





#### FRONT COVER

##### Poppy Grant

Torbay Kindergarten, Northern Auckland

Poppy is 4 years old, the middle child of three sisters. She is outgoing and talkative. Poppy loves to create artistically and she is always imaginative in her play.

Her artwork reflects her imagination and she extends her own work with guidance from her parents and teachers. The piece of art chosen for the cover of *Kairaranga* reflects Poppy's interests and also reflects the current topic of interest that we have been currently looking at. Poppy will bring in books and objects from home to support her interest in mermaids and fairies.

At Torbay Kindergarten we let the children work at their own pace in their creativity and we also provide art activities that guide them into new skills. We encourage the children to be observant and will often repeat an activity while they still show an interest so that they can cement their skills for future use.

At Torbay Kindergarten we celebrate diversity in our children and we strive to weave our curriculum around the children's strengths and interests. We are very inclusive to children with special needs and welcome families from different cultures and enjoy their contributions to our programme.



**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

*Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga*

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# Editorial

Waiho i te toipoto, Kaua i te toiroa!  
*Let us keep close together, not wide apart.*

The art work on the cover of this issue of *Kairaranga* was chosen for its depiction of sea life. It was contributed by Poppy Grant, a 4-year-old at Torbay Kindergarten in seaside Auckland. In preparing this issue of the journal the editorial team were struck by the imagery of the picture, and how well it represented key messages introduced by the authors of the articles. We have chosen (just as in our journal title) to weave the themes from the articles as they relate to the imagery depicted in this artwork.

One of the key purposes of *Kairaranga* is to both explore and to encourage an ecological approach to practice. This approach is evidenced in a number of the articles presented in this issue. These articles are grounded in fieldwork practice either in the form of reviewing the tools of practice (Oxford Reading Pen, book reviews) or in the form of examining the "how" of service delivery (He hui whakatika).

When underwater we see the world through a different lens which can sharpen our perceptions into closer relief. The insight provided by the lens of a SWOT analysis, for instance, can be applied to our work as illustrated in the article on the new multi-ministry response to challenging behaviour.

Fish keep together in shoals and their partnership/ collaborative behaviour goes without saying. In a similar vein, *Kairaranga* articles espouse collaborative behaviour focused toward meeting the needs of learners. The reluctant swimmer can be motivated to brave challenges through the encouragement and modelling of the rest of the group or shoal. Similarly, *Kairaranga* provides models of excellence in biographical format through our interview series with special educators who have made a significant contribution to education in Aotearoa New Zealand (an interview with Ken Ryba), but also in the articles by authors who share how they work collaboratively or in partnership.

Water is a very different medium in which humans can struggle to function, nevertheless with encouragement and assistance people can "ride the waves", stabilise themselves and begin to enjoy the experience over time. So it is with ecological practice.

Finally, mermaid culture is very different from fish or human culture, but the maxim "when in Rome ... it's okay to be a tourist" offered by one of our authors may be relevant to humans experiencing new settings, or even when wanting to visit in a yellow submarine.

Let us encourage you to dive into this edition and immerse yourselves in the ebb and flow of your colleagues' thought!

Noho ora mai, nā  
Jo C, Carol, Graeme, Merrolee, Valerie.

# Kairaranga

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# Innovation and Practicality

## An interview with Dr Ken Ryba

**Dr Jean Annan**

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### INTRODUCING KEN RYBA

Ken Ryba came to New Zealand from Canada in 1978 to teach special education courses and to work on his PhD at Massey University. His PhD was in the area of computer assisted instruction and he set up the first course on the subject ever to be offered at a New Zealand university. Over the years he has written scores of articles on special education and computers in education. He has also carried out research projects and published extensively on a range of subjects in educational psychology and special education. Ken was instrumental in setting up the Master of Education (Special Education) degree at Massey University. Following this, he spent two years at the University of Waikato in the School of Education developing a new Master of Special Education degree. With the establishment of the new Massey University Albany Campus, he was re-appointed by Massey University and subsequently took the initiative to establish a Master of Educational Psychology and a Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Psychology which leads students toward their registration as psychologists.

### INTERVIEW

**J: Ken, what are you doing now?**

**K:** I am working on a contract at the University of Calgary developing a new online Professional Diploma in Inclusive and Special Education. This is a post-graduate programme for teachers who want to develop their knowledge and skills in teaching students with diverse needs and abilities. The programme is flexibly delivered online using real-time class meetings via web conferencing along with a class website and audio-enhanced PowerPoint presentations that are sent out to students. We have students up in the Canadian Arctic in isolated places in Nunavut, North West Territories, British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. The Professional Diploma can be used as a stand alone qualification or as a stepping stone to masters level.<sup>1</sup>

**J: In the first edition of Kairaranga, you commented that today's diverse and complex schools required on-site support from professionals with advanced training. What are your current thoughts?**

**K:** I have strongly supported the Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) initiative from the time it was proposed in 1995 because it provides the kind of on-site support that teachers need to provide quality education for students with diverse needs. Having been overseas for a year or so now, I can say that the RTLB school-based approach is "the way to go" in terms of providing direct and indirect support for teachers. It is pleasing to me that several of our educational psychology graduates have continued to work as RTLBs, often in senior positions as cluster leaders. This was part of my original thinking about a career pathway in which we could locate special education and school psychology support within educational settings rather than offering a specialist service model. There is widespread concern amongst Canadian schools about the specialist school psychology model in which professionals are based away from the schools. It seems to me that the goal of building capacity in schools to meet the needs of students with diverse needs and abilities requires that we build teams that are located and work directly within the environments where the students, teachers, parents and significant other people are located. I know that there are many reasons advanced for the separation of specialist services from schools in order to provide an independent and fair service. However, to my way of thinking, if we are serious about ecological ways of working then we need to have ecologically sound models of professional support. That means that on-site support should be provided from professionals with advanced training.

**J: You created career pathways for many people. Can you tell us a little about these?**

**K:** I have always tried to maintain a practical orientation whether it was teachers returning to the workforce or people who wanted to do advanced professional training right up to doctoral level. I was modestly successful in providing career opportunities for many people through the development of our Master of Education (Special Education) programmes and also through the establishment of the educational psychology training programme. Unfortunately, I never realised my

<sup>1</sup> If you would like more information or to see a presentation on the new programme, go to our website <http://www.education.ucalgary.ca/apsy>

goal of training RTLBs and creating a pathway for the creation of RTLB school psychologists. Having said that, several RTLBs over the years completed educational psychology training at Massey University and have gone on to take leadership roles in special education. It makes me happy to see the success of many of our graduates and the part that they are now playing in special education, educational psychology and allied professional bodies. My greatest satisfaction was to establish a staircase at Massey University so that students with an undergraduate degree in education could move right through their post-graduate certificate, diploma and masters level to doctoral studies.

**J: Ken, you were working with computers long before many of us knew they existed! What is exciting about computers?**

K: This is a big subject. My initial interest in computers in education was spawned by the belief that the technology could be used to create better learning conditions. My early research with young adults at IHC<sup>2</sup> showed how capable these students could be when given access to learning opportunities that they had not previously had. Being a pioneering type, I was keen to be innovative and excited about the prospect of applying this new technology to training and education. I completed my PhD on the subject of computer-assisted instruction for teaching word recognition to adults with intellectual disability. This was in 1980 and, ironically, I had to type my thesis as we did not yet have a viable word processor. This work set the stage for everything that followed in terms of developing new courses on computers in education, carrying out a range of research projects, and ultimately writing books on the subject of information technology in education. In the 1980s I developed the undergraduate and graduate level courses on computers and the learning process, then, as the technology advanced, I sought new opportunities to create better learning conditions for students with special needs and abilities. It was always the case that each time I began to lose interest in information and communication technology in education there would be a new development and new inventions that created new and exciting research opportunities. I always found the field of computers in education to be extremely positive and uplifting. It enabled me to work with keen people and motivated students to see how we could enhance the teaching and learning process. There has always been a lot of debate about the "effects" of new educational technologies on teaching and learning. Suffice it to say that the machine effects may not be so important as the people effects. It has been a pleasure to see what motivated and capable people can achieve given the right kinds of technology and the right kinds of knowledge about cognition, learning and academic achievement.

**J: So, your appreciation of this technology to improve educational conditions has led to some valuable projects. Can you tell us about some of these?**

K: I could say a lot about this but will just sketch a few outlines.<sup>3</sup> My initial work with computers in education took place in Palmerston North at the IHC sheltered workshop. The focus of this was on computer-assisted instruction for teaching practical academic skills such as counting, time-telling, basic word reading, etc. I subsequently graduated to the prison and to work experience classes where we did projects with youth in transition from school to work. An exciting part of this was to see students who were "at risk" make significant gains in their learning with computers.

I then started to write books and articles with a focus on effective learning strategies with computers. A lot of this work stressed the importance of computers for developing thinking skills and learning strategies. We placed a great deal of emphasis on metacognitive development and "constructivist" approaches to learning. I was greatly influenced by the writing of Seymour Papert concerning children, computers and powerful ideas. Papert's ideas about accelerating cognitive development through the creation of highly interactive and rich learning environments captured my attention. I was keen on the idea that technology provided an intellectual partnership with students who could advance in their learning through interaction with computers and one another. This led me to propose many ideas about the creation of learning communities supported by new educational technologies.

In more recent years I have been actively involved in carrying out projects with teams of colleagues in clusters of schools to study the innovative uses of computers for supporting the teaching and learning process. This included the North Shore Schools Net, the South Auckland Schools Net (both supported by the Tindall Foundation) and Project Activate (supported by the Ministry of Education, Digital Opportunities Project). The outcomes of these projects are recorded in three special issues of the *Computers in New Zealand Schools Journal*.<sup>4</sup> All of these projects involved the use of action research in which teachers and schools carried out their own projects to study different aspects of technology for learning. These projects ranged from interactive whiteboards as a context for teaching Te Reo right through to monitoring and recording student health and fitness. All together, our work on these projects has involved teachers in more than 30 schools. It has been especially satisfying to see these teachers publish the results of their projects and to see them present their findings at educational technology conferences and teacher professional development workshops.

<sup>2</sup> IHC, including the division now known as IDEA services, provides services and advocacy for individuals with an intellectual disability and their families.

<sup>3</sup> If anyone wants the details I would be pleased to send them a copy of my curriculum vitae with all of the research and projects that we undertook.

<sup>4</sup> See Further Reading section at the end of this article.

**J: What is the highlight of your career to date?**

**K:** The highlight of my career to date is the satisfaction of working with so many dedicated and capable people. I have often said that if I can have a positive influence on the professional development of just one other person, then it makes my academic career worthwhile. It brings me great pleasure to see the achievements of so many of our past students and to watch the growth of teachers through our research and demonstration projects. Where new educational technologies are concerned, I feel that I have succeeded in translating theory and research into practice. The sort of applied research that we did created a lot of synergy amongst many people who went on to touch the lives and make a positive difference for the growth and academic achievement of many students. A high point in my career was to establish a flexible high quality educational psychology training programme. This is evident in the large number of graduates from our programme who are now located throughout New Zealand. It would not have been possible for me to achieve anything without being part of a capable and wonderful team, especially my colleagues Jean Annan and Mandia Mentis at the Albany Campus who pioneered the development of our new programmes.

**J: What keeps you working in Special Education?**

**K:** The work is never done and there is always a need for creation of new ways and new methods of providing quality education for students with diverse abilities and needs. It is rewarding when it happens to make a positive difference in the lives of students and to watch them grow up into capable people. I see it as my responsibility to leave the world a better place than it was when I found it and this is one way that I can make a contribution.

#### FURTHER READING

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#### INTERVIEWEE PROFILE

**Dr Ken Ryba**



#### Dr Ken Ryba

Dr Ken Ryba is currently working at the University of Calgary in his home city. He is the programme coordinator of a new online Postgraduate Diploma in Applied Psychology: Inclusive and Special Education. As a registered psychologist working in New Zealand at Massey and Waikato universities, he established courses in special education and educational psychology. His research background spans general education, special education, educational psychology and the use of information technology in education.

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# He Hui Whakatika

## Culturally responsive, self determining interventions for restoring harmony

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### ABSTRACT

The time has come for kaupapa Māori<sup>1</sup> ideology and epistemology to move from the margins and claim legitimate space within the discipline of education. Kaupapa Māori ideology provides a dynamic framework within which Māori are better able to make meaning of the world and work for change. Increasingly, kaupapa Māori is being used to inform policies and practices across a range of sectors and initiatives. Research carried out by Bevan-Brown and Bevan-Brown (1999), indicates that for special educational policies and practices to be more responsive to and effective for Māori, there is a need to incorporate Māori values and philosophies.

Bishop (1996a) contends that the solutions for Māori do not reside within the culture that has traditionally marginalised Māori; rather, the solutions are located within Māori culture itself. An example of one such solution is the hui whakatika<sup>2</sup> process (Hooper, Winslade, Drewery, Monk & Macfarlane, 1999), a process which is underpinned by traditional Māori concepts of discipline, and one which is able to be likened to more recent and contemporary notions of restorative justice.

This paper highlights the role of a kaitakawaenga<sup>3</sup> as he works collaboratively with whānau<sup>4</sup> members to seek resolution and restore harmony by facilitating a hui whakatika process.

### Practice Paper

#### Keywords

*Behaviour problems, culturally appropriate strategies, discipline, Māori culture, parent school relationship, restorative practices, self determination, sociocultural factors.*

### INTRODUCTION

Despite the obvious renaissance that has transpired for Māori over the past 20 to 30 years, and Durie's (1997) assertion that Māori knowledge has integrity of its own, Māori epistemology is still regularly relegated to the margins, or simply dismissed. Within education, there needs to be an ongoing commitment to developing and maintaining learning contexts within which Māori students are able to

bring their own cultural realities (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003). This paper will illustrate how kaupapa Māori ideology can provide a dynamic framework within which Māori are better positioned to understand the world and to achieve more effective outcomes.

### KAUPAPA MĀORI

According to Mead (1997), the term "kaupapa" implies a structuring for how ideas are perceived and practices are applied. Kaupapa Māori locates this structuring within Māori preferences and practices and grew out of a strong sense of frustration about the effects of rapid urbanisation on Māori post-World War II. This culminated in heightened political consciousness by Māori, as well as a shift in mindset by large numbers of Māori away from the dominant western dialogue, particularly during the 1970s and 1980s (Awatere, 1981; Bishop, 1996a; Smith, 1990; Walker, 1989). This renewed consciousness, described by Bishop (1996a) as 'the revitalisation of Māori cultural aspirations, preferences and practices as a philosophical and productive educational stance and resistance to the hegemony of the dominant discourse' (p. 11), has been responsible for producing many societal changes.

Kaupapa Māori theory requires challenging western notions about what constitutes valid knowledge, so that Māori epistemology is neither denigrated nor marginalised (Smith, 1999). Kaupapa Māori opens up avenues for critiquing western perspectives and practices, whereby Māori are empowered to lead and determine the revitalisation and protection of Māori-preferred perspectives and practices (Bishop, 1996a, 1996b, 2005). Bishop (1996a) suggests that kaupapa Māori provides 'the deconstruction of those hegemonies which have disempowered Māori from controlling and defining their own knowledge within the context of unequal power relations in New Zealand' (p. 13).

As a means of responding to unequal power relations, Bishop (1994, 1996a, 1996b, 1997) developed a model for evaluating research which responds to Māori demands for self-determination by identifying and addressing the locus of power and control. There are five critical areas of questioning.

<sup>1</sup> Māori philosophy

<sup>2</sup> A meeting that seeks to resolve issues and make amends

<sup>3</sup> Facilitator and broker of relationships and services of support for Māori

<sup>4</sup> Immediate or extended family

The first explores how the research is *initiated*; the second determines who *benefits* from the research. Locating research within Māori cultural perspectives is essential for ensuring positive benefits accrue for Māori. The third element, *representation*, challenges whose ideas and realities are represented. The research must be located within the discourses of Māori whereby Māori metaphors, concepts and social realities are represented. For decades, Māori knowledge has been deconstructed and reconstructed by western researchers from a functional limitations or “expert” perspective in order that it might be more easily understood by western readers. The fourth area, *legitimation*, defines whose needs, interests and concerns the research is representing. A Māori voice must be used if appropriate meanings are to be made from Māori experiences and social realities. Finally, the area of *accountability* ascertains to whom the researchers are accountable.

Bishop’s (1997) model maintains that Māori must be the ones to authenticate the language and cultural content. By maintaining power and control over these critical issues in the past, traditional western research has been viewed with suspicion by many Māori, who refuse to participate in research where they are without a voice.

Smith (2003) asserts that the Māori language revitalisation movement that began at the same time produced mindset shifts that were ‘away from waiting for things to be done for them, to doing things for themselves; a shift away from an emphasis on reactive politics to an emphasis on being more proactive; a shift from negative motivation to positive motivation’ (p. 2). Smith observes that these shifts involved many Māori moving from merely talking about de-colonisation, to talking about “conscientisation” or consciousness-raising which places Māori in a position from where changes can be made.

This enables Māori to take greater responsibility for their own situation by dealing with the “politics of distraction” (Smith, 2003). A critical element to this is the rejection of hegemonic thinking and practices (Gramsci, 1971) and becoming critically conscious about one’s own aspirations and preferences. Friere (1996) notes that in order to achieve critical consciousness, it is necessary to own one’s own situation; that people cannot construct theories of liberating action until they no longer internalise the dominant discourse. Smith notes that rather than working from a reactive standpoint, kaupapa Māori is a proactive transformative stance. Kaupapa Māori repositions Māori away from places of deficit theorising to positions of “agency”, able to take responsibility for transforming their own condition (Bishop et al., 2003). Drawing from te ao Māori<sup>5</sup> for the myth messages, discourses and metaphors is an important part of repositioning (Walker, 1978). It involves looking back in order to provide guidance moving forward - to source solutions that ensure cultural identity is strengthened rather than rendered invisible (Smith, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> Māori worldview

A range of definitions of what constitutes kaupapa Māori theory exists, however most researchers agree that Māori must determine and define what this is (Cram, 2001, Glover, 2002, Smith, 1999). Reid (1998) and others (Bevan-Brown, 1998; Jackson, 1998; Mutu, 1998) argue that kaupapa Māori theory must endeavour to address Māori needs while also giving full recognition to Māori culture and value systems. Kaupapa Māori theory must therefore be underpinned by Māori epistemology, reflecting Māori cultural realities, values, and unique life experiences. This indigenous body of knowledge is based around concepts such as tapu<sup>6</sup> and noa<sup>7</sup>, which work to regulate life. Often these expressions are tribally specific (Cram, 2001; Te Awekotuku, 1991).

Smith (1997) identifies that the essence of kaupapa Māori:

- relates to being Māori
- connects to Māori philosophy and principles
- takes for granted the legitimacy and validity of Māori
- takes for granted the legitimacy and validity of the Māori language, beliefs and practices
- is concerned with the struggle for Māori autonomy and thus the reclaiming by Māori of both cultural and political space.

## MĀORI CULTURAL SOLUTIONS

Bishop (1996a) and Bishop, et al., (2003) argue that solutions for Māori do not reside within the culture that has marginalised Māori; rather, the solutions lie within Māori culture itself and draw from both traditional and contemporary cultural knowledge. Currently, kaupapa Māori theorising and metaphors are being used to inform policies and practices across a range of sectors and initiatives (Bishop, 2005; Mead, 1997; Smith, 1999). As a dynamic framework, kaupapa Māori enables Māori to work for change, and to better understand the world.

Phinney and Rotheram (1987) argue that there are ethnically-linked ways of thinking, feeling and acting that are acquired through socialisation. The message implicit in this statement has profound implications for all sectors of education, given that education provision needs to be responsive to the intricacies of individuals’ and groups’ sociocultural and learning needs. Understanding others depends on three specific components: engagement; ways of thinking and theorising; ways of analysing (Durie, 2006). Durie explores the marae atea<sup>8</sup> as facilitated during the process of pōwhiri<sup>9</sup>, as a metaphor for engagement, wherein aspects such as space, boundaries and time take on exacting significance.

Durie (2006) describes the notion of *space* whereby a realistic degree of distance is necessary until a relationship has formed. Acknowledging distance provides an effective stage for clarifying the terms under which parties come together. Conversely, diminished distance may precipitate fear and panic, leading to withdrawal, thus impacting negatively on the process of building relationships and

<sup>6</sup> Sacred

<sup>7</sup> Removed from tapu

<sup>8</sup> Space in front of the wharehau, or meeting house.

<sup>9</sup> A ritual of encounter

establishing engagement. The concept of *boundaries* explores particular distinctions between groups, that is tangata whenua<sup>10</sup> and manuhiri<sup>11</sup>; the living and the dead; the right and the left; safe and unsafe; men and women; old and young. Appreciation of these distinctions enables mutually-respected boundaries to be defined without pretence, providing a platform upon which respectful engagement may emerge. The *domain of time* means that being “on time” is less important than allocating, taking or expanding time.

For many Māori, the same phases of engagement - guided by notions of space, boundaries and time - are adhered to during other situations of encounter. These phases broadly include:

- Opening rituals (respecting space and boundaries, determining who speaks and when).
- Clarifying who you are/where you have come from.
- Declaring intentions.
- Coming together as a group.
- Building relationships and making initial connections (including sharing whakapapa or genealogical connections).
- Addressing a particular kaupapa<sup>12</sup>, using open and frank discussions, face-to-face interactions, reaching decisions and agreements, defining particular roles and responsibilities, allocating time.
- Sharing kai<sup>13</sup>.
- Closing; summarising decisions and agreements, upholding mana.

## HUI WHAKATIKA

Pōwhiri and hui whakatika are kaupapa Māori processes that are also Māori cultural solutions. Macfarlane (1998) proposes that the traditional hui<sup>14</sup>, guided by Māori rituals of engagement, provides a supportive and culturally grounded space for achieving resolution, and restoring harmony. Hui whakatika is a unique kaupapa Māori process for restoring harmony from within legitimate Māori spaces (Hooper et al., 1999). Hui whakatika follows those same phases of engagement, and is also underpinned by four quintessential concepts of traditional or pre-European Māori discipline. These are:

1. *Reaching consensus* through a process of collaborative decision-making involving all parties.
2. *Reconciliation*; reaching settlement that is acceptable to all parties rather than isolating and punishing.
3. *Examining* the wider reason for the wrong with an implicit assumption that there was often wrong on both sides; not apportioning blame.
4. Having less concern with whether or not there had been a breach; more concern with the *restoration* of harmony. (Olsen, Maxwell & Morris, cited in McElrea, 1994).

These features are critical to an effective hui whakatika, and continue to guide contemporary Māori society when responding to issues of concern or conflict. The four distinct phases to a hui whakatika process include:

1. *The pre-hui phase* – preparing the whāriki<sup>15</sup>.
2. *The hui phase* – the hui proper:
  - Beginning
    - Mihimihi<sup>16</sup>/karakia<sup>17</sup>
    - Response from manuhiri
    - Reiterating the purpose of the hui
    - Whakawhanaungatanga<sup>18</sup>
    - Sharing kai
  - Developing
    - How we are being affected, how we are feeling
    - Successes to date, strengths
    - Barriers/enemies to success
    - Seeking out a new story (restorying)
      - Determining and agreeing on the way forward
      - What we will do, who will do what ...
    - Setting a time/venue for forming/consolidating the plan
  - Closing: poroporoaki<sup>19</sup>
    - Whakakapi<sup>20</sup>
    - Final comments by members
    - Karakia<sup>21</sup>
    - Sharing kai
    - Informal discussion
3. *Forming/consolidating the plan.*
4. *Follow-up and review* – at a later date.

