



Pastoral Care in Education: An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rped20>

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Published online: 28 Jul 2009.

To cite this article: Chris Watkins (1985) Does Pastoral Care = Personal and Social Education?, *Pastoral Care in Education: An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development*, 3:3, 179-183, DOI: [10.1080/02643948509470513](https://doi.org/10.1080/02643948509470513)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02643948509470513>

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Does Pastoral Care = Personal and Social Education?

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The question of this title is stimulated by some worrying aspects of educational debate in secondary schools. With increased attention being given to questions of personal and social education (a development which, if not carried out in a narrow utilitarian fashion, is long overdue), there is sometimes a tendency to imply that this is the major focus of pastoral care. Generally there is confusion between these two terms and the activities they describe. For the national association the question could read 'Does NAPCE = NAPSE?'

In this paper I shall not attempt to generate an absolute or prescriptive definition of Pastoral Care, or of Personal and Social Education, but I shall discuss general and strategic issues in the possible relation between them.

First some remarks on pastoral care. We know from research such as that by Best et al (1983) and from various of the critiques, that the operation of pastoral systems in schools *can* become counter-productive and distorted if it becomes marginalized from the main activities and processes of school. This, sometimes termed 'ghettoization', is a possible danger for all helping subsystems. In the face of this potential pitfall, it is increasingly recognized that we must avoid regarding pastoral care as *only* a subsystem (i.e. pastoral care is a whole school issue, the responsibility of all teachers), and that on occasions when we do consider some of its subsystem features it is very important to clarify goals tasks and skills together with the interrelation with other subsystems (this was rarely achieved in the crude examples of debate on the 'pastoral/academic' split).

The broad ambition of pastoral care is to help pupils benefit more extensively from their school experience. But this is surely the broad aim of any school, so is it worth saying? Yes, if we go on to say that the more specific contribution of pastoral care is to bring attention to the personal and interpersonal dimensions, and to give a pupil-centred focus. The reasons for this focus are fundamental – it is impossible to seriously consider any aspects of learning and teaching without considering intra-personal and interpersonal dimensions.

Thus pastoral care develops:

Goals of

1. providing a point of personal continuing contact
2. creating an overview of pupils' progress, achievement and response
3. offering guidance on personal, educational and vocational issues
4. developing a management system to facilitate these goals
5. communicating with all others involved in the enterprise, both those inside and those outside the school.

Given these goals and the rationale on which they are based, it is now perhaps easier to consider the plethora of *tasks* which can be identified in the activity of pastoral care. It may be useful to employ the following broad headings:

- a) *pastoral casework*, where the main focus is an individual pupil, their achievement and development.
- b) *pastoral curriculum*, where the focus is on pupils and the social/personal skills and knowledge they need at school, for study, elsewhere, in later life.

c) *pastoral management*, where the focus is on the school organization, its staff, its curriculum and its relation to others outside the school.

It is clear that for the various pastoral role-holders (form tutor, Head of House/Year etc.) the balance of tasks in their role varies under these headings, and that different skills and resources are required under each. Perhaps it is also the case that our pastoral systems become distorted when there is not an overall effective balance across these headings. Certainly it has been argued that insufficient attention has been given to aspects of pastoral management.

At this point a partial answer to the initial question 'Does pastoral care = personal and social education?' is possible. The answer would be No for that aspect I have labelled 'pastoral casework' since this is not typically included in what is meant by P.S.E. Thus in my view it is dangerous to equate personal care and P.S.E., since to do so runs the risk of ignoring the demanding and skilful aspect of work with individual members of the tutor group. While this aspect is not the totality of the tutor's task, it is recognized as a crucial element in achieving the first three goals of pastoral work: contact, overview, guidance. It requires of the tutor first-stage counselling skills for effective communication and skills of understanding patterns in pupils' progress and response in school. Being central to the range of normal contacts with parents is implied in pastoral casework.

What then of the other headings, pastoral curriculum and pastoral management? Could the question in the title now be framed as 'Does Pastoral Curriculum = Personal and Social Education?'. Here an answer will depend greatly on how each is conceptualized. Before addressing this, let pastoral management not be forgotten: the work of co-ordinating and developing pastoral activity and its relation to others' activity is often undervalued and under-

resourced. Organizing meetings, arranging flow of information between tutors and teachers, planning reports and contact with parents (written, meetings, and hopefully in London 'tutor group associations'), relations with welfare network colleagues, caring for staff – these essential activities too are not generally included in the meaning given to P.S.E.

Pastoral Curriculum is a relatively recent term, coined to indicate the school's learning offer which has a deliberate focus on the learner's learnings about him/herself. A fairly general conceptualization of this (developed from Wall 1974 and Hamblin 1978, 1981) would include the following:

Areas of Pastoral Curriculum

- bodily self
- sexual self
- social self
- vocational self
- moral/political self
- self as a learner
- organizational self

Each of these areas will no doubt stimulate the reader to think of themes to be covered and perhaps specific programmes which address the themes, but at this point there still remain some prior considerations to that of creating syllabus.

The first is *where to locate the pastoral curriculum*. We have a learning offer but have not considered at which times, in what contexts and with which teaching teams it may be most appropriately offered. Thinking on these interrelated decisions is now developing (e.g. Marland 1980, Bulman 1984, CCC 1984) and an overall view would include:

Possible 'locations' for the pastoral curriculum

- tutorial programmes
- specialist guidance lessons
- subject lessons (some, specified/all)
- extra-timetable activities

- residential experience, work experience
- para-curriculum of classroom and school life
- links to community

This view could immediately raise the question 'Is P.S.E. a sub-set of the pastoral curriculum?'. The answer of course depends on how wide a view of P.S.E. is taken, and whether it is more than a cluster of subject lessons. The question will be raised again.

