Rational and Winnicottian Wellbeing 'at work'

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Abstract

The idea that that the wellbeing of employees should be of concern to managers and employers has long been considered within management thought. From the paternal ideals of the 19th century social reformers to the current purveyors of happiness in the workplace, the need to mediate the demands of constantly increasing pressure on productivity has generated many organisational effects. This paper highlights the conflicts triggered when management seeks to assist teachers to become more efficient and productive as strategic human resources, rather than professional teachers and educators involved in the production of the next generation of citizens.

Following a year-long study into staff relationships within a school[1] this paper develops a line of analysis using the concept of the 'good enough mother' (Winnicott, 1971) to highlight a site of conflict. It is suggested that a lack of understanding by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of the school toward the support sought by the teachers involved in 'front line' work with pupils is part of this conflict situation. The focus by the SLT on wellbeing techniques to assist the teachers toward a more rational 'bottom line' set of outcomes has the effect of increasing the distance of understanding between teachers and managers.

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[1] The majority of this time was spent with the teachers. Interviews and storytelling sessions were carried out with 25% of the staff. Teaching staff as well as teaching assistants and all of the senior leadership team (SLT) took part. The quotes drawn from in this paper best reflect the opinions and feelings of the majority of those that took part and the general culture observed in the school over the 12 month period. Ethical approval for this study was received from the supporting university.

Introduction

Ever since Elton Mayo's Hawthorne experiments (Mayo, 1949) employee relations and concerns with wellbeing have been tied to managerial desires to improve bottom line performance, see O'Connor (1999). Managerial concerns with performance, productivity and efficiency are common across many aspects of the management and organizational literatures (Cartwright et al, 2011; Collins and Cartwright, 2012; Cartwright and Cooper, 2014; Cooper et al, 2009). Approaches from within positive psychology by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) and Luthans (2002a&b) have also been important in directing organizational and managerial approaches towards issues of wellbeing. Luthans (2002a) noted the importance of studying 'positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities' suggesting that they 'can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace' (Luthans, 2002a: 59). This attitude to wellbeing has increased in prominence amongst private and public sector organizations and schools are no exception. Indeed, schools more generally have taken a more efficiency based approach in recent times, as Ball 2003 notes 'the key elements of the education reform 'package' – are embedded in three interrelated policy technologies; the market, managerialism and performativity' (215).

Northern School is an 'outstanding'[2] school/sixth form college for 11- 18 year olds in the UK. The school approaches staff wellbeing as one important tool by which to improve the pupils' exam and coursework grades, and the school's performance as measured by Ofsted/various published school league tables. Unfortunately, the teachers who took part in our research tend to view this rational approach to teaching and wellbeing negatively, while

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[2] 'Outstanding' is an official category used by Ofsted. Ofsted operates in England and is the "Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills." They "inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people, and services providing education and skills for learners of all ages." (Gov.uk, 2016)

the SLT view this as an attempt to maintain or improve the performance (bottom line) of the school.

Many teachers did appreciate the value of working for a highly performing school, but these same teachers nevertheless experienced a sense of dissonance between the approach the SLT felt necessary for the school to be successful (the bottom line), and their concern for the wellbeing of themselves and their pupils, (the front line).

The paper begins with a brief outline of the methods undertaken. Second, we note the contribution of the organizational wellbeing literature to which we hope to contribute. Third, we present the educational context for Northern school, and the findings associated with the ethnography. Fourth, we discuss the findings through a Winnicottian lens that emphasises the central notions of the good enough mother and merging, highlighting their relevance for the teachers we observed and interviewed. This leads to an extension of the work of Winnicott and his under-utilised (at least in organization and management research) *object relations theory* into an understanding of *Winnicottian Wellbeing*[3].

A note on method

This paper is based on ethnographic research completed in a school for 11- 18 year olds in Northern England that took part over 12-months as part of PhD research. The PhD concentrated on the working experiences of teachers and senior management. For the purposes of this paper however we focus on the outcome of investigations into working experiences for the teachers in relationship to demands from the educational context, passed

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[3] *Winnicottian wellbeing* as we conceive of it, comprises good relationships with others (adult merging – a reduced form of merging as Winnicott saw it in infancy, and a sense of autonomy that mirrors the omnipotence Winnicott believed infants should experience. See the *Winnicottian Wellbeing* section for a fuller explanation).

on to them, as they see it, by the SLT. We focus on the extent to which these experiences

highlighted difficulties in accessing *Winnicottian Wellbeing*[4]. Participants were approached

through employing purposive, snowball and criterion sampling (Coyne, 1997; Russell and

Gregory, 2003). The ethnography involved 25 semi-structured interviews with teachers,

taking part in daily activities, and observing life in the school. This provided the necessary

context to comprehend the working lives of the teachers in greater depth. We also carried out

storytelling interviews focussed on life course narratives with the same respondents.

