

**Staff and pupil experience and perceptions: What is seen as the
'value' of a new variant nurture group?**

Sandra Harrison

Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology

School of Education Communication and Language Sciences

28th October 2016

Acknowledgements

Completing both this piece of research and the Doctorate course itself would not have been possible without on-going support from the people around me.

I would like to thank my research supervisor, Billy Peters, for his feedback, patience, humour and guidance. I am also grateful to Wilma Barrow for providing the 'light bulb' moment which helped me grasp the thorny nettle of epistemology. Of course I am also grateful to all of the tutor team for their feedback, support and guidance throughout the duration of the course.

I would like to thank my mam and brother, and my partner Richard and all of my friends for their love and support throughout the duration of the Doctorate course.

Thank you to my fellow trainees and EP colleagues who have provided support, laughter and opportunities to reflect throughout this process.

And finally I would like to thank the participants involved in the study for their time and honesty. I hope I have done justice to your thoughts, ideas and the fantastic work going on in your Nurture Group.

Contents

Staff and pupil experience and perceptions: What is seen as the ‘value’ of a new variant nurture group?	1
Abstract	1
Chapter 1 - Are nurture groups effective in preparing children for mainstream classes	3
Abstract.....	3
1.1 Introduction	3
1.1.1 What are nurture groups?	4
1.2 Method	6
1.2.1 Table Summarising Petticrew and Roberts (2008) Framework	6
1.3 Defining the review question.....	6
1.4 Determine the types of studies and complete a comprehensive search.....	7
1.5 Screen the studies.....	8
1.6 Map the field of identified studies	9
1.6.1 Table Summarising Studies	10
1.6.2 Weight of Evidence and Quality of Studies.....	15
1.6.1 Weight of Evidence Table.....	16
1.7 Synthesise the studies findings.....	16
1.7.1 Effectiveness of nurture groups and relation to preparedness for mainstream classrooms.....	16
1.7.2 Studies measuring success, post-reintegration	17
1.7.3 Studies measuring success in part-time (partially integrated) nurture groups.....	19
1.8 Communication of the studies’ findings.....	22
1.8.1 Discussion	22
1.8.2 Conclusions.....	25

Chapter 2 – Systematic Review to Empirical Research.....	28
Abstract	28
2.1 Introduction.....	28
2.2 Consideration of findings from the Systematic Review	28
2.3 Development of the research question	29
2.3.1 Initial Development of the Epistemological Stance.....	29
2.3.2 Refining research methodology and ontological and epistemological stance.....	31
2.3.3 Critical Realism – reaching a definitive epistemology	31
2.3.4 Epistemological impact upon question redefinition	32
2.4 Experimental design as a function of a critical realist stance	34
2.4.1 Information gathering	34
2.4.2 Data Analysis.....	35
2.4.3 Selection of Data Analysis method	35
Chapter 3. Empirical Research - Staff and pupil experience and perceptions: What is seen as the ‘value’ of a new variant nurture group?.....	38
Abstract	38
3.1 Introduction.....	39
3.1.1 Nurture Groups.....	39
3.1.2 Clarification of terms and the research question.....	41
3.1.3 Research Aims.....	43
3.2 Design	43
3.2.1 Context.....	43
3.2.2 Participants	43
3.2.3 Ethics.....	44
3.2.4 Data gathering	45
3.3 Analysis.....	46
3.3.1 Table of stages of IPA Analysis	46

3.3.2 Findings.....	47
3.3.3 Table of themes derived from IPA	48
3.4 Discussion.....	52
3.4.1 Superordinate theme – Social and Emotional Factors.....	52
3.4.2 Superordinate Theme – Learning.....	54
3.4.3 – Superordinate Theme – Educational Structure.....	56
3.4.4 – Discussion of links across the themes	58
3.5 Conclusions	60
References	62
Appendices	68
Appendix A – Examples of information and consent letters	68
A i – Information Letter (Staff)	68
A ii – Information Letter (Parents)	70
A iii – Information Letter (Children)	71
A iv – Consent form (Parents)	72
A v – Consent form (Children)	73
Appendix B – Examples of transcript with notation	74
B i – Excerpt from MT Transcript Analysis.....	74
B ii – Excerpt from Children’s Transcript Analysis.....	75
Appendix C – Examples of Excel data analysis sheet.....	76
C i – Data filtered by Superordinate Theme.....	76
C ii – Data filtered by Emergent Theme	77
Appendix D – Example questions for pupils and staff	78

Abstract

Nurture Groups have experienced rises and falls in popularity since their initial introduction by Marjorie Boxall in 1969 in inner city London (Boxall 1976). At present there are more than 1,500 Nurture Groups in the UK (Nurture Group Network Website) with the Nurture Group Network continuing work to expand and develop the use of these groups in more areas across the country. This research project seeks first to examine the effectiveness or success of nurture groups in preparing children for reintroduction to the mainstream classroom. This was examined by conducting a systematic review of the literature which evaluated studies reporting on outcomes for children attending nurture groups, using quantitative measures. The review concludes that the lack of consistency in the methods of analysis employed between studies, the varying perceptions of 'success' and the dearth of studies which examine pupil data longitudinally (only one being present Cooper and Whitebread 2007) does not provide a solid and compelling evidence base for effectiveness of nurture groups in preparing children for reintroduction to mainstream classes. Nurture Groups remain popular however and the author sought to question what it is about nurture groups which schools, staff and pupils value.

Through discussion of a process of personal epistemological change and development, the focus of the research project shifts from the quantitative measures described in the Systematic Review to a more qualitative approach. In light of the researchers aim to add a unique perspective to the body of literature a decision was made to conduct an empirical research project with the staff and pupils of a nurture group. The nature of the group in relation to traditional nurture principles is explored and explained. The research project is conducted using a combination of focus groups and semi-structured one to one interviews with nurture group staff, children who attend the nurture group and the mainstream teachers of those children. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to produce superordinate and subthemes which emerged as particularly pertinent to the participants involved. This method of analysis allowed discussion of these themes by looking at both the way in which the participants made sense of their experiences and the researchers understanding and meaning making of the descriptions produced. The study concludes that many of the reported benefits and value laden aspects of the nurture provision tie in with current psychological

knowledge of processes such as attachment, relationships, sense of belonging and self-efficacy and self-worth. There is also discussion of the policy issues mentioned by staff which influence practice within school and the nurture group. Tentative conclusions state that this research can contribute to the field by offering an examination of one case study which may contribute to identifying wider patterns and themes in other IPA studies in this area. It is also concluded that the new variant nurture group involved in this study shows evidence of enriching the children's educational experience; helping to develop skills both in learning and in social and emotional functioning. However, future suggestions for development of the group could include work on developing these skills in a way which can be transferred outside of the safety of the nurture group. Future studies could also look at the views and perceptions of parents and ways in which to implement a nurturing ethos throughout school.

Chapter 1 - Are nurture groups effective in preparing children for mainstream classes

Abstract

Nurture groups have experienced rises and falls in popularity since their initial introduction by Marjorie Boxall in 1969 in inner city London (Boxall 1976). At present there are more than 1,500 nurture groups in the UK (Nurture Group Network Website) with the Nurture Group Network continuing work to expand and develop the use of these groups in more areas across the country. This research project seeks first to examine the effectiveness or success of nurture groups in preparing children for reintroduction to the mainstream classroom. This was examined by conducting a systematic review of the literature which evaluated studies reporting on outcomes for children attending nurture groups, using quantitative measures. The review concludes that the lack of consistency in the methods of analysis employed between studies, the varying perceptions of 'success' and the dearth of studies which examine pupil data longitudinally (only one being present Cooper and Whitebread 2007) does not provide a solid and compelling evidence base for effectiveness of nurture groups in preparing children for reintroduction to mainstream classes. Nurture Groups remain popular however and the author sought to question what it is about nurture groups which schools, staff and pupils value.

1.1 Introduction

Many children do not come to school equipped with the basic learning capabilities which, for many, are taken for granted as part of their early upbringing (Boxall 2002). School life can prove difficult and distressing for these children and stressful for the staff who work with them. These difficulties often present as social and emotional difficulties which can lead to various problems within school. There has been research which demonstrates that social and emotional difficulties in children can make it harder for them to achieve, form good relationships with their peers and participate in school (Calabrese, 1987; Huesmann, Eron, & Yarmel, 1987; NICE, 2008, 2009; Sutherland & Singh, 2004; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004)).

Under previous governments there was a strong agenda for the idea that schools should enhance the emotional well-being of pupils and provide support for those experiencing social emotional and behavioural difficulties (DCSF, 2007; DfES, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006). Since the change of government in 2010 (and with their subsequent re-election in 2015) there is no longer such a clear stance on these issues. The coalition governments' white paper *The Importance of Teaching* (DfE, 2010) has a much clearer focus on clear discipline in schools and giving headteachers more autonomy to choose what if any interventions they might introduce in their schools. This emphasis on discipline is unlikely to be helpful to children who are experiencing social emotional and behavioural difficulties which are seen by schools as purely behavioural or 'naughty'. Children who have come to school lacking the learning capabilities that their peers possess, require help to reach the developmental level of their peers. Nurture groups are designed to do exactly that and although not prominent in government literature, the government's guidance *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* (DfE, 2015) refers to schools using 'well-established nurture groups to address emerging social, emotional and behavioural difficulties'.

1.1.1 What are nurture groups?

Nurture groups were initially set up in inner London in the 1970s in response to an unprecedented rise in the number of children being excluded from school and/or referred for psychiatric help. Marjorie Boxall was an Educational Psychologist (EP) working in London at the time and reported that through her work she discovered that many of the children had missed out, for various reasons, on the nurturing care which many consider vital for the positive emotional development of children in the early years (Bennathan & Boxall, 2013; Boxall, 1976, 2002). At the time, specific links to a particular area of psychology had not been made but Boxall did go on to relate the work back, and firmly root it in attachment theory (Bowlby, 2008).

Attachment Theory is the idea that effective social, emotional and cognitive development, comes as a result of nurturing care during the early years (Bowlby 1969). According to Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), children are born with an innate tendency to attach to the person who is most sensitive to their needs; usually the mother (Schaffer & Emerson, 1964). This attachment forms a template for our

future attachments. Bowlby argued that if for any reason, the care that we are given is not consistent, nurturing, and predictable during the critical first three years, there can be disruption to our development of good social, emotional and cognitive skills. Children may develop less adaptive attachment styles (Ainsworth, 1978) and find it difficult to build and maintain relationships with peers and adults. This may result in children who are described as overly passive, or aggressive (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000).

The rationale behind Nurture Groups is based upon Attachment Theory (Bennathan & Boxall, 2000). The aim is to provide the child with the opportunities for nurture that may have been missed during their early years. According to Bennathan and Boxall (2000), the Nurture Group staff should interact with the child in a similar way to that of a mother and child, keeping them close emotionally and 'allowing them to be and helping them to do' (p.21). This gives the child the opportunity to develop a consistent, predictable relationship with an adult, in order to provide a secure base from which to discover the world, allowing them the opportunity to develop socially and cognitively.

Nurture groups are designed to provide children with a routine, in a structured and controlled environment. The idea being that this structure and predictability will help them to develop a sense of mastery and control over their emotions, behaviour and relationships. Nurture groups aim to help children develop relationships with peers and staff which are supportive and caring. Through these relationships children are able to experience caring relationships in which they are valued and can begin to explore their own autonomy and self-control (Boxall, 2002).

'Classic' nurture groups, as described by Boxall (2002) involve up to twelve children in a class with two members of staff, ideally a teacher and a teaching assistant. The children attend the nurture groups for four and a half days a week but complete registration and 'end of day activities' with their own mainstream class. The focus of the groups is providing children with a supportive and structured context in which to learn and develop appropriate behaviour. This is alongside a core curriculum of language, number and personal and social development. There has also been a more recent interest in using the principle of the nurture group in more flexible ways in primary schools (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Cooke, Yeomans, & Parkes, 2008;

Sanders, 2007; K. Scott & Lee, 2009; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013) and adapting them for secondary schools (Cooke et al., 2008). Lucas, Buckland, and Insley (2006) suggest that versions and adaptations which hold true to the fundamental principles are also genuine nurture groups.

1.2 Method

In order to conduct the systematic review a template was used which is summarised in the table below. This approach is based on the framework provided by Petticrew and Roberts (2008). Petticrew and Roberts' framework was used because in addition to providing a clear structure for the systematic review, their book provides good examples and the logic behind completing reviews where the studies in question are composed of both quantitative and qualitative data.

1.2.1 Table Summarising Petticrew and Roberts (2008) Framework

Section of Review Process
1) Clearly define review question
2) Determine types of studies required
3) Carry out comprehensive literature search to locate these studies
4) Screen the studies found using inclusion criteria to identify studies for in-depth review
5) Describe the studies to 'map' the field, and critically appraise them for quality and relevance
6) Synthesise studies' findings
7) Communicate studies' findings

1.3 Defining the review question

There have been a variety of studies which have assessed the effectiveness of nurture groups on children's academic attainment as well as social and emotional well-being. A systematic review of these was conducted by Hughes and Schlösser (2014a) However there has not been a systematic review to date which has looked at the impact of this effective intervention specifically relating to children's transition back into or success in mainstream classrooms. Much of the work so far has looked

at the scores of children, using various assessments such as the Boxall Profile (Bennathan, 1998) Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (Goodman, 1997) and Behavioural Indicators of Self-esteem (Burnett, 1998), whilst they were attending nurture groups or about to reintegrate. There has been little work looking at the impact for the child returning to the classroom, longer term effects, or following up children who have previously attended nurture group provision.

This systematic review intends to look at relevant literature with the following questions in mind:

- Are children prepared for the mainstream classroom when they leave the nurture group?
- Is the success demonstrated in the nurture group environment sustained when children integrate into mainstream classrooms?

1.4 Determine the types of studies and complete a comprehensive search

The terms used to search for studies for this review were: nurture group*, nurture, nurture-group* (* enabled the database to search group as a truncation and search for both group and groups). Further search terms were not deemed necessary as nurture groups are a very specific intervention and although there may be groups purporting to be nurture groups which aren't, there aren't any nurture groups which refer to themselves by any other term or name.

In terms of research studies, 'nurture groups' is a fairly small area of study. A limited number of database searches were employed for this review as by the third search of databases the only results being obtained were duplicates of previous searches with no additional studies being found. Searches were conducted using British Education Index, Education Resources information Centre (ERIC), and PsychINFO.

Date of publication was not limited. Hand-searches were completed on relevant articles which had been identified.

