The use of Transactional Analysis in Secondary Education: A Case Study

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Abstract

This paper presents the findings of a case study on the use of Transactional Analysis (TA) in schools in England. The paper gives a brief overview of TA and its relevance to secondary education – for pupils, teachers and school improvement. TA is a field of psychology that looks at the 'transactions' that go on between people when they communicate. Self-awareness and understanding of others enables individuals and groups to develop effective and powerful communication and a better climate in the workplace. This paper goes on to present the findings of the case study on teaching TA to children and young people from 11 – 25 and their teachers. We have found that children, young people and teachers with TA skills have better self-awareness, increased understanding of others and as a consequence better relationships and can demonstrate impact on attendance, attainment, personal and professional lives and school climate overall. We conclude with recommendations for practice.

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Introduction

Context

The Education Secretary of the Coalition government in England, Michael Gove (2011) announced that 'bad' behaviour in schools had reached 'critical levels' as figures showed that 250 children are excluded daily from London schools for disruptive behaviour. Schools have tried a range of methods – hard line tactics including isolation areas, sanctions and exclusions and softer tactics including nurture groups, pastoral support and personalised learning. The figures would indicate that these are not altogether successful. The Government approach is to increase the powers that schools have to tackle 'bad' behaviour as outlined in the 2011 Education Act (DfES, 2011) which includes measures to tackle bad behaviour by giving teachers and schools power to: search for any item banned by the school rules; expel violent pupils; impose detentions; and protect teachers from pupils telling lies. Where schools fail to address behaviour, the Bill has: increased the Secretary of State's powers to intervene; has introduced smarter school inspections focusing only on four core elements of schools; and now measures our education system against the best in the world.

The previous government, New Labour (1997-2010), developed Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL)[1] as an explicit strategy to improve attendance and behaviour through explicit teaching of emotional literacy.

However, the Coalition government has introduced measures which speak of a rejection of 'softer' approaches which develop intrinsic motivation for school attendance and attainment. Examples of this would be a reversal of the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda which put the child at the centre, the enhancement of teachers' powers to exclude pupils, and increased rights to detain pupils without first notifying parents (DfES, 2004).

These actions speak of a rejection of 'softer' approaches, despite an evidence base that showed SEAL effective (Hallam, Rhamie and Shaw, 2006; Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2011; Weare, 2003). This context is problematic. The authors posit that behaviour is not 'bad', it all has a function for the individual enacting it – disturbing lessons may for example be a way of gaining attention for a neglected child, violence may be an expression of trauma that the child is experiencing out of school, bullying may empower an otherwise helpless and powerless child with self-esteem. These behaviours over time become patterns that provide some certainty and stability for the individual and great frustration for those around them. Whilst there are negative consequences to the behaviour, it is unhelpful to label the behaviour or the child as 'bad'. More punitive approaches will not necessarily reduce this disruptive behaviour as it does not tackle the root causes of the problem. This does not mean that we endorse, or ignore disruptive, or negative behaviour, it means that we have a humanistic and holistic rather than 'zero tolerance' approach where the policy or practice of not tolerating undesirable behaviour in any way is advocated. Sanctioning schools for failing to punish 'bad' kids adds

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[1] SEAL available online at: http://www.lancsngfl.ac.uk/nationalstrategy/ks3/behaveattend/index.php?category_id=37&s=!B121cf29d70ec8a3d54a33343010cc2 (Accessed 27 July 2011).

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fuel to the flames. So what will work? This is the problem space that we chose to address in a positive way.

