"Keeping the Children and Community in Mind'':
Attending to discourses of poverty
in the maintained nursery school

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Research commissioned by TACTYC
Association for Professional Development in the Early Years

Focuses on the current and future role of the Maintained Nursery School (MNS) as a hub of Early Years Education and Care (EYEC)

Is concerned with finding out about:

How the MNS sees and positions itself in order to deliver quality provision (*its impact*)

What might be getting in the way of this happening (*the barriers)*

What *is* a Maintained Nursery School?

Many established over 100 years ago in areas of 'deprivation' to provide education and care

Legally constituted as a school with a head teacher (with EYEC specialism), governing body, delegated budget, at least one teacher with qualified teacher status (QTS)

Across England:
1988, N=600
2019, N=392 (sharp decline since 2011)

Research Methodology & Data Collection

Mixed methods study with a particular focus on perspectives and accounts of those within the MNS sector.

Focused on **West Midlands** and the 'South region' of England which included **London** and the **South East** and touched the **South West** to included Oxford.

Involved two stages of data collection
  Stage 1 (Jan to March 2019): Nursery practitioners and leaders were invited to complete an online questionnaire to answer questions related to role, sector improvements, opportunities for professional development, impact and challenges (responses N=55/200 for practitioner surveys; N=60/200 for leaders).

  Stage 2: (April to June 2019): Researchers contacted Maintained Nursery Settings and conduct interviews (within the setting and/or via telephone) with leaders only, following the analysis of Stage 1 data to focus on particular areas of significance that emerged from Stage 1 (N= 14 interviews and a focus group including 7 MNS leaders)

Analysis of Interview Data

THEMES EMERGING:

The MNS – identity and Implications/Impact		The MNS and the child			The MNS and the Family	The MNS and the Community	The MNS under threat	
VALUES		EXPERIENCES			EXPERIENCES	EXPERIENCES	ISSUES	
Identity including the professional as signifier	Implications & impact	All children	ALN (including EAL)	SEN	Including meeting care and welfare needs	Including meeting structural and material issues esp. of poverty	Recognition & Clarity of purpose	Certainty of fiscal security

FOCUS TODAY

Maintained Nursery Schools

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX
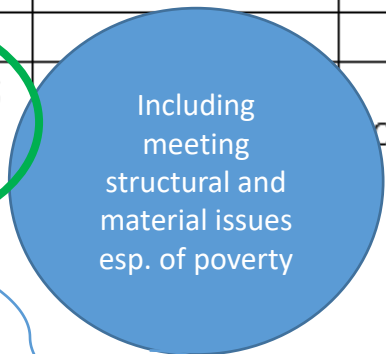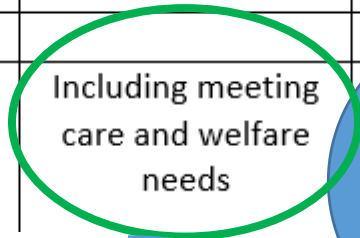
Identification of Disclosures of 'Poverty'

- *Deductive readings* of research literature (see final slide for references)

- *Inductive engagement* with the interview data (listening to, and reading of by two researchers separately and together)

- *Production of dominant discourses/ideas* which allows for:
  - Connections of what is said with wider social and political frameworks
  - Recognition that language and 'the social' inform each other and that power shapes the way in which this works to produce knowledge (Dunne, Pryor & Yates, 2005)

Emergence of Three Inter-Connected Discourses

Welfarist discourse:

Assumes a role for 'public service' and for education as a public service

Makes links with the past and with histories of provision and practice

Stresses continuity

Constructs the MNS child within a wider social, political context and links her to ideas of family, community, state institutions

Social Mobility/Closing The Gap discourse:

Assumes a language of meritocracy

Considers a role for the MNS as allied to social mobility

Future orientated and solution focused

Fast-paced often constant, change

Sees the MNS as coping with the deficit of the market in EYEC provision and 'choice'

Pragmatist discourse/'Just Do It…'

Language of 'needs must….'

Reactive

Crisis aversion

Sense of imperative and call to action

Linkage of the Discourses to Ideas of 'Poverty'

Welfarist discourse:

Uses language that recognises a need for welfare: 'Living in poverty'; 'Economically deprived'; A 'poverty trap'

Suggests 'now' as a time of what was there once but is now gone -

'no [this]; no [that]'; things that have been 'dropped'

Acknowledges low income and the restrictions and stresses this can place on parenting and family life and health

Recognisees intergenerational patterns and 'knowledge' of communities through time

Structural challenges that constrain the ability of the MNS to fully address consequences of 'poverty'

Utilising values of children's rights/entitlements

Social Mobility/Closing The Gap discourse:

Duty to: 'unlock the future' for children in poverty

Requirement to ensure 'narrowing the gap' care/educational experiences

Identifies change – new children, reconfigurations of 'family', coping with the unfamiliar

Language of deficit that needs to be made up: 'lower starting points' for children in poverty; ideas of lack of attachment; early neglect; mental health problems that are inter-familial, 'fight or flight' instincts of children and their families,

Pragmatist discourse/'Just Do It…'

Language of reliability, of consistency, and safety of the MNS

Attention to the whole family, regardless of who they are, and in what situation, in times of crisis

Offering of emergency support/placements

Assumption that MNS staff will react in a crisis to act on behalf of children and their families, above and beyond any defined remit

Activity

- *On your table you have a selection of excerpts from interviews that either directly or tangentially link to ideas of 'poverty'.*

- *Select and discuss an excerpt and consider what you might say about it as a group. You can either use the analytic frame of the 3 discourses that Rebecca and Carla have identified, or come up with your own.*

- *Report back to the wider workshop on your reading of an excerpt. Consider: what is/should be the role of the MNS in the future scape of EYEC   provision?*

Some Literature References

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/782568/RPT_Frontier_Economics_MNS_Report.pdf]

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TACTYC Research: The Impact of Maintained Nursery Schools on Sector Developments

Dissemination of research related to the impact of Maintained Nursery Schools on Sector Developments. A research project between the University of Worcester and the University of Sussex funded by TACTYC.

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