

Teacher views on the contemporary educational applications of behavioural theory

By

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Abstract

This research aims to find out different primary and intermediate teacher views on the pedagogical role of behavioural theory. Behaviourism is common in today's classroom in the form of award systems and punishments in order to develop wanted behaviour and prevent unwanted behaviour (Laureate Education, 2010). Traditional methods of behaviour management in New Zealand schools often tends to be punitive which included methods like office referrals, detentions, suspensions, and expulsions (Elder, 2014; Savage, Lewis, & Colless, 2011).

In order to address this priority, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has introduced a comprehensive plan called Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) that fosters the kind of positive behaviour that enables all children and student to learn and achieve, by encouraging respectful and inclusive relationships (MOE, 2015). PB4L enables schools to design and implement a whole school approach that focuses on teaching positive behaviour, setting out clear behavioural expectations, and creating a whole school culture which supports responsibility for behaviour (Savage et al., 2011). PB4L is firmly linked to behavioural theory and Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) as it emphasizes behavioural theory that observable behaviour is an important indicator of what the student has learned and how they operate in their environment (Carr et al., 2002; Filter, 2007; Simonsen & Sugai, 2007). This study involves six teacher participants working in a school implementing and sustaining PB4L framework. The teachers' perspectives regarding the behaviour management strategies and challenges experienced in the classroom were explored and shared during semi-structured interviews.

The outcomes of this study confirm findings in literature by demonstrating that consistency along with a close, positive and supportive student-teacher is important for developing a mutual respect and for managing challenging behaviours successfully.

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Attestation statement

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

Chapter one

Introduction

Challenging behaviour in a classroom can disrupt the teaching and learning processes and creates barriers to effective learning and success in the classroom. Behavioural difficulties is another label for unacceptable conduct as suggested by the New Zealand Government Special Education 2000. This policy document identifies challenging behaviour as putting at risk the physical safety of the students, causing significant property damage, and affecting the sense of personal well-being and academic performance of students (MOE, 2000). Educators in New Zealand schools have described challenging behaviour as a major concern (Browne, 2013). Teachers have reported feeling ill-equipped to assist students with the many challenges they present in the classroom (Browne, 2013). For example, 70% of middle and high school New Zealand teachers have reported disruptive behaviour in their schools, with 85% of new teachers feeling they are unprepared to manage discipline problems (Public Agenda, 2004). According to Reinke, Herman, and Stormont (2013) almost half of new teachers give up the profession in the first five years and many do so due to difficult student behaviour. With outcomes for students, teachers, schools, and families at stake, an effective long-term solution is required (Elder, 2014). It is therefore important to understand why this is the case and what is being done to address the issue of effective behaviour management.

The literature suggests that the considerable number of students who have challenging behaviours in New Zealand schools, is an important issue. From a study by Gunning (2009), 575 New Zealand teachers, from 79 primary and intermediate schools, covering 12,787 students, it was found that students presenting challenging behaviours in New Zealand schools, has become an important issue. In addition, research has shown that methods of behaviour management in New Zealand schools tend to be punitive, including methods like office referrals, detentions, suspensions, and expulsions (Elder, 2014; Savage, Lewis, & Colless, 2011). These methods of traditional behavioural management approaches were not providing the long-term positive behavioural change that the schools required (Elder, 2014). Yet these behavioural management practices have not resulted in long-term positive

behavioural change (Elder, 2014; Anderson & Terrance, 2009). Often stand-downs can have negative consequences for the student (MOE, 2012) and there is no evidence that such strategies promote a positive school environment (Elder, 2011; Sugai & Horner, 2009).

The Gluckman Report (2011), reported that although there has been increasing investment in a range of early intervention programs in New Zealand, no evaluation of these programs have been made. The Gluckman Report concluded that key task is to develop policies, strategies and services that translate evidence into effective practice. The report showed that there were worrying levels of behavioural disruption among children and adolescents. However, despite the Gluckman Report, this long-time concern and increased attention, a curriculum for the social development of children and youth in schools has not been formally and widely embraced (Sugai, Horner, & McIntosh, 2008). Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) was introduced by the MOE in 2009 which is built upon the principles that positive behaviour can be learnt and environment can be changes to support effective teaching and learning (Positive Behaviour for Learning, 2015).

Teachers have a direct influence over student behaviour and providing positive learning environment is an important factor in determining quality of learning and preventing bad behaviour (MOE, 2004). When teachers experience a high level of rule-breaking behaviour their attention is turned to regaining classroom control to eliminate disruptive behaviour, in order to comply with school expectations (Sugai & Horner, 2009). It has been noted by Elder (2014), that repeated incidents of challenging behaviours can negatively affect a teacher's confidence, self-efficacy, and increase their levels of stress.

This project explores issues related to challenging student behaviours and more or less effective behaviour management strategies that are being practiced in New Zealand schools. This research aims to find out views of primary and intermediate teachers on the pedagogical role of behavioural theory. Analysis of teacher knowledge of theory can help highlight key tensions, issues and areas for support for school communities.

Addressing challenging behaviour is one of the trickiest situations that a teacher can face. PB4L may help in identifying a child's behaviour challenge as a 'learning' challenge, providing tools to turn negatives into positives (MOE, 2013). PB4L aims to improve the behaviour and wellbeing of children at school in order to make the teachers feel more confident and supported in addressing behavioural problems. Thus, PB4L is important in terms of behavioural theory. However, in this study the views of the teachers in terms of PB4L will be engaged through interviews in order to gain their perspectives and experiences of implementing strategies in New Zealand classrooms.

Research aim

The overall aim of this study is to find out primary and intermediate teacher views on the pedagogical role of behavioural theory. The research proposed for this investigation were examining teacher perspective on behavioural theory and the application for the theory in New Zealand schools. The research question that guided this aim was: 'what are the teacher views on the contemporary educational application of behavioural theory?'

Overview of study

Chapter two explores the historical foundation and the background knowledge of the emergence of behavioural theory. A brief overview and summary of Positive Behaviour Support systems and PB4L which examines international case studies of schools that apply ABA principles as effective behaviour management practice is addressed in this chapter. The teacher perceptions regarding behavioural theory, and strategies used by teachers to manage challenging behaviour in a PB4L-School Wide framework (PB4L-SW). The next section in this chapter will describe the most recent evidence-based practice for behaviour management on PB4L.

Chapter three includes the methodology, the research design and procedures, data gathering and collection and analysis of teachers' perceptions on educational application of behavioural theory. Chapter four presents the results from the data analysed followed by the discussions of the themes identified. The responses provided by the participants will be analysed and put into themes, followed by each

theme critically discussed in relation to PB4L and behavioural theory. Chapter five concludes with a summary of the research limitations, possible future recommendations and implications related to the current New Zealand primary school context.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review focuses on the historical foundation and background knowledge of the emergence of behavioural theory. A summary and overview of the PB4L framework being implemented in New Zealand schools will be discussed. Teacher perceptions regarding behavioural theory, and strategies used by teachers to manage challenging behaviour in a PB4L-SW framework will also be discussed. This chapter will also describe how behavioural theory has influenced the pedagogy based on the most recent evidence-based practice for behaviour management based on PB4L.

The focus of the behavioural theory is on what is observed and the visible behaviour of the learner only. This learning theory is relatively simple as it relies on observable behaviour (Alberto & Troutman, 2012). Behavioural theory is commonly seen in today's classroom in the form of reward systems and punishments in order to develop wanted behaviour and prevent unwanted behaviour (Laureate Education, 2010). The aim of this research, thus, becomes important as the behaviour management framework is firmly linked to behavioural theory and ABA as it emphasises behavioural theory that observable behaviour is an important indicator of what the student has learned and how they operate in their environment (Carr et al., 2002; Filter, 2007; Simonsen & Sugai, 2007).

Historical foundation of behavioural theory

Behaviourism is the conceptual framework underlying the science of behaviour. It is the assumptions, values and belief implicit consisting of findings, laws and theories (Skinner, 1974; Zuriff, 1975). This framework has four components namely philosophy of science, a philosophy of mind, experimental theory and ideology. Behaviourism represents a set of values which are more notable with respect to applied behavioural science. Behaviourism thus can be viewed as ideology as well as philosophy (Zuriff, 1975).