Claxton (2010:184) is clear that; 'Schools must change. The case is overwhelming. It is education's core responsibility to prepare young people for the future, and it is failing in that duty'. He claims that children leave school 'with a smattering of certificates and a strong feeling of not having been adequately prepared for the rigours and complexities of life'. Whilst some studies position the acquisition of social and emotional skills of equal or greater important than cognitive skills, Margo and Sodha (2007) argue persuasively that cognitive skills, to some extent, go hand in hand with social skills – as each area of 'self awareness' and 'understanding' requires some cognitive processing. The Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR, 2008) compared longitudinal studies from 1958 and 1970 and found that 'in just over a decade, personal and social skills became 33 times more important in determining relative life chances'. .The same study reported that an ability for application at the age of 10 has a bigger impact on earnings by the age of 30 than ability in maths. By studying the same data, Margo and Sodha (2008:6) concluded that in 1970 future wellbeing was four and a half times more dependent on emotional well-being than in 1958. More recently, the DCSF (2010:13) found that 'if young people from the poorest families had the attitudes and behaviours of their peers form the richest families that would narrow the GCSE attainment gap by 5 percentage points'. IPPR (2008:38) linked poor psychological well-being at age 10 to poor outcomes at age 16. Fenstein (2010) and Carneiro et al (2007) went on to show that academic improvement benefitted the most able, but personal and social development benefitted the least able from the lowest social class backgrounds. Social and

emotional skill development can thus be seen as one approach to 'narrowing the gap' in outcomes and creating social equality. .There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that social and emotional skill are more open to development than academic skills during adolescent years (Blackmore *et al.,* 2006) giving weight to the argument for their value in secondary schooling. The findings from our small scale study support the view that emotional development is very useful for young people and professionals working with them.

There are powerful critics of developing emotional literacy in schools. Furedi (2009:166) and Ecclestone and Hayes (2009:155) point out that the neo-liberal policy context was encouraging everyday feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability, and creating the sense that such conditions are treatable by schools. They are not discounting the value of therapeutic approaches per se, but make claim that:

> 'It is precisely because popular caricatured therapy resonates so powerfully with cultural explanations about emotional problems that policy makers and the emotional well-being industry have seized on it' (2009:158).

They argue that it is not the place of schools to 'deliver' to this therapeutic agenda and indeed they believe that even teachers trained in cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) and TA 'cannot deal with the complexities of psychology, poverty, social conditions and translate these into their dealings with their students' (ibid:157). They go on to state that such approaches also advocate a 'diminished self' that do not seek to transform the world, but seek to make the students fit the world (ibid:160).

In policy terms this could be seen to be the approach of the 'National Citizenship

Service' with a fixed programme and fixed outcomes for all 10,000 young people participating this summer. Boeck (2009:98), writing from the perspective of social capital commented that;

> 'Social capital can be used within a neo-liberal agenda to provide subtle ways to regulate the young people within communities through informal control and sanctions (Halpern 2005), and trying to achieve harmonization and integration in society; thus the enhancement of social capital could become part of a subtle regulation.'

The Big Society aims to treat all citizens (including all sorts of young people) as capable and it wants them to be active, informed and responsible (Cabinet Office, 2010) as it was grounded in the principle of 'co-production' (Boyle and Harris 2009:9). Co-production develops:

> 'an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals and people using services…so that both services and people become far more effective agents of change.'

Coote (2010) criticises the policy for ignoring power balances – she sees the policy reinforcing division and inequity as the most advantaged will be the most able to contribute. Young people in schools may well not be able to contribute as equally as other members of society, especially if they are labelled by the policy makers as being 'badly behaved'. Schools have real opportunities to work in participatory ways, yet some continue to have paternalistic cultures that breed passivity and by implication an external locus of control.

TAPACY and TAPATE

Transactional Analysis (TA) is a field of psychology that looks at the 'transactions' that go on between people when they communicate. TA has informed individual psychotherapy, and group based organisational development. It is also taught to a range of professionals as a way of increasing their emotional intelligence and communication skills. This programme was unique in that it was designed for children and young people by the Institute of Developmental Transactional Analysis (IDTA). As they state:

'The TAPACY - Transactional Analysis Proficiency Award for Children and Young People – has been designed specifically to support learning centres that want to help children and young people to communicate and have better relationships. TAPACY operates through a process whereby the children and young people learn and apply various TA concepts, produce portfolios of evidence and undertake a process of peer and adult assessment' (IDTA, 2009).

