Monografie i Studia Instytutu Spraw Publicznych
Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego

Current issues in European Educational Leadership

Eds. Roman Dorczak, Robin Precey

LEARNING

INDIVIDUAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

INCLUSION

COOPERATION

TRUST

RESPONSIBILITY

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Roman Dorczak, Robin Precey
(Edited by)

Current Issues in European Educational Leadership

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CONTENT

Editorial 5

1. Dom Harasiwka
   Lessons from Lockdown: Technology, Parental Engagement and the Education Gap 9

2. Alexander Butler
   The Meaning of 'Life'. An Exploration into International Teacher Retention 33

3. Keira Royds
   Exploring issues with curriculum leadership in English primary schools 47

4. Ebryl Nicholls
   Closing the vocabulary gap: how can school leadership narrow the vocabulary gap in 7–11 year olds? 71

5. Emma Johnson
   We can go out of doors, beyond the walls: Leading outdoor learning in an English Primary School 87

6. Maja Henriette Jensvoll
   Complicating effects of Mergers in Higher Education in Norway: Teacher educators' perspectives 109

7. Knut Ove Æsøy, Evy Jøsok
   Democratic contents for a democratic way of life 125

8. Kamran Namdar
How to avoid educating idiots: leading schools as arenas for reconstructing democracy 147

9. Izabela Cytlak, Joanna Jarmużek
Support network of students with disabilities at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań during the COVID-19 pandemic: comprehensive report on qualitative research 159

10. Herman Siebens
Anti-social and destructive (organisational) cultures and individuals – and what to do about it 177

Editorial

This book was written in strange times. In early 2020, the world suffered a global Coronavirus pandemic. No country was unaffected and the impacts were unprecedented in modern times. By March 2020, all schools in England and most other European countries, were closed later to open only for vulnerable children and those of workers essential to keep the countries just surviving. Most places of work closed or continued with staff working remotely at home. International travel became a trickle and for essential purposes only. Health services were at breaking point. Most people, including children, stayed at home - indoors most of the time. People's mental health became a concern in such isolated dystopian circumstances.

Hopefully when this book is published all of this will be memories. The first five chapters in this book were written by young teachers based on their research for their final year of a part-time Masters programme in leadership. Most were teaching their students, sometimes remotely, and conducting their research. All were students at Canterbury Christ Church University on a Teach First programme that recruits committed people to train to teach in challenging schools. The times in which they were writing provide a (hopefully) unique opportunity to compare education in pre-Covid and Covid times. They have been able to see some lessons from the latter that should influence the direction taken for education in future post-Covid times. Following five chapters from different European countries are the collection of texts inspired by discussions at ENIRDELM (European Network for Improving Research and Development in Educational Leadership and Management) yearly conference that was organized form Norway. Authors raise problems important from the perspective of improving education. There are always lessons to be learned about improving the quality of education…even in tough pandemic times. Authors of following chapters focus on:

Dom Harasiwka identifies factors that impacted on students' engagement with remote learning throughout the Covid lockdown in England and evaluates the extent to which an intervention aimed at improving parental engagement had an influence on this. His conclusion considers the applicability in a wider context, and the implications for schools in the future.

Alexander Butler explores teacher retention through different lenses

using a modified version of Brookfield's (1995) model of reflection. The aim was to give an international school explanation as to why the teacher turnover rate was alarmingly high. The author goes on to give potential ways to begin to reduce this in the future.

Keira Royds investigates the fact that, in England, responsibility for a part of school curricula falls upon primary school teachers who do not hold subject-specific knowledge. She researches the expectations of head teachers, workload, remuneration and subject knowledge. The chapter goes on to examine the measures that head teachers can take to support such teachers. This may well resonate with those non-specialist teachers with subject leadership in the education of 4–11 year old children.

Ebryl Nicholls work picks up the language theme in her research into a 'vocabulary gap'- a difference between the vocabulary knowledge of more and less advantaged children with this gap is predictive of wider academic achievement. A successful intervention strategy that explicitly taught children higher-level vocabulary to narrow the gap within a group aged 7 -11 years is the focus of the research. The effect of narrowing the vocabulary gap on wider academic attainment is discussed, as well as the impact this has on school leadership.

Emma Johnson looks at a growing yet limited trend to educate children outdoors on England. She reviews the relevant literature and discusses traditional and contemporary outdoor education in England. The author goes on to present research conducted at her own school using children's, teachers' and leaders' perceptions on the benefits and challenges of taking learning outside the classroom and their implications for leadership and management.

Maja Henriette Jensvoll in her text aims at investigating the impact of some of the ongoing mergers in higher education from the perspective of the teacher educators, looking at their involvement and engagement in processes related to the mergers. The author places her considerations in context of changes in higher education in Norway.

Knut Ove Æsøy and Evy Jøsok work is based on interview with 8 different teachers. Their reflections on democratic content are discussed considering John Dewey's progressive pedagogic and Wolfgang Klafki's critical-communicative didactic. Authors emphasize the difference between content about democracy and democratic content and how to teach the student the content by praising, orientate or make the student experience the content in everyday school practice in the classroom.

Kamran Namdar continues discussion on education and democracy pointing that a key institution for enabling the realization of the full extent of human potential in service to the required democratic world transformations is the school. He argues that school has to transform itself, to be able to act as

a space for the education of globally transformative agents. This is the most urgent and essential challenge to educational leadership.

Izabela Cytlak, Joanna Jarmużek aim in their chapter at analyzing the importance of support offered students with disabilities at Adam Mickiewicz University (AMU) in Poznań and secondly the impact of pandemic COVID-19 on the process of learning. They try to show the different difficulties experienced by students with disabilities during the pandemic and challenges placed before the supporters working at different Faculties and on the central level of AMU.

Herman Siebens in his text focuses attention on culture as a common narrative that acts as a filter through which group members perceive reality and act. He points out that it is always described as a positive thing or at least neutral and asks the questions: What about the negative side of group culture ? What if culture is 'toxic' ? How to combat anti-social and destructive cultures and individuals within it.

Editors think that presented collection of texts will inspire those interested in educational leadership issues to develop new ideas both for theory and practice.

Roman Dorczak, Robin Precey

LESSONS FROM LOCKDOWN: TECHNOLOGY, PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT AND THE EDUCATION GAP

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Abstract

In this chapter, the author aims to identify factors which impacted on students' engagement with remote learning throughout lockdown, and to evaluate the extent to which an intervention aimed at improving parental engagement had an influence on this. The introduction provides the context under which this research was conducted and the motivations for choosing this area of focus. The literature review then looks at existing research on remote learning along with other factors, such as the role of ICT access and parental engagement and how they interact in order to design the research question. The methodology explains the approach taken, the nature of the intervention and the data collection methods. The results section discusses the finding with reference to relevant literature. Finally, the conclusion considers the applicability in a wider context, and the implications for schools in the future.

Keywords: lockdown, technology, parental engagement, educational gap

1: INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus outbreak in the UK resulted in schools closing with very short notice. Schools, students, and parents had to quickly adapt to a new way of teaching and learning, with which most would have had very little prior experience. This required a quick response to ensure the impact on education was minimised.

This imperative to respond quickly and effectively was arguably greater in schools serving more deprived communities, including the one where this study was conducted; a Teach First eligible school which has an above average level of deprivation amongst its students (Teach First, 2020a). The mission of Teach First is to tackle the education gap which means disadvantaged pupils are around 18months behind their peers (Teach First, 2020b), which despite narrowing from 24 months in 2011 (Foster and Staton, 2020), is now predicted by many to widen as a result of the disproportionate impact of school closures on the most disadvantaged (Whittaker & Booth, 2020).

The focus of this study will therefore be to use existing literature to form hypotheses about which factors may be indicative of, or have an impact on, an individual student's engagement with remote learning, with an added focus on improving parental engagement. This will be crucial where those same areas can impact engagement with remote learning, such as lack of IT access and differences in parental engagement (Lucas et al., 2020, p. 4), may also be important in ensuring that the gap, if widened, can be closed as quickly as possible and that any further lockdowns, will not have the same disproportionately negative impact on the most disadvantaged.

2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1: THE ROLE OF ICT IN DISTANCE LEARNING

The impact of laptop use on student outcomes is argued by Gulek and Demirtas (2005, p. 4) to be significant, highlighting a number of benefits including that students 'produce writing of higher quality and greater length' and spend 'more time doing homework'. Their study assesses laptop provision in a conventional school setting but is likely to be relevant in a context whereby most learning interactions are online. Further, Gulek and Demirtas (2005, p. 4) show that those students with access to laptops 'direct their own learning' and show 'deeper and more flexible use of technology'. This suggests that access to a laptop also develops skills such as metacognition and self-regulation which, as will be discussed later, contribute to being a more effective distance learner.

Lack of ICT access was highlighted as a concern during the lockdown, with 86% of school leaders reporting that they had some students unable to access IT, and of this being an issue for 23% of pupils (Lucas et al., 2020, p. 9).

2.1.1: Factors affecting ICT access

Given the impact that laptop ownership can have, and their increased role during lockdown, it is necessary to look at the 'digital divide', which Chen and Wellman (2004, p. 19) define as:

> *'The gap between individuals that have the resources to participate in the information era and those that do not'.*

On the surface this gap appears small, with the ONS (2019) estimating that 93% of households now had internet access. However, the way in which the internet is accessed also needs to be considered, particularly with younger people where the same ONS report (2019) shows that of 16–24 year-olds, 100% reported accessing the internet via smartphones, compared to 59% via computers and 38% via tablets.

For example, at the school in this study, a survey (Appendix 1) showed that 99.2% of students had access to the internet outside school, and 94% had the ability to access their work via a tablet or PC. However, having access to the above is not the same as having unfettered or reliable access, where laptops may be shared with siblings, a connection may be unreliable, or a computer may be in need of repair.

2.1.2: The impact of accessing work via various devices

There is also a notable difference between accessing the work via a laptop versus a smartphone (Christodolou, D., 2020, p. 1). This has an impact on the functionality of online learning platforms, and the accessibility of the materials and assignments on them, which varies depending on the device used. A study by Stritto and Linder (2018, p.6) showed that 'students overwhelmingly preferred laptops' citing 'convenience, ease of use and effectiveness' as primary factors.

This is evidenced in our school, where despite the numbers reported above, with hard copy packs sent to 239 children, representing 23% out of a total of 1,027 students. These were issued to those students who lacked reliable internet and a means by which to access the remote learning resources.

2.2: IS DISTANCE LEARNING FOR EVERYONE?

The efficacy of distance learning being heavily predicated on the suitability of the individual learner is something explored by Roblyer and Marshall (2002, p. 249–250), who through a questionnaire were able to identify a number of traits that correlated with academic success through distance learning. The main areas identified included 'belief in oneself and in one's ability to achieve', 'individual initiative', 'be skilled at using online resources' and approaching tasks in an 'organised and goal-orientated' way Roblyer and Marshall (2002, p. 249–250).

It is not unreasonable to posit that the first two criteria are crucial to educational success in any context, with the question being how those students weaker in these areas can be supported when learning remotely, whilst the need to be organised and goal-orientated can, to an extent, be facilitated through the effective design and delivery of the work, there is less control that teachers can have over the access that students have to online methods of delivery or the extent to which they engage. As in the given context, learning remotely is no longer a choice but a necessity for all, there is a need for parents to become more involved in supporting children with their education.

2.3: THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

Firstly, it is important to clarify what is meant by parental engagement. Campbell (2011, p. 5 citing Harris & Goodall, 2007) distinguishes between 'parental involvement', defined as 'parents getting involved in school life', e.g. attending parent's evenings, and 'parental engagement', defined as a parent directly engaging with their child's learning, e.g. helping with homework. In this context engagement has become more pertinent, whereas traditional forms of parental involvement may not even be possible. Even with this distinction, there are still a wide range of activities that can be categorised as parental engagement.

Harris and Goodall (2007, p. 23) acknowledge that:

> *'Parental involvement is multidimensional and includes a multitude of parental activities regarding children's education', including, 'the provision of a secure and stable environment, intellectual stimulation' and 'high aspirations'.*

These are important in supporting children to work effectively at home, as these correlate with those factors identified as crucial for successful distance learning. Looking at parental involvement with online schooling, Borup et al. (2013, p. 40) suggest that it is even more important for students of this age because they possess 'fewer metacognitive skills' and 'self-regulation abilities' than adult learners, and because these skills become more important with remote learning.

Given that such abilities are less developed, research suggests younger students require more supervision, and need to 'receive more extensive reinforcement than older students' Cavanaugh et al. (2004, p. 7). Where, traditionally, this role is performed by teachers, Borup et al. (2013, p. 40) explain, in an online context parents are required to 'assume more of the traditional teacher responsibilities'. If a parent is to ably fulfil this role, greater communication between schools, teachers and parents is required (Cavanaugh et al, 2004, p. 7).

Although parental engagement is arguably of increased importance with remote learning, research shows that it has always had an impact on outcomes

and is ‘positively related to achievement’ (Cotton and Wikelund, 1989, p. 2), the impact being greater the more involved the parent becomes. Given this has long been known, it is important to appreciate the various barriers to effective parental engagement, especially as these may be exacerbated by school closures.

2.3.1: Factors affecting parental engagement

Campbell (2011, p. 5, citing Feinstein and Symons, 1999) identifies that parental engagement diminishes as a child enter secondary school. Cotton and Wikelund (1989, p. 4) identify several reasons for this, with those relevant to remote learning including the fact that:

> *‘The curriculum is more sophisticated’, ‘each student has several teachers’ and ‘parents of older students are more likely to be employed’.*

All these factors present tangible barriers to parental engagement, so any effective intervention needs to address them. However, a lack of parental engagement should not be conflated with a lack of parental interest. Despite the decline in parental engagement as a child gets older, ‘parental interest’ in their child’s education increases from age 11 to 16, as they approach their exams (Hango, 2007, p. 1386). This suggests that the problem is the ability, not the willingness, of parents to help.

Furthermore, Campbell (2011, p. 10) identifies additional barriers for those parents deemed ‘hard-to-reach’, defined as having very low levels of engagement with the school. Reasons for this include their own lack of self-esteem (Campbell, 2011, p. 11), where they lack the belief that they can impact on their child’s learning, or if they had their own negative experience of school, either as a parent or student (Campbell, 2011, p. 11). This helps to explain why ‘engagement’ may wane despite ‘interest’ increasing.

These issues, present at normal times, were also identified during lockdown. Teachers reported that just 48% of parents of secondary school pupils had engaged with their child’s remote learning (Lucas et al., 2020, p. 3), but of greater concern is the imbalance in which parents were engaged.

Given the increased role that parents had to play in lockdown, Drayton (2020, para. 3) argues that the ‘pre-existing differences in family resources’ could result in a ‘widening of educational inequalities’. This is reflected in the views of parents, where 47% of middle-class parents said they felt confident supporting their children, compared with 37% of working-class parents; furthermore, ‘more educated parents were more likely to feel confident as an educator themselves’ (Culinane & Montacute, 2020, p. 5). The potential impact of this can then be seen in the amount of work completed, with those from middle class homes completing more work on average (Culinane & Montacute, 2020, p. 5 and Lucas et al. 2020, p. 10).

The socio-economic status of different families is also likely to influence the level of parental engagement; parents with lower incomes appeared 'significantly less involved than their higher income peers' (Snell et al. 2009, p. 241, citing Vaden-Kiernan et al. 2005). These factors, and their impact, have been borne out in the current crisis, as shown in research by the Sutton Trust and the National Foundation for Educational Research (Culinane & Montecute, 2020 & Lucas et al. 2020).

These barriers to parental engagement, coupled with the correlation between income and adequate ICT access, and the concomitance of such factors with successful remote learning, may precipitate a perfect storm which widens the attainment gap between more economically deprived students and their peers by as much as 75% (Whittaker & Booth, 2020, p. 1).

2.3.2: Overcoming barriers to parental engagement

IT resources, as well as being important for learning, have proved a useful tool to empower parents, as Goodall and Vorhaus (2011, p. 7) suggest, by providing an easy way for parents to access up-to-date information and to better engage with their child's learning. Further, by overcoming some of the barriers identified, such as the logistical issues presented with in-person events (Goodall and Vorhaus, 2011, p. 7 and Harris & Goodall, 2008, p. 280), IT can be used to better engage those parents considered harder to reach.

2.3.3: Introducing Parents to VLEs

The use of technology to improve parental engagement has been a growing trend in recent years, including granting parents' access to information that eases 'the transfer of schoolwork into the home' (Selwyn et al., 2011, p. 315). Despite an increase in usage, it has been argued that it has had little impact on parental engagement (Lewin & Luckin, 2010, p. 749). This lack of efficacy could arise from poor implementation and management, rather than the concept of parental engagement with VLEs. When done correctly, VLEs should enable the 'seamless inclusion of parents' into 'all aspects of their children's schooling' (Selwyn et al., 2011, p. 315), and whilst parents who use such resources tend to view them favourably, issues persist with regards to overall uptake amongst parents, and the propensity of certain groups of parents to be more involved (Selwyn et al., 2011, p. 315).

Any existing research needs to be viewed from the perspective that it was conducted at a time when schools were running 'as normal', with different foci, for example, geared towards homework (Cranmer, 2007, p. 312) or blended learning (Ni, 2020, p. 220). However, it also needs to be considered that parents might be *more* likely to engage whilst students are learning exclusively from home, as parents may more clearly see educating their children as 'part of their 'job' as a parent' (Harris

and Goodall, 2008, p. 281). Further, the lack of confidence parents may have in engaging with online environments can be addressed by supporting parents with technical issues (Preston et al., 2010, p. 10), opening a dialogue and encouraging better communication between the school and home more generally.

2.3.4: The role of leadership in driving parental engagement

It is widely accepted that school leadership is essential to engendering an environment conducive to meaningful parental engagement. Riley (2009, p. 58) argues that:

'School leaders have a critical role to play in building trust and mutual understanding between schools and communities' and that this is nurtured through 'relationships', 'information' and 'knowledge'.

This can only be achieved through an understanding of the school community (Smith, 2006, p.48), so that the specific barriers to parental engagement within that community can be identified, focusing on 'low-income families in particular' (Campbell, 2011, p.6) which can have a direct impact on the likelihood of parents becoming involved (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003, p.4, Smith, 2006, p.44), noting that it is these students who can benefit most from increased parental engagement (Henderson, 1987).

RESEARCH QUESTION

Based on my findings from the literature reviewed above, this study aimed to determine the extent to which measures of a student's performance prior to lockdown, such as their attitude to learning (attendance, teacher assessments of effort), socioeconomic status (pupil premium eligibility) and gender may have been indicative of their engagement with schoolwork whilst working remotely. Further, how an intervention aimed at improving parental engagement might impact on the level of online learning completed by students.

I then sought to establish how generalizable any findings were, what further research was required and how the findings might be applied either to future lockdowns, or to wider educational contexts.

3: METHODOLOGY

3.1: COLLECTION OF DATA AND MEASURING ENGAGEMENT

The nature of my study was to monitor levels of engagement with remote learning by students from Years 7 to 10 throughout the lockdown. This allowed me to determine the impact of various factors on levels of engagement.

The primary method of monitoring students' work output was through a 'contact register'. For each subject where a student completed work, the teacher would add their initials to the column for that subject, which added to the total for that student. This provided a score for each week, between 0 and 10, with 0 indicating no visible engagement and 10 engagement with all subjects. I also calculated a mean average engagement for each student.

This allowed me to track engagement in several ways. I was able to observe engagement trends over a number of weeks and engagement between different year groups. Further, I compared this engagement with other pre-existing data held for these students. This allowed me to measure the extent to which these identified factors could be predictors of engagement with remote learning.

Part way through the lockdown an intervention was introduced to encourage, and measure the impact of, parental engagement. This involved adding parents to the google classrooms to give them greater oversight over the work being set and would let them know when work wasn't done. I analysed this by comparing engagement levels for students before and after the invite and compared this with those students who did not have a guardian invited over the same period.

This enabled me to analyse trends in engagement, and to evaluate the impact of the intervention on individual students and entire cohorts. There are however multiple factors which need to be taken into account, in terms of the reliability of the data.

3.2: SAMPLE SIZE

The focus of the study is all students from Year 7 to Year 10 in a secondary school. Year 11 was excluded because the parameters to measure their engagement were not consistent with the other year groups and so could compromise the validity of the results. This leaves a total population size of 871 participants, which enables me to exceed the minimum specified of 100 samples for 'each major subgroup' and between 20–50 for each 'minor sub-group' (Delice, 2010, p. 2008) when conducting analysis based on different criteria to try and account for covariances.

This improves precision, as larger sample sizes 'tend to minimise the probability of errors, maximise accuracy...and increase the generalisability of results' (Osborne & Costello, 2004, p. 1). This is because, arguably, the larger the sample size the more that the effect can be shown to exist regardless of other contextual factors, as well as 'noise or error' (Frey, 2018, p. 4).

4: ANALYSIS

4.1: WEEKLY AVERAGE ENGAGEMENT BY YEAR GROUP

The engagement of each student was measured by totalling the number of subjects for which contact was logged for each week, up to a maximum number of 10 in KS3 and 9 in KS4. The average was calculated each week for every year group. The data in each year group was normalised, with an uplift applied to Year 10 to account for the narrower Key Stage 4 curriculum.

Table 1 shows that weekly engagement is highest in Year 7, drops in Year 8 and is relatively consistent through to year 10. Engagement through Years 7–10 remained relatively stable with the lowest weekly average in each year group showing around 80% engagement levels in comparison with the peak, and the overall average engagement at 93% of the peak.

Table. 1. Weekly engagement

Table 1	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10
20/04	5.18	4.1	3.8	3.9
27/04	5.27	4.4	4.3	3.6
04/05	4.45	3.5	3.8	3.5
11/05	5.18	4.1	4.0	3.8
18/05	4.82	3.8	3.0	3.8
01/06	4.7	4.2	4.0	4.1
08/06	5.1	4	4.1	3.6
Average	**5.0**	**4.0**	**3.9**	**3.7**
Total Subjects	10	10	10	9
Normalised Average	**5.0**	**4.0**	**3.9**	**4.2**

Source: own work

Engagement through years 8–10 is relatively flat, with a slight uptick in Year 10 once the uplift is applied, which one might expect due to them sitting their GCSEs in the following year, however, the average engagement in Year 7 is notably higher.

This might be expected anyway, with students' attitude towards school diminishing with age. This is suggested in a study conducted by GL Assessment (2016, p. 3) which shows that the decline in attitudes to learning is potentially greater between

years 7 and 8 than years 6 and 7, despite the bigger transition from one school to another (GL Assessment 2016, p. 6). Ionides (2016) attributes the dip in Year 8 to the 'novelty of Year 7' having worn off whilst the 'the extrinsic motivators of GCSEs' seem far away to those students.

Table 2 examines the extent to which this applies to my study by comparing the average level of engagement with remote learning to other data collected; which may be indicative of attitudes to learning and school more generally.

Table. 2. The average level of engagement with remote learning

Table 2	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10
Average Engagement	5.0	4.0	3.9	4.2
Average RTL	1.96	2.02	2.02	2.17
Correl. w/ RTL	-0.28	-0.41	-0.44	-0.42
Average Attendance (%)	94.2	91.6	91.5	91.4
Correl. w/ Attendance	0.41	0.40	0.31	0.45

Source: own work

Average attendance was highest in Year 7, reflecting the national picture of increasing absence rates from year 7 to 10 (Department for Education, 2016). Therefore, as higher attendance can be seen to be indicative of a more positive attitude to learning (GL Assessment, 2016) this could account for some of the variance in average engagement by year group.

This does not seem to be reflected in the average RTL (Readiness to Learn) score. This was calculated as an average of the RTL score that a student received from each of their teachers each term, reflecting their effort in lessons. A lower score reflects a higher readiness to learn, with 1 denoting an 'outstanding' attitude, 3 indicative of 'coasting' and 5 a 'cause for concern'.

Whilst the average in Year 7 was slightly higher than the other years, this difference was marginal, and much less than the differences in attendance and average engagement. This may reflect differences in how individual teachers determine RTL scores. These scores are necessarily subjective, and it is likely that a student's efforts will be compared with others in their class or year group but not necessarily across year groups. As such, what a teacher considers to be 'outstanding' for a year 7 students might not be the same in Year 9, for example, Nagy (2016, p. 165) argues that student effort is reported 'with little to no objectivity' and that there is often a 'high correlation to student's academic achievement' because that achievement is used as the basis for determining effort.

Table. 3. The number of parents who requested an invitation with an average across the year groups

Table 3	Total Students	PP Students	Total Guardians Invited	% of Total	PP	% of total	Non-PP	% of total
Year 7	260	70	73	28%	12	17%	61	32%
Year 8	224	62	68	30%	12	17%	56	29%
Year 9	215	66	70	33%	15	21%	55	29%
Year 10	171	55	43	25%	10	14%	33	17%
Overall	**870**	**253**	**254**	**29%**	**49**	**19%**	**205**	**33%**

Source: own work

Table. 4. The comparison of the level of engagement of both groups in the periods before and after the invitations were sent

Table 4	Students with Guardian Invited				Students without Guardian Invited				
Year Group	Overall Average	Average before Guardians Added	Average After Guardians Added	Change	Overall Average	Average before Guardians Added	Average After Guardians Added	Change	Overall diff. between groups
Year 7	6.31	5.68	6.12	0.44	4.58	4.69	4.50	-0.19	0.62
Year 8	5.12	4.96	5.24	0.28	4.01	3.99	4.09	0.10	0.19
Year 9	4.56	4.36	4.71	0.35	3.51	3.79	3.30	-0.49	0.83
Year 10	4.42	4.14	4.63	0.49	3.52	3.45	3.57	0.12	0.37
Total	**5.10**	**4.79**	**5.17**	**0.39**	**3.91**	**3.98**	**3.87**	**-0.11**	**0.50**

Source: own work

As a result of the similar RTL scores across year groups, Year 7 showed a weaker negative correlation between RTL scores and average engagement levels[1] than other year groups. This higher engagement from Year 7 students, even if considered in keeping with their generally better attitude to learning in school, runs contrary

[1] A negative correlation is expected, due to a better attitude to learning being reflected in a lower number for a student's RTL which one would expect to result in a higher level of engagement with remote learning indicated by a higher number.

to the wealth of research that states 'self-regulation should develop and improve with age' (Vukman & Likardo, 2010, p. 266, citing Demetriou, 2000), suggesting it would be least developed in Year 7, coupled with the research that tells us that self-regulation is of increased importance with remote learning due to its 'largely autonomous nature' and the 'lack of on-going, interactive support or scaffolding that a physically present instructor typically provides' (Bol & Garner, 2011, p. 105).

If both of these hypotheses hold true then we must look for other explanations for the higher levels of engagement from Year 7 or concede that RTL scores are not necessarily a reliable measure, and that Year 7 do generally have a better attitude towards education as has been shown and is reflected in their higher attendance.

4.2: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

During the third week of Term 5, a survey was sent out to parents inviting them to be added as guardians to the Google Classrooms. Doing so meant that from the following week each parent received an email summary of assignments set for their child (see Appendix 5 for example), including which had been completed, which were outstanding, and those that were overdue. This gave parents an oversight of how much work was being completed. Table 3 shows the number of parents who requested an invitation with an average across the year groups of 29%.

Table 4 compares the level of engagement between students with a parent invited and those without. The average engagement for those students with a parent invited was 5.10 and 3.91 for those without. However, as explained in the methodology, if taken as a crude measure of higher parental engagement, those parents who have requested an invitation may already be more involved in their child's remote learning and so their average engagement would be higher. This is supported by literature which shows that achievement often correlates with 'an authoritative parenting style' and high parental expectations (Porumbu & Necsoi, 2013, p. 706), characteristics which might make a parent more likely to request an invitation. As such, this does not in itself necessarily suggest that the intervention has had any impact as much as confirm what we already know.

The data, therefore, includes a comparison of the level of engagement of both groups (those with and without a guardian invited) in the periods before and after the invitations were sent.

Table 4 shows that those students who had a guardian invited to the classroom increased their engagement by an average of 0.39, whilst those who did not showed an average decrease of 0.11 over the same period. This may be concomitant, to some extent, with the gap identified between pupil premium (PP) eligible students

Table. 5. Comparison of groups I

Table 5	Students with Guardian Invited – PP				Students without Guardian Invited – PP				
Year Group	Overall Average	Average before Guardians Added	Average After Guardians Added	Change	Overall Average	Average before Guardians Added	Average After Guardians Added	Change	Overall diff. between groups
Year 7	4.33	3.97	4.60	0.63	2.71	2.84	2.62	-0.22	0.85
Year 8	3.62	3.76	3.48	-0.28	1.98	2.13	1.83	-0.30	0.02
Year 9	2.61	2.80	2.42	-0.38	2.39	2.65	2.14	-0.50	0.12
Year 10	3.52	3.27	3.78	0.51	2.10	2.18	2.02	-0.16	0.66
Total	**3.52**	**3.45**	**3.57**	**0.12**	**2.30**	**2.45**	**2.15**	**-0.30**	**0.41**

Source: own work

Table. 6. Comparison of groups II

Table 6	Students with Guardian Invited – Non-PP				Students without Guardian Invited – Non-PP				
Year Group	Overall Average	Average before Guardians Added	Average After Guardians Added	Change	Overall Average	Average before Guardians Added	Average After Guardians Added	Change	Overall diff. between groups
Year 7	6.24	6.02	6.41	0.40	5.44	5.52	5.35	-0.17	0.57
Year 8	5.47	5.26	5.68	0.42	4.49	4.44	4.54	0.10	0.32
Year 9	4.68	4.36	5.01	0.65	3.71	3.88	3.53	-0.35	1.00
Year 10	4.65	4.40	4.89	0.48	4.28	4.14	4.41	0.27	0.21
Total	**5.26**	**5.01**	**5.50**	**0.49**	**4.48**	**4.50**	**4.46**	**-0.04**	**0.52**

Source: own work

and their peers as parental engagement is also shown to correlate with socioeconomic status (Snell et al., 2009), which can be seen in the relative uptake of this intervention.

The link between parental engagement levels and socioeconomic status appears to be reflected in Table 3. This shows that 19% of the parents of PP-eligible students requested an invitation, compared with 27% of Non-PP eligible students,

which may have skewed the results on this basis. I have therefore tried to examine the extent to which the variances can be attributed to other factors. Tables 5 and 6 analyse the data in different subsets, dividing the groups of students either with or without a parent invited into those that are eligible for PP and those that are not.

Table 5 shows that whilst overall PP eligible students with a parent invited increased their engagement, there was a decrease in Years 8 and 9, though smaller than for those without a guardian invited in those year groups. Overall, the changes vary quite significantly between the year groups, which may be due to the small size of these subgroups, with only around 10–15 students in each year group. This meant the change in engagement of one student who, for example, may have had internet issues in later weeks, would have quite a significant impact on the averages.

For both groups there is a net negative change in the amount of work completed for students without a guardian added. This might be unsurprising, given studies show that effort levels generally decline over the course of a term (MacIver et al., 1991, p. 45), and that effort levels are linked a students' view of their own ability, known as 'self-concept', and the value placed on the subject and their education generally (MacIver et al., 1991, p. 45 and Pokay & Blumenfeld, 1990, p. 41). The referenced studies were conducted in a conventional school setting, where student's waning efforts over time would be tempered by the influence of a teacher in the classroom, and as Pokay and Blumenfeld argue (1990, p. 41), that those students who stay motivated throughout a term relied more on metacognitive strategies which we know play a more important role in distance learning, meaning that the risk of decline may be even greater in this context.

MacIver et al. (1991, p. 46) highlight that 'the desire to please one's parents by getting a good grade is an important reason for putting forth effort in class', and that parental praise then creates a virtuous circle in which this improves upon a child's self-concept (DeDonno & Fagan, 2013, p. 54), whereas those parents less aware of what work their children have completed will have been less able to offer praise, helping to explain the impact the intervention may have had in this context.

The greater decline in those PP eligible students without a guardian in comparison with Non-PP eligible students is intriguing, as socioeconomic status is shown to have little bearing on a student's 'self-concept' (O'Connor & Miranda, 2002, p. 72 and Trowbridge, 1972, p. 63), but is linked to other factors affected by socioeconomic status, such as parental education levels (Senler and Sungur, 2009, p. 106) and the quality of educational resources available in the home (O'Connor & Miranda, 2002, p. 76). All of these factors have also been identified as relevant to a parent's ability to support their child's home learning, so their potential impact might be even greater.

Comparing the PP eligible students with a parent invited to those without shows a smaller difference than the overall data (0.41 vs 0.50), and when comparing to just non-PP eligible students (0.41 vs 0.52), but this suggests that socioeconomic status accounts for only some of the difference. Further, despite the smaller change when looking at the raw data, because of the lower contact logged overall by PP eligible students, in percentage terms the overall difference in engagement levels between the groups before and after the intervention is actually greater in the PP group (17.8% vs 11.6%). This adds weight to the argument that the intervention overall had a tangible positive effect on engagement levels regardless of a child's background, however, the more significant problem may be in the low levels of uptake from parents despite its apparent effectiveness, and more specifically the lower level of uptake from parents in lower income families.

There is a need to caveat these results as despite trying to account for some underlying factors, there are many others affecting both parental and student engagement. This includes parents who received a higher level of education being more

Table. 7. The average engagement

Table 7	PP – Average Engagement	Non-PP – Average Engagement	PP Average – excl. Zero Contact Students	Non-PP Average excl. Zero Contact Students
Year 7	2.8	5.5	3.8	5.6
Year 8	2.7	4.7	2.7	5.1
Year 9	2.7	4.4	2.5	4.2
Year 10	2.2	4.4	2.6	4.3
Overall	**2.6**	**4.7**	**2.9**	**4.8**

Source: own work

Table. 8. Students who are working from hard copies

Table 8	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Total
Total Students w/ Hard Copies	47	52	52	38	**189**
PP Students w/ Hard Copies	28	28	25	22	**103**
PP as % of total	60%	54%	48%	58%	**54%**
Total PP	70	62	66	55	**253**
Total Students	260	224	215	171	**870**
PP as % of total	27%	28%	31%	32%	**29%**

Source: own work

likely to be able to support their child (Bol, 2020, p. 4) with 75% of those parents with a more academic education feeling able to provide support, compared with 40% of less educated parents (Bol, 2020, p. 12). This is likely to correlate with socioeconomic status to a certain degree and so may already be accounted for, but also other factors such as the type of work done by a parent and so the likelihood of them working from home also needs to be considered, with those with a higher level of education more likely to fill 'key worker' roles (Bol, 2020, p. 4) and so less able to provide support during the day.

Interestingly, there does not seem to be the same class disparity when comparing the levels of 'parental supervision', where those in working class families were only 2% more likely (21% vs 19%) to be working 'completely unsupervised', and more likely to be working 'completely supervised' (14% vs 11%) (Cullinane & Montecute, 2020, p. 5). Given that the intervention could be argued to be aiding parents to better supervise their child, rather than supporting them with their learning, this could help explain the similar effect seen in both the PP and Non-PP groups.

4.3 OVERALL ENGAGEMENT – PP VS NON-PP STUDENTS

The above disparities are of greater concern when considered alongside the worrying gap between the work completed by PP eligible students and their peers more generally. Table 7 compares the average engagement and shows that non-PP students completed 45% more work than the PP group. This is comparatively worse than available national statistics, which suggest the gap in work produced to be around 30% (Andrew et al., 2020, p. 2).

We can account for some of that gap since we know that PP eligible students are overrepresented in the group of students who are working from hard copies, comprising 54% of the total whilst only being 29% of the overall student body (Table 8).

Hard copies were provided to students lacking reliable Internet access or a device. Given their inability to complete work online, their efforts are not reflected in the

Table. 9. Comparison of groups

Table 9	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Total
Students with no contact Logged	40	52	46	25	163
Students with Hard Copies	47	52	52	38	189
Total Students in Year	260	225	217	171	873
% with No Contact	**16%**	23%	21%	15%	19%

Source: own work

online engagement figures. Their inclusion therefore may mean the engagement for PP eligible students is understated as it cannot account for the work they may have completed but was not posted online.

This effect is exacerbated by the fact that, along with being overrepresented as a proportion of the students with hard copies, they are a relatively small proportion of the overall year group. As such, students with hard copies comprise 40% of the overall PP students, compared with 14% of the rest of the students. If we exclude those students who showed zero contact throughout, which correlate very closely with the number of students with hard copies in each group (see Table 9) then the gap between PP eligible students and the rest is smaller, but still significant.

Whilst providing laptops to those students without would contribute to closing this gap, it is unlikely that this would be enough to close it entirely due to other persisting factors. These include whether a child has their own workspace or bedroom (Bol, 2020, p. 8 and Andrew et al., 2020, p. 11), receives private tuition (Cullinane and Montacute, 2020, p. 7) or even has access to enough food and stationery supplies (Cullinane and Montacute, 2020, p. 9). This is why published recommendations prioritise ameliorating the impact of these factors by 'making students experience of home learning more equal' (Andrew et al., 2020, p. 17), including the timely provision of IT equipment (EPI, 2020, p. 8) and providing additional resources and support to the most disadvantaged (EPI et al., 2020, p. 13 and Andrew et al., 2020, p. 17).

CONCLUSION

This study shows that, generally speaking, the better a child did whilst in school, the better they engaged remote learning during lockdown, with many of the factors relevant in one setting playing a part in the other. Whilst not a surprise, some of these factors become more significant in a remote learning context, both in terms of the skills possessed by students, the home environment in which they had to work, and the support and resources that were available to them. Further, these factors are all underlined by socioeconomic status, resulting in an even greater significance for the most disadvantaged students.

More specifically, these results and the questions that they raise suggest that a better distinction is required between the better facilitation of parents who are already engaged, and genuinely improving parental engagement. What these results may suggest is that firstly, those parents who are more engaged in their child's learning would be eager to gain more information about the work they are completing and would then use that information to encourage and support their child in their work, which is reflected by their increased engagement with remote learning.

The key lessons from this lockdown, and the most effective next steps for school leaders, are that the technology gap should be removed by providing devices to as many students as possible and that the improved use of technology should be leveraged to better facilitate effective parental engagement. This would not only enable more responsive engagement from parents, but also extend that engagement to parents who, for practical reasons, are the least able to do so and whose children stand to benefit most.

The bigger challenge remaining is how to engage those parents who are less willing or able (in this case, 71% of parents did not participate), though there are signs that the lockdown has led to improved communication between schools and parents (Lucas et al., 2020, p. 17), which can be used as the basis for better engagement in the future.

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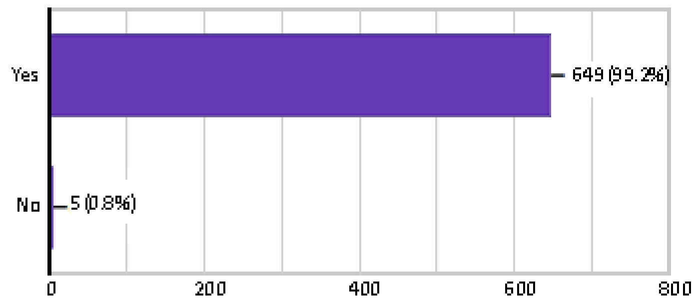
APPENDIX 1

Fig. 1. Responses to Survey on IT access I

Does your child have access to the internet outside school?