Behavioural theory can be thought of as a branch of psychology that explains the relationship between stimulus and response, where stimulus is an event that

activates behaviour and response is observable as a reaction to the stimulus. As a theory that relates to human behaviour, and how the behaviour can be changed through being positioned to react or behave in a certain way (Woolfolk & Margetts, 2013). Behavioural learning theory offers explanations for learning that focus on external events as the cause of changes in observable behaviour (Zuriff, 1985).

Behavioural theory assumes that the outcome of learning changes behaviour (Woolfolk, 2014). Early behavioural theorists such as John Watson (1878-1958), believed that cognitive events were not observable, therefore could not be seen as a reliable explanation of learning. Albert Bandura (1974) believed that behaviourism only partly explains learning and overlooks social influence (Woolfolk, 2014). Although Skinner (1904-1990) was interested in human and animal behaviour, he believed that psychology only applied to operant conditioning i.e. controlling actions by providing a stimulus after, rather than before the action (Skinner, 1974; Watson, 1913). Watson (1913) emphasises external behaviour and situations rather than internal states in order to understand human action. It was Watson who opened a new era to behaviourism psychology rejecting the study by other psychological theories and theorists claiming they held unnecessary subjective elements. Watson felt that psychology should be focussed on 'behaviour' of people and not their 'consciousness' (Watson, 1913).

Behaviour is best understood by looking at the causes of an action and its consequences. Skinner's theory focuses on giving positive reinforcement or rewards for desired behaviour, punishment and negative feedback for undesired behaviour. Skinner believed that positive reinforcement for any kind of behaviour will lead to that behaviour occurring again. However, if the same behaviour is negatively reinforced then it will reduce the chances of that behaviour being repeated (Skinner, 1974). Skinner's theory in relation to the management of behaviour in classrooms, has been very influential in both educational research and the preparation of teachers. Nearly all the classroom management applications of behavioural theory involve one of the following basic operations i.e. positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, extinction or punishment (Landrum & Kauffman, 2006).

Science has provided an explanation and procedure for the control of behaviour that is often termed, by Skinner, as an analysis. By the 21st century, ABA had replaced Skinner's original term, but continued to follow Skinner's behavioural framework (Nasey, 2012). The term ABA is further explored below.

Emergence of PB4L framework in New Zealand

According to Savage et al. (2011), behavioural management system in New Zealand schools tends to focus on disciplining students after a behaviour has occurred. Traditional methods of behaviour management have included office referrals, detentions, suspensions, and expulsions (Elder, 2014; Savage et al., 2011). A survey of 579 New Zealand teachers conducted by Gunning (2009), shows that 21% of students engage in disruptive behaviour, disrupting other student's learning and the school environment, and up to 7% of these students were engaged in what has been termed severe behaviours. The literature suggests that low-level disruptive behaviour that occurs on day-to-day basis in the classroom may have the greatest impact on learning environments (Johansen, Little, & Akin-Little, 2011). Rising rates of challenging behaviour indicate that behaviour management methods have not led to long-term positive behaviour change in schools. Thus a need for change in behaviour management systems for New Zealand schools emerged in order to respond to concerns regarding the frequency and nature of disruptive behaviour (Savage et al., 2011).

Managing student behaviour has become a priority for the MOE as it finds an alternative approach in order to have better outcomes for students (MOE, 2013). In order to address this priority, the MOE introduced a comprehensive plan entitled the PB4L. This is a nationwide implementation inhabiting a series of behaviour management strategies and services made available up to 400 New Zealand primary, intermediate and secondary schools across the country (MOE, 2013).

PB4L emerged from the Taumata Whanonga behaviour summit in 2009. The summit report recommended that the MOE look internationally for successful initiatives with a strong research and evidence base (MOE, 2015). The report also mentioned the need to find new ways to reduce disruptive and challenging behaviour, with a focus

on keeping students engaged and reducing truancy, which impacts on student achievement (Tolley, 2009). A commitment was made to support local programs developed by Māori for Maori. PB4L framework is now delivered by the MOE in partnership with a range of organisations and group, including Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb), non-government organisations and universities (MOE, 2015). According to Henry (2015), PB4L has emerged as the programme of choice for New Zealand in providing a response to teacher unions' and professional associations' requests for more support in behaviour management.

PB4L has now been positioned in New Zealand as a programme to help parents, educators and schools address problem behaviour, improve student wellbeing and increase academic achievement (MOE, 2013). The framework that makes up PB4L in New Zealand has adapted some of the programs from Problem Behaviour in Schools (PBIS) into its family of programmes, of which PB4L-SW is one (Henry, 2015). PBS, originated from ABA, an approach that applies behaviour principles to challenging behaviour, which are of high concern (Spaulding et al., 2010). ABA is a method where researchers take a baseline measurement of the behaviour (A), then apply the intervention (B), to observe or see if the behaviour changes (A) (Woolfolk, 2014). PBIS systems that emerged in the literature in the 1980s and have become a part of international educational practice over the past decade (Dunlap, Carr, Horner, Zarcone, & Schwartz, 2008). These systems were developed in order to provide schools with positive and preventative behaviour management initiatives that replace traditional approaches to behaviour management in the schools (Elder, 2014).

The PBS systems have become a well-established methodology for school to deliver ABA-based behaviour principles and strategies (Elder, 2014). Many components of positive behaviour support originate from ABA and the two disciplines share the same behaviour theory in terms of behaviour management (Singer & Wang, 2009). The aim of PBS is similar to PB4L to provide schools with positive, proactive, and preventive behaviour management initiatives to replace traditional, punitive approaches (McIntosh et al., 2010). By doing so, PBS creates safe and positive school environment, support academic engagement and positive outcomes for students (Lynass, Tsai, Richman, & Cheney, 2012). Since its emergence in the mid-

1980s, PBS has developed rapidly as a broad approach for addressing difficulties in behavioural adaptation (Dunlap et al., 2008). PBS and PB4L are designed to replace problem behaviour with new actions (Woolfolk, 2014).

Guided by these programmes, teachers are in both regular and special education classes focus on the question of 'why' the behaviour is exhibited not on 'what'. The process of understanding the 'why' of a problem behaviour is known as Functional Behavioural Assessment (FBA). It is a procedure used to obtain information about antecedents, and consequences to determine the reasons for the problem behaviour (Woolfolds, 2014). With the information derived from FBA, interventions such as PBS and PB4L can be devised. With the help of FBA, a teacher studies the antecedents and consequences of problem behaviours to determine the reason for the behaviour (Woolfolds, 2014).

The foundation principles supporting PBS include selecting practices that have a strong evidence-base to support their effect, using methods supported by ABA (Elder, 2014). As a strong evidence-base for School-Wide PBS builds up in the literature, the research focus shifts towards the need for implementing support for success (Elder, 2014). These characteristics create a behavioural management system that is preventive, proactive and positive.

Summary of PB4L and PBS

Parsonson (2012) believes that there is continued focus on using positive strategies rather than the traditional responses to improve behaviour. The positive strategies that utilise ABA methods should be supported. While stand-downs and suspension are still available to New Zealand schools, the literature suggests more proactive methods of behaviour management that could provide more satisfactory results (Collin, 2001). Johnsen, Little and Akin-Little (2011) suggest that often behavioural issues are seen within individual students rather than within an environment or school system. School-wide approach like PB4L-SW changes this view about individual students and addressing the problem behaviour as a whole school issue to be dealt with (Scott, 2005; Sugai & Horner, 2006).

The aim, as already mentioned, of the MOE was recommended in Taumata Whanonga behaviour summit that was run in 2009 to bring together the education leaders from all education sectors in order to develop a focused approach to address concerns about behaviour, behaviour management based on consistency and shared goals (Positive Behaviour for Learning, 2013). As a result of this summit, the PB4L action plan was developed. PB4L is a series of behaviour management strategies made available to New Zealand primary, intermediate, and secondary schools across the country (MOE, 2013).

