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8. THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM

A Behaviour Management Case Study

INTRODUCTION

Education is essentially a relational activity, where the interaction between teacher and learner creates a learning space in which knowledge is constructed and co-constructed. It is clear however that the learning space is not just cognitive. It is coloured and nuanced by emotion and interpersonal relationships. Indeed teachers and schools have long acknowledged the influence of school on social and emotional development, a fact that has been acknowledged in more recent times through the formalisation of social and emotional learning in school curricula (Durlak et al., 2011). Classroom and behaviour management are areas where the cognitive, social and emotional aspects of learning intersect. Through the ways in which they respond to each other's behaviour, teachers and children learn not just about appropriate behaviour but also determine whether the learning space is a facilitative one.

Some educational contexts appear to give rise to more challenging behaviour than others. In particular, the tendency for challenging behaviour to be an issue in contexts of social and economic disadvantage has been noted, and in some cases attributed to a 'disconnect' between the middle class world of teachers and the working class world of students. This chapter explores a classroom management intervention which took place within such a context. The intervention, called the Working Together Project, took place in three schools in Ireland, each of which is located within an area of socio-economic disadvantage. The Working Together Project was a research and intervention project that grew from an educational network of 18 elementary schools serving the learning needs of children living with urban disadvantage and a teacher education institution on the Western seaboard of Ireland. The project was designed as a practical response to the network's request for research and intervention in the area of classroom management. Three of the network schools self-selected to participate in the project. The specific objectives of the Working Together Project were to:

- create a positive ethos of approved behaviour that is shared by children, parents and teachers, and an improved, systematic response to challenging behaviour that is shared by children, parents and teachers;
- develop a sustainable approach to behaviour;

- document, using established research methods, the processes involved in i) challenging behaviour, in ii) formulating and implementing an appropriate response, and disseminate the findings to the broader educational community in order to improve practice.

It is clear from these objectives that the project had a strong focus on interpersonal relationships and emotions. In this chapter the data yielded by the project are explored in terms of what they reveal about the nature of emotions and relationships at school and their impact on classroom management.

INTERVENTION DESIGN AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Challenging behaviour can be interpreted from a number of different perspectives (Cowley, 2001; Martino, 2000). The Working Together Project viewed behaviour as a response to environmental and individual needs while recognising the objective undesirability of some behaviour (Jones, 2003; Lyons & O'Connor, 2006). Consequently, the project emphasised developing an understanding of behaviour while being clear about behavioural expectations. The driving principle behind the Working Together project was collaborative practice and its design was based on reports of successful interventions in the areas of behavioural problems and bullying (Dearden, 1994; Hickey, 1999; O'Hara, Byrne, & McNamara, 2000; Smith & Sharp, 1994). The interventions that were implemented in each school were based on an assessment of need at the start of the project in each setting. Common foci or intervention that emerged across the participating schools included the development of a whole-school policy and the participation, support, and personal development of children, parents and school staff. In particular, given the project's objectives, the intervention team identified a need within each school for the development of a clear, agreed, statement of behavioural expectations and of an escalating series of positive and negative consequences that could be applied in to reinforce positive behaviour and sanction negative behaviour respectively.

Each of the participating schools was located within an urban social housing setting in Ireland. School 1 was a large co-educational school, with 500 pupils and 34 teaching staff, School 2 was a boys' school, with 115 pupils and 15 teaching staff and School 3 was co-educational up to second grade and girls only thereafter, with 216 pupils and 23 teaching staff. In order to maximise the transfer of learning from site to site, the project had a lagged design. During the first year the project began in School 1. The project team worked in School 1 for two years. The research and reflection process gave rise to learning which was applied to Schools 2 and 3, starting in year three of the project.

This is a participatory action research project utilising a multiple-case case study methodology (Stake, 2006). It involved designing and implementing an intervention intended to bring about a change, rigorously observing the process and nature of the actual change, reflecting on these processes and consequences, and re-planning for future changes (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998). Case study design has been described by Quinn Patton as 'holistic and case sensitive' (2002, p. 447)

and was chosen because it offered a scaffolding to explore both the context of the school and the interpersonal relationships between stakeholders from a holistic perspective, which acknowledged temporality, sociality and physical boundaries (ibid., p. 447). These interrelationships merit further investigation within an Irish context.