Each of these phases is critical to the overall success of a hui whakatika (Macfarlane, 2007). Sufficient time and effort must be invested in the pre-hui phase, as this is equally as important as the hui itself. This involves determining who needs to be involved, establishing a willingness from all parties to participate, meeting with all parties separately in order to explain the process and prepare them for what will happen, hearing their stories, and selecting a venue and time. Phase two, the “hui proper”, follows the protocols of engagement as represented by a pōwhiri process. Effective facilitation of this phase is crucial.

This paper now focuses on the role and experiences of a Ministry of Education, Special Education kaitakawaenga. The role of the kaitakawaenga is to work alongside non-Māori specialists who are working with Māori families. Their cultural expertise and knowledge is invaluable as they are able to draw from kaupapa Māori ways of knowing and engaging.

The kaitakawaenga had been engaged in order to assist a special education advisor (SEA) working in a mainstream primary school with two brothers (Māori), who had been referred for their severe and challenging behaviours at

<sup>10</sup> Hosts

<sup>11</sup> Visitors

<sup>12</sup> Issue

<sup>13</sup> Refreshments

<sup>14</sup> Meeting

<sup>15</sup> Foundation

<sup>16</sup> Greetings

<sup>17</sup> Prayer

<sup>18</sup> Introductions/making connections

<sup>19</sup> Departure ceremony/rituals of farewell

<sup>20</sup> Summing up

<sup>21</sup> Prayer/blessing

school. The brothers, less than a year apart in age, were in the same Year 6 class. Their parents were separated, and custodial arrangements meant that they had both boys, week about.

Due to the apparent severity of the boys' behaviours at school, the SEA had hastily put in place a behaviour intervention plan with little input sought from the whānau. Subsequently, they had ceased to engage in any of the tasks that had been allocated to them in the plan. The boys' behaviours had escalated since the plan had been initiated; the class teacher and principal were extremely frustrated and wanted immediate action in order to prevent the boys from being suspended or excluded. The SEA therefore sought help from the kaitakawaenga.

### Phase 1: The Pre-Hui Phase

It was determined that a hui whakatika would be convened. The kaitakawaenga met with both parents, initially separately, and then together, to ensure that there was willingness on their part to attend. The parents explained that they wanted to resolve the issues but were suspicious of the school's motives, and were consequently reluctant to meet at the school grounds. The kaitakawaenga listened to the concerns and aspirations that they both had for their sons. He explained the hui process mentioning that he would facilitate with the support of his kaumātua<sup>22</sup>, who would welcome them and any other whānau members they wanted to bring with them. The kaitakawaenga also met with the class teacher, the principal, and the SEA and went through the same process. These meetings were critical to gauge commitment, and to clarify the protocols and purpose of the hui. The venue was then organised, the room set up, and food ordered.

### Phase 2: The Hui Phase

The hui was held at the Ministry of Education, Special Education office, in a room that was regularly used for hui, and reflected many of the cultural icons of the local iwi<sup>23</sup>. The parents and boys opted to bring along whānau support, including the maternal grandmother, the paternal grandfather, an aunty, and an older cousin. The classroom teacher, senior teacher, principal, SEA, kaitakawaenga and special education kaumātua were also in attendance; 14 people in all.

The kaumātua began the meeting with mihimihi and karakia in order to clear the pathway for the rest of the hui. The grandfather responded in te reo Māori, declaring the family's willingness to contribute and participate. The kaitakawaenga briefly reiterated the kaupapa and intended flow of the hui, and then started the process of whakawhanaungatanga, whereby everyone introduced themselves, and made a brief comment about what they hoped to achieve at the hui. Everyone then had a cup of tea and a biscuit.

The members listened to everyone else's stories and perspectives without interruption. Although initially whakamā<sup>24</sup>, whānau members, including the boys, began to contribute more as the hui progressed. The hui worked from a strengths-based approach, where positive perspectives were shared. Honesty was also a key component, and people were encouraged to share how they were feeling. The kaitakawaenga observed the ahua<sup>25</sup> of the group gradually change as they listened to each other's issues and frustrations. Several constructive and affirming statements were shared, which challenged many previously held assumptions.

Members started offering positive and supportive comments which became solution-focused; they also began to see where they perhaps needed to take more responsibility for their own attitudes and actions. There was an obvious willingness to remain respectful of each other, and to remain committed to the kaupapa. A list of possible actions was then brainstormed and collated, to be reconstructed into a more formal plan at a subsequent meeting attended by all members. Both of the boys contributed to the final discussion, and offered some suggestions, which were added to the planning list. The kaitakawaenga then summed up, everyone was given a final opportunity to comment, and the kaumātua concluded with a karakia. Formulation of the plan (Phase 3) took place two days later.

### Phase 3: Forming the Plan

At the request of all members, the planning meeting followed the same pōwhiri process. Several members of the group commented that having the two days interim space allowed them to reflect on the things that had transpired during the hui. According to the whānau, it had also enabled them to gain even greater strength and resolve moving forward.

The plan focused on three key areas:

1. Achieving a consistency of routines and expectations
2. Maintaining regular and ongoing communications
3. Developing and maintaining positive and productive relationships.

Both parents openly discussed the inconsistencies that existed between the respective home settings, and defined some new kawa<sup>26</sup> that would be put in place across both contexts. These kawa included being more clear and consistent in their instructions and expectations of the boys, and also included the boys taking on greater responsibility for their actions, with incentives and rewards playing a role. The boys agreed that this was fair and reasonable. Communication protocols were also constructed collaboratively. These involved setting up home-to-school positive notebooks, regular phone calls both ways, and an end-of-week group debrief for the first four weeks. Building positive relationships required all parties to make time for each other. The teacher made adaptations to the classroom

<sup>22</sup> Elder

<sup>23</sup> Tribe

<sup>24</sup> Shy, reserved

<sup>25</sup> Demeanour

<sup>26</sup> Protocols

programme (content, lesson structure, pace, classroom responsibilities) and promised to provide more regular and specific feedback. The teacher and principal wanted the parents to feel welcome at school, and reiterated the “open door” approach that they wished to maintain. Weekly debriefs were planned for Friday lunchtime, and would include all group members, and kai. A follow-up and review meeting was scheduled for four weeks time, with the option of calling one sooner should the need arise.

#### Phase 4: Follow-up and Review

The hui whakatika took place early in April. At the follow-up and review meeting in May, feedback from all parties was extremely positive. The boys were much easier to manage in both home settings as well as at school, and were actively engaged in learning. Both parents had been using positive and consistent strategies in their respective homes, and the boys had achieved several small rewards. Over the next few months, both boys also received achievement awards at school.

There were only two minor incidents that occurred at school post the hui whakatika. School staff said that both incidents were easily dealt with and were no more challenging than others that they had to deal with regularly. In early October that same year, the boys were transitioned to the Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) service over a two week period.

The parents both stated that they finally felt as if they had a voice in their sons’ education, and were now in partnership with the school. They put this down to the barriers that had been broken down during the hui whakatika. School staff felt more inclined to approach the parents and seek their ideas and perspectives in terms of the boys’ education needs, something they would not have actively done prior to the hui whakatika. At the last RTLb transition meeting, one of the boys mentioned that he had not been in much trouble lately. When asked by the kaitakawaenga if he thought that was better, he said “Yeah, cos I get to learn more stuff, so I am getting more clever”.

#### CONCLUSION

O’Sullivan (2007) declares that Māori have regularly been relegated to the position of *junior* partner within our society. A determination to reclaim legitimate Māori cultural spaces at the nexus between indigenous Māori and Pākehā<sup>27</sup> cultures is a responsive pathway forward if power sharing and self determination are to be rightfully distributed (Durie, 2003).

Within such spaces, cultural constructs such as pōwhiri and hui can provide solutions, determined by Māori culture and protocols; new learning and cultural strength may be derived for both Māori and non-Māori. By developing relationships based on mutual respect, opportunities to see oneself in relation to others and to learn from these relationships may arise. People can bring their own experiences, in order to contribute to the kaupapa<sup>28</sup>. Power is able to be shared between self determining individuals and/or groups. Participants are able to determine their own actions; actions that are culturally prescribed and understood within

relationships of interdependence (Bishop, Berryman, Powell & Teddy, 2007; Young, 2005). From relationships of interdependence, independence can emerge.

Bishop and Glynn (1999) suggest that the reassertion of Māori cultural preferences and practices can lead to more effective participation and learning for Māori students in mainstream settings. Te Kōtahitanga (Bishop, et al., 2007) has shown that the reclamation of cultural spaces can also benefit non-Māori students. For many professionals this may require a shift in mindset away from familiar and preferred practices to those which uphold and respect the legitimacy of Māori cultural spaces.

Although the epistemological paradigms emerging from the experiences of indigenous minorities such as Māori may challenge mainstream education (Gordon, 1997), continuing to disregard such alternatives will leave the discipline of education impoverished. Paying attention, however, will surely enrich and benefit education, enabling those who access education services to achieve more positive outcomes.

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<sup>27</sup> Non-Māori; settlers, people descended from settlers

<sup>28</sup> Agenda

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## AUTHOR PROFILES

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### **Sonja Bateman**

Sonja Bateman affiliates to the Ngāi Tahu tribe from New Zealand's South Island. Her passion for improving educational outcomes for at-risk students has seen her move from a Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTL B) to her present position of Practice Leader, Services to Māori, a national position within the Ministry of Education, Special Education. Her work focuses on enhancing professional practice, and the outcomes that are achieved by learners who are Māori.

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Mere Berryman is researcher and manager of the Ministry of Education, Special Education Poutama Pounamu Education Research and Development Centre. Her work aims to investigate and develop culturally responsive approaches for supporting Māori students and their families in a range of Māori and English language educational settings. Sociocultural approaches to learning and development acknowledge the importance of learners developing relationships, and engaging in learning interactions with more skilled others, from within their own cultural experiences. She has found this to be of fundamental importance if students are to assume autonomy over their own learning.

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# The New Multi-Ministry Response to Conduct Problems

## A SWOT analysis

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### ABSTRACT

*The Inter-agency Plan for Conduct Disorder/Severe Antisocial Behaviour 2007-2012* (Ministry of Social Development, 2007) is assessed according to the SWOT dimensions of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The document is one of the most important statements for the social services in New Zealand because of the primacy that it gives to current knowledge about conduct problems and for its endorsement of research-based practices. The plan's limitations include its risk-focused approach, its unsystematic response to 0-2 year-olds in difficult care-giving circumstances, and its lack of reference to adolescent girls with emotional issues who can contribute to the next generation of antisocial young people. As well, the plan might have considered the role of social systems in regard to conduct problems like the school, the neighbourhood, and community values. The implementation of the document could be imperilled by numerous influences, such as contrasting professional perspectives and non-empirical emphases in education.

### Position Paper

#### Keywords

*Antisocial behaviour, conduct disorder, effective practices, evidence based practice, integrated services, programme evaluation, service provision.*

### INTRODUCTION

The recently released *Inter-agency Plan for Conduct Disorder/Severe Antisocial Behaviour, 2007-2012* (Ministry of Social Development, 2007), which is hereafter referred to as *The Inter-agency Plan*, has four action areas. Firstly, *The Inter-agency Plan* will ensure that there is 'leadership, co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation' (p. 3) of government services for children with conduct problems, and this work will be overseen by a governance committee comprised of senior officials from the Ministries of Social Development, Health, Education, and Justice who will be advised by an Experts' Group. Secondly, the Experts' Group is to describe the best practices for responding to conduct disorder/severe antisocial behaviour and this report will be used to review and refocus the relevant services currently provided by Government agencies by 2012. Thirdly, to expand the behavioural services provided by the Ministry of Education so that up to 5% of children aged 3-7 years (identified by systematic screening) can receive a comprehensive behaviour change programme made up of child, parent, and teacher components. The fourth action

area is to ensure common understandings, actions, and workforce development across Government agencies who work with children with conduct problems. *The Inter-agency Plan* is potentially the most important document that has been written for the social services in this country and the intention here is to evaluate it according to the SWOT dimensions.

### STRENGTHS

Briefly, *The Inter-agency Plan* says that antisocial behaviour and adult criminality have early beginnings, and so it is sensible that interventions should be directed at early childhood. The programmes that we use should be those that other countries have found to work best, provided that it is shown that they also work well for all New Zealanders. To achieve measurable effects, individual assessments and interventions will need to be detailed and comprehensive, and be undertaken by highly skilled professionals. It is understood that conduct issues can be tricky to deal with, that knowledge in this area is not complete, and that making a real difference will take time. Nevertheless, state agencies will need to demonstrate that they are making a difference for, and with, families and to do these things agencies will need to work together. Taking these actions for children and youth with behavioural difficulties are justified because it is possible to make real changes for them. As well, these young people do a disproportionate amount of damage to the social fabric and each antisocial adolescent costs the country about three million dollars (Ministry of Social Development, 2007).

The special strength of *The Inter-agency Plan* is that it is a research-based document that demands research-based interventions for children at risk of negative life courses and outcomes. The document largely aligns with what is known about the development of serious antisocial behaviour; and there has been much success in mapping this developmental sequence (Reid, 1993). For instance, work by Patterson and others at the Oregon Social Learning Center has shown that a particular dynamic develops between a child with conduct problems and his/her parent(s) that is characterised by accelerating coercion on the youngster's part, as evidenced in tantrums and ultimately physical attacks, and progressive retreat and disengagement by the mother/father (Patterson, DeBaryshe & Ramsey, 1989; Reid, Patterson & Snyder, 2002). Research has also shown that it is possible to change factors during the transition to school that markedly alter a child's trajectory of antisocial behaviour (Reid & Eddy, 1997).

Professionals need to be proactive, and they should respond to the full complexity of the influences that are acting on the child. Interventions that ignore ecological factors are invariably limited (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003). Hence, there is the expectation that programmes will contain multiple components, be developmentally adjusted, and can cut across conventional health, education, and human service delivery (Hawkins, Catalano & Miller, 1992).

To respond to our most at-risk young people, *The Inter-agency Plan* requires the implementation and coordination of individualised interventions for 3-7 year-olds, skill development for parents, and training for teachers to assist them to cater for the identified students in the classroom. The new interventions are to be distinguished by their accessibility, breadth, depth, duration, and therapeutic fidelity. Professionals will engage with vulnerable families in ways that ensure that they stay with the programme. All of the child's key settings are to be targeted, as are the family's needs; and these include such requirements as mental health services, housing, and income support. The initial interventions are to be of sufficient intensity to effect change, and help will also be available to the young person for transitions and stressful events in later years. It is recognised that proven therapeutic programmes must be delivered faithfully and in accord with associated protocols.

It may be that we have generally underestimated what is needed to assist antisocial young people. Interventions have to be powerful enough to cross thresholds and achieve critical effects, since 'rooted dysfunction resists change tenaciously' (Cowen, et al., 1996, p. 12). As well, programmes have to persist over time. Rutter (1982), for instance, contends that if we really want to bring about changes for young people then there are actually only choices like adoption, which achieve lasting modifications (see also Curtis & Nelson, 2003, on this point), otherwise we should make assistance available throughout periods of development. To deliver a behaviour change programme with fidelity means to follow the original model exactly, in terms of the number of sessions provided, the order of activities undertaken, the materials utilised, the methods deployed, and the group leaders being appropriately trained (Webster-Stratton, 2004).

A particularly attractive aspect of *The Inter-agency Plan* is that it gives prominence to empirically-supported parent training programmes. Over twenty years ago, Loeber (1987, cited by Zigler, Taussig & Black, 1992) observed that parent training was the success story in responding to children with conduct issues. As an intervention, parent training (typically mother training) deserves precedence for at least five reasons. Firstly, the family is the primary, the most proximal, and the most enduring socialising influence on children (Luthar, 2006). Secondly, the effects of important events in children's lives (e.g., divorce, community influences) tend to be transmitted via the parenting relationship (Kalil, 2003). Thirdly, parent training is probably the most studied treatment for conduct issues and it impacts positively on an array of child outcomes (Kazdin, 1997).

A fourth reason in favour of parent training programmes is that the entire family dynamic may be altered, which can mean that siblings of the target child benefit as well (Kazdin, 1997), and the mother also develops in self-sufficiency - emotionally, behaviourally, and socially (Luthar & Zelazo, 2003). A further justification for this intervention is that young people who have been advantaged by it can take the positive effects with them (predispositions, relational skills) whenever they venture into other settings, such as at school or when engaging with peers (Reid & Eddy, 2002). In the light of such arguments, leading resilience researcher Masten contends that 'the first order of business' is to ensure that children have a strong bond to a caring and competent adult (Masten & Reed, 2002, p. 83).

In fact, considerable progress has already been made in the implementation of research-based parent training in New Zealand. Reference is made to this in *The Inter-agency Plan* with respect to the Incredible Years series, pioneered by Webster-Stratton of the University of Washington. The utility of the Incredible Years parent programme has been demonstrated in independent, randomised controlled trials (e.g., Hutchings et al., 2007) and it has been taken up in 20 countries. In New Zealand, Incredible Years has received endorsement from the Werry Centre for Child and Adolescent Mental Health. It is currently being offered on 28 sites by the Ministry of Education and also provided through other organisations. Efforts are being made to evaluate the parenting programme in this country, and pre-test/post-test data reportedly show good therapeutic effects for both New Zealand European and Māori participants (L. Stanley, personal communication, November 28, 2007). As well, Incredible Years has been the subject of several local postgraduate investigations (Lees, 2003; Hamilton, 2005). An advantage of the Incredible Years series is that it is a multi-component intervention system; the parenting programme (Basic) can be used as a prevention strategy; and it can also function as the core of a response (made up of child, parent, and teacher engagements) for more challenging children and their families (Stanley & Stanley, 2005).

## WEAKNESSES

The following shortcomings are identified in *The Inter-agency Plan*: it does not insist on systematic and rigorously evaluated professional services being offered in early life; it is preoccupied with male varieties of externalising behaviour; it is a risk-focused strategy and, as a corollary to the aforementioned point, it does not give due regard to protective factors and the resilience approach. One of the plan's key principles is that interventions should be provided as early as possible, which here means when children are three years of age. The plan suggests that systematic screening and intervention can be delayed until 36 months because there are services presently available to the younger age group, and these services are being expanded (these responses are described on page 36 of the plan). *The Inter-agency Plan* is not strong at this point and, for a document dedicated to verifiable outcomes and best practices, there is a disappointing silence with respect to accessibility, breadth, depth, duration, and therapeutic fidelity of the current (and intended) provisions for children under three years.

The first years of a child's life matter greatly, and can implant the 'vile weed' (Patterson, Reid & Dishion, 1992) of antisocial behaviour. For instance, Shaw, Keenan and Vondra (1994), in a study of 100 infants from low-income families, found that there was a progressive developmental sequence for boys made up of maternal unresponsiveness at 12 months, child noncompliance at 18 months, aggression at 24 months, and externalising problem behaviour at 36 months. Shaw et al. (1994) cite Bates and colleagues (1985), who have reportedly shown that a mother's perception of her child's level of difficulty in the first year of his/her life is predictive of behaviour problems at three years of age. This work accords with research by Farrington (1978, 1991) and Loeber and Dishion (1983) who established that, while early child adjustment problems are strong indicators of subsequent antisocial behaviour, an even better predictor is poor parental discipline (cited by Reid, 1993).

A second area of deficit in *The Inter-agency Plan* is that it is basically about boys and externalising behaviour. These emphases are common in contemporary prevention, and they can ignore the interrelationships of emotions and behaviour, and the possible, relative contributions of males and females to the maintenance of maladaptation. As we know, there are at least two distinct trajectories of antisocial behaviour: adolescent-limited and life-course-persistent (Moffitt, 1993). What may be less readily appreciated is that depression has separate pathways as well, and again the episodic/persistent distinction is pertinent (Jaffe, et al., 2002). Depression is mostly a female phenomenon, but it can connect with externalising conduct and, as maternal depression, it is associated with a range of adverse child outcomes (Belsky & Jaffe, 2006). These outcomes may contribute to the cross-generational transmission of antisocial behaviour.

A third aspect of *The Inter-agency Plan* that is likely to prove problematic over time is that it is essentially a clinical, risk-focused statement. It stresses the need to screen, identify, and intervene with the most needy young people. Conceptually, prevention and intervention are not mutually exclusive dimensions and, in practice, there needs to be a continuum of interventions to achieve prevention goals with different sectors of the child population (Walker et al., 1996; Walker & Sprague, 1999). There are real risks in focusing on the "worst of the worst", and included here is that we can 'invest larger and larger amounts of our resources in return for weaker and weaker therapeutic effects and outcomes' (Walker & Sprague, 1999, p. 71). If we allow ourselves to be preoccupied with the most extreme cases we will never respond to the true scope and magnitude of the task (Albee, 1999).

*The Inter-agency Plan* makes brief reference to the resilience approach (refer to pages 10-11 of the plan) and it is suggested that the new multi-ministry strategy is more likely to succeed if this approach is more completely embraced. Attempts have been made by Stanley (2003a, 2003b) and others (e.g., Masten & Powell, 2003) to outline the theory and the casework implications of resilience. With respect to practice, Katz (1997) says that, when we attend to protective factors,

we start to see the needs of children and families very differently. Amongst other changes, strengths and talents take on special significance, additional importance is attached to the presence of responsible adults, and extra recognition is given to neighbourhood resources and support. Appropriately utilised, resilience provides a new framework for intervention and prevention that gives priority to positive goals. In this regard, Masten and Reed (2002) observe that '*Promoting healthy development and competence is at least as important as preventing problems and will serve the same end*' (p. 84, original italics).

## OPPORTUNITIES

Fundamentally, *The Inter-agency Plan* recommends the reform of all government agencies that have responsibility for young people with conduct issues. We may legitimately ask, "Why stop here?" If the job is to be done well, it should be done completely, and suggestions could be made with respect to the extra-familial settings that impact on behavioural problems, and these are schools, neighbourhoods, and the community.