654 responses



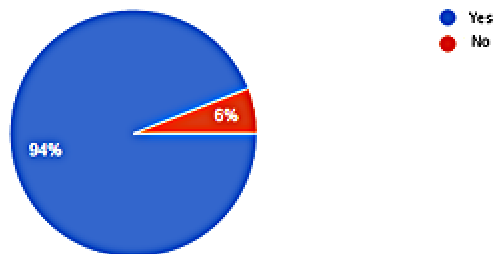
Source: own work

APPENDIX 2

Fig. 2. Responses to Survey on IT access II

Is your child able to complete work electronically at home (on a laptop/ tablet/ PC)?

654 responses



Source: own work

APPENDIX 3

Table. 10. Example Contact Register (student names and teachers initials anonymised)

Student Information			Contact by Subject												
Gender	**Att**	**PP**	STAR	DR	Maths	Eng	Sci	Geog	His	MFL	Arts	RS	PE	DI	Total
F	89.8	Y			AAA	GGG	HHH	NNN	OOO	PPP	QQQ	SSS	TTT		9
F	98.3	Y			BBB	GGG	III	NNN	OOO	PPP	QQQ	SSS	TTT		9
F	97.9				AAA	GGG	HHH	NNN	OOO	PPP		SSS	TTT		8
F	99.2				CCC	GGG		NNN			RRR	SSS	TTT		6
M	97.9				DDD	GGG	JJJ	NNN	OOO			SSS			6
M	92.4	Y			EEE			NNN				SSS			3
M	95.8				AAA	GGG	HHH	NNN				SSS			5
M	96.7				FFF	GGG	III								3
F	99.2				ASA	GGG	LLL	NNN	OOO	PPP			TTT		7
F	90.6														0
M	92.9	Y			EEE	GGG	FFF	NNN				SSS	TTT		6
M	96.7					GGG	III	NNN	OOO	PPP		SSS	TTT		7
F	100	Y													0
F	95.4	Y													0
M	97.5				DDD	GGG									2
F	97.5				AAA	GGG	MMM	NNN		PPP		SSS	TTT		7
F	86.7														0
F	100		UUU		DDD	GGG	JJJ	NNN	OOO	PPP	RRR	SSS	TTT		10
F	87.8							NNN							1
F	92.4	Y													0
M	96.7				BBB		III		OOO			SSS			4
F	99.2				BBB	GGG	III	NNN	OOO			SSS	TTT		7
M	96.7				AAA	GGG	HHH	NNN				SSS	TTT		6

Source: own work

APPENDIX 4

Table. 11. Example ranked average contact register (anonymised)

Pupil information					Weekly Contact							
Gender	Att	PP	Avg. RTL	Guardian added	20/04	27/04	04/05	11/5	18/05	01/06	08/06	Average Contact
F	100		1.82		8	9	9	10	10	8	9	9.0
M	99.2	Y	2.27		9	9	8	9	9	9	9	8.9
M	100		2	Yes	9	9	8	9	9	8	9	8.7
F	98.3		1.64		9	9	8	8	9	9	9	8.7
M	97.5		2		9	8	8	9	9	8	9	8.6
M	100		1.73	Yes	8	8	8	10	9	8	9	8.6
F	99.2		1.55		9	8	8	8	9	9	9	8.6
F	99.2		1.36		10	9	8	8	8	8	9	8.6
M	97.9		2		9	8	8	9	9	8	9	8.6
F	96.3		2		9	9	8	8	10	7	9	8.6
F	99.2		1.91	Yes	8	8	8	10	9	8	9	8.6
M	98.3		1.91		10	8	8	9	9	7	9	8.6
F	100		1.91		9	8	9	9	9	7	9	8.6
F	97.9		1.36	Yes	9	9	7	9	8	8	9	8.4
F	88.3		1.91		9	8	8	9	8	8	9	8.4
M	99.2		1.45		9	9	8	9	8	7	9	8.4
M	100		2.45		8	9	8	9	8	8	9	8.4
M	98.3		1.91	Yes	8	9	8	9	9	7	9	8.4
M	97.9		2.18	Yes	8	8	8	9	9	8	9	8.4
M	98.3		2		9	8	8	10	9	7	8	8.4
F	99.2		2		8	9	9	8	10	7	8	8.4
F	100		1.45	Yes	7	9	8	9	9	8	9	8.4
M	100		1.36		8	8	8	9	8	8	9	8.3
F	95.8		1.64	yes	9	9	8	9	8	8	7	8.3

Source: own work

THE MEANING OF 'LIFE'. AN EXPLORATION INTO INTERNATIONAL TEACHER RETENTION

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ABSTRACT

This chapter looks at the important issue of teacher retention in a private international School in the UAE. It argues that quality education rests on retaining effective teachers and so leadership strategies to help retention are very important. It looks at the issue through different lenses and concludes that leaders' awareness and response to improving teachers' work-life balances is an essential aspect of improving teacher retention.

Keywords: teachers, professional development, retention

1: INTRODUCTION

1.1: TEACHER TURNOVER

It could be argued that teacher recruitment and retention is key to the success or failure of educational institutions (Lee, 2005). Much research has been conducted to support this argument, confirming that recruitment and retention of top-quality teachers is a fundamental component of school leaders, schools and pupils' success (Allen, 2005 and Guarino et al, 2006). Therefore, teacher retention and recruitment are always at the forefront of a leader's mind. The wealth of research around teacher recruitment and retention has been conducted at a national level and emphasises the point that teacher retention is a problem around the world (Smethem, 2007).

Studies in America and the United Kingdom (UK) across primary and secondary schools (children aged 4–18), suggest the teacher turnover rate is between 10%–16% each year (Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017, DfE, 2016) Looking at international teachers, Mancuso (2010) identified that the turnover rate of American international schools was greater than both of these at 17%.

The purpose of the study was to explore the phenomena of teacher retention through different lenses. The overall aim was to give the participating international school evidence to suggest why teachers were choosing to leave with the hope that in the future, the school could begin to reduce the teacher turnover rate. Throughout, the theme of work-life balance took prominence with considerations being made to the value international teachers place on the 'life' aspect of work-life balance.

1.2 PERSONAL AND SCHOOL CONTEXT

During the research, I was a classroom teacher for children aged 9–10 in a private international school in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) which was formed in 1978 (the school will be referred to as School X). I was in my first year of a 2-year contract. However, I decided to not fulfil my 2 years and instead accepted a position teaching in an elementary school in America. School X had over 1500 pupils from nursery (age 4) all the way to Year 13 (age 18) and a teaching staff in excess of 100.

1.3 REASON FOR RESEARCH

School X had a turnover rate of 27% which was alarmingly higher than research suggested was the average. Not only this, but research conducted in the UAE identified that schools rated as very weak and weak, showed a clear link towards a high teacher turnover rate of around 30% (Westley, 2017). As someone who negatively impacted the teacher turnover rate of School X, and someone who was moving onto their third school in 3 years. I felt it was my duty to explore this issue to gain a personal understanding of the topic.

Looking at practical application for this study, by gaining the perception of School X's leadership on teacher retention (turnover), along with my own and staff members reflections, this research aimed to gain an understanding of what impacted teacher retention at School X and offer suggestions on how to address these issues. This in turn, would allow School X to focus on the quality of instruction being given rather than recruitment and retention which research suggests would give them a greater opportunity of having successful pupils (Brown and Wynn 2009; Ronfeldt et al, 2015).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 TEACHER RETENTION – WORTHY OF STUDY?

It is important to understand why the issue of teacher retention was worthy of study. From a personal point of view, the research aimed to give me an understanding of why I left two different schools in two years. These decisions were purely my own, with both schools showing a keenness to retain me and offering me leadership roles if I stayed. Whilst I believe my decision was purely personal, I was interested to explore if any underlying factors had a bigger role in my decision to leave than first thought.

Looking at the issue of teacher retention from a leadership point of view is key to this research. There are many negative effects a high teacher turnover rate can have on a school (Donley et al, 2019). To emphasise this point, a report conducted in America identified that replacing teachers costs a staggering $7 billion a year (Darling-Hammond et al, 2016). Furthermore, it is widely agreed that pupils at schools with a lower teacher turnover rate have a higher chance of success, which enhances the value of this research (Hanushek et al, 2016; Ingersoll, 2001; Ronfeldt et al, 2015; Synar and Maiden, 2012).

2.2 TEACHER TURNOVER – A HISTORICAL OR MODERN PHENOMENA?

Sass et al (2012) suggest teacher retention has been a problem since the 1970's in America; Darling-Hammond's study (1984) identified that teachers in America were leaving for other occupations, yet as early as the 1950s, research highlighted how as high as one in four new teachers left the profession within five years (Charters, 1956). Granted, these pieces of historical research are focused on America. However, the issues raised by these studies are equally prevalent in research today outside of America, confirming that teacher retention is an issue of international concern (Buchanen, 2010; Carver-Thomas and Darling-Hammond, 2017; Lehman, 2017; NEU, 2019). Having said that, it is important to note that Reed (2017) suggests there are more differences than similarities when comparing historical teacher retention issues with those today.

Looking into the future, the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS, 2016) estimates the need for 68.8 million teachers to be recruited worldwide by 2030. Looking at the statistics, Education Central (2019) identified Germany, England, Australia, America and New Zealand as having teacher shortages. This further emphasises the point that teacher retention is not relenting and is a worldwide issue which is not limited to one area or nation.

2.3 RESEARCH IN THE FIELD

There is a plethora of research surrounding teacher retention, with the majority of it taking place in America and the UK. Recent research conducted in the UK, by Perryman and Calvert (2020), focused on teachers leaving within the first 5 years of joining the profession as this has been a cause for concern which leads to increased teacher turnover (Allen et al, 2017; Sims and Allen 2018). This research showed workload and work-life balance as the top two reasons for leaving the profession. Interestingly, Sass et al (2012) broke their research down into two parts. Their research looked at how personal context (age, gender, ethnicity) and school context (policies, school level, school type) affected teacher retention. This is supported by Theobald (1990) who identified school characteristics of support, location, class size and types of students as possible predictors of teacher retention.

Research into teacher retention issues within international schools is rare. However, Henley (2006, cited in Odland and Ruzicka, 2009) identified that from 270 international schools surveyed within The European Council of International Schools and Council of International Schools there was a turnover rate of 14%. This presents a similar picture to the data from America and the UK, suggesting that international schools are facing the same teacher retention crisis.

With that said, there have been studies which attempt to identify the reasons for teacher turnover in international schools. Hardman (2001) concluded that international school teachers were more likely to stay past their initial 2-year contract due to extra benefits, salary, a sense of security and support from colleagues and administration. Odland and Ruzicka (2009) conducted similar research but approached it slightly differently. They surveyed 281 international school teachers attempting to identify why they left after their first contract was over. This research concluded that the three main factors that influenced international teacher retention were poor leadership, low salary and personal circumstances.

Further research by Mancuso et al, (2010) within international schools in South-East Asia, appears to suggest similar findings. Their study identified the largest impact on teacher retention was support from head teacher, followed by salary. The evidence suggests, therefore, that international school teachers highlight similar reasons for leaving a school or the profession as those from countries such as America and the UK.

Interestingly, Coulter and Abney (2009) discovered that international teachers are less likely to feel 'burn-out'. This suggests they have a comfortable or a more comfortable workload than their home country education system. Therefore, if the research suggests that international school teachers have a higher job satisfaction,

better work-life balance and a more manageable workload, why are International teacher turnover rates still high?

Research suggests that a teacher's reason for leaving can be grouped into two areas. Personal context (age, race and ethnicity) and school context (salary, workload, work-life balance, support) (Boe and Bobbit, 1997; Sass at el, 2012; Theobald, 1990). However, some authors argue that teacher retention is based around the relationship personal factors and school factors play in a person's life and are completely individual (Choi and Tang, 2009; Odland and Ruzicka, 2009).

2.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

It was shown that international school teachers and those within countries like America and the UK share the same variables when looking into the issue of teacher retention. However, the amount of evidence was inconclusive about the weighting of each variable in a teacher's decisions to leave their role. Indeed, the literature suggests that, whilst the variables are known as to why teachers might leave or want to leave, it is a completely personal decision, and one teacher's reason might be completely different to another (Choi and Tang, 2009; Odland and Ruzicka, 2009). This means school leaders, whilst are aware of what 'could' impact teacher retention rates in their school, could be left unsure of which issue to give attention to if they wish to lower their turnover rate. Additionally, there was a lack of research which compared school leaders' perception of retention issues in their school and their teachers' views.

School X had a turnover rate of 27% which was considerably higher than those in other research studies. This could negatively be impacting student performance whilst adding financial strain. In order to offer School X's leadership team with evidence on issues impacting teacher retention within the study, the following research questions were explored:

1. What issues cause teachers to leave School X?
2. Does School X's leadership team's views on why teachers leave School X reflect the views of those staff?
3. Which of these issues are a priority/concern from a school leader's perspective?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH MODEL

Due to the nature of the research, a qualitative case-study approach was used as this could gain data from people's views, opinions and experiences within School X (Wallace and Atkins, 2012). This allowed the research to take participants points of

view in mind and find meaning from these. Allowing the research to present School X's leaders with explanations and evidence, rather than simply statistics, will enable them to gain a deeper understanding of any issues which arose.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

Traditionally, within qualitative research interviews, questionnaires and observations are used to collect data (Thomas, 2017). Adding to this, reflection and self-reflections are also a key part of qualitative research, especially educational research within a case study or action research (Wallace and Atkins, 2012).

This research focused on the issue of teacher retention at School X and aimed to look at it from a variety of viewpoints. Therefore, Brookfield's (1995) model of reflection was used as it encourages reflection from different points of view and not just one, unlike alternative models from Gibbs (1998) and Kolb (1984). Brookfield's (1995) model of reflection suggests reflecting from 4 different perspectives and calls these 'lenses':

- Self (autobiographical)
- Students (students' views)
- Peers (colleagues' experiences)
- Scholarship (theoretical literature)
- In order to answer the research questions, reflections needed to be collected from the researcher and a variety of participants around the same topic. This research did not take into account the students eyes and therefore Brookfield's model of reflection was modified to include School X's leaderships eyes instead of the students.

As a result, the four lenses allowed the research to be collected using the same instrument, reducing the risk of researcher bias and keeping the amount of variables to a minimum.

In order to collect the data, questionnaires were used. However, rather than looking at the participants (including researcher) data collection method as a questionnaire. A more appropriate title would be 'guided reflection'. The questions asked were based around what extensive research has highlighted as potential issues around teacher retention and the 'guided reflection' gave all participants a chance to reflect on these. It was important when setting out the questions for the 'guided reflection' that there were no leading questions or any questions which made presumptions on what a person may know (Coleman et al, 2012). Therefore, with each question included a definition of the key term being used. This ensured all participants focused on the same issue which added validity to the data collected. Finally, it was important to make the questions open in order for the participants to offer the most honest data (Cohen et al, 2018).

It is important to defend the omission of factors such as age, sex and ethnicity from the data collection. Previous research has used such data quantitatively to act as a predictor for who is more likely to leave teaching (Hardman, 2001; Ingersoll, 2001; Kirby et al, 1999; Stinebrickner, 2001). However, this research is trying to give reason to this decision and is following in the footsteps of previous qualitative research by solely focusing on the issues identified within the literature review as 'school context' whilst using previous quantitative studies involving 'school context' issues in the analysis (Buchanen, 2010; Perryman and Calvert, 2020).

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was applied to the data collected through Brookfield's lenses, using a grounded theory approach. This means that when conducting the analysis of the data I did not have any pre-conceived ideas of what might emerge when triangulating all the lenses together. Each question was analysed separately, using the four lenses as a means of triangulation.

In order to give a fair reflection of views, three senior leaders were selected to participate and give their perception of the research phenomena, whilst two teachers who were leaving were selected to give their views, alongside my own self-reflection. This means that three sets of data were collected from both sides in order to give a fair reflection of the issues studied and aid the triangulation process.

When analysing the data, my reflective lens was added to the teaching staffs' reflections and used together within the triangulation process. It was decided to not use the reflective lens separately from the staff lens, but to incorporate them as one for a number of reasons. Firstly, the number of participants used means that it was fair to include three teachers to ensure the same weight of data was collected alongside the three senior leaders. Secondly, it is argued that this decreases the risk of researcher bias as the reflective view was offset by two other views.

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research, in accordance with University and BERA guidelines. Gatekeeper access was granted, participant consent and understanding gained and confidentiality upheld at all times.

4. ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 WHAT ISSUES CAUSE TEACHERS TO LEAVE SCHOOL X?

Throughout the literature review, it became apparent that there was not one clear issue which caused teachers to leave their job. For example, Perryman and Calvert

(2020) and Buchanen (2010) suggest that workload and work-life balance are the most impactful issues on teacher retention. However, Buchanen (2010), Lehman (2017) and Wiebke and Bardin (2009) argue that support or lack of support could be the most influential. With that said, much of the research around teacher retention concluded that it was very rarely a singular issue that impacted a teacher's decision to leave. Instead, it was a variety of different reasons, mainly personal which suggested how individual the decisions for each teacher can be (Choi and Tang ,2009; Odland and Ruzicka, 2009, Perryman and Calvert, 2020).

The findings from School X reinforce this idea. Two of the three teachers expressed how salary impacted their decision whilst an argument was made that whilst they did not think workload impacted their decision, the evidence within the guided reflection would suggest otherwise. School X was praised for their support by the teachers. However, two of the three teachers expressed how they felt isolated outside of school. Therefore, it is argued that whilst all teachers felt support with their work, some may have felt less supported outside of school. This supports Miryala and Chiluka (2012) research that argues schools need support programmes outside of work for teachers.

Health and living arrangements once again were very individual at School X and impacted the teachers differently. Much like workload, it is argued that although the teachers may not realise it, health played a bigger role in their decision to leave than first thought. All this only further reinforces the suggestion that a teacher's decision is very individual and varies from person to person (Choi and Tang ,2009; Odland and Ruzicka, 2009, Perryman and Calvert, 2020).

However, an argument can be made that the issue which impacted teachers' decisions to leave School X the most, was that of work-life balance. Work-life balance was seen as a key issue in research around teacher retention which suggests how influential it can be (Miryala and Chiluka, 2012; Perryman and Calvert, 2020; Ritter, 2006; Strauss, 2012). With that said, an argument can be made that all the issues discussed fit into the term of work-life balance. Various authors have attempted to define work-life balance: For example, it can be said to be how happy a person is with the way their personal and work roles fit into their life, or the amount each area (work and personal) cause conflict in a person's life (Blatt, 2002; Clarke 2000; McDonald and Bradley, 2005). Whilst on the whole, teachers at School X felt the 'work' aspect of work-life balance did not impact their decision to leave. It is argued that at an international school, where it is accepted teachers are living away from family and their home country, teachers at School X found the 'life' aspect of work-life balance to have the biggest impact on their decision to leave.

4.2 DOES SCHOOL X'S LEADERSHIP TEAM'S VIEWS ON WHY TEACHERS LEAVE SCHOOL X REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THOSE STAFF?

Throughout the research, the views of the leadership and individual teachers view differed from issue to issue. However, as a whole it should be said that all three of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) participants appeared to have the same opinion on the issues discussed. This can be said for the teaching participants as well with the exception of Teacher 2, who at times had a slightly different, but not hugely different opinion to the other two teaching participants.

Regarding salary, whilst the leadership understood they paid less than other schools, they felt this was not a reason teachers were leaving School X. However, the research identified that the teachers gave this issue greater weight than the leadership did. Workload is an interesting issue when looking at School X. Whilst at first sight, it appears SLT and two of the three teachers are of the same opinion that workload does not impact a teacher's decision to leave School X, delving deeper into the data causes doubt on this. Teacher 2 expressed how workload impacted their decision to leave and the other two teachers expressed how some aspects can be tedious and felt pointless. Therefore, it is argued that the evidence is inconclusive regarding workload as the teachers' views and opinions are conflicting.

Much like workload, support is also inconclusive. Teachers praised School X for the support which fell in line with the leadership's view that support is a strength of the school. However, as previously discussed, two of the three teachers felt isolated and unhappy with their life outside of school. This raises questions about the support School X is offering outside of work and a grey area begins to emerge of where support should end. However, as the school employs international teachers, who are living away from home and family, it is argued that support should encompass life outside of school as well. Therefore, on the face of it the views of the leadership and teachers appeared to be aligned. However, deeper analysis made this less and less clear.

This is where the issue of work-life balance comes to the forefront. It is argued that the issues such as health and living arrangements, along with the issues already discussed, fit into the term 'work-life balance'. This is where the views of SLT and teacher's do not align. A possible reason for this is that the leadership at School X very much felt they were doing all they could regarding the 'work' aspect of work-life balance, by offering support and reducing workload. Whilst the teachers agreed with this, the evidence suggests it is the 'life' aspect of work-life balance that had the biggest difference in opinions.

4.3 WHICH OF THESE ISSUES ARE A PRIORITY/CONCERN FROM A SCHOOL LEADER'S PERSPECTIVE?

It has been suggested that all the issues discussed fall under the umbrella of work-life balance. Whilst this research has argued that teachers at School X show some dissatisfaction with the 'work' aspect of work-life balance, it is not a priority for SLT as this was not the main reason for teachers deciding to leave. Instead, it has become clear that it is the 'life' aspect of a teacher's work-life balance at School X which senior leaders should be most concerned about and supports previous research that identified this as the main influencer towards teacher retention (Miryala and Chiluka, 2012; Perryman and Calvert, 2020; Ritter, 2006; Strauss, 2012). Not only this, the research supports the suggestion that in order to aid teacher retention, support needs to be in place for teachers, both inside and outside of school, to enable a positive work-life balance (Miryala and Chiluka, 2012).

This research highlights a difference between 'home' teachers and 'international' teachers. The national studies conducted in the UK and America showed that the 'work' (workload and support) aspect of work-life balance was a key contributor to teacher retention (Allen et al, 2017; Ingersoll, 2001; Perryman and Calvert, 2020; Sims and Allen, 2018). However, in this particular research, international school teachers give far greater weight to the 'life' aspect of work-life balance. Whilst these findings cannot be generalised, they offer a different type of problem that leaders of international schools and specifically, the leadership team of School X should consider.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

Whilst this research cannot be generalised outside of the teachers studied within School X, it can be linked back to previous research to see if it aligns or contradicts previous findings. This research adds to previous studies as it confirms the identified issues regarding teacher retention are present at School X (Miryala and Chiluka, 2012; Perryman and Calvert, 2020; Ritter, 2006; Strauss, 2012). This research also confirms the idea that whilst there are predictors towards why a teacher may leave, it is completely individual and can vary from person to person even within the same school (Choi and Tang ,2009; Odland and Ruzicka, 2009). However, a key difference this research offers, as opposed to national studies of 'home' teachers, is the weight in which international teachers value the 'life' aspect of work-life balance. This creates an interesting debate around a school leader's responsibilities and remit regarding work-life balance. An argument can be made that if a teacher's dissatisfaction outside of school negatively impacts on retention rates, which research

has shown in turn can negatively impact students (Hanushek et al, 2016; Ingersoll, 2001; Ronfeldt et al,2015; Synar and Maiden, 2012), then a school leader has a responsibility to address this and to support teachers in the 'life' aspect of their work-life balance where possible.

6. CONCLUSION

This research began as a self-reflective journey aiming to see if there were more reasons than I first thought as to why I was wanting to move onto my third school in three years. Whilst this was still a focus, it evolved into a multi-faceted study which aimed to give senior leaders of my current school an awareness of issues or trends regarding teacher retention at the school as the teacher retention rate was a high 27%.

Whilst the research in general agreed with previous research conducted around the world at a national level in places such as the UK and America, A key difference was the weight international teachers appeared to place on the 'life' aspect of work-life balance. Teacher's working in their home countries potentially could place a higher value on the 'work' aspect, as 'life' is seen separately from work. However, teachers in School X suggested that the 'life' aspect of work-life balance had the most impact on teacher retention. It could be argued that this is due to 'work' and 'life' being a much closer partnership when teaching at an international school in a foreign country rather than their home country.

Therefore, the key takeaway I would offer to the senior leadership team of School X is to take a closer interest in teachers' lives outside of school. Research suggests that teachers with a happy work-life balance are more impactful in the classroom and it is this idea which I would like to leave with senior leaders.

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Exploring issues with curriculum leadership in English primary schools

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ABSTRACT

Responsibility for a part of school curricula falls upon primary school teachers who do not hold subject-specific knowledge. Twelve teachers were questioned about their academic achievements, four of whom were interviewed to explore matters including expectations of head teachers, workload, remuneration and subject knowledge. Thematic analysis revealed implications for workload and a lack of relevant post-KS3 qualifications, indicating the need for head teacher support regarding challenges posed by combining class teaching with subject leadership. Forthcoming research requires focus on the effect of providing primary school teachers with subject knowledge enhancement opportunities.

Keywords: curriculum leadership, primary school

1: INTRODUCTION

1.1: THE BIG PICTURE

A subject leader is responsible for a curriculum area across a school, supporting tasks such as planning and assessment (Myatt, 2018). In England, secondary school[1]

[1] Secondary education in England is compulsory, full-time education for children aged 11–16, although many remain students until the age of 18.

teachers usually have a degree in the subject they teach to GCSE[2] and/or A Level[3], but the arrangement is different in primary schools[4] (Department for Education, 2020). Primary teachers are responsible for the progress of children in their class, in all subjects, but may adopt additional responsibility for leading a subject in which they have no recent academic experience. This raises many questions, such as should primary subject leaders hold a certain qualification in their subject and, if they don't, is it their responsibility to accrue the necessary knowledge?

1.2: A NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Until the 1970s, there had been little mention of the need for a standardised curriculum in England (Myatt, 2018). In 1976, James Callaghan (then Prime Minister) delivered a speech in which the curriculum was referred to as a 'secret garden' highlighting the need for openness (McCulloch, 2001; BBC Parliament, 2005; Myatt, 2018). Children were not consistently learning the knowledge and skills needed to progress beyond the education system (McCulloch, 2001; Gillard, 2010). Schools were flexible with content, hindering control over the expected level of knowledge a school leaver should have (Myatt, 2018). Callaghan's speech launched the 'Great Debate,' stimulating conversation about the purpose of education (BBC Parliament, 2005; Gillard, 2010; Myatt, 2018). A system whereby the government had more awareness of what was being taught in schools, and when, was necessary.

The teaching of a national curriculum began in 1988, as a result of the Education Reform Act (Gillard, 2018; Myatt, 2018). It listed a series of subjects to be taught so that all children would learn similar skills in each year group, providing equal opportunities upon leaving school. In 2008, the Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum: Final Report was published by Jim Rose, recognising that the primary curriculum was content-heavy with some areas requiring expertise beyond that of an average teacher. A revised curriculum would need to focus on a clear progression of skills and knowledge, while being manageable to teach.

When Michael Gove took office as Education Secretary, he commissioned an expert review panel to report on a revised national curriculum (Department for

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[2] In England, a GCSE (General Certificate of Education) is an academic qualification in a subject achieved at the end of Key Stage 4 (UCAS, 2018a).
[3] In England, an A Level (Advanced Level) is an academic qualification in a subject achieved at the end of Key Stage 5 (UCAS, 2018b).
[4] Primary education in England is compulsory, full-time education for children aged 4–11.

Education, 2011a; 2011b). The report highlighted that the 'quality of delivery depends on teacher subject expertise supported by guidance from the Programme of Study,' recognising the limitations of a primary school teacher (Department for Education, 2011b). Pertinently, it stated that 'arguments for the importance of teaching in Year 5 and Year 6 being undertaken by subject specialists have been advanced for decades, but this has proved to be organisationally difficult to achieve' (Department for Education, 2011b).

1.3: OFSTED AND THE EDUCATION INSPECTION FRAMEWORK (EIF)

Ofsted recently published its Education Inspection Framework (EIF), setting out 'Ofsted's inspection principles and the main judgements that inspectors make' including a discussion of teacher workload (Ofsted, 2019a). Within a primary school, a subject leader may assist with lesson planning or resourcing – reducing overall workload for staff. Although primary teachers deliver the curriculum to their class, they are not expected to have expertise in every subject.

However, one must consider the workload of subject leaders. The publication of the EIF led to the coining of the phrase 'deep dive' (Ofsted, 2019a; 2019b), a detailed inspection of a subject looking at its intent, implementation and impact. Ofsted accepts that schools adopt different approaches, so providing that 'leaders have built or adopted a curriculum with appropriate coverage, content, structure and sequencing and implemented it effectively' a school can be judged fairly.

2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1: EXPECTATIONS FROM HEAD TEACHERS

Primary subject leaders can fall victim to high expectations from head teachers. The NASUWT (National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers) recently published that '[Ofsted] Inspectors will consider the extent to which school and college leaders take account of the workload and wellbeing of staff' (NASUWT, 2019; Ofsted, 2019c). It was reported that "good' and 'outstanding' leaders…must demonstrate they are aware of and take account of the pressures on staff…including their workload' (NASUWT, 2019; Ofsted; 2019c). It is crucial that school leaders understand the requirements of subject leaders and consider issues of workload and pay in line with expectations (NASUWT, 2019).

2.2: TEACHER WORKLOAD

Estelle Morris, former UK Secretary of State for Education and Skills, said that 'a tired teacher is not an effective teacher' yet the pressure is ever-increasing (Divine, 2019). 'Full-time primary teachers in England reported working 52.1 hours a week,' according to the TALIS (Teaching & Learning International Survey) in 2018 (OECD, 2019). 'This was more than in any other participating country except Japan' (OECD, 2019). A follow-up survey revealed most teachers 'could not complete their workload within their contracted hours, that they did not have an acceptable workload, and that they did not achieve a good work-life balance' (Department for Education, 2019a).

The School Teachers' Review Body (2019) found most teachers 'felt that their earnings did not fairly reward them for their efforts,' suggesting no trade-off between high workload and a deserved salary. Since the publication of Ofsted's EIF (2019a), teaching unions have been concerned. The NEU (National Education Union) (2019) feels many primary subject leaders are not sufficiently rewarded, despite the number of hours worked. They are held accountable, but not given time to complete work associated with the role. PwC (PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2001) found primary teachers complete 7–9% of work during weekends which does not even account for subject leaders; therefore, one assumes the time spent working would be higher due to increased workload with additional responsibility.

2.3: REMUNERATION

Teachers join the profession for many reasons, like a love of their subject (Berger, 2003). However, salary is important. In 2017, the School Teachers' Review Body acknowledged that teachers' earnings have grown more slowly than any other public sector role for over a decade (NEU, 2018). 'If pay at the top of the upper scale had increased in line with average earnings growth across the economy since September 2010 it would now be worth £44,078. This is 14% higher than its actual current figure' (NEU, 2018), highlighting how teachers' salaries are denied natural progression.

One method of recompensing teachers is to award a TLR (teaching and learning responsibility) payment (Department for Education, 2019b). This can be paid to a teacher fulfilling duties above basic requirements, requiring them 'to lead, manage and develop a subject or curriculum area' (Department for Education, 2019b). One may assume that primary subject leaders would receive this payment, but this is often not the case. In light of Ofsted's new EIF (2019a), the NEU is concerned about subject leaders' pay (NEU, 2019). It was considered unreasonable that teachers should

have such accountability with no remuneration. TLR payments reward teachers 'for undertaking a sustained additional responsibility, for the purpose of ensuring the continued delivery of high-quality teaching and learning' (Department for Education, 2019b). Therefore, some teachers work beyond what they are paid for. The NEU (2019) advises that teachers in subject leadership positions without a TLR payment should not be held accountable or meet with Ofsted inspectors alone.

2.4: SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Subject knowledge can be divided into pedagogy, content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) (Burns, 2020). Pedagogy refers to one's approach to the practice of teaching and content knowledge is the awareness of subject-specifics within a curriculum. Where pedagogy and content knowledge overlap is PCK, concerned with specific pedagogical approaches when teaching a subject (Shulman, 1986; Royds, 2019). It is critical that teachers have the necessary knowledge across a range of subjects (Rosenshine, 2012; Coe et al, 2014).

There are many routes to becoming a primary school teacher and achieving QTS (qualified teacher status), such as completing an undergraduate degree in any subject then a postgraduate teacher training course or studying for a degree in primary education (Department for Education, 2020). Thus, when entering the classroom, newly qualified teachers (NQTs) have differing levels of subject knowledge. Teacher training offers a grounding in each national curriculum area; however, some teachers will deliver subjects which they have never formally studied.

To enhance subject knowledge, teachers can engage in continuing professional development (CPD) but this is often limited (Myatt, 2018). For some subjects, government-endorsed subject knowledge enhancement courses (SKEs) are available for aspiring teachers requiring further subject knowledge (Department for Education, 2014). However, SKEs are not available in primary subjects with the exception of mathematics.

2.5: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent is the current situation of curriculum leadership in primary schools appropriate?
2. How does curriculum leadership in primary schools impact a teacher's workload?
3. How does the approach of a head teacher impact leadership of the curriculum?

3: METHODS

3.1: PARTICIPANTS

Thirteen primary school teachers completed the questionnaire, (3 males, 10 females, Mage = 33.9 years5). It was necessary to discount one participant, leaving the remaining twelve participants (Mage = 31.8 years). Four participants (Mage = 38.8 years) were randomly selected for interview.

3.2: PROCEDURE

A case study approach was used to enable the building of knowledge through rich data collection within the school context (Hamilton, 2011). All teachers received an email outlining the study and were asked for voluntary participation. A link to the online questionnaire (Appendix 1) was provided and participants used their own devices to complete it.

3.3: ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

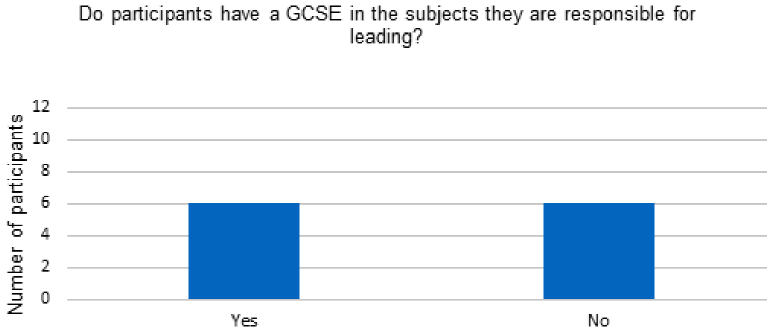
Adhering to British Educational Research Association guidelines (2018), participants provided informed consent and given the right to withdraw. Participants could access the results on completion and debriefed where necessary. Participants were anonymous and data was stored in line with GDPR requirements. To minimise emotional harm, questions focused on curriculum delivery rather than personal experiences. No deception was involved.

3.4: EFFECTS OF COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN ENGLAND

It was important to reflect on the effects of continuing research during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as implications for participants. It was clear to participants that should they be affected by the outbreak then it is advisable they do not feel pressured to continue. It was not possible to interview participants in person due to lockdown restrictions. One participant preferred to send me their responses by email and this was respected.

[5] One participant did not provide their age.

Fig. 1. A graph to show participants with GCSE qualification in relevant subject



Source: own work

4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1: QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Participants were asked about their GCSE, A-Level and undergraduate qualifications (Appendix 1; 3). 50% of subject leaders have a GCSE in the subject they are responsible for leading (Fig. 1), decreasing to five out of twelve when asked about A-Levels (Fig. 2).

One participant has an undergraduate degree in the subject they are responsible for leading (Fig. 3). Some participants (9 and 10) had covered aspects of their subject at university, but this was not recorded as an undergraduate degree (Appendix 3). Table 1 accounts for subject leaders with multiple qualifications in the relevant area (Appendix 3).

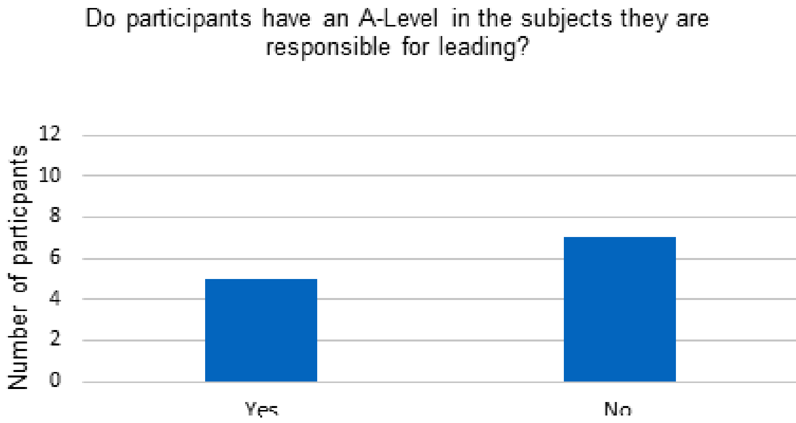
Table.1. A table summarising key questionnaire results

Qualification (in their subject area)	Proportion of participants (%)
No formal qualification	41.7
A GCSE qualification only	16.7
An A-Level qualification only	8.3
A GCSE and A-Level qualification	25[6]
A GCSE, A-Level and undergraduate degree	8.3

Source: own work

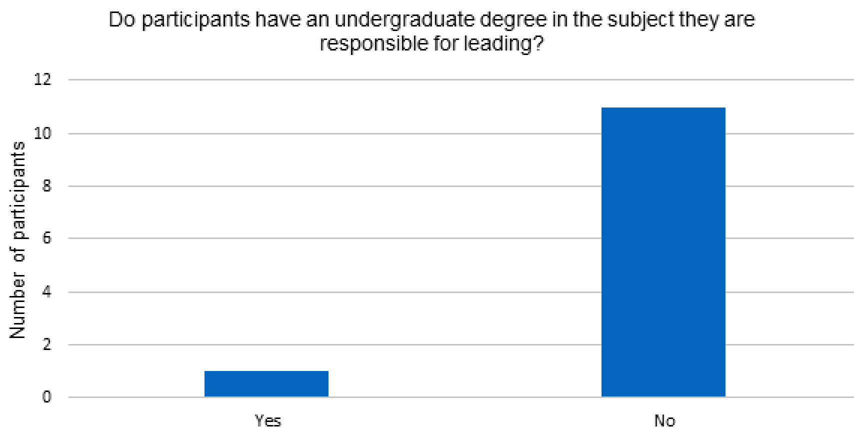
[6] This value includes the subject leaders of mathematics and English, where these are compulsory subjects at GCSE level for all primary school teachers.