1.5 Screen the studies

There were two stages to the process of deciding which studies to include and which to exclude. The first stage focused on the following criteria:

Inclusion

- Publication in peer-reviewed journals
- School-aged participants
- Experimental Design
- Some or exclusively quantitative data

Exclusion

- Purely observational studies
- Purely qualitative case studies

The second stage involved a tighter focus on the questions the studies were looking to answer or the outcomes being measured. Further inclusion criteria were identified:

Studies looking at effectiveness in longer term (a number of years after intervention)

Studies looking at reintegration to mainstream classes

Studies where children were attending part-time groups and so were already partially integrated in mainstream, and the effects in mainstream.

Initially 42 studies were identified. 17 studies were excluded as they contained no quantitative measure at all. A further 13 studies were excluded because they did not focus on the outcomes of a nurture group intervention, the quantitative data generated related only to perceptions rather than success. Of the remaining 12

studies four were excluded because they did not address any aspect of reintegration or impact in the mainstream classroom.

1.6 Map the field of identified studies

The studies which met the inclusion criteria were analysed in terms of participants, the context in which the study was set, the type of nurture groups provision, experimental design, analysis of data and findings. This information is presented in

1.6.1 Table Summarising Studies

Due to the nature of the experimental design, and the fact that no effect sizes were reported these are not included in the table. This table summarises the points relevant to this systematic review's questions.

1.6.1 Table Summarising Studies

Table 1

Study	Participants	Context	Type of group	Experimental Design	Evidence/Analysis	Findings
Binnie and Allen (2008)	N= 24 4 nurture groups Infants - Children aged between 4 and 7 years.	Primary schools within 1 LEA	Part-time	Pre and post intervention (8 month gap) Using Boxall Profile, SDQ and BIOS Questionnaires	T-tests for Boxall, T-tests for SDQ with further chi squared analysis for the parent SDQ, Means for BIOS Percentages for questionnaires	Significant findings for Boxall, BIOS and SDQt, High percentages for all questionnaires looking at overall positive impact, positive impact on behaviour, improved self-esteem, and improved academic progress from parents, teachers and headteachers.
Cooke Yeomans and Parkes (2008)	N= not reported	1 school	KS3 Group (adapted nurture group) Part time – Y7 attended every day in the afternoon,	Pre and post intervention Boxalls.	No evidence of analysis	Reported 'Clear improvement' on Boxall developmental strands for whole groups scores. Inconsistent for the diagnostic profile

Study	Participants	Context	Type of group	Experimental Design	Evidence/Analysis	Findings
			Y8 1 afternoon twice a week			
Doyle (2001)	N=2	Not specified	Not stated but at least flexible as Child 2 moved to part time.	Score of 218 (70%) on readiness scale Teacher and researcher reports (anecdotal) on progress in mainstream using this.		<p>Children underwent readiness scale scoring over their time in the NG</p> <p>This informed IEPs</p> <p>When threshold reached went back to mainstream</p> <p>Further testing not undertaken at this point but scales used to inform planning</p> <p>Reports on going back to mainstream for both children indicate better social and academic results</p> <p>Child 1 managed to stay in mainstream over three terms after pilot and took sats with his peers.</p> <p>Child 2 partial integration based on not reaching 70% build intervention around increasing this score</p>

Study	Participants	Context	Type of group	Experimental Design	Evidence/Analysis	Findings
Doyle (2005)	N=1 5-year-old boy	1 school	Classic nurture group	Case-study Pre and post data – 3 terms in NG. Boxall pre and post and reintegration readiness scale.	None	Boxall showed great improvements between pre and post but not all areas in normal range. Reintegration readiness scale Maintained place in infant school post intervention and at time of writing had maintained a place in junior school for two years.
O'Connor and Colwell (2002)	N=68 46 boys, 22 girls (on longer term after attrition 9 boys and 3 girls) Age at start of NG given as mean of 5.25 years	2 infant and 3 primary schools in one LEA	Classic nurture group	Pre, post and follow up (after 2.67 years) Compares attendance for 1, 2 or 3 terms Boxall	T-tests	Boxall significant for measures taken pre and post, particularly 'participates constructively and accommodates to others' Most significant disengaged, avoids/rejects attachment. Follow-up showed no significant difference (levels maintained) on 16 out of the 20 Boxall strands but some evidence of relapse on some strands – 'connects up experiences' undeveloped/insecure sense

Study	Participants	Context	Type of group	Experimental Design	Evidence/Analysis	Findings
						of self', 'shows negativity towards others', wants/grabs, disregarding others'.
Sanders	N=29 N=17 Reception and Y1 pilot, N=19 KS1 pupils across 3 schools, N=9 control group in non-NG school matched for level of need on Boxall	4 schools in one LEA	Part-time infant pilot – not clear if this was the case for other participants for 3 NG schools.	Pre and post and matched control Questionnaires (staff scored) Parental interview Pupil interview, Pupil assessment form, Naturalistic Observations.	T-tests for Boxalls pre and post. T-tests for Boxalls for NG vs Control	Boxall significant except strands R,S,U,Y & Z. Most significant scores in developmental sub-strand 2/3rds of staff ratings saying children made academic progress, more motivated, and work independently, more willing to take risks in learning. Attendance increased and permanent exclusion reduced.
Scott and Lee (2009)	N=50 N=25 NG children N=25 Control across whole primary age groups	4 schools	Part-time groups across the school	Case-control design pre, mid and post using Boxall Staff Perception (anecdotal)	Aggregated gains of NG children vs control on Boxall, Literacy, Numeracy and Motor skills	NG children greatest gains, greatest of these between pre and mid – significant for Boxall measures. Lit num and motor were greater for NG than control but not quite significant

Study	Participants	Context	Type of group	Experimental Design	Evidence/Analysis	Findings
						Anecdotally staff sure NG had been cause of progress, reports of more independence in class, better self-belief, being proud of themselves, improved behaviour, less shouting out etc
Shaver and McClatchey	N=19 for nurture group focus group N=33 for Boxalls	3 NGs-part time in 3 schools in 1 LEA	Part-Time	Boxall (2 schools pre and post – additional to current nurture group children) Focus Group	T-test for Boxalls	15 out of 20 sub-strands showed significant improvement on Boxall Staff reported more confidence, better behaviour, better response to adults, Difference to classroom life – academic progress

1.6.2 Weight of Evidence and Quality of Studies

Studies were assessed using the Eppi-Centre's Weight of Evidence Tool (Gough, 2007). The results of this assessment are presented in *Table 2*. They were assessed upon three criteria which led to the calculation of an overall weight for the study in relation to this systematic review questions.

The first of the criteria (A) looked at the study itself, apart from any consideration of the systematic review question. This criterion related to the degree to which the study answered its own question, did it use sound methodology, was it clear about what methodology was used and why? The second criterion (B) is the first to relate the study to the systematic review question. It looks at how well the research design relates to answering the systematic review question. This was particularly pertinent with this systematic review as there are a range of methodological approaches and this criterion highlighted those studies with particularly relevant designs and questions. The third criterion (C) looks at how relevant the focus of the studies relates to the systematic review question. Again, this helped highlight studies with particularly relevant samples, measures or scenarios. The highlighting of studies when examining criterion B and C proved useful later in the review process when synthesising the results of the studies.

The overall weight of evidence was obtained by taking into account the weightings assigned for each study to criterion A, B and C. This allowed for identification of studies which were most methodologically sound and most relevant to the systematic review question under consideration.

1.6.1 Weight of Evidence Table

Table 2

Study	A Trustworthy in terms of own question	B Appropriateness of research design for own review question	C Relevance of study focus to own review question	D Overall weight in relation to review question
Post reintegration				
Doyle (2001)	Low	Medium/Low	Medium/high	Medium
Doyle (2005)	Medium/high	High/medium	Medium	Medium/High
O'Connor and Colwell (2002)	Medium/high	Medium/high	High	Medium/High
Part-time (partial integration)				
Binnie and Allen (2008)	High	Medium	Medium	Medium/High
Cooke, Yeomans and Parkes (2008)	Medium	Low	Medium/low	Medium/low
Sanders (2007)	High	Medium	Medium/low	Medium
Scott and Lee (2009)	High	Medium/high	Medium/low	Medium/high
Shaver and McClatchey (2009)	Medium	Medium/low	Medium/low	Medium/low

1.7 Synthesise the studies findings

1.7.1 Effectiveness of nurture groups and relation to preparedness for mainstream classrooms.

When analysing and synthesising the studies selected, two components were under scrutiny. Firstly, did the study provide a measure which showed success in the nurture group? Secondly, did the study either use this data or comment on other data gathered in relation to the children's ability to either reintegrate into, or function

effectively in, a mainstream class. The first question could be answered by many more studies than were included here but the combination of a measure of success and a link to mainstream class provision provided this review with the eight studies to be analysed.

The experimental designs and methods of extracting and recording data varied over the eight studies. This lack of homogeneity meant that synthesising the studies was more easily accomplished by sorting them into two categories. The first category was those studies which looked at data including post reintegration into mainstream classes. The second category was where the link between nurture group and mainstream classes was provided by the fact that the nurture groups were part time and therefore children were partially integrated in mainstream classes. This meant that any information included in the studies regarding their current mainstream behaviour could be examined in terms of a link to nurture group success.

1.7.2 Studies measuring success, post-reintegration

Three studies fell into the category of including a post intervention measure. The study which carried the highest weight of evidence, both in this group and overall, was by O'Connor and Colwell (2002).

The study by O'Connor and Colwell (op. cit) provided data from 68 children, 46 boys and 22 girls. The nurture group in this study was a classic nurture group and children attended, on average for three terms. The study used Boxall Profiles pre and post nurture group intervention and reported statistically significant (using t-tests) improvements on all strands of the profile. Children made improvements specifically on 'participates constructively with others' and 'accommodates others'. Development of both these skills would be advantageous in terms of a move back to the classroom. Most interestingly in terms of this review, this study involved a follow-up of 12 of the children (the rest lost to attrition for various reasons) an average of 2.67 years post intervention. These results showed no significant difference from post intervention scores on 16 out of the 20 strands of the Boxall. There was however some evidence of relapse on some strands, 'connects up experiences',

'undeveloped/insecure sense of self', 'shows negativity towards others', and 'wants/grabs disregarding others'. Clearly these skills are not advantageous in a mainstream classroom. O'Connor and Colwell (2002) suggest that along with these results the fact that nurture group children remained in mainstream school is evidence of the long term effectiveness. It follows that this study suggests nurture groups provide children with the tools to be successful in mainstream classrooms where success is measured by the ability to sustain the placement. No data was given on the children's academic performance or the children or staff's views of their successes.

Two studies by Doyle (2001, 2005) also came under the category of post intervention measures. In terms of study design these are markedly different from that of O'Connor and Colwell (2002) (op cit). Both of these were case studies and therefore could have initially been rejected due to the exclusion criteria on case studies. However, in both cases there is a degree of quantitative data.

As can be seen by the weight of evidence analysis in *Table 2*, this study (Doyle, 2001) whilst having high relevance to the systematic review question, did not score very highly in terms of how well it answered its own question, using very little quantitative data, and how appropriate the research design was in relation to this review question. This study was a case study of a pilot using a tool to assess children's readiness to return to the classroom after a period in the nurture group. Two cases were used to report results on the use of this tool. The only quantitative data presented was that the child needed to score 218 (or 70%) on the readiness scale to return to mainstream lessons. This tool was used throughout their time in nurture group however, and the pupil's scores on different scales informed not only the decision to return to mainstream but also which areas of skill or emotional development should be worked on to eventually be reintegrated. The other pertinent factor to this review was that this study did report on the longer term successes of the children, albeit in a narrative rather than quantitative fashion. Child 1 at the time of follow up had remained in mainstream for three years and had been able to take SATs with the rest of his peer groups. Child 2 was partially reintegrated as he was approaching a 70% score on the readiness scale but both he and staff felt he coped

better with a partial reintegration, the readiness scale was reported as helping to identify the areas needed to develop for full reintegration into mainstream. This study then offers the picture of a degree of success for nurture group children when a tool is used to assess their readiness for reintegration.

Doyle (2005) was a case study of one child, which scored medium/high on the weight of evidence tool owing to the fact that although not the most empirically rigorous form of study, it very much fulfilled the brief of such a study. No explicit question was stated for this study but data was given from Boxall profiles pre and post intervention. These showed improvements in his scores but no statistical analysis was conducted on the scores. A readiness scale was again used but no hard data or scores are given for this. The tool was used to assist gradual reintegration into the mainstream classroom much as in the previous study, using the scale to identify areas on which to work. The 'evidence' of the effectiveness of the intervention here is that the child maintained his place in infant school, post intervention and achieved at national average standards. At the time of writing/follow-up he had managed to maintain his mainstream placement in junior school for two years.

1.7.3 Studies measuring success in part-time (partially integrated) nurture groups

Binnie and Allen (2008) conducted a study which falls in the upper range of studies identified, in terms of its weight of evidence in relation to the systematic review question. The study involved 24 children aged between 4 and 7 years, across 4 infant school nurture groups in a single LEA. This study had the strongest experimental design, being quasi-experimental (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008) placing it just behind randomized controlled trials in the hierarchy of evidence. This study also analysed its results statistically, applying t-tests to the scores from Boxall Profiles (Bennathan, 1998) and SDQt and chi squared for SDQp (Goodman, 1997); they also used means of BIOS (Burnett, 1998) scores as a comparison and percentages for questionnaires about staff experience of children in mainstream classes. Scores were recorded pre and post intervention. In terms of assessing the impact of the intervention in the classroom this study used the scores from the questionnaires to

attempt to quantify staff experiences. The results for Boxall, SDQ and BIOS were all statistically significant, showing improvements from pre to post assessment.

Questionnaires provided high percentages for overall positive impact, positive impact on behaviour, improved self-esteem and improved academic progress. Although percentages were high for questionnaires, they were not subject to pre and post intervention analysis and therefore no comparison was available to statistically examine.

Cooke et al. (2008) conducted a study which scored in the middle to low range on the weight of evidence tool. The study took place in one school and the number of participants was not reported. This study was unusual in that the nurture group involved was located in a secondary school and catered for Y7 and Y8 pupils. It was a part time group for each year group with year 7 attending most often. The study was quasi-experimental in nature, in that it set out to compare two sets of results, using pre and post intervention Boxall scores. However, the study did not complete any form of statistical analysis on these and presented the total group's scores rather than individual scores. These raw scores however, did show improvement from pre to post intervention on the developmental strands of the Boxall profile but were inconsistent for the diagnostic profile. Support for the impact of nurture groups on mainstream class learning in this study is very briefly presented quantitatively in the form as part of the case study which formed part of this mixed methods study. The case study stated that the girl described improved reading age scores by 3 years 7 months to 9 years 9 months over a 14-month period, the assessment used for this figure is not given. Her national curriculum writing level increased to a 4b, although her previous level is not stated. She is no longer in an SEN (Special Educational Needs) English class and is coping with support in a mainstream class. The girl in question was the first to 'graduate' from the group and no longer 'needs' to attend sessions. There is no data on other members of the group at the time of writing.

