

**Teachers' and Students' Perspectives of Using Restorative Practices in
Schools: "It's Got the Power to Change Behaviour"**

Submitted by

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Statement of Authorship and Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis. All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics Committees.

This traditional thesis comprises the original work of the author. In all published work shown as an appendix the author was the Principal Investigator, contributed 50% or more, and planned and prepared the work for publication.

..... Date:

Michelle Kehoe

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my biggest supporter, my best friend and husband, Bruce. Without your loyalty and unwavering confidence in me, this thesis would not have been possible.

And to my children, Talia, Callum, and Keeley, you are my biggest joy and my life's greatest achievement.

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Abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CASEL	Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
CEO	Catholic Education Office
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
DET	Department of Education and Training
HEART	Harmony, Empathy, Awareness and Accountability, Respect, and Thinking
PERMA	Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment
SWPBS	School-Wide Positive Behaviour Supports

Abstract

In recent decades, there has been a shift away from authoritarian, punitive discipline in school communities and a movement towards approaches that promote inclusion, respectful relationships, and understanding. This shift was due to growing concerns about the negative impact of bullying and victimisation that was not resolved using traditional punitive measures. Whole-school restorative practices is an approach that has been reported as successful, in not only addressing misbehaviour as it occurs, but also as a preventive measure that builds social and emotional skills for all those within the school community.

The aim of this research was to explore teachers' and students' personal experiences of restorative practices and the use of discipline in their school communities. A qualitative approach was undertaken to explore these aims using one-on-one interviews with teachers and focus groups with students. A qualitative approach was considered the most appropriate means to understand the participants' lives and experiences and to gain depth of information. This allowed for exploration of culture and context through the lived experiences of the individuals. It was anticipated that the research could be used by other schools to create understanding regarding the implementation and sustainability of restorative practices.

Six schools participated in the study from government, Catholic and independent providers. One-on-one interviews were held with 14 teachers (three male and 11 female) from the six schools. Sixty students participated in focus groups (one group at each school). Students were recruited from either Year 6 (age 11–12 years old) or Year 9 (age 14–15 years old). School principals completed a basic demographic questionnaire.

This study found that there were discrepancies in teachers' and students' perceptions of the use of restorative practices. Teachers tended to resort to punitive

approaches, whereas students expressed a desire for greater use of restorative practices to build social skills. Despite the discrepancies, both students and teachers described key benefits of restorative practices for the whole school community. This led the researcher to propose a user-friendly framework that draws together the themes described and were considered as supporting social skills: harmony, empathy, awareness and accountability, respect, and thinking of others (HEART). The aim of the HEART framework is to offer a simplified understanding on the benefits of restorative practices, which was considered time consuming and complex by teachers. The HEART framework sees a move towards restorative practices as a social-emotional learning program.

The findings highlighted the challenges faced when implementing and sustaining restorative practices. These challenges include those related to institutional factors (e.g. training) and those related to personal beliefs (e.g. the belief that a punitive discipline measure is more effective). A key recommendation is that prevention and early intervention programs, such as restorative practices in school communities, need ongoing support from federal and state governments. This is particularly important for programs that improve social-emotional learning outcomes for young people. Investing in the lives of young people is an investment in both their futures and the future health and wellbeing of communities throughout the world.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The aim of education is the knowledge, not of facts, but of values. (William Ralph Inge, author, 1860–1954)

Introduction

The primary focus of this thesis is to explore the use of restorative practices in school communities. Restorative practices are a range of approaches that have been reported as successful in not only addressing misbehaviour as it occurs but also acting as a preventive measure that builds social and emotional skills for all those within the school community (Blood, 2005; Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001; Schiff, 2013). This introductory chapter gives an overview of this thesis through presenting the problem that the research seeks to address, the primary aims, a statement of the research questions, and a rationale for the research questions based on the literature, dominant theories and current practice. Each research question has been numbered with its rationale presented underneath.

The overarching aim of this research is to understand and develop the body of knowledge about teachers' and students' experiences of school discipline, behaviour in school communities and the use of restorative practices as an approach to address discipline and behaviour. Restorative practices are the focus of this thesis. The present study provided both teachers and students the opportunity to discuss these experiences from their own perspective and in their own language through qualitative interviews and focus groups. These are described in detail in Chapter 5 with the findings presented in Chapters 6 and 7.

School and School Discipline

School attendance is mandatory for Australian children from age 6 to 17 years. Consequently, children and young people spend a substantial amount of their formative years within a school community (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014). A school community is considered as all people attached to a school including teachers, administrators, students, their families, and members of the broader community (Slee, et al., 2009). Schools can be places where many emotional and behavioural issues occur and need to be addressed. As such, people working within the school setting can often be the first to identify students' emotional and behavioural issues. A healthy, positive school environment therefore plays an important role in promoting prosocial skills and supporting student wellbeing.

Within the school system there is also pressure on teachers to competently manage the academic curriculum while simultaneously juggling the management of student misbehaviour and classroom disruption (Harrison, 2007). This pressure can create a dilemma for teachers trying to find appropriate ways to deal with student misbehaviour and classroom disruption while building more respectful relationships and a sense of community. Teachers tend to use a range of disciplinary techniques to manage student behaviour, from punitive approaches to those that are more lenient. Traditionally, a punitive, and sometime zero-tolerance approach, has been used in school communities. This focuses on punishing the individual for their wrongdoing to prevent a recurrence of the behaviour as well as sending a clear message to other students that such behaviour will not be tolerated (Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). In recent decades, concern has grown about punitive forms of discipline because they have been found to have a serious and negative impact on students (Hemphill, Toumbourou, Herrenkohl, McMorris, & Catalano, 2006; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Removal of a student can cause feelings of

disconnection from the school community. Removing students can interrupt and hinder development of their academic skills and abilities, and affect their general health and wellbeing (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). When the school community manages behaviour in punitive ways, the perpetrator can become the person at risk. The outcomes for these students can be bleak, with the possibility of substance abuse, anxiety, depression, or suicide (Espelage & Holt, 2013). The extent of the detrimental impact on young people who bully was shown in a recent study of over 600 students in the United States of America (USA). The authors found that 43% of bullies had thought about killing themselves in the six months prior to the incident, while 36% had tried to or had hurt themselves in some way. These rates are similar to those for the victims of bullying (Espelage & Holt, 2013).

Since current statistics show that one in four young Australian people (under the age of 18 years) experience a mental health issue, there is a clear need for school communities to understand effective and appropriate behaviour management of students (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015; McNamara et al., 2014). However, many schools in Australia continue to mandate punitive measures as one means of managing misbehaviour. For example, Victorian Government policy supports the use of suspension and expulsion (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2017). In addition to detention, suspension, and expulsion, other punitive actions include corporal punishment, which is defined as “the intention of causing some degree of pain or discomfort, however light” (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2017, para. 2). This can include smacking, belting, or hitting (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2017). Current Australian legislation regarding the use of corporal punishment varies between the states and territories. For government schools in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria, and Western Australia, corporal punishment is banned. However, this ruling does not apply to non-government schools in Queensland or Western Australia, where the

Criminal Code Act states it is lawful to use “such force as is reasonable” (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2017, para. 32). In the Northern Territory, it is lawful for teachers to use corporal punishment. Throughout the world the use of corporal punishment in the school setting has been prohibited in 128 countries.

These different approaches to the management of school discipline in the states and territories are at odds with the values the education system seeks to instil in the students such as a sense of belonging, community, connectedness, and social justice (Osher et al., 2010). Therefore, in many schools, traditional punitive discipline is no longer considered to be compatible with contemporary attitudes nor does it support a school-wide focus on positive behaviour approaches. Not only can the punitive approach have a detrimental effect on students’ wellbeing, it does not teach students better or more prosocial ways of acting or behaving (Espelage & Holt, 2013; Osher et al., 2010).

Promoting Positive School Communities

Teaching prosocial skills and positive behaviour has become a focus for many schools (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). Durlak et al. characterised prosocial skills as “empathy, concern for others, and an interest in enhancing personal relationships” (2011, p. 142). Aikins and Litwack (2011) suggest that children who are cooperative, helpful, and willing to share are perceived more positively by their peers. Durlak et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of school-based interventions and concluded that developing students’ prosocial skills through wellbeing programs results in increased social-emotional competence and reduces the risk of future negative behaviour and mental health issues. When young people are given the opportunity to learn these skills, especially during their formative school years, they are more likely to benefit from lifelong wellbeing, increased empathy, and improved conflict resolution ability (Durlak et al., 2011). Preventive programs are considered a good financial investment because they

can reduce the burden on the broader community in both the short and long term, however, future research should include an economic analysis (Durlak et al., 2011).

Concurrent with the data collection phase of this thesis, an updated version of the National Safe School Framework was published (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2010). The purpose of the framework was to promote a set of guiding principles for school communities to increase student wellbeing and assist in the development of respectful relationships. The framework also sought to respond to emerging challenges (e.g. cyber safety) for schools. The overarching principle of the framework is the belief that safe, supportive, and respectful school communities are a prerequisite for effective learning. Restorative practices are one approach that has been reported to be successful in not only addressing misbehaviour as it occurs but also in acting as a preventive measure that builds social and emotional skills for all those within a school community (Blood, 2005; Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001; McCluskey et al., 2008). The key aims of restorative practices are consistent with the principles of the National Safe School Framework.

The Current Study

This study was an investigation of the experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of students and teachers towards the use of restorative practices to deal with student behaviour and proactively build prosocial skills. The study examined the benefits and barriers in the use of restorative practices from both the student and the teacher perspectives. The use of restorative practices in Australian schools has a relatively short history. It was not until 2002, when a pilot study implemented and explored the use of restorative practices in Victorian schools (Shaw, 2007), that the approach began to gain interest and momentum within Australian school communities.

The State of Victoria, where the pilot study was conducted, has various school service providers (including Catholic, government, and independent schools) who cater for primary students, secondary students, and special needs students. At the time of the current study, there were 2,238 schools in Victoria: 1,537 government schools, 486 Catholic schools, and 215 independent schools. There were 471,041 primary students aged from 5 years to 12 years, and 386,083 secondary students aged from 12 years to 18 years (Department of Education and Training, 2016b). There was no data on the prevalence of the use of restorative practices in Australian schools.

Statement of the Problem

Despite there being over 850,000 students in 2,238 government, Catholic, and private schools in Victoria, there are no mandated government policies regarding student misbehaviour (Department of Education and Training, 2017). Each of these school communities has considerable autonomy, with the management teams being free to manage their schools on a day-to-day basis as they deem appropriate. For many schools, this self-governing approach means that any program introduced into the school community requires the commitment to be taken up by the school's management team and school council. Although this self-governing approach can have the advantage of reducing the level of governmental bureaucracy needed to adopt new programs, it can also have the disadvantage of shifting responsibility to school communities without providing them with additional support. Hence, school communities become wholly responsible for the implementation, training, and sustainability of the restorative practices approach or any approach they seek to implement.

Advocates of restorative practices suggest that there is a positive impact on students when the approach is embedded in the school's philosophy (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Campbell, Wilson, Chapman, & McCord, 2013). For schools that have implemented the

restorative practices approach to behavioural management, a lack of formal study over the past decade means that it is not known exactly why they implemented restorative practices, how they use the practice, or how they have or intend to sustain the practice over time. This lack of research into restorative practices in schools – particularly in Victoria, Australia, which is the focus of this thesis – has resulted in a gap in restorative practices knowledge. Although implementation of restorative practices approaches is known to be a complex and lengthy process, little is known about the teachers and students who have embraced this practice and continue to do so (Daly, 2002; Daly & Hayes, 2001; Johnstone, 2011). Furthermore, little is known about why the teachers and students are committed to this approach, what barriers they experience, and how they overcome any challenges during the implementation process. Given the increasing interest and use of restorative practices to address behaviour issues such as bullying in Australian schools, there is a need for research to explore a current understand on the implementation and use of the approach literature (Hemphill et al., 2006; Rigby, 2013; Stinchcomb et al., 2006).

Prior research has indicated that the use of restorative practices can be an effective strategy to manage and prevent problem behaviour. McCluskey et al. (2008) found when restorative practices were used as an active learning strategy it was considered by students and teachers as being effective to manage with problematic behaviour. In addition, restorative practices have been found to be effective in reducing school suspensions, expulsion, and referrals for further disciplinary action. Research in Canada, the United States of America and Australia found the approach is effective in reducing recidivism and promoting positive relationships. For example, one school in the State of California reported an 87% decline in suspensions following the introduction of whole-school restorative practices (Schiff, 2013).

Morrison (2005) suggests that restorative practices are not a “panacea” (p. 106), there is a great deal more to learn about the approach, and that the use of restorative

practices in schools focuses too much on the “practice of the approach” (p. 106) rather than how the school community sustains the approach. Morrison believes that, to be “effective and sustainable” (p. 106), the approach needs to be used regularly rather than being considered simply another program in the school community.

Similarly, Blood and Thorsborne (2005) suggest that implementation of the approach needs a broad and deep understanding rather than simply overlaying a justice model and expecting it work in the school community. They believe that “we need to understand what it takes to change the hearts and minds of our school communities and be prepared to learn from the past” (p. 18), otherwise the approach may not be sustainable in the longer term. Blood and Thorsborne’s (2005) and Morrison’s (2005) assertions hold an important implication for the current study, which seeks to explore the implementation and use of the restorative practices approach in school communities.

Understanding and knowing the process of implementing restorative practices could assist other schools through the implementation phase. It is also hoped that understanding the benefits and challenges associated with restorative practices in the Australian context will assist in informing policy change within school communities, as well as at the broader state and federal government level.

This thesis has been guided by the following research questions. A rationale for each of the research questions is provided and is based on the literature and informed by the theory and frameworks described in Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

Aims

The aims were to contribute to conceptual advances in theory, research, and practice in the implementation, impact, and sustainability of restorative practices in Victorian schools. Specifically, the study aims were to:

- explore the key drivers and reasons behind implementation of the restorative practices approach by the broader school community and identify the challenges faced through in order to sustain the process,
- identify how teachers use the approach in their classroom and explore how teachers translated the theory of the approach into practice, and
- elucidate students' views on current behaviour management in their classroom and identify student understanding of good behaviour management by teachers.

The overarching aim and purpose of the study was to examine school communities that currently use the restorative practices approach to establish current perceptions and understanding on the use of the approach.

Statement of the Research Questions and the Rationale

The research questions were framed to gain insights into the key characteristics of school communities demonstrating a commitment to the use of restorative practices so that any learning could assist other schools to emulate this approach. This research seeks to understand the experiences of school communities that have gone through the implementation process, how they overcame any challenges, and how they sustained the use of the approach over time. The questions were formulated to gauge the impact of the approach on student behaviour and learn whether the approach was perceived as effective by both students and teachers. The research questions were formulated to address the aims of the study and allow for a constructivist, grounded approach to data analysis, which is described in detail in Chapter 5. No directional hypothesis was used due to the research paradigm adopted. The research questions are described below.

Research questions 1: Implementation and sustainability in the school community. What were the key drivers that empowered the school to implement

restorative practices? What changes did the school community need to make to their daily operations (if any)? How will, or has, the school community sustained the approach over time?

Rationale for research question 1. One of the major threats to restorative practices in the school community could be sustainability, with some suggesting that it can take between three and five years to embed the practice in the school culture. Other researchers suggest that this estimate is conservative and a more realistic time frame is 10 years from the initial implementation (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; McCluskey et al., 2008; Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005). Regardless of the actual time required, the process of change takes time. Any change to a school's ethos can be potentially problematic, and sustainability depends on many factors including good quality training; engaging, committed, and supportive leadership; and the ability of teachers to change their method of thinking towards their work (Blood, 2005; Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016).

This issue was highlighted by Shaw (2007) who reported findings from a pilot restorative practices program in 2002–2004. Shaw (2007) argued that restorative practices can be introduced and used in many ways due to varied understandings of the approach for example some teachers felt the approach was best used for issues as they occurred. This can cause a problem for those seeking to implement the approach, in addition to the length of time needed to build a whole-school approach. Shaw (2007) concluded that there is much to be learned about the restorative process, those who use the approach, and the impact the approach has on the school community. It is important to understand the drivers behind the decision to implement restorative practices and the level of commitment to this process. This knowledge is important because restorative practices may be perceived as a complex process that can create confusion for school communities, especially if there is no defined boundary for using the process, how it occurs, or when it is used (Daly, 2002; Daly & Hayes, 2001; Johnstone, 2011). Some school communities consider restorative practices

as “just another tool in the tool-box” and tend to use it in conjunction with traditional compliance and discipline measures rather than using restorative practices as a method to teach skills (McCluskey et al., 2008, p. 412). McCluskey et al. (2008) suggest that this is problematic and that this approach to restorative practices reduces a school community’s opportunity to transform the school ethos. The current study builds upon the research of Shaw (2007) to further examine the impact of restorative practices on the school community, and to understand how the schools that implemented the approach at least five years prior have sustained the approach and overcome any challenges.

Research questions 2: Teacher training, application of the approach, and views about the impact on student behaviour. What training did teachers undertake prior to the implementation of restorative practices, and what other support did they receive? How do teachers use restorative practices within their classrooms? What impact has restorative practices had on student behaviour?

Rationale for research questions 2. Despite reported enthusiasm for restorative practices, implementation of the approach is not without its challenges (Shaw, 2007). These challenges include the need for training, supportive leadership, and a commitment from all staff to change (Porter, 2007; Shaw, 2007). The challenges need to be addressed to improve outcomes and sustain the approach over time. Effective training has been reported as one of the vital components in the sustainability of restorative practices (McCluskey et al., 2008; Porter, 2007). When training and education of staff is successful, change can occur at a deeper whole-school level, with changes to school culture, philosophy, people, and ethos (Campbell, Wilson, Chapman, & McCord, 2013; Gregory et al., 2016).

Prior research suggests that teachers can use the features of restorative practices without considering themselves to be in a restorative school community. Similarly, some teachers consider themselves restorative but fail to use the techniques, fail to use the techniques effectively, or revert to punitive approaches (Shaw, 2007). This suggests that

there is either a generational discourse or experience bias towards traditional punitive discipline or the underlying restorative practices philosophy is misunderstood. This may be due to a lack of clear, simple explanation because past theory proposed to explain restorative practices has focused on shame. This study seeks to explore these discrepancies and understand teachers' knowledge of the approach and gain examples of how they transform the theory behind the approach into practice within their classrooms.

Research questions 3. Student perceptions of discipline and restorative practices. What do students think about school discipline? What are students' views on how their teacher manages misbehaviour in the classroom? What do students think is the most effective way to manage student behaviour and classroom disruption?

Rationale for research question 3. It is widely agreed that the use of punitive discipline approaches, particularly those that exclude the student from school, is ineffective in bringing about change to student behaviour (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; McCluskey et al., 2008; Mendez & Sanders, 1981). However, there are discrepancies in how students perceive teachers' management of behaviour and the use of school discipline compared with how teachers perceive it. Students report a lack of consistency in the use of school discipline and place an emphasis on teachers listening to them, treating them with respect, and being fair in their judgements as the best means to manage behaviour (McCluskey et al., 2008).

Further issues can arise between students and teachers when teachers believe they are adopting the most appropriate action to deal with a situation but the students feel their opinions are discounted or misunderstood (McCluskey et al., 2013). Teachers and school leadership who hold authoritarian views of adult power are more likely to resort to punitive approaches to manage behaviour (Gregory et al., 2016). As a result, students can feel, at times, that teachers do not offer them the opportunity to explain their behaviour or listen to the issues that concern them (McCluskey, 2014). This mismatch can result in students

feeling frustrated with their lack of participation or involvement in discussions about issues that affect them. This dynamic is concerning because individuals, especially young people, who feel disconnected from society can experience self-harm, unemployment, early school departure, mental health issues, homelessness, and substance abuse (Osher et al., 2010). Although one in four young people suffer from mental health issues, 70% do not seek professional help (Burns, 2017). Teenage suicide is the leading cause of death for young Australians (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

When students are connected with their school community, they are less likely to suffer mental health issues such as depression (Bond et al., 2007). The current study seeks to understand the impact of restorative practices on student behaviour, how students feel about the approach being used, and what benefits they see when their teacher uses the approach to manage issues. When students see their teacher behaving in pro-social ways they are more likely to replicate that behaviour.

Thesis Overview

Within this thesis, it will be asserted that many factors can affect behaviour, including contextual aspects (e.g. interactions with the community), the influence of family and peers, normal human development, and personal beliefs such as what motivates people to change their behaviour. To build a foundation for future research, the current study used a qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is an appropriate method to explore and understand a phenomenon from the participant's perspective. This approach is useful to offer depth and build theory (Patton, 2015). A chapter-by-chapter summary is provided below.

Chapter 2 commences with a discussion on behaviour in the school community and how teachers manage behaviour. Traditional punitive discipline measures are discussed and it is argued that these approaches are ineffective in bringing about change to student

behaviour. Alternatives to punitive discipline are introduced. The chapter gives a brief history of restorative justice and how restorative justice was adapted to suit the school community and renamed restorative practices. The change in name hailed a change in the use of the approach to reflect the broader more holistic application of the approach in the school setting, whereby the approach was used as a preventive measure rather than only reacting to misbehaviour as it occurs. Details of the restorative practices continuum are provided with information on how the approach is used in the classroom and broader school community.

Chapter 3 reviews social-emotional learning and school-wide positive behaviour support (SWPBS). The key attributes and challenges of these approaches are discussed. The chapter draws upon positive psychology to understand how individuals can develop an awareness of their positive strengths. Limitations of positive psychology are discussed. Finally, the chapter compares positive psychology, social-emotional learning, and restorative practices.

Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical foundations of the study. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section gives an overview of behaviour and what behaviour is socially considered as acceptable or not. The chapter introduces the predominate theories that have, to date, been used to explain how restorative practices can change behaviour. The limitations of these are discussed. The second section presents an overview of relevant theories and frameworks (such as social learning theory) that can explain behaviour and how behaviour change occurs. Introducing these theories and frameworks offers an alternate explanation to understand if restorative practices is effective in changing behaviour, and if so, how it is effective. A discussion of the underlying mechanisms is provided. Finally, a section on motivational theories is included to explain why people make choices and how their motives can affect behaviour change.

Chapter 5 presents the epistemology and ontological approach taken for this qualitative study. The chapter discusses the role of the researcher and addresses the researcher's influence in the qualitative research process. Data collection methods, including recruitment, instruments, and procedure are discussed in sufficient detail so that the study could be replicated in the future. This chapter also discusses practical considerations such as managing the dynamics with a focus group of young people. A section on data analysis is included to illustrate the rigorous process undertaken. The section on the validity and trustworthiness of the data and data analysis explains the rigour in the method undertaken. Limitations with respect to the methodology are addressed.

Chapter 6 is the first of the two chapters relating to results. To increase the trustworthiness of the data, Chapter 6 uses the interview questions as a framework to illustrate the participant responses for teachers and students. The chapter is in two parts. The first part addresses the questions posed to the teachers and gives a sample of their direct responses. The second part addresses the questions asked of the students and their direct responses.

Chapter 7 is the second chapter related to results. Findings are discussed in relation to the research questions and the emergent themes. The chapter is divided into three sections: (a) the overarching benefits of restorative practices, (b) the challenges and issues faced, and (c) how those challenges were overcome. The purpose of the chapter is to describe a framework to understand the key mechanisms that are needed to successfully implement and sustain restorative practices in school communities. Similarities and differences between the student and teacher findings are used to highlight the strengths of the study findings. A small section of the chapter is dedicated to discussing the unique contribution of a deviant or remarkable case that became evident during the data analysis.

Chapter 8 is the discussion chapter. It is divided into three main sections which explores the perceptions of the participants:

- *The Benefits of Restorative Practices* discusses the impact and benefits that restorative practices have on the whole school community.
- *Facing the Challenges* explores the challenges and issues faced during implementation of restorative practices.
- *Inspiring the Big Picture* explores the perceived barriers and facilitators that can assist or hinder the implementation and sustainability of the restorative practices approach in a school community.

This chapter brings together the results and explores these in relation to theory and the restorative practices literature. A comparison of teachers and student findings is discussed. A user-friendly restorative practices framework known as HEART is proposed. Finally, there is a discussion on the strengths and limitations of the study.

Chapter 9 is the conclusions chapter. It presents the implications of the study. A section on practical recommendations for schools that are in the early stages of adopting restorative practices or seeking to adopt the approach in the future is included. This is discussed in the context of a proposed new restorative practices framework, HEART, which highlights the potential benefits of using the approach. There are recommendations on integrating the HEART framework into the school community and classroom. The chapter, and the thesis, concludes by elaborating on and exploring future research on restorative practices within school communities.

Summary

The research aims and questions proposed in this chapter seek to address highlight the discrepancies in the current literature and limited empirical research. As such, this research will make a valuable contribution to the field, contribute to further development of theory and enhance practice use. This study investigated the implementation, use, and

sustainability of restorative practices from the perspectives of both teachers and students.

A comparison of these two views offers a holistic understanding to address the research questions and aims. The current chapter has presented a statement of the problem, the research aims and questions, and the rationale. The following chapter begins with establishing an understanding of the key topic of this thesis – restorative practices.

Chapter 2: Behaviour Management in Schools

Human behavior flows from three main sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge.

(Plato, philosopher, 427 BC–347 BC)

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of behaviour management in schools. A school community is where most young people spend a considerable amount of their formative years, from around the age of 5 years to the age of 18 years. School is not only a place to teach academic subjects but is also a place where children and young people learn prosocial skills such as getting along with others. This chapter commences with the reasons why behaviour needs to be managed in school communities. This chapter acknowledges that dealing with disruptive behaviour and building their students' prosocial skills can be a challenge for school administrators and teachers. Each school community needs to find ways to respond to misbehaviour and offer opportunities for student learning and personal growth (Morrison, 2006). The challenges facing educators and students in contemporary society are varied, ranging from changes to family structure, such as divorce and blended families, through to the increase in mental health issues and the reliance on media and technology.

School education is not only a place to learn academic skills it is also a place to build effective relationships. Therefore, when conflict occurs, it requires an approach that incorporates resolution, forgiveness, and healing (Catholic Education Office, Melbourne, 2007). This chapter discusses the use of different disciplinary approaches used by school teachers, arguing that punitive approaches can have adverse effects on students. This chapter then introduces the use of non-punitive approaches and the alternatives such as restorative practices as an effective means to manage student behaviour. While a

comprehensive historical overview of schooling is beyond the scope of the current thesis, a brief history of restorative practices will be discussed and will be followed by an overview of the use of restorative practices in countries where some school communities have sought to implement the approach.

Managing Student Behaviour

In contemporary society, there is a strong emphasis on the role of schools in fostering acceptable student behaviour and teaching students how to be responsible citizens in the wider community (Lewis, Romi, Qui, & Katz, 2005). There is a growing need for school education to move beyond the formal academic curriculum to incorporate social values as well as developing prosocial skills and behaviour, such as problem-solving and empathy for others (Wong, Cheng, Ngan, & Ma, 2011). However, this can create a dilemma for many school communities as they seek to work out ways to not only deal with student misbehaviour but also to proactively teach social-emotional skills to students as a preventive measure. Adopting a wide range of management techniques to deal with student behaviour, without suitable integration of multiple approaches in the school community, can result in a lack of coordination, poor time management, and challenges in sustaining the techniques (Payton et al., 2000).

When students misbehave, there may be consequences on student learning, a negative impact on the school community, and a contribution towards teacher burnout (Osher et al., 2010; Özben, 2010). When behaviour management is used effectively it can help students develop knowledge, increase their respect for others, learn prosocial skills, and achieve better learning outcomes (Smith-Sanders & Harter, 2007; Sugai & Horner, 2008). The primary aim of classroom management is described by Osher et al. (2010) as:

An enterprise of creating conditions for student involvement in curricular events, and attention is focused on the classroom group and on the direction, energy, and

flow of activity systems that organize and guide collective action ... the emphasis is on cooperation, engagement, and motivation, and on student learning to be part of a dynamic system, rather than on compliance, control, and coercion. (p.49)

Effectively managing student behaviour can cause a dilemma regarding whose rights are more important, “the individual’s right to an education or a student’s right to schooling in a safe and affirming place” (Wearmouth, McKinney, & Glynn, 2007, p. 38). Addressing student misbehaviour, such as bullying and aggression, continues to create ongoing public concern due to the adverse effects on children and young people’s physical and mental wellbeing (Ttofi & Farrington, 2012). This is of particular concern because bullying and other misbehaviour in schools can predict aggression and violence in adult life (Costenbader & Markson, 1998). Over the past several decades, there has been a rise in the implementation of approaches seeking to address bullying and other misbehaviour. The use of these approaches is vital for tackling these behavioural problems, with reports suggesting that anti-bullying programs can potentially reduce the prevalence of bullying. However, there have been conflicting results on the effectiveness of such programs depending on the age of the students. Future research to investigate programs with students of different ages is recommended (Ttofi & Farrington, 2012).

Student misbehaviour can encompass a range of behaviours; less serious misbehaviour includes disrespect towards the teacher, answering back, a lack of attentiveness within the classroom, or a lack of sociability towards other students and the teacher, while more severe misbehaviour includes bullying or violence towards other students, staff, or school property. These behaviours can negatively affect the classroom and school community, resulting in a hostile environment that reduces the capacity for learning (Özben, 2010).

Dealing with student misbehaviour can have a detrimental effect on teachers' wellbeing and is associated with an increase in both physical and mental health issues (Hastings & Bham, 2003). Hastings and Bham (2003) explored which dimensions of student behaviour contributed to teacher burnout. One hundred primary school teachers completed a series of questionnaires exploring students' classroom behaviour and teacher burnout. A regression analysis showed a highly significant correlation between teacher burnout and student disrespect, lack of sociability, and lack of attentiveness. The research did not take into account teacher self-efficacy and coping, and suggested further research to explore this as an additional variable.

When teachers are faced with managing a classroom of disruptive students, to maintain control they tend to resort to the use of rules, an expectation of obedience, and a consequence if the rules are not adhered to (Osher et al., 2010). This can be particularly challenging because teachers can often face overt provocation from students requiring teachers to respond in an effective and timely way (Romi, Lewis, Roache, & Riley, 2011).

A Scottish study of 1,468 teachers used a mixed methods approach to explore the occurrence of positive and negative behaviours in the classroom and around the school. Teachers reported that, in the week prior to data collection, the most disruptive behaviour was low-level negative behaviour such as talking out of turn, which was identified by 96% of primary teachers and 99% of secondary teachers (Munn et al., 2013). In these situations, some teachers perceive this disruption as necessitating punishment whereas other teachers allow and even encourage spontaneous discussion rather than enforcing a hand up before speaking rule (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). These different approaches can give conflicting messages to students. It seems reasonable to suggest that students may perceive some teacher behaviours as negative or perhaps misinterpret the behaviour as hostility or criticism. Consequently, students may display defensive or aggressive reactions (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). It is important that students receive clear guidelines so they can predict

teacher behaviours and understand their teacher's expectations of them and adapt their behaviour to the class norms and rules (Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

School Discipline

Punitive punishment approaches. In Western society, it is traditionally accepted that when a crime or wrongdoing is committed to a person or property, the most appropriate action is to penalise or punish the individual who committed the offence (Carlsmith & Darley, 2008; Wachtel, 2003). In this context, punishment involves applying an unpleasant action to suppress recurrence of the response. The purpose of this approach, known as retributive justice, is to punish the individual, thereby protecting society from further offences and deterring future wrongdoing (Carlsmith, 2006; Diaconu, 2012). Failure to punish a wrongdoer is generally not considered acceptable, with those who do not enforce some type of punishment being considered by some as permissive or lenient (Grimsrud & Zehr, 2002; Wachtel, 2003).

Retributive punishment is often considered as the offender receiving just deserts, a belief that punishment should be proportional to their crime (Bastian, Denson & Haslam, 2013; Carlsmith & Darley, 2008). Carlsmith (2006) proposes that punishment tends to be based on a desire by individuals to maintain social order, with many favouring retribution as the ideal punishment, while some people can alter their justification of the type and extent of the punishment depending upon their personal perceptions of the offence and the characteristics of the wrongdoer (Wenzel, Okimoto, & Cameron, 2011). As a result, it is suggested by Carlsmith, (2006) that individuals' justification towards types of punishment may be a learned response rather than an innate human characteristic.

In a school community, as with wider society, retributive punishment has been used to manage student misbehaviour. For example, in a school setting, this often takes the form of imposing material loss, such as denying an activity or freedom, as well as emotional

consequences, such as an expression of disapproval (Rigby, 2014). Some teachers achieve this by adopting a top-down approach to behaviour management whereby students are expected to conform to the teacher's rules and show respect to them as the teacher and person in charge (Johnson, Whittington, & Oswald, 1994, p.268).

This approach reflects the thinking of sociologist Michael Foucault who described the role of the school institution as one of social control and a place to establish social norms and authority (Foucault, 1977; Welch & Payne, 2010). The emphasis on obedience to strict codes of conduct with punitive discipline measures is considered the most appropriate means of managing any deviation from these expectations (Foucault, 1977; Johnson et al., 1994). The use of punitive approaches illustrates how teachers seek to control the student-teacher relationship through making and enforcing rules. When students fail to comply with the rules, teachers implement disciplinary sanctions upon them (Varnham, 2005).

Before the 1980s, Australian states and territories sought to control student behaviour through the use of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is the use of the strap, cane, or other physical implement and was aimed at causing pain to the individual, usually across the buttocks or hand (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2017). Over the past 30 years, most Australian states and territories have banned corporal punishment (see Chapter 1), but this abolition has not led to the revolutionary change in school disciplinary techniques that was originally anticipated (Cameron & Thorsborne, 2001).

Following the abolition of corporal punishment, schools have sought to manage student behaviour through the use of alternative punitive approaches. These approaches range from detentions to suspension or expulsion, the latter two removing the student from the school community (Morrison, 2006). During the 1990s, some schools in Australia and throughout the world began to use a zero-tolerance approach to discipline (Reynolds et al., 2008), which was described as:

A philosophy or policy that mandates the application of pre-determined consequences, most often severe and punitive in nature, that are intended to be applied regardless of the gravity of behaviour, mitigating circumstances, or situational context. (p. 852)

The zero-tolerance approach is another form of punitive punishment and social control. It is used to send a message to students that certain behaviours will not be tolerated, and if these behaviours occur, the student will be removed from the school community regardless of the severity of the behaviour (Evans & Lester, 2012; Hirschfield, 2008; Skiba, 2014). Some individuals advocate for a zero-tolerance approach where any minor disruption to the social order of the school is not tolerated and strict use of the approach is used as a form of deterrence (Skiba, 2014). In some countries and jurisdictions, a zero-tolerance approach to school violence and bullying has been adopted as a tough deterrent, but in recent years, zero-tolerance and punitive approaches in general have been found to be counterproductive (Martinez, 2009; Reynolds et al., 2008; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). A task force evidentiary review conducted by Reynolds et al. (2008) on behalf of the American Psychological Association sought to explore the effectiveness of a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline. The review examined research which pertained to the use of zero tolerance using a set of agreed criteria. The review concluded that zero-tolerance discipline approaches were associated with negative mental health, higher rates of misbehaviour, lower academic outcomes, and higher rates of school dropout. The report recommended that alternative strategies needed to be sought or zero-tolerance approaches needed to be reformed to address these negative outcomes. In Australia, common forms of punitive punishment adopted by teachers include verbal reprimand, removal of privileges, and removing the student from the class or school community through detention, suspension, or expulsion. The rationale is that misbehaviour must be punished and punitive

punishment will deter future misbehaviour (Hemphill et al., 2006; Hemphill et al., 2014).

The continuing and widespread use of punitive punishment suggests that teachers and wider society believe in the efficacy of this approach.

