

Framework For Intervention: the road to Total Quality Behaviour ?

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Abstract

This paper is the second of two. In the first (Daniels and Williams, 2000) the authors described a system (Framework for Intervention), analogous with the Code of Practice (DFE, 1994), for dealing with behaviour problems. The current paper describes the links between the underlying philosophy and practice of The Framework and the principles of quality management. Roots in psychology and sociology as well as the practice and evidence from educational psychology are cited. The paper concludes with a brief note on the relationship of Framework for Intervention with current views on inclusive education.

Introduction: Framework for Intervention- a response to practical need

The process now simply known as 'Framework for Intervention' took its name from 'Behaviour in Schools: Framework for Intervention' (Ali et al, 1997). This document described a three level approach to behaviour problems in schools analogous to, and drawing heavily upon, the Code of Practice for the Assessment and Identification of Special Educational Needs (DFE, 1994a).

The significant elements of the approach are:

- Early intervention- Level 1 starts at the point of first concern by classroom teacher (or other)
- Support from the earliest point (from within the school and outside)
- Plans at Level 1 based on factors in the 'behavioural environment' rather than on individuals
- Those with the initial concern retain control and responsibility at level 1
- A universal 'no-blame' approach
- Mutual respect between all built into the procedures
- Level 2 continues the environmental approach in conjunction with Individual Behaviour Plans
- Level 3 similar to Code of Practice

A fuller account of the approach and its application can be found in Daniels and Williams (2000).

Framework for Intervention was developed as part of a wider project on behaviour in schools in Birmingham which went under the title of 'New Outlooks' .(Williams et.al., 1997) This two year study involved psychologists, advisers, behaviour support personnel, education officers and social workers. In addition, it benefited from regular consultation with Advisory and Reference Groups comprising elected members, teacher associations, representatives from social services, health, police, probation, housing and voluntary organisations.«»

While its brief was to look specifically at the provision made for children with 'EBD' the core working group came to the conclusion very early that there was a systemic problem; particularly that the environment in which schools were asked to deal with behaviour problems lacked clarity and consistency. The result of an initial survey showed that headteachers felt confused about criteria and procedures, and felt frustrated in what appeared to be an unresponsive environment. This was not directly consequent on funding; in fact funding for schools and support provision had increased in preceding years. Discussion with colleagues in other authorities also indicated that the situation was not unique to Birmingham. Nationally, the link to this finding could be seen in the national rise in exclusions from schools (Parsons and Howlett, 1996) .

The Framework was the New Outlooks project's primary response to this situation. To start on this process the project group identified a number of stress points in the way that the system for dealing with problems of behaviour in school 'worked' .

Of prime importance is the extent to which behaviour problems cause extreme tension within classrooms and schools (for example, DES,1989). This tension is so great that teachers develop sub-cultural 'rules' to ensure that it does not undermine staff relationships. An example of this is reported by Miller (1996) who observed a taboo against discussing successes with children with behaviour difficulties in the staffroom. Many teachers clearly feel alone in dealing with such problems in the early stages: their peer support being restricted to confirmation of and sympathy with the difficulties they face. Characteristically, only when the problem has become embedded in the common understanding of the school as being clearly related to a pupil with a significant problem (as was the case in all Miller's examples) can the teacher feel confident that a 'referral' of any official nature will be accepted by colleagues, senior staff and support services.

The Code of Practice could well have contributed to this process encouraging support services to engage with individual pupils only at Stage 3 and beyond. Additionally, government circulars specifically aimed at behaviour at the time discriminated between matters of pupil behaviour and discipline (DFE,1994(b)) and emotional and behavioural difficulties (DFE,1994(c)) the former being seen as an internal matter for schools and the latter suggesting a greater need for outside help. For the teacher having difficulties with behaviour in the classroom the definition of the problem as being 'EBD' thus brings three key stress-reducing implications;

- that the problem is internal to the child,
- that it is a problem that requires intervention from outside and
- that it is a problem that could lead to extra resource being made available or the pupil being educated elsewhere.

