“Pass the Parcel”. Are managed moves an effective intervention? Is there a role for Educational Psychologists in facilitating the process?

Christopher Bagley
“Pass the Parcel”. Are managed moves an effective intervention? Is there a role for EPs?
Background – socio-political context

- The Education Act (1986) introduced “fixed-term” and “permanent” exclusions.

- Dramatic rise in exclusions throughout early 90s.

- In response - Social Exclusion Unit set up in 1997.

- Reduction in recorded exclusions, **BUT**.....
Background - socio-political context

- Increased unofficial exclusions - ‘wholly un-transparent ... as no statistics exist’ (Centre for Social Justice, 2011 pg 12).

- Rise in ‘dual roll’ (DfE, 2013).

- Ofsted (2010) - some schools permanently exclude illegally.
According to the DfE...

YP with Special Educational Needs (SEN) are eight times more likely to be permanently excluded.

Black Caribbean YP and those from Gypsy and Roma Traveller and Irish Traveller backgrounds are at significantly higher risk of school exclusion.

Boys accounted for 78 per cent of permanent exclusions and 75 per cent of fixed-term exclusions.

YP who are brought up in families with low incomes are disproportionately likely to be excluded from school.
The drive towards conformity

- Munn et al. (2000) - competing claims of ‘individual welfare versus collective rights’ is discussed.

- Secondary schools which had both social and academic goals for their pupils, exclusion rates were lower.
The quasi-market

- West and Pennell (2002) suggest that UK education exists within a “quasi-market” environment. Results / league tables.

- (Parffrey, 1994) – Head-teacher described some young people as “human un-saleable goods”.
The quasi-market

- Market dynamics work against YP who have difficulties conforming to the demands of mainstream education (Blyth and Milner, 1994).

- Parson’s (2009) argues that ‘exclusion from school, either permanently or for a fixed period, is a quiet mockery of Every Child Matters’. The “will to punish”.
The quasi-market

- UK – high exclusion rates when compared with Europe. *Particularly worrying... high exclusion rates from UK Academies.*

- The moral limits of markets (Sandel, 2013).
The Office for the Children’s Commissioner (OCC, 2011) and Parsons (2005) take a rights based view. They assert that the current system of school exclusion is not compliant with the UNCRC and ECHR.

The Education Act (2011) removed the right for parents to appeal to an independent panel against their child’s permanent exclusion.
Human rights

- **UNCRC**
  - **Article 3** - interests of the child should be of primary consideration.
  - **Article 12** - views of the child to be fully considered.
  - **Article 28** - right of the child to education... on the basis of equal opportunity.
  - **Article 29** - education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child’s personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.
Human rights

- **ECHR**
  - **Article 6** - of the European Convention Human Rights, which protect the right to a fair trial.
Managed moves

- DfES (2008) - fresh start at a new school, with the full cooperation of all parties involved, including parents, governors and the LA.

- It is deemed “helpful” to have a protocol in place and to have a “full support package” for the YP. It is not specified what a “helpful protocol” or a “full support package” means.

- Parents should never be pressured into removing their child under threat of permanent exclusion.
Previous research

- DCSF (2008) report that some schools engineer managed moves to effectively exclude YP, whilst avoiding permanent exclusion.

- Centre for Social Justice (2011) ... ‘the managed move process is being abused by some head teachers. Concerns also exist over the quality of practice being applied, which appears to vary considerably... inconsistency, unfairness and an understandable degree of scepticism by some towards the process itself’ (pg 151).
Previous research

- Vincent et al (2007)... **Coalfields Alternatives to Exclusion Scheme (CATE)**

- The CATE scheme involved: **A preventative element** - YP identified as disaffected receive additional support of various forms, within and outside school.

- Participants reported:
  - a reduction in the number of exclusions,
  - a reduction in previously problematic behaviour
  - increased behaviour in line with school norms
  - **more constructive relationships** with peers, staff and family members.
Previous research

Vincent et al (2007) - Factors that led to success included:

- a **phased integration** over a number of weeks
- **shared control** across a number of key stakeholders
- **YP being consulted.**
- **inclusivity and flexibility of the new school**
- ‘**Fresh start**’. 
Previous research

- The role of EPs...
Rationale

- Research shows that young people who are permanently excluded tend to have poor life outcomes. Much more likely to be incarcerated.

- Daniels (2011) - “deep” exclusion.

- Exclusion is incredibly expensive economically and socially.

- Need to develop interventions that support inclusion, avoid permanent exclusions.

- Given the government drive towards inclusion and avoidance of PE, surprising paucity of research as to valid alternatives.
Research questions

1) How does the managed move process work?

2) What are the reasons for managed move taking place?

3) What are the characteristics of a successful managed move?

4) What factors lead to the success of managed moves?

5) What are the problems associated with managed moves?

6) How can EPs increase their impact upon managed moves?
Method – case study

- Pragmatic – research questions shaped the methodology.

- Social constructionist / Relativist epistemology. Systems thinking.