Behaviour checklists and questionnaires completed by teachers in the first year in each school were used to identify a group of children whose behaviour in class was defined along a spectrum from highly disruptive to non-disruptive. In each year of the project these children, their parents and teachers participated in focus groups and interviews, which examined perceptions of behaviour at school, the characteristics of effective classroom management and the perception of interventions and changes implemented through the Working Together Project. In the first and final year teachers and children in each school completed questionnaires which assessed the level of challenging behaviour at school, the classroom management strategies used to address challenging behaviour and the perception of the effectiveness of those strategies. The number of children, teachers, and parents who responded to each data collection instrument over the four years of the project is summarised in [Table 1](#). Throughout the project the research findings were fed back to participants in order to facilitate their reflection and inform future actions. This co-interpretation of research results between researchers and participants built a strong sense of ownership of the project and its interventions.

Table 1. Participant rate and profile across schools

	School 1	School 2	School 3	Total
Questionnaire participation rate	290 children	48 children	80 children	418 children
	29 teachers	8 teachers	10 teachers	47 teachers
Focus group participation rate	52 children	24 children	40 children	130 children
	43 teachers	12 teachers	24 teachers	79 teachers
	17 parents	10 parents.	12 parents	39 parents

The data presented in this chapter include those presented in the final evaluation in which the 6 members of the project team, 29 teachers and 6 parents were interviewed (Smyth & Dunne, 2005). The project yielded a large amount of qualitative and quantitative data. The following discussion focusses on those

findings that relate to the role of emotions and interpersonal relationships in behaviour.

LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT EMOTIONS, INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
AND BEHAVIOUR AT SCHOOL

Quality of Children-Teacher Relationships

Children's emotional response to school in general was measured by asking them the extent to which they liked school and the extent to which they liked their teachers. Most children reported liking school at least sometimes. At the start of the project 38% of the children in school 1, 27% of the children in school 2 and 52% of children in school 3 said that they liked school most of the time. At the end of the project, 47% of the children in school 1, 32% in school 2 and 62% in school 3 reported liking school most of the time. The results of the children's focus groups confirmed the questionnaire findings that children generally liked school. The primary relationship in the classroom is between the children and the teacher. The majority of children in each school reported liking or getting along with their teacher most or all of the time. In school 1 61% of students said that they liked their teacher most/all of the time in the first year of the study and 69% expressed the same sentiment in the final year of the study. In school 2, 59% of the children said that they liked their teacher most or all of the time and 75% said the same in the final year. In school 3 75% of children said that they liked the teacher most or all of the time in the first year and 84% said so in the final year.

Another way of looking at the relationship between teachers and children through the questionnaires was to ask how often teachers get really cross with students. In the first year, 54% of children in school 1, 34% in school 2 and 42% in school 3 said that the teacher got really cross a lot of the time. In the final year of the project, 36% of children in school 1, 39% in school 2 and 15% in school 3 gave the same answer.

The qualitative data suggested that children's prevalent feelings of liking or disliking schools were linked to emotional reactions to their teachers and to the quality of their interpersonal relationships with their teachers.

Q. Are you happy in your class?

A. No

Q. Why not?

A. Cos I hate the teacher.

Q. What's your school like?

A. It's the best school ever! Cos my teacher is nice and lets us do the good stuff.

The children's views were echoed in the parents' interviews.

Q. Why would you say that they like school so much?

A. It's the teachers

A. They make friends

A. The teachers praise them

For the children, meeting friends and peers was also an important part of school life and was seen as one of the reasons that they both attended and enjoyed school

Q. Why do people come to school?

A. To learn and spell and do maths and to play with friends 'cos sometimes you mightn't have friends near you.

A. To make friends and to get an education

The role of school in making friends and its role in social skills development and in self development were factors mentioned by the parents also.

Q. What should school be about?

A. I think it's the best place they can learn to get on with other people because it's the first place they're in a group. If you can get it at this age it's very productive. It is the first time that they're with other children.

Teachers also saw school as having a role in self-development and in presenting social role models to the children. They were also conscious of the importance of a positive atmosphere at school.

I suppose that we all trained for the academics and we're very conscious of the curriculum that we have to cover but sometimes the information we impart educationally we can integrate the social skills we desire.

Despite, these general positive comments about school and teachers, it was clear that school can be boring for children.

Q. What makes you look forward to school?

A. If we have something good inside school like P.E. but sometimes even though if we have P.E. it's probably something isn't ...it isn't really good inside school cos we're probably doing the same things over and over again.

