Containing the containers: Work Discussion Group supervision for teachers – a psychodynamic approach

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Aims: *Unlike many other professionals working with children and adolescents, teachers are not routinely provided with a safe space in which to reflect on the experiences and emotions they are left with in their day-to-day work. This paper explores how Work Discussion Groups (WDGs) based on psychodynamic theory might be used with teachers as a method of professional supervision.*

Rationale: *The paper introduces some of the psychodynamic principles that underpin WDGs, in particular, Klein's theory of Projective Identification and Bion's concepts of Basic Assumption Mentality and Containment. We illustrate these theoretical principles with clinical examples from WDGs we have run in schools.*

Findings: *WDGs are suggested as an emotionally containing space in which teachers might be supported in thinking about the paranoid and persecutory feelings resulting from their work in complex human organisations and their experiences of challenging interactions with colleagues and the children and young people they teach.*

Limitations: *The paper considers some of the practical and theoretical challenges in the application of psychodynamic theory in educational psychology practice.*

Conclusions: *Psychodynamic WDGs are proposed as a useful framework for supporting teachers to reflect on the emotional aspects of teaching and learning.*

Keywords: *psychodynamic theory; work discussion groups; supervision; teacher well-being.*

Introduction

FOR PSYCHOLOGISTS, psychotherapists and social workers, the containing space of supervision is an essential if not mandatory professional requirement. For many clinicians, supervision is the safe space in which we try to make sense of the often unmanageable and overwhelming experiences and emotions we are left with in our day-to-day professional practice. It has long been noted that, as a profession, teachers are largely alone in not receiving a boundaried space in order to reflect on their professional practice. This is curious when one considers that it has long been then case that teaching extends beyond the formal curriculum to social and emotional aspects of learning (Salzberger-Wittenberg et al., 1983).

This anomaly was noted as early as the Elton Report (1989) when it was suggested that it would be good practice to provide teachers with space to reflect on their own classroom management. Since the Elton Report, attempts have been made to achieve this recommendation. Stringer et al. (1992) note that the Local Education Authority Training Grants Scheme (LEATGS, 1990–1991) provided funding for the development of staff support groups. Disappointingly, these recommendations did not translate to schools as was widely as it was initially hoped. According to Salzberger-Wittenberg et al. (1983) one possible reason for this lies in the very nature of educational settings. She argues that:

> 'In the rush of activities within an educational institution, there is little time and space to reflect on the interactions that take place.' (pp.ix)

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Do teachers really need supervision?

The impact of the absence of professional supervision or support for teachers is widely recognised as a major factor in a range of negative work-related and psychological outcomes (Elton, 1989; Milstein & Golaszwski, 1985). Steel (2001, p.95) argues that 'staff stress is undoubtedly a contributory factor in how pupils' behaviour is viewed and managed.' Indeed, it seems probable that teachers' stress levels are a factor in the management of pupils' challenging behaviour. Jackson (2002) argues that:

> 'Teachers frequently experience a whole range of unpleasant feelings towards pupils… Intense feeling of resentment can also be felt towards the head teacher or members of the senior management team, especially if teachers feel their suffering is not being taken seriously enough or that they are not being sufficiently supported.' (pp.141)

According to Jackson, where a space is not available in which these intense and often unpleasant feelings can be thought about, teachers may experience feelings of failure and guilt. Where these feelings of vulnerability become too overwhelming they may result in either emotional fragility or omnipotent behaviour. Left unprocessed, Jackson suggests that teachers may then 'react' to rather than 'reflect' on subsequent challenges they face in their interactions pupils, colleagues or the organisation. According to Jackson (2002) a space to process these emotions is entirely necessary:

> 'It is this space and process that can offer relief and protection from the persecutory states of mind that result from the relentless challenges of their pupils.' (pp.142)

Ultimately, an emotionally demanding and stressful job coupled with a lack of reflective space can lead to teachers losing touch with the very ideals that may have initially motivated their entry to the profession. On this point Salzberger-Wittenberg et al. (1983) note that:

> 'The result is that quite a few teachers find little satisfaction in their work. Some lose their self-respect or give up teaching altogether.' (pp.x)

It appears that failure to support teachers' emotional needs may also impact at a wider level (Galloway & Goodwin, 1987; Hanko, 1985). Obholzer (1994, p.208) comments that 'we need to have work-related systems to contain the anxieties arising from the work itself, as well as out of the process of change'. It seems an evident conclusion that where teachers feel unsupported and uncontained they will be less likely to engage in their work effectively.