The PB4L initiative is a three-tiered response to the framework based on need similar to that underpinning SW-PBS. The primary first tier is known as the SW-PBS, which is designed to deliver preventative behavioural supports which encourage pro-social behaviour in order to prevent problem behaviour before they occur (Safron & Oswald, 2003, Sugai & Horner, 2009). The second and the third tier focuses more on the students with greater needs or severe behavior difficulties which cannot be responded with tier one (Safron & Oswald, 2003; Sugai & Horner, 2009). (see figure 1). The primary tier illustrates the bottom of the pyramid, the second tier is designed to deliver additional support as compared to tier one, and the third tier at the top of the pyramid is designed to provide intensive individual support (Positive Behaviour Interventions & Supports, 2014).

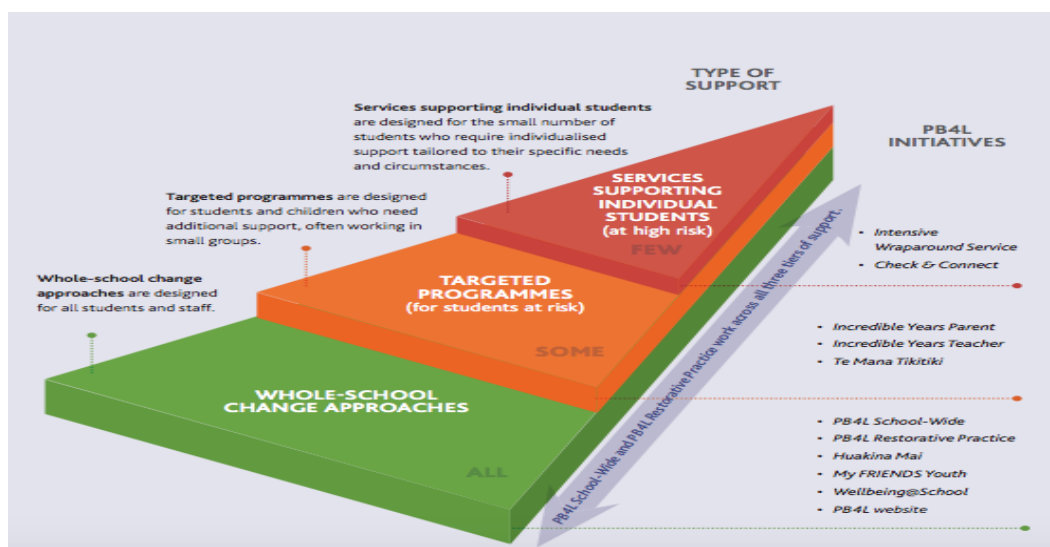


Figure 1. Positive Behaviour for Learning: three tiers of support (MOE, 2015).

This three-tiered framework includes numerous programs and initiatives that support students at each level of need (MOE, 2013). The tier one includes programmes like PB4L-SW, Restorative practice, Wellbeing@School to support the students. The tier two targeted programmes include Incredible Years Parent, Incredible Years Teacher and Te Mana Tikitiki (MOE, 2015). The third tier includes intensive individual services. The Incredible Years Teacher programme is a set of comprehensive strategies designed to promote emotional and social competence to prevent, reduce disruptive behaviour and build positive relationships with the children (MOE, 2015). This programme will be discussed and explored more in greater depth in chapter 4 as it is relevant to the participants interviewed and to this study.

PB4L fosters the kind of positive behaviour that enables all children and students to learn and achieve, by encouraging respectful and inclusive relationships and interactions (MOE, 2015). It is a school wide integrated initiative, which aims to promote appropriate behaviour in a positive way that is non-threatening and supportive. This initiative provides teachers with strategies of building a positive relationship with students, prevention of challenging behaviour, using positive behavioural strategies to change behaviours, motivating and helping children learn (Elder, 2014). It aims to encourage the teachers to abandon the punitive responses to problematic behaviour, improve social and academic student achievement, and maximise positive school environment for successful learning (Savage et al., 2011).

PBS is an approach designed to improve the accurate implementation and sustained use of evidence-based practice related to behaviour and classroom management. This PBS framework was used to support the design of MOE PB4L-SW initiative to find solutions to challenging behaviour in New Zealand schools and making evidence-based decisions concerning behaviour (Savage et al., 2011; Sugai & Horner, 2009). The MOE describes PB4L-SW as a framework made up of practices and systems, which can be adapted by schools to meet the needs of their students (MOE, 2013). The initiative also provides teachers the strategies that encourage them to abandon reactive and punitive responses to problem behaviour, to increase prosocial behaviour, academic student achievement and positive school environment (Savage et al., 2011). A clear and consistent reinforcement process,

that includes reward programmes for displaying positive behaviour, must be put in place to achieve a positive behavioural expectation of the school (Handler et al., 2006; Lynass et al., 2012; McIntosh et al., 2010). The overall aim of PB4L-SW is to decrease behavioural problems and their associated negative effects.

Teacher perceptions regarding challenging behaviours

The study of classroom management was developed in the 1950s by two behaviourists, Watson and Skinner, and their learning theories that focused on shaping challenging behaviour of individual students through reinforcement or by the use of operant conditioning (Alberto & Troutman 2009; Nasey, 2012). According to Walker, Ramsey and Gresham (2004), challenging behaviour can be defined as antisocial behaviour which may range from aggressions to minor defiance. The term challenging behaviour has number of definitions which allow teachers to provide challenging behaviour as labels to individuals who display unacceptable behaviour (Emerson, 2001). Regardless of the label of challenging behaviour given to the students, it is reasonable to say that challenging behaviour is that which affects the child's learning or development, but also other children and teachers within close proximity and within the classroom learning environment (MacFarlane, 2007). However, teachers' opinions of what constitutes problem behaviour varies dependent on their perception of what is acceptable and within their own threshold of tolerance and within their own cultural beliefs and understandings (Rogers, 2000). As stated by the MOE (2007), school and teacher culture strongly influence student behaviour as actions taken by the teacher promote student learning. Effective pedagogical practices taken by the teacher have positive effects on students learning and behaviour.

According to Watkins and Wagner (2000), often teachers develop a negative focus on the unacceptable behaviour which leads to punishment when dealing with behaviours in the classrooms. However, building a good relationship with the students by talking to them about what is important may diffuse the situation (Balson 1992; Rogers, 2000). A positive learning environment is an important factor in determining the quality of learning and preventing negative behaviour in the classroom (MOE, 2004). It has been recommended that stand-downs or

suspensions or any kind of punishments should be only made after considering the long-time implications and affect for the educational future and life chances of the student (MOE, 2004). The New Zealand curriculum states the importance of actions that teachers take that promote student learning (MOE, 2007). There is well documented evidence that reveals that a teacher's role is imperative in student learning and that effective pedagogical practices have a positive impact on students and learning and behaviour (Dhaliwal, 2013).

The teaching environment is believed to be constantly changing with time and shifting towards a more modern learning environment in the 21st century. In such a case, the teacher's role is not only to distribute classroom content knowledge with activities, but also to deliver sound pedagogical knowledge way beyond classroom content (Dhaliwal, 2013). This justifies the need for professional development that can support teachers to adapt to the changing environment. It is believed that modifying the classroom environment may provide a direct intervention for children who demonstrate disruptive behaviour (Conroy, Davis, Fox, & Brown, 2002) cited in Guardino and Fullerton, (2010). According to Dhaliwal, (2013) how to establish and employ good behaviour management strategies and promote learning in their classrooms is not only a dilemma for student teachers or beginning teachers, but also concerns experienced teachers.

Evidence-based practice

The literature recommends that a strong evidence based practice should include various researches that have been carried out by individual researchers that exhibit important effect of the practice on the desired outcomes (Hicks et al., 2014; McIntosh et al., 2010). In other words, the initial role of evidence-based practice in education is to ensure that learners receive the best possible programme and services instead of ineffective ones (Detrich & Lewis, 2012). If implementation of an initiative cannot occur in a sustainable way, schools tend to go back to traditional methods of behavioural management (Browne, 2013; Coffey & Horner, 2012; Sugai & Horner, 2006). In order to provide the greatest chance of success, schools must address their needs, and those should be based on evidence based practices that are linked to desired outcomes (Elder, 2014).

Hicks et al. (2014) suggest that evidence-based practices should be supported through studies that demonstrate positive effects across time, contexts, and settings: “implementation and use of evidence based interventions in school settings can lead to overall school improvement and more specifically may enhance the effectiveness of school psychological services” (p. 2). According to Browne (2013), knowledge and understanding of evidence-based practices can lead to more effective behaviour management in the classroom. The effectiveness of any practice depending on its applicability to the targeted or desired behaviour, outcomes, and situation (Elder, 2014).