Fig. 2. A graph to show participants with A-Level qualification in relevant subject



Source: own work

Fig. 3. A graph to show participants with degree qualifications in relevant subject



Source: own work

4.1.1: Analysis of questionnaire results

The majority of participants do not hold formal qualifications relevant to the subject they lead (Appendix 3): 50% are without a relevant GCSE (Fig. 1), 58.3% are without a relevant A-level (Fig. 2) and 41.7% are without any relevant qualifications (table 1). This means they lack a GCSE, A-Level or undergraduate degree in this subject, therefore one assumes no recent formal study.

Atkins (2019) deems it necessary to rely on the skills and talents of teachers within a primary school to deliver the curriculum to its full potential. The participant responsible for French studied modern foreign languages to degree level, but has no experience in French specifically (Appendix 3). Similarly, the participant leading Physical Education (P.E.) has no relevant qualifications, so can they be responsible for supporting others (Appendix 3)? Both participants discussed here are hard-working teachers and one does not aim to question that. However, they are in positions of responsibility where they do not hold qualifications relevant to their subject.

Ryan (2019) expresses the need for 'confident, knowledgeable practitioners' to deliver lessons across the primary phase. Teachers could swap classes so all children learn from someone with subject-specific knowledge. This could extend to other subjects, such as languages which is 'probably the one area in which most teachers feel they have least experience' (Myatt, 2018). Although teachers can somewhat learn alongside their pupils, it is unreasonable to expect children to experience excellence if teachers are not equipped to nurture this. Nevertheless, class swaps may negatively impact children who benefit from having the same teacher (Ryan, 2019). Platooning – the movement of teachers between classes in a primary school – can prevent a sole practitioner from building strong relationships with pupils and flexibility to 'build on prior learning throughout the day.'

Some teachers do hold formal qualifications in the subject they are responsible for leading (Appendix 3; table 1). For example, participant 9, subject leader for art, studied BA Arts in Education at undergraduate level. Although not the pure study of art, they have considered the primary curriculum during their degree. They also studied art at GCSE and A-Level, displaying genuine interest in this subject. Therefore, one could reasonably assume that participant 9 will be more successful at supporting other teachers with art than participants 1 and 2 would be in their respective subjects.

4.2: THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEW RESULTS

Responses of four participants were coded according to key themes (Appendix 4).

4.2.1 Expectations from head teachers

Head teachers should provide staff with opportunities to develop subject knowledge whilst maintaining a work-life balance (NASUWT, 2019; Ofsted; 2019c). Interview data was coded according to supportiveness of senior leaders and decisions around choosing subjects (Appendix 4). Participant 1 highlighted that although

it is 'logical' they lead French, the school's senior leadership team (SLT) made the decision. They claim it is due to their 'understand[ing of] how it should be taught and how to build a curriculum for a language.' Similarly, participant 7 can see 'the reasoning behind the choice' as they studied music to GCSE level, completed extra-curricular awards and been 'involved in the school choir,' but it was suggested by the SLT. Although not a free choice, it displays an appreciation of prior knowledge as both participants have previous experience in their subject.

Coulson (2019) states that school leaders should 'provide both a clarity for what a subject leader is responsible and the support and time provided in order to achieve this very successfully,' linking to the NEU's concern over accountability (2019). It is essential that 'expectations are grounded in the reality of all the other priorities which staff are being expected to achieve' (Coulson, 2019), setting the precedent that primary subject leaders are also class teachers with potentially limited subject knowledge. Head teachers need awareness of demands they place on teachers, when they may not receive additional incentives for the work they do towards their curriculum responsibility.

4.2.2: Teacher workload

Teachers generally '[do] not achieve a good work-life balance' (Department for Education, 2019a). To explore this, two codes were used for thematic analysis (Appendix 4). Participants 1 and 7 are both classroom teachers who recognise that, due to curriculum reform this year, there is high workload involved in the initial planning of a subject. Building a progression document across all year groups is a lengthy process. However, participant 1 raised that once this is in place, curriculum leadership 'does not really impact…workload' on a 'day to day basis.' Further to this, participant 7 said that using 'a scheme of work helps to reduce workload.' Ryan (2019) suggested the use of knowledge organisers for subjects such as history. Similar to using a scheme, they provide a key overview of information to be taught such as vocabulary (Ryan, 2019; Burns, 2020). Although autonomy is important and teachers should be able to move away from scaffolds, they provide a basis for those without necessary subject knowledge.

As deputy head teacher, participant 11 acknowledged that they manage their time according to other duties due to not being a class teacher (Appendix 4). They commented 'it is perhaps easier to manage the workload of curriculum leadership' when holding an out-of-class role as their timetable offers flexibility. This view was echoed by participant 12 who is also out-of-class (Appendix 4). They suggested that if 'you are leading a subject that you enjoy, the perceived workload may seem easier compared to leading a subject that you don't have a genuine interest in,' alluding to the idea that qualitative measures of workload can be vague as views depend on perception. This is supported by Coulson (2019) who considered his own experience of

designing a science curriculum, reporting teachers must have the required subject knowledge underpinning the plan they aim to achieve. In addition to knowledge, key skills are needed too. If leading a subject in which you are confident, it is reasonable to suggest workload may seem lower.

4.2.3: Remuneration

From responses provided by participants 1, 7 and 12, it seems that primary subject leaders do not usually receive benefits in terms of time or money (Appendix 4). Participant 12 said 'my out-of-class position means subject leadership time can be managed around other duties but not dedicated time as such. In previous schools when I had a class I did not receive release time to support the curriculum leadership role.' Similarly, participant 7 raised that leaders of foundation subjects7 'can feel forgotten about in terms of additional benefit.' In the case of participant 11, one could assume they receive remuneration in terms of the leadership spine. Although not directly incentivised, there is a difference in pay between a senior leader with a subject responsibility and a recently-qualified teacher with similar responsibilities. One could question whether pay is directly proportionate to the time spent on subject leadership duties.

The Department for Education (2019b) states that teachers fulfilling duties above basic requirements, such as 'lead[ing], manag[ing] and develop[ing] a subject' are eligible for a TLR payment. The literature review explored how in light of the EIF (Ofsted, 2019a) unions are concerned about staff who are not remunerated appropriately 'for undertaking a sustained additional responsibility' (Department for Education, 2019b; NEU, 2019). Teachers at the school in question should not be held solely accountable for their subject upon inspection such as holding meetings with Ofsted inspectors alone (NEU, 2019). This creates interest in further research exploring accountability of subject leaders in primary schools prior to, during and following an Ofsted inspection.

4.2.4: Subject knowledge of primary school teachers

Having multiple routes into primary teaching leads to variation in subject knowledge. Subject leaders should feel supported when implementing a curriculum (Knight, 2019); it is not a sole endeavour (Coulson, 2019). Primary school teachers could engage with CPD to improve their subject knowledge. Participant 7 said it's

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[7] The study of foundation subjects, such as history, music and art, allows children to access a wide range of skills (Appendix 2). Although not studied as thoroughly as core subjects, like English and mathematics, foundation subject nurture curiosities children have about the world and inspire creativity.

'likely' the senior leadership team would support staff members wishing to participate in relevant CPD (Appendix 4), which could take the form of joining 'national societies and [attending] training days to develop their subject knowledge and expertise, which they can then disseminate back' (Ryan, 2019). Attendance at a course or society event does not just benefit the individual subject leader, but the rest of the teaching staff if the leader is able to relay key information. Myatt (2018) argues that CPD is often limited and teachers would benefit more subject-specific CPD, rather than generic pedagogic CPD.

Participant 12 highlighted that 'it's important to be aware that teachers without strong historical knowledge may be in the position of leading history across a school. Even though subject knowledge of a taught topic is crucial, the teacher should also consider the teaching and learning strategies needed to embed concepts' (Appendix 4). Participant 12 raises that whilst subject knowledge is important, 'leadership is not about knowing everything, but focusing on what is taught and supporting colleagues across the school to deliver this material successfully' (Appendix 4). Therefore, colleagues should consider their PCK by questioning how to deliver concepts. As a subject leader, the required subject knowledge is important (Rosenshine, 2012; Coe et al, 2014), but one must also advise on appropriate pedagogical approaches.

4.3: REVIEW OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4.3.1: To what extent is the current situation of curriculum leadership in primary schools appropriate?

It is important to recognise that primary school teachers hold the necessary qualifications (Department for Education 2020) and can take on responsibility for leading a subject. Some subject leaders are fortunate to lead areas in which they are knowledgeable and others not so fortunate. Primary teacher training programmes do not require primary teachers to be subject specialists, but more generalists, so perhaps it is enough to not hold academic qualifications in this area and seek CPD as needed. We must accept that they cannot know everything they are expected to teach in huge detail, but they are obligated to be well-informed about upcoming topics (Myatt, 2018; Lear, 2019).

Considering the workload associated with subject leadership, particularly when initially setting up the curriculum (NEU, 2019), the situation is not ideal. It seems class teachers responsible for a subject receive no remuneration (Appendix 4). Therefore, the current situation of curriculum leadership in primary schools is not appropriate in terms of remuneration but teachers are suitably qualified for the role. However, this project has highlighted a number of issues:

- Many primary teachers (41.7% of this sample) lead a subject in which they do not hold post-KS3 qualifications (Appendix 2)
- Primary subject teachers would benefit from appropriate CPD
- Pupils may benefit from being taught by a specialist for some subjects

4.3.2: Does curriculum leadership in primary schools negatively impact a teacher's workload?

Workload is challenging to analyse, as interpretations of high or low workload are subjective. For example, Participant 12 commented that due to their experience the workload of history leader does not seem high but this was different in the case of Participant 1 (Appendix 4). If holding an out-of-class role, demands of subject leadership are easier to manage alongside other duties. However, a full-time class teacher that is required to write a progression of skills and produce resources from scratch, without remuneration, will be more burdened.

Thus, yes, it is likely that subject leadership in primary schools negatively impacts workload. This is particularly true when not receiving remuneration for additional duties. However, these results are based on just four interviewed participants (Appendix 4). Concerns raised by unions suggest there is a wider issue with workload that would be interesting to explore with more participants (NASUWT, 2019; NEU, 2019).

4.3.3: How does the approach of a head teacher impact leadership of the curriculum?

The head teacher of the school in question appears to consider subject leadership carefully as interviewed participants could verify the allocation of their subject. For example, Participant 12, the history leader, holds a degree in history (Appendix 3). However, it would have been beneficial to speak with members of the 41.7% who hold no formal qualifications in their subject area to hear thoughts on their allocation (Appendix 3).

5: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1.1 Subject-specific CPD

It is positive that the SLT would support teachers engaging with CPD (participant 7, Appendix 4). There is an argument for whether teachers should be pro-active in this, or if senior leaders should ensure this is undertaken. Teachers could be

allocated one 'subject day' per academic year in which they attend a curriculum-related event or engage in relevant reading (Myatt, 2018; Ryan, 2019). This would provide teachers with the choice of what particular CPD they attend, catering for personal development needs, but the head teacher would be assured everyone had the opportunity (Myatt, 2018).

5.1.2 Subject-specialist class swaps

Learning in some subjects may be enhanced by the implementation of 'class swaps,' where pupils are taught by a subject-specialist (Atkins, 2019). Subject leaders could complete a knowledge audit, outlining their qualifications and special interests. Then, according to the specialisms available, subject leaders could teach pupils in other classes.

5.1.3 A review of accountability

In light of the EIF (Ofsted, 2019a) it is advisable to review accountability of subject leaders and their remuneration. If subject leaders have a 'sustained additional responsibility' (Department for Education, 2019b) in which they complete paperwork regarding 'standards in that subject…monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in that subject' (NEU, 2019) for example, then a head teacher should review accountability, TLR payments and non-contact time allowances.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are questions linked to the literature review that could be explored further to provide a stronger answer to the question of appropriateness of curriculum leadership in primary schools.

- How does the improvement of primary school teacher's subject knowledge aid their confidence in teaching and pupil outcomes?
- What effect does a subject specialist, compared to a generalist, have on pupil outcomes?
- What factors affect the workload of primary school teachers and how can these be overcome?
- How does the leadership style of a head teacher affect subject leadership in primary schools, in terms of remuneration, workload and subject knowledge?
- What is the impact of the EIF (Ofsted, 2019a) on primary subject leaders?

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

From this case study, it is clear that responsibility for primary subjects often falls upon teachers who do not hold specific knowledge. There can be high workload in the initial stages of establishing a curriculum, but participants suggested this gets easier with time, experience and with use of scaffolds. Practical implications for schools and forthcoming research foci have been proposed.

I hope that primary school head teachers will use the concepts discussed to consider how their teaching staff feel about subject leadership and what can be implemented to support them to be most effective.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Exploring issues of curriculum leadership – consent form and questionnaire for all participants

Thank you for your interest in taking part in this research. This study is investigating the issues of curriculum leadership in primary schools within England.

You will be asked to provide some personal details at the start of the questionnaire, such as age, gender and education details. Then, you will be asked a series of questions about your views on curriculum leadership. It should take approximately ten minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. Your participation and any data produced will be kept confidential and anonymous. If you have any questions regarding your participation in the study, or would like a copy of this consent form, please contact the researcher via the email address below. Thank you.

- I have read the information above and give consent to take part in this study
- I do not consent to take part in this study

Data to be collected using online survey software (Survey Monkey)

Please enter your responses below each question. Please enter 'prefer not to say' if you do not wish to answer a particular question.

1. Please state your gender (male/female/other/prefer not to say).
2. Please state your age.
3. Do you currently hold a position of curriculum responsibility within school? Please give details. E.g. geography subject leader
4. Do you hold any post-18 qualifications? Please give details. E.g. bachelor's degree, PGCE
5. Did you achieve an A-Level in the subject that is your current curriculum responsibility (please delete as appropriate)?
   Yes/No
6. Did you achieve a GCSE in the subject that is your current curriculum responsibility (please delete as appropriate)?
   Yes/No

7. Do you have any other qualifications or experience that is related to the subject you lead in school? For example, if you lead physical education then you may hold coaching qualifications.

When answering the following questions, please consider the subject/curriculum area(s) that you are responsible for leading within school.

1. When given a curriculum area to lead, was the subject chosen by yourself or a suggestion made by a member of senior leadership?
2. Do you feel suitably qualified to lead this subject? Yes/No/Partially Please provide details.
3. Have you engaged in any CPD (continuing professional development) activities that relate to the curriculum area you lead? Please give details of when these activities took place and what they involved.
4. Do you receive any additional benefit e.g. time, for leading this subject?
5. How has leading this curriculum area impacted your workload?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share about your role as a curriculum leader?

APPENDIX 2

Table. 2. Compulsory subjects at each key stage

	Key stage 1	Key stage 2	Key stage 3	Key stage 4
Age	5 – 7	7 – 11	11 – 14	14 – 16
Year groups	1 – 2	3 – 6	7 – 9	10 – 11
Core subjects				
English	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mathematics	✓	✓	✓	✓
Science	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foundation subjects				
Art and design	✓	✓	✓	
Citizenship			✓	✓
Computing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Design and technology	✓	✓	✓	
Languages[4]		✓	✓	
Geography	✓	✓	✓	
History	✓	✓	✓	
Music	✓	✓	✓	
Physical education	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source: Department for Education, 2013

APPENDIX 3:

Table. 3. Questionnaire results

Qualifications relevant to subject leadership area	Number of participants (out of 12)	Percentage of participants	Subjects responsible for leading	Notes
No formal qualifications in subject area e.g. GCSEs, A-Levels and bachelor's degree	5	41.7%	Participant 1: French Participant 2: PE Participant 3: PSHE Participant 4: Healthy Schools Provision Participant 5: Oversight of geography, history and French	Participant 1: Undergraduate degree in German and Italian
GCSE only in subject area	2	16.7%	Participant 6: Computing Participant 7: Music	Participant 6: Completed computing for schools course and has been ICT lead at previous school. Participant 7: Grade 5 piano and music theory
A-Level only in subject area	1	8.3%	Participant 8: Art	
Undergraduate degree only in subject area	0	0.0%		
GCSE and A-Level in subject area	3*	25%	Participant 9: Art Participant 10: Mathematics Participant 11: English	Participant 9: Undergraduate degree in BA Arts in Education Participant 10: Studied maths specialism as part of BA Primary Education
GCSE and undergraduate degree in subject area	0	0.0%		
A-Level and undergraduate degree in subject area	0	0.0%		
GCSE, A-Level and undergraduate degree in subject area	1	8.3%	Participant 12: History	

Source: own work

APPENDIX 4

Table. 4. Interview results and thematic analysis part I

Codes	Themes
Supportive senior leaders in school Subject area chosen by senior leadership team	Expectations from head teachers
High workload, when compared to duties of a classroom teacher without responsibility Manageable workload, when compared to duties of a classroom teacher without responsibility	Teacher workload
Increase in remuneration No increase in remuneration	Remuneration
Good subject knowledge of curriculum subject area e.g. qualifications, CPD Poor subject knowledge of curriculum subject area	Subject knowledge of primary school teachers

Source: own work

Table. 5. Interview results and thematic analysis part II

Question	Response: Participant 1 (subject leader for French)	Response: Participant 7 (subject leader for music)	Response: Participant 11 (subject leader for English)	Response: Participant 12 (subject leader for history
When given a curriculum area to lead, was the subject chosen by yourself or a suggestion made by a member of senior leadership?	A bit of both – it was one of my options that I said I wouldn't mind doing but ultimately SLT choose.	The school's senior leadership team had chosen the subject for me but I can see the reasoning behind the choice as I have been involved in the school choir.	When I joined the school, I had experiencing of leading English at previous schools, so could bring experience during its period of change	It seemed like the logical decision due to my experience with history. It was suggested to me but also the subject I would have chosen myself.
Do you feel suitably qualified to lead this subject? Yes/ No/Partially Please provide details.	Yes My curriculum area is MFL and my degree was in languages so I understand how it should be taught and how to build a curriculum for a language. I also have some experience teaching in other countries so it feels like I was a logical choice.	I feel qualified to lead the subject due to previous experience with music such as having a GCSE qualification. I enjoy playing the piano and have taken private music exams.	Yes, I feel qualified to lead this subject. If I was given the choice again this is the subject I would choose. As part of my BEd degree, I studied the English curriculum in depth and learnt how to support other staff members. I do feel for teachers these days who have limited experience teaching a subject area and are then given the responsibility for leading it. We expect primary teachers to know so much. We must make sure we support them.	Yes, I have studied history to degree level so feel suitably qualified to lead this area.

Have you engaged in any CPD (continuing professional development) activities that relate to the curriculum area you lead? Please give details of when these activities took place and what they involved.	Not really… I have been part of a tiny cluster meeting but haven't had any help or training about how to lead a subject.	I have organised the use of the music scheme of work 'Charanga' across the school and held a staff meeting. I have not received any formal training in terms of how to lead music across the school. I think the senior leadership team at our school are likely to support additional CPD. There are not as many training opportunities for subject like music but I would be willing to attend more courses to support curriculum leadership. Maybe subject leaders should be more pro-active and seek out courses themselves.	I run numerous CPD (continuing professional development) courses for teachers in the local area such as the reading and spelling courses. This has led to change across the school and impact on other schools. It is important to keep my own subject knowledge up-to-date and it helps that I am continuously engaging with teachers across the county. The discussion really helps.	I support the training of SCITT students in history in the local area. I have a keen interest in this subject and keep up to date with the curriculum, but I don't regularly attend CPD sessions for myself.
Do you receive any additional benefit e.g. time, for leading this subject?	No!	I have received no additional benefits for leading the subject, such as time or money.	Due to my role of deputy head, it is perhaps easier to manage the workload of curriculum leadership as I do not hold daily responsibility for teaching a class. I can manage my time according to other duties	My out-of-class position means subject leadership time can be managed around other duties but not dedicated time as such. In previous schools when I had a class I did not receive release time to support the curriculum leadership role.
How has leading this curriculum area impacted your workload?	Revamping the curriculum and starting it all from scratch this year was a lot of work and so that was hard to balance – but on a normal, day to day basis it does not really impact my work load.	I think using a scheme of work helps to reduce as it can take a lot of time to plan schemes yourself.	I think having two members of staff leading each subject in school is very positive, as it allows staff to share the burden of workload.	To be honest, it hasn't really affected my workload. If you are leading a subject that you enjoy, the perceived workload may seem easier compared to leading a subject that you don't have a genuine interest in.

Is there anything else you would like to share about your role as a curriculum leader?	I think working in pairs is a more effective way to lead a curriculum because you can both share the workload and engage with CPD together, which is probably more motivating.	Foundation subjects, such as music, are often not taught as much on the curriculum so they can feel forgotten about in terms of additional benefit. Subject like maths usually have more training opportunities.	As we are re-working our curriculum this year, there is an initial high workload involved. But hopefully in the years to come, we will just be tweaking and making improvements rather than creating lots of documents from scratch	I think it's important to be aware that teachers without strong historical knowledge may be in the position of leading history across a school. Even though subject knowledge of a taught topic is crucial, the teacher should also consider the teaching and learning strategies needed to embed concepts. Subject leadership is not about knowing everything, but focusing on what is taught and supporting colleagues across the school to deliver this material successfully.

Source: own work

Closing the vocabulary gap: how can school leadership nerrow the vocabulary gap in 7–11 year olds?

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ABSTRACT

Research has highlighted a 'vocabulary gap', a difference between the vocabulary knowledge of more and less advantaged children and this gap is predictive of wider academic achievement (Hart & Risley, 2003; Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2010). However, educational literature has found that explicitly teaching children higher-level vocabulary can narrow this gap (Christ & Wang, 2011; Duff et al., 2015; Coyne, 2019). Furthermore, such research has concluded that these interventions are the most effective in promoting pupil progress when school leadership is transformational (Day et al., 2009; Quigley, 2018; Lumby, 2019). Thus, this chapter will refer to a study set in a Key-Stage-Two (age 7–11), East of England school, aiming to increase vocabulary progress for children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Nicholls, 2020). The intervention explicitly taught children higher-level vocabulary, with data revealing large progress in post-intervention vocabulary knowledge for children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds compared to their more advantaged peers. These less advantaged children also showed they could apply their vocabulary learning to allow them to independently learn other words as well. Staff questionnaires found 67% staff altered their teaching due to the shared vision to narrow the vocabulary gap, suggesting the leadership style influenced the positive results seen. Herein the effect of narrowing the vocabulary gap on wider academic attainment shall be discussed, as well as the impact this has on school leadership.

Keywords: school leadership, vocabulary gap, academic achievement

INTRODUCTION

Educational disparity between children from more and less advantaged backgrounds is a global issue (PISA, 2018). The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranks the academic performance of 15-year-olds in 79 countries across the globe in tests assessing reading, maths and science. Within 2018's testing, there was, on average, a three-year attainment gap between children from the most and least advantaged backgrounds (PISA, 2018). This highlights the socioeconomic educational divide; a divide caused by both social and economic factors. Looking at PISA data in more detail, one subject stands out as being the most divisive: reading. This suggests that across the countries PISA tests, children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are struggling the most with reading, which is the gateway to much other learning (PISA, 2018). Despite the dreary message this data highlights, there is a light at the end of the tunnel: the gap is lessening. In 2012, PISA found socioeconomic status to account for 12% of the variance in UK results (where this study is taking place), by 2015 this figure was 11% and by 2018 it was 9%, suggesting inequality does not have to be a fixed feature in education (PISA, 2012; PISA, 2015; PISA, 2018).

Further UK studies into disparity in reading have found that, on average, children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were 24.2 months behind their more advantaged peers by the time they reached age 15–16 (Hutchinson et al., 2018). The focus of this chapter's study is upon Key-Stage Two (children aged 7–11) in an East of England primary school. The chapter will explore the impact of the educational divide in academic achievement within this school, in particular looking at reading and vocabulary. The study will go on to investigate how such a gap in attainment can be tackled by school leaders, as well as if interventions to narrow the socioeconomic divide can have wide-spread effects across the curriculum.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

A 30-million-word gap between more and less advantaged pupils.

> *"In four years, an average child in a professional family would accumulate experience with almost 45 million words, an average child in a working-class family 26 million words, and an average child in a welfare family 13 million words"*
>
> *Betty Hart and Todd. R Risley*

Reading has many facets, and perhaps it is not surprising that it is English reading, which has some of the most ambiguous spelling to sound correspondences within European languages, that has highlighted the largest socioeconomic attainment gaps in PISA testing (Ziegler et al., 2010; PISA, 2018). Furthermore, English, alongside other languages such as Portuguese, French, and Danish, tends to have less transparency in grapheme-phoneme relations and this leads to slower learning rates for young language learners (Ziegler et al., 2010). Additionally, some languages, including English, also have broader vocabularies compared to others. This means there are more words for children to learn, thus making the language more complex still (Ziegler et al., 2010; Lervåg, Hulme & Melby-Lervåg, 2017; Castles, Rastle & Nation, 2018).

In the early years of English schooling, significant emphasis is focused on phonics: decoding a word into separate sounds, changing the written graphemes into an understandable string of sounds and producing a word (Trieman, 2018). In addition, to be able to read one must also comprehend words; it is one thing to be able to say a word aloud and another to understand its meaning. Hence, reading requires children to not only phonetically sound out words but to also understand the vocabulary they are decoding and understand the word meaning in context. With this in mind, it is no surprise that studies have shown the size of child's vocabulary to positively correlate to their reading ability and wider academic achievement, both in English speaking countries and world-wide (Hart & Risley, 2003; Fricke et al., 2013; Hagen, Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2017; Lervåg et al., 2019).

This brings us to the quote that started this research: "In four years, an average child in a professional family would accumulate experience with almost 45 million words, an average child in a working-class family 26 million words, and an average child in a welfare family 13 million words" (Hart & Risley, 2003). Hart and Risley (2003) began research into the socioeconomic vocabulary gap, investigating how children's vocabulary size impacts their reading ability as well as wider academic achievement. They coined the term, 'The vocabulary gap': the socioeconomic disparity in reading ability which can in part be explained by children's early exposure to vocabulary. Children from less advantaged backgrounds had heard, on average, 30 million less words in conversation compared to their more advantaged peers, by the time they reached English school age (at 4). Moreover, Hart and Risley (2003) predicted that this initial gap would continue throughout children's school lives, getting larger and larger with time.

This conclusion has been repeatedly corroborated in the literature (Hart & Risley, 2003; Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2010; Christ & Wang, 2011; Duff et al., 2015; Coyne, 2019) Moreover, with further research, more

interesting findings have emerged. Duff et al. (2015) found that the vocabulary skills of pre-school children (under age 4) were related to their later reading comprehension and wider academic achievement. Interestingly, their research also uncovered that pre-school vocabulary skills were only predictive of later school achievement and not causal as Hart and Risley (2003) originally proposed. This finding is particularly important for schools and leaders. It means that low vocabulary ability when starting school does not mean children will inevitably achieve lower scores later in school, instead the predictive nature can be eliminated by implementing effective teaching strategies to raise vocabulary knowledge. However, Duff et al. (2015) also discovered that this predictive validity increased further if combined with the children being from less advantaged backgrounds. Therefore, low socioeconomic status exacerbates the risk of children falling further behind in school due to low vocabulary knowledge. This study paints a gloomy picture in terms of education equality: children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have lesser vocabularies, lesser vocabularies are predictive of poor school performance and low socioeconomic status further exacerbates the risk of these children falling behind (Hart & Risley, 2003; Fricke et al., 2013; Hagen, Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2017; Lervåg et al., 2019). Therefore, it is critically important that school leaders implement interventions to reduce this risk. The risk is predictive, therefore education systems must do all they can to reduce the predictive nature of low vocabulary knowledge on academic performance and lessen educational inequality.

Since a focus on vocabulary has come to the forefront of education, many schools have begun to implement interventions to tackle the vocabulary gap. However, as with many education 'hot-topics', these interventions fall prey to themselves. A popular solution to allow children to learn more vocabulary is for teachers to simply use more higher-level vocabulary words, thus exposing all children to a wider range of vocabulary (Duff, Tomblin & Catts, 2015). On the surface this seems like a fantastic solution. However, the vocabulary gap itself creates a problem: The Matthew Effect, "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer" (Walberg & Tsai, 1983). In other words, if teachers use more complex vocabulary when talking to children in their classes, those with an already broad knowledge of vocabulary will understand the lesson, take in knowledge and thus learn more. In contrast, those children with poorer vocabularies, will understand less of the lesson, become overwhelmed and fall further behind (Duff, Tomblin & Catts, 2015). Therefore, school leaders must move away from using more untaught vocabulary to solve the problem.

If children cannot learn vocabulary implicitly (through exposure alone), it is intuitive to try explicit vocabulary teaching instead. Explicit teaching means choosing

a word, telling the children what it means and giving children the opportunity to explore the word whilst the teacher reiterates its meaning (Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2010). This method of vocabulary teaching has been explored by many educational researchers and has been proven to inhibit The Matthew Effect. Instead it allows every child to access the word meaning, improving progress for all children, in particular those from lower starting vocabularies, and narrowing the vocabulary gap (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2010; Christ & Wang, 2011; Duff et al., 2015; Coyne, 2019).

Thus, it appears explicit vocabulary teaching is the solution for school leaders. Vocabulary must not become another educational 'trend', instead leaders must use research-informed practice to narrow the gap and play their part in reducing educational inequality. In Quigley's (2018) book 'Closing the Vocabulary Gap', the impact of school leadership is highlighted as one of the main issues surrounding socioeconomic disparity in attainment. Quigley (2018) argues that leaders in schools must start by changing the school vision; the school vision must focus upon vocabulary at its centre to have a hope of improving pupil outcomes. Quigley states that a school passionate about closing the vocabulary gap would integrate vocabulary teaching into every element of the curriculum, ensuring all teachers worked together towards narrowing the socioeconomic divide. This full integration would require a transformational leader, one who could inspire change in their school by promoting a vision with such passion that the entire workforce is compelled to take up the vision as their own (Lumby, 2019). If a leader inspires the rest of the teaching staff to be passionate about closing the vocabulary gap and creating change, staff will be intrinsically motivated to make the changes to their practice and bring about pupil progress. Studies focused on schools with transformational leaders have shown that a shared goal can bring about school reform and promote pupil progress (Day et al., 2009). However, teaching staff must be passionate and intrinsically motivated to bring about such change. Therefore, for any vocabulary intervention to be successful in increasing school outcomes, staff must be driven and motivated towards the shared vision of narrowing the socioeconomic vocabulary gap.

Christ and Wang's (2011) meta-analysis of vocabulary interventions from 31 primary schools (age 4–11) supports the impact of a school-wide, all-encompassing vision to promote pupil progress and narrow the vocabulary gap. It was found that when explicit vocabulary teaching was fully integrated into the curriculum it was the most effective. In particular, interventions worked best when the teaching put taught words into context for the children, this thematic word learning allowed the children to map new words onto already known concepts, increasing the children's mental lexicons. Therefore, Christ and Wang's (2011) meta-analysis

supports Quigley's (2018) idea that an effective vocabulary intervention must encompass the whole curriculum, thus requiring a transformational stance from school leaders.

It is clear that vocabulary has the power to transform a child's educational experience and this is the case across multiple languages. Vocabulary is the gateway to all learning; without an understanding of what a teacher is saying a child will fall further and further behind. Thus, with a clear socioeconomic divide in educational achievement, it seems paramount that school leaders take up the mantle and incorporate explicit vocabulary instruction into their everyday teaching (Hart & Risley, 2003; Fricke et al., 2013; Hagen, Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2017; Lervåg et al., 2019). This explicit vocabulary instruction has been seen to be effective across a range of contexts, however the degree of success has been variable, with a range of results across different classrooms (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Waldfogel & Washbrook, 2010; Christ & Wang, 2011; Duff et al., 2015; Coyne, 2019). Despite the varying results, what is constant is the impact of leadership on these interventions: the most effective school interventions are led by transformational leaders. Thus, every teacher in the school must be inspired by a shared vision for closing the vocabulary gap and this will promote the most pupil progress (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2009; Day et al., 2009; Lumby, 2019).

This research poses two questions:

1. How can explicitly teaching vocabulary in KS2 classrooms within an East of England primary school improve pupils' vocabularies, and will this improvement be greater for children from more disadvantaged backgrounds?
2. What will be the implications of school leadership on the effectiveness of the intervention?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP'S ROLE IN INTERVENTION SUCCESS.

Before the vocabulary intervention was decided, this study aimed to uncover how school leadership could best be used to increase the effectiveness of an intervention. Literature suggests that transformational leaders (those that inspire their workforce with a vision for change), were the most effective when producing a successful intervention to increase pupil progress (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2009; Day et al., 2009; Lumby, 2019). Therefore, throughout the intervention there was careful consideration regarding how the vision to close the vocabulary gap was shared with staff. The intervention would be the most successful if staff in the school felt inspired and felt a sense

of ownership over the intervention they were implementing, thus reflecting Lumby's (2019) research.

Before the intervention was implemented within the school, a vision regarding the vocabulary gap was shared with staff, allowing staff to feel a shared ownership of the intervention and consequently ensuring the intervention was effective in promoting pupil progress (Lumby, 2019). To assess this sharing of the intervention, a staff questionnaire was used, consisting of six multiple choice questions before giving the respondents the opportunity to express their own opinions in a final long-answer question (see table 1).

2.2 HOW SHOULD SCHOOLS TACKLE THE VOCABULARY GAP?

Within my school context, this intervention focused on children in Key Stage Two (KS2: aged 7–11), where I taught a class of Year 6 children (age 10–11) in an underprivileged East of England area. For context, 36% of children within the school were pupil premium (PP) and 40.5% free school meals (FSM). Children in these categories are deemed as from a low-income family and receive government benefits, thus providing children with free school meals (FSM) or providing the school with extra money to support these children (PP) (Department

Table 1. List of Questions Given to Teachers

Table. 1. : A table to show the staff questionnaire which assessed teacher commitment to and understanding of the shared vision to close the vocabulary gap

1) Do you understand the importance of explicit vocabulary teaching in your class?		
Yes, and I aim to teach vocabulary explicitly daily.	Yes, but I don't always explicitly teach vocabulary.	No.
2) Do you integrate vocabulary activities into your classroom daily?		
Yes, I know the importance and integrate this daily.	Yes, but not daily.	No.
3) How confident do you feel on using evidence-informed practice to support your vocabulary teaching?		
Very confident	Quite confident	Not confident
4) How confident do you feel that your classroom environment is a rich language environment for disadvantaged pupils to access a wider range of vocabulary?		
Very confident	Quite confident	Not confident
5) Do you feel confident that your disadvantaged pupils can gain a rich vocabulary?		
Very confident	Quite confident	Not confident
6) Do you believe that this vocabulary intervention could make a difference in your classroom?		
Yes	No.	
7) Explain your above answer. Is there any limitations or areas of the intervention you would like to improve?		

Source: Nicholls, 2020

of Education, 2020). This illustrates the socioeconomic divide within my own school and classroom context, therefore highlighting the importance of tackling this divide.

Literature is clear that teachers using 'higher-level' vocabulary alone has little impact on children's vocabulary knowledge (Duff, Tomblin & Catt, 2015; Wasik & Hindman, 2015). Furthermore, it can exacerbate the vocabulary gap; implicit vocabulary teaching allows children with an understanding of more complex vocabulary to grasp their learning whilst leaving their peers further behind. With this in mind, the vocabulary intervention in this study needed to not widen the gap further or expect children to implicitly grasp and understand new vocabulary simply through exposure. Instead this study's focus wanted children to learn vocabulary through explicitly teaching it (Wasik & Hindman, 2015; Coyne, 2019). Explicitly teaching vocabulary means that teachers should not expect the children to spontaneously grasp a word's meaning, instead, they must teach vocabulary by relating it to context, repeating the word and continually practicing (Wasik & Hindman, 2015; Westgate & Hughes, 2018; Quigley, 2018).

2.3 THE STUDY

This study chose school-wide vocabulary words that would allow all children in KS2 (age 7–11) to learn the same taught vocabulary, ensuring consistency across the school. Westgate and Hughes' (2018) research shows that children learn better when learning feels relevant and when it links to previous knowledge. Therefore, in this study teachers were asked to link the chosen vocabulary words to their class' knowledge, allowing the learning to feel relevant for the children and to increase the vocabulary links within each child's mental lexicon. Finally, when learning anything new, recall and retention must be considered. In Biemiller and Boote's (2006) research, explicit teaching of vocabulary led to significant gains in children's vocabulary knowledge. However, there is question as to if these gains could be maintained, leading to the question: would children sustain their rate of learning? To combat this, the intervention here included breaks within vocabulary learning. Quigley (2018) suggests learning three words per week, leaving two days to practice and recall previous vocabulary. This also has practical benefits within any busy classroom setting, ensuring all teachers can keep up with the learning schedule.

Alongside the literature's impact upon the chosen intervention for this study, there were ethical considerations that also had to be taken into account. This was particularly relevant with regards to the vulnerable groups taking part in the study

(children and teaching staff) (BERA, 2018). Ethical considerations were a key reason no control groups were used, instead all children had access to the same vocabulary intervention throughout. Similarly, participation in any staff questionnaires was entirely optional, allowing staff to opt out of sharing their opinions with the leadership team.

The study aimed to answer two research questions, as stated in the introduction. Therefore, three sets of data were collected, more detail provided in the original study (Nicholls, 2020):

1. A questionnaire to assess the intervention's success in terms of school leadership.
2. Pre and post intervention vocabulary tests to assess the children's learning of explicitly taught vocabulary.
3. An assessment of children's application of their vocabulary learning to other curriculum areas.

3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

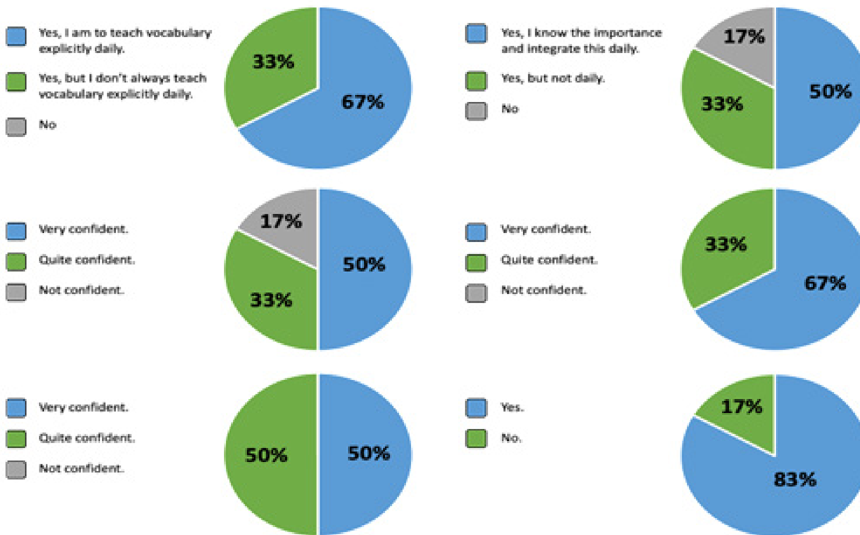
3.1 HOW CAN LEADERSHIP AID THE EFFECTIVENESS OF VOCABULARY INTERVENTIONS?