Hanko (1985) argues that failure to support teachers who are required to manage pupils presenting challenging behaviour has a wider impact:

> '…not only as increasing such children's needs but as hindering the all-round effectiveness of teachers and school.' (pp.146)

Miller (1996) argues that policies developed in schools and particularly issues surround behaviour will have little impact unless the school system has a culture of support. Miller goes on to advocate peer support networking for teachers, noting that this would have a specific purpose in,

> '…allowing teachers to share success, ventilate emotions and decrease their sense of isolation.' (pp. 211)

Educational Psychologist facilitated Staff Support Groups

Educational Psychologists (EPs) have developed several models of teacher support groups that appear to apply the pioneering work of Gerda Hanko (1985, 1995, 1999, 2002). Hanko's Staff Support Groups presented a solution-focused framework for working with the problems experienced by teachers in their work with children with special educational needs. Hanko describes a three step structure to group consultation with teachers:

1. Case presentation, including solutions already attempted;

2. Gathering of additional information, where group member's questions are the basis of supplementing information regarding the case;
3. Joint exploration of the issue based on this new information.

Hanko's model recognised the inherent dilemma between the teachers' immediate and long-term developmental needs, encouraging case discussion that,

> '…took account of the teachers' needs for immediate support as well as their need for information which would highlight issues and evoke the skills necessary to put insights and principles into practice beyond the immediate difficulty. The solutions which they attempted were their own and arose from their active involvement in the joint exploration of workable alternatives.' (pp. 41)

Hanko's work led to a flurry of EP activity in schools (e.g. Annan & Moore, 2012; Babinski & Rogers, 1998; Bozic & Carter, 2002; Burns & Hulusi, 2005; Critchley & Gibbs, 2012; Farouk, 2004; Gersch & Rawkins, 1987; Jackson, 2002, 2008; Kearney & Turner, 1989; Mintz, 2007; Monsen & Graham, 2002; Stringer et al., 1992; Tempest et al., 1987). Although proposing subtle variations on a theme, these models were based on the premise that the facilitator would hold the group to a sequential process by which the presenting problem might be thought about and possible solutions generated. These models are broadly based within the solution-focussed framework articulated by key authors such as de Shazer (1988) and Ajmal and Rhodes (1995). According to Burns and Hulusi (2005) the fundamental principles of solution focussed group work include an opening sequence of problem-free talk, moving to the identification and focus on exceptions to the presenting concern. The models then work to identify the personal resources the problem owner might use to realise a preferred future.

It has been suggested (e.g. Stringer et al., 1995) that, given the often explicit and systematic framework used for solution finding, the facilitation of these groups could be taught to the teachers themselves in order that they might then facilitate groups in the future without the need of an external consultant. A notable exception to this belief was presented by Farouk (2004). This was unsurprising when one considers that Farouk's model placed an expectation on the consultant to manage not only the task process but also the psychodynamic elements of the group process. Given this psychodynamic focus on group dynamics, psychological training was required for the facilitation of the groups. Indeed, Farouk's model sits more readily with Work Discussion Groups than Staff Support Groups.

Psychodynamic Work Discussion Groups: Attending to the group process

Work Discussion Groups (WDGs) are markedly different from teacher support groups. The focus of the consultants' work in WDGs is to facilitate the group's reflection on the psychodynamic aspects of the group process rather than solely the search for a solution. In these groups, the consultant attends to the parallel process or reflective process; that is, 'the here and now as a mirror on the here and then' (Searles, 1955). Attending to the parallel process, the consultant takes up a,

> '…listening position on the boundary between conscious and unconscious meaning and work simultaneously with problems at both levels.' (Halton, 1994, pp.12).

For the consultant, the main questions to be asked are: What is the primary task of this group and what might be happening within the group to obfuscate this primary task?