A quasi-experimental study involving the Boxall scores of 17 children from Reception and KS1 attending a nurture group in a pilot school and a control group of 9 children in a comparison school, matched for level of need on the Boxall Profile, was conducted by Sanders (2007). This study scored highly for being trustworthy in terms of its own question largely due to the robust quasi-experimental design used, second

only to a randomised controlled trial (Petticrew & Roberts, 2008) which could not be conducted as it is not possible to randomly assign children to nurture or not nurture groups. In addition to this design mixed methods were used to gather further information. A further condition of KS1 children was included across three schools where teachers provided information on the social, emotional and academic gains after an average of two terms in the nurture group. Seven children identified by teachers as having the most need were interviewed about the impact of the group, their perceptions of school, themselves as a learner and their friendships. Staff with direct contact with the groups (eight teachers, six nurture group staff and three headteachers) were also interviewed regarding the impact of the group on the children, the mainstream class, parents and the school as a whole. Three parents who were willing to take part took part in questionnaires and other data was gathered from naturalistic observations. Boxall profiles showed significant improvements (using t-tests) on all strands except R (self-negating), S (makes undifferentiated attachments), U (craves attachment, reassurance), Y (shows negativism towards others) and T (shows inconsequential behaviour). The most significant scores were in the developmental sub strands. Two thirds of staff reported positive gains saying children made academic progress, were more motivated, could work more independently and were more willing to take risks in learning. Attendance for these children increased and permanent exclusion was reduced. A table was presented with percentages for the provision needed after 2.5 terms. 51 percent of children went back to classrooms without additional support, ten percent moved out of the area and three per cent (one child) was the score for returning to the classroom with support, receiving a statement of SEN, permanent exclusion and placement in special provision; showing that for the majority of the children full integration into mainstream classes.

Scott and Lee (2009) conducted another quasi-experimental study, a case-control involving 25 nurture group children (case) and 25 non-nurture group children (control). The design was further strengthened by attempts to match control children for age, gender, and level of need. This was partially successful, with problems matching level of need as the control group in each school was limited. Due to this limitation the study used a comparison of aggregated gains to determine significant differences in Boxall Profiles (split between developmental and diagnostic strands),

Literacy, Numeracy, and Motor skills. Boxall measures were statistically significant whereas the other measures showed more gains for nurture group than control children but did not quite reach significance. Again the evidence presented for this study on mainstream impact was given anecdotally by teachers. They reported that they were sure that the nurture group had been the cause of progress they had seen children make, and that children were more independent in class, had greater self-belief, were more proud of themselves and showed improved behaviour.

The final study analysed in this review was that of Shaver and McClatchey (2013). 19 children from 3 nurture groups, all of which had been running for over a year took part in focus groups and questionnaires. Boxall data from two schools were given to be analysed, it is not clear if these schools also completed focus groups and no link is made from the data from focus groups and specific Boxall profiles. A t-test was conducted on the pre and post intervention Boxalls and 15 out of 20 strands improved significantly. Some attempt was made with this study to quantify the questionnaire results with frequencies given for answers 'yes' 'no' or 'don't know'. Anecdotally staff all described improvements for the nurture group children. These improvements included children showing more confidence, better behaviour, better responses to adults and in terms of classroom life, academic progress.

1.8 Communication of the studies' findings

1.8.1 Discussion

The initial focus of this review was to identify, analyse and synthesise studies which gave some kind of quantitative measure to the success gained by nurture groups and its link to success in mainstream classrooms. An important question here may be what constitutes 'success'. In this discussion we will look at the various ways in which success is described or interpreted in the studies. For some studies it is maintaining a mainstream placement, for some it is academic achievement, there are many anecdotal instances describing social and emotional development and better peer and adult relationships.

Ideally studies to be included would have contained a quantitative measure for both conditions however, as is evident from this review so far there are few studies which record the outcomes for children after they have left the nurture group in any kind of quantitative manner. The two studies which did attempt to provide quantitative measures of data obtained after reintegration or for part time groups, on the impact on success in the classroom were Doyle (2001) and O'Connor and Colwell (2002).

Interestingly both of these studies were also in the category of 'Post-reintegration' studies during analysis for this review. Of the two, Colwell and O'Connor (op cit) has the higher weight of evidence rating and is the only study to provide quantitative data which matches the pre and immediately post intervention data provided. The design of the study is simple yet robust and evaluations of children's Boxall scores, analysed using t-tests are reliable. This study showed that on the whole improvements made on the Boxall Profile are sustained over a relatively long period of time. The authors themselves argue that the fact that the children remained in mainstream classes is evidence of success in mainstream classrooms. What this study did not examine was academic success, or the impact (anecdotal or measured) of the strands on which there was some evidence of relapse.

In contrast to O'Connor and Colwell's (op cit) study, Doyle's (2001) (op cit) research used a case study approach and attempted to quantify the children's readiness to return to mainstream via a 'readiness scale'. For one child this quantitative measure was used to inform developmental areas once he had returned to mainstream classes. For the other child the interpretation of the scale suggested a phased approach to reintegration and his scores were monitored during this period. For neither child were scores reported other than to say that a score of 218 (or 70%) would indicate readiness to return to the classroom. It is to be supposed then that the second child did not quite reach this level before beginning partial reintegration but no information is given as to what scores he obtained and which areas he needed to develop. For all these two studies tell us some, however small, degree of quantitative information about children post reintegration from nurture group, neither seems to give specific detail on a range of measures of success in the classroom.

In most of these cases quantitative data is provided for pre-intervention and immediately after intervention. The actual data provided for impact on classroom success, in any form is almost always provided by anecdotal evidence or focus group or questionnaire evidence which is not quantified; or in the case of Shaver and McClatchey (2013) very crudely quantified using frequencies from questionnaires. In terms of analysing the evidence from the studies it seems sensible to give more weight to the studies which provided sound measures pre and post intervention and which attempted in some way to record or investigate teacher's and children's perceptions of the experience and its impact.

Binnie and Allen (2008) used percentages from staff questionnaires to assess the impact of the intervention in the classroom. These percentages were high for the kinds of statements which would fit with the developmental strands of the Boxall Profile. This seems to have been true of a number of the studies, Sanders (2007) found that most of the significant Boxall improvements occurred on the developmental sub-strand rather than the diagnostic, as did O'Connor and Colwell (2002) where all of the developmental sub-strands showed significant improvement from pre intervention scores to follow up scores. This was mirrored in the inconsistent results from Cooke et al. (2008) on the diagnostic scale. This may suggest that whilst diagnostic areas may 'relapse' O'Connor and Colwell (op cit) the more skills based and 'learnable' aspects of the developmental strand become internalised and contribute to the perceptions of teachers and parents who see the nurture group as a success.

The studies to which we should give least weight are those which report purely anecdotal evidence without any formal investigation or recording. It is more difficult to be certain of a link between the data presented pre and post intervention and the descriptions of impact in these studies as they do not attempt measures of comparison with post intervention scores or take into account other possible factors which may have influenced the observations from the classroom.

Doyle (2005) and Cooke et al (op cit) and Sanders (op cit), all of whom reported in some way on maintenance of mainstream placement after intervention, might argue that maintaining a mainstream place is evidence in and of itself, that nurture groups are effective and prepare children for moving back into the mainstream classroom.

1.8.2 Conclusions

The studies examined here have, to their own degrees of rigour and choice of experimental design, provided some evidence that nurture groups are effective. Many of the studies have provided anecdotal or informal evidence that this success is carried through into the mainstream classroom when children are reintegrated. The success in these studies has been presented in terms of improvements perceived in social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. It has also been presented as the ability of a child to maintain a mainstream placement. Other studies have presented success as a child's ability to perform academically at a level broadly average to that of their peers.

Whilst there may be merit in all of these presentations of success beyond the nurture group, there are no longitudinal quantitative measures (apart from O'Connor and Colwell (op cit)) which have undergone statistical analysis to show a relationship between nurture group interventions and measures of mainstream success. Whilst Binnie and Allen (2008) did conduct statistical analysis, this was immediately pre and immediately post intervention and therefore did not measure the success in the classroom itself. It is not possible to answer definitively, given the evidence provided, whether nurture groups truly equip children for mainstream classrooms. All of the evidence presented certainly points towards a positive relationship but as yet is has not been quantified.

Future studies could look at replicating or using as a template the follow-up work done by O'Connor and Colwell (op cit) in order to provide a quantitative base on which to build our answers. Studies could also look at what other factors may influence success or lack of it after leaving nurture groups. The political climate in

education at present and the expectations and perceptions of the pupils, members of staff and schools as a whole, merits further consideration in relation to and in conjunction with explorations of success beyond the Nurture Group. The strands identified as showing greatest short term success and which did not show relapse in long term measures in the work of O'Connor and Colwell (op cit) also merit further study. We know these sub-strands of the Boxall Profile showed and maintained improvements both pre and post intervention but exploration of 'why' these areas remained successful may help to understand the value and effectiveness of nurture groups. Further investigation into the practice and experiences of staff and young people labelled with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties would help with our understanding of what practices underpin this 'success' and what schools should consider and put in place, both in nurture groups and in school as a whole, to aid the best outcomes and practice for these young people.

1.8.2.1 Limitations of the systematic review

The initial focus of this review was on literature which dealt with quantitative data. There was a concerted emphasis on this to the exclusion of all studies with no quantitative data analysis. This emphasis may have led to the omission of studies which offered valuable insights into ideas of 'success' in mainstream classrooms following nurture group interventions. Conclusions drawn from the literature reviewed are inescapably reductionist and do not account for individual and environmental circumstances; this is true in relation to both the participants involved and to the settings and communities in which the nurture groups exist.

The WoE tool provides a structure for attempting to objectively evaluate the quality of studies, and as such is certainly preferable to researcher judgement alone. However, there is still a great deal of room for subjectivity whilst rating studies on each of the criteria and it is entirely probable that two researchers could arrive at different weightings for the same studies, calling into question the level of rigour involved. As mentioned however, when dealing with mixed experimental designs and data collection and analysis methods it does provide a needed structure to compare non-homogenous studies.

1.8.2.2 Implications for Educational Psychologists' (EPs) practice

The review offers evidence that nurture groups can be effective in improving social emotional and mental health difficulties in children and one study offers evidence that

much of this improvement can be maintained when children return to the mainstream classroom. The most direct way that this is likely to impact on EPs practice is through providing them with an evidence base with which to approach schools in order to put into place nurture groups in settings. Helping schools to identify children who may benefit from nurture provision and supporting staff members working within nurture groups is also an area where EPs can contribute. It could be argued that there is a role for EPs in helping schools to employ nurture principles more widely within schools and to research and evaluate in collaboration with schools which aspects of nurture are most effective for them.

Word Count – 5436 (pre-amendment)

Chapter 2 – Systematic Review to Empirical Research

Abstract

This chapter documents the epistemological journey which has taken place during the formulation and implementation of this piece of empirical research. The chapter encompasses the influence of the systematic review findings on generating a research question, shifts in my perceived epistemology and ontology and the influence of these shifts upon the design of the research and the method of analysis. A journey from a perceived positivist position through that of social constructionism and back a little to a position of critical realism is described. This is explained in relation to practical and real-world considerations which influenced these shifts throughout the research process. There is detailed discussion of the decisions made regarding research design, in particular the employment of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and the relationship of this to the critical realist stance.

2.1 Introduction

The initial systematic review conducted sought to interrogate the research around nurture groups' for evidence of their efficacy in children returning to mainstream classes. From the outset the focus was on identifying generalisable approaches, teaching styles principles and practice in nurture groups which could be said to provide long term benefits to the learning and well-being of children. The systematic review was concerned with quantitative data and reflected my perceived ontological and epistemological stance at the time of writing. Throughout the research process a shift has occurred in my understanding of ontology, epistemology and my own position in relation to these; the shift referred to was from a largely positivist stance, towards a more constructionist stance and back again through ideas of pragmatism to the development of a critical realist stance. This bridging document intends to explore the research process and the effect upon methodology which occurred throughout this epistemological journey.

2.2 Consideration of findings from the Systematic Review

Given that the systematic review attempted to examine quantitative measures of effectiveness in nurture groups and that the studies identified were selected upon reports of adhering to 'Classic Nurture Group' principles a trend was identified even in the studies which were selected for use. The trend being that alongside

quantitative data, almost all studies contained some element of qualitative qualification of that data (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Doyle, 2001; Sanders, 2007; K. Scott & Lee, 2009; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013). An examination of this combination of quantitative and qualitative data in the studies reviewed suggests a need on the part of researchers to qualify and add to quantitative measures; a suggestion that perhaps the quantitative data is lacking in its ability to capture the complexities of the implementation and success of nurture groups across varied settings and contexts. The question was also raised as to what further knowledge could be gained from a quantitative analysis seeking to look beyond 'what' is shown by qualitative data to be effective and 'why' this is so, or perhaps what is it that those involved in nurture groups view as important which may help us to understand why certain measures were found to have long term success in the one study which looked at longitudinal data (O'Connor & Colwell, 2002).

2.3 Development of the research question

I approached the Systematic Review from a stance of realism and positivism, embracing the idea that success was measurable and that that measure could and should be used to inform practice. This realist and positivist (Thyer, 2008) stance led to initial formulations for research encompassing experimental approaches and methods of *measuring* outcomes of children who had re-joined their mainstream classes. However, my recognition of the ubiquity of qualitative additions to quantitative data in the research began to influence the beginnings of my research question formulation. Questions around ontology and epistemology emerged, entwining my perceived stance with the recognition that in many of the cases discussed the qualitative data described added to the understanding, and my own interpretation of the results. This had not been a conscious consideration at the point of writing the systematic review, however a need to examine more closely my ontological and epistemological approaches became of paramount importance to the research process.

2.3.1 Initial Development of the Epistemological Stance

My initial realist and positivist stance had developed from the experience of completing my first degree in a time and place where psychology as a traditional science was the default position and as such research supervision and formulation

had a decidedly positivist slant. There was some personal discomfort to the experience of joining an Educational Psychology training course and having this position challenged by the sharing and acquisition of new knowledge. However, the process of examining existing research, and from this beginning to develop a research question brought the changes in my understanding of ontology and epistemology into sharp focus.

The initial shift in my ontological thinking was radical. Increasingly the recognition that any given situation, thing or event could be parsed, perceived or packaged in a variety of ways depending upon individual perspectives pervaded the process of developing a research question. The importance I had begun to place through practice, upon understanding the perspectives of those with whom I work fed into and developed my emerging realisation that the 'reality' I had thought existed seemed now a rather narrow perspective which took no account of a complex interplay of factors. I found myself examining the relativist position and finding that I felt it had, to some degree, unconsciously become inherent in my practice. The idea that knowledge always has its origins in an 'evolved' perspective (Raskin, 2008) rather than a fixed perspective based upon sensory experience is one that fits with the way I practice and view the world. Although a seemingly dramatic shift I realised that there had been some tension for a significant time with what I had believed to be my ontology and epistemology and the practice and approach to the world which was now emerging during my training.