The school is the second most important setting for most children and it is uniquely situated for operationalising protective factors. In Werner's classic resilience research (Werner & Smith, 1989) it was found that teachers played a key role for students who did well and who came from difficult backgrounds. The teachers were available and especially helpful to the young people when their family lives were most challenging. Similarly, Rutter (1984) determined that well-functioning women with institutional backgrounds often had positive experiences when they were at school. A systematic relational approach by teachers might represent an 'implicit challenge to the grammar of schooling' (Baker, Terry, Bridger & Winsor, 1997, p. 597). However, student support and guidance probably should really come from ordinary teachers rather than school-based helping professionals. For instance, Stanley (1991) argues that the localisation of caring in designated roles, such as with guidance counsellors, may lessen the nurturance obligations of other school staff. Gilligan (2001) also comments on the "professionalisation" of problem behaviours:

We may too easily underestimate the healing potential that may lie naturally within children, in their normal daily experience or their social networks. Instead we maybe drawn excessively and prematurely to professional and clinical responses which may not engage the child, or may not resolve the problem (or may aggravate it) or, worst of all, may discourage interest by natural network members who may be left feeling irrelevant, marginalised or de-skilled. (p. 181)

Neighbourhoods vary substantially in terms of socioeconomic status, as indicated by the decile system that is used for ranking schools in this country. The effects of poverty are widespread and enduring (Jack, 2001). Indeed, poverty in childhood is the most consistent predictor of maladaptation in adulthood (Davis, 1996; Doll & Lyon, 1998). Offord (1996) believes our preventative efforts should be directed at established risk factors with high attributable value. Other commentators go further when they say of casework

interventions in risk-ridden neighbourhoods, that 'Without also focusing our scientific and preventive energies on developing strategies that modify these broader social domains, even the best conceived family- or school-based interventions are unlikely to succeed' (Reid & Eddy, 1997, p. 354).

For *The Inter-agency Plan* to triumph, there are also things that need to be done at the macro level of the community (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a). Walker et al. (1996) suggest that violent societies need to change the norms and expectations associated with aggressive behaviour. More particularly, Coie (1996) also argues for changes in the values of adolescent culture as a means of reducing youth violence. Finally, given the primacy of positive relationships to wellbeing (Luthar, 2006), we need to promote connectedness within our community at every opportunity. At a proximal level, this means constantly looking for ways of ensuring that more young people have continuing access to adults who feel responsible for them (Masten & Reed, 2002; Rich, 1999). More distally, it requires greater acceptance that raising children is a shared and demanding endeavour that requires the collaboration of caregivers, schools, and the larger community (Falbo & Glover, 1999). Bronfenbrenner (1979b) puts the last point in human development terms when he says 'The developmental potential of a child-rearing setting is increased as a function of the number of supportive links between that setting and other contexts involving the child or persons responsible for his or her care' (p. 848).

## THREATS

Kauffman (2001) states that we have known about the need for early identification and prevention for more than 40 years and yet we continue with ineffectual, reactive responding and services that are guided by vague philosophical ideas. Our knowledge about children with severe behavioural issues is not perfect, but we know enough, and we have the strategies to act. Kauffman comments, however, that:

Turning the ideas into coherent, consistent, sustained action will require scientific and political finesse that previous generations could not muster. As the 21<sup>st</sup> century opens, it is still the case that children are unlikely to be identified for special services until their problems have grown severe and have existed for a period of years. (2001, p. 88)

There are many threats to *The Inter-agency Plan* and Kauffman provides an excellent overview of the dangers to be encountered in his 1999 paper, *How We Prevent the Prevention of Emotional and Behavioural Disorders*. The author believes that it is professionals who derail preventative efforts, and the general public takes its lead from them. Prevention-denying thinking and strategies are pervasive and include objecting to identification, preferring false negatives in screening, maintaining developmental optimism ("He'll grow out of it"), protesting the percentage of students served, and denouncing disproportionality, defending diversity, and denying or dodging deviance (Kauffman, 1999a).

Kauffman's (1999a) article provides an extensive catalogue of prevention precluding gambits but this listing is incomplete, and there are at least two other major difficulties that have to be overcome before prevention can succeed. The first of these hurdles is concerned with what people regard as "evidence" of worthwhile therapeutic activities. *The Inter-agency Plan* is committed to evidenced-based interventions and by this it is understood to be programmes of proven efficacy and, preferably, programmes that have been shown to have clinically significant effects in randomised controlled trials (Kazdin, 1997). However, the term "evidence-based" is open to a range of interpretations (Sugai, 2003), and it can mean any and all data concerning a case. For this reason, the descriptors "empirically-supported" and "research-based" are to be preferred, as these relate directly to empiricism and the public verification of effectiveness.

Arguably, *The Inter-agency Plan* is a document for education, as it is in this sector that the big growth in services is to occur. But educators as a profession may be distinguished by the ease with which they accept unsubstantiated methods (Simpson, 1999). For instance, some primary schools ban all positive reinforcement because teachers hope to encourage intrinsic motivation (J. McGovern, personal communication, November 29, 2007). The problem with using unproven interventions is that we can waste people's opportunities for assistance (Kauffman, 1999b), and we can do them harm (Rutter, 1982). In working with young people at risk, there may be legitimate criticisms that can be made of empirically-supported therapies but interference with the delivery of sensitive, professional services is not one of them. The United Kingdom Department of Health (2000) states 'The combination of evidence-based practice grounded in knowledge with finely balanced professional judgement is the foundation for effective practice with children and families' (p. 16, quoted by Adcock, 2001, p. 96).

The second major obstacle that is to be discussed is anticipated by *The Inter-agency Plan*, and it is reconciling the competing perspectives of the professional groups that work with young people with conduct disorder/severe antisocial behaviour. The conflicts that are inherent here can run very deep, as they are associated with fundamentally different views of human nature (Walker, Zeller, Close, Webber & Gresham, 1999). Stanley has commented extensively on the debates (Stanley, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c), and it is arguable that the medical/psychiatric interpretations of behaviour have simply not kept up with the advances in developmental theory (Masten & Curtis, 2000). We now utilise new ways of seeing, whereby maladaptation is regarded as a process that extends over time rather than as an entity or outcome (Wyman, Sandler, Wolchik & Nelson, 2000). The contemporary, complexity models of human development (Sameroff, 2000) are concerned with all the domains of development (the "whole child"), the many contexts in which youngsters transact their lives, and the antecedents of personal competence as well as of dysfunction.

## CONCLUSION

In the 1970s and 1980s it was recognised that human development studies had relevance for preventive interventions for maladjusted young people (Dishion & Patterson, 2006). What we now know is that the antisocial developmental trajectory is invariably associated with numbers of the following antecedents and outcomes: premature and low-birth-weight deliveries, child maltreatment, learning problems, special education involvements, school dropout, poor physical health, drug abuse, delinquency, violence towards others, social service engagements, depression, early sexual activity, sexually transmitted infections, teenage pregnancy, misuse of motor vehicles, unemployment, incarceration, and higher hospitalisation and mortality rates (Fergusson, Poulton, Horwood, Milne & Swain-Campbell, 2004; Reid & Eddy, 1997; Walker, Ramsey & Gresham, 2004). The costs to individuals, to families, and to our society are colossal. The revolutionary contribution of *The Inter-agency Plan* is the leadership it provides in addressing antisocial behaviour and, specifically, for promoting decisions that are 'truly rational, grounded in solid theory, based on replicable empirical evidence, and ultimately referenced most closely to the creation and adoption of best practices' (Walker, et al., 1999, p. 294).

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## RELEVANT WEBSITES

The **Oregon Social Learning Centre** website lists the Centre's current and completed research assignments, and included there are many fascinating projects that address the details of children's functioning and development (<http://www.oslc.org>).

The **Incredible Years** website describes the parent, child and teacher programmes, it outlines the process for becoming a trainer, and it has articles and research on the programmes (<http://www.incredibleyears.com>).

The **Werry Centre** website lists local Basic Parent Training Days, and Consultation Days (for those who have received training) (<http://www.werrycentre.org.nz>).

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# Schooling for Happiness

## Rethinking the Aims of Education

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### ABSTRACT

The release of *The New Zealand Curriculum* causes us to rethink the aims of education. Dr Cavanagh offers an alternative set of aims to the vision outlined in the Ministry of Education document, which is based, at least in part, on socialisation into the corporate industrial world. Dr Cavanagh's position is focused on putting relationships at the centre of who and what we are as schools. He believes if we create a culture of care in schools, students will be happy and flourish. As a result, the two major domains of schooling will be joined together – student behaviour and teacher pedagogy. This emphasis will help students and teachers to build their capacity to solve problems non-violently by learning how to build healthy relationships and heal broken relationships.

### Position Paper

#### Keywords

*Educational policy, inclusion practices, peer relationships, restorative practices, school culture, society, teacher student relationships.*

### SCHOOLING FOR HAPPINESS: RETHINKING THE AIMS OF EDUCATION

Consider the following. We humans are social beings. We come into the world as the result of others' actions. We survive here in dependence on others. Whether we like it or not, there is hardly a moment of our lives when we do not benefit from others' activities. For this reason it is hardly surprising that most of our happiness arises in the context of our relationships with others.

What does this tell us? It tells us that genuine happiness consists in those spiritual qualities of love, compassion, patience, tolerance and forgiveness and so on. For it is these which provide both for our happiness and others' happiness. (His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, 1999)

In November, 2007, Prime Minister Helen Clark and Minister of Education Chris Carter released *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007). This document goes to the heart of the aims of education in New Zealand. Yet, in a democratic society the aims of education are not a given, to be imposed on educators by those in power. Those aims are continually up for reflection and discussion.

If we adopt a political agenda where the purposes of education cannot be questioned, we restrict schools to the technical role of delivering an education based on what works or what is effective, and do not allow each school

to answer the moral question of 'what is appropriate for these children in these circumstances?' (Biesta, 2007, p. 11). This article then is based on the idea that *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) is an empowering rather than a prescriptive document.

To understand the stance taken in this piece, I draw on the position taken in a recent article outlining a Māori worldview of the curriculum, noting that the 'differences in meaning and understanding should not be seen as sites of conflict, but rather as opportunities for improving and enriching the quality of education of all New Zealanders' (Macfarlane, Glynn, Grace, Penetito & Bateman, 2008, p. 123).

In the light of expanding the conversation about the aims of New Zealand education, it appears that one of the major goals of education presented in the curriculum is socialisation into the corporate industrial world by making our young people entrepreneurial. By way of explanation the New Zealand Conference of Catholic Bishops (2006) said, 'This "competency" has its home in the world of business ... On the other hand education should serve the "common good"' (p. 1).

Schools are encouraged to achieve this goal by giving students a bit of knowledge in a number of areas and specific knowledge about one or two fields, alongside training about how to be a good employee. The question we should ask is: "Is this the goal we want for our children?"

To answer this question we need to ask another question: "What are the aims of education?" Far too often today we talk about schools in terms of curriculum standards and testing rather than aims. We appear to be focused more on ways and means, rather than directions and aims.

### PUTTING RELATIONSHIPS AT THE CENTRE

Initially, let me establish a foundation for talking about aims. At a meeting of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, participants adopted Article 29, which states ...

Education needs to address the development of the child to his or her fullest potential and promote respect for human rights, the child's own culture, and the natural environment and to promote values of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality and friendship. In other words, education must not be limited to the basic academic skills of writing, reading, mathematics and science. (United Nations Children's Fund, 2007, p. 118)

At the heart of this article are relationships – building healthy and caring relationships with (a) our parents and people who share our cultural identity, language, values, and country of origin, (b) people from other cultures, (c) the land. These relationships are based on a belief in dignity, that each of us is born with inherent dignity that cannot be denied or taken away from us and is not dependent on our behaviour. This understanding of relationships forms the basis for how we relate to others as adults and as peaceful and non-violent people.

With this understanding, we can, along with our children, begin to examine whether our current societal aims and goals are appropriate for us, are fair to others and to the environment. Also, we can explore whether they will lead to improving the quality of life we are creating for ourselves, our children and grandchildren, and those who are yet to be born. Hopefully, schools will be places where our children can learn to critique and challenge the aims of society and our public leaders. Hopefully, schools will not be places to meet the aims and goals of policymakers, business people, and those who hold positions of power and wealth.

When students, educators and those interested in education enter into broader discussion of society's aims, they learn that not only are schools shaped by policymakers and others in power, but that schools have a moral duty to shape the aims of society. In this way, hopefully schools can be places for modelling what a tolerant and humane society looks like and acts by way of engaging, teaching, learning and valuing people who are different than the dominant culture.

My research supports this discussion about aims (Cavanagh, 2003a). This paper draws on research projects I was privileged to participate in, including my dissertation, Fulbright Fellowship, and current work as Senior Research Fellow for a research project focused on improving indigenous student achievement. My research is grounded in ethnography as the holistic study of schools as systems. My passion is exploring how we can create peaceful and nonviolent schools (Cavanagh, 2003b). I am pursuing that work by investigating how to create a culture of care, focused on building and maintaining caring relationships, where the theory of restorative practices underpins responses to problems related to student behaviour, and the theory of culturally appropriate pedagogy of relations underpins teacher and student relationships and interactions in classrooms. I have reflected on my research experiences over the past five years in writing this piece.

From my research I have come to realise that when the focus of education is on curriculum and testing, the importance of relationships is forgotten. From this perspective, the curriculum learning our children encounter needs to be grounded in human relationships, particularly as these interactions are lived out in classrooms. I have learned that a school can use the best curriculum, but if the relationships aren't right, the school can fail. Fundamentally, relationships must be central to the aims of education, for if we ignore relationships we suffer the consequences of such things as bullying and gang violence.

Teachers want to have effective interactions and relationships with students. After all, recognising and talking about relationships is at the core of schooling and who we are as educators. It is about treating children as treasures and recognising what a privilege it is to teach and learn with them.

I'd like to begin this discussion about the aims of education by considering what parents want for their children. Most of us would say that we want our children to be happy.

If this is true, then how can we turn these desires of parents into aims for education? As Noddings (2003) suggests in her book on *Happiness and Education*, at the present time we are focusing on financial aims in schools, educating students to support a strong economy and to be financially successful rather than to flourish as adults. We need to remember the key to what helps us to flourish is living happy and fulfilling lives. If we want our children to be happy and flourish as adults, then we need to ask them what makes them happy and what will help them to develop and achieve in an impressively successful way.

It is ludicrous for the media and policymakers to be criticising education, based on a financial purpose for schools, as being inadequate in a time of economic prosperity. How do they think the people who created and maintain this prosperity were educated? Rather, we celebrate our schools for their contribution to the wonderful lifestyle we enjoy today. After all, happiness and education are intimately connected, and education should contribute to the individual and collective happiness of all persons who are part of our schools: students, teachers, parents, educators, and those interested in education.

That is not to say we can't improve our schools. I recommend the place to start is by abandoning the notion that there is one best way to educate our children. However, we do not need two systems of education: one for the "normal" students and the other for those who are seen to not fit the criteria for a "normal" student (whether that labelling is the result of linguistic, cultural, or disabling conditions that mark a student as different). If we want our children to think inclusively as adults, then we need an inclusive education system that models inclusivity (Macfarlane, 2007). In addition, if we want our children to be happy and flourish as adults, we need to help students build healthy relationships and heal broken relationships.

My purpose isn't to criticise education and educators, rather to support their good work and urge them not to bow to pressures created by the media. Media tends to force blame for society's problems on schools. Based on my experience, teachers by and large get things right, and we don't want them to lose sight of the good things they are doing.

Noddings (2003) suggests that educators need to replace the emphasis on standards and testing with a focus on aims. She says resurrecting a focus on aims should include the ideas of people flourishing, developing competencies based on relationships in both our public and private lives, and shaping our worldviews and in turn our dispositions.

## CREATING A CULTURE OF CARE IN SCHOOLS

Noddings (2003) also explains that the combination of relationships and happiness are what lead to people flourishing. From my research I have learned that students are happy and flourish in an environment of care that focuses on relationships (Cavanagh, 2005). Such a culture of care is based on the idea of caring for and about others and responding appropriately to such care. In this culture, educators care for students as individuals and also care for their learning.

This culture has three elements:

1. Being in relationships by building healthy relationships.
2. Living in relationships by creating a sense of belonging or community.
3. Learning in relationships through routines, practices, and customs.

Being in relationships by building healthy relationships in schools is critical for our children to be successful in life. From our research we know that students can begin learning how to be peaceful and non-violent people in primary school and continue building this capacity throughout secondary school (Cavanagh, 2005).

Living in relationships happens when people live together in a sense of solidarity or all for all. We need community to meet our needs, particularly for recognition. If a school adopts a model based on how healthy families create loving homes, children will learn that caring is reciprocal. In that way students will feel welcomed, respected and comfortable at school (Noddings, 1992).

When we rely on practices and customs so students are learning in relationships about socialisation and norms of behaviour, then they will begin to understand the answers to "Who am I?" and "Who am I in this group?". They will begin to think critically about what makes this group or school good? This thinking leads to children becoming reflective adults (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001).

In a culture of care, the response to wrongdoing and conflict must be one of restoration, particularly of relationships, rather than retribution. As an alternative to using coercion, particularly in the form of punishment, for example, name calling and labelling, controlling behaviour, and punishing students through detentions and stand downs, teachers need to help children learn how to repair broken relationships that are harmed through wrongdoing and conflict.

The culture of care I propose is the glue that holds together the two major domains of schooling – student behaviour and teacher practice. In a culture of care, student discipline is based on restorative practices, where the emphasis is on helping students learn how to solve problems non-violently by healing the harm resulting from wrongdoing and conflict, rather than punishment and retribution (Restorative Practices Development Team, 2003). In classrooms that have a culture of care, teachers focus on creating healthy relationships with their students from the beginning.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I urge educators to persist in what they know in their hearts is right about education. My research supports them and also shows we do not lack caring teachers; what we lack are school systems that support caring educators. Furthermore, I would remind myself and others interested in education that this is a matter of great importance for everyone because ultimately focusing on relationships benefits the children entrusted to our care.

Educators and those interested in education understand that the task of education, first and foremost, is about the transmission of ideas of value more than facts. They support the desire for our children to understand and make sense of the world, not in a cynical or negative way, not dividing people into those that are good and those that are bad. Rather, it is important to honour the dignity of all persons and values happiness as being at the core of what helps us flourish as part of the natural world.

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Dr Tom Cavanagh is Senior Research Fellow at the University of Waikato. He is a social scientist studying how to create a culture of care in schools, using restorative practices to respond to problems related to student behaviour and creating a culturally responsive pedagogy of relations in classrooms. Some of his research can be accessed at [www.restorativejustice.com](http://www.restorativejustice.com)

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# Working Together

## An occupational therapy perspective on collaborative consultation

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### ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was to explore the occupational therapy consultation process used with students on the autistic spectrum attending their regular school. Individual, in-depth interviews with senior occupational therapists were employed to collect the data. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998), a qualitative research methodology, was used to develop a high-level description and conceptual ordering as an initial step towards developing a consultation model. Constant comparative analysis of the data revealed three interactive and interdependent processes, *Joining Up*, *Finding A Way* and *Walking and Talking*. These processes often occur simultaneously and greatly influence each other. The central concept was identified as *Working Together*, which highlights the collaborative nature of the consultation process. The context of the inclusive education environment requires a strong ecological approach as an essential aspect of therapists' practice. The consultation process described uses occupational therapists' day-to-day experience and is grounded within the inclusive education setting in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### Key Words

*Autism spectrum disorders, collaborative consultation, ecological perspective, grounded theory, inclusive education, occupational therapists, professional practice, school based intervention.*

### BACKGROUND

Historically employed by health, occupational therapists have long worked in special education schools (Vaughan-Jones & Penman, 2004). Recently, the place of occupational therapists in the inclusive education sector as an educational- rather than health-based practitioner was legitimised through *Special Education 2000* (Ministry of Education, 1996, 1999a, 1999b, 2000a), and strengthened through the *New Zealand Disability Strategy* (Minister for Disability Issues, 2001). Implementation of this policy and strategy resulted in increased employment of occupational therapists in the general education context (Vaughan-Jones & Penman, 2004) as an increasing number of students with special needs choose to attend their local schools.

Occupational therapists newly employed by Special Education Services (latterly Ministry of Education, Special Education) were faced with therapy provision within a general education context. Traditionally, minimising disability by 'fixing the child' (Bundy, 1997, p. 1) using a '1:1 model of service delivery' (Swinth et al., 2002, p. 12) guided therapists' practice, but this approach became less relevant with the focus on enabling the student to attend school and access the curriculum (Anich, 1998; Hanft & Place, 1996). Whilst consultation models to guide clinical reasoning have been proposed by Bundy (1991, 2002) and Hanft and Place (1996), therapists have continued to struggle to define their role within the general school setting (Fairbairn & Davidson, 1993; Meanger, 1990; Spillane & Sterling, 1996; Vaughan-Jones & Penman, 2004).

Occupational therapists working in inclusive education are not only challenged by working in the consultative model, but also by providing services for the increasing number of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (Center for Disease Control, n.d; Gilberg & Wing, 1999; Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA), n.d.) who present with more complex issues than the traditional client base of students with physical disabilities (Case-Smith & Miller, 1999). The needs of students with ASD differ significantly, specifically in the area of sensory processing difficulties, affecting their participation and occupational performance in daily life (Dunn, 1999; Smith Myles, et al., 2004; Watling, Deitz & White, 2001).

Clearly changes in employer, work context, service provision and clientele have challenged occupational therapists. There is limited school-based occupational therapy research to guide practice, and what exists is primarily North American. In addition, inclusive education occupational therapy models tend to be theoretically-derived, and based on individual expert opinion and personal philosophy. Differences in legislation, funding and culture warrant caution when applying these models to Aotearoa New Zealand practices. Local research is therefore crucial to develop the knowledge which can inform therapists' day-to-day practice. The focus of this study was to address this need by exploring occupational therapy consultation practice related to students on the autistic spectrum attending regular schools in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

As a step towards developing a consultation model for use in Aotearoa New Zealand practice, the aim of this study was to develop a high-level conceptual ordering (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) based on therapists' professional experiences. To gain an understanding about the social processes which occur when occupational therapists work in an inclusive education context, grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was utilised.

### Participants

Eight experienced female practitioners working for the Ministry of Education, Special Education were recruited by forwarding information through the occupational therapy/physiotherapy electronic mailing list, and subsequent "word of mouth" recruitment by the initial participants. The Ethics Committee of Otago Polytechnic approved the study, and the National Office of the Ministry of Education, Special Education gave permission to approach potential participants.

All participants were provided with information about the study and gave written consent. With between 2 and 8 years of experience in working with children, participants were employed by the Ministry of Education, Special Education to provide itinerant school-based services in regular schools in varied geographical areas (urban/rural), for students aged 5-21 years with a wide range of disabilities including ASD. The students with ASD were verified under the Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS), which include teacher-aide and specialist teacher support, specialist support services and funding for resources. All participants worked within a consultation framework of service delivery. Two of the eight participants had an occupational therapy diploma, four a bachelors degree and two had completed postgraduate studies, with all having attended at least one sensory processing and ASD course.

Face-to-face, one to two hour semi-structured interviews were undertaken with participants in a location of their choice. Participants were initially asked to share a story in which they worked with a student with ASD attending his/her regular school. Questions were used to encourage the participant to expand, to clarify, or as a prompt for further detail. To elaborate on their points, participants frequently drew on other experiences where difficulties occurred, or where everything had gone to plan.

### Analysis

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed for data analysis with pseudonyms used to protect anonymity. In keeping with grounded theory, the constant comparative method of data analysis was used. Each piece of data (a phrase, a sentence or paragraph) was compared to other data to determine similarities and differences (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Consistent with Strauss and Corbin's (1994, 1998) descriptions of coding, data was first divided into small pieces (open coding), then developed into concepts and finally linked into conceptual families (axial coding).