Issues with Punitive Discipline

The use of punitive punishments that remove the student from the school community can result in adverse outcomes for students. Hemphill et al. (2014) explored some of the adverse outcomes following school suspension, in Victoria, Australia and Washington State, USA. A 2-stage cluster sampling approach was used for study recruitment. There were 961 student participants in the Washington sample and 984 student participants in the Victorian sample. Students completed a range of measures on non-violent behaviour, school suspension, and academic and related factors. The authors found that school suspension at Year 7, in both samples, was significantly related to high rates of non-violent antisocial behaviour 24 months later, low school grades, and low school commitment.

Removal from the school community can lead to the student feeling isolated and they can experience a sense of rejection, shame, and stigma (Wachtel, 2012). These feelings can lead to the student seeking approval and acceptance of their behaviour through the creation of a subculture or group of deviant peers to legitimise misbehaviour that can lead to further negative outcomes such as crime and violence (Dodge, Dishion, & Landsford, 2006; Morrison, 2006; Wachtel, 2012). In addition, these exclusionary practices place the onus of dealing with the student and their behaviour onto the wider community (Mendez & Sanders, 1981; Costenbader & Markson, 1998). In this situation, punitive punishment appears to be counterproductive.

The use of discipline in the school community can also cause issues for teacher wellbeing (Lewis et al., 2005). Many teachers can struggle with student misbehaviour and

not know how to use effective discipline techniques to manage that behaviour. Teachers tend to adopt an authoritarian, punitive approach to deal with student misbehaviour due to a lack of knowledge, insufficient education, inexperience or feeling ill-equipped to use other techniques (Lewis et al., 2005). The use of authoritarian punitive approaches can lead to a power struggle between teacher and student (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). These factors can cause high levels of teacher stress that may affect teachers' physical and mental health (Lewis et al., 2005).

When teachers perceive lower levels of respect from their students, they engage the students less in discussion and tend to resort to punitive punishment to manage misbehaviour and gain compliance (Lewis et al., 2005). This approach can be particularly damaging to the student if the punishment includes embarrassment that attacks the student's self-esteem (Romi et al., 2011). The emotional effects of punitive discipline can interfere with the student's opportunity to learn a prosocial alternative. The use of punitive discipline does not teach acceptable behaviour to the students, nor does it foster a healthy relationship between students and teachers (Rigby, 2014; Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

Although many factors, such as biological determinants, can influence aggressive and antisocial behaviours, the use of punitive discipline has been found to increase these behaviours (Alizadeh, Talib, Abdullah, & Mansor, 2011; Baumrind, 1991; Sanson, Montgomery, Gault, Gridley, & Thomson, 1996). Early aggression has been shown to be associated with future antisocial and deviant behaviours (Sanson et al., 1996). This suggests that prevention needs to be targeted at children and young people before these behaviours become established. The use of preventive approaches through schools, family, and community is likely to be a more cost-effective alternative than treating an existing persistent problem. A meta-analysis by Farrington and Ttofi (2011) sought to examine the effectiveness of school-based programs to reduce bullying. The analysis found that such programs decreased bullying by up to 23% and decreased victimisation by up to 20%.

Farrington and Ttofi found that the elements underlying successful behaviour management and anti-bullying approach included establishing consistent expectations through playground supervision, consistent use of discipline, classroom management techniques, and a whole-school approach to rules with respect to bullying.

Beyond punitive discipline. Alongside the more traditional view of punishment lie the concepts of restoration, restitution, and inclusion that exist at varying levels within the justice system, school system, and broader community. These are often referred to as restorative justice (Daly & Hayes, 2001; Johnstone, 2011).

The restorative justice movement has gained momentum over the past few decades, with the initial focus to think and practise restoratively in response to crime (Daly & Hayes, 2001; Johnstone, 2011). The focus was a means to give a voice to the victim and allow the offender to acknowledge their wrongdoing, which would not be possible in the traditional retributive criminal system (Fields, 2003). The aim of restorative justice is to empower the individual through accountability and responsibility for their own actions (Morrison & Ahmed, 2006).

The focus of this thesis is the use of restorative practices in the school community, but to offer a contextual view, a brief historical perspective on the use of restorative approaches is described. Howard Zehr, an early pioneer of the restorative approach, was the first to articulate the theory and concepts of restorative justice in his book *Changing Lenses – A New Focus for Crime and Justice* (Johnstone, 2011; Vaandering, 2011; Zehr, 1990).

Zehr (2015) describes restorative justice practices as being like “a river with many sources” (p. 2). Although the modern form of restorative justice is thought to have begun in the 1970s, the practice has deeper traditional roots. The modern restorative approach, which Zehr describes, developed in Mennonite communities across North America as a

means to apply faith and peace perspectives to criminal justice (Zehr, 2015). These developments led to the growth of other programs throughout the world.

The restorative movement has roots in the practices of the North American Navajo and New Zealand Māori peoples. Proponents of restorative justice in the Western world consistently trace its roots to ancient indigenous and spiritual traditions that emphasised the interconnectedness of individuals, both with each other and the environment (Breton & Lehman, 2001; Zehr, 2015). As such, justice was understood more in terms of relationships than judging right from wrong (Vaandering, 2010).

Contemporary origins of restorative practices began in Canada in the 1970s with a victim-offender reconciliation program. This was used as an experimental alternative in the sentencing of two young offenders who were required to meet their victims and report back to the judge about the damage the victims had suffered because of their offences (Daly & Immarigeon 1998; Johnstone 2011). Subsequently, the use of victim-offender mediation was introduced in various parts of Europe and the United Kingdom. During the 1980s, New Zealand mandated the use of family group conferencing to deal with youth crime and increase youth care. Family group conferencing was introduced to Australia by the New South Wales police during 1991, in what is now known as the Wagga model, to deal with juvenile cases (Daly & Immarigeon, 1998). Howard Zehr, an early adopter and primary influence in the restorative justice movement, defines restorative justice as:

... a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations in order to heal and put things as right as possible (Zehr, 2015, p. 40).

Where criminal justice seeks to establish what laws have been broken, who did it, and what they deserve, the restorative justice approach seeks to establish who has been hurt, what their needs are, and who is under an obligation to right the wrong (Zehr, 2015).

The restorative justice approach takes the view that when a wrongdoing, crime, or conflict has occurred; it results in damaged relationships that need to be repaired (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2011; Drewery & Winslade 2003; Morrison et al., 2005). This approach places value on maintaining and strengthening relationships to prevent the isolation and rejection that can be felt by both the victim and the wrongdoer (Morrison et al., 2005). The aim is to repair the damage and restore the relationship between the individuals and the community (Zehr, 2015). Indeed, the restorative justice system can include punishment if it is deemed and mutually agreed to be appropriate by all of those involved, including the offender (Wenzel et al., 2011).

More recently this approach has been used to deal with other problem behaviours such as misconduct in schools, neighbourhood disputes, and workplace issues (Johnstone, 2011). Morrison (2006), an advocate of the restorative approach, expresses her belief as “justice as part of our everyday lives, and hence it belongs in our homes and schools” (p. 97). The move towards preventive measures and the promotion of prosocial skills has seen the use of restorative approaches gaining momentum.

From restorative justice to restorative practice. Restorative practices have been used in areas such as criminal justice, education, social work or counselling, and organisational management. While each of these areas uses its own terminology, the approaches are all considered to fall under the umbrella of restorative practices (Wachtel, 2012). The International Institute of Restorative Practices notes that restorative practices are known as *restorative justice* in the justice system, *empowerment* in the social work or counselling environment, *positive discipline* in education and *horizontal management* in organisations (Wachtel, 2012). The use of these terms and definitions is a critical issue within the restorative literature when discussing restorative approaches since the varying terms can cause confusion for the reader when not clearly defined.

This thesis uses the terms and definitions recommended by the International Institute of Restorative Practices, who define restorative justice to be a subset of restorative practices (Wachtel, 2012). Restorative practices are conceptualised as having either a process or a broad set of values or principles. Wachtel (2012) defines restorative justice as being “wholly reactive through formal or informal responses to crime or wrong-doing after it occurs” (p. 1). Restorative justice is considered as a tertiary approach (see figure 3.1 on page 57) which aims to manage behaviour in order to prevent a recurrence of that behaviour. In contrast, restorative practices include the use of informal and formal practices that precede wrongdoing; these include proactively building relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrongdoing (Wachtel, 2012). Restorative practices expand on restorative justice and are considered a primary approach that places effort on measures to prevent problems occurring in the first place. Wachtel (2012, p.1) describes the benefits of restorative approaches as:

- reducing crime, violence and bullying,
- improving human behaviour,
- restoring relationships, and
- repairing harm.

Advocates of the restorative justice movement originally encouraged and actively promoted the use of this approach in schools. This was based upon the belief that if children learn that conflict can be resolved through a collective problem-solving process, as opposed to force, then they are less likely to become involved in crime in their later years (Cowie, 2013). However, the use of term *justice* was not considered appropriate in the school setting and the term was changed to *restorative practices* to acknowledge that the approach incorporates different uses in this environment (Johnstone, 2011). Initially, the use of restorative practices in schools was for dealing with problem behaviours such as

bullying and truancy as an alternative to traditional measures such as detentions, suspensions, and expulsions (Drewery, 2007; Johnstone, 2011; Porter, 2007). As a result, restorative practices offered schools a behaviour management method that placed emphasis on building relationships rather than the traditional punitive methods based on rules and consequences (Armstrong, 2007).

As with the philosophy underlying restorative justice, the underlying philosophy of restorative practices proposes that when harm due to misbehaviour has occurred, it has damaged the relationship between the parties involved. This relationship needs to be repaired so that the parties can move forward (Morrison et al., 2005). Many schools that adopt restorative practices not only use this method to react to incidents as they occur, but also use the method as a proactive preventive or whole-school approach. This preventive or whole-school approach aims to educate students and build social-emotional skills through effective communication. Schools achieve effective communication through regular discussions within the classroom and by establishing appropriate agreed behaviour and expectations for students (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). When reacting to a situation or misbehaviour, the teacher seeks to establish the student's thinking and feeling behind their action, allowing them the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour (Porter, 2007)

One aim of the whole-school approach is to ensure consistency by using written school policies that reflect restorative values. This ensures that everyone adopts the same style of language (e.g. using open questions), effective listening, and problem-solving skills to build positive and supportive relationships in a proactive manner (McCluskey et al., 2008; Porter, 2007). The restorative practices approach is in direct contrast to the punitive approach, which tends to focus on the wrong-doers and how they defend themselves to minimise or avoid punishment (Morrison et al., 2005).

The aim of restorative practices in schools is to promote resilience in not only the person who has been harmed but also in the person who caused the harm. Ultimately,

restorative practices are about helping young people become aware of how their actions affect others and for them to take personal responsibility for their actions (Corrigan, 2014). Nevertheless, there has been some criticism of restorative practices (Rigby, 2004; Wearmouth et al., 2001). Rigby (2004) believes that restorative practices may be considered by some to be coercive if there is a lack of genuine interaction and dialogue between those involved. For example, if the victim has provoked the situation and the perpetrator feels pressured into responding restoratively. The success of the formal aspect of restorative practices requires the willingness of the victim. There can be a danger that the school may exert too much control over the process, creating inequity for those involved. This can be particularly problematic if the behaviour or decisions (such as a suspension) is made by a staff member who is part of the problem, resulting in disempowerment to the student involved (Wearmouth et al., 2007). The current use of restorative practices in school communities around the world is discussed later in this chapter.

The restorative practices continuum. Over time, there has been a shift in how restorative practices are applied in schools. Johnstone (2011) notes a shift from the old ways of using restorative practices as a reactive method for dealing with misbehaviour to a proactive holistic approach through modelling prosocial behaviours and the use of a common language that avoids focusing on blame or excuses. As a result of the changing uses and applications in schools, restorative practices can be considered as a continuum, as which ranges from reactive to proactive approaches (Wachtel, 2012). The model is illustrated in Figure 2.2, but a discussion of the model and key terms are introduced first.

Reactive approaches. The reactive approach generally involves formally bringing together the students, teachers, and possibly parents in a conference after an incident has occurred. The purpose of the conference is to have a structured discussion about what happened and how to resolve the issues. The restorative conference is often facilitated by

an independent person and follows a pre-determined set of questions, or a script, as shown in Figure 2.1. The questions emphasise the feelings of all those involved and are asked to all those involved in the conference, with each person being given an opportunity to speak. One purpose of this type of script is to ensure a clear and standardised process (Kane et al., 2008).

- Can you explain what happened?
- How did it happen?
- How did you act in this situation?
- Who do you think has been affected by this?
- How were they affected?
- How were you affected?
- What needs to happen to make things right?
- If the same situation happens again, what could you do differently?

Figure 2.1. Conference script (Wachtel, 2012).

Proactive approaches. Although formal reactive approaches continue to be used, less formal approaches are now more widely implemented and used in school communities (Gregory et al., 2016; McCluskey et al., 2008). Informal approaches can be a chat, a brief interview, a corridor conference, or a casual but intentional conversation (Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010; Kane et al., 2008). These approaches are enhanced through using a proactive, relational style of language to communicate with students (Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2017; Morrison, 2006). This style of language is known as affective language and involves the teacher and student addressing each other with statements such as “when you disrupt the classroom I feel disappointed” (Wachtel, 2012, p. 7). This style of language is used in everyday interactions with the aim of encouraging students to be reflective and think about their behaviour and how it affects others.

Circle time. The use of affective language is promoted by many schools through circle time. Circle time is similar to other practices such as yarning circles in Aboriginal

culture. It can be used as a stand-alone approach but is also used to develop and enhance wellbeing and healthy relationships. Circle time is a versatile value-based aspect of the restorative practices approach (Pranis, 2014). It is a structured activity to enhance self-esteem and encourage relationships through the sharing of thoughts and feelings (Leach & Lewis, 2013; Mosley, 1993).

The use of the circle has several purposes such as information sharing, conflict resolution, support, and decision-making. The overall aim is to develop skills that construct solutions rather than focus on deficits. The theoretical underpinnings of circles and circle time is based on social constructionism, positive psychology and ecological systems (Roffey & McCarthy, 2013). In practical terms, circle time gives students the opportunity to sit in a circle with their teacher and be given a structured opportunity to speak and listen to their peers as a regular activity and not just in response to a behavioural issue. Circle time follows some basic rules: you need to wait to speak, when it is your turn everyone will listen, you can choose to pass and not speak, and no put downs are allowed (Roffey, 2006, 2016).

Topics may be academic (e.g. my work goal for today), emotional (e.g. how my feelings were hurt when I was excluded), class-specific (e.g. establishing the class norms) or social (e.g. what I did on the weekend; Gregory et al., 2016). Although the topics and contents can vary, the main aim of circle time is to build connectedness, cooperation, participation, thinking, and relating to others (Corrigan, 2014). There are multiple practical examples of circle time in the classroom (see Roffey & McCarthy, 2013; Mosley, 2005).

A whole-school approach. Over more recent years, some schools have moved towards adoption of a whole-school approach to restorative practices. A whole-school approach not only incorporates the reactive and proactive aspects described above but includes the development of a shared ethos, philosophy, and goals within the school community. This is achieved through the adoption of restorative codes of conduct and a

consistent school policy to reflect the shared vision (McCluskey et al., 2008; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

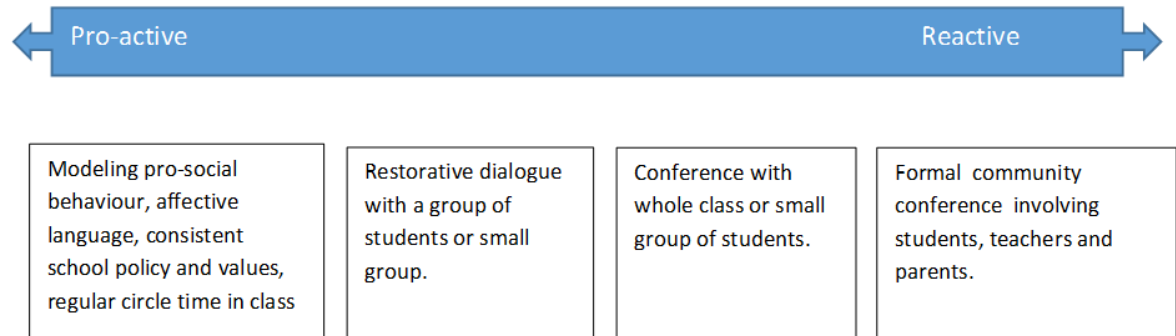


Figure 2.2. The restorative practices continuum (adapted from Armstrong, 2007; Morrison, 2002, 2006; Wachtel, 2012).

The whole-school approach includes all of the aspects of the continuum depicted in Figure 2.2. The emphasis is on fostering social relationships, responsibility, and accountability for one's own behaviour; empathy towards the feelings of other people; fairness; respect for others' views and feelings; and active involvement of everyone in the school community to make decisions that affect them (McCluskey et al., 2008).

Using Restorative Practices in Schools: A Global Overview

Although many countries have sought to explore the use of restorative practices in schools, the approach has tended to be limited to a reactive use of the approach. However, restorative practices as a whole-school approach has flourished in three countries: New Zealand, Scotland, and Australia. In these countries, there has been a commitment from both school communities and the government to support the approach. This thesis draws heavily on research emanating from these countries. Other countries such as the USA and Hong Kong have conducted research with mixed findings. The reader is now provided with

a brief discussion of restorative practices emanating from New Zealand, Scotland, Australia, USA and Hong Kong.

New Zealand. Arguably, New Zealand has one of the most prolific restorative practices programs in schools. According to Wearmouth et al. (2007), this can be directly attributed to the influence of the Māori culture. In the pre-European history of New Zealand, the Māori people used *hui* meetings to resolve conflict (Wearmouth et al., 2007). These *hui* meetings emphasised learning from the elders of the community, with all parties then taking turns to speak until the elders' judge that a consensus has been reached. The collective responsibility of all those present was to uphold the decision reached in the meeting. In the late 1990s, the New Zealand government sought to actively develop a formal restorative conferencing process in schools as part of what they called the Suspension Reduction Initiative. This initiative was closely followed by an approach known as the Student Engagement Initiative. Both initiatives were aimed at reducing school suspensions and improving educational outcomes (Drewery, 2007; Drewery & Kecskemeti, 2010).

A paper by the Ministry of Education in New Zealand found that the reliance on punitive measures had not brought about the safe learning environments that were anticipated (Corrigan, 2014). In 2010, the Ministry of Education in New Zealand announced a Positive Behaviour for Learning Restorative Practice plan to be piloted in 21 schools across New Zealand with implementation in a further 200 schools by 2017 (Ministry of Education, 2014). Following the widespread introduction of restorative practices, the Ministry of Education reported they were beginning to see fewer suspensions (an 81% reduction in some schools for Māori students), a more positive learning environment, and better achievement outcomes. The use of restorative conferences was considered to improve student engagement with more than 80% of the victims being either highly satisfied or satisfied with their experience and would recommend use of the

approach to others. Ninety-five per cent of the staff members at another school reported an improvement in student–teacher relationships as a result of restorative practices. Further results from the pilot study were increased student engagement, improvements in students’ and teachers’ attitudes, and less class disruption (Corrigan, 2014).

Scotland. The implementation of restorative practices in Scottish schools came from a recommendation of a national task group in 2000. The Discipline Task Group, Better Behaviour Better Learning found there was concern among teaching staff about student behaviour, in particular, low-level disruption, aggression, and violence. The restorative practices pilot evaluation formed part of a government-funded response to improve the school climate and address student disengagement and disaffection (McCluskey, 2010). The recommendation was to promote strategies that promoted positive discipline, increased prosocial skills, and reduced pupil disengagement and disaffection (Kane et al., 2008; McCluskey et al., 2008).

As a result of this recommendation, restorative practices were introduced into the Scottish education system in 2004 as part of a 2-year Better Behaviour Better Learning initiative (Head, 2005). The restorative practices approach was chosen because it would offer a more holistic view of children’s needs and would minimise or eliminate perceptions that view offending behaviour in isolation. The aim was to learn and understand how restorative practices might influence school culture and determine if the approach could be adapted to the Scottish system.

Following the pilot, an extensive mixed-method formal evaluation was conducted with multiple stakeholders (Kane et al., 2008). The evaluation involved 18 schools and over 100 key staff members who were interviewed over a number of occasions. In addition, over 200 primary and secondary school students and 31 parents of those students participated in group interviews. In addition, data was collected through student and staff survey, observations, documentary analysis of schools’ policies and analysis of national

and school statistical data. The evaluation explored two main research questions: (a) How did restorative practices develop in the pilot schools? and (b) Were restorative practices perceived by participants as supportive and positive? The evaluation team developed indicators of achievement based on the teaching staff and local authority staff interviews to ascertain the progress of each school community in their adoption of the approach. The evaluation showed some staff were trained and there were plans in place for further professional development. These school communities were considered as being in the early stages but there was evidence of progress. The number of students excluded from the school was reported as decreasing (a significant achievement indicator) in 14 out of the 18 schools. The qualitative findings from the evaluation found that the success of the approach was reported as being greater when teachers felt they had received quality training and had committed, enthusiastic management supporting them (McCluskey et al., 2008).

The evaluation reported varying success between primary and secondary schools. Primary schools showed greater evidence of cultural change than secondary schools (e.g. more restorative language used and a stronger sense of community ethos). Secondary schools had a lower rate of uptake of the approach and the use of the approach was more diverse and less consistent. Some secondary school staff reported a struggle to reconcile the school's previous strategies with restorative practices (McCluskey et al., 2008). This issue was attributed to the complexity and structure of secondary schools. It appeared that secondary schools tended to use restorative practices to sort out incidents when relationships had broken down rather than as a prevention approach (Kane et al., 2008).

A further issue identified in Scottish secondary schools was the conflicting views of teachers, students, and parents. Some senior school staff claimed that although restorative practices permeated the school ethos and positively affected relationships, the pupils of these schools did not report similar positive experiences (Kane et al., 2008). Many of the

young people and their parents cooperated in the study but were not actively engaged with the school about the process; this resulted in different perceptions of the use and success of the approach. These findings highlight some of the issues facing the implementation of restorative practices, particularly in secondary schools. The evaluation concluded that successful implementation of the restorative practices approach could be attributed to the school identifying the need for change and a consistent commitment to creating change by the whole school community (McCluskey et al., 2008).

Australia. In Australia, restorative practices began in 1994 in Queensland, and over the following decades, the practice expanded into other Australian states (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). It was not until 2002 that the formalised concept of restorative practices was first introduced into Victorian schools with a 9-month pilot study conducted by the University of Melbourne, the Catholic Education Office, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Shaw, 2007). Victorian education authorities were looking towards the use of restorative practices to manage drug-related issues as an alternative to school suspension.

The student wellbeing initiatives being promoted at the time of the pilot sought to use a code of conduct that increased prevention and reduced the potential for students being alienated from the school community. The pilot study involved 23 schools: 14 secondary schools, eight primary schools, and one alternative school. Schools were selected, based on an expression of interest, from four regional clusters: one in a regional centre, one rural, one metropolitan, and one outer suburban. There were two forms of training incorporated into the trial. Three of the clusters participated in Mode 1 which was delivered by an independent organisation. The training consisted of a 3-day program which consisted of background and theory of restorative practices and the practical uses in the school setting. The fourth cluster participated in Mode 2 delivered by the Department of Learning and Education and Development at the Education Faculty at The University of

Melbourne. The training was offered as a single unit in the Masters of Education course and explored restorative practices within a philosophical and practical framework.

The evaluation was conducted at the completion of the training using a pre- and post-training self-administered survey to gauge satisfaction and skills gained. Additional data was collected from interviews and observations. The findings from the evaluation were limited due to the short duration of the pilot being 9-months. Therefore, the challenges and benefits identified by the research team and by the school who participated were reported with caution.

The findings from the pilot suggested that restorative practices were consistent with current advice to schools, at the time, regarding student welfare. However, there were a number of challenges that were identified: (1) when school principals were trained there was more interest and greater uptake of the approach, (2) when colleagues were trained it was highly valued as an opportunity to debrief, (3) a lack of time during the pilot to establish the approach adequately, and (4) a lack of confidence reduced use of the approach.

By 2003, the funding for the pilot program had ceased, affecting the ability of many schools to remain involved in the program (Shaw & Wierenga, 2002). In 2004, a follow-up report on the status of restorative practices in Victorian schools was conducted with 18 schools, six of which remained from the original 2002 pilot study. Three days of professional development were provided to the staff of the 18 primary and secondary schools. The focus of the follow-up study was to report on the conditions under which schools had implemented restorative practices (Shaw, 2007).

The authors reported that the schools had introduced restorative practices in two distinct ways, either as a reactive formal approach using conferencing or as a broader proactive relationship management and skills development approach. School leadership reported using restorative practices language in their everyday activities, and most used

small-scale restorative practices conferences as a method of dealing with incidents as they occurred. The findings suggested that restorative practices could successfully address problem behaviours such as bullying, increase communication, and build quality relationships between students and teachers. The school staff felt that restorative practices had impacted their school climate, indicating that there were improvements in the relationships and reductions in confrontations.

The benefits of adopting a whole-school approach to restorative practices included successfully addressing bullying and conflicts, increased communication, more responsibility, and an increased sense of belonging for all those within school communities. Overall, teachers felt that there had been a positive impact on their schools' climate, with improvements in student–teacher relationships and reductions in confrontations.

Despite the positive findings, there were also challenges throughout the implementation process. Concerns included a lack of teacher's time, the short duration of the pilot, and the time involved in building a whole-school approach. Teachers reported struggling with an overcrowded curriculum while trying to incorporate restorative practices into everyday school life. Other issues centred on the confidence and skills of the facilitator, the current policies and support offered to the school community, the need for training, supportive leadership, and commitment from all staff to adopt the approach (Shaw, 2007).

Some teachers reported that there needed to be a fundamental shift in thinking and this resulted in some teachers perceiving a loss of power or control, creating resistance to change. Despite the pilot and evaluation, schools were unable to determine whether restorative practices were successful in reducing the frequency of suspensions, expulsions and detentions. Seventeen of the schools felt that the restorative practices approach was more effective than traditional punitive methods but did not have the data to support this

claim. Shaw (2007) concluded that for school communities to sustain restorative practices, the focus needs to move from one of behaviour management to one of relationship management.

United States of America. The use of restorative practices as a means to manage student behaviour in USA schools is in its infancy, this could perhaps be due to the popularity of zero-tolerance policies which has been dominant in school communities until the late 1990s (Fronius, Persson, Guckenberg, Hurley, & Petrosino, 2016; Martinez, 2009).

Before 2014, the use of restorative justice was limited (the preferred term in the USA literature tends to be restorative justice rather than restorative practices), but educators in the USA are beginning to look for alternatives to exclusionary approaches to address misconduct and defiance issues (Fronius et al. 2016; Gregory et al. 2016; Guckenburg, Hurley, Persson, Fronius, & Petrosino, 2016). Since 2014, there have been varying attempts at introducing aspects of the restorative justice approach with mixed and limited results.

A study by Guckenburg et al. (2016) sought to explore the extent and use of restorative justice in USA schools. Data was gathered during 2014 using snowball sampling to reach as many restorative justice practitioners as. One hundred and sixty-nine restorative justice practitioners replied from across the USA. The authors found that the restorative justice approach was not widespread and had only been adopted in 18 states with less than 50% of the schools in any single entire district using the approach. Only 10% of schools had used the approach for more than 6 years, with 39% having introduced the approach 1 to 3 years prior. There was a high degree of diversity in the use of the restorative justice approach, with the main use being circle time. This was not used as a proactive approach but to question students following an incident. The report showed that restorative justice is primarily used to formally address issues such as verbal conflict,

bullying, and physical infractions. The social-emotional learning components of restorative practices were not evident in the school communities that participated.

Nevertheless, 54% of the schools reported that the program was successful with reductions in numbers of suspensions, increased respect, and an improved school climate. Similar to other countries seeking to implement restorative practices, the barriers were training, time (including teacher mindset), resistance, and low parental support (Guckenburg et al., 2016). The participants in the USA study expressed confusion about what the approach is and struggled with a lack of consensus during implementation, perhaps due to a lack of training and support.

Gregory et al. (2016) suggest that there is a need for school communities in the USA to explore restorative justice as a prevention-oriented program (such as a whole-school approach) since it is based on a humanistic approach that may be more developmentally sensitive to young people. They concluded that future studies in USA schools need to systematically track restorative consultants throughout the implementation phase to measure improvements over time and prevent any potential declines in the use of the approach.

Hong Kong. A 2-year longitudinal study in Hong Kong examined whether the use of restorative practices could address increasing issues with bullying behaviour within schools (Wong et al., 2011). The quasi-experimental study by Wong et al. (2011) included an intervention group, a partial intervention group and a control group. The intervention group received in-depth training on the restorative practices whole-school approach, including workshops and programs for all staff. Full implementation lasted for 15 months. The partial intervention group did not receive the full training program and the control group received no training. The Hong Kong government provided the sampling frame, which consisted of 1,480 school students from Grade 7 to Grade 9 (aged approximately

12–14 years). Data was collected using a questionnaire to rate students' attitudes and perceptions of their teacher and school harmony.

The authors found that there was a significant reduction in bullying behaviour and an increase in empathy in the intervention group compared with the control group. The results also showed that the management of the school with the full intervention had a welcoming attitude towards the adoption of the approach and the school embraced clear restorative goals and guidelines to deal with bullying. Wong et al. (2011) suggested that success depends upon the teachers accepting the approach. The school with the partial intervention did not have the same level of success, which led the researchers to conclude that extensive implementation needs to occur for the program to fully succeed.

There were some limitations to the study. First, the test and re-test duration was only 5 months. Other research suggests that it is not possible for change, in particular for a whole-school approach, to occur within this timeframe (Morrison & Ahmed, 2006). Second, the intervention school may have had a higher baseline with respect to more caring behaviour, empathy, harmony, and a sense of belonging prior to participating in the program.

Wong et al. (2011) conclude that restorative practices can increase students' understanding of others' feelings and enhance their empathy skills. They attributed the increase in empathy to the clear and consistent guidelines within the school. However, they acknowledge that further research is needed to ascertain the long-term benefits and effectiveness of restorative practices beyond their 15-month trial.

Summary

This chapter examined how behaviour is managed in schools. Rules and formalised expectations of behaviour form a major part of our society so that communities and individuals can live together in a harmonious environment. The chapter found that when

rules are broken in the broader community, the justice system seeks to punish individuals and enforce compliance. However, the school environment is an institution that seeks to educate, support, and promote the development of children and young people as they mature into adulthood. As such, the use of retribution and punitive approaches to managing misbehaviour seems at odds with the purpose of education. Indeed, the word discipline originates from the Latin noun *disciplina* meaning instructions and verb *discere* meaning to learn. Hence, school communities need to use discipline as an opportunity for learning rather than as punishment.

This chapter discussed how the restorative justice approach used in the criminal justice system has been adapted for use in school communities. Initially, the approach was to manage misbehaviour as it occurred, but the practice has developed and is now used as a preventive, supportive, and corrective method. This approach is known as the whole-school approach to restorative practices but its use and implementation has been limited in modern society. Three countries – New Zealand, Scotland, and Australia – are at the forefront of the approach. These countries have shown a commitment to addressing student behaviour that is not seen in other parts of the world. The use of restorative practices is in its infancy in other parts of the world and there is an acknowledged need for more research. Limitations in other countries may be the result of firmly held ideas, beliefs on punishment and retribution, and the use of a restorative approach in a punitive manner. There is evidence to suggest that the use of restorative practices can teach students prosocial behaviours that punitive measures fail to achieve.

The following chapter will discuss Social-Emotional Learning approaches in schools and the use of SWPBS. The challenges of these approaches will be addressed. The next chapter introduces positive psychology as a concept to broaden understanding of the positive impact these programs can have on student resilience and positive behaviour.

Challenges and criticisms of positive psychology are given, and a comparison between restorative practices and positive psychology is provided.

Chapter 3: Social-Emotional Learning and Positive Psychology

The good life is a process, not a state of being. (Carl Rogers, psychologist, 1902–1987)

Introduction

This chapter reviews the use of social-emotional learning and positive behaviour interventions in the school setting. It considers the key attributes of social-emotional learning programs and explores the use of School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) approaches as well as the challenges in the implementation of these approaches. This chapter draws upon positive psychology to explore how students can learn to develop an awareness of their strengths to reduce mental health issues and increase wellbeing.

The chapter explores the challenges and criticisms of positive psychology and the ways in which those challenges can be overcome through understanding the difference between content (e.g. a person's psychological characteristics) and contextual aspects (e.g. the quality of a person's social environment). Finally, this chapter includes a discussion of the similarities and differences of social-emotional learning, SWPBS, positive psychology and restorative practices.

The primary aim of this chapter is to build an understanding of the relevant concepts to compare and contrast them to the focus of the current study, namely, restorative practices. The first three sections of this chapter take the reader from broad overarching concepts or frameworks to specific concepts or theories. The first section discusses social-emotional learning and associated programs. The second section discusses adoption of SWPBS at a whole-school implementation level, and the third section discusses the contribution of positive psychology in school communities.

Social-Emotional Learning Programs

This section offers an overview of social-emotional learning programs in school communities and includes a definition and description of the key components of these types of programs. Social-emotional learning is described in simple terms as “the capacity to recognize and manage emotions, solve problems and establish positive relationships with others” (Zins & Elias, 2006, p. 1). Twenty-first century education research considers education as being about developing the whole person, which includes social, emotional, and moral values rather than just intellectual skills (Waters, 2011). Prosocial skills are considered an indicator of social maturity (Eisenberg, Cumberland, Guthrie, Murphy, & Shepard, 2005), empathy (feeling emotion similar to others) and sympathy (feeling concern) that are vital factors that motivate prosocial behaviours (Eisenberg et al., 2005). Prosocial values are described as being “stable, pervasive and enduring holistic beliefs that people hold about what is right and wrong and how to treat others” (Noble & McGrath, 2008, p.1).

Today, there is an increasing effort by state and federal governments to move towards better preparing young people as they mature and enter the workforce and broader social community so they can reach their full potential (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) suggest that wellbeing should be taught in schools for three reasons: “as an antidote to depression, as a vehicle for increasing life satisfaction, and as an aid to better learning and more creative thinking” (p. 295). School-based programs are considered effective means to promote positive development and protect against mental health issues and aggressive behaviour (Greenberg, 2010). School-based programs can provide a cost-effective means to reach children and young people because programs that are delivered through the school community can reduce or eliminate barriers

such as cost, location, time, transport, and potential social stigma, especially in the case of mental health programs (Neil & Christensen, 2009).

Social-emotional competence is a foundation for a child's success and wellbeing in later life (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Brackett & Rivers, 2014). The term *social-emotional learning* emerged in 1994 following a series of meetings that were hosted by the Fetzer Institute and included a collaboration of researchers, education advisers, and child advocates (Greenberg et al., 2003; Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2017). The members of the collaboration sought to develop and introduce a framework that would promote positive development in young people and address concerns about ineffective school programs. As a result of this meeting, a new organisation, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2013; see www.CASEL.org) was established. The goal of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning was to establish evidence-based research and programs to promote social-emotional learning as an essential part of student learning from pre-school until the completion of high school (Greenberg et al., 2003, 2017).

The primary aim of social-emotional learning is to develop individual strengths related to social-emotional, cognitive, and moral development (Greenberg et al., 2017). Social-emotional learning in the school community merges the theoretical perspectives of positive psychology, developmental psychology, cognitive behaviour therapy, and ecosystem models of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Cefani & Cavioni, 2014; Festinger, 1962; Heider, 1958; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Due to the time children and young people spend in schooling, the school community is well placed to provide wellbeing initiatives by teachers, school leaders, and all those within the school community. Most parents and educators consider that promoting wellbeing should be a central part of modern schooling (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Social-emotional learning has increasingly been implemented by school

communities to foster better relationships, reduce conflict, and develop the social-emotional skills of all those within the school community (Brackett & Rivers, 2014). High levels of social-emotional learning can reduce stress, increase feelings of wellbeing, improve coping strategies, reduce aggression, and increase social connectedness (Hromek & Roffey, 2009).