Leading on from this, the epistemological position of constructionism seemed to be the one which fitted with my developing stance. I examined ways in which I could conduct research which encompassed this new idea of explanation and understanding coming through the social relationships between people (Burr, 2015). This led me to consider research methods which aligned and encompassed these ideas. Co-operative or Collaborative enquiry, research 'with' rather than 'on' people (Heron & Reason, 2006) seemed ideally placed to meet my emerging perception of my own relativist ontology and constructivist epistemology. This however, left something of an impasse in terms of a solid research question. The considerations gleaned from the systematic review provided me with a conviction that the research should encompass wider considerations than the nurture group itself, both in terms of

the social constructions of those pupils and staff directly involved in the nurture group but also the constructions of the mainstream staff relating specifically to nurture groups and the children who attend them. The idea of seeking the views of mainstream teachers who work with children from the nurture groups continues to be important, however I was keen to understand their own views and perceptions of the group and its members rather than simply exploring their views of the child's behaviour or attitude to learning outside of the nurture group.

2.3.2 Refining research methodology and ontological and epistemological stance

Personal discomfort from my radical epistemological shift continued to be a consideration and the need to explore this discomfort further became apparent with the development of what may be termed 'real-world' or practical considerations in relation to research (real here not referring to the more abstract notion of 'reality' thus far discussed in relation to ontology) (Bryman, 2015). At the point of gathering consent from children and meeting to begin the formal collaborative enquiry process (Bolden et al., 2014) the school I had begun working with informed me that they were no longer able to release the staff to take part in the research.

Throughout the process of initiating the collaborative inquiry there had been a degree, once more, of personal discomfort from an ontological and epistemological perspective, perhaps understandably given the radical nature of the initial shift. The enforced change in the course of the research led to further examination of and a deeper probing of my ontology and epistemology leading to the epistemological stance which came to underpin the final research question and methodology. This stance was one which lay between the two extremes which I had previously considered, the stance of Critical Realism.

2.3.3 Critical Realism – reaching a definitive epistemology

Rather than the relativist understanding that the world only exists as a construction of individual minds and the relationships of these minds to one another or the entirely realist view that the world is a concrete thing which can only be understood through the analysis of information gathered about it from our senses, Critical Realism has developed as my perception of my view of the world and how we acquire knowledge.

I believe that there is a physical world which exists outside human constructions and perceptions. However, it is my view that our observation and experience of that world is filtered and focused through the lens of our own prior experience, constructions of others, ourselves and society rather than through our senses and the world and therefore cannot be directly understood independently in its truest or physical sense. I view the social world as somewhat of a Gestalt conception, in that individual minds understand, construct and interact with it in their own way producing an overarching, and cumulative independent social mind. A shared social mind constructed through facets such as language, communication, socio-economic status, culture, ethnicity and the possession, or lack of, social power (Gorski, 2011).

In terms of informing the shape of the research this stance gives scope for a methodology which encompasses my ideas on the social construction of knowledge and the ability to produce a rich picture of a particular setting which may have transferrable or universally understandable tenets at its centre. That is to say, I believe that there is a degree of shared knowledge and understanding of social concepts such as relationships and self-worth in a way which is likely to include some shared meaning between individuals in a shared setting. Whilst this is true, there also remains the consideration that the researcher should retain awareness of the differences in people's meaning making owing to prior experience, beliefs or culture and take this into consideration throughout both research conducting and analysis. In addition to considerations of participants meaning making the researcher must also be aware of their own meaning making and any assumptions they may be bringing to bear on the contributions of their participants (Silverman, 2013).

2.3.4 Epistemological impact upon question redefinition

The critical realist perspective allows for the researcher to both acknowledge and seek to understand how others construct 'reality' and seek to understand this within the bounds of their own constructions of the world (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Scott, 2005). The adoption of this stance, of necessity guided the methodology, experimental design and question formulation for the empirical research project. This was again bounded by practical considerations owing to the necessity of finding a new school with whom I could work and their ability to release staff and pupils to take

part (Bryman, 2015). This stance also led to the reconsideration and reformulation of the research question.

Taken together, the initial review question of the success of nurture group children in mainstream classes and the situational factor of the original participating school having withdrawn their nurture group to use staff expertise in mainstream provided a stimulating direction for my thoughts on the research question. Both cases seemed indicative of searching for some kind of link between nurture groups and mainstream classes. A 'bridge' between nurture and mainstream became a pervading imagery in my construction of the research question. Ideas of 'success' were difficult to examine owing to the nature of different constructions of the term, not wishing to conduct research whose focus was solely on what is defined as 'successful' the next logical step was to look at what was valued about the nurture group which was considered at least in its own school to have achieved and be achieving its aims. An ideal setting was identified where there was an established nurture group, best described as a 'variant' nurture group (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007), that is to say a nurture group based to a degree on 'nurture principles' (Bennathan & Boxall, 2013) yet not adhering to the explicit structure or 'six nurture principles' provided by Boxall (op cit). This group seemed a good example of the 'bridge' envisaged between the aims and practice of nurture groups and the aims and practice of mainstream classes. Further discussion of this is to be found within the chapter detailing the empirical research.

Given nurture group staff, mainstream staff and children's possibly differing constructions of the purpose, practice and aim of a nurture group and holding to the idea of bridging their experiences with those of mainstream teachers a question was developed. The question was one which allowed scope for examining the constructions of these three sets of participants both as part of their discreet groups and in relation to one another. It aimed to gather information on the value these stakeholders have placed upon facets of nurture group provision with a view to understanding areas identified in the systematic review as successful in both the long and short term.

'Staff and pupil experience and perceptions: What is seen as the 'value' of a new variant nurture group?'

2.4 Experimental design as a function of a critical realist stance

As mentioned above the adoption of a critical realist stance informed and shaped not only the research question under consideration but the method by which that question was to be explored. Two main factors needed to be decided, first of all how would the information or data be gathered and secondly how would it be analysed.

2.4.1 Information gathering

In considering how information would be gathered it was necessary to account for who I would gather data from and how I would do this. In the first instance it was clear, as with most of the studies described in the systematic review, that views would be gathered from adults who were closely involved in the nurture group or who had children in their mainstream classes who were attending the nurture group (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Doyle, 2001; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002; Sanders, 2007; K. Scott & Lee, 2009; Shaver & McClatchey, 2013). Many of these studies sought to do this in a very informal way, with anecdotal evidence gathered ad hoc and reported in support of quantitative measures. A more rigorous method of analysis was required in order to give the opportunity of a more 'fine-grained' analysis (Galletta, 2013). In order to facilitate this more in-depth analysis within the context and bounds of the real-world setting of a school (Bryman, 2015) a combination of semi-structured interviews and one focus group (with the children) was planned. Semi-structured interviews provide a means of gathering descriptions both of the participants world and their construction and understanding of a specific topic and a way of beginning to interpret this (Brinkmann, 2007; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The choice of conducting a focus group with the children was in part a practical consideration and in part a pragmatic one related to notions of power dynamics and the gathering of pupil voice. The decision to use a focus group was taken in consideration with the planned method of analysis, both this method and the implications of using a focus group are discussed later.

The inclusion of the 'child voice' as a general concept is one that has permeated my practice and to a degree my consciousness. That there are benefits, bonuses and warrant for including child voice is a matter of record as is the importance of accessing and recording child voice (DfE, 2014b). Including child voice has benefits not just for the researcher but for children themselves. Pupil participation provides

children with a sense of agency, control and a sense of being valued; eliciting their views is important in terms of raising their confidence, aspiration and motivation through encouraging them to grow an understanding and ownership of their own learning and learning approaches (Beveridge*, 2004; Cheminais, 2013; Emilson & Folkesson, 2006; Goepel, 2009). Thus the focus groups process strives to be of benefit to both researcher and participant alike.

2.4.2 Data Analysis

The method selected for analysis of data from the semi-structured interviews and focus group was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers, & Osborn, 1997). The use of IPA was informed by the epistemological stance of critical realism in that it acknowledges the existence of both a reality shared in the physical sense and individual constructions, perceptions and experiences of that reality. The identification of IPA as rigorous method of analysis, attuned to the epistemological stance of critical realism helped to define the research question, 'Staff and pupil experience and perceptions: What is seen as the 'value' of a new variant nurture group?' It seeks an in-depth exploration of people's lived experiences whilst also exploring how they make sense of those experiences (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

IPA is concerned with both describing how things appear and interpreting them, based on the tenet that uninterpreted phenomenon do not exist. IPA offers a rigorous approach to accessing those constructions and perceptions through both participant's responses and the inherent hermeneutic nature of the analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). It is concerned with studying people ideographically, however it is also beginning to be used in conjunction with a variety of data collection methods and data types and (Tomkins & Eatough, 2010). A further discussion of the 'pitfalls and potentials' of using IPA with focus groups can be found in the discussion/method section of the empirical research chapter.

2.4.3 Selection of Data Analysis method

Epistemological considerations influenced the selection of the method of data analysis. The method needed to correspond with the epistemological stance of both the research and the researcher. To do so, it needed to allow for exploration and rich picture building whilst remaining actively aware that knowledge is always perceived through a subjective lens. Interpretative, Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et

al., 1997) was selected as the most appropriate method of data analysis. IPA offers the opportunity for the researcher to immerse themselves in the data and attempt to put themselves in the shoes of their participants, whilst remaining conscious of the hermeneutic circle (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2004) in which their own constructions mediate their understanding of their participants understanding. It is also ideal for dealing with small sample sizes and whilst providing a guide for analysis it allows for flexibility in approach to analysis. This flexibility could potentially be viewed as contentious but as Smith (2004) remarks himself flexibility in analysis is fundamental to the idea of collecting good qualitative research. He emphasises that the quality of the research outcome is determined more by the personal analytical work done at each stage of the procedure than by following a rigid set of instructions.

The other possibly contentious consideration in terms of the use of IPA in this study is the question of being able to be truly idiographic, an underlying tenet of IPA, when two of the semi-structured interviews were conducted in either a pair or group setting. However, there has been discussion, due to the development and adaptations being used of IPA which supports the use of IPA with multiple participants (Tomkins & Eatough, 2010) . Whilst Smith himself had stated that he is generally cautious or sceptical about the use of IPA with focus groups he recommends parsing transcripts twice, once for group patterns and dynamics and then for idiographic accounts (Smith, 2004), advice which was taken on board whilst analysing the data for the current project. A colleague and student of Smith's, Eatough, along with her colleague Tomkins (Tomkins & Eatough, 2010), offers a balanced yet slightly more positive and detailed exploration of using IPA with focus groups. The suggestion here is that the use of IPA with focus groups is epistemologically challenging and that efforts must be made to avoid privileging group meaning making over individual and vice versa. They suggest attempting to take a 'step back' from traditional ideas of either psychological *or* discursive and attempt to blur the distinctions between these by 'showcasing' the sense and meaning making of individuals as well as highlighting how the relational, discursive and contextual factors add to or detract from this meaning making. The process of analysing focus group data in the present study aimed to work from this perspective.

In practice this was a challenging feat to undertake. The table in the Analysis section of Chapter 3 details at each stage how relational, discursive and contextual factors were identified, recorded and considered at each stage. To a degree this felt a logical

and natural part of the analysis process. However, at the stage of comparing themes and making links between data it is likely that some of the rich data garnered by this approach was lost. In this study this seems to be due to the relatively small amounts of individual data in groups which presented clear deviations from or personal differences in the wider opinions being addressed in the discussion. As suggested by Smith (2004) it may have been more productive to make a separate case study of individual perspectives and meaning making which struck the researcher as interesting in the earlier stages of analysis although this was something which was not possible due to time constraints in this case. The researchers own relative inexperience with the interviewing and analysis processes may also have had some impact on identification of different types of and influences on meaning making.

Chapter 3. Empirical Research - Staff and pupil experience and perceptions: What is seen as the 'value' of a new variant nurture group?

Abstract

This chapter details the empirical research, the formulation of which has been described in Chapters 1 and 2, and its findings. The study was completed with the staff and pupils of a new-variant nurture group. The nature of the group in relation to traditional nurture principles is explored and explained. The research project is conducted using a combination of semi-structured one to one interviews with nurture group staff, a focus group with children who attend the nurture group and, and a joint interview with the mainstream teachers of those children. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to produce superordinate and subthemes which emerged as particularly pertinent to the participants involved. The study concludes that many of the reported benefits and value laden aspects of the nurture provision tie in with current psychological knowledge of processes such as, relationships, sense of belonging and self-esteem and self-construct. There is also discussion of some of the negative aspects of nurture provision identified such as, difficulty adapting to different, less scaffolded teaching styles, and social isolation due to negative self-concepts. There is also discussion of the policy issues mentioned by staff which influence practice within school and the nurture group. Tentative conclusions state that this research can contribute to the field by offering an examination of one case study which may contribute to identifying wider patterns and themes in other IPA studies in this area. That the nurture group involved shows evidence of enriching the children's educational experience and helping to develop skills both in learning and in social and emotional functioning however, future suggestions for development of the group could include work on developing these skills in a way which can be transferred outside of the safety of the nurture group and which can be taught in other areas of the school.

3.1 Introduction

This research was conducted with a focus on eliciting the views and perceptions of stakeholders involved in a 'new variant' nurture group. The introduction to this research seeks to give a brief overview of key concepts relating to nurture groups and research findings to date and to provide clarity on the question being asked and the terms used.

3.1.1 Nurture Groups

Nurture groups were introduced by Marjorie Boxall in 1969 in inner city London (Boxall 1976) to attempt to provide a 'growth not pathology' (Boxall 2002, P10) approach to teaching children with SEMH (Bennathan, 1997). There is some evidence for the effectiveness of nurture groups when examined using tools which seek to measure children's behaviours, skills, ability to cope, and ability to regulate their emotional responses. Such tools include the Boxall Profile (Bennathan, 1998), or the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997; Goodman, Meltzer, & Bailey, 1998) or BIOS (Burnett, 1998). However, both the systematic review in chapter one and a review conducted by Hughes and Schlösser (2014b) conclude that whilst there is evidence of effectiveness for children with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, (SEBD) – now termed Social Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) (DfE, 2014b) – this evidence is limited to short term outcomes with only one study (O'Connor & Colwell, 2002) providing long term data.

