TEACHER PERCEPTIONS AND MANAGEMENT OF CHALLENGING STUDENT BEHAVIOURS IN PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

BY

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Teacher perceptions and management of challenging student behaviours in primary school classrooms

ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating Teacher perceptions and management of challenging student behaviours in classrooms and what support is available to the teachers to manage students with challenging behaviours. Managing challenging behaviour in a classroom setting is a problem faced by many teachers. The literature review indicated that teachers who show a genuine interest in students and what they learn and do are more likely to build strong positive relationships with their students and as a result are better able to manage challenging behaviours in their classrooms. The literature review also indicated that it is important, that teachers recognise their perceptions of challenging behaviour and reflect on their own personal beliefs and the beliefs of others regarding the understanding of challenging behaviours.

The study is a small-scale educational research project that was qualitative in nature. The qualitative nature of this research allowed for the exploration of the eight teacher participants' experiences shared during the semi-structured interviews regarding challenging behaviours and what the issues are in managing these behaviours. The outcomes of this study confirm findings in literature by demonstrating that a close, positive and supportive relationship between teacher and students is essential for developing a mutual relationship of respect and for managing challenging behaviours successfully.

Findings indicate that teachers need to discuss with colleagues their current perceptions and attitudes towards working with those students who present challenges and investigate ways of working positively with these students. School management and teachers need to work collaboratively in order to minimise the occurrence of and impact of challenging behaviours in classrooms. Findings also indicated some issues raised by teachers that were not viewed in the literature reviewed. For example issues facing teachers due to occurrence of challenging student behaviour.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will begin by providing a little bit of background information about myself followed by explaining how I became curious about the phenomenon of teacher perceptions regarding challenging student behaviours. Then this chapter will discuss my rationale and impetus for wanting to undertake this piece of small-scale educational research.

Background information

I have been a qualified primary school teacher for seven years. My research began last year in August 2012. Presently I teach a year two class of 23 students in an east Auckland primary school in Pakuranga. Even as my topic and rationale were developing I decided early on that I wanted my research to be from the teacher perspectives. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, most of the writing about challenging behaviours stresses on how teachers can effectively manage challenging student behaviour. Secondly, from personal experience of being a practicing classroom teacher it seems that the onus of managing a student misbehaving in class rests with the teacher as it is portrayed as if it is the teachers' responsibility if students are not behaving in an expected manner. So therefore, I decided to carry out this research and hear from teachers point of view- their perspectives on challenging student behaviours and what they do to manage these behaviours and what support is available to them in managing challenging student behaviours.

My interest in understanding challenging student behaviours stems back to the beginning of my teaching career. I have spent six years teaching in a decile one and two school in Auckland, New Zealand. A school's low decile number reflects the extent to which it draws its students from low socio-economic communities. I have been a practising classroom teacher since 2006 and an associate teacher since 2007 (helping student teachers in their journey to become a teacher) at this school. I have come across many children portraying different types of challenging behaviours and have learned from my experience the value of building strong positive relationships with the students. I have realised the importance of reflecting on my own thinking and my own perceptions as a teacher about challenging behaviours. As Walker and Whitaker (2004) state that teachers need to be prepared to think about their own perceptions and change accordingly to better their understanding of challenging behaviours.

Rationale for this research

This research study "Teacher perceptions and management of challenging student behaviours in classrooms" examines teacher perceptions towards challenging behaviours presented by students, strategies teachers use to manage these behaviours and the support that is available to the teachers to manage students displaying challenging behaviours.

The term challenging behaviour has generated a number of definitions in a school context which allows educators to attach labels to students who demonstrate unacceptable behaviours (Emerson, 2001). Challenging behaviour is any form of

behaviour that interferes with children's learning or normal development; is harmful to the child, other children or adults around him; puts a child in a high risk category for later social problems or academic failure (MacFarlane, 2007). According to Emerson (2001) challenging behaviour as a label for unacceptable conduct is not a diagnosis and not a special education condition, although it may accompany several education conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

Managing challenging behaviour in a classroom setting is a problem faced by many teachers (Emerson, 2001). According to Weinstein (2002) most students respond positively to a well-organised classroom led by an enthusiastic teacher who is willing to understand their students and be flexible in their approach. Teachers who show a genuine interest in students and what they learn and do are more likely to build strong positive relationships with their students and as a result are better able to manage challenging behaviours in their classrooms. So far the research is showing that teachers who have strong positive relationships with their students are better able to manage challenging behaviours. Walker and Whitaker (2004) state that teachers need to identify their individual perceptions of challenging behaviour and reflect on their own personal beliefs and the beliefs of others regarding the understanding of challenging behaviours. Challenging behaviour is a hugely contested and problematic term. A definition of what constitutes challenging behaviour depends upon the context in which it occurs and how it is perceived by teachers (Hill & Hawk, 2000). In attempting to understand why some behaviours are classified as 'challenging' it is important also to have an understanding of how teachers perceive behaviours.

Some types of behaviour will challenge some teachers in a way that they do not challenge others. For example, some teachers will be able to manage or tolerate levels of disruption to their lessons, which others cannot. Some behaviours are regarded as 'good' in some contexts but 'bad' in others. For example, a child who runs enthusiastically around the running track on sports day, never pausing for breath, will be regarded, in this context, as having done well and is likely to be rewarded. If the same child exhibits the same behaviour in the corridor of the school then they are likely to be punished for it. It is not necessarily the behaviour that challenges, rather the circumstances in which the behaviour happens which make it challenging and that again depends on how the behaviour is perceived within that context or by individuals within that context. One teacher might be amused by the athlete who runs just as fast in the corridor as they do on the running track and deal with them in a less punitive way than another teacher, who may be appalled by the same behaviour (Richardson, 2003b). That is why it is important to explore what behaviours teachers perceive to be challenging and why.

If this is so, then what is problematic is that there are many teachers who do not exercise caution before they conclude that a child is exhibiting challenging behaviour (Emerson, 2001; Rogers, 2000). A teacher can often create a classroom environment in an image of their own childhood experiences and cultural influences (Kroeger & Bauer, 2004). This image could mimic how they were taught at school, and instil their own beliefs on how homes and lives are organised, believing that this is the right way and is how it will be (Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2006). So research suggests that teachers' opinions of what constitutes a behaviour problem varies

dependent on their perception of what is acceptable and within their own threshold of tolerance.

As a practicing classroom teacher I am mindful that I need to be involved in professional development programmes within my organisation to improve my practice as a classroom teacher, and by doing so I am able to not only deepen my own pedagogical knowledge and understanding, but also my own practice and help my school management to create and sustain conditions for improved practice within my school (Robinson et al., 2009). Therefore, I decided to carry out this research project and contribute to the existing literature on challenging student behaviour and teacher perceptions of this.

Research Aims, Questions and Setting

The overall aim of this study was to contribute to the already existing pool of literature on teacher perceptions of student behaviours and to create recommendations on further clarification of and understanding of teacher perceptions regarding challenging behaviours and how to manage these effectively.

The two research aims proposed for this investigation were:

- To examine teacher perceptions towards challenging behaviours and their management of challenging student behaviours.

- To examine the support that is available to teachers for managing students that present challenging behaviours.

The three questions that guided this research were:

- What behaviours do teachers perceive to be challenging?

- What strategies do the teachers employ to manage challenging behaviours?

- What support is available for teachers to manage challenging behaviours?

This research was set within the educational context of two large New Zealand urban primary schools in Auckland. It involved a total of two senior teachers (team leaders), two deputy principals and four classroom teachers in individual interviews. Involving these three groups (classroom teachers, senior teachers and deputy principal) in interviews allowed for the differing and somewhat similar perspectives of each group to emerge and for comparison and at the same time commonality in analysis to occur.

Overview of the thesis

This thesis is set out in six chapters and the chapters are organised as follows:

Chapter One

This first chapter provides an overview of the research study and background information on the researcher. The term challenging behaviour is explained and a rationale on which the thesis is built and the outline of the research aims and questions complete this chapter.

Chapter Two

This chapter is the review of literature. The first part focusses on the term challenging behaviours and understanding the notion of teacher perceptions regarding challenging behaviours is discussed. The second part focusses on effective teaching strategies that assist in successful management of student challenging behaviours and promote learning. It also focusses on the role of the school in supporting the teachers in managing challenging student behaviours.

Chapter Three

The choice of a methodological framework and the method of data collection is explained in Chapter Three. An explanation of concepts of reliability, validity and the ethical considerations complete the chapter.

Chapter Four

'Perceptions and issues related to challenging behaviours', 'strategies for managing challenging behaviours' and 'school support for managing challenging behaviours' are the three headings for the themes which structure this analysis of findings and results. This chapter presents the findings by analysing the participants' responses from the eight individual interviews.

Chapter Five

This chapter discusses the findings presented and analysed in chapter four. Challenging behaviours as perceived by the eight participants are discussed in great depth in order to gain further insight into the aims of this study.

Chapter Six

The summary of the findings presented in this final chapter is based on the three research questions. The in-depth analysis of the findings of teacher perceptions regarding challenging behaviours, issues recognised by eight participants and discussion in chapter five paves way for a few recommendations and suggestions for future research concluding this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review focuses firstly on definitions associated with challenging behaviours, with a discussion on 'typical' types of behaviours exhibited by students that are considered challenging followed by a discussion of literature on teacher perceptions regarding challenging behaviours and strategies teachers use to manage these behaviours.

The second part of the literature review explores student and teacher relationships and diversity in learning preferences followed by the final part that discusses the role of the school in supporting teachers in managing challenging student behaviours.

Understanding challenging behaviours and teacher perceptions

What is challenging behaviour and understanding the importance of teacher perceptions regarding challenging student behaviours –

Challenging behaviour is a hugely contested and problematic term. A definition of what constitutes challenging behaviour depends upon the context in which it occurs and how it is perceived by teachers (Hill & Hawk, 2000). In attempting to understand why some student behaviours are classified as 'challenging' it is important also to have an understanding of how teachers perceive behaviours. Some types of behaviour will challenge some teachers in a way that they do not challenge others.

For example, some teachers will be able to manage or tolerate levels of disruption to their lessons, which others cannot. Some behaviours are regarded as 'good' in some contexts but 'bad' in others. For example, a child who runs enthusiastically around the running track on sports day, never pausing for breath, will be regarded, in this context as having done well and is likely to be rewarded. If the same child exhibits the same behaviour in the corridor of the school then they are likely to be punished for it. It is not necessarily the behaviour that challenges, rather the circumstances in which the behaviour happens which make it challenging and that again depends on how the behaviour is perceived within that context or by individuals within that context. One teacher might be amused by the athlete who runs just as fast in the corridor as they do on the running track and deal with them in a less punitive way than another teacher, who may be appalled by the same behaviour (Richardson, 2003b). That is why it is important to explore what behaviours teachers perceive to be challenging and why.

Common definitions regarding challenging behaviours

The term challenging behaviour has generated a number of definitions which allow educators and others to attach labels to individuals who demonstrate unacceptable behaviours. Challenging behaviour as a label for unacceptable conduct is not a diagnosis and not a special education condition, although it may accompany several special education conditions such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

Behavioural difficulties is another label for unacceptable conduct suggested by the New Zealand Government Special Education "2000" policy proposing that challenging behaviour is that which, "jeopardises the physical safety of the student or others; threatens to cause or causes significant property damage; and severely limits

the student's access to ordinary settings and interferes with social acceptance, sense of personal well- being and their educational performance" (Ministry of Education, 2000,p.34).

Special Education (2000) is a policy set up by the Ministry of Education, New Zealand to help provide support for students who have special educational needs. The central theme of the policy is to develop a fair system to ensure students receive appropriate support wherever they may be and according to their level of need. Special Education 2000 policy continues to remain in place at the present time. The label behavioural difficulties as adopted by New Zealand special education professionals is a term assigned to those students who have special educational and medical needs and who may exhibit undesirable behaviours as a result of these needs.

Walker, Ramsey and Gresham (2004) refer to challenging behaviour as 'antisocial behaviour' which may range from hostility or aggression to minor annoying defiance. They suggest that antisocial behaviour is perhaps the most destructive behaviour pattern that children and youths can adopt, one that sets them up for lifetime of sadness, disappointment and failure (Walker et al., 2004) also indicate that pro social behaviour as opposed to antisocial behaviour is that which refers to cooperative, positive and mutually acceptable forms of social behaviour. Galloway, Ball, Blomfield, and Seyd (1982) suggest that challenging behaviour can also incorporate 'disruptive behaviour'.

They state that,

… a wide range of behaviour may be regarded as disruptive. For the present purposes, disruptive behaviour is defined as any behaviour which appears problematic, inappropriate and disturbing to teachers (p.xv)

Disruptive behaviour is a term used in the 1970s by educationalists and was applied to unacceptable behaviour that was of high intensity such as physical aggression when compared to behaviour that was low level such as defiance (Walker et al. 2004).

Limitations in defining behaviour

There is clearly a debate around which behaviour in the classroom or at school is identified as challenging, by whom it is identified, and from whom it is exhibited. Behaviour is relative to a context, be it social, environmental, cultural, or historical (Emerson, 2001) and to variations in contexts and variations in explanations (Watkins & Wagner, 2000), suggesting that learning and behaviour is both socially and culturally acquired. Behaviour can be perceived as unacceptable in one setting and be quite acceptable in another setting, (Watkins & Wagner, 2000). The social setting in one environment may allow for acceptable behaviour which may not be acceptable in another, eg. loud shouting (at a rugby match) or physical aggression (in a boxing ring), would not be tolerated at a church service or in a school classroom. There are different expectations regarding behaviour in different settings (Arthur, Gordon, & Butterfield, 2003), and some may overlap. However, people usually behave in accordance with contextual social expectations.

Failure to adhere to the rules and expectations lends itself to becoming unacceptable by the community that sets the rules and expectations. The perpetrator of the unacceptable behaviour will therefore have difficulties with "fitting in" or "belonging

to" the community. Not "fitting in" or "belonging to" could have far reaching serious consequences for the person who exhibits the challenging behaviour.

> Within the community, challenging behaviours may serve to limit the development of social relationships… reduce opportunities to participate in community based activities…and prevent access to health and social services (p. 13).

Participation within a community is seen by some as a consequence of individual choice, and the individual needs to be made aware of the fact, if they choose to participate, that they are accountable to the community for their own actions. However, many students with challenging behaviours may not have chosen to participate in some classrooms and school contexts. Maybe, it is the communities' responsibility to ensure that people maintain their rights to inclusion and belonging within the community. The same can be said of individuals with challenging behaviour.

Emerson (2001) explains that it is likely that an individual's own understanding of challenging behaviour will depend largely on when and how it is experienced. Behaviours such as aggression or violence towards others, not completing tasks or activities in teaching sessions, talking constantly, annoying others, are rightfully viewed as examples of challenging behaviours in educational settings. However, the severity of the behaviour will depend on the teacher's own understanding or tolerance of what they believe or perceive as being misbehaviour or challenging behaviour. Furthermore many descriptions of challenging behaviour given by

teachers along with decisions regarding subsequent interventions do not always reflect an understanding of students' own reasons for the behaviour. It is well recognised in schools that a student who is described as challenging by one teacher can be perceived as a typical youngster by another, (Emerson, 2001; Kauffman et al., 2002 ; (Wheldall & Glynn, 1998). All teachers, like all parents and other adults, have different thresholds of tolerance for behavioural variations, which present another limitation when defining whether the behaviour is challenging or not.