A meta-analysis of school-based social-emotional learning programs by Durlak et al. (2011) found that, on average, students who participated in a social-emotional learning program scored 11% higher on achievement tests than students who did not. These students also showed similar improved attitudes towards school and learning. Students with pre-existing behavioural, emotional, or academic problems were not included in the meta-analysis.

Social-emotional learning is an integration of competencies to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for young people. Durlak et al. (2011) suggest that these competencies entail:

- self-awareness (the ability to identify and recognise emotions, describe interests, and assess strengths);
- social awareness (being able to take the perspective of and empathise with others, and recognise and appreciate individual and group differences);
- self-management (ability to manage emotions and behaviour, manage stress, control impulse and perseverance in the face of obstacles);
- relationship skills (ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships);
- responsible decision-making (making decisions based on consideration of all relevant factors).

These competencies are considered a foundation for positive prosocial behaviours to reduce misbehaviour, facilitate problem-solving, increase awareness of emotion, improve emotional regulation, and improve academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011).

Social-emotional learning programs have been introduced into school communities around the world as a result of the advocacy of organisations such as the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2013) in the USA and as a result of government policy initiatives (e.g. Kismatter in Australia and Social-Emotional Aspects of Learning in England; Cefani & Cavioni, 2014). An evaluation of the Kismatter and Social-Emotional Aspects of Learning programs has illustrated evidence of both advantages and challenges. A summary of the evaluation of these two programs is provided below as an exemplar of social-emotional learning programs in school communities.

Kismatter. Kismatter is an Australian primary school mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention initiative supported by various stakeholders including the Federal Government. The aim of Kismatter is to provide a framework, an intervention process, and the resources to develop and implement mental health strategies in school communities. A trial of the Kismatter program was conducted between 2007 and 2008. Expression of interest were sought from school communities to take part in the trial, from the 260 applications, 100 schools were selected on the basis of the sampling design that aimed to account for the State or Territory, location (metropolitan, rural or remote), size and sector (government, independent, Catholic)

The trial was evaluated by Slee et al. (2009) who examined the impact of the program on teachers, parents, and students. The evaluation used a mixed methods approach comprising surveys, interviews, and focus groups. The design and delivery of the questionnaires to evaluate the program occurred at 4 times points over the 2-year duration using a stratified random sampling procedure

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Goodman, 1997) was used as the principal measure of student mental health difficulties. The evaluation found there was a 10% reduction in student mental health issues over the 2-year period following the introduction of the program (Slee et al., 2009). The evaluation of the Kismatter program showed that 63% of teachers and parents strongly agreed that the program developed a sense of belonging and connectedness for all those within the school community. Slee et al. (2009) concluded that the program resulted in positive change, such as a better school culture, which was consistent with a whole-school approach to enhancing academic and social competence. The limitations and challenges of the program included the importance of the leadership to generate change, difficulties incorporating the program into the school curriculum, and the need to address potential issues regarding the long-term sustainability of Kismatter.

Social-Emotional Aspects of Learning. The Social-Emotional Aspects of Learning program is based on “curriculum materials which aim to develop qualities and skills that help promote positive behaviour and effective learning” (Hallam, 2009, p. 314). The initiative was piloted in the United Kingdom from 2003 to 2005 in local school authorities where behaviour and attendance had been identified as problematic. The aim of the program was to provide a curriculum that focused on developing qualities and skills to promote positive behaviour such as self-awareness.

The evaluation used a mixed method approach. A repeated-measures design questionnaire (prior to the pilot and following the pilot) assessed the impact of the program on the students (Hallam, 2009). Qualitative perceptions of staff and students following implementation were obtained via interviews and focus groups. There was no control group. Students from 172 schools completed the pre- and post-intervention questionnaires, along with teachers from 29 schools. Two questionnaires were developed, one for children aged 5-7 years and one for children aged 7-11 years. The questionnaires assessed students

social, emotional, and behavioural skills, perceptions of classroom, school ethos and their attitudes towards school.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted at 13 schools that were considered as exhibiting good practice by the Social-Emotional Aspects of Learning program coordinators. The authors found that 48% of teachers believed that the program had reduced incidents of bullying and 84% of teachers believed the program had improved students' social skills (Hallam, 2009). All of the analyses in the evaluation were found to be statistically significant. The qualitative interviews supported this with teachers and students reporting an improvement in relationships.

The evaluation identified some problems with the implementation and sustainability of the approach due to a lack of training, insufficient school resources, and staff reluctance to adopt the approach (Hallam, 2009; Lendrum, Humphrey & Wigelsworth, 2013). The evaluation concluded that, despite the challenges, the program showed some positive outcome such as increased awareness of difficult emotions. The authors suggested that where the program was fully implemented then the program was more likely to promote whole-school engagement and increased communication about behaviour, attitudes, and choices.

Stearns (2016) suggests that for social-emotional learning programs to be successful in school communities, they need to adapt to the complexity of human nature and emotional experiences. Without a flexible approach, the programs can ignore complex and sometimes intangible issues. Stearns (2016) recommends that to understand these complexities, future research should look towards qualitative methodologies to gain a deeper understanding of students' and teachers' lived experiences.

School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS)

In contrast to social-emotional learning, SWPBS aim to manage students' behaviour with the focus on the teachers' skills rather than the students' skills (Osher et al., 2010). SWPBS aims to establish a common purpose and approach to managing behaviour. SWPBS are a framework to provide a systematic range of strategies that promote academic skills and healthy behaviour outcomes while preventing problem behaviours (Osher et al., 2010; Horner, Sugai, & Anderson, 2010). Schools using this technique establish clear expectations around behaviour which are taught, modelled, and reinforced by staff. Similar to social-emotional learning programs the approach seeks to prevent problem behaviour and promote prosocial competencies. The emphasis is on positive intervention as opposed to punitive discipline (Osher et al., 2010; Horner et al., 2010).

The World Health Organization suggests that a healthy school is one that strives to foster health and learning for the whole school community, including teachers, students, and their families (WHO, 2017). These schools support skill development in a safe environment through the use of policy and practice. The use of an integrated approach can lead to improvements in wellbeing, mental health, and a sense of belonging or connectedness to the school community (Cefani & Cavioni, 2014; Durlak et al., 2011; Greenberg, 2010). SWPBS programs are an integrated proactive method for dealing with student behaviour, with the content of the program providing consistent and positive reinforcement of appropriate prosocial behaviours (Fallon, O'Keeffe, & Sugai, 2012).

SWPBS entails a set of integrated intervention practices aimed at establishing a healthy social culture and providing individual support to increase academic and social success for students (Horner et al., 2010). An intervention is defined as a "program, service, policy or product that is intended to ultimately influence or change people's social,

environmental, and organizational conditions as well as their choices, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors” (Bowen et al., 2009, p. 452).

An SWPBS program consists of a three-tiered whole-school prevention that is similar to the concepts used in the restorative practices approach. These include all students receiving basic preventive support and intense support that is individualised for the particular needs of a student. Primary (school-wide and universal), secondary (targeted and selective), and tertiary (individual and indicated) systems of support are used to enhance positive behaviour and prevent misbehaviour as depicted in Figure 3.1 below.

Primary prevention supports are aimed towards all students and use proactive practices that prevent the development of problem behaviour. Primary preventions are similar to the skills taught through social-emotional learning programs and reflect the use of circle time, affective questions, and modelling of prosocial behaviour in restorative practices. Secondary prevention is aimed at a smaller number of students who have not been responsive to the primary intervention. In restorative practices, this takes the form of an informal conference or a restorative dialogue within a small group to address a particular issue. Tertiary prevention is aimed at the small number of students who are unresponsive to primary and secondary prevention and require specialised individual support. In restorative practices, this occurs when there has been a particular incident and involves a formal community conference (see Chapter 2 for details on the restorative practices approach).

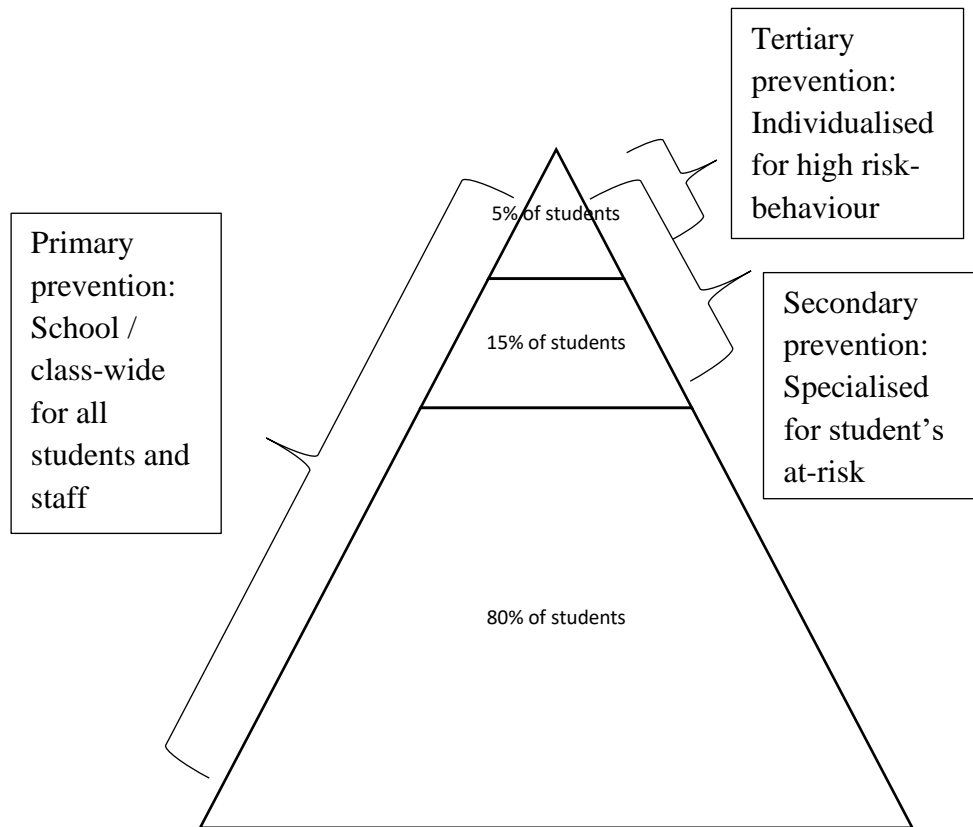


Figure 3.1. Three-tiered prevention continuum of positive behaviour support (adapted from Sugai & Horner, 2006, p. 247).

The SWPBS approach seeks to improve the school community through changes to systems (e.g. reinforcement of prosocial behaviour) and procedures (e.g. training and leadership). These changes focus on promoting positive staff behaviour that alters student behaviour (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010).

Bradshaw, Waasdorp, and Leaf (2012) conducted a randomised controlled trial of SWPBS over 4 years in 37 primary schools in the USA. The primary aim of the research was to examine the intervention effects on behavioural and academic outcomes over 5 years using a randomised control trial method. Twenty-one of the schools participated in the intervention condition and received SWPBS training. The 16 schools that formed the comparison condition (or control group) received no training. All school staff completed a series of measures at the commencement of the trial and once a year after that.

The results indicated a significant effect on pro-social behaviour with children in the intervention having higher levels of positive behaviour compared to those in the control group. The findings indicated that the effects were strongest when children were exposed to the approach at a younger age. These children having significantly increased prosocial skills compared with their older peers. The researchers suggested that, from a developmental perspective, it is possible that early exposure to SWPBS results in a greater impact of the model on younger children. They suggested that younger children are potentially “more malleable and responsive to adult expectations and positive reinforcement” (p. 1443). They were unable to draw a conclusion with regard to the impact of SWPBS when implemented in middle and high schools.

Successful implementation of SWPBS requires the school to (a) be ready for change, (b) empower the students, (c) have community input, (d) include professional learning, and (e) use data to inform practice (Savage, Lewis, & Colless, 2011). Further research is needed to explore effective implementation and sustainability of these approaches (Sugai & Horner, 2008).

Implementation and Challenges of Social-Emotional Learning and SWPBS

Implementation. Implementation has been described as an examination of “putting an innovation into use” (Rogers, 2003, p. 20) or “how well a proposed program or intervention is put into practice” (Durlak & DuPre, 2008, p. 5). The development of programs or interventions usually passes through several stages between identification of the problem within the school community and the dissemination of the chosen approach. Typically, a pilot (efficacy) study is followed by effectiveness trials (Lendrum & Humphrey, 2012).

An efficacy study typically demonstrates the internal validity of a program and evaluates whether the intervention produces the desired results; effectiveness trials are

used to test whether the intervention works in a real-world setting (Wigelsworth et al., 2016). Although the efficacy of a program may be demonstrated, the results may not replicate in a real-world setting, such as a school community that has limited financial or physical resources.

Effectiveness trials tend to be conducted in a regular school setting, using teaching staff and resources that would normally be available. This allows for the identification of factors that may affect the successful adoption of a program (Savage et al., 2011). For interventions and programs to be described as effective, the evidence base requires testing in multiple contexts. Wigelsworth et al. (2016) believe that there is little clarity regarding program evaluation in the social-emotional literature, and many programs are classified as successful or exemplary on the basis of efficacy studies alone. They conclude that, although the field has established social-emotional learning can “potentially be effective” (p. 367), there is limited understanding of how this can be maintained over time. Efficacy studies and effectiveness trials are time consuming and expensive. The lengthy duration required to implement a program may result in evaluation of the intervention or program not being viable for some school communities.

Despite an extensive meta-analysis of 89 social-emotional learning programs and SWPBS any attempt at replication of prior findings, to date, has been limited (Wigelsworth et al., 2016). Some researchers have been unable to replicate the positive results of efficacy studies following formal adoption and implementation of the approach in the school community (Stallard et al., 2014). Some of the reasons for these discrepancies may be due to a lack of efficacy testing over multiple contexts, using staff and resources ordinarily available rather than optimal conditions, and not examining effectiveness over several stages from initial development to broader implementation.

The failure to replicate the outcomes of efficacy studies in real-world settings can be attributed to a number of causes. A meta-analysis of universal social and emotional

learning programs conducted by Wigelsworth and colleagues (2016) found that the majority of social-emotional learning programs are in the early stages of development and evaluation with 69% of the programs being efficacy based. The aim of an efficacy study is to demonstrate internal validity, but this assumes the intervention will be implemented with 100% fidelity and this requires optimal conditions to maximise the results.

Wigelsworth et al. argued that it is possible that a program may be adjusted during implementation to support and demonstrate the desired impact.

Stallard et al. (2014) found that the impact of an intervention program can vary depending on who delivers the content. Although the use of teaching staff offers a low-cost option for schools with limited resources, the results are not as effective as when the content is delivered by experts.

A further limitation is the transferability of programs from one country to another. Wigelsworth et al. (2016) found that intervention programs developed and implemented within one country would be more effective than those developed in another country. The lack of cultural transportability of intervention programs has been attributed to a lack of infrastructure (e.g. quality supervision during implementation). Although the program may have good internal validity, it may not be able to be implemented in a different cultural context. To ensure successful program implementation, there is a need to consider school culture (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). When interventions are not aligned with the values of the school community, there is likely to be a reduction in the program's effectiveness (Kumpfer, Alvarado, Smith & Bellamy, 2002).

Durlak and DuPre (2008) posit that common factors can affect the implementation of program. The three common stages of program implementation are (a) adoption (the decision to use the intervention or program), (b) implementation (executing the intervention or program), and (c) sustainability (continuing to carry out and evaluate the

intervention over time; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Meyers, Durlak, & Wandersman, 2012; Savage et al., 2011).

Meyers et al. (2012) suggest that there is a “temporal order to the critical steps of implementation” (p. 375), and without this many programs fail to be successfully implemented. The researchers described the systems and processes that enable interventions and programs to move from the initial research phase, to efficacy testing, and to widespread implementation. The aim being to improve future implementation to ensure a best-practice approach. Figure 3.2 below depicts an adapted and integrated version of these concepts.

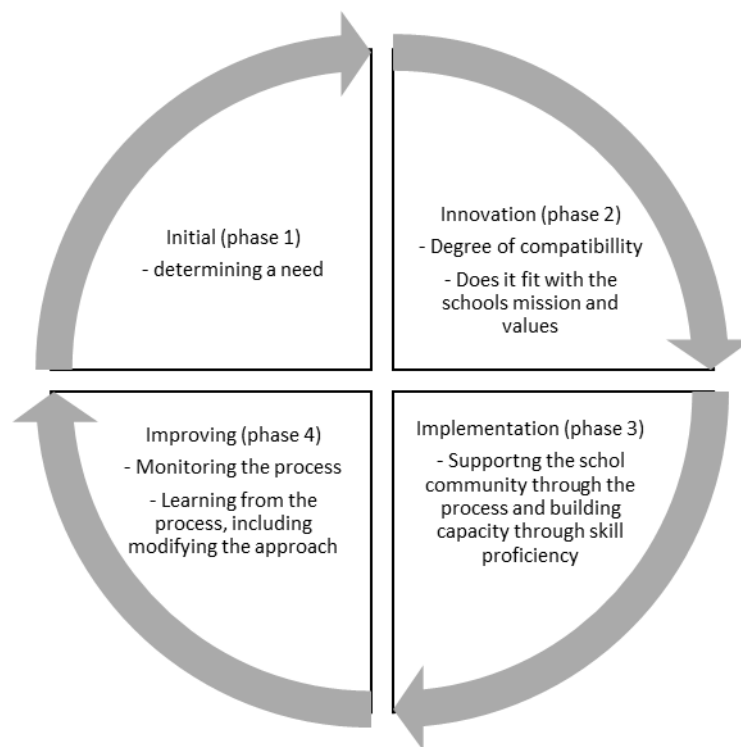


Figure 3.2. Ecological framework for understanding effective implementation (adapted from Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Meyers, Durlak & Wandersman, 2012).

Implementation can be a dynamic process and does not necessarily occur in the sequence of steps illustrated in Figure 3.2. It is possible that some of the steps are repeated if, for example, additional training is required or a step may not be required if, for example,

there is already evidence of sufficient capacity in that area. Meyers et al. (2012) suggest that the dynamic nature of their model allows for steps to be conducted simultaneously if necessary.

Challenges to successful implementation. It is important to identify specific factors that affect implementation to promote successful adoption of programs in school communities. Although the process of SWPBS includes the application of evidence-based strategies, there are critical barriers to successful implementation. There are several reasons why positive behaviour programs are successfully implemented in one school but not another. Barriers to successful implementation can include staff turnover, lack of staff buy-in, insufficient time, lack of knowledge, and poor leadership support (Kincaid, Childs, Blasé, & Wallace, 2007).

A further barrier to successful implementation is the conflict between staff beliefs and the key principles underlying the approach, particularly when some staff members feel that the approach is too lenient. This conflict occurs when teaching staff fail to understand the environmental influences that can affect behaviour. When these types of conflicts occur, it can be difficult for the approach to have an impact on the school community (Bambara, Nonnemacher, & Kern, 2009).

Kincaid et al. (2007) suggests that barriers involving staff may not necessarily be addressed adequately or successfully by using external consultants. Instead, many issues can be better addressed through mutual team support. This highlights the importance of establishing a school culture whereby staff and students share a common understanding of the approach being introduced to ensure ideal conditions for quality implementation. The results of a qualitative study by Bambara et al. (2009) showed 84% of the participants (who were key stakeholders such as teachers) described conflicting beliefs and practices as interfering with acceptance and implementation of the SWPBS program in their school community. Working as a team was considered as a strength and an important enabler

during the implementation phase (Bambara et al., 2009; Kincaid et al., 2007). A school-wide approach is considered to provide a foundation for shared values.

Kincaid et al. (2007) suggests that when these factors are understood, the information can be used to modify training and provide support in critical areas. They recommend that further research should include regular data collection (e.g. yearly) and qualitative techniques such as observation to understand environmental contexts that may affect enabling or inhibiting factors. McIntosh et al. (2014) suggest that the implementation and sustainability of SWPBS is not captured by existing fidelity measures, however, to date there has been no measure which has been validated for this use.

Positive Psychology

More recently, the positive psychology movement has been making progress in the area of wellbeing and mental health in school communities (Cefani & Cavioni, 2014). Positive psychology is an umbrella term that unites a range of similar theories that focus on positive aspects of human life (Noble & McGrath, 2008; White & Waters, 2015). Positive psychology is the “study of conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups and institutions” (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 104). Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reich, and Linkins (2009) suggest that positive psychology in education fosters traditional academic skills along with skills for happiness and wellbeing.

Historically, psychology has focused on identifying effective approaches to addressing mental health issues or difficulties. Positive psychology is a relatively new branch of psychology that shifts the focus from trying to identify what is going wrong to understanding how to maximise mental wellbeing for a satisfactory life (Waters, 2011). Positive psychology includes programs that are aimed at improving social-emotional learning, increasing life satisfaction, promoting learning, and improving social cohesion

while a protecting against mental health issues (Kern, Waters, Adler, & White, 2015; Madden, Green, & Grant, 2011).

The focus of positive psychology is subjective wellbeing. Unlike many school-based early interventions programs that address a skills deficit, positive psychology focuses on building skills and personal strengths. However, the approach is complex and encompasses resilience, positive emotion, social connectedness, and meaning (Ciarrochi, Atkins, Hayes, Sahdra, & Parker, 2016). Where the focus of clinical psychology tends to be on mental illness and the negative aspects of human life such as lack of social support, positive psychology emphasises the positive aspects of human life such as receiving praise or a compliment (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Positive psychology focuses on the ways people feel joy and the creation of healthy families and school communities.

There has been a continued academic contribution to knowledge around how, why, and under what conditions individuals flourish and how they build positive relationships, strengths, and meaning in their lives (Noble & McGrath, 2015). Noble and McGrath (2008) suggest that positive psychology is consistent with a number of other approaches such as humanistic psychology, cognitive behaviour therapy, and the positive youth development approach. Positive psychology is not simply about a positive life but also focuses on repairing negative aspects (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Positive psychology interventions aim to cultivate positive thought, positive feeling, and behaviour.

Positive psychology in education. The emergence of positive psychology and the subsequent interest in education has largely been attributed to Martin Seligman (Cefani & Cavioni, 2014; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). In their seminal work, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) describe the need for an evidence-based health and wellbeing program that “help individuals and communities, not just to endure and survive, but also to flourish” (p. 13).

Seligman et al. (2009) conducted the first empirical study of a positive psychology program for adolescents which involved a randomised controlled trial of 347, Year 9 students. Students were randomly assigned into a positive psychology stream or a non-intervention (non-positive psychology stream). The aim of the intervention was to help students identify their characteristic strengths (such as kindness or wisdom) and increase their use of those strengths in day-to-day life. The intervention also aimed to promote resilience, positive emotions, and a sense of purpose in the students' lives. The intervention group completed several classroom activities to promote these skills which consisted of 20-25, 80-minute sessions over the year. An example of one of the exercises is shown in Figure 3.3.

Students, teachers, and parents completed standard questionnaires before the program, after the program, and two years post follow-up. The evaluation showed that the program increased students' enjoyment and engagement with school over the 2-year period. In addition, improved social skills such as empathy and cooperation were reported by teachers' and the students' mothers. However, the evaluation of the positive psychology program did not show any improvement in student reports of depression or anxiety. Seligman et al. (2009) suggested that more robust effects may be obtained through a more intensive intervention or by combining interventions to address youth mental health issues.

Three Good Things. We instruct the students to write down three good things that happened each day for a week. The three things students list can be relatively small in importance (“I answered a really hard question right in Language Arts today”) or relatively large in importance (“The guy I’ve liked for months, asked me out!!!”). Next to each positive event listed, they write a reflection on one of the following questions: “Why did this good thing happen? What does this mean to you? How can you increase the likelihood of having more of this good thing in the future?”

(Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 301)

Figure 3.3. Sample positive psychology exercise.

Conceptual frameworks. Advocates of positive psychology argue that wellbeing is equally as important as academic learning. Research suggests that school-based positive psychology approaches are associated with improved student wellbeing, relationships, and academic performance (Waters, 2011). As such, there is a need to teach students skills that enhance positive emotions and promote wellbeing (Waters, 2011). This can be achieved using frameworks that target aspects of the curriculum, pastoral care, and the broader teaching and learning environment so that the whole school community benefits from the opportunity to thrive.

In 2011, Seligman proposed a broad conceptual framework called PERMA. Seligman’s (2011) framework comprises five factors that are key components of positive psychology interventions: (a) positive emotion (feelings of happiness and joy), (b) engagement (being connected to activities and engagement with life), (c) relationships (social integration and being supported by others), (d) meaning (a belief one’s life is valuable), and (e) accomplishment (progress towards goals and a sense of achievement). Seligman suggested that PERMA could be used as a framework in the school environment for guiding assessment of interventions, but this use has not been reported in the academic literature to date.

An alternative framework known as PROSPER was proposed by Noble and McGrath (2015) to promote a positive school culture. The PROSPER framework has many similarities to Seligman's (2011) PERMA model but includes two additional components: strength and resilience. PROSPER consists of the following elements: (a) optimism or positivity, (b) positive engagement or relationships, (c) competence or outcomes, (d) strengths, (e) meaning or purpose, (f) engagement, and (g) resilience.

Noble and McGrath (2015) sought feedback on the usefulness of the PROSPER framework from 14 researchers and academics at the Institute of Positive Psychology and Education at the Australian Catholic University. They found that respondents agreed on the key elements and believed that a common language would be helpful to school communities. In addition, the use of simplified terminology was able to assist staff to reflect on their practice. Noble and McGrath (2015) defined PROSPER in the context of positive psychology as "the integration of the core principles of positive psychology with the evidence-informed structures, practices and programs that enhance both wellbeing and academic achievement. The aim of positive education is to enable all members of a school community to succeed and prosper" (p. 4).

The PROSPER conceptual framework has the potential to be a useful tool in helping schools to strengthen and enhance their practice, but formal implementation and evaluation of the proposed framework has not yet been reported.

Positive psychology programs. Frameworks such as PROSPER offer a broad organising structure behind the principles of positive psychology (Noble & McGrath, 2015). Alongside these frameworks are programs and curriculums that support and focus on direct teaching strategies. One such program is Bounce Back, a program that incorporates the PROSPER framework. The Bounce Back curriculum was developed as a whole-school primary and middle school wellbeing program. The aim of Bounce Back is to promote positive school culture and provide a curriculum for teachers. In Australia, a

small qualitative evaluation of the program was conducted with 10 schools that were long-term users of Bounce Back. The authors found that the respondents identified some key attributes to sustained success of the approach such as school leaders who prioritised the approach, the approach being used at a whole school level, communicating the program to parents, and linking the program to other school initiatives (Noble & McGrath, in press). A more comprehensive evaluation of Bounce Back in Australia has not, to date, been reported. However, there have been two overseas evaluation which may interest the reader and can be found at

http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/docs/Perth_&_Kinross_Council_bounce_back_Report.pdf or <https://childhoodresilience.org/bounce-back-evaluation-in-schools/>.

Another positive psychology program named Bite-Back was developed by the Black Dog Institute to improve wellbeing and happiness in young Australians. The primary objective was to encourage young people to reach their full potential. The program consists of a range of online activities that young people complete in a classroom environment. The activities include gratitude entries or journals, mindfulness, and personal stories.

Similar to the findings of Seligman et al. (2009), the Bite Back program did not lead to any significant improvements in mental health outcomes compared with the control group. This result may have been due to primarily the participants not being free to choose the activity they participated in and may have felt coerced into engaging with program which may have negated any beneficial effects. The research highlights that the method of program delivery may be equally important as the content of the program. This has important implications for any program being introduced into school communities – students need to be engaged with the process and need a level of involvement to ensure success of the program (Burckhardt, Manicavasagar, Batterham, Miller, Talbot, & Lum, 2015).

Over time, evidence of the effectiveness for positive psychology approaches has built. Promoting positive strengths in students can increase resilience, motivation, positive behaviour, and a more positive attitude towards teachers (Madden et al., 2011; Seligman et al., 2009). A 2-year longitudinal repeated measures design evaluation conducted by Shoshani and Steinmetz (2014) aimed to explore if positive psychology school-based interventions enhanced mental health in staff and students. They found positive psychology improves conflict resolution, increases the use of a common language or terminology, and establishes meaningful conversations, including an increase in empathy and cooperation. The authors conclude that the study offers further support that positive psychology interventions can improve the mental health of young people and their well-being.

Positive psychology has subsequently grown to include developments in other areas such as optimism, forgiveness, happiness, hope, and emotional intelligence (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Wood & Tarrier, 2010; Ciarrochi et al., 2016). Some schools and educational institutes have adopted positive psychology approaches such as writing gratitude journals, mindfulness (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010), and counting your blessings (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). A meta-analysis of 39 positive psychology interventions by Bolier and Colleagues (2013) indicated that many of these practices show some effectiveness in reducing mental health issues such as depression. This has important implications for mental health promotion and public health because these practices can offer accessible and non-stigmatising approaches (Bolier et al., 2013).

Issue and Challenges for Positive Psychology

There has been some criticism of positive psychology that has arisen from the “assumption that if there is a positive psychology, then the rest of psychology must be negative” (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 107). The success of psychology, which has focused on negative events, means that until recently, there has been a lack of progress in establishing

evidence for the effectiveness on the positive aspects of human life (Gable & Haidt, 2005). Other criticisms have suggested that positive psychology is coercive, promotes avoidance, and is maladaptive due to the pursuit of a positive internal state that can result in unrealistic beliefs in what constitutes happiness (Ciarrochi et al., 2016). This criticism is, in part, due to the reliance on promoting change rather than context as influencing behaviour and behaviour change. Agreement on defining the key components and concepts of positive psychology is another main challenge (Alex-Linley, Joseph, Harrington, & Wood, 2006). Despite these criticisms, the majority of academic scholars in this field consider positive psychology as neutral, focusing on neither wellbeing nor distress (Gable & Haidt, 2005).

To date, one of the main issues and challenges of positive psychology is a lack of empirical research and limited applications of positive psychology frameworks and interventions in the educational setting (Noble & McGrath, 2015). Waters (2011) reviewed 12 positive psychology interventions and found that many of the programs were in pilot stage and further evaluation was needed to ascertain the long-term sustainability of the programs and whether they can be adapted to other student groups. A systematic review of over 1,300 peer-reviewed positive psychology papers published between 1999 and 2013 found growing evidence of the effectiveness of positive psychology (Donaldson, Dollwet, & Rao, 2015). Over 750 of these papers used empirical data to test hypotheses and explore research questions. However, only 21% of the empirical studies were intervention studies (Donaldson, Dollwet, & Rao, 2015).

Further challenges identified relate to a lack of successful implementation and application of the approach in school communities. When school staff are expected to implement an increasing number of new initiatives and interventions it can result in overload, cynicisms, and a lack of sustainability over time (Lendrum & Humphrey, 2012). White (2016, p. 4) attributes the lack of successful application to eight obstacles:

1. financial (e.g. the view that it is expensive to train staff),

2. it's a marginal topic (e.g. wellbeing is a distraction from the academic curriculum),
3. either/or thinking (e.g. policy suggests it's either wellbeing or another topic),
4. maverick providers (e.g. questionable training practices),
5. scientism (e.g. empiricism is seen as the way forward and overlooks the reasons why wellbeing should be incorporated into the education curriculum),
6. there is no central governance (e.g. wellbeing is not the core-business),
7. the silver bullet (e.g. it can be seen to fix all the challenges in education), and
8. socio-economic status and culture (e.g. it is an excuse to not expect improvement or change in education).

White (2016) argues that these pragmatic hurdles need to be overcome if positive psychology is to gain traction with government policy.

Content versus contextual. Until recently, positive psychology has focused on the individual flourishing, which suggests that there is an over-reliance on feelings of happiness. However, feelings of happiness and wellbeing are a subjective experience that can be difficult to prove or disprove. Positive psychology is now recognising that there is a need to explore the situational or contextual influences that can influence wellbeing (Biswas-Diener, Linley, Govindji, & Woolston, 2011)

McNulty and Fincham (2012) argue that wellbeing is not determined solely by a person's psychological characteristics but is "an interplay between those characteristics and qualities of people's social environment" (p. 3). In other words, given the right skills, strength, and social context, all people have the potential to thrive (Ciarrochi et al., 2016).

Galinha and Pais-Ribeiro (2011) suggest that there are three approaches to examining wellbeing. A bottom-up approach emphasises contextual factors (e.g. life events), a top-down approach emphasises intrapersonal factors (e.g. cognitive factors), and

an integrative approach emphasises the dynamic contribution of both contextual and intrapersonal factors. Galinha and Pais-Ribeiro (2011) administered seven measures to 303 participants over a 2-month interval to explore the contribution of intrapersonal and contextual factors on wellbeing. They found that there is a temporal variation in wellbeing at the individual level and that contextual factors can predict current wellbeing whereas interpersonal traits predict medium to long-term wellbeing. They concluded that the best model to explain wellbeing was the integrative model which acknowledges the multiple factors which contribute to wellbeing.

Positive psychology has been criticised for failing to acknowledge context and as a result being considered as coercive. Coercive in this context is defined as “to compel by force, intimidation, or authority” “for example, a child might be singled out for disruptive behaviour in class during an exercise that identifies character strengths” (Ciarrochi et al., 2016, p. 3). When context is overlooked there is a tendency to ignore the factors which may contribute to the child’s behaviour. If the child had been subjected to verbal abuse by a parent any thoughts may co-occur with these memories. Therefore, Ciarrochi and colleagues (2016) consider that when considering the child’s context, the exercise may be coercive, e.g. forced upon the child and not in their best interest. Ciarrochi et al. (2016) suggest that these criticisms can be overcome through further understanding of positive psychology. The authors suggest that positive psychology needs to be understood as comprising two parts: content and context.

Content-focused positive interventions (which are referred to by Galinha and Pais-Ribeiro [2011] as interpersonal traits) are defined as altering the content of how people think. The aim is to reinforce the notion that a certain way of thinking is good. Content-focused positive psychology refers to personal and private experiences such as thoughts and feelings. This approach focuses on interventions that increase positive mental content and decrease negative thought.

In contrast, context-focused positive psychology considers the situation and historical events that can influence a person's behaviour. Behaviour is considered to be determined not only by a person's psychological characteristics but also by "an interplay of those characteristics and the qualities of a person's social environment" (McNulty & Fincham, 2012, p. 3). One of the criticisms of positive psychology has been that it promotes a focus on the individual being solely responsible for their own wellbeing (content) without accounting for their individual circumstances (context). Many positive psychology interventions emphasise the individual's characteristic strengths and feelings with an assumption that wellbeing is due to the individual and not due to external causes. McNulty and Fincham (2012) argue that "psychological traits and process are not inherently positive or negative; rather, their implications for wellbeing depend on the circumstances in which they operate" (p. 9). When the focus is on the individual and overlooks other circumstances, it is known as a fundamental attribution error. A fundamental attribution error occurs when a social judgement about a person is based on their personality rather than the situation, circumstance or context (Walker, Smith & Vul, 2015). Attribution theory and fundamental attribution error is discussed further in Chapter 4.

Comparing and Contrasting Approaches

Where social-emotional learning is aimed at fostering students' capacity to know themselves and be socially responsible within their community, the restorative practices approach engages students to think of others and tackle issues within their school community to create equity (Hamedani & Darling-Hammond, 2015). Restorative practices aim to preserve relationships and foster responsibility. School communities that adopt social-emotional learning alongside restorative practices offer students the opportunity to

practice social-emotional skills and remain a part of the school community after a misbehaviour incident.

Restorative practices have traditionally focused on the cause of misbehaviour and the process of reacting to that misbehaviour. In recent decades, restorative practices, as a whole-school approach, have integrated positive social elements, such as empathy towards others, into the traditional approach that reacted to misbehaviour as it occurred. As a result of these changes, restorative practices could be considered as reflecting key aspects of social-emotional learning. A further aim of restorative practices is to use the approach at a whole-school level, which is similar to the aim of SWPBS. The key elements of restorative practices could easily be incorporated into the three-tiered SWPBS prevention continuum depicted in Figure 3.1. This is in contrast to social-emotional learning and positive psychology approaches that focus on teaching skills as a preventive measure.