In such a situation, it was felt that any fundamental solution would need to address the organisational, psychological and sociological aspects surrounding the behaviours of those involved; the pupils, carers, the school staff, their managers and external support personnel.

Project specification

The New Outlooks project had from the start discussed with its advisory and reference groups the need for a set of commonly held principles under which to conduct the study. A list of three 'philosophical' statements and principles relating to six areas of action were devised. (see figure 1) In fact, the 'philosophy' statements would have been better described as 'theories' in Popper's (1959) terms in that they are capable of refutation and specific enough to suggest some predictive power. Indeed, in terms of the Framework for Intervention which is in essence an experimental consequence of these theories, the intention of the group has not followed the line commonly found in education to 'prove' them (see for example Burgess's (1998) Popperian critique of Michael Barber's 'evaluation' of the Literacy Strategy). Instead, the intention has always been to find examples of where the theories fall down so that they can be refined, and thus be more useful in the real world of classrooms and corridors.

Of course, the Philosophy did not appear from the blue. Instead it reflected the collective experience of the practitioners involved in New Outlooks which itself came from range of sources reflecting their varied schools of study, principally education, sociology, psychology and management. As can be seen, the overall effect of the 'Principles of Action' is to move the agenda away from concepts such as blame and post-hoc analysis of problems towards an ecological, systemic and humanistic approach. At its very heart is a solid basis for prevention rather than reaction.

Philosophy:

- 1 Children's behaviour is central to the learning process and is an intrinsic element of education**
- 2 Problems in behaviour in educational settings are usually a product of a complex interaction between the individual, school, family, community and wider society**
- 3 Social interaction based on mutual respect is a fundamental basis of an optimal educational environment**

Principles:

- 1 Equal opportunity and maximum inclusion**
 - 1a An individual's difficulties and needs can vary over time and in different settings . Thus, organisations and individuals should avoid 'labelling' children and young people**
 - 1b All children should have maximum access to the mainstream curriculum and children should be educated, as far as possible, with their mainstream peer group**
 - 1c Policy, planning and action in the field of behaviour management should be anti-discriminatory and conform to equal opportunity policy**

- 2 Respect for all**

- 2a Children and their teachers have the right to have difficulties in behaviour in educational situations addressed without prejudice
- 2b All persons involved in difficulties in behaviour have a right to have their views and feelings taken into account at all times
- 2c Policy and practice should actively promote mutual respect for schools, parents, teachers and children
- 3 Positive approaches to behaviour
- 3a In all circumstances positive approaches to behaviour should be preferred
- 3b Interventions in response to unwanted behaviour should be the least necessary and least intrusive
- 3c The 'behavioural environment' should be evaluated at the starting point of all interventions and work to improve the context should always be accorded high priority
- 4 Organisational consistency and improvement
- 4a Organisations should recognise the importance of having clearly stated and shared values and beliefs which underpin expected standards of behaviour and quality of relationships
- 4b All involved in the organisation (including children, taking into account their age and understanding), should be included in the process of determining and reviewing values and beliefs
- 5 Working with children and parents
- 5a The views and wishes of the child (as taken in the light of her age and understanding) are of prime importance and must be heard and taken into account
- 5b Working with behavioural difficulties should be done in partnership with parents/carers wherever commensurate with the welfare of the children
- 6 Appropriate and effective agencies
- 6a Provision for emotional and behavioural difficulties should be made by the most appropriate agency, in most cases the mainstream school working in partnership with parents
- 6b In the best interests of the child, there must be close cooperation and agreement in working practices between agencies

Figure 1: *Behaviour in schools: Principles for Action*

Principles for Action: Rationale and representation through Framework for Intervention

Children's behaviour is central to the learning process and is an intrinsic element of education. For many this assertion is axiomatic- in particular behavioural theorists do not discriminate between behaviour and learning seeing one as the result of the other (for example Skinner, 1968). Nevertheless the statement has discriminative value as it assumes a number of important consequences which are not beyond dispute. Firstly, it implies that evaluating behaviour as an issue separate from all the others concerned with education is wrong. This does not mean that schools should not have behaviour policies (or any other separate provision for behaviour) but it does

suggest that all activities around behaviour should be seen as an intrinsic part of the whole organisation and thus should not be conducted on different principles or seen in any way as a 'bolt on'.