Parsonson (2012) has discussed in his review the evidence-based behaviour management strategies that are appropriate for use in the New Zealand classroom. Within the review the need for effectiveness of many of the PB4L-SW strategies were stated. For example, the use of behavioural expectations, and positive reinforcement strategies that aim to reduce disruptive behaviour in the classroom. Parsonson (2012) also mentions that all of the behaviour management strategies supported within the review are “consistent with, and complementary to the New Zealand Ministry of Education’s Positive behaviour for Learning School-Wide strategy” (p. 21). According to Towl (2007), findings indicate that identifying the initial cause of the negative behaviour and reintegrating the students into a school community should be an important part of the process. Towl’s findings in relation to PB4L expectations, value behavioural theory that focuses on repetition of words, rewarding students and being consistent in a behaviourist approach (Towl, 2007).

A widely accepted form of evidence-based practices that are implemented in schools and classrooms are those, which rely on the principles of ABA. Teachers often apply this approach to behaviour management by observing students’ behaviour and their functional relations to antecedents and consequences (Maag, 2004). ABA methods used in classrooms is not a new idea, in fact, the literature contains references to the use of ABA in New Zealand schools from back in 1970s (e.g., Ballard, 1983; Glynn & McNaughton, 1978; Glynn & Quinnell, 1971) cited in Elder (2014). This has also extended into more recent New Zealand literature (Johansen, Little, & Akin-Little, 2011; Savage, et al., 2011; Parsonson, 2012). ABA provides a method and strategy

for reducing unwanted student behaviour and teaching more desirable behaviour. ABA emphasises the use of positive, proactive, and preventative measures in the school environment in order to gain desired behaviour (Savage et al., 2011). The literature suggests that ABA can be effectively applied in schools in order to create positive behaviour change. Furthermore, consistent and appropriate use of ABA strategies demonstrate links with both increased learning and decreased challenging behaviour (Johansen et al., 2011; Parsonson, 2012; Sugai & Horner, 2006).

An ABA-based behaviour management plan implemented in schools, includes both positive and negative consequence strategies (Alberto & Troutman, 2009). Positive reinforcement involves delivering desirable consequences, such as praise or rewards, only when the desirable behaviour is displayed in order to increase positive behaviours. Negative strategies involve delivering repellent consequences only when the undesirable behaviour is displayed in order to decrease the negative behaviour occurrence (Alberto & Troutman, 2009).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the historical foundations and background knowledge of behavioural theory that supports PB4L-SW system. The principles of ABA and PBS have been examined as an effective methodology for creating a positive behavioural change. A brief summary of behaviour management strategies used in the New Zealand education sector that has not been successful in addressing behaviour management issues has been discussed. The behaviour management framework PB4L which was introduced by the MOE in 2009 has been described and considered in relation to teacher perspective, behaviour management strategies, evidence-based practice and behavioural theory for implementation. The literature reviewed also placed an importance on the need for teachers to define what challenging behaviours are, and reflect on their own beliefs and perceptions regarding behavioural theory. The review has also shown that behaviour and learning are interconnected.

The present research is about gaining teacher perspectives on educational applications of behavioural theory in relation to the behaviour management

framework being used in the school through semi-structured interviews. The next chapter outlines methodology, data gathering and analysis process, and ethical considerations.

Chapter three: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of teachers on the application of behavioural theory in New Zealand primary schools, that are currently implementing PB4L. The study identifies and analyses the strategies used in teaching, current views of the theory, examples of corrective behaviours in classroom, techniques and theories used in the classroom and challenging behaviours faced by the teachers in New Zealand context. This chapter describes the qualitative methodological approach to the study. The data collection method of semi-structured individual interviews within a qualitative research paradigm is described and explained. The concepts of reliability and validity are critiqued and implications of the ethics are outlined.

Rationale for choosing qualitative approach

This study follows a qualitative research design. This research is a useful research method as it allows access to an individual's attitudes and values, interpretation of events, understandings, experiences and opinions (Silverman, 2008). As stated by Burns (2000), a qualitative research method is another way of understanding people and their behaviour. The results drawn from the research are based on the teacher's observation rather than trying to prove or disapprove a hypothesis. The research is interested in finding out how different people make sense of their lives (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Hence a qualitative research method best suits this study, gaining the views of the teachers, to determine their perspectives on the implementation of behavioural theory in their teaching practice.

Qualitative research is ideal for a smaller sized study which allows the researcher to focus on, "the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of the world by its participants" (Bryman, 2004, p. 266). The qualitative approach also fitted well with the aim and research question of this study as it provided an opportunity to gain perspectives from the participants in greater depth. This is important as it allowed for meaningful analyses and gave respondents a voice which uncovered specific ideas and elaborated on the current understanding

and knowledge of behavioural theory. Since this study is a small scale research involving six individual interviews, qualitative approach is best as the sample sizes are normally small in this method (Mason, 2010).

The study focused on teacher views on behavioural theory and its application in the classroom setting. In order to gain an in-depth view, knowledge and understanding of teacher perceptions regarding behavioural theory, it was important to identify issues and experiences of teacher participants through their eyes (Bryman, 2004; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). This allows for an impression to be given by detailing the viewpoints of the participants being researched and answering the question “what is going on here?” (Bouma, 1998, p. 169).

Participants:

The participants were from New Zealand primary and intermediate schools who were implementing PB4L framework at their school, at the time of the study. The aim was to select primary intermediate schools that have PB4L as their behavioural management program. Six participants responded back from one school, and were selected. At the end of the recruitment process, there were altogether six participants, out of which three participants were full-time classroom teachers and two of them being in the leadership roles for PB4L team. This research involved a principal, so it provided a range of experiences of both classroom teachers and a leader. The three full time teachers taught a mixture of full and group settings. Full setting in this context means open play environment with two classrooms sharing a central teaching space, whereas, in a group setting the teacher plans together but most of the time are on their own teaching the classroom.

Procedure

The schools that were familiar to me due to past working day-to-day reliever and were implementing PB4L were chosen for this study. After emailing the school receptionists requesting a meeting with the principal, only one school responded back approving my request. The responder school was contacted again via email and a meeting was planned with the principal to discuss the project and provide information about the research. A flyer introduced the research purpose and aim,

participation requirements, and provided contact details for the research participants (see Appendix C). An attached information sheet provided more detailed necessary information for a fully informed participation (see Appendix A). Overall, six responses were received as a result of the invitation. The respondents were asked to provide the name of their school along with the class year level that they taught.

The working experience with the school provided benefit as the school policies, procedures, behaviour policies and the programme, PB4L, being implemented were already known to me as a researcher. This involvement helped in framing the questions for the interview specific to my study in order to gain perspectives and more knowledge about PB4L and its theories from the known participants. Since the researcher is already familiar with the participants, the researcher generates further questions from the known information that reflects teachers desire to make sense of their experiences, rather than gathering new information (Berthoff, 1987) cited in Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993). The participants were comfortable in answering the questions during the interview which resulted in gathering rich, honest and authentic data.

As an insider researcher, the risk may be gaining access to any sensitive information or views provided by the participant. This risk was managed by respecting the ethical issues, and anonymity of the participants and the school. Also by not being in hierarchical position in the school to judge on their views, so there was no pressure on the participants. Another challenge of being an insider researcher is that honesty and openness of the responses can never be guaranteed due to the researcher's relationship with the participants. Hence, it is important that the research process is transparent and honest. This was done through the PIS forms before the interview was conducted.

All the six participants were involved in individual semi-structured interviews that lasted for 45 minutes. The semi-structured questions that were asked during the interview are:

1. What do you know about behavioural theory and its use in teaching practices?
2. What behavioural program is in the school and how are the management techniques used in the classroom? Provide examples.
3. What are some of the theories/techniques/strategies that work best for you and

why? Provide examples.

4. What kind of behaviour do you find challenging and why? Provide examples.
5. What other behavioural techniques are you aware of? How would you apply those into your teaching practice? Provide examples.
6. Would you be interested in Professional Learning Development sessions to learn more about behavioural theory?