All data was transcribed and a theme search was then conducted, leaving room for

unexpected themes (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). The themes identified were then

further explored and coded using content analysis (Creswell, 1998; Graneheim and Lundman,

2004, pp.106; Silverman and Seale, 1997). Many participants expressed feelings that

suggested that they used past experiences and relationships with others (particularly from

childhood) to inform their feelings on current events both at work and at home. A

Winnicottian psychoanalytic analysis was then added to offer a deeper and different

engagement with the participant observation/interview material.

In this study the researchers did not set out to explore the histories of participants'

lives using a psychotherapeutic approach or practice, as the researchers are not practicing

psychoanalysts. However, the interview material was analysed from a Winnicottian

psychoanalytic perspective because themes arose that suggested that this would be fruitful

and in the knowledge that Winnicott's ideas are applicable to the adults psyche ((Aitken and

Herman 1997; Winnicott, 1986; Winnicott, 1969; Winnicott, 1971).

The emerging themes from the data often focusing on autonomy and the need to be

emotionally or professionally close to others, encouraged us to examine the presence of

[4] Members of the SLT also demonstrated desires for *Winnicottian Wellbeing* that were very similar in nature to the desires of the teachers. For the purposes of this paper however we focus on the experiences of teachers as the job demands for teachers and members of the SLT different significantly with members of the SLT much more likely to feel that their needs had been met.

potential links between early childhood experiences and certain aspects of the teachers' experiences of their adult working lives. Indeed, crucially, teachers expressed desires at work that mirrored common experiences with Winnicott's good enough mother, and therefore go on to inform what we see as *Winnicottian Wellbeing*. Therefore, we suggest that if one accepts the experiences of the good enough mother then it follows that these fundamental experiences are likely to go on to influence in which spaces we may have the best chance of experiencing *Winnicottian Wellbeing*, in this particular case at work.

Literature Review: *Organizational wellbeing*

Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), and Luthans (2002) have directed much organizational and managerial attention towards wellbeing. In addition, Luthans (2002a) has also emphasized the importance of studying "positively oriented human resource strengths and psychological capacities" and has suggested that they "can be measured, developed, and effectively managed for performance improvement in today's workplace" (Luthans, 2002a: 59). Indeed, programmes and techniques to address issues of well-being and its impact on 'bottom line' concerns have been widely documented (Cederstrom and Spicer, 2014). The strength of argument that now surrounds the impact of wellbeing on performance, has even led the World Economic Forum to host a Buddist Monk to promote mindfulness at work (Davies, 2015). However, there are implicit assumptions in definitions of wellbeing that it involves the creation of 'an environment to promote a state of contentment which allows an employee to flourish and achieve their full potential for the benefit of themselves and their organisation' (CIPD, 2007, 4). Although, the definition of wellbeing is itself contested (Dodge et al, 2012) there are frequent attempts to link wellbeing with the end goals of organizations as seen in the CIPDs understanding (CIPD, 2007). The common argument for the introduction of wellbeing practices tends to be based on a rational approach to wellbeing

(whatever this is taken to be) as focused upon maintaining or improving an organizations bottom line considerations. It is our contention that the potential effects of positioning wellbeing in this way needs to be given more rigorous attention. Therefore, we focus here not on any 'correct' definition of wellbeing, but rather on a critique of the more general rational approaches to wellbeing.

Wellbeing work has considered affective wellbeing (Warr, 1987; Van Katwyk et al, 2000), cognitive wellbeing, but this work has a tendency to individualise approaches to wellbeing by focusing upon particular states or traits that individuals demonstrate. There has been work detailing the importance of social interactions and intrapersonal relationships at work within the wellbeing literature (Taylor, 2011). There has also been work discussing the results of failing social defences from a psychoanalytic perspective (Gabriel, 2012; Hinshelwood and Skogstad, 2002; Hirschhorn, 1988; Neumann and Hirschhorn, 1999). In addition, research acknowledging the detrimental effects of conflict (Sonnentag et al; 2013), the importance of good line managers (Mellor and Webster, 2013) and the importance of a strategic approach to employee concerns (Brewster and Larson, 2000) has been important. Stress models have long held social support to be crucial for wellbeing (Karasek and Theorell, 1990). However, despite good work having been conducted on the importance of social support, management, and employee concerns at work in the literature, there has been no specific work into how subtly differing managerial and employee approaches to work tasks could hamper social relationships and hence wellbeing between groups. Ultimately, there has been limited attention given to the potential for conflict between front line and bottom line priorities and its potential effects on managerial constructions of wellbeing and employee expectations of wellbeing.