At this point, dimensions of individual concepts were clarified and the relationships between categories formalised into a theoretical framework (selective coding). Strategies employed to promote rigor included:

- a presupposition interview carried out by a colleague experienced with qualitative research and knowledgeable about the area under investigation
- a pilot interview with a colleague who met the participant selection criteria but was not one of the participants
- ongoing memoing as an audit trail
- regular peer review with two occupational therapists with experience in the area under investigation and understanding of qualitative research
- member checking with individual participants through face-to-face meetings discussing preliminary results
- review of results through the Grounded Theory Group at Auckland University of Technology (De Poy & Gitlin, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

## FINDINGS

As shown in Figure 1, the central concept emerging from this study was *Working Together*, emphasising the notion of collaborative consultation. This concept was strongly reflected in all three interactive, but distinctly different processes that were in the participants' stories. The processes of *Joining Up*, *Finding A Way*, and *Walking And Talking* are not linear nor independent. Although one of the processes might dominate at any one time, the processes can also occur simultaneously, overlapping and blurring into each other, and can take place during one visit, or over a period of time.



Figure 1. Working Together.

Each process is discussed in depth in the following sections.

### **Joining Up: Establishing a collaborative foundation**

**Judith:** ... you have to sort of build those relationships first of all ... with the student, with his parents, with the school. So ... the first part of the journey is forming those relationships ...

In *Joining Up*, the occupational therapist described focusing on building relationships with the key players: school staff and parents. Relationships with colleagues in the special education team, for example the speech-language therapist, psychologist, special education advisor and physiotherapist, are also important. All of the key players aim to come together to collaborate as one entity as the student journeys through the educational system. Given the number of people who could be involved with a student with ASD, the therapist starts by questioning "Where do I fit?" The therapist needs to find out whom to connect with for this child, at this time, in this situation and to what level. Therapists particularly emphasised the importance of connecting with the teacher's aide who works with the student every day and often require support regarding the student's management. However, therapists also expressed concerns that building strong relationships with the teacher-aides might at times lead to others, particularly the classroom teacher, taking less responsibility for the student with ASD. It can also be difficult for therapists to maintain regular contact with parents who may be in full or part-time employment as most contact time takes place in the school during school hours.

In order to meet the key players involved, the therapist enters the school's patch. Therapists described a temporal and spatial divide, as all the individuals involved are not situated in the same place, nor do they share the same background and perspectives. The therapist may feel a welcome or unwelcome visitor, which can relate to the school and family's previous experience of either occupational therapy in general, or more specifically, the individual therapist or Special Education staff. Irrespective of the welcome, the therapist, in aiming to get to know the key players, spends crucial time being around the school, touching base with staff and families.

**Liz:** In some schools, you do a lot of hanging around with the teachers, and hanging around with the staff, or hanging around with the families, which doesn't look like you are doing anything, but is actually quite important to build that relationship.

In order to develop a relationship with all key players, therapists emphasised the need to clarify expectations, specifically those related to role and services provided. Working with members of the other teams over time, and especially through difficult situations, helped to build the relationship required to collaborate with each other effectively.

**Theresa:** If a student comes into a school where you are already familiar with staff and they are already used to seeing you, I think that does make a difference as opposed to going directly into a whole new situation.

The outcome of the process *Joining Up* determines if the therapist partners with the key staff involved for the journey that lies ahead. Successful partnering means that all are on the same page with a shared understanding of the issues and of each other. To ensure this, the therapist adjusts the pace during the assessment and intervention process to accommodate that of the school staff and family.

### **Finding A Way: An ecological assessment process**

When reflecting on developing understandings of the child, family, school staff and school environment, therapists frequently used descriptions such as "finding out" and "finding a way". In contrast to the "withdrawal approach" to assessment used within health-based services, therapists working in schools use an ecological approach of assessing the child in the context of their school.

**Judith:** I like working in the school because I think that's where the students are all day. I very, very rarely would take a student out of the classroom or wherever because we always work where they are; in the classroom or in the gym and usually within their own group of students.

Aiming to not disrupt the classroom teaching or general school activities, the therapist becomes an invisible or silent observer blending into the background. Observation is the key assessment tool.

**Theresa:** ... you need to observe them [the student] on a number of different occasions and often in different environments to really get a good understanding ...

Talking and listening to the school staff and family also provides the therapist with essential information.

**Rachel:** ... it's through that process of time that you establish a clearer picture about the team and the skills and abilities of the child, of the difficulties they face and the gains that they've made in time. Time with listening, with observation, with reflection, gives you a much clearer picture of what you're dealing with, with that child and with that team.

The use of standardised assessment tools, which require the child being out of the classroom, are considered carefully. However, congruent with the ecological process, all of the therapists used the Sensory Profile (Dunn, 1999), a standardised caregiver questionnaire focusing on children's responses to sensory information in daily life. Completed by teachers and parents, the Sensory Profile does not require the student to be withdrawn from class for completion.

The various contributing sources of information provide a snapshot of what is happening not only for the student, but also the school staff during daily school life. This snapshot gives the therapist an understanding of the student, the classroom context (both human and non-human), the difficulties which arise and the perspectives and concerns of the school staff and parents.

**Liz:** To actually see what is happening is really important in terms of understanding the dynamics of the school or the classroom and then checking it out through talking and through having a cup of tea and saying I noticed such and such ...

Key to the assessment process is accessing the school staff and family knowledge of the student and their environment. Therapists join the individual pieces gained in the assessment process with their theoretical knowledge of, and practical experience with, ASD to aid their interpretations. The multifaceted nature of ASD also contributes to the complexity of the assessment process, with therapists frequently using the term “trying” to indicate that the way to understanding is not straightforward. In the process of trying to understand, the therapist is able to identify and then prioritise their contribution to the collaborative intervention process.

### **Walking and Talking: A collaborative intervention process**

Therapists did not view their interventions as one-off events, but rather as different “pieces of work” they might be involved in, or contribute to, as one of the members of the team. When working with children with ASD, “pieces of work” commonly addressed include issues related to sensory processing difficulties affecting the child’s behaviour in the classroom, developing independent toileting skills, and written communication. These “pieces of work” are shaped by the school context, for example the emphasis on written communication in a regular school environment, the student’s needs, and the concerns of the school staff and family. What is considered a valid piece of work is also influenced by the therapists’ understanding of their role in schools, which focuses on supporting and equipping the key people around the student to enable the child to attend and learn in the school context. The occupational therapist intervenes with words, by providing information (talking) and through actions, by jointly implementing strategies and adaptations (walking).

**Liz:** ... and with this child it might be just after observing all that and making some hypothesis about it, saying to the teacher’s aide “let’s just see what he does if you just draw it for him and not say anything”. Or I start intervening, let’s have a go and see if we put a yellow highlighter on the mark, will it make it easier for him to do it more independently rather than with too much help. So it is an observing, but then also a “let’s have a look”. It is an observing and an intervening.

Through the use of trial and error the therapist finds out what might work for the student, the school staff and family. Each step in the process is a tweaking or making fine adjustments, rather than the trialing of completely different solutions. Frequently, therapists - in response to levels of concern expressed by school staff - would trial a strategy during their visit, thinking “on the spot” to provide strategies for situations that have arisen while they are there.

Reframing, which involves offering alternative interpretations, was an important tool used by therapists to facilitate a change in the perspective of school staff and family members.

**Liz:** ... one of the key things that I think we do a lot of re-interpreting for people around autism is “the behaviour is not about them being naughty, there is a reason for the behaviour”. This is what I noticed and this is when the behaviour occurred and this is how it manifested and this is the interpretation

I make of it. “How does that sound to you? Does that fit? Does that make sense?” And when they say “oh, yeah, that makes sense”, you know you have reframed something for them.

At times, reframing lays the foundation for offering possible adaptations, while at other times the altered perspective achieved through reframing makes accommodations unnecessary.

**Liz:** It is about them [the school staff] seeing it differently, understanding it differently and then altering their behaviour to match the child’s behaviour or to match the child’s need for a different way of interacting or creating the environment for them.

Adaptations offered commonly focus on the classroom environment and the task in question with the therapists ensuring that any suggestions they make fit with the school staff, the school and classroom. This is achieved by considering the school culture and the skills and resources available in a specific school or classroom.

**Carrie:** ... looking at the teacher and the way they run their classroom. Some classes you can introduce lots of tactile, messy kind of activities and that is ok, but other classes and teachers can’t handle that. So you have to find non-messy ways to get the same sensation.

The desired outcome of *Walking and Talking* is to get the match between meeting the student’s needs and what the school staff and family can provide. In doing so, the key people are able to take on board the suggested perspective or strategy. These adaptations enable and facilitate the student’s participation and inclusion within the classroom.

**Donna:** ... to see him [the student] included in the classroom with his peers when everyone first started thought he wouldn’t. Everyone thought he was a candidate for a special school and now, he’s in there and the other children accept him.

### **DISCUSSION**

With a view towards developing a consultative model, this study aimed to develop a higher level conceptual ordering (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) based on therapists’ consultation practices when working in with children with ASD attending their local school. The therapists have developed a distinctive practice model in response to the considerable challenges encountered in employers, work context, service provision model and clientele. In sharing their stories, the therapists clearly articulated the processes they use to achieve the goals of assisting the child to attend their local school, to become part of the class community and to access the curriculum.

Occupational therapy consultation in schools is grounded in a collaborative, interactive process reflecting principles of consultation outlined by Schein (1999) and further elaborated by Bundy (2002). The process is not linear with a clear start or finish; rather it is iterative as new issues are raised by school staff and families. Working collaboratively with all involved, at different times and in different ways, therapists – drawing on their understanding of the sensory

processing needs and difficulties frequently experienced by children with ASD – use a range of tools such as intently listening to school staff and family during the assessment process, and adapting their suggestions according to others' needs. Additionally, the classroom context becomes the therapeutic media, with the creation of artificial situations considered less desirable. The therapist utilises as much as possible the resources, natural situations and skills available within the school and classroom environment, rarely working outside of the classroom or playground. This ecological approach, which is congruent with the occupational therapy consultation models suggested in the literature (Bundy, 1991, 2002; Hanft & Place, 1996), was a key feature of therapists' practice.

Instead of giving advice as a "one-off" event as an expert may do, consultation involves ever-evolving support to school staff and families over months or years, coming in and out as a visitor in the school as the needs are identified by those who know the child best. The therapists use processes to draw out others' understandings to ensure joint problem-solving occurs for the benefit of the child (Mickan & Rodger, 2000, 2005) and the needs of the school staff involved. Therapists emphasised a general attitude of being supportive and respectfully aware of the school staff's requests and solutions even though these may not be the most useful or effective ones from the therapist's perspective. Working alongside the school staff at their pace, the therapist may see the perfect solution but does not impose this immediately; rather they engage all key stakeholders in the problem-solving process in order to arrive at a jointly owned solution.

Issues needing to be addressed can be unclear or change quickly, as can the individuals and teams involved in the collaboration process. Membership can change due to staffing changes, but also can change in relation to the identified issue and potential solutions. Where teams remain reasonably constant, the process of identification and solution-finding can be relatively quick as all roles and unique contributions are known. However, where team membership has altered significantly or where the teams are new because a child has entered a school for the first time, then time and energy is given by the occupational therapist to the establishment and preservation of relationships (Mickan & Rodger, 2000, 2005) and determining where in the group of key people surrounding the child they fit.

Throughout the journey, the members of the family team (Lesar, Trivette & Dunst, 1995; Rosenbaum, King, Law, King, & Evans, 1998) are mostly constant, but liaising can be problematic as parent and therapist availability do not always match and workload pressures can prevent additional home visits. Phone calls and emails can ease the communication, but the therapists were aware of the pressing need to include parents more in the team (Brown, 2004; Hannah & Rodger, 2002; Rosenbaum, King, Law, King & Evans, 1998).

In contrast to existing occupational therapy consultation models (Bundy, 1991, 2002; Hanft & Place, 1996), therapists in this study described considerable differences in the level of relationship and collaboration with specific individuals from the school, family and special education teams depending on the respective student, situation, and reason for involvement. The therapists evaluate and re-evaluate their role, their position within the overall team and the level of involvement on an ongoing basis. The complex collaborative problem-solving process described by the therapists has a different emphasis than the respective stages described by Bundy (1991, 2002) who discussed that the client is primarily responsible for developing strategies as much as possible, while the therapist contributes from a repertoire of strategies.

Not only do the families and the teams influence the outcome of the consultation process but so does the inclusive education context, which is not surprising given the ecological approach to practice taken by these therapists (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1989). Therapists specifically highlighted how the consultation process differs between schools or within different classrooms within the same school. The concept of differing cultures between classes in a school or between schools is a recent acknowledgement in the educational literature (Stoll, 2000; Gaffney, McCormak, Higgins & Taylor, 2004). For the therapists in this study, the inclusive education context in general and specific school environmental influences shaped their every step and action. Bundy (1991, 2002) and Hanft and Place (1996) recognised the need for therapists to consider the overall culture of schools, however the significant cultural differences between individual schools and consideration of these differences within the consultation process is yet to be acknowledged.

### **Implications for Practice**

The results of this research not only have the potential to inform occupational therapists' practice within the educational setting, but also that of other health and educational professionals.

For therapists commencing in education settings, having previously worked in health settings, there is a need to appreciate a different model of working. Hence consideration needs to be given to the induction of therapists into this particular field of practice. Novice therapists, even those with extensive paediatric experience in health, would benefit from a reduced caseload while transitioning into working consultatively in general schools. Given the numbers of teams the therapists will join, additional time may be required to develop relationships with school staff and colleagues. Additionally, the complex problem-solving required might take longer for these practitioners. Regular opportunities for supervision and peer mentoring are important to develop these essential skills. Joint school visits with senior occupational therapists as well as colleagues from other professional groups within Special Education would be beneficial to develop the consultation, collaboration and clinical reasoning skills necessary to practice effectively. Opportunities to join wider communities of school-based therapists through the use of technology (e.g. mailing lists or online discussion forums) to discuss general practice principles and specific issues may be valuable.

Caution is warranted when trying to generalise timeframes required in addressing a specific piece of work such as toileting or handwriting issues, or limiting a therapist's involvement to one-off visits or short timeframes of involvement. Therapists described situations in which workload pressures impacted on their ability to allocate the necessary time, which they felt hindered the overall consultation process. The development of relationships with key people in one school may take very little time if the therapist or educational professional is "known" in the school. However, in other situations much of the professional's time will be focused on engaging with and coming to know and be part of the school. Being engaged with the school staff has been identified as one prerequisite of effective practice by therapists in this study, therefore rushing or limiting the therapist's involvement is likely to considerably impede the overall outcome.

The professional development needs of these therapists are shaped by the specific skills and knowledge required in this field of practice. However, at present there are limited opportunities for therapists to build up these skills as part of their ongoing professional development. Working in regular schools using collaborative consultation requires considerable problem-solving by therapists. Therapists need to be flexible, to juggle many factors within their head, and to often do this very quickly, i.e. "on-the-spot". Therefore, actively engaging the therapists using a problem-based learning approach and real-life scenarios or case studies should be an integral component of courses and induction programmes offered by tertiary institutions and employers. The content of these courses needs to cover a wide range of topics which are essential to this area of practice, including:

- a sound understanding of inclusion
- the general education context and relevant legislation
- interactive reasoning skills and knowledge about concepts such as school culture
- practice skills such as adapting suggestions to the specific school and class context.

Additionally, it would be beneficial to introduce school-based occupational therapy to preregistration occupational therapy students. This could be achieved by including relevant concepts and theoretical knowledge into the curriculum, use of school-based therapy case scenarios in problem-based learning sessions and offering fieldwork education placements within relevant organisations or agencies.

### Implications for Further Research

Clearly this is only the start of the development of a model of collaborative consultative practice that has emerged not from other discipline's writings on consultation, but from the actual stories of Aotearoa New Zealand occupational therapists as they describe their day-to-day work. The processes need to be further explored and tested by a number of therapists providing services to different student groups who receive services under different funding schemes. Additionally, as this research investigates just the occupational therapists' perspective, exploring the

consultation process from the standpoint of the school staff, families and other special education professionals is essential to gain insights into the shared understanding of collaborative consultation in schools. Finally, specific concepts such as the process of adapting intervention and approaches to address the school culture, as well as skills and resources available in the respective school, require more attention in research as these concepts are essential for effective practice. Similarly, the interactive clinical reasoning processes used by school-based therapists requires further investigation as trusting relationships have been identified as an essential aspect in effective collaborative consultation practices. Further research into collaborative consultation as it is practiced by occupational therapists working in inclusive education will contribute to developing a coherent and effective collaborative consultation model grounded in practice.

### Limitations of this Study

When considering transferability of the results, it is important to be aware that while congruent categories emerged from the therapists' stories, the size of the sample was small and all were female. In addition, the study occurred within the framework of a master's study where timeframes and resources were limited. A longer time period, observations in the classroom and inclusion of male occupational therapists may have led to the introduction of other categories.

Furthermore, the students with ASD mentioned in this study attended their local regular school and were verified under the ORRS, which include support staff, specialist services and funding for resources. Therefore, caution is warranted when generalising the findings to other settings, such as special schools, and students receiving funding under other schemes. Additionally, although the process described is interactive and collaborative in nature, this research offers only the occupational therapists' perspective with further research required to explore the perspective of all key players.

### CONCLUSION

Grounded theory analysis of the experiences of eight Ministry of Education, Special Education occupational therapists provided insight into the consultation process used by these therapists when working together with the key people supporting students with ASD attending their local school. A high-level conceptual ordering emerged from the data, consisting of the three separate but at the same time interrelated processes, *Joining Up*, *Finding A Way* and *Walking and Talking*, which amount to the central concept of *Working Together*. This research is an initial step towards developing a consultation model grounded within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. In particular, these therapists' consultation practice reflects a collaborative as well as an ecological approach. Additionally, the findings shed light on the complex problem-solving and interactive clinical reasoning processes, which are essential components of the therapist's day-to-day work. In summary, these findings contribute significantly to the knowledge-base of practitioners working within the inclusive education context in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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# On Children Transitioning to New Cultural and Linguistic Settings

“When in Rome ... it’s okay to be a tourist”

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## ABSTRACT

There may be an implicit assumption amongst some New Zealand educators that minority cultures should assimilate wholly into the New Zealand way of life, shedding aspects of their own culture that conflict with the mainstream. Some others assert that encouraging minority students to maintain their culture, including language and traditions, results in positive academic and social achievement. This paper challenges some of the possible covert assumptions that may be prevalent amongst educators; assumptions that prevent these children from transitioning smoothly into our schools. It outlines the importance of valuing cultural differences, promoting a sense of personal identity and encouraging the use of first languages.

## Research Paper

### Keywords

*Bilingualism, cultural differences, ethnic identity, inclusion practices, minority students, refugees, transition programmes.*

## INTRODUCTION

The adage “When in Rome, do as the Romans do” is a familiar expression relating to one culture interacting with another in various settings. To an extent, it may be warranted that those “visiting” should take on aspects of the local culture as a means of showing respect and “fitting in”. Conversely, the question of how much of a person’s identity should be put aside in order to be accepted by others may be debated. Right now, the assimilation of cultures is occurring regularly right on our doorsteps, with students from ethnic minority groups transitioning into New Zealand schools on a daily basis (Ministry of Education, 1999). A valid question may be posed as to how educators should regard their presence in our classrooms and school communities. When transitioning into New Zealand schools, should ethnic minority students be expected to “do as the Kiwis do”, or are there other approaches that can be taken to ensure that respect for both cultures remains intact?

## THE OFFICIAL VIEW

In recent years, the number of migrant and refugee students in New Zealand schools has increased significantly (Kennedy & Dewar, 2007; Ministry of Education, 1999). These students hail from a range of backgrounds, with differing experiences that combine to shape their unique and individual identities. As a result, schools and educators at all levels have been directed to acknowledge and value the character of the

communities they are situated in (Ministry of Education, 1997, 1999). *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) emphasises the value placed on our nation’s cultural diversity and the traditions of all its people, outlining that all school students, irrespective of cultural background, will be accepted in the education system. The identities, cultures, and languages of all individuals will be supported, their experiences valued, and learning needs addressed. This is echoed in *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996), the curriculum document for early childhood education, indicating that it is a priority for ethnic minority groups in New Zealand. But just how successful has this mandate been? Baker (1997) suggests that modifying educational policies to acknowledge cultural diversity is one issue; however adjusting entrenched attitudes of some monolingual, monocultural teachers is far more difficult. Campbell (2000) concurs, saying that such reactionary teachers often attempt to change minority students to fit the “norms” of the mainstream culture they are familiar with, and find easier to teach. They tend to make few attempts to bridge the gap between home and school, immerse the student in English language and Western value systems, and fail to recognise the traditional cultural values that could academically advantage students from minority cultures.

## WHAT COULD HAPPEN

Research shows that ethnic minority groups generally fail to achieve either academically or socially to a level that is comparable with dominant cultures (Chapple, Jefferies & Walker, 1997; Hirsch, 1990). There are several reasons cited for this, including an inequitable education system, poor self esteem, and external locus of control, where individuals look for fault externally rather than internally (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973). Campbell (2000) argues that one reason for poor achievement amongst minority students is the attitude of teachers. She believes that, while cultural diversity is now acknowledged and “celebrated” in national education policies, there is still an assumption amongst some educators that coming from a minority cultural background is a disadvantage. This underlying attitude sends mixed messages to students from minority groups who are readily enrolled into the system, but who are limited by racial stereotyping that underestimates their ability to cross the cultural barriers they encounter in order to succeed. Students who are not expected to succeed will often fulfil expectations and fail (Ministry of Education, 1999). Viewing cultural traditions, values, attitudes and language as deficits devalues the

essence of the child (Blackledge, 1994; Eckermann, 1994). Alternatively, genuinely acknowledging and appreciating cultural differences communicates to the minority student that they are valued as human beings. This has a significant impact on how they view themselves and others, boosting confidence, and positively influencing their academic achievement, social acceptance, and personal well-being.

### WHAT THE THEORISTS SAY

Sociocultural theories propose that children's intellectual and social development are closely linked, and that their world is constructed through interactive social contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bruner, 1996; Eckermann, 1994; Erikson, 1968). During transition into unfamiliar social contexts, in times of change and challenge, individuals tend to depend on aspects of their self-concept that are core to their identity (Jackson & Warin, 2000). This may be paralleled with travel situations, where individuals spending time in other countries will often become unusually patriotic or exude more of their own culture whilst attempting to integrate into an unfamiliar context. For instance, New Zealanders embarking on the traditional "OE" (overseas experience) can perhaps be too readily identified by their "I'm from Down Under" t-shirts and hats, or accentuated "Kiwi" jargon. As well, many seek comfort by finding accommodation in suburbs that are known to be heavily populated by other New Zealanders, and searching out familiar foods in supermarkets or local bars to help with their adjustment during the transition. Students from minority cultures are no different, drawing on attitudes, values and belief systems that have been shaped through experiences in environments that may differ vastly from the milieu they are moving into.