Literature suggests that leadership plays a large role in allowing school interventions to promote pupil progress. A leader must be transformational: inspiring clear shared values with staff members and ensuring staff are intrinsically motivated towards the common goal of narrowing the vocabulary gap (Day et al., 2009; Lumby, 2019).

A staff questionnaire was used to assess the effectiveness of transformational leadership on staff's individual opinions of the intervention's importance. Therefore, investigating if the leadership could be deemed effective, or indeed, ineffective. Of the eight teaching classes within KS2 (one of which was my own) six of the other seven teachers opted into the questionnaire. The majority of staff were supportive of the leadership vision, with 67% agreeing and taking steps to integrate the vision into their daily teaching (see questionnaire results in Figure 1).

In this study it was not possible to pair children's vocabulary progress data with individual teacher's commitment to the shared vision (due to the impact of COVID-19 on the study and ethical consideration for anonymity (Nicholls, 2020)). Therefore, in future investigations it would be interesting to investigate the two data sets hand-in-hand. Would children from the classes where teachers were less engaged with the shared vision make less vocabulary progress?

Fig. 1. A figure to show the percentage responses for each questionnaire question



Source: Nicholls, 2020

3.2 CAN EXPLICITLY TEACHING VOCABULARY NARROW THE VOCABULARY GAP?

A pre and post-test assessing the children's knowledge of the chosen explicitly taught words directly assessed the vocabulary progress children made as a result of the intervention. However, again due to COVID-19, the sample size for the data was significantly reduced and any children unable to complete both the pre and post-test were removed from the study (Nicholls, 2020). Children were unable to complete both parts of the test due to schools being closed from March 2020 (BBC News, 2020). This meant schools moved to online learning, and in the current study this reduced the sample to only Year 6 children (age 10-11). In addition, the uptake of online learning in the study school was low (lower still for children classified as PP or FSM, highlighting another impact of disadvantage on educational inequality), leaving a very small sample size of 22 pupils. Furthermore, the 12-question vocabulary test was reduced to include 9 words, as the other 3 had not yet been taught in school (BBC News, 2020). Thus, any conclusions drawn from the results, must be drawn taking this small sample size into consideration.

Despite COVID-19, the data suggests a positive impact of the vocabulary intervention. An average of 4.63 vocabulary words (out of the 9) were known

pre-test compared to an average of 7.41 words post-test, meaning 60% progress. This corroborates research that supports the use of explicit vocabulary teaching to increase children's vocabulary knowledge (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Christ & Wang, 2011; Westgate & Hughes, 2018). However, has the vocabulary gap been narrowed?

Table. 2. A table to show pre and post intervention vocabulary progress as measured by scores in a vocabulary test

	Average Pre-Test Score (/9)	Average Post-Test Score (/9)	% Progress in Scores
All Children	4.63	7.41	60.04
Non – PP Children	5.57	7.57	35.91
PP Children	3	7.13	137.67

Source: Nicholls, 2020

Table 2 shows the results of the vocabulary tests when split into more and less advantaged pupils (in this context categorised by PP status). The pre-test clearly highlights a vocabulary gap, supporting Hart and Risley's (2003) findings: PP (less advantaged) children could correctly define less higher-level vocabulary words in comparison to their peers. Furthermore, the data shows that progress of PP children is significantly higher than their non-PP peers. This difference is due to the children's pre-test scores: PP children on average defined 3 out of 9 words correctly on the initial test, compared to 6 out of 9 for their more advantaged peers. However, in the post test, all children, regardless of socioeconomic status, achieved an average of 7 out of 9 words correct. Thus, the progress seen suggests that the vocabulary gap has been narrowed.

Despite the positive outcomes of the intervention, causality must also be considered. The small sample size due to COVID-19 has reduced the reliability of the results, furthermore it also enhanced my own (as teacher and researcher) impact on the data. As one of the Year 6 class teachers, my knowledge of the predicted results would have impacted upon the children in the class. This may have been negated if combined with data from throughout KS2, however, COVID-19 narrowed this sample, and as a result increased the impact of my own bias on the final results. It may be that my knowledge of the research also created bias towards certain pupils, perhaps helping the less advantaged children more than others. With this in mind, the intervention alone cannot be wholly concluded as causal to the progress seen.

3.3 CAN EXPLICITLY TEACHING VOCABULARY ALLOW CHILDREN TO APPLY THEIR LEARNING ELSEWHERE?

A criticism of previous vocabulary gap interventions has been the success of extrapolating data further (Biemiller & Boote, 2006). Would it be possible for progress to be maintained when children are learning a greater number of words?

This study aimed to teach 39 words over 13 weeks, however the intervention was cut short. Thus, it cannot be known if a larger number of words could have influenced the results seen, if the whole intervention had taken place perhaps the results would have been less positive due to the impact of memory retention. Despite this, Coyne (2019) stated explicit vocabulary teaching could give children the skills to apply their knowledge and aid future vocabulary acquisition. In Coyne's (2019) study children with larger vocabularies were more able to learn new vocabulary compared to their peers. Therefore, it could be theorised that after explicit vocabulary teaching children would have larger foundations to build new vocabulary on.

To investigate this, a thematic analysis across pieces of comparable pre and post-intervention writing for 10 children (aged 10–11) was undertaken. If children were able to use more un-taught higher-level vocabulary correctly in post-test writing compared to pre-test, this would suggest that the explicit vocabulary teaching aided the children's ability to apply their knowledge to the acquisition of new, un-taught, higher-level vocabulary.

Table. 3. A table to show percentage progress of higher-level vocabulary words in two comparable pre and post intervention pieces of writing

	% Increase in vocabulary use
All Children	80.70
Non – PP Children	13.00
PP Children	144.67

Source: Nicholls, 2020

Again, there are clear positive results, thus supporting literature that shows explicit teaching of vocabulary leads to an increased ability to apply vocabulary learning (Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Christ & Wang, 2011; Westgate & Hughes, 2018; Quigley, 2018; Coyne, 2019). But again, does this narrow the vocabulary gap, or just improve vocabulary for all children leaving the gap still in place?

When separating the data by socioeconomic advantage (categorised by PP status), there is a clear difference: non-PP children showed some improvement (+13%

higher-level vocabulary used), however the progress made was far greater for PP children (+144.67% higher-level vocabulary used). This supports the conclusion that explicitly teaching vocabulary allows children to acquire new words more quickly than they could before and this progress is accelerated for children with lower starting vocabularies.

To further support the narrowing of the vocabulary gap, just as when looking at the data from the pre and post vocabulary test, the greater progress seen is not due to the PP children now overtaking their peers, but a levelling of their abilities despite socioeconomic status. All children post-intervention used an average of 10.7 higher-level words in their writing regardless of PP status. Therefore, this data suggests that Hart and Risley's (2003) vocabulary gap can be narrowed, not only improving vocabulary knowledge for children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, but also aiding progress in wider academic facets, in this case writing.

Although promising, it cannot be assumed that these results were solely causal of the explicit vocabulary teaching. Perhaps this would have happened over time regardless of the intervention. Moreover, the sample size of 10 children is again too small to reliably extrapolate to wider populations. Therefore, further investigation may be required to know if explicit vocabulary teaching is causal to wider academic progress.

CONCLUSIONS

Can the positive result seen be repeated in other school environments?

This chapter explores the impact of teaching vocabulary explicitly on narrowing the vocabulary gap between more and less advantaged children. It goes on to investigate if explicitly teaching vocabulary can impact in other areas of the curriculum, as well as if school leadership can impact the effectiveness of the intervention put in place.

Overall, the positive impact of explicit vocabulary teaching has been supported by the data in this study. Furthermore, the positive results seen highlight that children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds benefit from vocabulary teaching far more than their peers, allowing them to make vocabulary gains as a result of the explicit teaching. On top of this, there are suggestions that learning higher-level vocabulary words also impacts positively on other areas of children's education: children began to use a wider variety of these words in their writing, including words that had not been part of the explicit teaching. Moreover, as suggested in literature, the effectiveness of school leadership influenced the effectiveness of interventions put into place. This study met the requirements of transformational leadership by sharing a vision with staff and allowing them to take ownership of this (Lumby, 2019).

Hence suggesting that the use of transformational leadership to promote explicit vocabulary teaching was in part responsible for the pupil progress seen. The study adds to the wealth of literature surrounding school leadership and the vocabulary gap. However, its small sample size may be a barrier to its extrapolation to wider school contexts. Despite this set back, this chapter outlines the benefits of explicitly teaching all children in school new words to add to their vocabulary arsenal. The benefits of this on both children's vocabularies and attainment in wider areas of the curriculum should encourage all schools to add this vocabulary pedagogy to their teaching.

Across international education, languages and language learning differs. Therefore, perhaps this study, set in an English-speaking context, can offer insight into improving vocabulary in different schools globally. English schools have the largest socioeconomic disparity in reading in the 79 countries PISA tests (PISA, 2018). Perhaps the complexity of the English language, including its low transparency and wide variety in vocabulary, can offer insight for other schools (Ziegler et al., 2010; Lervåg, Hulme & Melby-Lervåg, 2017; Castles, Rastle & Nation, 2018). If the vocabulary gap can be narrowed here, it can be narrowed elsewhere.

To further any conclusions this research does raise questions. Would the vocabulary learning be consistent over a more diverse range of classes? Does vocabulary learning have even wider academic impact? Does an individual teacher's commitment to a shared vision for change impact the progress of the children in their class? Any future research into the vocabulary gap should bear these questions in mind.

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We can go out of doors, beyond the walls: Leading outdoor learning in an English Primary School

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ABSTRACT

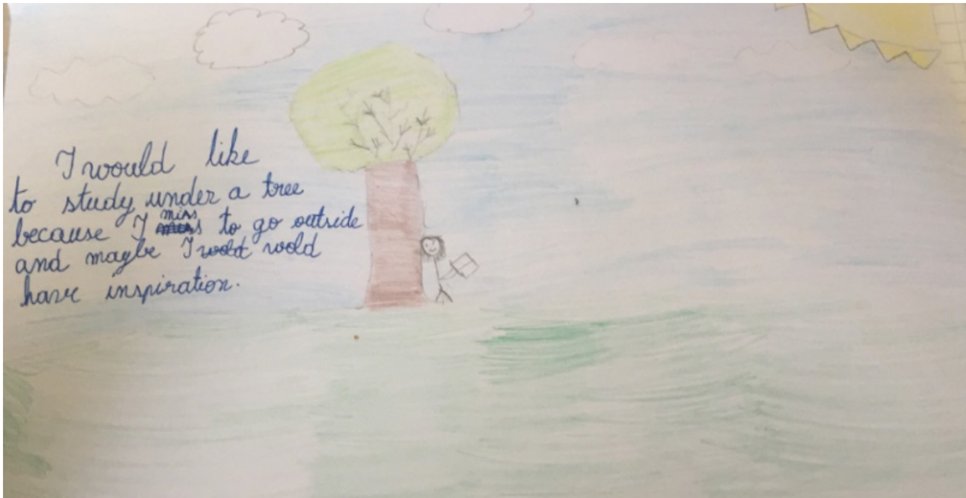
In England, learning inside a classroom is the most common way of organising schooling. However, there is a growing body of academic literature that provides a clear rationale for classroom teachers to teach their lessons outside of the classroom. This chapter presents a critical literature review gathered from the perspective of a subject leader of outdoor learning and offers insights relevant for leading outdoor learning in schools within a highly centralised and controlled education system, such as we have here in England. Included is a discussion of traditional and contemporary outdoor education in England. Following this, the author presents research conducted at their own school that sought to gain children's, teachers' and leaders' perceptions on the benefits and challenges of taking learning outside the classroom and their implications for leadership and management. The chapter concludes with key takeaways from the author's reading and research and important questions for schools (Fig. 1).

Keywords: outdoor learning, primary education, leading learning

1. INTRODUCTION

In England, learning inside a classroom is the most common way of organising schooling. It is a tried and tested method (Ofsted, 2018). The environment can be controlled (light, warmth, air), facilities are close at hand (toilets, other staff, water),

Fig. 1. *"I would like to study under a tree because I miss to go outside and maybe I would have inspiration"*



own source
author of the drawing: girl aged 11

learning resources are within reach and of course, with being undercover one does not have to worry about the weather. The average British person talks about the weather for an average of four and a half months of their life (Bristol Airport, 2018). For British people, the topic of the weather borders on an obsession (Harley, 2003).

However, there is a growing body of academic literature that provides a clear rationale for classroom teachers to teach their lessons outside of the classroom. The Student Outcomes and Natural Schooling report (Malone and Waite, 2016) summarised international research and identified four key themes; health benefits, social and emotional skills, sense of place and pro-environmental behaviour and learning benefits.

This chapter presents a literature review gathered from my perspective as a subject leader of Outdoor Learning and offers insights relevant for leading outdoor learning in schools within a highly centralised and controlled education system, such as we have here in England. I have included a discussion of traditional and contemporary outdoor education in England. Following this, I present research conducted at my own school that sought to gain children's, teachers' and leaders' perceptions on the benefits and challenges of taking learning outside the classroom and their implications for leadership and management (Johnson, 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This critical literature review focusses on what traditional and contemporary outdoor learning is and the research evidence that demonstrates benefits and challenges to outdoor learning. For the purposes of this research, I will focus on outdoor educational experiences for English Primary pupils, aged 5–11.

2.1 WHAT IS OUTDOOR LEARNING IN AN ENGLISH PRIMARY SCHOOL?

The nature of outdoor learning has been summarised by Ford (1986, p. 1): "Outdoor education is education in, about and or, the out-of-doors." The form of such education is varied. It can include; residential trips, one-day off-site trips, recreational and adventure activities, orienteering, fieldwork, projects on the school grounds, outdoor play in nursery and early years, environmental education, expeditions and more. Outdoor learning is typically hands-on and active, where participants learn through doing. The learning would be in an environment outside of the walls of the classroom, although I do believe, as Ford's definition of outdoor education mentions, that it is important to understand that the learning could be concerning the 'out-of-doors' but may be delivered inside a classroom.

Traditionally, outdoor education has focussed around 3 key threads – personal growth, environmental education and skill acquisition (Beams, 2012). I first investigate these three themes and give examples of typical activities.

2.2 TRADITIONAL OUTDOOR EDUCATION IN AN ENGLISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Historically in the UK, there are many examples of outdoor learning designed to give opportunities for personal growth. There was a lot of emphasis on 'character building' and 'fitness for war' (Cook, 1999 cited by Beams, 2012). The idea that outdoor learning provides opportunities for 'character building' is still widely prevalent today. Activities typically include recognised sports that have an adventurous component such as abseiling, canoeing, sailing, climbing or team activities such as camping and orienteering which aim to develop interpersonal skills. These activities offer opportunities for personal growth as many people have not experienced them before. There is also a degree of overcoming fear and realising that you can do something that you did not think you could do. The idea is that participants will build resilience and a positive attitude to challenges which they can then apply to other areas of their lives.

This type of outdoor education has a long history in England. Many will have similar childhood memories to me of a school residential week. It has become a tradition, a coming-of-age ritual, a milestone in a child's educational experience. These are typically one-off experiences, incur a cost to the parent or school (funding can be sought in some cases), usually involve being away from home for 3 nights or more and where learning is not commonly integrated into the curriculum. These experiences are usually less formal than what happens in the school classroom. Learning outcomes are rarely assessed, reported on, measured or tracked over time.

Environmental education is typically more academic. Field-study centres exist where pupils can investigate their curricular in a concrete way. Another aim is to help pupils understand the importance of the environment and to develop a sense of stewardship towards the land. Although historically this has always been valued, the global issue of sustainability and the health of the environment has become elevated in recent political debates. Teenage environmental activist Greta Thunberg sailed over the Atlantic Ocean in a solar-powered yacht to speak at the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit and has met many global leaders. She became the youngest Time Person of the Year in 2019. The magazine credited her for starting a global movement by truanting school to camp outside the Swedish Parliament with a sign in Swedish, translated as 'School strike for climate' (Time Magazine, 2019). The 2019 Global Week for Future ran in September where there was an estimated 4,500 demonstrations across 150 countries (Millman, 2019) with many school children demonstrating. In the UK, environmental groups such as Extinction Rebellion demonstrated for several weeks during 2019 in London to put pressure on politicians and policy makers. This could be argued to have an impact on the increased attention environmental issues got during the 2019 UK General Election. Italy has become the first country to make education dedicated to climate change and sustainable development compulsory for all schools (BBC, 2019). Typical environmental educational activities would include studying rainfall by making rain gauges and collecting measurements over time, surveying wildlife and plants, litter picking and designing strategies to decrease litter, sorting soils and making seed balls for birds during winter.

One argument for environmental education is that it encourages people to act in a more pro-environmental way. As famous British television presenter, David Attenborough, put it (cited in Prisk, 2018) 'No-one will protect what they don't care about and no-one will care about what they have never experienced.' However, the UK report Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE, 2019) demonstrated that despite adults spending increasingly more time outdoors over the last decade, pro-environmental behaviours did not demonstrate a similar

increase. In 2018/19, the proportion of adults that agreed with the statement "I am concerned about damage to the natural environment" was 90%. This has remained at a fairly constant level over the last decade (88% in 2009/10). The MENE survey asks about participation in 12 actions that are commonly acknowledged as helping to protect the environment. Overall, 87% undertook one or more of these pro-environmental actions. Levels of participation in the activities recorded have remained at fairly constant levels over time (Figure 30, p. 24), with 'household actions' such as recycling, the most common. Although evidence linking love of the outdoors and pro-environmental behaviours is not prominent, this is worth researching further in relation to outdoor learning for children.

Skill acquisition activities include where the pupils may learn how to paddle a canoe or to climb, for example. Pupils may be learning a new skill whilst also having opportunities for personal growth, as discussed above. Other outdoor skills could be; shelter building, orienteering, lighting fires, cooking food, plant and vegetable growing. Whilst these are not skills are not specifically covered in the UK National Curriculum, many schools will try to provide exposure to some of these skills.

2.3 CONTEMPORARY OUTDOOR LEARNING IN AN ENGLISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Over the past decade increasing amounts of literature have been published that support a move beyond these traditional concepts of outdoor education, which often takes place off the school site, into something broader but also closer to school. More interest is building now in what can be utilised within the school grounds and just beyond that, in the local community. The shift can be recognised through the use of language, as more traditional activities were often known as 'outdoor education', but now much of the literature refers to 'outdoor learning', encompassing all learning which takes place outside of the classroom.

Another experience that has been very common are one-day school trips. These perhaps were not traditionally thought of as 'outdoor education', but I do think that they should be considered in broader description of outdoor learning. The experience usually links into part of the curriculum studied and is designed to bring the curricular to life to impact positively on pupil academic outcomes. These types of trips usually incur a cost to the school and/or parent/carers. In most English schools, children will take their Physical Education (PE) lessons outside for at least some of the year. Other than that, lessons are generally held inside a classroom. Subjects like Science and Geography lend themselves more obviously to going outside, but other lessons can also be reimagined outside of the classroom.

One form of outdoor learning has grown in popularity rapidly, this is known as Forest School. I will explore it more deeply here as its pedagogy and curriculum differs from the English National Curriculum and typical style of delivery. Forest School tackles the content often covered within traditional 'outdoor education' – that of personal growth and skill acquisition but brings it closer to school, most commonly within the school grounds.

'Forest School' is a particular, branded, approach to outdoor education, experienced in the UK. It has become increasingly widespread since early 2000. Forest School was inspired by Scandinavian pre-school pedagogies which are largely outdoor, child-centered and play-based. Forest School is 'An inspirational process that offers ALL learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees.' (Forest School Association, n.d.). Training programmes are run across the country to develop practitioners and enable them to run a Forest School.

In 2012 the Forest School Association (FSA) was established as the professional association for Forest School and the governing body for training. By its own description, Forest School has had a 'meteoric' rise in popularity (FSA). By 2006 there were approximately 140 forest schools in the UK (O'Brien, 2008). A business plan published by the Forest School National Governing Body (2012) shows at least 9000 people had completed the Forest School training since 1995 and that more local authorities were taking on Forest School in the UK (FSA). The sharp increase of a number of Forest Schools has alerted some to possible weaknesses in the approach and its guiding philosophy. In the article; A critique of 'Forest School' or something lost in translation (2018), Leather discusses issues that he sees arising. As Forest School has become so popular and training so widespread it has possibly become a victim of its own success. Forest School could be argued to have become a commodity – a package that can be purchased and has a guaranteed set of outcomes. It has been suggested that outdoor education provision, such as Forest School, has become a victim of 'McDonaldization' (Loynes, 1998; Ritzer, 1993 cited by Leather). When one invests in a product one expects efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. Leather argues that these seem in contrast to the guiding philosophy of Forest School. Leather also argues that despite many practitioners being trained to deliver these activities, he feels that there is a lack of understanding of the underpinning philosophy. Another issue with this 'commodification' is that it encourages advertising. This opens up for making claims for the benefits and efficacy of the Forest School experience, which may not be fully substantiated with empirical evidence. An example of this that Leather gives is where claims have been made "about perceived benefits

such as growth in confidence and self-esteem may be presented in the literature as a matter of fact (p. 13)."

Forest school is a particular pedagogy for learning outdoors and parts of it can be closely aligned with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum. Although some schools may incorporate some of the Primary National Curriculum for England (Department for Education, 2013) into their time in Forest School, the typical Forest Schools pedagogy does not match with it. This means that schools would dedicate time within the school timetable to learning which does not directly contribute to the curriculum and at the end of the day, the Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs). Humberstone and Stan (2012) have similarly noted how neoliberal ideologies shift informal educational experiences away from pupil-centred learning towards production and outcomes (p. 184, cited by Leather, 2018 p. 11). A Forest School approach is not the only way of taking learning outdoors, and schools should be careful not to 'tick the box' of outdoor learning if they do have a 'Forest School'. Having a 'Forest School' could thereby potentially limit thinking and creativity for all teachers as they plan their lessons. Child-initiated free-play is not the only way of learning outdoors.

The Natural Connections Demonstration Project was a 4 year project that sought to connect teachers and schools with their natural environments to deliver the curriculum. In a promotional short film about the project created by Natural England,(2016, 6minutes 50seconds), Garrick argues that 'if you redefine the term classroom to learning space, that's any space and actually a lot of the curriculum should be taught in a space that isn't the classroom, and therefore by default that's outside'. In addition to this, the space could also be a museum, sports centre, art gallery or other place outside of the classroom.

I will now discuss the benefits and challenges to outdoor learning.

2.4 WHY DO LEARNING OUTDOORS?

Two recent reports supported by Natural England discuss various benefits of outdoor learning. Natural England states that 'We're the government's adviser for the natural environment in England, helping to protect England's nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide.' (Natural England, date accessed – 2.1.2020). The Natural Connections Demonstration Project (NCDP) was a 4 year project (2012 to 2016) funded by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Natural England and Historic England, and delivered by Plymouth University (Waite, 2016). The impetus for the project was based on previous research by DEFRA which found that there are 'diverse

benefits' when learning is outside but that children had increasingly less opportunities to learn outside (p13). The DEFRA White Paper (2011) – The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature, explicitly states that the government aims to offer every child in England the opportunity to experience and to learn about the natural environment.

The NCDP was mentioned in the White Paper as a specific commitment to deliver this initiative. Natural England then developed the aims for the project based on initial research identifying fundamental challenges to learning outside the classroom in the natural environment. The data collected and analysed during the project was considered to be 'ambitious, effective data collection. The collection of a large amount of data from a wide range of project participants has enabled a thorough understanding of the project processes, scale, scope and impact (p. 26).' A total of 125 schools were used to evaluate the project.

In the report it states that many schools agreed that learning in natural environments (LINE) had a positive impact for pupils in a number of areas. 95% of schools reported that pupils enjoyed the lessons, 92% stated that LINE had a positive impact on engagement with learning and 85% reported a positive impact on behaviour. 57% of schools said that it had a positive impact on attainment, but it is noted that teachers were reluctant to make a direct correlation between attainment and learning in the natural environment due to it being very difficult to disentangle the different factors that can lead to higher attainment. This could explain why attainment showed a significantly lower percentage of positive impact for pupils (p. 80).

The report also showed that learning in natural environments had a positive impact for teachers (p. 86). 69% of teachers said that participating in the project had a positive impact on their job satisfaction and 72% said it had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing. Currently the UK is suffering a teacher retention crisis. Between 2012 and 2018 retention rates of early-career teachers fell significantly. 20% of teachers said that they felt tense about their job most or all of the time and 41% felt dissatisfied with their amount of leisure time (Worth, 2019, p. 5). Projects that have positive impacts on teachers as well as pupils are to be considered important.

However, Lovell (2016), attaches a warning to the growing body of research around the benefits of outdoor learning. The validity of a lot of the research is limited because many studies were short term and relatively small scale, there may have been sources of bias which were not made adjustments for, and there is little evidence that focussed on whether the outcomes were more likely to be achieved through outdoor learning rather than in the classroom. This is a point also raised by Leather (2018). Lovell does state that despite these points, there is still a weight of available evidence demonstrating a relationship between positive outcomes and

learning that takes place in the natural environment. As such, it should still be supported but more research should also be conducted.

2.4 CHALLENGES TO OUTDOOR LEARNING

The Natural Connections Demonstration Project (NCDP) (Waite, 2016) sought to better understand the challenges perceived by teachers in engaging their pupils with more outdoor learning. The five challenges most frequently chosen by schools were that staff lacked confidence working outside, a lack of funding, the need for volunteer support, that staff were uncertain how to link learning outdoors with the curriculum and time (p. 71). During the four year project only time increased as a challenge for schools (p. 75) as they found it took time to develop confidence in teaching outdoors. The other four challenges all reduced as schools developed their understanding of how low-cost outdoor learning could support everyday teaching of the curriculum.

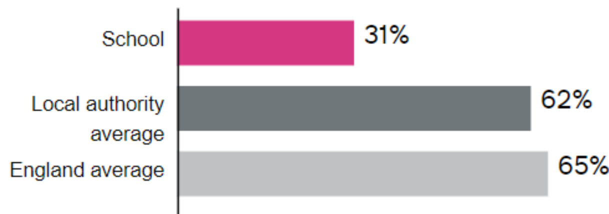
- Consulting more research around the challenges to outdoor learning perceived by schools and teachers, other issues come to light, including;
- Concerns about behaviour (Edwards-Jones, 2018)
- Perceived loss or degradation of learning time (Waite, 2010)
- Teachers find difficulty in producing individualised evidence and documentation of an individual's learning journey (Maynard, Waters, Clement, 2013; Edwards-Jones, 2018)
- Concerns about risk-assessment and health and safety (Edwards-Jones 2018, Rickinson et al 2004)
- Time pressures on individual teachers covering the curriculum (Rickinson et al 2004; Edwards-Jones, 2018)
- Limited time for leaders of outdoor learning within school to support planning, implementation and resourcing for school-wide lessons (Edwards-Jones, 2018)
- Lack of training and subject-knowledge (Edwards-Jones, 2018, King's College London, 2010, Pether, 2012)
- Teacher perceptions about weather (Edwards-Jones, 2018)
- Additional adult supervision (Edwards-Jones, 2018)

An important point, made by Garrick in the NCDP film (Natural England 2016, 6m27s), is that learning which takes place outside the classroom is not guaranteed to have positive results, as with classroom lessons. The same level of thought, preparation and reflection are required. Taking learning outside does not guarantee better outcomes.

3. OUTDOOR LEARNING AT MY SCHOOL

I will now present an account of the research undertook at my own school setting. The school is a co-educational primary academy school for pupils between the ages of 3 to 11 years in a large town. For almost a decade it has failed to enable pupils to meet expected grades; results are 'well below average' (see Figure 2). In 2017 and 2019 the school was rated as 'Requires Improvement' by the UK Government's Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).

Fig. 2. Pupils meeting expected standard in reading, writing and maths



Source: Gov.uk (Accessed 2021)

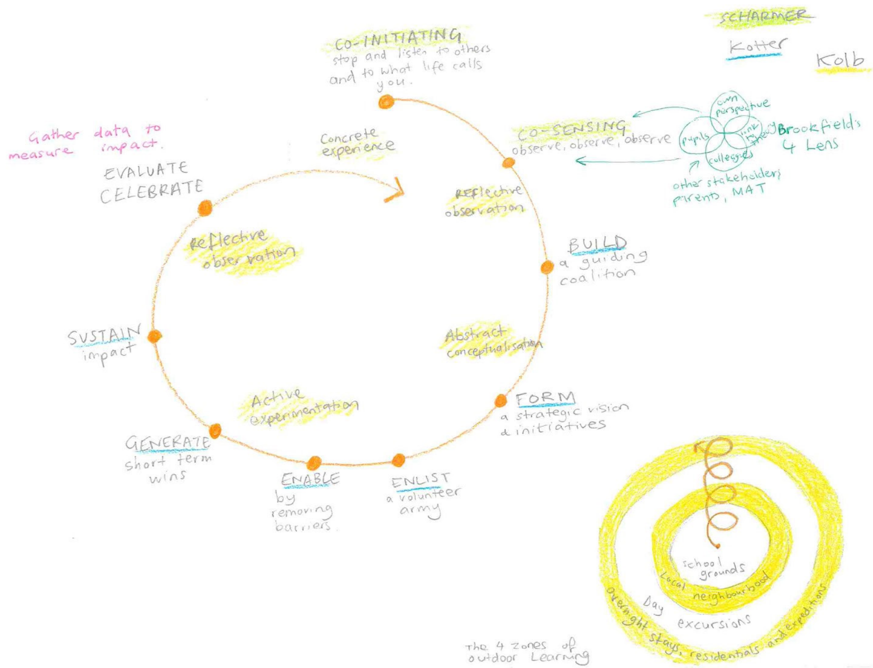
The proportions of pupils joining or leaving school mid-year are higher than the national averages (Ofsted, 2019) and it is undersubscribed – at the time of the most recent Ofsted inspection in October 2019, the school had 81% of the available school places filled. 55.1% of children have English as an additional language (EAL) which is much higher than the national average of 21.2% (Gov.uk, 2019). 29% of pupils were eligible for free school meals at any time during the past 6 years which is higher than the national average of 23% (Gov.uk, 2019). The school serves a deprived area where 27% of children are living in low income families.

There is a great deal of urgent pressure on the school to improve academic results. After the 2019 Ofsted inspection the headteacher left and a new headteacher began at the beginning of the 2020 academic year the following September. I believe that through developing the outdoor learning offered, the school could provide a platform to improve academic results, attendance and make it a desirable school for pupils to attend.

4. METHODOLOGY

Research into leading change, leadership and outdoor education all suggest knowing your context first. Therefore one of my key aims in the next stage of my research was to better understand my context.

Fig. 3. Change Model



Source: own work

I formulated three main questions for research:

- What is the current level of outdoor learning at the school?
- What is the current attitude towards outdoor learning by all stakeholders?
- What are the stakeholders' perceptions as to what is needed to enable more outdoor learning to take place at the school?

After studying change, I developed my own change model (Figure 3). I infused Brookfield's 4 Lens (Brookfield, 1995) model to invite stakeholders to become part of modelling what the change process would look like. This also fits in with Sharmer's idea of co-initiating and co-sensing where the initial steps of change involve group listening and dialogue to find the path to the co-imagined future together (Scharmer, n.d.).

During the period of my research the world was encompassed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This greatly affected education; in England school sites were closed to most children while teaching and learning became a remote digital experience.

Unfortunately, I was not able to invite the parents' voice at the time but see them as a vital stakeholder to involve. As discussed in the Scottish Government's document, Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning, (2010, p. 17), it is important to have parents/carers on board and communication with them is 'crucial'. Parents provide support for their child's learning. They may have to provide clothing and footwear for outdoor pursuits and they may have concerns over the quality of learning.

To elicit the attitude of pupils towards learning in an outdoor space, I developed a creative task to answer an open question based on a semi-structured interview method. This allows the researcher to guide the focus of the answer whilst allowing the respondent to express themselves in their own terms (Cohen and Manion, 2010, p. 321). I attempted to free it of bias towards learning in any space in particular, therefore the final wording was as follows – 'If you could make your ideal learning space, what would it be like?'. Pupils were invited to draw, photograph and/or write their responses. To encourage as much participation as possible, I recorded a 1 minute video to explain the task. This was sent out with simple instructions via our home-school online communication platform which provides translation into over 35 languages.

To hear the teachers' voice, I used a mixed methods approach, including both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection through a survey followed up by staff interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews with leaders from the school and the multi-academy trust. Throughout this research, the university's ethical guidelines were followed and ethical approval was given.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 WHAT IS THE CURRENT LEVEL OF OUTDOOR LEARNING AT THE SCHOOL?

Lessons including some time outside reduce as children move up the school. More pupils in Years 1 and 2 (age 5–7) are engaged in outside activities than in Year 5 and 6 (age 9–11). Reasons for this may be the real or perceived pressure to 'get through' the curriculum and prepare pupils for statutory assessment tests (SATs) that are taken at the end of Year 6 (pupils are aged 10-11). As the school has repeatedly performed poorly on these tests, it is the view that there is no time to spare. Going outside can be perceived as some learning time wasted. Also, the Year 4, 5 and 6 (ages 8–11) classrooms are located upstairs and so it will be marginally longer for the pupils to get out of the building. As a leader of outdoor learning, it is my perception that the research indicates these teachers may need more support to engage in the outdoor environment.

What is the current attitude towards outdoor learning by all stakeholders?

Support for outdoor learning was high from teachers and leaders, with all indicating that they felt it provided an important or very important part of learning provision. The reasons they gave to support this correlated with contemporary research. However, there are a range of challenges impeding use of outdoor spaces at the school and 61% of teachers felt 'unsatisfied' with the amount of learning outside the classroom they provide. This indicates that whilst teachers support using the outdoor spaces for learning, they find it difficult to do so as often as they would like. This provides me with confidence that, if I can work towards overcoming challenges, the teachers would find it easier to use outdoor spaces for learning, and the amount of outdoor learning pupils are offered will increase.

5.2 Teachers' voice

100% of the teachers responded to the survey. The first question asked, 'Do you think learning outside the classroom at school is important?'. 100% of the teachers responded on a 5-point Likert scale that it was 4, important or 5, very important. When asked, 'Please explain your answer', I found the responses fell into 4 key themes – Learning Benefits, Health Benefits, Social and Emotional Skills and Sense of Place and Pro-environmental Behaviour – which were identified in the report – Student Outcomes and Natural Schooling (Malone and Waite, 2016). 17 out of 18 teachers gave learning benefits as reasons to support outdoor learning, the most common of those reasons being that it can provide context for learning and that teachers find pupils positively engage in learning – with 7 teachers referencing each of those reasons. The next most commonly referenced reason was that outdoor learning can provide pupils with an opportunity to develop a sense of place and connection to their locality, and that they believe outdoor learning can support the development of pro-environmental behaviours in young people. There were also 4 references to fresh air, 2 in the context of fresh air being good for health and 2 in reference to fresh air being good for learning.

When asked – How satisfied are you with the amount of learning outside the classroom you provide at school? – 61% of teachers answered 'unsatisfied'. More teachers in Years 1 to 3 said that they were 'neither satisfied or dissatisfied'. All teachers in Years 4 to 6 said that they were 'unsatisfied', except one that said they were 'satisfied'. As they were the only one, I investigated further with an interview. They said "... if it was my choice I would have certainly taken more of the learning outside .." Despite there being support for it, outdoor learning does not happen as much as teachers would like, especially in Years 4 to 6.

Fig. 4. The drawing of boy

own source
author of the drawing: boy aged 7

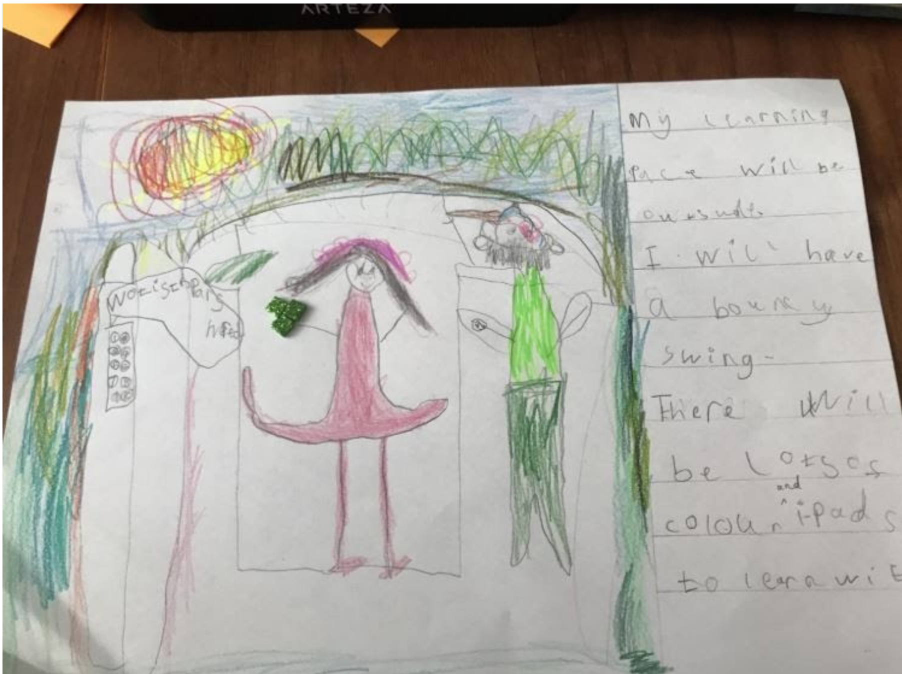
PUPIL VOICE

There are 609 pupils on role at the school. 9.7% of these pupils participated in the creative task, which equalled 59 submissions across all year groups. Each year group was represented by at least one male and female, except Reception (age 4–5) which had only one female submission. Years 1 to 5 had the most coverage with 52 of the 59 submissions coming from these year groups. 47% of these submissions referenced an outdoor space to learn in. This suggests that pupils do consider the outdoor space to be a place where they can, and want to, learn in. Comparing the submissions by gender, 54% of male submissions referenced an outdoor space compared to 42% of female submissions which indicates that males are more likely to want to learn outdoors. This is important because as a teacher and/or leader, it may be that female pupils need more encouragement or reassurance when going outside for a lesson. It could also suggest that male pupils enjoy being outdoors more. This view correlates with the view of the school senior leader. They said; "For boys, also for girls, but especially boys, they've said that is a massive constraint, it's not natural (to be inside)."

To analyse the creative tasks submitted by pupils, I made a table and noted down each piece that included a reference to an outdoor space. I described the drawings and transcribed their writing. I then looked for references that were made more than once by 2 or more pupils, for example – trees. I colour coded these and then grouped them according to themes that emerged. These themes were; weather, flora, environment, animals, people, furniture and place. I will now summarise the themes that were referenced by over half of the pupils.