Antisocial behaviour, challenging or disruptive behaviours are labels applied by other people who are often not part of a student's home and community environment and may reflect the impact student behaviour has on them, rather than saying much about the behaviour itself. This is especially an issue when the student and the person using the label come from different cultures. Home and school contextual differences are more difficult for students from minority cultures to negotiate, especially when the teacher is from the majority culture. The teacher needs to be aware that the most powerful culture in the classroom will usually be their own and that this will influence the classroom culture to an extent that some students from minority cultures will not understand and as a result, not respond positively to teacher expectations.

Teachers therefore need to think about exercising caution before they conclude that a child is exhibiting challenging behaviour (Emerson, 2001; Rogers, 2000). A teacher can often create a classroom environment in an image of their own childhood experiences and cultural influences (Kroeger & Bauer, 2004). This image could mimic how they were taught at school, and instil their own beliefs on how homes and

lives are organised, believing that this is the right way and this is how things will be (Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2006).

To summarise this section of the literature, it is clear that a definition of challenging behaviours is complex and can also be confusing. Regardless of the label given it is reasonable to say that challenging behaviour is that which affects not only the student presenting challenging behaviours but the behaviours of others within close proximity. Within the classroom this will include the learning environment and all those within it. 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).

Challenging behaviours in context

Wheldall and Glynn (1998) argue that challenging behaviours will be challenging based on the antecedent or current contextual conditions which have promoted or are maintaining the behaviour. It could also be argued that behaviour is defined as challenging because of its particular impact on others within the community. If this is so, then one needs to ask, "Do we know why the student is challenging." For example, is the behaviour a response to another person's behaviour, or to a change in circumstances, such as the arrival of a relief teacher. Therefore there is a need for the teachers to recognise student's interpretation of an incident by listening to their reasons and identify their own perceptions regarding behaviour of concern, and the context in which it occurred.

The literature review discusses different types of challenging behaviours which are frequently observed in classrooms and schools in order to better understand the notion for whom is the behaviour challenging.

Watkins and Wagner (2000) categorise behaviours according to the context in which the behaviour is displayed, environment and time, the audience, and according to the person who is seen to be harmed. On the other hand, Smith and Laslett (1998) offer four labels for types of challenging behaviour, which may be displayed in any contextual setting.

The labels are

1. The class wit- This student is unsure of their status in the classroom as regards to how they should behave and so treats all interactions as a humorous episode.

2. The promoter- This student usually dislikes the teacher or is not interested in learning and promotes disruption in lessons with peers.

3. The victim- This student is usually unpopular with other students and becomes victim to their teasing, which usually results in the student constantly complaining to the teacher and sometimes refusing to work or off task behaviour due to lack of motivation.

4. The saboteur – This student usually encourages others to misbehave and enjoys the confrontations as a result. Often this student will step back and let the others suffer the consequences. (p. 61-65).

However there are major problems in imposing such labels on observed behaviour.

The labels may have profoundly different meanings and understandings for the 'labeller' from the meanings understood by the students. Watkins and Wagner (2000) argue that teachers need to be sure that their expectation of how the student behaves does not depend only on the attributed label which could be given to them from past teachers or past events. Similarly, teachers need to look at how the context within the classroom setting or environment and their own perceptions of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour may be influencing the behaviour, eg. rules that may be unreasonable, unrealistic, or arbitrary. Furthermore, the label given to the behaviour may not always be justified by the events that led up to the incident or the context that the behaviour occurred in (Watkins & Wagner, 2000), particularly so when students come from different social and cultural backgrounds, which is so the case in the school setting I used to teach in prior to the school setting I teach in now.

Similarly it is important to recognise that some students are often further pressured or inclined to misbehave when they are given a label "to live up to" (Balson, 1992), and thereby given a powerful means to influence the behaviours of others. Watkins and Wagner, 2000 state that some very common challenging behaviour exhibited by the students in classrooms includes:

Attention seeking- attacking or defending behaviour which has similarities to "the actor" as promoted by Watkins & Wagner, (2000). Asserting power- threatens the teacher's authority and makes them 'powerful' in the eyes of other students. It is important to note here that Balson (1992) suggests that by sending the student to "time out" or challenging their behaviours in public only strengthens a student's belief

that power is important and that those who have power win. Struggling to belong- is one of the basic expressions of human nature, and forms a basis for belonging to an ethnic or a social group. Students from a very early age of understanding seek ways of behaving which will give them recognition and often begin by operating on a trial and error basis (Kauffman, Mostert, Trent, & Hallhan, 2002). Such students may well respond to being shown "how to" belong to a group, how to wait for their turn or how to listen carefully before they speak or act.

Balson (1992) furthermore suggests that,

It is the sense of inadequacy, of internal discouragement and the fear of rejection which are the major factors behind learning failures and behavioural problems in the schools (p.21).

A fear of *rejection* is worthy of consideration of a cause of challenging behaviour as students feel the need to belong to a group, and try all sorts of inappropriate ways of "gaining entry". Taking revenge- these students need to "get even" with society that denies them a place in the organisation (Edwards, 2000) and not only do they seek to dominate but they may seek revenge in the process. They may provoke intended or a disguised hostility in order to be organised.

Balson(1992) writes of the child whose goal is revenge:

> The mutual antagonism may become so strong that each party has only one desire: retaliation, to revenge his own feeling of being hurt. The child no longer hopes merely for attention or power; feeling ostracised and disliked, he can see his place in the group only his success in making himself hated (p.70).

Balson (1992) concludes that these are students who often steal, damage, assault others especially younger peers, remain sullen, moody and morose. As adults they often vandalise, assault, become arsonists, threaten and are prone to abuse verbally.

Balson further suggests that there is a purpose for revenge.

> Teachers must recognise the purpose of revengeful behaviour, sense the deep discouragement, futility and sense of worthlessness which characterise these individuals and realise that it is always the inability of young people to gain a sense of achievement and self-worth in our schools which is the major contributor to resultant and violent behaviour (p.73).

Escaping –

These are the students who withdraw into themselves in order not to be shown up for their inadequacies, and make a deliberate attempt to remove them from an environment that they feel uncomfortable in and cannot cope with. But sometimes there is no attacking behaviour and they are discouraged enough to no longer hope for any success at school. The student often becomes the victim (Smith & Laslett, 1998), and also does not reach their potential academically, as a result.

Bullying-

Bullying is defined as a repetitive attack of verbal, physical, social or psychological nature that causes a victim stress, immediately and in the future (Arthur et al., 2003) and creates an imbalance of power between two people. Bullying, as suggested by Rigby cited in Wearmouth, Richmond, Glynn, & Berryman (2004) (Wearmouth, Richmond, Glynn and Berryman, 2004) may be understood as "an inevitable part of

the struggle that is inseparable from existence" (p, 288). It is part of survival and has been present throughout the existence of mankind. Rigby has identified hereditary factors as well as historical and contemporary contextual factors such as, home life and the community that the person lives in as being responsible for elevating the chances of a person bullying include; lack of confidence, showing off to others to get attention, jealousy, not coping with others who are different, joining or copying others who are bullying to be part of a group, they have been bullied themselves or don't know that it is wrong and/or haven't learnt how to socialise with others (Rigby, 2002). In regards to who can be a victim,

Statistically, anyone can be a victim- and it is acknowledged that individuals who experience bullying "are often above average performers, efficient and better at what they do than those who bully them". In fact bullies can target those who they envy and those who they feel would refuse to be subservient to them (Kazmierow, 2003, p.43)

Bullying at school is often the result of a 'victim' perceived as being a target by a person who is much stronger either physically or emotionally. There is a vast literature available for schools regarding the causes, effects and suggestions for stopping bullying behaviour (Buckley & Maxwell, 2007; Olweus, 1993: Police, 1992, 1994; Rigby, 2002; Rogers, 2000; Sharp & Smith, 1994).

For many years New Zealand schools along with support from the government agencies have been developing initiatives "to challenge bullies, support victims and try to effect behavioural change to stop bullying reoccurring" (Kazmierow, 2003,

p.32). Even more pleasing is that many of these initiatives eg. 'Eliminating Violence' (Special Education Service, 1989) achieve success without needing to remove the bully from the school.

I have intentionally used work of and research of Balson (1992) on most common challenging behaviours because they appear to encompass most of the challenging behaviours of students who can be either 'labelled' (Smith & Laslett, 1998) or experience "environmenta"' or contextual factors (Watkins & Wagner, 2000) influencing the behaviours. It is interesting to note that Balson (1992) also suggests that the "exhibiting of behaviours is seen as coming from within the student's own determination to misbehave" (p.72).

Teacher perceptions regarding challenging behaviours

Teacher's explanations of challenging behaviours reflect, in part, real evidence about patterns of difficulty. But they also reflect a range of distortions or incomplete perspectives (Walker et al., 2004; Poulou and Norwich cited in Wearmouth et al., 2004). Common teacher explanations for misbehaviours often overheard in staffrooms locate the problem entirely with students or their home community,for example, " they're not that sort of person", "they're not very bright", "it's just a few", it's normal for their age", it's the home life" and " their brother was like this as well". According to Rogers (2000) and Watkins and Wagner (2000) , these are all deficit judgements on the part of teachers generate negative and deficit thinking which can have adverse impact on student and teacher esteem, class environment, relationships and may change the school ethos regarding discipline. Watkins and Wagner (2000) believe that it is a common practice for teachers to develop a

negative focus on the unacceptable behaviour which leads to a 'punishment that fits the crime 'approach, when dealing with challenging behaviours in their classrooms.

There is much greater agreement among teachers about what behaviour is prohibited that what is demanded. That is, teachers find it easier to specify what they will not tolerate than to specify the appropriate behaviour that they demand. Perhaps this is a result of our culture's focus on punishment as the primary means of behaviour control (Kauffman et al., 2002, pp.18-23)

The method promoted by Canter *et al.* (1990) regarding punishment as the result of consequences has seen a number of schools develop a negative attitude towards challenging behaviours by using power and control. Power and control depend heavily on the importance of the teacher (and schools) to determine how students should behave and what should be done to encourage this. Nevertheless, there are a number of teachers in our schools who still propagate the use of the Canter model. This could be because of its inflexible but perceived "no nonsense" or "zero tolerance" approach. This approach concerns those who prefer to utilise other approaches such as those teachers who see the importance of using student voice supported by a behaviour recovery approach as suggested by Rogers (2000). Zero tolerance, it is feared, may lead to zero care and responsibility on the part of some teachers.

However, in contrast, Canter also argues that students have rights and that their rights are to have teachers who promote appropriate behaviour and limit inappropriate behaviour. To allow this to happen, teachers must learn to be assertive

themselves. This is understood to mean that teachers clearly and firmly communicate their wants and needs to students and are prepared to enforce consequences for non-compliance of these actions. Rogers (2000) identifies with this position but insists that the teacher needs to be fair, consistent and firm in their enforcement of consequences. A common teacher explanation for an incident is that it is the student's fault and therefore the student needs to deal with consequences or be punished. On the other hand, confronting an angry or distraught student in public who is attempting to deal, however imperfectly, with an incident they created, may "merely serve to further damage their self-esteem and self-efficacy" (MacFarlane, 2007). I agree with other researchers (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai, & Riachardson, 2003a; Gadd, 2003; Kazol, 1992; Zeitlin & Refaat, 2000) that teachers cause harm to a persons' self-esteem when they berate or intimidate students in front of others. I myself have been in a situation when sometimes I have confronted a student in front of other students and then reflecting back on it I have only regretted because I thought as an adult I would not like to be confronted in front of my colleagues so the same should be the case with any of my students.

According to Balson (1992) and Rogers (2000) teachers create injustices for all students when they concentrate on student behaviour rather than talking with children about what is important to them by building a good relationship with them. To concentrate on the exhibited physical behaviour alone is ineffectual in providing a safe working environment for all students. Concentrating on exhibited physical behaviour alone does not take into account those individuals who present withdrawn, depressed, anxious and docile behaviours (Prochnow & Bourke, 2001) who are often

over looked by educators as they focus on dealing with the behavioural challenges of louder and more aggressive types of behaviours in nature.

On the other hand, it is possible that the behaviours that Prochnow & Bourke describe are not perceived as 'challenging' by many teachers, because they do not disrupt classroom activities.

When teachers continue to think that disruptive behaviour is "that which disrupts others' learning", they do not appear to acknowledge what the student may be trying to communicate and what the student understands about why the behaviours have occurred. Teachers as professionals are in a position to provide an "adult" view of classroom experience and it could be argued that this has been based on an unquestioned assumption that 'the grown-ups know best'. (Prashing, 2001b; Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005). It is the responsibility of teachers as professionals to be more able than children to maintain control of their own behaviour in challenging situations, and to model more appropriate behaviour to their students.

There has been considerable research undertaken suggesting that how teachers conceptualise the causes of behaviour they see as worrying and disturbing , bears a strong relationship to their own emotional and cognitive response to the behaviour (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2002; Wearmouth, Glynn, & Berryman, 2005). This implies (for example) that the teacher may be unaware that they are not focusing on the causes of the behaviour but purely on the behaviour itself. Brophy et al., (1974) further suggests that teachers' actions toward students may be reactions to the

students' behaviour and this means that the teacher may often respond in a "knee jerk" reaction.

When teachers complain that they do not understand particular children, when they misbehave, what they may be saying is that they are not aware of the purpose or the goal of the child's behaviour (Balson, 1992; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). So does this mean that teachers need to ensure that they have personalised their own codes of practice regarding responding to student learning and behaviour (Walker et al., Whitaker, 2004). A role for school management is to ensure that teachers are aware of cultural difference, are positive and do not engage in deficit thinking, and are receptive to other teachers' perceptions as to how students learn and behave. Schools also need to be aware of how students respond to different learning environments, different learning contexts and different teaching styles.

In summary this part of the literature review shows that it is important , that teachers have a personal definition of challenging behaviour and reflect on their own personal beliefs/perceptions and the beliefs of others regarding the understanding of challenging behaviours.

Role of the teacher and effective teaching strategies in promoting learning and managing student behaviour

Effective Pedagogy-

The New Zealand curriculum (2007, p.34) states that it is the actions that teachers take that promote student learning. 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.

However, not all teachers have the adequate professional development in order to deal with challenging behaviours and optimise learning in their classroom (McCormack, 2006).

Issues

Ingersoll (2004) in his research findings talks about an issue of "power" – he poses a question about how much actual power a classroom teacher has in order to manage student behaviour? Whose hands does the power rest with? He believes that in actual fact the real power rests with the school management and the team leaders and not the teachers. Students might believe it is the teacher but according to Ingersoll (2004) it is the school management that the power rests with. So the issue here is that the teacher retains the responsibility to "manage" the class, but at times may have little control over the process. This means that the management or the school that lacks the skills of managing behaviour in a good strategic way will not have very good outcomes for the students (Ingersoll, 2004).

