

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

The Philosophy for Children School
and the
Inequalities in New Zealand's School Achievement

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

At Massey University, Manawatū,
New Zealand.

Bridget Anne Comer

2015

ABSTRACT

The New Zealand educational system has faced major reformation in the last 20 years resulting in an inequality of achievement, also known as the long tail of underachievement. New Zealand's results in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) has steadily declined since the assessments beginning; which is similar to other countries who have initiated high stakes, standardised based testing policies. If New Zealand is to address the declining results and attempt to alleviate the gap between its highest and lowest achievers, and address educational inequalities, then alternative approaches must be considered.

This thesis outlines the Philosophy for Children (P4C) School as a viable within-school approach to addressing educational inequalities through the implementation of the principles underlying the Community of Inquiry (COI), the Philosophy for Children Programme and democratic education as a whole school approach.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge, with deep gratitude, the support and guidance of my primary supervisor, Professor John Clark and my second supervisor, Senior Lecturer Tony Carusi. The multiple conversations and dialogue has contributed to my understanding and thus the shape of my thesis. Your overview of the forest and potential terrain was invaluable, when at times all I could see were trees and an empty map.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family, especially Will, Caitlin and Isabella, who have allowed me the time and space to write, to think and to ponder!

CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Contents	iv
List of Tables and Figures	v
Introduction	vi
Chapter One: Inequality of School Achievement in New Zealand	1
Chapter Two: Philosophy for Children (P4C) Programme and The Community of Inquiry (COI)	25
Chapter Three: Democracy and Democratic Education	42
Chapter Four: The Philosophy for Children School, Generation Three (P4C Gen3) – Pedagogical Level	67
Chapter Five: The Philosophy for Children School, Generation Three (P4C Gen 3) - Leadership, Governance and Partnership Level	95
Chapter Six: Implications for Education and Addressing Inequality in Achievement.....	108
References	116
Appendices	137

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.	2000 -2012 New Zealand PISA Rankings	2
Table 2.	Comparison of OECD Average Results and New Zealand Results (2000 – 2012)	3
Table 3.	Percentage of Students at various proficiency levels on the PISA 2012 Mathematics Subscale Formulating	5
Table 4	Percentage of Students achieving at or above the National Standard by year level	8
Table 5.	Percentage of NCEA Candidates in Years 11 – 13 attaining certificate by ethnicity from 2009 – 2013	9
Table 6.	Schools which have joined in the IES Cluster of Schools.....	17
Table 7.	Ethical Frameworks for Educational Policy	63

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.	New Zealand Trends in Mathematical Proficiency Levels 2003 – 2012	7
Figure 2.	Variation in Financial Literacy Performance within Countries and Economies	11
Figure 3.	Perry’s Conceptual Model for Analysing Education Policy in Democratic Societies	57
Figure 4.	The Elements of the Pedagogical Core	69
Figure 5.	Traditional One Way Dialogue & Community of Inquiry Dialogue	73
Figure 6.	The P4C School: Conceptual Floor Plan	85
Figure 7.	The P4C School Inquiry Model	88
Figure 8.	P4C School Connections.....	99
Figure 9.	Inventory Case Study - Australian Science and Mathematics School (ASMS): Distributive Leadership Model	100
Figure 10.	P4C School Structure	102
Figure 11.	P4C Schools Network	107