Even when a child from a minority culture appears to be adapting personally, socially and academically to their new environment with ease, there may actually be a mismatch between school and home that confuses this transition. Baker (1997) refers to this as "home/school disarticulation", where norms, values and beliefs within the family unit differ from those of the education system. Students may merely "survive" by moving constantly from one cultural context to another, essentially learning what is "expected" of them and how they should conduct themselves in each situation (Campbell, 2000). The Ministry of Education (1999) outlines the importance of celebrating cultural differences and valuing diversity, not just to remove possible barriers to learning, but also to foster positive self esteem and identity. Paying "lip-service" to culture is demeaning and detrimental to a minority student's sense of who they are (Blackledge, 1994). When students from different cultural backgrounds are supported to develop a strong sense of self, they are more likely to move through the transition process with minimal stress (Merry, 2007). Embracing and supporting the individual ways in which minority students deal with transitions into the educational environment can deeply impact on their confidence, perceptions of self, and ultimately, their identity.

Bourdieu (1997) discusses the concept of cultural capital, which consists of values held by families that are handed on to their children. These may exist as beliefs that shape

goals, attitudes and development, and they are influenced by economic, symbolic, cultural and social factors (Brooker, 2002). As with any child transitioning into a new school context, students from ethnic minority groups bring with them a "package" of individual cultural capital that largely defines who they are. The cultural capital that is possessed by the individual, and how it is perceived by others in the new context, can determine the level of control the minority student has over their transition. Cultural capital can be representative of levels of "power", which are ultimately used for "negotiating a place" in social contexts (Gibbons, 2002). The sometimes unfamiliar or threatening cultural capital a minority student brings with them can result in their peers or teachers positioning them at the lower end of this scale. Likewise, the minority student's own perception of their worth can have an effect on where they fit in terms of this assumed power in their new social context. Eckermann (1994) proposes that people are organised into a series of hierarchical positions according to aspects of capital such as class, socio-economic status and culture. She states that:

A group's culture is relevant only to its own particular group, it helps to determine how that group perceive themselves, how they conceptualise or order their world, what propositions or beliefs they use to explain things, how they try to cope with their world as well as the sentiments and values which tell them what is good and what is bad, their proven mechanisms for dealing with other people and with material things in their world. (pp. 2-3)

Clearly, the extent to which these aspects of culture are accepted by individuals in the new social context will be a determining factor in how well the minority student copes with the migration from a familiar to an unfamiliar setting.

In his ecological model, Bronfenbrenner (1979) demonstrates the influence of different social systems that impact on individuals, emphasising the complexity of the interaction between people and contexts. He highlights systems that range from situations close to the individual, such as home and neighbourhood, to impacts from further afield, such as government or international influences, maintaining that the impact of these layers and the way in which they are responded to, combine to shape the individual. As mentioned previously, ethnic minority students can face challenges in transitions due to a mismatch between home and school environments. Returning to the illustration of the Kiwi traveller embarking on their OE, the sense of disequilibrium experienced in a new environment can be somewhat unsettling. Despite the exhilaration one may be feeling about exploring something new, the resulting apprehension is a factor that can often not be prepared for. Grappling with language, currency, customs and laws are all an exciting part of the new experience, but can leave even the most confident traveller rather perturbed. Just as the weary traveller must "find their feet" in order to glean the best from their overseas expedition, students from ethnic minorities are faced with a similar challenge. However positive minority students might feel about their new experience, the likely presence of some anxiety may impact on their initial engagement with the unfamiliar context.

The addition of another system of influence that in some situations conflicts with what minority children have experienced in life to that point can have devastating consequences for their achievement in the new context. Corson (1998) suggests that aspects of cultural capital other than language brought to school by children from minority backgrounds are what cause inequalities in academic performance. He states that teacher pedagogy and organisational arrangements need to be matched with children's home cultural values in order to reverse educational failure rates. In light of this, the relationship between school and home can impact positively on the child's ability to transition smoothly into their new environment. Schools can assist culturally diverse parents or caregivers to support their child's social and academic success by outlining cultural factors that may hinder achievement in these areas. Likewise, families can assist schools and educators to understand cultural traditions that have shaped their child's values, beliefs and practices (Whyte, 2005). This raises the question: Who holds the responsibility for instigating discussion regarding cultural aspects? Such dialogue should be considered with sensitivity from all perspectives, in order to successfully initiate and foster this relationship.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE

Language can be a key barrier to social interaction and academic achievement in the initial transfer to the mainstream school setting. The communication challenges experienced by some learners with limited oral English skills may result in the student being socially isolated by their English speaking peers, or reduce important interactions with teachers and other significant adults. In New Zealand schools, English should add to, not replace, the languages of minority students, as this acts as a reinforcement of their cultural identity (Blackledge, 1994; Kennedy & Dewar, 1997; Waite, 1992). Learning in all curriculum areas is language-oriented, and this can present challenges to students who are required to master language as well as content. May (2002) proposes that academic achievement and literacy development are actually increased when students are able to use their first language in the school setting, a notion supported by other experts in the linguistic field (Corson, 1998; Cummins & Swain, 1986). Proficiency in one language can aid in the learning of another, as linguistic knowledge is transferred from the native language to that which is being learnt. When minority students are encouraged to use their first language in the classroom, this may remove limits on their ability to communicate meaning. From the perspective of teacher practitioners and peers, developing an understanding of basic linguistic terms from minority students and their parents or caregivers may well be beneficial. This might enable them to gain insight into aspects of the student's culture and background that could not possibly be communicated by them with their limited knowledge of English and its meanings.

Supporting minority students to use their first language also makes it a "normal" occurrence for their peers, as they are not being influenced to view bilingualism as a "problem" that needs to be overcome (Smith, 2006), or as a point of

difference that divides them. Such strategies support the inclusive intent of our national curriculum documents; however the practical implications for teachers are considerable. Educators must be open to continual modification of teaching practices in order to optimise learning opportunities for students whose primary language is not English. These may include using non-linguistic representations (for example, symbols and diagrams) to complement language use, and fostering support networks outside of the classroom to allow minority students to make links with prior experiences and knowledge (Alton-Lee, 2003). They must also work to create classroom cultures that are not characterised by intimidation by peers, and that promote acceptance and understanding of diversity. *The New Zealand Curriculum* (Ministry of Education, 2007) states that effective teachers create supportive learning environments by attending to the cultural and linguistic diversity of *all* students. Obviously, with increasing multilingualism in their classrooms, appropriate resources will need to continue to be made available for teachers to cope with this expectation.

### CONCLUSION

Clearly, the smooth transition of students from ethnic and linguistic minority groups into mainstream learning environments is impacted on by numerous intricate factors. Each interacts in such a complex way that it is difficult to separate any one as being significantly more important than any others. However, one aspect remains certain – that educators at all levels need to develop an awareness of the difficulties faced by minority students when moving into our predominantly English-speaking school environments. With numbers of students from ethnic minority groups expected to increase (Ministry of Education, 1999), it is in the best interests of New Zealand educators to adapt pedagogy and practice to support these transitions. This should result in an increased understanding of how to accommodate and enhance cultural and linguistic diversity within educational settings and the wider society. An important feature of the vision for our education system is to encourage our young people to create a nation in which all cultures are valued for their contributions (Ministry of Education, 2007). The conception that being in a particular social context should involve putting aside the very characteristics that make individuals who they are, expired the day that New Zealand, like many others, became a multicultural nation.

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# Does the Oxford Reading Pen Enhance Reading Accuracy and Comprehension for Students with Reading Difficulties in a Classroom Environment?

## An implementation trial

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### ABSTRACT

This article was undertaken to determine whether the Oxford Reading Pen (ORP) could enable students with reading difficulties to read and comprehend text at their chronological age. A small sample of students with reading difficulties was involved in a trial to ascertain the impact of using the ORP within their classroom reading activities. The results gained were positive and the potential of the ORP as an effective complementary tool for classroom use is discussed. The importance of carefully matching assistive technologies to student needs is highlighted as "one size does not fit all".

### Practice Paper

#### Keywords

*Assistive devices, classroom practices, dyslexia, evaluation, information and communication technology, learning difficulties, reading difficulties.*

### INTRODUCTION

This implementation trial set out to identify if the ORP is an appropriate and effective compensatory Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to assist students with reading difficulties in their classrooms. The aim of this study was to investigate if the ORP could be used by students independently in their classroom to:

- enhance comprehension
- increase reading accuracy
- enable reading for meaning at chronological age.

The writer approached the trial from the perspective of a practicing Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTL) seeking to identify if the ORP was an appropriate compensatory ICT for students with reading difficulties. Whilst a variety of ICT solutions are available to assist students with reading difficulties the ORP appeared to be able to assist such students at a fraction of the cost, with minimal training time and little classroom disruption. An experimental approach was used to test the effectiveness of the ORP during this small scale implementation trial.

### BACKGROUND TO THE TRIAL

Many of the referrals RTL receive are for students who require assistance and support with their reading. Whilst a variety of remediation programmes are readily available within schools, such as Rainbow Reading (Pluck, 1996) and Reading Recovery (Reading Recovery New Zealand, 2006), these interventions require time for students to develop their reading skills. In contrast, the ORP has the potential to enable immediate decoding and comprehension of unfamiliar vocabulary, allowing students to engage in reading at their chronological age immediately. This may help students with reading difficulties to avoid disengagement and disaffection, which are common features of students who are struggling to read (Dyslexia Foundation, 2007). Complementary ICTs such as the ORP have the potential to overcome such difficulties.

The ORP is claimed to assist people with reading difficulties (see Appendix) and as such, links closely with the Ministry of Education ICT policy which highlights the importance of people using ICT to participate fully in society, including school (Ministry of Education, 2003). With the recent recognition of dyslexia within New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2007) and the government pledge to assist students diagnosed with dyslexia, ICTs such as the ORP may become more common within schools. This trial seeks to clarify the ORP's effectiveness in assisting New Zealand students to overcome reading difficulties.

ICTs combining text-to-speech software and scanners have been used in New Zealand since the early 1990s. The literature search examined studies which investigated ICTs which could assist people to overcome their reading difficulties. The majority of this originates in the United Kingdom (United Kingdom Parliament, 2007) and the United States of America (Slaughter, 2001). These countries have historically recognised and provided specific screening and ongoing support for students with reading difficulties and/or dyslexia.

Balajthy (2005) completed a study summarising the use of text-to-speech technology as it utilises scanning and speech technology. He identifies a range of literature which highlighted the success of computers and text-to-speech software in enhancing reading and comprehension. Balajthy identifies that students with the greatest difficulties make the best gains using these sorts of technologies. An important factor highlighted is the close matching of the user's needs with the technology they are to use. As an example, Balajthy identifies that text-to-speech software is more successful for students with low reading ages, but that students with attention deficits do not generally do any better when using the ICTs.

Higgins and Raskind (2005) investigated the effectiveness of one compensatory option, the ORP, for increasing the comprehension of students with learning difficulties. They identify a variety of research that shows the ORP as a viable tool for compensating for reading deficits with American students. Their study used a sample of 30 students, training them over two weeks to use the ORP. They received comprehension tests with and without the ORP and the results were compared. Their results indicated that the students did increase their reading comprehension with the use of the ORP and that it could be used successfully across curriculum subjects by a variety of students at high school.

Within the research presented above there was wide praise for the gains which occur in reading comprehension when text-to-speech software is utilised. The only issue raised by the authors related to a mismatch between equipment and the users' needs. This should not be seen as a criticism of the use of ICTs, rather that of improper implementation. Balajthy (2005) identifies a major problem when utilising laptops or text-to-speech software and scanners being the time for preparing the equipment and training, as well as the expensive purchase price.

ICTs are not only valuable in aiding comprehension, but outcomes of studies suggest that, when used appropriately, ICTs can facilitate other outcomes. The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (Becta, 2004, 2007) identifies that ICT can motivate children with specific learning difficulties to acquire literacy skills and give support across the curriculum. They add that ICTs such as text-to-speech software (handheld or tabletop), spellcheckers and wordlists can also foster integration within the classroom and enhance student independence and self initiated learning. These are described by Becta as the hidden benefits of portable ICTs.

Perry's (2003) research on the use of Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) within schools supports the ideas of Becta (2004, 2007). This is relevant as Personal Digital Assistants are small handheld devices which are relatively inexpensive and have positive impacts upon student learning. In this respect they may be seen as comparable to the ORP. With this in mind, pedagogy must be developed around their use in schools as has been for graphical calculators. For instance, could handheld devices be used instead of a human reader in examinations?

The ORP has the ability to be used only as a text-to-speech device with the dictionary switched off and locked by the password feature. This could enable a student with reading difficulties to work independently of a human reader, although they still could not be used in examinations as presently there are no guidelines for use. This is an ongoing issue with new compensatory ICTs as the technology outpaces the processes which need to be developed for the usage within examination situations. Luckily, reader-writers are available and students with reading difficulties can use their complementary ICTs at other times.

Perry (2003) indicates that many schools aim to have students accessing school websites (for homework for instance) and that PDAs could be used to achieve this. ORPs could enable students to access their homework and school tasks independently as long as they are presented in a manner in which the ORP could recognise the text. This would certainly be a cheaper method for both families and schools to enable students with reading difficulties to access age-appropriate homework tasks.

Finally, Becta (2004) indicates that a variety of factors must be considered when using portable ICTs such as adequate training for staff and students, as well as ongoing commitment from teacher, parents and student. This aspect, along with Higgins' and Raskind's (2005) article, helped shape the training aspect of this trial.

## METHODOLOGY

### Description of the ORP

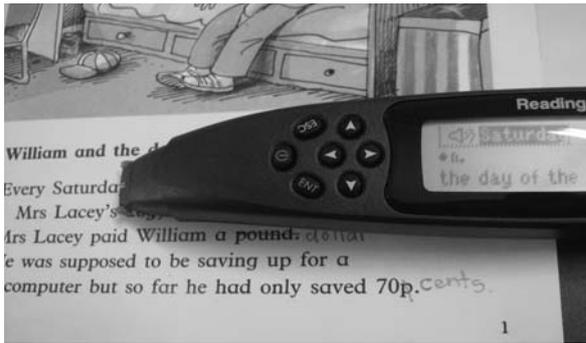
The ORP is of similar size to a board marker and uses two AAA batteries. It combines Optical Character Recognition technology with an on-board scanner, speaker and liquid crystal display window. It is able to scan printed text and read either individual words or sentences the user wishes to read (see Appendix for a full description).

### Why was the ORP selected?

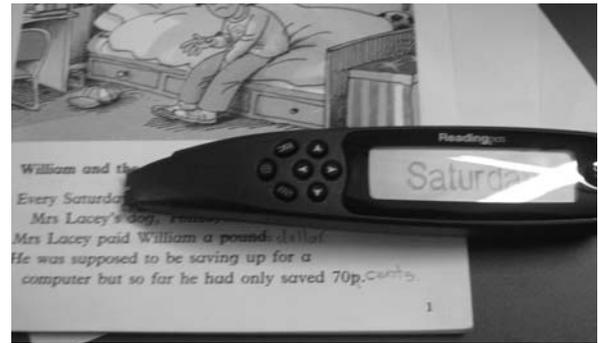
For a number of years, the writer has been using a variety of compensatory ICTs to assist students with reading and written output including predictive text, speech recognition, laptops and text-scanning software. When matched correctly to a student they are highly effective. The major barriers to successful implementation are the cost of the software and hardware, as well as the training time for the student and the adults around them. A further barrier faced by high school students is that of mobility as a laptop, scanner and headphones takes time to set up in each class and are difficult to move around school.

The ORP came to the writer's attention following a conversation with a colleague who recommended it. Following a quick demonstration and "hands on" experience, and an exploration of relevant research, the potential of the ORP to assist students with reading difficulties was apparent and one was purchased to trial in the RTLB cluster. Higgins' and Raskind's (2005) study provided a framework for this trial and clarified the writer's ideas with regard to how the trial could be implemented.

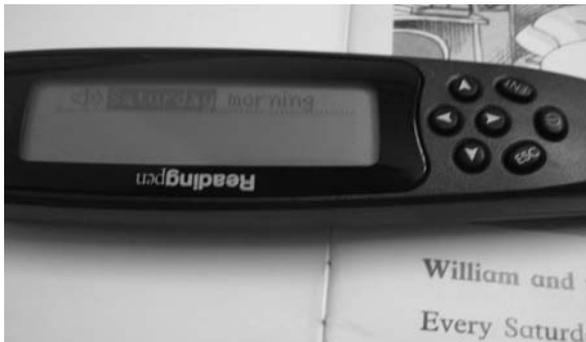
Saturday has been scanned and definition is displayed.



Saturday has been scanned and is displayed in large text.



ORP in left hand format – note screen reversal.



ORP in left hand mode being used to scan.

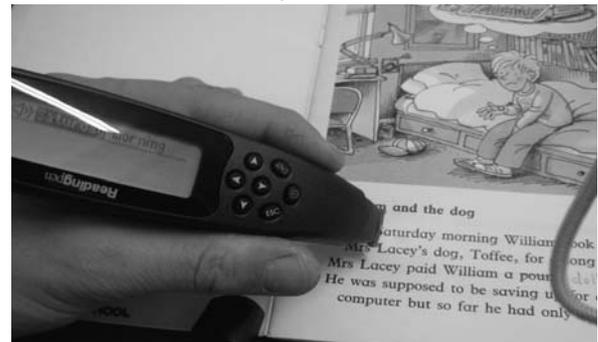


Figure 1. Pictures of the ORP in use. (Pictures courtesy of Westland RTLB)

An initial literature search located a study completed by Hardy (2004) who did not identify how she had obtained her viewpoints on the ORP, yet highlighted some potential pitfalls for this trial. She notes difficulties with scanning if the ORP is not held correctly, especially if the user does not have good motor skills. A further difficulty identified is that of the ORP only scanning from certain papers and being not appropriate for scanning large tracts of text. These views I feel are not well-founded as the ORP instruction manual highlights what it is possible to scan and how much it will scan in one attempt.

### Selection of Participants

Four students who were already participating in reading remediation programmes were selected as subjects. The sample of four students represents a quarter of the writer's current cases. All four students were open RTLB cases on the writer's caseload and are referred to as Students or 'S' 1-4 in this article. All the students were selected because they were reading below their age. The students were of different chronological ages to each other, enabling a wider cross section of users to be assessed. Gender differences were not considered relevant to this trial: three boys and one girl were selected.

Excellent relationships were already established with the students, teachers and their parents. The writer approached the teachers and parents, and explained the scope of the trial and demonstrated the ORP to them. Permission was gained from all parties and the writer asked each student if they were willing to participate, following a clear explanation of what was to occur. All four students agreed to participate verbally and written consent was gained from the teachers and parents.

The ethical dimension of testing the students' reading accuracy and comprehension at their chronological age may be questioned: all students were reading more than 1.5 years below their chronological age (all participants, parents and students were made aware of this prior to participation in the trial). It was important to test at the chronological age for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the students were presented with chronologically appropriate written material during their school day as it was an aim of the trial to identify if the ORP could help them overcome their difficulties.

Secondly, by using the ORP with the texts at their chronological age, the pre-ORP trial identified the difficulties experienced by the students on a daily basis and enabled a direct comparison to be made when they used the ORP. Thirdly, the students were well aware that they struggled with reading at their age and it was important for them to identify during the post-trial questions if they felt the ORP helped them. A final ethical consideration was that of the students being trained and tested within their regular classroom. This may have been an issue for the students so it was discussed with them prior to their agreeing to participate. It was important as the writer sought to identify if the ORP could be used effectively within a busy classroom environment.

This trial aimed to assess the potential benefits of using the ORP within the writer's cluster to enable an informed decision about its utilisation within cluster schools. Readers may relate this trial's findings to their situation but should be aware that the sample size of this trial is limited and is relevant only to the writer's cluster.

## Data Collection

Baseline data was collected on the students' reading and comprehension levels using the Prose, Reading, Observation, Behaviour and Evaluation of Comprehension (PROBE) (Pool, Parkin & Parkin, 1999) assessment in the pre- and post-experimental phases.

Each student received a PROBE test at their chronological age within their regular classrooms. Following this, a one-to-one training session with the writer on using the ORP was conducted, again within their respective classrooms. By the end of their sessions all the students were able to scan effectively and use the basic functions readily. The students were then given the ORP to use for a day each within their classes. Time constraints only allowed for one day's practice for each student.

The following week the students were again visited by the writer individually in their regular classroom settings and given the ORP for a five minute refresher session and then tested again using a different PROBE at the same reading level. The students were then asked questions about their experiences and thanked for their participation. Quantitative data (PROBE testing) and qualitative data (individual interviews) were combined to evaluate the effectiveness of the ORP.

## ORP Training Outline

All individual training sessions took place between 0900 and 0930 enabling all four students to practice with the

ORP for the remainder of the day. The training session covered demonstration and hands-on practice scanning text, and adjustment of the ORP to match left- and right-handed users. Following this, scanning of individual words and then sentences was practised along with their playback. The students were instructed how to use the definition and history features as well as connecting and using the headphones as required. Finally, the students were left with the ORP for the remainder of the day to practise using it.

Each student was asked six questions to gather insight into what they thought of the ORP. Each student was asked to describe what they thought of it, what they liked about it, how they thought it could help them, if they would use it with their peers around them, if there were any problems and finally, if they had \$500.00 of their own money, would they buy an ORP?

## RESULTS

The results were analysed and shared with the students, teachers and parents.

Figure 2 compares the chronological age, reading accuracy with and without ORP, self correction and comprehension scores for all four students. Figure 2 indicates that all four students increased their reading accuracy when using the ORP. Students 1, 3, and 4 also show increased comprehension scores when using the ORP. Conversely, Student 2 shows a significant decline in comprehension.

