

So in a sort of solving and managing and easing of teaching problems it is work problem focused, most of the problems around special needs matters but they may be of wider concern, they can be of learning or emotional behavioural nature and managing these problems may not always involve referring on to some other authority. It may not even actually involve solving the problem because one of the things that come out of our work is we use terms of tolerance and active engagement and our view is that a lot of the teachers in schools that we have been working with have been pushed beyond their level of tolerance for teaching. They are very stressed, a lot of them, it is as if you were not a terribly good swimmer and you get out of your depth and you panic then you do absolutely anything you can to get back within your depth again you splash around, you make a noise but you do anything.

The other side of that is the notion of actively engaging with problems actually feeling that you are making some progress, you are really involved in it, and our view is that when people have gone beyond their level of tolerance for the job they tend to cease or decrease their level of active engagement which makes the problem worse. They are not doing so much because they are almost retreating from it. Our view is that this kind of support can help people feel more tolerant about the very demanding situations they are working in and can help them to feel more like actively engaging with the problems they are confronted with.

I think it is important to mention as well that this system which is a forum for educated people to share knowledge and skills with each other, it is a resource for supporting teachers for the school, it is a practical embodiment of the whole school commitment and it is an opportunity for real development to take place. It differs significantly from a lot of the consultancy type of work that goes on in schools which are maybe typified by somebody coming to a special needs teacher and saying: «Oh, have you got a second, I really don't know what to do with X or, have you got any work sheets on geography or is there something else I can give this child in maths and it might be a break time when everybody is having a coffee it is a very busy conversation, somebody might shout from the other side of the room, it is your turn to be on duty outside, you have got the head teacher who

is asking you to fill in a form and there is something in the corridor over there, try that, but they never follow it up.

One of the important characteristics of the piece of work that we've been doing is that it embodies a sort of follow up procedure whereby when a teacher comes to a teachers support team they actually have the opportunity of setting a time when they come back to that team and discuss the implications of what happened. So how does it work? In the schools that we've been working with, which are largely schools for children in the age range five to eleven, three people form a team in the school. Those three people are usually the persons who know most about special needs in a school, who understand the special needs system most clearly, somebody who if the support team raises matters of managerial significance can effect change within the scene of management team of the school. So somebody who has maybe the rank of deputy head or senior teacher within the school, somebody who has some significant influence within the management of the school and somebody who understands what is like to be an ordinary classroom teacher who lives with the demands and tries and tribulations of the difficult work that classroom teachers have before them, so those three people usually are elected to form a teacher support team.

They make arrangements within the school, so that's teachers can find a private way of saying they wish to come along to talk about the problem which concerns them. They want to talk to the rest of the staff as a whole group about how they are going to manage and organise a teacher support team working in school. We still feel it is very important significantly in the early days of this work that there is complete confidence in the staff that anything that anybody comes along to talk about is confidential.

We have systems of appraisal and systems of monitoring of teachers in which actually some schools find it very difficult to admit they are having problem because it could have an impact on your own professional career, they could actually be used at a time when maybe the school is losing staff and has to identify people who they think ought to be going. Is therefore important in our mind that this work is entirely