WE ARE HERE TO HELP:

Listening to the voices of the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service Education Advisers

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of

Master of Education

at Massey University

Palmerston North

New Zealand

Murray Smales

2002

ABSTRACT

Truancy and school alienation have been problematic for education since the establishment of schools and even before schooling became compulsory in 1877. With the advent of "Tomorrow's Schools" in 1989 pressure was applied to school Boards of Trustees to deal with truancy (Education Act, 1989, Part 111, Section 31.3). School boards of trustees expressed concern as to the legitimacy of this role and further expressed their anxiety about the lack of resources schools had to call upon to deal with truancy problems. In 1996 the Ministry of Education established the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS) to work in the field, returning non-enrolled truants to education.

The New Zealand House of Representatives "Inquiry into Children in Education At Risk Through Truancy and Behavioural Problems" (1995) conceded that truancy in New Zealand was wide spread throughout the country. Truancy tends to have the greatest affect upon students and families who are confronted with difficult economic, social, cultural and family challenges. Therefore truancy is not just about education but is embedded in the social and economic fabric of society.

This study aimed to examine the work, explore the beliefs and investigate the issues raised by Education Advisers whose task it was to return non-enrolled students to education. To enable this to be achieved a multi-case, multi-site case study approach was used incorporating the use of a national questionnaire and in-depth interviews with Education Advisers.

The findings of the study revealed there was confusion about the role Education Advisers were expected to fulfil. Education Advisers who had previous experience in the education sector appeared to have advantages over their colleagues who had previously been in the non-education sector. The study highlighted the variety of strategies used by Education Advisers in their attempts to return students to education. However, Education Advisers reported there were barriers that impinged upon their work as they attempted to return students to education. These included school personnel, curriculum, students and their families, government agencies and bureaucracy. Education Advisers identified training and professional development as requiring consideration by NETS management, while the concept of supervision appeared problematic.

Ultimately this study shows that truancy is not just an educational issue. Truancy is about social issues, socio-economics, culture and the educational environment. While the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service is successful in their endeavours to return non-enrolled students to education, to successfully retain non-enrolled students in education requires a well resourced collaborative, multi-agency approach to address the issues that contribute to truancy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Appendices

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Truancy in New Zealand is a growing phenomena which incurs considerable cost to New Zealand's society. The consequences of student alienation from compulsory education are far reaching. Alienated students, those who have become truants or who drop out of school, encounter social dislocation and limited opportunities of employment. Schools encounter disruption to their planning and programmes. Families are embroiled in emotional upheaval as tense relationships develop in the home, between the home and school, the home and educational authorities, and the communities in which they live. Society is confronted with the need to grapple with the social, health and financial costs incurred when students truant or drop out of state education.

In New Zealand truancy and non-enrolment are currently addressed using four distinct strategies. The strategies employed are initially at the school level. The next level involves District Truancy Services working with the school and the community to reduce day to day truancy. Within the last three years consortia of local secondary schools had been established to provide alternative education programmes for students alienated from school. At the national level there is the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS) who endeavour to return non-enrolled students to education.

The Non-Enrolment Truancy Service is a national organisation established to return non-enrolled students to education. The organisation employs Education Advisers throughout New Zealand who locate non-enrolled students. Once these students are located the Education Adviser works with the them, their families, schools, education providers, employers and government and community agencies seeking an educational outcome for these students.

The current research explores the work of the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service's Education Advisers and identifies how this work can be enhanced to more effectively address the problem of student alienation and non-enrolment.

1.2 Background

The passing of the Education Act 1877, rendered education in New Zealand free and compulsory. With the advent of compulsory education arose the concept of truancy. Over one hundred years later New Zealand struggles to provide a meaningful education system that caters for a diverse range of students, some of whom appear unmotivated, not suited to, excluded from, or for reasons often difficult to ascertain do not attend school.

In the early years of compulsory education the concept of truancy was tolerated by society. Children were often required to remain at home to assist with child care or seasonal chores associated with the development of farms and businesses. In today's society the implications for truancy have become more serious, affecting not only the prospects of the student but of society itself. No longer can the student truant or drop out of school without the student, the student's family and society being effected. Today we live in a "knowledge society" in which educational qualifications and skills are the basis of employment. Early drop out or persistent truancy from school is likely to affect the student for the rest of his/her life. Rumberger (1987, 1990) states that these students who truant or drop out of school will have their employment opportunities and earning capacity limited through having completing a minimum of education and leaving school with few if any qualifications. These students are more likely to have a tendency toward an involvement in criminal activity (Fergusson, Lynsky & Horward, 1996) as well as a predisposition towards health problems (Lichter, Rapien, Seibert & Sklanksy, 1962).

"Tomorrow's Schools" was ushered in to New Zealand with the passing of the Education Act 1989. This Act passed the responsibility for school attendance away from the now dissolved Education Boards and also the visiting teachers of the Specialist Education Services to Boards of Trustees. Donn, Bennie and Kerslake

(1993) reported Boards of Trustees considered they were too busy attending to priorities that would benefit maximum number of students to be greatly concerned about attendance and truancy. The Education and Science Select Committee Inquiry (1995) examined children at-risk through truancy and behavioural problems and recognised truancy as being widespread throughout the country. Government concerns about truancy lead to the establishment of the Truancy Project Unit within the Ministry of Education. From 1996 The Truancy Project Unit introduced a number of attendance and truancy initiatives. As a result, truancy and attendance is currently being monitored on four levels. The four levels are:

- School funded programmes that monitor attendance and follow up absences;

- The District Truancy Service that supports schools and assists enrolled students to attend school;

- Alternative Education in which consortia of secondary schools are funded to employ providers to provide a suitable educational and vocational programme for students alienated from school; and

- The Non-Enrolment Truancy Service that seeks to combat persistent truancy and return non-enrolled students to education.

For the purposes of this study it is the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS), and in particular the Education Advisers working for NETS, who are the subject of investigation. In 1995 and 1996 the Ministry of Education ran two regional trials to find and return non-enrolled students to education. In May 1996, still on a trial basis, the Ministry of Education contracted the work to two NETS agencies in Wanganui and Hamilton estimating that NETS would need to work with approximately 2000 students in any given year. NETS was deliberately operated on a low key basis to enable the service to build up experience and develop systems both in management and in the operations of Education Advisers in the field. The Ministry of Education released a circular to schools (1995/35, 2 December 1996)

outlining the NETS initiative with instruction for schools to refer students to NETS where there was a concern. Schools were informed that when a student was absent for twenty days, and where no advice had been received indicating that the student had transferred to another school, the student was to be removed from the roll and NETS informed.

On 1 June 1996 NETS came under the umbrella of a single agency. Education Services Central Limited, Wanganui was provided with a contract for the provision of the service. Since that time, and now known as, Education Services Limited has retained the contract for the NETS service. The current contract was signed in 2001 for a period of three years.

The Guidance Manual for Education Advisers (1997) suggested that the role of the Education Adviser was diverse, unique and flexible. The job description was open and did not elaborate on how the Education Adviser was to go about the task of returning students to education. Education Advisers worked independently and therefore developed their own methods, techniques and strategies for attending to each referral. Supervision was minimal and contact with the NETS manager was on an as needed basis. The present study set out to explore the perceptions of NETS Education Advisers regarding their role and their work. Through listening to the voices of Education Advisers insight can be gained into the complexity of truancy and in the complex task of returning non-enrolled students to education. Education Advisers reported in the course of the study that they have between them an abundance of knowledge and experience that should be harnessed to unlock any barriers faced in returning students to education.

1.3 Organisation of the thesis

Chapter two considers relevant and recent research literature related to truancy and school drop out. It includes material defining truancy, provides a rationale for truancy, as well as considering causes and consequences of truancy and drop out. This chapter also considers initiatives taken to lessen truancy and briefly examines the New Zealand truancy scene. The aims and objectives of the study together with an explanation of the methodology and processes used for the gathering and

analysis of data are contained in chapter three. Chapters four and five present the research findings form the questionnaire and indepth interviews. A discussion of the results is contained in chapter six. In this chapter the interacting themes of: role; employment issues; strategies; barriers; training, professional development and supervision, are discussed. Chapter seven concludes the study with a summary of the main findings and considers the implications of the research for schools, the Ministry of Education, Education Advisers, NETS, society and the return of students to education. Included in this chapter are several recommendations which may improve the delivery of the NETS service to non-enrolled students, remove barriers that hinder the work of, and improve the effectiveness of the Education Adviser.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

Truancy exists as a challenge in many countries especially in those where schooling is compulsory. Over succeeding generations truancy has had folk law status as depicted in Twain's 'Huckleberry Finn', Tom in 'Tom Sawyer' or Robin Toodle in Dicken's 'Dombey and Son'. Truanting was seen as a legitimate activity for adventurous boys and an alternative to schools that were harsh and brutal (Carlen, Gleeson, & Wardhaugh, 1992). Reid (1985) refers to popular English literature in which "Truancy is sometimes seen as a natural, impish act of escapism, which is likely to take place at some stage during the normal development of certain children"(p.3). He states that by the start of the twentieth century investigations were already taking place into the causes of truancy. Reid (1985) suggests there could be evidence that students at the commencement of the twentieth century truanted as a protest against the "narrow and artificial methods of the classroom, against suppressed activity and a denial of free outdoor life" (p.12).

Education in New Zealand became free and compulsory following the passing of the Education Act 1877 although over a hundred years later children were not always attending school (McAlpine, Bourke, Walker, & McIlroy, 1998). Education during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was not seen as a priority by many families and attendance at school was not perceived to be necessary when employment opportunities were so readily available. Children were often needed in the establishment of the family farm and compulsory schooling was not taken seriously in New Zealand until the passing of the School Attendance Act of 1901. McAlpine, Bourke, Walker and McIlroy state that it was at the time of the passing of the School Attendance Act 1901 "that the notion of truancy was legally acknowledged" (p.11).

Kerslake, Lange and Bennie, (1997) note that in recent years there has been increasing community, political, and education sector concern over truancy. The

6

1995 Education and Science Select Committee inquiry into children at risk through truancy and behavioural problems recognised that truancy was widespread throughout the entire country (Kerslake, Lange & Bennie, 1997). The committee concluded that the issue of children at risk through truancy and behavioural problems is both complex and multi-causal and interventions need to be, "Coordinated, controlled, relevant to the situation, fast, effective and efficient if they are to succeed" (New Zealand House of Representatives, 1995).

The problem of truancy is not unique to New Zealand and is of international concern to educators and politicians (Kerslake, Lange, & Bennie, 1997). Truancy has emerged internationally as well as in New Zealand to what they refer to as a central 'at-risk' issue (Jacka, Sutherland, Peters, & Smith 1997). According to Jacka et al. the notion of 'at-risk' underpins the truancy crisis, stating the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) recognises 'at-risk' as a key policy issue stemming from the need to develop a high level of skill so that employment is maintained alongside productivity levels and economic prosperity.

In reviewing current literature several themes emerged. These themes are:
- A definition of truancy;
- A rationale for truanting and dropout;
- Socio-economics, the home student and family;
- Schools and truancy;
- The school curriculum;
- Effects of truancy upon student achievement, self image and employment;
- Truancy initiatives; and
- The New Zealand scene.

2.2 The definition of truancy

Reid (1985) suggests that people instinctively think that they know what truancy means but in reality it is quite difficult to define. Absenteeism is not just about non-attending students but is related to the home, the school, and the community in which the home and school are situated and indeed in society as well (Carroll, 1977a, cited in Reid, 1985, p.6). Le Riche (1995) identifies the complexities involved in defining truancy. She suggests truancy is an umbrella term often used for absenteeism, school disaffection, school refusal, or wagging. Kerslake and Lange (1998) report truancy and absenteeism have been given varying definitions. This variation in definitions causes major difficulties when comparing studies (Jacka, Sutherland, Peters, & Smith, 1997). Absenteeism is often stated as justified or unjustified (Kerslake & Lange 1998) where as truancy is the deliberate act of staying out of school and is multi-causal in nature (Reid, 1985).

O'Keeffe (1993) considers truancy to be a complex phenomenon without a single agreed upon definition. He states that to even subdivide truancy into two main forms 'Blanket Truancy' and 'Post Registration Truancy', terminology favoured by Le Riche (1995), went only a small way toward doing any form of justice to the complexities and variety of truancy. O'Keeffe defines 'Blanket Truancy' as unjustified absence from school by pupils who have not registered in school and 'Post Registration Truancy' as the absence from lessons by pupils who have registered in school. Tyerman (1968, cited in O'Keeffe, 1993, p.13) defines truants as students who are absent from school on their own initiative. This definition however does not take into account those who are absent because their parents condone absenteeism, those who self inflict medical conditions, deliberately miss school transport, are too ill to attend or who arrive at school or class late due to circumstances beyond the student's control. Nor is there any consideration given to the student who attended classes but does not participate in any learning.

The definition of truancy provided by Goldberg (1999) is similar to the Blanket Truancy and Post Registration Truancy definition of O'Keeffe (1993) and Le Riche (1995). Goldberg (1999) defines truancy as occurring when students stay out of school without obtaining permission or going to school then leaving before the

8

school day is over. Goldberg refers to the term 'Dropout', defining a 'Dropout' as a student who after reaching the age of sixteen withdraws from school before graduating. She compares this situation to the youth under sixteen years of age who is not permitted by law to withdraw from school and if does, is considered to be truant.

The choice of a term depends upon many factors but that term often determines the type of intervention that would follow. Labelling may make the diagnosis confused and remedial action may not be effective or successful (Cooper & Mellors, 1990). They differentiate between school refusers and truants. School refusers are defined by Cooper and Mellors to be more emotionally disturbed, showing more signs of depression and stubbornness, and displaying higher levels of anxiety than truants. The way a student is labelled as either a school refuser or truant depends upon the way the problem is initially perceived. They consider there are problems with labelling students as either a school refuser or truant. Cooper and Mellors argue that once a student is labelled it is very difficult for the student to lose or change the label.

Clark, Smith, and Pomare (1996) maintain that truancy includes those students who are non-enrolled at any school. They consider the removal of school zoning, removed the enrolment safeguard of schools who previously knew which students were progressing on to them from within the zoned catchment. It appears there is sufficient anecdotal evidence to suggest there are numbers of students who do not enrol at any school upon leaving the full primary or intermediate school system.

Non-enrolled students (i.e., truants) are a small but increasing proportion of the total school population. Budgell (1983) believes the vast majority of students between the age of 6 and 16 years attend school on a regular basis. Budgell apportions truants into two categories, the school refuser who does not attend and whose parents were unaware of the non-attendance, and those whose parents condone absence or are powerless to enforce their child to attend. Carlen, Gleeson and Wardhaugh (1992) and Galloway (1985) suggest that students who can't, rather than won't, go to school suffer from school phobia. Budgell (1983) believes

that these students wish to go to school but are unable to do so because of anxiety. This anxiety is caused by leaving home, induced by the school or the journey to school, thus causing an aversion to attending. Galloway (1985) claims that there is disagreement over the existence of a discrete diagnostic category or if there are merely opposite poles of the same continuum. This suggests that there are degrees of truancy rather than differences. However Dwyer (1996) argues there is no such person as a typical non-attender.

The variety of definitions given for truancy has a blurring effect upon what counts and what does not count as truancy (Jacka, Sutherland, Peters, & Smith, 1997). Le Riche (1995) points out that schools themselves are inconsistent in their interpretation of unauthorised truancy. This inconsistency often results in student absences which are officially illicit being unofficially condoned. Inconsistency of interpretation of truancy by schools makes it difficult to determine rates of truancy and impacts upon the manner in which truanting students are processed through the school system (Jacka et al., 1997).

Schools should define truancy for the benefits of parents and consistency. Milbank (1999) asserts that truancy is any unjustified absence from school and schools should have a policy of attendance, setting out school truancy procedures and information for parents. He considers that any school policy should define what is meant by "justified absence" and provide examples of unjustified absences. This however leaves schools the task of defining truancy, stating what is justified and what is not and may lead to inconsistency between individual schools and confusion between parents and communities.

Reaching a definition of truancy is complex and problematic (Jacka, Sutherland, Peters, & Smith, 1997; Kerslake & Lange, 1998; Le Riche, 1995; O'Keeffe, 1993). Jacka et al.(1997) suggest, although producing exact definitions may make a researcher's task easier, endless searches for a "correct" or precise definition tend to relate truancy to the type or kind of person who truants rather than concentrating upon what truancy is, its legitimacy, and how truancy is responded to. To

concentrate upon the truant rather than the problem and the issues involved may result in little headway being made to lessen the rate of occurrence.

2.3 A rationale for truanting

Identifying a primary cause for dropping out of school is elusive (Kortering, 1999). Kortering (1999) believes that the decision by a student to drop out of school involves a whole host of factors thus reinforcing the notion that truancy is both complex and problematic. Reid (1985) asserts most truants don't attend school for a combination of social, psychological and educational reasons. However Goldberg (1999) points out some factors may play a more prominent role than others in causing truancy and dropout, suggesting school factors may be the most important factors that lead to truancy and dropout. It is clear that the process to dropping out of school is complex and happens over a considerable length of time (Wells,1990). For example Wells considers the failure of schools, society, families and students themselves all contribute to problems that eventually lead to a student dropping out of school.

A Californian High School report (Rumberger, Ghatak, Poulos, Ritter, & Dornbusch, 1990) suggested that families use a number of mechanisms influencing a student's decision to drop out of school. These drop outs are more likely to live in families in which parents are less involved in their children's education. Fitzpatrick and Yoels (1992) suggest that families headed by a single female increased drop out rates as these families often faced a multiple of financial, social and psychological problems.

It has been argues that the reasons for truanting could lie within the child (Le Riche, 1995). Le Riche theorises that some young people are more predisposed to truancy than others. These she suggests, are students who may feel that they cannot identify with the standards and values of school and therefore see themselves as failures, non-performers and non-achievers. School becomes a demoralising experience for these students and they react by displaying anti-social behaviour and have difficulty in forming relationships with others. Oliver (1999) suggests that students who truant do so because they are unhappy and failing in class. As a

consequence these students use agency and resistance. That is they make their own decisions about what to do, developing resistance to structures, rather than trying to change those structures. Gold and Mann (1984) argue that some students just cannot adjust to school and therefore alternative programmes may be necessary for these students if they are to remain within the education system and receive positive scholastic and social experiences.

Reid (1995) posits that the Welsh National Association of the Chief Education Welfare Officer's Survey, reports a considerable number of notes written by parents, for children to take to school, to excuse their child's absence, are partially or wholly untrue. In contrast to the above findings Reynold and Murgatroyd (1974) found that 75 percent of students from nine secondary schools, who missed school, did so for medical reasons. However research undertaken in 1976 by Galloway, and in 1983 by More and Jardine, confirm the work of researchers who have found that parental-condoned absenteeism accounts for a high rate of justified school absence (Reid, 1985). Kerslake, Lange, and Bennie (1997) report that schools expressed concerns about parents tolerance of truancy and the lack of support given to schools by parents as those schools attempted to encourage students to attend. They report that parents often kept children home for family reasons such as to baby sit. The effect of parents own negative experiences of school manifest a lack of interest as to whether or not their own children attend school and these parents have a tendency to condone absenteeism (Jacka, Sutherland, Peters, & Smith, 1997).

Students have suggested boredom and socialising with friends as a reason for truanting and absenteeism. In a study of Cambodian students Goldberg (1999) reported that boredom and socialising were the main reasons for students dropping out of school. Cribb (1999) quotes students as saying, "I like hanging [out] with my friends, they reckon school's not cool"(pp.17–18). Kortering (1999) also found that students dropped out of school to be with their drop out friends. Boredom is a students way of saying that they are struggling and do not understand the school work that they are given (Oliver, 1999).

Family factors such as parental apathy, using children as baby sitters, use of drugs and alcohol and the lack of money are also significant factors that effected families and lead to children becoming truants (Beresford, 1993). Stewart (2001) suggests that the family often view education as a low priority when they are faced with issues such as peer pressure, drugs and their own family problems.

Socio-economics and the home have been posited as factors that contribute significantly to truancy with its resulting negative outcomes. Cherry (1976) in her research identified truancy as a significant predictor of future job instability among the 15–18 age group. Cherry claims that truancy can be associated with a variety of personal problems including broken marriages, unemployment, psychiatric disorders and having illegitimate children. There is overwhelming evidence that truants tend to come from unfavourable homes and social backgrounds (Reid, 1985). Reid suggests that because only some and not all pupils from such backgrounds truant, the social aspects are but one facet of what he refers to as a complex, multi-causal and multi-disciplinary problem. Galloway (1985) claims that only one child in fifty from socially disadvantaged families miss more than three months schooling. While socio-economics and the home feature largely in research on truancy and act to 'select out' students, Hemmings, Hill, and Kay (1994) report there are significant educational influences that operate to break the disadvantage cycle.

Schools themselves may contribute to a student's decision to absent his or herself from school. Stewart (2001) states that one of the greatest problems in returning students to school are schools who refuse to enrol students who bring with them a poor reputation. Wells (1990) points out the notion that it has only been of recent times that schools themselves have been considered as being influential in student decision making to drop out of school. The school curriculum and its relevance to truancy has been explored in a number of studies. Irving and Parker-Jenkins (1995) contend that students who are likely to fall out of school be given an opportunity to engage in an alternative curriculum. An alternative curriculum may restore their belief in educational currency and value. Irving and Parker-Jenkins maintain that

schools should actively seek to retain students who are at risk of dropping out by the development of an alternative curriculum.

School structures and management processes often leave absenteeism and truancy going undetected. Le Riche (1995) notes there are schools that do not detect absenteeism owing to breakdown in school structures and weak management systems. Even in those schools that have computerised procedures, researchers have noted that these can be operated inefficiently (Jacka, Sutherland, Peters, & Smith, 1997).

2.4 Socio-economics, the home, student and the family

There is little doubt that socio-economics, the home and the family are a source of influence upon student decisions as to whether they will drop out of school or remain within the school system. Nash (1993) argues that families are "Differently endowed with specific resources as a result of their structural location in a class system"(p.36). He states that working class families cannot compete with the greater resources of middle class families. Working class families do not process the education, wealth, nor do they have the social networks that are associated with the middle class. Although working class families appear to do the best they can for their children there are limits to their capabilities and they are clearly unable to compete with the resources that the middle class have at their disposure. Nash (1993, 1997) indicates that there is overwhelming evidence to support the notion that middle class children enter the school system better prepared and have the fundamental structures in place that not only put them ahead but keep them ahead of children from working class families.

McAlpine, Bourke, Walker, and McIlroy (1998) in their evaluation of the New Zealand District Truancy Service noted deep social, cultural and economic issues as factors associated with truancy. They reported District Truancy Services as positing poverty, unemployment, insufficient financial resources, crime, and the lack of value placed upon education by parents as contributing factors associated with truancy. Jacka, Sutherland, Peters, and Smith, (1997) argue that where there is poverty and unemployment, truancy rates increase. An example of this is

provided in a study of West African parents in which Glick & Sahn (2000) state direct costs such as uniforms, books and transport are a barrier to school attendance. Greene (1966) on the other hand considers it is not the costs of books, uniforms, fees or transport as described by Glick and Sahn, but the "subtle" costs that include extra-curricular activities that impact upon truancy and dropout. McAlpine et al. reports families of truants have a lack of knowledge as to where they can attain help and these parents are said to be deficient in problem solving and coping strategies. Support and advice for these parents, on how to encourage their children to attend school as well as on managing their teenagers, is seen as necessary (MacDonald, 1991). Kortering (1999) notes, from interviewing school dropouts, that these students want to be provided with better support from their families. The empowering of families to help themselves may be considered to be a risky business (Stewart, 2001). However Stewart considers that empowerment is a positive outcome providing both the student and the parents a stake in the student's educational future.

Demographic changes are increasing the number of students who are dropping out of school or who are at risk of doing so (Rumberger 1990). Rumberger (1990) reports the proportions of students who come from minority groups, from poorer families and who live in single parent households are all on the increase and implies that these factors increase the rate of school drop out. Family factors that contribute to truancy and dropout are reported by Goldberg (1999) to include parental stress, emotional state, family dysfuntionality, a lack of financial resources and limited discipline within the home as well as a lack of family support for education. Glick and Sahn (2000) found that improvements to the father's education raised the schooling of both sons and daughters but an increase in the mother's education was likely only to impact significantly upon daughters.

Le Riche's (1995) identifies that most truants are likely to come from working class families and that there is a link between poverty, poor housing and a lack of parental interest in education, a view supported by others (Carlen, Gleesen & Wardhaugh, 1992; Essen, Fogelman & Tibbenham, 1978; Gleeson, 1994; Harris, 1978; Reid, 1993). Children who are identified as deviant have a greater tendency

to have had experience of dysfunctional family circumstances than peers who are non-deviant (Cooper 1993). However Le Riche (1995)identifies truancy as not being entirely restricted to the one social group.

In their study of intellectually capable students who drop out of school Lichter, Rapien, Seibert, and Sklansky (1968) found that the students and their parents had unhealthy relationships. They reported that the family household was often found to be in a state of instability and parents were often unable to cope with their children as adolescents. Parents as often ashamed of the child who is not coping with or performing at school and parents were likely to react negatively by withdrawing their affection for the child or instituting severe punishments.

According to Batten, Withers, and Russell (1996) dysfunctional family structures can affect both a student's performance and behaviour. Dysfunctionality is noted in behaviour such as conflict, abuse, mobility, poor modelling and disturbed parent-child relationships. White (1966) and Stewart (2001) note mobility as a primary factor leading to truancy and/or dropping out of school. Ford and Sutphen (1996) report that students gave their own reasons for dropping out as situated within their parents who are unable to provide supervision, guidance or discipline to their children. During the course of his studies Greene (1966) discovered that it was not at all unusual to find homes where there was a failure to provide love, understanding and emotional security deemed so necessary for a young person's normal development. In a dropout group studied by Lichter, Rapien, Seibert, and Sklansky (1968) they found it not unusual for households to be in a state of instability or hostility.

Lichter, Rapien, Seibert, and Sklansky (1968) expressed surprise at the severity of emotional and personality disturbances within the group of students they studied. Low levels of self-concept and self-esteem indicated that youth at risk felt less in control of their lives than did other students (Rumberger, 1986).These students exhibited a negative attitude to school and had low expectations of themselves to achieve academically Wells (1990). They exhibited a lack of motivation, inattentiveness, low self-esteem, often health related problems, a lack of social

skills and the inability to face pressure (Wells, 1990). Le Riche (1995) argues that there are some students who are more predisposed to truancy than other students. These students she claims regard themselves to be failures and non-performers within the school system. They are socially inept and find school a demoralising place to be.

District Truancy Officers identified drugs, substance abuse and alcohol as factors related to truancy and dropping out of school (McAlpine, Bourke, Walker & McIlroy, 1998). Jacka, Sutherland, Peters, and Smith (1997) identified truants as having three times the level of soft drug and solvent misuse compared with non-truants. Farrell (1990) suggests that access to drugs gives a young person status among his or her peers and if students are involved in drug taking then there is nearly always someone to hang out with.

Socio-economics, family, home, the student, and the student's peers may all contribute either singularly or in combinations to influence the decisions of students as to whether or not they will truant or dropout of the school system. Rumberger, Ghatak, Poulos, Ritter, and Dornbusch (1990) recognise that families exert an important influence on drop-out behaviour and drop-outs are more likely to come from families in which they, the students themselves, are more likely to have to make decisions on their own. In addition their parents are far less likely to be involved in their education than are the parents of children who remain within the educational system.

2.5 Schools and truancy

2.5.1 Systems factors

School systems factors include programming, teacher and school attitudes, policy development, school and classroom organisation and management, discipline, the availability of emotional and counselling services, and all those structures within a school that contribute to its culture.

The identification of barriers to learning is a requirement of New Zealand schools (Ministry of Education, 1998). Although the Ministry of Education acknowledges

that the needs of students are complex, the Ministry states that schools need to be places where all of their students are motivated to take part in all aspects of school life. The Ministry of Education further states that students need to feel not only supported by but able to approach staff to discuss their problems. Schools should have a plan to show how they will identify at-risk students and how the school will respond to the needs of those at-risk. Jacka, Sutherland, Peters, and Smith (1997), suggest that school structures are not set up to accommodate truants as it is the parents and the children who schools see as being both the cause and the solution to the problems.

It can be argued that schools receive direct funding to work with students with special needs and therefore schools should be able to deal with the emotional and behavioural difficulties of disruptive and non-compliant students (Thewlis, 1996). However Thewlis notes that the funding schools receive for students with special needs is inadequate to meet the needs of those students.Even schools who have the best of intention to provide for students with special needs often struggle to do so.

Although suggesting there is little evidence to support the theory, Wells (1990) suggests that schools themselves may contribute to a student's decision to drop-out of school. Batten, Withers, and Russell (1996) recognise that there needs to be flexibility within the school structure to meet the needs of students at-risk. They use as an example a cluster of schools in Western Australia who have worked together to implement a programme for at risk students. In this study the school hours, timetables, insufficient support staff, facilities and attendance regulations were identified as barriers to learning. The success of the programme is attributed to the staff and structure being responsive to the students' needs. Wells (1990) agrees that the inflexibility of schools and their systems contribute to poor academic performance and to academic failure, a contributing factor to truancy and students dropping out of school.

School personnel are in a difficult position having to juggle the demands of the majority of students against the demands of students who require individual attention and having their problems attended to. Lichter, Rapien, Seibert, and

Sklansky (1968) suggest that through a combination of skilful handling and therapeutic attention by specialists, the numbers of students with problems can be reduced. Kortering (1999) provides an insight into changes that could prevent students from falling out of school. These insights, provided by the students themselves, suggest that changes within the school system could help students to stay in school. Kortering's students suggested that there needed to be: changes made to the school's attendance policies; a fairer discipline policy; and a change in teacher behaviour towards students. Just how teachers perceive a school refuser or a truant depends on just how the problem is initially seen. Once a child is labelled a truant, disruptive, or a refuser it is difficult for that child to be seen in any other way (Cooper & Mellors, 1990). Zeller (1966) and Cooper and Mellors (1990) assert that the successful outcome of managing these children depends very much upon the attitudes and actions of teachers. Finnie, Finlay, and Ridler (1999) identify a study in which thirty-seven of forty-six students surveyed agreed with the statement, "At school I was treated like a child". They suggest this response highlights the fact that schools are designed to teach children, while many teenagers consider themselves adults and need to be treated as such. They also discovered security and familiarity are important to young people who remain in school. Schools with high truancy rates appear to be "narrowly custodian in nature" have high levels of control with harsh levels of enforcement, and there is a gulf between teachers and students, and between teachers and parents (Reid, 1985).

The UNESCO 'Handbook for Coping with Drop-out' (1987) posits a number of school related causes for drop-out. These include the high student/teacher ratio; classes with wide ranges of pupil ages; lack of a relevant curriculum; inadequacy or lack of instructional aids; conditions not conducive to learning; distance; and the location of schools from students' homes. Also cited are teachers' attitudes towards learning; low levels of teacher ability; low motivation to teach; and teachers' use of discipline.

Campbell, (1993), Bos, Ruijters, and Visscher, (1990) and Fitzpatrick and Yoels, (1992) view teacher/pupil ratios as appearing to have an effect upon truancy and

drop out rates. This may be because of a cultural change that takes place in classrooms as the numbers grow. As teacher/pupil ratios increase this can mean that students receive less individual attention and teachers may focus upon classroom organisation to the detriment of classroom teaching. It is considered that there is almost total agreement that class sizes are too large and therefore any goal to offer equality of opportunity is lost (Campbell, 1993). Teachers often resort to dividing classes into those they like and can teach, those who they can leave to get on with it, and those whose behaviour is such that all they can do is ignore, outwit or suffer the behaviour. On the other hand O'Keeffe (1993) reports that as pupil-teacher ratios decline there is a slight increase in levels of truancy. O'Keeffe maintains that the lowering of the teacher/pupil ratio does not benefit attendance rates. However he does concede that there may be other benefits of a lower pupil/teacher ratio.

The malaise in teaching, although unmeasurable, has a causal effect upon truancy. Combating this malaise is considered to be one of the greatest challenges facing educationalists (Reid, 1985). Reid, in referring to a study carried out in the Irish Republic, concludes that numbers of teachers live in a state of "pluralist ignorance" in regard to their pupils priorities, wishes and aspirations and therefore these teachers are totally unaware of the high proportion of students who are bored. For many of the students Farrell (1990) worked with, school promised no pay off. What they learn appeared to have little bearing upon their lives. During the course of dialogue, Farrell conducted with students, the one word that characterised their response to school was "boring". Boring classes included the learning of mathematics, English and social studies. To Farrell it appears that the students distinguished boring from non-boring classes on the basis of process rather than upon the subject matter. Reid further states that research shows truanting students believe they are unfairly picked upon, not treated with respect, are dealt with harshly, and they are handled inconsistently by school staff.

By students interpreting their school experiences and the actions of schools and teachers as being anti-student, schools themselves can be said to be encouraging truancy and drop out. Turner (1974) refers to schools that apply the "Nelson

Touch". That is, they turn a blind eye to the absence of students who they perceive as unwelcome. Both Beresford (1993) and Galloway (1985) support the theory of school practices contributing to school alienation.

The school leaving age may have an influence upon truancy. Bell, Rosen, and Dynlacht (1994) state that age is related to truancy. They suggest that with increasing age comes a simultaneous increase in truancy. Truancy and non-attendance rises in the 14–16 year old age group (Irving & Parker- Jenkins, 1985). New Zealand statistics support the apparent correlation between increasing age and the increasing raise in truancy levels (Kerslake & Lange, 1998; Milbank, 1999). It is suggested there might be a case for not retaining students in school for such lengthy periods. (Galloway, 1985; Turner, 1974).

2.5.2 Curriculum factors

The school curriculum and its relationship with truancy has been explored in a number of studies. There is evidence to support a close correlation between truancy and the curriculum. A survey of English schools involving thirty-eight thousand students revealed the most common reason for truanting is dissatisfaction with the curriculum (McAlpine, Bourke, Waller, & McIlroy, 1998). In their evaluation of District Truancy Services, McAlpine et al. (1998) reported Truancy Officers as stating the inappropriateness of the school curriculum was a contributing factor to truancy. They found, that although some schools attempted to meet the needs of at-risk students by the modification of the curriculum, many secondary schools did not appear to make any modification to their curriculum to meet the needs of those students.

Kronick and Hargis (1987) suggest that when a student drops out of school the curriculum is virtually always either the primary factor or a contributing factor to that decision. If students don't fit the curriculum structures Kronick and Hargis believe they will be "battered by failure" and become what they refer to as a curriculum casualty. When students fail, that failure comes to be viewed as a student problem and not a curriculum problem. They suggest that it is not surprising that curriculum casualties drop out of school.

For students at-risk the curriculum should be geared to the students' requirements (Kilpatrick 1996). Kilpatrick asserts that the curriculum should have a primary vocational focus and a secondary focus of enjoyment. He found during the course of his research that school subjects that fell outside of a focus of vocation and enjoyment were not popular with at-risk students. Schools that have a narrow range of subjects within their curriculum, provide inadequate access to studies that are practical and who have uninteresting learning processes have, according to Batten, Withers, and Russell (1996), long been attributed to student decision to leave school. According to Bradley (1992) student responses to a research survey indicated that students wanted school to be made more interesting and with more relevance to the work force. In Western Australia the Select Committee into Youth Affairs was told that the lack of a more practical curriculum for less academic students is a factor in the high number of students who are chronic truants Beresford (1993).

Schools should actively seek to keep all of their students in school by developing an alternative curriculum for those students at-risk (Irving & Parker-Jenkins, 1995). They see an alternative curriculum as being more likely than the traditional curriculum to be geared to at-risk students particular needs, retain their interest and provide these students with successful educational outcomes. However in providing an alternative curriculum Irving and Parker-Jenkins perceive a need to retain mathematics and English. These subjects are often prerequisites for future educational or vocational progression. Collins (1989) commented that the National Curriculum had the potential to produce particular difficulties in relation to pupils of low ability or attainment. The imperatives of the National Curriculum have displaced the pastoral system within many schools (Thewlis, 1996).

O'Keeffe and Stoll (1995) question the necessity to have a national curriculum for all students while Coldman (1995) believes that too much emphasis is placed on the social and emotional problems of students and insufficient focus is given to the problems a school may have in providing and delivering an appropriate curriculum. Le Riche (1995) cites studies by O'Keeffe (1994a) in which the most common factor of school discontent for truants was found to be a dissatisfaction

with the school curriculum. Reid (1985) found that students truant when they fall behind in the basic subjects and feel uncomfortable about this. The students Reid worked with tended to enjoy only a very small number of school subjects. There appears to be a need for schools to make the curriculum relevant to the real world of pupils (Turner, 1995). An investigation by Galloway (1985) indicates that the curriculum can either encourage or discourage attendance. Galloway believes that adapting or providing an alternative curriculum on its own is not enough to encourage students to attend school. He believes that students need to feel that school attendance also brings greater personal and social benefits than what staying away from school does. The question of organising a curriculum that caters for all students is difficult. To arrange such a curriculum remains problematic and a source of controversy (Galloway, 1985).

While acknowledging that the curriculum content, structure and delivery need to be addressed to create a student-friendly school, Abbott-Chapman (1994) considers that it is professional staff who are the key to the creation of a successful effective school. The importance of teachers and significant others within the school situation as a factor in at-risk students making the decision to remain in or drop-out of school is evidenced by numerous researchers including Finnie, Findlay, and Ridler (1999), Kortering (1999), Reid (1985) and UNESCO (1987).

2.6 Consequences of truancy upon student achievement, self image, employment and society.

Research suggests truancy and non-school attendance has a direct negative effect upon student achievement, self esteem and employment potential. Truancy impinges upon the school climate, delivery of instruction and relationships between members of the school and its community (Harte, 1994). Le Riche (1995) and Parsons (1996) not only support Harte but maintain that the effects of the financial cost of exclusion from school is a critical issue. For example, the totality of cost is likely to be greater than the cost of maintaining a student in the school. Parsons and Castle (1998) discovered that replacement education costs are approximately twice as much as for that of standard mainstream education. This

makes the maintaining of pupils in schools, even by means of additional support, cost-effective.

Rumberger (1987, 1990) argues that when students drop out of school they severely limit their economic and social well-being for the rest of their lives. As a consequence these students cost the state considerable amounts of money incurred in social and health spending. Upon dropping out of school students find it difficult to secure regular employment and an adequate income. In 1970 the median earnings of adult men aged 25–34, who had dropped out of school, was 35 percent less than for those who had completed their high school education and 40 percent lower for females (Roderick, 1993). The unemployment rate of drop-outs is much higher than for the group of students who complete through to graduation from high school. (Schostak, 1991) suggests that those who are unemployed may be of little consequence as either consumers or workers and they become a drain on government welfare services Rumberger (1987, 1990) further suggests that if the growth of low skilled jobs continues to decline then opportunities for drop-outs will become even more limited than they are now. Further education and training are the most obvious means of providing a pathway to better job prospects for these students. As stated almost forty years ago, if those who drop out of school could be absorbed into the labour market then the problem of drop out would only be academic (Green, 1966).

By not attending school the non-enrolled student loses out upon educational opportunities that not only impact upon the student but upon society itself (Finn, 1998; Fitzpatrick & Yoels, 1992; Kerslake, Lange & Bennie, 1997; Rumberger, 1997;). Schools report, Kerslake et al., that truants are often engaged in petty crime. In a study on 'Truancy in Adolescence' Fergusson, Lynsky, and Horwood (1996) considered that the evidence suggested there is a close linkage between the severity of truancy and parallel increases in the risk of offending. Le Riche (1995) states that some studies show a correlation between truancy and crime and where truanting students are on the streets they are at risk of being drawn into anti-social and criminal behaviour. Le Riche (1995) notes as evidence of a link between truancy and crime the 'Truancy Watch' project in Staffordshire, which found the

rate of shoplifting decreased with a decrease in the number of children wandering around the shopping centre. However O'Keefe (1995) contends that a correlation between truancy and crime is not an explanation and argues that to suggest that truancy leads to criminality is unjustified. Criminality may just as likely have cause factors outside of the school as the moral perceptions of individuals are formed somewhere in a triad of the home, school and entertainment. There is an assumption of a national progression from truancy to petty crime (Coldman, 1995). Although Coldman (1995) agrees that there is some link between truancy and crime, he maintains that it is not proven as to whether this link is causal or incidental. He further argues that though it appears many criminals are truants from school that doesn't necessarily mean that truancy was the reason for their criminality. Colins (1998, p.2) theorises that students who truant, "May be no more involved with crime than those who attend [school] regularly". Both Coldman and O'Keeffe suggest that more research and evidence must be provided before any theory linking criminality and truancy can be accepted.

The career of a criminal may be the result of school influences. Children who are not managed at school become distracted, disruptive and destructive. As a result these children may drop out of school and chose a life of crime. Upon dropping out of school they are vulnerable to the influence of gangs and get hooked into drugs and crime (Rankin, 2001). Wells (1990) and Mensch and Kandel (1988) contend that school dropouts often exhibit drug and alcohol related problems and that the two may be related as they share common antecedents such as low psychological well-being. A close link between truancy and other forms of adolescent difficulties including that of substance use behaviours is evidenced in a study by Fergusson, Lynsky, and Horwood (1996). The findings of Fergusson, Lynsky, and Horwood indicate that the greater the severity of truancy there is, then the greater likelihood there is of students being involved in other risk taking activities. Batten, Withers, and Russell (1996) consider there is considerable evidence to associate early school leaving with drug abuse. Further evidence of drug abuse is provided by Kronick and Hargis (1998) who state that 45 percent of the students in their study report using drugs. Within this study group alcohol and cigarettes are designated as

drugs. The use of these substances may be a result, rather than a cause, of problems at school.