Rustin and Rustin (2005) describes the model of WDG used at the Tavistock Clinic in child psychotherapy, where detailed observations of infants are presented in turn within a group of psychotherapists. These observations are used as the basis for the presenter to raise an issue of particular interest or concern with the intention of sharpening the perceptions of the group

and to promote better understanding of the interactions between the child and others. Rustin (ibid.) describes further how work discussion groups have been used as a basis for experiential learning regarding the nature of group processes. In such experiential groups, no 'issue' is brought to the group as a focus for discussion; moreover, the processes at work within the group are the focus for study. The use of experiential groups differs from WDGs insofar that WDGs offer a clear focus on teachers' work with children.

Application of Work Discussion Groups outside of the clinic

WDGs have a longstanding history in child psychotherapy and can be seen in other settings as early as Balint (1957) with groups of doctors and Harris (1968) with school staff. More recently Jackson (2002, 2008a, 2008b) detailed the use of the WDG model in contexts other than psychotherapy, notably within social work systems and schools. Jackson (2008b) provides a description of the use of WDGs in educational settings, noting how they can be used as a means of promoting understanding of the emotional factors that influence teaching and learning. In such groups, teachers are encouraged to bring case examples of their work with children as the basis for group discussion, with relationships being the main focus of the discussion with the purpose of promoting communication and emotional containment.

Psychodynamic theory relevant to Work Discussion Groups

We will now examine Klein's theory of Projective Identification (Klein, 1975) and Bion's concept of Containment (Bion, 1961) and how these theories may offer some understanding into the function that supervision may bring through the application of WDGs. Examples from our professional practice will be used to illustrate theory.

A theoretical-clinical concept: Projective identification – 'mute dialogues'

Projective identification forms part of Klein's Object Relations Theory (Klein, 1975). Klein noted that objects were internalised images of persons, often parents or primary care givers. Projective identification is the process by which aspects of the self (or internal objects) are split off and attributed to an external object or person. Where an infant is faced with internal conflicts, it may expel the painful feelings or parts of the self by splitting these off and projecting them onto the mother through the process of projective identification. Projected aspects may be felt as being positive or negative. Most importantly, projective identification can act as a defence against the anxious feelings that the infant might find overwhelming. Klein (1975) notes,

> '[Projective identification] helps the ego to overcome anxiety by ridding it of danger and badness. Introjection of the good object is also used by the ego as a defense against anxiety… The processes of splitting off parts of the self and projecting them into objects are thus of vital importance for normal development as well as for abnormal object-relation. The effect of introjections of the good object, first of all the mother's breast, is a precondition for normal development… It comes to form a focal point in the ego and makes for cohesiveness of the ego… I suggest for these processes the term 'projective identification'.' (pp.6–9)

The direct relevance of Klein's work to group processes arises from her work on the relationship between mother and child and the role of projective identification (Klein, 1946). The relationship between mother and child, the initial dyad and effectively the first grouping that the child experiences, influences the manner in which the child later relates to other people and to groups. This is especially important with regard to the means by which the infant manages

internal conflicts (e.g. the presence but then absence of food in the form of the mother's breast and any other inconsistencies in comfort or warmth). This communication between mother and child is that which takes place before language and continues to exert influence through projective processes after language has developed. This method of communication is succinctly captured by the poet Wordsworth in *The Prelude; Book Second*, when he writes:

> '…a babe-in-arms I held mute dialogues with my mother's heart.' (Line: 268)

The relationship between the mother and the child and the scope for positive introjections of good objects forms the basis for the child to manage its feelings of anxiety. This role is echoed in later childhood and adulthood, where the process of projective identification occurs with other caregivers and significant adults, such as teachers and colleagues through the process of 'containment'.

Attending to projective identification in Work Discussion Groups

In practice, projective identification occurs where the recipient is given the unbearable, intolerable and unnameable feelings and finds themselves 'identifying' with what is projected, in a sense losing their own or an objective point of view. In this case, the EP as the facilitator may find themselves nudged and cajoled into a role they have not consciously adopted. Essentially one is given the experience of the other, be that the experience of the individual, the group, the sub-system or the institution as a whole.

The following example is taken from a WDG in a special secondary school for young people with autism. The group ran weekly for a term and was open to any member of the school staff who wished to think about examples of their work with children as a basis for group discussion. Participants were aware that the purpose of the group was to reflect on the emotional factors that influence teaching and learning. The group met in a quiet, designated space and was scheduled for the same day and time each week. After each session, the facilitator engaged in supervision to reflect on their experience of the group. In addition to supervision, the facilitator made field notes immediately after the session (Hollway & Jefferson, 2013). The combination of supervision and field notes provided the space in which to process and make sense of the difficult material that the facilitator was required to contain in the group.