14 out of 28 submissions that referenced outdoor spaces made a specific mention of trees, making trees the most frequent theme and overall, references to flora (trees, grass, flowers, plants) were made in 79% of those submissions. Males and females made reference to flora almost equally. This could mean that these pupils imagine that their ideal learning space would be when they are surrounded by flora. Environmental factors were referenced by 50% of pupils. This included mentions of fresh

Fig. 5. *"My learning space will be outside. I will have a bouncy swing. There will be lots of colour and iPads to learn with"*



own source

author of the drawing: girl aged 6

air, that they like the natural lighting and shade, they consider it calming, quiet and peaceful (Figure 1), and that they can take a break and play after they have worked. These desires could correlate to research around greenspaces having a calming effect. Wells and Evans (2003, p. 311) demonstrated that "the impact of life stress was lower among children with high levels of nearby nature than among those with little nearby nature." More research would need to be conducted to provide any conclusive evidence with regard to this.

The following most commonly referenced theme was furniture with 54% of submissions making reference to trampolines, benches, tents and treehouses (Figure 4). 4 pupils made a specific reference to a treehouse being an ideal place to learn in. 2 pupils said that they would use a computer tablet outside (Figure 5). 60% of male pupils referenced furniture in contrast to 46% of female pupils. Further research would need to be conducted to delve deeper to see if there is any reason for that difference.

Weather was specifically referenced by 43% of submissions, however I wanted to note that none of the submissions had rain, snow, hail or anything other than what looked like still air, blue sky and sunshine. Therefore it is possible that the data suggests that 100% of the submissions showed fair weather (comfortable temperature, dry, still and sunny) (Figure 6). Females referenced sunshine and rainbows in 62 % of the submissions compared with a much lower 23% from male pupils. This could suggest that weather is more of a concern for female pupils.

5.4 LEADERS' VOICE

Both school senior leader and multi-academy trust (MAT) leader said that they thought learning outside the classroom was very important, rating it as 5 on the Likert Scale but they were dissatisfied with the amount actually happening at the school. This opinion matched the teachers. The school senior leader spoke about how taking the learning outside can provide experiences for pupils which support long term memory. In contrast to the classroom, an outdoor space can allow for pupils to be up and active more. They said, "sitting down, you switch off'. Taking learning outside can "get kids excited and engaged in learning." When pupils are exploring and making connections between their learning, this can support them to remember the learning – "because they've done it, because they've been physical ... anything tangible will help embed learning. It creates the learning." This view was supported by the MAT Leader. They added that outdoor learning allowed, 'learners having the opportunity to do things that potentially they don't have the opportunity to do in other contexts'. However, they did go on to say that; 'In terms of the

curriculum going outside, it can be a little trite and a little bit shoe-horned in for the sake of it'. 'If it's done as part of the curriculum it's got to be done properly'. This view is reflected by Garrick in the NCDP film (Natural England 2016, 6m27s) where he states that better outcomes for pupils are not guaranteed when taking the learning outside the classroom. The MAT Leader went on to say that outdoor learning should not just be an indoor lesson conducted outside, but that 'we're able to do this because we're outside, this isn't something we're able to do inside'.

5.5 WHAT ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS AS TO WHAT IS NEEDED TO ENABLE MORE OUTDOOR LEARNING TO TAKE PLACE AT THE SCHOOL?

Part of the survey to teachers included an opportunity for them to select the challenges they perceive to be barriers to outdoor learning for them. Lack of necessary equipment was selected as a challenge by teachers in all year groups. Further research would ask teachers what they would want and what for. 3 teachers selected weather and this also seemed to be an unconscious concern for pupils. It could be possible to look for opportunities to provide covered areas in the outdoor spaces so that they may be used for learning in various weather conditions.

Other common concerns from teachers related to behaviour of pupils, the need for extra adult support and lack of confidence teaching outdoors. There seems to be knowledge within the staff body already and these colleagues expressed that they were keen to share their expertise with others. I believe that harnessing this knowledge and sharing it will be a positive step in upskilling other colleagues and also fostering a sense of community and peer learning. It could also build capacity which accords with successful change strategy (Fullan, 2008) and effective school leadership, where Leithwood et al (2010, p. 4) claim that successful leaders 'build collaboration internally'. The NCDP (Waite, 2016) demonstrated that connecting schools together supported long term cultural change which sustained outdoor learning beyond the life of the project. This is something that could be developed with the school to increase outdoor learning. Possible opportunities arising from working with other schools would be sharing of knowledge, training and peer support.

6. CONCLUSIONS

At my school, I discovered that despite teachers' and leaders' views on the benefits of outdoor learning correlating with contemporary research, the majority felt dissatisfied with the amount of lesson time spent outside. Challenges faced also correlated with research. Especially now, as we move to life beyond COVID-19 knowing that

infection is massively reduced outside (Public Health England, 2020), there is all the more reason to harness our understanding of how and why taking the learning outside of the classroom is powerful and actually get on and do it.

My reading and research showed that

- There are academic and personal learning benefits from outdoor learning, including health and wellbeing (for teachers as well as students), enjoyment and engagement, social and emotional skills and environmental learning including sense of place.
- Outdoor learning can take place at a variety of scales, in and around school, in the neighbourhood, on a day visit or during longer residential expeditions and excursions.
- Although environmental, social and emotional learning are often the focus, any aspect of the curriculum can be re-imagined outside, but the learning needs to be carefully planned to be effective.
- Perceived challenges include funding, staffing, weather, teacher confidence, curriculum mapping, evidencing learning and lack of time. Teachers may feel particularly constrained by curriculum pressure.

Figure. 6.: *"The ideal place to learn, for me, is a park because its calming and peaceful"*

The ideal place to learn, for me, is a park because its calming and peaceful

own source

author of the drawing: girl aged 9

- Some key questions for schools emerging from my research are:
  - ➢ Do we have the right balance of outdoor learning for different age groups?
  - ➢ How does outdoor learning add value by linking to, and enhancing, the curriculum?
  - ➢ What support and development do teachers need for outdoor learning to be effective?
  - ➢ Can motivational, social and emotional benefits from outdoor learning be brought indoors?
  - ➢ Does assessment of outdoor learning need to be done differently?
  - ➢ Are there inequalities of access and experience that need to be addressed (e.g. Special Educational Needs and Disability, perceptions of gender preferences, ability to afford outdoor clothing)?
  - ➢ What are the opportunities and implications for home learning when schools are closed?

During the process I have become increasingly confident in seeing myself as a subject leader. Having the change model (Figure 4) has enabled me to articulate to others where and how I see the outdoor learning offer developing. My next steps as a leader will be to work with colleagues to form a strategic vision for outdoor learning at the school, so that we may go out of doors, beyond the walls.

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Complicating effects of Mergers in Higher Education in Norway: Teacher educators' perspectives

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the impact of some of the ongoing mergers in higher education from the perspective of the teacher educators, looking at their involvement and engagement in processes related to the mergers.

Higher education organisations in Norway are currently going through major structural changes merging smaller organisations into larger, multi-campus colleges and universities.

The current study is based on a hermeneutic phenomenological interpretation of ten semi-structured interviews with teacher educators in three different university colleges and universities currently undergoing mergers in different parts of Norway. The teacher educators represent different subjects and disciplines in teacher education, and represent assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors.

The study has looked at how teacher educators have experienced the merger processes how the merger has affected the faculty and their working environment. Their responses reveal that even though positive small-scale cooperation is emerging, the faculty have found the situation distressing and that the processes related to the mergers created a "high degree of uncertainty" among the faculty relating to the establishment of a new management and a new organisation model. The stress imposed on the organisation seems to have taken a great toll on the faculty, who find themselves in an unstable organisation with unsettled power structures and high external pressure. The findings suggest that teacher educators find themselves in an unsatisfactory working situation which has led many of them to prefer not to get engaged in the merger processes, but rather withdraw into "their own bubble" – like silent resistance to the changes at hand.

Keywords: mergers; teacher education; democracy, engagement; motivation; organisation development

INTRODUCTION

The universities and colleges in Norway have been going through major structural changes merging smaller organisations into larger, multi-campus colleges and universities, making the organisations larger and more robust, and internationally competitive (NOU 2008:3, p. 25). The largeness and robustness that these mergers are supposed to produce is viewed as a measure of quality in higher education. This global trend (Pinheiro et al., 2015; De Boer, 2016) and national policy thus affect large parts of higher education in Norway, and all those who work there. This study aims at investigating the impact of some of the ongoing mergers are having on teacher education, from the perspective of the teacher educators. The aim is to investigate the role of democracy involvement and engagement to the merging processes and possible consequences for the working environment and the education quality.

THE NORWEGIAN CONTEXT

In the last few years, the Norwegian authorities have sought to reform higher education. The latest reform period in this sector was in the 1990s, the college reform in 1994. The current era for higher education reforms started with the white paper document NOU 2008:3 "Viewed together – new structures in higher education". One of the suggestions in this document was to gather all the state organisations in higher education in 8-10 multi-campus universities with focal points at different places in Norway. The document also described a process where the organisations would be able to negotiate and decide who they would prefer to merge with, based on size, geography, profile, and strategy. There was no political consensus behind these proposals, and the processes were not accelerated until a change to a more liberal government was in place in 2013. Whereas the period from 2000 to 2013 has been described as a time for voluntary mergers, the following five years saw several state initiated forced mergers in the sector (Kyvik and Stensaker, 2015). Though, as Kyvik and Stensaker also point out "the distinction between voluntary and forced mergers is sometimes blurred" (p. 39). Thus, the university sector has been through substantial changes regarding organisation structures, and only a few university colleges remain independent (Ministry of Education and Research, 2016).

The government expects these new large organisations to become larger and more robust, making them internationally competitive, particularly in applying for

international research funding. It was also believed that the adequate size of a university, and thus a measure of quality would be having a minimum of 10,000 students (this number was mentioned, but never written anywhere, only referred to as a need for a robust academic community) (Meld.St. 18, 2014–2015). In addition, the criteria for high quality education made it difficult for small colleges to meet the requirements, such as the new teacher education master's program, demanding more teacher educators with PhD qualifications or more: these come in limited supply, and thus increases the need for the mergers (Meld. St. 16, 2016–2017). Another driving force for the mergers was the desire to centralise education (Meld. St. 18, 2014–2015). The voluntary approach proved inefficient, and mergers became a way to force these processes, which also moved the political cost of unpopular decisions from the government down to the new universities (Elken and Frölich, 2016), and, added tension in the newly merged organisations. These externally decided and externally motivated mergers are the area of inquiry in the current study.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

It may seem like the changing of organisations has become a sign of the times, and that change is undertaken for its own sake, as Zygmunt Bauman points out in a discussion on liquid modernity, that "perfectly viable organisations are gutted just to prove their ongoing viability" referring to the writings of Richard Sennett (Dawes, 2010). Whereas mergers in general "are seen as very demanding" (Rhoades, 1998), mergers in higher education may pose additional challenges. According to Eastman and Lang (2001, p. 176) "The fact that people – intelligent, articulate, individualistic people – are at the centre of the academic 'enterprise' defines the culture of higher education, drives its cost structure, and distinguishes higher education mergers from other types of mergers". Since the contribution of human resources is especially high "the effect on institutional outcomes of a post-merger decline in motivation and commitment on the part of faculty and staff is even more dramatic and direct than in the corporate sector". Goreham (2011) notes about mergers in higher education that:

> The main lessons to come out of the literature seem to be that mergers are extremely expensive in terms of money and resources […]; that there are unlikely to be any significant benefits in the short-term […], that long term benefits take many more years than expected to develop, that there can never be too much planning in preparation for a merger and finally, that the organisational, human and cultural elements of the "new" institution need to be made a priority, particularly after the merger has occurred.

Thus, managing a merger is a demanding process that requires close cooperation between the management and the faculty, to develop a shared, positive, and productive culture.

Recent research shows how slow and hard it is to make practical changes, and that such mergers test and places stress on the whole organisation (Puusa and Kekäle, 2015). Eastman and Lang (2001) observe that "[b]ecause human factors loom so large in higher education mergers, effective communication is a vital part of merger management". They also point out that it is "difficult to measure the success of mergers in the higher education sector" because "agreement on basic goals is lacking and the very concept of institutional performance measurement remains controversial." Thus, "outcomes may be interpreted in very different ways".

One the one hand, researchers Eastman and Lang (2001) "Mergers lead to more standardization and less diversity in the delivery of higher education. At some point the drive for increased scale, breadth, and distribution diminishes quality". On the other, Goegedebuure concluded, on the basis of a review of the literature, that

> 'an assessment of outcomes appears to be tilted toward the positive. Agreed, merger processes seldom if ever have a smooth and easy run and are interspersed with major and minor problems and battles, but they appear to have surprising results considering their largely involuntary nature. Educational offerings appear to have expanded, there are indicators that suggest an increase in quality, and community links have been strengthened' (1992, 74).

However, Geschwind, Pinheiro and Aarrevaara (2015) point out that "'strong cultures' (i.e., deeply institutionalised norms, values, identities, and traditions) characterising the parties involved have the potential to affect the merged institution in the long run, either positively or negatively" (p. 228). It is also important to note that merger literature is clear on that, "all things being equal, voluntary mergers tend to be more successful than forced ones" (p. 232). Though, all in all, evidence suggests that "initial or anticipated cultural clashes have a tendency to fade away over time, perhaps even more rapidly than anticipated by either the merger architects or their critics" (p. 228). Elements like the acceptance of changes, attitudes to the new organization, effectiveness of new structures, systems and resources and communication in the process will influence how faculty and other staff contribute to – or hinder – the development of the new organization (p. 174).

In the Norwegian context, the cooperation between the management and the labour unions are required elements of the merger process. The "Basic Collective Agreement for the Civil Service" (2017–2019), (the agreement between the state and the labour unions) is meant to ensure "cooperation between the stakeholders

at all levels" (§1.1). and involve the employees' representatives in decisions and co-operation leading up to decisions (§17). The consequence of this agreement is that unions work together with management to implement changes and to voice the concerns of the employees and should also contribute to engaging the employees in the processes at hand. The development processes involving faculty and staff, their opportunity to take part in discussions and have their viewpoints heard thus become essential to ensuring democracy in the workplace and ownership to the new organization.

Such processes require skilful management. Tiller and Skrøvset (2015) emphasise the need of the individual to see and be seen and see this as fundamental in what they call appreciative management. They point to studies where recognition of the individual leads to positive results in organisational development processes. A positive attitude in the organisation is a good starting point for organisational development.

Ese (2019) has studied how academic relates to changes in higher education that he refers to as managerialism. He finds that the academic community seems to resort to several different strategies of silent resistance. The resistance strategies he lists are a silence culture (an unwillingness to openly criticise); Hide away – work from home, be unattainable and focus on your research; Pretend that you do not understand or know about requirements you disagree with; Ignoring procedures etc. if they find them to be counterproductive; They do too much – even though management says they should not spend time on something with their students, they will, because it IS important. Ese concludes that the researchers find that the management and the systems are unable to safeguard free and independent research and good teaching.

According to Pink (2011) mastery, autonomy and purpose comprise the truths about what motivates us. "Human beings have an innate inner drive to be autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another. And when that drive is liberated, people achieve more and live richer lives" (p. 71). This is particularly relevant for knowledge workers like faculty in higher education who value their professional autonomy, take pride in mastering their subject and developing it further, and who find motivation for their research through their understanding of purpose.

One source of "frustration in the workplace is the frequent mismatch between what people must do and what people can do. When what they must do exceeds their capabilities, the result is anxiety. When what they must do falls short of their capabilities, the result is boredom. But when the match is just right, the results can be glorious. This is the essence of flow" (Pink 2011, p. 117).

Thus, there are several factors that may influence the work of the teacher educators that find themselves in the middle of large mergers in higher education. These factors relate to how the organisation and the merger is managed, how it is communicated and how this is done in cooperation with the union representatives. But it also relates to how these processes interact with how the faculty then see their working situation, their ability to do their job and their experience of mastery, autonomy, and purpose in their jobs.

METHOD

The data in this study has been collected through a series of interviews with teacher education faculty at universities and colleges that were undergoing mergers into larger organizations. The interviews were designed as semi-structured interviews of faculty, and the informants had with different subject backgrounds and different competence levels. The persons interviewed came from three different organizations involved in three different mergers, and the three interviewers, who conducted 3–4 interviews each, were also working in the teacher education sector. The data thus consists of 10 transcribed interviews. These interviews were conducted in Norwegian and subsequently translated verbatim. Interviews like these may be a way to access part of a persons' life world (Kvaale, 1983, as sighted in Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2016, p. 174). At the same time, such interviews open up for possible ambiguities, which may challenge the analysis (Charmaz 2006, as sighted in Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2016, p. 33). Thus, the data may offer a glimpse into three mergers, but cannot alone offer conclusive and widely generalizable results.

The analysis of the data led to a sorting in the categories engagement, uncertainty, and powerlessness – because here is where there is a story to be told (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2016, p. 81). To support the choice of analysis categories, excerpt-commentary units (Emerson et al., 1995, as sighted in Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2016, p. 96) have been selected, because they were considered significant examples form the data that illustrate points in the analysis. The analysis evolved through the excerpt commentary units and the critical incidents, and it was important for the researchers to keep in mind that according to Silverman's (2007) tradition "all researchers partially create their own material by selecting certain paragraphs and statements" (Silverman, 2007, as sighted in Rennstam og Wästerfors, 2016, p. 42). Therefore, it must also be considered, that all three researchers in the team have their background in Norwegian teacher education, and thus had considerable knowledge of the situation prior to the study. Their prior understanding of the situation may

influence both the focus areas and the interpretation of the findings. Thus, validity of the findings also depend on the interpretation of the data in dialogue with prior studies, findings and theories.

FINDINGS

Considering the fact that "motivation and commitment on the part of faculty" (Eastman and Lang, 2001) is considered central to the success of mergers in higher education, this was the central starting point of the study. The results from the interviews were sorted and interpreted into the categories: Working environment, Participation and engagement and Education Quality which are analysed focusing on the concepts engagement, uncertainty and powerlessness.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

When looking at the perceived working environment, it is important identify the attitudes that the teacher educators have to their new working situation. To start on the positive side, it seems that many of the informants find it "very positive" to have "more colleagues within our subject". Having been part of smaller teacher education faculties they were experiencing having more colleagues within their subject, which was perceived as both enriching and that it made them "stronger as a larger section". This last quote refers to the shifting of powers in the new organisations. As some departments and subject areas find themselves strengthened by the mergers, others fear marginalisation, which influences their experience of and attitude to the merger. To make cooperation work, some find it necessary to "mute those that are too negative, and rather support those that are positive." However, some of them report experiencing real differences regarding the philosophical question of what makes a good teacher. And, what does a good teacher need as part of their teacher education? These are questions that engage and involve the faculty both professionally and emotionally, and that are difficult to traverse.

The differences in organisation culture and quite so different subject traditions may lead to conflicts of interest at several different levels, thus leading to what some informants describe as "a high degree of uncertainty" relating to their working situation. At the same time, the organisational changes made decision structures unclear, and at the stage when the interviews were conducted, informants expressed concern about "not knowing who their leader is". At the same time, the merger was the result of executive decisions of which they had no influence, thus the situation is one that was imposed on everybody, and there is nothing anyone could do.

PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Considering how important participation and engagement is for organizational development, especially in organizations where so much depends on the organizations' human capital, some kind of structure for democratic dialogues might be expected. However, the informants in this study seem not to have been directly involved in the merging process. None of them have been engaged in union work related to the process, and they have little or no idea about what has been going on at the executive level. Here the responses range from having "no idea" to "not seeing how employees have been able to take part" to knowing that "they (unions) have been involved in some processes, but it has not reached the members…". The data does not clearly show what this was like before the merger; though the informants seem to experience a greater distance to where decisions are being made.

The experience of being part of an organisation where many aspects seem unsettled, and where conflicts of interest have yet to be resolved, the question of faculty influence becomes central. However, informants give the impression that they found it very difficult to take part in the processes related to the merger. One informant claimed that the "processes tend to be very hasty and that many of their colleagues feel they have not been heard" others went so far as to say that "even when we have strong and clear opinions in the academic community, we are not heard" and that this leads to a feeling of "powerlessness". All in all, the informants explain their lack of involvement with having a large workload and not having the capacity for this on top of everything else. Some said, they were "only involved when there was a request" from management, and this makes the involvement very much on the employers' terms. In addition, there was a clear feeling that there is no "democracy" and that "decisions have already been made".

There was also a clear tendency showing that many of the informants had been buried in work with for instance teaching and have been "mostly concerned with the goals and problems in our section". The informants said they preferred to stay "in their own bubble", leaving the challenges and the problems with the merger be dealt with by the management and the labour unions. One informant describes it this way: "I have been very pessimistic, and it has been exhausting – and I feel marginalised as a professional in my field".

EDUCATION QUALITY – UNCERTAINTY AND COMPENSATORY PRIORITIES

Many of the informants found that the merger had "not yet" influenced the quality of their teaching, and they emphasised that this was because they had prioritised

this work, rather than taking an active part in the processes regarding the merger. However, one of them noted that, because of extra work with deadlines regarding the merger, "I did not get to work enough with my students last semester, and I am still sorry about that".

There was also an interesting dichotomy in the data, and that was found regarding the prestige and importance of teaching. On the one hand, almost all the informants emphasised the importance of teaching, the need to prioritise their time for this work, to such a degree that it also took up part of their research time. At the same time, they felt that management and authorities gave less prestige to teaching, than to research. As an example, substitutes and temporary employees (often with lower qualifications) were hired to do the teaching when others are given time to do research. According to one of the informants this "challenges the continuity, and it increases the workload for those who are left" to run the show, advise the temps and ensure education quality. Thus, it may seem that the teacher educators see themselves as more concerned with teaching quality than what they perceive management to be. They take on the responsibility of keeping things going and protect the students and the education quality in spite of the situation.

The idea that teachers in higher education should also be researchers, because this makes education better is well established in numerous white paper documents, yet those who work there are very uncertain whether this can improve or impair teaching. The importance of teaching seems to have been an unresolved question even before the mergers, as one informant claims "teaching has never been very important, neither before, nor after the merger". Another aspect of this that is problematised in the data is the focus on hiring new faculty with "research competence", meaning a minimum of a PhD or the equivalent. As there are not enough people with this competence in the market and the organizations are reluctant to permanently hire anyone with lower competence, the result is a shortage of people to cover the teaching responsibilities, leading to both excessive use of overtime, temporary hiring and loss of continuity. Thus, executive decisions seem to go against the beliefs of the teacher educators and their commitment to providing high quality teaching for their students.

DISCUSSION

Ensuring a good working environment require workers to see and be seen, and to be appreciated by their leaders. Such appreciative management (Skrøvset & Tiller, 2015) seems increasingly difficult to achieve when organisations become large and geographically dispersed. It becomes difficult to support the faculty, thus leading to

the spread of uncertainty and discomfort in the work force – which may affect both their job satisfaction and their potential for learning.

The importance of effective communication and the risk of post-merger decline in motivation and commitment on the part of the faculty (Eastman and Lang, 2015) can also be found in the current study, as the lack of communication and involvement left faculty members feeling marginalized.

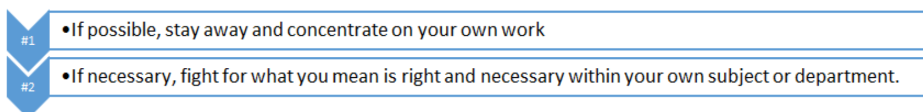
It seems that the different organization cultures and values (Geschwind et al., 2015) did pose challenges for the faculty, and that "agreement on basic goals" (Eastman and Lang, 2015) was not in place. The faculty had to cooperate across campuses deciding on study plans and structures – which on the one hand may promote organisational learning, but on the other, they may see it as threatening their professional autonomy and challenging their beliefs about important aspects within their subject competence. This also coincides with Eastman and Lang's (2001) claim that such mergers lead to more standardization. In addition, the informants report that they bury themselves in their own work – almost like a strategy to hide away from the things that are problematic or cause conflict when the faculty retreat into their private offices and "their own bubble".

These findings are consistent with the findings of Ese (2019), who finds a number of resistance strategies among faculty as reactions to such effects of managerialism. Ese's findings seem to fit well with the findings of the current study where the teacher educators spend more time on teaching and withdraw from the things that "disturb" their primary work focus – namely teaching and research.

Even though research at different points in time seems to show that mergers show positive results in the end (Goegedebuure, 1992; Geschwind, 2015) and that conflicts "have a tendency to fade away over time", the current study, which interviewed faculty members 1–2 years into the mergers, show that they are not there yet.

The data shows that the faculty that were interviewed did not seem to show much active resistance to the mergers they were a part of, but rather that they expressed scepticism and concern, and that their own reaction involved two different approaches:

Fig. 1. Coping strategies



Source: own work

Most of the faculty avoided engagement, nor did they feel they had the capacity or the energy to enter into discussions. Also, there was the feeling that the issues at hand were controversial and uncomfortable, and that they took focus away from their primary focus on research and teaching.

In many ways, the merger and the following upheaval challenges the factors that influence job motivation. The merger caused changes in power structures that influenced the degree to which the faculty were able to make decisions about and define the contents and focus of their subjects and classes, as well as the amount of time spent with students and on research. This can be understood as challenging their relationship to their work, because their feeling of mastery may be reduced as they had to change their teaching due to time restrictions or content changes, which also limited their autonomy and ability to decide how to do their job. Also, the data suggests that teacher educators are true to their purpose, which is to deliver good classes and good teaching for their students. Thus, the dissatisfaction with the situation can be connected to changes that impact their work motivation, their mastery, autonomy, and purpose. It seems the faculty met this challenge by withdrawing from as much as possible, to protect the areas of work that they found important, similar to the findings reported by Ese (2019).

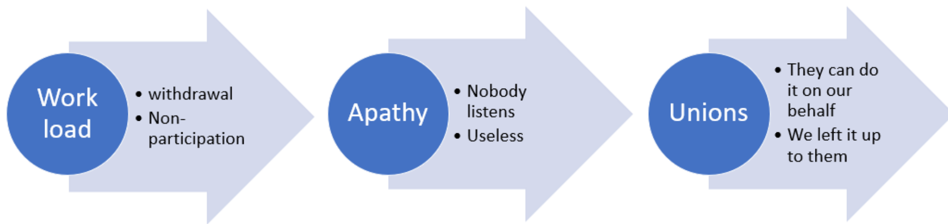
The data in this study indicates that Pink's description of the relationship between mastery, autonomy and purpose also applies to the teacher education faculty, and that the ability to create flow will influence the quality of their work and the education they offer. Faculty members found that the merger brought changes in expectations and demands relating to their work, which affected their perceptions of professional autonomy.

The faculty's feeling of powerlessness in relation to these processes could also be related to the processes being so clearly motivated by international trends and political ideologies, which they felt they could not change, however much they would like to. On top of that, the strenuous workload may also have prevented participation in the merging process, and thus contributed to what may look like apathy among many workers. Several of the informants report extraordinary amounts of overtime during this process, and that this is a contributing factor to them withdrawing from participation in the merging processes. These different factors all seem to lead to non-participation; which can be seen as evidence for the lack of democracy in the workplace and in the merger process.

The other factor that may contribute to our perception of worker apathy, is that they feel that they are not heard. Sometimes the management arranged seminars and invited the workers to take part in the processes, then later, at least this was the impression of the informants, disregarded the input from the faculty. This seems to

have left the impression that there was no use. On top of this, was the tendency to leave the problems to the union representatives – with the attitude that we elected them to speak on our behalf, and we trust them to do so. Thus, the effects of low engagement, uncertainty and powerlessness seem to take effect at several different levels:

Fig. 2. Levels where powerlessness, uncertainty and lack of engagement may be found



Source: own work

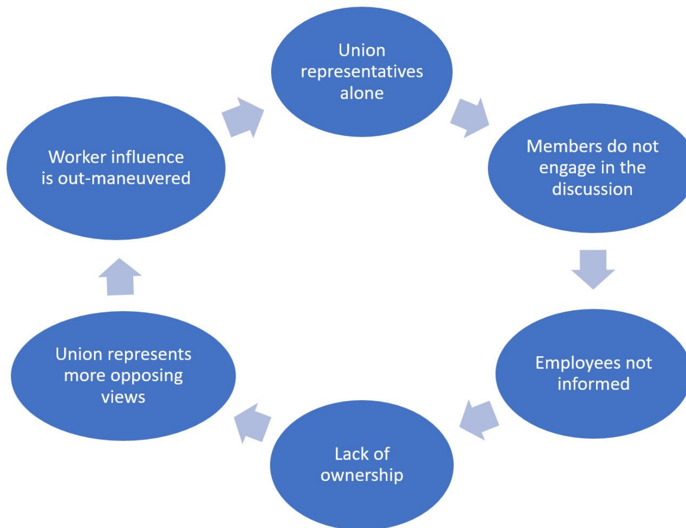
These mechanisms are problematic in several respects. If, as in these cases, the members of a union do not take part in the debates it is difficult for the representatives to know if they are in fact representing the view of their members. And if the members are not well enough informed of the decisions being made, there is a risk that they will not feel ownership to the decisions being made about their new organisation. Also, it may be difficult union representatives to represent their members, thus adding to the alienation between the decision makers and the faculty. An added complication was that the union representatives had to represent members from all the different campuses, who represented opposing views, making it very difficult to have any real influence. Thus, there seems to be a cycle of factors all adding to the lack of engagement and feeling of powerlessness on the part of the faculty (Fig. 3)

This shows how the distance between the faculty and the decision-making processes reinforced itself and posed extra challenges in mergers like these.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Organizational development in a merged organization may be both slow and challenging; and include both positive and negative outcomes. On the interpersonal level, positive cooperation seems slowly to be developing here and there, though

Fig. 3. Cycle of factors contributing to lack of engagement



Source: own work

that may still be challenged by decisions and structures higher up in the system, The mergers studied here did not show involvement and engagement of the faculty, or any perceived democracy in the workplace. These mergers were largely involuntary, which in and of itself posed an extra challenge, and the systems imposed, made participation and the outlook for having any real influence minimal. Building new organizations that are geographically dispersed, with different cultures and values, makes it particularly important to build trust within the organization. Unsettled power structures may foster negative attitudes to the merged organization and lack of trust in the effectiveness of new structures, systems, and resources, as well as willingness to accept the changes that have taken place. However, these issues may be difficult to resolve as the faculty retreat into their own bubbles.

Cultural clashes and differences of interest regarding a range of issues remain unsolved, as faculty members withdraw into their private offices and avoid conflicts whenever possible. The lack of involvement and open debate hampers organizational development as "the elephants in the room" have the opportunity to grow, rather than be resolved. Though cooperation among the faculty is developing, this is a process that takes time, and any results may be difficult to measure.

The data seems to suggest, that the merger has caused significant lack of engagement on the part of the teacher educators, that led to uncertainty and feelings

of powerlessness. At the same time, the teacher educators did what they could to preserve the things they found most important, and most closely related to their professional purpose, their teaching and their research.

It seems that major executive decisions are bound to cause unease in an organisation, but how the decisions are handled and implemented may greatly influence how a merger is perceived and how the new organization will develop. The current study reports on ongoing processes in the higher education sector, and thus affords a window into faculty members experiences with the first couple of years after the mergers have taken place. Even with this limited number of informants, the results show cause for concern regarding the lack of democratic processes and faculty ownership in all the new organizations studied. However, these processes are by no means at an end, and most research suggests that challenges tend to be resolved over time. Further research may follow the developments of the merged organizations and study the effects of these mergers in a more longitudinal perspective or perhaps redo these kinds of interviews at later stages in the processes. It may be interesting to look at how or if challenges are resolved, whether some of the defiance strategies can be retained over time, and if the faculty eventually find that they are part of robust and internationally competitive organizations.

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Democratic contents for a democratic way of life

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ABSTRACT

The purpose, of this paper, is to explore the teachers experiences of democratic contents and contents about democracy. We ask what position content has in the teachers' practice providing the students with experience of a democratic way of life?

The paper is based on interview with 8 different teachers. Their reflections on democratic content will be discussed considering John Dewey's progressive pedagogic and Wolfgang Klafki's critical-communicative didactic. Based on this, we emphasize the difference between content about democracy and democratic content and how to teach the student the content by praising, orientate or make the student experience the content in practice.

The teachers focus on skills as argumentation, ability to express one's own opinion and listen to others' opinions. The students are encouraged to bring forth political or personal topics to discuss in class. The main goal is to create a democratic student-centered classroom where everybody is integrated and can raise their voice. The teachers' praise an atmosphere of collective harmony and individual ability to develop democratic skills for the future society.

We discuss how a safe and equal classroom might reduce the teachers ability to emphasize content, and how difficult it is to engage the student in specific content. We also discuss if the open classroom where the students are to choose the topics and raise their own opinions, bring forth value of self-love and not solidarity and if the focus on democratic skills turns the democratic competence into election and freedom of speak in a political democracy and not moral and universal knowledge as part of a democratic way of life.

Keywords: democracy, democracy in school

INTRODUCTION

"A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, […]." (Dewey 1916). A mode of associated living is a way of life as a democratic ethos. This democratic ethos is not only about tolerance, openness and universal or mutual recognition. A democratic way of life is an everlasting confrontation of own and others logical, ethical, and aesthetical communicated experiences. Such confrontations will always be unpleasant in a search for truth and knowledge. Already Plato (1996) stressed that a democratic ethos was open and unsecure, bringing people towards dictatorship of a strong quorate man. And John Stuart Mill (1849) was critical to democracy, because it could become a tyranny of the majority and a mediocracy. To overcome these challenges a democratic society must emphasize knowledge. Åsa Wikforss (1017) highlights this connection between democracy and knowledge in her defense of knowledge. She argues that political extremism is based on an illusion of understanding. People are convinced without reason and to become reasonable doubtful or critical is not possible without knowledge. Wikforss quotes Hannah Arendt and George Orwell, when she argues that freedom and democracy is based on the power of knowledge, while tyrant fears the truth because truth is a power which she or he is not able to control (Wikforss 2017, p. 165–166). To realize the connection between knowledge and democracy, we need to renew the interest of content as part of education.

There is a difference between fighting for democracy and trying to maintain or nourish a democratic way of life after more than 75 years of peace. The fight for democracy creates unity and affiliation, but peace might fragmentize the society and our democratic ethos. Democratic values as tolerance and openness can nourish anti-democratic thoughts by allowing people to express anti-democratic thought. There is a general dilemma, how tolerant people should tolerate intolerant people, when the intolerant people do not tolerant the tolerant people (Rawls 1999). This has become even more problematic in an open virtual world. The echo chambers of the digital age provide a space to express anti-democratic illusions without being confronted with argumentation of the truth of a democratic society.

Civic education is at the top of the European educational agendas (Joris et al. 2021, p. 2). But the connection between knowledge, search for truth, critical thinking and democratic behavior is lacking in the European policy document related to civic education (Ryen og Jøsok, 2021). The main discussion is what kind of competence the citizen needs to become democratic and how the teachers are supposed to help the student gaining these competences (Ryen and Jøsok, 2021). It should be

possible to assess or study these competences. This might reduce them to specific skills or knowledge. The competences should provide the citizen with the ability to vote, participate in public debates and make political decisions. It seems like these competences could be taught and learned based on any form of content.

Several studies, (Hoskins 2012, Kahne&Sporte, 2008 og Reichert & Print, 2017) have documented a significant correlation between openness in the classroom and the student's political efficacy. The student's possibility to express their own meaning in the classroom gives faith in their own ability to participate in formal and informal democratic activities. In Norway the ICCS data of 2016 does not express this correlation. Openness might not be an independent factor. A qualitative research could explore different variables that affect openness in the classroom. This could be different types of topics and contents, different forms of organizing the interaction of meanings, the teacher's knowledge about the specific topic, how relevant the content is outside school or the students' sensation of relevance in own lifeworld. These factors are just some of the possibilities.

The purpose, of this paper, is to explore the teachers experiences of contents to bring forth a democratic way of life in the learners. We ask what position content has in the teachers' practice, facilitate the student with experience of a democratic way of life? In our empirical materiel, we focus on content, what interest the teachers have in content about democracy and content that has a democratic value and how the content are being didactical presented. The last curriculum reform in Norway has been criticized, as a further development away from knowledge content in direction of skills and competence goals (Telhaug 2005). Klafki experience the same historical development from content and knowledge towards more interest in originality and the students result (Klafki 2018, p. 174). The increased interest in competence result and originality reduces the interest in content and especially historical- and orientational knowledge. Wikforss argue that pedagogical constructivism is one of the enemies of truth and knowledge and Æsøy (2017) understand social constructivism as the dominant mindset in Norwegian teacher education. At the same time, several scholars are looking for ways to bring knowledge back into the educational discourse (Ryen and Jøsok, 2021). In our study, we head back to John Dewey and Wolfgang Klafki.

DEMOCRATIC CONTENT AND DIDACTIC OF CIVIC EDUCATION

John Dewey and Wolfgang Klafki is important representatives for human-science pedagogic that understand democratic way of living as an overarching aim of education.

THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION IS DEMOCRATIC ETHOS

According to Klafki (1995; 1998), the democratic principles are self-determination, participation in decision making (co-determination) and solidarity:

- Self-determination: Each and every member of society is to be enabled to make independent, responsible decisions about her or his individual relationships and interpretations of an interpersonal, vocational, ethical or religious nature.
- Co-determination: Each and every member of society has the right but also the responsibility to contribute together with others to the cultural, economic, social and political development of the community
- Solidarity: As I understand the term, it means that the individual right to self-determination and opportunities for co-determination can only be represented and justified if it is associated not only with the recognition of equal rights but also with active help for those whose opportunities for self-determination and co-determination are limited or non-existent due to social conditions, lack of privilege, political restrictions or oppression. (Klafki 1998, p. 314)

Self- and co-determination is about the individual will to fight for her- or his own interests in the social sphere, while solidarity is the individual will to fight for others. Solidarity demands a universal perspective on human being. The civic education must free her- or himself from the cultural particularity and personal interest towards a common universal ethic. This idea is based on the Frankfurt school. The possibility of emancipation is not only about self-determination but social emancipation of all human being from different forms of cultural illusions. Solidarity is to help others overcome the cultural illusions as barriers against self- and co-determination and solidarity.

Dewey, as Klafki, focus on the connection between individual self-determination and being part of a society.

> A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity. (Dewey 1916, chapter 7, pt. 2)

The social barriers that have to be abandon is those which prevent every citizen from having the opportunity to have a democratic way of life. Civic education should reduce those barriers. To reduce the barriers people needs knowledge and the ability to transcend and criticize the social structures. The only way to assess how efficient the civic education is in the classroom, is to examen the social changes towards a society where everybody has the possibility to mature according to the law of nature or universal order. This is not an individualistic project, but a humanistic approach of being human in the world and community.

This means, a democratic way of life is not something student learn in the common meaning of learning. A democratic way of life is a holistic attitude containing verbal and tacit knowledge, skills, values, ethical- and emotional engagement and even metaphysical founded ideals. It is all derived into a worldview in which the person has created order within himself and his relation to the world in an appropriate manner. This manner would contain solidarity and the search for common good.