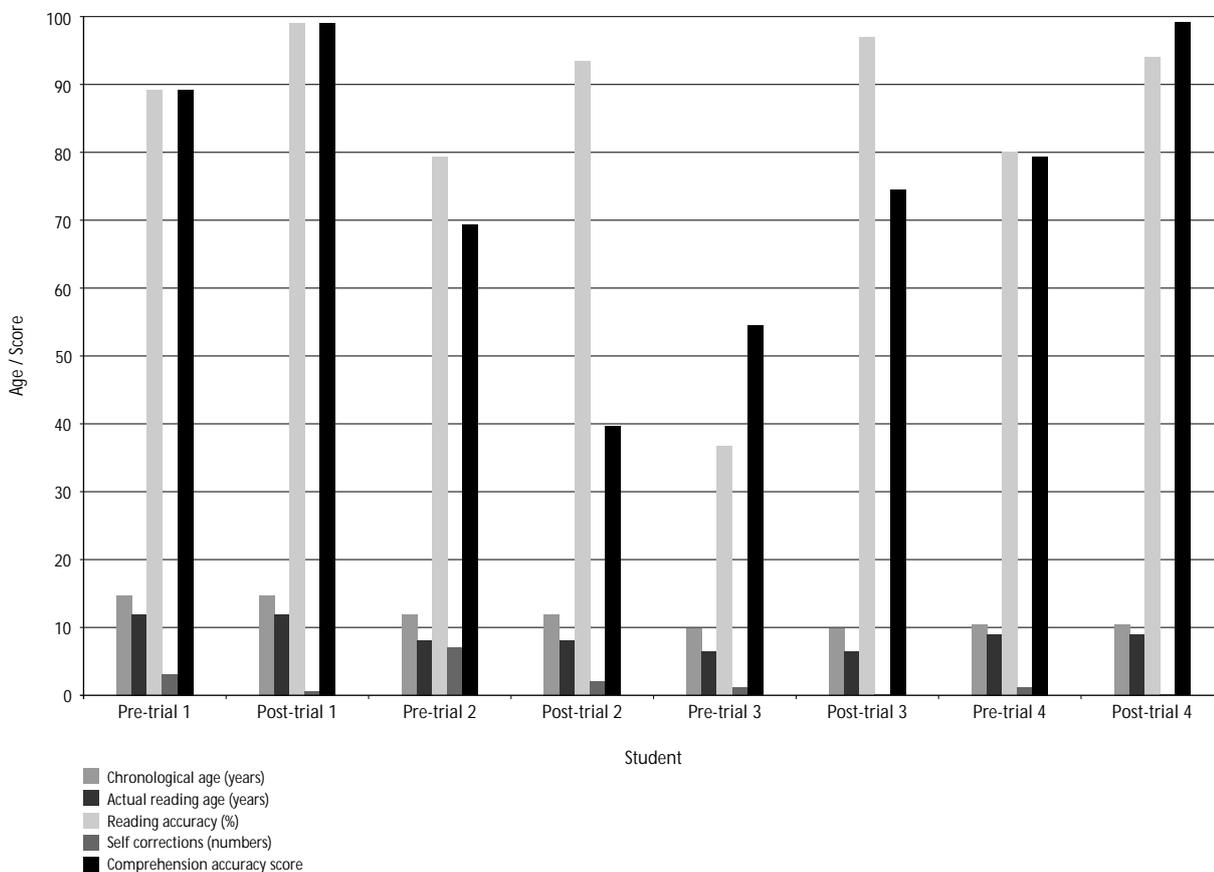


Figure 2. Reading Accuracy and comprehension scores using the PROBE student assessment.

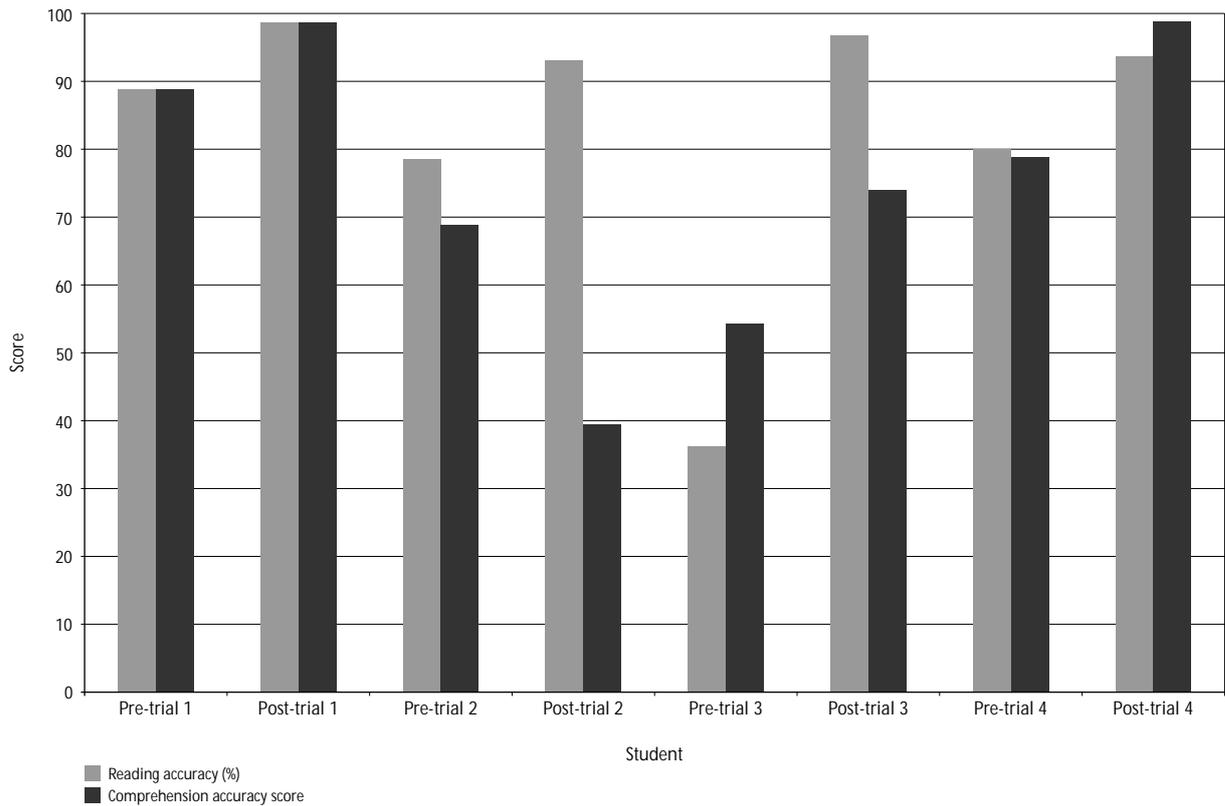


Figure 3. Reading accuracy and comprehension results with and without the ORP.

Figure 3 shows pre-trial and post-trial reading accuracy and comprehension results with and without the ORP. Student 1 gained 100% reading accuracy and comprehension when using the ORP, whilst Student 2 showed a 15% increase in reading accuracy with the ORP yet reading comprehension declined by 30%. Student 3 had a 60% increase in reading accuracy with the ORP and an increase of 20% in reading comprehension. Student 4 results show a 12% increase in reading accuracy with the ORP and enhancement of reading comprehension by 20%.

Figure 4 shows some of the student comments regarding their experiences when using the ORP. Positive comments from the students indicated that they felt the ORP helped them to read and understand more text. The comments show that the use of the headphones to assist hearing was down to personal choice, rather than students indicating it was better with or without them. Some preferred headphones whilst others did not utilise them. The students identified the ORP could be used in all subjects and at home and school. They added that it was acceptable to use with their peers around, with one indicating that he would ask his friends to read the definitions to him.

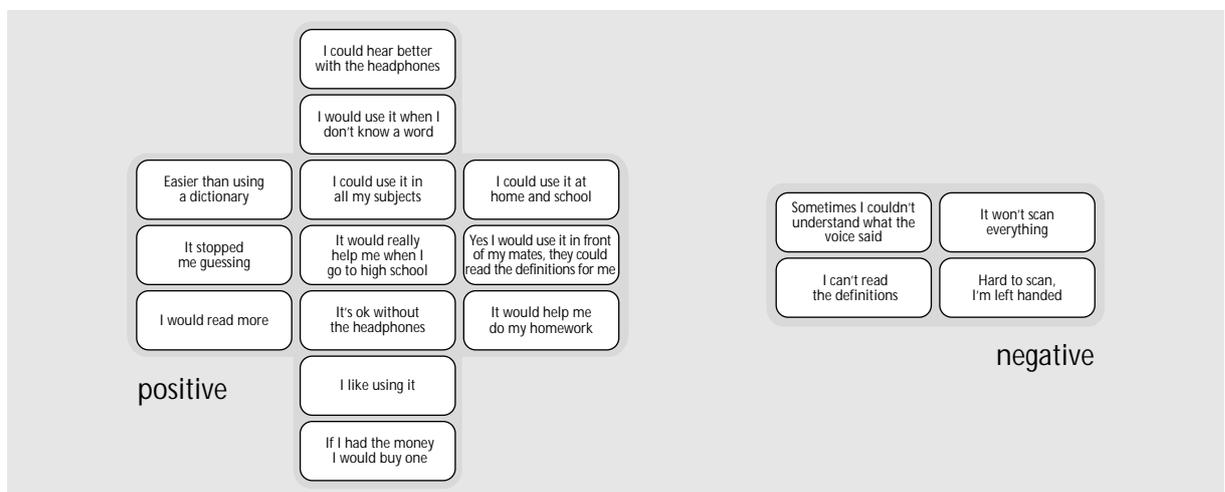


Figure 4. Summary of student comments following the use of ORP.

Negative comments included students indicating that the speech was difficult to understand at times and that they could not read the definitions. Other criticisms included difficulty with the scanning process and the fact that the ORP did not recognise all texts.

## DISCUSSION

The ORP was successfully utilised within the regular classroom by all the students with a high degree of independence. Students indicated the perceived assistance they felt the ORP gave them was well-founded, as is supported by the PROBE results.

Although on trial the speech output appeared to be too quiet for the classroom even with the headphones, the results gained indicate that the students could hear and understand the pronunciation. Whilst headphones were offered for the PROBE test, none of the students used them. The speech output of the ORP was well-below the general noise level in the class. Initially, the students did comment that the pronunciation was difficult to understand at times but by the end of the practice they all reported that they could understand when they used the strategies they had been shown. These included replaying the speech, getting the ORP to say each letter in the word on its own and, as a last resort, asking a teacher or peer. This again highlights the importance of training users of ICTs to allow successful utilisation.

The results indicate that the mobility of the unit is also extremely beneficial to the students. Whilst they only used it independently for a day, their comments indicate that they believed they could utilise the ORP across the curriculum. They also indicated they would use it for homework and leisure reading and that they were excited about using it. Unlike the scanner and laptop combination mentioned earlier, and similar to the PDAs, the ORP lends itself to high mobility allowing easy use between home and school. A further benefit, as with the PDAs, is the relatively cheap price – making it accessible to more families and schools. A further highly beneficial feature is that the ORP can be carried in a pocket and is operated by batteries which means no larger desk or power points are required, minimising its impact on the classroom environment and enabling the user to settle to work quickly with no inconvenience to the teacher or peers.

All the students were able to increase their reading accuracy, being able to read text at their chronological age. Three of the four students also increased their reading comprehension at this level. However, Student 2's reading comprehension was significantly lower using the ORP. This result may have been influenced by Student 2's poorer fine motor skills. Student 2 took much longer to complete his PROBE test using the ORP. He appeared to concentrate more on the scanning process than the material he was reading which may be the cause of the poor comprehension score.

A further aspect which may have influenced Student 2's performance is that of excessive cognitive load. Miller (2007) defines cognitive load theory as the effect of overload on the working memory. Miller suggests that "overload" can occur when acquiring any new skill. In the case of this trial, the

students had only a short training session on the ORP, meaning that the use of the tool required a high degree of conscious planning. The student was required to not only recall the contents of the article but to remember how to use a new piece of equipment. The load on the working memory was possibly too high for this particular student.

Further research is required but the results indicate that three of the four students were not affected by excessive cognitive load as their accuracy and comprehension scores improved. This again indicates the ease of the ORP's use and the effectiveness of a short, structured training plan. This has positive implications for the ORP's use within the school setting as many of the complications implementing new ICTs are removed by reducing training time such as staff training costs, withdrawal of students from class, frustration when learning how to use the equipment, and prerequisite ICT knowledge.

As identified earlier, technology must be closely matched to individuals for the best outcomes. The scanning position is supported by a plastic guide and the students certainly required assistance to begin scanning in the correct position. Following the training session all the students were able to scan effectively without the guide. A week later, following their refresher, three of the students scanned with no difficulty.

A further issue for Student 2 was that he was left-handed. A feature of the ORP is that the screen can be flipped, allowing left-handed people to scan with their left hand. This was found to be an important feature as some left-handed people are quite ambidextrous, as was Student 1. Student 2 found using his right hand very difficult so the ability to scan with the left hand was of great assistance, although it is apparent that he needs to further develop his fine motor skills to use the ORP more effectively.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, analysis of the results highlight the many benefits of the ORP as identified by Becta (2004, 2007). The students' comments indicate that the ORP fosters independence, confidence and enthusiasm which all assist inclusion (Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan & Shaw, 2000) enabling the student to read and understand at their chronological age. Students with reading difficulties commonly lack such traits (Dyslexia Foundation, 2007) which are inherently important for successful learning. From the evidence presented in this study it would seem the ORP not only enhances reading ability but also fosters the features commonly associated with successful independent learning, enabling the students to function effectively at school and in the wider community.

This trial has identified that the ORP is very effective after a short training time. Further studies comparing the results gained with the aforementioned ICTs may be conducted to clarify this viewpoint. From the writer's experience it does seem that the ORP is an economical and effective compensatory ICT. Hardy's (2004) comments outlined earlier seem unfounded by this trial aside from the difficulties of a user with limited fine motor skills (as Student 2). This trial found no issues with scanning effectively once the students

had been trained. In contrast to Hardy's (2004) findings, Student 3 scanned almost his whole PROBE assessment and increased both his comprehension and accuracy scores. This was achieved a line at a time as outlined by the ORP manual (Quick-Pen, 2007).

The independence the students demonstrated within such a short time using the ORP was astounding. To be able to read independently for meaning at their chronological age with a day's training on an ICT is indicative of its effectiveness. Three of the students required no further assistance prior to their second PROBE assessment when they used the ORP. They picked up where they left off. Student 2 required some coaching. The only general issue identified by the students in general which affected them using the ORP is that of reading the definitions provided on screen. Whilst this can be read aloud by the ORP, the students in general still found it challenging at times. When asked how they would get round it they commented they would ask a peer or adult.

The trial used a small sample size of students of four different ages. The results indicate that the ORP can be used effectively across a range of students ages (see Figure 2) between 10 and 15 years, supported Higgins' and Raskind's (2005) results. Although the students had varied levels of skills with ICTs, it would seem that there are very few prerequisite skills needed to ensure success with the ORP. One factor which appears to affect successful use is that of motor skill ability. With careful trialling and training the appropriateness of the ORP for individual students would be established (Balajthy, 2005).

This implementation trial has identified that the ORP does increase reading accuracy and comprehension for students with low reading ability. With its cheap price and simple operation, it lends itself to quick and easy implementation for a wide range of students who find reading a challenge. Such simplicity and ease of implementation negates many of the problems associated with more bulky, expensive and complex ICTs which require weeks of training and lots of preparation time. As one student commented, "I liked using it" and another added "I would read more", the ORP appears to be an appropriate and effective compensatory ICT which can be recommended for use in the writer's cluster schools. The trial indicates that the ORP is an ICT which can assist students to participate within school and society (Ministry of Education, 2003) and as such, its potential for assisting students with reading difficulties should be embraced.

#### POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

The ORP may be used in a variety of ways. In examinations (with the dictionary secured) or silent reading there is no reason why headphones could not be insisted upon. The ORP could be easily switched between students if a teacher or teacher aide was working with a number of students as the history can be deleted in seconds along with altering the scanning mode for left/right handed students. The ORP is possibly an excellent "first" assistive ICT. If a student is introduced to the ORP and they progress well and are enthusiastic about its use, it may provide a springboard for them to use other more complex assistive ICTs later in their school lives.

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## AUTHOR PROFILE

Ian Johnson



### Ian Johnson

Ian Johnson is an RTLB working within the Westland cluster based in Hokitika. He migrated to New Zealand 7 years ago following 10 years teaching in English mainstream and special schools. Since arriving in New Zealand he worked for GSE as a Special Education Advisor with responsibility for ORRS students and Assistive Technology. He has recently completed his Masters of Education from Victoria University of Wellington, following his RTLB training.

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## APPENDIX

### Features of the ORP (Quick-Pen, 2007).

#### New Reading Pen *Oxford*

The Reading Pen *Oxford* was designed for people with reading or learning disabilities, such as dyslexia. It is also useful for people who are learning English, or want the ultimate convenience of having a dictionary at their fingertips.

The pen contains the 240,000 word Concise Oxford English Dictionary. It assists users by providing a definition of the scanned word or line of text, as well as reading both the words and definition aloud using its miniaturized text-to-speech technology. Individual words are enlarged on the display, and words may be spelled out, or broken into syllables. If a person is reading and comes to an unrecognized word, the user can simply scan it, and the word will be spoken in British Real Speak. Because of its complete portability, this pocket-sized reading technology can be used where and when needed.

#### FEATURES:

- Concise Oxford English Dictionary, over 240,000 words including countries, weights and measures
- SMS (Short Message Service – the shorthand used for sending text messages on cell phones)
- Speaks with Scansoft, British Real Speak
- Has special "Test Mode" that allows the dictionary definition lookup function to be switched off for use during tests
- New menu structure makes frequently used options easier to access
- Captures text within seconds (over three times faster than our original Reading Pen)
- Improved accuracy
- Displays and speaks dictionary definition
- Single word/Full line scanning
- Large character display
- Reads words aloud
- Recognizes 6-22 point size text, bold, italic, underlined, inverted text
- Scans left to right, and right to left
- Displays syllables
- Spells words out loud
- Keeps a history of scanned words
- Defines word within the definition (cross-reference)
- Adjustable for left and right handed users
- Ergonomic 6" x 1 1/2" x 1", lightweight - 3 oz.
- An Opticard lets you input text manually

#### Comes complete with:

- User Manual
- Quick Reference
- Card Carrying Case (plastic) with Opticard
- Earphone
- 2 "AAA" batteries

The Oxford Reading Pen is available in New Zealand for \$NZ 489.00 (supplier: [www.workandstudytech.co.nz](http://www.workandstudytech.co.nz)).



# The Incredible Years Parent Training Programme in Tauranga

## A research summary

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### ABSTRACT

The Incredible Years parent training programme is a research-based therapy which aims to help families improve the behaviour of children with conduct difficulties in the early years, while the behaviour is malleable (Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2003). The short-term goals of the programme are to reduce conduct problems in children by increasing parental competence and strengthening families (Webster-Stratton, 2000). The programme was developed by the University of Washington's Parenting Clinic, USA and was introduced to the Tauranga community in 2002, via the research of Lees (2003). Due to the success of the programme trialed in Lees' research, it was rapidly embraced by agencies and community organisations.

Hamilton's (2005) research is summarised in this article and was inspired by the rapid expansion of, and enthusiasm for, the Incredible Years parent training programme in Tauranga. Rather than following participants' experiences within the programme, the researcher interviewed the facilitators. The perspective taken was that most of the programme facilitators are highly qualified psychologists and social workers who collectively have an enormous amount of knowledge, experience and insight. The researcher captured the observations and insights of the facilitators who, from their experience working with the programme, made valuable contributions to the identification of the barriers to the programme's success in Tauranga, the appropriateness of this empirically supported manual-based therapy in New Zealand's bicultural environment, and the value of the programme itself. The Incredible Years parent training programme was found to be highly successful in Tauranga as it provided a supportive group environment in which parents could share concerns and ideas, and it was adaptable to different cultural and individual needs.

### Research

#### Keywords

*Behaviour problems, conduct disorder, cultural differences, early intervention, evidence based practice, parenting, parent training, programme evaluation.*

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Concerns about New Zealand youth

An examination of the statistics associated with New Zealand youth show cause for concern, and many remain largely static in that they are not showing improvement over time, for example: unemployment rates (Ministry of Social Development, 2005, 2007; Ministry of Youth Development, 2003); truancy rates (Ministry of Education, 2006); suicide statistics (Currie, 2003); and educational attainment (Ministry of Education, 2004a). In 2003, 3.5% of students were stood-down or suspended during the year (the statistics may include repeat offenders). The most common reasons for the stand-downs and suspensions were for being continually disobedient, physical assaults, and verbal assaults (Ministry of Education, 2004b). In 2006, 16% of students left secondary school having completed a maximum of less than half of a level 1 National Certificate of Educational Achievement qualification (Ministry of Education, 2006). The Ministry of Youth Development (2002) website shows a steady decline in the personal income of youth aged between 15-24 over the past decade. Therefore, many youth are struggling to gain financial independence upon leaving school and are entering adulthood economically, as well as educationally, disadvantaged. This is also reflected in the unemployment rates, as the 15-24 year old age group has significantly higher unemployment rates than any of the older ages (Ministry of Social Development, 2007). Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for New Zealand youth aged between 16-24 years, followed by suicide (Ministry of Youth Development, 2002). In the 15-24 year age group New Zealand ranked among the highest of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nations for rates of suicide in 2002 (New Zealand Health Information Service, 2002). Following continued high suicide rates in New Zealand's youth, it was noted in the 2007 Social Report that 'New Zealand is one of a small number of countries which have higher suicide rates at younger ages than at older ages' (Ministry of Social Development, 2007).

#### Suggested causes of difficulties faced by New Zealand youth

Walker (1999) commented that the American society has a tendency to minimise children's behaviour difficulties and not take action until problems become severe. Arguably, New Zealand takes the same approach to children's behavioural problems. It is often hoped that

children will outgrow their problems as the behaviour is assumed to be a stage of development which will pass (Kauffman, 1999). Albee (1999) challenges society to consider that emotional and mental disorders could be ecologically based. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model of human development, known as the ecological theory, provides a framework for understanding the effects of environment on the individual. According to Bronfenbrenner's theory, the individual is in the centre of a series of "nested" systems which impact in varying levels on the life of the growing individual. Bronfenbrenner argues that while extended family and cultural expectations influence a child's development, it is the people closest to the child who have the most impact on his/her development and that is where intervention must begin.

One suggested ecological risk factor is low household income. Scott, O'Connor and Futh (2006) suggest that it is far harder for parents who live in the stressful conditions found in poor neighbourhoods to ensure that a child is brought up experiencing warmth, love and encouragement within safe boundaries. In 2001, approximately 25% of the New Zealand child population was found to be living in a household with an income of less than 60% of the median national income (Ministry of Social Development, 2005). Beautrais (1998) found that New Zealand youth at high risk of suicidal behaviour often come from disadvantaged backgrounds, specifically lower socioeconomic status and inadequate educational qualifications. For low-income families, a well-designed parent training programme which can provide group support, encouragement and address individual needs can be invaluable.

Another suggested ecological risk factor relates to ineffective or coercive parenting practices. Gerald Patterson of the Oregon Social Learning Centre noted that many young children use whining or tantrums to get what they want and parents who give in to this behaviour inadvertently negatively reinforce the child's behaviour (cited in Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992; Reid & Eddy, 2002). Patterson's (1995) research shows clear links between early coercive behaviour and continuing antisocial acts, including adolescent criminal behaviour and violence. Likewise, both the Christchurch Health and Development Study and the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study - longitudinal studies that have followed over a thousand New Zealanders from early childhood through to adulthood - have found that children displaying early disruptive behaviour patterns, including conduct problems and attentional problems, have a far greater risk of later offending (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1998; Fergusson, Poulton, Horwood, Milne & Swain-Campbell, 2004).

### **PARENT TRAINING AS AN EARLY INTERVENTION: THE INCREDIBLE YEARS PARENT TRAINING PROGRAMME**

Traditionally, parent training has been hierarchical, with the "expert" trainer teaching adults the correct ways to parent. More recently, a collaborative model of parent training has emerged which promotes partnership between the trainer (expert on child development, family dynamics and behaviour management principles) and the parent (expert on the child and family in question). Together the

parent and trainer work towards modifying the child's behaviour in a positive, supportive way (Webster-Stratton, 1998). The Incredible Years parent training programme utilises the collaborative model with the addition of support provided from the group members themselves. This programme has been developed as a result of over 20 years of research conducted by Carolyn Webster-Stratton and her team at the Washington Parenting Clinic.