Of course there have been many critical engagements with the wellbeing literature. Carl Cederstrom and Andre Spicer have drawn attention in their book 'The Wellness

Syndrome' (2015) to the ways in which a culture of wellness can, paradoxically; make individuals feel worse about themselves. They have also noted how the individualisation of wellbeing has drawn attention away from social responsibilities. William Davies in his book, 'The Happiness Industry' (2014) has highlighted the lack of consideration for the socio-political in considerations of wellbeing and in positive psychology. Moreover, the underpinning positive psychology that supports the wellbeing agenda has again been critiqued.

Fineman (2006) has noted that what counts as 'positive' will vary. In other words, what is positive in one situation at work may cause significant problems in another. Fineman also noted the difficulties inherent in trying to separate positive and negative feelings, arguing that they are intimately connected (Fineman, 2006). Indeed, wellbeing itself has also been defined as "more than an avoidance of becoming physically sick. It represents a broader bio-psycho-social construct that includes physical, mental and social health." (CIPD, 2007d: 4). What is surprising then is the focus on highlighting the responsibility that an individual holds for their own wellbeing, it is emphasised in CIPD documents (CIPD, 2007), in research, and in the policies implemented in organizations (Pomaki et al, 2012), even despite frequent acknowledgements that the social environment is important. The CIPD notes that, 'Your organisation can create and support an environment where employees can be healthier through providing information and access to schemes to improve well-being. However, well-being is ultimately an individual's responsibility requiring education and a degree of self-awareness.' (CIPD, 2007, p.5). As Ehrenreich 2009 suggests 'the flip side of positivity is thus a harsh insistence on personal responsibility' (8). In emphasising what the individual themselves can do to improve their wellbeing through a variety of wellbeing policies, we may be overlooking the many temporal, social and relational antecedents of wellbeing and 'un'wellness, antecedents we hope to start to elucidate here.

Findings: exploring the problematic efforts of the SLT to support the wellbeing of front line staff.

In this section, we firstly consider the educational context in which the school is placed. Secondly, we highlight the bottom line priorities of the SLT which derives from the educational context. Thirdly, we present the concerns of the teachers on the front line. Fourthly, we suggest that there has been a prioritisation of the bottom line over the front line that has led to a degradation of the relationship between the SLT and the teachers in the school and has affected perceptions of teacher wellbeing. The SLT and the teachers approach the children differently, with the SLT focussing on the results that allow them to perform well in the educational context we discussed (in this case the bottom line), and the teachers focussing on the broader social benefits they can bring to the children within their everyday engagement – the front line.

As Yiannis Gabriel reminds us, leaders 'will always be judged by their followers against their ability to demonstrate that they care' (Gabriel, 2015:317). The main focus of responsibility for both the teachers and the SLT are the children, however, the essence of what this responsibility should entail is somewhat contested between the two groups.

Educational context

Northern school is a successful school; we are not reporting here a case of an ultimately dysfunctional organization, quite the reverse. However, in looking in more detail at the inner workings of this successful school it is possible to highlight some of the sacrifices that are being made to achieve objective measures of success for Ofsted and various school league tables. We demonstrate that the majority of the teachers at the school feel that it does not offer them autonomy and a productive relationship with the SLT.

Schools in England have been subject to change over the past three decades (Travers and Cooper, 1996). In this paper however we concentrate upon those changes since 2010 that have had the greatest impact upon Northern school, a school considered 'Outstanding' by Ofsted[5]. The changes to the school arguably began with the UK governments 2010 White Paper 'The Importance of Teaching' (DofE, 2010) which set out a new way of measuring the progress of pupils from Key Stage 2 [6] to Key Stage 4[7]. The number of subjects that schools must be accountable for was increased making the progress of children easier to track and highlighting both successful and under performing schools more clearly. Additionally, the 2013 'Framework for School Inspection' from Ofsted also stated that academies and maintained schools judged overall as 'outstanding' at their last Section Five Inspection [8] (Ofsted, 2013), would be exempt from future inspection. 'Outstanding' status therefore was and still is of great value.