"Dropouts have lower levels of self-esteem and less sense of control over their lives than other students" (Rumberger, 1987, p.110). Reid (1985) states that the relationship between school refusal and anxiety is long established while Lichter, Rapien, Seibert, and Sklanksy (1962) consider emotional problems to be the major cause of difficulties at school that result in drop out. Children should be welcome and happy at school and view themselves as valued members of the school community (Thewlis, 1996). She suggests that negative self image is a strong characteristic of students who drop out of school. To convince such students of the value of education and school qualifications is thought to be a difficult task especially when those students see little chance of future employment and their self-esteem is low (Le Riche, 1985).

It is the contention of Kronick and Hargis (1989) that there is a strong correlation between drop out, delinquency and emotional disturbance. They believe it is necessary to deal with these mental health issues as soon as possible and that the school is the place where these issues can be best warded off. Finn (1989) argues that a student's positive self-image and ego develop as the student receives constant evidence of their adequacy through school related experiences.

2.7 Truancy initiatives

Combating truancy has been problematic for many years. However the methods used and the reasons for taking action have changed. If schooling is failing to deliver for students who truant or drop out of school, then there is a need to provide educational alternatives for those students (Irving & Parker-Jenkins, 1995). An alternative education programme should provide an organisation and structure that sustains a community within the programme and the learning itself must be an engaging process (Nichols & Utesch, 1998). White (1980) who supports the notion of alternative education considers that alternative education centres can provide meaningful programmes for students in spite of the fact that

many students come from disastrous family backgrounds and have experienced years of failure at school.

For Rumberger (1990) truancy intervention efforts fall into two categories. The first of these categories includes those programmes designed to keep students from dropping out of school. The second category includes programmes designed to provide students with a second chance. Second chance programmes either focus upon getting students back into school or into some other form of education that will provide not only education but training as well. The array of second chance programmes available reflect the diverse needs of students and these programmes are often employment orientated. Such programmes are provided by a wide range of public and private providers. Rumberger (1990) suggests that more research work needs to be undertaken on the evaluation these 'truancy recovery' programmes.

A significant range of truancy initiatives have been developed to alleviate the truancy problem. Le Riche (1995) describes home and school partnerships, local authority strategies, special teaching units and the use of truancy patrols within Britain. Zeller (1966) and Wells (1990) report on numerous American school based initiatives. Other programmes and initiatives are being developed and are providing programmes that are conducted away from school sites and premises. There are available alternative schools and centres that cater for the needs of school refusers and truants. An example of these programmes is the Park Road Centre in New South Wales (Brand, 1993). Gold and Mann (1984) suggest that not all alternative school programmes are successful because not all alternative schools are the same. Therefore we should not expect the same results from all of them.

Multiple interventions are often required when working with truants if a successful outcome is to be achieved. A study of Cambodian students reports that those who are at risk of truanting can be identified early and through the setting up of special programmes, using standard instructional methods, having small class sizes and providing a large amount of individual attention, positive results can be attained

(Goldberg, 1999). Ford and Sutphen (1996) found that early intervention programmes are effective devices for reducing truancy. Such programmes address absenteeism and promote positive attachment to school. They suggest that truancy reduction programmes should use a multi-agency approach.

The 'Brothers Programme' has a focus on students who have a high-risk of drug and alcohol use, low self-esteem, poor educational grades and unsatisfactory school attendance. For African-American adolescents the 'Brothers Programme' based upon mentoring is used as a means to better outcomes. Although a study of the programme did not find any qualitative data supporting it as being successful, the programme does suggest that caring adults do make a difference in the lives of youth who are considered vulnerable (Royse, 1998). Royse believes that programmes such as the Brothers Programme deserve and need a great deal more investigation.

Park Road Centre in New South Wales, Australia, provides courses for students who it is thought will not return to main stream schooling. The courses provided relate to employment and the community and where the interests and the personal needs of the students are met (Brand, 1993). Brand considers that the centre is addressing the needs of the students and that the improvement in student performance is due to the establishment of the alternative centre.

The 'Cities in Schools' model described by Stoll (1995) provides a place for students who cannot cope with mainstream school. The programme aims to reintroduce students to school by providing an appropriate programme for the students, liaising with the home, and addressing the problems of the student and family through the involvement of welfare agencies.

Research by Aeby, Manning, Thyer and Carpenter-Aeby (1999) indicates that an Alternative School Programme for chronically disturbed students is successful, resulting in the students attending more regularly and has reduced the drop out rate. The researchers attribute the intensive family involvement in the programme as an important factor contributing to its success rate. Turner (1974) supports

alternative schooling, suggests that alternative schools in England, who receive grants on condition that they return students to mainstream schooling, would be better to be accepted as schools basing their education on alternative ideas of education.

Reid (1985) and Thewlis (1996) report there are over 200 special units in Britain's ordinary schools and that these have been contentious. Reid suggests that further research is needed into the structure, organisation and effectiveness of both special units within schools and those established as alternative schools out side of the mainstream. Le Riche (1995) believes that the establishment of various types of units have been a reaction by Local Education Authorities rather than proactive interventions. She fears for the demise of such units as funding gets recycled for other school activities. Dwyer (1996) and Le Riche (1995) cite other English initiatives to overcome truancy including Cities in Schools, St Paul's Project, truancy patrols and care orders. A number of other initiatives are available in Britain. See for example Budgell, (1983); Grunsell (1978); Irving and Parker-Jenkins, (1995); Normington, (1996); Stephenson, (1996).

2.8 The New Zealand context

Truancy, whether it be persistent absenteeism, unjustified non-attendance or non-enrolment during the compulsory education years has been a feature of compulsory schooling in New Zealand since its inception in 1877 (Kerslake, Lange, & Bennie, 1997; McAlpine, Bourke, Walker, & McIlroy, 1997).

Truancy in New Zealand is a community, educational and political concern (Kerslake, Lange, & Bennie, 1997). The 1995 Education and Science Select Committee inquiry into children at-risk through truancy and behavioural problems recognised that truancy is wide spread throughout New Zealand (Kerslake & Lange, 1998). The Select Committee Inquiry (1995) concluded that the issue of at-risk children through truancy and behavioural problems is both complex and multicausal. The committee considered that efforts to combat truancy needed to address three fundamental components to succeed. First teachers needed to be trained to recognise and deal with students at-risk. Second there is a need to

provide support at the classroom level to assist teachers to deal with students at-risk. Third there is a requirement for the provision of off-school site programmes for students who need intervention to change their behaviour (House of Representatives, 1995).

Prior to 1989 visiting teachers and Education Board Attendance Officers provided services to schools to attend to truancy and attendance matters. While visiting teachers, employees of the former Special Education Service, visited homes and acted in a liaison capacity between the home and the school, Education Board Attendance Officers visited homes, wrote letters, collected children and delivered them to school, and arranged the publication of the names of missing students in the Education Gazette (Jacka, Sutherland, Peters & Smith, 1997).

With the advent of "Tomorrow's Schools" ushered in by the Education Act 1989, responsibility for school attendance became the domain and responsibility of parents and boards of trustees. Section 25 (Education Act 1989) states that boards of trustees are legally required to take reasonable steps to ensure that students enrol at a school and attend whenever the school is open. The Act makes provision for boards to appoint attendance officers and for them to be paid for through funds from within the school's operational grant (Jacka, Sutherland, Peters, & Smith, 1997). However boards of trustees found that dealing with truancy and attendance issues was problematic and Donn, Bennie, and Kerslake (1993) report that boards considered they were too busy to follow up truancy and that their priorities lie in areas where the maximum number of students benefit.

With truancy and non-attendance becoming a more public and political issue since the introduction of 'Tomorrow's Schools' and the Education Act of 1989 a number of conferences have been held, reports written, and initiatives operationalised that seek to provide answers and solutions to the truancy problem (Donn, Bennie, & Kerslake, 1993). What isn't known is the full extent of the problem and the full degree of numbers of students who either truant on a part time basis or who are habitual truants (Donn, Bennie & Kerslake, 1991; Jacka, Sutherland, Peters &

Smith, 1997). However what is known is that there are approximately six thousand school aged students unjustifiably absent on any given school day.

The Education Gazette (1999) reported recent research carried out by Kirkland and Bimler identified, using a methodology which locates points of psychological meaning behind people's behaviour, five main truancy styles among secondary school students. The identification of truancy styles may assist schools and agencies to deal with the problems of truants and truancy. The combating of truancy and keeping young people at school is all about crime prevention, tackling unemployment and ensuring that every young New Zealander receives an education (Smith, 1999). Smith states that the Government's approach to truancy provides a service and intervention process to preschool, primary and secondary schools. These services are designed to alleviate social, health, welfare and education problems that may contribute to truancy and to students dropping out of school. This approach of service and intervention is supported by Le Riche (1995) who advocates the need to look both inside and outside of schools to find the reasons and possible solutions to truancy.

The New Zealand Government's approach to truancy is multi-faceted with initiatives being funded by the government and by schools. The Ministry of Education established in 1994 a Truancy Project Unit which funds an increasing number of initiatives (Kerslake & Lange, 1998; Milbank, 1999). The truancy action is currently maintained at four levels. School funded programmes maintain attendance and follow up absences. District Truancy Officers, who are partly school, partly government and party community funded, support school action and assist to return truants to school. The District Truancy Service was established following the development of a model similar to one used in Rotorua and Whangarei that involved Maori Wardens. In the 1996/97 budget the Government allocated sufficient funding to establish over forty truancy programmes throughout the country (McAlpine, Bourke, Walker, & McIlroy, 1998). The Non-Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS) is the third level government truancy initiative. It is fully government funded and has been established to combat persistent truancy and non-enrolment. Ministry of Education circular 1996/35 provides information to schools

about the service, giving both background information on truancy action and on the manner in which NETS operates. NETS aims to enrol non-enrolled students into schools, onto approved courses or into employment (Milbank, 1999). The Education Advisers who work for NETS also have a role in the facilitation of truants into alternative education. The fourth level of the truancy initiative is the provision of alternative education programmes. In the 1997 budget the government allocated funding to begin to address the alternative education issue. These alternative education programmes are linked to schools with each student being enrolled at a school. Generally, community providers, working in a partnership with the schools provide the alternative education programmes (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Other government initiatives that have a direct bearing upon resolving truancy problems include Strengthening Families and Study Support Centres. Strengthening Families is a multi-agency initiative to address young people and family problems (Gerritsen, 2001), where as Study Support Centres are designed to provide students from Year 5 to Year 8 from lower decile schools the opportunity to learn computer skills that will assist them in their studies and provide assistance with homework (McCartney, 2001).

2.9 Summary

An overview of relevant literature on truancy reveals that there is a great deal of complexity surrounding the subject. The problem of truancy in its varying degrees and guises has been around since schooling was made compulsory and is not unique to New Zealand. The development of a definition of truancy has been and still appears problematic.

Identifying a primary cause of truancy is elusive as there appears to be a multiplicity of reasons, causes, aspects of student and family life that lead students to truant. What is clear, is that it is the accumulation of lived happenings and experiences that trigger the student to decide to truant either regularly, irregularly or to drop out of school altogether. There is little doubt that the home, family,

peers, school and the national curriculum contribute to student decisions to truant from school.

Research suggests that the consequences of truancy are: lower student achievement; negative self image; difficulties in gaining employment, especially in the world of higher paid and highly skilled positions; criminal activity; a financial and social cost to society. There have been and are numerous initiatives undertaken to reduce the problems of truancy. Programmes have met with varying degrees of success. Success may however be difficult to gauge as finding the typical truant and providing the typical intervention is problematic. What is known is that some programmes work for some students and that some students benefit from programmes designed to provide them with further educational and vocational opportunities thus suggesting that every case is unique and symptomatic of a wide range of issues. As Ribbins and Sayer (1998) claim there is no quick fix.

This chapter provides the context for the research reported in this study. In New Zealand, since the inception of "Tomorrow's Schools", the approach to returning non-enrolled students to education has been mainly through legislation. Boards of trustees are required to take responsibility for monitoring attendance and the District Truancy Service is to assist schools to return truanting students to school. The Non-Enrolment Truancy Service currently sits outside of legislation for in reality they work with students who do not legally exist. It is the task of Education Advisers, employed by the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service, to assist with the enrolment of non-enrolled students into a school, to verify applications for alternative education programmes and to facilitate exemptions from school so that students can legally attend courses or take up positions in the workforce. It is the Education Advisers who are the focus of this research.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1 Introduction

This chapter defines the research problem. It outlines the objectives of the research and discusses the methodological approach that is used in this study. The chapter presents the research questions and details the methods, procedures and techniques that were used in the study. Consideration is given to ethical issues, issues of validity and reliability, and reporting to participants.

3.2 The research problem and question

Ribbins and Sayer (1998) claim there is no quick fix solution to the truancy problem. A review of the current literature supports this point of view (Kortering, 1999; Reid, 1985; Rumberger, 1987, 1990). NETS Education Advisers do not prevent or reduce the incidence of truancy and drop out from school by students who have become alienated from education. When truancy or dropping out of school has occurred Education Advisers work towards returning the student to education. In fact the Education Adviser is most often the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff.

Education Advisers play a key role in returning students to education. They are the front line personnel who work with students who are non-enrolled in school. Education Advisers come from differing work backgrounds, work in isolation from NETS management and one another, and are required to use their initiative and a range of strategies to return students to education. Truancy, school drop out, and non-enrolment are an ongoing problem for students, parents and schools, and has repercussions for society. Education Advisers effectively returning students to education is in the interest of the country as a whole. Unless we are able to explore, evaluate and critique such issues as the role, employment and barriers encountered by Education Advisers, returning the increasing numbers of non-enrolled students to education may be difficult.

To achieve the desired outcome for the study, the central research questions are:

- What events and experiences impact upon the employment of the Education Adviser?

- What strategies do Education Advisers use to return non-enrolled students to education?

- What training, professional development and supervision do Education Advisers consider necessary to successfully fulfil their role? and

- What barriers impact upon the work of the Education Adviser?

3.3 Research Objectives

Research in the field of truancy has often focused upon the truant, causes of truancy, and initiatives taken to deal with truancy. This study focuses on Education Advisers whose task it is to return non-enrolled students to education. The narrative approach used in this study meant that participants could tell their own stories in a highly personal manner. The research set out to examine the work and explore the beliefs and issues raised by Education Advisers employed by the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service. These Education Advisers were a group of the people who work with truants, their families and within the wider community in an endeavour to return truanting students to education. The objectives of the study were to:

- listen to the stories of the Education Advisers;

- analyse the collected data to ascertain which experiences and events had significant influence upon how they worked;

- consider the data collected linking it to the findings of current literature; and

- discuss the implications of the findings and provide recommendations for the future development of the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service.

3.4 Design Framework

The study is based upon multi-case and multi-site case study using methods of survey and narrative. Case study is a bounded system with a conception of unity and totality (Bouma, 1996; Cresswell, 1994; Harker, 1999; Stake, 1995). The case becomes an entity in itself and allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events. The case itself is the focus of attention and the search is for an understanding of the particular case in its idiosyncrasy and its complexity. Stake (1995) defines case study as a bounded system that observes naturalistically and interprets interrelationships within the observed data.

Case study has become increasingly popular in educational research as it responds to attempts to interpret meaning. Often this is done by employing a range of research techniques including survey and interview. Within a case study approach, researchers may make use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry using multiple methods of data collection and analysis, which adds both scope and breadth to a study. Case study has much in common with qualitative naturalistic methodology and its philosophy and practices.

The main rationale for using case study as a strategy in this research was to provide insight into the experiences and work of the NETS Education Advisers. The purpose was to gather information so that a description of what was going on could be provided. The size of the research sample (26 questionnaires and 12 interviews) meant that generalisations could be made. The number of participants was representative of the total number of 32 Education Advisers employed by the Non-Employment Truancy Service at the time that the research was conducted.

3.5 Qualitative methodology

Qualitative methodology appears to be the most appropriate to answer the research questions. Qualitative methods tend to be expressed in the language of images, feelings and impressions and they allow for the description of the quality of the events under study. Creswell (1994) describes qualitative design as a process of

inquiry conducted in a natural setting and is reported in terms of both a worldly and as specific views of individuals.

Bouma (1996) suggests that qualitative methods provide an opportunity for the researcher to learn from the participants. Qualitative research is interested in finding out how people make sense of their lives and experiences and in how they structure the world. In so doing the researcher seeks to develop an understanding of a social or human problem (Cresswell 1994).

By using qualitative methodology the researcher becomes the main research instrument for data collection and analysis. The researcher inductively builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses and theories from the details of the research findings.

This research was based upon a qualitative framework that allowed the subjects to tell their stories so that an insight would be gained into the work of NETS Education Advisers.

3.5.1 Narrative

By its nature qualitative research is a very personalised approach to research. The narrative approach to qualitative research used in this study adds a further personal dimension. Through engaging in a narrative methodology practitioners are provided with an opportunity to reflect upon their practices and professional actions. Narrative provides the opportunity for people to tell their story in their own way. It provides a vast and varied landscape of the subjects knowledge, beliefs and understandings while at the same time giving the teller an insight to the self (Rothenberg, 1994). In this study narrative affords the participants the opportunity to construct their stories in the context of Education Adviser and as people providing a worldly context to their deliberations.

By using a narrative methodology the researcher is able to have the subjects freely tell what is important to them, give a personal perception of their work, and allow them to express their feelings. Narratives explain how I got here, why things had to

happen, why a person acts in a certain way. Narrative reveals who I am, how I relate to others and how they relate to me (Schostak & Davies, 1991). It is the story of the teller, the narrative that becomes the device to explain and understand the social world.

The NETS Education Advisers interviewed were able to provide a window to the role, practices and impediments to their work. These interviews were guided by an interview schedule (Appendix 1) that listed the key questions for the interview.

3.6 Quantitative Methods

Bouma (1996) stated that quantitative research is designed to provide numerical results. These results can be reported in tables, graphs and charts that tell the number, the proportion, or what the trends are. In quantitative research a great deal of effort goes into preparing questionnaires, setting up experiments or selecting groups to be compared.

The quantitative methods used within this study were an important aspect of data collection because a larger sample was able to be surveyed than who were able to be interviewed. Useful data was collected and used to collaborate the findings of the interviews. The quantitative data raised issues that needed further investigation and confirmation. Combining research methods, qualitative and quantitative, can provide a different perspective to the study and increase what is known about it (Bouma, 1996).

3.6.1 Survey

Through conducting a survey with Education Advisers a great deal of information was obtained in a short space of time. The responses from the advisers provided a landscape of the practices, issues and concerns important to the participants. This landscape incorporated a picture revealing how participants described and structured their world as Education Advisers. The survey was designed to:

- gather data that would assist in the selection of Education Advisers to be interviewed;

38

- provide information and trends that could be verified through in-depth interviewing;
- alert the researcher to situations that may have needed further investigation; and
- gather data that was generic and unique to individuals.

The questionnaire was designed to be clear, unambiguous and uniformly workable. It needed to minimise potential errors and engage the interest of those Education Advisers who participated in the research. The questionnaire was designed to elicit answers as close to the truth as possible.

3.7 The Research Samples

Three samples were used in the course of the study. These samples were developed for the following three purposes: focus group; questionnaire; and interview.

3.7.1 Focus group sample

Six Education Advisers who had gathered to attend a cluster group meeting in Palmerston North during March 2000 made up the sample of the focus group. The focus group met during the course of the cluster group meeting

3.7.2 Questionnaire sample group

As at 18 October 1999 there were 32 Education Advisers employed by the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service. In March 2000 a questionnaire was trialed with two of those Education Advisers. In April 2000 the remaining 30 Education Advisers were invited to complete the survey questionnaire (Appendix 2). Of these 24 returned the questionnaire. Together with the two Education Advisers who returned the trial questionnaires 26 Education Advisers made up the sample. Table 3.1 shows the composition of the sample.

Table 3.1
Research sample - questionnaire group

No. in group	Male	Female	Age < 45	45–54	55+	Time worked as an Education Adviser < 3yrs	3+ yrs	Previous Occupation Education	Non-education
26	18	8	7	7	12	15	11	17	9
100%	69%	31%	27%	27%	46%	58%	42%	65%	35%

3.7.3 Interview sample group

In order to arrive at a sample that was a fair representation of the cohort of thirty-two National Education Advisers, twelve of the latter were selected covering the range of geographical regions, gender, age, length of service and their previous employment. Table 3.2 shows the composition of the sample. Due to issues of confidentiality the geographical areas have not been identified in the table.

Table 3.2
Research sample - interview group

No. in group	Male	Female	Age			Time worked as an Education Adviser		Previous Occupation Education Non-education	
			< 45	45–54	55+	< 3yrs	3+ yrs		
12	9	3	3	3	6	7	5	7	5
100%	75%	25%	25%	25%	50%	58%	42%	58%	58%

3.8 Data Collection Processes

Three methods of collecting data were chosen. Using three methods established a degree of triangulation. The term triangulation here means seeking a convergence of results by obtaining complimentary data. Creswell (1994) states that the concept of triangulation is based on the assumption that any bias inherent in the sources of the data, researcher or the method can be neutralised when used in conjunction with other sources of data, researchers and methods. The three methods used were focus group, survey and in-depth interview.

3.8.1 Focus Group

A focus group of six Education Advisers met for one and a half hours during March 2000 to discuss among themselves issues related to their employment. The researcher prepared a series of lead questions to guide the discussion and the discussion was audio taped. The purpose of the focus group was that from the discussion the researcher would be able to identify issues that needed to be included in the construction of a questionnaire. Figure 3.1 illustrates the focus group process.

The composition of the focus group was six Education Advisers from the Taranaki, Waimarino, Wanganui, Palmerston North and Hawke's Bay areas who were gathering for a regular Education Adviser Cluster Group Meeting.

Prior to the focus group meeting participants were mailed an information sheet (Appendix 3) and a consent form (Appendix 4). Following the focus group meeting the researcher listened to the audio tapes and identified the important issues for inclusion in the questionnaire.

Figure 3.1
Process - Focus Group

```
┌─────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Participants contacted│     │ Questions drafted to│      │ Focus group met     │
│ Information and      │ ───> │ guide discussion    │ ───> │ and discussions     │
│ consent forms posted │     │                     │      │ audio taped         │
└─────────────────────┘      └─────────────────────┘      └─────────────────────┘
                                                                     │
                                                                     ▼
┌─────────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Audio tapes listened to│   │ Issues recorded from focus│
│ and issues raised recorded│ ──> │ group used to assist in the│
│ on paper            │      │ construction of the questionnaire│
└─────────────────────┘      └─────────────────────┘
```
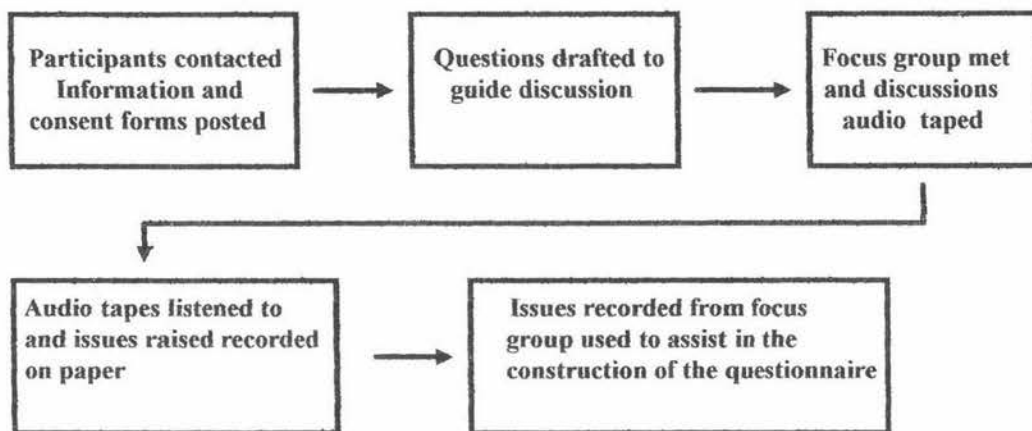
3.8.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to allow for the collection of data on the work, experiences and events that impacted on the work of the Education Adviser. Identifying the gender, age, years of service, previous employment and geographical location of participants across the cohort facilitated the drawing up of a interview sample that was representative of all Education Advisers.

The questionnaire used both open and closed questions. Open ended questions were incorporated to allow Education Advisers to express their own views in a more indepth manner. Upon receiving responses to the open ended questions the responses were categorised into common themes, counted numerically and tabulated.

Figure 3.2 illustrates the questionnaire process. The questionnaire was trialed with two Education Advisers in the lower North Island. Following analysis of the responses and taking into account comments provided by the trialists two minor adjustments were made to the questionnaire to clarify two of the questions.

The questionnaire together with an information sheet (Appendix 5) and a stamped return addressed envelope was posted to the remaining 30 Education Advisers. Twenty-four questionnaires were returned and when added to the two trialed questionnaires a total of twenty-six returns made up the total sample.

The responses received from participants were collated and recorded numerically. Once recorded the responses were transferred to chart form and variables of gender, age, years of service as an Education Adviser, and previous employment added (Appendix 6).

Figure 3.2
Process - questionnaire
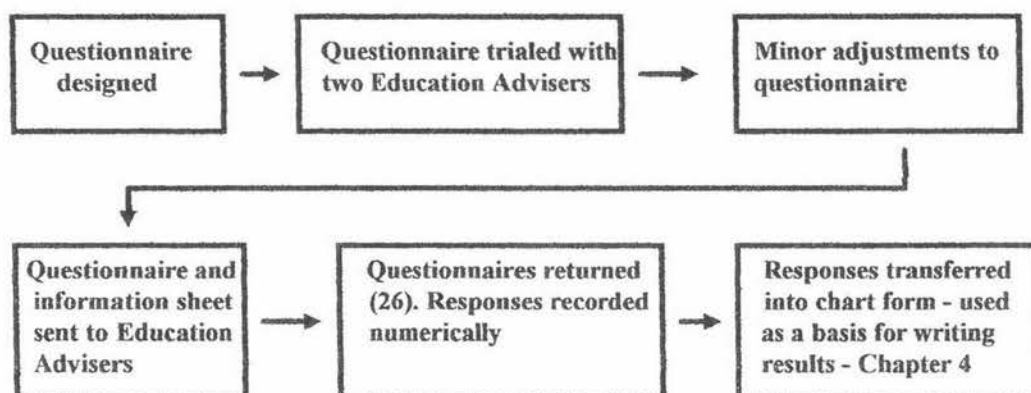
3. 8.3 Interviews

The interview process invited twelve participants for in-depth interview (see figure 3.3). The participants were selected to fairly represent the gender, age, years of service, previous employment and the geographical location of Education Advisers. On completion of the selection process information sheet (Appendix 7) and a consent form (Appendix 8) were posted to the twelve Education Advisers inviting them to participate. An interview schedule was drafted with key questions to be used as a guide during the course of the interview. These questions were

open ended and designed to start the participant talking about their employment experiences.

The questions in the interview protocol were constructed as a guide only as the researcher wanted the participants to talk about the issues and experiences that they themselves considered to be of importance. The interviews commenced with the same questions but then usually followed themes identified by the participants. The researcher used prompts to obtain more in-depth views and information.

Once the consent forms had been received the researcher arranged with each participant the time, date, geographical location and venue for the interview. Interviews were held in motels, hotels, places of work, participant's and the researcher's home. Interviews were audio taped and were between an hour to an hour and a half duration. When the interviews were completed the tapes were transcribed verbatim and a printed copy sent to the participant to be checked for authenticity and verification.

When participants authenticated the transcriptions an analysis of the interview transcripts was carried out. The interview transcripts were analysed to uncover the meanings of what being an Education Adviser was to each participant. These personal meanings and associated issues were categorised and emerging themes were identified. Comparisons of the frequency of evidence of categories in participant interviews across the variables of gender, age, years of service and previous employment were collated. Tables were produced presenting the data and the information used as a basis for writing the results.

Figure 3.3
Process - Interviews

```
┌─────────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────┐
│ Interview participants  │     │ Information sheets   │     │ Interview schedule  │
│ selected (12) to fairly │     │ and consent forms    │     │ drafted             │
│ represent gender, age,  │ ──► │ sent to participants │ ──► │                     │
│ years of service,       │     │                      │     │                     │
│ previous employment and │     │                      │     │                     │
│ geographical location   │     │                      │     │                     │
└─────────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────┘
                                                                        │
          ┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
          ▼
┌─────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Interview times,    │     │ Interviews  │     │ Audio tapes transcribed,│
│ dates, locations    │ ──► │ completed   │ ──► │ transcriptions returned │
│ and venues arranged │     │ and audio   │     │ to participants for     │
│                     │     │ taped       │     │ comment and confirmation│
│                     │     │             │     │ of authenticity         │
└─────────────────────┘     └─────────────┘     └─────────────────────────┘
                                                            │
          ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
          ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Analysis of             │     │ Information collated    │
│ transcriptions, data    │ ──► │ and used as a basis for │
│ processed according to  │     │ writing results -       │
│ themes and charts       │     │ Chapter 5               │
│ constructed             │     │                         │
└─────────────────────────┘     └─────────────────────────┘
```

3.9 Procedures for the Analysis of Data

The data from the questionnaire and the in-depth interviews were analysed separately.

Once analysed the data from the questionnaire was compared where appropriate with the data from the interviews and this was woven into the discussion (See chapter 6).

3.9.1 Analysis of the questionnaire data

The data from each question was collated on recording forms. Major themes were developed within which the responses were recorded. Within each theme a number of categories were established. Owing to the number of categories that emerged these were collapsed so that the categories became broader and the amount of material became easier to work with. The participant variables of gender, age, years of service as an Education Adviser and previous employment were added to each category and quantified. The data was then recorded in chart form. The

emerging themes were: role; employment issues; strategies used by Education Advisers; training, professional development and supervision; and barriers that impeded the work of the Education Adviser.

3.9.2 Analysis of interview data

The transcripts from the interviews were analysed and data recorded within the themes of that emerged. Within each of the major themes categories were identified and reclassified as they emerged during the analysis of the transcripts. These categories were further reduced using as a basis common threads. The participant variables of gender, age, years of service as an Education Adviser and previous employment were added to each category and quantified. Charts depicting this data are included in Chapter 5.

3.10 Validity and Reliability

This study has incorporated quantitative and qualitative methods. Qualitative studies use methods and techniques from both quantitative and qualitative types of research. Sometimes quantitative options are used at one phase of the research and qualitative at another phase. It is a matter of using the most appropriate methodology to obtain the answers to the questions asked. By using a variety of techniques and differing research methods there is a greater chance that the phenomena can be explored in a number of ways so that what becomes known about a situation is increased (Bouma 1996).

The use of a focus group, the questionnaire and in-depth interviews provided a chain of evidence that enhanced the accuracy and captured the realities perceived by Education Advisers at the time of their participation. The stories provided by participants were their stories and told in the manner in which they wished to tell those stories. Participants were provided opportunity to correct or change their stories should they have wished to do so. Transcripts were not analysed until authenticity had been verified by the participants.

3.11 Consideration of Ethical Issues

Ethical issues have been considered and the principles contained in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research and Teaching Involving Human Subjects (Massey University, 1999) has guided the study. These principles relate to:

- Informed consent;

- Confidentiality;

- Minimising of harm;

- Truthfulness; and

- Social sensitivity.

3.11.1 Informed consent

Education Advisers were informed of the pending research prior to the research being undertaken. The informing of Education Advisers was made at the NETS 1999 conference well in advance of the commencement of the research.

Further to this participants were provided with information sheets that informed them of the research and provided them with their rights as participants. The rights of participants were also discussed prior to the focus group commencing their discussions and prior to each interview being held. Education Advisers who were participants in the focus group and in the interviews were required to complete consent forms before participating.

3.11.2 Potential risks to participants and clients

The risk of participants being recognised were minimal. However there was a possibility that someone from inside the service could recognise a colleague. To minimise the risk, place names, narrow geographical locations and the names of any person or persons mentioned in the interviews were deleted. The audio tape of each interview was given a numerical number but in a numerical order different from that in which the interview was held. Rather than use the name of the interviewee a pseudonym was used throughout the reporting.

No psychological damage is likely to occur through participants telling their own story. In the researcher's own experience as an Education Adviser for NETS it was observed that when advisers met they readily discussed their work experiences with other Education Advisers. If any interviewee appeared distressed the interviewee was asked if they wanted the audio recorder to turned off. The interviewee had the right to ask for the interview to be stopped at any time. A copy of the transcript verbatim was sent to each interviewee for factual verification and comment before an analysis of the interview was made.

3.12 Feedback to Participants

Following the interview the participants were sent a copy of the interview transcript for comment, to check the authenticity, and to verify the document.

Results of the questionnaire were presented at the 2000 NETS Conference. Further to this during the 2001 NETS Conference the results from the interviews were presented. To conclude the reporting back it is intended that the findings of the research will be presented at the 2002 NETS conference. A copy of the completed thesis is to be circulated to the participants who consented to be interviewed. This copy of the thesis will also be made available to all other Education Advisers on request.

3.13 Summary

The study involved surveying and interviewing Education Advisers employed by the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service. The framework allowed for the voices of the participating Education Advisers to be heard within a qualitative paradigm that also used quantitative techniques to find answers to the research questions. A multi-case, multi-site case study approach was used within qualitative and quantitative paradigms that included the use of narrative methodology and survey.

The research design framework was described in some detail, diagrams provided to illustrate the processes followed for the focus group, questionnaire and

interviews, and the ethical issues were discussed. The following two chapters report the results of the study

CHAPTER 4
REPORTING THE FINDINGS

The Questionnaire

4.1 Introduction

The findings are reported in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Chapter 4 reports the findings from the questionnaire and Chapter 5 the findings from the interviews.

The present chapter reports on the findings of the questionnaire. The questionnaire sought both qualitative and quantitative type responses. The results are presented in five sections that present a particular theme relevant to the research. Variables used in the reporting of the data are gender, age, years of service as a NETS Education Adviser and previous work experience. Unless otherwise stated the number of possible responses is 26 (N=26). The first four sections present the results from both quantitative and quantitative data. The final section presents qualitative data. A discussion on these findings is reported in Chapter 6.

4.2 Previous employment, work skills and experiences, and present employment issues

Previous employment, work skills and experiences, and present employment issues may have an effect upon how successful the Education Adviser is in returning non-enrolled students to school, to a course or in getting them into the work force. Skills and experiences gained in their previous work may be transferred from and useful to the Education Adviser in their adviser role. Employment issues identified by Education Advisers may be beneficial or detrimental to the role and tasks that they are expected to perform.

The participants were asked how they were recruited to the position of Education Adviser. Education Advisers were most frequently recruited through being recommended by a previous Education Adviser. Table 4.1 shows 9 Education Advisers were recommended by the Ministry of Education or were aware of NETS and made their availability known to the manager.

Table 4.1
Method of recruitment.

Method of Recruitment	No of Responses	Percentage %
Recommended by previous NETS Education Adviser	11	43
Recommended by Ministry of Education	5	19
Contacted NETS and advised them of availability	4	15
Other	6	23
Total	26	100

When considering the research variables, of the 11 Education Advisers who were recommended for the position by a previous Education Adviser, 50% of the total number of females had been recommended as compared with 39% of the total number of males. There were 57% from within the 45–54 age group and 42% from within the 55+ age group. There were 53% of Education Advisers who had worked from 0 to 3 years, and 56% of those had previously worked in the field of education.

Table 4.2

Hours Education Advisers work per week.

Hours worked per week	No of Responses	Percentage %
0–10	10	38
11–20	7	27
21–30	7	27
31+	2	8
Totals	26	100

As shown in Table 4.2 the greatest number of Education Advisers work for less than 21 hours per week with 38% working for less than 10 hours in a week thus indicating that the job is very much a part-time occupation. There were two Education Advisers who indicated that they worked for more than 31 hours per week and therefore could consider the job to provide them with full-time employment.

Of those who worked 20 hours or less per week there were half (50%) of the female Education Advisers and almost three-quarters (72%) of the males. Forty-three percent of Education Advisers aged less than 45 years worked for more than 21 hours per week indicating that the younger group of Education Advisers were in geographical areas that had a greater number of cases or where cases required a greater length of time to resolve.

The respondents were asked to provide the reasons for becoming Education Advisers. A number of Education Advisers gave multiple reasons in response to the question. The response to reasons for becoming a NETS Education Adviser varied although there were considerable numbers whose responses could be placed within specific categories.

Table 4.3 shows 17 (65%) Education Advisers became involved in NETS because they considered NETS to be a worthwhile service and an opportunity to help students who were falling out of mainstream education.

Seven (27%) Education Advisers saw NETS as an opportunity to further use their previous work experience and considered that because of this they were well suited to carrying out the NETS contract. Six Education Advisers (23%) stated they were drawn to the job as it seemed to be both challenging and interesting. A further six (23%) thought the job provided an opportunity for them to maintain their professional contacts and educational links with schools, colleagues and agencies. There were four (15%) respondents who became Education Advisers to provide themselves with an interest and income in retirement.

Table 4.3
Reasons for becoming a NETS Education Adviser.

Reason	Number of Responses	Percentage %
Worthwhile service/wanted to help students	17	65
To use experience/suited to the work	7	27
Challenging/interesting job	6	23
Maintain professional contact/educational links	6	23
Provide an interest/income in retirement	4	15
Part time position	3	12
Self management/independent/less bureaucratic	3	12
Needed the work and income	2	8
Had been made redundant	2	8
to compliment other work	2	8
Less stressful than previous employment	1	4

When asked to consider how successful they thought they were in their job Education Advisers determined their success rate to be high. The advisers considered they were returning a large majority of students to education be it either back to school, on to an approved course or into the work force.

Table 4.4 shows there were 18 (69%) respondents who considered they successfully resolved 80% or more of the cases allocated to them and 6 (23%) who reported a success rate of 60%–79%. One Education Adviser considered their success rate to be less than 60%.

Education Advisers whose previous employment background was in areas other than education (89%) considered that they had a greater level of success at 80–100% than Education Advisers whose previous employment background was in education (59%). There were 67% of Education Advisers with 0–3 years service and 73% with 3 plus years service who considered their success rate to be 80% or better.

Table 4.4

Education Advisers' indication of case success rate.

Percentage Success Rate	Number of responses	Percentage %
80–100	18	69
60– 79	6	23
< 60	1	4
No response	1	4
Totals	26	100

A higher percentage of males (28%) than females (13%) considered their success rate to have been in the 60%–79% range. Of those whose previous employment background was in education, 35% are represented in the 60%–79% range as compared with 0% whose previous employment background was in the non-education sector.

In considering the benefit of their previous work background two respondents, both from the non-educational sector, reported that previous employment had been of little benefit to them in their role as Education Adviser. Of the remaining respondents, 92% considered their previous occupation either extremely beneficial or beneficial to them in their role as Education Adviser (Table 4.5.)

The two respondents who reported their previous employment to be of little benefit to them in their role as Education Adviser are aged less than 45 years, had 0–3 years work experience in the Education Adviser role and had a previous work background in the non-educational employment sector.

Table 4.5
Benefit of previous employment

Degree of Benefit	Number of Responses	Percentage %
Extremely Beneficial	19	73
Beneficial	5	19
Little Benefit	2	8
Totals	26	100

Participants were asked to list what they considered to be the three most desirable skills required to be an effective NETS Education Adviser.

Table 4.6 shows that skills associated with "people interaction" are recognised by Education Advisers to be of most valuable to carry out the job effectively. There were 50 (63%) responses identifying people skills. These responses included: empathy; people skills; communication; listening; being non-judgemental; and having patience. Skills associated with "systems knowledge" account for 22 (27%) responses and included: knowledge of the education system; local education community; organisation and administration; networking with schools and agencies; creditability; and resourcefulness. The third skill area was associated with "problem solving" and accounted for 7 (9%) responses.

The high number of responses (50), indicating the importance placed upon people skills by Education Advisers, was reflected across the full range of variables.

"Systems Knowledge" skills were desirable for 12 (67%) of all males and 7 (88%) of all females and for 83% of the 55 plus age group, 82% of the Education Advisers who had worked for 3 plus years, and 76% of those whose previous employment experience was in education compared with 67% whose employment experience was in the non-education sector.

Table 4.6
Most desirable skills required by NETS Education Advisers.

Area of skill	Number of Responses [1]	Percentage %
People interaction	50	63
Systems knowledge	22	27
Problem solving	7	9
Other	1	1
Total	80	100

"Problem Solving" skills were seen as important by 7 (27%) respondents. The majority of these respondents were aged 55 plus years and represented 36% of the Education Advisers in this age group. Of the 7 respondents (5) 28% of males considered problem solving skills to be important.

Participants were asked to provide the previous work, training or life experiences that were of benefit to them as NETS Education Advisers.

Table 4.7
Previous work, training, life experiences beneficial to the work of Education Advisers.

Work, training and life experiences	Number of Responses	Percentage %
Education/teaching	17	65
Other employment/occupations	7	27
Being a parent	7	27
Counsellor	6	23
Personal Issues	6	23
Member of church/social work	4	15
Member of service club/organisation	4	15
Links with Maori	4	15
Living overseas	2	8
Age	2	8
Known locally/local knowledge	2	8

.

---

1 Although N=26, participants provided a number of responses within each area of skill. Therefore Total N is more than 26.

Education and teaching occupations and experiences (65%) rated highly among the respondents as being of benefit to them as a NETS Education Adviser (Table 4.7.) Other responses worthy of note are being a parent (27%); other employment or occupations (27%); counselling experience (23%); personal issues (23%); being a member of a church (15%); having links with Maori (15%); or being a member of a service club or organisation (15%).

Thirteen (72%) males as compared with four (50%) females stated having been an educationalist was of benefit to them as a NETS Education Adviser. In the 55 plus age bracket all participants reported being an educationalist was of benefit as did. fifty-three percent of participants who had 0-3 years employment experience as an Education Adviser. Eighty-two percent of participants with 3 plus years experience as an Education Adviser also considered that previous employment in the education sector was beneficial to their work as an Education Adviser.