There is also a version of the award for teachers and educators – The Transactional Analysis Proficiency Award for Teachers and Educators or TAPATE. This award is identical to TAPACY in style and assessment, but the portfolio that the teachers complete includes evidence of teaching materials. The TAPACY and TAPATE awards are currently receiving funding from the European Association of Transactional Analysis, and fees may be waived or reduced at the time of writing below the nominal fee (£50.00 GPB per person).

TA in Education

Educational TA has existed as a context since 1970. In the UK, educational TA was led by Trudi Newton (who wrote with Napper the seminal TA handbook book TACTICS) and Giles Barrow has pioneered practical applications of educational TA work at school and local authority level. Stewart and Joines (1987:279) claim that educational practitioners work at a social rather than psychological level on overt rather than covert agendas which makes it distinct from 'psychotherapeutic TA' where the therapist usually has a therapeutic agenda that may not be shared with the individual client. The aims of educational TA are to develop people's awareness of the benefits of learning about TA in everyday and educational settings, and to develop awareness of how TA can inform the teaching and learning context.

Three key publications pertain to the use of TA educationally. In 2001 Barrow, Bradshaw and Newton wrote 'Improving Behaviour and Raising Self- Esteem' which outlines the benefits of using TA in the classroom and schools as a whole. TA concepts they say 'are particularly good at helping to unravel the complex way humans communicate, so helping us to move forward and look at the way things could be better and less confused' (2001:5). They summarise it as offering tools and strategies, a common language, a decisional model and a practical educational psychology for individual and schools. The various concepts introduce how TA concepts underpin and inform the pedagogical approach of teachers and the school. Following this, in 2004 Barrow and Newton edited a collection of examples of people using TA educationally. Hellaby (2004:15) found that in 20 years of primary teaching; 'the use of TA in the classroom has improved behaviour, which in turn has led to a more conducive learning environment, thereby raising self –esteem and academic standards'.

She had explicitly taught a range of TA models including 'strokes, rackets', and 'ego states'. Shotton (2004:22) used the concept of cultural script to underpin a mentoring service in an inner city. He concluded that; 'though using TA models to provide a common language and a structural analytical framework we have been able to confront and work with interlocking cultural and personal life-scripts and are continuing to co-create new narratives' (ibid:250). Harding (2004:49) taught 'ego states' to young people in one to one tuition sessions, and Wye (2004:7) taught 'drivers' and 'permissions' to Junior school children to enable them to understand and deal with bullying. The conclusion to the book stresses the importance of change within the learning context rather than focus on individual change. Evidence is presented that demonstrated a drop in detentions, increase in attendance and reduced fixed term exclusions after a whole school TA intervention. The TA work is also shown to be powerful for individuals. Wye quotes Rosie (aged 10) as saying; 'the strategy I use most is ego-states. I think about the ego-state Ben is in and the one I am in and think is this a good situation or not? Using TA has really worked and everybody says that Ben has improved, I am very proud of him and myself'. Finally, in 2008 Tudor edited a collection of applications of TA with children in 'The adult is parent to the child'. In this edition, Newton (2008:15) draws together key concepts into a 'healthy' map of school functioning, Hoyer and Hyatt (2008:29) describe teaching TA work to parents and children jointly, Shotton (2008:39) teaches TA to Muslim young men referred to him for tutoring in schools, and numerous therapeutic uses of TA.

Ecclestone and Hayes (2009) critique models of TA as they say it 'simply promote[s] the language and practices of psychotherapy in schools', and that

they are 'are based essentially on pop-psychology'. If TA was so 'popular' then the IDTA and EATA would not be flourishing, and reputable organisations such as the anti-bullying alliance would not adopt TA models the (e.g. the drama triangle by Ball, 2008). Furedi (2009:193) claims that a child's psychology needs to be active and creative and his main critique of psychological approaches in schools lies in the claim that it renders them 'passive with therapy'.

The snap shots and case studies above show that TA can be effective in schools, but has not gained a strong hold. It seemed to be advocated by a few key players in the field of TA, but there was little evidence of it in mainstream literature on strategies to improve behaviour, attendance and attainment. It offered an alternative paradigm for work with schools, encouraging the whole school to take responsibility for the system at play and the outcomes that resulted.