Whilst these studies support at least short-term, with the potential for long-term, positive effects for the outcomes of children attending nurture groups there has been less research focused on what it is about these groups which makes them effective. The effectiveness of nurture groups here encompassing both the short-term data suggesting quantitative measures of improvement in behaviours, emotional development and well-being of children and the anecdotal and qualitative reports which have accompanied these. Evidence suggests that having a nurture group in a school can lead to better outcomes in terms of behaviour and social and emotional wellbeing across the school as well as improving the ethos and increasing the capacity of schools to support children with social and emotional difficulties (Binnie & Allen, 2008; Doyle, 2003). Again, this evidence does not interrogate the specifics of

'what' it is about nurture group practice that has this effect, nor how this is constructed, perceived and used both within the nurture group and in the school generally. There is limited evidence on nurture groups and many studies are considered methodologically limited (Hughes & Schlösser, 2014b). As discussed in Chapter 1 research presents both quantitative and qualitative data, with uneven levels of rigour in the analysis of both types of data; often qualitative is reported as an adjunct to the quantitative data and does not undergo any form of data analysis at all, as.

The studies under review in Chapter 1 often contain some element of discourse on 'safety' and 'relationships'. There is also evidence that children labelled with social, emotional and what is termed as 'behavioural' issues do best in classrooms which promote self-esteem, where children view themselves and their abilities in a positive light and feel supported and valued and can develop their self-concept (Armstrong & Hallett, 2012; Colwell & O'Connor, 2003; Iszatt & Wasilewska, 1997; Roffey, 2010; Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976).

There has been debate over the understanding and delineation of self-concept and self-esteem. There has been some suggestion that self-esteem involves a cognitive appraisal of oneself (Marsh 2006) whilst others suggest that affect is intrinsically linked (Mruk 2006). By the same token there is debate on whether self-concept includes both cognitive and affective appraisal of oneself mediated by perceptions of the evaluations of others (Shavelson et al., 1976) or whether there is a clear difference between self-esteem and self-concept, one pertaining to the affective and one to the descriptive. The conception which fits most closely with my own understanding of the terms is highlighted by O'Mara, Marsh, Craven and Debus (2006). This conception holds that self-esteem is affective and evaluative whereas self-concept is descriptive. Here I refer to self-concept as what a person might view as facts about themselves and self-esteem refers to how a person feels about themselves. I would argue that self-esteem often has the more affective aspect although both are mediated and can be shaped by evaluations of others and our own belief about how others see us.

The idea that belonging to a group and holding that sense of belonging also appears in the literature (Armstrong & Hallett, 2012; Boyd, 2012; Cooper & Whitebread, 2007) on both nurture groups and supporting children with SEBD. Love and belonging are

identified on the third level of the Hierarchy of Needs model (Maslow & Lowry, 1968), suggesting that these needs rank only after physical and survival needs in importance. Given such a high ranking it could be argued that belonging, or a sense of belonging may be entwined with identified factors of importance such as self-esteem, self-concept (Marsh & Craven, 2006; Mruk, 2006; Shavelson et al., 1976) and emotional regulation and socialisation as measured by the Boxall profile (Bennathan, 1998). There is support for this idea in the literature, where belonging has been parsed as a multi-dimensional concept, closely linked to social behaviour which, like self-esteem and self-concept encompasses both cognitive and affective components (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Frederickson & Baxter, 2009; Hagerty Williams & Oe, 2002). Belonging has been conceptualised as both a fundamental human drive (Baumeister & Leary 1995) and as something which is experienced (Hagerty et al., 1992). Here I refer to belonging as something which embraces both of these conceptualisations and is both experienced and needed.

3.1.2 Clarification of terms and the research question

The research question employs the use of the term 'new variant nurture group, clarification of this term is integral to understanding the context of the research and the reasons for selecting the experimental group.

Whilst the first nurture groups were established with clear principles, structures and routines (Boxall, 1976) recent years have seen the development of nurture groups which vary from this 'classic' or 'traditional' format. The types of nurture groups commonly seen operating were classified as variant types by Cooper and Whitebread (2007). They identified the following types of group: 1 – the classic Boxall nurture group, 2 – new variant nurture groups, 3 – groups informed by nurture principles and 4 – aberrant groups. The first two of these variants are seen as genuine nurture groups, the group with which the present study was conducted falls into the 2nd classification.

Variants of this type are based on the principles underpinning the classic model but differ in structure and/or organisational features from the Boxall groups.

Cooper and Whitebread (2007) p177

The group with whom this research is conducted meets the criteria of being a small group, staffed by a teacher and teaching assistant (TA) and to a degree adheres to the core principles of the classic approach. There are tensions in terms of the scope of the group to meet the criteria described here for developmental emphasis (teaching children at the appropriate development level rather than chronological age) and holistic curriculum (recognising the importance of teaching and learning which encompasses the whole child and their developing personal, social, and creative skills and well-being). These were made explicit before research began and are discussed in more detail in the discussion section. The group is viewed as successful within its own school, this success evidenced in a number of children who have attended the nurture group and returned to mainstream classes.

The studies discussed above offer limited interrogation of the qualitative perceptions, interpretations and constructions of those most closely involved in nurture groups. There has also been a lack of investigation into the precise factors which determine and denote 'success' in nurture groups. In light of this, this study seeks to gain a rich picture of the understanding, and construction of stakeholders of both the group as an entity, and of themselves. The research seeks to do this through examining the lived experience of the children who attend a new variant nurture group (Cooper & Whitebread, 2007) and the staff who work closely with them. The research question refers to the perceived 'value' of this group, to those seen as direct stakeholders (nurture group staff, children who attend nurture group and their mainstream teachers) and to the school as a whole. Examination of the explanations of this by stakeholders seeks to gain a picture of both any aspects viewed as 'effective' and what, if anything is 'good, valuable, or important' to this particular nurture group. In so doing it is expected that issues which impinge upon the success of the group or the ability to carry out practice which is considered 'good' will also be considered from the themes generated.

3.1.3 Research Aims

This study hopes to add to the limited research which exists about the underpinning practices and factors which make these interventions successful (Colwell & O'Connor, 2003; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002). It is hoped that the perceptions of this group of participants can both strengthen these findings and add to them. It is also hoped that consideration of strategies, tools and ways of being identified, may indicate a psychological approach or theory best placed to promote these positive factors. In so doing, the study will also take account of factors which may impact identified factors, such as operational and academic expectations within the school environment. A secondary aim of this research is to compare the perceptions of children, adults working in the nurture group, and adults working in mainstream classrooms and possibly identify uniting or conflicting themes in these.

3.2 Design

The overarching method of this study is, to an extent idiographic in nature, largely due to the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 1997). The term, 'to an extent' is discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.4.3. The idiographic and hermeneutic aspect of this exploration of peoples lived experiences requires caution in attempting to generalise findings reported in this study. The methods of semi-structured interviews, and IPA analysis attempt to capture both the participants' experiences and constructions and also attend to how the researcher's own constructions concepts and understandings mediate their access to these (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

3.2.1 Context

The research was carried out in a primary school, with a roll of 243 pupils, in the North East of England. The number of children eligible for free school meals (81.1%) is higher than average as is the number of children supported on the SEN register or with a statement of special educational need (17.2%).

3.2.2 Participants

The participants of this study fall into three groups:

- 1) Children – 4 Key Stage 2 (two Y6 and two Y5) children took part in this study. All children had been attending the nurture group for a term or more at the time of interview. They were all boys. Partly due to the group being predominantly composed of boys and partly as, of the two girls who attend the group, one was judged by the nurture group teacher to be likely to be distressed by the process; parental consent was not obtained for the other.
- 2) The nurture group staff: one teacher and one TA, both of whom have worked in the nurture group for several years since it was set up by the teacher.
- 3) The two mainstream teachers of the children involved in the study, neither of whom had previously worked in the nurture group but one of whom who had experience of supporting an ex-nurture group pupil to re-join his mainstream class.

This was a purposive sample, based upon the availability of staff, children and provision of consent from parents or guardians.

3.2.3 Ethics

Ethical conducting of research was a consideration throughout the conception and realisation of this study (Willig, 2008). A letter (Appendix Ai) was sent to all parents detailing the purpose of the study, the way that data would be handled and the right of the child or parent to withdraw consent at any point. Participants were informed in the letters and immediately before interview that audio recordings would be kept on an electronically secure device for the purposes of transcription and analysis and would be destroyed immediately after acceptance of the research by examiners. Contact details were provided for any questions which may arise. Both parents and children signed consent forms (appendix Aii) . Participants' names and identifying information about themselves and the school has been altered or blanked out in transcripts and throughout the written report. Throughout the interview process attention was paid to levels of emotional arousal and possible sign of distress in participants.

3.2.4 Data gathering

The format used for gathering data was semi-structured interview. A number of factors in conjunction with and related to those of ontology and epistemology discussed in Chapter 2, influenced this choice. Semi-structured interviews afford opportunities for understanding people's constructions and perceptions within the bounds of the researcher's own construction and understanding of reality (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; D. Scott, 2005). They also allow for the researcher to prepare an interview guide, with open-ended questions designed to guide but not limit the discussion, allowing focus on the areas of research interest but not precluding possibly rich data from participants own meaning making and priorities (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Galletta, 2013). Semi-structured interviews are also ideal for time limited situations where opportunities for follow-up interviews is unlikely (Bernard, 1988; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

The focus group was set up as an informal discussion whilst sharing a drink and snack, a conscious decision, as was the choice to employ a focus group where children would not be in the situation of speaking to an unknown adult one to one. This was an attempt both to acknowledge and somewhat ameliorate the power differential between myself and the pupils (Farrell, 2005). The focus group also allows for the idea that hearing the ideas of others may facilitate the forming and sharing of opinions within the group (Krueger & Casey, 2014). Another benefit is that focus groups elicit information in a way which allows researchers to find out why an issue is salient, as well as what is salient about it (Morgan 1988). Greig and Taylor (1999) have suggested that focus groups are a good research method for eliciting the views of children as they can give confidence to individuals within the group, and provide an easier way to build rapport with children, particularly if they are anxious. As these children were selected for Nurture Groups based on social and emotional difficulties, this seemed to be a more appropriate method than an individual interview.

Before interviews were conducted time was spent in the nurture group, observing the structure, routines and approaches used, the children, staff school and nurture group's context and to allow the children to gain some degree of familiarity with me. This resulted in a more robust validity for the type of rich qualitative research being

undertaken (Cho & Trent, 2006). Practical considerations of real-world research meant that although one to one interviews of all participants was the intent some flexibility was required in this area (Bryman, 2015). The teacher and teaching assistant from the nurture group were interviewed individually as planned. Due to time constraints and availability of participants, mainstream teachers were interviewed as a pair and the children were interviewed as a focus group (Barbour, 2008; Goldenkoff, 2004). This has implications for the method of data analysis employed which is discussed later. To ensure that the children felt comfortable and relaxed the interview was explained to them as a chat about their group and a point was made of ensuring them that there were no right or wrong answers, just their opinions. The children were aware that I would be taking the audio recording of the session away and typing it up. To further break down the barriers which may exist due to an inherent power bias between children and adults in a school setting, the children were provided with snacks and drinks which were shared between them and the researcher, increasing the feeling of community solidarity (Fieldhouse, 1995).

3.3 Analysis

Data was analysed using IPA. This is a framework which provides a guide to data analysis which can be flexible and adapted to the researcher's data and research question (Smith, 2004). A detailed discussion of the epistemological and ontological motivations for using IPA can be found in section 2.4.2 of Chapter 2.

3.3.1 Table of stages of IPA Analysis

Stage 1	Each transcript was read a number of times. Once in isolation and twice with the audio recording playing, then two more close readings took place where I began to make notes in the margins regarding my own and the participants meaning making.
Stage 2	Each transcript was read again with explicit attention to my perceptions on language choice, possible constructions and conceptions of the participants and descriptions given by them. The fact that some of the data was produced in a focus group situation was acknowledged by awareness and recording of interpersonal and individual meaning making, constructions and conceptions. Some emerging themes were noted in the table of the transcript.
Stage 3	The emerging themes were transferred to a Microsoft excel document, (a table of which can be found in the appendices) where themes were recorded alongside exploratory notes, any further observations or perceptions which arose whilst arranging the information and page numbers and some quotations in order to aid my understanding of where in the transcript the theme had occurred.

	I chose to use Excel, rather than methods which are sometimes employed such as traditional pen and paper or post it notes and large sheets of paper. This allowed me to remain close to the data whilst beginning to categorise it, I found it easy to amend or add to notes and ideas of themes as I worked and it is a method of data recording which I am familiar and competent with. The other advantages were that the 'sort and filter' function helped throughout the analysis process in being able to easily see specific sets of data based on superordinate theme, subtheme or participant type or individual participant
Stage 4	For each theme identified I looked back at each transcript (and in some cases listened again to the audio recording where I thought tone may help my meaning making or to check that the transcript was accurate) to validate my original decision on the theme within which the data best fit. In some cases I amended the theme as a result of re-reading of the transcript, or listening to the audio and reflecting upon what sense I had initially made of their comment and what other ways the participant may have been constructing their explanation or what other ways it might be understood. Here I attempted to remain aware of both the groups patterns of meaning making and also more idiographic meaning making. At the end of this stage there were still a number of extracts from the transcription with notes which I felt may fit into one or another theme. I put these to one side at this point and went on with exploring emerging themes so that greater familiarisation with my own themes might indicate where these were best placed.
Stage 5	This process was carried out for each transcript in turn. I am mindful that by the fourth transcript certain themes were already prominent in my consciousness and I wonder if a different order had been selected whether differences may have emerged in the themes identified.
Stage 6	These preliminary analyses for each transcript were then gathered in one table and this was printed so that I could highlight patterns and themes which had emerged and produce a homogenous set of Superordinate Themes for all of the transcripts as a whole.
Stage 7	The themes were then grouped into a table which shows the Superordinate Themes, the Subthemes within each of these and examples from the transcript which exemplify these. Given the fact that four transcripts were analysed a selection had to be made carefully to best exemplify the dialogue which led to the formation of the themes and the meaning derived from them; it was impossible to demonstrate the wealth of evidence for each theme.

3.3.2 Findings

The findings of themes which suggest factors of value or importance to nurture group stakeholders, derived from the analysis is presented in the table below, as detailed in Stage 7 of the IPA analysis summary above. Analysis revealed three Superordinate Themes, which were further divided into subthemes and are shown in the table below with evidential extracts from the transcript.