Experience as a parent was seen as beneficial to their work by 50% of females and 43% of those in the age range of less than 45 years. Of those whose previous employment experience was in non-education occupations 3 (35%) compared with 4 (24%) from an educational employment background considered parenthood as being of benefit in their work as a NETS Education Adviser.

Previous counselling experience was considered by six (23%) of the respondents as being beneficial. Of those six participants, five had previous employment background in the education sector.

Sixty-five percent of participants indicated that the manager was the person within the NETS organisation with whom they had the most contact. (Table 4.8).

Education Advisers contacted a work colleague the most in 28% of the responses. Males stated they contacted the manager most often (85%) as compared with females (22%). Females (75%) tended to contact their colleagues more often than they did in making contact with the NETS manager. Education Advisers who had a

work background in education contacted the manager more often, more than those whose previous employment was in the non-education sector.

Table 4.8
Most frequent contacts within the NETS organisation

NETS contact	Number of Responses	Percentage %
Manager	19	65
Education Advisers	8	28
Administration Secretary	2	7
Total	29^2	100

Education Advisers reported making contact with the NETS manager (Table 4.9). Contact is made on a weekly basis by 19%, fortnightly 46% and monthly by 16% of Education Advisers. There are 19% of Education Advisers who rarely contact the NETS manager.

Males (50%) and those whose previous employment was in the education sector (53%) made most contact with the NETS manager.

Table 4.9
Regularity of contact with NETS manager.

Frequency of contact	Number of Responses	Percentage %
Weekly	5	19
Fortnightly	12	46
Monthly	4	16
Very seldom	5	19
Totals	26	100

Table 4.10 shows that when making contact with the NETS manager respondents stated that contact was mainly to discuss cases (92%). Sixty-five percent of Education Advisers made contact to obtain administrative advice and 62% to discuss alternative education or alienation. Contact to obtain exemptions or to have expenditure authorised was made by 50% of Education Advisers. A

---

[2] Three respondents indicated two contacts as most equal.

significant number (12) of Education Advisers contacted the manager for reassurance as to what they were doing.

Table 4.10
Reasons for contacting the NETS manager.

Reason for contact	Number of Responses[3]	Percentage %
Discuss cases	24	92
Administrative advice	17	65
Discuss AE or alienation	16	62
Obtain extension of case time or to authorise expenditure	13	50
Gain reassurance	12	46
Off load concerns	6	23

For those who sought administrative advice percentages of between 56 and 68 are recorded across the variables. Time extensions or authorisation of expenditure is made more often by females (75%) than males (39%) and by those whose work background was in education (59%) as compared with non-education work backgrounds (33%).

Those who make contact to discuss alternative education and alienation account for 88% of females and 50% of males and was highest among the less than 45 year age group (86%) and the 55 plus group (59%).

Reassurance was most often sought by Education Advisers from non-education work backgrounds (67%), distributed evenly across the years of service as an adviser and from within the less than 45 years age group (71%).

Males (28%) tended to make contact to off load their concerns more often than did females (13%).When asked how regularly they would contact another Education Adviser 63% of females stated that they made weekly contact. Table 4.11 shows 9 (34%) Education Advisers made contact with another Education Adviser on a

---

[3] Although N=26, participants provided a number of responses within each contact area. Therefore total N is more than 26.

weekly basis and 6 (23%) on a monthly basis. There were 8 (31%) Education Advisers who seldom have contact with another Education Adviser.

Of the male participants 39% very seldom made contact with another Education Adviser. Education Advisers from a non-education sector work background (44%) had less contact other Education Advisers than those whose work background was within the education sector (24%).

Table 4.11
Contact between Education Advisers.

Frequency of contact	Number of Responses	Percentage %
Weekly	9	34
Fortnightly	2	8
Monthly	6	23
Seldom	8	31
Never	1	4
Total	26	100

The participants, in response to being asked what contact with other Education Advisers was for, stated that it was mainly to discuss cases (92%). Contact by 16 (62%) Education Advisers was to discuss alternative education and alienation. Education Advisers made contact to seek reassurance from their colleagues and for social contact (Table 4.12).

Males (89%) and females (100%) contacted Education Advisers to discuss cases. Females (88%) discussed alternative education and alienation as did 73% of those who had worked as an Education Adviser for more than 3 years.

Females (63%) sought reassurance more than males (6%) as did those in the age group less than 45 years (43%). Significant numbers of Females (63%) sought contact for social reasons. Those seeking contact for social reasons tended to be Education Advisers in the less than 45 year age group (43%).

Table 4.12

Reasons for contact with other Education Advisers.

Reasons for contact	Number of Responses	Percentage %
Discuss cases	24	92
Alternative education and alienation	16	62
Social reasons	8	31
Seek reassurance	6	23
Miscellaneous	5	19
Administrative advice	2	8
Off Load	2	8
Peer supervision	2	8

4.3 Strategies

Education Advisers used a variety of strategies to assist them to return students to a legal educational setting, to be enrolled in a course or to engage the student in the work force. Education Advisers were asked to indicate how they introduced themselves to students and families and to consider both a successful and unsuccessful case that they had been involved with. They were asked to list the steps used in working through these cases to their conclusion. This section reports the strategies used by Education Advisers.

How Education Advisers introduced themselves to parents and students may have had a bearing upon case outcomes. Table 4.13 shows that 16 (62%) Education Advisers when introducing themselves gave their name and 7 (27%) used the term NETS. A further 6 (23%) used the term Ministry of Education while 5 (19%) used the term Education Adviser. Some variations upon the term NETS is used. These variations included Non-Enrolled Student Service (2) and Non-Enrolment Truancy Officer (1). There were 13 (50%) Education Advisers who reported that they used the terms "Help" and "Assist" when introducing themselves to parents and students. The data revealed 5 (19%) of the Education Advisers presented identification cards.

Table 4.13

Terms used when Education Advisers introduce themselves to parents and students.

Introduction used	Number of Responses[4]	Percentage %
Name	16	62
Help/assist	13	50
NETS	6	23
Ministry of Education	6	23
Education Adviser	5	19
Show ID	5	19
Greet in ethnic language	3	12
Firstly by phone	2	8
Seek parental assistance	2	8
Non Enrolled Student Service	2	8
I have a referral for	1	4
Smile	1	4
I'm not here to get you into trouble	1	4
Explain role	1	4
Non Enrolment Truancy Officer	1	4
Depends on the cultural situation	1	4

In considering a recent case where the Education Adviser *successfully* returned a student to either school, a training course or into a job Table 4.14 shows the most frequently used strategies used were: home or work visits; making contact with a school, course provider or employer; discussing options and issues with the family; arranging placements or enrolments; contacting the home; arranging and/or taking the students to an interview; and following up a placement to ascertain if the placement is working or successful.

Male Education Advisers (89%) made more visits to the home or place of work than female Education Advisers (63%) and visits were made by 100% of those Education Advisers aged less than 45 years. Eight of nine Education Advisers whose previous work background was in the non-education sector made home or work visits.

Contact with a school, course provider or employer was made by 18 (69%) of the Education Advisers and 88% of all female Education Advisers. Education

---

[4] Although N=26, participants provided a number of responses to how they introduced themselves. Therefore total N is more than 26.

Advisers in the 55 plus age group (83%) were the most likely group to contact a school, course provider or employer.

Education Advisers whose previous employment background was in education were more likely to discuss issues and options available to non-enrolled students than those who had previous employment backgrounds in the non-educational sectors.

Male Education Advisers (72%) more frequently arranged the placement or enrolment of a student than female Education Advisers (50%). Those aged less than 45 years were less likely to arrange placement or enrolment than those aged more than 45 years as were Education Advisers with an employment background in education (76%) than those with a non-education employment background (44%).

Table 4.14
Actions taken by Education Advisers in a *successful* case outcome.

Actions taken	Number of Responses	Percentage %
Home or workplace visit	21	81
Contact school, course provider, employer	18	69
Discussed issues and options	17	65
Arranged placement or enrolment	17	65
Contacted the home	9	35
Arranged for and/or took to interview	8	31
Followed up placement	8	31
Attempted to enrol at the Correspondence School as SBAE - arranged exemption	6	23
Listened and gathered information	4	15
Contacted referrer	4	15
Took student to AE orientation	4	15
Assisted with purchase of uniform	2	8
Provided counselling	1	4

When asked to consider a recent case where the outcome of returning a student to school, a training course or into a job was *not successful*, Education Advisers reported, the strategies they used most frequently were: visiting the home, family or school; discussing the issues and options available; contacting schools or providers; contacting the Ministry of Education or another agency; contacting the home or family; and contacting the referrer (Table 4.15). Unsuccessful cases were closed by 15% of Education Advisers and 19% referred the cases onto another agency.

Home, family or school visits were made more often by male Education Advisers (78%) than female Education Advisers (63%), by those less than 45 years of age and by those who had been working as an Education Adviser for less than 3 years.

Education Advisers who used the strategy of discussing the referral and providing options for families included 71% of the 45–54 age group and 55% of those who had more than 3 years service as an Education Adviser.

Of the Education Advisers who contacted the Ministry of Education or another agency to discuss referrals or obtain advice 4 (50%) were female and 5 (28%) were male. The nine Education Advisers (35%) who sought advise from other agencies appeared to be a small group when the unsuccessful outcome is considered. Four (44%) had employment backgrounds that were in the non-education sector and 5 (29%) employment backgrounds in the education sector.

Table 4.15
Actions taken by Education Advisers in an unsuccessful case outcome.

Actions undertaken	Number of Responses	Percentage %
Home, family or school visit	19	73
Discuss case and provide options	13	50
Contacted school or provider	11	42
Contacted the home or family	9	35
Contacted MOE or other agency	9	35
Contacted the referrer	6	23
Referred the case to another agency	5	19
Became aquatinted with the case	5	19
Took students/parents to orientation or interview	5	19
Organised placement	4	15
Closed case	4	15
Arranged exemption	3	12
Exhausted every avenue	2	8
Arranged assistance for student	1	4

4.4 Role of the Education Adviser

Education Advisers were asked to define their role, report upon tasks they undertook, and consider any overlap of the Education Adviser's role with a social worker role. In doing so the Education Advisers reported a varying number of roles, responsibilities and activities that they considered contributed to their role of Education Adviser (Table 4.16). There was an indication that some Education Advisers did not have a clear understanding of their role and carried out activities that were outside of the role and job description provided by NETS management. This section reports the findings regarding the role of education adviser as perceived by the participants.

In reporting the role of Education Adviser Table 4.16 shows 85% of Education Advisers signalled their role to be to "assist young people to return to education". Listening to, discussing the case with, and developing an empathy for the student

and the family was considered an important role by 42% of Education Advisers. Significant numbers of male Education Advisers (50%) considered the afore mentioned to be a major role as did Education Advisers (71%) aged from 45–54 years. This role was identified by 9 (53%) Education Advisers who had a previous employment background in the education sector.

Table 4.16
Role of the NETS Education Adviser

Role	Number of Responses	Percentage %
Assist students to return to education	22	85
Listen, discuss, develop empathy	11	42
Locate non-enrolled students	5	19
Liaise between students, parents, school, providers	4	15
Access professional support	4	15
Verify alienation status	3	12
Ensure provisions of the Education Act complied with	3	12
Ensure students are safe	3	12
Have knowledge of options	2	8
Empower students and families	2	8
Report to NETS manager	1	4

Locating students who were non-enrolled was considered a role by 5 (19%) Education Advisers all of whom had a previous employment background in the education sector. Other roles provided by the Education Advisers were: to liaise between student, parent, school and provider (4); access professional support (4); verify alienation status of the student (3); ensure that the provisions of the Education Act were complied with (3); ensure that students were safe (3); empower students and families (2); have a knowledge of options (2); and report to the NETS manager (1).

Table 4.17
Time spent on case related activities

Tasks	Number of Responses	Percentage %
Telephone		
< 20%	7	27
20–39%	6	23
40–60%	3	12
Administration		
< 20%	12	46
20–39%	7	27
40–60%	0	0
Locating students, home visits and interviews		
< 20%	3	12
20–39%	5	18
40–60%	14	54
Travel		
< 20%	2	8
20–39%	3	12
40–60%	1	4
Professional contact		
< 20%	7	27
20–39%	7	27
40–60%	2	8
Miscellaneous tasks		
< 20%	6	23
20–39%	1	4
40–60%	0	0

The Education Advisers were asked to list the six main components of their work and indicate the percentage (%) of case time that they spend on each of the components (Table 4.17).

The components listed by Education Advisers were allocated to six categories. Time spent on: telephone; administration; locating students, home visits and interviews; travel; making professional contact; and miscellaneous tasks.

Table 4.17 shows, of the Education Advisers (16) who listed using the telephone as being one of the six main components of the adviser's work, 7 used the telephone for less than 20% of referral time and 6 from 20–39% of the time. Of the 13 Education Advisers using the telephone up to 39% of the time 10 were males. Seven had a previous occupation in the non-education sector. Forty-six percent of Education Advisers spent less than 20% of case time on administrative tasks while 27% spent from 20–39% of their time on such tasks.

Locating students, home visits and carrying out interviews with parents and students took between 20–39% of five (18%) Education Advisers referral time while 14 Education Advisers (35%) spent 40–60% of their time on this task. There were 14 males (78%) and five females (63%) who spent up to 60% of their time in this way. Education Advisers with an employment background in the non-education sector spend more time on administration tasks than those with an employment background in the education sector.

Six Education Advisers reported travel as one of the main components of their work. Three spent between 20–39% of their time travelling, two less than 20% and one from 40–60% of their time travelling.

Professional contact was a component of their work reported upon by sixteen Education Advisers. Of these Education Advisers fourteen, twelve of who were males, spent less than 39% of their time on making professional contact. Miscellaneous tasks took up less than 20% of six Education Advisers' time. Five males reported these miscellaneous tasks taking up less than 20% of their time. Miscellaneous tasks were most often carried out by those with a previous employment background in the education sector.

Table 4.18 shows 13 (50%) Education Advisers stated there was an "inevitable link" between the role of the NETS Education Adviser and a social worker. Fifty-six percent of all males thought this link existed as did 67% of Education Advisers aged 55 plus years. This link was considered to exist by 73% of Education Advises

who had been in the position for 3 plus years and by 59% of Education Advisers whose previous occupation had been in the education sector.

Education Advisers (12) considered that by working with a variety of agencies they take on the social worker role. Females (57%), those in the less than 45 and in the 55 plus age groups, those with more than 3 years experience and those who were previously employed in the education sector support this notion that by working with a variety of agencies they are taking on the social worker role.

Table 4.18
Links between the Education Adviser and social worker role.

Social work links	Number of Responses[5]	Percentage %
Inevitable link	13	50
Working with agencies	12	46
Social issues impinging upon education	9	35
Truancy only part of the problem	6	23
Never allow a link	3	12
Similar skills to a social worker	2	8
Visiting homes and families	2	8

Nine Education Advisers reported that dealing with social issues impinging on education cast them in the role of social worker. A further six stated that truancy was only part of the problem that they had to deal with.

There were three Education Advisers who stated that they "never" allowed the social work to become part of their role.

4.5 Training, Professional Development and Supervision

Training, Professional Development and Supervision is an important consideration for Education Advisers who often work in isolation from their colleagues and NETS management. Education Advisers were asked to consider the need for

---

[5] Although N=26, some participants provided a number of responses for a link between the Education Adviser and Social Worker role. Therefore N is greater than 26.

training and components that would be beneficial to have included in a training programme. In addition to this Education Advisers were asked to report on any benefits they thought could accrue from a programme of supervision. This section reports the views of the Education Advisers to training, professional development and supervision.

Table 4.19
Training and reflective practice

Form of training	Number of Responses		Percentage %	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Preservice training	22	0	85	0
Regular training	22	2	85	8
Reflective practice and appraisal	18	4	69	15

Table 4.19 shows 22 Education Advisers responded positively toward pre-service training. This number included all participants those whose former employment had been in the education sector. There were 22 Education Advisers who approved of on going regular training. This number included all females and all those in the less than 45 age group.

Reflective practice and appraisal was considered to be an important aspect of training and professional development by 18 Education Advisers. Of these 18 Education Advisers, all of those who had been in the job 3 plus years and all those aged less than 45 years approved. Seventy-five percent of those from a previous employment background in the education sector approved of reflective practice and appraisal.

Respondents listed a wide range of topics for inclusion in a training programme including 14 one off topics as seen in Table 4.20. Topics provided were: regulations and policy (11); education trends and development (8); networking and agencies (7); case studies (7); alternative education (7); role of the Education Adviser (5); and administration (5).

Education Advisers with an employment background in education sought training in the areas of: regulations and policy; case studies; and alternative education. Education Advisers with an employment background in the non-education sector sought training more often in the areas of: networking and agencies; administration; education trends and development; and the role of Education Adviser.

Table 4.20
Suggested topics for inclusion in a training programme

Topics	Number of Responses	Percentage %
One off responses	14	54
Regulations and policy	11	42
Educational trends and development	8	31
Networking and agencies	7	27
Alternative education	7	27
Case studies	7	27
Administration	5	19
Education Adviser's role	5	19
Cultural sensitivity	4	15
Approaching schools, agencies, MOE	4	15
Counselling, mediation	3	12
Best practices	3	12
Keeping safe	2	8
Courses available	2	8

The issues most often identified by Education Advisers for inclusion in a programme for national conference or local cluster meetings were in the areas of: policy and regulation; best practices and skills; and alternative education. No one particular issue was raised by more than (9) 35% of Education Advisers (Table 4.21).

Table 4.21
Issues for inclusion at National Conference or Local Cluster Meetings.

Issue	Number of responses	Percentage %
Policy, regulations, law, data	9	35
Best practices and skills	7	27
Alternative Education	7	27
One off responses	5	19
Working with schools, providers, agencies	5	19
Case Studies	4	15
Supervision	3	12
Administration and contracts	3	12
Education trends	3	12
Conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation	3	12
Training	2	8

When asked to comment upon the benefit of a programme of supervision (6) 23% of Education Advisers stated that there would be either no benefit or that they were unsure if they would benefit at all. Of those who responded in this manner 5 were male and 1 female.

Benefits of supervision, as shown in Table 4.22, were given as gaining someone else's perspective (31%), getting appraisal and feedback (27%), getting support and reassurance (27%), being able to off load (15%), and receiving professional development (12%). There were 6 one off responses.

Education Advisers with an education sector employment background (41%) and those in the 55 plus age group (42%) considered that supervision would be beneficial for getting another person's perspective of their work.

Forty-three percent of Education Advisers aged less than 45 years considered getting appraisal and feedback of their performance was a valuable aspect of an appraisal programme.

Table 4.22
Education Advisers perceived benefits for a programme of supervision.

Benefit	Number of responses	Percentage %
Gaining someone else's perspective	8	31
Appraisal and feedback	7	27
Support and reassurance	7	27
None	6	23
One off responses	6	23
Able to off load concerns	4	15
Professional development	3	12

4.6 Barriers to returning non-enrolled students to education

Barriers are those obstacles or issues that Education Advisers experience which make it difficult for them to bring a referral to a satisfactory conclusion. In working towards returning non-enrolled students to education or into the work force Education Advisers often find themselves confronted by barriers that either prevent them from doing so or that make the process for enrolment or work difficult, frustrating and time consuming. Education Advisers have a limit to the time that they can spend upon individual referrals. Barriers that interfere with the progress of a referral may mean that the case cannot be completed within the time limit and therefore is unresolved and closed.

Education Advisers were asked to list any barriers they had encountered that either adversely effected or make their job difficult. In doing so Education Advisers identified seventeen separate items that could be classified as barriers (Table 4.23). No one particular barrier was identified by more than 38% of participants although some barriers such as school principals, school bureaucracy, and schools refusing to enrol have a close relationship.

Barriers identified by 19% or more Education Advisers included: school principals and school bureaucracy 38%; contract and employment conditions (31%); schools refusing to enrol (27%); parent or caregiver apathy (27%); student behaviour and apathy (19%); social services and agencies (19%); alternative education issues (19%); and the Ministry of Education (19%).

Table 4.23
Barriers that hinder the work of Education Advisers

Barriers	Number of responses	Percentage %
Principals and school bureaucracy	10	38
Contract and conditions of employment	8	31
Schools refusing to enrol	7	27
Parent and caregiver apathy	7	27
Student apathy and behaviour	5	19
Social services and agencies	5	19
Ministry of Education	5	19
Alternative Education issues	5	19
Privacy Act	4	15
No place of last resort	4	15
No telephone available to parents and difficulties in locating students/families	4	15
Specialist Education Service	3	12
Dysfunctional Families	2	8
District Truancy Service	2	8
Time management	2	8
One off responses	2	8

Fifty percent of male Education Advisers reported that principals and school bureaucracy was a barrier, hampering or preventing the enrolment of a student, as did 55% (6) of those aged 55 years and older and 55% (6) of advisers with 3 plus years service. Forty-one percent (7) of Education Advisers whose previous employment was in the education sector reported difficulties experienced with principals and school bureaucracy.

Six (33%) Male Education Advisers reported that the contract and employment conditions were a barrier to them in their work. Of the Education Advisers who reported in this way there was 44% of those whose employment background was in

the non-education sector and 43% in each of the age groups of less than 45 and 45–54 years.

5.7 Summary

Analysis of the data collected from the questionnaire indicates that the majority of Education Advisers were recruited through recommendation and mainly work part-time for less than twenty hours per week. Education Advisers considered themselves to be highly successful in their work and attributed this to having good people interaction and systems knowledge.

Although most Education Advisers worked in isolation from one another and from NETS management, they sought regular contact with both management and colleagues. The main purposes of this contact was to discuss referrals, alternative education, and to obtain administrative advice.

A variety of strategies were used by Education Advisers when working upon referrals. Of the strategies used, using the term NETS appeared problematic. Successful cases included: home or workplace visits; contacting schools, providers and employees; and discussing with students and families options.

Eighty-five percent of Education Advisers stated that their role was to assist students to return to education. Education Advisers also considered their role to include: being a good listener; leading discussions on situations and options; and to develop empathy with students and families. At the same time fifty percent of Education Advisers saw that their role was closely linked to that of a social worker, a role that is outside of the Education Adviser's contract.

Education Advisers approved of pre-service and ongoing training, and to a lesser degree upon reflective practice and appraisal. Suggestions were made for training programmes to include such topics as: regulations and policy; educational trends and developments; networking and agencies; alternative education; and case studies.

The greatest barriers to Education Advisers being able to carry out their work were stated by participants to be: schools; school bureaucracy; principals; the constraints of the contract and conditions of employment; and parent and student apathy.

CHAPTER 5
REPORTING THE FINDINGS
The Interviews

5.1 Introduction

Narrative interviews were conducted in order to gain a deeper insight and understanding of the work of the Educational Advisers through attaining their perspective. Narrative provided Education Advisers with a methodology that allowed them, the tellers (participants), a way in which they were able to identify and examine the meaning behind what it was they did. Education Advisers told their stories and discussed experiences that they had which were related to their work and were of particular importance and interest to them. Analysis of the interviews revealed how individual participants defined who they were as Educational Advisers. The influence of previous and current employment upon the work of the Education Adviser, from the participants' perception, was able to be identified and examined. During the interviews Educational Advisers raised issues they saw as barriers to the successful fulfilment of their role. Participants were able to provide their thoughts and ideas about training, professional development and supervision.

In accordance with the purpose of narrative methodology, the researcher sought the meanings as perceived by the participants. It is how the participants viewed their role and the influencing factors that was important to the study.

Analysis of the interviews revealed that the Education Advisers saw their role, the barriers with which they were confronted and the need for direction of professional development, training and supervision in a variety of ways. The findings have been reported under the five main categories of role, strategies, previous employment and employment issues, training, professional development and supervision, and barriers. It is important to note that the issues and factors raised by the participants did not always fit exclusively into one particular category. Frequently issues and factors raised crossed category boundaries. For example the reader will observe that the issue of increasing complexity of the Education Adviser's role is alluded

to in categories other than that of the Role of the Education Adviser. This issue interplays with issues raised when other categories such as: previous employment, work skills and experiences and present employment issues; barriers Education Advisers experience in their work; training and professional development and supervision are reported.

5.2. Role of the Education Adviser

From an analysis of the interview data participants identified a variety of roles that together constituted the role of the Education Adviser. Throughout the course of the interviews participants used metaphors that likened their role to that of persons in other occupations. These included the social worker, detective, counsellor, educator, salvage contractor and persons who motivate (motivator), legalise (legaliser), exempt students from school (exemptor), facilitate (facilitator), and provide (provider of educational opportunity). Several participants reported that their role had changed over the time they had been employed by the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service, as an Educational Adviser, and reflected on how the change had effected the course of their work.

The results showed that Education Advisers were required to perform a number of roles to achieve a positive outcome when facilitating the return of students to a legal educational setting or into the workforce. Table 5.1 shows that more than half the participants saw themselves performing a role of either facilitator (making the arrangements, easing the way for a student to return to education), provider of opportunity (making of provision for a student to have further access to educational chance) or social worker. Participants stated that they took on the roles of detective (5), motivator (5), counsellor (3), exemptor (2), educator (1), and salvage contractor (1). Seven participants stated the role of the Education Adviser had changed and become more complex since they had commenced the job. Participants often reported more than one metaphor as they spoke about their role as Education Adviser. They reported undertaking multiple roles and could perform the role of police officer, social worker and facilitator while working on a particular referral. However the roles undertaken had a common link to the goal of returning the student to further education.

5.2.1. Education Adviser as Facilitator

Nine participants stated they undertook the role of facilitator(See Table 5.1). More males (7) saw themselves in the role of facilitator than did females (2). Three participants were aged 35–44 years compared with two in the 45–54 and four in the 55 plus age groups. Participants carried out facilitating tasks that included bringing together the parties involved, organising meetings, and meeting with agencies, providers and schools so that students could be successfully reinstated into school, attend a course, or be employed in the workforce. Helping students work through viable educational options and assisting entry into their preferred option were facilitating roles adopted by Education Advisers. Education Advisers stated:

> *My key role is to facilitate the best learning outcome* [placement of the student] *for that young person* (Colin)[6].

> *Help the student get back* [facilitating] *into an educational institution whether it be a school or alternative education* (Fay).

In the course of returning a student to education the Education Advisers often worked with a number of parties to achieve a satisfactory outcome. Parties involved in the process could have included in addition to the student, family members, school principals and teachers, government agencies, and education providers Facilitating a student's return to education involved Education Advisers in more than just getting an agreement from the student to return to education. Education Advisers reported that they were often required to facilitate meetings or meet with parties involved with the student to gain cooperation and agreement so that an educational placement could be achieved.

> *Try and pull everyone together and you get some cooperation and you get someone finally saying yeah ... if you don't get things moving nothing will ever happen* (Bob).

---

[6] Pseudonyms used throughout the reporting of data

Table 5.1
Role of the Education Adviser

Role	No of Responses N = 12	Gender		Age			Years of Service		Previous Employment	
		Male	Female	45	45-54	55+	3yrs	3+ yrs	Ed	Non Ed
Facilitator	9	7	2	3	2	4	5	4	5	4
Provider of educational opportunity	9	7	2	2	1	6	4	5	6	3
Social worker	7	6	1	2	2	3	5	2	3	4
Role has changed	7	4	3	2	1	4	3	4	5	2
Detective	5	4	1	1	1	3	2	3	3	2
Motivator	5	5	0	1	2	2	4	1	3	2
Counsellor	3	3	0	0	1	2	1	2	2	1
Exemptor	2	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Legaliser	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	2	1	1
Educator	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0
Salvage contractor	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0

The Educational Advisers reported that some students who had fallen out of the education system either wanted to return to school, find a place on a course (e.g., Course approved by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority) or move into employment. Often students and their parents did not know how to accomplish this or who to approach to help them achieve their goal. The Education Advisers worked in the role of facilitator, assisting families and students to achieve a placement in their place of choice. Steve reported that some students really did want to return to education but clearly did not know the process for getting back into education. He stated, *"Kids are keen to work ... they are keen to learn, they want some qualifications. They don't know how to go about it"*.

Being an agent for change was reported as a component of the Education Adviser role. The Education Adviser acted in a role whereby they represented the student and facilitated enrolment on their behalf. Education Advisers reported that they advocated for the student, argued their case and made arrangements for their enrolment in to education. Education Advisers further acted in the facilitator role by assisting parents to obtain for their children an exemption from school so that those children could be legally employed. However an exemption can only be sought for students aged 15 years. This involvement by Education Advisers often included arranging meetings and interviews with perspective employers. Barry reported that schools were very willing to cooperate in the exemption process indicating that the school would then be resolved from any further responsibility for the student's education.

> *I don't think that I have had any school that has said no to giving an exemption to a student. I think that they look at it as saying hey he's out of my hair* (Barry).

Education Advisers considered that as part of the facilitation process was a need to establish a working relationship with students and their families. This was necessary so that they could allay fears and assure students and families the Education Adviser could help them to achieve a satisfactory outcome for the student.

> *I try and reassure them first of all that they are not in trouble, that there are people that care about their kids, that there are alternatives to what might be happening, there are negotiators and people that work along beside them that work with them and mediate, act as a go between, between them and the schools, who will be there as a support* (Guy).

5.2.2. Education Adviser as Provider of Educational Option and Opportunity

Nine participants reported providing educational options and further opportunities for students. They located the pathways that allowed students to return to school, enrol in a course or enter the workforce. As identified in Table 5.1 participants

aged 55 plus years (6), those with three plus years of experience as an Education Adviser (5) and who had a previous work background in the education sector (6) were most likely to fulfil this role.

> *I often suggest that there are other alternatives that they might like to explore other than schooling... we have lots of other options available* (Carol).

Often the key to getting non-enrolled students back to education was for the Education Adviser to provide students with educational options. Participants explained that alternative options to formal schooling needed to be explored and provided in order to get students interested and back into education. Students were reported to often refuse to consider a return to formal schooling and therefore all the legal alternatives needed to be explored with them.

> *I think that they have got to have options, my view is that it doesn't matter, it doesn't really matter what they get involved in, what you get them placed on, as long as you get them placed on something. That then has a great possibility for leading on to other things* (David).

Some students were considered by Education Advisers to be psychologically unfit to return to a formal school setting. As Bob reported, "*Sometimes along with psychological factors there is a genuine reason to move a child along onto AE* (Alternative Education) *reasonably quickly.* He considered alternative education was an appropriate choice of placement for some of these students.

5.2.3. Education Adviser as Social Worker

Participants reported a component of their role was akin to that of a social worker. They stated that there was often a priority to resolve social issues first before educational issues could be addressed. Seven Education Advisers reported they worked in the role of social worker. Of those working in this role six were males compared with the one female. Three participants aged 55 plus years, reported working as a social worker, as compared with two aged 35–44 and two aged 45–54

years. Five participants had worked as an Education Adviser for less than three years as compared with two who had worked three plus years. Of the participants whose previous employment was in the non-education sector four reported working in the social worker role as compared with three whose previous occupation had been in the educational sector. Trevor stated, *"We have to be part, part social worker"*.

Participants reported that they needed to 'keep an eye' on the student and family, to follow up cases and ensure that what they as Education Advisers had put in place was still happening. Participants were concerned about closing off cases without being assured that a student placement was being successful because placements could fail. As with a social worker role, Education Advisers believed the monitoring of the student placement may lessen the likelihood of dropout.

> *It's just to say, let the family know, "hey I did care about getting your child back to school," and we are still keeping an eye on him just to make sure that he is still going to school and if there are any problems then we can sort them out* (Barry).

Participants reported that working in a social worker role was not considered by NETS management as a component of the Education Adviser's role. Participants stated that it was difficult for them to separate the role of Education Adviser from the role of social worker. This was problematic to them as they considered the need to be involved in dealing with the social issues so that they could then deal with the educational issues. They reported fudging the boundaries, (not fully reporting exactly what it was they were doing) to justify undertaking work dealing with social issues. As reported earlier, dealing with social issues was an area they were inclined to be drawn into and this issue needed to be resolved through official recognition being given to social work activities.

> *But I think that it should be acknowledged, that it should be part of your job, that you be a social worker, where as now we all do it under the carpet sort of thing because you can't avoid it* (David).

However until a child's social and emotional issues are dealt with learning will not occur (Bob).

There were issues that had to be dealt with... Once the baggage has been dealt with and they can get treated like special individuals they are away laughing. But it is those ones that we don't deal with the issues, we don't deal with the baggage... we are still going to have problems with those kids (Colin).

5.2.4. Education Adviser as Detective/Police Officer

Participants reported a rewarding and enjoyable aspect of their role was that of being a detective or police officer. Education Advisers stated they needed to find and locate students before they were able to place them in an educational setting. It was reported that considerable time and effort was often spent by Education Advisers in finding and locating students. Where this had been the case, Education Advisers likened their role to that of the police officer or detective as they looked for leads and tracked students to where they lived.

Of the five participants who stated undertaking the role of detective/police officer this was representative of four males and one female. Three Education Advisers aged 55 plus and three who had worked for three plus years reported their involvement in a role of detective or police officer.

I enjoy the work, especially when a kid is not around and you must go and find them. I enjoy that part when you must go and find them, obtain information and tracking the student to where they have gone. I find that very interesting. Sometimes you feel like a policeman slowly working through the leads to get a resolution (Barry).

At times the Education Adviser considered strategies akin to the sleuth as they endeavoured to make contact with students and their families. There were times when the Education Adviser had to consider that some families and students were elusive and just did not want to be found. They wanted to be left alone to get on

with their lives without being chased or found by people who wanted to return their children to school.

> *Yeah some of them hide, sometimes there is no phone, sometimes you go two or three times to the house and nobody is there. Yeah, I think that making contact is the most difficult... I went out one weekend, it was out at... it was a long trip and I am pretty sure that there was someone in the house but no. What I should have done was pull the car up way down the street somewhere but like an idiot I pulled up in front of the house and on my way around to the back door I was sure that there was someone* (Steve).

The mobility and transience of students often made it difficult for Education Advisers to ascertain the location of students. Families often moved about the country and had not informed the schools they were moving location. Guy stated that being unable to locate students was, *"Quite often it was because kids were moving from say one city that was in decline to the other end of the country and stopping off with grandmother or aunt as they were going and the documentation didn't follow"*. The lack of information as to the movement of the family made it difficult for the Education Adviser to find where the student was currently residing. When there was no forward address available the Education Adviser became the detective or police officer. Locating the student was often made difficult when agencies refused to provide location details to the Education Adviser often citing the Privacy Act as the reason for non-cooperation.

> *Now there is all this privacy and that sought of rubbish, things like the Privacy [Act] are so gone overboard now I feel very angry about it. The way we get crippled in our job we can't find out where the kids are, the information about where they are is on a computer in the local [agency] office and here is us being paid to go out looking for them and the information is there* (Richard).

5.2.5. Education Adviser as Motivator

Education Advisers reported that one of their roles involved providing motivation for students and families to support them in examining further education or training that may lead to an educational placement. Five male Education Advisers reported working in this motivational role.

> *It falls upon people like the NETS Advisers to try and encourage, enthuse inspire, motivate kids to look at other ways of getting an education* (Bob).

Motivating students was reported as taking the form of coaxing, persuading or enticing the student into participating in some form of further education. Some Education Advisers believed that some students needed to be motivated towards changing their attitude towards further education. Students needed to be made aware of the benefits of education and the possible negative outcomes for them if they failed to take up educational opportunities. Some students needed to be motivated to actually make something out of their lives rather than become dependent upon the state and others for their future well-being.

> *To try and kid them into doing something with a view to making something out of their lives* (Steve).

> *Nothing in our work, that is listed in our guidelines that we have to work on, but often when you get a change, it is a change in attitude and a change in motivation... if we are motivated we are away and it is the same with them* (David).

5.2.6. Education Adviser as Counsellor

Working as a counsellor was reported as one of the roles of the Education Adviser. Three male participants reported the counselling role to be an aspect of their work. One participant reported being a trained counsellor. Two respondents reported that they considered they worked in the counsellor role through listening to the problems and giving the student and family guidance especially in relation to education. Each of male Education Advisers had worked for more than three years

in the Education Adviser job. Trevor stated, *"We have to be part time religious adviser, counsellor or whatever"* whereas Richard in considering the Education Adviser role identified a counselling role when he stated, *"In some ways we are counsellors as well There is, a lot of people out there* [who] *are just crying out to be understood because people just see them as different and I think that they see us as like them as long as we go in a friendly way, not authoritarian and not to be patronising. I am a professional sent to help and find a solution to their problems"*

5.2.7. Education Adviser in Miscellaneous roles

Working as an exemptor (2), legalisor (2), educator (1), or salvage contractor (1) were reported as aspects of the Education Adviser role. Exemptors provided assistance to students, over the age of 15 years, to obtain an exemption from school in order to take up a position on a course or to undertake employment. Education Advisers either arranged for the student to be enrolled on a course and assisted with the exemption process or initiated the legalisation process for a student who was illegally already on a course or in employment. Once obtained, the exemption legitimised the student's position on a course (New Zealand Qualifications Authority approved) or in employment. Participants reported having little difficulty in getting school principals to complete the school section of the exemption application form.

> *I haven't had too much problem with that. I don't think that I have had any school that has said no to giving* [signing] *an exemption to a student* (Barry).

Participants who reported their role sometimes included being a 'legalisor' saw themselves as assisting students to shift from an illegal status to a legal status. Students aged between six and sixteen years who were not enrolled in a school and were not in receipt of an exemption (Section 22, Education Act 1989) were in an illegal position. As Carol stated, *"I've got one thing in mind, legalising, and that's my prime thing"*. Education Advisers endeavoured to legitimise that status by returning the students to school, placing them on a course or into employment.

One participant reported being an educator as an aspect of their role. This encompassed the responsibility of educating students and families about their legal responsibilities and the educational choices that were available to them.

> *Get them back into an educational institution whether it be school or alternative education after talking with the parents...I think that with a certain group of people it is difficult to get them to understand that their child has to go to school* (Fay).

Richard stated that an aspect of his role was that of a salvage contractor. The role of salvage contractor was related to rescuing students from the educationally problematic situation they found themselves in and providing them with further educational opportunity. In removing the student from an illegal situation and providing a legal placement the Education Adviser was rescuing and making safe the student's education.

> *Salvage contractor, salvage something, there is still something still there, whatever the background, whatever the trouble these kids are in, there is something salvageable there and if we can identify that and work on it and turn them around and get them back on track* ... (Richard).

5.2.8. The changing role of the Education Adviser

The role of the Education Adviser was reported to have evolved, been added to or to have changed since the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service came into being in 1996. It was reported that the change in role had resulted in the job becoming more difficult and complex than previously. Participants, particularly those with more than three years service as an Education Adviser, stated that their employment had changed from one of originally having to find students who were in the main already enrolled to one of having to convince non-enrolled students and their families that a return to education was in the best interest of the student. Seven participants, three female and four male reported a change in their role. Two participants in the age group 35–44 and four in the age group 55 plus years identified a change in role as did four of the participants with three plus years

service and five whose previous occupation had been in the education sector. As an example of the changing nature of the Education Adviser role Guy stated that he previously had identified his role as one of *"Finding students where schools had not kept up the paper trail and had failed to request or forward on student records"*. His task had been to find students and verify their attendance at a new school. He reported his role as having become much more complex since he was first employed as an Education Adviser. Many more students are reported as non-enrolled than was the situation when the service was established (Appendix 10) and the Education Adviser is required to either find a school willing to enrol the student, arrange for the student to attend a course or to be employed and assist parents to obtain an exemption where appropriate.

> *So a large number of kids that I dealt with in the early stages were not really truants in any kind of definition. They had been attending school nearly all of the time* (Guy).

Steve reported that the job was pretty low key when he first started working as an Education Adviser more than three years ago. His comments support Guy's statement that the role initially involved, in the main, finding students who were already in schools. When Steve was first employed as an Education Adviser he considered that there was not the proliferation of issues nor the number of tasks to attend to as there are now. He stated that he how had to work with, and try to place into education, students who were what he described as social misfits. Steve thought students had changed, making his task of returning them to formal school education a much more difficult task to fulfil.

> *In the early days* [longer than three years ago] *it was a bit of a dawdle really. Often mostly it was kids who had mostly changed schools, changed the locality but now it's got more into social misfits and... and it is quite, far more difficult now than it was* (Steve).

Problems as a result of increased drug and alcohol use by students and families was reported by Fay and Ewan as making their role of returning students to

education much more difficult. Students and families who were regular drug and alcohol users did not seem to be too concerned with educational matters. On the other hand schools were reluctant to enrol any student who was known to have a alcohol or drug problem.

> *Well it's* [little chance of getting students back to school] *fairly high. We are also getting an increasing drug and alcohol problem and it's quite difficult... getting a student who has a problem with drugs and alcohol to get to go to any place regularly* (Fay).

> *If there is anything such as the use of cannabis or drugs they will not even get a foot in the door* (Ewan).

Role changes were reported to have been brought about by the increase in the number of alternative options available to students for education and the number of tasks that had been added to the Education Adviser's role since NETS came into being. Options for students included returning to school, attending alternative education (if the criteria for enrolment was met), attending a course or becoming employed. Those who reported change to the Education Advisers role had originally considered their role as one of finding, then returning a student to a school, arranging or legitimising a course placement or assisting with an exemption so that a student could be placed in employment. Participants reported that in addition to the tasks afore mentioned they now; arranged alternative education placements through NETS Based Alternative Education programmes; verified alternative education placements; dealt with a large number of agencies and were involved with an increased number of social issues; followed up suspensions and exclusions for the Ministry of Education; completed more and more paper work; and sometimes were involved with Strengthening Families and Family Group Conferences.

> *We were mostly following up kids who were already enrolled in schools and then it changed because we* [NETS] *then got a contract to follow up the MOE* (Ministry of Education) *suspensions, then there was the SBAEs*

(School Based Alternative Education) *and the AEs* (Alternative Education) *and then we were doing the verifying for them... now the work is a lot harder... the work has definitely got harder, much harder* (Andrea).