The development of this research
From 2006 – 2007 the author of this paper (Stuart) delivered TAPACY to a class of 30 year nine pupils in one West Cumbrian secondary school and to 30 year ten pupils in a second West Cumbrian secondary school. The project was designed in partnership with the relevant Excellence Cluster Partnership and was delivered in classrooms by Stuart and a lead officer from the partnership. The programme was accredited through the Institute of Developmental Transactional Analysis (IDTA) using their TAPACY programme, and also with the Open College Network (OCN) Level 2, one credit module 'Transactional Analysis for Young People'. The evaluation (Stuart, 2008) showed that year 9 and year 10 pupils found TA useful, particularly the ego state model and the increase in

communication skills that they gained. Pupils reported improved relationships in school and at home. Teachers and parents reported positive changes to pupils and felt that it was a valuable opportunity to celebrate success for young people who were often invisible or visible for the wrong reasons. The shortcoming of the programme was that the young people were then returned to school systems that were not fluent in TA or emotionally literate. This posed a problem for the sustainability of the learning for the young people. As a result of this, Alger (author of this paper) developed the project with the locality partnership further. In 2011 the project worked on an 'all through' basis, from primary to a sixth form college, had teachers learning alongside pupils, and was run on a voluntary basis after school in the local college.

Methodology

The methodology was practitioner action research, presented in a case study of the TA programme. The research question was 'how had the TA programme helped the young people, teachers and schools?' in this single case of practice. The approach taken was practitioner action research, in that we as teacher educators and youth workers sought to develop our ability to support schools tacking behavioural issues on a day to day basis. Benefits would be accrued to us in developing our practice, to the teachers in developing their pedagogy, and to the pupils learning communication skills alongside them. The action research sought to be participatory by giving voice to all the participants, and in 'accepting that there are many truths rather than one universal truth' (Ledwith, 2007:599). The participants (both teachers and students) had no vested interest in the success of the programme. The participants included 20 young people from years nine and ten in school who were all female. Two sixth formers volunteered to help, these were also both female. The eight participating adults comprised

five teachers, two teaching assistants and one learning mentor. The adults were also all female, perhaps indicating that the nature of 'emotional intelligence' is more acceptable for 'women' to attend and difficult to reconcile with patriarchal notions of masculinity. It may also be indicative of the 71% female teaching population (CWDC, 2010:178). The difficulty with this sample is that we are unable to comment on whether there is a gender differential in terms of the impact and utility of the programme.

Data collection included:

- Documentary evidence (course documents, and resources).
- On-going feedback through the programme.
- Feedback forms completed by the young people in a focus group convened to review the programme one year on.
- Notes from semi structured telephone interviews with participating adults about the benefits that they noticed a year on.
- The DVD of the celebration event.

Course documents were scrutinised for stated aims and methods. Feedback forms and interview notes and comments from the DVD were analysed thematically. Common themes were identified by the authors independently analyzing the data, and these were then compared. All the emergent themes are reported, there was no selection of evidence or themes. This was congruent with our participatory stance as we sought to hear the voices of all the participants, rather than a selected few. Where a theme was mentioned more than once, we indicate the number of references numerically and give a representative quotation or summary headline. A second analysis generated categories from the themes that had been initially identified. As a case study approach was adopted, there was no attempt to make the research generalisable. Validity was

sought through Dadds (2008) construction of empathetic validity, i.e. 'the potential of the research in its processes and outcomes to transform the emotional disposition of people toward each other' (2008:280), as this was congruent with the subject of the research.