The Incredible Years programme operates a weekly two-hour session for 10 to 12 weeks. It is an interactive programme which involves the group watching a video vignette as a discussion starter. From the discussion, ideas are shared and strategies evolve that are then reinforced through role play. Skills targeted for younger children include play, praise, using rewards effectively, limit setting and discipline (Webster-Stratton, 2000). The group is facilitated by two trained leaders, commonly referred to in New Zealand as facilitators. Webster-Stratton (2001) stresses the importance of highly skilled group leaders because there is a lot of emphasis on group collaboration, and judgments must be made about when to deviate from the manual in order to best meet the needs of the group participants. The programme in Tauranga complies as closely as feasibly possible with all of the expectations for operation outlined by the Washington Parenting Clinic. Facilitators undergo training by officially recognised trainers, authorised by the Washington Parenting Clinic.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This article summarises the findings of two of the research questions posed by Hamilton (2005):

1. Why has the Incredible Years parent training programme become such a popular programme with agencies and parents in the Tauranga area of New Zealand?
2. How does the Incredible Years parent training programme, as a manual-based, empirically supported therapy, incorporate the facilitators' professional judgment and cultural understandings in order to meet the individual needs of New Zealand clients?

### **METHODOLOGY**

Ethics approval was obtained from the University of Waikato before any of the research began. There were no identifiable conflicts of interest for the researcher when embarking on this study. The researcher had no prior involvement with the Incredible Years series, nor has she been employed with any of the agencies for whom the research participants worked.

Due to the low number of facilitators of the Incredible Years parent training in Tauranga, all of the facilitators were offered the opportunity to participate in this research. Sixteen of the nineteen facilitators in Tauranga agreed to participate, and one participated in a pilot interview. Fourteen facilitators came from various agencies including education, health, social service, and community organisations. Two facilitated or co-facilitated the Incredible Years parent training programmes independently, in that they did not work for any of the agencies mentioned. The facilitators consisted of thirteen women and three men. Eleven identified themselves as New Zealand European/Pākeha, three were Māori, one was Hispanic, and one was Latin American.

Approaching the facilitators began with a meeting between the researcher and the chairperson of the Incredible Years Guardian Group, Tauranga. The researcher was then invited to attend a meeting of the Group to outline the proposed research to the facilitators present, and to invite them to participate in the research. Facilitators were given an information sheet outlining the research procedures and the University of Waikato's Human Research Ethics Regulations, for their consideration. The facilitators were extremely supportive of the research idea and although they were encouraged to take a few days to consider their willingness and availability to participate, the enthusiasm was such that all of the facilitators present approached the researcher immediately for a Research Participation Agreement. Facilitators not present at the meeting were contacted individually to have the research proposal presented to them.

Each facilitator was interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview format. The interviews were taped, transcribed and sent to the facilitators for verification of accuracy. The interview transcripts were analysed in accordance with the thematic analysis procedures recommended in Drewery's (2005) notes, *Working with qualitative data*. Due to the openness of the questioning and the thematic approach taken to the transcript analysis, the facilitator numbers indicated in the results as making certain comments or observations does not necessarily infer that other facilitators had an opposing view. Each facilitator was assigned a pseudonym to protect his/her privacy. The pseudonyms were randomly assigned so that females may have been given a non-gender specific name. All facilitators, whether Māori or non-Māori, were given a Māori pseudonym. Each facilitator completed a brief questionnaire about his/her qualifications and experience. The most senior facilitator from each agency completed a brief questionnaire about their agency's involvement with and future plans for the Incredible Years programme.

## RESULTS

Three main themes relevant to this article emerged from the data analysis, and within each were sub-themes. The themes are most clearly expressed in question form as follows:

1. What makes the Incredible Years parent training programme unique and powerful?
2. What are the issues associated with the successful implementation of the Incredible Years programme in Tauranga?
3. How appropriate is the Incredible Years parent training programme for the diverse New Zealand society, particularly with regard to New Zealand's bicultural commitment?

### **What makes the Incredible Years parent training programme unique and powerful?**

More than half of the facilitators commented that the concepts presented in the Incredible Years parent training programme were simple and easy to grasp, and three noted that the programme covered a comprehensive range of parenting skills. Although the facilitators realised that the

Incredible Years programme was originally designed for children with behaviour difficulties, most indicated that this programme was also appropriate for parents whose children did not have behaviour challenges. The facilitators noted that the Incredible Years programme empowered parents to try new strategies. They observed that the supportive nature of the group environment reduced parents' feelings of isolation and enabled them to help, support and encourage each other. One facilitator commented:

**Marama:** If one parent has a problem the other parents start feeding in. They just support and help each other. The course is of sufficient length that they actually form their own support network. It forms a really good protective network for children and families.

The power of the group dynamic is a definite strength of this programme and, as such, the programme is not designed to be adapted to individual parent therapy.

The facilitators commented that because the Incredible Years parent training programme focuses on improving the parent-child relationship, it has a positive impact on the child's behaviour. Facilitators went on to comment that couples have reported developing a closer relationship between one another, and individual parents have experienced improved relationships with their children's teachers. Ideally, couples attend the parent training programme together, but barriers such as work commitments, childcare availability, and single parent family situations often prevent this from occurring.

Although somewhat dated, the facilitators found the video vignettes to be an invaluable tool for showing scenarios from which discussions could begin. Even though the Incredible Years parent training programme is a prescribed manual-based system, the facilitators commented that there is room for flexibility within the programme in order to best meet the needs of the particular group they are working with. They felt that the flexibility was apparent because they were able to decide the method of programme delivery and they had the freedom to enhance the programme with complementary activities, without making changes to the fundamentals of the programme. In the words of one facilitator:

**Jo:** It looks very structured but there's a great flexibility within it in terms of what people will get from it, relating to what they're needing.

### **What are the issues associated with the successful implementation of the Incredible Years programme in Tauranga?**

Firstly, time constraints were identified as a common issue for facilitators. Most facilitators were in positions in which only a portion of their job involved parent training facilitation. The rest of their time was dedicated to supporting children and families in need and they were sometimes required to alter their daily schedule at short notice to work with a child or family in crisis. When this occurred it could be very difficult to adequately prepare for that week's parent training session. Secondly, the issue of numbers of trained staff was raised by several facilitators. Some indicated that there were more clients wanting to

attend an Incredible Years parent training course than spaces available on courses. Facilitator training must be conducted by a trainer authorised by the Washington Parenting Clinic, therefore training sessions for New Zealand facilitators were infrequent. All of the participants in this research had received training from a member of the Washington Parenting Clinic team in 2004 and/or 2005. The training enabled facilitators to access the wealth of knowledge and experience of the certified trainer. One facilitator stressed the importance of attending these formal training sessions and cautioned that the programme could be run inadequately by untrained facilitators. Properly trained facilitators of this programme are far more aware of the programme format, requirements, topics, and philosophy, and are able to work together more effectively to meet the needs of the group. One facilitator commented:

**Lee:** We hadn't had the proper training to begin with and we tried to do it following the guidelines. It's quite different from after you go to the training. We didn't do a bad job, but we've improved considerably I think.

Lastly, participants identified barriers preventing parents from attending the programme, including transport, access to childcare services, and work commitments.

#### **How appropriate is the Incredible Years parent training programme for the diverse New Zealand society, particularly with regard to New Zealand's bicultural commitment?**

As an empirically-supported programme, it is essential that the Incredible Years parent training programme is delivered in accordance with the instruction manual. However, the programme acknowledges the unique needs of each parent as well as valuing cultural differences, and it has been designed to enable the facilitators to tailor the delivery according to the needs of the parent group. One facilitator commented:

**Robin:** Personally speaking, because I come from another culture as well, this [programme] doesn't need to be changed because it's applicable to every culture. It's been developed in a way that is culturally friendly.

The amount of cultural sensitivity present in the programme is determined by the facilitator. The facilitator is able to deliver the programme in a culturally appropriate manner as described by this facilitator:

**Rangi:** I think it can meet all ethnic groups in terms of content ... there are some really good things in there for Māori. If it's a particularly strong Māori group, then I will start with a karakia. I will make sure that protocol is upheld. I will probably use a bit more Māori language in the way I deliver things. I may use a lot of comparison to Māori protocols or phrases.

The facilitators' opinions on the appropriateness of the American families portrayed in the vignettes shown throughout the course were varied. Five facilitators commented that, in their experience, having American families portrayed was an advantage for New Zealand participants because they were not distracted by the way

the family was portrayed, and there was no emotional attachment to the people shown. This enabled the participants to watch the scenarios objectively without feeling that stereotypes about their culture or ethnicity were being presented. Television channels in New Zealand frequently screen American programmes which may explain the acceptance of American families in the vignettes. On the other hand, three facilitators felt that New Zealand clients would more easily relate to the scenarios given if the families and settings were clearly New Zealand. As there is a lot of group sharing throughout the programme, the facilitators stated that they sometimes used families' experiences as "real life" examples of the parenting principles being discussed. In this way, parents were able to have their individual needs met by getting ideas from the programme to address their specific concerns.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The comprehensive range of parenting skills covered in the Incredible Years parent training programme empowers parents by enabling them to cope effectively with present as well as future parenting difficulties. These skills provide parents with alternative models of parenting which are likely to reduce the use of coercive parenting practices as outlined by Patterson and his colleagues (Reid, Patterson & Snyder, 2002). At least half of the facilitators in the research outlined in this article commented that the concepts presented in the parent training programme were simple and easy to grasp.

A key purpose of the Incredible Years parent training programme is to intervene early in a child's life. This concept was strongly supported by the facilitators interviewed. Many believed that referrals to their services would reduce if more parents of children, particularly in the early childhood age bracket, were able to access and participate in the programme. Wider accessibility to the parent training programme for these parents could be considered a form of primary prevention which can be universally applied (Albee, 1999). In this way, all families would have access to the Incredible Years parent training programme, rather than it being a programme to which parents are referred following behaviour difficulties being displayed by their children. Families who need to wait to access an agency and receive a referral to the parent training programme are likely to be experiencing severe difficulties with their child which are more difficult to reverse than if they had easy access to the programme earlier.

Webster-Stratton's (1997) research found that the parent training programme reduces parents' feelings of isolation because the group becomes an important support network. The importance of the group for parents was also observed by the Tauranga facilitators. They noted that parents encouraged and supported one another during the parent training sessions and that the group became a valuable support network. In the opinion of the Tauranga facilitators, the Incredible Years parent training programme is relevant and suitable for all cultures and family styles. Their observations concur with the research findings of Reid, Webster-Stratton and Beauchaine (2001), who found that the Incredible Years parent training programme was effective for

a broad range of families including African American, Asian American, Caucasian and Hispanic, as well as low income and single parent families. Although some facilitators believed that it would be more appropriate to have New Zealand families on the vignettes which are shown throughout the parent training programme, a larger number of facilitators disagreed. The American families shown are so far removed from the New Zealand culture that many parents are able to take the message from the vignette without feeling threatened, targeted, or stereotyped.

While the parent-child relationship is the focus of the Incredible Years programme, the facilitators in this study found that parents' relationships improved in many unexpected ways. Couples reported developing a closer relationship between each other, relationships between themselves and their child's teachers have improved, as well as the relationship between themselves and siblings of the target child. Webster-Stratton's team have spent over 20 years researching and developing the Incredible Years parent training programme which is part of a wider series, including a child programme and a programme for classroom teachers, that is now recognised by the American Psychological Association's Division of Clinical Psychology (Division 12) as a "well-established treatment" for children with conduct problems (Webster-Stratton, 2000). In order for facilitators to replicate the results of numerous studies, it is important that the programme is followed accurately and with fidelity. Many of the Tauranga facilitators were concerned that because the programme was flexible in its ability to accommodate diverse groups, it would be easy for an untrained or unskilled facilitator to "water the programme down", and thereby make it far less effective. For this reason, Webster-Stratton's team insists that facilitators attend training run by a certified trainer. Tauranga facilitators who had attended the authorised training sessions placed a high value on the training they received.

#### AFTERWORD

The Incredible Years parent training programme is now routinely offered by a number of social service agencies and community groups in Tauranga and other New Zealand cities. The Werry Centre for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Workforce Development, located in Auckland, is actively supporting the programme and is providing official training for facilitators. The training is currently being offered in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch and it aims to enable the programme to be offered as widely as possible throughout New Zealand.

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## RELEVANT WEBSITES

[www.incredibleyears.com](http://www.incredibleyears.com)  
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# The Professional Learning Community

## A fulcrum of change

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### ABSTRACT

Paralleling the accelerating pace of educational change in the last two decades has been the development of a professional learning community (PLC) in schools. Characterised by teacher collaboration and a spirit of enquiry, the PLC represents a response to change and an opportunity to benefit teachers, students and schools, using an approach most suited to adults. The paper undertakes a literature review of various aspects of the PLC: attributes; evolution; benefits; and measurement of the PLC.

### Research

#### Keywords

*Collaborative learning, effective practices, professional development, professional learning communities, teachers.*

### INTRODUCTION

Individual teacher learning and professional growth no longer keeps pace with change. If we want to improve and remain effective, we need to take charge of external change, rather than being controlled by it. Doing so necessitates working together in a learning organisation which is 'continually expanding its capacity to create its future' (Senge, as cited in Stoll, Fink & Earl, 2003, p. 132). We need to work in organisations, collectively developing an understanding of where they are going and what is important.

In the education sector, the PLC provides a pathway to a learning organisation: one which comprises 'a group of people who take an active, reflective, collaborative, learning-orientated, and growth-promoting approach toward the mysteries, problems and perplexities of teaching and learning' (Mitchell & Sackney, as cited in Stoll, et al., 2003, p. 132).

A PLC can enable educational institutions to capitalise on change, on research, on technology and on self management, in order to secure the benefits for the school, for the teachers, and most importantly, for the students. If we fail to build learning communities, offering a web of support to all the members, we run the risk of building castles on shifting sands as existing learning institutions become increasingly stultified by waves of change.

### CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES OF A PLC:

#### A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

The literature serves to flesh out fundamental dimensions or attributes of a PLC. Hord (1997, 1998) suggests five critical attributes of a PLC, confirmed again in her work with a team of researchers in 2004 (as cited in Bullough, 2007).

#### Shared and Supportive Leadership

Firstly, a shared and supportive leadership, in turn nurturing leadership among staff with a distribution of power, authority and decision making. Haberman (2004) uses the term "egalitarianism" and notes a dispensing with formalities as characteristic of such a community. Stoll, et al. (2003) view 'concern for individual and minority views ...' (p. 168) as a defining aspect of a PLC.

#### Shared Values and Vision

Another attribute, shared values and vision (Hord, 1997, 1998), evolves from the values of the staff and leads to building staff supported behaviours. The Ministry of Education (2006) endorses the creation of shared vision arguing that it is 'essential this vision-building is carried out collaboratively and not simply imposed by educational leaders' (p. 66). Haberman (2004) and Carver (2004) similarly embrace the notion of a shared and collaboratively developed vision, emphasising that the vision must be embedded in improving teaching practice and an undeviating focus on student learning. The vision should make teaching and learning a lasting and powerful experience, not just a cliché about "learning for all" found in mission statements.

#### Collective Learning and Collaboration

A third attribute, the practice of collective learning and collaboration, might be central to the functioning of a PLC judging by the repetition of the theme in various guises throughout the literature (Bambino, 2002; Carver, 2004; DuFour, 2004; Haberman, 2004; Hord, 1997, 1998, as cited in Bullough, 2007). In a collective and collaborative learning community, teachers seek new knowledge, skills and strategies, share information and work together to solve problems and improve learning opportunities inherent in real site-based challenges.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) present the term "interactive professionalism" (p. 63). This term 'serves to capture much of what is essential in the relationship and communication necessary to foster reflective inquiry and the co-construction of understanding about professional practice' (Ministry of

Education, 2006, p. 59). Collaboration and collegiality form the twin pillars supporting interactive professionalism. DuFour (2004) uses an equally indicative phrase, 'culture of collaboration' (p. 8). Carver (2004) believes teachers are 'empowered as professionals' (p. 60) by the practice of sharing.

### Teachers Sharing Personal Practice

The next attribute, intimately linked to the last, teachers sharing personal practice, proves equally as prevalent in the literature (Bambino, 2002; Carver, 2004; DuFour, 2004; Haberman, 2004; Hord, 1997, 1998). Teachers observing classroom practice, giving feedback and mentoring each other, leads to individual and community improvement. Jianping and Poppink (2007) call for "open lessons" as 'job embedded professional development' (p. 189). Louis and Kruse (as cited in Hord, 1998) describe it as 'deprivatization of practice' (p. 6), and caution that this practice is 'not evaluative, but is part of the "peers helping peers" process' (p. 16). DuFour (2004) delineates this attribute of PLCs referring to 'collaborative conversations ... to make public what has been traditionally private – goals, strategies, materials, pacing, questions, concerns, results' (p. 9). In short, open doors, candid conversations and opportunities for reflection and discussion should be the norm in a PLC (Induction into Learning Communities, 2005).

### Supportive Conditions

Intrinsic to the first four attributes of a PLC is a fifth dimension: supportive conditions (Hord 1997, 1998). Supportive conditions include school structures and resources, open communication channels, and trusting and respectful relationships. It seems exceedingly difficult to imagine a collaborative, supportive and sharing community without such a fundamental state of affairs.

### EVOLUTION OF PLC: A PARADIGM SHIFT

The last two decades in education have witnessed paradigm shifts in our views of professional development in response to an accelerating rate of change and the exponential growth of a research culture. The 19<sup>th</sup> century model of "sink or swim" for teachers has slowly declined, giving way to a spotlight on random and individual professional development designed to enhance a personal teaching style. In the 1980s the shift began to retreat from a concentration on individual workers to the workplace setting as a learning environment. The new focus simultaneously converged with the notion of continuous learning as a prerequisite to a competitive and productive workplace. As an upshot, both educational and corporate leaders began seeking to foster and sustain learning communities to reform organisations and to improve outcomes (Sergiovanni, 1996).

In 1989, Rosenholtz's research on the teaching workforce proposed sharing ideas, collaboration, learning from each other and improved practice as the gateway to student benefits (as cited in Hord, Meehan, Orletsky & Sattes, 1999). In 1990, organisational "guru" Peter Senge's *Fifth Discipline* (as cited in Hord, et al., 1999) promoted the idea of a work environment in which employees engaged as teams, developed a shared vision and operated collaboratively to improve corporate outcomes. These paradigm shifts caught

the attention of educators. Seminal thinker Sergiovanni (1996) argued that when a school functions as a community, its members embrace shared ideals, norms, purposes and values, which contributed to continuous school improvement. The label for this phenomena became "professional learning communities".

### THE PLC AND ADULT LEARNERS: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

As the shape of the PLC emerged, it became clear that learning in a community better suited the nature of adult learners than the outdated model of individual professional development in isolation.

Writing about collaborative enquiry, an intertwined strand in the PLC fabric, Jackson and Street (2005) argue for its potential as a development tool, especially appropriate to the needs of professional adults, because it offers a constructivist approach in a social learning environment. The collegial, self-directed and autonomous nature of the tasks proves motivating and engaging to adults. The same arguments apply to the critical attributes of the wider PLC.

A PLC demonstrates constructivist learning theory. Learners (the professional staff) begin with a current situation, need or concern stemming from real and relevant site-based issues or problems. A PLC requires learners to work actively with new knowledge: drawing on prior knowledge and experiences; discussing, sharing, reflecting with other learners; modifying and adjusting beliefs and practices; and applying them to the specific school setting.

Jackson and Street (2005) echo Vygotskian learning theory when they note 'an important development has been a much more explicit recognition that learning is a social activity. Most people learn more effectively with others than in isolation' (p. 59). They suggest advantages for adults of learning in a social situation: 'Working with others offers the potential for "checking out", explaining, teaching others, testing out the concepts and talking through our own understandings, misconceptions and uncertainties' (p. 59).

Jackson and Street's (2005) arguments dovetail nicely with the characteristics and principles of adult learners in general: controlling their learning; linking new learning to prior knowledge; wanting relevant and pragmatic applications of learning; and benefiting from collaboration. In addition, being actively involved in the learning, exercising autonomy, and being self-directed (Billington, 1996; Lieb, 1991).

### BENEFITS: CAUGHT NOT TAUGHT

Much as the value of effective professional development in fostering teacher growth seems uncontested, the research and the literature make a strong case for the benefits of the PLC flowing from teachers, to students and to the school.

### Teachers

Hord's (1997) summary of the research literature offers a broad cornucopia of positive results for teachers. The tangible include reduced isolation, job satisfaction, higher morale, less absenteeism, and making teaching adaptations for students. The less tangible include commitment to school

mission and to systemic changes, shared responsibility for student success, new and powerful knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learners, increased meaning and understanding of curriculum and the teacher's role, professional renewal, and inspiration.

Teachers who feel supported in their own ongoing learning and classroom practice are more committed and effective than those who do not feel supported (Hord, 1997). Furthermore, says Van Horn (2006), PLC teacher members are 'more apt to venture into the unknown, to engage in long term inquiry, and/or to share what they are learning ...' (p. 61). Van Horn cites policy studies on PLCs and concludes they can provide educators with 'purpose, collaboration, commitment and community' (Langer, as cited in Van Horn, p. 60). As a consequence of working in a satisfying and rewarding professional environment, teachers feel 'empowered as professionals and responsible for their own learning' (Carver, 2004, p. 60) and are 'more positive about staying in the profession' (Darling-Hammond, 1996, p. 9), contributing to the resolution of recruitment and retention issues.

Jackson and Street (2005) cite a systematic review on the positive impact of collaborative enquiry to report changes to teachers' behaviour which included greater confidence, enthusiasm for collaboration, greater commitment to trying something new and to change in general, and enhanced self-efficacy or 'belief in their power as teachers to make a difference in pupil learning' (p. 61). The only qualifying remark on the effectiveness of collaborative environment for teachers seems to come from Jackson and Street: 'It is important to note that the positive outcomes sometimes only emerged after periods of relative discomfort – things often got worse before they got better' (p. 61).

### Students

Haberman (2004) suggests the teachers' attitudinal shift, reflected in a renewed love of professional learning afforded in a PLC, is caught by students, not taught. 'Only teachers who are avid, internally motivated learners can truly teach their students the joy of learning' (Haberman, 2004, p. 52). Ultimately, greater teacher effectiveness in schools with PLCs impacts on student results: 'decreased dropout rates'; 'lower rates of absenteeism'; 'increased learning ... more equitably distributed in smaller high schools'; and 'smaller achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds' (Hord, 1997, p. 28). Jackson and Street (2005) note 'some unanticipated outcomes [for students] in terms of change in attitudes and beliefs, enhanced motivation and increasingly active participation' (p. 61), which may serve to explain Hord's (1997) findings. Coming as no surprise, almost anti-climatically, Hord (1997), Stoll, et al. (2003) and Jackson and Street cite research linking PLC's and collaborative enquiry to improved academic performance.

### Schools

Teacher growth and enhanced student outcomes interweave to further institutional adaptivity, reculturation, continuous improvement, a collective focus on pupil learning and the creation of new organisational knowledge (Stoll, et al., 2003). Similarly, Bezzina (2006) notes 'rather than being a reform

initiative, a PLC becomes the supporting structure for schools to continuously transform themselves through their own internal capacity' (p. 164). Additionally, Jackson and Street (2005) submit that continued collaboration proves important in sustaining the changes.