Education Advisers reported that since they had become Education Advisers there was now increased difficulty in resolving referrals upon which they worked. They stated that the changed dynamics, of the school, students and families, had become more complex and therefore many referrals received by them had become difficult to resolve.

It has become increasingly difficult to find a resolution for them [the student] *and closing off sometimes means that you have to put it* [the referral] *back for placement or work that is beyond what you can do* (Ewan).

I find these days that the cases [referrals] *are becoming more and more complex... I also find that there is a degree of total disinterest by a number of families and their children in getting any form of further education what so ever* (Bob).

Ewan reported an increase in the amount of time that he spent doing paper work. As a result of additional tasks he believed there had been a corresponding increase in the amount of paper work that needed to be completed. If students did not meet the criteria for a placement the Education Adviser often provided the Manager of NETS with a case for inclusion. For the Education Adviser this involved an increase in paper work. Ewan was concerned that there was a duplication of paper work as a referral went from the Ministry of Education, to NETS, to the NETS advisers and then worked its way back again once the Education Adviser had completed his or her work upon it. Ewan stated, *"Just keeping up with the paper work, and I do find it quite heavy on the paper work. That is one of the big ones to do,* [issue to resolve] *to try and get the paper war under control"*.

As with other Education Advisers and Andrea's reference to the work having got harder and more difficult Bob stated that he had received an increased number of referrals. Because this had happened he thought he had received a larger number of more difficult referrals than he had previously received. Bob stated, *"I mean we are getting increasing numbers of cases so it is inevitable that there will be an increasing number of difficult and possibly unsolvable cases"*. He went on to say, *"When you are dealing in areas of sexual and physical abuse with deep psychological trauma NETS workers are not going to solve those on their own"*.

Education Advisers reported the tasks they had to do had become more complex and difficult. From having carried out tasks that in the main required finding students and verifying their school of attendance, assisting with enrolments or gaining exemptions Education Advisers were now involved in placing students in education who were apathetic, reluctant to return to education and whose families were engaged in social situations where their children's education appeared to be the least of their concerns.

5.3. Previous employment, work skills and experiences, and present employment issues

Participants identified a variety of previous employment, work skills and experiences, and present employment issues. These were issues that impacted upon the work of the Education Adviser. Seven of the Education Advisers interviewed came from an education sector background and five from a non-education sector background and as a result of this reported bringing to the Education Adviser role a variety of work skills and work experiences. Many of these skills and experiences were reported as beneficial to them in their role of Education Adviser. From the information gathered a number of current NETS related employment issues were reported.

5.3.1. Understanding truancy

A number of Education Advisers stated their previous employment had not prepared them sufficiently to fully understand the problems of truancy nor had it given them any real understanding of truancy. Two Education Advisers expressed

surprise at how unprepared they were for the reality and complexity of the work. Returning students to education was not the simplistic job that they thought it would have been. David stated, "*I had a very limited idea of it* [truancy], *I think, when I initially took it on*". Barry's response was, "*It was very much a shock to my system, especially when I had to go into my first gang house. I had never done that sort of thing before and it was quite an eye opener... I was as nervous as hell*".

The data suggested that prior work experiences had an impact upon the effectiveness of the work of the Education Adviser, especially in the early days of an Education Adviser's employment. Education Advisers who had previously been employed in the education sector appeared to have some advantages over those whose previous employment had been in the non-education sector. Having been previously employed in the education sector meant that those Education Advisers had a knowledge in respect to how the education system operated. In most instances they already had a network of people within the education sector and government agencies who they could work with. However, responses from Education Advisers suggested that those with a previous work history outside the education sector thought that they were nearly as well prepared for the job as those whose work history was within the education sector. Most of the participants whose previous work background was in the non-education sector had worked in positions that involved them working with members of the public and often with Government and or social agencies. Being in positions where they were regularly in contact with the general public and often with teenagers meant they had developed some skills suited to the Education Adviser role. For example Andrea who had previously worked in the non-education sector, stated that she had an understanding of the problems associated truancy.

> *they were the same families that I was dealing with... The students don't become truants in isolation do they, there is lots of other stuff going on. So they weren't that different, it didn't seem much different* (Andrea).

There were participants who stated that they really had no idea of the reality of the work or the complexity of the truancy situation. Although these participants had

been aware that some students did not attend school they were surprised by the lack of knowledge they had in regard to truancy and of students who truanted. As Fay stated in regard to her knowledge of the truancy situation, *"Quite frankly I didn't have very much of an idea at all"*. Barry reported that at first he thought truants were students who just took a bit of time off school every now and again. He stated, *"Before truants were just kids that I thought were just wagging school and going up town and doing that"*.

Colin considered that his view of truants had changed considerably since he had become an Education Adviser. He said, *"It* (my understanding of the truant) *has changed quite considerable because I've said they* [students] *are hopeless, their parents are useless and I'm now convinced that this is not the case at all"*. Fay reported that she was unaware of the enormity of the task. Working with truants was a far more complex and difficult task than she had expected it to be. She reported, *"It was a far greater a task than I think anyone ever imagined"*.

Learning as they went about their work was an aspect participants reported. That is they developed the skills and strategies required to carry out the tasks of the Education Adviser as they worked through the referrals that were sent to them. This involved utilising their previous work experiences, speaking with colleagues and reflecting upon both their successes and failures. While learning on the job, participants reported the experiences of their work resulted in the development of a deeper understanding and sympathy for the truant.

> *We have really learnt the job as we have gone along* (David)

> *I never got any formal training, I just got the cases* [referrals] *coming through* (Richard).

Through their work with students Education Advisers reported that they developed a sympathy for students who had found themselves non-enrolled and outside of the education system.

But I see them as victims now, they are the victims of their own home,
upbringing or failure to have a settled life (David).

If it wasn't for people like myself who are willing to give them a second
chance I don't think that there is much hope for them and I find that a
pattern of joining up with a gang, getting into trouble and getting noticed by
the police and ending up in court and from then onwards going towards the
jail (Barry).

5.3.2. Impact of previous employment

Previous employment appeared to have an effect upon how Education Advisers managed the tasks of their employment. Participants reported contact with students and families as being the most important aspect of previous employment that impacted upon their work as an Education Adviser. Table 5.2 shows that five Education Advisers who previously worked in the education sector saw contact with families and students as beneficial as had three participants who had previously worked in the non-education sector. For example Fay, who previously worked in the education sector, stated, *"We had our own educational background to call upon and that was a big plus"*. In another example, Trevor thought that his previous work in the public sector was of benefit to him as an Education Adviser. Through his previous work he met with families and youth and was known within the community. While not having an educational sector background, Trevor provided evidence of previous contact with families and youth as being beneficial by stating, *"There was a lot of public hostility when my job* [previous employment] *finished towards the end of... And so to me it* [working with members of the public] *has actually been quite a help"*.

Further participants to evidence the importance of having had contact with parents and students through previous employment were Carol and Bob. Carol stated, *"Probably because of my background as I think that I have had a lot of experience with and trying to bring about positive change"*. Bob said, *"People have known me in the area a long time and now are getting to know me in quite a different role but with similarities"*.

Table 5.2
Previous employment factors that impact upon the work of an Education Adviser

Previous Work Factors	No. of Responses	Gender		Age			Years of Service		Previous Employment	
		Male	Female	-45	45-54	55+	-5yrs	5+yrs	Ed	Non-Ed
Contact with students/ families	8	6	2	2	1	5	4	4	5	3
Contact with agencies	3	2	1	1	0	2	2	1	2	1
Empathy with schools	3	2	1	0	1	2	1	2	2	1
Known within community	2	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Self discipline	2	1	1	1	1	0	2	0	0	2
Of little benefit	2	2	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	1
Able to Counsel	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
working in isolation	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0

While employed in a previous occupation some participants had made contact with agencies that they were now networking with in the fulfilment of their Education Adviser role. Participants reported being known by these agencies, having already developed credibility and a working rapport with them, and this was of benefit as they worked toward returning students to education.

> *I know of people in the community that I can refer to and they will do their bit and together we can put together a plan and get the kids back to school* (Andrea).

I have a strong networking system in the area because I have been here for so long I involve the people that do provide the expertise, Family Support, Child and Young Families Service (Bob).

Schools were reported to appear reluctant to enrol students who were known to be difficult or who had been excluded. Education Advisers reported that having an empathy for schools and knowing the school system, through their previous employment connections, was beneficial to them in their role of Education Adviser. Although Education Advisers reported schools, and the school system, to put in place barriers making it difficult to obtain a student enrolment, they also reported having empathy and an understanding of the position schools sometimes found themselves in when being asked to enrol a non-enrolled student. This was especially so if that student was known to have caused problems for other schools and were seen as likely to cause problems for a new school.

When I was in the job, the principal's job, I always had, you know, a feeling that it wasn't fair for one or two to disrupt the education of many... it's an unfair situation to place the school in (Steve).

Quite often I think that schools try very hard... some of the students cause mayhem at these schools, their behaviour problems are such that the safety of the students and teacher is at risk (Fay).

If the kids in the class are being continually disrupted and annoyed by these kids I think that the school has a duty to remove them to let other kids learn and get on with their lives (Trevor).

Some Education Advisers did not feel adequately prepared for the work. Participants from both education and non-education sector backgrounds reported some concerns. Barry (from a non-education sector employment background) and David (education sector background) reported their previous employment did not sufficiently prepare them for the job. Barry considered that his lack of experience in working with students and families was a disadvantage to him in the role of

Education Adviser. He had to learn how to work with students and family members as he worked on referrals. Barry stated, *"They* [Students and families] *are very wary of me. Even on the second visit they are very wary of me. Usually by the fourth visit"*. David in contrast thought because of his previous experience working with students and families he knew it all, came to realise that he didn't, and was still learning. *"When I was... I thought I knew and understood it all but I had no idea now looking back"*.

5.3.3. Employment Issues

Table 5.3 shows the employment issues raised by participants. The issues raised have links to the growing complexity of the Education Adviser's work, the career structure and role, training, supervision, communication and barriers.

Most participants reported satisfaction working for NETS on a part-time basis but some participants thought that for them NETS needed to be a full-time career option. With half of the participants aged 55 plus years, many of whom are retired or semi-retired, the part-time basis of the position met their need to keep active, be involved in a worthwhile service and provided them with extra disposable income. However two participants (males with less than three years experience) stated concern that being an Education Adviser and working for NETS did not provide for them a career structure or certainty of employment. They thought that the part-time nature of the position meant they needed to seek other part-time work and they raised the issue of where their next pay would come from during times when little NETS work was available. This lack of work was reported to most likely occur during school holiday times or at times when they had few referrals. Bob reported, *"There is always a certain anxiety that you will not have sufficient cases ... or the income that you depend upon suddenly dries up"*. Colin was concerned that the part-time nature of the work didn't encourage people to become Education Advisers. He thought that, *"We need to encourage NETS Advisers that it is a worthwhile occupation... there is a likelihood of a career"*. Because of the part-time nature of the work, Colin reported he needed have other part-time work as well as NETS work. For Colin this was problematic as it had placed him in conflict with the schools that he worked with. *"I find myself now in conflict with*

some of my schools not because of education but because of the other things that I have to do in order to earn an income. And so that impacts adversely upon the work that I am trying to do as an Education Adviser... so let's start recruiting and promoting the job as a job not just having people who are part-time this and part-time that".

The work of the Education Adviser was reported to have become more complex and therefore more difficult in the finding of solutions to some referrals. This issue was earlier reported in section 5.1.8. in the guise of a role issue. However Education participants also saw the complex nature of their work as an employment issue. The reported increase in the complexity of the work had increased their work load and it had become more difficult to achieve successful outcomes for students. As earlier stated by Steve, *" In the early days it was a bit of a dawdle really... It is quite, far more difficult now than it was".* Participants associated the growing complexity of their employment with their changed role, time limits placed upon the completion of referrals, student and parent attitudes to education, misuse of drugs and alcohol by both students and parents, and school reluctance to enrol students or to provide students with a second chance. Five participants, three male and two female identified a growing complexity of the referrals and the increased difficulty to successfully find a satisfactory resolution. Carol, reported that the growing complexity of referrals had removed much of the fun from the job. *" I think that in the beginning it was a great job... it was fun ... now it's very rare that you get a referral that has a beginning and an end".*

NETS management allocated to each referral a specific time frame within which each referral was required to be closed. Participants reported that this time frame could create pressure when endeavouring to find a satisfactory solution for a students education. This was an issue reported by a third of all participants, predominantly males and those whose previous employment had been in the education sector. Colin reported that it took time to put into place the necessary structures to place and support a student in education. This time was not always available to the Education Adviser when referrals were limited to twelve weeks. Colin stated, *"And I suppose that is the real heart ache for me, and it is all that issue of time".*

Richard accepted that twelve weeks was a long time for resolving a referral. However he indicated there could be significant periods of time during the twelve week period when the referral could not be worked upon. *"I accept the limits, twelve weeks is a long time, but when you run over a period of the school holidays and then you deal with a family that keep going off to tangis and things, and then you have got to work with course providers and then maybe there's a course that hasn't started yet or the kid has to get some drug counselling or something time goes on and the weeks click by... It's just something that you have got to live with"* (Richard).

Training, personal development and mentoring were reported as issues of employment by five participants. Those who reported these issues included four males, participants aged between 45–54, and five participants with less than three years service as an Education Adviser. Trevor reported a need to be provided with training in areas of truancy related to the Education Act. He wanted to be conversant with Ministry of Education Policy and how policy related to the work of Education Advisers. *"I would like to see training around the Education Act, it's effects and implications, and the Ministry Policy being more part of the training of a NETS person"*. Trevor further considered that there needed to be training in the area of alternative education. As evidence of this need, he reported that Education Advisers talked about alternative education and alienation stating that they understood it, but in fact he thought alternative education was not really well understood at all. *"So I think probably there should be some more training and understanding, what the whole thing* [alternative education] *is about... Perhaps we should sit down with a couple of cases* [referrals] *and really look at them"*.

Induction into the role and mentoring for the Education Adviser were reported to be two issues that needed to be addressed by management. Ewan determined that because Education Advisers worked in an isolated role, often had little contact with colleagues or management, it was important they be properly inducted into the service. Induction could include being made fully aware of the Education Adviser role, being provided with training and being provided with regular support and advice during the early stages of employment. He considered mentoring

should be provided as a means of support and training especially for newly appointed Education Advisers and that it was important for the success of such programmes that they be fully resourced. "*The more isolated the role, like NETS, the more important the induction and mentoring is...I think that induction and mentoring are really important but they will fail if they are not properly resourced*".

Andrea considered the position of an Education Adviser to be a difficult one for a number of people because when taking on the job they were unaware of what the work really entailed. She suggested that there was more to the job than just returning students to education. There was a great deal of skill required when working with schools, students, families and agencies and convincing them that being involved in the students education and providing the student with further educational opportunity was in everyone's interests. She suggested that management needed to look at how they recruited people and what training they provided for new staff. Andrea suggested that because the work of the Education Adviser had become much more complex than when she first commenced the job, "*We* [NETS management] *need to look at how we get people on board and training for new staff and that because I think that it's a much bigger job than when I first started and I think that new people would find it quite difficult ... I think that it is actually quite a difficult job to do for lots of people. Most don't know what they are letting themselves in for*".

Three participants reported that the role of the Education Adviser was too restrictive. The participants reported concern at insufficient recognition being taken by NETS management and the Ministry of Education to the social factors that impinged upon truancy and non-enrolment. Some Education Advisers thought that the social aspects impinging upon truancy needed to be given serious consideration by NETS management and the Ministry of Education and that Education Advisers be given some freedom to assist in addressing those issues. They reported that if the social issues were not addressed then the educational issues were unlikely to be resolved.

Extending it [The Role] *to include a bit of social work ... go into a home and* [the Educational Advisers] *sees a whole multitude of things going on* (Barry).

I find myself drawn into the social needs of the family because until they are dealt with not a lot of learning, no learning, is going to take place (Bob).

I mean there are some very sad cases and that's why I just have this feeling that I do, that our work must be part of it, must have a social aspect to it. I don't see how we can do it without our job having this social aspect to it. I know that they [NETS management and the Ministry of Education] *say that your job is, the officials are trying to determine that our job is straight forward and you just place the kids in an alternative education if you can but it is far more than that* (David).

Richard and Steve reported that for them supervision was an issue related to their employment. The supervision process was stated by these advisers to be either a way of checking up on their work, some form of training that they didn't want nor need, or some aspect of employment that was needed by new Education Advisers but not them. Richard did not really understand what supervision was all about and therefore had no commitment to it. He stated, *"I don't quite understand the supervision business but it doesn't grab me really".*

There were alternative views expressed by participants in respect to supervision. Steve didn't want supervision to be a part of his employment conditions, didn't want to be checked up upon, but was happy enough for others to have supervision as part of their employment. Steve had his own mentor outside of the NETS organisation and was happy with that situation to continue. In discussing supervision Steve stated, *"All that supervision stuff they talked about and have been sending papers to me means nothing to me, I don't want that, I'm quite happy talking it* [the job and his role] *over with.... I don't want to go to anybody or have them checking on me... but I don't want it, but for a number of advisers it is necessary".*

Fay on the other hand stated that Education Advisers needed to be accountable for the work that they did but considered she already had a reputation of creditability as did other Education Advisers who worked in geographical areas adjacent to where she worked. *"We have got to be accountable for what we do...I think that we have got, I can only speak for our area, I think that we have got a fairly good reputation"*.

In the context of employment three participants spoke of difficulties surrounding alternative education. Guy stated that students were out of school, on the streets, being involved in petty crime, and had been given up on by schools. He suggested that it was worth the while getting students into alternative education as many came right when involved in alternative programmes. *"Because a large number that schools have given up on them* [the students] *when they get into alternative education they actually come right"*. He further stated that it was the schools who had the responsibility to cater for students and received large sums of money to provide programmes for them. Guy indicated that he was afraid the alternative education system would allow schools to use alternative education programmes to abdicate their responsibilities to students and would allow schools to get rid of students that they did not want. He stated, *"In my mind is the danger of schools exploiting alternative education to lessen their load particularly their responsibility"*.

Steve reported the alternative education process was difficult to understand. He considered alternative education was an issue that needed to be dealt with by management. Management needed to explain the programme and Education Advisers instructed in the role they were to fulfil in alternative education. He stated that, *"I get a bit frustrated because there are many sort of parts to AE that I am unclear of... the poor old adviser gets landed with it and you know those sort of things need to be sorted out really"*.

Professional relationships was raised by Carol and Andrea who expressed the need for there to be a professional working relationship between Education Advisers and Ministry of Education officials. Andrea and Carol expected they should

receive support from Ministry officials but reported Ministry officials were not always forthcoming with support. Andrea stated, *"We get little support from the Ministry here to actually help us to get them* [students] *back to school"*. Carol stated Ministry of Education officials caused her personal anxiety and that she felt pressured by them. *"It's funny that the things that I get most upset about, have been the most upset about or what have caused me the most trauma have been exclusions and the Ministry. Feeling pressured to make decisions that I don't really want to make"*.

Individual contracts and communication with management were reported as issues related to the employment of Education Advisers. Colin considered that being paid on an hourly basis did not reflect either the work that he did nor the amount of time that he put into cases. *"How do you actually put a price on meeting the young person on the rugby field and saying ...* [Discussing his situation] *I'm not going to rush back and enter* [referral time] *on my time sheet"*. Colin was also concerned that different Education Advisers were paid different rates of pay for doing the same work. David also expressed consternation on the disquiet that was apparent when Education Advisers came to realise that they were being paid at different rates for doing the same work. He reported, *"The different rates at which people were paid ... really caused concern and I guess that we didn't realise that until we got together"*.

David thought that management hadn't always listened to what they were told by Education Advisers. He thought management needed to take heed of what Education Advisers had to say about their role and in how they needed to operate to enable them to return students to education. *"I think that they* (NETS management) *don't seem to take too much notice of what the field officers* (Education Advisers) *are telling them about their role and how the role is evolving and how they go about their job"*.

Finally Colin reported, *"I think that we have sought of lost focus, we are too constrained by the paper war, legal issues, Privacy Act, I personally like outcomes, positive outcomes"*. Colin considered the Privacy Act was detrimental

to being able to carry out his work as an Education Adviser. He further claimed that the Privacy Act constrained him in his work and made it more difficult to attain positive outcomes for students. He considered that agencies used the Privacy Act to withhold information and were therefore depriving students of their right to education.

Table 5.3
Employment Issues

Employment Issues	No. of Responses	Gender		Age			Years of Service		Previous Employment	
		Male	Female	<45	45-54	55+	3yrs	3+yrs	Ed	Non Ed
Work more complex	5	3	2	2	1	2	3	2	3	2
Training, Development and mentoring	5	4	1	1	3	1	5	0	2	3
Time	4	3	1	0	1	3	2	2	3	1
Role	3	3	0	1	0	2	3	0	2	1
AE Complex	3	2	1	0	0	2	0	3	3	0
Super-vision	3	2	1	0	0	3	0	3	3	0
Data Base	2	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	0
Contract and communic ation	2	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	0
Career option	2	2	0	0	1	1	2	0	1	1
Ministry of Education	2	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	2
Privacy Act	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1

5.4 Strategies

Table 5.4 shows Education Advisers used a variety of strategies to place non-enrolled students in education. Analysis of the interviews revealed there was a commonality of strategies used by a majority of Education Advisers. Strategies commonly used included: making contact with and visiting students and families; utilising a network of agencies and contacts; providing students with options of choice; assisting and supporting families; making contact with the referrer; and for some Education Advisers not becoming involved in the social issues that are usually associated with truancy. Strategies reported as used by a minority of Education Advisers included: developing a rapport with families; not using the term NETS or Non-enrolment Truancy Service; waiting for a number of cases to build up in an area before acting upon those cases; and planning actions.

5.4.1. Contacting and visiting students and families.

Table 5.4 shows nine participants stated they made contact with, or visited students and families as a strategy when working upon referrals . Males (7) and females (2) regularly made direct contact with families and students. Participants aged 35–44 years and who had been an Education Adviser for less than three years reported using this strategy most often.

Barry reported making several visits to families. He stated, *"It is usually the third or fourth visit that they start opening up to me and letting me know of some of their problems"*. Further examples of participants using this strategy included Richard and Andrea. Richard said, *"I phone them and make an appointment to see them. If they have no phone then I visit and make arrangements to meet them and discuss the problem"*. Andrea who did a lot of home visiting reported she made enquires about the referral before a home visit. She stated, *"Most of my referrals don't have home phone numbers so I end up doing a lot of home visiting. I do a bit of research before I go basically. I like to know before I actually turn up to visit somebody to have a few ideas about it"*.

Table 5.4
Strategies used by Education Advisers

Strategy	No. of Responses	Gender		Age			Years of Service		Previous Employment	
		Male	Female	<45	45-54	55	5yrs	5+ yrs	Ed	Non Ed
Contacting/visiting students and families	9	7	2	3	2	4	6	3	4	5
Networking-agencies and contacts	9	6	3	3	2	4	6	3	5	4
Assisting/supporting families and students	8	6	2	1	2	5	4	4	6	2
Provide options	8	5	3	3	0	5	4	4	5	4
Contact referrer	7	4	3	2	1	4	4	3	5	2
Don't deal with social issues	6	3	3	1	1	4	2	4	4	2
Develop rapport	4	2	2	1	0	3	1	3	3	1
Don't use the term NETS	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1
Wait for cases	2	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	0
Plan actions	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0

5.4.2. Networking

Education Advisers reported that establishing, maintaining and continually extending a strong network of contacts was pivotal in the successful placement of students either into school, a course or the work force. Sharing of institutional knowledge and setting up working and professional relationships with personnel within the network greatly assisted Education Advisers in carrying out their role. Education Advisers networked with schools, alternative education coordinators and providers, iwi representatives, the Correspondence School, Police, Children and Young Persons Service, Work and Income, private course providers and NETS colleagues.

Networking, as a strategy, was reported by nine participants. All females reported using a network compared with six of nine males. All participants aged 35–44 years, six who had worked in the position of Education Adviser for less than three years and five who had a previous education sector work background, compared with four from a non-education work background, were most likely to use networking as a strategy.

Well my strategies, I am lucky that I have got a strong networking system in the area because I have been here for so long, and my strategy is to call upon the network, to gain support and ideas, find further options, decide to make a further decision that this situation needs expertise in an area that I am not qualified therefore I need to call in and involve people that do provide the expertise (Bob).

Ah, without my contacts throughout my area I would be completely buggered. Unless I had at least good relationships with CYPs, [Child and Young Person's Service] *Police, Housing Corporation, Rural Post, Electoral Offices I just couldn't manage it* (Trevor).

We [the participant and another Education Adviser] *will ring up, we will meet quite often and we will discuss what is happening in each area. I think that it is important to keep in touch with your neighbouring Education Advisers... Yes and I also keep in contact with the truancy services* (Fay).

5.4.3. Providing alternative options for education.

Providing options for students was a strategy reported by eight participants. Options included assisting the student, to return to either the school they had previously attended or to another school and included the option of The Correspondence School, placement into alternative education, or assistance in obtaining an exemption so that the student could take up a position in the workforce or an enrolment in a course. Providing students with options allowed students to have some control over the decision making process and therefore was likely to have a greater chance of succeeding than telling the student what it was

that they were going to do. With the exception of participants aged 45–54 years who did not suggest this strategy, participants were equally represented across all other variables.

You are not going back [to school] *so let's look at something else. What can we do for you that you would like to do? In most cases, in quite a number of cases they will say I don't want to do anything, you know that is a normal reaction as you well know. So then you start looking at alternatives (Steve).*

But you are not always sending them back to school that's the thing, that is the advantage of NETS. You might be putting them on to AE (Alternative Education) *or into a course or setting up an AE NETS type programme or going somewhere else so you can offer kids choices which sometimes can be a big help* (Fay).

Some say there are too many options but I think that they have, I think that they have got to have options. My view is that it doesn't matter, it doesn't really matter what they get involved in, what you get them placed on, as long as you get them placed on something. That then has the possibility of leading on to other things (David).

5.4.4. Assisting and supporting students and families

To return students to education participants reported using strategies that supported the student and the family. Strategies included arranging interviews, taking students and families to interviews, taking them to meet providers, advocating on their behalf and providing transport, school uniforms and shoes. Carol reported she needed to help the families all the way, lead them and support them through the enrolment and meeting processes. She stated, *"I will go through the process with them, I will go to the schools with them, I will take them there making sure that I am holding their hand all the way through so I just keep giving them reassurance that this is the process that we will follow through".* Bob stated that there were a number of families who had to be provided with continued home support if their situation was to be changed. He considered that these families were

in no position or unable to make the changes or to carry through with any educational option without support. Bob said, *"We have to remember there are a number of students and families that do not have the personal, spiritual or emotional resources to get themselves to where they want to go and in those situations, these are on going situations where a lot of them come back again after already being referred..., these families will need continual support in propping up right through the generations".*

Eight participants reported working with and assisting students and families. For example Education Advisers offered advice, arranged meetings with agencies, made appointments with schools and education providers, took families to interviews and arranged for the purchase and payment of school uniform, school fees and transport. Five participants aged 55 plus years and six whose former employment was in the education sector reported assisting students and their families.

5.4.5. Contacting the referrer

Education Advisers were expected to contact the referrer upon receiving a new referral. This initial contact was to inform the referrer that the referral is active and to ascertain any further information relevant to the referral. Seven participants reported that they made this contact either to inform the referrer that they were commencing the case or to attain further information that had become available since the referral was lodged with the Ministry of Education. All female participants reported they contacted the referrer compared with four of the nine male participants. Five participants who had previously worked in the education sector made contact with the referrer as compared with two participants who had previously worked in the non education sector.

Examples that provided evidence of having contacted the referrer included were provided by Fay and Ewan. Fay reported, *"Well the first thing that I do ... is that when I get a referral I ring up the person providing the information and they often have a lot more* [information about the student's situation]". Ewan reported that he contacted the referrer and usually made contact within a short period of time of

having received the referral. He stated, *"The usual start is the envelope in the letter box and ideally you start off by identifying the referring agent or person and you contact them within the deadline"*. [NETS management expects action on referrals to be commenced within three days of the Education Adviser receiving the referral].

5.4.6. Social issues

There was reported a delineation between male and female Education Advisers in regard to social issues that are inevitably associated with truancy. Female Education Advisers reported that they focused on the educational issues of truancy rather than becoming involved with social issues. Andrea said, *"My job is to try, you know, to get these students into a legal educational situation or find out if they are already in one and that's my job"*. This stance was echoed by Fay who stated, *"I have to keep on reminding myself that I am not a social worker, I am not a member of the youth aide section, I am not a youth justice coordinator, and that my contract is to find these young people and to get them into education"*.

Six participants reported that they did not become involved in social issues even though they were aware that social issues often contributed to truancy. No female Education Adviser dealt with social issues, did not consider that it was their job to become involved, and reported that instead they often referred social issues onto agencies whose job it was to assist families with social issues. Andrea stated, *"I can refer on to other agencies to do all that social stuff and I don't feel responsible for it and it's quite a relief actually"*.

On the other hand six male participants reported their involvement in social issues. Richard however was one male who reported that he was careful not to take on a social worker role. He stated, *"[I need] to be careful not to take on the role of a social worker"*. Four participants aged 55 plus years, four with three plus years service and four participants whose previous employment was in the education sector did not involve themselves in the social issues of the student or family. These participants reported keeping within the perimeters of their job description. That was to find students and return them to a legal place of education, an

approved course or to assist parents to obtain an exemption from school for their child [if aged 15 years] that allowed the student to take up employment.

5.4.7. Developing rapport

Four participants reported developing a working rapport and establishing good relationships, with students, families, schools and course providers was a strategy they used to assist in returning students to education. Richard reported, *"The main thing is to win the confidence of the parents of the child and let them see that the child is going to benefit from cooperating and the parents will benefit by not having children on the streets getting into trouble".*

Further evidence of the benefits of having developed rapport was provided by Guy who told a story of a boy whose interests lay in motorcycles. *"He told me* [Guy] *that "I'm* [the boy] *on a course", and he told me the course that he was on was an outdoor course. I said, "What do you do on this outdoors course?" And he said that, "The last thing that I did was I fixed that motor bike down there." and he pointed down the hill. And I looked at him and said, "Does it go?" And he grinned and said, "Of course it goes". And so I talked to him about it* [the course].

Guy said that he knew who he needed to develop a good working relationship with and stated, *"I know where to establish rapport with the people I am working with, I know the principals of the schools... so I am quite well accepted by those people personally".*

Andrea noted that getting students back into schools could be difficult because schools were often unwilling to enrol students who had a history of truancy or negative behaviour when they had previously been in school. She considered that to get students back into school often depended upon the relationship that she developed with the schools. *"Yeah, it is really hard to get students into schools, that is the hardest thing. It depends, ... in some of these schools you know who you can build a relationship with. The schools that I have the greatest difficulty with, you know, are the schools where the principal is really anti. One of them I have got around because I get on really well with the DP* [Deputy Principal] *now. I can*

say that this kid is not as bad as you think so I would be pleased if you could interview him. But I still have one school where I still don't have anybody who can do that for me".

Fay discussed having developed a working relationship with agencies and in particular with the police. She considered that because of the rapport she had developed with agencies she could call upon them when in need of assistance. *This is where being in close liaison with CYFS* [Child, Youth and Family Services] *and the police is very good. I find that having a good working relationship with them* [then] *they can often do something that we ask them to do".*

5.4.8. Debate about the service name

The use of the service name Non-Enrolment Truancy Service was a centre of some debate. Three participants reported not using the term Non-enrolment Truancy Service when meeting with students and families. Ewan considered it was not correct to use the term Non-enrolment Truancy Service when he was not dealing with just truancy but with education. He reported there should be a branding of the NETS organisation that better reflected the role of Education Advisers. *"You are just not dealing with truancy and so you are dealing with educating, you are dealing with excluded students and things like that and so I think that it is just a little bit of the matter of the branding with the role and where it sits".*

Carol reported that she used the term NETS but not Non-enrolment Truancy Service and further added that she made a connection to the Ministry of Education. *"I usually say that I work for NETS under the Ministry of Education ... I always say as part of my introduction that my job is to help".*

David stated that he didn't use the term truancy in his introductions. He wanted people to understand what it was he did in his work and how he could help them. David thought that the term truancy in the service name had connotations with illegal actions and with the enforcement of the law in relation to truancy. He wanted students and parents to focus upon how he could assist the student back into education.

I mean very rarely do I say that this [is] *the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service. I mean I try and change the name of it so that people have an understanding of what we do. And the understanding of what we do is not tied up with truancy, you see, so I often say this is the Ministry of Education Non-Enrolment Service. I try to miss out the word truancy because people have this mind set on this terminology truancy. What we are dealing with is far more difficult than just normal truancy"* (David).

5.4.9. Attending to referrals

Two male participants reported that they waited for several referrals to arrive for a particular area before actioning those referrals. Reasons for this were reported to be the distances they needed to travel and the cost associated with actioning a one off referral that required significant time and travel. Ewan stated, *"So I build up a number of cases* [referrals] *in... and* [then] *go and spend a day in,... and build up a number of cases in and go and spend a day in... So rather than just responding instantly by rushing off to go and do one case in... I let a group establish in that area"*. Guy provided further evidence for having left referrals to build up in an area before action was taken by stating, *"What I am saying is that the area takes about four hours travel to the south-eastern boundary and three hours travel to the north-western point and so a large amount of time is used in travel. What might happen is if there is something happening in that area I might wait in hope that there will be two or three referrals and I think that that might make it more cost efficient but I never leave it more three or four weeks and I do follow up as much as I can by following it* [the referral] *up by phone"*.

5.4.10. Planning actions

Richard reported that he planned his work for up to a fortnight in advance. He considered how he would work through his referrals. Richard stated, *" I plan my time, I am always planning two weeks ahead, working out how I am going to cover the cases that I've started and need to follow up, or cases that could be needed to hurry along because they are exclusions or need to be done in a certain time or whatever"*.

5.5 Barriers Education Advisers experience in their work

As participants worked upon referrals, endeavouring to return non-enrolled students to education, they reported that they were confronted with numerous barriers. Barriers either hindered, frustrated or prevented them achieving successful referral outcomes.

Table 5.5 showed participants identified 12 barriers that impinged upon their work as Education Adviser. By analysing the totals reported for each identified barrier and comparing this number with the total possible number of reportings available, females reported being effected more by barriers than did males. Participants who had worked as an Education Adviser for less than three years reported slightly more barriers than those with more than three years service. Participants aged 35–44 years reported more barriers effecting their work than either participants aged 45–54 years or participants aged 55 plus years

5.5.1. Students and families

Students and family were reported as placing barriers in the way of Education Advisers. When this occurred it became difficult for the Education Adviser to achieve a positive outcome for a referral. Where a student and, or, a family displayed negativity to achieving a positive outcome and showed little interest in any form of further education the Education Adviser's role of returning students to education was difficult. Guy had come to the conclusion that it was not always possible for the Education Adviser to succeed. He stated, *"What I am saying is that there is a hard core we are not going to succeed with and we have got to accept that"*. Steve referred to two instances of students and families putting up barriers preventing him from being able to find successful outcomes for students.

I thought that I had done a good job. In the next breath he [student] *that if I go back to school I'll do everything that I can to get kicked out* (Steve).

Mum [the student's mother] *often makes promises that she has no intention of keeping and sometimes they* [parents] *make excuses to, they just keep*

putting you off... you can say to yourself at the end of it I've tried, I've given it a go but they have ambushed it.

Table 5.5
Barriers Education Advisers identified that hindered them in their work

Identified Barriers	No. of Responses	Gender		Age			Years of Service		Previous Employment	
		Male	Female	45	45-54	55+	3yrs	5 yrs	Ed	Non Ed
Schools	12	9	3	3	3	6	7	5	7	5
Students & families	12	9	3	3	3	6	7	5	7	5
Alternative Education	10	7	3	3	2	5	6	4	6	4
Bureau-cracy	9	6	3	3	2	4	6	3	5	4
Curri-culum	7	6	1	0	3	4	5	2	5	2
Time	5	4	1	1	1	3	3	2	3	2
Complex Referrals	5	3	2	2	1	2	3	2	3	2
Lack of status	5	4	1	2	1	2	3	2	2	3
Isolation	5	4	1	2	3	0	3	2	2	3
Time cases Take to get to EA	4	3	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2
T.C.S. Super-vision	4	2	2	3	0	1	2	2	1	3
Family mobility	3	2	1	0	0	3	1	2	3	0

5.5.1.i. Students

Participants reported that students themselves could be barriers to achieving a positive outcome to a referral. Students were reported as apathetic, having a dissenting attitude towards school or any form of education, and they responded negatively to discipline and authority. Students were reported as being disinterested in school and seeing little benefit from attending. Trevor stated, *"Most of them say school sucks. There's no job out there for me anyway so what"*.

School or further education was noted as not a viable option for some students as their attitude and behaviour suggested that placement into an educational situation would meet with only limited success. Students were said to be deliberately disruptive in order to be removed from school. Barry reported, *"The kids do get the feeling that hey if I play up I can be out of there with Johnny you know and we can do whatever we like out there".*

Further evidence of students putting up barriers to returning to education were provided by several participants who stated:

Young people don't really know, a lot of them don't know what they want. They just want to sit down. You ask them what they want to do ... and they say I don't want to do nothing, I just want to sit down here, get up at midday and watch television (Fay).

Then you get the student ... who don't really want anyone to guide them towards any further education or any sort of training for jobs, they just want to do their thing which is often just to lie around and get in the way and frustrate their parents (Bob).

They [girls] *can be just as big as pains in the butt as boys, in fact in many ways they are more difficult. They are often more difficult to communicate with I find. They don't want to know. They are the ones that often hide. They see you coming, pull up in the car or whatever, and you see the shape in the window and they disappear. Yeah, I don't think that they are not at all fussed of someone interrupting their easy lazy way of life that is convenient for them* (Steve).

There are some that have got to a stage of despair or hopelessness. There are some called learned helplessness or whatever the term is who have actually become dependent upon hand outs and benefits you know. It is everybody else's fault rather than their own and it is all the school's fault and all the community's fault and you know it is not my fault that all of this

has happened and [students] *are waiting really for everyone else to solve it.
That is very hard because as soon as you offer them another opportunity
there is no commitment to it personally. They may go along with it but as
soon as a challenge or problem arises or something more interesting, their
other truanting mates ring up, they are off* (Ewan).

Participants reported that truanting students were often known to the police. These
students had often been involved in criminal activity or drug and alcohol abuse.
Education Advisers suggested that schools were unwilling to enrol students who
were known to be involved in crime or drug and alcohol abuse. Through their own
actions, taking part in the above activities, students presented themselves as a
barrier to furthering their educational opportunities. As Barry reported, *"They are
all parts of gangs or groups in town. They are more than likely to be trouble
makers of some sought to the police".*

When students were involved in crime it appeared improbable that they would
return to education. Steve suggested that in some instances it was a waste of time
trying to return them to education, *"He was doing 400 hours community hours as
it was for pinching cars and so I mean he is a waste of time".*

Ewan expressed his concern that students had little chance of getting anywhere
near a school if it was known that the student had any connection with drug abuse.
whereas Steve stated, *"If there is anything such as the use of cannabis or drugs
then they will not even get a step in the door".* A participant told of how she had
approached numerous schools in an attempt to get a student back into school but
was unsuccessful because the schools knew that the student had been a drug and
alcohol user.

*I approached seven schools and they were all caring schools, the principals
of all those schools were very caring people, but I was turned down by each
one because they have got problems in their own schools and they don't
want someone who is a known alcohol and drug user. They don't want
another one to come in* (Fay).

Many students could not break away from truancy because of what participants referred to as the "baggage" that they carried around with them. This baggage was referred to as emotional in nature and an issue of mental health. Dealing with these issues were often reported by Education Advisers as having been beyond the scope of the work of the Education Adviser. However, participants considered, until the "baggage" had been attended to the educational issues were unlikely to be resolved. Colin referred to this baggage as "the rot" and thought that it was necessary to attend to this rot if students were going to be successfully integrated back into education.

> *Once the baggage has been dealt with and they* [the student] *get treated like special individuals they are away laughing and they will keep on progressing. But it is those ones that we don't deal with the issues, we don't deal with the baggage, that still have a whole range of issues, I call it the rot eating away at their guts, we are still going to have problems with those kids* (Colin).

Carol reported that when she recognised students who carried around a lot of baggage she referred them on to other agencies as a means to getting the baggage attended to.

> *Every case is different and it depends on the sort of baggage that is going along with it You wouldn't walk out on that one without putting lots of, you know, alarms out to the different agencies with your concerns* (Carol).

Physical and sexual abuse were also referred to as issues (baggage) students carried around with them and had to be overcome before educational issues could be attended to. Until students were helped to come to terms with these issues the students themselves presented as a barrier to their further educational opportunity.

> *A couple of families the children had been sexually abused and I can see now why at fourteen or fifteen, why they might drop out of school if they are still carrying all that stuff that they had earlier* (Andrea).

Participants talked about students displaying a poverty of spirit. This poverty of spirit was manifested in apathy and a lack of motivation to do almost anything. Bob stated, *"Students and families do not have the personal, spiritual or emotional resources to get themselves to where they might want to go"*. Fay stated that she thought that we [New Zealanders] had done something wrong within our country that had resulted in this poverty of spirit especially among Maori and Pacific Island students.

> *Now what concerns me that if you take away the Maori and Pacific Island students in our area I wouldn't have many cases. Now that seems to tie in with abuse, it seems to tie in crime, it seems to tie in with the number of people within the prisons. It's a real problem that we have got that New Zealand has got to face up to. Something is wrong, we are doing something wrong with the parenting skills or we are doing something wrong because many of these people don't have jobs although in some cases they are working but there is a poverty of spirit. You go into some places and the people have given up, you feel that they have given up, there is no effort to do anything* (Fay).