Northern School gained Academy status in 2011. Academy schools essentially run as businesses, arguably therefore, the focus for the school became increasingly concerned with productivity and rationality as well as with the care of the children as future economic units. Academy schools are also given freedom from the curriculum (Gov.uk, 2017). However, this freedom is often considered to be illusory "Ofsted are likely to judge us on it" (Bassett et al., 2012, pp.28). If freedom from the National Curriculum is "illusory" and at the same time there is an increasing number of methods for measuring the success of schools, then it is perhaps unsurprising that Principals' such as the Principal of Northern School feel a need to increase their own range of methods of monitoring teachers. Attempts to standardise teaching practices have increased in order to maintain and enhance successful results in relation to pupil grades/progress/the leagues tables.

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[5] Office for standards in Education, Children's service and skills – they 'inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people' (Ofsted, 2017) in England.

[6] Key Stage Two is a stage of the English education system that applies to children between the ages of 7 and 11.

[7] Key Stage Four is a stage of the English education system that applies to children between the ages of 14-16.

[8] A Section Five Inspection – A routine inspection of English schools for 11-18 year olds

Northern Academy (and indeed many other schools) have been, and are still going through a process of change that is effectively forcing a devolution of the monitoring of teachers from Ofsted, local authorities, and the government more generally, to the school SLT itself. Where schools are shown to be 'outstanding' they are increasingly allowed to monitor themselves and are subject to Ofsted inspection less frequently. Terry Birchmore has noted the application of neo liberalism in the service sectors, commenting that the New Managerialism agenda has several characteristics including 'the enforcement of a powerful management body that overrides professional Skills and knowledge' and 'the standardisation of work processes through the use of targets and performance management techniques' (Birchmore, 2014, 39). These kinds of practices, as will become evident, were commonplace in the school. In addition, performance related pay is now in operation in education (Department for Education, 2013). Unfortunately, this effort to improve the objective and externally viewed success of the school also appears to have contributed to problematic relations between the SLT and the teachers. As Ball notes, 'teachers as ethical subjects, find their values challenged or displaced by the terrors of performativity' (Ball, 2003, 216). This in turn has mirrored the negative reaction of the teaching unions to many of these measures. In a letter to Michael Gove in 2013 Christine Blower the General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers (NUT), and Chris Keates the General Secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), suggested that "Morale across the profession has reached dangerously low levels" (Blower and Keates, 2013).

Bottom line priorities

Teachers, are seen as a vital resource for the school, and ultimately the children, that need to be effectively managed, with the Principal noting how more than half of the school's budget

is taken up with teachers' wages. This approach to the management of staff is arguably typical of rational approaches to wellbeing more generally where the focus tends to be on the employee as a resource to be managed. Indeed, Keenoy (1990) noted this when he suggested that the focus on employees is connected to their productivity as a resource. This is demonstrated by the approach the SLT took, they introduced a health insurance policy and a teacher coaching system to care for and develop their 'biggest resource'. In order to encourage parents to send their children to the school and for the school to remain successful it does need to maintain certain standards. The principal in reflecting on the importance of exam results in the school notes:

'Some people are not able to adjust to a more rigorous approach shall we say a more results focused approach' She further stated that:

'This is not a cottage industry we are a business, we are managing an £8,000,000 budget here, we have to run like a business - I thought this is a school this is a professional environment, this is not a family and anyway the family is the most dysfunctional unit in society'

In these quotes what becomes clear is the rational, results focused, professional view of the school that the Principal holds, and her distaste for familial culture. This attitude followed through in the approach implemented. There is an 'excellent' lesson plan and learning walks, inspired by a desire to improve the bottom line. This does speak to a rational concern with the wellbeing of staff, as they are designed to improve performance and efficiency. The 'excellent lesson plan' was introduced to standardise the format of lessons and to ensure quality. 'Learning Walks' entail a senior member of staff dropping into lessons in order to observe practice and can also be linked to the drive of the school to perform well nationally.

Unfortunately, the professional view of the school as an £8,000,000 business, dislike of the notion of family, and push on 'best practice' for the purposes of results, contrasts sharply with what most of the teachers we observed and interviewed feel that the school should be.

Front line priorities

The teachers, although concerned with the educational performance of the children and proud of the performance of the school, appeared to be much more focussed on the enrichment of the children more broadly (the front line) and concerned that the pressure for results was in some way degrading this. Many teachers felt that teaching should not be all about results:

'There's a lot more to life - we do too much of this testing in this country and blatantly it's just too much push on academia and I think it's just thousands and thousands and thousands of kids that get forgotten about.'