A common misconception of positive psychology is that those who study the approach are naïve and ignore the problems in life due to focusing on positive states and experiences (Magyar-Moe, Owens, & Conoley, 2015). In more recent years, appraisals and evaluations of positive psychology have resulted in a more balanced approach that emulates the restorative practices approach, where individuals are seen as having both strengths and weaknesses. Many of the core aspects of positive psychology and social-emotional learning and restorative practices intuitively enmesh well into the education system (Sheedy, 2013). However, many school communities tend to adopt the approaches in isolation, favouring the adoption of one approach. In some schools, restorative practices have been adopted as a whole-school approach, whereas other schools tend to partially implement restorative practices to manage misbehaviour as it occurs (Gregory et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2011).

Positive psychology principles emulate many of the key aspects of restorative practices such as a focus on relationships. These aspects are shown in table 3.1. Restorative

practices are based on a continuum of practices (see Figure 2.2) that emphasise the development of social-emotional skills to prevent misbehaviour. In contrast, positive psychology focuses primarily on preventive skills. Blood (2005) suggested that developing social-emotional skills (including encouraging accountability of one's actions and working together) develops personal confidence and a sense of community. An increase in social-emotional learning requires a long-term stable and consistent use of an approach to achieve and sustain skills as different cohort of students move through the school community (Greenberg et al., 2003). Table 3.1 below compares the key aspects of restorative practices and positive psychology.

Table 3.1

Key Dimensions of Restorative Practices and Positive Psychology

Restorative practices	Positive psychology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building relationships • Accountability • Reflective thinking • Empathy • Prosocial skills such as listening to others • Forgiveness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful relationships • Promotes choice • Personal strength in self and others • Personal growth • Building awareness • Building social capacity

Note. Adapted from Sheedy (2013).

Positive psychology in educational settings encourages confidence in knowing personal strengths, whereas restorative practices encourages citizenship and teamwork to resolve issues. The formality of restorative practices can be challenging for the young person or student involved in the process because it requires reflection about one's own behaviour, which if mismanaged, can lead to feelings of shame (see Chapter 2 for a review). A supportive positive psychology approach enables the young person to reduce any feelings of shame by allowing them to question their own behaviour and its

incongruence with their personal values. The formal restorative process uses standardised affective questions to promote self-reflection (e.g. what were you thinking at the time? see Chapter 2 for further details on restorative affective questioning). Similarly, the restorative question “what do you need to do to make things better” offers students an opportunity to draw on personal values which are promoted through positive psychology principles such as kindness or forgiveness to address the issues. To date, research has not described the possibility of merging positive psychology principles within the restorative practices framework.

Regardless of the intervention implemented, a whole-school approach has the greatest impact in creating effective change (Campbell et al., 2013; Gregory et al., 2016). A whole-school approach involves all of those within the school community including students, teacher, school leadership, administrators, parents, and the broader school community (Sheedy, 2013). A summary of the benefits of restorative practices and Positive Psychology are shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2
Summary of Benefits of Restorative Practices and Positive Psychology

Restorative practices	Positive psychology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict / resolution skills • Empathy and understanding of others • Taking responsibility for one’s own actions • Decrease in misbehaviour • More engaging relationships • Greater respect for others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flourishing communities which are more successful • Increase in personal self-worth and confident • More tolerance and acceptance of others • Reduced conflict • Resilience

Restorative practices and positive psychology share several similarities such as a focus on reducing conflict, building an awareness of others’ feelings (empathy), and

developing respectful and meaningful relationships (Gavrielides & Worth, 2013). These similarities indicate a compatibility between the two approaches which may not only strengthen both approaches but offers a further understanding on the underlying benefits of restorative practices.

Summary

This chapter discussed social-emotional learning and the benefits of this approach on student behaviour. It also discussed the use of SWPBS and the impact that involvement of the whole school community can have on student behaviour. The differences between the two approaches were discussed along with the limitations and challenges.

The chapter discussed positive psychology, which relatively new in the field of psychology. As such, research into positive psychology is limited, with further evaluation being needed to form an evidence-based practice. The findings of many positive psychology studies have not been replicated and there are limited reports of effective empirical interventions. Despite the limited findings, valuable and interesting results have been reported. Contextual positive psychology was discussed to illustrate how some of the criticisms of positive psychology can be overcome. Finally, this chapter compared restorative practices, positive psychology, social-emotional learning, and SWPBS. The comparison showed that the approaches are complementary.

The following chapter will discuss the theory of restorative practices focusing on current research findings. In particular, the following chapter will explore theories that offer an explanation of behaviour, motivation, and attitudes and how these can be changed. In addition, theories that explain teachers' attitudes and motivations towards change when adopting new approaches will be highlighted.

Chapter 4: Theoretical Underpinning of the Present Study

Be the change that you wish to see in the world. (Mahatma Gandhi, political leader, 1869–1948)

Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical foundations of the current study. It is divided into two sections. The first section discusses behaviour and what is considered deviant or acceptable behaviour. It introduces theories that, to date, have provided a rationale for the effectiveness of restorative practices such as reintegrative shame and the social discipline window in changing behaviour. The limitations of these theories are discussed, and a short summary on the use of restorative practices in school communities is included.

The second section discusses frameworks and alternative theories as a rationale to explain how restorative practices can change behaviour. The theories chosen are consistent with the main aims of restorative practices. Many of the chosen theories informed development of the interview questions and focus group guides. The section is divided into three parts.

The first part of the section explores other relevant theoretical frameworks and perspectives to understand the influence of context, community, family, and peers on behaviour development. Contextual aspects are discussed using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The second part of the section discusses social emotions and learning social skills including theories such as social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). These are discussed to explore alternative explanations and theories, to those previously proposed, to explain the effectiveness of restorative practices and demonstrate how restorative practices may change student behaviour. The third part of the section discusses motivational theories. Motivational theories such as attribution theory

have been included to provide an understanding of why people make the choices they do and how this can affect behaviour and behaviour change.

Understanding Behaviour

To understand behaviour, it is important to understand what is considered deviant (that which is unacceptable to the school community) and what is considered socially acceptable. Deviant behaviour is defined as a behaviour or action that violates social norms (Clinard & Meier, 2008). Many definitions of deviant behaviour have been proposed (Downes, Rock, & McLaughlin, 2016), but agreement on a definition can be challenging because a particular behaviour can be acceptable in some situations but condemned in a different situation. For example, laughing out loud is socially acceptable at a comedy show but is not socially acceptable during a funeral procession (Clinard & Meier, 2008). In the case of school students, their behaviour needs to follow the rules established by the school's leadership team and the broader community, with students brought to account if those rules are not followed.

Because behaviour is not necessarily abnormal or deviant in every situation, there can be issues with definitions, and individual perceptions of what constitutes misbehaviour can also be problematic (Connor, 2012). For example, Tremblay (2000) asserts that the Child Behaviour Checklist is one of the most "aggressive rating scales" (p. 130). The scale is administered to parents and teachers and use terms such as *argues*, *demand attention*, *stubborn*, *sulks*, *lies*, *loud* and *moody*. These terms suggest that perceptions of behaviour are largely subjective. Behaviour considered annoying by one person could be seen as a clear breach of school rules to another. For example, the extent to which a student may irritate a teacher could be seen by some as aggressive but by other teachers as inquisitive (Tremblay, 2000). These perceptions call to mind several questions:

- Can these behaviours be classified in the same category as a physical attack on another?
- Is aggressive behaviour always antisocial?
- If a school student is an aggressive football player, is this socially acceptable given the context, or is it antisocial?

In contemporary society, the period of life between childhood and adulthood is often considered a stage during which misbehaviour is likely to occur. Misbehaviour such as a temper tantrum is often considered an acceptable, and sometimes even expected, part of normal child development (Hong, Tillman, & Luby, 2015). However, if a similar behaviour manifest in adult populations it would be considered deviant behaviour by society (Brown, 2005). This explains why behaviours such as sulking and moodiness are not particularly deviant but can be considered as disruptive and unacceptable in the social context (Connor, 2012; Tremblay, 2000). Understanding what motivates behaviour and behaviour change is a key aspect of this thesis, the following section discusses how current theorists have sought to explain how restorative practices approaches can challenge and change behaviour.

Restorative Practices View of Behaviour

To date, restorative practice practitioners and advocates have focused on two main theoretical approaches to explain how the practice can change an individual's behaviour: *reintegrative shame theory* explains shame in the context of deviant or criminal behaviour while the *social discipline window* focuses on varying degrees of support and control of the individuals' behaviour.

Reintegrative shame. Australian criminologist John Braithwaite proposed the reintegrative shaming theory to explain crime and deviant behaviour in his seminal work

Crime, Shame and Reintegration (Braithwaite, 1989; 2016). Reintegrative shame theory was first applied to the context of crime and young people. The theory proposes that citizenship, feeling part of a community and a sense of belonging can act as protective factors against problematic behaviour such as bullying. A protective factor refers to anything that prevents or reduces vulnerability towards the development of a risky behaviour or poor outcomes, such as family, a supportive school community, and the individual's personality (Braithwaite, 1989; 2016).

Braithwaite (1989; 2016) believes that strong communities raise children to know and follow community norms and consider the community to be a protective factor in the prevention of potential future criminal behaviours and deviant subculture. When problematic behaviour occurs, it is followed by a process which involves people who have been affected by the individual as well as those who respect and care for the person who has committed the wrongdoing. When the wrongdoer acknowledges and takes responsibility for their actions, Braithwaite proposes that social bonds strengthen and the individual is more likely to act in the interests of the community in the future (Morrison, 2006). Reintegrative shame builds a sense of trust and respect and plays a role in repairing social bonds (Morrison, 2006). Braithwaite (1989) suggests that the underlying success of restorative practices can be explained by his theory.

Reintegrative shame has since been adopted as one of the primary theoretical approaches to explain restorative practices and is widely cited in the restorative practices literature. There are two components to this theory; first, the reintegration process needs to occur in a supportive environment within the community for both the victim and the wrongdoer, and second, the process of shaming involves a confrontation between the two parties. The purpose is to make it clear to the wrongdoer that their behaviour is not condoned within their community while offering both parties support to allow them to reintegrate into their community.

Shame is considered a predictor of harmful behaviour because it indicates a breakdown in relationships. A typical response to a wrongdoing is often expressed as “shame on you” (Morrison, 2005, p. 101). Shame can elicit responses (such as hostility and a tendency to blame others) in the perpetrator or can motivate the perpetrator into withdrawal, resulting in them feeling a sense of helplessness and depression (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2011; De Hooge, Zeelenberg, & Breugelmans, 2011).

Reintegrative shame theory proposes when feelings of shame associated with wrongdoing are managed in socially adaptive ways, individuals are able to work through their feelings (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2011), but when shame is communicated in a stigmatising manner, it can increase the wrongdoing or misbehaviour (Braithwaite, 2000). These two approaches delivered in either a reintegrative manner (which is adaptive) or a stigmatising manner (which adds further feelings of shame on the individual) (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2011; Braithwaite, 1989, 2000).

Braithwaite (1989) offers an elaborate explanation of shaming and the need for shame to be reintegrative to separate the behaviour from the intrinsic worth of a person. Braithwaite describes shaming as “all social processes of expressing disapproval which have the intention or effect of invoking remorse in the person being shamed and/or condemnation by others who become aware of the shaming” (p. 100). Reintegration occurs when shaming of the individual is “followed by efforts to reintegrate the offender back into the community of law abiding or respectable citizens through words or gestures of forgiveness” (p. 100).

The manner in which an individual responds to shame and manages their reaction can have important implications for the success of the restorative practices approach. There are two dimensions to shame management: acknowledgement and displacement (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2011). For reintegrative shame to be effective the individual needs to acknowledge their emotion and wrongdoing, which can increase empathy for the victim

and reduce externalising behaviour (Murphy & Harris, 2007). However, when an individual has feelings that are displaced, this can result in blaming others or deflecting responsibility. In this situation, shame displacement can result in maladaptive behaviour such as an increase in bullying behaviour in the school environment (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2011). In contrast, successful shame acknowledgement can result in a reduction in these types of behaviours.

Ahmed and Braithwaite (2011) examined shame and management in school children. The sample consisted of 1,402 students from 32 schools from Grade 4 (age 9–10 years) through to Grade 7 (age 11–12 years) in Canberra, Australia. Students completed a series of questionnaire related to bullying, bullying behaviour, shame, perceptions of bullying culture, and personality measures. The authors found that context was more important than the individuals personality in explaining those involved in bullying. When students felt safe in their school community they were more able to acknowledge wrongdoing. Ahmed and Braithwaite (2011) concluded that the expression of shame can depend upon the individuals enduring personality characteristics and whether or not they acknowledge or displace their reaction or response.

Reintegrative shame theory suggests that those who feel a sense of connection to their community (for students this could be their school community) tend to feel greater shame if they believe their actions have harmed or affected others within that community (Braithwaite, 1989). The theory proposes that feelings of shame then result in less problem behaviours in the future (Braithwaite, 1989, 2000).

To date, many restorative practices scholars and advocates have used shame and shaming theories as a means of understanding the changes in behaviour that are achieved through restorative practices in school communities (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2011; Braithwaite, 1989). However, Braithwaite describes the process, at times, as being “cruel, even vicious” (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 101). This can be problematic if the individual feels

their wrongdoing has been exposed and disapproved of publicly. This can result in higher levels of shame and create painful emotions. Ahmed and Braithwaite (2011) contend that disapproval of wrongdoing and support for the victim can result in a greater chance of the wrongdoer feeling shame and is therefore more likely to displace that shame in a maladaptive manner (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2011).

Although Braithwaite's theory has made a valuable contribution to the literature on restorative practices, it only illustrates one side of the restorative continuum – the reactive, formal approach to managing problematic behaviour (refer to Chapter 2 for further information on the restorative practices continuum). Other researchers have described the emotion of shame as being expressed through a number of responses in addition to remorse, such as sadness, regret, humiliation, anger, and withdrawal from others (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2011; Dost & Yagmurlu, 2008; Morrison, 2006).

Similar to Ahmed and Braithwaite (2011), the potentially harmful effects of shame and the shaming experience in the school community were reported in a Swedish study by Aslund, Starrin, Leppert, and Nilsson (2009). The researchers defined shame as “ranging from social discomfort and embarrassment” to feeling of strong “humiliation” (p. 1). They found that students who reported a shaming experience were more likely to display aggressive behaviour at school. In addition, Aslund et al. (2009) found that the social status of students was a predictor of aggressive behaviour. Those with either a high or low social status who were subjected to shaming experiences were at a higher risk of aggressive behaviour. Social status was defined as being both the student's family's socio-economic status and the student's peer-group status within the school. Aslund et al. (2009) concluded that shaming may be a social threat that results in aggressive behaviour.

Further evidence of the link between shame and anger was found by Thomaes, Stegge, Olthof, Bushman, and Nezlek (2011) in a study of 383 school students aged 10 to 13 years. They found a significant positive correlation between shame and anger and

concluded that when people feel shame it gives rise to anger and hostility. However, the authors also found that an individual's personality and gender can also influence expressions of anger. For many individuals, shame is a painful emotion that can result in these emotions being displaced through denigration or the blaming of others as a means of escaping negative feelings (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2011). This can lead to an increased risk of further antisocial behaviour, such as bullying, and an escalation in the original conflict.

Despite a lack of consensus regarding the impact of the shame experience for individuals, there is general agreement in the literature that shame forms part of an individual's moral emotions and moral conscience, both of which are important for developing prosocial behaviours (Rosemary, Arbeau, Lall, & De Jaeger, 2010; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992). The development of prosocial behaviours in students is vital to improve and strengthen relationships. Developing healthy relationships is a key aspect of the restorative practices approach (see Chapter 2 for a description of restorative practices approaches), so promoting the use of shame as a means of controlling behaviour appears to be in direct conflict with the restorative practices approach.

Social discipline window. The social discipline window is another framework that has been developed to explain how restorative practices can affect behaviour (Wachtel, 2012). The framework is illustrated in Figure 4.1, which depicts a matrix of the differing degrees of control and support of behaviour. Wachtel (2012) defines control of behaviour as discipline or limit-setting and defines support of behaviour as encouragement or nurturing. The two variables are combined as either high or low control with high or low support to identify the four approaches within the social discipline.

Wachtel (2012) sought to integrate the theories proposed by Baumrind's parenting styles and Braithwaite's reintegrative shaming theory to illustrate the uses of discipline in the restorative practices approach (Braithwaite, 1989; Baumrind, 1991). Baumrind

proposes that a child's emotional style is closely linked to their parent's discipline style. Parents who use an authoritative style were more effective parents because they set clear standards for their children's behaviour to encourage social responsibility, self-regulation, and cooperation (Baumrind's concepts are described in part 2 of this chapter; Baumrind, 1991).

In the social discipline window, punitive approaches (those high in setting limits for but low in support) reflect Baumrind's authoritarian parenting approach and Braithwaite considers this to be a stigmatising approach to behaviour management. Neglectful approaches are ineffective because there is a failure to respond to behaviour by offering neither support nor structure, and is characterised by indifference and passiveness from parents or caregivers. Wachel (2012) describes this aspect of the social discipline window as being low in both limit-setting and support.

The permissive approaches identified by Baumrind and the social discipline window (high in support but low in limit-setting) are considered by Braithwaite (1989) as reintegration without any disapproval of wrongdoing. Permissive approaches reflect a high level of responsiveness or tendency to do *for* a person but with little consequence for the behaviour. This approach tends to protect people from experiencing the outcomes of any wrongdoing (Baumrind, 1991).

Braithwaite (1989) suggests that, although a perpetrator or wrongdoer can experience disapproval of their misbehaviour when they are within a supportive community, they can move from an egocentric focus to one that reflects empathy for their victim (George, 2011). In the social discipline window, the term *restorative* is used in place of Braithwaite's term *reintegrative* and Baumrind's term *authoritative*. The primary purpose of the restorative approach, which emphasises people and relationships, is to explain how stronger relationships results in more positive behaviours (Vaandering, 2013).

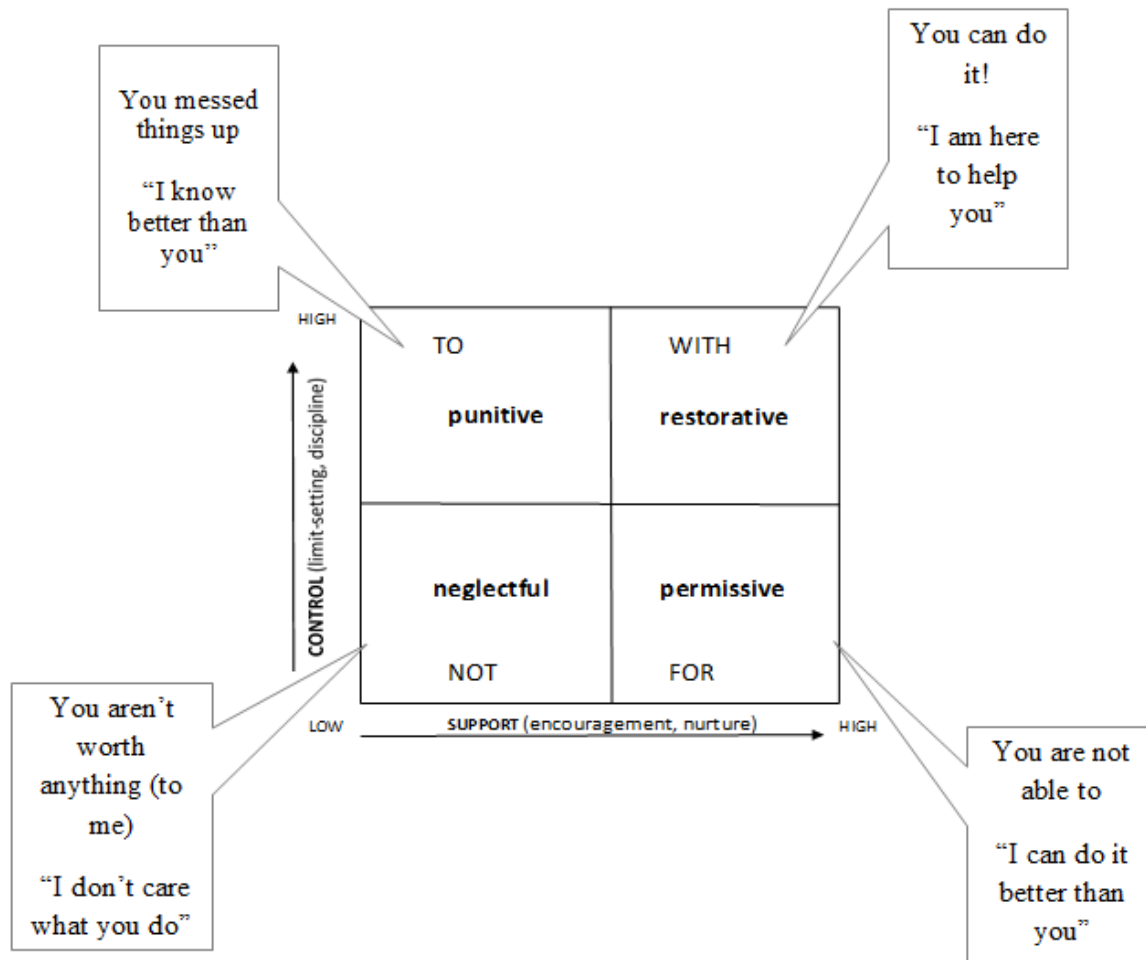


Figure 4.1. Social discipline window (adapted from Vaandering, 2010, 2013; Wachtel, 2003, 2012).

Wachtel proposes that the fundamental unifying hypothesis of restorative practices reflects the quadrants of the social discipline window such that “human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive and more likely to make positive change in their behaviour when those in position of authority do things with them rather than to them” (Wachtel, 2012. p. 2). Traditional discipline methods in school communities, according to Baumrind’s theory, reflect an authoritarian approach that is high in discipline and limit-setting but is low in nurture (Baumrind, 1991).

The main limitation of the social discipline window is that the model does not give a comprehensive account of factors, such as differing attitudes, that can influence social engagement in the education context. Vaandering (2013) argues that the social discipline

window is open to misinterpretation by teachers. She suggests that this can occur if teachers believe that the purpose of restorative practices is to manage student behaviour as a means of regulation and control rather than to improve social engagement, relationships, and mutual cooperation (which are the aims of restorative practices). However, these assertions have not been empirically tested.

The social discipline window favours a reactive restorative approach (refer to Chapter 2) that focuses on harm done and the need to repair that harm rather than a proactive approach that focuses on building prosocial skills (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). For the restorative practices approach to address this limitation, the contribution of the social discipline window should be reconsidered because it promotes a focus on behaviour rather than on relationships. Shame and the social discipline window have been the dominant concepts linked to restorative practices in the literature, but as discussed, these theories have limitations.

Reintegrative shame focuses on the shaming experience and the need to reintegrate the individual back into the community following an incident. However, shame is an emotion that can potentially have a detrimental impact on individuals, thereby perpetuating further behaviour issues. The social discipline window is a model that seeks to describe and illustrate the potential effectiveness of restorative practices when a high support and high control environment is provided, but it does not allow for the reciprocal or relational aspects that are key components of restorative practices. These limitations may be due to the theories being adapted from crime and the criminal system whereby the focus is on offenders and their victims achieving a restitution agreement through conferencing style mediation. However restorative practices in the school community seeks to build prosocial skills, communication, and socio-emotional learning as such this primary focus is only open small aspect of a restorative school.

One of the main criticisms of the restorative practices approach is concern over a lack of theory to explain how the approach works (Vaandering, 2013). To date there have been limited and sporadic attempts to link theory to the approach and has been dominated by reintegrative shame theory and the social discipline window. Before exploring alternative theories and psychological explanations of behaviour and behaviour change, the following section offers an overview of restorative practices in schools.

School Communities, Mental Health and Restorative Practices

During the past decade, there has been an increasing focus on the use of restorative practices in Australia. In part, this was due to endorsement of the National Safe Schools Framework by the ministers of education (McGrath, 2005). The purpose of this framework was to ensure “all children have a right to receive an education in a secure and happy learning environment, free from all forms of bullying, harassment, violence, abuse and neglect” (McGrath, 2005, p. 5). At the time of the endorsement of the National Safe School Framework the most commonly used approach to address such issues in schools was restorative practices. Although school staff members were mostly satisfied with this approach, they did raise concerns regarding a lack of confidence in using the approach and a perception it was time consuming compared with other measures (McGrath, 2005).

The current emphasis in Victorian schools is on prevention and early intervention to support students and promote positive relationships rather than punishment to respond to challenging behaviour (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009, 2010; Payton et al., 2000). When a student is in a supportive school community, they increase prosocial behaviours, improve academic performance, and reduce the likelihood of serious mental health issues (Durlak et al. 2011).

Corrigan (2014) posits that restorative practices can contribute towards increased resilience and can offer early intervention from potential mental health outcomes. Corrigan

believes that restorative practices places relationships at the centre of the education experience. Teaching students' better ways of interacting with others can protect both them and others from potential mental health issues due to behaviour such as bullying by creating an environment where everyone can get along and learn. However, in a school community there are also risk factors that can affect student wellbeing. Mental health risk factors can include removal of the student from the school community, inadequate behaviour management, and poor student-teacher mental health relationships.

A supportive school community is one where there are positive interactions between students and teachers; these factors reduce risk and act as a protective factor for students' health and wellbeing (Corrigan, 2014; Hendrickx, Mainhard, Boor-Klip, Cillessen, & Brekelmans, 2016). Despite the growing interest in restorative practices, there have been few empirical studies that have examined the implementation, impact, challenges, and sustainability of the approach in school communities.

Supportive school communities can increase prosocial behaviours and act as a protective factor against mental health issues. However, research (as discussed in detail in Chapter 2) highlights not only the positive aspect of restorative practices but also the challenges faced by the school community when implementing restorative practices. In particular, the research suggests that there are issues related to teacher attitudes and resistance to change when adopting the approach. Finally, the degree of training needed for teachers to adopt the restorative practices and the sustainability of the approach in the longer term is not clear. The following section explores and discusses alternative explanations and theories of behaviour, in particular behaviour in the school context.

Frameworks and Theories of Behaviour

This section has three aims: first, to explore contextual influences on the behaviour of children and young people such as community, parents, and peers; second, to discuss the

early development of social emotions and emotional learning which can influence behaviour; and third, to examine theories of motivation that provide an account of the reasons behind an individual's behaviour.

Although there are many theorists which could be considered to illustrate behaviour, this section of the chapter has drawn upon the work of several theorists including Bronfenbrenner, (1977), Bandura (1977), Heider (1958), and Festinger (1962) to discuss the psychological and social development of a child or young person, in particular, how individuals learn behaviour, what motivates that behaviour, and what can help or hinder behaviour change. Although each of the frameworks and theories introduced in this section has different aims, each can provide an alternative explanation or rationale to understand how restorative practices can change behaviour. Understanding what influences a child's behaviour provides restorative practices schools with an opportunity to teach children to make the link between their own behaviour and the consequences of that behaviour (Crick & Dodge, 1994). These theories assisted in formation of the interview guides and focus group questions.

Contextual Influences on Behaviour

As children develop they experience a greater variety of social situations, which enables them to acquire more skills such as understanding outcomes, the intentions of others, and the appropriateness of behaviour. This is more likely to lead to the construction of new social responses (Crick & Dodge, 1994). The following section discusses the impact of context and contextual influences on behaviour.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

The way in which an individual interacts with the influences (e.g. parents, peers, and the broader community) in their life can be explained by Bronfenbrenner's ecological

systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) was considered a relevant theory during the development of the interview questions and focus groups guide. In particular, the theory guided an understanding of how implementation of the approach may affect individuals, the school community, and the broader community (e.g. parents) and their interactions with each other. For example, teachers were asked what changes they and the school community required when the approach was introduced. Students were asked about their perceptions of school life and the environment, for example, what happens when your school rules are broken?

In developing the ecological system theory Bronfenbrenner (1977) focused his research on the importance of the environment to explain the growth and development of a child or young person. Bronfenbrenner suggested a system for how these influences on a young person's life are interweaved. Bronfenbrenner proposed the ecological system which is a nested system to explain how the environment influences behaviour. The focus of his model is on normal childhood or "developmental competence" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 582) rather than dysfunctional development. The nested system consists of a number of layers or circles, with each layer indicating an influence or impact on the individual and their daily life. The ecological system is depicted in Figure 4.2.

The individual is at the centre of the system and can influence the other levels of the model just as the other influences can affect the individual. The next part is the micro-system, which includes the people that the individual has daily or regular contact with (e.g. family). The individual has a bi-directional relationship with each of those in the micro-system. This exchange consists of those who have the most immediate impact on the individual and their development. For example, parents are likely to influence their child's beliefs and behaviour, but the child can also affect the beliefs and behaviour of their parents.

The meso-system refers to the network of relationships or links between the micro-systems (e.g. communication between parents and teachers). Bronfenbrenner described that, although the family is the main context for human development, there are other settings that can influence the child. The psychological development of a child in the family is also affected by environments in which children spend their time but also where their parents spend their time. Bronfenbrenner (1977) called this the exo-system. For example, children have limited access to their parents' workplaces and friends, but these may affect children as a result of the influence on the parents.

The macro-system is the individual's overarching culture. Cultural contexts can include ethnicity and the country or area the individual lives in (e.g. a third-world country or an urban area). Finally, the chrono-system is time as it relates to the individual's environment. Bronfenbrenner added the chrono-system to include a longitudinal dimension to his theory to examine the influences on personal development over time in the environment in which people live (e.g., ageing, marriage, or divorce). Bronfenbrenner suggested there are two types of transitions: normative (e.g., school entry and marriage) and non-normative (e.g., severe illness, divorce, and moving house). Each of these aspects influences the individual's development indirectly by affecting family processes.

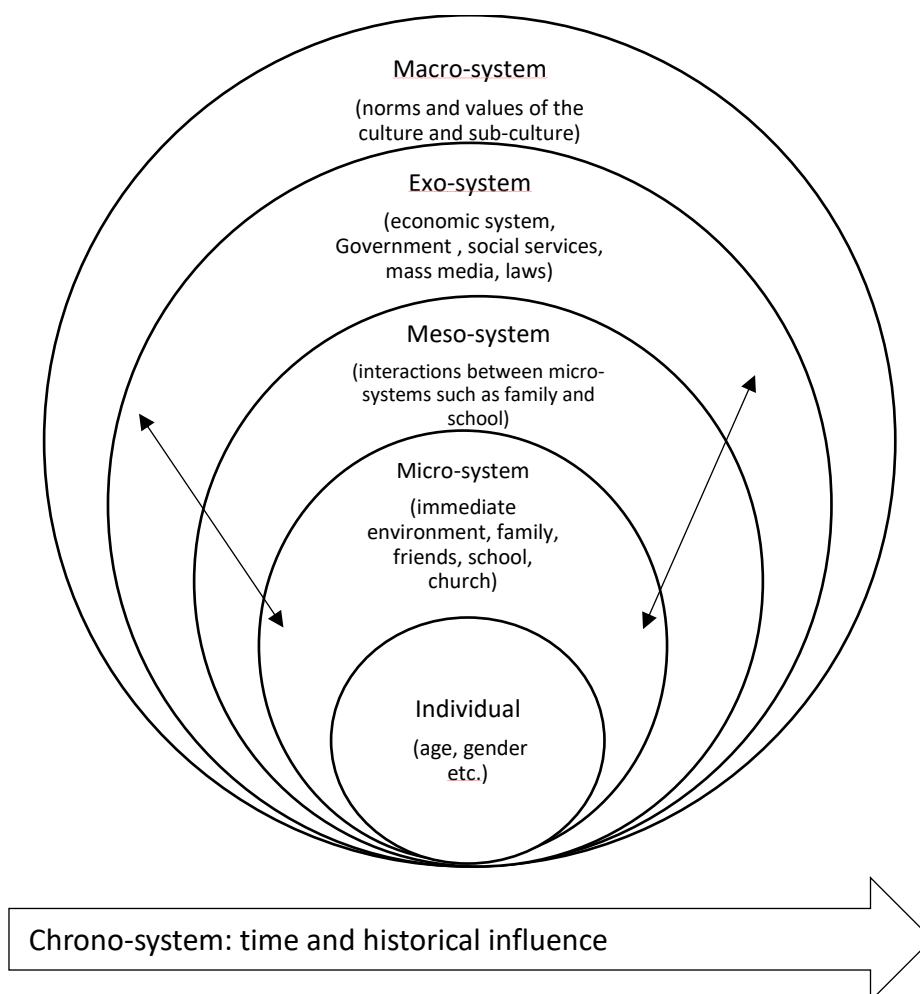


Figure 4.2. Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Despite Bronfenbrenner refining his theory over a number of years, there has been some criticism of the model. Bronfenbrenner did not consider past influences in his model; he only considered those that are currently operating or “what human-beings become tomorrow” (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000, p. 117). Although in later years Bronfenbrenner renamed his model the bioecological model, he acknowledged that it did not account for individual personality traits. Bronfenbrenner’s theory minimises the impact of other social variables, in particular those he described as the macro-system (e.g. culture and subculture). According to Bronfenbrenner’s theory, these variables can influence development through unique sets of values and norms, which are described as informal and implicit. The theory has implications for the education system because Bronfenbrenner

places the child and family as the central component of the model. But if the family is unable to provide a stable environment (e.g. because of divorce) then the question arises, can the education system adapt to compensate for any deficits the child may experience in their family?

According to Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, if the relationship within the micro-system breaks down or is ineffective, the child at the centre of the model will not have the skills to explore their environment or community. Although a school community and teachers may not be able to replace the complex interactions between a child and their primary carer, they can play a vital secondary role to the family. A restorative practices school could achieve this by supporting the parents and the child through building relationships, offering support, and providing access to an understanding community.

The Influence of Parents and Peers

Parenting. Both theory and empirical research have identified the link between parenting practices and children's wellbeing (Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007). Children learn, not only through observing their parents, but also through parental practices, behaviour, and the quality of relationships within the family (Morris et al., 2007).

According to Baumrind's (1991) seminal work on parenting, children tend to be more socially competent when they have parents who adopt an authoritative style of parenting rather than other parenting styles (e.g. authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful; Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994). Baumrind explains that authoritative parenting is the most effective approach to parenting because it increases a child's competence, achievement, and social development (Baumrind, 1991, 2013; Morris et al., 2007; Wahl & Metzner, 2011). The concept of authoritative parenting is similar in several ways to that of restorative practices.

Steinberg et al. (1994) demonstrated a positive correlation between parenting and adolescent behaviour. Adolescents raised in a household where parents adopted an authoritative approach reported higher levels of prosocial skills, improved academic competence, and reduced problem behaviour, such as school misconduct, compared with those raised in households adopting other parenting approaches. The authors reported consistency in these results over a 1-year period. The study concluded that a parenting style that incorporates a combination of responsiveness and demands carries the most benefits and the least disadvantages for adolescents. When children are more socially competent, there is a tendency towards greater academic achievement, which increases student confidence and approval of peers (Lamborn, Mounts, Steinberg, & Dornbusch, 1991).

Similarly, a study by Carlo, McGinley, Hayes, Batenhorst, & Wilkinson (2007) explored the relationship between parenting style and prosocial behaviour in adolescents. Data was collected from 233 adolescents and their parents using measures to assess parenting style and practices and prosocial tendencies. The results found a significant positive correlation between parenting practices and prosocial behaviour. In particular, the researchers found that open communication between parents and their children positively predicted prosocial behaviours, increased a child's empathy towards others, and acted as a protective factor from future risky behaviour. These qualities are the key components that restorative practices seek to promote such as taking turns in listening and speaking (Carlo et al., 2007; Cook, Buehler, & Henson, 2009).