The constantly changing teaching environment

Teaching environment is believed to be experiencing constant changes every now and then. In New Zealand and world- wide, the last twenty years in education have

seen many changes. Tomorrow's Schools, The Curriculum Framework and NCEA have remarkably changed the classroom environment. In the past, the teacher's role was to disseminate important classroom content along with some co-curricular activities but now, teaching responsibilities have extended well beyond delivering classroom content. The classroom has become a fishbowl experience (Smylie et al, 2004). Another aspect to this is the need for necessary professional development that can support teachers to adapt to the changing environments and enable them to do their job well (Moffett, 2000).

Moffett (2000) believes that the environment in which the change takes place is very crucial to teacher self-efficacy and self-efficacy has been regarded to be critical in teacher's ability to manage stress and burnout and, consequently, student behaviour. If the teachers don't feel comfortable and enjoy what they are doing then it is very hard for them to manage student behaviour, especially challenging ones and this can hinder the process of learning. This shows us that the teacher is a very important factor or has a very significant role to play in determining the efficiency of the education system. Birman (2000) supports this view and says that it is important to identify and look at those issues around teacher learning and support that enhance efficacy and reduce pressure. Effective professional development to enable teachers to manage challenging student behaviour is crucial for the enhancement of learning.

According to Miller (2009) 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. An old

piece of research but very interesting - Doyle (1986 as cited in Miller, 2009) states that classroom teaching is about learning and establishing order. He believes that the two cannot be separated from one another. His research findings are that classroom order encourages student engagement, which creates conducive environment for learning eventually. Without order a teacher is under a lot of pressure to promote student learning. The word "order" here implies to the term "behaviour management".

Importance of student teacher relationship and its effect on behaviour

Weinstein (2002) is of the opinion that unfortunately, there is no magical formula for managing challenging student behaviours but we do know that strong and positive relationships are a central factor in establishing a good safe classroom environment. Good consistent teaching practices can do a lot in managing challenging student behaviours. Most students respond positively to a well- organised classroom led by an enthusiastic teacher who demonstrates a genuine interest in students and what they learn (Ericksen, 1978).

Successful teachers place a high value on forming mutually respectful, trusting and positive relationships with their students which allows for a stronger focus on realising potential, encourage learning and manage student behaviour effectively (McNaughton, 2002). Hawk *et al,* (2002) carried out a study during 1999-2000 – the research demonstrated that a very high value is placed on the right kinds of relationships between teachers and students to encourage learning. The principles

of valuing relationships appear to be important across all cultures regardless of ethnicity (Gadd, 2003; Pianta, 2000; Zeitlin & Refaat, 2000)

Effective teaching strategies and the role of good relationships between teacher and students

According to Hawk et al., (2002), mentioned below, are some of the attributes that a teacher should work towards attaining in order to have strong positive relationships with the students. According to various researchers it is believed that teachers do not have to be of any particular age, gender, and ethnicity, type of teacher training or professional development, expertise in an area or have several years of experience to be able to develop and maintain positive and successful relationships with their students (Hawk et al., 2002).

What really matters is the teachers' attitudes, behaviour, values, efforts and skills that help in developing good positive relationships to be formed that would help a student learn (MacFarlane, 2007). Teachers not only should be thinking about their students positively but also their families in both positive and non-deficit ways (Bishop and Berryman, 2006). So it can be said that teachers can make valuable contributions to the classroom and that they can make a difference for all their students.

Empathy

According to Alton- Lee (2003) and MacFarlane (2004) it is very important for the teachers to be empathetic towards valuing culture and should have the capability to include relevant experiences into daily activities, encourage students to use first

language and enjoy learning from students about their culture. From personal experience- when a teacher places a high value of importance to a student's culture or some personal experience the student really appreciates that and feels happy.

Caring for students

MacFarlane (2004) states that there are many ways in which caring can be demonstrated. Some teachers love their students as they love their family members. (Butterworth & Bevan-Brown, 2007; Hawk et al., 2002), suggesting that successful teachers genuinely appreciate the importance that families place on a students' well-being and their value in society.

Hawk et al., (2002) suggest that teachers who engage in extra- curricular activities with their students and their communities have the opportunity to form better personal relationships. Furthermore, if a teacher has had cultural and family experiences that are the same or similar to those of their students they have an advantage, and they can facilitate establishing appropriate relationships (Gill, 2006).

In my experience as a classroom teacher, students who exhibit any kind of challenging behaviour often do not involve themselves in any extracurricular activities such as sports and cultural activities. Generally their families will also not participate in any outside of school activities. This can be a great barrier in forming personal relationships between student-teacher and parent/families. In this respect, teachers who care about students will have enthusiastic and happy students in their class who are ready to learn and enjoy their learning (MacFarlane, 2004).

Respect

According to Wilson-Hill (2006) respect helps in forming an effective relationship between teacher and student. However, respect is not necessarily the same as liking (Hawk et al., 2002). The respect that students give their teachers reflects the way teachers treat their students and speak to their students. Demonstration of respect can also be seen in the way that a teacher models appropriate attitudes and behaviour, in the energy and effort they put into their work, in their enthusiasm for learning, in their loyalty to school and in their genuine love and caring for each student as a person and as a learner. Robertson (1996) reports a conclusion by Tattum (1982) from a study of disruptive students that their behaviour was determined by whether they liked and respected the teacher and not by what consequences could be bought to bear on their actions (Robertson, 1996) p. 134. It is extremely unusual for serious confrontations to arise between students and teachers who share respect for each other and have healthy friendly relationships (Alton-Lee, 2003; Boyes, 2002; Rogers, 2000).

Attending constructively to unacceptable student behaviour can be viewed as providing learning opportunities (not disruptions) for the students and teacher in order to repair and further build relationships (Rogers, 2000; Wilson-Hill, 2006). Furthermore, mutual respect arising from strong teacher student relationships should be ongoing, not just something that a teacher does at the beginning of the year (Boyes, 2002; Roberstson, 1996; Rogers, 2000; Russek, 2003).

Communication

Communication is a two -way process, teachers who show and model respectful communication are more likely to receive the same. Respectful communication provides strong opportunities for reciprocal dialogue between the student and teacher (Hawk et al., 2002).

Mc Naughton (2002) discusses "community styles of discourse" which requires the teacher to be familiar with the language patterns of the students in order to assist with understanding and promoting effective communication.

Mc Naughton suggests that,

The teacher's use of a known style of community discourse establishes that he or she is authoritative through actions rather than through an ascribed role" (p68).

Gill (2006) however argues that this is not to suggest that teachers abandon their own speech and adopt the interpretive dialect that the students often present in their conversations but to be aware that words, such as "sweet as", "cool" and "choice" all mean that everything is okay. However, if we are concerned with improving literacy, then these words should feature prominently in texts and discussion as a common language base to build upon. Similarly, for effective learning to happen, students must feel safe enough to learn without fear; and not be afraid to take risks. This sense of safety comes from genuine interpersonal relationships in the classroom and beyond. Relationships are fundamental to learning. "Teachers cannot be aloof, detached or apolitical." (Gill, 2006, p.17). So therefore, communication needs to be mutual and respectful. As mentioned earlier it is a two- way process, if a teacher expects students to respect them and communicate with them respectfully then

teachers need to respect students and communicate with them without a need for 'put downs.'

Connectedness

Hawk (2002) suggests that there needs to be a sense of connectedness between teacher and student which is equally shared and which develops through mutual respect. Such connectedness allows for the student to develop an understanding of their own responsibility for controlling their own actions. Teachers should only have to remind students of their responsibility to maintain effective discipline in the classroom. Many teachers develop signals that direct student behaviour. These are effective because they are quiet, unconfrontational and often directed at individual students without others being aware (Hawk et al., 2002, p.48).

The use of private hand signals to allow students to identify when behaviours need attention can be a good example of a non-discriminating and non-threatening approach to curbing the action before the behaviour escalates (Rogers, 2000). Also in reciprocation, teachers need to be aware that they can also receive 'signals' from students that they may be overstepping the boundaries (MacFarlane, 1997).

Palmer (1997) expresses the view that, good teachers, "are able to weave a complex web of connections between themselves, their subject matter, and their students, so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves" cited in (Gill, 2006, p.17). An effective teacher establishes a learning environment that is "needs-based, positive and inclusive" (Arthur et al., 2003). Teachers who have expertise in and a passion for a particular subject area and who demonstrate to the students who will

also come to share the passion. It is often observed in schools that a teacher who shares a passion for literacy for example, will have students sharing this passion also and may bring culturally relevant ideas, preferences and experiences to the curriculum.

Praise

There appears to be a growing concern among teachers that they seem to be praising their students for just about everything they do. This may have resulted from teachers following 'expert' advice that students will respond more favourably to praise rather than punishment (Doidge, 2005; Kohn, 1993; Robertson, 1996). The use of rewarding appropriate behaviour with positive outcomes such as certificates, free time and prizes appears to be a regular happening in most schools. Often the response from the teacher is that by rewarding the good behaviour allows the bad behaviour to diminish. However, the use of praise needs to be more nuanced than this. Praise only makes complete sense in a social context where both giver and receiver understand its meaning and are already in a relationship of mutual respect and trust. Furthermore, "being positive" is not just about praising students, it is also about maintaining a positive outlook during your time with them. Russek (2004) suggests- The discriminating use of praise, and the ability to remain relentlessly positive, will help one a great deal with managing behaviour (p.11).

Motivation

Responsibility for motivation lies somewhere between resting entirely with the student and entirely with the teacher. The teacher is not in control of all of the influencing factors that can cause boredom or loss of motivation (Sturgess, 2006). Student motivation at school depends on the teacher's skills and ability to develop relationships and maintain the interest that the students deserve in the first instance. (Ministry of Education, 2000). Ericksen (1978) states that all students bring a degree of motivation into the classroom and this will be transformed, for better or worse, by what happens in that classroom. Motivation is not something that can just be achieved like this or there is some magical formula to have motivating teachers in schools but according to Weinstein (2002) existence of strong positive relationships between the teacher and the student are a central factor in arising motivation in classroom. Weinstein (2002) further states that motivation can arise from students experiencing learning opportunities, and from interactions with teachers and peers, and school wide policies that convey to students low expectations about their learning capacity.

Robertson (1996) suggests that good teaching practices can do more to counter student apathy by providing students with some measure of academic success than additional special efforts to attack motivation directly. Similarly, Pianta (2000) is of the opinion that most students respond positively to a well-organised classroom led by an enthusiastic teacher who has a genuine interest in students and what they learn.

Another growing subject matter of interest has become the diversity in learning preferences. The next part of the literature will discuss the issue of diversity in

learning preferences and whether that impacts on student behaviour and learning. So therefore, the last research questions deals with diversity in learning preferences and its connections with student behaviours (see appendix 3).

Diversity in Learning Preferences

New Zealand is a highly multi-cultural society now and there are many cultures in a classroom therefore giving rise to diversity. So, it is the teacher's professional role to promote diversity in learning preferences within the classroom (Edwards, 2000; Mc Naughton, 2002) by perhaps, listening firstly to what students say regarding how they best learn and secondly learning to become more flexible in their own thinking.

Prashing (2000) believes that there can be a break down in relationships between teacher and the students if there is prevalence of attitudinal differences in learning preferences. Prashing (2000c) sights an example- she says boys 'have more preferred way of doing things (often labelled kinaesthetic) than that of girls who generally favour visual or auditory learning methods'. However, it is also important to note that much research has been undertaken on learning preferences and multiple intelligences (Prashing, 2000) which affect student achievement. Low achievers are said to be more nonconforming, and less persistent when it comes to challenges and are therefore less responsive to their teachers. The teaching methods of the teacher may not be seen by these students as conducive to their preferred ways of learning and therefore they lack motivation and thus set out to be purposefully non-conforming and may present challenging behaviours. On the other hand some students may accept the extremely authoritarian "top down" approach of some teachers and achieve well in their class, because they have somehow established a

trusting and respectful relationship with those teachers. The solution here poses an important question: what strategies do teachers use to cater for these diverse learning styles?

It is interesting to note that high achievers show a greater match in learning preferences to their teachers and this probably is the reason they do better at school than their counterparts. Nevertheless, it is up to a teacher to create a classroom culture where each student is valued and strong positive relationships are built (Prashing, 2000).

The role of the school in supporting teachers to manage student challenging behaviours

Kiro (2007) states that schools that manage behaviour well have deep seated values about the safety and well being of all members of the school community. These values dominate the school environment and are clearly mentioned in a school mission. He further believes that a school that promotes good behaviour will ultimately pave the way for a positive school environment to take place – providing a respectful and peaceful environment for learning. Kiro however brings forth an issue which is that- requiring teachers to teach in conditions where they cannot manage their classrooms well is detrimental to the teacher, to the students, to the students who are disruptive and to the wider school climate.

According to Durlak (1998) factors that contribute to poor outcomes for students are "poor quality schools", schools that fail to provide conditions for students to achieve

their potential. He defines school failure as "poor academic achievement and poor behaviour". High- quality schools, however, are identified by Durlak as a protective factor in mediating against the risk of poor outcomes for students. In other words, high quality schools promote good behaviour, and in turn this promotes good outcomes for students. While risk and protective factors operate in complex relationships, understanding those factors that contribute towards "quality" in schools may enhance the school's capacity to contribute towards reducing poor outcomes for students. Improving school quality, in itself, may enable school based behaviour to be better managed.

The New Zealand view on quality schools and quality teaching is very well mentioned in: Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling (Alton-Lee, 2003). According to Alton-lee (2003), "The central professional challenge for teachers is to manage, simultaneously, the complexity of learning needs of diverse students" (p.i). Ten characteristics of quality teaching are identified. Included in Alton-Lee's characteristics of quality teaching are such features as "focusing on student outcomes including social outcomes" and enabling classes and other groupings to "work as caring, inclusive and cohesive learning communities" (p. ii). These suggest a positive, proactive behaviour focus. Hood (2004, as cited in Alton- Lee, 2003) identifies a series of more specific success factors that, he maintains, reduced suspension rates in Māori students and as such, improved educational outcomes for students. Initiatives such as concentrating on "progressively improving student engagement" (p.11), ongoing self review and building "trust, collegiality and common interest between schools" (p.11) reducing suspensions, develop a school climate which fosters improved behaviour.