This is representative of the comments of the majority of teachers interviewed and observed. The primary responsibility for both teachers and the SLT were the children themselves. Nevertheless, it is their common responsibility for the children that ends up dividing them. Although over the course of the research it became clear that the teachers did display a pride in working for an 'outstanding' school, the responsibilities of the school to the children was nevertheless highly contested between these two groups. The teachers position the management as not operating in the interests of the children or the teachers, while the management position the teachers as a potential threat to the children if they do not conform

to the schools' results focused approached. This mutual 'othering' (Sibley, 1995) hinging on the differing priorities of each group, greatly hinders relationships in the school.

The difference in focus for the teachers and the SLT is related to the SLT construction of the school as a business. This is not to say of course that the Principal and other members of the SLT are not well intentioned, or that their priorities are not important and justified, but only that their priorities lie ultimately with the rational objective measurements of the children and by association the teachers. The social relations between teachers and members of the SLT however, appear to be more problematic as a result.

As several teachers noted 'The SLT don't seem to care'

Indeed, the rational approach to staff management arising out of a concern for professionalism and improved results corresponds to a lack of autonomy and poor relationships with management. This arises not only out of any concerns staff may have for themselves, but also out of concern they have for their pupils regarding how they may be affected by this results focused approach, as we will now discuss.

The conflict and reduced teacher wellbeing

The teachers have a desire for a familial environment and this stems at least in part from the prior management of the school who had provided a family atmosphere according to longstanding staff.

'I used to socialise with teachers, it was the Northern School family, but there has been an erosion of the social side'.

The recollections of this prior management approach that we encountered were unanimously positive as representing a time when teachers and pupils experienced a more holistic caring and learning experience. This was a space in which teachers felt that they could support the broader development of pupils as citizens rather than focusing so strongly on academic results. The teachers often said that they felt a reduction in their professional autonomy due to feeling undermined by constant monitoring. The teachers felt that the 'excellent lesson plan' was not appropriate in all circumstances and that it hampered their ability to be autonomous, innovative and creative where this may have been of benefit to the children.

As 'front line' staff teachers are responsible for engaging with the children on a much more personal and emotional level than members of the SLT, and as such these children come to mean much more to them than the results they achieve or their career prospects;

'You know it's always nice when you know you teach kids that are having a tough time and then those kids wanna come and see you, and they wanna talk to you, and they've singled you out as somebody that they trust'

The issue of what was 'best' for the pupils was at the heart of the conflict between teachers and the SLT and it is this conflict that we suggest came to undermine the teachers own wellbeing. As teachers' abilities to act with their desired level of autonomy as creative professionals in the classroom was restricted, wellbeing suffered:

'I am told how to teach, I have to use the (school name) "Excellent Lesson" - in a way I have to bend forward myself to put inside things that (sharp intake of breath) maybe they are not that convenient in that lesson'

The Principals view of what is good for the pupils, standardised teaching and learning approaches for 'best practice', was markedly different to the autonomy and creativity that the teachers thought to be vital for engagement with the pupils. The new approach taken by the Principal and the SLT has eroded the relationship between teachers and the SLT to the extent that it was stated that:

'there isn't a relationship as such'

This is representative of the feelings of the majority of the teachers we spoke with and observed, who expressed concerns that the familial nature of the school is being eroded and that the SLT do not understand or appreciate their concerns. However, despite the desire of teaching staff to work within a familial environment where attention is paid to them personally and they have a sense of autonomy that allows them to attend to what they view as their responsibilities towards the children, the Principal and the SLT more generally construct what they see as a largely professional environment.

The evidence here highlights a lack of good relations with the SLT for a majority of teachers at Northern School and the damage this can cause. The SLT's approach attends to the bottom line, to overall results rather than to the specific individual needs of children or teachers. Although the school is measured on its children's results, and hence this is in many respects sensible, this does appear to undermine the autonomy of teachers and their relationship with both the pupils and the SLT. In other words, the majority of teachers

interviewed felt that the SLT existed to improve them as resources to facilitate their professional development, and not to help them or their pupils as individuals. This is something that directly impacts on the teachers own experiences of wellbeing. SLT policies and initiatives were distrusted. In addition, those instigating them were felt to be 'inauthentic'.