In contrast, when a child's parents are overprotective, lack warmth, or offer low support (identified by Baumrind, 1991, as authoritarian, permissive, or neglectful) they are at risk of poor psychological outcomes such as increased levels of aggression, externalising behaviour, lower self-esteem, and an increased risk of developing depression (Steinberg et al., 1994; White & Renk, 2011). White and Renk (2011) found that parental characteristics

were highly correlated with adolescents externalising behaviour such as aggression and difficulties with self-control.

Kuppens, Laurent, Heyvaert, and Onghena (2013) conducted a meta-analysis exploring parental psychological control and aggression in young people. Inclusion criteria were (a) measures of parental psychological control in the parent – child dyad; (b) measure of relational aggression; (c) correlation coefficient between parental psychological control and relational aggression had been reported; and (d) the mean age of the sample was younger than 19 years. The search yielded 30 studies that met the criteria. The analysis found that negative parenting practices are less effective than other parental methods of controlling undesirable behaviour, particularly aggression. Negative parenting is the control of a child's behaviour by using physical or verbal threats (e.g. yelling), exploitation (e.g. love withdrawal), negative expression (e.g. shame and disappointment), or control (possessive and overprotective; Kuppens et al., 2013). However, the authors identify that aggressive behaviour in young people may be associated with the young people being unable to adequately process social information in some situations. They may attribute the intent of the behaviour as hostility and then retaliate with aggression.

Parental aggression, such as spanking a child, has strong links to child aggression. When children are exposed to aggression and violence in the home, the neural pathways in the brain, particularly those responsible for affective and cognitive development, can be affected (Perkins & Graham-Bermann, 2012). As a result, these children struggle with expressing emotion when trying to develop relationships with their peers, which can lead to peer rejection (Perkins & Graham-Bermann, 2012).

Similar to parenting, the role of the teacher in the classroom environment can help the development of prosocial behaviour through the use of authoritative styles (Allen, 2010). The use of restorative practices in school communities offers the opportunity to engage and educate parents about alternative ways of parenting that may bring out the best

in their children, especially for parents who do not use authoritative styles of parenting. School communities that adopt a whole-school approach to restorative practices believe that educating parents is essential to improving school culture and bringing about better outcomes for the students (Kane et al., 2008).

In the current study, an understanding of the parent – child relationship was addressed in the development of the student focus group questions, in particular, the influence of parents of the students' behaviour and what they learnt from their parents in regard to appropriate way of behaving.

Peers. Beyond school and parental influences, children and, in particular, adolescents are also influenced by their peers. Social interactions and peer affiliations are an important part of development for young people, enabling them to develop autonomy outside of the family (Cook et al., 2009). Over the past several decades, the influence of both peers and parents has been explored in many settings with the finding that parents exert the greatest influence over their children in deterring deviant behaviour in the long term, while the influence of peers is transitory (Biddle, Bank, & Marlin, 1980; Cook et al., 2009).

As a young person gains maturity, the influence of peers can vary (Prinstein, Brechwald, & Cohen, 2011). Prinstein et al. (2011) used an experimental approach to explore adolescent susceptibility to peer influence. Thirty-six adolescents participated in a chat room experiment where half were exposed to deviant or risky social norms by a confederate and half formed a control group. Adolescents were susceptible to changes in their attitudes towards risk, particularly those they perceived as being more popular. The authors concluded that adolescents emulate the behaviour of popular or desirable peers as a way to gain social acceptance, a practice that can lead to either deviant or prosocial behaviours (Prinstein et al., 2011). When an adolescent creates allegiances to friends or peers they can become enmeshed in these relationships despite an antisocial culture and are

more likely to engage in risky behaviour in the presence of their peers (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2011; Prinstein et al., 2011).

Peers can also act as a protective factor against antisocial behaviour, particularly when the adolescent–parent relationship entails the use of physical punishment or where there is inadequate parental supervision (Lansford, Criss, Pettit, Dodge, & Bates, 2003). When such deficits occur, the peer relationship can provide the opportunity for positive social interactions and self-disclosure (Lansford et al., 2003). Peer relationships can therefore act as a buffer for adolescents who are exposed to negative parenting because these relationships allow an opportunity for validation, support, and security. However, adolescent behaviour may become inappropriate when the peer relationships are inadequate and parental support is lacking (Lansford et al., 2003).

Although adolescent behaviour may become problematic as a result of peer influence, restorative practices can enable students to develop conflict management skills in a supportive environment. A restorative school achieves this through regular circle time to allow students the opportunity to voice their concerns in a safe environment (refer to Chapter 2). This can increase students' levels of empathy and respect for their peers' opinions (Corrigan, 2014). The current study sought to understand how students related to each other, helped each other, and how they reacted when a peer was angry or aggressive towards them in order to explore the influence of peer relationships. The use of focus groups questions was framed to explore these aspects. In addition, the use of focus groups as a methodology was also considered as being suitable to capture these peer interactions.

Developing Social Emotions and Social Skills

Antisocial and prosocial behaviours are closely associated with emotional states. Therefore, theories that account for the development of emotions in the social context are relevant to the understanding of these behaviours in young people. The most relevant

theories are theory of mind and social learning theory. These theories are reviewed next in order to explore a link between the development of social-emotional skills and restorative practices.

Theory of Mind

Theory of mind explains the development of social emotions and moral reasoning, which are reported to develop between the ages of 4 and 7 years (Lagattuta, Nucci, & Bosacki, 2010; Shakoor et al., 2012). At this stage of development, children begin to develop a capacity to attribute mental states to others and understand how these can then predict actions, intentions, emotions, and behaviours (Lagattuta et al., 2010). Empathy is related to the concept of theory of mind, whereby a person is able to recognise the feelings, emotions, and desires of another. It is often described as being able to put one's self in another's shoes (Sutton, Smith, & Swettenham, 1999). Early theorists such as Piaget and Skinner originally considered the underlying concepts of theory of mind as innate, but more recently, it has been assumed that adequate socialisation is required to optimise the acquisition of these capacities. The ability of children to understand others' motives is fundamental to their understanding of their social world (Shakoor et al., 2012; Sutton et al., 1999). The development of these skills is important for building healthy relationships with other people and ensuring behaviour can be adjusted based on social cues (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Theory of mind can offer a developmental and cognitive perspective to this study.

Within schools, the restorative practices approach enables students to develop their own theory of mind through the use of circle time. This gives students the opportunity to relate to other people's feelings, thereby helping them to develop empathy skills. The concept of theory of mind can extend beyond students. Because these skills are fostered through socialisation and experience, it is possible that some adults – teachers and parents – may never fully develop the ability to understand and predict the actions of others. In

restorative practices schools, adults who have not previously developed these skills may initially struggle to embrace the concepts and language used in the restorative practices framework but it is possible that restorative practices offer them the opportunity to learn such skills in a supportive environment (McCluskey et al., 2008).

The notion of socialising school students and developing their theory of mind to increase the ability to relate to other people and their feelings is a concept that sits neatly within the restorative practices framework. As such, school leadership and teaching staff that have not developed their theory of mind may struggle to embrace the concepts and language of the restorative practices framework.

Theory of mind is another theory that informed the development of the focus group guides for students. The aim was to develop questions that allowed students the opportunity to think from another person's perspective and if they could think of the feelings of others which is a key aspect of restorative practices. For example, if you were school principal, how would you manage behaviour? And what do you do when someone is upset or sad?

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory posits that behaviour is learned through observation and imitation and this can take place in any setting such as at home, at school or through interactions with peers (Bandura & McDonald, 1963). Bandura (1977) defines social learning theory as "a continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioural and environmental determinants" (p. 7). Hence, the environment can have a major impact on the development and reinforcement of behaviours.

The theory predicts that when teachers use aggression or antisocial behaviours to deal with conflict in the school context, children observe and then imitate the antisocial or aggressive behaviours. The children learn that such behaviour is not only acceptable, but

they also learn the rationale and motivations for resorting to this type of behaviour (Powell & Ladd, 2010). This aspect of social learning theory highlights the potential negative impact on students and the importance of fostering quality relationships between students and teachers to break such a cycle.

The principles of social learning theory emphasise the impact of modelling appropriate behaviour, which is an important principle for schools adopting a whole-school approach to restorative practices (Bandura & McDonald, 1963). In a restorative school, teachers are aware of the influence their own behaviour has on the children they teach (Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005). Similarly, if students witness a positive role model behaving in an appropriate manner towards other people, it is expected that the students will learn the rationale and motivation to accept this behaviour as the most appropriate way to handle issues they encounter. With further positive reinforcement, the student or teacher is more likely to continue to engage in positive acts or behaviours. Similarly, when teachers observe the leadership team acting in a certain way, they are more likely to see this as the acceptable method of handling situations

Observing the interactions of an appropriate adult role model increases the child's awareness of socially appropriate behaviours. When a parent acts as a positive role model within the home environment, the likelihood of future antisocial behaviour by the child is reduced (Carlo et al., 2007).

Social learning theory was pertinent in informing the development of the interview questions and focus group guide. There were two aims. The first was to ascertain whether students saw their teachers modelling behaviour and understand the impact this had on them (e.g. what have you learned from your teacher about getting along with others?). The second aim was to ascertain whether teachers actually modelled prosocial behaviour to directly teach student skills (e.g. teachers were asked to provide examples of how they used restorative practices to change behaviour). Exploring these aspects enabled the

opportunity for the current study to examine whether the previously proposed social discipline window (described earlier in this chapter) focuses on level of support and control towards a young person, was demonstrated by teacher.

At the third step, the child considers how to respond to the cue based on their repertoire of behavioural responses. For example, when faced with a possible hostile situation, the child may choose to fight or they may choose to flee from the encounter.

The fourth step involves accessing memories of possible responses to the situation they have encountered. The final mental step involves evaluating the choice of behavioural responses and considering the possible consequences of that choice for the best outcome. Following these five mental processes, the chosen response is enacted and the social behaviour then results (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, Brown, & Gottman, 1986).

Table 4.1 below shows how these two theories relate to aspects of restorative practices in a practical sense.

Table 4.1

Summary of Theories and Restorative Practices Approaches

Theory	Restorative practices approach/technique
Theory of mind	Use of circle time to increase empathy and ability to relate to others Use of affective questions during conversations A more direct teaching/learning approach needed
Social learning theory	Teachers model the preferred behaviour and act as role models Restorative practices techniques are emulated Does not require direct teaching

Motivational Theories

Motivation has been defined as the “desire to act or move toward a particular activity, task or goal, just what influences one’s desire to do so remain complex” (van der Putten, 2017, p. 1). Over time, motivation theories have progressed from being based on basic needs such as Maslow’s hierarchy of needs model (Maslow, 1943) towards a focus on goals, values, interests, abilities of self-worth, and the social environment (van der Putten, 2017). Many motivation theories assume that people initiate and persist in behaviours because they will lead to desired outcomes and goals. However, motivation is a dynamic entity and not a personality trait (Kusurkar, Croiset, & TenCate, 2011).

In the field of psychology there are several motivational theories such as expectancy theory, goal theory, and drive-reduction theory but this thesis will explore attribution theory, cognitive dissonance theory and self-determination theory. These theories have been chosen to help explain the underlying motivation for the choices people make and the impact this can have on the implementation and sustainability of restorative practices in school communities.

The purpose for inclusion of a review of motivational theories is to consider how aspects of motivation can affect behaviour and to offer a framework for exploring teacher and student experiences. Prior research has identified that some teaching staff feel more challenged when adopting restorative practice compared to other. This can result in some teachers resorting to familiar or old ways of doing things if they are not challenged about their existing beliefs and practices (McCluskey et al., 2008; Shaw, 2007). Exploring these theories offers further understanding around the changes that people need to make when adopting new approaches and is particularly relevant to understand the motivation of teachers in the current study to embrace the restorative practice approach or not and the extent they use the approach.

Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory was developed by Deci and Ryan (1985) and is based upon the premise that people have an innate tendency to satisfy three basic psychological needs and this tendency forms the basis of self-motivation and the choices they make. The three basic psychological needs being autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Lyness, Lurie, Ward, Mooney, & Lambert, 2013). These are illustrated in Figure 4.4.

Autonomy relates to self-initiating and self-regulating; people need to feel in control of their own goals and behaviours. Competence involves understanding how to attain external and internal outcomes; people need to gain mastery of tasks to learn new and different skills. Relatedness is the need to interact, be connected to, and experience caring for others; people need to experience a sense of belonging and attachment to other people (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2008, 2012; Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2013). Supporting these three basic psychological needs engages a person's motivation from within.

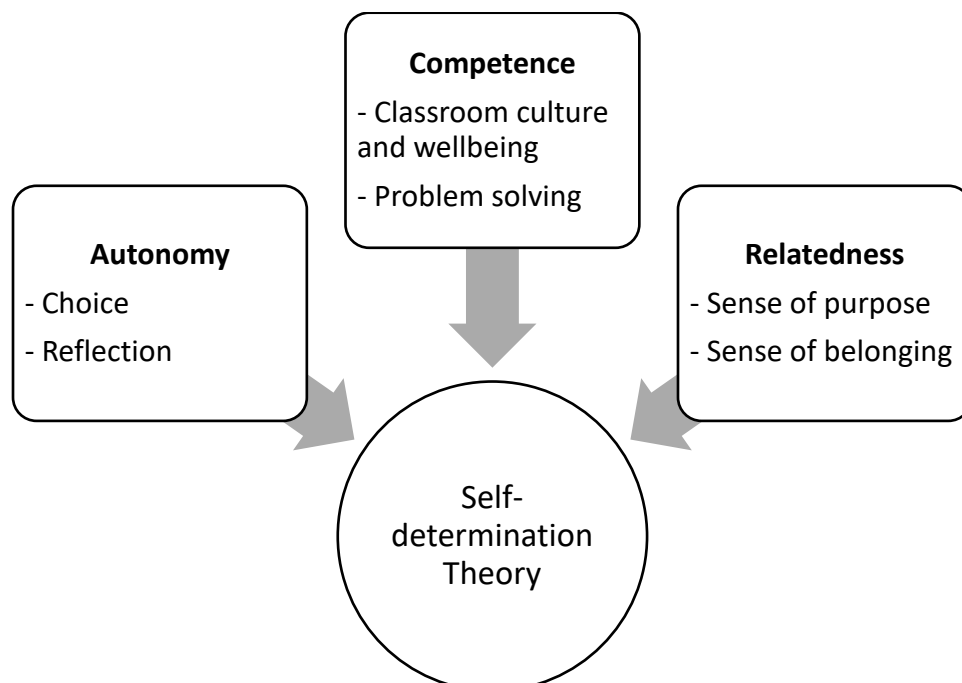


Figure 4.4. Self-determination theory model (adapted from Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The primary focus is the degree to which an individuals' behaviour is self-motivated. However, self-determination theory is not only concerned with positive development but also examines the social contexts that may antagonise those innate tendencies.

Self-determination theory is a macro-theory of human motivation, emotion, and development that focuses on the factors that facilitate or hinder an individual's inherent growth process and supports their natural or intrinsic tendencies to behave in effective ways. This theory can be applied to learning and the education system since students may have a natural tendency to learn but are placed in a situation where they must abide by conditions and rules within the school community.

Intrinsic motivation is evidenced by behaviour that is not under the control of external influences (e.g. young children are intrinsically motivated to explore and engage in play for fun; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Intrinsic motivation is sustained by the satisfaction of the three needs, autonomy, competence, and relatedness (e.g. when a student is autonomous in their drive for learning they will voluntarily devote time to study; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). Intrinsic motivation provides an important basis for learning, but students need to abide by school rules and not all aspects of schooling are satisfying or fun. Therefore, intrinsic motivation may not be evident and students will need other incentives or reasons to learn.

Extrinsic motivation is evidenced by behaviour performed to obtain an outcome from the activity itself. When a teacher lacks autonomy, their satisfaction can be reduced, thereby undermining their enthusiasm and the creative energy they bring to their teaching. The pressure towards specific outcomes encourages teachers to rely on extrinsic strategies and can be to the detriment of more effective, interesting and inspiring teaching practices (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). The differences in intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are show in Figures 4.5 and 4.6 below.

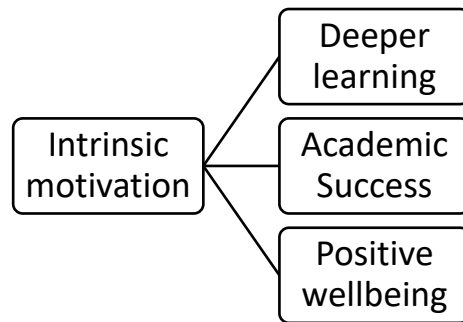


Figure 4.5. Outcomes of intrinsic motivation (Kusurkar, Croiset, & TenCate, 2011).

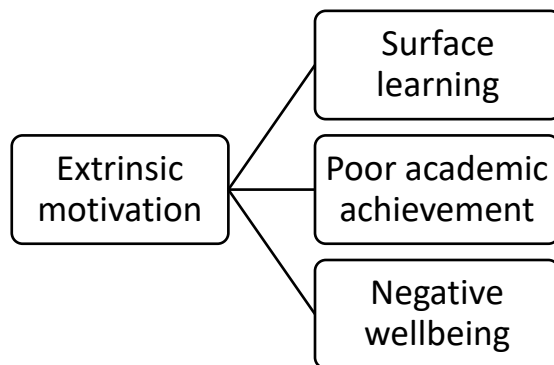


Figure 4.6. Outcomes of extrinsic motivation (Kusurkar, Croiset, & TenCate, 2011).

If the three basic needs are not met then this can lead to a withdrawal from others and a tendency to focus on one's self potentially leading to antisocial behaviour. Deci and Ryan (1985, 2008) posited that when people meet these three needs, they become self-determined and can intrinsically motivate themselves to pursue the things that interest them. When people have extrinsic rewards for existing intrinsically motivated behaviour, their autonomy can be undermined. As the behaviour becomes controlled more by extrinsic rewards, individuals feel less in control of their own behaviour. On the other hand, unexpected positive encouragement can increase intrinsic motivation because the feedback allows a person to feel more competent – one of the key needs for personal growth (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Deci and Ryan (2000) later introduced a sub-theory known as “organismic integration theory” (p. 61) to describe the different forms of extrinsic motivation that can promote or hinder behaviour. They proposed a continuum in terms of the degree of motivation coming from an individual (i.e. those who are self-determined and those who are not). People with intrinsic motivation and who are self-determined are at one end of the continuum and people with “nonself-determination” or “amotivation” being at the other end (p. 61). They argued that amotivated people do not act at all, act without intent, or show passive compliance. Amotivation can result from not valuing the activity, not feeling competent, or not expecting it to achieve the desired result.

Applied in the classroom, self-determination theory accounts for promoting a student’s interest in learning, the value of education, and encouraging confidence in their own abilities and capacity. These can lead to enhanced personal growth (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). Other practical applications of self-determination theory include nurturing inner motivation; incorporating student interests, preferences, and values into learning activities; and avoiding external regulators such as rewards, directive, deadlines, and compliance. Teachers need to rely on flexible non-controlling language that communicates information (e.g. affirming rather than to controlling and ridged). This style of communication is similar to the affective language that is used in restorative practices. It is also important that teaching staff and school leadership communicate values and provide rationales for their reasoning (e.g. if the task does not capture the interest of the student explain the use, value, and importance of the task). Teachers who rely on negative feedback can decrease intrinsic motivation, which can result in a perception of a lack of competence that leads to students feeling amotivated (Deci et al., 1991).

When a teacher knows their students, and is more involved with them, the teacher can build interpersonal relationships that will promote motivation and self-determination. Students experience autonomy when they feel supported to explore, take initiative, and

develop solutions for their problems. Students experience higher relatedness when they perceive others listening to them and responding. Positive feedback improves competence and intrinsic motivation (Lyness et al., 2013). These aspects of self-determination theory reflect the key aspects of restorative practices, which are communication through circle time, acknowledge feelings, and building empathy for others.

Another key aspect of self-determination theory is that the social context supports the person being competent and autonomous. For example, while positive support and feedback will enhance motivation in general, it will also enhance intrinsic motivation, thereby promoting autonomy. School communities need to provide quality experiences for their students; this is an intrinsic value that addresses quality of life and not simply an outcome of schooling (Ryan & Niemiec, 2009). As such, school-based programs need to create an environment that enhances social-emotional learning for students. More importantly, the quality of the learning environment within the school needs to support academic social-emotional learning (Ryan & Niemiec, 2009).

Self-determination theory and Attribution Theory (described below) focus on similar constructs. As described earlier in this chapter, social context or the perception of social context can influence what a person attributes to their sense of self (Attribution Theory) and subsequently their mindset and behaviour to act (self-determination theory) (van der Putten, 2017). However, the focus of self-determination theory suggests that contextual factors affect intrinsic motivation. When an event promotes a change towards internal processes, it can increase motivation. It is therefore possible (in terms of self-determination theory) that for some students the concept of learning is not a self-determined or autonomous process; they may perceive their academic outcome as something beyond their control and feel more compelled by evaluation than by interest in their learning (Soric & Palekcic, 2009).

Attribution theory. The pioneer of attribution theory was Fritz Heider who sought to explain the way individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and subsequent behaviour (Heider, 1958; Weiner, 2008). Subsequently, alternative models of attribution theory have been developed, such as self-perception theory and Kelley's covariation model (Bem, 1972; Kelley, 1973). Attribution theory is defined as "the act of explaining why a person acts in a particular way" (McArthur, 2011, p. 32) and suggests that people are motivated to understand another's behaviour by seeking to understand the cause of that behaviour. Attributions are especially important when the cause of events or behaviour is ambiguous, e.g. what are the reasons why someone is crying? Answers may vary from the person is depressed to they were rejected or they failed a test which may or may not be a correct inference.

Heider (1958) suggested that people explain another person's behaviour as a result of two dimensions either an internal or an external attribution. Internal attribution considers that a person behaves in a certain way due to characteristics of that person, for example their personality or a person behaves in a certain way due to a situation that they react to, e.g., an event outside of a person's control rather than their internal characteristics. Figure 4.7 illustrates these concepts.

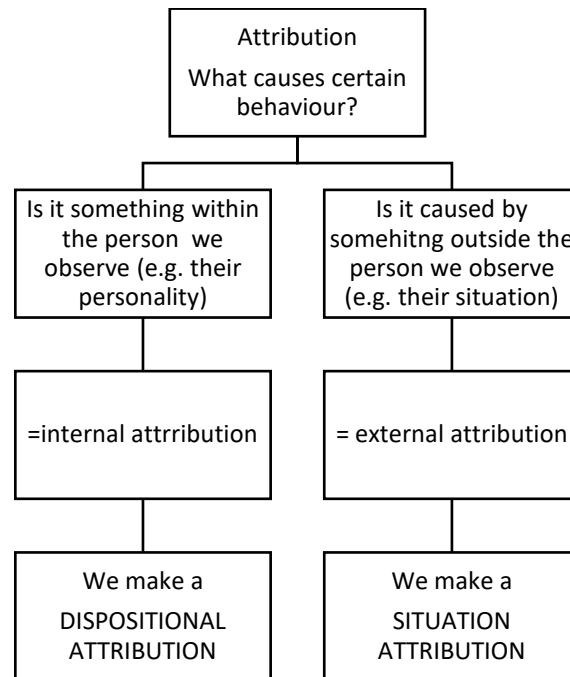


Figure 4.3. Heider's Attribution Theory (Heider, 1958).

Heider (1958) argued that people have two motives for behaviour: the need to understand the world we live in and the need to control the environment. Attribution theory suggests that, to achieve understanding and control, we seek to predict how people are going to behave rather than live in an environment full of random or unexpected events. The theory explains how and why people explain events. Attribution theory suggests that, for an attack or expression of frustration to lead to an angry response, it would be due to the respondent's belief that the intent of the other person is harm. The angry response is the result of how a person perceives the motives or intentions behind the other person's actions. However, the attribution process is not always rational and logical. Social judgement can be biased, and when a person attributes another's behaviour to personality rather than the situation, this is known as a fundamental attribution error (Walker et al., 2015).

Understanding attribution theory has an important implication for school communities. If a teacher attributes a student's misbehaviour to delinquency rather than the

student's situation, they may inappropriately punish the behaviour without taking proper account of mitigating factors such as difficulties at home. Restorative practices increase two-way communication through the use of conferencing and circle time. For example, the restorative practices approach directly asks affective questions such as "what happened?" to understand why a situation occurred. This ensures that a student can explain what is happening for them and what they are thinking, thereby enabling clarification and avoiding ambiguity. It can also illustrate the multiple perspective or interpretations that can occur when individuals participate in a discussion or conference situation. The aim of restorative practices is to enhance communication and understanding through discussion, learning, and narrative. Attribution theory explains the creation of new self-knowledge where a behaviour doesn't conflict with a view of self. This is contrast to cognitive dissonance theory, which explains a change to self-knowledge when the behaviour conflicts with the view of self.

Cognitive dissonance theory. Cognitive dissonance theory suggests that people are motivated by an inner drive to hold onto their beliefs, thereby maintaining an inner harmony and avoiding an unpleasant internal state or dissonance (Festinger, 1962; Harmon-Jones, Harmon-Jones, & Levy, 2015). This can be particularly problematic when new programs or changes are introduced into a school community and the attitudes and perceptions of those within the community are at odds with the change being implemented. This resistance, when attributed to a person's history, thoughts or beliefs, results in cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962)

When cognitive dissonance occurs, it can be reduced in one of three ways: change the behaviour (which can be problematic because it can involve changing a well-learned behaviour), acquire new information to outweigh the dissonant belief, or reduce the importance of the belief (Festinger, 1962). Dissonance can be reduced by forced compliance of the new behaviour, decision-making to increase the attractiveness of one

option and decrease the other, and the belief that effort will result in a good outcome (Festinger, 1962). However, to be able to change this behaviour, a person needs to first be aware of that behaviour, attitude, or belief. It would be difficult for an individual to change their behaviour if they hold firmly to their beliefs. Those beliefs need to be challenged for any change to occur (Harmon-Jones et al., 2015).

Several alternative paradigms have been proposed that have sought to challenge and revise Festinger's work. These include self-perception theory (Bem, 1972), impression management (Tedeschi, Schlenker, & Bonoma, 1971), self-consistency theory (Aronson, 1992), and the action-based model of dissonance (Harmon-Jones, 1999; Harmon-Jones et al., 2015). However, the original concept proposed by Festinger continues to provide a rational, explanatory, and integrative theory in this area (Cooper & Fazio, 1984; Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2007).

In summary, cognitive dissonance theory aims to reduce discomfort and challenge or change self-perceptions, whereas attribution theory does not. Cognitive dissonance theory is similar to self-determination theory where there is a need for the individual to feel capable of achieving outcomes and is similar to self-efficacy in cognitive theories (Patrick & Williams, 2012). Cognitive dissonance can be a powerful motivator in the change process and can lead a person to change their conflicting beliefs. The school community plays an important role in either fostering or hindering a student's motivation for learning and change. In addition, the structure of educational systems and policies can influence teachers' actions and attitudes (van der Putten, 2017).

The use of motivation theories assisted in the development of some of the interview questions for the teachers. The aim was to ascertain what they found challenging and how those challenges were overcome. This was to gauge the extent that their personal beliefs either motivated or hindered their use of the approach. An example question being, what do you see as being the main challenge in using and sustaining the approach?

The theories reviewed in part two of this chapter show that there are many alternative and additional perspectives to guide understanding of behaviour than those that have dominated the literature on restorative practices and are discussed in section one. The theories reviewed offer justification for how restorative practices can affect student behaviour and aid understanding of why, at times, teacher behaviour is resistant to change.

There are several aspects that need to be considered. One is understanding what motivates behaviour, both our own behaviour and another person's. There is also a need to understand contextual influences such as family, peers, and the community, and how each of these shapes behaviour, beliefs, and attitudes. Finally, developmental factors such as social learning, which is a part of normal child development, need to be taken into account.

Summary

This chapter demonstrated that the current study is supported by theories and frameworks that have sought to understand the impact of restorative practices on behaviour. The first section of the chapter discussed the concept of behaviour and explored when behaviour is considered as deviant. It introduced reintegrative shame and the social discipline window, which to date, have been the dominant conceptual frameworks that have been used to explain how restorative practices changes behaviour. The review showed that there is limited research in schools, particularly in Victorian schools, which is the focus of this thesis, on the implementation, sustainability, and issues faced by these school communities during the past 10 years.

The second section discussed theories that are relevant to understand behaviour change in the school setting. It was argued that to understand the impact of restorative practices on the school community, there is a need to review predominant theories of behaviour change and assess whether restorative practices are compatible with these frameworks. The importance of behaviour and changing behaviour was discussed. This is

particularly pertinent since introducing new approaches can be challenging and understanding the influences on both teachers and students is a key component to change. The following chapter will discuss the methodology that was designed to rigorously test the aims of the study and research question.

Chapter 5: Methodology

I never guess. It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts. (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, author of the Sherlock Holmes stories)

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology that was used to address the specific research questions posed in Chapter 1. The research aimed to develop an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of students and teachers at schools that had implemented restorative practices at least five years before the study. The purpose was to establish parameters that could be considered as best-practice guidelines that other schools could emulate in their community although it is acknowledged that there is much debate around what constitutes best practice. The overarching aim of the research was to increase understanding about the use, impact, and sustainability of restorative practices in schools from the perspectives of teachers and students. The chapter provides a rationale for the chosen qualitative research methodology and the underlying theoretical constructs that shaped the data collection and analysis. The characteristics of participants are described, along with the administrative procedures such as recruitment and ethical considerations. A comprehensive procedures section, including practical considerations, is described in sufficient detail so that the study could be replicated. Finally, validity, trustworthiness, and limitations to the methodology are discussed.

Research Design

The following section discusses the wider framework used for conducting the current study, particularly the paradigm and positioning of the study, including the inquiry lens, research strategy, and design framework adopted for data collection and analysis.

Qualitative Research

A qualitative research paradigm includes the analysis of words which are transcribed from the voices of participants in a natural setting that closely resembles the participants' normal environments or lives. This concept stems from the idea that the best way to make sense of data is within or alongside its social context (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Because this study sought to explore the participants' lived experiences, a qualitative research approach was chosen as the most appropriate method to obtain such data. The purpose of using this approach was to gain depth of information rather than breadth (Patton, 2015). Qualitative data can be understood in more than one way and is therefore subjective, but this potential issue can be overcome with coherent analysis that is grounded in the data. In summary, qualitative research methodology is particularly useful because it provides researchers with "rich, complex data no other means offers" and is "presented through the voices and eyes of research participants" (Liamputtong, 2006, p. 9).

The research questions (see Chapter 1) focus on generating an understanding of the impact of restorative practices within school communities. Due to a lack of current research on restorative practices in Australia, in particular the whole-school approach to restorative practices, it was felt that a qualitative approach would be well suited for capturing this phenomenon for this doctoral thesis. Students and teachers are active participants within the school community, but it has been difficult to disentangle the way in which restorative practices has influenced and affected students and teachers.

Consideration needs to be given to their views and experiences within the wider context of the school community. The use of a qualitative research methodology was the most appropriate means to understand those views and build a foundation for future research in this area.

Social Constructionism

This research positions itself within a social constructionist paradigm (Charmaz, 2014). Social constructionism values culture and context to attribute meaning to what occurs in society, and constructs knowledge based on this understanding. This theoretical perspective is closely associated with many contemporary theories such as Vygotsky and Bandura's social cognitive theory (Charmaz, 2014; Kim, 2001). Social constructionism is based on assumptions about reality, knowledge, and learning (Kim, 2001). From an ontological perspective, there are many variations of reality, from realism to relativism. Realism considers the truth as one truth that can be discovered through research. Whereas relativism, which is this study's ontological position, considers that reality has multiple constructs and depends upon the way we learn it (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Reality is considered to be created through the process of social exchange, and social constructionists believe there is no objective basis for knowledge claims because knowledge is a human construct (Au, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2013). In essence, the social constructionist view is concerned with lived experience to understand how the world is seen by individuals.

Social constructionists aim to understand how people create meaning through their interactions with each other, the setting, and objects within their environment as a means to gather data about participants' lives (Au, 1998; Charmaz, 2014; Charmaz & Bryant, 2010). For example, how one person perceives and gives meaning to a situation will be different from another person. This perspective suggests that people tend to view the world in terms of what they experience and then compare that to their own understanding of the world,

either confirming their understanding or adding to that knowledge. The social constructionist viewpoint acknowledges that individuals actively construct new knowledge and understanding as they interact with society and the world in which they live (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In summary, the participant is viewed as the creator of their own subjective experience.

For the current data collection, this involved acknowledging the experiences of teachers and students who attended a school where restorative practices were used as a means to manage student behaviour and enhance prosocial skills. Although participants in this study may have shared the same observable event involving restorative practices, the way in which this event is experienced will reflect their unique views. For example, two Grade 6 children of a similar age, same gender and in the same class sharing the same teacher will experience a circle group differently.

For a researcher adopting the social constructivism paradigm perspective, it entails relying, as much as possible, on participants' perspectives based upon their experiences and acknowledging their subjective views as a construction of their own reality (Creswell & Poth, 2017). However, due to the interpretive nature of this approach, it is important that as researcher, I recognise and reflect upon my own personal views, values and reasons for undertaking this research.

About the Researcher: The Insider/Outsider Perspective

In qualitative research, the social constructionist lens considers that researcher and participants are in dialogue. The research is not simply about gathering data, but it is about sense making between the individuals engaged in the research (Patton, 2015). Given this stance, it is important for me to situate myself as the researcher. Patton (2015) suggests that the background, qualification, and experience of the researcher are important aspects in qualitative research because the researcher is the primary tool that collects and analyses

the data. A further important aspect of the process for me as the researcher was to adopt a reflexive approach that involved paying close attention to my role in the process and considering the potential impact my involvement and personal values may have on the participants and the data collection (Hamdan, 2009; Patton, 2015). This type of reflective approach acknowledges the bi-directional and interactive relationship between researcher and interviewee when gathering data. This type of biographical description increases the trustworthiness of the qualitative research, which is discussed later in this chapter (Shenton, 2004).

The main aspect of reflexivity entails a critical evaluation of the research process and the role of the researcher, both as an insider and an outsider (Braun & Clarke, 2013). A reflexive approach was adopted in order to overcome any potential power imbalance as described. An insider is someone who shares an identity with the participants, for example, a qualified nurse as researcher interviewing midwifery staff about supporting women and breastfeeding (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Burns, Fenwick, Schmied, & Sheehan, 2012; Patton, 2015). In contrast, an outsider is someone who shares little or no characteristics with the participants, for example, a white female researcher interviewing Indigenous males about their sexual health. However, it is likely that for most researchers there will be multiple insider and outsider positions (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

As a researcher and mother with young school-aged children at the time of data collection and with an academic background in psychology, I was aware of my personal impact on the subjective and interpretive nature of the perceptions of students through the focus groups and teachers through the semi-structured interviews. During the period of my research, my three children attended a school where restorative practices had been introduced. My experience as a parent at this school gave me some insider knowledge of the approach. My role as a parent and interactions with young people enabled me to

quickly gain rapport with the student participants. My parental status was unknown to participants.

The insider role has the advantage of obtaining access to participants, building rapport, reducing stigma, and fitting into the community with the participants (Burns et al., 2012; Patton, 2015). To overcome the possible gatekeepers¹ to the research during the months leading up to the commencement of data collection, I met with each school principal and the key staff to introduce myself and the research. This was well-received and the positive response alleviated the need to address or further counteract my outsider identity.

An additional and essential consideration in this research was my responsibility as an outsider with no teaching experience. I came to the project looking through a psychological lens or viewpoint. Collecting data without an insider perspective has advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages was that I came to the research from a more independent, non-teaching stance with less assumed knowledge and therefore less bias. But this was also a disadvantage because I had a lack of knowledge with respect to the nuances of how things happen in practice within the classroom and school. The main advantage was that there was less concern with making erroneous decisions because I arrived with few assumptions around teaching practices (Breen, 2007). Reflexivity about my position as both an insider and an outsider for this research is a vital component in communicating the authenticity and trustworthiness of the data (Patton, 2015).