The following exemplar from the facilitator's field notes illustrates how the intolerable feelings within the staff team and organisation itself are mirrored in the parallel process in the WDG.

> *Early in the life of the WDG it became very clear that it was extremely difficult for group members to talk about specific students. Instead, they wished to talk anonymously, generally and impersonally. An early and vivid example of this paranoid re-enactment was the suggestion by one group member that the only way to enable the discussion of pupils was to have an 'anonymous suggestion box' in which teachers could offer professional opinions about the cases brought to the group. This strategy was met with enthusiasm by the group.*
>
> *This suggestion left me, in my role as facilitator, feeling uncomfortable, as if my work in the group was being critically scrutinised by the 'absent senior management team'. More disturbingly, I was left feeling an unnamed weight of responsibility, invested in me by the group as the 'expert' to identify solutions. In the group I found myself overwhelmingly nudged, cajoled, prompted and primed to collude with this suggestion despite experiencing an uncanny feeling of not being quite myself. I wondered whether my feelings of discomfort were indicative of an organisational shadow being cast in the group – notably, a projection.*
>
> ***Working with the parallel process***
>
> *Taking up this position I became curious whether my discomfort was in fact a communication from the group that was yet unformulated consciously and verbally.*

Naming the projection prompted curiosity in the group as to why they had not been able to name the pupils they were bringing to the group. The group began to talk more openly about their feelings of 'surveillance culture' in the school and their fears of persecution by managers. It was evident from the discussions in the group that there was in this organisation (as in many others) a culture of 'looking over one's shoulder' and being very careful about exposing one's professional practice. This generic organisational phenomenon was re-enacted in the work group.

The naming of this projection appeared to be sensed as a containing experience by most of the group and became the focus of the discussion for the session. In subsequent sessions, the group were more able to 'name' the young people they were concerned about. Nevertheless, whilst the presenting problem was articulated, names tended to be mumbled or avoided, requiring prompting from me for teachers to actually name the young person. The naming of this projection clearly did resonate with some group members. However, for other members the naming of the projection actually increased their secrecy and they became less forthcoming, as if talking in these terms was perhaps seditious.

Containment – Bion (1961)

A theoretical basis for the function of supervision through WDGs is further underpinned by Bion's theory of 'Containment' (see Bion, 1961). In explaining containment, Bion suggested that this process originates in the initial mother-child relationship, where ideally the mother provides the infant with emotional security in a manner that allows the infant to manage its own feelings of anxiety and consequently creates conditions in which the infant can develop psychically and engage in learning.

Bion (1967) argues that infants are filled with an innate sense of insecurity from being unable to process some of the more difficult emotions that they inevitably experience from life events that are beyond their control and which they see as obstacles that need to be expelled. Bion argues that this process of transformation through the mother/child relationship is an essential part of containment, where negative events are processed into digestible experiences and opportunities for learning. Bion suggests that through the process of containment the child is allowed to develop its capacity to manage difficult experiences through accessing support from its mother. This process is essential to learning.

Bion posited further (1985) in his paper 'Container and Contained' that in order for the mother to be able to provide containment, she herself must feel a sense of emotional security (which might, for example, be provided by a partner or by extended family). This concept seems immediately transferable to many human relationships and to teaching and learning in particular. Bion (1961) argued that individuals' relationships within groups are also influenced by the containment process; where individuals lack containment they may become susceptible to processes that prevent them from connecting with the primary task that is set for the group. In classrooms, this primary task is learning, a process borne out of a relationship between student and teacher. Where teachers do not feel adequately contained in their work they will not be able to provide containment to their students, who therefore in turn will not be able to engage effectively in learning. The role of the EP in the practice of WDGs is to provide a containing function to those teachers participating in the group.

Bion's work on group processes

One of Bion's major theories, recorded in 'Experience in Groups' (1961), asserted that when any group of people meet to do something (e.g. a 'primary task') there are actually two configurations of mental activity presented simultaneously. There is the work group (referred to as having 'work group' mentality), which within the context of school classrooms, for example, can be seen when the children are 'on task'. Such

groups, however, are 'constantly perturbed by influences that come from other group mental phenomena' (ibid, pp.129), which Bion described as 'basic assumption mentality'. Bion argued therefore that the functioning of groups falls into two main categories:

1. Work groups that 'get the job done';
2. and, 'basic assumption groups', which act out fantasies and mental conflicts and prevent work group mentality from occurring.