Participants reported that students were often social misfits and could not or would not take their place in mainstream school. These students often made the choice and chose to be out of education. They were reported to have been on the streets with their mates and there appeared to have been an element of excitement and adventure when truanting from school. Truanting students were reported to hide from Education Advisers and it was stated that these students believed they had the right to withdraw themselves from school whenever they wanted to.

> *They are victims of their own homes, upbringing or failure to have a settled life. Often they come from dysfunctional families* (David).

> *Couldn't cope with the discipline* (Trevor).

Because of this lack of discipline... kids just do and get away with whatever they do... that gets them suspended or whatever... then hey I can be with my mates out there doing whatever they are doing (Barry).

A lot of them are at their mates' places (Richard).

We have got students who are moving beyond just ordinary day to day truancy but who are long term out of school truants who are refusing to attend school at all (Bob).

Participants reported truanting students thought that schooling or further education was irrelevant to their needs. David stated, *"Many have opted out of school because it is irrelevant for them".* Having the ability to spend time with their truanting friends and to move around their environment seemed much more attractive than attending school. Many were reported to be highly mobile and had access to either family or the vehicles of their mates.

Most of them just stay around home until their buddies pick them up in a car (Steve)

5.5.1.ii. Families

All participants reported that the students' families placed barriers in the way of students returning to education. By placing barriers in the way of their children families contributed to the truancy problem. Richard considered that parents were almost or equal to schools in placing barriers in the way of students continuing in their education. He stated, *"The next one* [greatest barrier] *would be, maybe on a par* [with schools], *would be parent support. Parents are either indifferent, ineffective or antagonistic, none of which help the kid at all.*

Participants provided evidence of families being overwhelmed by social and economic issues, families who didn't provide their children with adequate supervision, who deliberately kept their children at home and those who had given up trying to get their children to school. Parents often appeared beset by numerous

personal and family issues and therefore education was not always given a high priority of importance.

Family apathy and dependency upon agencies was also reported as contributing to student truancy. It was reported that parents often found it easier to give up upon their children's education rather than having to deal with the anger and agro they frequently received from children when trying to get them to school.

> [The] *thing that has surprised me is that there is a section of our population that don't value education. That they don't really think that it is a priority in getting their children to school* (Fay).

> *There is a degree of total disinterest by a number of families and their children in getting any form of further education whatsoever* (Bob).

> *And the parents have often given up on their kids and they don't want to know* (Andrea).

> *Then you have those that give verbal support but not back up what they* [say they will] *do. They will say how wonderful, isn't that good. But once you are outside the door all the various slack habits and things that don't reinforce it* [education], *that sort of carry on, be it being out of the house or failing to supervise their kids or to encourage them. You know, they will kick them out the door in the morning, having had a session of drinking the night before, kick them* [the children] *out without any breakfast in the morning and expect the kids to go somewhere but they won't support them even though they will say the right things but not do it* (Ewan).

Parental apathy appears to have developed from a complex multiplicity of events. Parents were said to have developed a poverty of spirit where families lacked both the will and the resources to keep their children at school. Ewan stated, *"The cases when they get down as far as NETS are usually symptomatic of more deep seated and complex issues they really are. Truancy is often one of the first visible*

indicators or signs of a dysfunctional family's problems". Participants spoke of families expecting Education Advisers to solve their problems for them. This was an indication of family reliance upon agencies for continued support. Bob referred to families as having neither the, *"Personal, spiritual, social or emotional resources"* to enable them to overcome the issues that were affecting the family. It was reported that parents often denied there was a problem of truancy and they would avoid the Education Adviser or state that they were taking a particular action just to get the Education Adviser 'off their backs'. Other parents were antagonistic and uncooperative and made it clear to Education Advisers that they were not welcome.

> *Initially many of them are antagonistic... You fellas kicked him out so it's your problem. Those were his words and he walked away* (Richard).

> *I find that the professional families go into denial* (Trevor).

> *Mum often makes promises that she has no intentions of keeping and sometimes they make excuses to, they just keep putting you off. Oh I'll see to it next week* (Steve).

> *It's the attitude of the parents that worry me... they are carrying that sort of baggage through to the next generation* (Fay).

Fay reported that parents often kept children at home to look after siblings while the mother went out to work. *"There are quite a few cases that I have got where young people are kept home to look after younger children and they will tell you that quite openly, they are not trying to hide it"*. Obtaining sufficient finance to live on was a greater priority than children's education and parents did not appear concerned about the law. *"It is very difficult to explain to them that they are not allowed to do that by law. They are really [not] interested in the law you know"*.

Participants reported that parents were not providing adequate discipline or supervision for their children and therefore were not carrying out the basic

responsibilities society expected of parents. As Trevor stated when parents don't discharge their responsibility to have their children educated what can be done by the Education Adviser? *"What do you do when parents don't want to discharge their obligations".* Barry suggested that the children lacked discipline and parents allowed their children to make their own decisions regarding attendance at school. *"Because these kids have no discipline at home... It's that lack of discipline that is breaking down and allows these kids to do what ever they like".* Bob comments further on the lack of discipline in the home contributing to truancy. He stated, *"Families have problems within their own homes in terms of disciplinary procedures, there is no discipline and the children are openly defiant and disregard their parents wishes. Many of the parents that I talk to want their children at school, it's just that they have lost the ability to direct the child and make them attend".*

5.5.2 Schools

All participants reported that schools contributed to truancy. Barry stated that for him schools were the number one barrier to furthering the education of students referred to him. The most difficult people in the schools according to Barry were the principals. *"They are the hardest ones to convince to take a student back,"* [into school]. David suggested that even when students were allowed to enrol some of them were treated very badly by the school. *"Some of them* [students] *are not treated very well at secondary school. They* [the students] *are spoken to very badly and some of them are doing so called school work that has no relevance for their lives. The schools are so big and so impersonal"* Several other Education Advisers reiterated the message of the school being a barrier to a students further education.

> *The schools that I have the greatest difficulty with are the schools where the principal is really anti. I got told that they don't want Cook Islanders as they always fight, we don't want any more.* (Andrea).

> *I get frustrated with schools as I know that there are schools that just want to railroad kids out* (Bob).

However some Education Advisers acknowledged the work of schools and expressed sympathy for those who were required to deal with students who were disruptive and caused problems. Some schools were reported to be more inclined than others to be supportive and conciliatory towards truants. Andrea stated, *"Some schools are willing to give the students a chance"*. Further evidence recognising schools who provided truants with support was given by Ewan, Fay and Guy.

> *There are certain schools who take a much more inclusive attitude and are prepared to give and take... but even they at times get quite wary of being dumped on as they see some schools that deny them* (Ewan).

> *Quite often I think that schools try very hard* (Fay).

> *It would be much better if some of the schools started to give programmes that met these kids' needs. And a number of schools are doing that. They have spent large sums of money* (Guy).

However while participants acknowledged the work of some schools to positively deal with the truancy problem they were concerned other schools were unwilling to make available educational opportunity for a number of truanting students who wished to return to school.

5.5.2.i. School curriculum

Seven participants reported the school curriculum presented a barrier to student participation. Trevor reported, *"Sometimes the lessons for them are too structured, too hard or too long"*. Six male and one female, four participants aged 55 plus years and three aged 45–54 years, five with less than three years service as an Education Adviser and five whose previous occupation was in the education sector reported the curriculum as a barrier. Participants reported the curriculum was seen by students, and often by parents, to be irrelevant to the needs of students, too difficult to understand and lessons were often too long. The curriculum was said not to cater for individual student needs and the academic mode of delivery was

not suited to students who truanted and as a result students turned to truancy as a means to escaping failure at school.

> *The major reason, the major one, is that it* [the curriculum] *doesn't have any relevance, the work is far too hard. It is to do with the curriculum. The curriculum for those kids is absolutely faulty. It is this ring and run affair. Even though the schools do their best, that's the forty minute period stuff, ring and run I call it, and there is no stability whereas if they go to one of these alternative education courses they have one tutor working with them all of the time* (David).

Guy and Trevor reported poor curriculum delivery practices contributed to truancy. Guy stated, *"I had a concern that there were a number of secondary schools whose major perception of their role was to prepare kids for academic success at some level and kids who didn't fit that kind of model just hung on and they were in classes where they didn't get a fair go. The work was too difficult for them and there was no attempt to meet individual needs in whatever subject area it was. There was some instances of poor practices"*. Ewan thought that a school's hidden curriculum further influenced a student's decision to remain at or truant from school. The hidden curriculum included all those aspects of school life, all messages that a school signalled to students and its community, the school culture and the way in which a school went about its business, that may or may not make a student feel he or she was a valued member of the school community.

> *It* [the hidden curriculum] *has got stronger and stronger. Things like school image... and it is always about the success of a few, sometimes unfortunately it can be at the wider expense of the* [school] *community... I think that they* [schools] *are reflecting the egocentric model that we have been living in and pushing for a couple of decades now* (Ewan).

5.5.2.ii. Principals, teachers, school structures.

Participants reported it was often a difficult task for them to advocate strongly for the student on the one hand and continue to maintain working relationships with

principals and schools on the other. If Education Advisers were seen by principals to be too forceful, too officious in their dealings with schools, relationships between the Education Adviser and the school were likely to suffer. This resulted in the placement of students within a school becoming more difficult to achieve. As they endeavoured to get students back into the education system, having to appease principals and schools was often a source of frustration to Education Advises Bob described his frustration stating, *"I get frustrated with schools and my problem is that I have to maintain a social pleasantry with those schools as I have to win their cooperation if I want a child enrolled there or assistance given. I guess I walk a tightrope in being asked to enforce what is the law and considering the school's position. I get p... off with principals who say I don't talk to Education Advisers... who in the hell does he think he is?"*. Further evidence of frustration with principals was provided by Carol who said, *"At the moment I have a lot of difficulties with the schools not returning my [phone] calls where I have made phone calls to schools and they do not return them. It can be quite difficult to get through to the principal. Some principals don't want to talk to NETS advisers... Yeah just refusing to enrol but not having the legal grounds to do that yet some schools are wonderful"*.

Schools were reported by David to be difficult places to be in. *"Some of our secondary schools are so impersonal. I go into them here even in... even though I know the people I even feel somewhat, not quite threatened, but they are difficult places to be in. They are so big [and] staff are impersonal"*. He thought that if he an adult found it difficult to go into some schools, how could the student who was in difficulty going to succeed in such a place. *"I mean here you have a kid going in with all these difficulties and they are not going to succeed"*.

Convincing principals to give a student another opportunity to receive a state education was reported as difficult. If principals did not want a student in the school there was little the Education Adviser could do to get the principal to change their stance. Colin stated, *"One of the biggest barriers is the insular way the schools operate"*. It was further reported that some schools were mercenary in their dealings with Education Advisers and they expected to obtain some financial

incentive if they agreed to an enrolment. Participants also considered that schools placed upon students too harsh conditions for them to be enrolled and often gave negative vibes to students who they considered for enrolment. These negative vibes, given by the school, made it clear to both the student and the student's family that the student was not really being welcomed as a member of the school community.

Principals are pretty one sided. They see a trouble maker and nothings going to change it (Barry).

The biggest barrier [to getting students back into education] *would be the schools being unhelpful. They are careful that they don't go too far in refusing but use everything in their power to get you to keep these kids away* (Richard).

[Students are told] *One play up and you are out. I think that the schools need to be told by the Ministry* [of Education] *not to keep putting barriers in the way... It wouldn't matter if the kid is trying to change his life he just can't get in* (Trevor).

They [schools] *are becoming extremely reluctant to accept students that they perceive could be an on going problem to them indefinitely when there is no real funding or staffing to go with them* [the student] (Ewan).

An "old boys" network was reported as being alive and flourishing thus depriving students of an opportunity to enrol in a new school. When a student was excluded or labelled as a trouble maker a school made other schools aware of the student's problems effectively making it difficult for the student to enrol elsewhere.

You know the principals have rung around each other to say don't touch this kid and you have to try and find something else for them... they [students] *want to go back to school and you really think that they should go back to school but nobody will take them* (Andrea).

Once they get a name the name circulates around the town pretty quickly especially around the High School, they don't want to know. You can try other schools, all that trying two or three other schools in a way is pie in the sky because word gets around pretty quickly and they wont have them, they wont have them, they make up all sorts of excuses (Steve).

Richard reported that some schools did not report truants to NETS. There appeared to be a school of thought, that if students were not reported, either the school was doing so well truancy did not exist in the area or if the schools' reported truancy they may be required to take back students they didn't want. Richard stated, *"It's not for us* [Education Advisers] *to go out and find them* [truants] *but the schools who just let them drift out, and I get to know the schools...and I know which ones care and which ones don't"*.

Ewan thought that schools who refused or were very reluctant to have enrolled non-enrolled students were concerned with maintaining the school's image. *"Schools are particularly aware of their images and they don't want to be seen taking students that could be a problem"*.

5.5.3 Alternative Education

The current provision for alternative education was problematic to Education Advisers. They considered that student access to alternative education was too restrictive and Education Advisers were confused about the process for entry to the programme. Education Advisers expressed their concerns that some alternative education programmes appeared to be of little educational to students. Ten participants reported upon barriers associated with alternative education. Of these ten participants seven were male and three female. Five were aged 55 plus years and six had been working as an Education Adviser for less than three years. There were six participants who had previous employment within the education sector.

Confusion about the alternative education process was reported by some participants. Performing two separate roles that were concerned with alternative education was reported to have added to the confusion. On the one hand Education

Advisers were required to verify a students alienation status and therefore eligibility for alternative education while on the other hand in the course of working upon a referral use every means possible to place a student back in education. This dual role led to frustration and confusion as the Education Adviser in declining a student's eligibility to attend alternative education would not then be able to use that form of education for that same student in the course of the Education Advisers normal referral work.

> *We* [Education Advisers] *talk about alternative education centres and we talk about alienation and things like that. Sometimes the words that we use, we say that we understand it but we really don't understand it. Perhaps we should sit down with a couple of cases and really look at them. Ok why did you actually say that that kid is alienated? I struggle with it* [alternative education and variation] (Trevor)

Participants reported the criteria for verifying students for alternative education programmes was too restrictive. In particular concerns were expressed regarding the requirement for students to be out of school for 20 weeks [two terms]. The 20 week criteria was reported as the criteria most often used for students to access alternative education. Participants thought 20 weeks was too long for a student to be out of school before they could be verified as alienated. They suggested that after such a length of time out of school the chances of getting the student back into education were reported to have lessened.

> *I think that two terms out is quite difficult. I think that it should be shortened, I think that is a very long criteria, often you have lost the student. Often the student is lost within the two terms* (Fay).

> *I am wasting my time trying to get him back into school because he just wont turn up. He obviously is an AE* [alternative education] *student but he doesn't meet the criteria and I obviously don't have enough information to suggest that he should be verified if I did refer him to the manager. He looks as if he should be in school but he just isn't going to go* (Bob).

Education Advisers reported that for students under the age of 13 years who were non-enrolled there was no alternative education programme available. If these students could not be returned to a mainstream school there was little opportunity to return them to any form of education.

> *There still seems to be a growing need, still minor at the moment but definitely growing, for an alternative education for students below high school age that I see around you know at even late primary but definitely intermediate. We have had a growing requirement for that, AE* [alternative education] *places for students that don't meet the age criteria* (Ewan).

Guy and Andrea reported some schools viewed or could consider the alternative education programme as a means to getting rid of students they didn't want in their school. Guy stated, *"I think that the other question that you* [interviewer] *have raised in my mind is the danger of schools exploiting alternative education to lessen their load, particularly their responsibility".* Andrea reported she was aware of situations where schools in her area had endeavoured to place students into an alternative education programme immediately following a decision to exclude them. These schools were endeavouring to use alternative education programmes as a means for furthering the education of students that they didn't want. *" We have a big problem especially here in... where schools think that they can exclude a student and put them straight on to AE ".*

In some areas of New Zealand alternative education programmes were reported to be unavailable. In other areas participants reported a lack of variety of programmes to meet the diverse needs of students. At the time of interviewing Education Advisers the Ministry of Education was still establishing consortiums of secondary schools. While in some areas of the country alternative education programmes had been established other programmes were still in the planning or negotiation stage as the Ministry of Education worked with secondary school principals establishing consortiums to develop alternative education programmes.

The AE that is one of my little pets at the moment. There is a lot of money sitting there in... and yet nothing is happening... I feel that it is slowly slipping by as the Ministry [of Education] *sets so many rules and regulations in place that the principals don't want it* (Barry).

We probably need a wider range of providers and things to meet the need and I guess we will need to be more flexible and adaptable in our vision of education so that we can provide for a wider range of educational options (Bob).

Participants expressed doubts over the abilities of some alternative education providers and the educational value of some programmes. Guy spoke about the value of good providers stating, *"Good providers are making them* [students] *feel good about themselves... reinforce the positive kind of things"*. Fay stated, *"Some of these course providers are not providing a nine to three education. They are providing a ten to one or ten to twelve or ten to you know. They need to look at what they are providing... There are some very good providers that do some really good work. I have my doubts about some of them and it's not for me to be judgemental because they are dealing with extremely difficult students but also they are quite well funded for these students"*.

Carol expressed her concern, *"As we all know there are AE places and AE places that we all know no doubt... that* [the educational programme] *really depends on who is in control of the AE. And that's where I think that a lot of work needs to be done to make sure that the standards are high enough"*.

A high drop out rate from alternative education was reported by two participants. Both Steve and Andrea reported alternative education programmes in their areas as having had a really high turn over rate of students. Guy suggested that drop out from alternative education programmes may be linked to alternative education programmes being too much like school programmes.

I don't know if too much is being taken on board [learnt by students]. *It is my guess that it* [alternative education] *is too much like school* (Guy).

5.5.4. Bureaucracy and management

Nine participants reported aspects of bureaucracy and management being barriers to their work. Included in this group of participants were all of the female and six male participants. Six of the participants had been an Education Adviser for less than three years compared with three with more than three years service. A number of bureaucracy and management issues were reported in section 5.2.3.

The Privacy Act was reported as preventing or curtailing the solving of referrals. Education Advisers reported having to spend time gathering information that was already held by state agencies. Easier access to student and or family details could expedite the work of the Education Adviser. Colin expressed his thoughts by stating, *"We are far too constrained by the paper war, legal issues and the Privacy Act"*.

Excessive paper work was reported by Colin he and Ewan. Ewan said, *"I do find it quite heavy on paper work"*. Colin also reported that a further barrier to him in his work was the lack of a professional development structure which he considered an integral part of a career structure. He stated, *"I'd like people to be serious and say ... here is your professional development"*.

Not being able to attend to a student or families social issues was reported as a barrier to the work of the Education Adviser. Participants argued that NETS work and social work could not be separated and social issues often needed to be resolved before educational issues could be attended to. David reported management discouraged or did not allow Education Advisers to attend to social issues. By not being allowed to attend to the social issues he found it difficult to resolve the educational issues. He stated, *"A successful officer* [Education Adviser] *has to do some degree of social work"*.

David also referred to communication with NETS management. He reported having had difficulties with communication and he considered communication needed to be more up front. He reported, *"The difficult part is the lack of communication from the administration I find if you make a mistake which everybody does... I would hope that you would actually hear about it"*.

Differing pay rates for Education Advisers was a concern reported by participants. David reporting again stated, *"I just hear at conferences people voicing their concerns...I guess we didn't realise that* [Education Advisers were being paid different rates] *until we got together.* Colin who saw a need for the NETS organisation to be more professional in its dealings said, *"There is no consistency. There needs to be more consistency in it...I don't know if my contract is the same as yours. I know unofficially that it isn't and yet we are doing the same job"*.

The time it took before referrals reached Education Advisers was referred to by two participants who suggested that the longer it took to get a referral actioned the more difficult it became to resolve. Barry thought, *"The kids are out of the* [education] *system too long before we get involved"*. Trevor considered that schools needed to refer students to the Ministry of Education more quickly than they did stating, *"By the time the school gets around to telling you... often it's too late to do a hell of a lot"*.

Participants criticised the Ministry of Education whom they considered at times to be indifferent towards them. The Ministry appeared at times to undermine the work of the Education Adviser when the Education Adviser expected assistance and support to be provided. Two females, Andrea and Carol, had both experienced indifference from the Ministry of Education. Andrea stated, *"That's one of the things I find really difficult because it frustrates me...then they* [Ministry of Education] *support the* [school] *principal rather than me"*. Carol reported the Ministry of Education caused her trauma and applied pressure for her to make decisions that she did not want to make, *"Feeling pressured to make decisions that I didn't really want to make"*.

5.5.5. Growing complexity of referrals

Five participants reported a growing complexity of referrals as a barrier to their work. They stated referrals had become more complex and difficult to resolve than they previously had been when they were first employed as an Education Adviser. Of those who reported complexity as a barrier to resolving education issues three were male and two female. Three of the participants had worked as an Education Adviser for less than three years compared with two who had worked three plus years. Three participants had formerly worked within the education sector and two in the non-education sector.

Complexity was reported to have arisen owing to the increase in social issues including drug and alcohol use, poverty, mental health issues, apathy and despondency. Education Advisers had found it increasingly difficult to place students and in particular in getting them back to school. Ewan spoke about, *"Increasing complexity and challenges of particular cases* [referrals], *particularly the excluded and alienated students"*. Bob stated, *"Cases are becoming more and more complex and so what one can have previously anticipated to resolve fairly easily is taking a lot longer to resolve"*.

5.5.6. Isolation

Isolation of the Education Adviser was reported by five participants isolation as a barrier to their work. Education Advisers usually worked alone and sometimes in isolated or remote areas of the country. Their isolation was reported to hinder professional contact. Steve reported relying upon his wife for support considering himself fortunate as, *"She has had experience dealing with these same educational misfits"*.

Barry reported that the isolation of his position as Education Adviser led him to concentrate only on what was happening within his own area. He had little knowledge of how other Education Advisers were working in other regions of New Zealand until he had made contact with some of these. Barry stated, *"I have no idea of the scale of things up there* [Auckland] *as you tend to concentrate upon your own area. It's only when you talk to other Education Advisers that you*

realise that what is happening in your own patch does also happen in other towns and centres but on a bigger scale sometimes".

Isolation meant that some participants drove considerable distances to attend to referrals. Because of their isolation some Education Advisers waited for the number of referrals to accumulate rather than drive to an isolated area to attend to only one or two referrals. Trevor stated, *"From where I live... geographically I have huge boundaries".* Guy explained that he waited to see if a number of cases came in for a particular area before driving to that area to work. He reported, *"I might wait in hope that there will be two or three referrals and I think that might be more cost efficient but I never leave it more than three or four weeks and I follow up as much as I can by following it* [the referral] *up by phone".*

5.5.7. Time

Time was considered by some participants to be a barrier to successful referral outcomes. Four male compared and one female participant, three aged 55 plus, three with less than three years service as an Education Adviser, two with three plus years service and three whose previous occupation was in the education sector compared with two non-education sector occupations reported time as a barrier.

Participants reported that they found it sometimes difficult to complete and close referrals in the time allocated. It was stated that some referrals needed considerable time. Often Education Advisers endeavoured to change student and family attitudes towards education and this could not always be achieved in the allocated time period. Participants reported time was needed to put strategies into place and to ensure that these strategies were working successfully.

> *Some cases require more than twelve weeks. Some of them require months...*
> *I don't think that that is understood by management* (David).

> *The time it takes me to say hey that this young person needs a little more, it*
> *needs some counselling support,... and I suppose that is a real heart ache for*
> *me and it is all* [about] *that issue of time"* (Colin).

Participants often worked as an Education Adviser in a part-time capacity. Some had other part-time positions of employment and found time management difficult.

> *I am involved with so many other things… Having my own job, being on this committee… so time that to me is number one"* (David).

5.5.8. Professionalism and professional status

Professionalism and professional status were identified as barriers. Participants reported that the service needed to develop more professionalism and the position of Education Adviser required a greater level of professional status. Five participants identified a lack of professionalism and professional status as barriers. Of those who identified professionalism and professional status as a barrier four were male and one female indicating that this was a greater issue for males than females. More participants (3) from a non-education sector employment background than participants (2) from an education sector background, three who had been an Education Adviser for less than three years as compared with two with three plus years service identified professionalism and professional status as a barrier. Colin considered that the short term nature of his employment contract needed to be on a more long term and professional basis.

> *At the moment it's* [Education Adviser employment] *month by month, by year by year so if you feed that sort of environment into people they have to go out looking for things* [other employment] *… where is our future in this kind of work* (Colin).

Participants reported that they had no power to enforce their decisions, there was difficulty gaining creditability from not having an employment background in the education sector, there was no career structure, they received little or no training and their was only minimal supervision as evidence of a lack of professionalism and professional status. As Richard said, *"I never got any formal training at the beginning".*

You just about have to give up really because as you know we haven't really got any power of enforcement (Steve)

The system makes it very hard for me as an Educational Adviser to get a prosecution in place (Barry).

Concerns that I am raising, where is our professional structure, where is our future in this truancy work (Colin)

5.5.9. Students being retained on school rolls

By keeping students on their rolls when those students were not attending school meant that schools hampered the Education Advisers' efforts to return students to education. Participants reported that the longer a student was out of education the more difficult it was to get them interested in returning. Remaining on a school roll when not actually attended was reported to effect a student's chances of being verified for alternative education. This was especially so when the criteria of 20 weeks out of school was applied and the day the school took the student off the roll used as the basis for calculating the 20 weeks (two terms) out of school. Four participants reported schools were keeping students on their rolls when they should have been removed after 20 days of non-attendance. Schools are required by regulation to remove students who have been absent, without reasonable excuse for more than 20 days, from their roll. Schools having removed the student from the school roll are then required to complete and send a NETS 1 form to the Ministry of Education (Appendix 10). Upon receipt of a NETS 1 form the Ministry of Education checks details and forwards the form onto NETS management who then refer the student to the appropriate Education Adviser. It was suggested that an under reporting of truancy to NETS meant that the number of referrals that Education Advisers were receiving was not a true indication of the number of students who were non-enrolled or truanting beyond 20 days.

I think that we are just scratching the surface... they [truants] *are not being reported... schools that just let them* [students] *drift out* (Richard).

He was suspended on 16 February... and it was referred on 3 August... but that is too late, it is six months, it's just too late really (Fay).

Difficult because by the time a school gets around to telling you [completing NETS 1]... *often it is too late to do a hell of a lot* (Trevor).

5.5.10. Correspondence School

Four participants thought Correspondence School was not always a good outcome for a truanting student. They stated it was too easy for students to drop out from the Correspondence School as there was very little if any supervision of the student's work. Barry reported, *"The excluded student that you find out on the street who is meant to be doing correspondence is a very hard one to deal with as there is nobody here who is willing to pick up the supervision of correspondence".* In his concern for the lack of supervision for Correspondence School students Steve reported, *"They are not that keen on the Correspondence School ... the ones that I have got to do something they don't seem to last long. They get the stitch very quickly. I'm not too sure of the reasons but I'm sure of one thing it's often the cause of bad supervision".* It appeared that parents who were paid a small fee to supervise often didn't or weren't willing to be tied to supervision. Andrea went as far as saying, *"In my experience it* [correspondence schooling] *doesn't work that often. You need to set it up so that there is good supervision".*

Carol reported parents and students thought correspondence schooling was a choice of schooling by right. Carol explained that she needed to tell parents it was not and to explain the reasons as to why correspondence was not provided as a school of choice. *"I say that it* [correspondence schooling] *is just not a possibility now and I just explain the reasons and they seem to accept that".*

5.5.11. Mobility

Three participants stated the mobility of families and students was a barrier to further educational opportunity. Students often had access to vehicles or families constantly moved either across cities or from town to town. Constant movement by

students and families made it difficult for Education Advisers to track and find students or to put an educational plan into operation.

> *And the sheer mobility of people that you are about to deal with as they are here one day and gone the next, they move from school to school, they move from community to community* (Bob).

> *The next thing is they have gone off to another relative* (Fay).

5.6. Training, professional development and supervision

Participants reported the level of training, professional development and supervision that they had received was minimal. However most participants regularly attended the annual national conference and some participated in one or two cluster group meetings per year. These cluster group meetings were usually held when Education Advisers requested the manager to allow a meeting to be arranged.

Professional development undertaken, usually at conferences, included activities whereby Education Advisers exchanged case studies, listened to speeches and addresses, were provided with updates on policy and process, had issues they raised clarified and were addressed by Ministry of Education personnel. Conferences were facilitated and led by the NETS manager.

Supervision can involve employees in a process of professional development and/or be a process of measuring performance. During the course of the interviews there was reported some confusion in understanding the concept of supervision. Three participants reported there was no need for them to have any form of supervision when they worked on a part-time basis.

5.6.1. Training and Professional Development

Table 5.6 shows that seven participants supported training and professional development. They considered training and professional development taught new skills, improved their awareness about issues related to truancy and improved the

performance of the Educational Adviser. Of the seven participants who supported the notion of training and professional development for Education Advisers six were male. Six participants had less than three years work experience as an Education Adviser and four had previously worked in the non-education sector.

Ewan stressed that any training needed to be properly resourced. He considered there was a need for new Education Advisers to be given proper induction and mentoring. He stated, *"As it* [NETS] *matures I see that you have got to develop more sophisticated human resource systems... it means having an identified structure and resources for induction... the more isolated the role, like NETS, the more important the induction mentoring is because you are putting people out on their own... but they* [induction and mentoring programmes] *will fail if they are not properly resourced"*.

Barry considered there was a requirement to keep up with new ways of working with truants. He stated, *"You have always got to look for new ways because the students are always looking for new ways of getting out of school"*. Colin suggested that Management needed to take professional development seriously. He considered that training and professional development needed to be included as part of a career structure. Colin stated, *"I'd like to see and people to be serious and say... here is your career path... here is your professional development"*.

David was one of four participants who reported having had limited training. He reported that Education Advisers learnt about the job as they went about their work. David stated, *"We have really learnt the job as we have gone along and I think that that has sought of contributed towards some of the difficulties... I think that our training has been extremely limited"*. Andrea suggested that when they took on the job of Education Adviser many participants were not fully aware of what the job involved suggesting that there was a need for induction and training.

Table 5.6
Training and professional development

	No of Responses N=12	Gender		Age			Years of Service		Previous Employment	
		Male	Female	<45	45-54	55+	5yrs	5+yrs	Ed	Non Ed
Need to improve upon and develop new skills	7	6	1	2	3	2	6	1	3	4
Learned on the job	4	3	1	1	0	3	2	2	3	1
No training provided	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2

5.6.2 Supervision

Supervision provides opportunity for professional development, training and provides a means to measuring the performance of employees. Table 5.7 provides an indication of how participants' viewed the benefits of supervision. Four participants considered supervision to be a liaison and mentoring activity that could provide Education Advisers with support, guidance and advice and would be of most benefit to newly appointed Education Advisers.

David thought that the term supervision was causing some confusion and that it would have been better to have used some other term in it's place. He stated, "*I think that there is some sought of supervision required. I think that could be where some of the difficulty arises because perhaps they should call it* [supervision] *something else and there should be some liaison between somebody else and myself to see how the job is going surely*".

Three male participants reported that there was no need for them to have a supervision programme. Comments were reported that stated: there could be value in supervision for others; any supervision should be by choice unless management perceived there to be performance difficulties; the nature of the work didn't require supervision. More than one participant reported that they didn't understand what supervision was about.

Table 5.7
Supervision

	No. of Responses N=12	Gender		Age			Years of Service		Previous Employment	
		Male	Female	45	45-54	55+	5yrs	3 yrs	Ed	Non Ed
As a liaison and mentoring process	4	3	1	1	2	1	4	0	2	2
No need for supervision	3	3	0	0	1	2	3	0	2	1
Peer support	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1
Measure of account-ability	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Needs to be resourced	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
1 to 1 development	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0

5.7 Summary

Reporting the results of the interviews has been completed in five sections each having links to one another. Analysis of the data gathered from the interviews indicated that participants carried out a number of roles in the course of their work. Carrying out the role of a social worker indicated that there were participants who considered this to be necessary and an important aspect of their work. Conversely other participants considered that social work was not an area to become involved in.

A diverse range of roles other than social worker were reported. These included the role of detective, counsellor, motivator, educator, salvage contractor and someone who made legal situations where students were not currently in a legal position. However all participants were aware that their major role was that of an Education Adviser whose task it was to return students to education.

Seven participants reported a change to the Education Adviser role since they had first been employed as an Education Adviser. Evidence was provided to support the notion of the role having become more difficult and problematic.

There was some impact of participants previous employment on their work as an Education Adviser. Participants reported contact with parents and students in previous employment was of significant benefit to them in the role of Education Adviser. Previous contact with agencies, a ready made network of contacts and an empathy for schools were evidenced as impacting positively upon the work of Education Adviser. Participants who previously had little contact with schools or had limited knowledge of how the school system operated were often initially disadvantaged.

A number of strategies were used in the course of the Education Advisers' work to return students to education. The strategies used most frequently included: using a network of agencies and contacts; making contact with students, families and referrers; providing students with options for further education or employment; assisting and supporting families to get students into education or the workforce. Participants reported not using the term Non-Enrolment Truancy Service when working with students and their families. It was considered that the term truancy had a negative connotation and could bring about a negative response.

There were numerous barriers presented that affected the work of the Education Adviser. Participants reported their frustration at the barriers they were confronted with and were expected to overcome to enrol students in education. All participants reported that schools, principals and teachers presented barriers to students continuing with their education. Participants also reported families and the students themselves placed barriers in the way of the student gaining access to further educational opportunity. Bureaucracy was considered a barrier to a student's return to educational opportunity. There was both frustration with, and misunderstanding about, the alternative education scheme and the roles Education Advisers were expected to fulfil in respect to alternative education. The criteria for a student to be considered for alternative education was reported to be too

restrictive. When students did not meet the requirements of the criteria for alternative education participants reported that they had no professional leeway to verify a student for alternative education even when it would clearly be in the best interests of the student to do so. This was considered by some participants as an indictment upon the professionalism of the Education Adviser.

Participants reported that they learned the work of being an Education Adviser as they went about the job. Training and professional development were evidenced as being insufficient to meet the growing demands placed upon the Educational Adviser. Some confusion over the place of supervision for the Education Adviser was evident. Although some participants reported supervision was necessary and could be beneficial, others either had a misunderstanding of the supervision process or were threatened by it. The latter saw supervision as a means of "checking up" on them and an affront to their professional integrity.

The school curriculum was considered to be a barrier to getting non-enrolled students back into education. The curriculum for these students was seen as being not relevant or too academically orientated for the non-enrolled student to comprehend. Further barriers were reported as: time limitations on referrals; mobility of families; lack of professional status for Education Advisers; complexity of some referrals; time it took for some referrals to get to the Education Adviser; lack of supervision for students on correspondence; and the isolation brought about by the nature of the Education Advisers position.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The issues around truancy, non-enrolment and dropping out of school are complex and often problematic for the students themselves, their families, schools, agencies and the organisations that work to return students to educational settings. Through this research the voice of the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS) Education Advisers illustrated a number of these issues and tensions. This chapter examines the results presented in Chapters Four and Five. Specifically these are: professional development, strategies Education Advisers use; the role of the Education Adviser; barriers; and employment issues.

The interaction between themes will be discussed. Each theme influences and impacts on each of the other themes. As shown in figure 6.1 the role of the Education Adviser is pivotal to the issues raised. The understanding of the role is critical to understanding the influences and impact of the remaining themes on the activities undertaken by the Education Adviser.

In considering the gender, age, years of service and the previous employment of participants some conclusions can be drawn from the results. These have been integrated throughout the discussion.

6.2 The role of the Education Adviser

The results indicated that without a clear understanding of the Education Adviser role, Education Advisers may work outside of the terms of their contract with Education Services Limited. In working outside of the contract Education Advisers could be positioning themselves and Education Services Limited as vulnerable to possible litigation. In addition to the possibility of litigation, Education Services Limited renumerates Education Advisers on an hourly rate based upon the legitimate work of the contract. Working outside of the parameters of the contract

may result in payment being received for work not contracted for. Further more, in the case of litigation or accident, the Education Adviser may not be protected by Education Services Limited insurance policies or be entitled to legal representation if working on issues not within the contract.

How can the Education Adviser improve their effectiveness?

Professional Development/ Training/supervision

Strategies

What strategies do Education Advisers use?

Who am I?

Role of the Education Adviser

What do I do?

What barriers affect the work of the Education Adviser?

Barriers

Employment Issues

What are the issues?
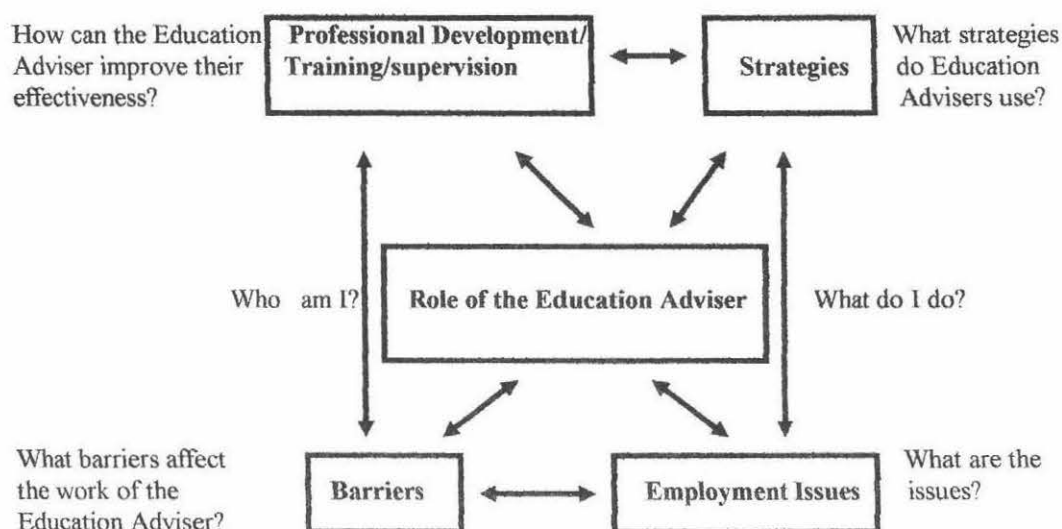
Figure 6.1 Themes and areas of tension

The results of this research showed that truancy is clearly a complex phenomena. which is consistent with other researchers who have examined the social and political nature of truancy (Kortering, 1999; Le Riche, 1995; O'Keeffe, 1995; Wells, 1990). The complexity and nature of truancy does make finding sustainable solutions difficult. There appears to be no quick fix to the problem of truancy and each case appears to be unique and symbolic of a wide range of issues (Ribbons & Sayer, 1998). Education Advisers appeared very aware of a responsibility to facilitate educational solutions that work long term for students. When interviewed Education Advisers exhibited a high level of passion for the work they were involved in. However this was often combined with a high level of frustration. Education Advisers reported that they considered there were students who were victims of an education system and of a society that did not respond to, or meet their particular needs.

NETS states within their literature that Education Advisers are "Here to Help". Education Advisers took this statement of intent as a licence to do whatever was necessary to provide a successful outcome for students. However often this help applied not only to helping the student return to education, but also to helping the family with social and family matters. The results showed that Education Advisers felt it was often necessary to deal with the social issues before dealing with the educational issues. Education issues were often reported as being considered as the least of a family's concern when issues such as housing, finance, health and employment impacted heavily on their day to day life.

The job description for Education Advisers is outlined in the Guidance Manual for Education Advisers (1997). The job description states the objectives of the Education Advisers as being:

> *To track young people reported by schools and others as possibly not enrolled in any legal learning situation.*

> *To assist parents and non-enrolled young people either by supporting the young person in:*
> > *a: enrolling in a school (including Correspondence School); or*
> > *b: obtaining an exemption from schooling to attend a course or job.*

> *To assist the Ministry of Education to ensure students do attend school and receive their right to education as required and provided for in the Education Act [1989].*

Further to the above description, Education Advisers were provided with a letter, (8 September, 1999) signed by the Truancy Project Manager, Ministry of Education, informing them that Education Advisers have the additional task of verifying alienation status of students who seek enrolment in an alternative education programme.

When the Education Adviser is faced with the multiple problems of a family, and where education may not be a major priority for the family it appears necessary for the Education Adviser to remain focused upon the Education Adviser role. Education Advisers needed to make clear to the family that their primary role was to assist the family in returning the student to education. The results showed that the Education Adviser came into the family situation from a different prospective to that of Government agencies with whom the family may have been previously involved. The Education Adviser is in a unique position, in that he or she is not restricted in their work by any specific legislation that directly relates to how an Education Adviser performs their work. This means that the Education Adviser is able to develop an empathy and trust with student and family that is often difficult for workers in Government Agencies to achieve. The Education Adviser has the opportunity to work in a non-aggressive, non-judgemental and non-authoritative manner. Workers in Government agencies generally work within the confines of particular legislation and their decisions can be enforced through legislative requirements. Government agencies inform their clients about legal entitlements. Education Advisers and NETS are not legislated for under the Education Act 1989 and therefore can work alongside students and families helping them to find solutions. Provided that the solution is within the realms of legal education the Education Adviser can pursue a placement for the student.

