

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.

Teachers' Perceptions of Psychological Services in Educational Settings in

Aotearoa New Zealand

Olivia J. Williams

13226741

Massey University

A Thesis

Presented to the Institute of Education at

Massey University, Manawatū, New Zealand

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of Masters in Educational Psychology.

November 2016

### **Abstract**

Despite an increasing international knowledge base, there is a lack of New Zealand based research regarding teacher and school perceptions of educational psychology. This study discusses the findings of a survey of teachers' perceptions of educational psychology services in New Zealand. A total of 164 teachers completed the survey that yielded both quantitative and qualitative data. Findings indicate that there is considerable alignment between educational psychologists and teachers in New Zealand regarding the role of educational psychology. Teachers from this survey reported little contact with educational psychologists, and rated educational psychology services as at least 'slightly helpful'. Consultation and collaboration with both school staff and parents was recognised as the most important service educational psychologists in New Zealand should provide. The greatest barriers to educational psychology services were identified as insufficient funds, a personal lack of knowledge regarding services and referral processes, and a shortage of educational psychologists. Teachers reported feeling overwhelmed, unsupported and underequipped to properly support the wide ranging and seemingly ever increasing needs of our learners. Overall, the teachers surveyed expressed that too many students are missing out on desperately needed support. These findings suggest important implications for the future of educational psychology services in New Zealand. An increased promotion of psychological, social, and emotional health in schools is proposed as one potential area in which the role of educational psychologists in New Zealand could be further advanced.

**Table of Contents**

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>List of Illustrations</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>List of Appendix Tables</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Development of the Role and Function of Educational Psychology</i>	9
<i>Educational Psychology in the New Zealand Context</i>	16
<i>Perceptions of Psychology Services in Educational Settings</i>	29
<i>Purpose of the current study</i>	38
<i>Research Questions</i>	40
<i>Educational Significance</i>	40
<b>Method</b>	<b>41</b>
<i>Research Design</i>	41
<i>Participants</i>	42
<i>Ethical Considerations</i>	43
<i>Documents</i>	44
<i>Data Cleaning</i>	45
<i>Data Analysis</i>	46
<b>Results</b>	<b>48</b>
<i>Demographics</i>	48
<i>Research Questions</i>	54
<i>Further Comments</i>	71
<i>Deleted Responses</i>	75
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>76</b>
<i>Limitations</i>	89
<i>Implications for Practice and Future Directions</i>	91
<i>Conclusion</i>	97
<b>References</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>114</b>

**List of Tables**

Table	Page
1. Participant gender, ethnicity, role, and years employed in an education setting	49
2. Summary of the demographic profile of schools as represented in the current study	51
3. Self-rated knowledge of educational psychology by years of teaching experience	56
4. Participants' ranked ratings of services provided by educational psychologists in New Zealand	58
5. Participant ratings of the general helpfulness of psychological service providers	60
6. Participant ratings of barriers to educational psychology services in New Zealand	61
7. Participants' top three ranked barriers to educational psychology services	63
8. Top three ranked problems seen in the student's in participants' care	65
9. Time spent discussing the unmet educational needs of students in school staffrooms or with other members of staff	67
10. Number of referrals within the sampled population that did not result in service support since the beginning of 2015 until July 2016	70
11. Number of children not referred to psychological services despite a perceived likelihood that they would benefit from such services	71

**List of Illustrations**

Figure	Page
1. Survey participants' demographics compared to the wider New Zealand teaching population demographics	53

**List of Appendix Tables**

Table	Page
C1. One-way between groups ANOVA comparing group membership (age, gender, ethnicity, school location, and school decile rating) with perceived knowledge of educational psychology in New Zealand	118
D1. Participant response rate for awareness of provision of services provided by educational psychologists in New Zealand	119
E1. Participant ratings of the general helpfulness of psychological service providers by number and percentage of response (N/A removed)	121
F1. Participant ratings of barriers to educational psychology services in New Zealand by number and percentage	123
G1. One-way between groups ANOVA comparing group membership (age, gender, ethnicity, experience) and cultural relevance of educational psychology services in New Zealand	125
H1. One-way between groups ANOVA comparing group membership (age, gender, ethnicity, experience) and cultural responsiveness of educational psychology services in New Zealand	126
I1. Hocberg's post hoc comparisons of age and rating of cultural relevance of educational psychology services in New Zealand (using an $\alpha$ of .05)	127

### **Acknowledgements**

Great appreciation and gratitude are extended to the following people for their contributions in making this study possible:

Dr Judith Ansell and Terence Edwards – not only for your supervision and guidance, but also for your unwavering enthusiasm throughout this research project.

All the teachers who took the time to complete the survey – your responses alongside the affect you displayed throughout the survey provides important commentary to the discourse of educational psychology in New Zealand.

My friends and family – for loving me, supporting me, and putting up with me.