Bion (1961) observed further that there are three types of 'basic assumption groups', which take over from work group mentality when the group is unable to manage internal mental conflicts (notably when it feels 'uncontained'):

- *'Basic assumption dependency'* relates to an over-reliance or integration with the group to the extent that this dependency prevents thinking within the group and negates the possibility of work taking place;
- *'Basic assumption – fight-flight'* relates to Klein's paranoid-schizoid position, that is, that if the functioning of the group creates unresolved mental conflicts that the group will either fight the primary task or flee from the task by rejecting it;
- *'Basic assumption pairing'* takes place when the group collectively thinks that the functioning of the group is borne by the development of a pairing of two group members that might find a new purpose for the group, albeit different from the group's primary task.

Bion (1961) argued that basic assumption mentality operates in groups as means of avoiding the pain of reality, albeit in a dysfunctional manner which avoids thinking about the primary task. To adopt work group mentality requires the understanding and acceptance of internal conflicts and where this is not possible, basic assumption mentality develops as a defence against anxiety. Such functioning can occur when groups feel under stress. Menzies-Lyth (1960) provides a clear example of this in her description of nurses in their work with people with serious illness, where amongst themselves they would refer to 'the liver in bed 10' rather than address patients by name. In so doing, nurses adopted defences against the potential for social anxiety when faced with painful feelings arising from their work. In schools, occupational stress may lead to basic assumption mentality as a means of defence against anxiety. Such occupational stress can clearly be caused by emotionally challenging work.

The example below is taken from the facilitator's field notes. It illustrates how a group can operate a basic assumption mentality when faced with overwhelming and catastrophic feelings of loss. In this case, despite the facilitator's best efforts, thinking in the group was seemingly impossible.

> *In this group and in this context, I noticed that teachers found it almost impossible to think or communicate their feelings in the group. It was not uncommon for the group to experience extremely long periods of silence, only to punctuated by banal, empty and repetitive comments by group members.*
>
> *One such punctuation of a deathly silence followed an announcement that a teaching colleague had died that week. This news was presented as a 'problem to solve' in terms of how to manage the impact of the death of their colleague on the subsequently deteriorating behaviour of the young people.*
>
> *The group spoke in concrete terms regarding the immediate actions that had been taken by the staff team. It appeared that a staff briefing session had been called at which there had been a decision taken by the staff team not to explain the death of their colleague to the pupils. Instead, it was agreed that if raised by a pupil, staff should offer a simple explanation that he was no longer at the school. The group spoke about how, on returning to their classrooms, they had removed all pictures of the teacher from the notice boards.*

Working with the parallel process

I became curious with the group regarding the sense they made of this approach. My curiosity was met with hostility. The group suggested that the approach adopted was reasonable and a 'matter of fact approach' that was in interests of the pupils. One group member wondered whether the young people would have even noticed the absence of their colleague. This point was met with general agreement by the group as if justifying the strategy that had been adopted.

Listening to the group, I experienced a profound inability to think and a deadening of thought and emotions in myself. The repetitive nature of the material presented by the group was experienced by me as similar to a ritual that was impervious to change. I felt cajoled into accepting the logic of their strategy. I also experienced feelings of anger and despair at what appeared to me to be a cold and unfeeling response to the death of a close colleague. I wondered what sense the group made of their response to this catastrophic event that had seemingly been stepped over and not thought about.

I wondered aloud within the group about whether the tragic loss of a longstanding and valued colleague could not be thought about in terms of its impact on either themselves or the impact on the young people. I suggested that it felt as though the group's response was to eject any thought of their colleague from their mind rather than to think about the profound loss they, the pupils and the organisation had experienced. The group in response suggested that their response might be indicative of a general reaction to grief. It seemed to me that the group remained unable or unwilling to reflect on their own feelings of grief. Instead, the group were quick to offer strategies to deflect my attempts to discuss how they felt.

Conclusion

The application of supervisory support groups with teachers has been proposed by psychologists and child and adolescent psychotherapists for decades. It is surprising, therefore, that supervision has not been more commonly applied in schools. Our joint experience suggests that this is in part owing to a defensive resistance within the school system and uneasiness within the profession to embrace psychodynamic theory.