Some of the major themes emerging from the semi-structured questions will be discussed and analysed in next chapter. The interviews were audio taped and later transcribed by the researcher. Three interviews took place in the school of the participants after gaining permission from the principal, while the others were taken at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) South campus. Once the interview was completed, each participant was provided with a \$20 Whitcoulls voucher as a gift for their valuable time. Before concluding the interviews, the participant's questions or concerns were address. The participants were thanked at the end of the interviews, and will also receive an email summary of the research findings when the study completes and approves.

Validity and reliability

In a research study it is important to plan the details of the sampling techniques employed as this can enhance the validity of the data. To ensure the validity and reliability of the themes analysed, regular feedback and guidance from the mentor was undertaken. A list of six relevant schools that implemented PB4L-SW framework were chosen through the convenience sampling and non-random procedure. Sampling is an important step when choosing participants that fit the parameters of research (Tracy, 2012). The process of checking the interview questions, prior to interviewing, against the aim, purpose and research question supported validity of this study. To support reliability, the sampling process was carefully planned, the interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions. Once the interviews were transcribed, a copy was sent to the participants in order for them to change or remove any comments or information provided by them. Encouraging the participants to validate the transcripts also added to the validity and reliability for this

study, as it gave the participants an empowerment to control what was written and authenticate what was said in the interview (Mero-Jeffe, 2011).

Validity and reliability was also established through credible qualitative counterparts to internal validity. The semi-structured interviews allowed flexible dialogue between the researcher and the participant which increased the validity of the research. The validity is addressed in this research by engaging into dialogue with the participants rather than the 'formal' conversation (Burns, 2000).

Analysis of the data:

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were employed to gain the views and perspectives of the participants. The method of thematic analysis was used for "identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). The rationale behind using this approach was to check if the data were consistent enough to provide information related to the research question.

The first step in organising the data included looking the notes made at the time of the interview identifying similarities, themes and responses. The second step was the transcription of the interviews through listening to the audio tape. This allowed for repeated listening of the full interview by returning again and again for re-listening without interruption (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Each transcription was then read along with listening to the recording, allowing the researcher to become more familiar with the data and to begin the step of noting down thematic connections (Dhaliwal, 2013).

Finding common themes involved looking for repeated words and phrases and then categorising that data. Each of these themes were then sub-categorised using coding. The coding approach was used to develop categories for analysing statements from the interviews that were then labelled by a category (Flick, 2014). Coleman and Briggs (2002) suggest that researcher should be aware of both themes emerging from the questions as well as other themes that emerges as the analysis takes place. The five major themes that emerged were: 'praise, relationships, modelling, Professional Learning Development sessions, and reflections'. As the interpretation of the data progressed, these five main themes were further sub-

divided such as positive guidance, positive prompts, student teacher relationship and support available for teachers. Two themes emerged during the analysis of the interview which was found across much of the data. The first was consistency in using the positives in ratio to negatives. The second was reflective practice in how teachers can be more reflective and gaining feedback from observations and discussions. These themes have been analysed and placed in chapter five, the result and discussion chapter.

Using a clear process to organise, summarise and interpret data is a way to increase validity of the study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Though criticism has been made of qualitative data analysis having little explanation of the process of analysis, in more recent studies this has been more systematic. However, analysis in qualitative research has become more systematic which enables to find more meaning in the data, and organise the data in a way so that the comparisons, contrasts and insights can be made clearly (Burns, 2000; Neuman, 1997).

This study provided a range of experiences as it involved a school principal, a senior teacher, and 4 classroom teachers. The participants were not judged or perceived on the information and views provided on behavioural theory, rather a systematic analysis method was used to look at the strategies and incentives used in the classroom. This showed similarities or differences that appeared within individual and group responses, linked to PB4L and behavioural theory. It was not only the clear noticeable themes that required consideration, but also the hidden, underlying themes that required reflection. Within this opportunity to compare and contrast the findings, both the common themes and differences have been featured in the findings.

Ethics

Standard university ethical protocols were followed as this research was carried out in accordance with the approval by Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) process (AUTEC, 2016). A number of steps were taken to ensure the current research carried out in accordance to these guidelines. The teachers of all schools invited to participate received information and explanation of

what the research involved through Information sheet and Consent form (see Appendix C). The participants were informed that no school or individual identity would be revealed and would remain confidential. The interview participants were informed about the nature of the study and the process of data collection, along with the details of data storage of data upon completion of this study. All participants were informed that a summary of the results would be provided. The participants were informed that the findings of this study would provide general perspectives and views on behavioural theory in relation to PB4L in New Zealand schools. The time and effort of the participants were acknowledged by the researcher upon completion of the interview.

Chapter four: Findings and Discussions

Introduction

The responses provided by the participants have been categorised according to PB4L strategies and perspectives of behavioural theory. While individual statements could only be coded to one theme, some responses included several statements that could have been coded to various themes within those themes. The coding for each of the themes related to behavioural theory includes praise, relationships, modelling, Professional Learning Development (PLD) sessions and reflections. Each of these themes have been explained and labelled, in order to define the relevance of those themes in relation to PB4L and behavioural theory. Examples from each of the participant have been provided in order to support each of the themes. R5 has been referred to the principal participant, R3 to the senior teacher, and, R1, R2, R4, R6 are referred to the teacher participants.

Findings and discussions

1. The theme of praise is one of the most effective school-based strategies to decrease problem behaviour and promote positive behaviour (Cavanaugh, 2013). Teacher praise has been found to be most effective when it is contingent, descriptive, personal, and genuine (Chalk & Bizo, 2004).

The first code is under praise is rewards. Giving praise and rewards can increase student's intrinsic self of self-worth and motivation by allowing student to own their success (MOE, 2015). The senior teacher gave examples of how rewards can motivate the students: *"so saying things like 'I like the way you are listening' maybe to someone to was listening"* [R3]. Often verbal rewards like correct, right, or good job, have been used by the teachers strengthens and encourages intrinsic motivation (Cameron & Pierce, 2002). This has been supported by Bandura's social learning theory of rewards and how rewards influence future outcomes of an action (Cameron & Pierce, 2002). Many of the teachers often uses special rewards to give out for expected work or behaviour (Hill & Hawk, 2000). Teacher 2 confirmed the point made by Bandura's theory as: *"I often give out the reward of caught being awesome when I notice a child sitting nicely or paying attention"* [R2].

The second code under praise was positive prompts and acknowledgements. Higher ratios of praise to behaviour correction are positively related to opportunities among teachers and intrinsic motivation among students (Sutherland, Wehby, & Yoder, 2002; Cameron & Pierce, 1994). It has been suggested by Trussell (2008) that a ratio of 4:1 positive to negative feedbacks has the highest effect on student learning and behaviour. Praise increases children's self-worth and self-confidence. The senior teacher's view is *"It's about having 4:1 ratio of positive acknowledgements to correctives"* [R3]. Children are empowered and they learn to be more inquisitive about their own learning (Cochrane, 2011). Another teacher expressed it this way, *"the aim should be higher, acknowledging the learners using positive prompts, and then celebrating it"* [R1].

The third code, self-esteem, can be defined as people developing beliefs about themselves through thoughts, feelings, hard work and worthiness (Druckman, D., Bjork, R. A., & National Research Council, 1994). In order for students to form foundation of self-control, they need to develop prosocial skills of empathy, cooperation and compliance (Kersey & Materson, 2013). When learners feel competent when they meet a task, there is a perceived shift in the mind of the learners that increases feelings of competence and self-esteem (Robins, 2012). *"Being negative is not going to help learners manage their feelings and develop a sense of self-empowerment, rather creates all kinds of mental baggage"* [R3]. Dweck's self-theory observes that adults have an important role in creating self-esteem. The theory also believed that any form of negative comments could harm self-esteem (Robins, 2012). However, the research data suggests that although there is a link between academic performance and high self-esteem, it cannot be assumed that high self-esteem leads to academic success (Kohn, 2011).

According to Evans (1996), praise can easily lead to discouragement, if the work praised has no value. It is recommended that praise thus should shift the focus from students' worth to a specific behaviour. *"So when we learn something, instead of focusing on negative side, we focus on the positive side"* [R2]. The same teacher expressed her view regarding self-esteem: *"If they have got good self-esteem and resilience then their behaviour towards their learning might be better"* [R2].