It is not only in New Zealand that there is a clear link between school quality and behaviour but other countries as well. Balson (1992), Reid (1999), Chaplain (2003) and Rogers (2006) advocate meaningful tasks/learning, relevant curriculum, collegiality and targeted group management skills as some characteristics of quality schools and means to enhance school and classroom relationships. There is one issue, however that has come forward in the course of this literature review and that is that there is a lack of training or professional development to enable teachers to manage their classrooms in a way that they are able to maintain a balance and provide good learning experiences to the children thus managing behaviour in the best possible manner. Traditionally it has been assumed that teachers learn to manage behaviour and optimise learning naturally when they begin to teach and enter the profession and do not really need much support in this area. This view is however not supported by the literature that has been viewed so far. Being able to manage groups of children is one of the knowledge areas of a teacher's job along with subject content knowledge and subject delivery knowledge. Significantly, however, group management of students with diverse behavioural and learning needs is an area for which little assistance is provided either in pre-service or in-service teacher professional learning (Rogers, 2006; Chaplain, 2003; Balson, 1992; Knight, 2007). So therefore, schools need to provide high-quality, targeted professional development that addresses key gaps in teachers' knowledge.

Rogers (2006) states that another very important factor in successful behaviour management is that schools build and maintain an environment where respect and the primary focus is on learning which he believes ultimately promotes good behaviour. Schools that espouse values like respect and fairness are more likely to be peaceful and positive. The approach a school takes in managing behaviour is

critical as it is the way that schools manage behaviour as well managed schools are neither autocratic nor laissez faire but democratic (Balson, 1992; Chaplain, 2003).

Building Positive staff relationships and providing support to the teachers-

Chaplain (2003) states that building positive staff relationships, strong collegiality and open learning culture are some important features of quality schools that manage behaviour well. He is of the view that the school climate is a holistic concept. It is easier and more sustainable to promote a positive classroom culture within a school that espouses shared values. Schools, therefore, need to link behaviour management to school policies. Quality schools acknowledge that managing student behaviour is on-going. When classroom relationships break down, teachers need adequate and appropriate support to enable teaching and learning to occur (Chaplain, 2003; Cowley, 2001; Balson, 1992). Students learn from classroom encounters regardless of how they are resolved. Nobody benefits from poorly resolved behaviour difficulties: the teacher's sense of self efficacy is damaged (Kokkinos, 2007); the disruptive student has his behaviour affirmed (Balson, 1992; Chaplain, 2003); and students observing the encounter feel unsafe (Chaplain, 2003). Schools that realise the importance of staff and student safety recognise the toll classroom disruption exacts on both teachers and students. Teacher self-efficacy is recognised as an important moderating factor in managing stress and improving stamina. Nir and Kranot (2006) state that: Self efficacy beliefs influence thought patterns, emotions and actions in which people expend substantial effort in pursuit of goals, persist in the face of adversity, and exercise some control over events that affect their lives. Procedures that enhance rather than damage teacher self-efficacy may enable better management of student behaviour. In addition schools should

consider and constantly evaluate the quality of support they provide to teachers (Chaplain, 2003).

Small class sizes and professional development

Finn (1998) in his research states that: small class size is one factor that increased student engagement and promoted good behaviour in the classroom. The American Educational Research Association (Zurawsky, 2003) reports: Teachers in small classes pay greater attention to each pupil. Students in these classes experience continuing pressure to participate in learning activities and become better, more involved students. Attention to learning goes up and disruptive and off task behaviour goes down.

The PPTA Class Size Taskforce (NZPPTA, 2005) noted that reduced class size is likely to reduce teacher stress as behaviour management issues are reduced, and as relationships with students and their academic results improve. This is likely to alter teacher perceptions of workload manageability and their level of job satisfaction. This will in turn improve teacher recruitment and retention. Other benefits of smaller class size include lower levels of noise, fewer opportunities for distraction, and less time spent on classroom management and classroom discipline (American Federation of Teachers, 2003).

Professional development

According to Moffett (2000) a positive school learning culture is the most important element in making a change or adapting to something new or a difficult situation. To achieve this, leadership support is essential as positive leadership support assists in creating an environment that is conducive to learning. The schools need to have a

behaviour plan and view and review it from time to time. The school where I am currently teaching has a behaviour management plan but the issue is that new teachers and long term relievers are not even aware of our behaviour management plan. So, therefore it just goes to show that schools really need to make sure that every member of their staff whether new or old is aware of the school expectations in this field. Professional development is an excellent way in equipping the teachers and informing them about what the policy/ mission statement around behaviour management and learning is. Moreover, planned, effective professional development has the potential to increase teacher capacity in order to manage challenging behaviour (Moffett, 2000).

Glickman (2002) states that leaders of the school need to constantly ask questions to themselves on where their school is at and what the teachers need or are the teachers teaching effectively and if not then why and what can be done- what area needs professional development to be focussed on. Gordon and Ross Gordon (as cited in Glickman, 2002) state in their research that successful schools typically have no greater amounts of time or resources than those where this scenario is a pipe dream, but the difference lies in how time, focus, and structure are used; how staff development, school improvement, personal evaluation, and classroom assistance are used together and how instructional leadership is defined and employed.

From the discussion so far it is evident that the school plays a significant role in managing behaviour and promoting learning environment in a student's life. As

Chaplain (2003) and Rogers (2006) say schools need to aim to foster diversity and to support students to achieve their potential. They further state that it is up to a school to equip their teachers with resources and skill them through professional development by enabling them to better deal with inappropriate behaviours in the classroom and ensure that learning opportunities are being provided to the students.

Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter has placed significant importance on the teacher's role in developing and maintaining positive relationships with the students. Research also indicated that there is a need for the teachers to define challenging behaviour and reflect on their own personal beliefs or thinking about what their perceptions are regarding understanding of challenging behaviours. Literature reviewed has also shown that learning and behaviour have a strong connection- academic learning and social learning are interconnected.

It is the teacher's responsibility to initiate a classroom culture that connects learning and behaviour, especially where there are a number of cultures present in the classroom. This new classroom culture must be acceptable to, and shared by both students and teachers. To achieve this, teachers need to be the ones that change the most as they are the ones who hold the power to do so.

Research also demonstrates that successful teachers place a high value on the establishment and existence of strong positive relationships where there is mutual respect, trust, connectedness and positivity in the classroom. Achievement of having

this kind of relationship with the students teachers allow an environment that has a strong focus on realising potential and encourage learning. Literature suggests that the most effective way of forming such relationships and environment is to listen to and respect student voice.

The present research will be about gathering teacher perspectives towards challenging behaviours and their management of challenging student behaviours through semi-structured interviews. The present study will also aim to gain insight into the possible support allocated to teachers for managing students that present challenging behaviours and what role has the school to play in it.

The next chapter outlines the methodology, data gathering, data analysis processes and ethical considerations that will be undertaken to complete this research.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Introduction

The central aim of this study was to examine teacher perceptions regarding challenging student behaviours in primary school classrooms and the strategies teachers use to manage these behaviours. As has been shown in the previous chapter the role of a teacher as a classroom practitioner is complex and teachers do face difficulties in managing challenging behaviours, thus the study also explored the support that is available to teachers in managing challenging student behaviours.

This chapter describes the qualitative methodological approach to research and justifies this approach for this study that is concerned with research in education. The employed research method of semi-structured individual interviews that sit within a qualitative research paradigm is described and its selection for this study is justified. The analysis of data is described and explained. The concepts of reliability and validity are critiqued and implications of the ethical considerations are outlined.

Methodology

Overview

The selection of a research approach was influenced by the study being undertaken. While some topics suit a qualitative approach, others suit a quantitative approach or even a blend of the two approaches. The philosophical framework and fundamental assumptions of this study are defined as methodology. Methodology is concerned with the process of the research rather than the product. Both quantitative and

qualitative approaches can be used to research educational issues. According to Bryman (2004) a qualitative approach has become a very popular choice for researchers working within schools. "All educational research needs to be grounded in people's experience" (Coleman & Briggs, 2002, p.18). The emphasis within educational settings on researching human behaviour and actions may be a significant factor in the selection of an interpretive approach.

Rationale for choosing qualitative approach

It was necessary to select a research methodology which had the ability to focus on exploring and understanding the complex process of teaching and dealing with challenging student behaviours. Teacher participants needed to be able to share their experiences and individual perspectives so words would provide the required in-depth data. Rather than take an instantly strong stance against a quantitative or qualitative approach, I chose to accept the Ary et al. (2002) and Holliday (2002) opinions that all approaches are valuable and the choice depends on the research question being asked and personal preference. The decision to carry out this research using a qualitative approach was based on the view that "particular problems demand particular solutions, research should always be tailor-made" (Davidson & Tolich, 2003, p.128).

Qualitative research is ideal for a smaller sample, where an interpretivist approach leads the researcher to focus on "the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants" (Bryman, 2004, p. 266). Since this study is a small scale research involving eight semi-structured individual interviews, therefore qualitative research methodology embracing the interpretivist approach was adopted for this study. Qualitative research methodology

also sits in well with this study as this research involves participants from different perspectives as all eight teacher participants are different from one another in terms of years they have taught, position held (Team leader, deputy principal and classroom teacher) and also different teaching experiences. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define qualitative research as "an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world… attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p.3). These goals of qualitative research create understanding through a picture by using description of the events (Bryman, 2004b; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). This allows for an impression to be given by detailing the viewpoints of the interviewees being researched and answering the question "what is going on here?" (Bouma, 1998, p.169).

When considering all of the above mentioned factors and the aims and research questions of this research, the qualitative approach fitted well, because it gave the researcher an opportunity to gather perspectives from a number of participants in great depth. The context described in the previous chapter outlining the themes, questions and issues that emerged from the literature review, provided the rationale for the following research questions:

1. What behaviours do teachers perceive to be challenging and why?
2. What issues do teachers face in managing challenging behaviours and what strategies do the teachers employ to manage these behaviours?
3. What support is available for teachers to manage challenging behaviours?

This study therefore focussed on what behaviours teachers perceive to be challenging and why. In order to gain an in- depth knowledge and understanding of teacher perceptions regarding challenging behaviours, the issues around it, how teachers managed these behaviours and what support is available to them, it was important to identify issues and experiences of teacher participants through their eyes. This study was dependent on dealing with active participants and investigating perceptions of teachers regarding challenging behaviours through the eyes of all participants (Bryman, 2008).

Research Method

Semi- structured interviews

I decided to use interviews as a data gathering method. According to Davidson and Tolich (2003) and Hinds (2000), interviewing is the best method to capture experiences of individuals. Interviews can go far beyond other methods and look into the unseen to seek information on interviewee's feelings, perceptions, opinions, values and perspectives (Bouma, 1998; Seidman, 1998; Wellington, 2000).

My first plan was to conduct one group interview so that the two senior teachers (team leaders- management positions) from each participating school could be interviewed together. However, this was not possible because the teachers could not be released from their classes at the same time due to lack of teachers available to cover two classes. As Creswell (2002) explains, the type of interview depends on the time available and the availability of interviewees. The change to separate time slots

so that individual interviews were conducted for each senior teacher solved this problem.

Participant background, selection and procedure for gaining consent

Criteria for recruiting the participants for the interviews, was as follows:

a. Eight participants from two different primary schools in Auckland. Four from each school.

b. Variety in teaching experiences and roles in schools for example at least two teams leaders, two deputy principals (as they are involved in policy making regarding behaviour management) and four classroom teachers.

The participants

The teachers were selected on the basis of their teaching experience as I was looking for a variety of perceptions regarding challenging behaviours. The participant teachers ranged in experience from 8 to 20 years. All participants are considered effective practitioners by their principals and through the attestation process at their school, and all the participants were classroom teachers, even the four participants being in leadership roles- two team leaders, one deputy principal and one special needs co-ordinator in their school.

Procedures in which research participants were involved

All the eight participants were involved in individual semi-structured interviews each lasting no longer than 30 minutes (appendix 3). The interviews were audio taped and later on transcribed by the researcher. The intention behind audio taping the interviews was so that the researcher could listen to what the interviewees had to

say in response to each question in their own time and repeat the tape in case needed and transcribe the interviews without any errors or any misleading or untrue information. The interviews were restricted to 30 minutes and this time frame was checked when all of the research questions were piloted at the school where I teach (permission from the principal was gained). It proved to be adequate time to gather in-depth data. I was also very aware that the interviewees time was precious and that the data had to be transcribed so I needed to work within the time constraints available for this research study.

Semi-structured interviews were selected because they involved a series of questions that became the interview guide. With more than one school participating in this research, a set of focus questions, the interview schedule (appendix 3) was necessary to guide the discussions. This allowed for findings across the two sites to be contrasted and compared within the analysis. Further questions were asked at times to clarify information or to follow through on significant points, although my aim was for the interviewees to participate without interruption. The well worded interview format (appendix 3) provided adequate structure to prevent wandering and time wasting. This semi- structured format also allowed flexibility so that the interviewees were able to share their experiences without being restricted by the demands of specific questions (Bryman, 2004b; Cohen et al., 2007).

Advantages and disadvantages of interviews

In considering whether or not to use interviews, it was important to consider the advantages and disadvantages of this data gathering method. Interviews have a number of advantages. They can provide very good information if they are conducted correctly (Coleman & Briggs, 2002) and are useful for gathering in-depth information. They also create the opportunity to ask for clarification of information and have the advantage of supplying a large amount of data fairly quickly (Ary et al., 2002; Bryman, 2004b; Hinds, 2000). Individual interviews as in the case of this research study can also avoid the disadvantages of group interviews. These disadvantages could include group members dominating the discussion with a long speech, threatening behaviour, limited contribution of more reserved group members and the requirement of higher quality of recording equipment (Wellington, 2000).

However, individual interviews also have a number of disadvantages of which the researcher needs to be aware. They may be very time-consuming and they may be costly because of travel time, actual interviewing time and transcribing of the interview data. Important points may also be overlooked when employing a semi-structured interview approach. Different wording of questions can result in a variety of interpretations therefore making comparisons difficult and the information is 'sifted' through the views of the researcher (Creswell, 2002). In addition to this, the researcher may have an influence on how the interviewee answers the questions. Researchers may also need to give attention to the interviewee and may need to respond to emotions, uncertainties, or any hesitancy. An occurrence of emotional outburst took place in one of the interviews carried out. This participant was in tears as she shared her experience of dealing with a student who presented extreme challenging behaviours and she lacked support of the school management. I had to calm her down and give her time. She was feeling better in few minutes but it just

made me aware that interviews can be difficult for some people who have had a bad experience. Overcoming shyness can be an issue when researchers and interviewees have not previously met. Fortunately this was not the case in the interviews I carried out in order to complete this research study. Moreover, the interviewees may present false information so the researcher needs to have the knowledge to assess the information along with the skills to conduct a successful interview. Another disadvantage within interviews is that the participant is unable to remain anonymous (Ary et al., 2002; Creswell, 2002).

To minimise these disadvantages the selection of schools from a specific geographical area limited the travel and the restricted interview timeframe, as discussed previously, was effective. Limiting the interviews to eight also kept the time commitment to a manageable level. Trialling of the questions prior to interviewing the teachers participants allowed me to establish my role in guiding the interviewees so that meaningful data was collected. When listening to the digital recording of the pilot interviews, I became aware of the importance of limiting my comments in order not to lead or influence the interviewees' responses. Prior to each interview, time was taken to relax the interviewee by chatting about the research in a general way and spending some time hearing about their school and experiences. This also answered the background questions on the interview schedule (appendix 3). Interviewing four people from each school also provided a check on the perceptions of each interviewee. My own experience as a classroom teacher also provided an additional check, as I was able to assess whether or not the data seemed to be reasonable. However, I did not need to use my judgment to question the accuracy of any of the data provided by the interviewees.