Resistance amongst teachers to supervision would seem multivariate. Teachers note, for example, that there is no time for supervision. There are resourcing constraints. There is no space. Ostensibly, this would seem curious and rather incongruent given the extent of the emotional challenges that are presented by the work of teachers. When considered as an example of basic assumption mentality, this resistance is nevertheless understandable. Indeed, this resistance can be understood as a deep-rooted need for the institution to defend itself against the anxiety that arises from its work (Obholtzer, 1994). Through exploration of the complex issues of relationships in schools, supervision can present a risk in exposing the more painful dynamics of the institution's functioning, something that may be too painful for many educational managers to think about. Such anxiety has to be contained if a supervisory relationship is to be fruitful. This need appears to stress the importance of a psychodynamic understanding of group relations for supervisors and while courses in consultation skills are common in psychological training, it is our experience that training in supervisory skills are not commonly addressed during initial psychological training.

It is widely accepted by psychologists that psychodynamic thinking represents more than just thinking and application in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness (Bion, 1952, 1961; Obholzer et al., 2000; Salzberger-Wittenberg, 2002; Solomon & Nashat, 2010). The supervision of teachers is clearly a further area for the application of psychodynamic thinking. Salzberger-Wittenberg (2002) argues that the insights gained through psychodynamic thinking have relevance in many other disciplines, such as education, medical and social work.

The application of psychodynamic thinking cannot, however, be imported wholesale. Salzberger-Wittenberg argues further that,

> 'It is the task of each profession to work out in which way they can most usefully and appropriately apply the insights gained from the psychoanalytic study of the personality.' (pp.xii)

Salzberger-Wittenberg (ibid.) notes with a word of caution that applying thinking from one discipline to another requires either sound knowledge in both or 'co-operation' between disciplines. For EPs training at the Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, this co-operation is possible. Indeed, it is an underlying philosophy of the Tavistock Clinic that psychodynamic concepts are usefully applied outside individual psychotherapy.

Based on our joint experience, we would strongly recommend that EPs running WDGs based on psychodynamic theory will themselves require bespoke supervision. In many ways, supervision in this instance should seek to mirror the WDG in that the provision of a containing space will allow the EP to explore their experience of the group. As with the WDG, supervision should also attend to the parallel process, with the supervisor attending to 'here and now experiences as a mirror on the EPs here and then experiences of the WDG'. Inevitably, supervisors will need to have some additional training in and experience of the application of psychodynamic theory.

Educational psychology and psychodynamic theory: Uneasy bedfellows?

In general, it is our experience that the application of psychodynamic thinking in EP practice is not currently widespread. We would suggest that there are many historical, political, professional and cultural reasons for this, which are beyond a full consideration within the remit of this paper. However, we would nevertheless offer Pelligrini's (2010) concise reflections on why this might be:

> 'The position of EP as scientist practitioner may be adopted as a social defence against the messiness and complexity of casework. The strict adherence to problem-solving analysis models and to 'evidence-based' practice may be defences against using one's feelings to understand another person's experience… this requires sensitivity to one's emotional experience as well as the emotional states of others. On the other hand, following a 'scientific' problem-solving checklist to deal with the mess of real-life problems can provide powerful armour against unconscious intrusion.' (p.258)

Despite not being mainstream within the profession, some EPs and particularly those receiving training at the Tavistock Clinic have sought to integrate psychodynamic thinking into their school consultation practice (Greenway, 2005; Pelligrini, 2010). The multidisciplinary nature of the Tavistock EP training course and subsequent practice recognise the utility of applied psychodynamic theory in EP work. This is effectively summarised by Osborne (1994) who argues that,

> 'As psychologists we are […] dealing with real people, with feeling, hopes and ambitions, rational and irrational fears, the individual's need to defend against painful feelings and cope with past experiences and relationships. Individuals are not, in fact, parts of machines.' (p.38)

Osborne notes further,

> 'We need all the help we can find to strengthen our understanding of the (apparently) irrational.' (pp.37–38)

We would suggest that the application of psychodynamic thinking through supervision groups for teachers can provide a useful framework to support teachers make sense of the 'apparently irrational' experiences that they frequently face in their day-to-day work.

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