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How do New Zealand Teachers like to be supported by Psychologists?

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A Thesis

Presented to the Institute of Education at

Massey University, Albany, New Zealand

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of Master in Educational Psychology.

November 2017

Abstract

Educational psychology as a profession has undergone many changes over the past few years, warranting an exploration of the current understandings of key stakeholders' perceptions and requirements of the profession. While there have been numerous studies investigating the perceptions of teachers who are one of the main stakeholders, regarding the roles of educational psychologists, there are no empirical studies internationally, as well as locally, that have investigated how teachers want to be supported by psychologists who work in schools. This study explored how teachers in New Zealand would like to be supported by psychologists working in their schools, which can include educational, developmental and clinical psychologists, as well as their perceptions of the roles of educational psychologists in particular. The study used a mixed method qualitative research design, combining surveys with an instrumental case study approach. The first phase of the study, involved 50 teachers completing a web-based survey, while the second phase consisted of semi-structured interviews with three teachers. Key findings indicate that teachers had limited knowledge surrounding services that psychologists provided in schools. Overall they believed that psychologists working in schools took an ecological approach to their work, but their role had very rarely been explained to them. Some teachers sought the support of psychologists because they did not feel their training had sufficiently prepared them to meet the extent of needs in their classrooms. The support they wanted from psychologists was professional conversations on a range of issues concerning students, as well as professional development. Even though they identified an increased need for psychological assistance, they were not consistent in seeking this support. The findings have some key implications for the future practice of psychologists in New Zealand Schools. Among others, it highlighted the importance of increasing teachers understanding of the role of psychologists in their school, in particular, educational psychologists. The small sample size and other limitations of the study warrant that further research across primary, intermediate and secondary schools to better understand the nature of support that teachers actually want from psychologists, and if there are differences between the three sectors in the nature of support required. Findings from the study can be useful to inform and tailor the services offered by psychologists, in particular educational psychologists, to the needs of teachers.

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Acknowledgements

Ehara taku toa, he takitahi, he toa takitini-

*My success should not be bestowed onto me alone, as it was not individual success
but success of a collective*

Firstly, thank you to my supervisors, Dr. Vijaya Dharan and Mr. Terence Edwards for sharing your academic knowledge with me and for guiding me through this process. Your commitment to this research project and the profession has been a constant source of inspiration and motivation for me. Thank you for setting high expectations for me throughout this project and for supporting me to continuously reflect and improve my work.

Thank you to the principals of the schools who participated in granting me access into your schools, even when there were already so many other things going on in your schools.

Thank you to the teachers who participated in either one or both phases of this research project. I appreciate how valuable your time is, so I thank you for making time to participate in this study, your dedication to your students and passion for equipping them for success was so evident to me.

Lastly, thank you to my family and friends for coming on this rollercoaster with me, for celebrating the highs with me and helping me through the lows. Your unwavering support and encouragement have meant the world to me.