Sampling

It is important to plan the details of sampling techniques before beginning to gather data because careful sampling enhances validity and therefore supports soundness of the data. The principle of sampling is that a sample represents the whole but there can never be certainty unless everyone is part of the sample, which in most instances would be impractical. The researcher's real interest does not lie in the small sample of interviewees but instead the researcher is keen to establish the findings because they may be applicable to much larger group (Cohen et al., 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003). However, Wellington (2000) cautions the researcher by stating that it can never be certain "that our sample is representative of the whole population. Sampling always involves a compromise" (p.58).

Research sample

All of the interviewees in my sample were from U5 (school roll numbers between 301-500) or U6 (school roll numbers 501-675) primary schools because it is usually larger primary schools that have greater numbers of senior teachers, special needs co-ordinators and assistant principals. As I intended to have participation of three different groups- classroom teachers, senior teachers (team leaders) and assistant principal so I chose the two schools that were of this size in Auckland. As my own school is U5(school roll between 301-500), I also believed that , as the researcher, I might be able to relate to the findings with greater understanding.

The choice to select team leaders, assistant or deputy principals and classroom teachers was made considering the topic of the research- teacher perceptions regarding challenging behaviours and management of these behaviours and what support is available to them. The school management (team leaders and assistant principals) could be seen as the initiator of behaviour management policies in their school and classroom teachers can be seen as the receiver and the one who implements and follows these policies regarding behaviour management in their school, so gathering data from a variety of interviewees depending on the role they play in their school could provide a relatively balanced set of viewpoints and variety of perceptions to analyse. According to Coleman and Briggs (2002), there is no set answer as to what size the sample should be, but the way the sample is selected is more important. A sample free of bias is more important than having a large sample where lack of bias cannot be assured. Two different schools (sites) were selected for data collection to strengthen the findings and allow for the possibility that the findings may be applicable to schools of similar size.

Analysis of Interview Data

There is no one way to analyse and present qualitative interview data. The literature does suggest using three steps, which are labelled as organising, summarising and interpreting as a guide to data analysis (Ary et al., 2002). While the process that was employed was not as clear-cut as three distinct and separate steps, this did provide a general guide for analysis of data. It is this process of analysis which turns the information collected into data (Coleman & Briggs, 2002).

The first step in organising my data was looking at the notes made on the sheets of paper at the time of each interview and noting down the similarities, themes and interesting responses. The second step in organising my data was to listen to the digital recording of the complete interviews. This allowed me to hear the full interview as the interviewees complete their statements without having to concentrate on the questioning. The interview data was then fully transcribed. A transcription of the interview was sent to each participant for checking and they were invited to make any corrections. While most interviewees confirmed that they had received the email, no amendments were made. Each transcription was then read through with the recording to ensure that the transcription was correct. This also allowed me to become more familiar with the data and to begin the step of noting possible connections between the eight sets of data.

The step of summarising by finding common themes, involved looking for repeating words and phrases and categorising these into similar groups. It was decided not to follow the individual questions because within the format of the semi-structured interview, and with very little interjection from me, the feedback on the questions did not fit into neatly packaged answers. Three major themes were selected as a way to organise the data. These were 'teacher perceptions and challenging behaviours' and 'strategies and school'. The data on teacher perceptions regarding challenging behaviours, issues involved in understanding and managing challenging behaviours, support that is available to teachers was examined under each of these themes. The interview data from each interviewee was literally cut and pasted onto large charts under these headings with a space for further notes to assist with this stage and the last stage of interpretation which flows on into the Chapter Five discussion.

The third stage of interpretation was where the data was examined, analysed, contrasted and compared. Extensive interview data was included to avoid taking excerpts out of context and placing an emphasis on it to suit my own purposes. As the interpretation of the data progressed, the three main themes were broken down into further sub-headings such as teacher perceptions regarding challenging behaviours, issues facing teachers of challenging student behaviours, strategies teachers use to manage student challenging behaviours and support that is available for teachers to manage these behaviours. Coleman and Briggs (2002) remind the researcher to not only be aware of the themes which come from the questions but that other important themes may appear as the analysis is undertaken so to be aware and look for these. One theme emerged which was found across much of the data. This was issues that teachers face in managing student challenging behaviours and how they manage these behaviours. All the teacher participants shared their perceptions and experiences regarding these two aspects so this theme was analysed and placed in chapter five, the discussions chapter. Developing and using this clear process to organise, summarise and interpret data was a way to increase validity as it provided a system that could be understood by the reader. In the past, a criticism of qualitative data analysis was that no one explained how it had been analysed so the process was not open. However, analysis within more recent research has become more systematic (Neuman, 1997).

This research involved the use of more than one school so it provided a range of experiences of both senior teachers and classroom teachers. The schools were not compared with each other on their behaviour management policies or how their staff members perceive challenging behaviours but rather the teachers and senior teachers transcripts were examined for similarities, differences and connections

were drawn and compared both as individuals and as groups. With this opportunity to compare and contrast the findings, both the commonalities and differences featured in the findings. As the researcher, I could describe, summarise, and look for themes and test and look for commonalities and differences, as long as this analysis matched the purpose of my research. It was not just what was said that required consideration; it was also what was not said that required reflection. What was missing became important. The comparisons made were "based on logic and judgement" (Neuman, 1997, p. 439). While the elements of group comparisons came into my analysis, the specific context of each interviewee's feedback was also kept in focus (Bryman, 2004b).

Validity and Reliability

Reliability relates to being consistent over time with methods and treating all groups the same when gathering data. Validity is achieved when the researcher's data gathering relates to the concept being studied so it is in line with the actual research aim (Bryman, 2004b; Cohen et al., 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003). It is important to address these two issues of reliability and validity within qualitative research as they support the authenticity of the findings.

Addressing reliability and validity within a qualitative approach may be seen as challenging. There are no direct answers in qualitative research, but rather description and explanations. Moreover, methods such as semi-structured interviews can compromise reliability even further. This is because it is difficult to ensure a consistent approach with the practice of treating each participant as an individual respondent (Coleman & Briggs, 2002). There is also potential for bias that can come

from the researcher, interviewee or the questions themselves and therefore influence the findings. Within the writings of Seidman (1998) and Wellington, (2000) there are further concerns expressed in relation to reliability and validity. Wellington (2000) explains that total reliability, which is linked to whether or not research results can be replicated, is a debatable issue because it is impossible to replicate natural behaviour. Seidman (1998) questions the whole concept of validity when he comments that many "qualitative researchers disagree with the epistemological assumptions underlying the notion of validity" (p.17). He believes that words such as trustworthiness and transferability should replace validity. Internal and external validity can never be claimed as a certainty as these are only perceptions, which is a concern noted by Wellington (2000). These concerns leave the concept of validity and reliability wide open for debate, but this does not change the fact that they remain part of the requirements if research is to be recognised as genuine.

In order to establish reliability and validity within my research, the following steps were implemented. The processes of checking both sets of interview questions, prior to interviewing, against the aim and key questions and the piloting of the questions supported validity. To support reliability, the sampling process was carefully planned and systematic, the interviews were structured with prepared guiding questions, the research design was thorough and the data was compared with previous research outlined within the literature. Getting the participants to validate transcripts added to the validity and reliability in this study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics play a very important part in educational research because the processes involve people. The ethical protocols for every aspect of research are clear. "Ethical

research might be unethical in its design, its methods, its data analysis, its presentation or its conclusions (Wellington, 2000, p.56). Informed consent is necessary so that all interviewees know what the research is about and what is involved in being a participant. Invasion of privacy is a consideration so interviewees have the right to refuse to answer certain questions and the issue of confidentiality remains highly important. Deception is also an ethical consideration so the purpose of the research has to be clearly stated and no inducements are to be used to entice participation. The "main criterion for educational research is that it should be ethical… Ethical considerations override all others" (Wellington, 2000, p. 54).

Procedure for gaining consent

Two different primary schools were selected to carry out the research study. Initially the principals of each school were sent emails with participation information sheet attached (appendix 1). The principals were requested to choose four staff members from their school; intention behind this decision was that principals would know best which teachers from their school will be able to participate in this research. After I was granted permission from the two principals and sent contact details of the selected teacher participants from their schools willing to participate in this research study, I then contacted these eight participants and invited them to be a part of my research (appendix 1). The information sheet (appendix 1) explained the research and detailed information about the informed consent form (appendix 2). I then followed up within a week personally to ascertain the teacher's willingness to become involved. All teachers were willing to participate and I negotiated a date for the interview and obtained the consent form (appendix 2). If any of the teachers had been unwilling to participate I then had a plan B of intending to contact and request another principal for granting me the permission to carry out this research study with

their staff members. Unexpectedly all of a sudden I received an email during my research that four teachers had refused to participate in this research study so I had to follow plan B and kept all of the ethical considerations in mind and gained permission and consent from another school.

Prior to beginning this research study, approval was obtained from the Unitec Research Ethics Committee. It was only after receiving formal approval that my interviewing in schools could commence. After indication of willingness to be involved in an interview, each participant was emailed an 'information Sheet' (Appendix 1) and 'Consent Form' so they could view these documents prior to my arrival to conduct the interview. Each participant signed the 'Letter of Consent form' (appendix 2) before the interview began. Time was given for the interviewees to ask any questions and at the end they were asked if they wished to make any further comments. Pseudonyms were given to maintain anonymity of both schools and interviewees. Venues for interviews were chosen carefully so that the participant would feel comfortable and the discussion would remain confidential. Any information, which could identify either the school or participant within the transcription, was removed without altering the essence of the statement. Transcriptions were sent back to the interviewees for checking and procedures for storage of data were clearly outlined.

Challenges faced during the course of this research

Initially two schools were contacted and approval was sought but at the very last moment one school decided to withdraw for some reasons like someone did research at their school and mentioned the name of the principal and the anonymity was lost. Two teacher participants decided that they did not feel comfortable sharing their experiences regarding student challenging behaviours and withdrew. So therefore, I started all over again and gained approval from UREC (Unitec Research Ethics Committee) and followed the same protocol as done for gaining the first approval. Both my supervisors were informed of the situation that had arisen and then they advised me to apply for an approval to UREC and I had to wait for the approval to come through to me before I could start any research.

Ethical considerations cannot be an additional extra because for research to be truly ethical these considerations need to be built in from the beginning of the planning stages and continue to be considered throughout the whole process. As Mertens (2005) states, ethics need to be a fundamental part of the complete research package and not just added on.

Conclusion

The best way to explore and understand teacher perceptions regarding student challenging behaviours and management of these behaviours is to hear the experiences of those who were the most involved. The classroom teachers themselves, senior teachers and assistant principals (leadership roles). In-depth interviews found within a qualitative approach were chosen to provide the opportunity to hear how teachers, assistant principals and senior teachers think, feel, and react as they experience challenging behaviours within their schools. The data

gathered from the eight interviewees during these interviews will be examined and analysed and findings presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of the findings from semi-structured interviews with eight participants. All the eight participants were primary school teachers from two different primary schools in Auckland. There were four from each school. Both the participating schools were located in different geographical areas of Auckland. The findings are organised into three aspects: Teacher perceptions and issues related to challenging behaviour, strategies teachers employ to manage such behaviours and lastly school support and home influence.

There are a number of issues relating to each of these broad aspects which I will describe and then draw together to synthesise the findings. Teacher's responses throughout the presentation of the findings will be identified as T 1-8. Representing Teacher 1, Teacher 2 etc. (See appendix 4- table of findings- table 4.1)

Perceptions and issues related to challenging behaviours

The first interview question asked the teacher participants to describe what behaviours they perceive as being challenging and why. The main focus of the question was to investigate from teachers perspective what behaviours were challenging from their perspective and what the issues were that affect student behaviour at school and issues facing teachers of students presenting challenging

behaviours. Findings are presented below showing issues that were common to the teachers interviewed.

Teachers perceptions of challenging behaviours

1. Disruption to lessons

The teachers I interviewed overwhelmingly perceived challenging behaviour in terms of disruption to their lessons. What emerged from the interview findings was that disruption to the learning process was what the teachers found most challenging because it diverted the teachers from being able to carry out their role. Quite simply their perception was that they were sometimes prevented from doing their job. This disruption was created in a variety of ways, but the four most common were firstly, attention seeking (mentioned by 5 teacher participants), secondly defiant behaviour (mentioned by 5 teacher participants), thirdly restlessness and refusal to work (mentioned by 4 teacher participants) and fourthly physical aggression (mentioned by 3 teacher participants). The least challenging behaviours as perceived by the teachers interviewed were – immature behaviour ("crying over every little thing and complaining about one another to the teacher" mentioned by 4 teacher participants) and separation anxiety ("throwing a tantrum in the morning while saying goodbye to mum or dad" mentioned by 3 teacher participants).

One teacher expressed how she was challenged by behaviour that was disruptive by saying:

> *There is a group of about 7 kids in my class at present that are very very disruptive in the class. They all especially 3 of them constantly chat during learning time or when the class is doing independent work on their desks. I find it so stressful to constantly remind them of the rules and routines of the*

class. The interesting or rather irritating part is that when I ask them to do the right thing they would nod along and still carry on chatting with each other or throwing colour pencils at each other. (T8).

2. Attention seeking-

Attention seeking behaviour was seen as the most challenging as five teachers out of the eight interviewed shared their views on attention seeking behaviour.

Four teachers spoke about attention seeking as being a very challenging behaviour to manage in the classroom on daily basis. As one teacher said:

This child constantly does things to get your attention and it can become quite annoying. They will blurt out and tell you what they did or that they've finished their work or that somebody is copying their work etc. Their desire for attention is almost insatiable. Much of what they do is done to get attention. It doesn't seem to matter that you provide lots of attention as they continually seek more.(T4)

Another teacher expressed it this way:

The challenge is the constant need for attention, drawing attention to one specific place and there are a lot of students in the class that do draw attention but it's the repeated focussing of attention on that one student that draws away from being able to address the whole class or address their issues that may be going on in the class and I find most draining is the constant defiance- some students you can catch them doing something wrong and they will agree and say yes I did it but some kids just not agree with you and instead back chat about it. (T1)

3. *Defiant behaviour*

The third common challenging behaviour as perceived by the group of eight teachers' I interviewed was- 'defiance'. According to American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry (2011) a child with ODD (oppositional defiant disorder) can be

very difficult for their parents and teachers. These parents and teachers need support in managing this difficult behaviour seen in some children. Five out of the eight teachers experienced this challenging behaviour in their class and spoke about how they need extra support to manage this type of behaviour as it can be very time consuming and stressful. The five teachers said they all have support (teacher aide) in their class but for very little time like two hours in total and the rest of the time the teachers talked about how difficult it was to manage this behaviour. This is what some teachers expressed.