Data Collection Methods

Interviews and focus groups were the two main methods of data collection for the current study. This involved semi-structured interviews with teachers and focus groups

¹ A gatekeeper is defined as “a term referring to the adult who controls or limits researcher’s access to participants” (McFadyen & Rankin, 2016, p. 82).

with students. A description of the way in which these methods were used is presented below.

Interviews

The purpose of the research interview is to ask questions of the participants that give them the opportunity to position their views in terms of their experiences (Kvale, 2006). For this research project, the purpose of the one-on-one interviews with teachers was to explore their individual experiences and be mindful of the possible need for a private discussion. It was decided that individual semi-structured interviews (a frequently used method in qualitative research) would be best suited to this part of the project (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The interviews with school teachers focused on topics of school discipline, how and why restorative practices were implemented, and the impact the use of restorative practices had on student behaviour. The aim was to develop interview guides that explored the topics and could be generally administered within a one-hour period.

Semi-structured interviews are a form of social interaction that occurs in an environment where views and opinions can be freely and confidently expressed (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). The semi-structured interview has the advantage that those views and opinions are less likely to be influenced by others, which was an important consideration for the current study. The interview guide provides a framework of questions that covers a range of topics (see below) while allowing flexibility to ask each participant relevant unstructured follow-up questions. The interview questions for teachers were structured around the following topics: demographics, training, implementation, impact, application, dealing with parents, sustainability, and commitment. See Appendix F for the full interview guide.

Focus Groups

The current study used focus groups as the preferred data collection method with students. Focus groups are facilitated group discussions that involve group interactions to explore the topic of interest. As such, participants are selected because they share a social or cultural experience (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002). Hence, focus groups are used to collect information, as determined by the researcher, through a purposeful interaction of multiple participants in a group setting (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Krueger & Casey, 2000; McLafferty, 2004; Morgan, 1996).

Focus groups generally involve less structure to the questions with more guided discussion around topics of interest (see Appendix B; Braun & Clarke, 2013). This was particularly important for the current study because it was considered less threatening for students and allowed them to use each other's comments to stimulate further discussion. One main advantage of using focus groups is the rich data obtained from the interactions between group members where participants can both support and question each other's responses (Kennedy, Kools, & Krueger, 2001; Morgan, 1996). The use of focus groups allows the participants to reflect on their own beliefs regarding a topic. Focus groups also allow the researcher to capture idiosyncrasies of language such as inflection, tone, word emphasis, and jokes within the group dynamic that can rarely be captured via other means (Kitzinger, 1995). These interactions can form a valuable means of capturing cultural differences or group norms, allowing for a unique understanding of the research topic (Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan, 1996).

However, with this type of data collection the researcher needs to be mindful since group dynamics can be a disadvantage if group norms silence individuals into complying or if an individual's response is influenced because they want to gain acceptance within the group (Carey & Smith, 1994; Kitzinger, 1995). Despite this, the use of focus groups to

generate data means that, in most cases, participants do not feel discriminated against if they are impaired in their ability to read or write (Kitzinger, 1995). This can be of particular value when conducting research with children and young people. The use of focus groups with children and young people enables modelling of behaviour by the adult researcher in terms of speaking openly about their thoughts and opinions. Children and young people are able to describe their feelings despite not having all of the social skills that adults may perceive as being important (Kennedy et al., 2001).

Ethical Considerations

Before data collection occurred ethics approval was obtained from the Australian Catholic University's Human Research Ethics Committee. Following university approval, ethics approval was sought from the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne and the Department of Education and Training (previously known as Department of Education and Early Childhood Development). This was a requirement to gain access to schools governed and administered by the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne and the Department of Education and Training (see Appendix A for approval letters). Independent schools are self-managed so approval was sought directly from each school principal. In addition, the researcher conducting the focus groups with students was required to obtain and provide each school with a copy of a valid Working with Children Check. A Working with Children Check is a legal requirement for adults working with children in the state of Victoria to protect children and young people from harm.

The conduct of the research raised several ethical considerations that were addressed through the ethics process. The main consideration was the power imbalance that can exist when interviewing vulnerable populations such as children and young people (Fossey et al., 2002). In addition, the use of focus groups meant managing confidentiality of the student participants. Conducting research with young people can place caveats on

the research process such as gaining consent. In Australia, the National Health and Medical Research Council (2007), is the leading expert and advisory group to the government on research-related issues. They stipulate that for a child or young person (under the age of 18 years) to participate in research, consent must be obtained, from not only the child's parent or guardian, but also from the child or young person who will be involved in the research.

In line with the National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines, consent was obtained from the students who wished to be involved in the focus groups. Careful consideration was given to establish the age at which the students could understand the consent forms that were based on the National Health and Medical Research Council (2007) guidelines. As a result, a child-friendly consent (assent) form was used for the primary school participants and was adapted from a study by Moore, McArthur, and Noble-Carr (2008; see Appendix E). The secondary school participants were given a simplified English language consent (assent) form (see Appendix E). Although students were encouraged to provide their assent before the focus group, this was not a mandatory provision for them to participate. However, a signed parental or guardian consent form was a requirement before any data collection process could occur (see Appendix E). Consent forms were returned to the school principal, who kept a copy for the school records and handed the researcher the original forms prior to the focus group commencing. Similarly, teachers were required to return a signed consent form before participation in an interview. The teachers were provided with a reply-paid envelope to return the consent form.

Constructing the Sample

School selection. Schools were selected using criterion sampling, which is a form of purposive sampling based on the cases meeting a pre-determined set of criteria (Patton, 2015). Purposive sampling is designed to maximise “representation of a range of perspective on an issue that will challenge the researchers own views” (Fossey et al., p.

726). The criteria for the current study included schools that had been using restorative practices for at least four years. This time frame was used because prior research suggests it can take between three and five years to embed the practice in the school environment (Blood & Thorsborne 2005). Six schools agreed to participate. The schools came at the recommendation of an independent restorative practices practitioner in Victoria.

Following ethics approval, school principals were contacted via email to ascertain their willingness to participate in the study. School principals were offered the opportunity of a face-to-face meeting to discuss the project before committing to participation. All school principals who were contacted took up this offer.

During the initial meeting, the school principals were able to ask questions about the research and could explain the particular restorative practices language or terminology used in the school. This enabled appropriate amendments to the interview and focus group questions to reflect the language used by staff and students within the school. All of the school principals participated in the initial meeting agree to participate in the study and indicated a willingness to assist in the recruitment of both teacher and student participants.

All schools were located within metropolitan Melbourne and varied in size. One school (School D) was a single-sex (female only) school and the remaining five schools were co-educational (male and female students). Participation occurred during term 3 and term 4, 2012 (August to November). School principals were provided with a pack containing information letters for teachers and students, parent consent forms, child-friendly consent forms, teacher consent forms, and reply-paid envelopes (see Appendices D and E).

The school principals sent the consent forms and information letters home with students and those who returned a signed parental permission slip were eligible to participate. For this study, all those who returned signed permission slips participated because the number of permission slips reflected the places available in the focus

group. The school principal indicated two or three teachers who were willing to participate and they were contacted independently via phone or email to confirm their willingness to participate.

Teachers. School principals were requested to approach and recruit teachers to participate in the study. The inclusion criteria for teachers was for them to have been trained in restorative practices and be actively using the approach in the classroom. It was not a requirement for the teachers to have a strong interest in restorative practices.

Students. For student recruitment, each school principal was asked to approach students from Year 6 or Year 9 and recruit a maximum of 12 students. These year levels were purposefully chosen. Year 6 students were chosen as the primary school participants due to their age and maturity. Year 9 students were chosen because by this stage they were settled in the secondary school environment. Year 9 is also a time of change and growth in maturity, so it was considered more likely that the use of restorative practices may have had an impact on behaviour by this stage of schooling (Bellhouse, 2004). The selected Year 6 and Year 9 students were asked by their either their school principal or classroom teacher if they would like to participate in the study. All of the selected students participated.

The school principal was advised during recruitment to be mindful of any current known student conflicts to avoid any potential issues that could arise during the focus group. The maximum number recommended by the school principal allowed for any attrition due to illness or if the students did not provide a signed parental permission slip on the day of the focus group. This was also in line with recommendations of prior research (Kennedy et al., 2001; Morgan, 1996). The selection of participants was at the discretion of the school principal who needed to provide consent for the students to participate.

Sample Size and Saturation

The number of interviews and focus groups needed to yield saturation is a debated topic in qualitative research (Mason, 2010; Patton, 2015). Saturation refers to the process whereby data continues to be collected until the researcher decides collection of additional material will not add any new concepts, themes, or relationships. However, it has been suggested that the research design, types, and aims can determine theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2014).

The concept of saturation can be influenced by the experience of the interviewer because varying skills and experience can affect the quality of the data. It has been argued that new data will always add something new and therefore the cut off is arbitrary (Mason, 2010). Saturation is considered the “gold standard by which purposive sample size are determined in health sciences research” (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006, p. 60). O’Reilly and Parker (2012) comment that:

Sampling in qualitative research is concerned with the richness of information, and the number of participants required, therefore, depends on the nature of the topic and resources available. There are two key considerations that guide the sampling methods in qualitative research; appropriateness and adequacy. It is argued, therefore, that the researcher should be pragmatic and flexible in their approach to sampling and that an adequate sample size is one that sufficiently answers the research questions (p. 192).

To determine the number of focus groups required, the current study followed the recommendations of Liamputtong and Ezzy (2000) and Morgan (1996) who suggest that between three and six groups would yield an adequate amount of data. In addition, the current study chose to gather data from both primary and secondary school students to

allow examination of a range of views and opinions from students differing in age, maturity, and competencies (Punch, 2002).

For one-on-one semi-structured interviews, the number required is affected by “what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with the available time and resources” (Patton, 2015, p. 311). Achieving this means that the sample size can vary from one to over 50 individual interviews. However, the most common sample size is from 15 to 30 interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Although this project followed these recommendations, the primary objective of this thesis was to examine the experiences of students and teachers from two age groups of students and from the three different education providers in Victoria. For this reason, the participant numbers required to reach theoretical saturation for both the interviews and focus groups were pre-established with the researcher’s supervision team. Hence, six focus groups, one from each school and a minimum of two teacher interviews from each school was considered as being required.

Developing and Refining the Research Instruments

The focus group and interview questions were developed from the literature on restorative practices (McCluskey et al., 2008; Shaw, 2007) and informed by psychological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bandura, 1977; See Chapter 4 for more information). The questions were refined following meetings with school principals, restorative practices educators, and a review of the literature. The questions for the focus groups were piloted on a sample of young people to ascertain if they were understandable and meaningful. The pilot group did not participate in the final data collection. Following the pilot phase, the questions were amended and the language simplified to suit the ages of the participants. However, despite pre-testing, the different terminology used to explain restorative

practices, such as *circles*, *circle time*, *circle group* or *restoratives*, within each school required some adaptations to the questions throughout the focus group process (see Appendix B). Similarly, the teacher interview questions were piloted with a small number of teachers prior to the interviews and some minor amendments were made to the language (see Appendix C).

Conducting the Interviews and Focus Groups

Once school principals had agreed to participate they or their nominated alternative were provided with a short one-page questionnaire (see Appendix F) to obtain demographic data on the school and other background information. The responses were self-recorded and could be returned via mail using a pre-paid envelope or via email.

Examples of the questions included:

- Are restorative practices formally written into your school documentation (e.g. school policy)? Why or why not?
- Describe the main reason/s or purpose for formally implementing restorative practices into this school.

Teachers who agreed to participate had independent contact with the researcher directly to discuss the project and schedule an interview time. Each interview was conducted at the teacher's school in a quiet office at a mutually convenient time. The semi-structured interview style allowed teachers to discuss the challenges they faced and the way these were overcome. The interview schedule consisted of main leading questions with subsequent probing questions to prompt responses. Participants were free to disclose as little or as much information as they wished. The duration of the interviews with teachers ranged from 19 minutes and 47 seconds to 76 minutes and 32 seconds (mean = 48.53 minutes, standard deviation = 13.03 minutes).

For focus groups involving participants aged 12 years and over, it is recommended there should be between five and eight participants to enable a lively and manageable group discussion that yields enough diversity in views but is not too large that it may be uncomfortable to share opinions (Morgan, 1996; Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). It is also recommended that for participants of this age to remain focused, a focus group should not exceed 90 minutes duration (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Kennedy et al., 2001).

During the focus groups, participants were free to disclose as little or as much information as they wished. However, this posed some issues that are described further in this chapter. The duration of the focus groups ranged from 29 minutes to 1 hour and 13 minutes. There was a difference in the extent and degree of engagement between the two genders and depending on the age of the participants. The younger male students were more vocal than their older counterparts, whereas the older female students were more vocal than the younger female students. This is reflected in the duration of the focus groups based upon gender and age. For example, the all-male focus group of secondary students was notably shorter at 29 minutes, compared with the all-female secondary student group who spoke for 1 hour and 13 minutes.

Before the scheduled day of the focus group or interview, a phone call was made to the school administration to confirm the date, time, and location of the focus group or interview. Each of the focus groups and interviews were conducted at the school in a room set aside for the purpose. To ensure students participants were comfortable disclosing their views about their school and school discipline, a teacher was not present in the room but was available in the adjacent room. Each focus group consisted of between five and 10 participants. One focus group consisted of all female students because it was conducted at a girl's school, and one focus group was male only since only male students agreed to participate and returned a signed consent form. Interviews were recorded using a digital

voice recorder and field notes were kept. The students who participated in the focus groups were provided with morning or afternoon tea to acknowledge their contribution to the research and as a thank you for their participation.

Practical considerations. The study addressed a number of practical considerations before and during the student focus groups to ensure ethical requirements were met and students were aware of their rights. Before each focus group, students were reminded that they were free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and the audio file would be deleted, but this situation did not occur. Focus group participants were advised that once the recording was transcribed it would be difficult to separate individual comments made. The limits of confidentiality were also explained, whereby anything that was said during the interview would not be disclosed to the students' teachers and any identifying information would be de-identified. Similarly, teachers were advised that their names would be kept confidential and a pseudonym would replace their name in this thesis or any publication, with any identifying information de-identified.

The content of the focus groups was not considered to be sensitive or personal in nature. Nevertheless, all participants were provided with contact information for Kids Helpline and Lifeline if they experienced any distress as a result of participation. This information was provided in the form of a help card and information sheet (see Appendix E). A school staff member was available to students if they required debriefing after the focus groups.

Location, time and set-up for focus groups. To minimise fatigue and restlessness in the students, as well as being mindful of the school's obligation towards the students, it was vitally important for me to liaise with the school to establish the most appropriate scheduling of the focus groups. Both the day and time of day for the focus groups were determined by each school. All focus groups were conducted during the course of a normal school day and the students who participated were released from their regular classes to

attend. At the conclusion of each focus group, the participants returned to their normal classes. Each school supplied a quiet vacant room with desks or tables and chairs. Before the commencement of the focus groups, the tables and chairs were re-arranged to form a circle so that each student could be seen and heard within the group.

Managing the group dynamics. The main purpose of the focus group was to elicit responses from the participants in their own words. The students were encouraged to talk to each other rather than only addressing me as the researcher. To build rapport between the students, the focus groups began with some general opening questions about daily school life. Questions were phrased in a conversational manner with language that could be easily understood.

To ensure that all students had an equal opportunity to respond, should they wish, it was important to manage the group and group dynamics. Initially, managing the group involved setting the ground rules such as speaking one at a time, listening to others, and respecting others' opinions. Next, students were asked questions one at a time in a circle around the table allowing, each student to answer before moving on to the next question. Once the students were comfortable with the process, they responded as they wished to the questions and each other's comments. As the students became more engaged with the discussions, it became necessary to control the more vocal students by thanking them for their response and then reiterating the question and allowing the next person to respond. It was also necessary to be mindful of the students who were not responding and ensure that they had the opportunity to be heard, with other group members being asked to listen while the student spoke if they wished to.

Data Analysis

All interviews and focus groups were digitally recorded and transcribed in their entirety. In an effort to become familiar with the data, I transcribed of two interviews and

one focus group. This required approximately three minutes of transcription time for every one minute of recording. Due to the length of time I estimated it would take for me to transcribe all of the interviews and focus groups, I decided that the use of a transcription service would be more efficient. The transcription service took two weeks to transcribe the remaining the interviews and focus groups. Once the transcriptions were received, I checked each transcription to identify any omissions or errors. There were minimal errors found in the data. Teachers were offered the opportunity to review a transcript of their interview if they choose. None of the teachers took up this offer.

Data analysis commenced during the interviews and focus groups through noting insights and observations in the form of field notes with preliminary themes being identified (see Figure 5.1).

A suburban, Catholic school in an affluent area of Melbourne (e.g. prestige cars of parents and large family homes). For a small school the playground is well-equipped. In school halls there was various evidence of the school supporting restorative practices as a whole-school approach such as posters promoting pro-social skills, for example, “we respect each other”.

The school staff room was set out with one large circle of tables as opposed to several groupings of table. Again, this showed a commitment to inclusion and community.

The focus group of students were polite and well-behaved. They were able to take turns and listen to each other without being reminded. There were no dominant members in the group. They collectively implied feelings of dis-empowerment at times to make a difference in their school about things that bothered them. This was expressed in through head nodding agreement, sighing and other non-verbal responses.

Figure 5.1. Example of field notes.

Qualitative data analysis is a continuous open-ended process, which for this research study involved immersion in the data by reading and re-reading each transcript

and making detailed notes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). The initial stages of analysis involved an inductive thematic approach. The themes that emerged are considered to be grounded within participant responses; their thoughts, ideas, and experiences were analysed as their own entity (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). An inductive approach considers that it is the researcher's judgement as to what constitutes a theme because there are no firm rules. This requires a flexible approach and constant revision as a means of refinement (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In practice, the participant responses were systematically examined and analysed for both similarities and differences. Initially, this was achieved manually during a line-by-line summary of the interview transcripts whereby I identified rich text and key concepts within each interview. This involved writing notes in coloured pen in the margins of the transcripts. In a separate note book, I detailed a short summary of the findings and identified preliminary broad themes. Once each transcript had been coded in this manner, the similar and differing themes from each transcript were recorded in a second notebook, along with the participant's or school's pseudonym. This allowed me to become familiar with the data and identify themes and links within the data and across the transcripts.

Figure 5.2 shows a flow chart of data analysis.

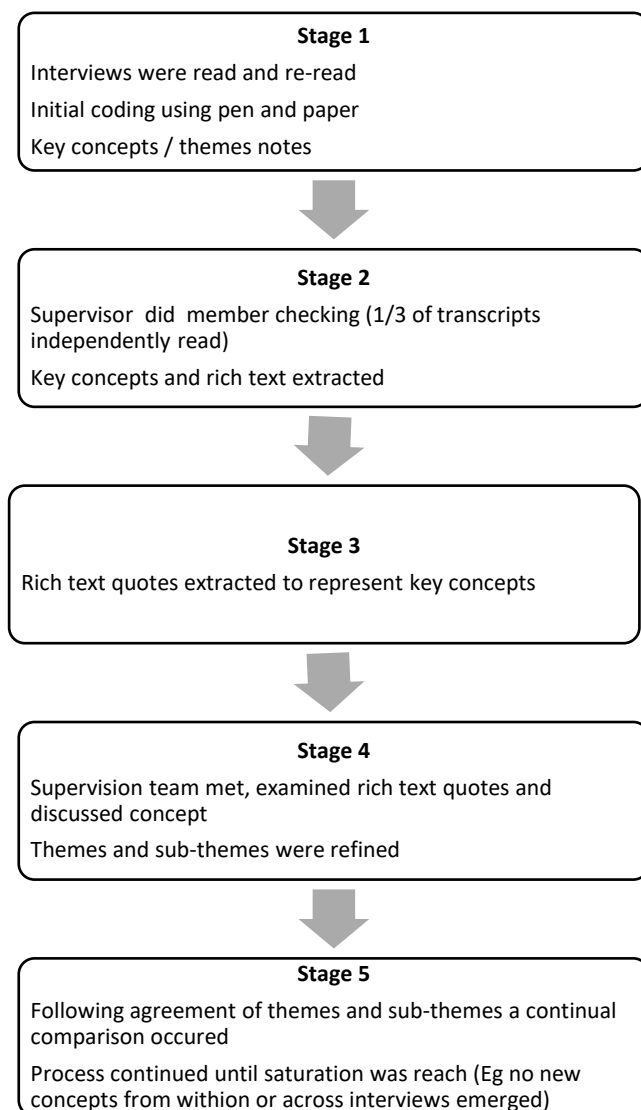
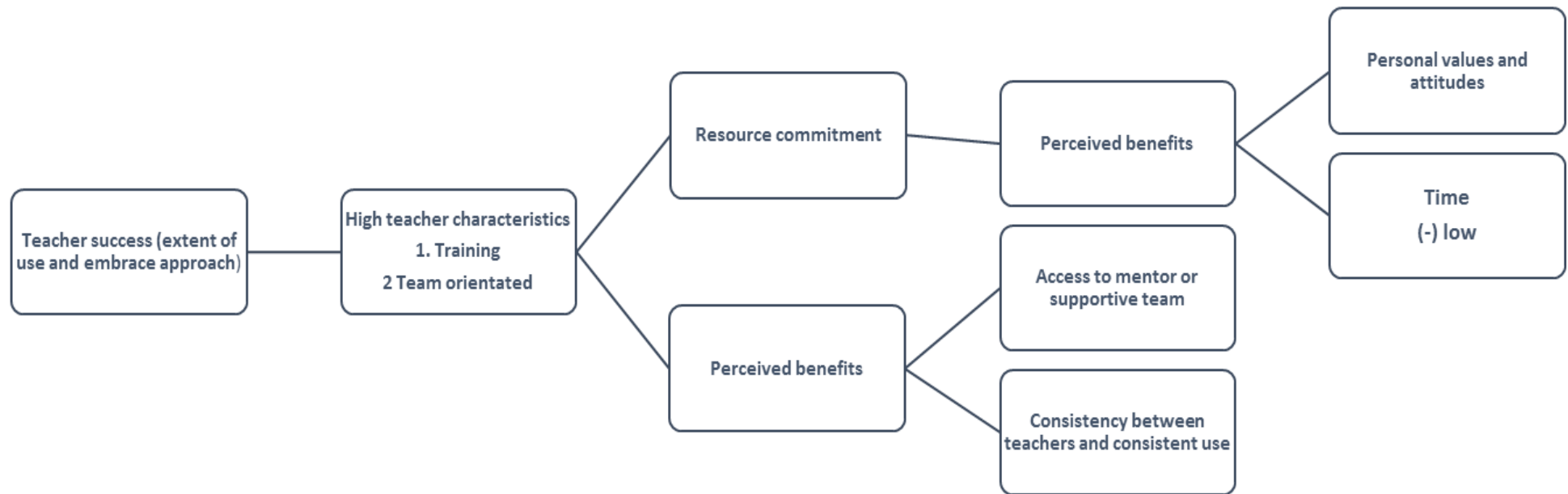


Figure 5.2. A flow chart of data analysis.

Following this initial analysis, a thematic network was developed to assist in clustering the data segments and to inform interpretation. An example of a thematic network using data for this study is depicted in Figure 5.3. This type of network allows the reader to understand the relationships between the data segments. The example illustrated shows an evidential chain that is used as a process of analytic induction (Miles et al., 2013).



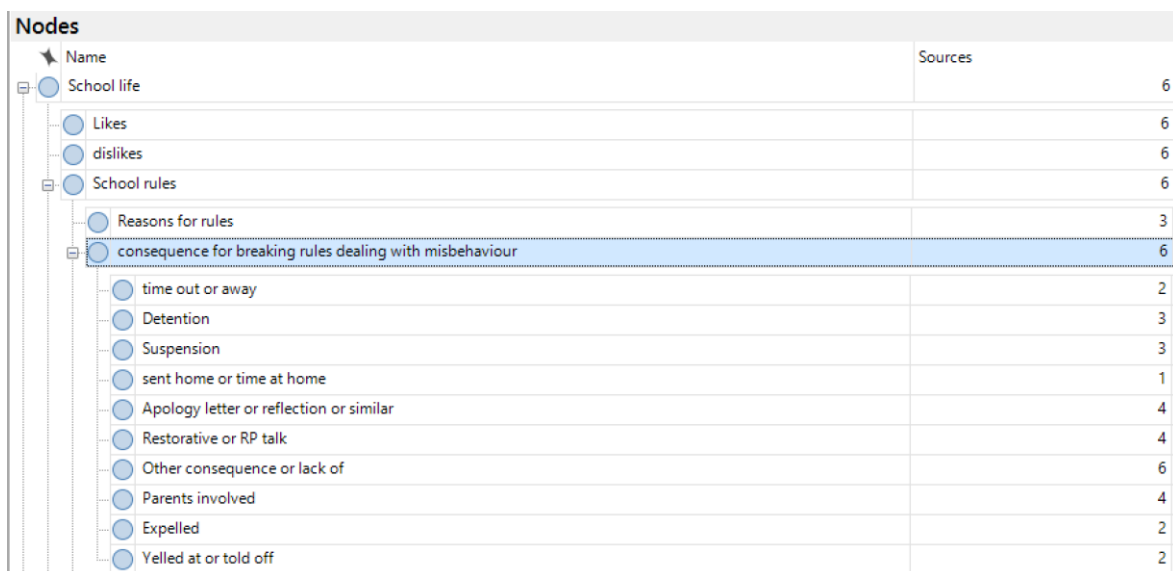
Note: (-) low = inverse influence

Figure 5.3. Structure of a thematic network (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013).

Following the manual analysis, the interview data was loaded into the Nvivo data analysis program (QSR International, 2013) for further analysis. The use of software enables effective storage, sorting, and retrieval of the data, but it does not analyse the data for the researcher (Fossey et al., 2002). To assist in the initial stages of the Nvivo secondary data analysis, word clouds were used to give a visual depiction of the transcripts (Ramsden & Bate, 2008). The words that are used more frequently throughout the transcript are larger in the visual depiction. Word clouds are being particularly useful for qualitative research that involves thematic analysis (McNaught & Lam, 2010). The findings from the word cloud analysis are illustrated and discussed in Chapter 7.

The rich text and key concepts previously identified were used as the framework for the secondary analysis using Nvivo. As with the initial analysis, the secondary analysis was conducted using a thematic approach. The analysis progressed in a systematic structured manner with careful records being kept. The use of Nvivo allowed the data to be managed and links between concepts to be made in a more logical manner. This method of analysing the data is useful to explain how people experience a situation, event, or phenomenon and supports the development of a theoretical framework (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The transcripts were analysed for concepts and themes known as nodes within Nvivo and conducted in two parts: teachers and students. This entailed creating separate project names within Nvivo. The main node is examined further for sub-themes that are delineated by sub-nodes. The process continues by reducing the quotes into smaller themes. The results resembled a tree-like structure with branches and sub-branches of information, which can be seen in Figure 5.4. The process allows for connections to be made vertically between themes as well as horizontally along themes. As part of the analysis process, the concepts continued to be developed in a systematic manner. Once the concepts had been refined, these were expanded and re-worked into broader concepts that refined commonalities. This rigorous and systematic process occurred over several weeks.

During this time, comprehensive records on the analysis were kept along with a record of any additional links between the concepts and ideas that emerged. The research team had several meetings and discussions regarding the main themes and concepts to seek agreement. Verification of the main themes between the researchers allowed for triangulation to occur. Finally, excerpts from the data were assigned to illustrate the main themes based on the participants' quotes. The resulting constructivism approach resulted in the framework illustrated in the findings presented in Chapter 7.



Name	Sources
School life	6
Likes	6
dislikes	6
School rules	6
Reasons for rules	3
consequence for breaking rules dealing with misbehaviour	6
time out or away	2
Detention	3
Suspension	3
sent home or time at home	1
Apology letter or reflection or similar	4
Restorative or RP talk	4
Other consequence or lack of	6
Parents involved	4
Expelled	2
Yelled at or told off	2

Figure 5.4. Excerpt of nodes and sub-nodes from Nvivo.

The main themes were examined for similarities and differences and then coded or grouped into categories (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2000; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). Concepts within and across each transcript (for both one-on-one interviews and focus groups) were examined to allow the concepts to be linked by meaning. This method of data analysis involves working with data, organising and coding it into manageable units, and searching for patterns. Interpretation of the data involves explaining and framing those ideas in relation to theory and making them understandable.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Validity of data is a key requirement of all good research (Fossey et al., 2002; Kvale, 1995). The constructivist viewpoint, which this study adopted, focuses on the trustworthiness of the data to establish validity. Guba (1981) suggests that there are four key components to the trustworthiness of data: credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability.

Credibility (internal validity) can be achieved through triangulation of the data (Patton, 2015). Triangulation is described as:

The use of multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. Triangulation also has been viewed as a qualitative research strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources (Carter et al., 2014, p. 545).

Not only does triangulation of data increase validity, it can also enhance understanding of the data by confirming findings and different perspectives, thereby adding breadth to the research (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2013). In this study, triangulation was achieved through the use of different school sectors (Catholic, government, and independent) and school types (primary and secondary).

To establish the transferability or applicability of the data, detailed description is required to enable the reader to determine the degree to which the research findings are transferable to a contextually similar situation (Fossey et al., 2002).

Another key aspect of trustworthiness is confirmability. Confirmability relates to the degree of neutrality in the data to establish the objectivity of the research. This ensures that the researcher does not attempt to skew the interpretation of the data by creating spurious relationships. Spurious is when something is falsely attributed; therefore, a

spurious relationship means the data is being connected incorrectly (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013, p. 305). Therefore, it is vital to accurately connect the participants' responses. Confirmability is achieved through the use of an audit trail that is established as an ongoing process through the data collection and analysis (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Confirmability is also addressed through recognition of the study's limitations (Shenton, 2004).

A final aspect in establishing trustworthiness is dependability, or the extent to which a study can be replicated (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In addressing this issue, the positivist approach suggests that if the study were to be repeated – in the same context, with the same methods, and with the same participants – similar results would be obtained. However, the changing nature of human behaviour can be problematic in achieving this (Shenton, 2004). To address dependability, Shenton (2004) suggests that the processes within the study should be reported in enough detail to enable a future researcher to repeat the work, “if not necessarily to gain the same results” (p. 71). Therefore, the research design should be viewed as a “prototype model” (Shenton, 2000, p. 71). For this reason, the findings of this thesis are divided into two sections. Chapter 6 is organised around the interview and focus group questions accounting for the responses with follow-up questions. This chapter makes extensive use of quotes to allow the voices of the participants to be the primary focus. Chapter 7 summarises these findings, by making comparisons and identifying the major themes that emerged. This purpose of this approach is to allow the reader to understand how the interview transcripts were analysed and how the themes were established.

Summary

This chapter described the methodology and research design for this project. It discussed the rationale for the use of qualitative research methodology and why this

approach was chosen as being suited to answering the research questions. It gives a detailed description of the sample, participants, and participant recruitment procedures along with practical considerations when recruiting children and young people. This information is provided in enough detail so that the study could be replicated. The data analysis was described using a diagram of a thematic network to illustrate the approach used. The chapter discussed the importance of trustworthiness and validity in qualitative research and how this study has sought to address these issues. The following chapter will provide a description of the results using the voices of the participants to illustrate the findings.

Chapter 6: Research Results

It's not just this wishy-washy peace, love, and goats milk hippy approach. (Mr G, independent secondary school teacher and research participant)

Introduction

The findings of the research are presented in this chapter. The first section of the chapter gives an overview of the demographic data from the schools, teachers, and students. This chapter seeks to address the applicability of the research, as described in Chapter 5. Hence, the reporting of the data in this chapter clearly links the interview and focus group questions with the data collected, thereby allowing a comparison with the thematic summary in Chapter 7. This approach enables the reader to follow the chain of logic from justification of the methodology, to the data collection and analysis, and through to the conclusions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, the primary purpose of this chapter is to present the voices of the participants, both teachers and students, who worked or attended a school where restorative practices was being used as a whole-school approach at the time of the study.

Schools

Three primary and three secondary schools were recruited from government, Catholic and independent sectors. The schools ranged in size from 300 students to 1,350 students, with between 22 and 170 teachers. The schools had diverse ethnic populations, with languages other than English accounting for between 5–50% of the student population. All the schools had adopted restorative practices at least five years prior to the study. All except one of the schools had an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage score over the mean of 1000. The Index of Community Socio-Educational

Advantage is a scale of socio-educational advantage that is computed for each school. A value on the scale assigned to a school is the averaged level for all students in the particular school. The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage does not describe or reflect the wealth of parents of students in a particular school or the wealth or resources of that school (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014). A summary of the school demographics is shown in table 6.1.

Table 6.1

School Demographics

School Pseudonym	Year since RP introduced in the school	Number of students in school	Number of staff (including administration)	% of non-English speaking students	School ICSEA ²
Primary school A	More than 5	1,148	150	14	1165
Primary school B	At least 5	293	27	5	1,168
Primary school C	More than 5	335	29	10	985
Secondary school D	At least 5	Approx. 1,450	260	35	1,086
Secondary school E	More than 5	Approx. 700	Approx. 60	13	1,002
Secondary school F	At least 5	2,300 (whole school) 180 (middle school)	25–30	50	1,086

Note. ICSEA = Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage; RP = restorative practices.

² The Index of Community Social-Educational Advantage is information on family background provided to schools directly by families, including parental occupation, and the school education and non-school education levels they achieved. In some cases, where this information is not available, the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage uses Australian Bureau of Statistics census data on family background to determine a set of average family characteristics for the districts where students live. The mean Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage is 1,000 (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014).

School staff. A total of 14 teachers (11 female and three male) participated in one-on-one interviews. These numbers reflected the proportion of male and female teachers in Australian schools (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). All staff participants were teachers, except for one participant who was primarily a pastoral carer and school psychologist. Teachers had between 5 and 20 years of teaching experience. All teachers had participated in a minimum of 1 day of training on restorative practices but were not required to advocate the use of restorative practices. Seven of the teachers had received the initial training 5 or more years prior, but had received professional development since their initial training. Five teachers had not received any professional development since their initial training; three of these were from government schools. Table 6.2 shows the teacher demographic information.

Table 6.2

Summary of Teacher Participants

Teacher	School sector	Role	Years teaching	Years teaching at current school	Onsite school psychologist /counsellor/wellbeing coordinator	Training in restorative practices		
						Formal training days	Professional development	Years elapsed since initial training
Teacher Ms A	Government	Teacher and director of wellbeing	25+	8	No	2 days	Yes	>5
Teacher Ms B	Independent	Director of pastoral care	0	13	Yes	2 days	Yes	6
Teacher Ms C	Independent	Teacher	25+	6	Yes	1 day	Yes	6
Teacher Ms D	Catholic	Student wellbeing	25+	1	No	1 day	No	<1
Teacher Ms E	Catholic	Teacher	5	5	No	1 day	No	1–2
Teacher Ms F	Catholic	Teacher	20+	6	No	1 day	Yes (various ongoing)	6
Teacher Mr G	Independent	Teacher and pastoral care	9	8	Yes	2 days	Yes (8 workshops)	6

Teacher	School sector	Role	Years teaching	Years teaching at current school	Onsite school psychologist /counsellor/wellbeing coordinator	Training in restorative practices		
						Formal training days	Professional development	Years elapsed since initial training
Teacher Ms H	Catholic	Teacher and wellbeing support	20+	2	Yes	4 days	Yes	5–6
Teacher Ms I	Catholic	Teacher and wellbeing support	10	1	Yes	4 days	Yes	3
Teacher Mr J	Government	Teacher	18	6	No	1 day	No	4–5
Teacher Ms K	Government	Teacher	20+	5–6 years	No	2 days	No	4
Teacher Ms L	Government	Teacher	20+	4	No	2 days	No	4
Teacher Mr M	Independent	Head of middle school and classroom teacher	10+	10+	Yes	2 days	Yes	5
Teacher Ms N	Independent	Classroom teacher and head of middle school	10	10	Yes	2 days	Yes	4–5

Forty students, from Year 6 in the primary schools and Year 9 in the secondary schools, participated in six focus groups. Of the primary student participants, 11 were male and 10 were female with ages ranging from 10 to 12 years. Of the secondary students, eight were male and 11 were female; all aged 15 years old except for two students who were 14 years old. Of the student participants, 52% were female ($n = 21$) and 48% were male ($n = 19$). Table 6.3 presents the number of male and female participants by school.