Findings

Evidence from the course planning documents:

The aims of this programme were to:

- Train champions who would be able to integrate in schools
- To use 'all through learning' (from primary to FE)
- To train teachers alongside pupils
- To facilitate the merging of schools
- To improve behaviour, attainment and attendance

The programme was advertised in school and a number of school based adults volunteered to take part. These adults invited young people to participate who they considered would benefit from the programme. A staggered programme was delivered so that the school based adults learned a concept a week before the young people did and then supported the young people's session. The programme was delivered on the neutral ground of the college and ran for 10 weeks. There was a preparatory team building day at Brathay Trust[2] 10 one hour college based sessions and then the final celebration and moderation day attended by the IDTA. The focus of the ten sessions was as follows:

1. Contracting
2. Ego states

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3. Transactions
4. Drama Triangles
5. Rackets
6. Stamp collections
7. Frames of reference / OK corral
8. Strokes and Affirmations
9. Cycle of development
10. Goal setting and final assessment

The different ages and abilities of the young people presented some challenges to the delivery team, and the course planning showed evidence of open ended and inclusive activities that would engage all. Although the sessions were staggered so that the adults learned a concept before the young people, the programme director noticed that in reality the young people taught the adults as they were quicker to pick up the concepts and apply them. Although, the adults had contracted to be called by their surnames, as in school, after the first session they asked for their first names to be used, perhaps indicating the level of trust that was quickly established by working in a TA way.

Although the sessions were voluntary, there was an extremely high attendance rate from adults and young people alike (100% and 95% respectively). An additional catch-up day at the end of the course was planned to cover any missed concepts and prepare for the moderation process. All the young people gained the IDTA TAPACY award, but the adults did not due to the pressing demands of the school merger.

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[2] Brathay trust named with permission

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Programme feedback:

The on-going evaluations included comments that:

> *'It has helped me to get on with my mum'* (Pupil).
>
> *'When I see friends falling out I think to myself that they are responding from child'* (Pupil*).*
>
> *'This is great, everyone in school should learn it'* (Pupil*).*
>
> *'I think about how I respond to people now'* (Pupil).
>
> *'Thank you for last night, it was just what I needed, I had a very bad day and was emotionally down when I arrived, but when I left I felt great, it really is a great group of people – can we extend the programme'* (Teacher).
>
> *'I am learning so much from working alongside the pupils'* (Teacher).

These early comments suggested that there were benefits to using TA, but that they were perhaps not as per the objectives – there was a much more personal use of the programme than the school based objectives.

One year on feedback:

The young people were contacted a year after the programme and fully evaluated the long term impact that the programme had on them. There was a response rate of eight out of 20. They said that they had signed up because: it was a chance to do something new (3), it was a chance to meet new people (2), it looked interesting (2), they wanted to improve their learning and simply because they were chosen. In terms of impact, the young people identified the following changes:

> *'I think before I speak.'*
>
> *'It has not changed me but I can recognise things better.'*

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> *'I have more awareness in situations.'*
>
> *'I am more polite and friendly.'*

and comments to the effect that they had greater maturity and less arguments.

These changes were underpinned by the learning that they identified. They had new specific skills and understanding to diffuse arguments (2), to know how to make people feel good (2), increased awareness of influence on others (2), they could think before acting and identify the reasons for their actions. For one individual, '*Working with teachers has improved my confidence'*. The TA concepts that they had used the most were;

> *'Ego states because I use it day to day.'*
>
> *'the OK corral because of the effect that I have on others.'*
>
> *'strokes as I can use them to make others feel good about themselves.'*
>
> *'Ego states or OK as we spent time on each and both had an impact after the course.'[3]*

The thematic analysis suggested that the young people felt that the programme had helped them prepare for the future as they are able to communicate in different ways, understand other people's points of view, remain calmer and relaxed in stressful situations. This they said would be helpful when in interviews, meeting new people, and problem solving.

The young people's criticisms of the programme were that they did not get enough free time (1), that they lacked the confidence to engage as much as they

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[3] For more information on TA terminology, refer to http://www.businessballs.com/transactionalanalysis.htm (Accessed 25 August 2011).

would have liked to (1) and that some people did not get it and that held the group back (1). The school they felt should have given them more support (2) and could have 'integrated it into the school week'. Two young people thought that it could not be improved in any way. Overall, they classified it as: a good opportunity, as well worth the time, as interesting (2), providing them with new friends (3), and helping their individual development.

A year on, fifty percent of the adults contributed to the interviews. The adults said that they had become involved because; they thought it would be useful with teenagers (1), they had a little bit of insight and wanted to find out more (2), they thought it would support them in connecting with more challenging pupils (3), and they wanted to find out how it might relate to younger pupils (4).