The fourth code is proximal praise. Proximal praise and encouragement when given to the student reduces disruptive behaviour (Cochrane, 2011). The child's willingness to maximise themselves through engagement is seen when the adult is warm, pleasant and responsive, and provides verbal praise (Berk & Winsler, 1995). Vygotsky's theory of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) argues that when a child interacts with people and its environment, their internal development processes are awakened (Daniels, 1993). Teachers 2 and 4 describes proximal praise as: *"proximal praise works well as it is linked to the school-wide reward system" [R2]. "Proximal praise is to give it someone to try get their attention in order to do things properly" [R4].*

Praise itself is highly appreciated and creates positivity within classroom as well as individual students, only if the praise provided is genuine (Hill & Hawk, 2000). The teacher participants in the interview highlighted that keeping students engaged and motivated is the key to minimising challenging behaviour from occurring. Motivation and praise is used as a preventive strategy rather than using it after the behaviour has taken place (Dhaliwal, 2012). This raises the question: what exactly is the purpose or intent of praise? Is it to teach a skill, promote a value, boost self-esteem or to make someone do what we want? (Kohn, 1990). When praise is provided to a person, they often tend to things what we want them to do and become like us (Kohn, 1993). It has been argued by Kohn (2011) that in order to help children feel good about themselves, it is better to treat them with respect rather than showering them with praise. This has also been agreed by one of the teachers who mentioned *"overtly praise might not work every time and does not help the learner if he/she gets embarrassed" [R4].*

Kohn (1990) also argues that often praise creates competitive hierarchies. In simple terms, this has been agreed by another respondent that often praise or reward systems are being used negatively or in a threatening way. The principal agreed to the similar views by Kohn that: *"threatening each other with taking ticks off and ending upsetting each other" [R1].* When praise or rewards are used negatively, Skinner refers to it as operant conditioning. Within operant conditioning are the consequences that either strengthen or weaken a behaviour, and are called

reinforcers and punishers. Often when students are threatened using rewards, it becomes a reinforcer as it causes the behaviour to increase in frequency in future (Powell, Symbaluk, & Macdonald, 2002). According to Bandura (1997) and Herrnstein (1997), the terms reinforcers and rewards are used interchangeably, however rewards cannot be defined as reinforcers, as rewards are often associated with events that are pleasant. Research and findings by Kohn (1990) shows that often behavioural modification programs rarely lead to change that are maintained by other settings. The incentive programmes like The Incredible Years provide teachers with new strategies and opportunities to interact with the children in order to find the underlying causes of a behaviour (MOE, 2011). These strategies are then put in place to address these behaviours. *"I tend to use lots of strategies from the Incredible Years programme like positive guidance, praise, rewards, point charts, recognition, social coaching" [R1].*

According to Knoster and Drogan (2016), the teacher's presentation of a desired stimulus (e.g. verbal praise in the instance where the students find verbal praise rewarding) is contingent on the student(s) acting in a manner that is expected (e.g., the student raising his or her hand to gain the teacher's attention in the classroom). The delivery of the reinforcer (e.g. verbal praise) is explicitly labelled in connection to the behaviour that is being reinforced. The context in which praise was provided raises the question of whether the rewards are truly reinforcing the behaviour or making the learners how we want them to.

2. The theme of relationships encourages children's feelings of worth and foster their sense of belonging in the community (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2008). A positive, responsive teacher-child relationship increases positive behaviour and decrease negative behaviour (Kersey & Materson, 2013). The students in one study described how critical is the relationship were that they had with their teacher as this motivated them (Hill & Hawk 2000).

The first code is teacher-student relationship. Positive teacher-child interactions and climate are important part of quality programs that increases academic and social

outcomes (Kersey & Materson, 2013). Senior teacher viewed this as: *"it is important to have a relationship with student where you can be light-hearted about learning in order to build their self-esteem"* [R2]. Another teacher shared the same views as the senior teacher on self-esteem: *"if they have got good self-esteem and resilience then their behaviour towards their learning might be better"* [R2]. Having positive relationship with teachers often helps the learners to view school as a safe environment where they can be successful (Baker, 2006). The relationship of a learner with the teacher should be completely linked to the learning process. For example, the students were keen for the teacher to understand that the task was completed only because the teacher had set it up (Kersey & Materson, 2013). Teacher 4 views relationship as an important role in order to manage the behaviour and expressed as: *"building relationships is the best technique as learners are more willing to follow an instruction or task set by you"* [R4].

The second code is student-student relationship. A strong relationship of trust should be built not only between teacher-student, but also between students (Robins, 2012). It is important to consider which child or peer can facilitate and prompt growth for others in an academic situation. This helps in encouraging the child to make better choices and successful in an activity (Kersey & Materson, 2013). Teacher 2 and 4 had shared views on student-student relationship as: *"behaviour and achievement comes from emotional state of a child. It depends on their mood, friendships, relationships with the teacher, and own self esteem towards learning"* [R2]. *"Pairing them and giving them a buddy would always be beneficial to their learning"* [R4].

The third code is student voice. A constructivist practice that genuinely engages student voice has powerful influence on the decision making process (Robins, 2012). A strength based system should be encouraged that includes a sense of belonging, independence, skill development and support for success (Rubin, 2005; Sigler & Aamidor, 2005). Teachers expressed their views about student voice as: *"by having student voice and their involvement helps to unpack what learning means for them"* [R6]. Or as another teacher explained: *"As a teacher, you empower the students to be independent, nurture them in order to use the tools independently"* [R4].

When teachers provide strong emotional support and respect, children respond more positively (Kersey & Materson, 2013). The way the adults respond and interact with the child becomes foundation for the perceptions children form for themselves (Koplow, 2002). The teacher participants find that it is easy to manage the challenging behaviour once the relationships of mutual respect were built with the student. The mutual respect relationship has been supported by Macfarlane (2004) to explain that if care is provided to the students, and vice versa, then the students will show enthusiasm in class towards learning.

Building close rapport with the students has also been supported by Knoster and Drogan (2016) that the teacher's actions result in building a trust level with that teacher if genuine interest and care is shown. The teacher's behaviour result in a constructive student-teacher relationship that is based on trust and mutual respect. Thus it becomes important that teachers receive training for specific strategies to redirect behaviour that are respectful, effective and assure success (Sawka-Miller & Miller, 2007). Teachers have also reported in the interviews that in order to successfully manage the challenging behaviour, it should be aligned with consistency, rewards and praise.

3. The theme of modelling increases the perception of a student that a task is achievable and that it is accepted to make mistakes and errors (Robins, 2012). The first code under modelling is consistent. Young children often crave reliability, dependability, stability and routine that comes with consistency. It is one of the staples of promoting positive behaviour (MOE, 2013). This has been expressed by the senior teacher as: *"consistency from each teacher is important in day-to-day practice but also consistency school wide"* [R3]. Consistency can often defuse the heated emotionally situations when students know what to expect (MoE, 2013). Another teacher expressed her views about consistency being an emotional state: *"if I am in good place regardless or different bad or good mood, I would know exactly how to make the learners feel valued"* [R4]. Arataki Primary school suggest that consistency can take the heat out of some potential emotionally charged situations as students might know what to expect when undesired behaviour is shown (MOE, 2013). This is again agreed by the senior

teacher: *“teaching the learners what you expect is a key important part”* [R3].

It has been suggested by Kersey and Materson (2013) that often when teachers are inconsistent in their responses, it creates more problem rather than solving a situation. This has been acknowledged by the principal as: *“even though it is good to co-construct the school language in different year levels, sometimes you will get the lack of consistency”* [R5]. When teachers model and teach expected behaviours and acknowledge students for displaying them, they place children in the best position to experience success in their learning and in their social relationship (MOE, 2013). It is advised to come up with choices or other options for every child to focus on more appropriate behaviour and positive learning experiences (Kersey & Materson, 2012).

Consistency is seen as a key part in PB4L framework as it provides reliability, stability, dependability and routine, as mentioned previously, which generates trust and promote positive behaviour (MOE, 2016). Knoster and Drogan (2016) suggest that positive behaviour support strategies and preventive approaches provided in schools should be applied with consistency as it creates expectations, rapport building structures and reinforcement systems. These are the key components and principles that are necessary in establishing positive environment conducive to learning (Knoster & Drogan, 2016).