Q. ... and what happens when you do the same things over and over again?

A. It gets kind of boring so you feel just like walking out of it.

How Relationships Impacted on Construction of Norms of Behaviour

As the main aim of the project was to look at behaviour within the school one way to look at the relationships in the school is to consider what consensus or co-construction of rules was in existence. To what extent did stakeholders within the school have shared ideas about how children should relate to each other and to their peers? The questionnaire data at the start of the project in each school give some idea of how children and teachers felt about this aspect of school life. Teachers were asked about the extent to which they consulted with children about classroom rules. These responses could be seen as an indication of the teachers' attitudes to the role of children in behaviour management. In each year, all of the teachers in each school said that children should be involved in the construction of rules, but they did not always do so. In year one, only 48% of the teachers in school 1 said that they had involved children in the construction of class rules and only 33% of children reported having been consulted. In school 3 66% of teachers and 73% of children said that children had been involved in the construction of class rules. In school 2 62% of teachers that they had involved in the construction of class rules but only 45% of children reported being involved. By the final year of the project, 89% of teachers in school 1, 87% of teachers in school 2 and 89% of teachers in school 3 said that they involved children in the construction of class rules. Eighty-three percent of children in school 1, 71% in school 2 and 74% in school 3 agreed that they had been involved. These results seem to indicate a shift in the way that teachers thought about children's role in behaviour management.

At least some teachers confirmed that their involvement in the project had led to a greater cohesion between children, teachers and parents.

I think the cohesiveness really, that everybody is working towards a common aim, is very important, we weren't all singing off the same hymn sheet ... there's a greater sense of communication between the kids, the staff and the parents.

Generally, pupils were seen as actively engaging in the process and it was seen as giving them some 'ownership' over the behaviour policy within the school.

I think the kids as well enjoy getting involved in the making of the rules and it made them feel like it was their own.

By the end of the project, children were also more likely to say that they had had some involvement in making up the rules.

Q. Who made up the rules?

....

A. All of us in the school because we said we'd be good and do all what the rules told us to and our parents said we had to say we'll keep the school rules too.

Some children could distinguish between the expressed ethos of involvement which did not always match their perceived reality.

The teacher said that we made them up with her but we didn't really.

In this next extract, a child illustrates how the concept of respect can be used to mask requests for obedience.

Q. X you know when it says 'respect other people'. What does respect mean?

A. It means don't shout at them and don't be cheeky and just do what they say.

Teachers' Capacity to Manage Challenging Behaviour and Strategies Used

Teachers reported emotional reactions to children's challenging behaviour and their emotions also impacted on their perceived ability to respond to that behaviour. It was clear that when the relationship between teachers and children was positive and relatively trouble-free teachers felt more positive about their work.

I don't ever feel tense coming in in the morning but maybe that's cos I've infants, I don't know. There was one year and it wasn't a pleasure and that's because of who was sitting in front of me and I didn't enjoy it and that's not a nice place to be.

Teachers reported feelings of frustration and fear in relation to classroom management.

... and I was afraid to bring up issues that I felt were important to me because I felt I was stupid, was I the only one? Now I can say "anyone got any suggestions for me?" I can now say I feel more empowered as a teacher.

In their questionnaires, teachers were also asked to indicate the extent to which they used a variety of strategies to address children's misbehaviour. A number of these related to building relationships, namely, consulting with children about class rules, discussing the behaviour with the child, informing parents of positive behaviour and informing parents of misbehaviour. The children were also asked about the frequency of strategies. The wording of the teachers' and children's items differed. The teachers' questionnaire had more items. [Table 2](#) shows the percentage of teachers in each school in each year of the project who said that they used each

strategy often. It also shows the responses of the children to two of the items which were similar to those of the teachers.

Table 2. Percentage of teachers using a particular strategy often to address misbehaviour and percentage of children saying a comparable strategy was used a lot

	School 1		School 2		School 3	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2
<i>Strategy</i>						
Consult with children on class rules	45	78	75	71	70	67
Inform parents of misbehavior	62	61	50	57	50	33
Discuss behavior with the child	59	89	63	86	70	89
Have a talk (child)	47	33	37	30	35	22
Inform parents of positive behavior	28	44	50	100	60	44
Send a positive message home (child)	12	23	9	20	4	4

It is also interesting to note whether the teachers found the strategy to be effective. The following table notes the percentage of teachers who found the strategy usually effective, regardless of how often they used it. Again, the extent to which two comparable strategies were judged as helping them to behave most of the time by children is also indicated.

Table 3. Percentage of teachers who found a particular strategy to be usually effective when used to address misbehavior

	School 1		School 2		School 3	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2
<i>Strategy</i>						
Consult with children on class rules	52	n/a	25	43	40	33
Inform parents of misbehavior	38	44	38	57	50	67
Discuss behavior with the child	14	22	38	29	40	33
Have a talk (child)	67	73	59	42	58	69
Inform parents of positive behavior	59	72	38	43	70	67
Send a positive message home (child)	63	77	54	52	29	56

Further detail on the kinds of interpersonal strategies used by teachers was evident in the children's interviews and focus groups.