Teacher 3-

Although this child who has ODD (oppositional defiant disorder) in my class has a teacher aide working with him during reading and writing sessions which spans for about 2 hours. The rest of the time is spent in managing his constant defiance by a lot of positive guidance and praise. I have formed a good relationship with him over the year and it is becoming more manageable to deal with him as a result of this working relationship formed with him and his parents. T3

Teacher 1-

And they need time, and they need emotional investment and only then you can manage the defiant behaviour successfully. T1

Teacher 4-

It is the constant questioning and the constant talking to other kids   that I find so irritating at time and on top of that her constant defiance is just icing on the cake. This girl is new in my class so I am working on building a rapport with her so I can understand her and manage this behaviour of hers using strategies that work with her. T4

A paradox emerged at this point in terms of how teachers perceived the students and their behaviours. Firstly, the teachers appeared, at times, to be very frustrated

about the situations which the disruptive behaviour created for them in the class. However, at the same time they also appeared very positive at managing these behaviours as they all believed that by forming a 'good relationship' with the students presenting challenging behaviours makes it easier to manage the difficult behaviour.

4. Restlessness and refusal to work

The fourth most common challenging behaviour teacher participants spoke about was restlessness and refusal to work.

The teachers described situations where sometimes for a number of reasons (mainly being lack of motivation or lateness to school and constant absenteeism) a student would just refuse to complete a task (not write even one sentence in their writing book or just sit with their reading or maths work sheet on the table and not write even one word), as in the situation that Teacher 7 describes below,

> "*Arrives late to school with no reason whatsoever, has no stationery (no books). Parents cannot be contacted because of some serious family problems (parents are separated) the father is not available and mum's cell phone is always off. Only a few times I have been able to speak to her and she seems to be supportive of me in helping her child to manage her difficult behaviour but nothing concrete can be done as there is no follow up. I do as much as I can in the class. She just refuses (the child) to write or even read books I give her to read. Sometimes it has taken me an hour just to get her to write two sentences in her writing book. The thing is I do not give up and I keep on encouraging her and she has found this out about me. I am managing to manage her constant refusal to finish her work by trying to build this relationship with her where she feels I am not someone who will hurt her in anyway (physically or emotional) and that is the reason why she is beginning to write few lines but takes ages". It is such a task I tell you! T7*

5. Refusal to take responsibility

One thing that was a common concern for teachers not so much challenging behaviour but just a concern was with the students refusal to take responsibility for their behaviour. Attention seeking came along with very strong defiant behaviour. However, all the eight teachers firmly believed that by forming a 'good relationship' with the students presenting challenging behaviours good behaviour can be expected and seen in these students'. For example Teacher 5, said that she knew all the children in her class so well and had such a good relationship with them that she was able to manage challenging behaviours like attention seeking and defiance with ease. She further explained that the occurrence of such types of behaviour was minimal in her class at present.

6. Physical Aggression

The sixth most common behaviour perceived to be challenging by teacher participants interviewed is physical aggression. Although only 3 teachers mentioned that physical aggression was occurring as a challenging behaviour in their classroom but all the eight teacher participants had experienced managing physical aggression at some point in their teaching career. In fact, two teacher participants said that they had to leave their job and get another after some time off as they found the physical aggression to be very challenging to manage and also they had no or poor support from the school management. This was their previous experience.

Issues that affect student behaviour at school

All the eight teacher participants maintain that the home environment has a major impact on the behaviour of students at school.

Teacher 1 pointed out that if child has experienced an unsettling incident at home, and before coming to school on a particular day this will affect their behaviour during that day.

> *I'd say home issues, do affect a child and I think that if the child comes to school and there's been a bust up and the cops have come or whatever, that child's still going to come to school feeling insecure and troubled and not really interested in reading, writing or any kind of activity in the class, its not high on their list of priorities and are likely to portray challenging behaviours like being defiant, aggressive and non-attentive in the class.*

However this teacher also added that"…it's not an excuse for us teachers, I think we need to get past that".

Furthermore, one teacher did make reference to remaining positive in spite of the effect that an unsettled home life might have when she suggested that,

> *Regardless of these outside influences, while the children are at school, we have to , to a point forget about what we can't change and identify what behaviour is not acceptable being presented by a particular child and manage it and teach them in a way that engages them in learning and keeps their challenging behaviour under control. (T3)*

T4 referred to the students' emotional well-being as one of the issues affecting student behaviour, indicating that,

> *Just the self- esteem thing, one of the things that I've just noticed is kids don't like to be singled out and they can be, oh if I'm going on a negative tangent like if I'm giving them a growling and they are getting singled out you know they just become withdrawn and then indulge in misbehaviour like calling out, defiance, refusal to work so on and so forth. I also think it depends on who the kids are of course as some kids who are more on to it type of kids will take everything on board and then they'll make the change.*

Only one teacher out of the eight mentioned that there was an issue with students who do not seek positive relationships with the teacher despite the teacher's efforts to encourage this. These students are usually loners but they can be the students with the most challenging of behaviours.

Issues facing teachers of students with challenging behaviours

Six out of the eight teacher participants spoke about how behaviourally challenged students placed considerable stress on their own well-being.

Teacher 1 claimed that,-

"I think it's far more stressful, I mean I'm thinking back to other classes that I've had that are similar as well, you know a pretty stressful time, but I don't think it's fair on the other kids".

All the six teachers firmly believed that such students wasted the teachers and other students' valuable teaching and learning time adding to the stress of the teacher who, while being well organised and well planned can have the whole day "ruined" by a student who decides to engage in undesirable or non-compliant behaviour. On the contrary two teachers of the eight teacher participants were not affected by students presenting challenging behaviours as Teacher 7 stated that,

I have come to believe that it's not me who the student is showing his or her anger or negative behaviour and I do not let it bother me after school finishes. I just deal with the challenging behaviour and do not think about it on the next day as I think every day is a new day.

However, T3 described how he was constantly frustrated at the time it takes to deal with a student who frequently refuses to comply.

I think the main issue for me is the time it takes to deal with problems and the interruptions, sometimes it's really hard when you've got children chipping in all the time, and I guess that's the hardest thing when you are trying to teach something, in the instruction group you might be, and that child is constantly na, na, na don't want to do that, na, na,na and you're getting this constantly, and you can see the frustration on the other children's faces.

Another teacher spoke about the frustrations regarding the time outside of school hours thinking about discussing with other teachers, the disruptive behaviours of only a few.

You spend more time thinking about them. You spend more time in meetings talking about them, you spend more time in preparation for them, and there is way more money spent on them, and I sometimes go away and think, you want those kids contained so others can get on with their work, and it's getting that equal balance, and sometimes you know that you haven't got the equal balance (T1).

T4 spoke of the frustration of not getting the time to work with all students because of the disruptiveness of some students.

My time could be spent elsewhere, with the kids that do want to learn, so I'm having to pull these guys up when I could be doing other stuff that's you know someone else misses out when I have to deal with that.

While six out of eight teacher participants emphasised their frustration, two teachers offered suggestions as to how students with challenging behaviours could be better catered for or managed within the classroom. The first of these included, (in particular reference to boys) that they engage in construction type activities for certain periods of the day.

She argued that,

> *"If they are engaged in their learning they won't have time to misbehave (T1). I would like to see a behaviour class set up, and those kids, take them out of those classrooms you know have 19 kids in a class one teacher, you would need a teacher in there who has empathy for those type of children, and have had some sort of training, you know you see it working in other areas".*

The equity issues involved in undertaking a proposal to set up a separate class such as this and the question of needing a teacher who has empathy for these types of students could create an issue in itself by other teachers. Also what I believe is that this looks a bit like, "exclusion" of a student with challenging behaviour from their classroom. They would certainly contend that all teachers should have empathy for all students regardless of their behaviours.

The findings regarding teachers' perceptions as to the effect that students with challenging behaviours have on them as teachers and fellow students suggested that all six teachers of the eight interviewed are aware of the possible effects that students with challenging behaviours can have on the remainder of the class. These include, constant interruption, missing out on quality time with the teacher, fellow students becoming resilient to the incidents and getting on with their work regardless of the disruptiveness. All of these place an unfair emphasis on the rights of all students to work in an academically and emotionally safe environment.

They waste the other children's learning time (T1).

> *They get quite frustrated and you can see it in their expression that they are quite frustrated that, that person is stopping them from doing what we going to do. And you know you're always giving your attention to that child, that's hard. (T3)*

Teacher 4 when asked about how do the other children react towards these students presenting challenging behaviours? The teacher responded by saying

The good kids know you're spending more time again, just for those other kids. There's probably three or four that will say "oh why do you have to do that", whereas the others will say "those kids they always do that".

All teacher participants were aware that they needed to be proactive in encouraging the students who were affected by the misbehaviours of others, to not become complacent with these behaviours and not make excuses for their peers. Students should instead continue to model appropriate positive behaviour in the hope that their peers will change their own behaviours and present acceptable behaviours consistently.

Strategies for managing challenging behaviours

One of the strategies that all the eight teachers used in their classrooms to manage challenging behaviours is engaging and motivating students in learning by building a personal relationship with the students who present challenging behaviours. This was perceived as necessary and most important for many reasons. All the eight teachers believe that if students are engaged and motivated towards learning then incidences of inappropriate behaviour minimises and all the eight teachers expressed that this can be achieved mostly by building a strong positive relationship with the students and that this was a constructive way of approaching the problem of challenging behaviours. Four teachers out of the eight interviewed completely condemned the idea of exclusion from the class (sending the child to the office to the principal or someone in the school management) as they were of the opinion that

there are students who present challenging behaviours regularly or very often and one cannot afford to send the child to the office over and over again as the child then starts to get comfortable to this kind of consequence and it no longer has any positive effect on the child. In such situations what works most is the relationship that is between the teacher and the student and also the family of the student. One of the teachers explained,

" I mean it's all very well saying if you push the boundaries I'll send you to the office to Mrs so and so or Mr so and so but the boundaries aren't being set at home so they're used to it". These children also get used to being sent to the office. In dealing with such students or situations I think we as teachers need to develop a strong and a good positive relationship with that student so he or she conforms to the class expectations and school rules and complies with you". (T1)

The teacher participants also saw building good relationships with the parents of the students who present challenging behaviours as a very important strategy in managing challenging behaviours. The teachers all spoke of their efforts to involve the parents of the students who present challenging behaviours in the hope that this would enable them to educate and support their children more successfully. This is what these two teachers had to say:

"It is so important to build a strong working relationship with the parents and I see a lot of benefits in this. I keep an open channel of communication with the parents whose children have portrayed or portray on-going challenging behaviours. I always email them and let them know what happened at school with their child and how the situation was sorted. This way parents talk to their children and they know what is happening during the school day. In fact I have seen children become a bit cautious as they know that their teacher and parents communicate". T3

Another very useful strategy that six out of the eight teachers spoke about was token economy system.

Token economies are programs in which students (entire classrooms or individuals) earn points or tokens for appropriate behaviour and, at a later time, trade them for preferred activities, objects, or privileges. One of the most positive aspects of token economies is that they are set up to reinforce appropriate behaviour and prevent inappropriate behaviour, thereby minimizing the need to use reactive strategies in dealing with inappropriate behaviour (Boisjoli & Matson, 2009).

Teachers gave examples of how they set this tool up. For example, Teacher 1 said:

> *Set goals for your token economy. A token economy is a tool which strives to modify inappropriate behaviour and achieve specific goals. These goals can be behavioural (i.e.,, staying in seat during class time, raising hand and waiting to be called on before speaking, being on time for class) as well as academic (i.e., finishing at least 80% of homework, handing in work when it is completed, mastering 30 new vocabulary words). Take time to include the student(s) in setting and defining goals. Begin by targeting only one to three goals so that the student is not overwhelmed.T1*

And Teacher 7 described it this way:

> *The value is in rewarding progress, avoiding student frustration, and keeping full attainment as the ultimate goal. Determine time intervals for assessment. Intervals at which goal attainment will be judged and points will be awarded need to be determined before initiating the token economy. For some students, evaluation may take place every half hour and, for others, after the morning and afternoon. A good rule of thumb is, at the onset of the token economy, the interval should be half as long as the student is able to go without displaying the inappropriate behaviour. For example, if the student can go for a half hour without leaving his or her seat, the initial time interval should be 15 minutes. Gradually, time intervals should be increased.T7*

School support for managing challenging behaviour

All the eight teacher participants described management of challenging behaviours as an on-going concern in their classrooms and throughout the school. They all recognised that the support from the management team in the school and from other teachers in the school was of great importance in the process of behaviour management of challenging behaviours. Both the participating schools have a behaviour management plan that reflects the need to treat each incident separately and to allow for the diversity and cultural values of the students. This does not mean however that the consequences are inequitable. Both the schools have a senior management leader who is responsible for the pastoral care of the students and is the person who ensures that equitable procedures are followed for all interventions regarding misbehaviour. Both the schools that I carried out the interviews in have a lot of commonalities in the execution and implementation of their behaviour management plan. For example in both the schools- they resort (the school) to "stand down" procedures which are at the discretion of the principal when all other means are exhausted. Stand downs are usually applied only in cases of extreme behaviours such as intentionally hurting other students, swearing at adults and continual non-compliance of reasonable expectations. Stand downs are issued as a reminder to the offending student, their parents and other students and teachers that these behaviours are unacceptable and if such behaviours are allowed to continue they will affect the physical and emotional safety of every person within the school.

The teacher participant responses to managing behaviour have raised two distinct concerns. The participants spoke of *consequences* for the behaviour and also of the need to ensure that positive relationships are kept at the fore front of all interventions.

Consequences

All teachers spoke at length about the need for unequivocal consequences and what these were when responding to students who display undesirable behaviours, both in the classroom and in the playground, and against other persons or property.

T1 spoke of deciding whether the incident could be dealt with immediately, if time allowed, or as soon as possible allowing time to reflect on the situation ensuring that equitable justice can be seen to be done.

> *There's got to be consequences there's got to be follow up on whether or not I follow it up that second or I follow it up the next day and sometimes I'll get so busy that you know, if the behaviour hasn't gone right if something has happened and their behaviours not right at morning tea or whatever and it's been brought to my attention and I have to deal with it, then perhaps I don't get that opportunity within that next hour or even that day but the next day I have to be seen to follow it up because they always need to know(children) that there is a consequence, there is something going to happen.*

Five out of eight teachers described how they used "removal from the classroom" as a consequence for misbehaviour and this usually involved the senior management leader with responsibility for pastoral care of these students. Out of the remaining 3, one teacher completely opposed the idea of "removal" as she maintained that removing a child form the class on daily basis was detrimental to their learning and also for some children going to the office or some other classroom was fun.

Teacher participants indicated that home influences and the effects of lack of sleep and social and emotional well- being all impacted on student behaviour at school. In fact two teachers out of the eight firmly believed that this was the only cause of challenging behaviours presented by students. However, the school policy on

behaviour at both the schools used to carry out this research clearly mention it in their policy that it is the teachers' responsibility to create a positive and successful learning environment for all students despite these influences.

All the eight teacher participants agree that it is the teachers' responsibility to make sure challenging behaviours are managed as well as they can be by creating an environment in the class where children feel safe and a sense of belonging is there. However, one teacher out of the eight had no idea that there was a behaviour management policy at the school as she was a new staff member and had not yet been introduced to the policy on behaviour management but she said that her team leader did go through how they manage behaviour in their team.