In terms of personal and professional impact the adults identified the following outcomes:

> 'the course came at a very difficult time for me, professionally and personally with the merger of the two schools into an Academy the programme helped me rationalize this.'
> 'it has made me stop and think why are they reacting in that way, is there something about the way I respond that can help to change things?' There were two comments to this effect.

Four adults had observed changes for the students on the course, characterised by statements to the effect that:

> 'there was a growth in confidence and maturity for the girls on the course' (4 comments to similar effect).

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'in my role as Education Welfare Officer I have seen improvements in behaviour when I have talked through PAC with pupils, it has been really useful.'

 'The girls really got it they could see patterns of behaviour in families and friends.'

The programme was a useful teaching tool, exemplified by the statements that;

'it has all been very good I am using it with teenagers especially PAC to explain to students how they can turn an interaction around by moving into adult'(3 comments to similar effect).

'it has had a lasting impact, I use it all the time in my teaching.'

Unanticipated outcomes included the mutual support networks that grew up between pupils and teachers, supporting each other through a time of significant change involved in the merger. 'I really enjoyed working with both adults and students from different schools and felt very supported by them.' This revealed a possible benefit of the collaborative working style.

Criticism of the programme stemmed from teachers' frustrations that they didn't utilise the skills the students developed to set up further courses in school. However, this was partly due to the merger of three of the schools involved into an academy and the significant challenges this posed for all.

The thematic analysis was then summarised into two categories of response, those about the developmental aspects of the programme and those about the empowerment of the programme. These were categorized from the statements of

the young people, the statements of the adults, and the statements of the adults about the young people as shown in Table 1. overleaf.

	Developmental?			Empowering?	
	Controlled	Increased awareness	Increased behavioural flexibility	Passive	Empowered
Young people		7	6		18
Adults		1	4		5
Adults comments about young people		1	2		3

Table 1. Frequency of Responses by Categories of Impact

To what extent did the programme meet its aims?
TA champions were recruited and trained. The champions valued the skills and knowledge and used it in their personal practice, but they were not able to

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integrate into the Academy as a whole because of other organisational issues taking precedence. The project did employ 'all through learning' (from primary to FE), and this helped to build a small community of practice that supported the students and teachers through a period of transition in the merger of schools. Teachers were trained alongside pupils, and this seems to be valued by both the teachers and students, suggesting that hierarchical modes of teaching and learning are not always necessary or desirable. There is no evidence that the programme has improved behaviour, attainment and attendance (as data was not collected), but there is evidence to suggest that it improved relationships between the young people and peers, teachers and parents, and of personal and professional gains for the teachers. This could be seen to increase inter and intra personal awareness, understanding and autonomy and could arguably, be linked to potential improvement of other outcomes in schools.

Discussion

The introduction and literature review presented two opposing views of education. One was of paternalistic control, where increased school powers and an intolerance of 'bad' behaviour. The second approach is characterised by the belief that increasing young people's skills and motivation to be at school will increase positive behaviour. A second dualism identified in the literature is around the role of TA. TA has been positioned by its proponents as able to develop self-awareness and self-understanding that are necessary to progress successful, or 'autonomous' future lives. Critics of TA and other therapeutic approaches view it as developing passivity and normalising vulnerability and fragility. We will discuss each of these dualities in the light of the findings.

Control or development?

The findings suggested that the young people and the adult participants found the experience beneficial. The categorisation of themes showed that young people increased in both self-awareness and behavioural flexibility through engagement in the TA based programme. This was corroborated to some extent by the comments of the adults about the young people. .The adults also believed that they had developed both awareness and a range of new behaviours. This would indicate that the programme is indeed developmental, and that it has an impact cognitively and behaviourally. What is not clear from the findings however is to what extent this improved the behaviour of the young people in the school in disciplinary terms. Future research is needed to establish whether this developmental approach is equally, or more effective than a controlling one.

Dangerous or empowering?