Q. And what does the teacher do when people get mad, like that in the class?

A. She says calm down and don't.

A. She sends them to the office and ring your mother.

Q. Oh right if you don't behave?

A. They give you time to calm down.

A. And if you don't calm down they call your mother to come up and collect you.

Q. What would the teacher do?

A. Sort it out. Ask them what happened and listen to both sides of the story. I think the teacher will just (chat) with them.

One of the main foci of the intervention was the development of an escalating series of consequences for positive and negative behavior. Children and their parents were aware of the strategy of implementing a series of consequences.

She's this thing on the wall I think it's brilliant. If they're bold they don't get 10 minutes play on the yard and if they're still bold after that they get 10 minutes out of computer time and to my X that's bad bad now. And if you get the 10 mins off the yard well that's it, then he's good then because he knows that it's the computer next.

If you're bold (naughty) you stand out and if you're bold again you go on the tiles and if you be bold again you get a penalty sheet and if you be bold after that you get ...

Suspended!

No you get a note home and if you be bold again you get suspended

If we're good in class we get praise from the teacher and stars and things

Teachers generally recognized the benefits of this kind of system.

I know that the steps and I know where someone is and it gives me confidence knowing what the next step is.

There were some dissenting voices however. In the following extract one teacher describes how the children tried to find loopholes in the policy.

It didn't work at all in my room they'd say, "well it doesn't say in the book that I can't chew gum" and it just became impossible so I just use my own and the hundred stars and that works for them.

Reasons for Misbehaviour

Some insight into the role that relationships play in causing misbehaviour can be gained by an analysis of the children’s questionnaire. Some caution needs to be employed when interpreting these results as there is a ceiling effect in children’s responses. Children were given a choice of possible reasons for misbehaviour and they tended to select each one. [Table 4](#) gives those responses to the items related to relationship with peers. The results indicate that peer relationships play a role in causing misbehaviour although the reliability of distinctions between the items can be questioned, particularly as it seems unlikely that so many children do not get along with their classmates.

Table 4. Peer-related reasons for misbehaviour endorsed by children

	School 1		School 2		School 3	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2
<i>Why do you misbehave in school?</i>						
It makes other children laugh	89	86	68	79	93	93
Other children get me into trouble in school	47	63	34	48	67	73
I don’t like sharing books, colours or other things	91	92	68	93	90	92
That’s what my friends do	83	87	73	70	94	99
Other children are at me on the way to school	92	89	87	79	99	96
I don’t get along with the rest of the class	91	93	79	84	94	96

Children were also asked if they misbehaved because their ‘teacher isn’t fair’. In the first year of the project, 75% of children in school 1, 82% in school 2 and 85% in school 3 answered in the affirmative. In the final year of the project, 86% of children in school 1, 89% in school 2 and 92% agreed with this statement.

An attempt can be made to verify the children’s answers by comparing them with that of the teachers. Teachers were also given a list of reasons as to why children misbehave. Three of these items were teacher related, teacher is unfair, teacher is too soft, the children dislike the teacher. The responses to these items is presented in [Table 5](#).

Table 5. Teachers' agreement with reasons for children's misbehavior

	School 1		School 2		School 3	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2
<i>Why is the behaviour of some children challenging?</i>						
Being picked on by peers	59	28	25	29	100	67
Other children get them into trouble	21	22	13	29	40	22
Encouragement from peers	69	72	75	29	90	67
Desire to be part of a gang	66	61	38	29	90	56
Teacher is seen as unfair	41	6	63	14	30	33
Teacher is seen as too soft	31	11	25	29	30	33
Dislike of teacher	55	11	38	14	40	33

Children's emotional reactions were cited as the cause of disruptive behaviour. Frustration with academic work was cited as a reason for misbehaviour by children.

I get mad if I get something wrong.

It was also raised by teachers particularly in the context of children comparing their academic skills to those of their peers.

Especially with their peers I feel that there's great understanding if children aren't able to perform academically but I do think that with their peers they want to perform they want to have a certain level.

Common emotions related to negative behaviour that emerged in the context of interpersonal relationships at school were frustration, anger, boredom, and jealousy.

Q. Why would they be fighting?

A. Because they hate each other.

A. Maybe he did a better picture than him.

Q. And do you think it's hard for children when they have trouble with reading?

A. Yeah. Cos they think then that the other people might think that they are stupid not reading, but it's not really their fault they can't read. It's just that they can't read, they can get better at it if they do it themselves.

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The children spoke about how children would get angry with each other, call each names or fall out over games. They used the word 'hate' to refer to how they felt about each other.