Table 6.3

Number of Male and Female Student Participants by School and School Type

School pseudonym	School type	Males	Females	Total
Primary school A	Independent	5	3	8
Primary school B	Catholic	4	3	7
Primary school C	State	2	4	6
Secondary school D	Catholic	3	2	5
Secondary school E	State	0	9	9
Secondary school F	Independent	5	0	5
Total		19	21	40

School sample. To gather rich and meaningful qualitative data, this research focused on a small group of schools that were actively using restorative practice. Two schools, one primary and one secondary from each of the government, Catholic, and independent sectors were invited to participate, providing a total of six schools (see Table 6.3).

Interview Results

This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section in this chapter describes the data obtained from teacher interviews. It reports the interview questions and is organised under the headings of demographic information, training, implementation,

impact, application, dealing with parents, sustainability, and commitment. The second section of this chapter describes the student focus group findings and is organised under the headings of school in general, my teacher, and learning to get along with others.

The teachers who were interviewed did not necessarily teach the students who participated in the focus groups because this was not one of the inclusion criteria (see Chapter 5). As such, it is not possible to relate the findings of the teachers directly to the students in their school, and similarly, it is not possible to presume that the students were speaking about any of the teachers who participated in the study.

Direct quotations are used throughout both of the results chapters. All participants are referred to by their pseudonyms and all identifying details have been removed. However, to provide context to the quotes, demographic data for each participant is indicated throughout as follows:

- Teachers – title (Ms or Mr to indicate gender), pseudonym, school sector (Catholic, government, or independent), and school type (primary or secondary). For example, Ms A (GSS) to indicate a female government secondary school teacher.
- Students – gender (male or female), school sector (Catholic, government, or independent), and school type (primary or secondary). For example, male (CPS) to indicate a male Catholic primary school student.

Over a 4-month period during 2012 (August to November), the 14 teachers and 40 school students shared their experiences of school life and, particularly the use of school discipline and restorative practices. Participants did not receive any form of reimbursement for their time, other than morning or afternoon tea for students to share as a group. It is not known if the participants valued the opportunity to share their views. Although the question topics were primarily related to school, school discipline, and the use of

restorative practices, the students openly shared information about their lives and themselves. Some of the students, particularly the male secondary students, were frugal in their descriptions, which tended to lack the rich, candid expressions of their female counterparts. However, the students appeared to enjoy the experience of being allowed time away from their regular class to participate. The participation by the teachers and students was at the discretion of the school principal, and as such it was not possible to have direct control over the representativeness of the sample.

Section One: Teachers

The interview questions for teachers sought to explore their perceptions of behaviour management and the use of restorative practices. Most of the teachers spoke openly and expansively about their experiences, but two of the teachers were reluctant and hesitant in providing information. As a result, the assurance of confidentiality regarding their responses was reiterated several times throughout their interviews. For ease of understanding, the findings in this section are reported under the following main headings that reflect the interview guide and are aimed to orientate the reader to the findings:

1. Training;
2. Implementation and support;
3. Impact
 - a. On student behaviour,
 - b. On teachers,
 - c. Advice would you give to other schools;
4. Application
 - a. Use of the approach,
 - b. Use of punitive discipline;
5. Parents;

6. Sustainability

- a. Challenges faced,
- b. Future challenges.

Demographic information. This part of the interview comprised questions that asked for background information about the teachers' work experience, including their role or job title, and the number of years teaching within the school. The demographic profile for the teachers is shown in (see Table 6.2) and is not elaborated on further here because these responses were not directly relevant to the research questions or study aims. The format of responses to the interview questions below follow the teacher interview guide (see in Appendix C).

Interview questions.

Training. This part of the interview comprised two questions with prompts to understand the degree or extent of the training received by teachers on restorative practices. In addition, the questions sought to understand the degree of commitment to the approach by the school leadership and the school community.

Interview question 1: Can you tell me about the training you received on restorative practices? (e.g. how long ago did you complete this and who conducted the training?)

All the teachers had some formal training on restorative practices, which ranged from a single workshop (e.g. "about a half a day induction" [Ms B, IPS]) to multiple sessions over a period of time (e.g. "four separate days, so it was quite spread out" [Ms I, CSS]). A few teachers reported that after the formal training they had received informal training such as learning "bits and pieces at staff meetings" (Mr J, GPS). All except one teacher had received restorative practices training at least 4 years prior to the study, either at their current school or the one prior. The individual who had received recent training had not been exposed to the restorative practices approach before the training. Two-thirds of

the teachers received training from a private practitioner and all those in Catholic schools received training from the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne or a private practitioner.

Interview question 2: What did you think of the training?

Half of the teachers felt the training and the restorative practices approach matched their own personal values and style of handling situations. A small number said it was practical and made sense. A few teachers identified some issues in the training. One teacher said, “I found that [the training was] a bit overwhelming” (Ms D, CPS). She attributed this to the advanced nature of the course, where there was a high degree of assumed knowledge about the approach. Another teacher identified that, for some people, the main issue when adopting the approach may be a lack of understanding. He felt that many teachers may not realise during training “how valuable it [the approach] was going to be at that point until three years after” (Mr G, ISS). In other words, following the training, the value of the approach may not affect the school community until some years later.

Implementation. The questions in this section sought to explore the reason behind implementation of restorative practices in the school community, how it had been supported, and if the use of the practice had changed over time.

Interview questions 1: Were you at the school when restorative practices were introduced? If yes, what happened when it was implemented, why was it implemented and what were your initial thoughts? If no, do you know or understand why it was introduced?

Over half of the teachers interviewed were employed by the school at the time of implementation of restorative practices. For those who were employed at the time of implementation, two distinct reasons were given regarding their understanding of why the approach was introduced. One reason was that it was introduced to address a behavioural or school culture issue. As one teacher explained, “the punitive approach wasn’t working ... we had issues that were quite serious, issues that were difficult to resolve” (Ms

H, CSS). The second reason was that one or more people in the school had heard about the approach and believed it would benefit their school community.

A small number of teachers who were employed during the implementation phase were not aware or had no understanding of why restorative practices was implemented. The teachers who were employed at their school after implementation of restorative practices were not aware of the reason why the approach was implemented in their school. The staff who were new to their school were informed about restorative practices during their recruitment and at commencement at the school. They were advised that use of restorative practices was an expectation of everyone within the school community and that behaviour was managed based on restorative principles. One new teacher to the school describes her experience as “everyone just did it so it was how you deal with situations” (Ms E, CPS).

Interview question 2: What sort of support did you receive during the implementation phase? What sort of support have you received since?

All the teachers interviewed felt that the main support during and following implementation of restorative practices came from within the school community, particularly the school principal, assistant principal, and wellbeing or welfare team. Three teachers acknowledged that they receive additional support from external sources, either the Catholic Education Office Melbourne or a private restorative practitioner such as the person or people who conducted their initial training. Over half of the teachers spoke of the value of being part of a team who “were each other’s support” (Ms H, CSS) and being able to discuss concerns as a group where “people would air concerns or issues that had arisen and it would get discussed at a staff meeting” (Mr J, GPS).

Impact. In this section, questions sought to understand the impact that the use of restorative practices had on student behaviour, the school community, and teachers.

Interview questions 1: How has restorative practices changed the behaviour of the children in the school? Can you give examples?

All teachers identified either changes or improvements in student behaviour as a result of using restorative practices. Teachers identified better conflict resolution and improved relationships between students and also between teachers and students. One teacher said, “I think the relationships between students and staff are better” (Mr M, ISS).

Students reflecting on, or being aware of, their own behaviour and an increased awareness of other’s feelings was another primary finding that emerged from the teacher interviews. One teacher explained how students “reflect more deeply on their behaviour and the consequences of it” (Ms I, CSS). This comment was supported and elaborated on by another teacher who explained how the students have learned the restorative practices ways of behaving since the beginning of their schooling, meaning she “doesn’t have to do a lot of restoratives because my children came up from prep. They’re aware of how their actions affect others” (Ms K, GPS). All teachers identified other positive results such as a calmer classroom, less friction, better communication, and the ability of students to resolve their own issues.

Interview Question 2: In what way has restorative practices made a difference in your school for teachers?

All except one teacher identified positive differences in the teaching staff following the introduction of restorative practices in the school community. The overwhelming difference was in the quality of the relationships, such as greater “respect,” people “getting along,” and more effective “communication” or “conversations”. Teachers felt there was better collegial support, and the use of restorative practices gave them confidence to deal with any behaviour issues they faced. Mr J (GPS) could not identify any positive differences and felt that there was “a divide through the staff.” He believed that “some people that think it’s the bees’ knees and some who think it is an absolute joke.” Another

teacher felt that some teachers had found the process challenging because it had “pushed them in directions they are not comfortable with” (Ms B, IPS).

Interview Question 3. What advice would you give to other school communities who wish to implement restorative practices?

All the teachers would recommend the restorative practices to other school communities and were encouraging of any school community who was seeking to adopt the approach. There were two main pieces of advice. First, they emphasised the importance of training and professional development for all staff prior to implementation. Second, it is important to ensure that the school community explored the best way to implement the approach prior to adopting it. All teachers recommended a whole-school approach as the best method so that there is a “shared vision”. Other advice included “visit other schools” that have already implemented the approach (Mr M, ISS), “be reflective of your own childhood” (Ms F, CPS) and “get the kids [students] involved as much as possible” (Ms I, CSS).

Application. The questions in this section sought to explore how teachers put the restorative practices approach into practice, what they did, and how they used it. In addition, the questions sought to explore what other forms of discipline teachers used and what the strengths and weakness of each were.

Interview questions 1: Can you tell me about some of the restorative practices techniques you use in the classroom? Can you give examples?

The main technique that all teachers spoke of using within their classroom was circle time. Circle time was used regularly, but their definition of regular varied from daily to weekly sessions. All teachers spoke of using circle time, not only as a method of communication and for students to “articulate how they are feeling,” but also to resolve issues as they occurred. Some teachers spoke of using circle time at the commencement of the school year. For example, “we come up with our own norms of behaviour in our

classroom, with a written agreement being drawn up to reflect those agreed rules, which is referred back to during the course of the year” and “we would say I don’t think we’re following our norms of behaviour ... so we need to reflect”.

Although the teachers often instigated the use of restorative chats and circle time, both as reactive and preventive measures, many also spoke of how students would approach them and ask for a restorative chat. For example, “we need to have a circle and they’d go off and tell her [the pastoral worker] that then she’d organise that with them, and they’d have it out in the circle and they’d be fine, but they recognise in themselves that they needed to have a discussion and obviously needed an adult to lead it.” Not only were restorative chats or conversations used for student issues, but they were also used for issues between students and teachers, and between teachers. Many of the teachers spoke about the importance of being a role model for the students and ensuring that they demonstrated the use of restorative language and approaches to students, for example, “no raised voices” (Mr M, ISS).

Three teachers spoke about how they achieved consistency in their approach and modelled behaviour to the students during yard duty. They spoke of carrying lanyards with information on restorative practices. “It had the key questions on it which was my source because I’d lift that up and it would run me through the procedure. The lanyards acted as a reminder of the process when dealing with conflicts and assisted with confidence for the teachers in using the techniques.”

All secondary school teachers and one primary school teacher spoke of using formal restorative conferences, although these were used rarely. One secondary school teacher spoke of how these were “very scripted but powerful” (Ms A, GSS). Mr G (ISS) spoke of how no-blame conferences were only used for serious issues such as bullying or assault, with a subsequent agreement being written into a formal contract. Ms C (IPS) gave

an account of a situation when a restorative conversation was used to resolve a bullying issue. She explains:

A Year 5 girl was being teased on the school bus going home ... the child who was perceived as the perpetrator was spoken to. He admitted it straight away. [He said] "Yes I do those things." He could see that it was causing her harm. [The girl was asked] "what do you think needs to happen for you to move forward?" She said she wanted to get on the bus, sit anywhere and not feel afraid that something was going to happen. The perpetrator agreed that he could make her feel comfortable by perhaps looking her in the eye, smiling, and keep walking. He said he didn't have any reason for doing it, he just was getting some sort of pleasure from the fact others were laughing. He just didn't see that what he was doing was actually causing her grief.

Interview question 2: Are there any occasions when you use punitive approaches to discipline? Why or why not?

Punitive approaches were described as being used along with restorative approaches. Teachers described how punitive approaches were used when "behaviour wasn't changing" (Ms A, GSS) or when "all else fails" (Mr M, ISS). One situation was explained in detail by Ms I (CSS):

... his behaviour was off the Richter scale ... at one stage he swore at me ... I remained calm and said "I'm really not happy with how you are responding this morning. I think I would appreciate if you could finish your activity in the next room." He burst into tears because he knew he had done something wrong. I took him to the next room and it is punitive to do that to a child because it was ostracising him, but then I went back to the class and did a circle when he was out of the circle. I wanted to articulate to them that they understood why he was

removed. It wasn't so much punishment, but rather I wanted to explain to them that this type of behaviour is not tolerated and you don't answer back to your teacher, just as you don't your Mum or Dad or your Granny ... [I said] when he comes back it's a clean slate and we start over.

Secondary school teachers described how punitive measures tended to be used for lateness and uniform infringements. These punitive measures were often a detention that involved cleaning up the school grounds. The reason for using such measures was because students "know the rules" (Ms I, CSS).

Most of the teachers explained how restorative conversations usually occurred as a part of any detention or suspension for issues other than uniform, homework, or lateness. A part of this restorative conversation often resulted in an agreed consequence in the form of a written document. One teacher explained that was no direct punitive punishment used at his school, but parents were informed of issues via an incident book that recorded the information and this was sent home with the student. The parent was required to acknowledge the issue by signing the book and returning it.

In addition, the findings showed that punitive measures tended to be used as a primary means of discipline for children who were considered difficult due to issues such as learning, language, or behaviour difficulties (e.g. autism). Some the teachers expressed how children with severe Asperger's syndrome lacked remorse or empathy, and this often resulted in the teachers favouring an internal suspension that involved supervision within the school but away from the classroom rather than a restorative option.

Dealing with parents. This section sought to explore how teachers communicated with parents regarding behaviour issues and if they had encountered any issues with parents using restorative practices to manage behaviour.

Interview questions 1: How often do you need to speak with parents at school about their child's behaviour issues? For example, what happens if their child is the bully compared with if their child is the victim of bullying?

All teachers had, at some point, spoken to parents about behaviour issues that were addressed using restorative practices techniques. All teachers described the challenges they faced in managing parent expectations regarding behaviour management. The main issue and challenge that teachers faced was dealing with parents who wanted a punitive outcome or "justice" (Mr J, GPS), especially if their child was the victim of an incident. Another teacher explained how "a few parents want to see something punitive. So if their child's been hurt, they want to see that the other child had been punished in some way" (Ms K, GPS).

Some teachers described how parents believed that restorative practices were too lenient, that "they get off easy," and failed to understand the reason behind using the approach. As one teacher explained, "I feel in their mind [the parents] they're thinking this kid done this and you're having a conversation" (Ms A, GSS). This response was considered to be due to a lack of understanding of restorative practices. One primary teacher explained that many parents "don't completely understand the restorative process," but they "feel comfortable that we won't let things go" (Ms C, IPS). Sometimes the lack of parental understanding was considered to be due to "not growing up with it and they revert back to the way they [the parents] were at school and its respect for teacher, and don't step out of line or there will be a major consequence" (Ms E, CPS). Some parents were described as having little interest in how the school managed issues because they "dropped their kids at the gate and pick them up at the end of the day [they] don't want to know about it" (Ms F, CPS).

Although all teachers felt helping parents understand the approach could at times be challenging, it was generally agreed that "most parents, when we explain the process to

them, [are] very, very happy” (Ms N, IPS). Another teacher described how she explains to parents that restorative practices is “our [school] philosophy” and her approach was to phone parents to involve them when a situation had occurred (Ms B, IPS). She described how most parents are happy with the approach because they want their child (either victim or perpetrator) to be listened to. Half of the teachers mentioned a parent information evening during the implementation phase to inform parents of the approach that the school was adopting.

Sustainability and commitment. There were two questions that sought to understand the sorts of challenges that teachers and the school community faced when restorative practices were introduced and how those challenges were overcome to sustain the approach in the long term.

Interview questions 1: What sort of challenges did your school have to overcome (that you know of) when restorative practices were introduced? What do you see as being the main future challenge in using and sustaining restorative practices in your school community?

Both primary and secondary school teachers identified challenges they faced during the implementation and described how many of these continued to be challenging, requiring ongoing commitment to ensure sustainability of the approach. The main challenges were those related to *people* (students, other teachers, self, and parents), creating and improving *knowledge* with the help of training, and addressing various *other issues* such as time.

People. Overwhelmingly all, except one teacher, mentioned people as the greatest challenge in using and sustaining restorative practices. Ten of the teachers felt they knew a colleague who wasn’t “on board” with the approach (Ms K, GPS). One reason offered was that it was “more difficult for some staff” (Mr M, ISS), especially for those who had been at the school for some time or were a “bit more established in their ways” (Ms A, GSS).

Ms H (CSS) described the challenges faced by teachers when the leadership team sought to implement the approach in their school community. She said:

When the vice principal and the head of wellbeing came back into the school it wasn't translated in an appropriate manner. It was actually restorative practices introduced in a punitive manner. "You're going to do this" and it didn't work and it actually [took] two years to really get everyone on board because people were told ... "you will be doing this" and they went "doing what? what are you talking about?" And it was like ... "we are going to do this and you're going to have this conversation and that's going to resolve the problem."

Two of the teachers acknowledged how they felt adopting the approach was personally challenging, "I found it challenging to think you have to change your whole persona in order to get a better result" (Mr G, ISS), and adopting the approach "created a lot of concern and a lot of angst amongst the staff because it was so different ... and you've got to adjust" (Mr J, GPS).

There was also a perception that student behaviour was challenging during the implementation phase and was a factor that needed to be addressed to sustain the approach. One teacher explains, "the kids took it as a golden ticket to misbehave" because there was a tendency by staff to "think it meant there was no consequences" (Mr J, GPS). Other teachers saw this as students testing the boundaries, and behaviour escalated often because many teachers were not following up after a restorative chat had addressed an issue.

Three of the teachers described the challenges of educating parents about the approach and being able to ensure that parents understood that the process would take time and that teachers needed to ensure parents would "realise how valuable it was going to be" in the future and there was not going to be an immediate change in behaviour (Mr G, ISS).

The level of understanding by parents depended on how they see things (e.g. parental communication style and conflict resolution).

Knowledge. One of the main issues regarding sustainability of the approach was staff turnover because of retirement and resignations. This had two implications: first, new staff, including new graduates, required training, and second, new staff had the benefit of creating “an injection of enthusiasm.” Although new staff were being positive and embracing the approach, the challenge was ensuring that the new staff had access to professional development to support them, get them on board, and keep them on board. This was important to ensure there was consistency. Not only was training and professional development important for new staff, it was also considered vital for existing staff. This was important so that more teachers within the school had knowledge of restorative practices and this would ensure that the whole school was on board rather than a situation where “one staff member [is] doing a restorative meeting with some kids in one lesson, and they [the students] go on [to another class], the same behaviour is exhibited in another lesson and they’re treated in a punitive manner” (Ms H, CSS). When there was a lack of knowledge, it caused confusion for the teachers as they tried to follow the format without being “100% clear on what my role was” (Ms D, CPS). When training or professional development increased knowledge in teachers, it was described as a “light-bulb moment” (Ms H, CSS) that helped staff to separate the prior punitive method from the restorative approach being adopted.

Other. There were several other issues that individual teachers identified as being potential challenges in the sustainability of the approach. Some teachers identified a lack of time as an important issue. Ms K (GPS) described this as “you’re doing a bit of restorative and the language and you’ve lost 30–45 minutes every day and that’s a lot when you’ve only got 25 hours in the week and the government says you have to do your five hours of maths and five hours of language ... it doesn’t add up.”

Teachers also acknowledged that adopting restorative practices and changing school culture can take time. As a result, one teacher felt “we’ve got a long way to go ... there’s a lot more work around embedding of it, to be a real way we do things” (Ms A, GSS). Several teachers felt that the best way to address and sustain the approach was to have all school staff on board and be consistent “in the use of the approach across the whole school”. Another way to sustain the approach was through ongoing learning, knowing that embedding the practices would take time and that “different teaching cycles” and “different cohorts” of students required ongoing learning for teachers. A small number of teachers mentioned that there needed to be an allocated budget for this and sometimes financial resources were not available because the school community needed to find its own source of funding to attend professional development.

Two of the teachers in the study identified technology as one of the greatest challenges to the sustainability of restorative practices. They felt that there was a need to ensure that their use of restorative practices could adapt to the increased use of social media and the internet, particularly how these technologies are used by students and affect student behaviour such as cyberbullying. These challenges require school documentation and teacher education to be kept up-to date.

Section Two: Students

The following section describes the findings from the student focus groups. The first part of the student focus group guide aimed to assist students to orientate themselves with the topics being discussed. Each section of questions included a general ice-breaker question (see Appendix B) to allow students the opportunity to become familiar with the group and the format. The responses of these ice-breaker questions are not directly relevant to the research aims and the responses are therefore not included in this section.

Student responses and interactions tended to digress substantially from the questions being asked. The semi-structured format of the questions was designed to be flexible (see Appendix B). As such, it is not possible to directly report questions and answers to those questions, as in the prior section on teacher findings. For ease of understanding, this section is reported under three main headings, with sub-headings that reflect the focus group guide and are aimed to orientate the reader to the findings:

7. School in general

- a. School rules,
- b. What happens when the rules are broken?

8. My teacher

- a. Dealing with issues,
- b. My teacher's qualities;

9. Getting along with others

- a. What and from whom do you learn this?
- b. If you were school principal? (How would you deal with issues)?

School in general. Initially, students were asked about life at school, what they understood the school rules were, what happened when those school rules were broken, and what they thought of the way that type of situation was managed by their teachers and the school community.

Students identified school rules as being either physical or social. The male students from both primary and secondary schools emphasised the physical rules. The primary school boys focused on safety aspects such as “not allowed to tackle [another person]” (male, CPS), “no running through the courtyard” (male, GPS), and “no hurting each other” (male, IPS). The male secondary students commented on other physical rules such as “no gum” and “no phones” in class.

All students commented on their school uniform and appearance as a main school rule. This ranged from skirts being “a reasonable height” (female, IPS) to wearing hair “up in a ponytail or bun” not “down and sexy” (female, CSS). Appearance and the wearing of uniform was a contentious issue for some students because they felt that “teachers get to wear anything to school and you have to look respectable, but then they can just rock up in a singlet” (male, GPS).

All students mentioned social rules and the school’s expectations of them. One of the main responses was respect towards other people, for example, “all members of the school community are required to show respect” (male, GSS). A part of this respect was to ensure you “treat others how you wish to be treated” (female, CPS) and not be “disruptive” in class. However, one of the focus groups identified issues in their school where “different teachers have different rules” (female, GPS) and “we can’t do anything right in our grade, it’s always wrong” (male, GPS).

All students were aware of their school rules and they were also aware of the consequence of breaking the school rules. Some of the consequences that students described involved a “written reflection” (female, GSS). For primary students, this was described as a behaviour sheet and they were expected to “write what you did wrong, how you can improve and why you did it” (male, CPS). One female student (GPS) spoke of the teachers getting them to “write an apology letter.” Students also spoke of their teachers talking to them following an incident or misbehaviour. As one student explains, “He’ll [the teacher] say what you’ve done wrong and how you can do it, how your behaviour should be” (male, IPS).

Detentions were used at four of the schools: one primary and three secondary. In one primary school, detention was used for disruptive behaviour. In secondary schools, detentions were handed down for uniform infringement and involved “picking up rubbish,”

usually outside school hours. One male government secondary student commented that it would be a “guaranteed detention if you are late to class.”

Students reported mixed beliefs on the use of these consequences. When teachers required students to reflect on their behaviour, the students believed “it’s good to make kids reflect on what they did” (male, CPS), and this helped them to challenge their thinking: “It helps you reflect on a lot of things. You do one right after you do it [the misbehaviour] and then one the next day and then you get to see your attitude has changed” (male, ISS). One student expressed concern about “how my mum and dad would react to it [being told about his behaviour], if they’d be upset” (male, CPS). This prompted some students into better behaviour because they didn’t want to get “into trouble,” which resulted in following the school rules. A handful of students spoke about being dissatisfied with the punitive consequences handed down. One Catholic secondary school girl felt that the use of detentions “just basically sweeps it under the rug and hoping that it will go away.”

My teacher. To orient students to thinking about their teacher and their teachers’ attributes, they were initially asked an ice-breaker question (see Appendix B), which was to describe their favourite teacher. Following this, students were asked to describe how their teacher dealt with issues or problems – both personal issues and general problems – within the classroom. While discussing their teacher’s management of problems or issues, students were asked to reflect on the qualities their teacher displayed, particularly how they treated other people and what the student learned from them.

Dealing with issues or problems. Students across all schools described the main approach used by their teacher or teachers to deal with issues was through a conversation or “restorative chat” (female, GPS). This was described by one student who said when there was an issue within the classroom between students, the teachers would “get a conversation going. They’d sit you down with the other person who’s been bullying you”

(male, GSS). The students considered this a positive experience: “You get like pulled into the coordinator’s office and you just talk about it and it’s really calm and it’s really personal, it’s friendly, and they bring the other people in” (female, CSS). Talking was also seen to problem solve and clear up any potential misunderstanding which may have occurred, as one female student, (CSS) explains:

A lot of the time it’s a misunderstanding, someone has said something but it’s actually not true, they’ve misheard words. In other schools, you might just quickly get into trouble and that’s it, but when you talk it through that’s when you uncover the mistakes that have been made and you know what happens and then that’s easier to fix.

Students, particularly those in primary school, described how they were confident that speaking to their teachers would help resolve any issues they faced. One student said, “I’d talk to [my teacher] ... she’s just good at solving and she just gets it” (female, CPS). Another student said, “I know if something happens to me, like if someone starts bullying me, I know it’s going to be handled well” (female, IPS).

Involving the teacher in a situation was an opportunity for the teacher to talk to all those involved and build a picture or “get the story” of events (male, GSS). Students felt it was important that teachers could “get the other person’s side of the story so then they can compare” (male, IPS). Although teacher involvement was often seen as beneficial, one female student (GPS) believed the quality of managing and resolving the situation depended on the individual teacher. She said:

A good teacher will ask for both sides of the story first and if there are witnesses they will ask the witnesses and they will go with that side of the story. But if you have like a bad teacher then they will go like ... “say sorry to each other and move on,” but it still goes on because sorry doesn’t really do much – it is just words.

Other issues and how these were managed by teachers were raised by several students across from all groups. They believed that the way their teacher managed issues could or would prevent them from seeking help from them. These concerns included: the teacher being ineffective at resolving the issue, distrust of the teacher, and a belief the problem may get worse by involving the teacher.

The teacher being ineffective in their use of restorative practices to resolve student problems was the main issue students identified. This was reported to occur when the initial conversation did not actually resolve the problem, so it continued to exist or there was a lack of follow-up. This appeared to be of concern to the primary school students. One student described how “they [the teachers] kind of just talk about it. This year we had an issue between some people and we sorted it out and everything, but I don’t think it’s really sorted out, it’s still there” (female, CPS). Another female student (GPS) said that her teacher was ineffective at managing issues because she had been told to “apologise to each other and then they [the teacher] walk off and 5 minutes later it happens again”. Another student felt her teachers were ineffective because “some teachers haven’t really scratched under the surface they’ll [the students involved] just say sorry and it doesn’t really fix it” (female, CPS).

When the teacher was perceived as ineffective at managing an issue, some students were left feeling frustrated. As one female Catholic primary student explained: “If you’re made to apologise first when you feel that they should be apologising to you and then they just accept your apology but don’t apologise back, that’s really annoying.” Another male school student expressed his frustration at the way his teacher handled a situation, saying “the bit that really annoyed me was the kid we did it to was laughing at it [the consequence] ... I deserved it but the thing that they didn’t even ask the other kids ‘are you ok?’ or anything” (male, CPS). Other students spoke about an inconsistent approach to

managing behaviour depending on the teacher and that some teachers “think they are right and students wrong” (male, GPS).

A lack of trust towards teachers was a minor theme that was reported by a few students. The secondary school students tended to be more direct in their feelings about trust, whereas the primary students spoke of a lack of “fairness” or “favouritism,” which was an attribute that they didn’t like in their teacher. These feelings led to a distrust of the way their teacher managed situations. One male student (ISS) was clear about situations when he would not trust his teacher: “I don’t think we would really trust the teachers to keep a secret if you didn’t like another teacher. You’d trust them with things but because it was against another teacher you wouldn’t really trust them for that.”

Finally, one student expressed how she didn’t feel comfortable having her issues dealt with due to a fear it would escalate the issue. She explained that, “the probably biggest thing would be bullying, online or in the yard or anything like that, because sometimes you just don’t know what to do and you’re too scared to tell your parents or to stand up to the bully because you know it’s just going to get worse” (female, CPS).

My teacher’s qualities and what I learn. During this part of the focus groups, students elaborated on positive attributes of their relationship with their teacher and how that made them feel. One female student considered her relationship with her teacher to be “like a mum” who would “sit back and let you talk” (female, CSS). Students spoke of what they learned from their teacher, the positive ways their teacher behaved and what they learned from that behaviour.

Fun. The most common answer that all students gave was that their teacher made school fun. They saw this as a positive experience that enhanced their learning and created positive feelings towards school. One female student said her teachers “make it [school]

fun, they make you want to be here” (female, GSS). Another student (female IPS) explained how her teacher achieved a fun learning environment. She said:

Sometimes when our teacher wants us to get a point to us he tries to do it in a really fun and interesting way. So when we talk to the class and we constantly do it, instead of telling people – yelling at us and telling us to be quiet.

Students having fun with their teacher and feeling that learning with them was fun created greater respect and a positive regard towards their teachers. Students felt these teachers could “relate” to them and they were “like a friend” (male, ISS). These attributes showed students that “teachers aren’t just teachers, they’re real people as well and you can get along with your teachers and school can be fun” (female, GSS).

Practical skills. The second most common answer that students gave in this section was that their teachers demonstrated or taught them practical skills, for example, “teaching you to communicate with each other” (female, GSS). The primary school students spoke of how they were encouraged to take ownership of issues and try to resolve their problems on their own. One student (male, IPS) described how his teacher had taught him how to be understanding and gave him the skills to deal with difficult situations. He said. “if you don’t like someone, talk to them because when you watch kindergarten kids, if they don’t like what someone is doing to them they usually like hit them or push them into the fence or something and school teaches you to like verbally – not like swear at them but say ‘please stop.’”

Personal qualities. Finally, all students, but particularly secondary students, spoke of their teachers’ personal qualities and how their teachers instilled important values in them. They believed these skills would assist them in their future life. The qualities they identified were forgiveness (e.g. “the teachers don’t hold grudges. They give chances and

they're really considerate" [female, CSS]), being non-judgemental, a calm manner, being "firm but friendly" (male, ISS), and understanding.

Learning to get along with other people. Students were asked several questions (see Appendix B) about how they get along with others and who they learned this from. The overwhelming response from all students across was that they felt they learned this from their parents, "especially in younger years" (female, CSS), or from other family members such as siblings. One female student (CSS) believed that "the ground roots start at home."

There were several other comments about where students learned their social skills and how to get along with other people. These included comments specific to teachers, such as the values of the school and direct teaching such as a "peer mediation course" (male, GPS), through to people within the broader community, for example, "people walking around in public" (female, GPS), or "people that have lived through it" (male, CPS). One student (female, GSS) explained that she felt it was important to observe "people around you that you see ... [when] they treat people ... nicely and everyone loves that person and [you think] maybe if I'm nice to everyone, everyone will be nice to me." This was supported by another student who said she learned this from her "parents, the way they talk to each other, and the way our teachers interact with each other, basically just looking up on people and how everyone else acts to each other, how they treat each other" (female, IPS).

Many students acknowledged the role their teacher played in their lives but emphasised that "teachers can teach you how to act in the school environment where as parents teach you everywhere [else]." The all-male group of independent secondary school students spoke of the "college values" shaping the way they behaved, and this was the primary influence in the social skill development. Other comments included school activities such as "we also learn a bit from circle time" (male, IPS) and how the creation of

“classroom norms” were agreed ways of “how to behave” (female, CPS). This was considered positive because “it’s not the teacher setting things for us that we have to obey,” but they are rules that are “important to our class.”

One student felt that school was important to teach skills because she acknowledged that some people grew up with “parents that don’t care and aren’t role models.” She went on to say that this would “make it hard” (female, CSS). The ability to get along with other people was described at length by the group of male and female students from the government secondary school. These students spoke passionately about needing these skills to be able to “get along with people you’re working with,” and that if you can relate to other people then it would increase job prospects and the ability to sustain work. The skill of getting along with other people was considered a vital “life skill.”

If I were school principal. To identify whether the behaviour management or discipline methods currently used by the school staff were considered by the students as being ideal or the best way to manage situations, the students were asked the question: “If you were school principal, how would you deal with student misbehaviour?”

All students gave one main response to this question. They believed the best way to deal with student issues was to “talk about things,” “chat,” or “I would just sit them down and chat with them and do restorative chats.” Primary school students believed this was important because they felt necessary to encourage students to reflect on their actions or behaviours. One male student said he would “... sit them down and ask them why they did it and if they can explain a good enough reason” (male, GPS). Another reason students gave for talking things over was to ensure that the issue was understood by all those involved, with the aim of reducing future conflict. One student (male, GSS) explained why he thought this was a good idea. He said:

I'd get them together and have them talk about it. I guess yeah, it's not necessarily going to make them like each other but it should hopefully stop the conflict ... try and start a dialogue that hasn't been had between said students. Maybe someone's feeling a certain way or has misunderstood something that someone else has done and its unnecessary conflict and so you want to try and unearth some of those problems.

Talking to students was only considered beneficial if the person facilitating the conversation took the time to listen and did not make the student feel inferior. For example, "you don't act like you are better than them" (male, GSS) and you "don't be the one to talk all the time" (female, GSS). Th students believed this type of conversation could be done with an individual if they were the only person misbehaving, or as a group conversation with the class, such as through circle time, because "having circle time helps [to resolve and talk about issues]" (female, IPS).

A small number of students believed that the best way to manage student behaviour was through setting expectations and instilling values so they could "try and make kids care" (female, GSS). One group of students felt values could be taught by showing students how their current actions may result in future long-term consequences that could affect their life and future opportunities, with one student saying "having a long talk with them and take them to places and show them what they could end up being ... not having any money" (female, GSS).

Interestingly, all three of the secondary student groups and one of the primary school groups, described punitive discipline measures they would use to manage student behaviour if they were school principal. These included putting "all difficult students in one class" (female, GSS), removing them from the class if they were disruptive, and "kick them out [of the school community]" (male, ISS). One student (male, ISS) felt that

punitive punishment should only occur after having a talk and giving “warnings.”

Similarly, another student (male, GPS) said he would “personally do a normal restorative” and then give a detention or other consequence such as “no sport.” Handing out detentions was not the favoured option for any of the students. One female student commented that, “I don’t think sending them into detention just because of one slip-up or something happened. I don’t think that’s going to help” (female, CSS).