The findings showed that there were increased actions, or 'agency' for the participants after participating in the programme. This is linked intrinsically to it being a developmental programme as discussed in the previous point. There was no evidence of the young people becoming more passive, more vulnerable, or otherwise put at risk in any way. This leads us to believe that TAPACY is a way to prepare young people for their futures by enabling them to manage relationships and communications – developing a key life skill. As the literature suggested, life skills are as important as other skills. As our findings suggest, the development of self-awareness and communication skills was neither 'diminishing' nor 'normative'. Instead, we helped the young people to claim the ability to be who they wanted to be.

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Brathay Trust's work is underpinned by Maynard's (2010) empowerment model. Maynard developed the model as part of her PhD study on a 3 year programme with sexually exploited young women at Brathay, and has since been adopted by practitioners across Brathay as they feel it supports and explains their work. Maynard's model shows that young people often need a moment of 'sparking' before they can begin to realise that they can be different, and before they decide to take action to achieve the changes that they want. This process involves them empowering themselves, claiming an internal locus of control, and deciding whether to change self or change the world. We suggest that the TA programme provided such a 'spark' of change. We delivered this programme experientially and cognitively – these create moments of realisation that are profound for the young people and teachers. Such realisations can lead to critical emancipation as participants claim what they want for themselves and others. Maynard's model, and Brathay's approach does not infantilise or invoke passive conformity, it is a clarion call to action. A further study would be needed however to ascertain to what extent the process rather than the content of the programme accounted for the impact it had on the participants. The intent with which we planned the course was reflective of Ecclestone and Hayes (2009:162) call to arms for Radical Humanist Education, and why Furedi's (2009:170) critique of life skills as 'therapeutic modification' is not fitting. Chawla and Malone (2002:129) say that actual empowerment requires 'the appropriation of power by young people beyond just knowledge of the source of their disempowerment, to opportunities to engage in activities to change their situation', our modest findings suggest that this is the approach that the programme took. Addressing the claims of Furedi (2009:193), our findings suggest that the young people were not rendered passive – indeed a year on they are still highly motivated, still use their

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new skills and are still exercising their agency. One might say that they are instead 'active from therapy'.

Countering the normalising tendencies of the Government's National Citizenship Service, the experiential TA programme that we have developed places young people as equal learners alongside their teachers, it credits young people with the ability to learn psychological concepts to better understand themselves and the world around them, and 'sparks' them to be more active agents, making choices about themselves and how they interact with the wider world. Rather than forcing improvements in attainment, attendance and behaviour, we provide young people with the skills to decide whether and how they will make such gains for themselves. Working on intrinsic drivers, and leading young people to autonomy could be argued to be more sustainable and ethical than driving up school performance for a set of indicators, or 'normalising' young people in standardised National Citizenship Programmes.

Whilst our case study and findings are modest, we believe that such a programme is able to deliver the realities of the Big Society (Cabinet Office, 2010). This may only be the case however if TA is used organisationally rather than as an individual tool. A barrier to TA's adoption as a whole school approach is that it has not been 'proved' as effective. This programme gave us an opportunity to develop the evidence base and embed it institutionally. Despite evidence of success, it was not developed across the schools we worked with. The merger of the schools was certainly one obstacle, but additionally TA continues to be seen as an additional and unnecessary curriculum development. Future studies and research linked to school indicators of attainment and

behaviour are needed to convince decision makers.

Conclusion

It seems that the 'dangerous rise of therapeutic education' (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2009) is over in policy terms at the time of writing, but at Brathay we still aim for the appropriate rise of emotional intelligence and participatory practice in the way that we approach teaching and learning. This paper shows that using TAPACY had benefits for young people and practitioners alike, and additional benefits accrued from them learning together. The skills and knowledge that they learned were not boundaried into the school context, but were used in all contexts and relationships. As such, they are skills for lifelong learning, skills that develop critical awareness, sparking participants' empowerment and TAPACY and TAPATE are potent tools for schools to develop; young people's skills, practitioners skills, the school culture and school performance. Such 'active therapy' counters passive and normalising programmes, developing critical action. TAPACY could be the key to attaining a Big Society.

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