CONTENT AS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS A DIDACTIC OF CIVIC EDUCATION

Both Dewey and Klafki stress the content as an important part of the civic education. As part of the didactic activity, Klafki argue that the teachers must confront students with historical and current social problems which contribute to the learners Bildung or democratic ethos, while Dewey stress that the students must experience the content as relevant in their own life.

Klafki mention different core topics like peace, environmental issues, socially created inequalities, effects of new technologies/intercultural education, I-You-relationships (Klafki, 2018). In his English summary article (1998) he pinpoints: "methods of statistics, certain laws of nature, the rise of fascism, ecological processes, techniques of art, and so on." (p. 316) as important topics. All topics have the possibility to bring forth Bildung in the learner. To do so, the teacher must elucidate which aspects of the content contribute to Bildung (Klafki 1995, p. 17). Dewey understands the content is necessary part of teaching towards democratic ethos.

> In many respects, it is the subject-matter used in school life which decides both the general atmosphere of the school and the methods of instruction and discipline which rule. A barren "course of study," that is to say, a meagre and narrow field of school activities, cannot possibly lend itself to the development of a vital social spirit or to methods that appeal to sympathy and cooperation instead of to absorption, exclusiveness, and competition. Hence it becomes an all important matter to know how

> we shall apply our social standard of moral value to the subject-matter of school work, to what we call, traditionally, the "studies" that occupy students. (Dewey 1909, p. 31)

The vital question is how to apply the democratic ethos to the subject-matter and the didactic planning has to start by knowing the subject-matter. Didactic planning without an interest in content would reduce education to a meager and narrow learning of limited skills and knowledge. That would be, to use Dewey's word, a barren course of study. It is the content that turns didactic into a bildung-theory and not just a question of learning different skills (Klafki 1995).

The main question to elucidate the content is to ask what the nature of the subject matter is. Dewey says we must plunge ourselves into the very heart of the logical problem (Dewey 1903, p. 1). To get into the very heart of the problem, the teacher seeks to understand the content and the prior discussion reflected in the content. This is to analyze the content in advance (Klafki 1995; 1998). To do so, the teacher must orient critical towards social conditions and processes. The nature of the content is the meaning or substance why the content is selected as a possible part of the learners democratic attitude. All content must be exemplary, and the value of the exemplary content is the common ground insight and abilities that can be derived from the given examples (Klafki 2018, p. 180). If the content is holocaust, the example could be building of chimneys for concentration-camps and the meaning could be to understand the human nature which makes such action possible. Or, if the topic is fascism, the content could be Mussolini's march to Rome and the meaning could be to understand what power demonstration can unfold in a society. The teaching becomes an art when we are able to bring coagulated knowledge back to life. To bring technology back to the innovation, a plan to a worry, a law to the decision making, a solution to a problem or task (Klafki 2018, p. 179–180).

The teacher must master the subject matter in advance (Dewey 1933, p. 275). This means, that she or he already knows what the student are learning (Dewey, 1916). This is not about canonizing a specific content, but the teacher's ability to know and whole-hearted engage in the historical and rational discussion on the content (Dewey 1933). If the students are supposed to experience the scientific development through own experiences, the teacher must know the scientific history to confront and guide the learner in the correct direction towards democracy and modern science in a broad sense. Modern science is not only natural science, but the whole theory of knowledge from antic thinkers to German idealism and ethical and aesthetical theory. Dewey argues that there is a connection between modern science and democracy. Inquiry or search for knowledge and value of knowing lay

ground for more social or political openness and critical thinking. The classroom provides social equality based on student's possibility to engage into the same scientific knowledge, which will help the learners in their fight to comprehend and operate in a democratic way of life.

The teacher, as a layperson, must be willing to be moved by the subject matter (Klafki 1995). As a responsible democratic citizen, the teacher must personify and represent the content. This is a normative position. Knowledge is not free of values. The substance of the subject matter is the value or what is vital of being. The value of knowledge is the wisdom that becomes internalized in the teacher. This is not an easy process. It is a wrestling with the content. The next step is to facilitate for the learners own deeper educational potential. This presupposes, that the knowledge has a positive value for the learner's future and their ability to experience a democratic way of life.

The content must give the learner the possibility to learn this essential democratic knowledge. Nor Klafki or Dewey focus on content about democracy, rather they discuss contents that has democratic implications. Content about democracy focus on democratic theory and democracy as a political system. Democratic contents are topics that has a democratic value and knowledge that could unfold a democratic way of life. Contents about democracy is connected to informational knowledge. This provides the learner with information and normative rules of how the world ought to be and what he or she ought to do to become part of a democratic system. Democratic contents are connected to orientational knowledge. This is knowledge that orient the learner with historical narratives and facts, existential challenges, and holistic theories on how to experience the world. If the teacher can facilitate the learners in direction of the subject matter, the content should provide the student with knowledge that is essential to a democratic way of life.

There is a different between approaching the learners as things or object or approaching them as subjects. To learn about democracy might become an object form of approaching if the normative aspect of democracy becomes something the students are to learn and follow, while presenting democratic content might approach the students as subjects. There is a difference between learning the students about the different human right laws as rules they are to follow or presenting stories from World War 1 and letting the student discuss what kind of global arrangement that could prevent such cruelties from happen again. To bring forth democratic contents are to approach the students as subjects believing them to be able to participate in the common power of thinking and not telling them what to think according to the political system in a democracy. This difference proves how important content is in planning for the learning activities.

HOW TO PRESENT THE CONTENT, A DIDACTIC OF CIVIC EDUCATION

It is not possible to discuss different forms of content without at the same time plan for method and the student's possibility to engage in the different contents. Content is just the first step towards teaching. The next step is to bring the learner into this world of knowledge. The teacher must view the capacity of the student, the content should fill the young mind and point forward to future tasks and opportunities (Klafki 1995, p. 18). To do so the teacher must be able to move the child in direction of the substance matter. As the teacher the learners must eventually become moved by the content.

In the classroom, Klafki highlights confronting interaction between teacher, learners and content. The student's social perceptions, attitudes, prejudices, ways of action which are strengthened or suppressed or modified, lead to conflicts and disturbances, contacts and compromises, transportations and defensive reactions (Klafki 1998, p. 317). These confrontations must be according to democratic social education and the content should, in some way, reflect democratic or social conditions that unfolds a confrontation.

According to Kevin S. Decker "Dewey's great innovation is that he privileges *method* over *theory*". *This is only correct in certain ways. Dewey is critical to traditional theory giving privileges to certain groups of people. But knowledge in itself is a democratic value when everybody has the privilege to participate in the learning process. And a purpose of a didactic of civic education is to give each student, independent of class or social position, the same possibility to engage into the same knowledge which the competent teacher already knows before developing a method of learning. In Dewey's perspective there is no such thing as personal knowledge. The method should provide each student with the possibility to inquire into the same theoretical knowledge as modern science, in a broad sense, already has unfolded.*

Democratization of knowledge is every human's possibility to become educated and experience the truth in the world. The learner must be confronted with the meaningful demands and tasks of reality. All civic education is derived from a principle that the content must bring forth primarily, categorial insight and ethos in the learner (Klafki 2018). This means to experience the importance of education and community so everybody can interact constructive in the world.

A didactic of civic education must bring the child towards the domain of wisdom and truth as part of a universal order (Dewey 1902, p. 60-61). The universal order could also be understood as a social order and the citizens' knowing of belonging and being a constructive part of a community. To become moved or engage whole-hearted into the content is to experience the content as part of the universal

order. It is this normative value of knowledge that brings democratic attitude in contact with the moral possibility of universal solidarity. If the teacher or the learner does not experience this wisdom, they will only search for self- and co-determination based on their own interest and demands. We will end up in a democratic society of individualism and self-love.

To prevent individualism the teacher must provide the learners with the law of reality. "What each sovereign citizen of the realm of reality expresses is precisely law. Each is an embodiment in its own way of the harmony, the order, of the whole kingdom. Each is sovereign because it is dynamic law, —law which is no longer abstract, but has realized itself in life" (Dewey 1902, p. 60). The teaching has to start in content that gives the student a possibility to acknowledge the universal law and order by him- or herself. Students are not supposed to construct their own meanings as a solipsistic interest, but to reconstruct knowledge of the natural order which the teacher has already experienced (Klafki 2018, p. 179).

A democratic way of life is a moral position and democratic contents are normative knowledge. A moral position and intellectual worth are more difficult to teach than straightforward facts. Dewey understands moral judgment and intellectual worth as a taste the learner has to know by heart just like a musical taste. The moral taste and intellectual worth must become a vital appreciation in the knower (Dewey 1916, p. 93). Dewey distinguishes between two forms of teaching towards moral and intellectual worth. The first way of teaching is praising the right moral values, impressing second-handed knowledge into the learners. The other way of teaching is providing the learners with experiences in such a way that the values become a vital part of the person as a knower. To impress moral knowledge upon others may not be problematic if the learner has experiences that brings forth the same values as praised by the teacher. But the personal experience is vital to the possibility of real learning. Which means, if the learners are to value a democratic way of life, each person must have had personal experiences in such a way that democratic virtues become a vital appreciation. This could be bodily experiences of values, like generosity, which are important part of wisdom and knowledge towards a democratic way of life as part of a community.

There is also a third way of teaching between praising and facilitating experiences. According to Klafki (1995: 1998), the teacher does not need to impress values on the students through the content. The teacher could orientate through the content. This would be a more descriptive confronting method, where the students do the moral, logical and aesthethic judgment by comparing their vital appreciations with the different dimension of the content. Still, this orientation must bring the learner in contact with the subject matter and a universal order, and the teacher must be

a model who is moved by the content. The learner's judgements based on the content, would modify or suppress the former vital appreciations in the person. The student could argue for a moral position and experience a real dialog and interaction where their personal judgment, intellectual worth and vital appreciations are on stake and is confronted by the truth through interaction in the classroom.

To sum up: There is difference between teaching content about democracy and content that in some way reflects democratic and social or universal order. Bringing the learner in contact with the two kinds of content, we will distinguish between 3 approaches. This is praising, orientate or bodily experience. We have made a model to show these different analytical categories. The model is a hermeneutic synthesis of Klafki's and Dewey's theoretical reflections on content and how to bring the learner in contact with it.

Table. 1. Three approaches

	Praising	Orientate	Experiences
Content about democracy	Why democracy	How democracy works	Being in democratic publics
Democratic contents	Normative teaching of different topics	Descriptive teaching of the subject matters	Confronting contents and personal ethos and action

Source: own work

EMPIRICAL METHOD

The data we have used for this study is part of the project: Democracy, Equality, Learning and Mobilisation for Future Citizens (DEMOCIT). The project is a collaboration between the Faculty of Education and International Studies (LUI), and the Department of Primary and Secondary Teacher Education (GFU). The aim of DEMOCIT is to partake in reducing a growing civic empowerment gap within the Norwegian democracy and find out how Norwegian youths develop political efficacy and belief in their own participation in democratic society?

The informants are eight teachers. Their work experience warries from 4 to 15 years. All of the respondents do teach social studies. The schools are located in the eastern part of Norway. Four of the schools have been selected because they are part of the ICCS 2016-survey. The four remaining schools are pilot schools that have been selected on the basis of accessibility.

The interview topic was civic education. Content was not a starting point for the teacher interviews. However, in the reading and transcription of the interviews, it became clear that there was a lack of didactics interest in the teachers' selection of content in the planning and implementation of their citizenship education. Based on these interpretations, the transcribed interviews were analyzed and systematized according to the following model shown above. The informants' understanding is not consistent but based on Klafki and Dewey's theoretical framework on content, we were able to unfold some pattern.

All quotations are original spoken Norwegian. We have done the translation and some verbatim improvement to capture the essence of their thoughts based on our interpretations of the original statements and behavior in the interview situation. This would make it easier, for the reader to understand the meaningful value of the informants' expressions.

As all qualitative interview these findings are not a representation of Norwegian teachers. The teachers' voices represent only examples on didactic teaching. Our finding provides a picture of today's conditions and hopeful gives the reader a possibility to understand more about content as an important factor to develop a democratic classroom.

Empirical findings

In this section we will present the empirical data before we discuss the data according to the theoretical framework. We use the analytical categorization of experience, orientate and praising.

Experience

The teachers consider the students ability to raise their voice, express one's own opinion and to listen to others, as important skills in civic education. To practice these skills the teachers, organize, or carry out classroom discussions, collaborative learning and debates. When our respondents in different ways were asked to reflect upon what content they bring into the classroom to achieve the democratic competencies presented above, we find that there are little or no systematic didactical reflection or interest about the connection between content and civic education. The respondents never mention unsolicited why and how a content can be important for citizenship education. What often emerges, however, is that the teachers instead address specific methods they carry out.

> «I want the students to learn to express their opinions in a sensible way and discuss and dare to stand up for what they think, and make choices, especially the girls"

> ... bring the student voice out…, simply, spend less time going through and explain everything my students are going to learn about democracy, and then hope they learn it. It is not true.

> I have not had any type of teaching where I come into the classroom and say "today we will work with democracy and citizenship!" But it's based on what we work with all the time ...... working with bringing out the students own opinion ... When I work with democracy in the classroom, for example, sometimes I make my students come up with their own opinion orally, but for those who don't manage this ... or do not like to speak out loudly, they can, for example, use exit patches where they write their opinion so that everyone is heard. And then I also make a number out of everyone being heard.

The respondents are unified that civic education demands students that manage to express their "own voice" and their "own opinions". When it comes to the respondents' reflection about the importance of bringing the teacher's opinions into the classroom, we can clearly see an ambivalence.

> "I express my personal opinions in the classroom a lot, proven as a method……, and I tell my students that my opinion has nothing to do with the case, really. It is an effective means to make them dare to have own opinions about things, yes.

It seems like the teacher's own opinion has nothing to do with the case, and it seems like the students' opinion could be about whatever. In other words, opinion is not linked to a content. The teacher does not own the content. Only students can own content. It seems like, it is more important to talk, rather then what they talk about.

Media's agenda is an important premise provider for what is being addressed in several classroom discussions and debates. Some of the teachers mention Donald Trump, Greta Tunberg, Black life matters and other current and more local news.

> "What's the latest news? So, I start with the news. Because I say, social studies are not a period of history I will teach you. What is happening here and now today? We must be socially engaged and up to date on the news that happens every single day. Trump, Gjerdrum etc."

Several of our respondents let the students decide the topics to be discussed. The students often chose to debate topics from the news, but they also

want to debate for example, for and against homework, for and against chewing gum etc.

> We have generally had a number of debates ... such as role debates where they have been given an opinion and also prepared to mean what they have been told. They also have debates based on their own opinions, about, for example, homework in school, whether they should have more physical activity in school or ....if there should be grade in Nynorsk. Such types of debates are quite close to the students' ...

The respondents are concerned about bringing in the students' interests. They argue that it is easier to engage and bring out the students' opinion if the theme or content is chosen by the students themselves. The topics the students bring forward has low impact on the subject content. The topics are mostly based on the students' own life or current political affairs. The teachers argue that it is the students› interest which should decide or control the content. None of them turns this around and reflect upon the possibility that students are to become interested in new topics by being exposed to content which could challenge their own interests.

In contrast, one of the respondents explains the important role historical content are to civic education. He points out that the students are not really concerned or interested in anything other than themselves. The fact that they should learn something at school makes it basically boring and uninteresting for most of his students. Based on this, he wants to teach topics that they would not otherwise emphasize by themselves. Like he expresses it; "He will try to knock some sense into their heads", not because he thinks it will interest them here and now, but because he thinks that, in the long run, that will shape them, and maybe the classroom could be a counterculture to all other information they encounter.

Another of our respondents clearly expressed a frustration related to the fact that it is difficult to engage the students. She experiences, for example, that Greta Tunberg did not engage. To get her students to engage in the debate, she made them discuss whether it was best with a cat or dog as a pet.

> Inclusion, regardless of background, is really difficult. I try to encourage to participation, oral, to self-determination. But I find it difficult. There are few students who want to say anything or participate in a regular teaching lesson. It's something about personality, shyness and class culture that I do not get the hang of. With co-determination as far as they are concerned, I probably experience that it often gets a little immature, they want better food in the canteen, or have another football, right. So sometimes I include them on assessment criteria for example or

> make them choose whether they should have grade or not. Whether they should work in groups or alone and things like that. And then I'm pretty careful to say; notice now how you are allowed to participate in deciding. But I find that very few of my student really care ... so I do»

The data show us that several of our informants seems to be interested, engaged and moved by different types of content. An example is one of the respondent who find it sad to observe the students lack of engagement towards content about Greta Tunberg's work. The teacher's reaction indicates that she herself has a commitment to the content. The same can be said by the teacher who points out the important about historically content. There may be several reasons why they are unable to transfer this commitment to the students. One of them points out that "it is hard to be the driving force".

Another of our respondents is also clearly engaged in several of content. After she has listed a lot of content that may be relevant to citizenship education, she says:

> "I know a lot of things, I can, I am good at teaching, I think [laughs]" Then she stops herself and continues "But at least, I want them to feel safe in the classroom."

When she talks, she is committed to the content, but she stop herself, and guides herself back to the fact that the most important job as a teacher in civic education is to create security for the students so that they dare to bring out their opinions.

ORIENTATE

Five out of eight respondents mention various historical topics that may be relevant. Themes that are highlighted are Greece, World War I and World War II, the interwar period, slavery and the Russian Revolution. Other contents, mentioned, that is not necessarily content about democracy, but more democratic content, was environmental questions, fake news and the UN Millennium Development Goals. Several of the teachers claimed that it is difficult to engage the students in history teaching.

> "What I think the students think is that, when we start with the American Revolution, the French Revolution, we also go to the First World War, the Second World War, the Interwar and the races and all this. These are heavy topics for the students. And I do not think all the groups cope so well, and they get bored. Next lesson they want to talk about conflict and war, talk about society, debate topics that are more related to social studies than history or geography. And then I think, then I struggle

a little …. I think it's too much history. It's getting heavy. But the social science themes, go with brilliance"

None of the teachers say anything specific about how they work with history in connection with civic education, but one teacher says that "history is brilliant" and he points out that the students can be moved by learning about for instance "Watching the wave" He also clearly points out that the students need this kind of knowledge to be able to be part of, and stand up for the society as a whole.

When it comes to content about democracy, our data shows that they focus on what democracy is, the electoral system in Norway, the task of the courts, the principle of distribution of power and the various isms. When we try to grasp what themes and what content they bring into citizenship education we find a narrow, or perhaps an unsystematic, awareness of the difference. None of the teachers distinguish between democratic content and content about democracy. What we might define as clear themes about democracy, such as education in the electoral system, the principle of distribution of power and teaching about other political institutions are mentioned together with historical themes, but also with tolerance, diversity, equality and related topics. The quote below shows, for example, that this teachers do not link literacy as an important part of citizenship education.

> In English class, we have worked a lot with democracy and citizenship in connection with the United States, among other things with the election there. Also in connection with slavery, the rights of the blacks, things like that. In Norwegian class, no. We have read some texts that are a little democratic, yes, otherwise maybe not so much in Norwegian class.

An important common reflection we find in the interviews, is that the teachers mainly complain about working with citizenship education to practice a competence that the students will need in the future as democratic citizens. They rarely talk specifically about present competences needed to be a democratic citizen here and now. For instance, in the democratic classroom that they talk about.

PRAISING

In the transcriptions, it emerges that most of the teachers do work with content that can be defined as democratic content. Several teachers mention for instance equality, tolerance, racism, face news, discrimination, religion etc. They have a fairly clear educational and normative way of talking about the connection between these values and civic education. They stress the importance to be part of a community, show tolerance, and vote in elections and not to take democracy for granted. It seems

like the way the teachers organize these sessions, is to exhort that this is important, rather than let the student experience this in different manners.

> ….actually, I had my religion class last week, I taught them about Christianity in general. I had a number of students with other religious backgrounds and some of them started laughing. I took the student out and said "if you want your religion to be respected, then you have to respect others". I told the whole class how important it is for the community that we create an understanding, empathy, respect and tolerance for each other.
>
> I model conversations. I am standing on the left side of the room, then I am a person and on the right side of the room I am another person. (...) I model conversation between people that disagree. I explain what they mean and what they boundlessly disagree upon, and I show my students that there still is respect. I teach them that in our political system even extreme opinions are allowed. This is what's so nice about our democracy (...).

Some of the teachers mention critical thinking as a skill or a competences that are important for civic education. Critical thinking is understood as source checking. Beyond assessing sources critically, they don't explicitly point out activities, content or what kind of knowledge is important to develop to become a critical thinker. None of the teachers address why one should engage in critical thinking. Nor do they problematize the concept of knowledge or what competences they need to become critical, nor what kind of content they should be critical towards or what you might have to inquire in a critically way. They also connect this with activities like debates and classroom discussions, by being critical towards other students' argument to win the debate. It seems to be easier to engaged the student in a topic when you get the opportunity to win the debate.

> "We live in knowledge society with an enormous flow of knowledge, so a skill they must be able to do is critical thinking. Exactly in their current age, they are very open to anyone who is beautiful and has a nice body and is famous [laughs]. And the majority want to become celebrities and so on, so checking sources, right, it's an ongoing job that we work with for all three years. And we have our own courses where we work with source criticism. Who has written this, what is a good source…"

Although it is not expressed specifically by any of the teachers, several of them talk about the importance of solidarity. For example, when one of the teachers in connection with physical training. Several of the teachers also mention the solidarity

aspect as part of the classroom conversation itself, through listening to each other, paying attention to how your words affects other and the importance of create a democratic society in the classroom. We actually find that the teachers' main focus in civic education is to take care of the students and make them feel safe in the classroom.

> "…I think that one of my most important tasks as a teacher, is to create security and peace in the classroom, because then those who are insecure become safe….
>
> "Citizenship is about respecting each other. In the PE, for example, it is an important thing. Taking into account others, but also knowing how others feel, then around the world, both yes as a citizen as in local communities and at school, but also in the world then…"
>
> I try to soften the students so that they dare to say things, dare to mean things without fear of anything, but it's just talking in the classroom then. It is not a hocus pocus, but you have to have a starting point for this conversation then.

SUMMARY OF OUR EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

All eight informants are concerned creating safe classrooms where all students will have their say and dare to express their opinions through debates, classroom discussions and collaborative learning. The teachers are generally unsure of their own role as normative content communicators. All our respondents say they have debates in the classroom, and, to a greater or lesser degree, this is justified by the fact that students should be part of a democratic process where they learn and experience how to create arguments, brings out their opinion, listen to others and show solidarity with the students in the classroom. Still, we find little interest in content and teaching where teachers emphasize this by approaching the value of a democratic way of life. This means that the student's experience democracy through being in a democratic classroom more than being confronted with contents and personal ethos and action.

When the teachers orientate their students, they focus just as much on how democracy works as descripted teaching on the subject matters. There is great variation in how teachers communicate the importance of, and the connection between civic education and various themes. However, what is common for all of our respondents is that when we challenge the teacher on what content actually leads to good civic education, the answers become vaguer. From this we interpret that there is little didactic planning in analyzing the content. The orientation of content does not work the

way it is done, because of the lack of engagement and interest from the students. The teachers feel that the students are mostly concerned about themselves.

We find that most of our informants tend to impress why democracy is important. The teachers who bring in content connected to themes as tolerance, solidarity, BLM and what it means to be part of a society to the classroom, also have a strong educational or praising element in their teaching then the teacher who are more concerned with content about democracy. The more engagement the teacher have in civic education, the more they praise solidarity

DISCUSSION

The teachers' main democratic interest is to create an open classroom where everybody feel safe and are able to raise their voice. But this might reduce the interest and didactical planning for democratic content. If the students are to learn specific content, they need knowledge and the students' voice must have a direction towards specific knowledge and universal laws. But such demands might turn the students unsafe. The subject matter might turn the students afraid to raise their voice and only the students with knowledge are able to express the meaning of the content.

In the Norwegian language we don't differ between opinion and meaning. When the teachers claims that the student should raise their voices and that the teacher's opinions does not really matter, this is expressed as meaning but we interpret it as opinions. Opinion is a personal judgement that rests on an uncertain or self-interest ground. While a meaning is to reflect on the significance or normative value of what is. To be for or against something is to have an opinion based on your own self-interest. But to analyze or synthesize a phenomenon or a content is to understand the value or the meaning of the content. There is a difference between asking the students to be for or against Donald Trump, or reflect on the meaning and value in Donald Trumps politics.

When the teachers claim that their own meaning does not matter. The meaning is reduced to an opinion. This claim is based on an illusion that all meaning has equal value and that everybody in the classroom should be equal. But a democratic classroom should base equality on every student's ability to search for the same knowledge. This would reduce the power of personal opinions and charisma and transfer the power to the argumentation and meaning towards common knowledge and truth.

If we reduce argumentation to own opinions, we create a democratic society that emphasize individualism and self-love. Also, if the students are to choose whatever topic they like or act as essential topic like Greta Tunberg, is out of interest, this will nourish individualism and self-love. This focus on self-opinion and self-choices,

could explain why the teachers find it hard to engage the student in specific democratic content. The teachers have an engagement towards the democratic content, but do not focus on planning how to make the content a meaningful value for the students' real life. Content would challenge the students understanding of life and could even create insecurity in the students. Malin Tväråna (2019) writes that we must move away from thinking that social studies should focus on students' opinions. The teaching must focus on a wealth of perspective that can help to create independent critically thinking students. According to Tväråna, the teacher's role is to challenge students' opinions, create teaching that makes them "look up" instead of giving the student a "yes" to everything they dare to say.

If Klafki is correct, the democratic classroom as presented by the teachers, lacks important component to unfold a democratic attitude in the learners. The Norwegian classroom might have become to democratic or to open. The focus on democratic skills and self-determination might even remove the material ground needed for these abilities. It may also remove the teachers position of being a mature grownup with important knowledge and wisdom which are being moved by the content.

The teachers have got knowledge and engagement into democratic content, but some of them seems to have given up trying to create a classroom where the students have the possibility to experience and feel this content by them self. This is of course difficult if it is correct that most of the students' dream is to become a beautiful celebrity. One of the teachers wish to knock or impress the content on the students by force. The teachers are supposed to adapt to the students, and it would take a lot of time to plan for civic education which gives the student their own possibility to engage and orient towards values of a democratic way of life.

When the students are to choose the topic and content the discussions become like a unqualified game. Even serious topics like death penalty and Trump are something the students should argue for and against and be able to win. The students' interest in the topic is distance or could even be ironic. In our empirical data, we miss topics which has a meaningful value for the students in the Norwegian society, like exclusion or increased differences between pore and rich people. The classroom might become a playground for the future and not a place to be democratic in the present.

The teachers' interest in giving the students more impact on the topics could theoretical be understood as a heritage from Dewey's progressive pedagogic. But we find this understanding of Dewey to be problematic. In our interpretation of Dewey, he does not accept any topic as a good topic. The topic must have a democratic value and this value must be known by the teacher in advance. When the topic is defined by the students it might reduce the teachers' ability to know and whole-hearted engage in the content. Dewey does not understand a democratic way

of life as a question of skills, but of ethos. Democratic competence is understood as skills which is related to the method of learning and not a specific democratic content. Skills like argumentation, expressing own opinions, listing to others becomes technical abilities which the students are able to learn just by discussion. A democratic way of living is attitude and ethos and not only technical skills, and the method must be created in such a way that the students might experience democratic value as own values.

The teachers seem to praise democratic values like solidarity, respect and the feeling of belonging to a community. They do not seem to know how to create a classroom where the students should be able to experience these values or the feeling of being part of a universal order by them self. It is difficult to know how to teach other people values and attitude and it is difficult to know if the student has learned democratic attitude and values or not. In the Norwegian school assessment and visible learning has become important standards of teaching. This might be the reason why a democratic way of life is reduced to technical skills, by whom the teacher are able to assess.

The teachers are praising that the student should engage political in the democratic system. This might reduce the students engagement into this important knowledge. It might even reduce the democratic action, not only the students feeling of belonging to the society, but also reducing democracy to a question of election and freedom of speech. This is also expressed when the teachers talk about critical thinking, which is more or less reduced to a technical ability to check sources and argue against the opposite view. The students need to feel the value of critical thinking and why this has something to do with their own lives. This is also the case, when most of the education is pointing towards the future and are not raising the classroom with real experiences of a democratic way of living.

The student does not seem to experience the universal order needed to develop solidarity. The lack of interest in Greta Tunberg fight for a sustainable future is a good example. The open classroom, where the students are to experience by themselves this solidarity might become an illusion where the students end in self-love and values without an democratic essence.

FINAL REMARKS

Universal solidarity is being prized in the classroom, but we are not sure that the universal wisdom of this moral position is being experienced by the students. The teacher has to know what kind of knowledge that might unfold a human democratic attitude and not just voters in a political democracy. The teachers must know that to reflect without knowledge is to gaze into emptiness, to discuss without the

search for truth will just create manifold monologes and to discuss without knowledge might become an exchange of ignorance. Democratic action is not a safe and harmonic activity. On the contrary, democracy can not exist without conflicts both as dialectical argumentation and physical demonstration.

The learner need knowledge to search new knowledge on their own, to evaluate knowledge and to become critical. The learner need knowledge to engage ethical and emotional in a democratic way of life. To engage solidary with marginalized groups the student have to experience one self as part of a community or the global order.

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How to avoid educating idiots: leading schools as arenas for reconstructing democracy

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ABSTRACT

Democracy and schools have most often one thing in common. Democracy is usually seen as a heritage to be passed on from one generation to another, while schools are typically in the business of reproducing societal structures and preparing the young generation to adapt into them. Yet, the world we live in is not only one of rapid changes but has arrived at a historical turning point where more of essentially the same, even in refined forms, is suicidal. Humanity is in need of fundamental transformations, both in terms of our worldviews, value systems, and societal structures. This means that we have to start viewing democracy as something living and, hence, in need of constant renewal, so as to be able to respond to the transformative requirements of our times. A key institution for enabling the realization of the full extent of human potential in service to the required transformations is the school. But it has to transform itself, to be able to act as a space for the education of globally transformative agents. This is the most urgent and essential challenge to educational leadership.

Keywords: educational leadership, transformation, democracy, globally transformative agents

QUO VADIS DEMOCRACY?

I have on several occasions asked my students – to-be teachers – who among them stands for democracy. On every occasion, all of them have raised their hands. Sometimes, I have been a bit nasty and asked how they would describe democracy. The

number of hands has always decreased radically. My personal provocation of my students aside, democracy is generally regarded in Western countries as something solely positive and as the best basis for human governance and societal life. That seems to be the general sentiment among the educated adult population, and the politically correct way of thinking, by and large.

But during the past few years, a new attitude of discontent towards prevalent forms of democracy has become consolidated. Most often it has been expressed by political parties that are depicted as representing the "far right" and "populism". People that back these parties seem to be in many cases not just poorly educated and informed, but weary of the traditional political game, where societal realities that shake the lives of large numbers of people and create a sense of insecurity in their psyches, are ignored. Perhaps most notably, the young generation are reported to be losing faith and interest in established forms of democracy. It is easy to explain this in terms of apathy, disenfranchisement, and a feeling of exclusion among youth. But could it not be also, even mainly, due to the fact that, having a psycho-social distance to the political set-up, they are crying out that the emperor has no clothes.

While there is a wealth of research documenting the reasons for discontentment with democracy, it seems that the forms that democracy could and should take in the future are much less studied. At least this is what a certain scientific journal is currently claiming, as it calls for articles about the form of democracy that the political elites, on the one hand, and common people, on the other, are wishing for, as well as future patterns of political activity and democratic institutions.

The prevailing discourse on democracy is one of safeguarding and passing on a valuable heritage. From such a vantage point, democracy becomes like a piece of antique furniture that is passed on from one generation to another with care that it should not be damaged in the process. I would like to contribute here towards an alternative narrative according to which democracy is like a plant that each generation needs to attend to according to the particular stage of growth the tree has reached. At some point, it needs to be pruned, certain branches perhaps cut, even possibly moved to another part of the garden where it can obtain the sunshine and nutrition it requires. This is an approach to democracy as something living, requiring constant re-forming.

MAIN DEVELOPMENTAL CHALLENGES IN TODAY'S DEMOCRACY

From such a developmental perspective, at least three fundamental features of present-day Western style democracy can be identified as highly dangerous in terms of societal development and human flourishing. Firstly, our current party-political mode of democracy is based on a conflictual view of human interests and their

orchestrations. While adversarial positionings have played a role in the development of democracies, all the way since the antiquity, the current model of political parties is usually traced to the end of the 18th century. During almost four centuries, we have perfected the structures and the art of fighting for power, first between the candidates in a given party, and then between parties. By gradually extending voting rights to an ever-broader segment of society, we have found a way to cover the crude law of the jungle in a wrapping of supposed decency. Indeed, the number of sets of sharp teeth has replaced the art of deliberation and consultation – a victory of the animal mode over the human. I doubt that any schoolteacher would like to show her young students a scene of debate from let us say, the British Parliament, as similar demeanour by those students would invariably lead to them being admonished and most probably punished for rude behavior.

Michael Karlberg in his book "Beyond the Culture of Contest: From Adversarialism to Mutualism in an Age of Interdependence" (2014) presents a brilliant analysis of this aspect of current democracy and outlines a way forward that would correspond to the realities and needs of an interdependent global society. It is puzzling that so many well-educated people accept, without any criticism, the conflictual nature of our most powerful democratic institutions, while advocating collaboration, consensus, and even co-creation in the fields of business, management, and industrial production. Abraham Lincoln is quoted to have said, referring to a biblical statement: "A house divided against itself cannot stand – I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free". We could ask ourselves "Do we expect to have warring political factions a hundred years from today?". If the answer is negative, we would do well to reflect on when and how the transformation to a fundamentally different mode of governance and democracy is to begin.

Secondly, while we live in a de facto global society, all our democratic institutions are founded on the sovereignty and self-interest of nation states. Perhaps the greatest accomplishment, to date, in the field of global institutions, is the United Nations Organization. Some history-making advances in human wellbeing have been achieved through collaboration within the framework of institutions such as UNICEF, UNESCO, and WHO. But the political framework of the United Nations, especially that of its Security Council, designed to play the key role in the maintenance of peace and protection of peoples against atrocities of injustice, is far from being either democratic or truly based on a perspective of the global good. The five countries with a veto right are able to exercise disproportional power. Time after time, their national or block interests have blocked the way to peace and reconciliation, resulting in suffering for millions.

Aside from the undemocratic division of power between nation states, individual citizens lack access to decision-making processes that determine their lives – a central condition for the concept of democratic rule. As the decisions determining, let us say, the quality of life in a given country, in terms of environmental health or economy, are made not only in that country's capital but actually all around the world, it is not sufficient for the citizens of that country to merely have access to their own country's democratic apparatus. Not only does this curtail possibilities of real participation on the part of the inhabitants of any country, it also creates a justified sense of powerlessness and consequent political apathy. Ironically, the most powerful supra-national structures, multinational companies, thrive by trampling beneath their feet every consideration for democracy and justice.

What is needed institutionally, is a structure that can combine, and balance decentralized participatory opportunities with coordination of global resources, a system that allows contributing to the global good through local action. Developing and setting up such a machinery for global democracy is well within our technical possibilities even in today's world. The most significant challenge lies, in fact, in the mindset that is the necessary pre-requisite of the success of a globalized model of democracy: for rulers and citizens around the world to consider our planet as one common home country and all its inhabitants as their fellow-citizens.

Thirdly, we would do well to recall that, in ancient Athens, the cradle of Western democracy, it was a matter of honor for free men to engage in the betterment of the life of the city state. This kind of civic engagement and sense of responsibility was considered a rudimentary measure of decency. Ancient Athenians had a special contempt for those men that neglected their civic duties and instead spent their time attending only to the interests of their own household. These men were referred to as "idiots", self-centered persons. Today's Western democracies have become promoters of idiotism by its ancient Greek definition. In our homes and schools, through our economic mechanisms and legislation, we overemphasize rights at the cost of a sense of responsibility. Not too long ago, I was shocked to watch, in the news, people marching in Stockholm, carrying placates "Wake Up! Stop the Dictatorship!" – in response to the requirement of having to wear masks in public spaces. To many, democracy has come to mean unlimited and unbridled freedom to fulfill any personal whim and interest.

The freedom of the individual to think independently, to express her opinions, and to act for what she considers a moral obligation are all constructive only when the liberty implied in them is balanced with a sense and exercise of responsibility and mutuality. Individual agency can be understood in the light of a couple of simple analogies of a football team or an orchestra. In both cases, the skill, initiative,

and determination of each individual player are essential, but become beneficial only when their use is guided by a sense of belonging and contributing to an entity, only through group solidarity. Narcissists have only rights and freedoms, slaves have only responsibilities and obligations, but free humans understand, appreciate and learn to balance these. It is there democratic participation starts.

DEMOCRACY AND THE TRANSFORMATIVE IMPERATIVE

As human society in general, democracy has arrived at a historical turning point, a bifurcation point, where any attempt to continue business as usual, even with fine cosmetic changes, will lead to catastrophes of increasingly higher magnitude and where the only viable option is to transform the system into a completely new regime, with new underlying values and novel structures manifesting these (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984). The three points raised above, are all connected with a transformative need and challenge: from adversarial to consensual, from national to global, and from individualism to solidarity. A shared central element in all these and other transformations necessary for the creation of a possible and desirable future is the requirement of a deep understanding of the current potential of humanity – both individually and collectively – and mastery of ways to its realization.

Kant insisted on the importance of always treating humans as an end (as subjects), never merely as a means (as objects) (Kant, 1996). Kant was an Enlightenment philosopher and perhaps inadvertently contributed to the negation of his important insight about human dignity. The Enlightenment in Europe signified men of rationality liberating themselves from the yoke of church dogmatism. This separation led to the burgeoning of science and technology and the birth of what is referred to as the scientific revolution. About three centuries later, we have managed to transform our world materially as a result of scientific-technological advances, eliminating deadly diseases, creating global networks of communication, and developing supersonic means of transportation. A ball was set rolling that, at its current speed, doubles all our scientific knowledge twice a day.

Yet, we find ourselves in a paradoxical predicament. While equipped with all these amazing tools, we have failed to solve some of humanity's old problems, such as poverty and hunger. Beyond that, our science and technology have partially turned against us, like an autoimmune disease. After all, phenomena the like of environmental devastation and weapons of mass destruction were not brought about by uneducated wilds. As I see it, the root cause of this Janus-faced state of affairs is the way the Enlightenment project has advanced since its inception. What was initially a divorce of rational scientific thinking from irrational dogmatism has, with time, turned into

a total disconnection between scientific-rational thinking, on the one hand, and existential, ethical and aesthetic perspectives to life, on the other. Scientific-technological development has, consequently, become like a ship without a compass.