### MEASUREMENT OF PLC: DIAGNOSE AND EVALUATE

We live in an age of compliance and evidence, based on measurable evaluation, and so we must measure the PLC. The evaluation instruments below, only briefly described, but accessible, can often serve to both diagnose and evaluate a PLC. As a PLC develops, an analysis tool could provide indicators of strengths and weaknesses and future directions for site-based administrators to ponder. After the PLC emerges, the tool becomes evaluative for researchers, stakeholders and perhaps funding agencies. In the end, any evaluation should aim to support and enhance a PLC's development and to contribute to continuous learning and school improvement.

Hord, et al. (1999) describe the development of an instrument to assess the implementation of a PLC among staff. The instrument presents 17 judgment descriptors grouped around Hord's (1997, 1998) five major dimensions, or criteria, of a PLC. The rubric format allows a 1-5 judgment range and fulfills quality standards of usability, reliability and validity. The article gives examples, but not a complete rubric.

Similarly, Hipp, et al. (2003) offer an instrument with 45 descriptor statements and a 1-4 graduation of judgment responses to assess perceptions of staff, principals and stakeholders (parents and community members). The instrument, developed by Oliver, Hipp and Hoffman (as cited in Hipp, et al., 2003, p. 29), based on Hord's (1997, 1998) five dimensions of a PLC, is presented in its entirety in their paper's Appendix C. In Appendix D of their paper, Hipp, et al. provide guide interview questions for a research project, also based on Hord's (1997, 1998) dimensions. The research project could equally serve as a PLC evaluation or as a diagnostic tool as schools work toward reform efforts.

In their case study analysis, Liebman, Maldonado, Lacey, Candace and Thompson (2005) use semi-structured, qualitative interviews with the principal, the administration team and key faculty members to gather data. Their paper reports the interview findings. The interview protocols/questions, based on criteria honed from literature, are attached in their appendices.

With an unrelenting focus on student achievement, DuFour (2004) and Kanold (2006) examine the processes undertaken with the 4,000 students of Adlai E. Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois. In their view, individual teachers and/or each faculty and/or the whole school gather baseline data of student formative assessment, analyse the data, and set SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound) goals for improvement. Coordinated assessment and reporting programmes unflinchingly monitor student progress.

Adapting the instruments and techniques outlined, either slightly or extensively, could afford a ready-made and reasonably site-specific measurement tool for New Zealand schools. Furthermore, with the shift to standards-based assessment in recent years, it seems realistic to suppose that New Zealand educators possess the capability to establish criteria for a PLC, or use those dimensions delineated in the literature, and to construct judgment statements or interview questions which accurately evaluate the PLC's level of attainment for a customised and site-specific analysis.

### IMPLICATIONS: THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG – A MODEL WITHOUT A MODEL

The creation of a PLC, like the creation of the universe, creates a lot more wobbling and banging about than may appear on the surface. Too many dynamics, too many factors, too many people and too many imponderables generate unpredictable and complex variables on the pathway to the PLC: each site differs in culture, leadership, systemic and structural variations, personnel and resourcing.

Compounding the unfathomable combinations of variations, there are difficult questions around which PLC attribute evolves first: Does leadership set a direction first, or does the organisational culture change first? How conceptually intertwined are culture and leadership? Must structural adaptations precede all other attributes? As a consequence, it proves difficult to isolate any single critical factor as prerequisite to the formation of a PLC. The degree of variables and the complexity of the questions fail to suggest a set formula for establishing a PLC. As a result, the pathway might be described as a model without a model.

Perhaps the answer to what comes first in developing a PLC lurks in a most elemental and fundamental building block: people. Cultural shifts will happen when people collaborate and share, in constructive and trusting relationships, in small and incremental ways. When people benefit from collaboration, culture evolves and leadership will orchestrate, and a PLC emerges from the smallest units in the organisation, the individual staff members; a revolution from below.

If change emerges from the ground up, in small behaviours and needing trust, perhaps initiating the simplest and least intrusive of specific practices may prove most effective in the launching of a PLC. Specific practices could include:

- mentoring systems
- joint planning and assessment opportunities
- provision for video-based reflections on practice
- extending staff input into the planning and running of meetings on professional matters
- formation of study groups to investigate and address real site-based issues
- staff debate and decision making.

This list of specific practices is not exhaustive or prescribed, only indicative of what may be considered, yet site-dependent, based on existing leadership, culture and systemic structures.

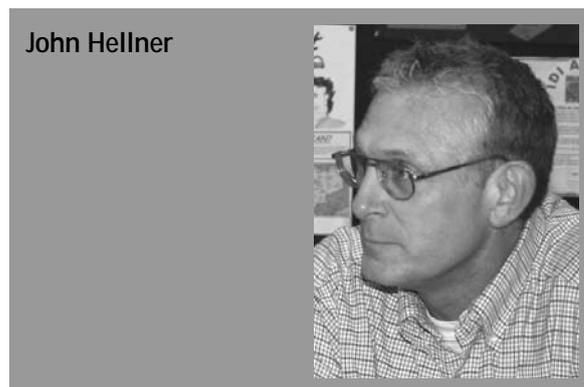
The ultimate starting point for the formation of a PLC is neither the "chicken nor the egg". Instead, perhaps the guiding strategy for the PLC model without a model lay somewhere near an unauthenticated, yet indicative story, about Franklin Roosevelt's mandate to his cabinet in 1933. Roosevelt was elected to resolve the unprecedented and monumental economic and social dislocation caused by the onset of the "Great Depression". He assembled his cabinet for the first time in an emergency meeting and ordered them to "try something and if that doesn't work, try something else and something else again, until it does work". And so began the most extensive and the most unparalleled socio-economic revolution in 20<sup>th</sup> century American history.

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## AUTHOR PROFILE



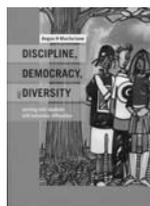
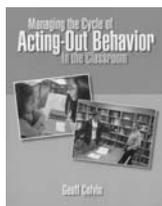
### John Hellner

John Hellner is a teacher educator for the University of Waikato at Tauranga, delivering the Graduate Diploma of Teaching (secondary). He first became interested in Professional Learning Communities through animated discussions with University staff and private consultants working in learning institutions to implement the Ministry of Education's draft document *Towards a Framework for Professional Practice: INSTEP*.

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# Kairaranga Book Reviews



## MANAGING THE CYCLE OF ACTING-OUT BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM

Geoff Colvin

They say you should not judge a book by its cover. However, the two photos on the front of this book instantly set the tone of this book: a teacher facing a single glowering or finger pointing student. If only life in schools were that simple with no other students present, no curriculum demands, no expectations from other teachers, parents or the Board. Some of the remaining photographs within the book are of real classrooms but usually of some confrontation in which the student is presented as the object to be controlled and checklists that ask you to look for students with “veiled” or “darting” eyes. Herein lie some of the assumptions and limitations of the behavioural method that the book adopts. It favours within-child explanations for the source of problems, a greater emphasis on difficulties rather than solutions and it moves away from the more complex understanding of how problematic situations come to life in schools (Miller, 2003).

There is now a vast literature on applying behavioural approaches in schools. What could this book add? It is easy to read, and well organised with photocopiable checklists. The use of case studies often scripted between students and teachers give it a realistic feel. There are many practical suggestions such as pre-correction procedures, adapting the classroom environment and teaching pro-social skills. It offers a framework for teachers to consider the level of intervention according to the stage they perceive the student to be at.

1. Calm
2. Trigger
3. Agitation
4. Acceleration
5. Peak
6. De-Escalation
7. Recovery.

As challenging situations evolve, it is assumed that the students will become increasingly aroused and display an increased intensity of “acting out” behaviour. Each of these stages will require a different response from their teacher. This is likely to be one useful framework for teachers to proactively plan to work with challenging situations in their classrooms. Unfortunately, this model is presented as the only way to understand “acting out” behaviour.

While these behaviours may differ in their form, settings and outcomes, there are several common factors. For example, some students may be angry towards parents or particular teachers and skip school, vandalize shops in the neighbourhood or become hostile towards teachers and become suspended from school. Clearly, each of these behaviours is different, but they are all motivated by anger towards parents and teachers. (p. 1)

I would query if all such behaviour is the result of anger or necessarily accompanied by increased arousal. I would favour a wider range of possible explanations and understandings for problematic situations observed in our schools, for example: solution-focused (Selekman, 1993), narrative (Bowen, 1996), school culture (Frederickson, 1990), reference groups (Stringer et al., 1992) and pupil culture (Newton & Wilson, 2003).

The scope of this book is very ambitious, aiming to apply its general principles to both primary and secondary school environments. There is little comment on these different contexts, for example, the increasing agency a young person might expect as they get older within a secondary school setting. The focus is on schools in the United States of America rather than Aotearoa New Zealand. Although the author acknowledges the significance of teacher expectations, he is noticeably silent on the issue of race, despite many photos featuring students who are black and over-represented in their national suspension statistics. Any reader of this book will need to keep in mind research from this country about the impact of teacher relationships with students and their response to the curriculum, particularly Māori (Bishop & Berryman, 2007).

Inevitably, any book that seeks to provide complete answers to such complex situations may end up with meaningless lists of advice that can often appear contradictory. For example, ‘A very effective strategy for reducing agitation is for the teacher to provide some level of space or isolation from the rest of the class’ (p. 88) and ‘Consequently, when a teacher stands near the student during the period of agitation, the student may be reassured’ (p. 91). Both pieces of advice are likely to be relevant but making a decision between them will depend on the student, other students, the teacher, the relationship, the type of activity and so on.

Overall, this book might be helpful for those who are unfamiliar with the behavioural method, who would like to focus on a single approach to working with problematic situations in schools and who favour the checklist approach.

However, there do seem to be other materials available that have already covered this ground in an accessible manner (Rogers, 1994).

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## REVIEWERS PROFILE

Quentin Abraham is a teacher, a systematic family therapist and registered educational psychologist who has worked in schools for 21 years. He currently works for the Ministry of Education, Special Education, in Wellington supporting young people, their whānau and those who work in schools to resolve challenging situations.

## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA

**Title:** Managing the Cycle of Acting-Out Behavior in the Classroom

**Author:** Geoff Colvin

**Publisher:** Behavior Associates

**Date of Publication:** 2004

**ISBN:** 0-9631777-3-7

**RRP:** \$28 USD

## DISCIPLINE, DEMOCRACY AND DIVERSITY

### Angus Macfarlane

A new book by Dr Angus Macfarlane of the University of Waikato, *Discipline, Democracy and Diversity* makes the point that issues of behaviour in the classroom are not new. At a time when we are faced with reports and so-called surveys that tell us that teachers are facing unprecedented and increasing violence, not simply behavioural issues, it is salutary to be reminded of this. At a time when genuinely unprecedented numbers of our students are disengaging or being disengaged with the processes of education, it is helpful to have a book such as this.

To use Hone Tuwhare's terms, we have certainly made the know-how of teaching and learning into a complex and technological area which we surround in our very special monkey language. I search for those who can tell the story of teaching simply and usefully. The issue with educational research and education writing is not that there isn't enough of it but that so little of it, relatively speaking, is known to classroom teachers. There is a key role in our system for those who can take some of this material and present it in a way that allows teachers to develop a context into which new ideas can flow like a mangrove seed and perhaps take root to withstand the daily tides that wash over them.

Macfarlane takes us on something of a journey through the trends in addressing issues of behaviour. The stages are labelled: institutionalism and relative isolation; segregation; categorisation; integration; mainstreaming; inclusion; finally, in 2007, circumspection described in these terms: 'because of the increasing manifestation of behavioural disorders, the view that every child has a right to a mainstream education is challenged in some quarters' (p. 17). I wonder if *exclusion* is the next theory.

We are then invited to consider factors that influence behaviours. Among these is the influence of the family. The book deals with the power of culture and of teachers' understanding of it. Basil Bernstein would agree with the view that the culture of the child cannot enter the classroom unless it has first entered the consciousness of the teacher. Macfarlane says 'Young people do not shed their cultural nuances at the school gate; they take them with them into the classrooms and playgrounds' (p. 39). That is a key and central challenge. Macfarlane underlines and makes clear the conclusion that his Waikato colleagues, Bishop and Berryman (2006), expressed so eloquently titling their book, giving a clear and unequivocal message to all involved in education in New Zealand: *Culture Speaks*.

The book then takes us through a repertoire of understandings and strategies for coping with what Macfarlane calls 'mild to moderate behaviour difficulties' (p. 51) – are these the "normal" students? In approaching discipline as both a noun and a verb we get a strong affirmation for the classroom with structure and shape. A dig through the archeological strata of classroom management will ring bells for many as the catch cries of theories of classroom management move past in procession – group dynamic, "withitness", congruent communication, applied behaviour analysis, assertive discipline, effective body language and on it goes.

Then we get to what for me is the highlight of the book, the Hikairo Rationale – seven principles around which teachers can build a positive and inclusive classroom. This is Macfarlane's very personal contribution to our understanding of the dynamics of teaching and learning.

- Huakina mai                    Opening doorways
- Ihi                                Being assertive
- Kōtahitanga                Seeking collaboration
- Awhinatia                    Helping learners
- I runga i te manaaki        Caring that pervades
- Rangaratanga                Motivating learners
- Orangatanga                Nurturing environment

There follows a careful exposition of the approaches and techniques for preventing and responding to behaviour difficulties in the classroom, one which builds on and preserves the dignity of the learner and the teacher. It is based on values, respect, commitment, valuing education and suchlike. Above all, it is designed to establish for learners a sense of belonging in the classroom, the school and, if successful, the wider world.

It acknowledges the connections to Mason Durie's (1998) *Te Whare Tapa Whā* and Rose Pere's (1997) *Te Wheke*. The book is, in Macfarlane's own words, 'a collection of methods and strategies for educators ... offered to help educators in their work with students who are experiencing learning and behaviour difficulties' (p. 165). He reminds us that 'there are no guarantees in the realm of learning and behaviour, but as change agents, educators must believe that they can make a difference' (p. 165).

This is the crucial point and never in our history has it been more critical. Many facts about the performance of our education system should worry us and these have been well canvassed elsewhere. The importance of this book is that it encourages us to take a good look at what we are doing. We need different and drastically improved results and it is simply foolish to believe that we can get a difference by continuing to do the same.

I cannot recall who said that the issue for us in education is not incompetence in the classroom, but rather the fact that competent teachers are doing the wrong thing. This book has the potential to take good teachers and turn them into better teachers and for taking teachers who are struggling and show them the hope that comes from a structured and values based approach. Classrooms can be a battle for understanding and against ignorance rather than a battle between each other.

Macfarlane calls the last part of the book "Navigating the choppy seas". The sea imagery is so central to New Zealand. The knowledge wave is really the bow wave of a canoe, driven strongly by a group that wants to head in the same direction and who are inspired to put their backs into the task. The stronger the team work the greater the bow wave. So too is it in education.

If teachers and schools aspire to see that bow wave carve a future for our students, then reading this book will be rewarding.

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## REVIEWER PROFILE

### Dr Stuart Middleton

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Dr Stuart Middleton is Executive Director of External Relations at Manukau Institute of Technology. He has been a secondary school English teacher, teacher educator and principal.

Stuart Middleton has been awarded a Commonwealth Relations Trust Fellowship to the University of London, and several QANTAS Media Awards as New Zealand's best social issues columnist. He has written a weekly column in *NZ Education Review* for the past 10 years. In 2007 he won a Fulbright New Century Scholars Award and joined an international group of scholars studying equity and access in higher education. In September to December 2007 he was a Visiting Scholar at the University of California, Berkeley.

## BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA

**Title:** Discipline, democracy and diversity: Working with students with behavioural difficulties.

**Author:** Dr Angus Macfarlane

**Publisher:** NZCER Press

**Date of Publication:** 2007

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**RRP:** \$35.20

## CLASSROOM TO PRISON CELL

**Alison Sutherland**

This book presents the results of interviews with 25 young people who were in one of three youth justice residential schools in New Zealand. The interviews focused on these young people's views about their experiences in the schools they had attended.

Participants were aged from 14 years to 16 years, 11 months. There were 19 boys and six girls. 68% identified themselves as Māori, 20% Pacifica and 12% as New Zealand European.

The interviews were tape recorded and most of the book consists of verbatim transcripts of selections from the young people's comments. This has the effect of focusing attention on the young people's voices which, as the author reports, is a perspective that is lacking in the literature on this population.

The boys' stories vary from the extremely moving to the really scary! Moving because you can't help but feel sorry for those whose personal circumstances were so difficult that developing normally was almost impossible. Scary when you realise the depth of hostility and alienation some have expressed and think of what they may do in the future if they are not helped to develop more positive attitudes and values.

Although the focus on the participants' voices is refreshing, I think it would have been useful to have more analysis of the themes emerging from their comments. Perhaps such analysis is included in the author's PhD thesis, from which the material in the book was extracted (Sutherland, 2006).

One theme which struck me was that most of the young people reported that they had become troubled during their time at primary or intermediate school, but that it was at secondary school when their troublesome behaviour had escalated to the extent that schools couldn't cope with them. Their most positive memories were from their primary school days, but this is also where things had started to go wrong, in many cases associated with smoking dope, drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

In New Zealand, guidance counsellors are found almost exclusively in secondary schools so most primary and intermediate schools do not have counsellors who can identify pupils at risk and begin to intervene before behaviour problems become too ingrained.

In fact, none of the young people mentioned being helped by secondary school guidance counsellors, but then none mentioned having been helped by RTLB, psychologists or social workers either. This is not to say that they didn't have contact with such specialists, it's just that, if they did, not much impression was made. Since these young people are some of the most vulnerable in the school system they are the ones in most need of specialist help, so they should have had a lot of contact with such specialists.

Another theme that emerged was that many of the young people reported that they had experienced difficulties in various aspects of learning at school. For some, their reading difficulties were identified because the interview process required them to read "memory jogging" cards, others mentioned experiencing difficulties with writing or maths at school. Also, several participants complained about the lack of understanding that teachers had shown when they had found schoolwork difficult. Once again, one wonders whether these young people's learning difficulties were identified by schools and to what extent specialist help from reading recovery teachers, RTLB and educational psychologists was involved. None of this is mentioned by the participants but this may not mean that it didn't happen.

So for me the book has done its job. It has raised my awareness of the needs of this very special population of young people and has highlighted some areas of concern regarding school provision for such young people and other aspects which are in need of further research.

### REFERENCE

Sutherland, A. (2006). *From classroom to prison cell: Young offenders' perception of their school experience*. Unpublished PhD thesis: Victoria University of Wellington.

### REVIEWER PROFILE

**Professor Garry Hornby**

Garry is Professor of Education at the University of Canterbury. He previously worked as a residential social worker, mainstream and experience class teacher and educational psychologist. Recent research projects include a follow-up study of ex-pupils of a residential special school for pupils with emotional and behavioural disorders and an investigation of parental involvement in mainstream schools.

### BIBLIOGRAPHIC DATA

**Title:** Classroom to Prison Cell

**Author:** Alison Sutherland

**Publisher:** Stead & Daughters Ltd

**Date of Publication:** May 2008

**ISBN:** 978-0-473-13386-3

**RRP:** \$29.99

## RIDING THE WAVES: INNOVATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Edited by Anne Meade

*Riding the Waves* is the second book released from the Centre of Innovation Programme (COI) in New Zealand. The COI Programme is a project initiated by the New Zealand government in 2002 as part of the 10 year early childhood strategic plan, *Pathways to the Future/Ngā Huarahi Arataki*. The purpose of this project was to reflect on innovative teaching and practice that improved children's learning within the context of *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum. The first book in this series, *Catching the Waves*, was reviewed by Beryl Overall in *Kairaranga* Volume 7, Issue 2, 2006.

The books are one way in which the participants in COI programme are disseminating their research. The focus of this book, *Riding the Waves*, is about early childhood practitioners' reflections on their journey of being involved in participatory action research, what they learnt and how this has influenced their practice.

Each chapter of this book describes different aspects of participatory action research and the implications for the COIs. The reflections from the COIs provide the reader with illustrations of what this actually looks like in practice. Most of the centres whose work features in this book are from the first round of COI. A reference to their full project findings is provided at the end of each of their contributions. The centres involved in COI are from a diverse range of early childhood communities. They have adapted the concepts of this type of research to answer their questions while honouring the "culture" of their community. Each centre's project questions are described and outcomes of their projects are linked to sociocultural theory and learning dispositions. They have detailed changes in teaching practice that have benefited the children and families/whānau of their communities, with the focus of these stories being the process of engaging in action research. Their journeys have been made explicit.

Some centres' reflections from the second round of this programme included in this book are still involved in the research phase, and are due to release their research findings this year.

Anne Meade made a point of saying that action research implemented in the way described in this book is rare. For the teachers and parent educators involved they have had to come to terms with the reality that not only were they participants but were also in control of their research. Research Associates, who had been involved in academic research, were chosen by each centre to support them through the process of carrying out action research. Forming collaborative partnerships became an important part of the process. Ethical issues around practitioners being researchers and doing research with young children and their families/whānau had to be addressed.

*Riding the Waves* will be of interest for anyone considering doing participatory action research in early childhood or the wider education sector within a New Zealand context. An understanding of the philosophy of early childhood education in New Zealand and knowledge of Assessment for Learning practices may be required by readers to understand the COI projects.

The COI programme exemplifies quality teaching practice and is designed to influence thinking in many areas of early childhood education. It is one way in which early childhood practitioners are shown how critical reflective thinking can enhance teaching practice, children's learning and can be the catalyst for change. The research undertaken by the COIs should be celebrated and shared. I look forward to seeing more books in this series.

### REFERENCES

Ministry of Education. (2002). *Pathways to the future/ Ngā huarahi arataki*. Wellington, New Zealand: Learning Media.

### REVIEWER PROFILE

Sally Barry is an Early Intervention Teacher and Lead Practitioner (Early Intervention) working for the Ministry of Education, Special Education, in the Waikato District. She co-wrote *Kei tua o te Pae Assessment for Learning: Early Childhood Exemplars*, Booklet 9: Inclusive Assessment.

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  - Research** - Papers summarising research studies involving quantitative and/or qualitative analysis of data, or reviews of the literature. (Up to 3,500 words).
  - Storied Experience** - Papers reporting the experiences of children, parents, caregivers, teachers, support staff and professionals in various learning settings. (Up to 1,500 words).
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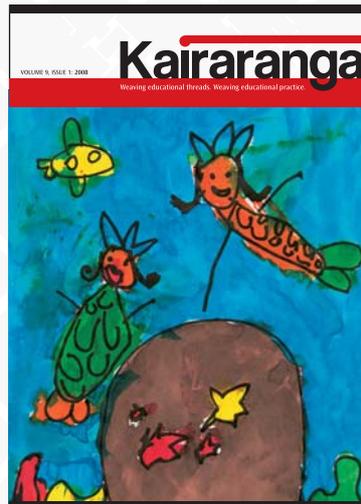
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