Q. Why would they get into a fight like that

A. Two are bullying one

A. They hate that fellow there

A. He's probably always slagging that fellow there.

Q. Why do you think they're not getting on?

A. They might of said stuff one of them something took something belonging to them and accused them of taking it.

A. Say if she went off with another friend one of/ one of her new friends and she felt like left out and she wasn't talking to her.

A. And 'cos they were fighting over who wanted to go first in skipping

A. They be calling names to each other and they could be slagging their Mam or their Dad or their parents and the other could be calling the other one back.

As can be seen from these quotes, teasing by others, known as 'slagging' in Ireland, was a common source of interpersonal conflict among children. The difficulties caused by this way of relating to one another was noted by teachers and it was a feature of children's interaction at the beginning and at the end of the project.

For me too slagging is a big thing. It has had/it has a negative effect in the school and it's very widespread

It's a way of relating to each other that's very=

=They might know it's wrong but they still do it.

Q. What are the things that lead to that challenging behaviour if it does happen?

A. Remarks sometimes that someone could pass to another one

A. Sometimes it could be something that happened at home or on the way home and they bring it into school and they just continue it

The importance of 'being tough' and presenting this image to others was evident in the comments of the children who were interviewed.

... people get threatened and they're probably just too scared cos other people are friends of them. And some people just start a fight and they know that they can't kill 'em, they just start itthey show the people that they're tough but they're not really that tough, they just want to show off in front of us.

Teachers felt that some misbehaviour was due to unmet emotional needs at home.

A. Well if there was some serious trouble at home but you wouldn't know what was going but I don't know you can't see into the fellow's mind or another fellow hassling him in the yard

Q. So the reason for misbehaviour could be something at home

A. Very often something at home

A. ...They come in very tired yawning they might be up til 2 or 3 in the morning.

Children were aware of the difficulties they had relating to each other at times and described how they themselves, or their teachers would try to regulate this behaviour.

A. I don't like fighting with friends. but sometimes my friends do annoy me

Q. Then what happens?

A. Name just slags me. I try to hold in my anger we all help me

Q. So they're just playing but they have to go out by the wall? So the teacher just puts them at the wall

A. They do be fighting over games or the ball

Q. Do they make friends after all?

A. Teacher makes them shake hands

Teacher-parent Relationship

With regard to relationships with parents, teachers were asked to what extent they felt that parents/guardians should be involved in constructing class rules. In the first year of the project, 39% of parents in school one, 62% in school two and 50% in school three felt that parents should be involved in constructing class rules. By the end of the project, these percentages had declined, so that 28% of teachers in

school one, 50% in school two and 22% in school three felt that parents should be involved in constructing class rules. In reality most teachers did not involve parents. No teachers in school two involved parents in constructing class rules in either year. In school one only 3% of teachers involved parents/guardians in the construction of class rules in year one and 22% involved them in the final year. In school 3 20% of teachers involved parents in the construction of class rules in year one but no teachers involved them in the final year of the project.

Teachers' perspectives on their relationship with parents varied between schools. Teachers in one school were complimentary about parents and spoke of their willingness to attend teacher-parent meetings. Others felt that at least some parents were less interested in their children's education and expressed frustration at parents' lack of engagement with school. Most teachers seemed to feel that it was a minority of parents who were disinterested. Yet, they felt frustrated because it was often those parents that they wanted to meet most.

Well they are the primary educators but I think a lot of them don't have respect for school. It's kind of an 'us and them' situation. And they always take the side of the child like, they never take the side of the teacher. If you call them in if it's in relation to behaviour, they don't want to admit that the problem lies with their child because then it reflects back badly on their own parenting skills.

You know what parents/ if there's even the slightest thing of even disrupting class you'll know there'll be a response but one or two where you won't get a response.

Teachers saw the expectations for behaviour at home as being different to those at school. They characterized the home environment as one with lower standards for behaviour.

... Even coming in they don't hold it for the next child.(description of holding doors etc.) They obviously/ that is not taught to them at home they obviously run through the door and that's it.

But I think that the skills they learn in school are only applied in school because outside of school, at home, in a lot of cases, anything goes. It's 'get out of the house, I don't want to see you till it's time for bed' in a lot of the cases. ... I think in a lot of cases, the social skills they learn in school are only applied in school. They kind of throw them out the window when they leave school I think.

While the intervention prompted teachers to engage with parents, it was felt that this was an area where more could be done.

The project also motivated us to keep picking at the parents and keep trying to bring them in on board you know. Certainly you couldn't say that there was as much parent involvement as we'd want but insofar as we were able within the confines that we're able to work in we did everything we could.

I think I'd like to see parents a bit more involved in the school like we need to work on that a bit more for the sake of the children.