Summary of key findings

In summary, the data indicates that teachers deal with challenging behaviours on a daily basis. The intensity of the behaviour and the forms of behaviours vary but findings also indicate that teachers find it stressful to deal with challenging behaviours. A proportion of teachers (seven out of eight) reported feeling frustrated, exhausted, upset, helpless and sometime angry while dealing with challenging behaviours. Nevertheless, they considered themselves to be effective in dealing with it. The type of behaviours most frequently cited as challenging by all the eight teachers interviewed was disruption to lessons and attention seeking, although physical aggression (self-injury or deliberate act of hurting others) was found to be the most challenging. Another key finding that emerged from interviewing teachers was that engaging students and motivating them in learning was seen as a preventive strategy as four teachers expressed that if the students will be engaged then there are less chances of them involving themselves in challenging behaviours.

Another aspect that was highlighted and came to the forefront in all the interviews was the importance of a good relationship between teachers and students and their families. All the teachers mentioned that in their experience they have seen that building positive relationships with students and their families helps in diffusing it quickly or with ease if not depleting the challenging behaviour completely. These relationships were seen as the key to making the students who presented challenging behaviour conform and behave in a way that was less disruptive and more conducive to learning.

Another key finding is that for this group of teachers, challenging behaviour had a meaning in the context of the classroom, which was disruption to the learning process and in turn, that disruption resulted in a struggle with the students in order to get them to conform to classroom expectations and appropriate behaviour. This is not to say that violent or aggressive behaviour was not a problem for these teachers.

To sum up, the findings clearly show that teachers stressed the importance of building what they regarded as 'good' relationships with the students and their families and that their practice or strategies that they employ in managing challenging behaviours in the classroom would frequently rest on the quality of these relationships.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION of the FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the significant findings that emerged from the data gathered and analysed during this research. The chapter begins with a review of the research process and participants. By identifying issues and discussing these with reference to the themes identified in the literature, it is hoped that the knowledge gained will contribute to the body of knowledge currently available on teacher perceptions and management of student challenging behaviours in primary schools.

Review

Eight participants, all primary school teachers with eight years or more years of teaching experience were interviewed. Semi structured interviews were carried out in two different schools in Auckland and there were four teacher participants from each school.

The data gathered sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What behaviours do teachers perceive to be challenging and why?

2. What strategies do the teachers employ to manage challenging behaviours?

3. What support is available for teachers to manage challenging behaviours?

This research study aimed to examine teacher perceptions towards challenging behaviours and their management of challenging student behaviours and to explore the support that is available to teachers for managing student challenging behaviours. The data indicates that teachers of students presenting challenging behaviours are concerned about the prevalence of such behaviours and find it stressful to manage such behaviours. However, there are a lot of factors that are regarded as being the possible causes of such behaviours and teacher participants share their views on how they manage such behaviours, what they feel or think is a strategy that is successful in managing such behaviours and what support they have in dealing with such behaviours at their school.

This chapter is organised in three main sections-(1) Teacher perceptions and issues related to challenging behaviours, (2) strategies, and (3) school.

Teacher perceptions and issues related to challenging behaviours

Teacher perceptions of challenging behaviours

Findings in chapter four have indicated that for all the eight teacher participants the term 'challenging behaviour' has become synonymous with the students who disrupt lessons and make it difficult for them to teach. In the interview stage of the research, teacher participants were asked to describe what behaviours they perceive as being challenging and why. What the teacher participants predominantly described as challenging behaviour was 'disruption' in lessons, things like talking at learning time, being off task and not complying at all to classroom rules and routines.

According to Moffet (2000) these behaviours in themselves, if taken individually, do not sound particularly challenging if compared to, for example, violent or aggressive behaviour. However, the consequences of this behaviour for the teachers were constant disruption to their teaching time. A key finding from the interviews was that all the eight teacher participants were highly driven professionally and did not perceive challenging behaviour to be child's fault or the home influences but all the teachers believed in being resilient and making a positive difference in student's lives who present challenging behaviours by understanding these students and catering to these students in a way that it nurtures their potential and are not failures when they grow up (Prashing, 2000).

The interviews revealed that this group of eight teachers perceived challenging behaviours as something that they had to deal with on daily basis and that they really need to be persistent and resilient in managing it. Edwards (2000) is of the similar opinion that teachers need to learn to be persistent and resilient in dealing with difficult behaviours. Three teachers said that it's not all about managing the behaviour but it's also about knowing your own limits (teacher's weaknesses and strengths) – they talked about the 'when to let go' as they mentioned that sometimes nothing works with a particular child in a particular situation so that's when a teacher needs to make a call and seek the assistance or support of the school management. All the eight teacher participants were of the opinion that challenging behaviour whether small or big is not the concern for them but its frequency is their biggest concern. This aligns with Weinstein (2002) view on management of behaviours that are difficult. His research shows that teachers get more stressed by the number of times an unacceptable behaviours occurs.

In summary, the findings indicate that teachers perceive challenging behaviours as stressful and are also concerned about it. A large proportion of teachers (six out of eight) feel frustrated, exhausted, angry or upset and sometimes totally helpless. However, interestingly none of the eight teacher participant considered themselves as ineffective and they firmly believed that by building a good relationship with children who present challenging behaviours assists significantly in dealing with it or managing it. The types of behaviour most frequently cited as challenging was disruption to lessons in forms of attention seeking, defiant behaviour and refusal to take responsibility. In the other lot of behaviours perceived as challenging by these teacher participants were- physical aggression and tantrums. Another highlight was that none of the eight teacher participants mentioned a year or a time that they did not have to deal with mild to severe challenging behaviours.

Issues facing teachers of students with challenging behaviours

Issues that teacher participants spoke about were stress, amount of time they spend on dealing with challenging behaviours, frustration in other students due to students who presented challenging behaviours, issue of equity (being fair) and students low self-esteem are believed to be the major issues that teacher participants experience in their teaching practice. All the eight teacher participants indicated that they endured a lot of stress from students with challenging behaviours. Teachers talked about the time and energy that these students take up. They believed that this is not fair to them or to other students in the classroom. As four teachers mentioned that other students notice really quickly the children that are exhibiting challenging behaviours. One teacher shared her experience by saying that there are few children

in my class who present challenging behaviours and the other students of mine say why we have to give up on our learning time because of him or her.

Literature implies that how teachers perceive the behaviour they see as worrying and disturbing, bears a strong relationship to their own emotional and cognitive response to that behaviour (Greer, 2000; Prashing, 2001a; Russek, 2004; Wearmouth et al., 2005). When teachers perceive that they are placed under stress by student behaviour, they begin to engage in deficit thinking (Watkins & Wagner, 2000) blaming the behaviour entirely on the student and their home life for the behaviour with comments such as, "they are always like that". This has a disempowering effect on both, the student, other students and other teachers (Balson, 1992; Kauffman et al., 2002; Rogers, 1994).

All the eight teacher participants indicated the importance of their own perceptions regarding behaviour. Literature suggests that understanding "why" the behaviour is present in the first place is as equally important as to dealing with the behaviour (Walker et al., 2004). The teacher participants who were interviewed chose a student whose behaviour they found challenging and then they described that behaviour. What the teachers predominantly described would, in educational terminology, generally be categorised as 'low level disruption', things like talking at learning time, being off task and answering back. The interesting part is that all the teachers spoke about one thing and that was – it doesn't matter what the behaviour is but what matters is how that teacher perceives it and the perceptions can depend on many factors like teacher work load, frequency of that particular behaviour and then that behaviour reaches the point of being challenging in nature.

The findings regarding teachers perceptions as to the effect that students with challenging behaviours have on fellow students suggested that all teachers are aware of the possible effects that students with challenging behaviours can have on the remainder of the class. These include constant interruption, missing out on quality time with the teacher, students becoming resilient to the incidents and getting on with their work regardless of the disruptiveness. However, all the teacher participants mentioned that it's not really fair on other children.

In summarising this section teacher participants were asked to firstly talk about their perceptions of challenging behaviours and secondly talk about how the challenging behaviour of some students affects them as a teacher and the environment (other students in the class).

The teacher participants revealed that students with challenging behaviours place a huge stress on themselves because of the time and energy needed to continually deal with disruption and all agreed that was not fair on the other students within the classroom. They also indicated that constant disruption within the class by a student or few students makes it hard for other students to concentrate and sometimes can stop them from learning. So therefore, the effects of challenging behaviours are huge in a classroom.

Strategies

Strategies for managing challenging behaviours

The eight teachers interviewed identified these two core aspects of teaching practice as very effective strategies to use to manage challenging behaviours-

- Motivation of students

- Relationship between students and teachers

Motivation of students

Teachers spoke of being organised in classroom setting, planning and having the right equipment. According to Arthur et al., 2003 being organised creates a framework for "classroom ecology" and suggests that physical settings and appropriate activities in a well organised classroom will enhance student motivation (Glynn, 2005). Ericksen (1978) suggests that most students respond positively to a well- organised classroom led by an enthusiastic teacher who shows consistency in his or her dealings with students. This was highlighted by teacher participants as well in this research that keeping the students in their class engaged and motivated was the key to minimising the chances of challenging behaviour from occurring. The teacher participants use this as a preventive strategy rather than a strategy to be used after the behaviour has taken place. Most of the teacher participants expressed that if students were engaged and motivated then they will not indulge in inappropriate behaviour.

Participant teachers interviewed, indicated that classroom environment has a lot to offer in terms of managing challenging behaviours. This view of teacher participants is in line with the research by Edwards (2000), Mc Naughton (2002), Prashing (2000b) as according to them effective teachers create environments which enable all students the access to their preferred ways of learning at all times and where teachers work hard towards catering for all their student's needs or preferred ways of learning. Encouraging students to learn by making them feel good about their learning is a source of motivation that the teacher participants have also spoken about. All participating teachers could remember an influential teacher in their past

who was encouraging and motivated them to learn and this also played a part in them forming their perceptions of challenging behaviours and dealing with it. Finally, teacher participants believe that by working within "boundaries" a student would be motivated to learn and would conform to classroom rules and expectations. Two of the teachers expressed their views around this by saying that having no rules or routines in a class for the children to follow will just end up in a disaster as the children will have no idea about what to do and how to behave if there are no boundaries set out for them. Kroeger & Bauer (2004) suggest that behaviour is governed by rules and expectations and that by not working within these boundaries of teachers expectations, students will not "fit in". This could also result in students being denied the "presence of access to learning" (Emerson, 2001, p.18). When setting boundaries for students presenting challenging behaviours, teachers also spoke of being firm but fair, they stressed on knowing about the home background of a student.

Consistent with the literature presented in chapter 2 (Balson, 1992; Kauffman et al., 2002; Rogers, 1998; Watkins & Wagner, 2000) these results show that when setting boundaries for students, teachers need to be clear about their own understandings of acceptable behaviours, in different contexts, and what they will tolerate around pushing the boundaries. Again stress is on teacher perceptions of what constitutes challenging behaviour and how they manage it. Next strategy considered significant by all participating teachers was building good relationships with the students and the families.

Relationship between teachers and students

A good relationship as one that is supportive and positive in nature is seen by almost all except one teacher participant to be of the utmost importance in ensuring that effective learning occurs and helps in managing challenging behaviours successfully. Only one teacher participant out of the eight teachers interviewed was of the opinion that with some children building good relationships with them and their family does not make much difference or any difference.

Teacher participants spoke of the need to have knowledge of the family that the student comes from in order to build strong relationships. One teacher claimed that positive collaborative family relationships between home and school made them feel safe and secure. This claim is well supported in literature regarding preferred Maori teaching practices (Bishop & Berryman, 2006). This claim is also supported in contemporary classroom teaching in bilingual classroom situations (MacFarlane, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2007). If a teacher has experienced family events that are the same or similar to those of their students, sharing these experiences will greatly assist in establishing effective relationships (Gill, 2006).

Four teacher participants assert that a teacher needs to genuinely appreciate the importance that families place on students well being. However this is not to suggest that teachers visit the families and homes of every student in their class to gather information but what the teacher participants expressed was that teachers need to ensure they build and maintain a positive open channel of communication with the students families. Involve the family members in their child's school life. Let them know if they had a good day or a bad day. According to MacFarlane (2004) and Russek (2004) teachers who care about students will find that their students care

about them in turn, and will generally show enthusiasm in class towards learning and are less likely to not conform to classroom expectations. Hence, teachers will find it easy to manage challenging behaviours as they would have built this relationship of mutual respect with their students.

The issue of respect between teachers and students was mentioned by all teacher participants. All the teacher participants indicated that they gain respect by being kind, firm and fair and creating a safe environment with boundaries.

Three teacher participants were of the opinion that respect needs to be initiated and experienced by both teachers and students. Literature indicates that students and teachers will develop effective relationships when the respect is mutual (Alton-Lee, 2003 & Hawk et al., 2002) and that the behaviour of the students is more positively influenced by whether they liked and respected the teacher rather than by the effect of consequences forced upon them if they stepped over the boundaries (Robertson, 1996).

In conclusion, findings indicate that positive relationships are crucial to both teacher and student working in the classroom, and are governed by the mutual respect that the two parties have for each other. Teachers reported that consistency in managing challenging behaviours and in setting boundaries, along with reward and praise are important factors in successful management of challenging behaviours.

Praise and reward (Token economies)

Teacher participants talked about the role of praise and rewarding students in order to manage challenging behaviours and also minimising the chances of challenging behaviours from occurring. Six out of eight teacher participants spoke about

rewarding through either praise or stickers and group awards. Five teacher participants out of the eight mentioned that from their experience they felt and have seen that students felt that they would rather receive rewards for good efforts than face consequences or be punished for poor effort. These comments relate to literature which suggests that students respond more favourably to praise rather than punishment (Doidge, 2005; Kohn, 1993; Robertson, 1996) and by achieving such rewards assists in maintaining a student- teacher relationship (Arthur et al., 2003). Russek, (2004) suggests using praise helps build self-worth in students and it is important that they "receive messages that they are loved, valued, and unique and fundamentally okay" (p. 18). It also helps in minimising the incidences of challenging behaviours from occurring.

Token economy reward system is seen as a great strategy to manage challenging behaviours by six teacher participants as four of them spoke about its value. One teacher indicated that having this praise and reward system running in the classrooms does help a lot in decreasing student frustration and manage challenging behaviours as it is based on goal setting – teacher participants who employed this strategy said that this strategy keeps both teacher and student motivated as the student wants to work towards their goal which could be anything from staying on their seat for 10 minutes without moving to another place in the classroom or not talking to their friends during completing a task. The students want to be able to achieve their goal as they want to be rewarded by extra time on the computer or extra time on the activity table. Token economy is also considered of great value by Boisjoli & Matson (2009) as they are of the opinion that one of the most positive aspects of token economies is that they are set up to reinforce appropriate behaviour

and prevent inappropriate behaviour, thereby minimising the need to use reactive strategies in dealing with inappropriate behaviour.