The Framework for Intervention reflects this inclusive and ecological approach by working on the assumption that variation in any aspects of the behavioural environment may have a bearing on specific examples of behaviour. The behavioural environment as defined by the Behavioural Environment Checklist (Ali et al, 1986) is not limited to factors directly associated with behaviour (existence of a behaviour policy, use of praise etc) but to all factors in school. To the Framework, therefore, the behavioural and educational environments are synonymous.

Problems in behaviour in educational settings are usually a product of a complex interaction between the individual, school, family, community and wider society: This statement, though to many as obvious as the first, is important to practitioners. The evidence for behaviour being connected with all manner of variables within and outside schools is legion (for example James, 1996; DES, 1989; Rutter et. al., 1979, Hargreaves et. al., 1975).

The importance of this restatement to the New Outlooks project and the Framework for Intervention is the high profile recognition of the fact: if teachers are to take on the implications of the previous paragraph- which clearly suggests that behaviour is the concern of all teachers- they deserve the recognition that while they may be charged with seeking solutions this does not imply that they are the cause. This is essential to substantiate the no-blame approach inherent in Framework for Intervention: since the causes are almost always too complex to allow certainty, blame is clearly irrational.

These first two 'philosophies' comprise the essential basis for Framework for Intervention's concentration on environmental factors. The essential corollary of their acceptance is that since so much in the environment affects the pupil's behaviour, even if we could change the behaviour 'within-child' this is unlikely to be sustained if a child returns to the environment in which the unwanted behaviour previously developed (Topping, 1983, Galvin and Costa, 1994).

Social interaction based on mutual respect is a fundamental basis of an optimal educational environment. The connection between behaviour and the perception of others is well known (for example Brophy and Good, 1974) and is accepted to some extent by all. For example, some students are seen as 'disaffected' and show disrespect, which often forces teachers into reactive behaviour which they might not have chosen if they thought the students' motivations were different. In seeking solutions, all perceptions of all parties are important, but those based on understandable emotional responses are often problematic.

The 'respect' within this statement has a specific meaning. It asks that all assume that the behaviour of others, however unreasonable it seems, is performed for a reason which has some kind of meaning for the actor. Seldom will the actor feel that the behaviour is irrational or ill-intentioned and the respect comes from assuming that neither is present. Simply, this means that the Framework implies a no-blame approach, either for the pupil or the teacher. Both are assumed to be acting without malice- not because malice could not exist, but because ascribing blame is least likely lead to resolution or an 'optimal environment'.

The 'Optimal Environment': Aiming for Quality

W. Edwards Deming (1982), possibly the most famous of the 'management gurus' and the progenitor of Total Quality Management, proposed on the basis of his work as a statistician that 94% of the variation in quality of industrial output is due to process leaving only 6% related to variation between individual workers' endogenous characteristics.

While the degree of commonality between industrial and educational settings may be open to debate, there is reason to believe that the sources of variation in school and pupil performance may show similar ratios. If accepted, it would suggest that it is inefficient to spend time on trying to change teachers and other school workers on an individual basis. In fact Deming specifically rules out appraisal as a desirable management tool.

The assumption is that if the procedures and processes in schools empower individuals (managers, teachers and pupils) the aims of the school (enhanced pupil progress and better behaviour) are more likely to be met. Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) see this empowerment as the purpose of management. The argument is simple: if the processes of the school are right the teachers and students are most likely to feel empowered. If they feel empowered they are more likely to see themselves as part of the school (rather than just as employees or students) and are more likely to contribute. This emphasis on getting the processes right (rather than concentrating on outcomes) is an essential part of the literature on Total Quality Management in schools: indeed, in West-Burnham's (1997, p. 34-6) diagnostic review of total quality in schools not one item refers to individual appraisal.