This lack of relationship with parents was particularly an issue when it came to working with children whose behaviour was particularly challenging. In these instances the teachers felt that the project had not adequately equipped them to deal with those issues and that the situation was exacerbated by the difficulty in reaching the parents of those children.

Well I think it's been reasonably successful ... like for the kids, the 90% of the kids it's been fantastic, but it's just the few kids on the periphery that's still, it still hasn't worked for ... so much has been tried with these kids it's very hard to see what else can be done for them only contain them and that's what you really are doing, you know, is containing them.

Our biggest problem is 'children in crisis' and they [the project team] were commenting "Oh, we will discuss the children in crisis. We will discuss the problem children" but we never got any answers on how to deal with problem children ... And they are our biggest problem. And it's very good to have rules and consequences [but] these children are outside of rules and consequences.

A couple of parents would be aware of it [the project] because they would have been involved in it, but none, I would imagine, I'm only guessing, I would imagine none of the parents that would be our target children, that would be parents of our target children, I would imagine not. It's usually the parents of actually the children who are quite well behaved.

The parents who were interviewed indicated their own willingness to come to the school and to meet with parents when required, but, like the teachers, they identified some parents as being unwilling to do so. It seems that teachers and parents are agreed then, in their characterization of some parents as neglectful.

Some kids as young as [mine] not going to school. Their parents don't care like. I find that very stupid. Kids have to go to school.

Parents however, were more likely to recognise that other parents' reluctance to come to school might not be related to indifference.

It's actually very hard but you have to hit them hard. Parents have to be pushed because they were neglected as well for years. People forgot that we existed down there for so long that people gave up caring and now you have people coming in and they are trying to pick up where it was never even started. People are trying to get things up now but parents have lost interest. Their attitude now is "Why should I do it?".

I think they're involving them [parents] great, but it's more the parents than it is the school, if you could get more parents to come in it would really help, because they done the shared reading, that's another one, and they found it

very hard, so to get the parents themselves to come, now I know a lot of them work, but some of them are afraid. ... You know they're more afraid, you know if they kind of made an effort to come in and have a look and see what they're asking of you, they're not asking you to come in and teach.

Some parents identified gaps in the development of relationships with teachers.

Q. Is there a way that it could be any better?... Is there any information that you would need to make sure you were able to support him.

A. Are you not supposed to be introduced to the teacher beforehand? So they can get used to one another.

Parents were mostly positive about their relationship with the school, which had been enhanced by the involvement of the project.

It was lovely actually, we were in the room down here and they asked us questions, ... but what was brilliant when they brought us in to the teachers and ... we were all sitting around and they really listened, the teachers listened to us. And then they were saying things back to us, and we were going "oh we never knew that now", that was brilliant.

Teacher-teacher Relationship

The strength of teacher-teacher relationships and their role in supporting teachers was clear from the start of the project.

I like the camaraderie in the staff, ... I like the level of interaction we have as teachers. We work very much as a team and we support each other every way, workwise, materials, sharing what's there and I enjoy that.

The staff are phenomenal I don't think you could possibly get a staff like it anywhere and the genuine empathy and genuine liking that they have for the children is passed on and the kids know its genuine caring.

Participation in the intervention strengthened these relationships, particularly when it came to teachers' willingness to share difficulties they had with behaviour. The extent to which teachers could collaborate around behavioural issues was measured by asking them whether they discussed behavioural management strategies with other staff. At the start of the project 34% of teachers in school one, 37% in school two and 50% in school three engaged in such discussions regularly. All of the teachers in school one and three and 87% of the teachers in school two found these discussions helpful. At the end of the project, 56% of teachers in school one, 50% of teachers in school two and 44% of teachers in school three (note only difference of one teacher) engaged in these discussion regularly. Again, all of the teachers in school one and three and 87% of those in school two found these discussions helpful. Several teachers mentioned this also in their interviews.

Before it was as if you were an individual in your own classroom a problem arose if you couldn't deal with it you had to send for the Principal and now people might have an arrangement with the teacher next door. Little things that we should have sorted out years ago but we never got around to.

Everyone is helping a lot more. No one is afraid to admit their fears and [when there's a problem] they all pull out all the stops

That we all feel that we can communicate with somebody that we can go to somebody with a problem, everybody seems to feel that you can actually approach someone now.

In two of the schools a need for bringing staff together was identified because of changes in school circumstances and because of a tendency for staff to be divided because of age.

The atmosphere within the school has changed. There is more openness between junior/senior staff. More sharing of resources, staff experience, skills and a greater admission of failure in dealing with issues around behaviour, therefore a readiness to request/receive help and advice from colleagues.