At the time of writing it is probably the case that proponents for each single location exist, but there is also a growing recognition that the pastoral curriculum needs to work towards the appropriate use of all the possible locations in a planned and coordinated way. Examples can be identified in various areas. Sexual self development is sometimes addressed through specific subject lessons (aspects in biology), specialist guidance lessons (with Health Ed. specialist and/or visitors), tutorial programmes (focus on relationships), other subject lessons (views through literature, history), and the paracurriculum (implicit messages conveyed by adults). Self as a learner can receive explicit attention through tutorial programmes (the more person-centred approach) and each subject lesson (where the discipline's methods of handling knowledge are in evidence), and here too the paracurriculum doubtless conveys powerful messages. Development of the social self can claim to be an issue in all locations, and in occasional schools is seen to be addressed in all.

In order to achieve the optimal use of all the possible locations, further consideration needs to be given to the process of deciding 'what goes where'. Certainly there will be no one answer which works for all schools, staff, neighbourhoods, ages of pupils, and so on, but it is fruitful to ask what considerations can we employ to help us make these decisions. Literature on pastoral care rarely illuminates this problem.

The table below merely attempts to gather together and organize some of the possible considerations.

Considerations when distributing the pastoral curriculum across the possible locations.

1) concerning the aims:

- do some aims require person-centred teaching and knowledge?
- do some aims address general issues across the whole curriculum which may not be addressed in the various component parts?
- do some aims focus on general issues emanating from membership of the organization, not from the content of the curriculum?
- do some aims require the teacher to have cross-curricular and/or familial knowledge of the pupil?
- what is the context to which the learning is intended to transfer? - is the learning location sufficiently close to aid transfer?
- are the aims for all pupils?

2) concerning the locations and the teacher teams which are associated:

- do some locations specifically require skills that are not demanded in other locations?
- what are the teaching and learning styles employed in the various locations?
- what knowledge of the pupils do the teachers in the locations have?
- are distinct teacher skills and resources available in each?
- how do pupils perceive the credibility of the locations?

3) concerning the school and its development:

- what is the present degree of curriculum integration?
- how developed is the tutor role, skills, knowledge?

- how developed are the roles, skills in other teams?
- how shared are pastoral aims among teacher teams?
- how are resources (inc. time) presently distributed?
- where is there room for change?
- what is the history of this type of work and of innovations concerning it?

It is possible to arrive at numerous different distributions through the considerations above, but one general point may apply to all: where pastoral casework is at least minimally developed, many aspects of the pastoral curriculum need to be closely linked in order to work from the base of the tutor's knowledge of and relationship with the pupil. This may take place through the tutorial programme. The reason has been given by many authors in the area, including Wall (1974) and McPhail (1983):

educational programmes which aim to promote self knowledge and skills, and to offer personal guidance must be:

- activity based
- person centred
- engaging social and familial processes
- cumulative and continuous

Thus, to return to the question 'Does P.S.E. = a subset of the pastoral curriculum?', the proper answer is probably No because some of the aims of P.S.E. may lie outside what I have described as pastoral curriculum. The more pertinent question is 'How much does P.S.E. overlap with pastoral curriculum?', and here the answer will depend greatly on the degree to which the form tutor is engaged in the activities labelled P.S.E. If P.S.E. is a cluster of subject lessons run by another teacher team, the overlap is obviously less than if P.S.E. is taken to include the tutorial programme or is arranged to engage the form tutor through some other means.

From the points above it follows that pastoral curriculum which is not linked

to pastoral casework is likely to be an impoverished offering. Similarly for P.S.E. Remarks have been made about the engagement of form tutor - what about Head of Year/House? If schools develop P.S.E. in a relatively narrow way (and believe this is pastoral curriculum) without engaging pastoral heads of section, a consequence is likely to be that the role of Head of Year/House will remain subject to the forces which distort and marginalize it into a demanded, event-led crisis management. The role is unlikely to develop in line with the forces of the more proactive, goal-driven pastoral curriculum. (It might also be the case that an isolated P.S.E. team will be questioned, not only because it is unlikely to be effective, but also because the growth of a further specialization on the secondary school timetable could be seen as inappropriate for the comprehensive curriculum).

Many of the above points bring to attention the crucial issue of *coordination*. With numerous locations possible, numerous teacher teams engaged, and a curriculum which needs to extend across all pupils in all years, the potential for both omission and repetition is extreme. Both need to be avoided (the latter if only because of the apocryphal story of fourteen year-olds in a North London school who are supposed to have cried 'Oh no, not sex again!'). But what mechanism could be instituted in present structures? New posts such as 'pastoral curriculum coordinator' which exist in some London schools are unlikely to achieve their task without a forum for coordination issues to be raised and without this forum being well located in the decision-making structure of the school. Perhaps the joint Heads of Pastoral Section/Heads of Department meeting would be suitable (for coordinating but not for designing pastoral curricula)? Other school examples institute a Deputy Head of Year/House to oversee tutorial programmes, but their link to other locations may be under-

developed. Again, there could be a number of possible solutions to this problem in a variety of schools, and the formal system will not provide a complete answer. The general point remains: co-ordination and monitoring are crucial and perhaps more so when some degree of negotiated curriculum with pupils is accepted.

In conclusion, developments in the focus brought to personal and social aspects of school activity are welcome. Certainly I do not conclude that pastoral care = P.S.E., but P.S.E. as I feel it is presently seen may overlap with one level of the pastoral task, that of the pastoral curriculum. At this level detailed thinking, organization and coordination of activity is required to achieve the best for pupils. This process in schools will ideally be reflected in lea's and centrally. *But it is not the complete picture of pastoral care.*

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