This is reflected in the prime focus of activity in a Framework intervention, the environmental plan. Almost all aspects of the Behavioural Environment Checklist (Framework for Intervention, Appendix B: Ali et al, 1996) refer to processes or environmental factors surrounding them. The activity of assessing these processes and looking for improving their quality is a direct reflection of the principles behind TQM and is reflected in its associated school improvement literature (Burridge and Ribbins, 1994; Greenwood and Gaunt, 1994).

The second strand from TQM that strikes a chord with the current project is that of 'supplier-customer relationships'. In TQM these are taken to be any relationship where someone is doing something for somebody else, they are not necessarily connected with payment. All organisations have many such relationships both within and externally (Oakland, 1989). What makes them relationships rather than simple acts of purchase and supply is that TQM demands that the question of what is quality is determined by the customer. But this is not a simple 'the customer is always right' policy. In amongst the questions that Oakland (1989) demands that suppliers should ask of their customers is 'What are their true requirements ?' (p.5). This is a question that can seldom be answered by simply asking them- and almost never in the complex world of supplying services to teachers (and children) to help them to deal with behaviour difficulties.

Miller's work (1996) moves the agenda toward this approach. He looked at examples where educational psychologists had been involved in cases of behaviour difficulties through working with teachers on behavioural programmes. He specifically looked for those where there had been successful outcomes in order to talk to the teachers about their experiences. The results gave eye-opening information for psychologists- certainly there was a significant gap between what was assumed to be happening and how the teachers construed the situation. As the 'customers' the teachers felt that what had been done had quality, but to be successful they had had to step

out of their cultural structures in order to take on procedures and actions grounded in different belief structures (those of the staff group). The inevitable consequence was that the teachers didn't generalise their successful practice from these cases and said nothing about it in the staffroom. Thus the quality of what was offered was temporary and did not meet the customers' needs in the long term.

The approach of the Framework to this problem is straightforward. In the first instance (at level 1), the teacher (or other) who has the concern is the customer. The success of the supplier (be it the Behaviour Coordinator or an outside support agent) is measured by how far the plan meets the needs of the person with the concern. To ensure that the person with the concern stays central to this process they are designated the 'lead person' at level 1 and so the specification for the support they need is made by them. However, as there are other customer-supplier relationships involved the lead person is not free to make any specification he or she wishes. The concerned person is in turn a supplier to pupils. In the end, the quality of any Framework for Intervention plan will depend on its ability to meet the needs of the pupils.

Therefore, as part of the process, there will be a need to ensure that the concerned teacher is aware of his/her responsibility as a supplier to the pupils. But the critical point for the support worker from outside is that what is supplied to the teacher is not a quality product (in TQM terms) unless the teacher with whom they are working feels that it is. It is not sufficient to say that what is being supplied is right for the child: at best this only fulfils part of the job specification. Therefore, for many 'teacher customers' this implies a change in culture and belief- the eliciting of which is the most difficult and expert part of the process.

The psychology of Framework interactions and effects on school culture

The relationships at every level within the process are subtle. The crucial relationships at level 1 are between the lead teacher (who is usually the person with the original concern) and those supporting him or her in selecting, producing and carrying out the environmental plan. Deming was increasingly aware of the psychological quality of such relationships (Deming, 1994) and within the Framework for Intervention programme it is this aspect which has been subject to the most significant discussion and development amongst those implementing the procedures in schools. The result of this has been an emphasis on encouraging, as far as possible, the ownership of the level 1 plans by the lead teacher and limiting to the absolute minimum the donation of external solutions (Framework for Intervention Project, 1998). This approach strongly reflects influences such as Client-Centred Counselling (Rogers, 1951), Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1995) and Transactional Analysis (Berne, 1964. Harris, 1974) and is best placed to avoid the problems associated with cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) in that it maximises the element of choice to act. It should be noted that this 'empowerment' approach is in strict contrast to 'labelling' foundations of relationships (Goffman, 1961, Becker, 1963) and avoids the dangers of prejudice and bias inherent in adopting a deficit model (Baratz and Baratz, 1970, Edwards and Hargreaves, 1976) by avoiding concentration on the limitations of the concerned teacher. Such modelling in the relationship between teacher and support worker may well have the effect of reducing the extent of pathologising pupil behaviour by teachers: teacher attitudes in this respect are a central focus of the evaluation of the project.