- As suggested by Flyvbjerg (2004), ‘predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs. Concrete, context-dependent knowledge is therefore more valuable...’
Method – case study (Yin, 2003)

Unit of Analysis – Managed Moves between Secondary Schools

Single Case – South London LA

Sub-groups → Local Authority ↔ Parent

Young person ↔ School
Method – case study

- Interviews – thematic analysis
  - School professionals
  - Parents
  - Local Authority professionals
  - Young people
  - Personal Construct Psychology *young people only
Method – case study

- Quantitative data – exclusion and permanent managed transfers.

Sample

- Those who experienced “successful” managed moves, as defined by the borough. Figures for unsuccessful ones not collated.
Context – the research borough

- School Behaviour and Attendance Panel (SBAP) Three-tier system.
  - Permanent exclusion
  - Permanent managed transfers
  - Managed moves
Summary of findings

- Thematic analysis
- Six super-ordinate themes
  1) Initial process
  2) Reasons for the move
  3) Factors contributing to long term success
  4) What is success?
  5) Problems
  6) EP role
Theme 1: Initial process

- **Trial period** – considerable scepticism and criticism amongst SPs as to the extent to which schools are positive.

- **Positive solution** – contrasting views as to MM purpose.
  - Is it a) alternative to permanent exclusion? OR b) preventative intervention?
Theme 2: Reasons for moving

- **Bullying / social isolation** – some evidence from this and other studies

- **Behaviour problems** – few mentions by YP

- **Breakdown in relationships with staff**
Theme 3: factors contributing to success

- Fresh start
- Home-school communication
- Early intervention
  - Pastoral work
    - Transition work
    - Relationships with staff
    - Relationship with peers
  - Commitment
    - School
    - Parents
    - Young people
- Involvement of young person
Theme 4: What is success?

- Happiness / improved self-perception
- Progress and learning
Theme 5: Problems

- **Inter-school tensions**
  - Honesty and information sharing
  - The results agenda
  - Moving a problem (“out of sight, out of mind”)

- **Narratives around young people**

- **Alternative to PE**

- **Provision gap**

- **Objectifying language** – “rubbish”, “divvied out”, “dumping”, “pass the parcel”.

- **Accurate diagnosis**

- **Timing**

- **Family stress**
Theme 6: EP role

- Lack of role clarity
- School dependent
- Reactive
- Capacity

Possibilities for further involvement
- Transition
- Preventative work
- Assessment of needs
Discussion

- Post-modernist outlook - disparate power.

- Systemic myths.

- Parsons “will to punish”.

- “System that subtly rewards the exclusion of the vulnerable”.
Discussion

- Bronfenbrenner (1990) taking a meta-view, recognising “immediate” influences, such as staff-student, home-school and student-peer relationships. More difficult will be for schools to identify more “remote” influences.

- Foucalt (1998) ‘Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart’.
Recommendations for the LA / government

- Discussion should take place as to the **validity of the six week trial**. Schools should not operate unilaterally or in small, closed consortia.

- YP should not experience more than one managed move. Playing “pass the parcel” is neither morally, or legally acceptable.

- Managed moves should be **recorded by LAs and collated nationally**.

- Alternative provision to support YP who are struggling to cope with demands of mainstream school.

- Schools should be incentivised to include YP with **significant difficulties** and those at-risk of exclusion. This may need to entail economic benefits for schools.
School considerations

- School ‘learning’ and ‘behaviour’ support services should not be separate.

- When sharing information between schools, the following should be included:
  - YP’s views about their socio-emotional / learning needs.
  - Criteria for success, based on a YP’s individual needs.
  - Accurate, up-to-date assessment and list of strategies and interventions - what works.
  - Named members of staff to act as ‘key person’.
  - Details of any external agencies that have been involved.
School considerations

- A **multi-professional meeting, prior to the managed move.** At this meeting, an interim review meeting should be agreed.

- The **LA should be notified** when managed moves take place, to ensure that families have access to advice from a neutral party.

- When a managed move is proposed, the actual **transfer date should be negotiated.** A maximum of four school weeks.

- **Parents need to be fully cognisant** of strategies and interventions.

- **Regular, weekly home-school contact.**

- Schools could initiate **half termly multi-professional meetings,** within which the school EP is present.
Educational Psychologists considerations

- It is critical that EP practice is not construed as applicable only within a narrow, ‘traditional’ definition. Establish role.

- In cases where a YP’s needs have not been assessed thoroughly, schools should ensure that this takes place, through consultation with an EP.

- Preventative work.

- Social constructionist and systems thinking.

- EP knowledge can be valuable in working with complex YP with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and wider exclusion issues.
What’s happened

- Presented to SBAP and Head-teachers.
- Working group set up including all schools.
- Agreement to remove permanent managed transfers.
- Agreement to re-model the protocol around managed moves based on the above findings.
Conclusion

○ Managed moves are potentially very worthwhile.
○ Incentivisation and privatisation in school culture. The quasi-market.
○ The disparate nature of power.
○ The moral limits of markets.

○ What kind of society do we want?
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