There is scope for Education Advisers to be creative in how they work with students and families. Being in a position where they are not restricted within their work by legislation is considered by Education Advisers to be advantageous. It allowed them to work through issues with students and families and arrive at what they considered to be the best decision for that student. However the results of the research indicate that the non existence of a legislative framework for NETS workers can mean that Education Advisers become involved in situations peripheral to that of returning students to education. Where concerns for the student and family are outside of the Education Advisers role, it could be prudent for Education Advisers to refer such matters on to the appropriate agencies or organisations. While some Education Advisers reported they did make referrals to Government Agencies others considered it was their role to assist the family with

other than educational issues. They considered that social and other family issues impacted upon educational issues and as such needed to be attended to as outlined in chapter two. The impact of a wide variety of issues upon truancy and drop out are discussed in the review of current literature (Kerslake, Lange & Bennie, 1997; Le Riche, 1995; McAlpine, Bourke, Walker & McIlroy, 1998; Reid, 1985; Rumberger, 1987, 1990; Wells, 1990). Research supports Education Advisers' views that there is a need to deal with issues other than educational that contribute to truancy and drop out if the placement of a student back into education is to be successful.

Many Education Advisers reported having experience in previous employment where they had in the course of that employment assisted students and families with their concerns and problems. This previous employment allowed them to work with students and families in an holistic manner. However the intent of the work of NETS Education Advisers is not holistic in nature. The intent is to help students get back into education by facilitating enrolment, a role recognised by Education Advisers as shown in the results. The approach expected by management to be used by Education Advisers to return students to education is more bureaucratic than holistic in nature. Evidence of Education Advisers taking on an holistic role to solving the issues of non-enrolment is provided by participants who stated that they followed up cases, showed deep concern for family issues as well as educational issues, and were concerned that returning a student to education just wasn't enough. They thought there needed to be recognition by management for Education Advisers to assist with social issues. While these Education Advisers may be correct in what they believe, it is not currently within their current job description for them to become involved with the social issues affecting many of the families of truanting and non-enrolled students. Rather there appears to be a need for Education Advisers, in consultation with families, to provide assistance to families to acquire the services of agencies who can, and whose job it is to assist these families. However, as the results show, it would be prudent and within the interests of the student and family for the Education Adviser to be provided with sufficient time to follow up an educational placement two or three weeks after that placement had been made. This would

allow the Education Adviser to arrange any further assistance that may be required to keep the student in the placement and would be an excellent public relations exercise with schools, providers, employers and families. Education Advisers reported a greater number of students were being referred to them for a second or third time. Therefore following up placements could reduce the number of multiple referrals for the same student. Such an action is supported by White (1995) who suggests that professionals have not been very successful at getting truants to return to, and remain in school. White (1995) argues that returning students to school is generally done for the reasons of the state rather than for the needs of the student.

Upon placement of a student back into education there should be, within the institution, mechanisms for support, follow up and evaluation. Reid (1985) suggests that schools should have at least one expert in the field of truancy. It is this expert who could work closely with the Education Adviser, monitor the student's progress and programme and arrange support and mentoring as well as being responsible for continuing family contact. As Zeller (1966) points out, to return the student to the same situation that he or she left without any change, then the student will have no better chance of succeeding than they did the first time that they were enrolled.

It appears from the results that it may be easy for the Education Adviser, especially those who had previous experience of working holistically with students and families, to be seen as the family friend and helper rather than the professional whose primary role it is to return students to education. Education Advisers reported the importance of developing empathy with student and family, of using a friendly approach and making offers to help and assist. Unless the Education Adviser has a clear understanding of the role expected of them and portrays this role clearly to students and families they may become involved in roles never envisaged by the Ministry of Education nor by the company contracted to fulfil the service. Both the Education Adviser and families needed to be aware that the use of the terminology "We are here to help" refers to helping to get the student enrolled in education and not with helping solve family social issues.

Although the role of Education Adviser may be clear to the Ministry of Education and to NETS management it is reported to be causing tension for Education Advisers. From an analysis of the interviews and questionnaires Education Advisers consider that it is them who are out in the field on a daily basis and who are confronted on a daily basis with family issues and problems. The Education Advisers were in a unique position where they ascertained and made decisions on what they considered best for making a suitable, successful and sustainable educational placement. Goldberg (1999) suggests that multiple interventions are often required when working with truants if there is to be a successful outcome.

Education Advisers work diligently towards bringing each case to a successful conclusion illustrated by their involvement with students and families, and personal enthusiasm and dedication for the work. Through taking an holistic approach toward solving the issues for students and recognising that there is a need to place the student into a successful educational placement, the Education Adviser can do work that appears to be outside of the job description and the primary role of returning students to education. Education Advisers reported that they often went that extra mile to get schools, course providers or prospective employers to accept students. In doing so they appeared to take upon themselves a great sense of responsibility to ensure that the placement was successful. Where people were reluctant to enrol students Education Advisers were aware that an unsuccessful placement could jeopardise the possibility of any further placement within the same school, course provider or employer.

Education Advisers reported becoming involved with NETS because they considered the work to be of value to the community and they had the skill and experience suited to the work. In carrying out the work Education Advisers reported that they seek to establish an empathy with students and their families, promote a sense of security and care and that they are there to help. In doing this the Education Adviser could, and often did, become involved in family issues other than education. In doing so they could find themselves 'smudging' the Education Adviser role in an endeavour to help the student and family by taking on a humanist holistic approach to solving educational problems. This smudging took

the form of reporting only those actions that would be seen as legitimate to the role. As previously stated such an approach is in conflict with that expected of them.

Education Advisers reported that their role had become more complex, problematic and difficult to carry out as time had gone by. They felt that students had become more difficult to motivate and return to education. A number of Education Advisers considered themselves to be facilitators. The notion of facilitation could be given more emphasis in the role of the Education Adviser. Through the promotion of the role of the Education Adviser as facilitator, rather than as the person who deals with all the issues themselves, the Education Adviser was less likely to become involved in social issues. Through an emphasis on facilitation Education Advisers could be expected to forward on to agencies the health, financial, social and welfare issues that are causing family dysfunction. Although reporting that they had little involvement in Strengthening Families, Education Advisers could become more involved in the initial establishment of Strengthening Families meetings. These meetings bring together agencies and voluntary organisations who can then plan to support and meet the social, health and financial needs of the family[7]

The results showed that gender had some influence upon the perception held by participants concerning the role of Education Adviser. Generally female Education Advisers saw the role in two dimensions of facilitator and provider of further educational opportunity. However male Education Advisers generally considered the role to encompass a wider range of tasks. Male Education Advisers perceived their role not only as that of facilitator and provider of further educational opportunity but also as motivator, detective, counsellor and social worker. Males often extended the role of Education Adviser beyond that designated within the NETS contract especially into the area of social worker.

---

[7] Strengthening Families is a Government initiative for the improvement of the well-being of families by improving the services provided to them through interagency cooperation

Evidence collected in the present study indicate that the age range of the Education Advisers had an effect on the way they perceived their role. Results from the interviews showed that four of the six participants in the 55 plus years of age category considered themselves as fulfilling the role of provider of further educational opportunity and were more likely to include detective, or as evidenced in the questionnaire, locater of students, as part of their role. The 55 plus age bracket together with participants in the 45–54 age bracket were more likely than participants in the less than 35 year age bracket to take on the role of counsellor.

Participants in all age groups considered the work of a social worker to come within the role of Education Adviser. Similarly all age groups were evenly represented in considering facilitation of a student's return to education to be a role for the Education Adviser.

It would appear that as Education Advisers spent more time in the role their perceptions of what the role encompassed shifted and changed. For example the role of counsellor was considered a component of the job by participants with more than three years service whereas those having less than three years service saw themselves more as motivators and social workers.

Education Advisers whose previous employment had been within the education sector related that the locating of students was a very important aspect of their role. Education Advisers whose previous employment fell outside the education sector did not specifically allude to location of students thus indicating that they did not perceive that all efforts possible to locate students should be made. Education Advisers with work experience in the education sector placed greater emphasis on listening to, discussing and developing empathy with students and their families. These advisers strongly forwarded the notion that part of their role was providing further educational opportunity for truants.

From the results it appeared that there was a need for the role of the Education Adviser to be clarified and made more explicit. The terms "assist", "help", and "support" that were used in the job description needed to be clearly defined so that

Education Advisers were aware of the exact meaning of the job description and its relationship to the work they were required to do. With truancy being a complex issue it was not surprising that Education Advisers saw themselves as filling many roles. Included as roles were: detective; social worker; facilitator; salvage contractor; educator; counsellor; exemptor; and provider of opportunity.

6.3 Employment issues

This research shows that many Education Advisers had careers in either education, public health, welfare, justice or the military services. All appeared to have skills transferable from their previous areas of employment to NETS. The most valuable skills appeared to be those associated with working with people and families. In the course of their duties Education Advisers are required to work alongside families, managers, chief executives and business persons from schools, agencies, training and course facilities.

The opportunity to work for NETS, participating in part-time work, working the hours that suited their life style, was appreciated by most Education Advisers. The majority of Education Advisers brought to the position a vast variety of experience, skill and knowledge that was useful to them when working with truants and dysfunctional families.

Participants reported that they were recruited to the position of Education Adviser either by recommendation from a previous Education Adviser, the Ministry of Education, or they themselves had informed NETS that they were interested in the work. Some Education Advisers stated they also combined the role of District Truancy Officer with that of a NETS Education Adviser. For those who were involved in this dual role, one job appeared to complement the other and often the students were known to the Education Adviser in their role of District Truancy Officer. An Education Adviser however suggested that having more than one position in the educational sector caused conflict of interest and problems for the Education Adviser. This could be difficult where the roles were not clearly defined or understood by the Education Adviser or where the public became confused by the dual roles being undertaken by the one person.

Participants reported enjoying the nature of the work and the flexible working hours. Although employed by Education Services Limited, Education Advisers have a great deal of autonomy. This did however pose problematic when issues around the Education Adviser role were unclear or were widely interpreted by the Education Adviser. It is possible that freedom to use initiative, to devise creative solutions, to work alone and to manage their own time contributes a great deal to the success of NETS. In 1998 Education Advisers arranged provision for further educational opportunities for 665 students, in 1999 1265 students and in the year 2000 1693 students[8] (Appendix 10). This success rate indicates that NETS is working effectively and is achieving the primary task of returning non-enrolled students to an educational setting.

The freedom to act and work in a range of ways was important to Education Advisers. They had no wish to be burdened by bureaucracy and regulation when helping students return to education. The freedom to work independently, to work hours that suited the individual and to have freedom to be creative and responsive to student needs is seen by Education Advisers to be a strength of the NETS organisation. However for the Education Adviser to maintain the freedom to work in a mode suited to the individual Education Adviser it appeared to be necessary for the Education Adviser to be fully informed of, and to have grasped a clear understanding of the role expected of them. If Education Advisers work independently without a clear definition of their role they may be in danger of placing themselves and their employer at risk of litigation or of bringing the service into disrepute.

Education Advisers who work independently of management and other Education Advisers, stated that they required regular communication from management and colleagues. Sixty-five percent of Education Advisers reported making contact with management at least once a fortnight usually for the purpose of discussing referrals. Of the sixty-five percent of Education Advisers who make this regular contact, eighty-five percent of all males did, compared with twenty-two percent of

---

[8] Statistics provided by NETS (January 2002)

all females. Females reported that they were much more likely to contact a colleague rather than to contact management to discuss cases and issues related to their work. This reported contact either with management or colleagues can be interpreted as contributing to good practice because it provides the Education Adviser with an opportunity to exchange ideas, discuss possible courses of action, make known their concerns and gain support from colleagues. In making regular contact the Education Adviser was assisted in their decision making processes and colleagues and management could monitor one another. Forty-six percent of Education Advisers stating that they contacted management to receive reassurance for what they are doing is further evidence to suggest that there is some confusion about the role of the Education Adviser. The degree of contact made with the manager, by Education Advisers whose previous work experience was outside of the education sector, suggested that this group of advisers in particular required training. It was suggested by participants that training for this group could have an emphasis upon role, school regulations with regards to truancy, school culture and matters related to working with and in schools.

The development of NETS has been problematic for Education Advisers and management. It is only as recently as mid 1999 that Education Services Limited received a contract for NETS for a period of three years. Prior to this time the contracts awarded to Education Services Limited were short term. It is perhaps not surprising then that training occurred on the job and Education Advisers reported that they learnt on the job, and sought advice from the manager or colleagues when unsure of the procedures to follow. It is of no surprise then that Education Advisers, and especially those with less than three years service, perceive a need for regular training. The area of training will be specifically addressed later in this chapter.

The majority of Education Advisers reported working on a part-time basis. This suited a range of needs. However some Education Advisers identified a preference for a full time career option. Currently very few centres could support a full time Education Adviser position in terms of the current job description and number of referrals. Many of the Education Advisers who brought to the position a depth of

skill and experience in working with families, students, agencies, teachers and schools may not be available should the position be made full time. Information received within the questionnaire reported that sixty-five percent of Education Advisers work for less than twenty-one hours per week and only eight percent work for more than thirty-one hours in any given week. When NETS was the sole source of their income some participants reported that for some them not working in a full time position resulted in them being disadvantaged financially. As a result of the part-time nature of their work some Education Advisers reported having to work in more than one part-time position. Working in more than one part-time position was reported to have brought about conflicts of interest causing the Education Adviser some degree of anxiety.

However NETS management is unlikely to face problems of recruitment of employees as most Education Advisers reported that they preferred the part-time nature of the position which suited their particular circumstances. As employees of the various branches of the public service took up early or full term retirement, as evidenced by those from this group working for NETS, these people often appeared to be on the look out for part-time work and NETS appeared to be a job for which they had the skills and time.

The issue of variable remuneration was reported as a cause of considerable concern by some Education Advisers. Education Advisers reported that they felt a great deal of dismay when learning that different hourly rates of remuneration had been negotiated with NETS. Education Advisers thought that they were being paid at the same rate. They suggested that as each Education Adviser did the same work they would receive the same remuneration and thought that management had not been entirely open or informative over their pay rates.

The research findings suggested a need for improved communication between management and Education Advisers. Currently the participants report that much of the communication with management is initiated by them. The Education Advisers reported that they did not feel fully informed of changes in policy and procedures. An example of this was in the area of alternative education where one

Education Adviser reported that he just did not understand what was required of him or his role in the alternative education process. Due to the isolated nature of the work, with Education Advisers often based in an area a significant distance from their nearest colleague, good communication appeared to be essential. Shipman (1990) reports that staff in effective schools need to be kept informed on policy and procedures for implementing that policy. The staff of NETS appeared to have similar communication requirements to staff within schools needing to be kept informed through a good communication system. Regular communication either by telephone, fax, email or newsletter would provide Education Advisers with a feeling of belonging to an organisation, of being appreciated for the work that they do, and can build staff moral as well as providing an opportunity for feedback and debate.

Education Advisers raised the issue of being listened to. They stated that they needed to be listened to and consideration be given to their ideas. They argued that because they are the people on the ground working through the day to day issues that they have had valuable experiences that the NETS organisation could use to further develop the service. One Education Adviser commented that the organisation needed to become more people orientated rather than being so concerned with statistical data. The Education Adviser thought that the outcomes for the organisation appeared to be measured in terms of the number of referrals completed rather than upon the quality of the outcome for students. Although outcomes for students are extremely important, NETS management has milestone reports to deliver and outcomes to meet that are set out in the contract between the Ministry of Education and Education Services Limited. There is a relationship between the role of the Education Adviser and issues of employment. Providing a clear understanding of, and engaging in, regular dialogue on role issues would be beneficial for both the Education Adviser and NETS management.

Education Advisers reported time allocated for the completion of each referral could be problematic. The twelve week allocation given to complete and return a referral to management was not always considered to be sufficient. In some cases the referral process was reported as being slow and instances were cited where

families went away, meetings scheduled were cancelled and new meeting arrangements had to be made, school holidays intervened or the Education Adviser was waiting upon other people or agencies to report on or carry out a task. There is a process that Education Advisers can use to request an extension of time where such an extension would determine a satisfactory outcome for the student (Non Enrolment Truancy Service, 1997). As the Education Adviser works mainly in isolation from both management and colleagues keeping motivated and within the time restraint of twelve weeks could in some situations be difficult to achieve. Management regularly provided Education Advisers with an update of their case work listing the referrals that each Education Adviser currently had and the length of time that these referrals had been active. This information provided the Education Adviser with the opportunity to plan actions and to either place a referral on 'hold' or seek an extension of time[9].

The results showed that issues of employment were of a greater concern to male than to female participants. However male and females indicated that the work had become more difficult and complex since they had commenced their employment as an Education Adviser. Male Education Advisers reported that they found the time restriction attached to each referral as being difficult to keep to when referrals were complex and difficult.

The age of the Education Adviser appears to have some effect upon how the participants perceived some employment issues. Education Advisers in the age brackets 45–54 and 55 plus years considered that a knowledge of the education system and having previous employment in the education sector were important factors contributing to their work

The length of service as an Education Adviser was an indicator to how issues of employment were perceived. Results showed that participants with less than three years service regarded training and professional development as issues that needed to be addressed. Participants with more than three years service as an Education

---

[9] Referrals can be placed on "Hold" when the Education Adviser is waiting for some action to occur

Adviser were concerned with the issues of supervision and the complexity of alternative education.

Participants whose previous employment had been in the education sector reported that their previous contact with students and families, the empathy they had with schools and previous contact with government agencies were all beneficial and of value to them in the role of Education Adviser. On the other hand participants whose previous employment had been in the non-education sector reported the need for training, professional development and mentoring suggesting that their previous employment was not as beneficial to the work of Education Adviser than for those who had worked in the education sector.

6.4 Strategies

Education Advisers have to possess skills that enable them to implement strategies for returning students to education. Participants indicated that the most desirable skills for the Education Adviser to possess were those concerned with people interactions, systems knowledge and to a lesser degree problem solving.

When Education Advisers reported on their endeavours to return students to an educational situation a number of common strategies emerged. One key strategy involved making personal contact with students and their families. Through making personal contact, usually by visiting the family home or the parent's workplace, Education Advisers reported the development of empathy with the students and their families. Students and parents were involved in the decision making process when Education Advisers spent time discussing the issues related to the student's education and future educational needs. This involvement provided the student and family with an opportunity to participate in the placement of the student in an educational setting. By providing the student and the parent with the opportunity to participate, the educational placement was considered by Education Advisers to have been given a greater chance of succeeding. The student would possibly remain motivated and continue to attend school or the course decided upon. Through their participation students and parents had a significant degree of ownership in the decision. The use of this strategy could be seen as an approach

quite different from that used by many other agencies. Government agencies can appear to parents to be directing them in what they are required to do and agencies can cite Acts of Parliament to enforce compliance. By listening to, and discussing the issues with students and parents, Education Advisers endeavoured to put into practice the notion that they were there to help.

Evidence provided by Education Advisers suggested that involving both student and parents has a positive impact upon returning students to an educational situation. Aeby, Manning, Thyer and Carpenter-Aeby (1999) believe that the involvement of parents in alternative education programmes has a positive effect upon the success of such programmes. The empowerment of students and families to help themselves and to make considered decisions generally provides a positive outcome. Stewart (2001) believes that empowerment provides students and families with a stake in the outcome.

The data showed that Education Advisers were aware of the importance of making regular contact with families, not only to attain an educational placement for the student but also to follow up that placement once the student is back in school or on a course. Education Advisers argued that follow up is important in preventing drop out. Although Education Advisers were aware that follow up was not within their job description a third of those who returned the questionnaire reported they followed up referrals and made further investigation once they had placed a student either back into school or onto a course. This action indicates that Education Advisers, having developed an empathy with students and families during the course of the work undertaken to find a suitable placement, considered they had a responsibility to the family to ascertain the effectiveness of that placement. By following up student placements the Education Adviser could provide assistance needed to keep the student in education. Such action on the part of the Education Adviser could prevent further drop out from education. As suggested by Lichter, Rapien, Seibert and Sklansky (1968), and Rumberger (1986), it could also advert some of the psychological damage students suffer when confronted with school drop out and truancy.

In the course of their work Education Advisers reported that they spend considerable time advocating on behalf of the student and negotiating with agencies, schools, alternative education coordinators, and course providers. The Education Adviser arranged meetings, set up interviews, and met with providers to arrange the best possible outcome for the student. In addition to this the Education Advisers assisted parents to obtain an exemption from school for their child where the student had a course or an employment position available to them. In carrying out strategies associated with successful advocacy and facilitation the Education Adviser was often able to arrange a successful placement for the student.

A conscious effort was made by Education Advisers, when discussing with parents a students non attendance at school, they did not use the term truancy. Although truancy is embodied in the name of the service, Non-Enrolment Truancy Service, by not referring to truancy Education Advisers sought to avoid reminding parents of any guilt, shame, or stigma for their failure to see that their child attended school.

There were participants who reported making a conscious effort to distance themselves from taking on the persona of a social worker. This was seen as a strategy that focused them upon educational matters rather than focusing on the social issues that nearly always affect families in which truancy is situated. These Education Advisers accepted that social issues were nearly always a contributory factor to truancy but they were not within the realm of their job description. When they ascertained that there were social issues inherent within a referral they referred those issues on to an appropriate agency. By undertaking this action Education Advisers were able to remain focused upon the role of returning students to education. In contrast there were Education Advisers who reported they carried out social work type activities and who stated that they wanted social work to be included in the role. It appeared that decisions needed to be made by management that clarified the situation.

Networking is a strategy used by Education Advisers to assist in returning students to education. The students and families referred to NETS were often involved with

several agencies and organisations. Through developing a network of professional contacts within these organisations Education Advisers were able to share information that assisted them in the task of placing students into education and attaining assistance beneficial to the student and family. Having good relationships with agencies and a strong network saved the Education Adviser considerable time when endeavouring to locate and place students into education. Where strong networks were not in place, gathering information could be time consuming and the information difficult to obtain. Closer links with agencies needed to be further enhanced. The development of a formal protocol between NETS and government agencies would allow for the free exchange of information especially in respect to the location of families.

Providing students with options for further education was said by Education Advisers to be critical if students were going to be returned to education. It was reported that it was difficult for the Education Adviser to provide educational options for students under the age of thirteen years. The Education Advisers endeavoured to return these students to mainstream schooling or alternatively to have them enrolled in The Correspondence School. Failing these alternatives the students were unlikely to be found an educational placement. Education Advisers argued that for some of these students a return to mainstream or enrolment in The Correspondence School was not a suitable or satisfactory option. They expressed concern that there was no provision for these students to be involved in alternative education. Unless the Education Adviser could offer another alternative to mainstream and correspondence education the student could become a casualty of the education system. Education Advisers further argued that provision for alternative education needs to be available if the cycle of truancy for these students was to be broken.

Students aged over thirteen years of age and who are alienated from education can be considered for alternative education programmes. Alienation is assessed by set criteria and students who qualify by meeting those criteria are considered for alternative education. Funding for alternative education programmes is allocated to

secondary school consortiums who purchase alternative programmes from providers.

In addition to their normal role of returning students to education, Education Advisers reported verifying students for alienation. Upon verification students were eligible for enrolment in an alternative education programme. However in performing the primary role of returning students to education the Education Adviser was at times presented with a dilemma when asked to perform the two roles simultaneously. Where an Education Adviser verifying alienation found that the student did not meet the criteria for alienation, the Education Adviser could be inclined to apply the verification criteria leniently. This would allow the verification to proceed so that in their primary role, that of returning students to education, the Education Adviser could then use alternative education as a placement. The Education Advisers reported an awareness knowing that if a student was unable to be verified then the door to further education for that student could be closed. This issue is consistent with the findings regarding confusion over the role of the Education Adviser.

Students aged fifteen years were provided with a further option to those offered younger students. The Education Advisers reported that they assisted parents to obtain exemptions from school for their children. Such exemptions are permissible within the Education Act 1989. When students having reached the age of fifteen and who find it difficult to remain at school have been accepted for enrolment upon a course with a private provider or who have been offered employment.

The results showed that in attending to a referral that had a successful outcome for the student, male participants (16) were more inclined to make home visits than were females (5). On the other hand females (7 of 8) were more likely to contact and visit schools than their male counterparts (11 of 18). Males (13 of 18) to a greater degree than females (4 of 8) reported that they arranged placements and enrolments for students suggesting that males were more successful than females in achieving positive outcomes for students. However a greater percentage of females reported that they had a success rate of between 80–100 percent.

The age of the participant appears to have some bearing upon strategies used to return a student to education. For example the study shows that when introducing themselves to students and family the Education Adviser aged 55 plus years is more likely, than an Education Adviser in the other age brackets, to have informed the family that they were there to help and assist the family to return the student to education. This age group and those aged less than 45 years were likely to refer to NETS or the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service. Participants in the 45–54 and 55 plus age bracket were reported as most likely to use a network of contacts to assist them in resolving a referral whereas those aged less than 45 years were the age group most likely to make visits to schools.

6.5 Barriers

In seeking to provide non-enrolled students with further educational opportunities Education Advisers encountered barriers that impinged upon their work. Participants suggested that their role was too restrictive. They argued that students and families often had more pressing and urgent needs that required attention than those of education. Education Advisers received referrals where they considered the need to be involved in assisting families to deal with day to day survival before they attended to the education of the student. There are links between truancy and poverty, poor housing and families that are dysfunctional (McAlpine, Bourke, Walker & McIllroy, 1998; Jacka, Sutherland, Peters & Smith 1987; Goldberg 1999; Le Riche, 1985). Where families of truanting students, or the students themselves, are involved in crime, substance abuse or where there is a lack of family and financial resources to meet their day to day needs the result is often low self-esteem, poor attitudes to education and authority, and apathy that was reported as barriers to educational placement. Some Educational Advisers reported that returning the student to education is difficult and was even undesirable unless action was taken to improve the family social, financial and cultural positions. This notion is supported by Lichter, Rapien, Seibert and Sklansky (1968) and Rumberger (1986) who suggest that students affected by emotional or personality disturbances, low self-esteem and self expectation, often the characteristics of truants, need their personal issues satisfied before having their educational needs addressed.

Where parents are antagonistic towards school, do not value education and do not support their children in school it is not surprising that students truant or drop out. Education Advisers reported meeting with families where there was what they described as a poverty of spirit. Others interpreted this poverty of spirit as apathy, disinterest and a failure to meet students basic needs. Breaking through the barrier of parental and student resistance was considered to be difficult and therefore required the Education Adviser to regularly return to the family. This assisted the development of working and friendly relationships so that action could be taken and progress made toward returning the student to education.

There is a direct link between the theme of barriers and the role of the Education Adviser. When Education Advisers visited and revisited families, listened to the family stories and concerns, it can be understood why they became involved in social issues affecting those families. By not maintaining a clear understanding of or focus upon the role of the Education Adviser the family social issues became a barrier to getting the student back into school. Education Advisers need to have a clear understanding of their role and ensure that families are aware of that role from the very first contact. Failure to do this could lead to the family having undue expectations of what the Education Adviser could do for them and the Education Advisers becoming involved in issues not within the realms of the NETS contract.

A lack of planning and resourcing can be a barrier to the Education Adviser successfully returning a student to education. Returning students to education requires careful management, and sufficient resources are needed to make the return to education successful. To return a student to education is not really a solution if the context or situation does not change. If the conditions are not changed and the situation is not sufficiently resourced, then it is not surprising if the student again drops out of education.

It was reported by Education Advisers that families often presented to the Education Advisers as dysfunctional. Families were often faced with problems associated with finance, employment, health, housing, substance abuse and their

children were often ill-disciplined. Within such circumstances it was not surprising that all participants who were interviewed reported the family itself as a barrier to placing the student back into education. As Batten, Withers and Russell (1996) discovered a dysfunctional family affects both a students behaviour and performance. Le Riche (1995) identifies truancy with being closely linked to poverty, sub-standard housing and the lack of interest taken by parents in their children's education.

However Wells (1990) argues that schools themselves contribute to truancy and drop out. Reid (1985) suggests schools that appear to be narrowly custodian in nature, through their actions, create a gulf between themselves, families and students. It was reported that schools often turned a blind eye to student absence (the Lord Nelson touch) especially where students are perceived to be unwelcome (Turner, 1974). Statistics provided by NETS management, (R.Novis, personal. communication. 4.12.2001), report that in the year 2000 there were 617 schools that referred students to NETS from a total of 2715 schools. As reported by Education Advisers the number of referrals being received is only the 'tip of the iceberg' suggesting a gross under reporting of students who have been absent from school without lawful excuse for a period beyond 20 consecutive days[10] (Non Enrolment Truancy Service 1997). Non reporting of truancy means that there are, in all probability, significant numbers of students under the age of 16 years who are not receiving an education.

Alternatively Education Advisers reported there were schools who went to great lengths to accommodate at risk students. However some of these schools were reported to be feeling pressure from accepting these students. This pressure was said to have been felt when the school found themselves unable to meet the needs of at-risk students and from the school community. The school community was reported to have perceived that at-risk students were affecting the educational opportunities of other students who attended the school. Education Advisers reported an awareness and realisation that many students with whom they work to

[10]Schools are required to inform the Ministry of Education of a students continuing absence from school by completing form NETS 1

enrol are disruptive, often apathetic, disinterested in school and exhibited social behaviours that were difficult for the schools to attend to. However these students were entitled to an education and were probably going to become alienated from education and society unless the Education Adviser provided them with an opportunity to further education.

Working with schools was reported to be problematic for Education Advisers. All participants who were interviewed and two thirds of those who returned the questionnaire indicted that schools themselves placed barriers in the way of attaining an enrolment or placement for students. It was reported that too much pressure placed upon a school to enrol a student could put at risk relationships between Education Advisers and the school making it difficult to get schools to entertain future referrals. This meant that Education Advisers needed to be skilled in negotiating with school personnel. Education Advisers further reported that some schools refused to consider enrolling students who are non-enrolled on the basis that there was no financial assistance to support the enrolment. Thewlis (1996) implies that funding for students with special needs is inadequate to meet the needs of those students even when the schools have the best intentions to do so. NETS was able to provide limited funding to a school to assist the student to settle in. Some funding was available for fees and uniforms. Should the Education Adviser have been able to offer the school a reasonable incentive to enrol a student this barrier to enrolment may have been reduced.

Cooper and Mellors (1990) posit that the successful management of truants, disruptive or difficult children depended very much on the attitudes and actions of teachers. The "old boys' network" was considered by Education Advisers to be a barrier to enrolment. They reported that networking between schools was active. Enrolling students at a new school was often prejudiced where principals or school staff made known to other schools the names of students they had excluded. The reality being that students were effectively locked out of education and denied the opportunity to put behind them any previous misdemeanours or behaviours that had lead to their exclusion or truanting from school. Refusing enrolment to a student or making it obvious to students and parents that the student was not

welcome within the school did solve the problem for the school but not for the Education Adviser, student or parent. Without educational opportunity the student would have difficulty in seeking future employment, of achieving financial and social stability often resulting in negative affects upon society. As Rumberger (1987, 1990) argued, truancy and student drop out severely limits the economic and social well-being of students for the rest of their lives.

The school curriculum is a contributing factor to truancy. Batten, Withers and Russell, (1996); Irving and Parker-Jenkins (1995); Kilpatrick (1996); Kronick and Hargis (1987); Le Riche (1995); and McAlpine, Bourke, Waller and McIlroy (1998) all consider that the school curriculum contributes to the cause of truancy. Therefore, to retain non-enrolled students in school, curriculum adaptation needed to be undertaken. Curriculum was considered by seven of the interviewed participants to contribute to truanting and dropping out of school. An Education Adviser considered curriculum to be the main cause of truancy and this view is supported by Kronick and Hargis (1987). Participants reported that the curriculum for truanting students was often too difficult, the lessons too long, resulting in a lack of success being achieved by students and as a consequent was a significant factor in student truancy and drop out. Where students had experienced failure with the school curriculum Education Advisers reported that it was often difficult for them to convince students that a return to education, and school in particular, was in their long term interests.

Alternative Education programmes do provide a suitable vehicle for furthering the education of truants and those students who have dropped out of school. Alternative Education is sometimes the best option available to Education Advisers to provide students with educational opportunities. The placement of students into alternative education programmes is supported by Nichols and Utesch (1998); White (1980); Aeby, Manning, Thyer and Carpenter-Aeby (1999). However Education Advisers reported frustration at a system that requires students to meet certain criteria before they become eligible to be considered for an alternative education placement. While Education Advisers concede that some

form of criteria are required to avoid abuse of the alternative education programme they exhibit some concern over the lack of flexibility allowed within the criteria.

Education Advisers are charged with two contradictory roles within the alternative education system. The first of these roles is to verify students who qualify for alternative education and the second role is to use alternative education as an educational placement for students they are already working with. The Education Adviser may consider that the best possible placement for a student is an alternative education programme but is unable to place that student in the programme because the student does not meet the requirements of the criteria. As stated earlier in this chapter, this is problematic, as Education Advisers are aware that not verifying the student could result in the student being denied any future education. Education Advisers suggested that they should be given the authority to use their professional judgement when verifying students for alternative education rather than have to raise the issue with management or decline the student entry to an alternative education programme. As the Education Adviser knows the student and his/her circumstances best, the Education Adviser should be able to make the judgement call. In isolated or small town areas in particular the number of alternatives for the placement of students was reported to be limited. Therefore, without the authority to have some flexibility to place students in alternative education programmes, students may be deprived of their right to any future educational programme.

Three quarters of participants interviewed and statements recorded in the questionnaire indicated that some school, agency and NETS management practices were a barrier to Education Advisers as they worked towards placing students back into education. Within schools it was reported that it was often difficult for the Education Adviser to get to meet with the principal. There was evidence of the "old boys network" at work prejudicing any chance of a student being enrolled in another school. Schools also used excuses for not enrolling a student, for example a full roll, large class sizes, being too near the end of the term or the year, or that the school already had their share of difficult students. Participants considered that schools were under reporting truancy and this is supported by figures provided by

NETS management (see page 169). Agencies were reported to be reluctant to give information. They used the Privacy Act as an excuse for their actions. NETS was reported as not providing sufficient communication and to being too statistics orientated rather than people focused.

There were mixed responses from the Education Advisers with regards to Ministry of Education support. The Ministry of Education received both plaudits and condemnation from Education Advisers. Some Education Advisers found that Ministry of Education Officials were extremely helpful to them where as others thought that they undermined them, were unhelpful and were disappointed in the role that the Ministry played.

Government agencies were seen to be both helpful and a barrier to the work of the Education Adviser. Agencies were reported to either work closely with the Education Adviser or to provide little support or information. Agencies often cited the Privacy Act as a reason for non-cooperation. It is apparent that where Education Advisers had had previous contact with schools and agencies in a previous employment role they already had professional credibility which assisted them in accessing the information they required. The development of a network of contacts and access to people in schools or Government Agencies appeared to be a vital component in the tool kit of the Education Adviser.

NETS administration was generally praised as being readily assessable, available and helpful in meeting the concerns of Education Advisers. There were however some concerns over varying pay rates for Education Advisers, some administration procedures, time restrictions, limited information and contact being made with Education Advisers as well as the lack of a career structure within the service. These issues identified by participants as barriers to their work were raised and discussed as employment issues earlier in this chapter.

Education Advisers, in particular males and those whose previous employment had been in the non-educational sector expressed concern at their lack of professional status. They reported that this lack of status was a barrier to them as they

attempted to return students to education. These Education Advisers suggested that the whole service needed to be placed upon a much more professional basis so that they could be better perceived by schools, agencies and providers as professionals doing a professional job.

That there were barriers to the work of the Education Adviser was recognised by male and female participants. While both genders recognised that schools, students and parents, and alternative education criteria were barriers to them in their work, male participants reported more concern than females about professional status, time restraints, contracts and conditions of employment and school curriculum. This provided an indication that females were more concerned with issues related to barriers that affected them in returning students to education whereas males, although concerned about barriers to returning students to education, were also concerned with issues that affected them personally.

Years of service as an Education Adviser appears to have some effect upon on what participants perceived as barriers affecting their work. Although some barriers were considered common to many of the Education Advisers those with less than three years service more often than those with three years plus service identified parent apathy, the school curriculum and bureaucratic practices to be barriers.

The previous employment of participants had a bearing upon the results. Participants who had previously been employed in the education sector (5) reported more often than those whose previous employment had been in the non-education sector (2) that the school curriculum was a barrier to returning students to education. Six participants with an education sector work background reported schools refusing to enrol students as a barrier to those students education where as only one participant from a non-education work background reported this as a barrier. This suggested that participants from a education sector work background were more aware of the role curriculum and refusal to enrol had upon the future education of students.

6.6 Training, professional development and supervision

The participants indicated that training, professional development and supervision were problematic. Education Advisers reported that they brought to the position of Education Adviser a wide variety of skill and experience, they were often located in isolated districts and scattered throughout the country, and the majority worked part-time for less than 20 hours per week. Participants in this research were generally in favour of training and professional development especially for new appointees and in association with national conference and cluster meetings. The expressed reaction of Education Advisers to supervision ranged from those who were strongly in favour of a supervision programme to those who totally rejected the idea of any form of supervision.

Education Advisers who had previous employment in the education sector or the public service reported that they were usually able to call upon those work experiences and the skills acquired to assist them in their work as an Education Adviser. These Education Advisers reported that their previous employment had been of great benefit to them in their employment with NETS. In particular, skills they had developed from working with people were considered to be extremely beneficial.

However some Education Advisers had discovered that their previous employment, although often of some benefit to them, was insufficient to provide the skills and strategies needed to carry out the task of Education Adviser. Education Advisers reported they learnt the job as they worked on referrals rather than being provided with training. As Education Advisers reported that they had been provided with only minimal training, this can be interpreted as a factor contributing to the confusion that exists in respect to their role. Training, not only in approaches and strategies, referral procedures and administration, but in the clarification of the Education Adviser role were considered necessary at an early or preservice stage of employment. It appeared to Education Advisers that they were expected to learn the job as they worked through referrals and reported not being fully aware as to what the job entailed when they first became employed by NETS. Training on this basis, learning through experimentation, can be fraught with

difficulties that hinder the work of the Education Adviser and impinge upon the integrity of the service. The nature of the short term contracts from 1996 to 2000, between the Ministry of Education and Education Services Limited, attributed to the scarcity of training. The insecurity of short term contracts provided little opportunity for the development of long term training or supervision programmes. The availability of the NETS manager to discuss issues was reported to have greatly assisted Education Advisers during this period of time. However with the most recent contract being granted for a period of three years opportunities are now available for NETS management to instigate preservice training and to use experienced Education Advisers to train and supervise new employees.

Education Advisers generally recognised that it was beneficial to receive training, professional development and supervision in order to improve the quality of their work and therefore lead to better outcomes for students. Seventeen of the twenty-six participants who returned the questionnaire had previously worked in the education sector therefore it is not surprising that they favoured on-going training and professional development for Education Advisers. Stewart and Prebble (1987) maintain that most teachers want to improve the quality of their practice and that they have a strong interest in the techniques and strategies used by their colleagues.

With Education Advisers supporting on-going training and professional development NETS has the opportunity, in consultation with Education Advisers, to develop indepth training and professional development programmes. Participants suggested that training programmes could be designed to include the topics of contract expectations, Ministry of Education and NETS policy and regulations, referral and work processes, alternative education and the development of skills for working with students, parents, schools and agencies. Professional development programmes on the other hand needed to focus upon improving the quality of practice and delivery. Education Advisers could be provided with the opportunity to further improve educational opportunities for students. This could be attained through developing programmes that reflect upon the nature and purpose of their work, emphasise data gathering and analysis,

problem solving, best practices (Stewart & Prebble, 1987) as well as analysing and discussing case studies.

The question of supervision has been problematic for NETS. This is particularly so because of the nature in which Education Advisers are spread throughout the country, the nature of their employment, levels of experience and the varying attitudes held by Education Advisers towards the concept of supervision. In June 1998, the Ministry of Education Truancy Project issued a draft discussion document outlining the Ministry's intention to include in the NETS contract a requirement for clinical supervision of Education Advisers. However at this particular time there does not appear to be any clear policy on supervision.

Education Advisers reported varying degrees of understanding about the nature of supervision. Some Education Advisers appeared to be personally concerned by the notion of supervision, assuming that any programme of supervision would be a checking up exercise. At the same time Education Advisers reported they wanted to know how well they were performing in carrying out their role. It would indeed be difficult to inform Education Advisers how well they were performing without some form of review process. Several Education Advisers informed the researcher that they didn't fully understand the nature of supervision and what it would mean for them. However others thought supervision would be a positive undertaking allowing them to receive feedback on how well they were performing and would provide opportunities for training, professional development, receiving advice, guidance and reassurance. There appeared to be a need for a programme designed and instigated to provide Education Advisers with education on the purposes, processes and benefits of supervision.

Focus upon training, professional development and supervision programmes should be considered as developmental in nature. This means building upon the knowledge and experiences already held by Education Advisers, clarifying understandings and then adding to that knowledge. Through being involved in such programmes Education Advisers should develop a greater understanding of their role, of the issues involved about truancy and non-enrolment, of best practices, and

develop professionalism that enhances their ability to provide increasing numbers of students with further educational opportunity.

Results from the study demonstrated that there was a need for training, professional development and supervision. The results showed that six male and one female participant considered that training and professional development was needed to improve upon their skills. Further indications from the study showed that gender had some influence on how Education Advisers viewed supervision. Some male participants considered that supervision was a form of monitoring their work while other males considered supervision in a positive manner believing that supervision included opportunities for professional development, gaining support and reassurance and for gathering positive feedback on performance.

Evidence from the study indicates that there is a link between the age of the Education Advisers and how they perceive training, professional development and supervision. Participants in the 55 plus age bracket were the group who most often considered preservice training to be necessary. This age bracket, more often than participants in other age brackets, stated that supervision would be of little benefit to them. However this very same age bracket reported the greatest number of benefits to accrue from a supervision programme. It appeared that those participants aged 55 plus years were aware of the benefits of supervision but considered that they themselves had the age, skills and experience not to require supervision themselves.

The time that a participant had been employed as an Education Adviser had some effect upon how training, professional development and supervision were viewed. Participants with less than three years service stated the need for them to improve upon their existing skills and to develop new skills. Those same Education Advisers specified that they considered the study of, and discussion about, best practices as being beneficial to their professional development. Further those Education Advisers with less than three years service reported the least need for supervision while at the same time suggesting that supervision could provide them with feedback and offer them reassurance and support.