The void create by the absence of existential and ethical considerations has been filled with consumer materialism and individualism – a perfect recipe for what the ancient Athenians called idiocy. In today's world humans have been relegated to the role of cogs in an economic machinery. The alienation from our true humanity caused by neglect of the most defining aspects thereof has not only led to monumental global illnesses but also had a devastating effect on the mental wellbeing of humans around the world. A point in case can be found in the Swedish society. While one of the most affluent and best organized societies, in terms of a welfare system, in the world, latest statistics show that almost half of children and youth in Sweden suffer from some form of mental health issue, and the trend is continuing alarmingly.

It would seem, then, that in order to be able to renew democracy so as to be able to use it for bringing about the historical transformations urgently needed in every field of our global society, we need to first bring together, in a balanced and harmonious manner, rational-scientific and existential, ethical, and aesthetic approaches to human development. Perhaps this could lead to the realization that what we call democracy – in all it involves in terms of human freedoms and solidarity – is not just a mechanism, an institutional arrangement but, fundamentally, an expression of our humanity, requiring a deep understanding and proper expression of the same. It appears that we need a new Age of Enlightenment, characterized by integration, instead of segregation, of the various central features of our humanity. In brief: Societal transformations require a renewal of our understanding of our humanity and setting flourishing of our highest human potential as the purpose and measure of progress.

SCHOOLS AS ARENAS FOR RECONSTRUCTING DEMOCRACY

If we aim at transformation and redefinition of democracy, who would be best suited for spearheading such a process? Already Karl Mannheim, the renowned German sociologist, in his wartime lectures in Britain, later collected and printed as Diagnosis of Our Time (1999), saw this potential in youth. Mannheim believed that if a society wished to be dynamic and make a new start, it would have to mobilize this dynamic human resource. Where Mannheim sees the promise, Stiglitz (2003, p. 316) warns us of the danger of failure to redeem it: If not given the opportunity to play its potential role as the spearhead of positive global transformations, the young

generation will, instead of spending their energies on reconstructing the world for themselves and their children, use them in destructive ways.

The very discontent of the young people with current democratic practices, referred to earlier on, is a token of their detachment from and lack of mental investment in the forms and processes promulgated by the prevalent views of democracy. This detachment, combined with the knowledge, idealism, and energy characterizing youth, as for instance demonstrated in connection with global climate issues, qualifies them, indeed, well in a process that involves radical and fundamental changes in the most established societal arrangements. Assuming that youth have the potential of a leading role in transforming democracy, who will guide them in realizing this latent capacity and in developing the self-image and skills needed for the task?

Considering where most youth spend the largest portion of their waking hours, the natural answer would be teachers at schools. An outsider to the educational system might well wonder why schools are not already doing this. Schools, in general, are in the business of reproduction and adaptation, not transformation. On the one hand, given the speed of change in society at large, schools find it difficult to keep abreast with it. On the other, the function of the educational system is seen to be producing well-polished cogs for the existing societal machinery, especially its economy, as a high level of education among a country's population will secure it a good position in the battle over pieces of the global market cake. Even in direct relation to the issue of democracy, schools are keen to familiarize students with the existing political system and have them join it, rather than try and get students to question it.

In other words, if schools are to act as spaces where young people can prepare to assume a role as champions of societal transformation, the educational system itself has to undergo a transformative change. Such a paradigm shift in the rationale of public education was heralded by small group of educational thinkers between the 1930s and the 1970s. They called their educational philosophy Reconstructionism, as they maintained, in the words of the leading figure among them, that a democratically empowered world civilization should be the central goal of education (Brameld, 1965). According to another prominent and earlier Reconstructionist, "The young generation should be offered a vision of the possibilities which lie ahead and endeavor to enlist their loyalties and enthusiasms in the realization of the vision. Also our social institutions and practices, all of them, should be critically examined in the light of such a vision" (Counts, 1978, p. 34).

A number of aspects of our national curricula and educational praxis, the world around, suffer from a strong streak of schizophrenia. With regard to the societally transformative potential of schools, we can see that, on the one hand, there are ideals and guidelines such as those embodied in the UNESCO formulation of

"Education for Global Citizenship" while, on the other, we can observe the consolidation of what Pasi Sahlberg (2016) has referred to as the destructive GERM (Global Educational Reform Movement), represented by the essentialist approach of PISA tables. This means that individual educators and schools can find justification for opposite positionings as to the central purpose and aims of education. Here, as elsewhere, holding on to dichotomies is fruitless. Much research, as well as abundance of educational experience, show that learning is at its best when it is holistic, i.e. cognitive aspects of engaging with new knowledge are optimized when that engagement is meaningful. From the opposite perspective, acting as a global transformative agent requires knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. After some 2500 years, we have to remind ourselves of the conclusion arrived at by Aristoteles that various forms of knowledge need to be integrated and balanced with each other, while they culminate in phronetic knowledge that guides us as moral agents in political settings.

LEADING SOCIALLY TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION

Aside from a fundamental philosophical orientation, a mode of education that could result in fostering young people as transformers of democracy and society, calls for some key educational processes and methods to be considered by those who wish to lead the young generation in realizing its perhaps most significant potential. A number of such means and methods will be briefly discussed below.

An essential aspect of any human activity involving choice is allocation of time. The amount of time we dedicate to an activity shows how important we consider it to be. As far as nurturing transformative agency is concerned, schools seem to treat time exactly opposite to what is required. On the one hand, youth has been made into a state of societal limbo. Teenagers in their best years are not expected to do anything else than accumulate knowledge divided into discreet school subjects, in order to be able to advance in the continuum of educational stages. School prepares for further school. In terms of any type of engagement with real societal phenomena, let alone a transformative approach to them, school students have to wait until they are older and have finished their studies. An interesting anecdotal example of this is the now world-famous Swedish school girl, Greta Thunberg, who was criticized for literally leaving the classroom and the formal educational settings to carry out her first climate change demonstration.

On the other hand, there are developmental and learning tasks that require a lot of time in way of reflection, metacognition, and even meditation. Some students need much more time than others to even learn the basics prescribed by school

curricula. Here, the mode of time allocation suddenly turns to the reverse. Not only is there no need to wait, any departure from the set speed of accumulating information is treated with alarm and as problematic. Teachers feel the invisible ghost of national target and international tables breathing in their necks and have to keep their students moving on at a set velocity to tick off all the required learning targets.

If schools are to be able to play their potential role as spaces for fostering transformative agents who can develop democracy, they need to reverse their allocation of time as well as their relationship to the surrounding social reality. They have to recognize the ability of young teens to act as societal change agents, and enable them to assume this important task, by organizing both the content and time frame of their curricula so as to prepare their students to initiate, maintain, and learn from small scale projects of social reconstruction in their local communities. Schools must also create enough room in their schedules for students to be able to reflect, ponder, and meditate, without stressing them with a feeling of hurry.

These conditions are among the many that should inform the mental and social environment of schools. Those involved in the life of a school would do well do realize that every school is a model society, a miniature world. In dialogical collaboration, teachers and students can formulate ethical guiding principles and learn modes of action that contribute to the further development of democratic practices within the world of the classroom and the school. Having experienced values of solidarity, appreciation of diversity, and justice and learned to live by them in the school environment, young people are well-equipped to promote these in new forms of democratic life outside the school.

A significant feature of a school culture conducive to the burgeoning of transformative agency is an atmosphere of experimentation, adventure, and discovery. As the great Estonian poet, Jaan Kross (2020), put it, every child is born with a Columbus spirit, intent on finding ways to new continents. By emphasizing right answers and stigmatizing mistakes, schools kill the natural tendency of young children to ask questions and to question the way the world is presented to them. Educational institutions tend to create in their students the misleading notion of the world being ready and them merely having to learn all the right answers and fit into the prevalent system. The truth, of course, is quite the contrary: the world is in the making, we do not have or at least are not practicing the right answers, and never in world history has there been such an urgent and colossal need for global transformations.

Interestingly, considering the well-recognized pace of change in most aspects of our lives, schools teach history as a subject but usually not future studies. To think of the future and, especially, to view the future as something formable that one can participate in creating is living a life with hope. Considering that humans are

essentially goal-oriented and purpose-seeking beings, hope is a necessary driving force for life. Indeed, medical studies show that people who have lost their hope die much earlier than their counterparts filled with hope. Hope can help release the transformative potential of a young person and guide her energies into constructive channels. The kind of regressive and extremist political movements we witness gathering strength all over democratically ruled Western countries, feed on people's lack of hope for a better future. When future looks bleak and uncertain, it is easy to become lured by the attraction of the "good old times".

Hope requires a positive and inviting image of the future, an inspiring vision. In this particular case, we are talking of a form of social imagination. There is, of course, an abundance of research on developing creativity in humans, in general, and children, in particular. Most commonly, creativity, innovation, imagination and the like are directed at designing new ways, developing new means or creating new tools. Seldom is our imagination turned towards ends and purposes, towards transformed societal states. And yet, that is exactly what is needed most badly. The young generations have to learn to envision unprecedented ways of organizing human societies and an image of a desirable global society. It is a process in which the rational, existential, ethical, and aesthetic are integrated into a rich and balanced view that calls to action for its realization.

We have never had a generation of people better positioned to transform the world. Our young people have all the required capabilities. They also have ideals. What they lack is worthy leadership. Let us not keep them waiting any longer!

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Support network of students with disabilities at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań during the COVID-19 pandemic: comprehensive report on qualitative research[1]

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of tis article is to analyse firstly the importance of support offered students with disabilities at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and secondly the impact of pandemic COVID-19 on the process of learning. This article consists of some of the material gathered during the interviews with peole responsible for giving support for students studying at AMU in the research: "Students with disabilities at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań during the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic: difficulties - support – solutions". We try to show the different difficulties experienced by students with disabilities during the pandemic and challanges placed before the supporters working at different Faculties and on the central level of AMU. Finally, we try to show some solutions already implemented and others wich are going to be implemented in short period of itme.

Keywords: support, students with disabilities, pandemic, difficulties, solutions

[1] The article is a part of the Report: *Students with disabilities at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań during the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic: difficulties - support – solutions*, under the management of prof. S. Banaszak. The research was carried out at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań in the years 2020/2021.

SUPPORTERS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ADAM MICKIEWICZ IN POZNAŃ: CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

The process of socio-political and economic transformation and the special situation during the COVID-19 pandemic, which takes place in Poland[2] and around the world[3], is widely reflected in various spheres of social life, both for entire groups and individual individuals[4]. The course of these processes and the changes that follow it, significantly influence the shaping of the consciousness of individuals related to the perception of their own life chances. The changes that are taking place made it possible to notice the threats faced by higher education of people with disabilities during the pandemic.

People with disabilities are a very diverse population with different accessibility needs. Higher education institutions are bound by civil rights law to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access, participation and opportunities to succeed in education as their non-disabled and neurotypical peers. Depending on the type of disability, a student with a disability may require support, such as taking notes, recording lectures, additional exam time and/or extended project deadlines, adapting projects / works, grading system tailored to the capabilities, specific settings in the classroom, support in cognitive processes or communication aids[5].

As a part of the project "Students with disabilities at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań during the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic: difficulties – support – solutions" interviews were conducted with people providing support to AMU students with disabilities. The research team has made very strong effort to reach out to every person responsible for providing support at different AMU

[2] Materials published by Polish Governemnt concering the influence of COVID-19 pandemic on different aspects of life of Poles: https://stat.gov.pl/en/covid/

[3] Pekhnyk A., Borzak J., *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the European economy: A first glance and long-term perspectives*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej w Poznaniu". 2020, t. 90, s. 13–27, nr 3 DOI: 10.26349/zn.wsb.w.poznaniu.0090.01 https://papers.wsb.poznan.pl/sites/papers.wsb.poznan.pl/files/ZN_WSB_P_ART/Pekhnyk_Borzak.pdf

[4] Materials published by United Nations concerning the influence of covid on social life of peole: https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/everyone-included-covid-19.html

[5] Meleo-Erwin Z. and others, *Online support information for students with disabilities in colleges and universities during the COVID-19 pandemic*, "Disability and Health Journal", vol. 14/1, 2021: https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S193665742030145X?casa_token=ivKmQUYI2UwAAAAA:hLMfCxBW2MUNq4ZCLpD1LwY1OLasLMQQmLKnjMsXXf331BF_KWI-bEeeYiyKb-Xu_kUx-cxH

structures. In individual cases, they did experience random situations (e.g. long term leave) or refusal to participate in research. The interviews were conducted with:

- Faculty Coordinators for Students with Disabilities,
- Departmental Coordinators for Cooperation with the Clinic of Human Development and Mental Support,
- Psychological Consultants for Difficulties in the Study Process,
- AMU Rector's Plenipotentiary for Psychological Support,
- Therapists of the AMU Clinic of Human Development and Mental Support,
- Support Office for People with Disabilities at Adam Mickiewicz University,
- Manager of the AMU Career Office,
- Employees of the Department of Physical Education and Sport at AMU.

During the interviews, issues related to the scope of duties, typical tasks, difficulties and successes experienced while performing the function at AMU during the pre-pandemic and after March 2020 were discussed. Each person was also asked about the challenges and threats for students with disabilities and mental difficulties experienced and reported by the students during period of remote education.

Firstly, we would like to show the kind of support is offered to students with disabilities, independently form COVID-19 pandemic.

MAIN FORMS OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AT AMU

University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań is one of the first in Poland to implement the strategy of the Open University for everyone, including people with disabilities (Strategy of accesability)[6]. Meeting the needs of this group, the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań offers a number of support services, including[7]:

- individual approach to each problem and help in solving them – students with disabilities are directed to The AMU Support Office for People with Disabilities,
- support of a learning assistant for a person with a disability, laboratory assistant, sign language interpreter: persons with disabilities can benefit from

[6] Strategy of Accesability at Amu https://amu.edu.pl/wiadomosci/aktualnosci/ogolnouniwersyteckie/strategia-uam-2020-2030

[7] Rutz A., et.all, *University accessible for all: guidebook for students with diasabilities,* http://international.amu.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/AMU-university-open-for-students-with-disabilities.pdf

support learning assistant[8]. The scope of the assistant's work covers only the support of the education process during studies and scientific activity of a person with a disability.

- support of a Psychological Consultant for Difficulties in the Study Process, the tasks of which are to implement support aimed at: effective learning and studying, overcoming barriers in studying resulting from cognitive or emotional-motivational difficulties, effective time management, coping with stress, incl. in exam situations, undertaking and realizing ambitious life challenges, satisfactory fulfillment in relationships with people.
- language courses for students/PhD students with sight and/or hearing disabilities at the Multimedial Studio for Learning Foreign Languages, which offers classes conducted by experienced teachers in small groups or individually. The main advantage of the course is the possibility of direct contact with the teacher or a teacher who works with a sign language interpreter;
- language courses for students/PhD students with cognitive difficulties: at the request of the Psychological Consultant for Difficulties in the Study Process, students with cognitive difficulties may obtain permission to increase the number of hours of the language course and take classes individually or in small groups.
- optional classes of practical Polish language learning for deaf or hard of hearing students: these classes are aimed at increasing linguistic skills in the field of text comprehension, writing, reading and strengthening linguistic competence in the field of practical use of the language in everyday communication situations. The knowledge gained on this course is primarily to be helpful in writing any final theses, tests or diploma theses.
- access to the resources of the Academic Digital Library for individuals with sight disabilities: As part of the The AMU Digital Library project, which is implemented by AMU in cooperation with over a dozen universities in the country, we provide access to collections of books and academic textbooks previously processed and adapted to a digital form that can be read in synthetic speech. People with visual disabilities can use computer workstations equipped with a scanner, as well as specialized screenreader and magnifying software that enable independent work for both blind and partially sighted people. In addition, libraries have enlargers to help people with very limited

[8] Students interested in such help independently select a person who will act as an assistant. An assistant can be a colleague or friend from the year, or another person indicated by the student. A family member of a disabled person may become an assistant only in justified cases.

vision read. This equipment enables independent and current use of library resources.

- adaptation of teaching materials,
- special scholarship for people with disabilities: for students and PhD students who have a valid degree certificate disability.
- Reasonable Adaptations (RD) of the education process tailored to the needs and abilities of a given person, which are entitled to every AMU student with a disability, who will receive the appropriate consent of the dean's authorities of his faculty. People with disabilities under RD may apply, inter alia, to: about: changing the way of participating in classes (e.g. by making up for overtime absences related to disability) or the right to the presence of a supporting person (assistant, sign language interpreter, etc.) during classes. The Reasonable Adaptations may also include changing the date and/or place of an examination, changing the organization of the examination session, extending the duration of the examination (by 50% of the basic time), changing the form of an examination (written/oral).
- sign language interpreter support: students can receive the support of a sign language interpreter during classes or rent some hearing aids - FM systems or portable inductive loops, which are a device compatible with various types of hearing aids, which additionally supports hearing. It can use it in lectures, exercises, or other study-related activities;
- a place in dormitories adapted to the needs of students with disabilities: all rooms meet the requirements for adaptation to the needs of people with disabilities, starting from an appropriate maneuvering area, through an adapted bathroom with toilet, furniture as required and intercom with visual signaling for the deaf;
- speech therapy classes;
- transport for students with disabilities: people with motor disabilities who, due to their health condition, are not able to use public transport on their own, may apply for transport services provided by AMU. People using this support are transported from their place of residence (for people living in the City of Poznań, and in justified cases up to 10 km outside the city's administrative borders) to the place where the classes included in the study plan are held;
- participation in the Adaptation Meeting for Students with Disabilities who are starting their studies;
- participation in Physical Education classes for people with disabilities, which are obligatory for first-year students, and in additional classes in the Sports Section of Adam Mickiewicz University Students with Disabilities: these

classes are characterized by various forms of individual exercises depending on the disease and disease entity. The advantage of the classes is an individual approach to the needs and psychophysical abilities of students;

- participation in training and sports and recreation camps, including the Summer School of English with elements of sailing, Winter Training Seminar, or in Integration Canoeing, Bicycle Rallies, etc. organized by the Office of Support for People with Disabilities and the Physical Education and Sports Study;
- UAM "Ad Astra" Disabled Students Association[9] is a student organization operating at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań. It works for students with disabilities by organizing numerous events, courses, trainings and trips. The Association works closely with the Office for Students with Disabilities.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSISTANCE AT AMU

The University offers various forms of psychological support for AMU students, doctoral students and employees. All of the groups can benefit from the support given by therapists form the Clinic of Human Development and Mental Support and assistance of Psychological Consultants for Difficulties in the Study Process, which are coordinated by the AMU Rector's Plenipotentiary for psychological support. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, psychological assistance was launched at the Faculty of Psychology and Cognitive Science, which offers help for AMU students and employees and their families, as well as volunteers helping in hospitals[10] and psychological workshops for employees and students[11]. Each person could have five sessions with therapist and attend different workshops concerning developing new habbits or coping with stress. A psychotherapist was also hired at the Faculty of Polish and Classical Studies, and psychological assistance for students in crises was launched at the Faculty of Educational Studies.

People interviewed underlined: "Now I have, and these are longer meetings with those who are in crisis, who need some strategy, some algorithm for getting out of a problematic situation, or developing some new habit of behaviour or learning

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9 https://amu.edu.pl/studenci/studenci-z-niepelnosprawnosciami/zrzeszenie-studentow-niepelnosprawnych-ad-astra

10 https://psychologia.amu.edu.pl/2020/05/29/potrzebujesz-emocjonalnego-wsparcia-i-pomocy-czekamy-na-ciebie/

11 http://psychologia.amu.edu.pl/2021/05/24/zapraszamy-na-warsztaty/

pattern because they are after some kind of crisis, difficulties from the previous semester" [R8][12]. Another person adds: "There are students with mental disorders, depression, borderline, anxiety disorders. Most often they are either already in therapy or I refer them to therapy so that they can find support for themselves somewhere. And in our clinic, or if it is within their organizational and financial reach, parents somehow support it, and I also support them in looking for a therapist" [R24].

1) **Psychological Consultants for Difficulties in the Study Process** offer help for both AMU students and staff[13].

Academic, administrative, library and technical staff may apply for consultations aimed at developing more effective work with students with disabilities, as well as with cognitive and mental difficulties. The work of Psychological Consultants, however, is mainly focused on providing help and support to students who experience difficulties in the study process. The support is aimed at overcoming barriers in the study process resulting from cognitive difficulties and at supporting the process of effective learning, managing one's own time, coping with stress, developing social competences and motivating oneself more effectively to act.

It is worth adding that originally only one person at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań was a Psychological Consultant. From May 2020, due to the very high demand for support in the study process, it was necessary to appoint another psychologist to provide this type of support for students. Currently, this function is performed by two psychologists, working full time.

2) **Clinic of Human Development and Mental Support** offers help in coping with various difficult life situations and in overcoming various psychological difficulties[14].

The Clinic employs two full-time psychotherapists. A psychiatrist and another therapist are employed only 35 hours a month. Each student or employee receives psychological help first, followed by psychiatric help if necessary. It is worth emphasizing that the Clinic has always struggled with the challenge of the availability of

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[12] Anonymised responder of the research – each time in brakets we note the number assigned to the intervied person.

[13] https://amu.edu.pl/studenci/Psychologiczny-konsultant-ds.-trudnosci-w-procesie-studiowania

[14] https://psychologia.amu.edu.pl/dla-studenta/wsparcie-psychologiczne-na-uam/

therapeutic help in a short time period for each person in need of support, due to the very high demand for this type of activities and the limited staff of the Clinic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this problem has become even more acute. In their activities, the Clinics support the "Ad Astra" Association and the Support Office for Persons with Disabilities and cooperate with department coordinators.

Other structures at AMU offering diffent kinds of help for students with diasabilities

The AMU Support Office for People with Disabilities[15] is a dynamically operating unit that supports students with disabilities on many levels. It cooperates with Rector's and Dean's Offices of AMU, Faculty Coordinators, Career Office, but also with the Clinic of Human Development and Mental Support and Psychological Consultants for Difficulties in the Study Process. People employed at this office secure the various and specific needs of students with disabilities. About 200 students use the services of the Office, with a total number of 700 students of AMU with disabilities (of which approx. 100-140 do not have a disability certificate or it is out of date).

The AMU Career Office[16], which has been existing since 1977, intensively cooperates with other structures at the University. Each year they organize academic job fairs, they have a wide range of internships, trainings and webinars. They also conduct individual advisory consultations. The AMU Career Office has qualified staff who is trained to cooperate with students with disabilities. It has modern communication tools that can facilitate contact with students with all sorts of difficulties. The AMU Career Office is not architecturally adapted to the needs of people with disabilities, however, it is possible to hold meetings in places accessible to all interested parties. Currently, the number of participants in events organized by the Careers Office has increased many times over the pre-pandemic period.

The AMU Department of Physical Education and Sport[17] supports students with disabilities with a wide range of activities, such as: physical education for people with health problems, swimming for people with disabilities and therapeutic gymnastics. These classes are carried out in small groups, adapted to the specific and

[15] https://amu.edu.pl/studenci/studenci-z-niepelnosprawnosciami/biuro-wsparcia-osob-z-niepelnosprawnosciami

[16] https://biurokarier.amu.edu.pl/strona-glowna

[17] https://swfis.amu.edu.pl/?page_id=43 https://amu.edu.pl/studenci/studenci-z-niepelnosprawnosciami/Sport-i-rekreacja-osob-z-niepelnosprawnosciami

diverse needs of students with disabilities. In addition, it offers additional classes in the Sports Section of AMU for Students with Disabilities and Integration Canoeing, Bicycle Rallies and many others.

THE ROLE OF FACULTY COORDINATORS

At each AMU Faculty, there is a designated Coordinator for Students with Disabilities[18] and a Coordinator for Cooperation with the Clinic of Human Development and Mental Support[19].

[18] Responsibilities of the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities are:
- assisting in the selection and giving opinions on rational adjustments to the proces education for students with disabilities (in agreement with the Support Office of People with Disabilities),
- close cooperation with the Support Office of People with Disabilities and reporting the needs of the department to the Support Office of People with Disabilities
- in the context of creating conditions for people with disabilities that can be financed from the students with disabilities support fund,
- assistance in recruiting teaching/laboratory assistants for people with disabilities or assistants-translators for people on the autism spectrum,
- participation in information meetings addressed to students and PhD students with disabilities,
- providing units with all information from the Support Office of People with Disabilities (about training for staff, surveys, activities for students, etc.),
- assist in contact with departmental computer scientists for assurance
- the availability of websites (including the submission of Support Office of People with Disabilities comments to the website),
- intermediation in creating accessible multimedia of a given unit (ie paying attention to providing multimedia with subtitles and extending it with audio description, Support Office of People with Disabilities provides assistance in creating accessible content).

[19] To the duties of the Faculty Coordinator for Cooperation with the Clinic of Human Development and Mental Support belong:
- Facilitating access to the Clinic by: informing interested persons about the offer of the Clinic, posting up-to-date information about the activities of the Clinic on the website of a given faculty, caring for the recognition of the Coordinator at the faculty and providing contact details.
- Responding to “emergencies and crises”by informing the Dean and the Clinic Team about the above-mentioned situations (e.g. life-threatening), following the Procedure developed by the Team
- The coordinator receives from the Clinic comprehensive support in the implementation of the entrusted tasks

It is worth saying, that at half of the Faculties, both functions are held by the same person, which certainly helps to coordinate help for particular student. At one of the Departments, the Coordinator for Students with Disabilities is a person from the Student Service Office.

It is worth emphasizing that Coordinators with longer experience pointed to the intensification of contacts with students with disabilities during the pandemic, while Coordinators with shorter experience often indicated little interest from students for needed support (they had no applications yet or had individual cases). This may indicate that people with longer experience have already developed strategies for reaching to and maintaining contact / supporting students with disabilities.

MAIN RISKS OF STUDYING DURING A PANDEMIC PERIOD

Coordinators emphasized that attention should be paid to the smooth border of providing support, because during the pandemic, people who do not have a disability certificate and experience various mental health problems and difficulties in the process of studying during the pandemic started asking for support. Coordinators emphasized that students often did not disclose the problems they experienced on time, did not inform lecturers and coordinators, and therefore they were left alone with them. The effect of this is that support is often provided late, and students' problems and difficulties increase. The probable reason is the inability to find information about the support by students without disability certificates, who do not participate in information meetings dedicated to students with disabilities. It is worth noting, however, that some coordinators emphasized that in a pandemic situation, students with disabilities more often look for support on their own and know where they can get it. This situation may result from the fact that students with disabilities are better informed (e.g. at specially organized, dedicated meetings) about the possibility of obtaining support at AMU[20].

Moreover, the Coordinators also emphasized that during the pandemic the mental difficulties of students worsened. Many students are currently in crisis, experience

- Readiness to listen and inform students and employees about the possibility of using the help of the Clinic, who: want to report that something disturbing is going on with another student or an employee, want to talk about their difficult situation.
- The coordinator supports students using the help of the Clinic in dealing with the necessary administrative matters related to the Studies.

[20] Each student with a disability at AMU has the opportunity to participate in meetings informing about the support available and places providing suport.

internal barriers and difficulties with everyday functioning. It causes the emergence and growth of mental crises the situation of closure during a pandemic, the transition to teaching and remote relationships, but also due to the largely limited role of peer support. Significantly, the number of parents of adult students, who report to the Coordinators for support for their children, has also increased. This situation was described by the examined person as follows: "Well, their character has changed a bit, because they also apply to this situation of isolation and concern the situation of contact through electronic media, that is through Teams, actually with the world of other people. Often these are people who they are outside Poznań, outside a large center [...] but really also has no contact with other students or faculty other than through Teams. So it is in my opinion, I mean in my personal opinion it is a very big source of difficulty for many students. Probably there is a group of students who do not mind this, and maybe there are some who somehow serve it, [...] but those who apply also often report [...] that it all happens this way. just remotely, it affects the well-being, the structure of time, the structure of the day, because ... And that, in effect, it also leads to such increased difficulties in motivating, lowering the mood and motivation to study. So there really is more stress sure, this stress build-up" [R8].

Therefore, in the event of a pandemic, the role of empathy in the contacts Coordinator – student and student – student has increased significantly. The needs most frequently reported by students to the coordinators asking for support were requests for: assistance in receiving RD (Rational Adjustment), IOS (Individual Organisation of Studies) and session extension, support of a teaching assistant, support in completing formalities (e.g. scholarships, awards), mediation between students and lecturers, increasing the awareness of the specificity of disability by lecturers and administration employees, support in maintaining/increasing motivation to remote learning.

Students with disabilities, as indicated by the Coordinators, during remote classes on the Microsoft Teams platform, they are invisible, inactive. They often have trouble asking for help, making it difficult to reach them with support. A very important aspect of the talks was that the Coordinators drew attention to the problem of the increased number of reports that they received and receive from lecturers in order to obtain help in supporting their students with difficulties and/or disabilities.

The conclusion that was repeatedly made by the Coordinators and other people with whom the interviews were conducted: "What could we offer in class, or what lecturers and academic teachers can offer to students during classes, it really helps most students, not only those students," who have mental difficulties, some serious and chronic. In fact, every student, if he knows what the credit conditions are, if he has access to information on a regular basis, if he has a clear structure of classes, it helps students" [R12]. And "there were also a lot of drivers with all sorts

of dilemmas. And I have a feeling that this is where the lecturers come for some knowledge, for some kind of orientation, who have a certain level of sensitivity, but there are a whole lot of people who do not have a dilemma with this and will not do much about it. I really have a feeling that the university could require from doctoral students and teachers to train in the field of atypical students, so that if something like a certain etiquette, such as a certain kind of sensitivity, should not only be left to whether someone has it or someone else there is no such thing, only it should be, how to say, as standard, just as we have to learn didactics" [R15].

CHALLENGES FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT AND ASSISTANCE GIVET AT AMU

It is worth paying attention to an aspect of support, which turned out to be critical, especially in a pandemic: providing mental health support for students with disabilities. The demand for mental health services has far exceeded the capacity to provide these services: the waiting time of college/university students for mental health support has increased significantly, and clinic staff is now overburdened with many applications not only from students but also from faculty staff. People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to the many psychological consequences of a pandemic, such as disturbed routine, inactivity and a lack of support networks, as well as stress and fear of contracting or a general lack of understanding of the pandemic and its limitations. These consequences can cause anxiety, anger, stress and agitation and lead to an increased risk of depression and suicide attempts. Faced with an unknown situation, the pandemic, a common source of stress in the context of a pandemic, could have an even greater impact for students with cognitive disabilities, who increasingly report their needs to faculty and university administration. As Maciver D. et al. note, young people with disabilities generally do better when their routine and supportive environment is maintained, which includes educational settings as well[21]. However, the transition to distance learning, forced by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, disrupted the regular functioning of universities, and the facilities made available so far for people with disabilities have been made difficult. Preliminary data obtained from the presented Report also suggest that students with cognitive difficulties have had and still have difficulties adapting to the new format of conducting the courses and the new expectations related to it.

[21] Maciver D., Hunter C., Adamson A., Grayson K., Forsyth K., McLeod I., *Supporting successful inclusive practices for learners with disabilities in high schools: a multisite, mixed method collective case study*, Disabil Rehabilitation, 40 (14) (2018), s. 1708–1717.

Intervied AMU staff strongy ephasised:

- Very high demand for support (the number of applications increased significantly in a pandemic), students in the pandemic were deprived of social relations, peer support, which significantly exacerbated various difficulties. The respondents said: "On the one hand, yes, I have the impression that there are more of these applications and I think that remote teaching is conducive to this, because the student does not have to show face to face. We don't have to meet. He just needs to write an email. Earlier, even if they knew that they could contact me by e-mail, it was as if knowing that they might meet me in the corridor could intimidate them. And now I have the impression that the fact that we are remote, that we do not see each other, that this contact is so mediated, after all, because this computer separates us somewhere or creates a barrier that allows them to feel more anonymous, makes these students have greater ease. Even to this extent, if it is not about any specific support, then even to the extent that I observe even in my exercise groups, students explain or argue their absence from classes by giving such very specific arguments. For example, that my mother had a hysterical attack at home. This is also an example from my experience from last week and they were waiting for the emergency room and at that time the student had classes with me and he couldn't be there because he wouldn't be able to function in those classes. So I have the feeling that this pandemic has made me not sure if it is because the pandemic caused these problems to worsen or if the pandemic caused the students to have more courage to share these problems" [R3].
- Currently, work consists of providing support in overcoming cognitive and emotional barriers in studying, building motivation, effective time management, coping with stress, developing social competences and methods of effective learning.
- Very often problems of students with disabilities as well with social and cognitive difficulties accumulate through relationship deficits. Students themselves have to deal with their own limitations. Tension, low mood all the more affect the motivation to learn, coping with stress and various internal barriers. Students were deprived of experiencing the fact that others were also stressed, nervous, did not understand the material or did not know how to do something – before the pandemic, this type of information was received through peer contact. Students perceived different situations differently back then. Nowadays, they often live under the false belief that only they do not know that they are the only ones stressed by something, which causes an underestimation of their own abilities and achievements.

Employees of the Clinic of Human Development and Mental Support strongly emphasized two threats that had intensified during the pandemic:

- growing demand for support: the number of applications has been systematically doubling since 2018. For example, from September 2020 to December 2020 – 180 new people volunteered for help; and in January 2021 with 142 people. The clinic currently supports professional therapeutic assistance from 50 AMU employees). The number of AMU students and employees waiting for psychological and psychiatric help is constantly growing dynamically.
- during a pandemic, there are many more reports from parents who are concerned about their children's health and seek help from the University.

The Office for Support of People with Disabilities indicated the following threats:

- Greater demand for assistants of the hearing impaired, taking notes. The reason is the poor audibility of lecturers during remote classes.
- Difficulties reported by deaf people: some of the speakers do not turn on the camera or their face is difficult to see (eg due to improper lighting). This is a serious handicap for lip readers.
- Difficulties reported by blind people – lecturers they do not share notes, materials for the purpose of adapting tchem to the student's disability. A frequent problem is also the maladjustment of the test or other form of examination to the student's disability.
- Greater demand for assistants for people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. This is related to, inter alia, with the necessity to use many IT tools (login processes, use of functionalities).
- The need for a more friendly organization of exams for people with disabilities – adjusted to the difficulties experienced by the student individually: longer examination time; postponing the examination date to the next day, if the student has already had an exam on that day.
- The most important challenges in the area of cooperation: preparation for the full implementation of architectural and IT accessibility and for crisis situations related to the emotionality of students
- The very important role of the Faculty Coordinators, who in an effective and friendly way reached an agreement with individual lecturers.
- It is therefore important to implement emotional crisis management procedures and to care for students diagnosed with the autism spectrum (the need to implement measures in the area of crisis intervention, including building awareness of the first symptoms of crisis).

PANDEMIC SUPPORT: PROPOSED CHANGES TO SUPPORT DELIVERY

With regard to the postulated changes in the scope of support for students with disabilities, the most urgent need was:

- providing students with disabilities of recordings and materials from classes in an online form, the possibility of participating in classes in an online form;
- increasing the number of training courses at faculties tailored to the specificity of the field of study and disability for lecturers, students and administration employees (Student Service Office): "Now, when are these remote classes, I realize that there is a need to emphasize it, too, how to organize this remote work. So, in general, I think it would be useful to make it so precise, even to specify it, because sometimes it seems to me that lecturers, if they have an assortment of specific tools, virtual ones, what they can use and what it could look like, it's just that they can choose something easier for themselves. It's easier for them to take advantage of it. Well, such a barrier consists in the fact that you have to register somewhere, see how it works, find out for yourself whether it works or not, that it just means that many people do not use it, but if it is to show some examples, even that could be very, as if it would work on the lecturers' imagination, right? Are employees, that is, academic teachers more broadly" [R27].
- the need for a psychologist in each department. Coordinators indicated that it would be best if it was a person from outside AMU, not conducting classes with students.
- increasing the number of therapists and psychiatrists employed full-time at the Clinic of Human Development and Mental Support. The need for action in this area is influenced by the situation of a significant increase in applications for support both among AMU students and lecturers.
- support in the preparation of tools for exams dedicated to students with specific difficulties in studying (adapting the tools to the needs of students).
- promoting institutions that, within AMU, support students in mental crisis.
- training of staff and students in conducting online meetings, building individual contact, adjusting work to needs and opportunities for employees and students, motivating, managing a remote team.

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES AT AMU IN TERMS OF SUPPORTING STUDENTS (NOT ONLY) DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC[22]

In terms of supporting students with disabilities, many respondents noted the improvement in access to Student Service Office, lecturers and other supporters at the time of launching online contacts during the pandemic. The main points indicated were simplified online formalities and no need to travel to the university. People interviewed emphasized the activities and initiatives taken at individual Departments in the field of good practices that go beyond standard activities. It is possible that since then other measures have been taken to support students with disabilities and mental difficulties.

Faculty of Modern Languages:

- TELL Initiative – support for students and lecturers of philology; in the form of individual meetings and workshops in the field of managing emotions and motivation, how to learn effectively. The team has been operating since 2018, and has already supported over 212 students[23].

Faculty of Polish and Classical Philology:

- free psychological assistance, remote and direct (difficulties: with learning, with family and social relations, with the mood and emotions, with depression and anxiety, with sleep disorders and nutrition resulting from the situation related to the COVID-19 pandemic),
- TELL Learning Techniques (for foreign language students individually agreed support in the course of study, diagnosis, adaptation of the study process)
- Trainings for students on motivation for distance learning.

Faculty of Psychology and Cognitive Science:

- Psychological support team for employees / checks and students of AMU and volunteers working in hospitals in Poznań (free support up to 1 hour, 5 meetings per semester); interpersonal skills workshops for employees[24]
- Workshops organized by 4th and 5th year students for students as part of psychological support: "Tools for working with automatic thoughts and time

[22] The list includes an original selection from a collection of numerous good practices taking place at all faculties of the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań.

[23] https://tell.amu.edu.pl/

[24] https://psychologia.amu.edu.pl/2020/05/29/potrzebujesz-emocjonalnego-wsparcia-i-pomocy-czekamy-na-ciebie/

organization", "How not to go crazy on a remote?", "Communicating with others")[25]
- Financing of psychiatric assistance for students in a difficult financial situation from the WPIK's own resources.

Faculty of Educational Studies:
- Psychological consultations (crisis intervention, redirection to Clinic of Human Development and Mental Support)[26].

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The current COVID-19 crisis has been repeatedly described by commentators and politicians as "unprecedented times". Such a framework, though perhaps overused at this point, is accurate because the world has not seen a pandemic of this magnitude in over a century. However, COVID-19 explained that the effects of an unprecedented, contagious disease are fundamentally linked and compounded by inequalities in "unprecedented times." It can already be seen that the epidemic has concentrated already existing problems. Marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, among others, faced the most severe negative consequences of this pandemic, largely due to health, education and employment disparities. That is why it is so important to develop recommendations for the current and future situation of students with disabilities, their lecturers and university administration, which will enable, in a critical situation, which undoubtedly turned out to be the current pandemic, to take immediate and targeted measures to improve the quality of education, and thus also the quality of life of students with disabilities. We must remember that the failure to provide such resources for both students with disabilities and lecturers constitutes a lack of equality and justice in higher education, and hence a restriction of legally regulated civil liberties.