The second code under modelling is positive guidance which can be explained as focusing on the children who are doing the right thing instead of doing the wrong. One teacher expressed how positive guidance has resulted in great results in students' behaviour by saying, *“with positive guidance, I have seen great results from positively correcting children's behaviour and focusing on what they are doing well”* [R1]. This has been supported by Kersey and Materson (2013) who add that benefits of positive redirection and responsive support has everlasting effects on the children. If children know what's expected of them, feel connected and praised, they're more likely to behave positively, learn better and achieve in the future (Cochrane, 2011). Positive reinforcement is often specific and has a positive effect on the students as helping them in their learning (Hill & Hawk, 2000).

The positive skills and strategies used by the teachers in the classroom helps in maximising opportunities to model and teach effective relationship interactions (Kersey & Materson, 2013). Social learning theory does suggest that rewards play a positive and important role in motivation and learning (Cameron & Pierce, 2002). Kohn (1993) contradicts the above statement and mentions how rewards kill intrinsic motivation. When a child no longer receives reward, the child has no reason to continue its task, which destroys intrinsic motivation. Once a ratio is 4:1 is achieved through reinforcing positive behaviour, it will help in steering the students towards the expected behaviour and result in positive teacher-student interactions (Knoster & Drogan, 2016). The ratio of 4:1 is also believed by the senior teacher: *"it is about having 4:1 ratio of positive acknowledgements to correctives"* [R3].

According to Alton-Lee (2003) and Hawk et al. (2002), effective relationships plays a major role in developing student behaviour more positively rather than the effect of consequences or overt praise forced upon them. This has also been supported by Hill and Hawk (2000), though students love receiving rewards and special treats, there is no evidence that it changes student behaviour. The literature suggest that motivation and relationships are seen as the essential tools for successful management of challenging behaviour and that the students respond more positively through the use of effective communication and care (Hemara, 2000). According to Weinstein (2002), without strong positive relationship between student and teacher, motivation and praise does not work in the classroom. Motivation can also arise from student-student relationship through learning opportunities and interactions with peers (Weinstein, 2002).

4. The fourth theme is Professional Learning Development (PLD) sessions provided to the teachers in order to support their learning and teaching. The professional development programs are designed to ensure teachers learn the skills and subject content to meet the needs of the learners (Hill & Hawk, 2000). These sessions are important for the teachers as, similar to learners, it boosts their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the personal belief that it is possible to create change and improve performance (Hill & Hawk, 2000). When classroom relationships break down and behaviour difficulties become challenging to resolve, often this impacts teacher's

sense of self efficacy. Hence, teachers require appropriate support in order to enable teaching and learning to occur (Dhaliwal, 2013; Kokkinos, 2007). Teacher 1 and 2 both attended the PLD sessions i.e. Incredible Years program. This program was designed for teachers and parents providing strategies to turn disruptive behaviour around and create a more positive learning environment (MOE, 2015). *"I attended the Incredible Years program and use lots of material that I learnt into my teaching practice" [R1].*

Almost all the participants during the analysis of the interview mentioned the need of ongoing PLD sessions to upgrade their knowledge and skills on behavioural theory and PB4L. According to Pollard (2014), teachers' knowledge, values and beliefs are subjected to constant re-evaluation and reflective as the education and society keeps changing, thus it becomes important for continuing professional learning and development for teachers to sustain commitment and maintain effectiveness. According to Nir and Kranot (2006), self-efficacy beliefs influence thought pattern, emotions and actions in order to control over events that affect their lives. The PLD session that provide effective strategies and procedures, may enhance teacher self-efficacy and provide better management of student behaviour (Chaplain, 2003). The environment in which change takes place is critical to teacher self-efficacy (Moffett, 2000) and self-efficacy has been found to be crucial in a teacher's ability to manage stress and consequently student behaviour (Towl, 2007). Effective professional development to enable teachers to manage challenging student behaviour has the capacity to eliminate stress and burnout. Reformed approaches to professional development rather than traditional approaches have the potential to build communities of learners and enhance student learning (Birman, Desimone, Porter & Garet, 2000).

According to Jones and Jones (2004), one of the reason behind ineffective classroom management is teachers receiving less training or PLD sessions on effective classroom practice. Almost all the participants have mentioned the need of benefitting from a PLD session providing information on behavioural theory along with effective strategies utilised in the classroom. Only 2 teacher participants mentioned attending the Incredible Years training program specific to positive

classroom strategies. *"The Incredible Year training program talks about incentive program used to change the behaviour first in order to create a habit" [R2]*. It is important to shift the teachers' view from a model of power and punitive approach, where focus is on changing student behaviour, to a more responsibility model where the focus is on students learning (Savage et al., 2011). PLD sessions are an excellent way of providing and informing teacher capability in order to manage challenging behaviour (Moffett, 2000). According to Towl (2007) High-quality professional development would appear to be a key component in enabling teachers to manage behaviour and focus more on teaching and learning.

5. The fifth theme is reflective practice where teachers actively involve themselves critically in recognising and examining their own values, beliefs and assumptions, contributing to the betterment of teaching (Zeichner & Liston, 2014). *"If learning is not interesting and stimulated, then I feel I am not doing good job in my practice. It is reflection of me as a teacher" [R6]*. Reflective practice becomes important in such case as it often gives rise to the question of what exactly is triggering the behaviour. According to Zeichner and Liston (2014), a reflective teacher recognises, the context he/she is working in and thus adapts themselves to the location for their teaching practice. The implications for the teachers is that in order to create a positive learning environment that fits the value and belief of PB4L, teachers need to continually reflect on their own practice regarding the factors of challenging behaviours (Dhaliwal, 2012).

In order to create a constructivist classroom environment an active learning, powerful motivator, and opportunities for collaborative learning should be created (Robins, 2012). When teachers reflect on their own practice and notice things they are doing within the classroom, it helps in recognising the student needs. Reflection also helps in ensuring the components of PB4L, i.e. clear expectations, building relationship, reinforcing positive desired behaviour, are addressed within the classroom in order to foster positive learning environment and avoid potential problem behaviour (Knoster & Drogan, 2016).

Within the PLD theme, the participants mentioned attending The Incredible Years Teacher programme. This programme lies within tier two of the PB4L pyramid and focussed more on providing teachers with approaches to help turn disruptive behaviour into positive learning environment (MOE, 2015). Research has shown that this programme has effectively supported the teachers to address undesirable behaviours, enhancing self-regulation and problem solving skills, motivating the children by giving incentives (Webster-Stratton, 2011). Incredible Years programme is a part of PB4L which works over the long-term and includes whole-school changes approaches, targeted groups and individual students (MOE, 2015). Research has shown that teachers give three to 15 times more attention to misbehaviour than they do to appropriate behaviour (MOE, 2015).

The Incredible Years programme provides motivation incentives like praise and encouragement that promotes healthy, positive relationship and environment within the classroom. The strategies provided by this programme are agreed by the senior teacher in the interviews as: *“using restorative practice, being consistent, sense of well-being, whole school rewards, sense of self-empowerment”* [R5]. The program aims at *“changing behaviour as incentive programs like rewards systems are good to change the behaviour first and create a habit and rewarded as a follow up. Once the habit is created, the rewards are gradually removed”* [R2]. This is from one of the participant who attended the Incredible Years program.

Summary

In summary, all of the participants highly spoke of the value that rewards and praise hold as a strategy to manage challenging behaviour. However, one teacher and senior teacher mentioned being against extrinsic motivation as it was sometimes used negatively by the students in the classroom in terms of ‘ticks and crosses’, and rather focussing more on consistently teaching the students to become intrinsically motivated. Some of the teachers mentioned the value of consistency being a key part of both behavioural theory and PB4L framework. Interestingly, one teacher mentioned being more child-centered and catering the needs of the students by reflecting on their own practice, while other participants preferred the strategy of

praise and rewards to change the behaviour. The next chapter concludes the thesis that presents conclusions, limitations, and lastly recommendations and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

Introduction

This study aims to gather teacher perceptions regarding behavioural theory from different primary schools through semi-structured interviews. The research also gathered information on challenging behaviours faced by the New Zealand primary teachers and the strategies they use in relation to PB4L framework to manage these behaviours.