The success of the project was attributed to the fact that teachers felt supported and that staff themselves were given the tools to work together rather than simply being an exercise in 'solving' behaviour problems in the school.

Understanding better the behaviour problems and learning skills to cope with them.

I am now more aware of behaviour and challenging behaviour and am more confident about dealing with or handling situations if and when they arise.

Issue of Time

Time emerged as a significant obstacle to the success of the project across all three schools. Although the provision of substitute cover for teachers helped to some extent, the intensive nature of the project and, in particular, the expectation that teachers would give up (at least some of) their own personal time to participate in the project were seen as creating potential difficulties.

I think at times teachers were probably tired and a big questionnaire comes in and lots of feedback and reading. And I think motivation. At times there may have been lulls. Being realistic about it because of extra hours. And I mean, it's ok for me cause I don't have a family. I don't have you know, commitments as much as other teachers who may have babysitters etc. and can't accommodate it.

I think the process worked very well but it's a very time consuming process. It's a very time consuming process, but it did work very well and ... because

of the process, there's ownership around it. It isn't the principal saying this is our behaviour policy. It's our behaviour policy, you know.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of the Working Together Project intervention showed that it was largely successful because it provided a mechanism whereby the interpersonal relationships of children, teachers, and parents could be explored and nurtured in a safe and bounded environment. The success of the project lay more in strengthening teachers' ability to respond to behaviour than in reducing the amount of challenging behaviour.

The project data indicated that most children had a positive experience of school. When disruptive behaviour did occur, children identified peer issues and emotional reactions as important causes. Such reactions were either in response to the child's academic experience or their emotional reaction to others. Common emotions related to negative behaviour that emerged in the context of interpersonal relationships at school were frustration, anger, boredom, and jealousy. Teasing by others was a common source of interpersonal conflict among children. These findings suggest that much of the work of behavioural management intervention might well be around helping children to manage and regulate their emotions and reactions to others.

Children's prevalent feelings of liking or disliking schools were linked to emotional reactions to their teachers and to the quality of their interpersonal relationships with their teachers. Over the course of the project teachers came to believe that children's perceptions of teachers were less important as explanatory factors for behaviour than the children's relationship with peers. Nonetheless both teachers and parents acknowledged the importance of teacher-child relationships in creating a positive experience of school for children. All of the participants in the project indicated that, in general, children were more consulted about behavioural expectations at the end of the project than they were at the start. Equally, it seemed that positive behaviour was more likely to be rewarded. These results were encouraging as this approach to behaviour has been associated with the development of greater social responsibility amongst children (Roache & Lewis, 2011). Consultation about class and school rules is not a simple process. Teachers and children did experience some difficulty in making consultation real rather than tokenistic. One of the difficulties here is the need to distinguish between what is negotiable and what is not. Sometimes a simple view of consultation is taken where it is suggested that children can make up the rules. In fact, this is not always possible or appropriate. What is in question really is a negotiated consultation. Being clearer about these parameters may make it less likely that children will be disappointed with the results or feel that teachers are being insincere.

Teachers reported emotional reactions to children's challenging behaviour and their emotions also impacted on their perceived ability to respond to that behaviour. Teachers reported feelings of frustration and fear in relation to

classroom management. These feelings could be said to interfere with their capacity for change.

Relationships at school between children and teachers, between teachers and parents and between teachers and teachers were found to be emotionally charged. These emotions were found to be enabling, e.g., feeling supported, or inhibiting, e.g., feeling disrespected. The importance of the quality of parent-teacher relationships was evident both in the reporting of negative relationships and the description of positive relationships. The participants' recounting of these relationships was charged with feelings of respect or lack of respect. Conversations with teachers and parents in interviews suggested that teachers perceive a greater divergence between their views and the views of parents than parents do. This is largely due to teachers' focus on 'hard-to-reach' children and parents. Understandably, teachers' discussions of challenging behaviour are coloured by the strain of managing the very disruptive behaviour of a small number of children. Teachers wanted a clear strategy for dealing with these children and were disappointed that the project did not deliver in this regard in their opinion. Finding ways to assist teachers in relating to these children becomes even more important given the finding that when children become more challenging, teachers tend to become more punitive in their responses (Roache & Lewis, 2011).

What is evident is that all intervention, regardless of the severity of the children's behaviour, requires relationship building and that teachers ability to build relationships with children who are very challenging and with the parents of those children may well be inhibited by their perceptions of these children and parents. The parents in this study, while equally angry at what they perceived as the neglect of some children by their parents, were more open to the possibility that such parents may have difficulty relating to school rather than simply not being interested. This points to the difficulty that can emerge between parents and teachers who come from very different social backgrounds (Christianakis, 2011). There was also the danger that teachers would paint all parents with the same brush or take parents who are interested for granted and the contact between parents and teachers facilitated by the project went some way to getting some teachers to recognise that not all parents are disinterested.