The teacher coaching, 'excellent' lesson plan, and learning walks are felt by teachers to inhibit the creative process and increase the pressure to perform. Many teachers stated that they feel 'under pressure', 'distrusted' and/or 'micro-managed';

'I dislike the fact that some of my colleagues feel quite under pressure from um perhaps from SLT or from like the monitoring, observation, coaching system, programmes'

Teachers found the SLT approach unsettling as it came into conflict with their front line priorities and therefore began to undermine their own sense of wellbeing. Indeed, most teachers felt that; 'there has been a considerable loss of professional autonomy'. The approach and policies while attempting to provide what teachers need to facilitate successful results for the children and the school; are often seen to devalue their professional experience (particularly in the case of older teachers) and therefore their autonomy in the classroom. The principal discusses being: 'at the cutting edge'. However, the teaching at this school, in the eyes of many of its teachers, has become both very prescriptive and less based upon family values than it used to be, something that the teachers had considered to be very important. Teaching in the view of the SLT has been professionalised, but for most teachers it has been experienced as both de-personalised and de-professionalised, it has reduced their autonomy, the attention they are paid as individuals, and challenged their concern with the broader

enrichment of pupils beyond exam results, school league tables, and Ofsted reports. The majority of the teachers interviewed did not appear to have good relationships with the SLT and suggested in various ways that their personal senses of wellbeing had been threatened by the SLT approach. Indeed, one teacher echoes the feelings of the majority of the teachers interviewed in 'othering' the SLT because of their approach to education. The SLT are de-humanised as 'corporate suits', and teachers express a common concern that the SLT in their focus on results, limit the ability of the teachers to be creative and in doing so also limit their ability to encourage pupil creativity and enjoyment.

In this section, we have highlighted that both groups had conflicting priorities for the pupils learning experiences (front line vs bottom line). The teachers felt that the SLT construct them as resources, and employ approaches that negate their autonomy for the facilitation of exam results. Teachers feel that this approach does not attend to the learning environment that they see as vital for the broader development of pupils as citizens. This reduces the extent to which good relationships can be maintained between the teachers and the SLT. Indeed, a large majority of the teachers at Northern school began to 'other' the SLT and their policies. Ultimately we suggest that this has contributed to a significant breakdown in relations between teachers and the SLT and that this has had a harmful effect on teacher wellbeing. We now introduce a new conceptual framework, *Winnicottian Wellbeing*, to further explore how reducing the space given to front line priorities at the school impacts upon teacher wellbeing.

Discussion: bringing in a different conceptual framework for wellbeing
Having outlined our initial findings, we now describe Winnicott's conception of the good

enough mother and extend this into a notion of *Winnicottian Wellbeing*. We think through what experiences with the good enough mother may mean for adult life in relation to the experiences teachers had at the school, and their problematic relationships with the SLT. In addition, we consider the difficulties inherent in developing a space in which feelings of safety, creativity and autonomy can occur within the rational approach to wellbeing taken by the school.

Winnicott: The good enough mother

For Winnicott the good enough mother is able to take care of the baby physically and emotionally so that the baby, at least at first, has all their needs met quickly. A facilitative environment involves 'adaptation, starting almost at 100 per cent and turning in graduated doses towards de-adaptation according to the new developments in the infant which are part of the gradual change towards independence' (Winnicott, 1965: 239). Following a period of merging or co-existence, the infant needs to experience frustration to allow it to start to view itself as a separate unit, as a unique individual able to interact with the world. Crucially there was no clear ego-boundary before the frustration began, and so no awareness of the self as an isolate (Winnicott, 1965). When the infant starts to experience frustration its comprehension of external reality and its own ego boundaries grow (Winnicott, 1965). It is the combination of providing the infant with both experiences of omnipotence and merging with the mother (or primary carer) that constitutes an experience with the good enough mother.

During this period the transitional object or '[t]he intermediate area of experiencing to which inner reality and external life both contribute' (Winnicott, 1971: 2) becomes crucial, it enables the infant to accept reality and 'play' with it in what is known as a holding or facilitative environment. Activities such as playing with a teddy, not wanting it to be washed Etc. are the first interactions an infant has with the external world where they attempt to

claim some power or control. Infants are creative in a potential space or third area between 'the subjective object and the object objectively perceived' (Winnicott 1971, 135). Winnicott argued that this creativity and playing 'makes the individual feel that life is worth living' (Winnicott 1971: 87). This results in the infant being 'able to use the object, and to feel as if this object is a subjective object, and created by the baby' (Winnicott, 1971: 150). Despite the object already being in existence, the infant nevertheless creates it and Winnicott tells us that, 'The paradox has to be accepted not resolved' (Winnicott, 1986: 30).