In conclusion, teacher participants spoke of motivation and relationships between themselves and students as being essential ingredients for successful management of challenging behaviours. Respect for the students and their home (family) backgrounds are regarded as important for developing and maintain good relationships. Hemara (2000) suggests that students respond positively and better to teachers who are connected with them through the use of effective communication and caring for them.

School

Issues that affect student behaviours at school

Literature suggests that for many years, people's perceptions of the influences of home life have been understood as the major influencing factor for student performance at school. The Coleman report (1996) concluded that differences in student achievement were mostly due to difference in the backgrounds of students, particularly in parental income and educational achievement.

Teacher participants in this study identified influences from the home environment as a major factor affecting student behaviour at school. They also stated that home influences, including unsettling incidents such as physical abuse, lack of sleep, no breakfast often lead students to come to school upset, angry and unable to communicate in appropriate ways with their teachers and peers. Walker et al. (2004) suggest that often these students on these occasions do not have the mechanisms

to cope with everyday reasonable demands of a classroom, resort to either aggression, defiance and off task behaviour or sometimes refusal to work. Thus paving way for challenging behaviours to occur in the classroom. These students will often exhibit behaviours in order to test the tolerance of the teacher (Watkins & Wagner, 2000) as to how far they can push the boundaries in place for acceptable behaviours. Borman & Gamoran's (2006) review of the Coleman report concluded that even though family influences pay a part in student performance and behaviour at school, nevertheless the school has the major part to play in developing achievement of students. However, it is worth noting that while schools can directly assist, support and influence the behaviours of students, they may have limited success in modifying the home environment (Rogers, 1994).

Writers including Borman and Gamoran, (2006) and MacFarlane (2004), indicate that even though home life in general does pay a major role in how the students learns and behaves, it is possible that, with knowledge and through close association with the family, teachers can gain an understanding of why the student may behave in the way that they do so be in a better position to help the student improve that behaviour.

In conclusion, the teacher participants expressed that they believe that home life has a huge influence on the students learning and behaviour. They cited unstable home environments, lack of sleep and sometimes food (no breakfast) as the main reasons for classroom misdemeanours. Interestingly most of the teachers indicated that they accept the responsibility for ensuring that learning takes place in the classroom regardless of home influences.

School support for managing challenging behaviour

All the eight teacher participants described management of challenging behaviours as an on-going concern in their classrooms and throughout the school. They all recognised that the support from the management team in the school and from other teachers in the school was of great importance in the process of behaviour management of challenging behaviours. Both the participating schools have a behaviour management plan that reflects the need to treat each incident separately and to allow for the diversity and cultural values of the students. This does not mean however that the consequences are inequitable. Both the schools have a senior management leader who is responsible for the pastoral care of the students and is the person who ensures that equitable procedures are followed for all interventions regarding misbehaviour. Both the schools that I carried out the interviews in have a lot of commonalities in the execution and implementation of their behaviour management plan. For example in both the schools- they resort (the school) to "stand down" procedures which are at the discretion of the principal when all other means are exhausted. Stand downs are usually applied only in cases of extreme behaviours such as intentionally hurting other students, swearing at adults and continual non-compliance of reasonable expectations. Stand downs are issued as a reminder to the offending student, their parents and other students and teachers that these behaviours are unacceptable and if such behaviours are allowed to continue they will affect the physical and emotional safety of every person within the school.

The teacher participant responses to managing behaviour have raised two distinct concerns. The participants spoke of *consequences* for the behaviour and also of the need to ensure that positive relationships are kept at the forefront of all interventions.

Consequences

All teachers spoke at length about the need for unequivocal consequences and what these were when responding to students who display undesirable behaviours, both in the classroom and in the playground, and against other persons or property.

Summary

In summary, all the eight teacher participants spoke really highly of the school management. However two teachers mentioned how lonely and stressed they got in one of their jobs a long time back. They were expected to manage these challenging behaviours on their own and that was difficult for them without relying for help from the school management. Therefore, what affected the ability of the teachers to manage challenging behaviour appeared to depend upon school management and the teacher themselves.

The next chapter is the concluding chapter of this thesis that presents the conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for future research and lastly discusses the implications for schools.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The research set out to gather information from eight primary school teachers through semi structured interviews their perceptions regarding student challenging behaviours and what strategies they use to manage these behaviours and what support is available to them.

The outcomes of this study confirm findings in the literature that student challenging behaviour is a problem faced by many teachers. The participant teachers believe that by identifying challenging behaviours and managing them by using the appropriate approach and support from school management challenging behaviours can be dealt with without major issues. However, there are some issues associated with challenging behaviour such as, teacher stress, home influences and teacher support.

All the eight teacher participants were of the opinion that managing challenging behaviour is not an easy thing to do but if a teacher is well supported by the school management and is able to build and maintain a positive relationship with students presenting challenging behaviours and their family then the expected outcomes can be achieved or the challenging behaviours can be better managed. Two teacher participants mentioned their negative experience regarding lack of support from school management in managing challenging behaviour. Both the teachers went

through similar experiences where they felt so unsupported and disconnected that they had to resign from their jobs to keep good health as their health was being affected due to stress caused by the challenging behaviours prevalent in their classroom and the lack of support from the school management. Therefore, it is evident that support from school management is vital to teachers in managing challenging behaviours.

Another important finding of this research is that the majority of (seven out of eight) the teacher participants believe that it is important for teachers to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses and be able to understand why challenging behaviours are occurring. Teachers need to be aware of the wider picture or know the reasons as it assists in managing challenging behaviours and causes minimal stress.

The literature review (chapter two) indicated that how teachers perceive challenging behaviours and understand these behaviours impacts greatly on the way these behaviours are managed. Chapter two also indicated the importance of appreciating that teachers define challenging behaviours in terms of their own personal beliefs as this assists in building a strong relationship with students and their families. If teachers understand the challenging behaviours well, they are likely to understand their students who present challenging behaviours well (Hill and Hawk, 2000).

Recommendations for further research

The research highlighted a number of issues in need of further investigation.

1. Research could further investigate the "quality of the relationship" between student and teacher. Findings show that positive relationships between teacher and student are fundamental for managing student challenging behaviour. What are the "indicators" for quality relationships and how does a teacher attempt to ensure that all teachers will believe in building positive relationships?

2. It is important to research the links between home and school especially in regards to cultural values and beliefs relating to defining challenging behaviours and the consequences for misbehaviour in the beginning years of a students schooling. Teacher participants indicated in this research that the students who occasionally come to school emotionally unable to cope with being in a classroom for the day present challenging behaviours that impact negatively on the learning of everybody. Better links between home and school, might enable teachers to anticipate emerging problem behaviour and plan to minimise impact on other students.

3. Research could further investigate how and to what degree the learning of the other students is affected by a student who presents challenging behaviours. All teacher participants in this research have said that challenging behaviour interrupts learning.

Implications for schools

Even though this qualitative research has been small –scale and findings understood within the confines of two schools, nevertheless this research study can offer a few suggestions that other schools may wish to consider to better manage and understand student challenging behaviour.

School management needs to be supportive of the teacher dealing with challenging behaviour as each and every participant interviewed in this research has mentioned and appreciated the significance and importance of school support in assisting the teachers in managing challenging student behaviours. Trust the teacher and provide them with professional development courses that enable the teachers to learn strategies in order to manage student challenging behaviours. This involves developing a collaborative school approach to managing the behaviour of all students.

Schools would benefit from adopting a collegial approach to promote a positive and safe environment for all students including those who present challenging behaviours. It is important that teachers understand student challenging behaviours and not label the students but enable the students to manage themselves in challenging situations.

Teachers need to reflect continually on their own perspectives regarding challenging behaviours so that they are not influenced by others opinions regarding challenging behaviours. Teachers need to discuss with their

colleagues and school management their current attitudes and beliefs towards working with those students who present challenging behaviour and investigate ways of working positively with these students.

Teachers need to recognise that building and maintaining good positive relationships with students and their families has a great deal to contribute to our understanding of challenging behaviour at school and to finding ways of minimising the occurrence of and the impact of these behaviours.

Concluding comments

This research study presents and discusses the findings of a small-scale study which aimed to elicit teachers' perceptions of students' challenging behaviour. Participants were asked to indicate what behaviours they perceived to be challenging and: which aspects of challenging behaviour concerned them; their responses to it; which strategies they found effective; what they believed to be the causes of it; how stressed they felt; and how effective they felt when dealing with it. They were also asked to identify sources of information, advice and help and to rate different types of challenging behaviour in terms of severity of challenge.

Results indicate that teachers are concerned about challenging behaviour and find it stressful. Whilst considering themselves to be effective in dealing with it, a proportion reported feeling frustrated by it, angry, upset and/or at a loss not at the student or students presenting these behaviours but for the student on the whole. The most frequently cited challenging behaviour by the eight participants was attention seeking followed by defiant behaviour and off task behaviour or refusal to work, although self-injury (physical aggression) was found to be the most challenging. Whilst recognising

the communicative basis of many forms of challenging behaviour teachers nevertheless tended to select strategies which were concerned with diffusion rather than prevention and all of the eight participants stressed on the importance of building good positive relationships with their students to manage challenging behaviours successfully. The most likely source of information, advice and help was other teachers (colleagues) and school management. Some differences in responses were noted according to experience and whether or not additional qualifications were held.

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Sources used

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- Electronic articles

Google scholar

- Used google scholar to read online articles on the research topic

Appendices

Unitec
Institute of Technology
TE WHARE WĀNANGA O WAIRAKA

INFORMATION SHEET

Title of Thesis: Challenging behaviours of primary school students:
Teacher perceptions and management

My name is Manpreet Dhaliwal and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Education degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to examine teacher perceptions towards challenging behaviours and their management of challenging student behaviours and to investigate the support that is available to teacher for managing students that present challenging behaviours.

Research Questions-
1. What behaviours do teachers perceive to be challenging and why?
2. What strategies do the teachers employ to manage challenging behaviours?
3. What support is available for teachers to manage challenging behaviours?

I will be very grateful to you if you agree to participate. I request your participation in the following way.

I will be collecting data using an interview schedule and would appreciate being able to interview you at a time that is mutually suitable. The interview will be conducted at your work place for no more than 45 minutes. I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event. Neither you nor your school will be identified in the Thesis. I will be recording your contribution at the time of the interview electronically and will provide a transcript (or summary of findings if appropriate) for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisors are Professor Carol Cardno and Angel Chan and may be contacted by phone.
Phone: (09) 815 4321

Yours sincerely
Manpreet Dhaliwal

38 Greenhill Crescent, Pakuranga, Auckland, 2010
Phone- Home- 09- 5763993 or Mobile- 021 1194722

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2012- 1036)
This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from (date) to (date). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

CONSENT FORM –

Research event: Individual interview

Researcher: Manpreet Dhaliwal

Programme: Master of Education

THESIS TITLE: Challenging behaviours of primary school students:
Teacher perceptions and management

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my school will be used in any public reports.

I also understand that I will be provided with a transcript and summary of findings for checking before data analysis is started.

I am aware that I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project up to the stage when analysis of data has been completed.

I agree to take part in this project.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (insert number here)
This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from (date) to (date). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Interview Schedule for Teacher participants

Background information questions

    a) How long have you been teaching for?
    b) What age groups have you taught in the past and what age group are you working with currently?
    c) How many students are in your class? Do you think this impacts on children's behaviours and the strategies you use to manage these behaviours?

       1) What behaviours do you perceive as being challenging and why?

       2) What strategies do you think are effective in managing these behaviours and why?

       3) Is there a school policy on behaviour management? If yes, what does it entail?

       4) What systems or professional development does the school have for you in order to support you manage the challenging behaviours?

       5) How well supported do you feel by these school systems in place?

       6) Who do you think is responsible in making decisions regarding specific children in your classroom presenting challenging behaviours, you or the school management?

       7) What support (other than) what the school currently supplies would you like?

       8) What do you think is your role as a teacher in managing student behaviours and do you think there are other factors involved in managing challenging behaviours like role of the school, home influences? What issues do you face in managing these behaviours?

       9) According to you what is the importance of relationships (relationship between the teacher and the students) and diverse learning styles?

Appendix 4

Table of findings

Table 4.1 below shows what behaviours are perceived by the eight teachers to be challenging and the reason for the kind of behaviour being presented by a student:

Teacher	Behaviour/s perceived as challenging	Reasons for occurrence of such type of challenging behaviour
Teacher 1	- Non-Compliance (continuous talking during teaching time) - Attention seeking	According to **T1** <u>non-compliance</u> was common with students who came unhappy to school from home and indulged in misbehaviour. <u>Attention seeking</u> according to this teacher was common with students with ADHD syndrome(attention deficit hyper disorder)
Teacher 2	- Tantrums - Refusal to work or finish tasks	**T2** said that according to her <u>tantrums</u> was seen in children who did not have any boundaries at home and the parents gave in to every demand of theirs. <u>Refusal to work</u> was seen in children who found the work to be difficult. Or were upset on the day due to situation at home.
Teacher 3	- Separation anxiety - Physical aggression	According to T3 <u>separation anxiety</u> was common in children who had least pre-school experience and had not been away from mother a lot. These children take a long time in adjusting to school life in the primary years of schooling(years 1 to 6) Separation anxiety was most common in junior school(years 1 to 3) <u>physical aggression</u>

		was seen in children who came from abusive home back grounds or upset families. (mother and father separated and custodial issues were prevalent)
Teacher 4	• Task avoidance • Defiant behaviour • Attention seeking	T4- he believed that task avoidance was seen in children who found the task difficult or boring. Either too hard or too easy both can result in task avoidance. Defiant behaviour was a
Teacher 5	• Defiance • Tantrums • Attention seeking • Restlessness	T5- She perceived these behaviours to be very challenging and the reasons she mentioned were ADHD syndrome, home influences and influence of the company the child was in- his or her friends influence. (Peer influence).
Teacher 6	• Mild deafness(special needs child) • Restlessness • Attention seeking	T6- perceives deafness to be very challenging. The reason for the deafness in child was due to severe grommets. (Illness of the ear). Restlessness and attention seeking were seen as common challenging behaviours by this teacher and the reasons she said were ADHD syndrome and home influences were at the top.
Teacher 7	• Task avoidance • Refusal to finish tasks • Defiance • Physical aggression	T7- Off task behaviour was seen because of work avoidance, defiance and upset home background. Physical aggression was common in this teachers' classroom in two kids as he said they were struggling at home with relations (step dad,

		mum's boyfriend and vice versa). As a result attention seeking and restlessness were very common challenging behaviours the teacher had to deal with and perceived as being challenging.
Teacher 8	• Off task behaviour • Immature behaviour • Defiance • Physical aggression • Restlessness • Attention seeking	T8-Off task behaviour was seen because of work avoidance, defiance and upset home background. Physical aggression was common in this teachers' classroom in two kids as he said they were struggling at home with relations (step dad, mum's boyfriend and vice versa). As a result attention seeking and restlessness were very common challenging behaviours the teacher had to deal with and perceived as being challenging.