Working on problems in the Framework environment is very different to the methods that many managers of schools are used to. We have already seen signs that there is work to do in changing personal constructs, not just in the case of class teachers but also those of some senior teachers. (Once again an observation reflected in

Quality Development literature: see for example Barth, 1990 pp.68-72.) This leads our Framework psychologists towards extensive consideration of not just 'the behaviour problem' but the construction that the class teacher and his or her colleagues put on the 'proper' routes towards solutions and how such constructions might block reasonable strategies. For many EPs this is an area about which many have had concerns, but which they have seldom felt that they have permission to address. The present authors noted at a meeting of specialist EPs a very marked and consistent view that one of the main weaknesses of their current practice in dealing with behaviour problems was the extent to which they felt forced to collude with questionable constructs and resulting bad practice.

So a change in teacher culture (and consequently in school culture) is clearly a desirable objective. To understand how to effect this it may be helpful to look at a parallel problem. Amongst a welter of alternative explanations in the sociological literature, anti-social behaviour amongst the young has been ascribed to sub-cultural adaptive behaviour to a society which has effective ceilings on achievement and reward for a significant minority (Merton, 1949, Cloward and Ohlin, 1961). The essence of the argument is that delinquency in the sub-culture is perceived as the only route to power and achievement for some young people in a society which places value on such attributes resulting from success in legitimate activities. The gaining of power through delinquent activities thus validates the 'delinquent' and reduces the sense of anomie (roughly, 'powerlessness': Durkheim, 1951). Thus to the delinquent, his or her activity is not 'anti-social' - it is reflecting social order given the limitations of his or her circumstances. Therefore to use this perspective to seek solutions would mean tackling either the social order, or the delinquent's sense of powerlessness, or both.

In an echo of this Miller (1996) describes how the professional isolation of teachers in their classrooms along with the stress on the value of 'keeping control' leads to pathologising of pupil behaviour with assertion of causal factors to be within-child or parental. In an echo of delinquent sub-cultures the purpose of this behaviour is adaptive- in this case to defend the necessary homeostasis of the institution. This comparison appears to be compounded by the apparent sense of powerlessness if the causes of behaviour are believed to be so far away from teachers' control. But teachers are expected to be in control and to have the means of dealing with this externally created unwanted behaviour. In Miller's study they indeed indicated that they attributed responsibility for solutions largely to themselves. But while the attribution of cause remains largely external the range of acceptable solutions will tend to be limited, and largely to remedial within-child interventions (though in the past there have been some notable and laudable exceptions to this- for example Pask, 1988). The danger of dissonance is great if changes in the environment are suggested, as this could easily imply that the teacher had some responsibility for the cause in the first place (Miller, 1996, p. 204). Modern schools, being in the main 'role cultures' in Handy's (1985) typography of organisational cultures, reinforce this view by effectively limiting the role of the teacher in dealing with behaviour ('my job is to teach', 'we can no longer meet his needs' etc.)

Framework for Intervention seeks to avoid this problem by creating a new system which, unlike De Shazer's temporary 'therapeutic suprasystem' (quoted by Miller, 1996) is intended to be permanent and to become 'the way we do things'. The concentration on process rather than persons (both adults and children) reduces the attribution of blame. At the same time it breaks into the school and staffroom culture by providing a different model for analysis and action based on empowerment 'from the bottom up'. There is some early impressionistic evidence from teachers' comments in the current project that change of culture is indeed happening: "We are talking about dealing with behaviour much more openly now", whilst in the 1997 Trial

schools' teachers were more inclined to believe that "teacher behaviour markedly affects the conduct of children in school" at the end of the trial than at the beginning, a period of only five months (Daniels, 1997).

