Aims and Research Questions

Aims

The specific focus of my inquiry was to develop an intervention around collaborative play to help Year 9 ESBD pupils form more appropriate attachments. I hoped to facilitate the ability in pupils to, 'thoughtfully consider their actions rather than be primarily concerned with instinct and gut reaction' (Malchiodi and Crenshaw, 2013, 7). I also hoped to see a development in pupils' expressive language skills. This would greatly enrich pupils lives as this thoughtful consideration could enhance their ability to learn and achieve their potential.

Research Questions

1. How does structured collaborative play promote the development of appropriate attachments in pupils with Emotional, Social and Behavioural Difficulties?
2. What effect does structured play and conversations have on the development of expressive language?
3. To what extent are staff with the ESBD environment aware of attachment theory and its impact on social and academic development?

Key Literature

'Children with attachment difficulties could so easily be misunderstood as bad or mad' (Bomber, 2007, 43).

'The earliest years of a child's life are critical for later development' (Golding, 2007, 13)

'Long term effects of separations could be disastrous, leading to neurosis or delinquency in children and adolescents' (Holmes, 2014, 48)

Normal   Extreme Neglect

Intervention and Methodology

Intervention

The intervention constructed on the principles of Action Research.
6 active intervention weeks were completed with a reflective week at the half way point. During each week of the intervention pupils took part in 3 group collaborative play session based around board games in which appropriate attachment behaviour and language was modelled. Pupils also participated in a 1:1 play session each week to explore behaviours in an alternative context.

Methodology

In order to achieve the project objectives several research methods were employed, including:
- Focussed observations of intervention sessions within the focus group.
- Semi-structured interviews with focus group participants using picture stimulus.
- Semi-structured questionnaires with colleagues
- Inductive and deductive coding
- Analysis of oracy assessment data

Findings

Research Question 1

Fluctuating levels of progress through the invention including an implementation dip between weeks 3 and 4. Overall progress in maintaining appropriate behaviour through play was made.

Research Question 2

All focus group pupils either stayed the same or improved their oracy levels by at least half a level against both National Curriculum and Literacy and Numeracy Framework benchmarks.

Research Question 3

8% of colleagues felt they had a strong understanding of attachment theory. It was considered to be more relevant to social development than academic learning.

Developing appropriate attachments in pupils with Emotional, Social and Behaviour Difficulties through structured collaborative play within a special school setting.

References

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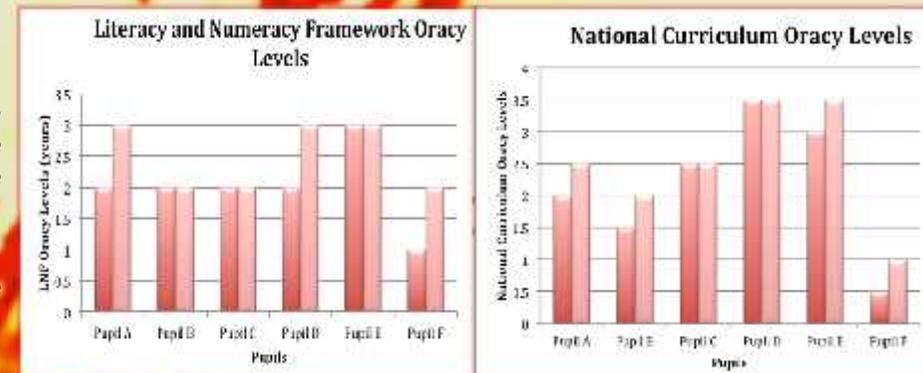
Impact

Learners: Learners able to play and work more cooperatively with decreased instances of inappropriate displays of attachment. Increase in expressive language ability improving access to the curriculum.

Teachers: Increased awareness of attachment theory and its impact on academic development through multiple CPD sessions.

Content: Under consideration by senior leadership team for a wider school role out during morning pastoral time to further measure impact.

Wider context: Meeting with local authority Educational Psychologist to explore wider applications.