These initial experiences enable introjection to become a means of supporting the true-self throughout life. For Winnicott the true-self was the incommunicable part of the self (Winnicott, 1986: 66). Winnicott suggested that in an ego- supportive environment the true-self could be supported by the use of the transitional object in order to elicit power over external reality.

Why Winnicottian Wellbeing

It is not possible in later childhood or adulthood to achieve the same intensity of omnipotence or merging that is experienced in the early part of a child's life. However, we suggest that there is good evidence that the participants in our study suffered from an inability to re-create experiences with the good enough mother to a lesser extent in their working lives– we have called this recreation *Winnicottian Wellbeing*. Indeed, as Aitken and Herman have highlighted the "ideas and values encountered and adopted by children during play, are likely to be the same ideas and values which come to guide their lives" (Aitken and Herman, 1997: 83). In this sense then our early introjections (during the formation of and after an ego boundary develops) and projections in an ego-supportive environment have a lasting part to play in influencing the introjection of adult merging and autonomy. *Winnicottian Wellbeing* then entails an adult searching for some autonomy as the teachers do, and searching for a

sense of being merged with others although obviously not to the same extent as in infancy, again as the teachers do. Adult merging is more along the lines of a lowering of boundaries to feel close to particular people (Sibley, 1995) (the drawing in of others for support) as is common in adulthood. We would argue that this kind of wellbeing is difficult to achieve through a HR policy. It happens when you are genuinely cared for as a human being not a productive resource. In other words, here we see people treated as an end in themselves not as a means to an end.

In looking for adult merging and autonomy in their daily lives, individuals are able to be creative/playful and enjoy and positively embrace some of the events that occur. Winnicott equally makes it clear that autonomy only occurs within the boundaries of possibility and that the facilitation of the true self occurs in small incidences rather than throughout life. By refusing to slavishly follow a recipe, by playing with the melody of a song, by using projection and introjection in everyday life individuals increase their scope to live 'creatively' (Winnicott, 1970).

Here Winnicott emphasises his belief that the creativity that we develop in infancy remains important in adulthood. Further he highlights that this creativity, this autonomy cannot be boundless. Individuals can be creative and enjoy life where they find some small element of *Winnicottian Wellbeing* within the framework of competing demands, laws and realities within the setting. However, if experiences of autonomy and adult merging are not found at all, autonomy and productive social relationships are threatened, then an individual may perceive the situation, and anyone thought to be responsible for it, negatively.

Whilst we have known for some time that social relationships and an element of control at work contribute to wellbeing, the emphasis on the maintenance of these relationships has often been placed with individual employees rather than with employers (Cederstrom and Spicer, 2014 and Pomaki et al, 2012). A Winnicottian approach brings something unique as it

highlights a potential reason for our need for good relationships and some control at work that should be common to all those who experienced a good enough mother in infancy. This then pushes the responsibility for the maintenance of relationships from teachers individually and places it on the shoulders of society more broadly, in this case the broader governance of education as represented physically in this case by the SLT. Crucially, a Winnicottian approach also emphasises that approaches to wellbeing taken purely for organizational ends such as productivity, performance or efficiency, are unlikely to be successful where teachers feel that they may be sacrificing too much in regard to their own motivations. As Winnicott notes: 'no statement that concerns the individual as an isolate can touch this central problem of the source of creativity' (Winnicott, 1971, 96). Where management and employees have conflicting priorities no rational attempt at improving wellbeing can succeed. No determination to bring such priorities in line with organizational aims will be accepted where the rationale given relates purely to performance and productivity in the production of pupils as future economic units, rather than to a broader social concern for the good of the children and the profession.

The absence of Winnicottian Wellbeing

The division between the SLT and the teachers discussed in the findings was damaging for their relationships, and seems to be indicative of a reduction in the teachers' access to adult merging if taken from a Winnicottian standpoint. What is perhaps most noteable is how the different conceptions of the responsibilities of the teachers to the children came to directly affect the wellbeing of teachers, highlighting the importance of *Winnicottian Wellbeing*. Our suggestion here is that the teachers' wellbeing is rationally managed by the SLT, ultimately to facilitate their development as resources for the benefit of the results of the children. However, the majority of the teachers themselves then do not appear to be able to access

Winnicottian Wellbeing (comprising professional autonomy and adult merging). *Winnicottian Wellbeing* comes into existence when some attention is given to individual relationships and autonomy, but this has been substituted by a more rational approach that (acting on its own) reduces for teachers both opportunities for adult merging and autonomy.