The results of the study indicate the importance of facilitating conversations between educational partners in order to develop an understanding of the other's perspective. While the views of teachers and children and teachers and parents often converged, there were also times when they diverged. The content of these divergences, e.g., that some children can only be contained or that some parents simply do not care, is conflictual and interpersonally challenging. Interventions in such relationships are likely to involve conversations where feelings run high and self-esteem is challenged. Addressing this emotional content is an element of intervention which needs to be seriously considered and planned for. Furthermore, it is a process which requires time and patience above everything else. One of the major impediments to the success of this project was the availability of time and energy for teachers, parents and children to engage meaningfully with each other.

As an intervention team the staff of the Working Together Project could not force these relationship building sessions. Teachers and schools are the gatekeepers for such interactions and they often have to take the initiative in reaching out to parents. While the project team could encourage and facilitate they could only begin to encourage teacher parent conversations.

A clear and unsurprising finding of the project was that teacher-teacher relationships are very important in helping teachers to cope with the emotional impact of challenging behaviour. What was more surprising perhaps was the fact that teachers at the start of the project many teachers did not engage in conversations with others about behaviour, despite the fact that these conversations were often deemed to be helpful. It appears that the view that good teachers do not have issues with classroom management prevented some teachers from seeking support from others. They reported feeling afraid and ashamed of seeming inadequate. At the end of the project more teachers were engaging in these kinds of conversations, although still only about 50% on average according to the questionnaire. In focus groups and interviews, teachers reported more collegiality around these issues. One major success of the Working Together Project was the creation of space where teachers could talk to each other about these issues. This fear of inadequacy displayed by teachers helps also to understand one of the challenges and limitations of the Working Together Project. Burke and colleagues note that routine interventions like the Working Together Project are frequently not evaluated for teacher fidelity to the programme and are instead evaluated by teacher self-report (Burke et al., 2011). The Working Together Project is subject to this criticism as most of the teachers in the study would not agree to observation of their teaching. They reluctantly agreed to observation of the class as long as the focus was on the children's behaviour. Given the strength of teachers' concerns about appearing inadequate, this reluctance is fully understandable.

The process of engaging in this project shed some light on the role of research in intervention. Qualitative research methods emerged as a better way of investigating the process of the project and, in particular, accessing the views of children. While the project tried to access the views of a large number of children with a questionnaire, the validity of the data gathered is questionable. One abiding challenge for the project team was the feedback of results to children and to parents. While parents were given written reports, the team relied on the teachers to convey the survey results to children. This is clearly a shortcoming of the project.

The WTP was the first study of its kind in Ireland. It was unique in that it was carried out over a 4-year timespan and was embedded in a continuous dialogue between research and practice. Methodologically, the study is significant in that it included the voices of children aged 6 to 12 years. The study confirmed the importance of positive interpersonal relationships in successful classroom management (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The results show that while teachers often articulate their needs in relation to behaviour management around improved techniques and skills, that skill development is not sufficient in itself. Rather it must be accompanied by opportunities to investigate and change the nature of inter and intrapersonal relationships along with an emphasis on the exploration of

teachers' conception of self and other (McCready & Soloway, 2011). An important element of developing positive relationships is attention to the emotional dimension of those relationships and an honest appraisal of their impact. Consequently, this study is part of the movement to examine the process of change in schools. It highlights the role of emotions in developing the collaborative interpersonal relationships between all stakeholders that are required in order to develop acceptable and empowering school-based change (Brackett et al., 2011; Murphy, 1999).

Finally, the study has important implications for teacher education. Reflective practice which emphasises the technical-rational dimension of teaching, without examining the emotional, moral and political content is shortsighted (Korthagen & Kessels, 2001; Sutton, Mudrey-Camino, & Knight, 2009). Jennings et al. (2001, p. 46) note that

Teachers' own development is a key issue if we are to improve the conditions of schooling, support teacher caring and commitment, and improve the academic and social-emotional growth of students.

The challenge for teacher education is to integrate teachers' need for strategies to deal with behaviour with the essential skills of emotional regulation, self-awareness and relationship-building, a challenge which becomes even greater when some studies show that these skills are developed in context and not taught by 'relationship experts' (McCready & Soloway, 2011, p. 119). The psychological educational literature demonstrates the importance of emotions and relationships in behaviour at school. The experience of the Working Together Project shows that these factors are equally important in any intervention.

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