Potential improvements on current approaches.

We have argued elsewhere (Daniels and Williams, 2000) that current approaches tend towards exclusion as the main response to difficult behaviour, be it local (removal of pupil from classroom to another part of the school), fixed term or permanent. This is primarily a direct response to the system in which professionals are required to work rather than a reflection of what they would wish to happen. (At present it can be argued that this system is being reinforced through developments such as 45 day exclusions and the requirement for provision of full time education for excluded pupils.) To break out of this 'knot' the environment for dealing with behaviour itself requires change in a fundamental sense.

There is an interesting parallel with the field of special needs here. In discussing the creation of inclusive education Dyson and Millward (1997) assert that:

- Meaningful integration is essentially a process of transforming mainstream schools rather than reforming special education
- It is a process of 'transformation' because it depends crucially on paradigmatic shifts on the part of educators and policy-makers
- It depends on assimilating questions of special needs provision into questions about teaching and learning for all students

Dyson and Millward (1997 pp 66-67)

We would argue that the same type of 'transformation' is needed to address the concerns raised by children with behavioural difficulties. The 'paradigmatic shifts' are needed to get away from some commonly held assumptions e.g.:

- There will always be some children for whom mainstream schools cannot meet their behavioural/emotional needs
- Behaviour problems which have their origins in circumstances outside the school are not susceptible to change within school
- Behaviour problems can only be solved by getting solutions from experts
- Behaviour problems are a personal, not management issue

We have seen how circumstances make such views psychologically necessary to protect the homoeostasis of the school (Miller 1996) and the consonance of the individual teacher. The views have some external substance, but most EPs would recognise them as fundamental barriers to effective working with schools. They are in essence

the foundation of an essentially reactive system as they focus attention on the external causation and the limited chance of being able to deal with behaviour problems in the school. It is small wonder that by the time the 'outside expert' is called in (usually these days at Stage 3 of the Code of Practice) the implicit need of the customer (the school) is removal. The chances of finding solutions to problems within the school are very limited.

As Lister and Cameron (1986) have argued in the field of learning difficulties the key is to divert the attention from 'problem children' (though we may well use their changing behaviour as a focus of evaluation) to the whole school environment.

The Framework for Intervention seeks to remove the need for negative views by reducing the level of teacher anxiety involved with behavioural problems through concentration on the environment, early intervention, empowerment and removal of blame from the process. It is an attempt to change school culture from 'the bottom up'. We are looking to establish a quality process incorporating quality management principles.

For educational psychologists this represents a real challenge. If the Framework became the vehicle for support to schools the demands of customers would change. This may well pose problems as Aubrey (1988) states:

"..... the formal education and training of psychologists in this country does not offer the necessary breadth in terms of formal knowledge, nor the range of practical behavioural and interpersonal skills, to equip an organisational school psychologist" Aubrey, 1988 p.181

It will come as no surprise that a process which aims at radical change in procedures and thinking within schools implies a similar degree of change in the role of the educational psychologist.

Conclusion

In many respects the Framework can be seen as a progression from the thinking of many influences rather than a revolution. What is different is the use of a structured approach (closely modelled on the Code of Practice) which seeks to enforce at the earliest stage the type of activity (organisational/environmental) that many practitioners have been advocating for years.

The test will be whether it leads to minimal numbers of exclusions and statements for 'Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties' through dealing with the issue of inclusion of children exhibiting behaviour difficulties at source. The evidence so far is highly encouraging. If objective and independent evaluation (built into the current project) shows that the optimism is well-placed, the present authors would advocate that the approach is accorded the same advisory status as is accorded the Code of Practice for the Assessment and Identification of Special Educational Needs. If this happens, the fundamental environmental changes which the current situation so clearly needs could be put in train.

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