[25] https://psychologia.amu.edu.pl/2021/05/05/warsztaty-umiejetnosci-interpersonalnych-zaproszenie-dla-studentow/

[26] https://wse.amu.edu.pl/dla-studenta/pomoc-materialna/zespolu-psychologow

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Anti-social and destructive (organisational) cultures and individuals – and what to do about it

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ABSTRACT:

In essence, culture is about a common narrative. It is not the simple sum of daily, very concrete answers to very concrete situations, but first and foremost the meta-philosophical answers to fundamental questions about man, the other and the world. This also means that culture represents the sum of values, norms and attitudes within a community. Culture therefore acts as a filter through which group members perceive reality, the glasses through which group members see and interpret life. Culture as the identity of a group is a very well-known phenomenon, but it is always described as a positive thing or at least neutral: social cohesion and prototypicality. What about the negative side of group culture, as the phenomena of social pressure (incentives, but also sanctions, risk of scapegoating and ostracism), in-group versus out-group, we-against-them-thinking, bullying, the culture of silence, professional minimalism and sabotage? In such cases, one speaks of a 'toxic' organisational culture. In this article we look at the phenomena of ideological thinking and the inefficient and ineffective culture to define the opposition between an open and a closed culture. On the level of the group we oppose the failing organisation to a culture of responsibility. The article ends with some suggestions to combat anti-social and destructive cultures and individuals within it.

Keywords: Toxic culture, ideological thinking, culture of responsibility

TALKING ABOUT CULTURE

In essence, culture is about a common narrative. It is not the simple sum of daily, very concrete answers to very concrete situations, but first and foremost the meta-philosophical answers to fundamental questions about man, the other and the world. It can be defined as "the sum of beliefs that an organisation has developed in the course of its history in order to deal with the problem of internal integration – cohesion – and that of external adaptation – survival. It is the sum of the rules – do's and don'ts – that function so well that they become unwritten rules and are passed on to each succeeding generation as being the right way of thinking, feeling and acting" (Doppler & Lauterburg, 1996). So, culture is the enduring body of fundamental beliefs that underpins the way people live together (cooperate) within a group, an organisation (company) or a society. Culture is an important part of the social capital of the group/ organisation, which can be defined as "the goodwill that comes from the fabric of social relationships and that can be mobilised to facilitate action" (Adler & Kwon, 2002). It is called to be the DNA of a group or organisation. We thus apply an anthropological definition: culture as a way of life and a way of understanding the world (worldview and human view) (Ekerwald, in Kalekin-Fishman, 1998).

This also means that culture represents the sum of values, norms and attitudes within a community. An organisational culture is therefore a complex whole of intangible, non-measurable, vague immaterialities within the group or organisation, such as the management style, the organisational philosophy (vision), the basic goals (mission), the strategy, the values, the principles behind rewarding and sanctioning, the rules, communication, the architecture and layout of buildings, the logo, the organisation of social activities, the rituals, etc. (Doppler & Lauterburg).

In addition, Foucault (1975 & 1983-1984; Fraser, 1981; Hartsock, 1989; Widder, 2004; Gutting, 2005) and other post-structuralist philosophers point out that it is precisely the discourse – including opinions and arguments – that is the place where a specific story is accepted as the official and prevailing narrative. Which means that this is the heart of organisational culture and that all other narratives become 'deviant', albeit that this process is a never-ending dynamic. It is here, then, that power is established and implemented. As the left-wing thinker Gramsci states about power: ultimately, power is about ideas, namely the ability to impose one's own opinions and visions (cultural hegemony). Thus, identification of an individual with his or her organisation implies identification with the official narrative and discourse that is 'in power'.

Culture therefore acts as a filter through which group members perceive reality, the glasses through which group members see and interpret life. Culture determines

the thinking, feeling, judging, deciding, and acting of the group members, whereby social cohesion and social pressure, including both rewards and sanctions, try to keep the group members within the boundaries of the culture. Culture thus encompasses cognitive, affective and active aspects of community life, both consciously and unconsciously. And especially unconsciously. Thus, our subject is not only subject to psychology, group dynamics or sociology, but first and foremost of ethics.

Within an organisation there is not and never has been only one culture, namely the formal organisational culture. At least, the organisation, departments, and informal groups each have their own version of the formal organisation culture. In some cases, this deviates considerably from the formal organisational culture, and one can speak of a deviant (sub-)group culture. However, theoretically the term 'deviant' leaves it open whether or not this informal group culture stands for acceptable, responsible, behaviour from an ethical point of view. But there is no doubt that in quite a few cases, known as corruption and fraud, there is indeed a subculture that is ethically unacceptable, even when situated within a very ethical formal organisational culture.

The notion of a strong versus weak group/organizational culture expresses the strength and certainty of the group/organization about the official narrative and discourse, which determines the space allocated to alternative or different opinions, narratives and discourses, so to discussion and deviation: the 'cultural standard deviation' (Siebens, 2004). "Culture strength is the degree of accordance between the members of an organization about the importance of specific values. If there is consensus on the importance, the culture is strong and coherent; in case of small consensus the culture is weak." (Arogyaswamy & Byles, 1987) It may be clear that an autocratic leadership and regime will be supported by a strong discourse and culture, which do not leave much room for cultural (or otherwise) deviation. With this, we must conclude that having a discourse, even open and argumentative, is not enough in itself for having a democratic and open group/organisational culture. Is it a strong and closed (i.e. ideological) discourse, or is it a discourse that leaves room for alternative discourses, doubts and open discussion?

As for such a substantive categorisation of cultures, research leads to the conclusion that there are as many systems as there are researchers and thinkers: primary versus secondary, Gesellschaft versus Gemeinschaft (Tönnies, 1926), socio-group versus psyche-group (Jennings, 1943), formal versus informal, in-group versus out-group, reference group and not, weak versus strong. At the end of the last century, Miller (1984) and Kitayama and Markus (1991) made the illuminating distinction between action-oriented ('agentic') and holistic cultures, which in this case offers us a deeper insight into the basic philosophical assumptions of a culture:

the action-oriented culture is primarily self-oriented; the holistic culture is primarily community- or environment-oriented. Action-oriented cultures, including Western European and North American ones, view the individual as the crux of society. Situations are presented, analysed, and judged from the actions of individuals. The individual person is seen as strongly acting and that is how he also sees himself. Freedom of action, responsibility for one's own behaviour and for one's own situation are basic ideas. Those who work hard deserve success and wealth; those who fall into unemployment, poverty and all kinds of problems are themselves to blame. In contrast, holistic cultures, such as East Asian or Indian, start from the basic idea that the individual is a link in a wider group and society. The individual human being is rooted in his living (/working) community, is embedded in social relationships and knows the well-being of his community as the ultimate meaning (common good). Cooper (2007) differentiates both types of culture with the terms 'independence' and 'interdependence' or 'interconnectedness'.

'NEGATIVE' CULTURE

Culture as the identity of a group is a very well-known phenomenon. But it is always described as a positive thing or at least neutral: social cohesion and prototypicality. What about the negative side of group culture, as the phenomena of social pressure (incentives, but also sanctions, risk of scapegoating and ostracism), in-group versus out-group, we-against-them-thinking, bullying, the culture of silence, professional minimalism and sabotage? In such cases, one speaks of a 'toxic' organisational culture because the negativity of the attitude of a single person or a few group members strongly reflects on the others. In a broader context, one speaks of the phenomenon of the 'escalating drama spiral' (Caponecchia & Wyatt, 2011) or the 'ethics degeneration law' (Dekker in Enderle, 1990). Irresponsible behaviour, however much an individual act or attitude, is thus always also a group dimension: it also is the consequence of the culture of the group or organization, and it influences in its term the group culture in the wrong, namely irresponsible, direction. According to Kets de Vries (2012), any misfit between the individual and the organisational culture – let alone a fit between a neurotic individual and a neurotic organisation – will cause problems for one or both. Only the 'authentic' organisation, in which a healthy individual personality goes together with a healthy organisational culture, will be effective and successful.

Despite their clear reciprocal relationship and the influence of group culture on the responsible and irresponsible actions of individual group members, the scientific discipline of ethics has paid increasing attention to positive, constructive,

responsible behaviour: what is responsible behaviour and responsibility tout-court, how can we teach and encourage responsible behaviour? Yet, as is often the case in social and societal phenomena, the study of situations where things go wrong is more interesting. It is difficult to define Good, but by studying and defining Evil – which is much clearer and simpler – we can. So, we will turn our attention to the culture and actions that fail to live up to a minimum minimorum of responsibility. It will help us to define a culture of responsibility.

(1)

The influence, even pressure from group/organisational culture to individual group member finds insight in Arendt's famous analysis of authoritarian/totalitarian regimes. Although in On the Origins of Totalitarianism (1951) Arendt clearly focuses on nation-states and political regimes, the structures, systems, and processes that she exposes are readily applicable to the small scale of the organisation. Arendt's analysis focuses on two striking characteristics in both political regimes: totalitarianism, which is characterised by ideological thinking. According to Arendt both regimes are characterised by among other authoritarian leadership, destruction of the individuality ('singularity') of the group members, atomisation with simultaneous massification of the nameless individuals, terror of the individual citizens in order to force them to accept the official ideology, the 'Gleichschaltung', strong centralisation of the power of decision with a reduction of participation, dismantling of old structures and customs (including traditional morality), strong polarisation with an emphasis on internal and external scapegoats (including we-against-them thinking and conspiracy theories). For Friedrich and Brzezinski (1956), totalitarianism has five conditions: an official ideology, the monopoly of a few and their party, the government controls all weapons, control of all mass communication, control by terrorising police and centralised economic administration. Linz (2000) defines totalitarianism according to three characteristics: limited pluralism, no political mobilisation of the masses in the sense of political opposition and unlimited appropriation of power by a small group of leaders. In any case, freedom to think and speak autonomously and critically is suppressed. All citizens are expected to conform in behaviour and thought to the official philosophy of those in power, what is bringing up the phenomena of ideological thinking, manipulation and indoctrination annex 'fake news', 'alternative facts' and 'facts-free opinions'.

It is also characteristic of totalitarianism that the atomisation, massification and 'Gleichschaltung' of all citizens goes hand in hand with a small group for whom all this does not apply, on the contrary. Around the leader figure, a small entourage is always formed (family, friends, supporting financiers and business managers, and so

on) who can afford just about everything materially, financially, and legally: privileges. An 'us-knows-us' climate around the leader leads to favouritism, nepotism and ultimately corruption. Their mutual solidarity and loyalty are rooted in the need to survive: the leader relies on the entourage for power, the members of the entourage rely on the leader to secure their privileges, deviant behaviour, and lifestyle. The latter creates the typical affirmative nod of this persons towards the leader, who ends up this way in a virtual reality. Often, it is exactly the fact that the political elite of the country is swimming in wealth while the mass of citizens has to put up with poor living conditions, an economic crisis situation, oppression and hopelessness that ultimately brings down the leader and his entourage.

It turns out that also in a figurative sense it is possible to have within a single organisation a regime that has the characteristics of the political regime totalitarianism. Both formal (e.g. a CEO) and informal (e.g. a head of department, informal leader of a subgroup such as a team) leaders can develop a totalitarian culture around themselves, in which only a small entourage of people who support them have access to some privileges that go against the formal values, norms, and rules (culture) of the organisation. In some cases, this leads to 'upwards employee hostility' (Camps, 2015), in an attempt to get rid of a formal leader of integrity and of investigations.

(2)

Borowski (2017) emphasises total control (a so-called 'structural' approach) and thus total submission. In essence, totalitarianism, as a way of thinking and as a regime, can be summed up in four characteristic words: ideology, extreme (total), control (coercion) and thoughtlessness (by the group members). With Parsons (1952) ideology can be understood as "a system of beliefs, held in common by the members of a collectivity, i.e. a society, or a sub-collectivity of one – including a movement deviant from the main culture of the society – a system of ideas which is oriented to the evaluative integration of the collectivity, by interpretation of the empirical nature of the collectivity and the situation in which it is placed, the processes by which it has developed to its given state, the goals to which its members are collectively oriented, and their relation to the future course of events". Zmigrod (2019) also regards ideology very broadly as the 'narrative' of a group (organisation, society) in which human activity is described and prescribed, acquires meaning and purpose and thus builds social cohesion and community. For van den Enden (1966), it is therefore a belief/disbelief system: a set of beliefs, values and norms that are recognised as true and valid by the group and of what the group considers false and invalid. These descriptions coincide with our description of (group or organisation) culture.

Zmigrod (2020) therefore it as “a style of thinking that is rigid in its adherence to a doctrine and resistance to evidence-based belief-updating, and favourably-oriented towards an ingroup and antagonistic to outgroups”. So he does not emphasise the content of the ideology, but rather what it does, how it works. Its characteristics are: simple(istic) hypotheses and reasoning, subjective selection of knowledge and information (what ‘fits the bill’), strong striving for certainty, rigidity, dogmatism and absolutism, strong group affinity, short-term thinking. When ideological thinking degenerates into outright conspiracy thinking, it provides itself, as it were, with ‘antibodies’ against any form of counterargument, debunking or refuting evidence. According to Le Yaouanq (2018), uncertain or disputable arguments are insufficient in any case. During the Covid-19 pandemic, reasoning by deniers and anti-vaxx movements is strongly inspired by ‘motivated reasoning’: what does not fit into the predetermined motivation and schema is qualified or denied, what does fit is overexposed (‘confirmation bias’). This makes it very difficult indeed to dissuade ideologically-minded people or movements from doing so by means of information, scientific knowledge, cognitive argumentation, and discussion. Although ideology is essentially intended to offer certainty, it thus thrives on ambiguity, which allows reality to be massaged in the direction of one’s own ideological position. According to Le Yaouanq, the underlying driving force is the interests of the persons concerned. It leaves room for contradictory information and arguments to be interpreted as affirmative after all, which helps to undo the experienced cognitive discrepancy and affective dissonance.

When we go through the characteristics of ideological thinking one common thread emerges: it is a culture in which short-sighted self-interest of group/organisation and/or leader comes first and dominates all other needs and interests. This short-sightedness can be defined by four characteristics: (1) a restriction on the number of stakeholders whose concerns are taken into account, (2) a restriction on the time frame (short-term thinking) in which (possibly harmful) consequences are taken into account, (3) a restriction of the scope of the discussion to only well-defined issues or perspectives (Siebens, 2020a), and (4) a restriction of the scope of the discussion to well-defined alternative options (Jeske, 2018). Short-sightedness leads to incomplete information, imperfect insights, analyses, restricted and therefore impaired decisions.

Ideology essentially fulfils important social functions, both in a positive and a negative sense. On the positive side, it gives those involved clarity and certainty. Those who are uncertain (politically, economically and/or socially) are therefore more susceptible to ideological thinking. In addition, ideology is the binding agent in a group, not to say that it is the essential group-forming element. In other words, it is the ideology,

the shared values, opinions, and norms that make the group a group. Without the ideology, there is no group because there are no shared values, beliefs, and standards. That identity is predetermined for the individual; the individual inherits the identity as a social identity within the group, a 'basic personality type' (Linton, 1945) or prototype of the group member (prototypicality). In addition, the ideology functions as a reinforcement and direction for the group members' intentions to act. This means that ideology has not only a cognitive and an affective, but also an active component. At the same time, this positive function of social cohesion also entails the negative functions of social control, sanctioning and possibly exclusion. Ideology, in its strong affirmation of well-defined basic dogmas as absolute answers, also determines who is 'in' and who is 'out'. Thinking in these categories inevitably leads to a clear-cut us-versus-them mentality and to closed frames of mind. The ideology functions in a descriptive, interpretive, normative, evaluative, and corrective (sanctioning) way ... thus regulating and stabilising the group, functioning as the conscience of the individual group member (being the second voice in the two-in-one dialogue of Socrates). Ideological thinking, therefore, stands for thinking based on hard differentiations between the in-group and its culture (basic beliefs, values, norms) with its firm conviction of its own rightness on the one hand and the outside world, which stands for misconceptions and threats to the uniqueness of the group, on the other hand.

(3)
Three types of culture (or a combination of them) therefore appear to be a clear incentive for inefficient and ineffective, even immoral, action (De Leeuw, Jeurissen, Kannekens, Kaptein & van Luijk, 1996):

1. An opportunistic culture: encouraging immoral behaviour because of the lack of clarity about what is expected from employees. This is due to a lack of rules, norms, and clear, unambiguous communication within a vague and weak culture.
2. An individualistic culture: stating that everyone is on their own. Internal competition prevails.
3. A closed culture: providing no opportunity to talk about expectations, norms, and criticism.

The negative effect of such a culture on the attitudes and behaviour of the individual group member is both the cause and the consequence of a process in which antisocial and destructive, i.e. irresponsible, group members take control of the entire group/organisation. This process is referred to as 'toxicity'.

Here, too, many elements play a role (Siebens, 2020b). In addition to genetics, environmental factors, education and peer pressure specific personal 'personality

traits' often play a role. Extensive studies during decades have revealed four basic personality characteristics that directly lead to anti-social and destructive, thus irresponsible behaviour: together their extreme has been called the 'Dark Personality'. Extensive research shows a set of four psychic aberrations, which are strongly related to each other: psychopathy, Machiavellianism, sadism, and narcissism. Psychopathy: lack of affective empathy (see below). Machiavellianism: exaggerated lust for personal power and control. Everyday sadism: lack of attention for the suffering one inflicts on others, even creating some pleasure in it, with 'Schadenfreude' being its most important manifestation. Narcissism: exaggerated sense of self-worth and self-centredness (egocentricity). Although each of these four abnormalities stands for a specific psychological disorder, they strongly evoke each other (strong to very strong Pearson correlations). After all, someone who is excessively self-centred (narcissism) will feel no empathy (psychopathy) and will care little about what happens to the other through his decisions and actions (sadism), defending and strengthening his own position (Machiavellianism). From each of the four disorders, the narrative brings us to the other three. In practice, therefore, a person with a 'dark personality' has characteristics of all four, although there will always be one which stands out most and which is, as it were, the entrance door to the whole of the deviations of the dark personality. In addition, a crucial criterion is that what happens, is not simply an incidental occurrence. It is a question of systematic, recurring behaviour over a longer period of time. However, these traits are not always consistently strong. Thus, the description 'with a tendency to psychopathic, sadistic, narcissistic, or Machiavellian, in short "dark" traits' is more appropriate.

The question remains as to what exactly makes such culture and behaviour ethically negative. The analyses show one and the same element recurring: ego-logica (Lévinas, 1961).

CLOSED VERSUS OPEN CULTURE

But, how to call an attitude contrary to thoughtlessness and its characteristic features of superficiality, lack of (self-)critical sense, short-sightedness, indifference, blindness, ignorance and unawareness, stupidity, impulsivity, relativism and nihilism? We can outline a contrast between self-centredness and openness. It's our hypothesis that the characteristic of openness to others, to the environment, to the impact on future generations etcetera, thus to other stakeholders is the ultimate general characteristic. The continuum between 'ego-logica' (Lévinas, 1961) on the one hand and the 'erweiterten Denkungsart' (Kant, 1790 & 1793) on the other

hand runs parallel to the continuum of closed/open culture. Costa and McCrae (1997) do not offer a fully-fledged definition of openness, but their research is full of descriptions: open individuals love new ideas, they want new experiences (feeling, tasting, smelling, ...), have an intrinsic motivation for new things (active curiosity), have a strong imagination, reflect on their basic beliefs and dare to adjust them, they love complexity, alternative options and do not shy away from change, they are tolerant and somewhat ambiguous (in the sense of complex), their thinking is divergent and rich, they experience things very consciously and intensely, are very open to the opinions of others and are therefore not or even anti-authoritarian, question authority, love to argue, question social and moral conventions and have a high level of ethical development (autonomous thinking), are fascinated by the non-familiar and the dissonant. And there is also such a thing as openness to the common good that transcends all these individual narratives and unites them or at least puts them on an equal footing. Jeske (2018) draws the following lessons concerning an open culture from her analysis of 'the evil within':

- We need to pay attention to the possible 'biases' that can influence our thinking and judgements, meaning we must be critical of our own narrative. Thus, Jeske points out that opinions, situations, decisions and actions that benefit us must be questioned. Evaluations that fit perfectly into the picture of one's own socio-cultural norms, opinions and visions deserve extra critical attention. This implies an absolute priority for 'facts and figures'.
- The wellbeing and the concerns of all other involved (than yourself) must be taken into account in an equal manner. So, empathic competence (and emotional intelligence) must be cultivated.
  We see here a clear reference to what in our time has become known as stakeholder thinking (Freeman, 1984 & 1994; Siebens, 1994, 2010, 2019).
- The long-term consequences of the various options, known as 'sustainability', must be explicitly considered.
- Every alternative option of a situation, decision, behaviour, or action must be faced, seriously analysed and evaluated.

According to Zmigrod (2019 & 2020) a limitation in or lack of openness of thought leads to increased anxiety and stress, risk avoidance, uncertainty, intolerance, avoidance of dissent and shielding oneself from 'infection' by other views. Herewith the closed culture shows a stronger tendency towards ideological thinking and the acceptance of an authoritarian leader and a totalitarian regime. One of the main differences between closed and open thinking appears to be that more free and open-thinking individuals are more resistant to conspiracy theories and misinformation (Farhart, Miller & Saunders, 2016; Pfattheicher & Schindler, 2016; Jost,

Pennycook & Sterling, 2016; Hardin, Jost, Panagopoulos & van der Linden, 2018; Pennycook & Rand, 2020). Arendt (1955) feels strongly attracted to Lessing's plea against fanaticism and intolerance and in favour of tolerance for any other thought and of an eternal self-critical, self-transformational thinking. Openness (or mental flexibility) implies the acceptability of external and internal deviant views and opinions: the 'cultural standard deviation' (Siebens, 2004). A group with a strong, closed culture will leave less room for manoeuvre in this respect than a group with a diverse, open, and less rigid culture. Social pressure towards social cohesion and social identification, but also the various forms of power within the group determine the extent to which deviant behaviour is accepted by the group. Besides, the pressure from and within the group, the urge to belong to the in-group and the fear of being marginalised or ostracised cause individual members to evaluate and correct their own behaviour: self-regulation.

Bell and Hughes-Jones (2008) rightly observe that moralising is therefore often more about conventionalising than about actually creating another, possibly higher ethical consciousness (ethical sensitivity or 'conscience'). Conventionalisation is aimed at the conventions of one's own group, organisation or society and is therefore based on the conviction that one's own conventions are superior and must therefore be dominant. From the point of view of the individual group member, conventionality is a means to gain social status and group security, possibly also to gain prestige, authority, and leadership within the group through prototypicality. This ambiguous effect is known as the 'push-pull model of moralization' (Feinberg, Inbar, Kovacheff & Teper, 2019). In this sense, moralising can also work as a strategy to reduce cognitive dissonance or to avoid or deny it (ethical disengagement) (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 1996; Feinberg, Inbar, Kovacheff & Teper, 2019). This is consistent with Bandura's theory of ethical neutralisation, in which responsibility for actions with a negative impact is quickly externalised.

In contrast to the process of moralisation, there is also a process of demoralisation. Rozin (1999) calls it 'un-moralisation' – whereby a situation, action or decision that previously had an ethical significance or charge loses that significance or charge. What was a value or norm then becomes a personal preference (Rozin, 1999) or not even that. This can, of course, happen because another norm is moralised, causing the members of a group or organisation or the citizens of a society to view things differently. What was previously permitted may become prohibited, but also vice versa: what was previously prohibited may suddenly, based on new knowledge, insights, or arguments, become acceptable or even necessary. There is thus clearly a connection with the formation of habits: the tacit habit of violating moral boundaries (moral rules or norms) causes these boundaries to fade and fall

away, or even to shift. What was at first unacceptable and irresponsible behaviour later becomes acceptable. Groups, organisations, and whole societies can lose their ethical compass and end up turning a blind eye to situations and actions that were previously totally unacceptable and often still are formally, in codes, laws and so on. Corruption, self-centred behaviour, bullying, minimalist professionalism and so on then creep in softly. This phenomenon of demoralisation is also behind the phenomenon of ethical disengagement, whereby prevailing ethical values, standards, and rules are eroded. This process is usually called 'norm fading'. We note that such a shift in values, norms and rules also entails a shift in prototypicality in the group and thus in leadership. Through the process of demoralisation, the culture of the group, organisation, or society changes, like an inconspicuous creeping poison: toxicity. When an organisation becomes failing, destructive and anti-social as a result, the formal leader who represents the fading values, norms and rules will find his position increasingly difficult. A process of demoralisation, however, can also give rise to a new 'noble nature', 'ethical hero', critical friend or whistle-blower, who stands up to denounce the silent shift in the culture of the group, organisation, or society: re-moralisation. The 'noble nature' is diametrically opposed to the Dark Personality in just about everything. In short, a strong culture can act as a dam against anti-social and destructive, i.e. irresponsible, action if it is a strong ethical culture. Conversely, a weak culture will more readily allow an individual group member with personality traits towards a Dark Personality to exert a highly toxic influence on the behaviour of the other group members. But at the same time, this also allows other group members to speak out against this toxic behaviour and leaves room for the critical, corrective input of whistle-blowers and ethical heroes.

Insofar as a closed culture and ideological thinking are never completely 'closed', ego-logical thinking remains, albeit increasingly unconscious (thoughtlessness). Although, Arendt (1971) calls this simply 'nicht-Denken', because every form of critical dialogue, including a self-critical two-in-one conversation (Socrates), remains absent. An 'erweiterten Denkungsart' (Kant, 1790 & 1793), on the other hand, is characterised by a general openness of thought, to break through the existential limitation of the individual person and his individual freedom by the totality of the community (communities) in which he lives and works. Here, Kant mentions the notions of Selbstdenken, sensus communis and empathy. However, the unique perspective of the other is and remains foreign to us. The 'erweiterten Denkungsart' also goes hand in hand with a form of conflict: it shakes our own image of the world and of man, our own opinions, because it presents the world around us from a uniquely different perspective. It creates not only rapprochement and communication, but also cognitive discrepancy and affective dissonance.

WHEN A GROUP/ORGANISATION FAILS

Externally, closedness (versus openness) expresses itself in polarisation and a we-versus-them attitude towards external 'others'. This tension can escalate and lead to conflicts or ostracism. Politically, it expresses itself in a unilateral defence of one's own needs and interests, who- or whatever. Recently, the phenomenon of one-issue organisations (parties, movements, NGO's, lobby and pressure groups) in which only one's own interests, feelings and convictions play a role (e.g. Me-too and Black Lives Matter) has surfaced. Also NIMBY-cases do bear more and more witness to a closed culture and thinking. But we also see governments that cut short the space for critical discussion and an open, argumentative, non-violent social dialogue (à la Habermas), for diversity, plurality and respect for individual autonomy.

Prins (2013) and Ayios, Jeurissen, Manning and Spence (2014) mention various aspects of what could be called the 'dark side' (Putnam, 2000) of a group or organisation: narrowing the interpretation and scope of reflection on reality by denying disturbing facts and opinions (selective thinking), strengthening intolerance against outsiders, discrimination, isolation and ostracism of outsiders, limiting freedom of choice and free will among insiders, blunting ethical and critical sensitivity to the norms and rules of the group, hindering critical free speech, strengthening thinking in terms of us-against-them and conflict, privileged people keeping their power by a/o misusing the opposition between in-group and out-group, playing people off against each other, promotions based on who they know instead of what they know (talents and competences), installing 'mind guards', strict discipline (social control in a negative sense) that forces group members to conform to the group, its norms and rules, and its leaders (conformism), introducing the norm that silence means consent (the illusion of unanimity and the illusion of the informal leader that he represents the whole group when he expresses his personal opinion). From research into difficult teams and organisations (Kampen, 2007; Prins, 2013) and change processes, we know that some attributes are characteristic, among others:

- A lack of empathy, altruïsm and compassion with the out-group, especially given the unethical consequences of actions on the outsiders.
- Some members resolutely opt for their own perspectives, needs and interests in an exclusive manner.
- Some members of the team withdraw their efforts to their own limited task description (professional minimalism).
- To survive, the members of the team create specific coping strategies to hide truth.

- There is no internal control or conscience. It becomes unclear what responsible behaviour means.
- The internal stakeholders are no longer able to understand or identify with the mission (core objectives) of their organisation. They withdraw into the realm of their own values.
- The leader experiences strong and continuous fatigue, strong emotional reactions, a need for social recognition, a tendency to downplay the seriousness of a situation, a collapse of self-esteem, concentration problems. Management is changed very often; new managers leave or become ill.
- There is no positive response from the team, but a lot of destructive energy: much complaining, anger, gossiping and lying, agitation, aggression, sabotage, omerta, small subgroups, extrusion, upwards hostility (Camps 2015), high degree of sick-leave, high degree of departing employees and so on.

A dysfunctional, inefficient, failing, and unsuccessful organisation is failing not only in the communication and cooperation between the group members/employees, but in all areas that are crucial to her economic (and financial) and social success: quality management towards customers/clients, people management towards employees, reputation management towards its social environment, respect towards the natural environment and so on. In short, it falls short in the optimal realisation of the basic objectives or targets and in its responsibility towards all its stakeholders. The fact that it sometimes focuses all its attention on one stakeholder cannot justify the overall negative result. That is why a company that only focuses on a higher dividend for its shareholders, and a larger bonus for its CEO, still can be an ethically failing organisation with a toxic corporate culture. It turns out that correcting the negative, anti-social culture in such a dysfunctional, failing organisation is an extremely difficult form of crisis management. After all, it is not an organisation that faces a crisis, but the organisation itself that is in crisis.

A CULTURE OF RESPONSIBILITY

An 'erweiterten Denkungsart' (Kant, 1790) or openness towards all stakeholders and the long term in the culture of the organisation is therefore clearly the decisive factor to realise a more responsible organisation (Freeman, 1984; Staessens, 1991; Siebens, 1994, 2010, 2013 & 2019; Nelson & Trevino, 1995; Pearson, 1995; Dalla Costa, 1999; Crane & Matten, 2004; Fullan & St. Germain, 2009; St. Germain, 2009; St. Germain, 2010; St. Germain, 2008; St. Germain, 2008; St. Germain, 2008; St. Germain, 2007. Germain, 2009; Korthagen & Lagerwerf,

2010; Burke, Jondle, Maines & Young, 2013; Ardichvili, Jondle & Mitchell, 2014; Lawton & Páez, 2015; Crews, in Giannantonio & Hurley-Hanson, 2015; Chadegani & Jari, 2016; Siebens, 1994, 2010, 2013, 2019). In any case, it implies that one can put one's own concerns, needs and interests (one's own 'narrative') into perspective and take into account the narratives of all others – including those who are absent – and the common good. This openness implies the necessary empathic competence, which, although not the only one, is a crucial factor for ethical action, including the (opinion of the) second voice in ourselves, partner in the two-in-one conversation (Socrates).

This allows us to answer the question of which organisational culture is efficient, effective, pro-social and ethical. Openness has proven to be an essential factor in an efficient and effective ethical corporate culture. A study in German companies by Kaptein (2008) shows a strong link between openness (visibility of behaviour and the possibility of discussion) and other moral factors . Pastin (1986) cites four main characteristics: frequent contact with all stakeholders, assuming that what is good for the stakeholders is also good for the organisation, comprehensive honesty, individual responsibility, and the activities of the organisation are seen as a means to an end, not as an end in themselves. Groenewegen and Ten Have (2008) mention four other characteristics of an 'accountability culture', i.e. an organisational culture in which accountability is a normal situation: communication, to create a large support base, support for employees, practice and output as the main weapons of commitment, and all persons involved are taken seriously.

Nelson and Trevino (1995) stress the importance of moral leadership and good communication – "downwards, upwards and in two ways". Jacobs (1995) states that it presupposes a bottom-up culture in which there is room for the wishes and proposals of the various parties involved.

In conclusion, we can identify a culture of responsibility by the following main characteristics:

- An open organisational culture, based on the awareness of the vital importance of a good organisation-environment-fit, based on the awareness of the crucial role of the expectations and preferences, and the needs, interests, and rights of all stakeholders. This implies a/o the pursuit of an optimal balance between efficiency and effectiveness on the one hand and caring on the other hand.
- A dialogical and participative organisational culture, in which an argumentative and power-free dialogue is conducted with all stakeholders, based on exact data (data-driven management). We refer to Habermas (1981/1985 & 1984) regarding the characteristics of such social dialogue.

- A culture of openness especially implies openness to reservations and criticisms, an open-minded climate in which the organisation's own functioning, its own achievements (products, services, etc.) and possible risks or negative effects are examined critically. A dynamic, learning organisational culture, in which critical and provocative thinking and feedback are valued as signals of commitment and intrapreneurship. Mezirow (1990, 1991, 2000 & 2009), influenced by Freire (1970) and Habermas (1981/1985 & 1984), refers to such a learning culture as 'transformative learning' in which participants can change their mental frames of reference and thus their views and habits (attitudes). Through 'transformative learning' individuals and groups/organisations not only learn new knowledge and technical skills, but first change their personality, their Self.
- Although the ethical literature strongly emphasises the importance of a strong, clear organisational culture to combat irresponsible behaviour, we must also be alert to an organisational culture that is too strong and strict, which, as if it were a sect, imposes the formal vision and objectives of the management and the organisation on all employees in a top-down manner and leaves them no room for autonomous, open and (self) critical thinking. What comes close to ideological thinking and totalitarianism.

WHAT TO DO AGAINST A CLOSED CULTURE BASED ON IDEOLOGICAL AND EGO-LOGICAL THOUGHTLESSNESS?

When asked if and how something can be done about ideological and/or ego-logical thinking, thoughtlessness and a closed culture the suggestions differ. According to some, by their very nature, it is difficult or impossible to break through. Marechal and Torfs (2021) therefore propose a radically different approach. They argue for an open, non-threatening debate. Its emphasis is on accepting the fact that the opponent thinks ideologically (which is not the same as accepting the content of his ideologically coloured views), rather than immediately rejecting his view of things, and herewith on listening to the underlying emotions, concerns, and motives of the ideologically-minded, thoughtless, ego-logical thinking person and creating sufficient room for the person concerned to listen to the interpretation of the non-ideologically-minded, open, critically reflecting interlocutor. A fresh, open culture, then, is the – temporary, always provisional – result, the conclusion of these dialogues at all levels of (sub-)groups, organisations, communities, and society. Arendt (1951 & 1958) emphasises the essence of the political process: politics as building together of one's own living/working community ('polis'), in which one makes oneself visible

as an individual but also realises oneself again and again as a unique, 'singular' individual ('natality') and that with respect for the singularity and cooperation with all others, thus for what she calls the existential plurality in the community.

WHAT TO TAKE HOME

1. Responsible behaviour is not 'for granted'.

   Many organisations find themselves in a split when it comes to responsible professional conduct and likewise culture. On the one hand, they consider this aspect important, even crucial for an efficient and effective – in short, successful – operation; on the other hand, they reject the direct investment in it of time, resources, and people. The lack of a direct return from such investments is probably a reason. Possibly, they also fear the critical reservations and discussions that can arise with it. They may fear more bottom-up control, inhibiting comments and demands about transparency and accountability. It is possible that people believe that a direct investment in the ethical sensitivity of the employees and the organisation as a whole is unnecessary. Nevertheless, social and ethical sensitivity may not be taken for granted.

   Regarding a direct policy on the ethical dimension of the organisation, work can be done, for example, on an ombudsman structure, an ethics hotline, an ethics helpdesk (Kaptein, 2002), clear agreements on internal whistleblowing, an own ethics officer, training on the ethical principles of the organisation, an annual report on the ethical aspects of the organisation (such as the social and ecological aspects) to the general assembly, a framework of corporate governance. A very explicit form of responsible professional behaviour is the good example set by the management: walk the talk, clear communication, open, argumentative, and power-free dialogues with all internal and external stakeholders, making ethics negotiable in meetings (acceptable for discussion), exemplary behaviour, creating commitment among employees, formulating realistic performance targets (feasibility), providing transparency and feedback (approachability) (Boschma, 2016). Responsible professional action must above all be marked by inclusiveness, transversality and consistency (Siebens, 2007a, 2007b & 2010). With Verwey (2005), we can subdivide the multiplicity into three levels: the tertiary level of the relationships between the organisation and its environment (where the organisation-environment-fit is situated), the secondary level of the organisational framework of the work and the primary level of the production processes. This subdivision draws our attention to the fact that real responsible action not only involves

the secondary and tertiary levels, but also and primarily (!) the primary level. All too often, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is indeed limited to the secondary and tertiary levels, or even just the tertiary level. We are then faced with public relations, window-dressing or 'greenwashing'.

2. A holistic approach.
   The professional organisation is a complex network of different employees, who combine their specific expertise to realise the organisation's basic objectives in the most efficient and effective and caring way possible, with respect for the concerns, needs, interests, rights (etc.) of all parties involved, including those outside the organisation. It is a task that must be tackled transversally, across all levels and departments, domains, and dimensions of the organisation. What seems obvious, however, is not so for many individual employees. After all, they have been recruited for a specific function and task package. As a result, they focus on this and lose sight of the bigger picture, losing their connection and commitment with the whole of the organisation and its basic objectives. In this way, employees will at best work alongside each other and at worst against each other. Moreover, when evaluation procedures, promotions and incentives focus solely on the individual performance of each employee and only evaluate what that employee has achieved in terms of down-to-earth production, turnover or financial figures, the specialised and compartmentalised view of the organisation's professional activities is only structurally entrenched and reinforced.

   Precisely because of the need for a holistic approach to governance, policy and daily management of a professional organisation, an attitude of thoughtless routine is out of the question. A lack of external critical dialogues with all stakeholders, a lack of room for internal critical-constructive reflections, a focus on short-term results, a focus on financial ratio and output, a bureaucratic attitude, a lack of empathy with other involved parties, a lack of interest in risks and negative effects on other stakeholders ... so many opportunities missed by the professional organisation to become more caring by working more effectively and efficiently. The notion of thoughtlessness (Arendt, 1963) teaches that the essence of an effective and caring, c.q. successful organisation lies in the level of selfconsciousness of the organisation and its employees, ultimately implying the question of integrity: consistently and coherently pursuing 'the good' in line with the 'erweiterten Denkungsart' and the stakeholder approach. It amounts to a culture of "continuous self-renewal" (Daudelin, 1996), which resists man's existential tendency towards ego-logic, thoughtless and finally anti-social and destructive behaviour.

3. Paying attention to deviant-but-destructive behaviour.
   Just because most ethical and economic problems of organisations arise from at least ego-logical, anti-social and destructive behaviour or even a likewise culture, it is of the utmost importance to pay attention to the appearance of destructive or 'Dark' behaviour. After all, they are toxic. It can lead to a destructive culture and threatens to make the organisation dysfunctional, even failing. In a positive sense, this implies paying attention to a constructive climate of well-being and respectful treatment, so responsible people management. This can be supported by open and argumentative dialogues, but open and critical reflection on the available 'facts and figures' is also inevitable in such processes.

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