Education Advisers whose previous employment had been in the education sector were concerned about the paucity of training particularly in the area of alternative education and saw a need for spending greater time discussing case studies. Alternatively Education Advisers who had a previous non-education sector employment background indicated a requirement for developing and improving upon skills and strategies that assist them in returning students to education.

From the evidence provided in the study it was apparent that there was confusion with regard to supervision. Some participants appeared unsure of what was involved in supervision and could not determine what benefits could accrue from a supervision programme.

6.7 Summary

The results of this study suggest that clarification of role of Education Adviser is necessary. There is some discrepancy between the documentation about the role of the Education Adviser and the actual work Education Advisers were carrying out. The primary focus of the Education Adviser is returning the student to education. There is some reported confusion concerning the extent to which Education Advisers should become and can become involved in social and family issues that impinge upon a student's attendance and access to education. The complex nature of truancy appeared to contribute to the confusion about role. Some Education Advisers reported making a conscious effort to keep reminding themselves of what they were employed to do, whereas others considered that they needed to perform the role and attend to truancy in an holistic manner assisting families with more than just the educational issues.

A number of employment issues were raised by Education Advisers. Employment issues of: isolation; career structure; terms of employment and different rates of remuneration; consultation and communication; and administration were of concern to participants. Participants enjoyed the autonomy inherent in the position of Education Adviser. The almost wholly part-time nature of the employment

satisfied most participants who found the flexibility of working hours suited their work and personal requirements.

Although a variety of strategies were used by Education Advisers when working upon referrals there was a consistent commonality between many of the strategies used. Key strategies used were: visiting the student and the student's family; making regular contact; informing students and families that the Education Adviser was there to help them; providing alternatives for education; involving students and parents in the decision making process; not using the term truancy when discussing issues with the student and parents; advocating on behalf of students; using a network to facilitate an enrolment; either deliberately avoiding or consciously becoming involved in helping with family issues that come under the guise of social work; following up placements and using the alternative education pathway to education.

Barriers to returning students to education included aspects of: schools; principals; the school curriculum; students and their parents; government agencies; alternative education criteria; bureaucracy; role; NETS contract; lack of professional status; dysfunctional families; and communication. However the key barriers were those directly associated with schools, students and families. Education Advisers suggested that where families and students displayed apathy associated with a poverty of spirit it was difficult to get them to consider education as a priority. From the evidence provided it appeared that some barriers could be removed where as others appeared to be outside the realm of either the Educational Adviser or the NETS administration to remove. Participants reported that they liked the flexibility to be creative in finding solutions to problems and it was probably this creativity that allowed them to overcome or circumnavigate some of the barriers that they identified.

Training, professional development and supervision were difficult for a national organisation that employed a small work force. Providing training, professional development and supervision was restricted by location and isolation and the short term contracts between Education Services Limited and the Ministry of Education.

Education Advisers indicated their support especially for training and professional development.

The results suggested that there was confusion surrounding the understanding of and the potential benefits of supervision. Generally Education Advisers saw supervision as a means to improving the service that they provided. Benefits of supervision were seen to be in the areas of: feedback upon performance; opportunities for training and professional development; receiving advice; having access to guidance; and being provided with reassurance. While some participants were enthusiastic in respect to the benefits of a supervision programme others were antagonistic and saw supervision merely as a form of being spied on or checked up on or because of their experience and the part-time nature of the work not being necessary. It was clear that education and discussion was required in this area if supervision was to become assimilated into the daily work of the Education Adviser and contribute to an even more effective service.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to gain an insight into the work of Education Advisers who were employed by the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service. Through listening to the voices of Education Advisers who told of their personal experiences, the researcher was able to examine their work, explore the beliefs of the participants and identify those issues that significantly impacted upon their work.

The research approach involved both narrative and survey. Narrative enabled the participants to reflect on and tell of their experiences in a way in which they wanted it to be told. In addition, survey was used to gather further information and to compare the survey results with the data from the narrative stories.

7.2 The Nature of Truancy

An analysis of the research data indicated that the nature of truancy and the job of the Education Adviser is both complex and problematic. Recent literature suggests that even defining truancy is problematic (Jacka, Sutherland, Peters & Smith, 1997; Le Riche, 1995; Reid, 1985). Identifying a primary cause for dropping out of school is in itself illusive (Goldberg, 1999; Kortering, 1999; Reid, 1985; & Wells, 1990). Education Advisers identified a number of causes for truancy and drop-out. They considered aspects of truancy were related to student and family life, school, and of society itself. The complexity of truancy made their job of returning students to education difficult.

Truancy goes beyond being solely an educational issue. This research has demonstrated that issues concerning truancy are complex and multifaceted. Education Advisers reported that embedded within the nature of truancy were deep social and cultural issues. There were many students who as clients of the

Education Adviser were already known to other government and community agencies.

The complex nature of truancy compounded the difficulty of the Education Advisers' task. Providing solutions to social and cultural issues rested outside of the Education Advisers role and job description. In many cases Education Advisers considered social and cultural issues needed to be addressed before the educational issues could be resolved. However, they were restricted by the role as to what they could do to help solve social and cultural issues.

7.3 The Main Findings

An analysis of the research data revealed a number of significant findings concerning the work of the Education Adviser. The nature of truancy was found to be both complex and problematic. This resulted in Education Advisers revealing some confusion about the role and the nature of the work required of them. Findings about the complexity of truancy is supported in recent literature. O'Keefe (1993) considered truancy to be a complex phenomena without a single agreed definition. Kortering (1999); McAlpine, Bourke, Walker and McIlroy (1998); Reid (1985); and Wells (1990) are researchers who support the notion that truancy is complex and problematic.

Findings indicated that Education Advisers who had a previous employment background in the education sector had certain advantages over those whose previous employment was in the non-education sector. Education Advisers from an employment background in the education sector had the advantage of an understanding of how the education system and schools operated, had professional status with both schools and many agencies, and were more easily able to gain access to school principals and staff. Findings provided evidence that Education Advisers with an education sector employment background were already aware of how the education system functioned. The continued employment of Education Advisers with an educational sector work background is necessary to the service, not only to maintain service creditability, but also to assist and provide support to newly appointed Education Advisers whose previous work experience is from the

non-Education sector. Although there appears to be no previous research evidence available to suggest that Education Advisers with an education sector background have an advantage over non-education sector Education Advisers, evidence from this research suggests that this is apparent.

Employment issues for Education Advisers vary but can be considered within two distinct categories. First, employment issues can be categorised in terms of the effects they have upon Education Advisers carrying out their role and second, upon how they personally affect the Education Adviser in terms of security of employment, remuneration and conditions of employment. The findings indicate that given the isolated nature of an Education Adviser's employment improved communication from NETS organisation and the Ministry of Education is required. Improved communication between Education Advisers, NETS and the Ministry of Education can only result in a more efficient service being provided to students and further enhanced relationships. Evidenced that Education Advisers enjoyed and appreciated the autonomy and freedom associated with their work any changes to procedures or the service need to maintain this. The findings suggest that any removal of the current level of autonomy and freedom currently associated with the Education Advisers work would be greatly resisted.

Considering that the findings of the research showed Education Advisers used a variety of strategies with a consistency of commonality between them, while working to return non-enrolled students to education, good practice needs to be considered as a component of training and professional development. This notion is supported in literature that maintains reflection and case study are valuable tools of professional development (Stewart & Prebble, 1997).

Although given that participants recognised the need for training and professional development it was apparent that Education Advisers had been expected to learn on the job. Education Advisers consistently requested further training and professional development and reported a variety of issues that needed to be included in their training. The Select Committee of Inquiry (1995) recognised that teachers needed training to recognise and deal with truancy. Given that this is so

then training also needs to be provided for those who work with non-enrolled students.

Significant differences of opinion were identified in relation to programmes of supervision. The findings showed that the purpose and concepts of supervision were poorly understood. Although Education Advisers generally saw supervision as a means to improving the service they were either confused by the whole concept of supervision, in favour of supervision, or against any form of supervision. Stewart and Prebble (1987) posit that supervision is important yet difficult to implement in the school system. They believe that supervision is to do with making sure that staff are doing a good job and helping them to do it better. In a similar manner the notion of helping staff to do their job better could be the basis of a supervision programme applied to the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service.

The findings found Education Advisers confronted a variety of barriers. There was evidence of commonality across four barriers including aspects of: school; student and family lifestyles; alternative education; and bureaucratic practices. Given that each of the afore mentioned barriers caused difficulty for Education Advisers who had to work through, or find ways around, the barriers to attain educational placements for students, statistics indicate that the Non-Enrolment Service is successful. Although having no power of enforcement Education Advisers appear to use their experience and skills to circumvent barriers to attain placements for many students. This demonstrates that Education Advisers use their initiative and are inventive and strive to find satisfactory solutions.

7.4 Implications of the main findings and recommendations

From the findings above there are implications for schools, the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service, Ministry of Education, the community and society, and Education Advisers.

7.4.1 Schools

Given that schools are expected to enrol students who are non-enrolled or who have dropped out of school they appear to receive little support to assist with

managing these enrolments. Teachers need to be trained to recognise and deal with students at risk of truancy and supported at the classroom level as suggested by the Select Committee Inquiry (1985). As some students are likely to cause schools problems and take up a disproportionate amount of staff time and school resources when compared with other students, resourcing and the employment of staff need to be considered. Unless school personnel acknowledge and understand that they may contribute to the causes of truancy they are likely to continue to do so. Students returning to school need to be provided with situations different from when they left if they are to be retained within the system. Considering that schools can become labelled by their communities for enrolling students known to have a history of causing problems, and this labelling can be detrimental to the school in terms of future enrolments and community support, support provided to schools and school practices need to be reflected on. As argued by Batten, Withers and Russell (1996), Beresford (1993), Cooper and Mellors (1990), Irving and Parker-Jenkins (1995) and Stewart (2001) and consistent with the current findings consideration needs to be given to the above issues.

As a result of schools being expected to enrol non-enrolled students some diffidence was shown towards NETS Education Advisers when they made contact with or visited schools. This made the task of the Education Adviser to return students to education difficult. Education Advisers provided evidence to suggest that schools made a variety of excuses for not enrolling students or that non-attendance often went unreported resulting in students being out of education longer than may have been necessary. Cooper and Mellors (1990) and Stewart (2001) support the above findings suggesting that schools use selective practices to decide on who can and who cannot attend.

Bradley (1992), Kilpatrick (1996), Kronick and Hargis (1987), Le Riche (1985), O'Keefe and Stole (1995), Thewlis (1996) all support the notion that the school curriculum is an aspect of school associated with truancy. The findings of the research are consistent with their findings as Education Advisers reported students considered that the curriculum was irrelevant to their needs or too difficult to comprehend. If students at risk of truanting continue to find the curriculum

unrewarding the implications are that students become involved in inappropriate school behaviours, truant from, or drop out of school. Unless an appropriate or alternative curriculum is provided, which may necessitate school resources being diverted from other areas of the school, the consequences may be students at risk continue to truant and end up deprived of their right to free secular education. Therefore the following recommendations could be considered by schools to facilitate the retention of students at school:

- Appoint a teaching staff member to be known as a specialist in the area of truancy and non-enrolment issues. The specialist's role would include: identifying students at risk of truancy and drop-out; developing strategies and programmes to prevent truancy and drop-out; making regular contact with the student and the student's teachers to ensure that the student was supported and provided with an appropriate curriculum; providing the student with regular mentoring and support; liaising with family and where appropriate agencies; working with the District Truancy Service and NETS; ensuring that student funding is used appropriately to support the identified needs of the student;

- Provide the specialist teacher (as described above) with appropriate professional development and training;

- Refer all students who, without reasonable excuse, have not attended school for 20 consecutive days to the Ministry of Education using the designated NETS 1 form[11] and remove those students from the school roll; and

- Form a consortium of schools within a district so that when a student has been excluded from a particular school the consortium directs that student to one of the remaining schools. In this way all schools would share excluded students, and students would be provided with another chance to continue with their education.

---

[11] The designated form NETS 1 is available to all schools from their Ministry of Education Management Centre

7.4.2 Ministry of Education

Schools appear to lack incentive or sufficient resources to support them in the enrolment of truanting and non-enrolled Given that there is under reporting of truancy and students being refused enrolment by some schools, the training and supervision of Education Advisers has been minimal, and there was reported indifference by some Ministry officials towards NETS Education Advisers there are implications from the study for the Ministry of Education.

The under reporting of truancy and school drop-out suggests there are school aged students not receiving an education that is deemed compulsory under the Education Act 1989. The suggestion from Education Advisers was that the number of students being referred to them was only the "tip of the iceberg". As argued by Turner (1974) and consistent with the findings of this research, schools gave the "Nelson touch" (i.e., turned a blind eye) to some truancy. This meant that they were prepared to either ignore the truancy so that the students were not encouraged to present at school or as evidenced by Le Riche (1995) weak school management structures failed to detect or attend to truancy.

When a school has refused to enrol a student and the student is denied access to education the Ministry may direct a school to enrol. This however has implications, especially for the student. On direction by the Ministry of Education to enrol a student there is a possibility that a school may not be inclined to treat the student in a manner in which it treats all other students. When a student feels they are not being accepted as a full member of the school community, a situation referred to by Education Advisers, there is a chance that the student will truant or drop-out of the school. Batten, Withers and Russell (1996), Beresford (1993), Galloway (1985), and Wells (1990) argue that school personnel need to acknowledge that they can contribute to truancy and that there needs to be flexibility within the school structure to meet the needs of students at risk.

Taken that access to alternative education programmes, organised by consortia of secondary schools, is limited by criteria set down by the Ministry of Education, students who would benefit from such programmes are at times being denied

access to further education. The criteria limits students access to alternative education on the basis of: age; non-enrolment, the length of time students have been non-enrolled; failure of other programmes that the student may have been in; or the student's record of exclusion, stand-down or suspension from school. The implications are that the state is not funding sufficient alternative education placements for the demand or, because of the criteria, not all places on alternative education programmes are being filled. Students who do not meet the criteria for alternative education are very unlikely to return to mainstream education. Failure to be verified for an alternative education programme may result in students simply staying away from education. Although Education Advisers stated that not all alternative education programmes were successful (Gold & Mann, 1984; Rumberger, 1990) there is evidence that alternative education programmes can provide meaningful and engaging programmes (Brand, 1993; Irving & Parker-Jenkins, 1995; White, 1980).

Given that the Ministry of Education had contracted out the NETS service to a private company and those contracts had until recently been of short term duration, NETS had been, in the early years of its establishment, looked upon as experimental in nature. Short term contracts and uncertainty towards the future of the service have resulted in minimal training and supervision. However the service proves to be successful and each year returns a greater numbers of students to Education. Considering that the job of Education Adviser has become more complex, for the organisation to grow and provide a continuing high level of service, the Ministry of Education needs to actively support the training and supervision of Education Advisers.

There are implications for the Ministry of Education if Education Advisers perceive that they are not always receiving support from Ministry of Education officials in the work that they do. Some Education Advisers praised Ministry of Education officials for their support and assistance while others were upset by the indifference shown towards them. The lack of rapport and a working partnership between some Ministry of Education officials and Education Advisers can only affect Education Advisers' morale and possibly the end outcome for students.

There is a need for greater collaboration between the two parties with each party recognising that they can be of assistance and benefit to one another.

As stated in section 7.4.1 it appears that schools require more support to successfully enrol truanting and non-enrolled students. Unless further support is provided it appears that schools will continue to under report truancy and find excuses for refusing to make enrolments. Providing support to schools could be through: assisting with truancy reporting procedures; appointing specialist or expert teachers of truancy; and redirecting student funding from schools who have been excluded or from which students have become non-enrolled to the enrolling school.

The following recommendations could be considered by the Ministry of Education:

- The Ministry of Education support the establishment of a truancy expert on the teaching staff of every secondary, intermediate and large primary school from within existing staffing. These experts to be available to assist smaller primary schools on an "as needed" basis;

- When a school enrols a non-enrolled student, in the first year of enrolment, double per student funding is made to the school to allow that school to purchase additional resources to support the enrolment;

- Funding for a student who has been excluded from a school be immediately removed from that school's funding;

- Ensure that in the course of school audits, rolls are scrutinised. Where there is evidence that students have not been removed from the roll, after a 20 day period, the Ministry is informed of the school name, the number of incidences and the length of time taken to remove students from the school roll;

- Regularly remind schools of their obligations to remove students from the school roll after 20 days non-attendance and the requirement to refer those students to the Ministry of Education using form NETS 1;

- Revisit the criteria for alternative education with a view to providing easier access for students truanting or refusing to attend school. Delegate to Education Advisers the authority to make a professional decision for a student's enrolment based upon the best interests of the student;

- Provide support to schools to establish consortia for the purpose of managing the enrolment of excluded students;

- Make provision within the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service contract for training, staff development and supervision of Education Advisers; and

- Establish protocols for the Ministry of Education, NETS and Education Advisers in respect to communicating with and receiving support from the Ministry of Education.

7.4.3 Non-Enrolment Truancy Service

It is taken that the job of the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service is to return non-enrolled students to education. To do this task the service employs Education Advisers who are located throughout New Zealand and they bring to the service a wide range of experience and knowledge in respect to education, working in the public arena and working with school age students. As the results of this study show, generally Education Advisers are enthusiastic, dedicated and enjoy the work that they do. They did however raise a number of issues that have implications for the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service.

Taking into account that the Education Advisers' perception and understanding of their role was not consistent across the research sample and the role became blurred between the directed role, provided by NETS management, and the realities of returning students to education, consideration needs to be given to clarifying the role of the Education Adviser. Given that Education Advisers undertake multiple roles in order to meet the challenging and often conflicting demands of their work, failure to address the role issue has implications for the service.

As there is some discrepancy between the documentation about the role of the Education Adviser and the actual work Education Advisers carry out, the issue of role is causing some anxiety for Education Advisers. Although there are Education Advisers who are very clear as to what their role is and who carry out this role, as expected of them by the NETS management, other Education Advisers know what the role is but take it upon themselves to assist students and families overcome social issues. As a result some Education Advisers considered that the NETS organisation placed barriers in the way of them accomplishing their work by restricting them in their role. As a consequence, the results of the research indicate that these Education Advisers found aspects of their work frustrating. The multi-nature of the Education Adviser role is a reflection of the multicausal, complex and problematic nature of truancy as evidenced by Kortering (1999), Reid (1985), and Wells (1990). Researchers evidence the social and cultural aspects that add to the complex nature of truancy (Cherry, 1976; Le Riche, 1995; McAlpine, Bourke, Walker & McIlroy, 1998; Rumberger, Ghatak, Poulas, Ritter, & Dornbusch, 1990).

So that as many non-enrolled students as possible are returned to education it is desirable for Education Advisers to maintain a high level of creditability within the communities in which they work. To maintain creditability Education Advisers need to be knowledgeable, trained, professional and seen to be successful in the role that they are required to fulfil. Training, professional development and supervision are areas that have implications for NETS. The service needs to take advantage of the strong support from Education Advisers to the concept of training and professional development. To date the nature of the Ministry of Education contract with NETS had hindered the provision of training and professional development. There are implications for NETS and non-enrolled students when Education Advisers, not familiar with the workings of schools and educational organisations, had to learn by trial and error. This resulted in Education Advisers from non-education work backgrounds reporting more barriers to their work than did Education Advisers who had previously been employed in the education sector. The degree of risk to NETS and the Ministry of Education associated with non-professional practice and poor outcomes, is increased if training and professional development needs of Education Advisers are not addressed.

Given that there were significant differences of opinion as to the benefits of supervision there are implications for the service. Until such time as Education Advisers are educated in the process and the benefits of supervision programmes, the development and success of any supervision programme will be hindered. However, the current limited amount of supervision being provided by NETS could be construed as not fulfilling the requirements of a good employer.

The research suggests that that communication between NETS administration and Education Advisers is in need of improvement. Stewart and Prebble (1997) consider communication to be a vital component to the success of organisations. For Education Advisers scattered throughout the country, generally working in isolation from one another and management, regular and informative communication is detected as being required. Without regular communication, or with communication being on a reactive basis Education Advisers are at risk of not only being affected by the physical isolation but also by being ignorant of changes to processes, new ideas, and issues of concern to management and to Education Advisers scattered throughout the country.

As a result of the findings the following recommendations are provided for NETS to consider:

- Remove the word truancy from all stationery, pamphlets, and materials used by Education Advisers in the course of their work with parents and students;

- Provide a regular monthly newsletter that informs Education Advisers about:
  - any changes to procedures or regulations;
  - cluster meetings held across the country;
  - issues or concerns raised by Education Advisers;
  - initiatives being used by Education Advisers that other Education Advisers might like to consider adopting;
  - articles of interest related to truancy; and
  - meetings and activities at managerial level;

- Regularly communicate with Education Advisers in respect to training, focusing upon the role of the Education Adviser and incorporating case studies;

- Develop and implement on a trial basis, a supervision programme for a selected number of Education Advisers. Regularly evaluate and report back to all Education Advisers;

- From the findings of the trialed supervision programme, in consultation with Education Advisers, develop a supervision model unique to the requirements of NETS, and implement for all Education Advisers;

- Provide newly appointed Education Advisers with a trainer and mentor for up to five hours per month for a period of three months. The trainer and mentor to be an experienced and successful Education Adviser whose training and mentoring work will be recognised through appropriate remuneration;

- Evaluate and review the training and mentoring programme for newly appointed Education Advisers; and

- Implement exit interviews when Education Advisers leave the service to retain the Education Advisers' knowledge and to provide local information to newly appointed Education Advisers.

7.4.4 Education Advisers

The findings have implications for Education Advisers in that they need to define and clarify their role and the functions they perform to return students to education. When Education Advisers work outside their role, they may be putting not only themselves but the NETS organisation at risk.

Conflict and concern over various employment issues can have a debilitating affect upon an employee. This may result in the service, that the employee provides, not being as efficient or as thorough as could be expected.

Considering that Education Advisers identified barriers impeding them as they carried out the task of returning non-enrolled students to education, it was not surprising that there was evidence of a degree of frustration over some of these issues. Education Advisers, while acknowledging and working toward the removal of these barriers, need to be weary that they do not antagonise the people whom they consider to be responsible for these barriers. Doing this could result in reducing even further the chances of returning students to education. The multifaceted nature of truancy makes considerable demand upon Education Advisers. This is consistent with recent research that supports the notion that truancy is multifaceted, complex and for which there are no easy answers (Ribbins & Sayer, 1998). The development, implementation and maintenance of professionalism appears paramount to working through issues associated with barriers.

Given that there is considerable confusion around the concept of supervision, the implementation of a supervision programme for Education Advisers will be difficult and problematic. However without a programme of supervision it may be difficult to ascertain the training and professional development requirements of Education Advisers or to provide effective assistance to those who may be in need of mentoring and support. A continuing lack of supervision may be detrimental to the effectiveness of the service as a whole. Because of the nature of the employment of Education Advisers careful consideration needs to be given to their supervision. A supervision programme for the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service needs to be adjustable and flexible to meet the requirements of individual Education Advisers and NETS management.

As a result of the findings the following recommendations are provided for consideration by Education Advisers:

- Education Advisers discuss and clarify any issues of employment directly with NETS management;

- Individual Education Advisers or cluster groups approach NETS management with suggestions about training and professional development; and

- Education Advisers use the expertise within their cluster groups to develop strategies for minimising the barriers they experience in the course of their work.

7.4.5 New Zealand Society

Truancy and non-enrolment has implications for New Zealand society. The cost of maintaining students in education may be considerably less than the costs associated with truancy and non-enrolment. Recent literature suggests that the cost of truancy and non-enrolment to society are substantial (Fitzpatrick & Yoels, 1992; Reid, 1985; Roderick, 1993; Rumberger, 1987, 1990; Wells, 1990). Not only are non-enrolled students likely to be restricted in finding employment but their life long capacity to earn will be limited. Non-enrolled students are also more likely, than students who stay in education, to need social support and benefits, medical and mental health treatment and are more inclined to be involved in crime. Students who truant are apt to need the resources of a number of government agencies. By restricting or refusing Education Advisers access to student information agencies contribute to truancy, resulting in students requiring more and more agency resources as they fail to complete their education and the implications of that take effect.

As a result of the findings the following recommendation is provided for consideration by government agencies:

- Develop protocols for releasing information to Education Advisers that assists Education Advisers to locate truants and non-enrolled students.

7.5 Limitations of the study

The limitations of a study are often related to issues over which the researcher has limited or no control. In the context of this research the sample was selected from a possible group of 32 Education Advisers. The greatest number of Education

Advisers were employed within the greater Auckland area and therefore some Auckland bias may be evident within the results. The sample was limited owing to the fact that only twenty-five percent of all Education Advisers were female and therefore the strongest voice being heard is predominantly that of the male. However, the female participants were proportionately represented in the sample for this study.

The stories of the participants were an interpretation of what Education Advisers believed at the time at which they were interviewed and reflected the meanings of their lives as Education Advisers. The researcher can not fully ascertain what information was withheld by the participants, the narrative secrets. It is a question of how alert the researcher was in attending to the parts untold.

7.6 Recommendations for further study

As with most research, just as many questions arise through the course of a study as are answered. This study was no exception. Truancy and school drop-out are considered to be complex, problematic and multicausal. Consequences of truancy are far reaching not only for the students and families but also for schools, other education providers, those who construct education policy, deal with truancy and for society in general. Multiple solutions need to be found to address the problem because of the multicausal nature of truancy. Further research will provide those involved and interested in addressing the problems of truancy with greater knowledge that may assist them as they ponder solutions. The following areas could be considered for further study and research.

The effectiveness and benefit to non-enrolled students of alternative education programmes in New Zealand needs to be considered. There was concern expressed by Education Advisers about some alternative education programmes and their effectiveness. The Education Advisers' concerns are supported in recent research and literature (Gold and Mann;1984; Reid, 1985; Royse, 1998).

The degree of support provided to non-enrolled students returning to school would be worthy of exploration. Abbott-Chapman (1994), considers that curriculum

content, school structure and the response of school staff all create a successful effective school and therefore need to be considered when non-enrolled or truanting students return to school. Reid (1985) suggests that there are teachers that live in a state of ignorance with regards to their pupils priorities, wishes and aspirations whereas Farrell (1990) suggests that for some students school promises no pay off.

Researching why and who falls out of education after re-enrolment in school or from an alternative education programme could provide a means for planning interventions before drop out occurs. The education system should not only endeavour to enrol non-enrolled students in education but as a priority endeavour to retain them in the system.

There is little doubt that socio-economics, home environment and the family contribute to the reasons for truancy. In their evaluation of the District Truancy Service McAlpine, Bourke, Walker and McIlroy (1998) noted there were social, cultural and economic issues associated with truancy. There may be significant factors associated with the cause of why some students from lower socio-economic families are more susceptible to truancy and school drop-out than the majority of students from that same socio-economic group who remain in school.

7.7 The Non-Enrolment Truancy Service

This study set out to explore and gather insight into the work, beliefs and experiences of the Education Advisers who were employed by the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service. Education Advisers provide an ambulance at the bottom of the cliff service for students who are truant or have dropped out of school. Very often the service provides students with what may be their last opportunity for furthering their education. The role of the Education Adviser is to return non-enrolled students to education and having done this, their role is complete. By listening to the voices of Education Advisers the researcher has explored the complexity of finding solutions and attending to truancy and non-enrolment.

7.8 Summary

From listening to the voices of Education Advisers, employed by the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service, it is ascertained that the issues of truancy are not necessarily about truants but about social issues, socio-economics and the education environment that is provided for students. Students appear to drop-out of school either because the school environment is unsatisfactory for them or because of the pressures of family, social issues, economics, culture or their social life.

The Non-Enrolment Truancy Service exists because the social, family, economic and cultural challenges are more difficult and more influential upon truanting and non-enrolled students than are the challenges of education. To return and maintain students in education there appears to be a need to address the issues associated with the home life, culture and socio-economics. It is not within the role of Education Advisers to address other than educational issues of non-enrolment, therefore other agencies need to be concerned with truancy as it is a symptom of deeper social and economic issues that need to be addressed.

Those working with non-enrolled students are a diverse group and more support is required for them if the service they provide is to be continually improved. Education Advisers employed by the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service need to be supported to be able to facilitate the process of returning students to education. This support needs to come from both within and outside of the service. Within the service improved communication, training, professional development and supervision require further consideration. From outside of NETS increased cooperation and support from agencies can only lead to an improvement in the service that Education Advisers can provide.

REFERENCES

Abbott-Chapman, J. (1994). The Challenge of Retention: Raising and Meeting Students' Educational Expectations. In *Youth Studies Australia. 13* (2), Winter, 1994, 17–20.

Aeby, V., Manning, B., Thyer, B., & Carpenter-Aeby T. (1999). Comparing Outcomes of an Alternative School Programme Offered With and Without Intensive Family Involvement. In *The School Community Journal, 9* (1), Spring/Summer 1999, 17–32.

Batten, M., Withers, G., & Russell, J. (1996). Students at Risk: An Overview. In *SET SPECIAL. Students at Risk. New Zealand Council For Educational Research. 1,* 1–4.

Beresford, Q. (1993). A social profile and policy review of early school leaving. *Youth Studies Australia, 12* (4), 14–25.

Bell, A., Rosen, L. & Dynlacht, D. (1994). Truancy Intervention. In *Journal of Research and Development in Education. 27* (3), Spring 1994, 203–211.

Boss, K., Ruijters, A. & Visscher, A. (1990). Truancy, Drop-out, Class Repeating and their Relation with School Characteristics. In *Educational Research. Vol 32* (3), Winter 1990, 175–184.

Bouma, G. (1996). *The research process* (3rd ed.) Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

Bradley, G. (1992). Increasing Student Retention. In *Youth Studies Australia. Vol. 11* (20), Winter 1992, 37–41.

Brand, D. (1993). An alternative school for adolescent school refusers. *Youth Studies Australia, 12* (4), 26–29.

Budgell, P. (1983). Working with pupils who refuse to attend school. In G. Lindsay (Ed.), *Problems of Adolescence in the Secondary School* (pp.182–208). London: Croom Helm.

Campbell, I. (1993). Disaffected school students. *Forum, 35* (3), 89–90.

Carlen, P., Gleeson, D., & Wardhaugh, J. (1992). *Truancy. The politics of compulsory schooling.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Cherry, N. (1976). 'Persistent job changing - is it a problem? In *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 49,* 203–221.

Clark, E., Smith, L. & Pomare, M. (1996). *Alternative Education Provision: A Discussion Paper Commissioned by Te Puni Kokiri.* Wellington: Ministry of Maori Development.

Cresswell, J.W. (1994). *Research design. Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches.* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Cribb, L. (1999). "Removing Barriers to Learning". In *Keeping Young People at School. From the Summit Conference on Truancy, Suspensions and Effective Alternatives. 17–18.* Auckland: Summit Conference Steering Committee.

Collins, D. (1989). Managing Truancy in Schools. In P.*Ribbins, & J.Sayer, (Eds.) Management and Leadership in Education.* London: Cassell.

Coldman, C. (1995). Truancy and the Curriculum: rethinking the Image of the Truant. In D. *O'Keeffe & P. Stolls (Eds.). Issues in School Attendance and Truancy* (pp.26–30). London: Pitman Publishing. 26–36.

Cooper, P. (1993). *Effective Schools for Disaffected Students: Integration and Segregation.* London: Routledge.

Cooper, M. & Mellors, M. (1990). Teachers' Perceptions of School Refusers and Truants. In *Educational Review. 42* (3), 319–326.

Donn, M., Bennie, N., & Kerslake, J. (1993). *Who's not here ....? Working towards keeping "absentee students" at school.* Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Dwyer, P.J. (1996). What do we know about non-attenders? In *Melbourne Studies in Education, 37* (1), May 1996, 47–56.

Essen, J., Fogelman, K. & Tibbenham, A. (1978). Ability Grouping in Secondary Schools and Attainment. In *Education Studies, 4* (3), October.

Fergusson, D., Lynsky, M. & Horwood, L. (1996). Truancy in Adolescence. In *Students At Risk. Set Special, 1996.* New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Finn, J. (1989). Withdrawing From School. In *Review of Educational Research. Summer 1989,* 59 (2) 117–142.

Finnie, C., Findlay, I. & Ridler, C. (1999). The Effects of School and College Cultures on Young People's Decisions to Stay On or Move On. In *Scottish Education Review,* 31 (2), November, 173–180.

Fitzpatrick, K. & Yoels, W. (1992). Policy, school structure, and sociodemographic effects on statewide high school dropout rates. *Sociology of Education,* 65 (1), 76– 91.

Ford, J. & Sutphen, R. (1996). Early intervention to improve attendance in elementary school for at-risk children: A pilot program In *Social Work in Education.* April. 1996.18 (2), 95–103.

Glick, P. & Sahn, D. (2000). Schooling of girls and boys in a West African country: the effects of parental education, income, and household structure. In *Economics of Education,* 19, 63–87.

Galloway, D. (1985). *Schools and persistent absentees.* Oxford: Peramon Press.

Gerritsen, J. (2001). Growing Stronger. In *New Zealand Education Gazette.* 79 (17), 1, 4–6.

Gold, M. & Mann, D. (1984). *Expelled to a Friendlier Place. A study of Effective Alternative Schools.* The University of Michigan press.

Goldberg, M. (1999). Truancy and Dropout Among Cambodian Students: Results from a Comprehensive High School. In *Social Work in Education.* Jan. 1999.1 (1), 49–59.

Grunsell.R. (1987). *Born to be invisible.* London: Macmillan Education.

Harker, R. (1999) *Methodological unit six. Study Guide.* Palmerston North: Massey University College of Education.

Harte, A.J. (1994). *Improving school attendance. Responsibility and challenge.* Toronto: Canadian Education Association.

Hemmings, B., Hill, D., & Kay, R. (1994). Factors influencing the decision to stay at school. *Youth Studies Australia, 13* (2), 13–16.

Irving, B., & Parker-Jenkins, M. (1995). Tackling truancy: an examination of persistent non-attendance amongst disaffected school pupils and positive support strategies. In *Cambridge Journal of Education, 25* (2), 225–233.

Jacka, S., Sutherland, B., Peters M., & Smith, L. (1997). *Te Kupenga: Children adrift in the Truancy Crisis.* Auckland: University of Auckland.

Kerslake, J., & Lange, D. (1998). *Attendance, absences and truancy in New Zealand schools.* Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Kerslake, J., Lange, D. & Bennie, N. (1997). *Truancy Action Survey. A Survey of Truancy Action undertaken in Schools.* Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Kilpatrick, P. (1996). Missing school: Implications of curriculum structuring for students with attendance problems. *Youth Studies Australia,* 15 (4), 19–22.

Kortering, L. (1999). School Dropout From the Perspective of Former Students: Implications For Secondary Special Education Programs. In *Remedial & Special Education. Mar/April 99,* 20 (2), 78–83.

Kronick, R. & Hargis, C. (1987). *Dropouts: Who Drops Out and Why - And the recommended action.* Springfields: Charles C. Thomas Publisher .

Lichter, S., Rapien, E., Seibert, F. & Sklanksy, M. (1968). *The Drop-Outs: A treatment study of intellectually capable students who drop out of high school.* New York: The Free Press.

Le Riche, E. (1995). *Combating truancy in schools. Listening to the voice of the pupils.* London: David Fulton Publishers.

McAlpine, D., Bourke, R., Walker, R,. & McIlroy, A. (1998). *Evaluation of the 1996/1997 District Truancy Services.* Assessment Services.

McCartney, A. (2001). Making Study a Habit. In *New Zealand Education Gazette*, 80 (6), 23 April, 2001, 1&4.

MacDonald, I. (1991). *Persistent Absenteeism in Christchurch Secondary Schools*. Christcurch: University of Canterbury.

Massey University (1999) *Code of ethical conduct for research and teaching involving human subjects*. Palmerston North: Massey University.

Mensch, M. & Kendel, D. (1988). Dropping Out of High School and Drug Involvement. In *Sociology of Education* 61 (2), April 1998, 95–113.

Milbank, G. (1999). *Attendance and absenteeism: data collection 1998*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Milbank, G. (1999). "Truancy, Non-Enrolment and Alternative Education". In *Keeping Young People at School. From the Summit Conference on Truancy, Suspensions and Effective Alternatives* (pp. 23–24). Auckland: Summit Conference Steering Committee.

Ministry of Education, (1989). *Education Act 1989*. Wellington: Government Print.

Ministry of Education, Circular (1996/35). *Non-enrolment truancy service (NETS)*.

Ministry of Education, (1998). *Ministry of Education - Truancy Project. Non-Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS)*. Draft thoughts for discussion. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education, (1998). *Improving Achievement. Case Studies of Secondary School Systems to Support Students At Risk*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education, (1999/2). *Alternative Education Policy. Operational Definition of Students Alienated from the Network of Schools*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Nash, R. (1993). *Succeeding Generations: Family Resources and Access to Education in New Zealand*. Auckland: Oxford University Press.

Nash, R. (1997). *Inequality/Difference: A Sociology of Education.* Massey University: ERDC Press.

New Zealand Education Gazette, (1999). *Solving the truancy dilemma. 78* (14), 16.

New Zealand House of Representatives (1995). *Inquiry into Children in Education At Risk Through Truancy and Behavioural Problems. Set Special: Students at Risk.* Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Nichols, J. & Utesch, W. (1998). An Alternative Learning programme: Effects on Student Motivation and Self-Esteem. *The Journal of Educational Research, 91* (5), May/June, 1988, 272–278.

Non Enrolment Truancy Service (1997). *Guidance Manual for Education Advisers.* Wanganui: Education Services Central Ltd.

Non Enrolment Truancy Service. *Recruitment Schedule.* Wanganui: Education Services Central Ltd.

Normington, J. (1996). Exclusion from school: the role of outside agencies. In E. Blyth & J. Miller (Eds.), *Exclusion from School* (pp. 237–249). London: Routledge.

O'Keeffe, D. (1993). *Truancy in English Secondary Schools.* London: HMSO.

O'Keeffe, D., & Stole, P. (1985). Truancy in the primary school. In D. O'Keeffe & P. Stole (Eds), *Issues in School Attendance and Truancy.* (pp. 96–101). London: Pitman Publishing.

Oliver, A. (1999). Student Perspectives on Truancy. In *Keeping Young People at School. From the Summit Conference on Truancy, Suspensions and Effective Alternatives.* 14–16. Auckland: Summit Conference Steering Committee.

Parsons, C. & Castles, F. (1998). Trends in exclusions from school - new labour, new approaches? *Forum, 40* (1), 11–14.

Rankin, J. (2001, November 3). Ex-crim says problems start at school. *The Manawatu Evening Standard,* p.3.

Reid, K. (1985). *Truancy and school absenteeism.* London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Reynold, D. & Murgatroyd, S. (1974). Being Absent from School. In *British Journal of Law and Society.* 1 (1), 78–81.

Ribbins, P., & Sayer, J. (1998). *Managing truancy in schools.* London: Cresswell.

Roderick, M. (1993). *The Path to Dropping Out: Evidence for Intervention.* Connecticut: Auburn House.

Rothenberg, J.J. (1994). Memories of schooling. *Teaching and Teacher Education,* (4), 369–379.

Royse, D. (1998). Mentoring High-Risk Minority Youth: Evaluation Of the Brothers Project. In *Adolescence.* Spring 98, 33 (129), 145–159.

Rumberger, R. (1986). *High School Dropouts: A Problem for Research, Policy and Practices.* Stanford California: Stanford University.

Rumberger, R. (1987). High School Dropouts: A review of issues and evidence. In *Review of Educational Research.* 57 (2), (Summer),1987, 101–121.

Rumberger, R. (1990). Second Chance for High School Dropouts: The Costs and Benefits Of Dropout Recovery Programs in the United States. In D.*Inbar (Ed). Second Chance in Education.* 227–250. London: The Falmer Press.

Rumberger, R., Ghatak, R., Poulos, G., Ritter, P. & Dornbusch, S. (1990). Family influences on dropout behaviour, in one Californian High School. *Sociology of Education, 63* (4), 283–289.

Schostak, J. (1991). Education, Social Class and the Political Economy of Youth in Trouble. In J.Schostak (Ed.). *Youth in Trouble. Educational Responses.* London: Kogan Page.

Schostak, J. & Davies, R. (1991). Narrative of Lives: Accounting for Experience. In J.Schostak (Ed.). *Youth in Trouble. Educational Responses.* London: Kogan Page.

Shipman, M. (1990). *In Search Of Learning. A New Approach to School Management*. Oxford: Blackwell Education.

Smith, N. (1999). "Keeping Young People at School - A government Perspective". *In Keeping young people at school. From the Summit Conference on Truancy, Suspensions and Effective Alternatives.*(pp. 17–18). Auckland: Summit Conference Steering Committee.

Stake, R. (1985). Case study. In J.Nesbit, J. Megarry, & S. Nesbit (Eds.). *World yearbook of education 1985: Research, policy and practice.* London: Kogan.

Stephenson, M. (1996). Cities in schools: a new approach for excluding children and young people. In E. Blyth & J. Miller (Eds.), *Exclusion from School.* (pp. 250- 269). London: Routledge.

Stewart, K. (2001). Giving Education a Chance. In *New Zealand Education Gazette* 80 (17), 10–11.

Stewart, D. & Prebble, T. (1987). *Making it Happen. A school development process.* (2nd edition). Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press.

Stoll, P. (1995). Policies for improving attendance. In D. O'Keeffe & P.Stoll (Eds.). *Issues in School Attendance and Truancy.* (pp. 53–64). London: Pitman Publishing.

Thewlis, J. (1996). What shall we do with the naughty children? *Forum,38* (3), 77–78.

Turner, B. (1974). Introduction. In B. Turner, (Ed.), *Truancy.* 5–8. London: Ward Lock Educational.