3.3.3 Table of themes derived from IPA

Superordinate Theme	Sub-Themes	Evidence from Transcript (C = children, NGTA = Nurture Group TA, NGT = Nurture Group Teacher, MT = Mainstream class teacher – individual children and mainstream teachers denoted by number)
Social and Emotional	Constructions of self and others	<p>C1 “Just me cos I struggle to listen properly”, “and if you’re mad Mr Jones lets you sit over there and calm down”, “it’s better than in class cos you get like help like they’re all brainier than us but we’re not that..... considering we’ve got problems really we’re like can get too angry or we don’t know as good much stuff.”</p> <p>NGT “you know by hurrying him you make him slower and really that’s [name removed] you know there’s nothing I can do to make his processing better. Just appreciate that’s [NAME REMOVED]”, “who weren’t writers and weren’t readers and weren’t mathematicians and now they’re seeing themselves as learning so that’s and there’s that whole other side of it that emotional nurturing where a lot of them are coming to school with loads of baggage ”</p> <p>NGTA “we try and just say that it’s we’re in here for a reason, Some of us need more help than others and they agree with that and they’re not they never argue that point and they always ... as long as I feel like they feel accepted and belong that’s fine with me”</p> <p>MT2 “I think they do definitely have some sort of inkling but even just sort of the chats the social skills they haven’t got them So they’re isolated I think in a mainstream classroom. A little bit.”</p>
	Relationships	<p>NGTA “I feel like the children feel it’s definitely safer..... I’ve said it about ourselves as well that it’s our own little bubble and the kids feel safe straight away” “we’ve got more of a, not a friendship balance, but it’s more, it’s more friendly in here... yeah between me and the kids” “A sense of belonging I think for them in here definitely I think, I feel, I hope I’m not wrong but I feel like they all feel like they belong”</p>

Superordinate Theme	Sub-Themes	Evidence from Transcript (C = children, NGTA = Nurture Group TA, NGT = Nurture Group Teacher, MT = Mainstream class teacher – individual children and mainstream teachers denoted by number)
		<p>C2 “Yeah teamwork and we had to rely on each other to do stuff” C4 “We helped each other as well” C2 “We had to trust each other” C1” No in our class when Mr Jones he tells us what about it and we tell him about us”</p> <p>NGT “it’s not the like the pupil/teacher relationship it’s odd really and you (.) sometimes they’ll say things like they’ll say things which you’d maybe tell them off for in a mainstream class” “They never ever ever made to feel silly or stupid or like they don’t know something and they should feel bad for it and it’s all about sort of helping each other and that stuff and they quite like that think”</p> <p>MT2 “whereas in a class I’m not saying that we don’t care it’s just that it’s they [NG staff] have a little bit more time to do that I think.”.</p>
Learning	Type of Learning	<p>C1 “But they turn things into fun ways like learn in fun ways like in Reception playing and everything” C2 “Yeah we learn how to cook”</p> <p>NGT “Cos I’m kind of it’s almost like having to prep them to survive in like..... Worlds really . What they need is life skills and stuff and speaking and listening is huge isn’t it?”</p> <p>MT2 “they would still struggle to achieve sort of getting everything correct having that sort of sense of pride in their work but in the nurture group because it’s off curriculum... they access a sort of Stage Two, Year Two reading SATS they achieve on them so it gives them a sense of pride”</p>
	Teaching Style	<p>C2 “The way the teachers teach us in class is different from the ones that teach us in here” C2 “and we do different activities”</p> <p>NGTA “Definitely having a laugh and a like building relationships with kids is always the best but even things like we always write on a whiteboard first and we’ve done that for I can’t remember how long”</p>

Superordinate Theme	Sub-Themes	Evidence from Transcript (C = children, NGTA = Nurture Group TA, NGT = Nurture Group Teacher, MT = Mainstream class teacher – individual children and mainstream teachers denoted by number)
		<p>NGT “you’re on a hiding to nothing if you’re wanting the kids to adapt to you and how you work we should be adapting to how the kids work to get the best from them”, “Everything’s more scaffolded and so supported even within a sentence..... and there’s always like a structure” “these guys work for 5 minutes independently and then they need something whether that’s to get their friend to check it or they need to check it or give them some extra tutoring and you don’t have that in a.. some people can figure it out”</p> <p>MT1 “They rarely get as far but their understanding of the things that they do is a lot” MT2 " I think it’s quite good as well for sort of like plugging gaps for example. Even though they’ve all been through Nursery, Reception, Year One, Year Two phonics with the children that are in nurture group they’re not it hasn’t stuck so to keep going over it and over it and even if it is just the success of spelling the reception high frequency words if they get it in the nurture group”</p>
Educational Structure	Environment	<p>C2 “cos if you go in our normal class it will look like white walls well we have white walls but we put something nice on it” C2 “We made them people we made them footsteps” C3 “these are blue and in our class they’re just white these are blue” C3 “we have more space to work in than the other classes there you have to share tables”</p> <p>NGTA “I like that they are proud.....well everything in here is theirs you try and get it so everything on display is theirs so they can (.) (well) so when people like yourself come in they can show you and that they can explain what they’ve done and why they’ve done it”</p> <p>NGT (talking about formalising the classroom indicated by gesture) “by formalising it moving down..... they’re not developing core stability cos their not moving enough and then they’re complaining they can’t hand write”</p>
	Policy	<p>NGT “Yeah it’s a funny one really but at the same time we’ve got a nurture group which a lot of schools don’t have.” “100 percent we’ve got a kid who’s got an EHCP only one, and he’s got an alternative curriculum and he gets some support (but) not all the time. He’s got his</p>

Superordinate Theme	Sub-Themes	Evidence from Transcript (C = children, NGTA = Nurture Group TA, NGT = Nurture Group Teacher, MT = Mainstream class teacher – individual children and mainstream teachers denoted by number)
		<p>own area that works for autism A typical autism so he's got his own space and his own area so and he is he's operating so far below the Year One Class" "We have to show that we're working within a school structure and school system that we're following that there's like continuity of practice. But then also be completely different at the same time."</p> <p>MT1&2 " "MT2: So 3 of them that sort of are very vulnerable children probably not academically ready or resilient enough to do it but are going to have to do it... and give them their best shot because of the rules..... MT1 So then when you talk about support we know that we are putting those kids into a situation we're not happy to put them into" MT1 "And yet we probably yeah we're our own worst enemy because we put so much support in they've got to a level where [they have to take SATS]"</p>

3.4 Discussion

3.4.1 Superordinate theme – Social and Emotional Factors

Subtheme – Constructions of self and others

There was considerable mention from participants during interviews of differing constructions of both themselves and others. Exploratory notes made on this subtheme reveal that, in the case of the children, their self-concept (Marsh & Craven, 2006; Mruk, 2006; Shavelson et al., 1976) placed them in a category which was different to their mainstream classmates. In general this was in a way which placed them in a negative light and constructed their peers more positively. However, Child 1, a child in Year 6 who had been attending the nurture group for a long time seemed to lean towards a more balanced view:

C1: it's better in class cos you get like help like they're all brainier than us but we're not that and considering we've got problems really we're like can get too angry or we don't know as good much stuff

He also seems to indicate that it's his view of himself as a learner that is negative and that this is somewhat inevitable because 'we've got problems' and I wondered if he had conflated learning and behaviour. This was common to all of the children and the idea that things were harder or they were less able than their classmates reoccurred throughout the interview. A difference was noted when they spoke of themselves as learners within the nurture group. Here, academic learning and skills such as cooking, model making and problem solving were opportunities to relay and even show what they were capable of. Therefore nurture group seems to be enabling children to develop a more positive self-concept.

Discussion with the nurture group teacher and TA suggested that the purpose of the nurture group is either not explained to children or is done in such general 'we're all in here for a reason' terms that no explicit link is made between doing well in the nurture group and transferring this to class. This could contribute to both the children's apparent negative self-concept and their construction of others as 'brainier'

than them. This was echoed by the perceptions of the mainstream staff who saw the children as perhaps being isolated in their classroom. The evidence points towards increases in positive self-concept and raised self-esteem which, along with a sense of belonging, is lacking in the classroom.

Subtheme – Relationships

Both children and nurture group staff recognised a difference in the teacher/child relationship to that generally expected in a school setting. The NGTA spoke about the feeling of safety within the group and although this was largely focused on the children, she acknowledged that the feeling extends, at least for her, to the adults too. This NGT also expressed his perception that he and the NGTA had a good and relaxed working relationship which the children appreciated. He mirrored my own thoughts in wondering if the children saw in that relationship something which may be missing for some of them at home.

The 'relaxed' aspect of relationships, identified by the NGT was something which was valued by both himself and the children:

NGT *"it's not the like the pupil/teacher relationship it's odd really and you (.) sometimes they'll say things like they'll say things which you'd maybe tell them off for in a mainstream class"*

C1: *No in our class when Mr XXXX he tells us about it and we tell him about us*

These quotes exemplify a quality to the relationship between all members of the group that it is safe to relax the norms found in a mainstream classroom. The overwhelming sense of these parts of the interviews, is that every member, feels part of a team and that team allows for adults and children to relate to one another on a level which is seen as 'impossible' in a mainstream classroom. This is indicated as possibly a function of the time constraints of having more children or, as will be discussed in the section on the subtheme 'policy', because the nurture group is seen from the outside at least as having a different mandate from the rest of the school in terms of boundaries and rules. In short, it's easier to 'belong' to a team in a smaller

group with less outside pressures, at least from the perspective of a mainstream teacher.

MT2 *“whereas in a class I’m not saying that we don’t care it’s just that it’s, they [NG staff] have a little bit more time to do that I think.”*

3.4.2 Superordinate Theme – Learning

Subtheme – Type of Learning

There was less coherence between the participants in this subtheme relating to the types of learning occurring and what is valuable about them. Children described being engaged by fun tasks in which they had some control and autonomy, often practical tasks such as making rockets or cooking. The NGT also described tasks where children were learning practical life skills, however he seemed to put greater emphasis on learning which children may not be aware of in an explicit way:

NGT *“Cos I’m kind of it’s almost like having to prep them to survive in like Worlds really. What they need is life skills and stuff and speaking and listening is huge isn’t it?”*

His emphasis here is on skills which help children communicate effectively to learn, develop and maintain relationships. As a researcher I am aware that I am filling in the information implied by the phrase ‘it’s huge’ however, it is clear that speaking and listening facilitates all of these things (Roffey, 2010) and the hermeneutic nature of the analysis (Smith et al., 1997) lends itself to a construction of the NGTs meaning making in terms of the benefits of developing good language and communication skills.

The mainstream teacher’s perceptions seem to reflect more on the standardised level of work expected of the children. That is not to say that MT2 is not aware of the affective factors of learning, she reflects that mainstream class work may not provide opportunities for them to take pride in their work. The understanding given here that nurture group is ‘off curriculum’ is interesting in relation to the NGTs discussion of providing the curriculum required in school but at a developmentally appropriate level, in line with Nurture principles (Boxall, 2002).

Subtheme – Teaching Style

The arguably most powerful insight offered by nurture group staff for this subtheme was the idea that we should not require the children in the nurture group to adapt to teachers. The NGT is very clear that it is the staff who must adapt to children's needs and learning styles. This encompassed approaches such as children being allowed to 'draft' or 'try' their work on a whiteboard before committing to paper, thus avoiding potential blows to self-concept and self-esteem by a page of 'incorrect' work. On the whole, the resources described would not be unusual to find in a mainstream classroom.

There was a definite idea on the part of the mainstream teachers that there were resources (such as Alphasmarts) in the nurture classroom that they would not have access to in mainstream. As stated above however, I suspect that the NGT would argue that it is not these resources which make the difference but the way that the children are supported, at their own developmental level and scaffolded where needed. Equally, the issue of time was a recurring theme with the mainstream teachers pointing out that in a much larger class the time needed to provide this for every child is limited.

The final consideration in this subtheme is that of teachers' approach to behaviour during learning time. As the NGT points out the pressure in mainstream classrooms leads to an idea that time to help children manage behaviour caused by social and emotional needs is time wasted from learning.

NGT: *“everyone's under so much pressure ...a few years agoyou'd say to kids “come on let's sort that out”we're in the era of the non-negotiable so there's a lot less of why've you done that come on let's not do that again and it's more you do this and make sure you do it and. Which is fine for a lot of kids but not for these really.”*

The comments of children and nurture group staff however, suggest that there is value to a relational approach which allows time to talk through incidents of behaviour or anger with children, to provide a different type of learning.

3.4.3 – Superordinate Theme – Educational Structure

Subtheme – Environment

Interestingly, when asked about differences between nurture classrooms and mainstream classrooms the mainstream teachers responses mainly fell into the ‘resources’ category and the physical arrangement of the environment itself was not commented upon, though this may have been to do with difference in questioning style or requests for elaboration from the researcher.

The physical environment was identified by nurture group staff and children. The comments from the children indicated that the bright and cheerful displays were more aesthetically pleasing than those in mainstream classes. Comments on both parts seemed to link the environment with the sense of teamwork, relationships, safety and ability. The children were keen to talk about and show items on the walls which were part of functional classroom displays and decoration which they had made. They valued that their work was useful to themselves and others and that they could show me how things worked. This was mirrored by the NGTA when talking about the approach which staff take to display work:

NGTA *“I like that they are proudyou try and get it so everything on display is theirsso when people like yourself come in they can show you and that they can explain what they’ve done and why they’ve done it”*

A different construction of the idea of the environment’s influence on learning was offered by the NGT who indicated the cushions, quiet areas and wide spaced desks and workspace in the room. Children are free to work in a place and position that is comfortable for them and can move around the room. Another example of children’s developmental needs being met, with this approach mirroring the kind most often seen in EYFS classrooms. There seemed to be a suggestion that the teacher preferred this more relaxed approach as a way of allowing children to develop physically as well as academically.

Subtheme – Policy

The subtheme of policy was one which was almost rejected as per IPA procedure (Smith et al., 1997) as it did not fully relate to the research question. The issue of relatedness to the research question is based on the word 'value'. Much of the commentary on policy impact, both at school and national policy level, was focused on the difficulties, challenges and perceived constraints imposed by these. However, as analysis continued it became clear that many of the comments and issues raised in the discussion of policy were pertinent to links in my construction of the data and offered explanations or further exploration of some of the ideas around belonging and self-esteem which were coming to the fore.

As seen in the table of derived themes, all teaching staff commented on this area. Comments from the NGT focused on frustrations with the wider climate towards schools and performance. Namely that performance pressures, from the government through Ofsted and performance tables was causing a pressure within school making it difficult to balance the nurturing, developmental, relational approach he wished to take with the requirements of school and national policy in terms of work produced and SATS.

Mainstream teachers echoed this view that children in the nurture group were supported so well academically that the school was in a position of having to enter them for SATs exams which could be detrimental to their emotional well-being. The teachers talked about resilience and I bracketed their concerns with my own construction of this, that children's self-concept may be imperilled by being 'set up to fail' .

“MT2: So 3 of them that sort of are very vulnerable children probably not academically ready or resilient enough to do it but are going to have to do it... and give them their best shot because of the rules.....