Summary of results

The results of this study have demonstrated teacher knowledge of PB4L framework and the different programme within it, for example Incredible Years, but less aware of the theories that underpin this framework. Some teachers mentioned the negative impact of rewards being used in the classroom. When implementing the strategies like rewards, it is important for teachers to understand both external and internal causes behind rewards being ineffective. Further implications for teachers in their practice would be undertaking training and PD sessions especially on theories underlying behaviour that is demonstrated by the student. The results of the current study highlights the need of PD session on behavioural theory as every participant responded positively to a PD being offered. Only 2 teachers mentioned their formal training received in Incredible Years specific to behaviour or classroom management. According to Jones and Jones (2004), one of the reasons that classroom management continues to be a problem is that teachers do not appear to receive training or information regarding the research on effective classroom management practices. The PD sessions need to have more critical approach in teaching the theories underpinning the strategies or framework being used in the schools, which in this research is PB4L. With the help of PD sessions on more specific topics like behavioural theory and management, teachers will be both knowledgeable and confident in a more positive approach to the management of the classroom behaviour.

The participant teachers along with the principal and the senior teacher believed that by using rewards, praise, and motivation as a form of strategy, the challenging behaviour shown by the students can be dealt with. However, there were some

issues associated with the challenging behaviour such as teacher reflection, overt use of praise and rewards, teacher-student relationship, and being a reflective teacher rather than changing the behaviour of the student. The participants' views were that even though challenging behaviour is not easy to manage, a well-supported PB4L framework helps to maintain and build positive relationships with students, given ongoing PLD sessions were provided to the teachers. The senior teacher mentioned her negative experience of using extrinsic motivation to change student behaviour which resulted in less management of the behaviour. Rather, using the verbal praise of intrinsically motivating the students, helped in managing, redirecting and scaffolding the expected behaviour.

Another important finding of this research was that the majority of the teacher participants believed in the value of consistency. This was seen as 'key' when using PB4L strategies and behavioural theory in order to create a more positive learning environment. Chapter four indicated the importance of consistency in PB4L-SW as it assists in reinforcement of acknowledging positive behaviour in the ratio of 4:1. This has been agreed by the senior teacher that PB4L-SW is about having 4:1 ratio of positive acknowledgements to correctives, and that is the goal every school implementing PB4L should aim for [R3]. The principal viewed consistency as re-teaching the expected behaviour a key part of the PB4L matrix, and that every teacher should use the matrix in their classrooms in a more visual, consistent way [R5].

Recommendation for further research

The research could further investigate the overt use of praise and rewards when understanding the root of challenging behaviour. Findings from chapter four show that the use of praise often tends to change student behaviour rather than focussing on their learning and achievement, which opposes the behaviourist approach (Kohn, 1993). Another research question might be the focus on changing the learning environment and other factors, instead of changing the student behaviour. Another important point to research is how and to what degree is the learning of other students and environmental factors is affected by a student who shows challenging

behaviour. Some of the participants in the study mentioned the effect of a negative learning environment when disruptive behaviour is presented.

The length of time a teacher has been teaching in a school where PB4L is being implemented is something that could be studied. This is important as the future focus could be on whether the length of time spent in the school affects the teacher's perspective and confidence in strongly using the theory in teaching practice.

Limitations

In this study, there are two major limitations that could have influenced the integrity and validity to the research. One limitation might be relatively small sample size i.e. six teachers, from the same school. This limited the external validity and the ability for generalisation of the results. The second limitation could be the use of qualitative data i.e. interviews, to gather the information rather than using a mixed approach of both qualitative and quantitative. The mixed method allows researcher to utilise the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative in order to gain a variety of insights into the research question (Caruth, 2013).

Summary:

This research study presents and discusses the perspectives of New Zealand primary school teachers in a small-scale study regarding behavioural theory in education. Participants were asked about perceptions and their views on behavioural theory, how they managed challenging behaviours in PB4L-SW school, strategies they found effective, and how effective were the strategies and challenges faced by the teacher when dealing with disruptive behaviour. While recognising the importance of consistency and building relationship with the students as a key strategy when dealing with challenging behaviour, teachers nevertheless tended to use strategies of reward and praise which often resulted in diffusion of the behaviour or situation rather than preventing those behaviours in order to create a positive and successful learning environment.

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Appendix A

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

10/10/2016

Project Title

Teacher views on the contemporary educational applications of behavioural theory

An Invitation

Kia Ora, my name is Ridhi Kumar, a student at AUT who is currently studying a Master of Education in the School of Education at AUT. I am doing this research as a part of my qualification. This research aims to find out teacher views on the educational application of behavioural theory.

I am inviting you to be interviewed about your knowledge and views of behavioural theory in the classroom.

What is the purpose of this research?

The purpose of this research is to find out the views of primary and intermediate teachers on the educational application of behavioural theory. Through interviews, I will explore what teachers think about behavioural theory, and how they apply behavioural theory in their teaching practice. I wish to investigate in particular the behaviour management program called Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L).

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

I am approaching all teachers at your school, and providing a flyer and information sheet during a staff meeting. The flyer invites teachers to contact me if they are interested in sharing their views through participating in the research. A total of 7 participants will be interviewed. Teachers will be selected for interview on a 'first come first selected' basis.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

To agree to participate, you will need to contact me at the details provided on the flyer and on this information sheet. We will then arrange an interview, and before the interview is conducted you will need to complete a consent form, which I will provide you with at the time of the interview.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used.

However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

I will be individually interviewing teachers. The interviews will be guided by some key questions however the interview is semi-structured, meaning that the focus will be on your views and experiences. The interview will take place in a meeting room at Manukau Campus of AUT. The interview will be 45 minutes long.

What are the discomforts and risks?

As a researcher I acknowledge that talking about classroom experiences and in particular classroom behaviour can at times cause discomfort.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

The information and knowledge will solely be used for educational purposes. The interview questions are open ended and so are intended to respect and value your views. If during the interview you feel uncomfortable with any question you do not have to answer and you can feel free to stop the interview any time.

What are the benefits?

This research will provide important perspectives for understanding how teachers view and apply behavioural theory in their practice. The research may be of benefit to you as a teacher as you get the opportunity to talk about, reflect on, and develop your views on behavioural theory and how it can inform teaching practice in New Zealand schools. I will additionally provide all participants with a \$20 book voucher to thank them for their time. Your school community may then benefit from the discussions we have that impact on teaching practices. As a researcher, I will benefit through completion of my dissertation and my Master of Education qualification.

How will my privacy be protected?

I will treat your information confidentially and will use pseudonyms for all teachers and schools in the dissertation and in any publications and conference presentations. I will also make sure that no data will be shared that might reveal identities of schools or teachers.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The only cost to you will be your time i.e. 45 minutes for the interview and travel time to AUT.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

2 weeks

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will receive a 1-2 page summary of the findings if you wish, by indicating this on the consent form.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Andrew Gibbons, andrew.gibbons@aut.ac.nz

<mailto:andrew.gibbons@aut.ac.nz>

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, Kate O'Connor, ethics@aut.ac.nz , 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Researcher Contact Details:

Ridhi Kumar

kumarridhi@yahoo.co.nz

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Andrew Gibbons

andrew.gibbons@aut.ac.nz

Appendix B

Consent Form

For use when interviews are involved.

Project title: **Teacher views on the contemporary educational applications of behavioural theory**

Project Supervisor: **Associate Professor Andrew Gibbons**

Researcher: **Ridhi Kumar**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 10/10/2016
- ☐ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ☐ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

.....

Participant's name:

.....

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on
type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEK Reference
number type the AUTEK reference number

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix C

Flyer

An invitation to participate in a research project

Are you interested in sharing your views on the contemporary educational applications of behavioural theory?



My name is Ridhi Kumar, a student at AUT who is currently doing a dissertation in Master of Education.

This research aims to find out teacher views on the educational application of behavioural theory especially PB4L.

I am inviting teachers to be individually interviewed on knowledge and views of behavioural theory in the classroom.

Participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time.

If you are interested, please contact me at kumarridhi@yahoo.co.nz