UNESCO (1987). *Handbook for Coping with Drop-out.* Bangkok: UNESCO Regional Office.

Wells, S. (1990). *At-Risk Youth. Identification, Programs and Recommendations.* Colorado: Teacher Ideas Press.

White, R. (1980). *Absent without cause: lessons of truancy.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Tyerman, M. (1968). Truancy: The socio-economic and institutional context. In D. O'Keefe, (Ed). *Truancy in English Secondary Schools.*(pp.85–92). London: HMSO.

Zeller, R. (1966). *Lowering the Odds on Student Dropouts.* New Jersey: Prentice-Hill, Inc.

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- Can you tell me about your work as a NETS Education Adviser?
- What do you see as your role?
- What are the expectations of you as a NETS education Adviser?

  Who has expectations of you in your role?

  Are you able to live up to/meet those expectations?

- What have you learnt about truants and truancy since becoming a NETS Education Adviser?
- What difficulties do you face when trying to return non-enrolled students to a legal educational setting?
- How much satisfaction do you get from being a NETS Education Adviser?
- What cultural considerations need to be addressed when working with young people from different cultural backgrounds?
- In what way has your attitude towards truancy changed since you became a NETS Education Adviser?
- What part of the job do you see as being the most challenging?
- How would you like to see the role of the NETS Education Adviser evolve?
- How well do you think that you are doing your job?

  How do you know?

- What do you know about what is happening in solving truancy either in NZ or overseas?
- What more would you like to know about truancy?

QUESTIONNAIRE

We are here to help. Listening to the voices of the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service Education Advisers.

SECTION 1: Demographic Data

(Please print)

Name:

Gender: (*Please circle*)   M / F

Ethnicity:

Postal Address:

Age: (*Please tick the appropriate box*)

25 - 34yrs

35 - 44yrs

45 - 54yrs

55 - 64yrs

65yrs and over

Geographical area in which you operate as an education adviser:

_____

_____

What is the length of time that you have been employed as a NETS Education Adviser? (*Please tick the appropriate box*)

0-6mths ☐

7mths-1yr ☐

1 - 1 ½ yrs ☐

1 ½ - 2 yrs ☐

2yrs - 2 ½ yrs ☐

2 ½ - 3 yrs ☐

Longer than 3 yrs ☐

Work experience prior to being employed as a NETS Education Adviser.(Please list previous work experiences and the approximate length of time spent in those positions)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

SECTION 2:   Employment

1. How were you recruited to your current position of NETS
   Education Adviser?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. How many hours on average per week would you work in the role of
   Education Adviser? (*Please tick the appropriate box.*)

   0 - 5 hours   ☐

   6 - 10 hours   ☐

   11 - 14 hours   ☐

   15 - 20 hours   ☐

   21 - 25 hours   ☐

   26 - 30 hours   ☐

   31 -35 hours   ☐

   36 hours or more   ☐

3. Why did you become a NETS Education Adviser?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. How do you introduce yourself to parents and students?

_____

_____

_____

5. What would you consider to be a fair indication of your success rate for
   returning students to either school, a course or into employment?
   (Please tick the appropriate box.)

80 - 100%   ☐

60 - 79%   ☐

40 - 59%   ☐

20 - 39%   ☐

0 - 19%   ☐

SECTION 3: Work Background and skills

1. Rate on the scale below how you consider your previous work
   background to be of benefit to you as a NETS Educational Adviser.
   (Please ring the number of your choice.)

Of extreme benefit	Beneficial	Of Little benefit	Of no benefit
1	2	3	4

2. List what you consider to be the three (3) most desirable skills required
   to be an effective NETS Education Adviser.

   i) ....

   ii) ....

   iii) ....

3. What previous work, training or life experiences have been of benefit
   to you as a NETS Education Adviser?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. Consider a recent case where you SUCCESSFULLY returned a student
   to either school, a training course or into a job. What steps did you
   follow in that case?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

5. Consider a recent case where you were NOT successful in returning a
   student to school, a training course or into a job. What steps did you
   follow in that case?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

SECTION 4: Role of the NETS Education Adviser

1. What do you consider to be the role of a NETS Education Adviser?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2.List the 6 main components of your work and indicate the percentage
  (%) of case time that you would spend on each component. Eg. Phoning
  parents/agencies and schools, administration, locating students, etc.

COMPONENT	APPROXIMATE % OF TIME SPENT ON EACH COMPONENT
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

3. How, if at all, does the role of a NETS Education Adviser overlap with
   that of a social worker?

_____

_____

_____

_____

SECTION 5: Contacts within the NETS organisation.

1. Whom within the NETS organisation do you have the most
   contact? (*Please tick the appropriate box.*)

   NETS Manager

   NETS Administrative Secretary

   NETS Advisers

2. How regularly would you contact the NETS Manager?
   (*Please tick the appropriate box.*)
   Never ☐

   Weekly or fortnightly ☐

   Monthly ☐

   Every 2 to 3 months ☐

   Very seldom ☐

3. What is your contact with the NETS Manager mainly for ? (*Please tick the appropriate boxes.*)

   Administrative advice ☐

   To discuss cases ☐

   To obtain time extensions/authorise expenditure ☐

   To discuss Alternative Education or alienation ☐

   To seek reassurance ☐

   To off load personal concerns ☐

   Others reasons
   Please list: ☐

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. How regularly would you contact another NETS Education
   Adviser? *(Please tick the appropriate box.)*

   Never   ☐

   Weekly or fortnightly   ☐

   Monthly   ☐

   Every 2 to 3 months   ☐

   Very seldom   ☐

5. What is contact with other NETS Education Advisers mainly for ?
   (Please tick the appropriate boxes.)

   Administrative advice   ☐

   To discuss cases   ☐

   To discuss Alternative Education or alienation   ☐

   To seek reassurance   ☐

   To off load personal concerns   ☐

   To arrange meeting together or for social reasons ☐

Other reasons that you may contact Education Advisers for - please list

   _____
   _____
   _____

SECTION 6: Training, professional development and supervision

1. Do you consider there is a need for:
   (Please tick the appropriate box.)

       a. Pre-service training   Yes ☐ No ☐

       b. Regular training   Yes ☐ No ☐

       c. Reflective practice and appraisal Yes ☐ No ☐
          with a supervisor or colleague

2. List some of the components that you think would be important in a training scheme.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. What issues would you like to see dealt with at national conferences or cluster meetings?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. What are the benefits of a supervision programme?

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

SECTION 7: Barriers

1. List any barriers that you encounter that affect or make your job
   difficult.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thankyou for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your responses are
greatly valued and appreciated. They will be treated confidentially.

Please return your questionnaire in the pre paid envelope by ....

Massey University

INFORMATION SHEET
February 2000

1600 Rongotea Road
Kairanga
RD 5
Palmerston North

Researcher: Murray Smales B.Ed.   Telephone 06-3290744
Superviser: Roseanna Bourke Senior Lecturer Telephone 06-3569099 x 8605

**We are here to help.Listening to the voices of the Non-Enrolment
Truancy   Service Education Advisers.**

This research is being undertaken as part fulfilment for the degree of Master of
Education (Massey University).

The aim of the research is to identify the diversity within the Non-Enrolment Truancy
Service (NETS), the role perceptions held by education advisers and any barriers to
the delivery of the service. It is anticipated that analysis of the complex and diverse
roles may contribute to developing strategies that could significantly increase the
effectiveness of the service to truants and their families.

The research will be carried out using two methods. A questionnaire which is being
sent to all advisers to collect data to assist in answering the research questions relating
to the role and work of the advisers. An interview will take place with 15 advisers
selected on the basis of gender, ethnicity, geographical location, age, previous work
experience and time spent in the position of a NETS Education Adviser. Those
selected for interview will be provided with an additional information and consent
form in May/June 2000.

Te Kunenga ki Purehuroa

Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey

220

You are being invited to take part in a voluntary focus group discussion (1 - 1 ½ hours duration) for the purpose of data gathering and for the further development and refinement of a questionnaire that will be sent to all NETS Education Advisers. The discussion will be audio recorded and the data and information may be used in the writing of the thesis and in any papers that may result from the research.

Rights of participants.
If you decide to take part in this focus group you have the right to:
- withdraw at any stage of the process
- decline to answer any particular questions
- ask questions at any time
- receive information about the outcome of the activity in an appropriate form

Confidentiality.
- The names, localities and addresses of participants and their clients will remain confidential and will not be referred to in any part of the research literature.
- The audio recorded discussion tape will be kept in a locked cabinet until the end of the research process when it will be destroyed and the participants informed of the occurrence.
- The transcription of the tape and notes made in conjunction with the discussion will be kept safely by the researcher in a locked cabinet in case they are needed for further research. In that event the original participants consent will be sought.
- The information will be confidential to the research and to any publications arising from it.

🌀 Massey University

Private Bag 11 222,
Palmerston North,
New Zealand
Telephone: 64 6 356 9099

CONSENT FORM
February 2000

Return in the reply paid envelope provided to:
M. Smales
1600 Rongotea Road
Kairanga
RD 5
Palmerston North

We are here to help. Listening to the voices of the Non-enrolment Truancy Service Education Advisers.

I have read the information sheet and understand the details of the study. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and to decline to answer any particular questions.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used at any time other than for administrative purposes.

I understand that the information that I provide will be used only for this research and publications arising from this research. Should the researcher wish to use the information towards other research my permission will be sought.

I agree/ I disagree to the interview being audio taped, and I understand that I have the right to ask for the recording device to be turned off at any time during the interview.

I agree to participate in this study under conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: .... (Participant)

Name:..

Date: ....

Massey University

Private Bag 11 222,
Palmerston North,
New Zealand
Telephone: 64 6 356 9099

INFORMATION SHEET
Questionnaire

1600 Rongotea Road
Kairanga
RD 5
Palmerston North

Researcher: Murray Smales B.Ed.   Telephone 06-3290744
Superviser: Roseanna Bourke Senior Lecturer Telephone 06-3569099 x 8605

We are here to help. Listening to the voices of the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service Education Advisers.

This research is being undertaken as part fulfilment for the degree of Master of Education (Massey University).

The aim of the research is to identify the diversity within the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS), the role perceptions held by education advisers and any barriers to the delivery of the service. It is anticipated that analysis of the complex and diverse roles may contribute to developing strategies that could significantly increase the effectiveness of the service to truants and their families.

The research will be carried out using two methods. A questionnaire which is being sent to all advisers to collect data to assist in answering the research questions relating to the role and work of the advisers. An interview will take place with 15 advisers selected on the basis of gender, ethnicity, geographical location, age, previous work experience and time spent in the position of a NETS Education Adviser. Those selected for interview will be provided with an additional information and a consent form in May/June 2000.

You are being invited to take part in this research by completing the enclosed questionnaire. It is expected that it will take approximately 1 ½ hours for you to complete. The data and information provided by you will be used in the writing of the thesis and may be used in any papers that could result from the research.

Rights of participants.

If you decide to complete this questionnaire you have the right to:

- withdraw at any stage of the process
- decline to answer any particular questions
- ask questions of the researcher at any time
- receive information about the outcome of the activity in an appropriate form

Confidentiality.

- The names, localities and addresses of participants and their clients will remain confidential and will not be referred to in any part of the research literature. The information gathered from SECTION 1 of the questionnaire will be used for the purpose of selecting then inviting 15 Education Advisers to take part in individual interviews of 1 - 1 ½ hours duration.
- The returned questionnaires will be kept in a locked cabinet until the end of the research process when they be destroyed and the participants informed of the occurrence.
- The information will be confidential to the research and to any publications arising from it.

APPENDIX 6
QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

Questionnaire Data

Section 1: Demographic Data.

Gender: Males 18 (69%)   Females 8 (31%)

Time in position of Education Adviser: < 3 yrs 15 (58%) + 3yrs 11 (42%)

Age: < 45 yrs 7 (27%)   45–54 yrs 7 (27%)   55+ yrs 12 (46%)

Previous employment: Educational sector   17   (65%)
                     Non Educational Sector   9   (35%)

Section 2: Question 1
Method of recruitment.

Method of Recruitment	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Recommend by previous NETS Education Adviser	7 39%	4 50%	2 29%	4 57%	5 42%	8 53%	3 27%	9 58%	2 22%
Recommend by Ministry of Education	5 28%	0	1 14%	1 14%	3 25%	3 20%	2 18%	3 18%	2 22%
Contacted NETS and advised them of availability	2 11%	2 25%	1 14%	1 14%	2 17%	2 13%	2 18%	2 12%	2 22%
Other	4 22%	2 25%	3 43%	1 14%	2 17%	2 13%	4 36%	3 18%	3 33%

Section 2: Question 2
Hours Education Advisers work per week.

Number of hours worked	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
0 - 10	8 44%	2 25%	3 43%	3 43%	4 33%	6 40%	4 36%	5 29%	5 56%
11 - 20	5 28%	2 25%	1 14%	2 29%	4 33%	3 20%	4 36%	6 35%	1 11%
21 - 30	3 17%	4 50%	3 43%	1 14%	3 25%	5 33%	2 18%	5 29%	2 22%
31 +	2 11%	0	0	1 14%	1 8%	1 7%	1 9%	1 6%	1 11%

Section 2: Question 3
Why did you become an Education Adviser?

Reason	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Worthwhile service/wanted to help students	12 67%	5 63%	7 100%	3 43%	7 58%	9 60%	8 73%	10 59%	7 78%
Use experience, suited to the work	6 33%	1 13%	1 14%	3 43%	3 25%	3 20%	4 36%	5 29%	2 22%
Challenging, interesting job	2 11%	4 50%	2 29%	0	4 33%	1 7%	5 45%	4 24%	2 22%
Maintain professional contacts, educational links	3 17%	3 38%	1 14%	0	5 42%	2 13%	4 36%	5 29%	1 11%
Provide an interest/income in retirement	3 15%	1 13%	0	0	4 33%	1 7%	3 27%	4 24%	0
Part time position	1 6%	2 25%	1 14%	0	2 17%	1 7%	2 18%	0	3 33%
Self management, independent, less bureaucratic	2 11%	1 13%	2 29%	1 14%	0	3 20%	0	2 12%	1 11%
Needed the work and income	2 11%	0	1 14%	0	1 8%	0	2 18%	2 12%	0
Had been made redundant	2 11%	0	0	1 14%	1 8%	2 13%	0	1 6%	1 11%
To compliment other work	2 11%	0	0	1 14%	1 8%	2 13%	0 2 12%	2 12%	0
Less stressful than previous employment	1 6%	0	1 14%	0	0	1 7%	0	1 6%	0

Section 2: Question 4
How do you introduce yourself to parents and students?

Introduction used	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Name	9 50%	7 88%	7 100%	2 29%	7 58%	8 53%	8 73%	10 59%	6 67%
Help/assist	8 44%	5 63%	3 43%	3 43%	7 58%	9 60%	4 36%	9 53%	4 44%
NETS	1 6%	5 63%	3 43%	0	3 25%	1 7%	5 45%	3 18%	3 33%
Ministry of Education	4 22%	2 25%	3 43%	1 14%	2 17%	3 20%	3 27%	4 24%	2 22%
Education Adviser	4 22%	1 13%	3 43%	1 14%	1 8%	4 27%	1 9%	3 18%	2 22%
Show ID	3 17%	2 25%	0	1 14%	4 33%	2 13%	3 27%	4 24%	1 11%
Greet in ethnic language	2 11%	1 13%	2 29%	0	0	2 13%	1 9%	1 6%	2 22%
Firstly by phone	2 11%	0	0	0	2 17%	1 7%	1 9%	2 12%	0
Seek parental assistance	2 11%	0	0	1 14%	1 8%	1 7%	1 9%	1 6%	1 11%
Non Enrolled Student Service	2 11%	0	0	1 14%	1 8%	1 7%	1 9%	2 12%	0
I have a referral for	1 6%	0	0	0	1 8%	0	1 9%	1 6%	0
Smile	1 6%	0	0	0	1 8%	0	1 9%	1 6%	0
I'm not here to get you into trouble	1 6%	0	0	0	1 8%	0	1 9%	1 6%	0
Explain role	1 6%	0	0	1 14%	0	1 7%	0	0	1 11%
Non-Enrolment Truancy Officer	1 6%	0	0	1 14%	0	1 7%	0	0	1 11%
Depends on the cultural situation	0	1 13%	0	0	1 8%	1 7%	0	1 6%	0

Section 2: Question 5
Success rate in solving cases

Percentage success rate	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
80 - 100	12 67%	6 75%	3 43%	6 86%	9 75%	10 67%	8 73%	10 59%	8 89%
60 - 79	5 28%	1 13%	2 29%	1 14%	3 25%	4 27%	2 18%	6 35%	0
<60	0	1 13%	1 14%	0	0	0	1 9%	0	1 11%

Section 3 Question 1
Benefits of previous employment to an Education Advisers work

Degree of benefit	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ -ment Non education
Extremely Beneficial	14 78%	5 63%	3 43%	6 86%	10 83%	9 60%	10 91%	13 76%	6 67%
Beneficial	4 22%	1 13%	4 57%	0	1 8%	4 27%	1 9%	4 24%	1 11%
Little Benefit	0	0	00	0	0	0	0	0	0

Section 3 Question 2
List the three most desirable skills required of a NETS Education Adviser

Type of skill	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ -ment Non education
People interaction	17 94%	8 100%	7 100%	6 86%	12 100%	14 93%	11 100%	17 100%	8 89%
Systems knowledge	12 67%	7 88%	5 71%	4 57%	10 83%	10 67%	9 82%	13 76%	6 67%
Problem solving	5 28%	2 25%	2 25%	1 14%	4 33%	3 13%	4 36%	5 29%	2 22%

Section 3: Question 3
Previous work, training, life experiences beneficial to the work of Education Advisers

Work, training and life experiences	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Education teaching	13 72%	4 50%	2 29%	3 43%	12 100%	8 53%	9 82%	17 100%	0
Other employment occupations	3 17%	4 50%	4 57%	3 43%	0	4 27%	3 27%	0	7 78%
Being a parent	3 17%	4 50%	3 43%	2 29%	2 17%	3 20%	4 36%	4 24%	3 33%
Counsellor	4 22%	2 25%	2 29%	1 14%	3 25%	4 27%	2 18%	5 29%	1 11%
Personal Issues	5 28%	1 13%	1 14%	3 43%	2 17%	3 20%	3 27%	2 12%	4 44%
Member of church/social work	2 11%	2 25%	0	2 29%	2 17%	3 20%	1 9%	3 18%	1 11%
Member of service club organisation	4 22%	0	1 14%	0	3 25%	2 13%	2 18%	3 18%	1 11%
Links with Maori	1 6%	3 38%	1 14%	1 14%	2 17%	2 13%	2 18%	3 18%	1 11%
Living overseas	1 6%	1 13%	1 14%	1 14%	0	1 7%	1 9%	1 6%	1 11%
Age	1 6%	1 13%	1 14%	1 14%	0	1 7%	1 9%	0	2 22%
Known locally, local knowledge	2 11	0	1 14%	0	1 8%	2 13%	0	1 6%	1 11%

229

Section 3: Question 4
Strategies used in resolving a successful case

Actions taken	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Home or workplace visit	16 89%	5 63%	7 100%	5 71%	9 75%	13 87%	8 73%	13 76%	8 89%
Contact school, course provider, employer	11 61%	7 88%	5 71%	3 43%	10 83%	11 73%	7 64%	11 65%	7 78%
Discussed issues and options	12 67%	5 63%	4 57%	5 71%	8 67%	10 67%	7 64%	12 71%	5 56%
Arranged placement or enrolment	13 72%	4 50%	3 43%	5 71%	9 75%	10 67%	7 64%	13 76%	4 44%
Contacted the home	6 33%	3 38%	0	4 57%	5 42%	5 33%	4 36%	7 41%	2 22%
Arranged for and/or took to interview	2 11%	6 75%	3 43%	0	5 42%	3 20%	5 45%	5 29%	3 38%
Followed up placement	6 33%	2 25%	2 29%	2 29%	4 33%	6 40%	2 18%	5 29%	3 33%
Attempted to enrol at the Correspondence School as SBAE - arranged exemption	4 22%	2 25%	3 43%	1 14%	2 17%	4 27%	2 18%	4 24%	2 22%
Listened and gathered information	4 22%	0	0	3 43%	1 8%	3 20%	1 9%	2 12%	2 22%
Contacted referrer	1 6%	3 38%	1 14%	0	3 25%	2 13%	2 18%	3 18%	1 11%
Took student to AE orientation	3 17%	1 13%	2 29%	1 14%	1 8%	4 27%	0	2 12%	2 22%
Assisted with purchase of uniform	1 6%	1 13%	1 14%	0	1 8%	1 7%	1 9%	1 6%	1 11%
Provided counselling	1 6%	0	0	0	1 8%	0	1 9%	1 6%	0

Section 3: Question 5
Strategies used in resolving an unsuccessful case

Actions taken	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Home, family or school visit	14 78%	5 63%	6 86%	5 71%	8 67%	12 80%	7 64%	13 76%	6 67%
Discuss case and provide options	9 50%	4 50%	3 38%	5 71%	5 42%	8 53%	5 45%	8 47%	5 56%
Contacted school or provider	8 44%	3 38%	1 14%	5 71%	5 42%	5 33%	6 55%	7 41%	4 44%
Contacted the home or family	7 39%	2 25%	1 14%	3 43%	5 42%	5 33%	4 36%	7 41%	2 22%
Contacted MOE or other agency	5 28%	4 50%	3 43%	2 29%	4 33%	5 33%	4 36%	5 29%	4 44%
Contacted the referrer	3 17%	3 38%	1 14%	0	5 42%	2 13%	4 38%	5 29%	1 11%
Referred the case to another agency	6 33%	2 25%	2 29%	2 29%	4 33%	6 40%	2 18%	5 29%	3 33%
Became aquatinted with the case	4 22%	1 13%	0	2 29%	3 25%	1 7%	4 36%	4 24%	1 11%
Took students/parents to orientation or interview	4 22%	1 13%	1 14%	1 14%	3 25%	3 20%	2 18%	3 18%	2 22%
Organised placement	2 11%	2 25%	2 29%	0	2 17%	2 13%	2 18%	2 12%	2 22%
Closed case	3 17%	1 13%	2 29%	1 14%	1 8%	4 27%	0	2 12%	2 22%
Arranged exemption	1 6%	1 13%	1 14%	0	1 8%	1 7%	1 9%	1 6%	1 11%
Exhausted every avenue	2 11%	0	0	1 14%	1 8%	1 7%	1 9%	2 12%	0
Arranged assistance for student	1 6%	0	0	0	1 8%	1 7%	0	1 6%	0

Section 4: Question 1
Role of the NETS Education Adviser

Role	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Assist students to return to education	15 83%	7 88%	7 100%	4 33%	11 92%	13 87%	9 82%	14 82%	8 89%
Listen, discuss, develop empathy	9 50%	2 25%	0	5 71%	6 50%	7 47%	4 36%	9 53%	2 22%
Locate non-enrolled students	3 17%	2 25%	1 14%	0	4 33%	3 20%	2 18%	5 29%	0
Liaise between students, parents, school, providers	0	4 50%	2 29%	0	2 17%	2 13%	2 18%	2 12%	2 22%
Access professional support	2 11%	2 25%	0	1 14%	3 25%	1 7%	3 27%	3 18%	1 11%
Verify alienation status	1 6%	2 25%	0	1 14%	2 17%	2 13%	1 9%	3 18%	0
Ensure provisions of the Education Act complied with	2 11%	1 13%	0	1 14%	2 17%	1 7%	2 18%	2 12%	1 11%
Ensure students are safe	2 11%	1 13%	0	1 14%	2 17%	2 13%	1 9%	2 12%	1 11%
Have knowledge of options	2 11%	0	0	1 14%	1 8%	1 7%	1 9%	1 6%	1 11%
Empower students and families	2 11%	0	0	1 14%	1 8%	0	2 18%	2 12%	0
Report to NETS manager	1 6%	0	0	1 14%	0	1 7%	0	0	1 11%

Section 4: Question 2
Time spent on case related activities

Tasks		Number of Responses	Percentage %
Telephone	< 20%	7	27
	20–39%	6	23
	40–60%	3	12
Administration	< 20%	12	46
	20–39%	7	27
	40–60%	0	0
Locating students, home visits and interviews	< 20%	3	12
	20–39%	5	18
	40–60%	14	54
	< 20%	2	8
	20–39%	3	12
	40–60%	1	4
Professional contact	< 20%	7	27
	20–39%	7	27
	40–60%	2	8
Miscellaneous tasks	< 20%	6	23
	20–39%	1	4
	40–60%	0	0

Section 4: Question 3
How does the work of the Education Adviser overlap with that of a social worker?

Social work links	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ -ment Non education
Inevitable link	10 56%	3 38%	3 43%	2 29%	8 67%	5 33%	8 73%	10 59%	3 33%
Working with agencies	7 39%	5 63%	4 57%	1 14%	7 58%	6 40%	6 55%	8 47%	4 44%
Social issues impinging upon education	7 39%	2 25%	1 14%	1 14%	7 58%	4 27%	5 45%	7 41%	2 22%
Truancy only part of the problem	4 22%	2 25%	1 14%	2 29%	3 25%	5 33%	1 9%	4 24%	2 22%
Never allow a link	2 11%	1 13%	1 14%	1 14%	1 8%	2 13%	1 9%	0	3 33%
Similar skills to a social worker	1 6%	1 13%	1 14%	1 14%	0	0	2 18%	1 6%	1 11%
Visiting homes and families	1 6%	1 13%	1 14%	1 14%	0	1 7%	1 9%	0	2 22%

Section 5: Question 1
Whom within the NETS organisation do you have the most contact?

Contact with	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ -ment Non education
Manager	17 85%	2 25%	5 63%	6 75%	8 67%	11 73%	8 73%	13 76%	6 66%
Education Advisers	2 11%	6 75%	3 43%	1 14%	4 33%	4 27%	4 36%	4 24%	4 44%
Administration Secretary	1 6%	1 13%	0	1 14%	1 8%	2 13%	0	1 6%	1 11%

Section 5: Question 2
How regularly would you contact the NETS manager?

Frequency of contact	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ -ment Non education
Weekly	4 22%	1 13%	2 29%	1 14%	2 17%	4 27%	1 9%	3 18%	2 22%
Fortnightly Advisers	9 50%	3 38%	3 43%	3 43%	6 50%	4 27%	8 73%	9 53%	3 33%
Monthly	2 11%	2 25%	2 29%	0	2 17%	3 20%	1 9%	3 18%	1 11%
Very seldom	3 17%	2 25%	1 14%	2 29%	2 17%	4 27%	1 9%	2 12%	3 33%

Section 5: Question 3
What do contact the NETS manager mainly for?

Reason for contact	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Discuss cases	17 94%	7 88%	7 100%	7 100%	10 83%	13 87%	11 100%	15 88%	9 100%
Administrative advice	12 67%	5 63%	5 71%	4 57%	8 67%	10 67%	7 64%	11 65%	6 67%
Discuss AE or alienation	9 50%	7 88%	6 86%	1 14%	9 75%	8 53%	8 73%	10 59%	6 67%
Extension of case time or to authorise expenditure	7 39%	6 75%	5 71%	1 14%	7 58%	6 40%	7 64%	10 59%	3 33%
Gain reassurance	8 44%	4 50%	5 71%	2 29%	5 42%	7 47%	5 45%	6 35%	6 67%
Off load concerns	5 28%	1 13%	1 14%	1 14%	4 33%	4 27%	2 18%	4 24%	2 22%

Section 5: Question 4
How regularly would you contact another NETS Education Adviser?

Frequency of contact	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Weekly	4 22%	5 63%	3 43%	1 14%	5 42%	6 40%	3 27%	6 35%	3 33%
Fortnightly Advisers	2 11%	0	0	1 14%	1 8%	0	2 18%	2 12%	0
Monthly	4 22%	2 25%	2 29%	2 29%	2 17%	4 27%	2 18%	4 24%	2 22%
Very seldom	7 39%	1 13%	1 14%	3 43%	4 33%	4 27%	4 33%	4 24%	4 44%
Never	1 6%	0	1 14%	0	0	1 7%	0	1 6%	0

Section 5: Question 5
What is your contact with other Education Advisers for?

Reason for contact	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Discuss cases	16 89%	8 100%	6 86%	6 86%	12 100%	13 87%	11 100%	16 94%	8 88%
Alternative education and alienation	9 50%	7 88%	5 71%	2 29%	9 75%	8 53%	8 73%	11 65%	5 55%
Social reasons	3 17%	5 63%	3 43%	1 14%	4 33%	5 33%	3 27%	4 25%	4 44%
Seek reassurance	1 6%	5 63%	3 43%	0	3 25%	3 20%	3 27%	3 18%	3 33%
Miscellaneous	4 22%	1 13%	0	2 29%	3 25%	2 13%	3 27%	3 18%	2 22%
Administrative advice	2 11%	0	1 14%	1 14%	0	2 13%	0	1 6%	1 11%
Off Load	1 6%	1 13%	1 14%	0	1 8%	2 13%	0	1 6%	1 11%
Peer supervision	1 6%	1 13%	0	1 14%	1 8%	1 7%	1 9%	2 12%	0

Section 6: Question 1
Do you consider that there is a need for

Form of training contact	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Preservice YES	16 89%	6 75%	7 100%	4 57%	11 92%	12 80%	10 91%	16 94%	6 67%
NO	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Regular YES	14 78%	8 100%	7 100%	5 71%	10 83%	13 87%	9 82%	15 94%	7 77%
NO	2 11%	0	0	0	2 17%	0	2 18%	2 13%	0
Reflective practice and appraisal YES	12 67%	6 75%	7 100%	4 57%	7 58%	7 47%	11 100%	12 75%	6 67%
NO	4 22%	0	0	1 14%	3 23%	1 7%	3 27%	3 19%	1 11%

Section 6: Question 2
List some of the components that you think are important to a training scheme

Training components	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
One off responses	11 61%	3 38%	3 43%	5 71%	6 50%	5 33%	9 82%	10 59%	4 44%
Regulations and policy	8 44%	3 38%	2 29%	4 57%	5 42%	6 40%	5 45%	8 47%	3 33%
Educational trends and development	7 39%	1 13%	3 43%	2 29%	3 25%	5 33%	3 27%	5 29%	3 33%
Networking and agencies	3 17%	4 50%	2 29%	2 29%	3 25%	5 33%	2 18%	4 24%	3 33%
Alternative education	3 17%	4 50%	2 29%	1 14%	4 33%	4 27%	3 27%	5 29%	2 22%
Case studies	6 33%	1 13%	3 43%	0	4 33%	3 20%	4 36%	6 35%	1 11%
Administration	3 17%	2 25%	2 29%	0	3 25%	2 13%	3 27%	3 18%	2 22%
Education Adviser's role	4 22%	1 13%	1 14%	3 43%	1 8%	5 33%	0	3 18%	2 22%
Cultural sensitivity	2 11%	2 25%	2 29%	1 14%	1 8%	1 7%	3 27%	2 12%	2 22%
Approaching schools, agencies, MOE	4 22%	0	1 14%	0	3 25%	2 13%	2 18%	3 18%	1 11%
Counselling, mediation	2 11%	1 13%	0	1 14%	2 17%	1 7%	2 18%	3 18%	0
Best practices	3 17%	0	0	2 29%	1 8%	3 20%	0	1 6%	2 22%
Keeping safe	1 6%	1 13%	1 14%	0	1 8%	1 7%	1 9%	1 6%	1 11%
Courses available	1 6%	1 13%	0	0	2 17%	1 7%	1 9%	2 12%	0

Section 6: Question 3
What issues would you like to see dealt with at National Conference or at cluster meetings?

Issue	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Policy, regulations, law, data	6 33%	3 38%	1 14%	4 57%	4 33%	5 33%	4 36%	6 35%	3 33%
Best practices and skills	6 33%	1 13%	1 14%	3 43%	3 25%	6 40%	1 9%	4 24%	3 33%
Alternative Education	5 28%	2 25%	2 29%	1 14%	4 33%	4 27%	3 27%	6 35%	1 11%
One off responses	3 17%	2 25%	3 43%	2 29%	0	3 20%	2 18%	1 6%	4 44%
Working with schools, providers, agencies	3 17%	2 25%	1 14%	1 14%	3 25%	4 27%	1 9%	5 29%	0
Case Studies	3 17%	1 13%	1 14%	0	3 25%	1 7%	3 27%	3 18%	1 11%
Supervision	1 6%	2 25%	1 14%	1 14%	1 8%	2 13%	1 9%	1 6%	2 22%
Administration and contracts	3 17%	0	2 29%	1 14%	0	3 20%	0	1 6%	2 22%
Education trends	3 17%	0	0	1 14%	2 17%	0	3 27%	3 18%	0
Conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation	2 11%	1 13%	0	2 29%	1 8%	2 13%	1 9%	2 12%	1 11%
Training	0	2 25%	2 29%	0	0	0	2 18%	0	2 22%

Section 6: Question 4
What would be the benefits to you of a supervision programme?

Benefit	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Gaining someone else's perspective	6 33%	2 25%	2 29%	1 14%	5 42%	4 27%	4 36%	7 41%	1 11%
Appraisal and feedback	4 22%	3 38%	3 43%	1 14%	3 25%	5 33%	2 18%	5 29%	2 22%
Support and reassurance	4 22%	3 38%	2 29%	1 14%	4 33%	5 33%	2 18%	5 29%	2 22%
None	5 28%	1 13%	2 29%	1 14%	3 25%	3 20%	3 27%	3 18%	3 33%
One off responses	4 22%	2 25%	1 14%	2 29%	3 25%	2 13%	4 36%	5 29%	1 11%
Able to off load concerns	3 17%	1 13%	2 29%	0	2 17%	3 20%	1 9%	3 18%	1 11%
Professional development	2 11%	1 13%	1 14%	1 14%	1 8%	0	3 27%	2 12%	1 11%

Section 7: Question 1
List any barriers that hinder or make your job difficult

Barrier	Male	Female	<45 yrs	Age 45–54 yrs	55+ yrs	0-3 yrs service	3+ yrs service	Previous Education	Employ-ment Non education
Principals and school bureaucracy	9 50%	1 13%	1 14%	3 43%	6 50%	4 27%	6 55%	7 41%	3 33%
Contract and conditions of employment	6 33%	2 25%	3 43%	3 43%	2 17%	5 33%	3 27%	4 24%	4 44%
Schools refusing to enrol	4 22%	3 38%	1 14%	2 29%	4 33%	3 20%	4 36%	6 35%	1 11%
Parent and caregiver apathy	4 22%	3 38%	2 29%	1 14%	4 33%	5 33%	2 18%	4 24%	3 33%
Student apathy and behaviour	3 17%	2 25%	1 14%	1 14%	3 25%	3 20%	2 18%	3 18%	2 22%
Social services and agencies	4 22%	1 13%	2 29%	1 14%	2 17%	4 27	1 9%	3 18%	2 22%
Ministry of Education	3 17%	2 25%	4 57%	0	1 8%	3 20%	2 18%	2 12%	3 33%
Alternative Education issues	5 28%	0	0	3 43%	2 17%	3 20%	2 18%	5 29	0
Privacy Act	1 6%	3 38%	2 29%	1 14%	1 8%	3 20%	1 9%	1 6%	3 33%
No place of last resort	3 17%	1 13%	0	1 14%	3 25%	3 20%	1 9%	4 24%	0
No telephone available and difficulties in locating students, families	1 6%	3 38%	1 14%	1 14%	2 17%	3 20%	1 9%	2 12%	2 22%
Specialist Education Service	3 17%	0	1 14%	1 14%	1 8%	2 13%	1 9%	2 12%	1 11%
Dysfunctional Families	2 11%	0	0	1 14%	1 8%	0	2 18%	2 12%	0
District Truancy Service	2 11%	0	0	1 14%	1 8%	1 7%	1 9%	1 6%	1 11%
Time management	1 6%	1 13%	1 14%	0	1 8%	1 7%	1 9%	1 6%	1 11%
One off responses	2 11%	0	0	1 14%	1 8%	1 7%	1 9%	2 12%	0

Massey University

Private Bag 11 222,
Palmerston North,
New Zealand
Telephone: 64 6 356 9099

INFORMATION SHEET
INTERVIEW 2000

1600 Rongotea Road
Kairanga
RD 5
Palmerston North

Researcher: Murray Smales B.Ed.   Telephone 06-3290744
Superviser: Roseanna Bourke Senior Lecturer Telephone 06-3569099 x 8605

**We are here to help. Listening to the voices of the Non-Enrolment
Truancy Service Education Advisers.**

This research is being undertaken as part fulfilment for the degree of Master of
Education at Massey University.

The aim of the research is to identify the diversity of roles and experiences within
the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS), the role perceptions held by education
advisers and any barriers to the delivery of the service. It is anticipated that analysis of
the complex and diverse roles may contribute to developing strategies that could
significantly increase the effectiveness of the service to truants and their families.

The research will be carried out using two methods. A questionnaire that has been
sent to all advisers to collect data to assist in answering the research questions relating
to the role and work of the advisers. An interview will take place with 12 advisers
selected on the basis of gender, ethnicity, geographical location, age, previous work
experience and time spent in the position of a NETS Education Adviser.

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey

You are being invited to take part in a voluntary interview of approximately 1 - 1 ½ hours duration. The aim of the interview is to listen to your experiences as an Education Adviser. The discussion will be audio taped and the data and information may be used in the writing of the thesis and in any papers that may result from the research. The interview will be undertaken at a time and place convenient to the participant.

Transcriptions of the interviews will be sent to participants to correct any factual errors and to add any further comment. Further consent will be obtained from the participants before any material from the transcript is used in the writing of the thesis.

Summary of the rights of participants.

If you decide to take part in this interview you have the right to:
- Withdraw at any stage of the process prior to the interview data being analysed for incorporation into the thesis;
- decline to answer any particular questions;
- ask questions at any time;
- receive a transcript of the interview for your comment regarding factual correctness; and
- receive information about the outcome of the activity in an appropriate form.

Confidentiality.

- The names, localities and addresses of participants and their clients will remain confidential and will not be referred to in any part of the research literature.

- The audio recorded discussion tape will be kept in a locked cabinet until the end of the research process when it will be destroyed and the participants informed of the occurrence when this has been completed.

- The transcription of the tape and notes made in conjunction with the discussion will be kept safely by the researcher in a locked cabinet in case they are needed for further research. In that event the original participants' consent will be sought.

- The information will be confidential to the research and to any publications arising from it.

⟲ Massey University

Private Bag 11 222,
Palmerston North,
New Zealand
Telephone: 64 6 356 9099

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM
2000

Return in the reply paid envelope provided to:
M. Smales
1600 Rongotea Road
Kairanga
RD 5
Palmerston North

We are here to help. Listening to the voices of the Non-enrolment Truancy Service Education Advisers.

I have read the information sheet and understand the details of the study. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time as explained in the information sheet and to decline to answer any particular questions.

☐ I agree to the interview being audio taped, and I understand that I have the right to ask for the recording device to be turned off at any time during the interview.

☐ I do not agree that the interview can be audio taped.

I will receive a copy of the interview transcript for comment. At this time I can still withdraw from the research.

I agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that my name will not be used at any time other than for administrative purposes.

I understand that the information that I provide shall be used only for this research and publications arising from this research..

I agree to participate in this study under conditions set out in the Information Sheet

Signed: .... (Participant)

Name: ....

Date ....
Te Kunenga ki Purehuroa

Inception to Infinity: Massey University's commitment to learning as a life-long journey

243

APPENDIX 9
NETS 1 REFERRAL FORM

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Te Tahutu o te Matauranga

NETS 1
This form contains information about a possible non-enrolled young person for the Non- Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS) to use to help ensure the young person receives an education

---

INFORMATION ABOUT THE YOUNG PERSON

Surname	**Forenames** (Underline one called by)
Known by any other surnames?	Known by any other names or nicknames?

Date of birth: .... D .... M .... Y	Gender (tick): .... M .... F	Ethnicity:

LAST KNOWN ADDRESS:	**PARENT(S) CAREGIVER(S) NAME(S):**
Phone:	Other contacts and Phone(s):

LAST KNOWN SCHOOL:	Last date of attendance: ....
(if not referring school)	Taken off roll? (Circle) YES NO Date:

BRIEF COMMENTS ON SITUATION: (If necessary, continue overleaf or attach additional pages)
Please provide information about the background to the situation, including information (such as relative's or parents' employment) which may help NETS trace the young person. Schools, please include information on efforts made to check the ensuing enrolment, or to assist the young person to continue their education, as set out in the circular to which this form is attached. Simply copy the summary made for your school record, showing your actions and the information gleamed, including dead ends.

PERSON PROVIDING THIS INFORMATION

Name: .... **Position:** ....

School/Agency: .... **Phone:** ....

Address: .... **FAX: (......)** ....

How do you come to be in the position of being aware this young person may not be enrolled at a school?
(eg. "Was the student at this school." "Referred to CYFS Justice." "Known to District Truancy Service.")

Signed .... Date: ....

MINISTRY USE ONLY

Ministry checks tick	Not home schooled	Not S22 exempted	Not CS approved	No active suspension ....
Ministry Management Centre		Date of referral to NETS:		

MOE - Any additional information:

NETS USE ONLY	File number:	Outcome Code:

Brief notes on outcome:

APPENDIX 10

NETS REFERRAL STATISTICS 1997 - 2001

Year	No. of Referrals	Found already enrolled	Found already exempt	Aged over 16 years	Found overseas	NETS assisted enrolment	NETS assisted exemption	Not Found	Closed for practical reasons
1997	3001	1225	65	169	683	335	163	233	113
1998	2536	894	58	103	477	528	137	159	180
1999	4092	1208	126	214	607	901	364	328	344
2000	4789	1288	194	288	707	1316	377	264	355
2001	5349	Statistics not	currently	available					

Statistics provided by Manager Non-Enrolment Truancy Service