MT1 “And yet we probably yeah we're our own worst enemy because we put so much support in they've got to a level where [they have to take SATS]”

The NGT also touched upon the idea that policy makes it difficult to approach the teaching, learning and development of children with SEMH needs without the statutory backing of an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). I sensed a frustration about the idea that only a statutory process could legitimise the time and effort afforded to these children and that constructions of children like them would be different, perhaps more accepting or forgiving of lack of progress if they were labelled in some way.

.

3.4.4 – Discussion of links across the themes

During the analysis and recording of themes there seemed to be common threads emerging, which while not necessarily themes of their own were entwined through many of the themes identified. Literature around nurture groups and children with SEMH needs suggest that a number of factors are important to provide the best chances of success in nurture groups (Armstrong & Hallett, 2012; Colwell & O'Connor, 2003). These factors include attending to and developing self-esteem and self-concepts (Armstrong & Hallett, 2012; Colwell & O'Connor, 2003; Iszatt & Wasilewska, 1997; Roffey, 2010; Shavelson et al., 1976). I would argue that self-esteem and self-concept (the first an affective self-evaluation and the second a descriptive one) are linked to a sense of belonging (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Frederickson & Baxter, 2009; Hagerty, Williams, & Oe, 2002) which is itself both a cognitive and an affective experience (McLellan & Morgan, 2008). I would further argue that from the themes identified here these closely related ideas appear to permeate the constructions of staff, pupils and researcher in making meaning from the experience of being involved with a nurture group. It is important to note that the analysis is conducted in one school and has limited generalisability.

I intend here to make explicit the links which I have observed by discussing where and how these ideas are reflected in the subthemes identified. Firstly, I contend that children's self-concept and self-esteem seemed to differ between mainstream (where they felt others were 'brainier') and nurture (where they were eager to demonstrate

work they were proud of) demonstrates their sense of belonging in each environment. Their drive to belong leads them to evaluations of their ability against their peers in the classroom and their experience of belonging in the nurture group appears to influence their self-esteem and self-concepts which are in sharp contrast between the two settings. They feel safe and accepted in the nurture group but unsure in the mainstream classroom. In the nurture group the children valued the teamwork and camaraderie with children who share similar difficulties. They have relationships with teachers and each other where they feel safe and accepted and have a sense of belonging. This is further reinforced by the types of teaching and learning which occurs. Tasks which are fun, give the child autonomy, and use real-life and problem-solving skills allow children to adapt their self-constructs as learners and feel that they are contributing. Their teachers value learning which is child-centred and child-led wherever possible. (Armstrong & Hallett, 2012; Solomon, Battistich, Kim, & Watson, 1996).

The fact that it is 'their' work on the walls and that having this in the room is valued by both children and adults again points to a sense of belonging underlying that which is valued. The children feel some responsibility and ownership for the class room and have contributed to making their space useful for them all (Solomon et al., 1996). Undoubtedly nurture staff recognise and value the positive impact on self-esteem and sense of belonging which this has.

Throughout the analysis I noticed that sense of belonging and thoughts on self-esteem and self-concept were not uppermost in the dialogue with mainstream teachers. There was much focus on the way that the NGT is able to teach, valuing the smaller class size which equates to more time and the resources perceived as specially available. Rarely did the discussion dwell upon social and emotional factors and given the discussion with the NGT I posit that this is largely an impact on the way mainstream teachers feel they have to teach to meet the policy demands of an increasingly demanding and marketised education system that has developed in our neo-liberal society (Apple, 2004; Pratt, 2016). Not only has this had an impact on the mainstream teachers and their way of teaching and constructing the children from the nurture group and the level of support they require, it is also commented on

frequently by the NGT as a tension between the holistic and nurturing way he would like to teach and compromises which must be made to this system.

In this context there is a strong focus within the school on the academic side of the children's education. I contend that this can leave the children with a disjointed sense of belonging in that they experience belonging in the nurture group but aren't always sure why they are there and see the focus as being academic, meaning when returning to mainstream classes in the afternoons or when nurture group cannot run, their carefully constructed nurture group self-concept and self-esteem is threatened by the lack of sense of belonging to their class and perhaps school.

3.5 Conclusions

Conclusions which can be drawn from this research are that support was found for the evidence of studies into the principles and practices which make good nurturing provisions (Armstrong & Hallett, 2012; Colwell & O'Connor, 2003; O'Connor & Colwell, 2002). Links have been made between these practices and the importance of self-esteem, self-concept and sense of belonging. These would appear to be key areas where school could look at developing ways of practicing which mirror those identified as valuable in the nurture group, flexibility of curriculum, a key adult for children to access every day and when needed, a feeling of contributing and responsibility within mainstream classes and school are all areas which could be investigated for development.

The wealth of information gathered meant that a much larger and more in-depth study could have been conducted. A study which includes individual interviews of some of these participants, in order to truly capture idiographic data which is not eclipsed by the group could be beneficial. Certain subthemes were abandoned as they did not relate directly to the idea of examining what is valued, or seem to impact upon this. One of these which would merit further study was that of 'Transitions' which was discussed in terms of children having trouble transitioning not just from nurture to mainstream but also beyond primary school. The staff's experience of

outcomes for nurture group children when moving to secondary suggests insights into how to support this transition would be a useful area of research.

This study was limited by factors such as the time scale affecting how participants were interviewed. A knock-on effect of this was a potential weakening of rigour and the epistemological relevance of the method of analysis used. As discussed earlier, this required a conscious acknowledgement of and commitment to identifying both the psychological and discursive in the data and attempting to capture or reflect this effectively. This was controlled for by maintaining a consciousness of the interplay of individual voices, constructions and patterns of such in the group and interrogating these during analysis.

Whilst this study is representative of one particular school, members of staff and cohort of children it is hoped that ideas discussed here can contribute to the field of qualitative research into the principles and practices underpinning nurture provision. As an educational psychologist working in schools under increasing pressure to perform in national league tables and on national tests there is merit to understanding the underpinnings of a valued nurture group. Children with labelled with SEMH are often seen as a 'burden' or a bar to schools performing well (Rouse & Florian, 1997) in an increasingly competitive climate (Apple, 2004; Pratt, 2016). Whether given the opportunity to support or even set up a group itself, or supporting schools in a more general way the findings here are applicable to everyday practice. The findings relating to self-esteem, self-concept and sense of belonging indicate ideals which EPs can work towards with schools at all stages of developing the nurture and well-being of their young people.

Word Count – 5498

References

- Apple, M. W. (2004). Creating difference: Neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism and the politics of educational reform. *Educational policy*, 18(1), 12-44.
- Armstrong, D., & Hallett, F. (2012). Private knowledge, public face: Conceptions of children with SEBD by teachers in the UK-a case study. *Educational & Child Psychology*, 29(4), 77-87.
- Barbour, R. (2008). *Doing focus groups*: Sage, London.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 117(3), 497 -529.
- Bennathan, M. (1997). Effective intervention in primary schools: what nurture groups achieve. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 2(3), 23-29.
- Bennathan, M. (1998). The Boxall Profile: a guide to effective intervention in the education of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. *Handbook for Teachers*. Maidstone, UK: AWCEBD.
- Bennathan, M., & Boxall, M. (2013). *Effective intervention in primary schools: Nurture groups*: Routledge.
- Bernard, H. (1988). Research methods in cultural anthropology. *Qualitative and*.
- Beveridge*, S. (2004). Pupil participation and the home–school relationship. *European journal of special needs education*, 19(1), 3-16.
- Binnie, L. M., & Allen, K. (2008). Whole school support for vulnerable children: the evaluation of a part-time nurture group. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 13(3), 201-216.
- Bolden, B., Christou, T., DeLuca, C., Klinger, D., Kutsyuruba, B., Pyper, J., . . . Wade-Woolley, L. (2014). Professional learning cultures: An evaluation of collaborative inquiry in Ontario elementary schools: RFS.
- Bowlby, J. (2008). *Attachment*. Basic books, New York.
- Boxall, M. (1976). *The nurture group in the primary school*: Inner London Education Authority, London.
- Boxall, M. (2002). *Nurture groups in school: Principles & practice*: Sage, London.
- Boyd, F. E. S. (2012). " Ask them what helps them and try to go ahead with the plan"*: an appreciative exploration of what works to support young people's behaviour at school. (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne)

- Brinkmann, S. (2007). Could interviews be epistemic? An alternative to qualitative opinion polling. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 13(8), 1116-1138.
- Bryman, A. (2015). *Social research methods*: Oxford university press.
- Burnett, P. C. (1998). Measuring behavioral indicators of self-esteem in the classroom. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling*, 37(2), 107.
- Burr, V. (2015). *Social constructionism*: Routledge, London.
- Calabrese, R. L. (1987). Adolescence: A growth period conducive to alienation. *Adolescence*, 22(88), 929.
- Cheminais, R. (2013). *Engaging Pupil Voice to Ensure that Every Child Matters: A Practical Guide*: Routledge, London.
- Cho, J., & Trent, A. (2006). Validity in qualitative research revisited. *Qualitative research*, 6(3), 319-340.
- Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (2006). Qualitative research guidelines project July 2006, <http://qualres.org>.
- Colwell, J., & O'Connor, T. (2003). Understanding nurturing practices—a comparison of the use of strategies likely to enhance self-esteem in nurture groups and normal classrooms. *British Journal of Special Education*, 30(3), 119-124.
- Cooke, C., Yeomans, J., & Parkes, J. (2008). The Oasis: nurture group provision for Key Stage 3 pupils. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 13(4), 291-303.
- Cooper, P., & Whitebread, D. (2007). The effectiveness of nurture groups on student progress: Evidence from a national research study. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 12(3), 171-190.
- DCSF. (2007). *Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning for Secondary Schools: tool for monitoring, profiling and evaluation* Nottingham: DSCF Publications.
- DfE. (2010). *The importance of teaching: the schools white paper 2010*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- DfE. (2014b). *SEND Code of Practice 0–25*. Crown London.
- Dfe. (2015). Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools. Retrieved from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508847/Mental_Health_and_Behaviour_-_advice_for_Schools_160316.pdf
- DfES. (2001). *Inclusive Schooling: children with special educational needs – statutory guidance*. Nottingham: DfES Publications .
- DfEs. (2003). *Every child matters: change for children*. Nottingham: DfES Publications.

- DfES. (2004). Every Child Matters: Change for children. *Department for Education and Skills*. Nottingham: DfES Publications
- DfES. (2006). *Excellence and enjoyment: social and emotional aspects of learning: Key stage 2 small group activities*. Nottingham: DfEs Publications.
- Doyle, R. (2001). Focus on Practice: Using a readiness scale for reintegrating pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties from a Nurture Group into their mainstream classroom—a pilot study. *British Journal of Special Education*, 28(3), 126-132.
- Doyle, R. (2003). Developing the nurturing school: Spreading nurture group principles and practices into mainstream classrooms. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 8(4), 252-266.
- Doyle, R. (2005). 'I Hate You. Please Help Me': A Case Study From A Classic Boxall Nurture Group. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 23(1), 3-11.
- Emilson, A., & Folkesson, A. M. (2006). Children's participation and teacher control. *Early Child Development and Care*, 176(3-4), 219-238.
- Farrell, A. (2005). *Ethical research with children*: McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- Fieldhouse, P. (1995). Social functions of food *Food and Nutrition* (pp. 78-105): Springer US.
- Frederickson, N., & Baxter, J. (2009). *Belonging*. London: GL Assessment
- Galletta, A. (2013). *Mastering the semi-structured interview and beyond: From research design to analysis and publication*: NYU Press, New York.
- Goepel, J. (2009). Constructing the Individual Education Plan: confusion or collaboration? *Support For Learning*, 24(3), 126-132.
- Goldenkoff, R. (2004). Using focus groups. *Handbook of practical program evaluation*, 340-362.
- Goodman, R. (1997). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: a research note. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry*, 38(5), 581-586.
- Goodman, R., Meltzer, H., & Bailey, V. (1998). The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire: A pilot study on the validity of the self-report version. *European child & adolescent psychiatry*, 7(3), 125-130.
- Gorski, P. C. (2011). Unlearning deficit ideology and the scornful gaze: Thoughts on authenticating the class discourse in education. *Assault on kids: How hyper-accountability, corporatization, deficit ideologies, and Ruby Payne are destroying our schools*, 152-176.

- Gough, D. (2007). Weight of evidence: a framework for the appraisal of the quality and relevance of evidence. *Research papers in education*, 22(2), 213-228.
- Greig, A.D. & Taylor, J. (1999). *Doing Research with Children*. London: Sage.
- Hagerty, B. M., Williams, R. A., & Oe, H. (2002). Childhood antecedents of adult sense of belonging. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 58(7), 793-801.
- Heron, J., & Reason, P. (2006). The practice of co-operative inquiry: Research 'with' rather than 'on' people. *Handbook of action research*, 144-154.
- Huesmann, L. R., Eron, L. D., & Yarmel, P. W. (1987). Intellectual functioning and aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social psychology*, 52(1), 232.
- Hughes, N. K., & Schlösser, A. (2014a). The effectiveness of nurture groups: a systematic review. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 19(4), 386-409.
- Hughes, N. K., & Schlösser, A. (2014b). The effectiveness of nurture groups: a systematic review. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*(ahead-of-print), 1-24.
- Iszatt, J., & Wasilewska, T. (1997). Nurture groups: an early intervention model enabling vulnerable children with emotional and behavioural difficulties to integrate successfully into school. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 14, 63-70.
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey, M. A. (2014). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*: Sage publications, London.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interview: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*. Det kvalitative forskningsintervju. Oslo: Gyldendal akademisk.
- Lucas, S., Buckland, G., & Insley, K. (2006). *Nurture Group Principles and Curriculum Guidelines: Helping Children to Achieve*: Nurture Group Network, London.
- Marsh, H. W., & Craven, R. G. (2006). Reciprocal effects of self-concept and performance from a multidimensional perspective: Beyond seductive pleasure and unidimensional perspectives. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 1(2), 133-163.
- Maslow, A. H., & Lowry, R. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being*. New York: Van Nostrand.
- McLellan, R., & Morgan, B. (2008). *Pupil perspectives on school belonging: an investigation of differences between schools working together in a school-university partnership*. Paper presented at the Paper presented at the British

Educational Research Association Annual Conference, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, 3-6 September 2008

- Morgan, D. L. (1998). *Focus groups as qualitative research* (Vol. 16). Sage publications: London.
- Mruk, C. J. J. (2006). *Self-esteem research, theory, and practice: Toward a positive psychology of self-esteem*. Springer Publishing Company: New York.
- NICE. (2008). Social and Emotional Wellbeing in Primary Education: Full Guidance. Retrieved from <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/PH12>
- NICE. (2009). Social and Emotional Wellbeing in Secondary Education: Full Guidance. Retrieved from <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/PH20>
- O'Connor, T., & Colwell, J. (2002). Research Section: The effectiveness and rationale of the 'nurture group' approach to helping children with emotional and behavioural difficulties remain within mainstream education. *British Journal of Special Education*, 29(2), 96-100.
- Petticrew, M., & Roberts, H. (2008). *Systematic reviews in the social sciences: A practical guide*. John Wiley & Sons, Online ISBN 9780470754887.
- Pietkiewicz, I., & Smith, J. A. (2014). A practical guide to using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in qualitative research psychology. *Psychological Journal*, 20(1), 7-14.
- Pratt, N. (2016). Neoliberalism and the (internal) marketisation of primary school assessment in England. *British Educational Research Journal*.
- Raskin, J. D. (2008). The evolution of constructivism. *Journal of constructivist psychology*, 21(1), 1-24.
- Roffey, S. (2010). Content and context for learning relationships: A cohesive framework for individual and whole school development. *Educational and Child Psychology*, 27(1), 156.
- Rouse, M., & Florian, L. (1997). Inclusive education in the market-place. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1(4), 323-336.
- Sanders, T. (2007). Helping children thrive at school: The effectiveness of nurture groups. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 23(1), 45-61.
- Schaffer, H. R., & Emerson, P. E. (1964). The development of social attachments in infancy. *Monographs of the society for research in child development*, 1-77.
- Scott, D. (2005). Critical realism and empirical research methods in education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 39(4), 633-646.