Aside from one exception, all of those teachers that we observed and interviewed found it difficult to develop what we call *Winnicottian Wellbeing* at the school largely because of an approach that they felt restricted their autonomy and encouraged them to 'other' the SLT. 'Othering' (Sibley, 1995) here refers to teachers erecting strong boundaries between themselves, felt to be working hard for the wellbeing of children, and the SLT, seen by the teachers to be 'mis-guided' in their concern with targets, objective measures of performance and the standardisation of the teaching process. In this way the SLT's approach to staff wellbeing contributes to the 'othering' of the SLT. Therefore, we are suggesting that access to wellbeing and creativity tended to be problematic. A Winnicottian approach helps to investigate both why and how the values that Aitken and Herman (1997) discussed come to influence everyday adult experiences of *Winnicottian Wellbeing* and the lack of it, in this case at work. There have been feminist critiques of Winnicott's work which we do recognise, however we take Wendy Hollway's view on his work that it 'begins to do justice to the enormity of women's transition as they become mothers" (Hollway, 2012: 1).

Conclusion: a new category of wellbeing

In this paper we have noted that Northern school is very successful in terms of its bottom line, the objective success of the school. The school has received 'outstanding' Ofsted reports and performs well both locally and nationally. However, via the development of the work of Donald Winnicott and a year of primary ethnographic research work, we have sought to

illuminate a problem with the schools approach to the management of people and in particular to their privileging of rational wellbeing via policy and practice.

Wellbeing at work is typically viewed as being tied to the development of the human resource, unfortunately however in the case of the school this has led to a general deficit in experiences of *Winnicottian Wellbeing*. We derive our understanding of *Winnicottian Wellbeing* from Winnicott's original concern with the good enough mother in order to further our understanding of the perceived resentment felt towards the SLT by a majority of the teachers within the school.

The paper highlights the need for attention to be paid to early infant experiences that contribute to a desire for access to *Winnicottian Wellbeing* (comprising autonomy and adult merging as adults). However, at Northtern school the SLT and the policies they advocated, were received negatively. As articulated by the teachers the policies did not attend to the particular (front line) concerns of the teachers. They were therefore felt to be 'inauthentic', to undermine autonomy, to limit the extent to which adult merging was possible, and ultimately to impede *Winnicottian Wellbeing*.

As the SLT are concerned with the bottom line they make numerous attempts to professionalise and standardise the teaching of children in order to improve the schools local and national standing. The front line teachers then suggested that the SLT and the policies they introduce are felt to be 'inauthentic' as they are seen as relating to the teachers development as resources they are in other words, rational approaches to wellbeing. Indeed, the SLT often allows (intentionally or unintentionally) the teachers to become aware of their construction of them as a resource to be managed for the enhancement of the schools performance through their language use. As we have demonstrated throughout, there are many problems that arise out of the different ways in which the SLT and the teachers tended to construct their roles, front line vs bottom line. The SLT's attempts to address the wellbeing

of the teachers are largely unsuccessful from the point of view of the teachers. Many of the teachers interviewed felt that there was a fundamental schism between the objectives of the teachers and the SLT. This leads to a reduction in the teachers' experiences of adult merging with the SLT and therefore contributes to blocking access to *Winnicottian Wellbeing* for the teaching team.

Expanding current literature on wellbeing at work

The field of critical organization studies and our understanding of wellbeing policies could be further developed through a closer examination of the perceptions employees have of the motivations that lie behind wellbeing policies. As the teachers from Northern school show, experiencing *Winnicottian Wellbeing* can be difficult within purely rationally motivated wellbeing policies and practices. These wellbeing policies and practices and those that implement them come to represent a restriction of autonomy (an important aspect of *Winnicottian Wellbeing*), and therefore employees do not feel inclined to engage in adult merging. Diverting from the standardized lesson under specific circumstances with the approval of the management could then provide a space for the creative development of employees. In addition, this may encourage the development of a closer bond between employees and managers. This paper also leaves several open questions to be tackled in future work, namely, can teachers be 'good enough' in Winnicottian terms outside of the sphere of *Winnicottian Wellbeing*? How might an absence of *Winnicottian Wellbeing* impact upon the teachers' ability to be 'good enough' for the children, and how might this in turn effect the ability of the children to experience a creative space at school?

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