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ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTRE SERVICE CLIMATE AND CLIENT SATISFACTION
An Investigation of New Zealand English Language Centres Offering TESOL Courses

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management at Massey University, Palmerston North and Wellington, New Zealand

John Walker
2003
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to state that the research carried out for my Doctoral thesis entitled “English Language Centre Service Climate and Client Satisfaction” in the Department of Management & Enterprise Development, Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand is all my own work.

This is also to certify that the thesis material has not been used for any other degree.

Candidate  

John Walker

Date  

15 December, 2003

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa  

Inception to Infinity: Massey University’s commitment to learning as a life-long journey
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

(a) This is to certify that the research carried out in the Doctoral Thesis entitled “English Language Centre Service Climate and Client Satisfaction” in the Department of Management & Enterprise Development at Massey University, New Zealand is the original work of the candidate, except as indicated by appropriate attribution in the text and/or in the acknowledgements. The text excluding appendices/annexures does not exceed 100,000 words.

(b) We also confirm that all the ethical requirements applicable to this study have been complied with as required by Massey University, other organisations or legislation___________________________, which had a specific interest in this study.

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Candidates Name: John Walker
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Date: 15 December 2003

Supervisors Name: A/Prof Andrea McIlroy
Signature: ____________________________
Date: 8 December 2003
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

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Supervisor

Date 8 December 2003
ABSTRACT

The teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) conducted in English language centres (ELCs) is a major service industry in New Zealand, earning several hundred million dollars annually. Despite its increasing importance to the New Zealand economy, however, little is known about management aspects of TESOL programmes in ELCs, and particularly the nature of TESOL as a service. The research described here addressed these issues by exploring links between the service climate of ELCs in New Zealand and levels of client satisfaction with ELC service.

Focus groups of ELC staff and clients were set up to provide insights into staff perceptions of service climate and client perceptions of service provision. The data obtained was content-analysed and the findings used to construct two survey instruments. A service climate questionnaire was used to survey staff in 30 New Zealand ELCs on their perceptions of the service climate in their institutions. A satisfaction survey was used to survey clients in the same 30 ELCs on their satisfaction levels with the service provided. The surveys returned 275 usable staff responses and 1684 usable client responses. The survey data was subjected to statistical analysis.

The general conclusions of the study are that ELC staff perceive a positive service climate in New Zealand ELCs; that ELC clients are, overall, satisfied but not delighted with the service they receive; and that the more positive ELC staff perceive the service climate to be, the greater the levels of client satisfaction with ELC service.

A number of implications for management theory, for policy and for practice are stated. These include implications in the following areas: research practices and techniques used to investigate climate and client satisfaction; research into the management of TESOL in ELCs; policy on mandatory national qualifications for New Zealand ESOL teachers in ELCs; levels of ELC manager performance in traditional functional areas such as strategy, organisation and quality control; desirable staff professional and technical skills for the creation of client satisfaction; standards of teacher resources, facilities and equipment in ELCs; and the effectiveness of ELC-client communication.
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