- Scott, K., & Lee, A. (2009). Beyond the 'classic' nurture group model: an evaluation of part-time and cross-age nurture groups in a Scottish local authority. *Support For Learning, 24*(1), 5-10.
- Shavelson, R. J., Hubner, J. J., & Stanton, G. C. (1976). Self-concept: Validation of construct interpretations. *Review of Educational Research, 46*(3), 407-441.
- Shaver, I., & McClatchey, K. (2013). Assessing effectiveness of nurture groups in Northern Scotland. *Support For Learning, 28*(3), 97-102.
- Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*: SAGE Publications Limited, London.
- Smith, J. A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 1*(1), 39-54.
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Osborn, M. (1997). Interpretative phenomenological analysis and the psychology of health and illness. *Material discourses of health and illness, 68-91*.
- Solomon, D., Battistich, V., Kim, D.-i., & Watson, M. (1996). Teacher practices associated with students' sense of the classroom as a community. *Social Psychology of Education, 1*(3), 235-267.
- Sutherland, K. S., & Singh, N. N. (2004). Learned helplessness and students with emotional or behavioral disorders: Deprivation in the classroom. *Behavioral Disorders, 29*(2), 169-181.
- Thyer, B. A. (2008). The quest for evidence-based practice? We are all positivists! *Research on Social Work Practice*. Sage publications: London. .
- Tomkins, L., & Eatough, V. (2010). Reflecting on the use of IPA with focus groups: Pitfalls and potentials. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 7*(3), 244-262.
- Walker, H. M., Ramsey, E., & Gresham, F. M. (2004). *Antisocial behavior in school: Evidence-based practices*: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont California.
- Willig, C. (2008). Introducing qualitative research methods in psychology. *Maidenhead, England: McGraw Hill*.

Appendices

Appendix A – Examples of information and consent letters

A i – Information Letter (Staff)



Information Sheet (to be attached to initial email that goes out to school)

Introduction:

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with XXXXX Educational Psychology Service. I am writing to you to request your support in conducting my research. The research is on how aspects of Nurture Group provision be transferred to mainstream classrooms.

What is the purpose of the research?

The research aims to find out which ways of learning in a nurture group were effective and how we might be able to use these in classrooms throughout school to replicate that success.

What will this involve?

The research involves an initial interview with myself, which will be recorded on a Dictaphone and transcribed onto a secure document on the university and Educational Psychology Services secure systems. There will then be a second phase of the project in which we work collaboratively to identify what are perceived as the most effective nurture principles or approaches gleaned from the interviews with yourselves and pupil who have accessed nurture provision in the past. The third phase will involve formulation of and implementation of any approaches or strategies which we will produce together.

Your participation would be greatly appreciated. If you are interested in participating in the research an opportunity for you to indicate this is provided on the attached sheet.

If at any point you would like to contact me regarding the research, please do not hesitate to get in touch. I am available via email at s.harrison5@ncl.ac.uk or Mon-Wed at sandra.harrison2@durham.gov.uk 03000 263 333

Looking forward to hearing from you and possibly working with you in the near future,

Kind regards,

Sandra Harrison

A ii – Information Letter (Parents)



Dear Parent/Carer,

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with Durham Educational Psychology Service. I understand that Mr XXX or Mrs XXXX might have spoken to you/your child recently about your child's possible involvement in my research.

This would involve them speaking with me about the time they spent in the nurture group. We will talk about what they liked best, how it helped them learn and anything they might like to make better or change. I hope that the research will help us find ways to use the good things about the nurture group in all the classrooms in school.

Our discussion would take place at XXXXX Primary and would be recorded on a Dictaphone.

I would then transcribe our conversation onto a document for analysis. This would remain anonymous. Your child's name would not be recorded and I would not stipulate what school they attended. Once the study is completed the recording would be deleted and the document would be shredded.

I would also like to meet with you/your child at the end of my research to share what the research found.

This document is to confirm their participation in the research.

If you are happy for your child to take part, I would be grateful if you could return the attached consent form to Mr XXXX or Mrs XXXX

Signing this form does not mean your child has to take part if they decide they don't want to later. You can withdraw your child from the research at any time.

If at any point you would like to contact me about the research, please do not hesitate to get in touch. I am available via email at s.harrison5@ncl.ac.uk or Mon-Wed at sandra.harrison2@durham.gov.uk 03000 263 333

Looking forward to hearing from you and possibly working with your child in the near future,

Kind regards,

Sandra Harrison

A iii – Information Letter (Children)



Dear Student,

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist working with Durham Educational Psychology Service. I understand that Mr XXXX or Mrs XXXX might have spoken to you recently about your possible involvement in my research.

This would involve you speaking with me about the time you spent in the nurture group. We will talk about what you liked best, how it helped you learn and anything you might like to make better or change. I hope that the research will help us find ways to use the good things about the nurture group in all the classrooms in school.

Our discussion would take place at XXXX Primary and would be recorded on a Dictaphone.

I would then transcribe (copy) our conversation onto a document for analysis. This will remain anonymous. Your name will not be recorded and I will not say which school you attend. Once the study is completed the recording will be deleted and the document will be shredded.

I would also like to meet with you at the end of my research to share what the research found.

This document is to confirm your participation in the research.

If you are happy to take part, I would be grateful if you could return the attached consent form to Mr XXXX or Mrs XXXX.

Signing this form does not mean you have to take part if you decide you don't want to later. You can withdraw from the research at any time.

If at any point you would like to contact me about the research, please do not hesitate to get in touch. I am available via email at s.harrison5@ncl.ac.uk or Mon-Wed at sandra.harrison2@durham.gov.uk 03000 263 333

Looking forward to hearing from you and possibly working with you the near future,

Kind regards,

Sandra Harrison

A iv – Consent form (Parents)



I confirm that my child _____ would like to take part in research exploring the use of nurture group ideas in other classrooms.

I understand that this involves them speaking with Sandra Harrison, Trainee Educational Psychologist, about their experience of the nurture group. The desired outcome of the research is to find out which staff approaches from the nurture group can be used successfully in all classrooms.

I understand that as part of the research Sandra needs to retain the information discussed. However this will be kept anonymous.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw consent for my child to take part at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

A v – Consent form (Children)



I confirm that I would like to take part in research exploring the use of nurture group ideas in other classrooms.

I understand that this involves speaking with Sandra Harrison, Trainee Educational Psychologist, about my experience of the nurture group. The desired outcome of the research is to find out which staff approaches from the nurture group can be used successfully in all classrooms.

I understand that as part of the research Sandra needs to retain the information discussed. However this will be kept anonymous.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw my consent to take part at any time.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B – Examples of transcript with notation

B i – Excerpt from MT Transcript Analysis

Exploratory comments	Transcript	Emerging themes
<p><i>Unclear whether views need to sit with these kids as being due to behaviour or learning</i></p> <p><i>Early comments suggest learning is focus</i></p> <p><i>1+2 seem in agreement</i></p> <p><i>T1 attributes not being able to cope emotionally to being with kids who are achieving higher.</i></p>	<p>S: OK So I guess the first question that I've got is what do you personally think the purpose of the Nurture Group is?</p> <p>T1: The purpose of the Nurture Group is to support the kids who often struggle with main stream teaching but are not deemed as being bad enough to go to an old style Special School. That we don't tend to have any more. It's for the kids that we can't cater for erm</p> <p>T2: Yeah I think like even all amounts of differentiation that does go on like in the mainstream classroom the three of my children that do access the Nurture Group I would literally have to sit with them</p> <p>S: Mmhmm</p> <p>T2: in order to get them to complete the work we do in the Year Six classroom. I would literally have to sit right next to them and not leave their side. So it just wouldn't be feasible really to get that done</p> <p>S: Yeah</p> <p>T2: they need their (inaudible) out of a different curriculum they can't access what's going on in our</p> <p>T1: and it's not purely about curriculum either is it. it's also about the fact it's also the kids who can't cope sort of emotionally</p> <p>T2: yeah there's a lot of</p> <p>T1: with being stuck in a class of 30 kids who are all well above them and</p> <p>T2: Yeah even just you can see sort of little things the Nurture Group only happens on a morning so when they have to come back on an afternoon the</p>	<p><i>Approaches to teaching + learning</i></p> <p><i>Self concept (kids)</i></p>

B ii – Excerpt from Children’s Transcript Analysis

<p><i>Space to calm down, not seen as 'being sent' recognised as a helpful strategy rather than an exclusion</i></p> <p><i>Again more acceptance that some kids need this.</i></p> <p><i>Again, matter of fact expl. no judgement of others difficulties.</i></p> <p><i>Dominating with his ideas, not keen in NB as long as the others - less time to embed effective communication.</i></p> <p><i>Also long grasp of the benefits + aims of group? Does this need to be</i></p>	<p>C: Miss Smith and she's speaking to loads of kids when she's speaking</p> <p>S: Right, Aaa so that's harder for you</p> <p>C: Uhu</p> <p>C3 and if you're mad Mr [redacted] let you sit over there and calm down</p> <p>S: Does he</p> <p>C: Yeah</p> <p>C3 Like [redacted]</p> <p>C1 Only sometimes</p> <p>S: So is that where you go if you're feeling like you're a bit</p> <p>C1 No it's like</p> <p>S: stressed or angry</p> <p>C1 [redacted] is the only one who goes in there <u>all</u> the time ^{C4} cos she gets very stressed</p> <p>S: Does she get quite stressed out does she</p> <p>C2 And then we're like doing our homework they help us out like do you know when you've like missed your homework and you haven't done it the teachers will help you finish it and do it</p> <p>C: (inaudible)</p> <p>S: Oh I think actually you're getting on to what my next question is. Which is what kinds of things do you do in here? What kind of things do you do in the</p>	<p><i>Relationships + strategies</i></p> <p><i>Relationships +</i></p> <p><i>Relationships.</i></p> <p><i>Relationships - Safety to express views over others?</i></p> <p><i>Less time to embed effective communication</i></p>
---	--	---

Appendix C – Examples of Excel data analysis sheet

C i – Data filtered by Superordinate Theme

B	C	D	E	F	G
Group	Page Number	Emergent ideas	Elaboration	Emergent Theme	Superordinate Theme
NG TA	8	More pupils in mainstream = more pressure		Teaching style	Learning
Children	14	C4 Support is important - second time he contributed to say this		Teaching style	Learning
Children	16	Targets - flexible help you do things you don't want to do	Interesting phrasing	Teaching style	Learning
NGT	15	Recognising and using children strengths and convergent ways of thinking		Teaching style	Learning
NGT	16	Core stability development		Teaching style	Learning
NGT	3	Adaptation of expectations - learning		Teaching style	Learning
NGT	3	Adaptation of expectations - learning		Teaching style	Learning
NG TA	13	Worry about transition and moving on		Teaching style	Learning
NGT	13	Embracing positive contrast with secondary		Transitions	Learning
Children	2	Life skills		Type of learning	Learning
Children	4	Child-led learning	Fun and engaging	Type of learning	Learning
Children	14	Having fun	C2 compares to reception - is this as it feels more developmentally appropriate in an emotional sense?	Type of learning	Learning

C ii – Data filtered by Emergent Theme

B	C	D	E	F	G
Group	Page Number	Emergent ideas	Elaboration	Emergent Theme	Superordinate Theme
NG TA	4	very definite answer in that she feels they feel a sense of belonging		Belonging (Relationships)	Social and Emotional
NG TA	5	important to TA that they feel accepted and belong		Belonging (Relationships)	Social and Emotional
NG TA	5	Talking about our bubble and 'our space' 'we never say anything horrible'	See's herself and the children as a group not them and us	Belonging (Relationships)	Social and Emotional
Children	22	Shared experience and teamwork	sailboat	Belonging (Relationships)	Social and Emotional
Children	27	Teamwork	very important as child wanted me to have asked in more depth about how that works	Belonging (Relationships)	Social and Emotional
NG TA	6	Teamwork	She was really happy that the children recognised this	Belonging (Relationships)	Social and Emotional
NGT	19	Team work	provides attention as well as camaraderie	Belonging (Relationships)	Social and Emotional

Appendix D – Example questions for pupils and staff

Questions for pupils

Why do you think children come to the Nurture Group?

What kinds of things do you do in the Nurture Group?

Do the teachers in the Nurture Group do things differently to your class teachers? (Or What do you think is different between Nurture Group and your other class?)

Is there something you or your teachers do in Nurture Group that you think would help in your other class?

What things do you like most in Nurture Group?

Is there anything you don't like about the Nurture Group? (Or If there was something you could make better about NG what would it be? OR Is there anything about NG that you would like to happen in your other class/the rest of the school?)

Questions for teachers in Nurture Group

What do you think is unique/different about your practice in the NG compared to how you have worked before/how you work in the rest of the school?

What do you think are the principles or approaches on which you base your work in the NG? (Possibly What is your personal ethos about working with children in the Nurture Group?)

What do you think is important to the children in the NG?

What do you think they like about NG?

What do you think have been the successes of the NG and what do you think it is about the NG that helped these to come about?

Do you think there is an NG practice which could be embedded in the whole school – if so what is it and do you have any ideas about how this may be done?

Questions for class teachers/teachers with post-NG children

What do you think the purpose of the NG is?

What strengths do children from the NG show?

What difficulties do they have?

How do you think the NG has helped with these?

How and in what ways do you feel the NG has been successful for these children?

Would you like to know more about NG and its approaches?

Do you find you change your teaching style with children from the NG?

Do you feel knowing more about practice in the NG would benefit you?