A small number of students believed that the most appropriate way to deal with issues was to involve parents, especially for repeat issues or severe issues. For example, “if they constantly keep doing it ... then maybe get the parents involved” (male, GSS) and “I’d have a talk with them [the student], send an email to their parent ... if it’s bad” (male, IPS).

The group of government secondary school students discussed a novel idea to manage problem behaviour. They felt that if they were school principal (or a teacher), they would engage the student in a sporting activity to facilitate a conversation. These students believed that this would create a comfortable situation where a student was likely to feel “in their zone.” This feeling of comfort would allow a natural conversation to occur so more probing questions could be asked. They believed this would be a successful method of addressing behaviour issues, especially for male students.

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed description of the interview and focus group findings under broad categories that summarise the interview questions. The chapter relied substantially on the direct words of the participants – teachers and students – to provide a rich and vivid account. The chapter shows that teachers and students had many similar and

contrasting views on school life and school discipline, including the use of restorative practices.

The following chapter will illustrate the key themes that emerged from the data and will discuss those themes in relation to the focus of this research: the impact that restorative practices has on the school community.

Chapter 7: Thematic Analysis

You can use this in your whole life, every life situation, restorative practices is a really helpful thing to use. (Female, government secondary school student and research participant)

Introduction

This chapter will present the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the teacher interviews and student focus groups from the six school communities that were involved in the study. The chapter synthesises and illustrates the similarities and differences in the findings. There are three main components of the analysis: (a) benefits, (b) challenges and issues, and (c) the way the challenges were overcome via mediating or sustaining factors. The supporting or sustaining influences are those that assist and promote the use of restorative practices in the school community. These components form the primary framework of this chapter to facilitate an understanding of the key mechanisms needed to build a best-practice approach for school communities. A small section of this chapter is devoted to discussing one teacher who was a deviant (or remarkable) case that emerged during the data analysis.

Thematic Analysis

As described in Chapter 5, participant data was interpreted using a constructivist theoretical framework. As such, it is acknowledged that the meanings attached to the experiences are constructed by the individuals who experienced the events. This means that the descriptions are not directly about the experience itself, but rather are a reflection of the meaning that the individual attaches to the event. Similar to Chapter 6, this chapter uses direct quotations from participants in the following manner:

- Teachers – title (to indicate gender), pseudonym, school sector (Catholic, government, or independent), and type of school (primary or secondary). For example, Ms A, GSS, indicates a female government secondary school teacher.
- Students – gender, school sector (Catholic, government, or independent), and type of school (primary or secondary). For example, male, CPS, indicates a male Catholic primary school student.

The chapter commences with an examination of the perceived benefits of restorative practices that emerged from the interviews and focus groups. Each school community had implemented restorative practices at least four years before the study, although the level or degree of teacher training varied. The students' exposure to restorative practices depended on when the approach was first introduced to them, for example, at the commencement of their school life or only since they have been attending secondary school (in which case the maximum would be three years exposure). The description provided in this chapter will include any similarities and differences in the reports of the students and teachers, as well as any differences between primary and secondary schools and the school type (Catholic, government, or independent).

Benefits

Both teachers and students from all school types could identify the broader benefits of restorative practices. In particular, they identified an increase in social skills that resulted in benefits to personal relationships and the overall school environment. There were five sub-themes that showed how the use of restorative practices affected student behaviour and built social skills. These were *harmony* (both personal and being part of a more harmonious environment), *empathy* for others, *awareness and accountability* (of one's own actions), *respectful relationships*, and *reflective thinking*. Each of these aspects

were described as being vital to learning, personal feelings, and values. All teachers agreed on the key themes depicted, but there were some differences between students.

Primary school students spoke in broad terms about their increase in social skills and having a general insight or awareness about their behaviour. Although similar themes were mentioned by secondary school students, the older students focused on why certain skills were important (e.g. having respect for others means they are more likely to respect you). Each of the key themes is described in the following section and illustrated in Figure 7.3.

Harmony

Both students and teachers described how the use of restorative practices gave them skills that promoted a more harmonious environment. Teachers described how the restorative practices framework gave them the skills to manage student behaviour in a calmer manner. As Ms H (CSS) said, “I deal with it [the behaviour] in a more calm manner, knowing that if I follow the process then we can have a good outcome.”

Teachers felt that restorative practices allowed more effective communication and this resulted in a more harmonious school community. Ms C (IPS) explained, “You don’t hear raised voices or that sort of thing as you walk through the corridor. It’s got a very warm feel about it and it’s very much a community-based school in that we have a strong sense of community.”

Both primary and secondary students reported similar beliefs. They identified how a calm teacher and a more harmonious school community helped them feel safe. As one female secondary student said, “them [the teachers and staff] being calm and understanding and stuff, that helps ... everyone is so genuinely nice and [they] make you feel safe.”



Figure 7.1. Benefits of using restorative practices.

One female government primary school student described how she felt a sense of community was built through peer mediation, with older students assisting younger ones: “One good thing about peer mediating is that the little kids trust you with their problems.” Not only did this create a feeling of a safer calmer school playground and provided reassurance to younger students, it also gave a sense of responsibility to older students. This concept was supported by a male government primary school student who acted as a restorative peer in the school playground. He explained that “sometimes you are dealing with one problem and another problem comes along, and you tell them to wait ... it’s a serious problem and then all these kids are coming around ... I think sometimes when you are trying to work out a big problem it can take all of lunch to get these kids to settle down.”

Empathy

When teachers were asked about the biggest impact restorative practices had on their school’s culture, the most common response was empathy. Ms N (IPS) described how she identified this by the way students spoke and the language they used: “I think the language ... they are aware of the language and the empathy ... they now talk more about the effect ... when you deal with them they are talking about how their behaviour is affecting others.” Mr M (ISS) supported this belief and described how restorative practices was “powerful in terms of developing empathy.”

Similarly, many of the students, in particular the female students (both primary and secondary), were able to identify their ability to empathise with others. One female Catholic secondary school student gave a definition of empathy: “It’s a two-way street so it’s the way you feel [you] might affect someone else or vice-versa.” Students offered examples of how they thought about other people in an empathetic way and why it was important to think of others in this way. One female student (CPS) said “it makes me upset

to see other people upset because no-one deserves to be put through bad times at school.” Another student explained her feelings in relationship to empathy: “They were calling her midget and pushing her around and stuff and it made us feel really bad; we really wanted to help her” (female, GSS). One male student (IPS) believed that showing empathy involved trying to understand another person’s perspective and not be influenced by rumours. He said, “give people a chance, don’t just go by rumours that you’ve heard about someone, like ‘that person’s not very good.’ Give them a chance and maybe you might become best friends in the end.”

Awareness and Accountability

Another key response from teachers was how the regular use of restorative practices in the classroom, in particular through circle time, created conversations that allowed students to build awareness of their own behaviour and take accountability for their actions. Ms H (CSS) described the change she saw in her group of students: “It would be the responsibility the kids take for their actions ... there’s a tendency for them to straight away stop and go ‘what [should I] have done in this situation?’ instead of always going ‘but she said this’, ‘but that teacher hates me,’ or whatever. You don’t get nearly as much. So less of that victim mentality.”

One male government secondary student supported this by explaining how teachers use circle time to help build this awareness: “When we’re really unsettled she’ll be like ‘all right, everyone in a circle’ and we all know [it’s time to behave better].” All students were able to explain why it was important for students to be aware of their behaviour. For example, one said, “Yeah, and how both of you can overcome it, the issues and what you can do in the future to prevent it from happening” (male, IPS). Sometimes building awareness occurred as a result of their teacher helping them to understand. As one female Catholic secondary school student explained: “I had a bit of a situation just recently in my

class, and a few other girls, and something [my teacher] helped me and a few friends work out that everyone is completely different. No matter what you do, you just ... it affects other people in different ways.”

Ms A (GSS) commented that the use of restorative practices as a means to challenge student thinking and make them accountable for their actions was challenging for students, especially when they were expected to acknowledge their mistakes. She explained that “I think, the most powerful thing I’ve seen about restorative practices ... is those kids having those awkward conversations ... they’re uncomfortable, out of their comfort zone. They squirm, its punishment enough.”

Respectful Relationships

A further benefit of restorative practices was building respect for everyone within the school community. Both primary and secondary students described how they learn from their experiences, and that observing other people behaving helped them distinguish between socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. In particular, students could identify the benefits of acting in prosocial ways when they witnessed these behaviours being demonstrated by their teachers. As one female independent primary school student said, “... the way they talk to each other and the way our teachers interact with each other, basically just looking up on people and how everybody else acts to each other ... how they treat each other.”

In addition, the students’ comments suggested that they valued a positive student–teacher relationship. Students were acutely aware of the need to respect their teachers, believing that if they treated their teacher with respect then their teacher would treat them in the same manner. For example, “... the teachers are all really nice to each other as well, and they treat each other with respect as well, and that teaches us to also do the same” (female, CSS). Ms I (CSS) said that she had more positive and respectful relationships with

colleagues since restorative practices were introduced, as well as with students: “I’ve always had good relationships, but I’ve found that my relationships with staff and students, I think, have become even more respectful.”

Teachers and students spoke of the use of circle time to develop respect and practise communication skills with each other. Ms C (IPS) said, “... the use of circle time [to] develop those open lines of communication and develop respect for all students, all people within the class and even across the class levels.” When the students were asked what they learned from circle time, they all gave similar responses. For example, one female Catholic secondary student said, “... respecting others. Just understanding where people come from.”

Thinking Reflectively

The final main benefit that emerged was *thinking*, particularly thinking in a reflective way. Both students and teachers were asked questions about relationships and relationship building. For students, this involved asking about life at school and within the school community. For teachers, the questions related to managing student behaviour.

All students described situations where they were encouraged to think in a reflective way, which generally involved having a conversation or meeting with their teacher to address issues. One male government primary student explained how his teacher used a restorative session to increase reflective thinking: “You hear the other side of the story, then you can hear what annoyed them and they can see what annoyed you, so then you can sort of see ...” Another student felt that restorative practices “helps you reflect on a lot of things” and enabled them [students] to “put themselves in someone else’s shoes.” A female student (CSS) felt this was important because “you need to be considerate of everyone ... you need to be aware that everyone has different feelings.”

Ms F (CPS) said that she could see how students were able to recognise and acknowledged their behaviour themselves: “They come in and you can just see them and go ‘is everything all right?’ and they’ll just say ‘I did this and I know I shouldn’t have.’”

Ms E (CPS) explained how she believed the use of restorative practices had, over time, increased students’ ability to think of others and this had led to sustained change. She said, “I don’t think they’d [the students] ever been forced to think about it [their behaviour] from the other person’s point of view. Whereas now, well I personally don’t have to do a lot of restoratives because my children have come up from prep. They’re aware of how their actions affect others.”

Building Skills

The five benefits were seen to collectively develop and build social skills, such as more effective communication and understanding. In particular, students spoke of how the skills they learned at school, especially through restorative practices, improved their social skills. As one female independent primary student explained, “it’s important to go to school because it teaches you social skills ... if you wagged you wouldn’t have any social skills.” One male government secondary student elaborated on this and said, “I think to do well you have to have [social] skills. Yeah, you need to be able to get along with people because if your boss hates you they’re not going to promote you.” The students were aware that they needed the skills to get along with other people, resolve conflict, and communicate effectively to build healthy relationships. Teachers made similar comments, explaining that conflict management and an increase in social skills were beneficial skills for students.

Both students and teachers could identify long-term benefits and believed that learning how to get along with other people was an invaluable life skill. For example, “... you can use in your whole life, every life situation, like restorative practices is a really

helpful thing to use” (female, GSS). A further benefit identified by teachers was the way in which restorative practices empowered students to take a proactive approach to dealing with issues as they arose. Some teachers described how students would identify an issue and ask their teacher to “facilitate the conversation” with those involved. This skill was also beneficial to the teachers because it meant the problem could be resolved before it escalated and required a higher level of intervention, such as a formal restorative conference.

In addition, teachers described skills they had personally developed as a result of using restorative practices approaches, such as being less likely to “jump to conclusions” and ensuring they understood the background to an incident. The teachers considered the approach to be good for “human relationships” and a natural way for them to deal with issues.

Facing the Challenges and Barriers

The following section primarily reports findings from the teachers regarding the challenges, barriers, and issues they faced. Students didn’t directly identify any challenges in relation to the implementation or sustainability of restorative practices in their school community. Instead, they offered other comments that supported the concerns raised by teachers and expressed their own beliefs about how some teachers overcame these challenges. Students’ comments are used throughout this section to support those findings.

Teachers identified two main challenges or themes with sub-themes. First, there were *institutional factors* that they felt they had little or no control over but were determined by institutional constraints. The sub-themes included *policies and procedures*, receiving *initial training* on the approach, and issues around time a *lack of time*. Second, there were *personal beliefs* that hindered or promoted the use of restorative practices. The

sub-themes included *use of the approach* (e.g. when it was used), *resistance* towards using the approach, and the influence of *experience or knowledge* (see Figure 7.4).

Institutional Factors

Institutional factors were one of the main themes that emerged from the data. Institutional factors summarise the conditions that teachers worked under and include constraints related to the situations or circumstances that the teachers have no direct control over or the conditions of the school community or leadership team.

Policies and procedures. All teachers spoke about the need to amend or change policies and procedures to be consistent with restorative practices. This was to ensure there was a clear understanding within the school community around expectations of behaviour. It was also done to “embed restorative practices into the behaviour plan” (Ms A, GSS). Addressing policies and procedures was considered particularly important, and one teacher commented that before restorative practices, “the punitive approach wasn’t working, we had issues that were quite serious, issues that were very difficult to resolve” (Ms H, CSS). Mr J (GPS) described how in his school, the first thing the school community, as a whole, did was “re-write the discipline policy and reign everything in.” He felt it was important that the school community was empowered to take ownership of this process by “getting people to own the discipline/welfare policy, because if you own it when things go astray or issues occur, you are more likely to restore it back ... if people don’t own it, often the barriers of resistance will go up.”

Many of the teachers believed that a shared vision through the use of policies and procedures would create a consistent approach to managing student behaviour. One teacher described the importance of planning to create the shared vision: “It’s a common approach. So you need to ... it needs to be planned, you need to have a strategic plan of how to introduce it and you need to get the whole staff on board first” (Ms H, CSS).

The use of restorative practices as a formal school policy and having written procedures was used by schools to educate new staff and to inform parents. Mr G (ISS) explained how he reminds parents that “we have a school policy that they’ve [the parents] agreed to and we remind them of that. They are aware we are a restorative school.” The use of written procedures was reflected by one female (government primary school) student who thought the restorative practices approach should be used by all teachers. She believed that when the process was followed it gave her reassurance the issue would be dealt with, and said, “all teachers should learn restorative. They should have a book like Mrs ‘X’ does in the office where she writes everything down ... because some classrooms have circle time and some don’t ... I think having classroom circle time helps.”

Despite incorporating restorative practices into school policies and procedures, there appeared to be a lack of record keeping about when and how the approach was used. Half of the schools identified that they did not keep records of suspensions, detentions, and restorative practices conferences or interventions. The lack of record keeping makes it difficult for school administration, teachers, and school leadership to determine the effectiveness of the approach or make any comparison with other disciplinary. Ms A (GSS) said, “we don’t have the data ... we thought there was definitely less suspensions, but I don’t know if the data supports that.” Several of the teachers acknowledged that, despite the restorative approach being written into their school policy, “if all else fails then you just have to go down the punitive path” (Mr M, ISS).

Initial training. All teachers had received between one and four days of initial training. All of the teachers felt that training was a vital component before and during implementation. There was some discrepancy in the findings about the training received from teachers from different school types. Some teachers described how few teachers within their school had received training. Training was described as top heavy because only those in school management or leadership positions received training and ongoing

professional development. Describing this lack of training for classroom teachers, Mr J (GPS) said, “it’s something few people have. It tends to be mainly the leadership [who] do all of the training.” Other teachers, particularly those from independent schools, believed training was distributed evenly throughout the school. Ms B (IPS) described how the knowledge and training were distributed throughout the school, “so in each section we have a couple of people who had done the full two-day training and then other staff have [been given] a half day sort of introduction.” The need for more training was highlighted as a result of new staff being employed at the school, and this could be an issue when training was only offered infrequently. As one teacher noted:

We send a team rather than one person off and the team comes back and when there are individual new staff members, we send them off. [It] was a negative in that if it’s only offered once, February, March, whatever, that if you miss that or didn’t get registered in time, you haven’t got any other until next year. (Ms D, CPS)

Training was important to teachers because it was seen as a commitment by the school leadership to increase teacher experience, assist the school community in sustaining change, and to ensure a consistent approach. As one teacher explained:

I’d have to say, make sure that it’s not just in name only because if you’re doing that, then that’s not going to work. You need to make sure that you do actually fully prepare as many people as you can. Make sure that the people who are the restorative experts [are] not just coordinators or not just heads of house. Try and get as much training and as much experience as you can because it will be the pastoral teachers [and] classroom teachers who will be doing it the most and will have the most impact. You want it to be happening on a daily ... not just because there’s been an incident. Make sure that you do perhaps have regular reminders. (Ms I, CSS)

Quality of training was also seen as important. One teacher explained how a lack of teacher knowledge or skills could create a potentially harmful situation for those involved and have a detrimental impact on student wellbeing. As one female teacher explained:

I can think of one time where we didn't tick all the boxes. A session was run with someone that wasn't sufficiently trained and because they weren't sufficiently trained they didn't do the preparation for the session beforehand. If you cut corners you will pay the price. [The previous session] did not go very well and did some harm. (Ms B, IPS)

One male primary teacher felt, that for him, his own lack of personal understanding could be attributed to a lack of training, so he was unable to progress his development. His comment indicated a high level of frustration:

It's that I still don't have that next level of understanding that I think I need and it has to be put into like a whole model. Like that's probably my ignorance on it because I don't know enough about it. There's probably a lot more to it that I don't know. (Mr J, GPS)

Lack of Time

Some of the teachers felt that time, or a lack of time, was a major issue for them. In particular, these teachers felt pressured to incorporate circle time or other restorative practices techniques into an already crowded curriculum. One female teacher explained that "... time does seem to be a number one issue, to make time regularly, there's a full curriculum" (Ms D, CPS). Her comment was supported by another teacher, who said:

If you're doing a little bit of restorative and the language then you've lost 30 to 45 minutes every day and that's a lot when you've only got 25 hours in the week and

the government says you have to do your five hours of maths and your five hours of language and your five ... you know, it doesn't add up. (Ms K, GPS)

Many of the teachers explained that because they felt time poor, this hindered their ability to use the restorative practices approach as much as or as effectively as they would like. Ms E (CPS) expressed concern about how this would affect teachers: "It's fitting it into the curriculum. I think if it's something that has to be done at a certain time and the whole school's doing it, there's no way [we can fit it all in]. It's going to force teachers to do more." A similar issue was identified by Ms H (CSS) who noted that the actual restorative practices approach itself took time to use: "It's very time-consuming ... one of the biggest things was to do the pre-meetings and record everything and prior to going into the conference, to actually write out the script."

However, one teacher did not consider the issue of time to be a constraint placed upon her due to institutional demands. In contrast, she believed that, despite a full curriculum, if she used the approach regularly to build student social skills, it would save time in the event that a problem occurred:

Time does seem to be a number one issue, to make time regularly, there's a full curriculum, but I think the time to do it regularly, 20 minutes or whatever, every week will save them the hours later when there's a problem and that's what I'm finding. (Ms D, CPS)

Similarly, some teachers believed that there needed to be a deeper understanding around restorative practices by the whole school community because adopting the approach and creating institutional change can take time. These teachers believed that when the approach is adopted at a whole-school level, time is no longer a barrier as long as there is an understanding that the approach is a long-term goal and not a quick fix to issues. Ms A (GSS) explained:

Just time and just realising it is an ongoing thing, otherwise it just sort of, yeah, in such a way as another idea, and sort of making it not just a project or a thing but just the way we do things.

Personal Beliefs

Throughout the interviews, teachers gave candid views on their feelings, beliefs, perceptions, and personal opinions of the factors or issues that affected or assisted their use of restorative practices. There were three main personal belief themes: *use of the approach*, *resistance*, and *experience or knowledge*. Although this section primarily reports teacher views, there is extensive use of student comments which offers extra depth and insight.

Use of restorative practices. How teachers used restorative practices and the extent to which they used it varied. A few of the teachers felt that consistent and regular use of the approach alleviated behaviour issues because it built teacher skills and ensured that students had a clear expectation. As (Ms D, CPS) suggested:

I think a regular time is great so that it's not just brought ... the classrooms that are doing [restorative practices] regularly seem to have less issues in there. The classrooms that just do it when there's a problem ... they're not getting enough practice ... the teachers aren't practicing the skills enough so they've probably forgotten what sort of things they should do and then the children don't know what to expect from it [the use of restorative practices].

Some of the teachers reported that, in the early stages of implementation of restorative practices, a lack of consistency in managing student behaviour affected staff morale and caused friction, with some teachers resorting to punitive measures. Ms K (GPS) explained:

We were having a terrible time. That was impacting on staff morale as well because there was disagreement among the staff about how they should be treated. Some staff wanted them suspended, some staff wanted them expelled, some staff were sort of patting them on the head and saying “there, there” and there was a lot of friction among the staff.

To address these issues, one teacher believed that the whole school community should adopt a shared vision and make a commitment to a consistent use of restorative practices. Mr M (ISS) said:

It’s like anything. Everyone’s got to ... you’ve got to have a shared vision. I know this is for going out there ... but things like this never work unless there is a shared vision and everyone’s on the one page, singing from the same hymn book as they say.

When restorative practices were used inconsistently it affected the teacher–student relationship, whereby some students “didn’t feel they were being listened to” when they were trying to get the teacher to “address their concerns.” Ms I (CSS) described a situation she encountered when another teacher failed to use restorative practices (despite it being written into her school policy). She said:

Try and deal with kids who say, “This staff member dealt with me in this way,” and they feel, in their experience, that’s something that they should be able to address, and they should be able to sit down and have a conversation but that staff member will not sit down, and have a conversation with them ... where you’ve got somebody that is a great teacher in all respects but they don’t deal with the students in a very restorative way or they deal with them in quite a punitive way.

Similarly, students identified issues around consistency that had affected them, particularly the variation between different teachers' use of restorative practices: "I did it last year [circle time], but [my teacher] doesn't do it this year, so we can't really share our feelings or anything so it's not really that good" (female, IPS). Students from all schools had some criticism of their teachers and how their teachers handled situations beyond a lack of consistency. One female student said that her teacher resorted to yelling when she got frustrated. The student explained how sometimes they did not feel listened to as a result: "In my class you just can't explain yourself if something goes wrong ... like 'Jo,' he tries to explain why he did it and you are explaining something and she just goes ... and she yelled at him and sent him out" (female, GPS).

Students from all schools commented on the value of a good relationship with their teacher. They looked at their teacher as an important role model. However, this was problematic when the students believed their teacher didn't behave in a restorative way. As one student (female, GPS) explained:

The teachers have to be our role models but some of them – like when you are in a classroom and someone is getting yelled at they actually yell at them ... and they have to be our role models and that influences like ... if a younger student was standing at the door that influences on them ... and they probably think that's right and if they want to be a teacher they would do that.

Students offered interesting insights into why they believed these inconsistencies occurred. These ranged from a lack of follow-up (e.g. "if your teacher is lazy and ... couldn't be bothered following up" [male, GSS]) to teachers resorting to punitive discipline measures as a means to gain compliance (e.g. "I didn't get suspended but I had to go out of the classroom for the whole day because me and my teacher had a disagreement" [male, GPS]). These comments from students indicate that teachers are not

only inconsistent in their use of restorative practices, but there may be other reasons that affect teachers using and embracing the approach. These reasons may be the result of resistance or a reliance on firmly held traditional beliefs.

Resistance. The extent to which teachers use restorative practices and the inconsistencies around usage was considered one of the main challenges the whole school community faced. Within each school, teachers spoke of knowing colleagues who resisted embracing and adopting the approach, although they did not claim to be resistant to it themselves. Of all the teachers who spoke of this resistance, half believed that some individuals took more time to change their beliefs. As Ms N (IPS) said, “it takes time ... for it to be instilled in all staff members – it is a process ... I had to learn that some staff wouldn’t get it straight away and that is ok ... you have to keep chipping away at and keep going back over it and standing up and believing in it.” Other teachers described how the overarching school culture needed to change and this too could take time to occur. These teachers spoke of colleagues who did not understand the underlying philosophy of restorative practices as a means to manage student behaviour and felt that teachers who had received training tended to be less resistant. Ms K (GPS) explained that:

Teachers who had had the training were on board but I think there was a lot of resistance from the other teachers because they perceived it as oh, if you just say sorry and I won’t do it again then you’ve gotten away with it. So, I think there was a lot of resistance there. So that’s why I think that doing the training is so important. Because it explains to you how it works and why it works. But yeah, there was a lot of resistance from the teachers.

Ms A (GSS) felt that when teachers were involved in the implementation process and had ownership of the approach, it reduced the level of resistance:

I remember [the trainer] saying it takes at least five years for cultural change. I feel we've got a long way to go ... there's some real strengths in it, but there's a lot more work around the embedding of it, to be a real way that is the way we do things ... there's still some staff who do it because it's expected, but [are] not quite on board, but they know it's part of our philosophy, and as a teacher here this is the way we do things at [our] college. So, they don't voice it, but there are people that are reluctant.

Experience. Many of the teachers believed that the reluctance to embrace restorative practices was the result of firmly held personal beliefs, experience, and old familiar ways of doing things. These experiences centred on traditional beliefs about wrongdoing requiring a consequence or punishment to be effective. The following comment by Mr J (GPS) shows the overlap between resistance and personal beliefs he witnessed from some other teachers:

All [the teachers] could see was so now we just have to talk to them and they get off scot free? So, they couldn't relate to restorative practices, they couldn't separate the punitive and the restorative ... there was a lot of resistance ... [there was] a tendency to think that it meant there were no consequences.

Further issues emerged when teachers reluctantly faced a change to their beliefs and firmly held practices. Ms I (CSS) described a colleague who refused to use the approach and had said, "No, I don't like it. That's not how I deal with things and you can't tell me that's the way we should, so I won't."

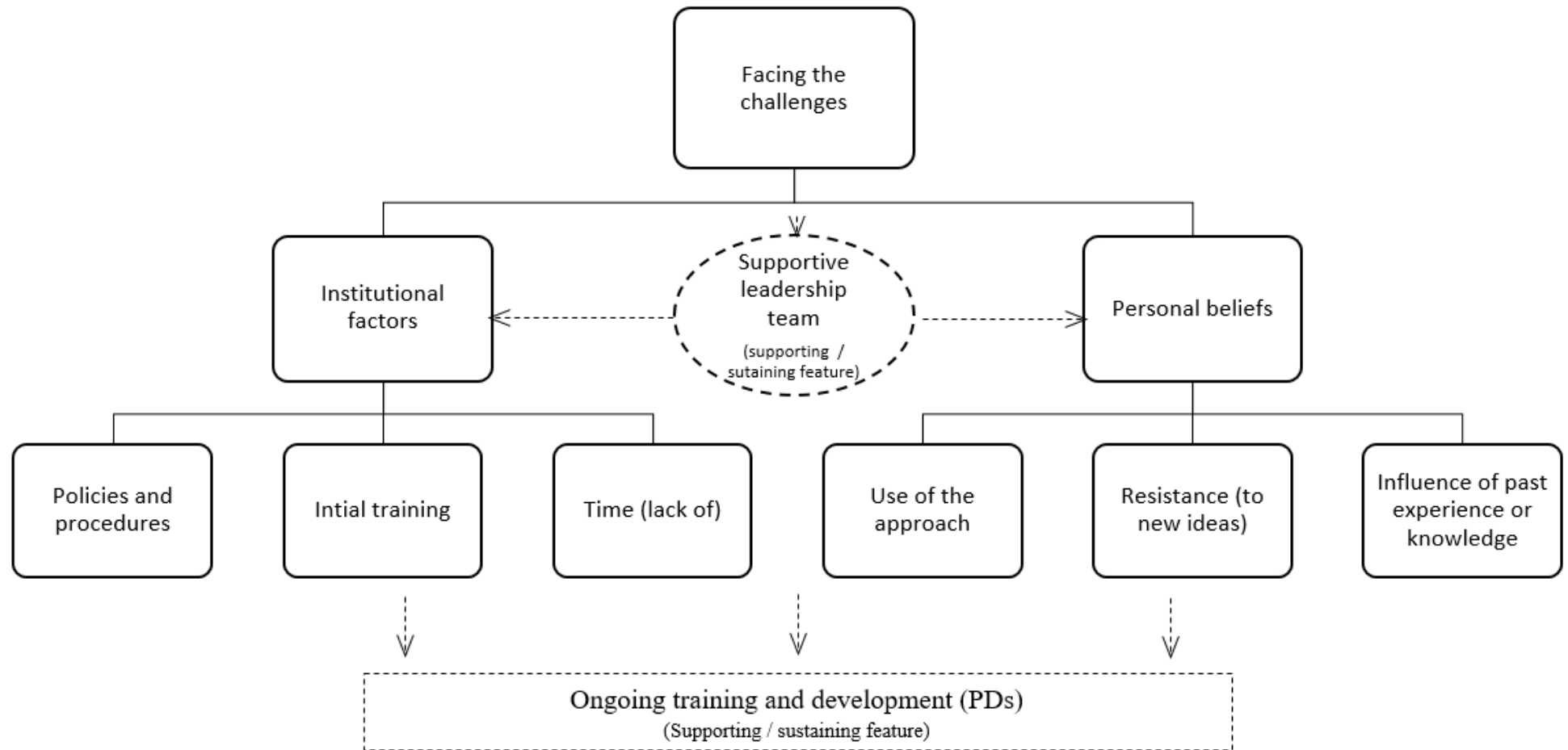
Sometimes the experiences of parents needed addressing when the teachers used restorative practices. As Ms E (CPS) explained, "not growing up with it and they revert back to the way they [the parents] were at school and its respect for teacher, and don't step out of line or there will be a major consequence." However, experience and personal

beliefs, when used effectively by teachers, were seen as beneficial by students. Two government secondary school students explained how their teacher used personal experience to help them understand:

Female: When they talk back to you, it makes sense for what they're saying, like it's really helpful.

Male: Like it's coming from a personal experience.

This type of experience was seen as positive and valuable by the students. This conversation was supported by another student who agreed he liked it when "sometimes they [the teacher] say about their own experience" (male, IPS). Hence teachers' experiences could be beneficial to students when used in a positive, supportive, and educational manner.



Note: The dashed lines depict a supporting / sustaining feature

Figure 7.2. Challenges of implementing restorative practices and the sustaining and mediating factors.

Overcoming the Challenges

This section discusses a supporting or sustaining factor that teachers identified: the leadership team. The leadership team was considered to be vital in supporting and promoting restorative practices when faced with challenges. Teachers believed that a *supportive leadership team* that drives the process, demonstrates *ongoing commitment*, and *encourages and promotes teamwork* with *ongoing training and development* was crucial to the future of restorative practices in their school communities. Figure 7.4 shows the challenges and their relationships with the sustaining and mediating factors.

Supportive Leadership Team

Two challenges affected the implementation, use, and sustainability of restorative practices: institutional factors and personal beliefs. These challenges could be addressed through ongoing training, professional development, and a supportive leadership team. These factors can be considered as either sustaining factors or mediating factors (see Figure 7.4). All of the teachers discussed the importance of support and how support came primarily from the leadership team. Ms A (GSS) described her experience: “... have the leadership [team] on board. Really important in terms of whether to do whole-school or wind it out [in stages], important to have leadership on board and then explore how we’re going to do this for a whole school thing ...” Many viewed support as a key component to the successful implementation and sustainability of restorative practices.

Drive the process. Many of the teachers discussed the need for the leadership team and school principal to ensure there were clear expectations around the use of restorative practices. It was also felt that an inclusionary approach was important. Mr M (ISS), a teacher and part of the leadership team, explained why he felt this was important: “[We] apply it without exception, we involve staff in the process, they see it working, they see

students respond, they feel a part of the process.” The importance of the leadership approach and their beliefs was reflected by Ms A (GSS):

The principal came on board and they embraced it and said “this makes sense for what we want to do.” [It] was important, having the principal come on board. So, the leadership mattered ... you need someone driving it, definitely driving it ... so this is the focus, it’s a priority, it’s expected, modelled.

This comment highlighted the strong influence that a school leadership team can have in creating change within the school community. However, when a school leadership team fails to understand the process, it can send the wrong message to staff and potentially negatively affect the implementation of the approach. Ms B (İPS) described how restorative practices was implemented in her school and resulted in teachers receiving a negative message from the school leadership:

When the vice principal and the head of wellbeing came back into the school, it wasn’t translated in an appropriate manner. It was actually restorative practices introduced in a punitive manner. You are going to do this and it did not work and it actually took two years to really get everybody on board because people were told [what we had to do].

Some teachers believed the leadership team had the power to affect the beliefs and perceptions of all teachers about the use of restorative practices, but the leadership team needed to whole-heartedly embrace the approach to influence other staff. Ms F (CPS) explained that “I would definitely say it comes from leadership because if they don’t live ... eat, sleep and breathe it, we’re not going to.” School leadership was considered vital to support teachers and other staff by setting an example of using and demonstrating the restorative practices approach

Ongoing commitment. The teachers who discussed the importance of the leadership team also said that there needed to be an ongoing commitment to the approach by the school community, especially the leadership team. Ms K (GPS) supported “commitment by the leadership to keep everybody trained and up because as staff naturally turns over I think you need to keep new staff on board, otherwise that might be a challenge.” An ongoing commitment allowed for the approach to be tweaked to alleviate any potential challenges that may be encountered with staff turnover. Mr M (ISS) remarked that “it does have to be ongoing and you do have to revisit it, particularly as you’ve got a turnover of staff and just freshen up on it and sometimes it’s been tweaked here and there as well.”

Encourage and promote teamwork. Many of the teachers spoke of support from their colleagues or other staff members in addition to the school leadership. This occurred through helping each other with practical applications of the approach, talking things through, or being a mentor. Teachers identified other staff members who were available to support them with using restorative practices and managing issues with the students. One teacher (Mr G, ISS) who was also a pastoral leader, explained that:

It means that we support each other and ... we support our pastoral care team ... so that if there is an issue we can be seen to step in. [It has] allowed our pastoral care team to come [to us] and say “well I’ve got a few things going on or I need a hand here or can you help me out.”

The availability of other staff members to support the process was considered important, particularly if they needed to work through a difficult issue or needed some additional support through the process. The way in which teachers and other staff help each other was discussed by (Ms L, GPS) who said:

My boss [the school principal] keeps saying “this is a really great school in terms of collegiate support and helping one another you know” [and] “you know you can go next door to the person [and say], ‘hey listen could you have my kids while I work out [an issue with] this particular group.’”

Teamwork was considered valuable by a few of the teachers who spoke at length about how they placed value on the opportunity to talk to other teachers. The increased feelings of support and the belief that help to use the approach would be available if needed was described by Ms F (CPS):

There was always someone available to back us up or to support us ... we’ve never been left high and dry with it [using restorative practices]. It’s always been about talking it through and looking at one another and talking with our colleagues or our level conveners or our level teachers.

All teachers described the value of mentoring for teachers who were less experienced with restorative practices. This was considered an effective way for the approach to be applied, through either acting as a role model or through role play to familiarise each other with the approach, and as a means of learning. This was giving support and showing teachers who may struggle with the approach how it can be used in a practical way. Ms H (CSS) explained how this worked in her school:

We were the role models and worked collegially with the teachers to introduce it into the classroom and I think that was the most effective way of actually introducing it, to actually work as a mentor for teachers to see it actually work

Another teacher (Ms E, CPS) explained how the staff room was physically set-up to reflect a more supportive and team environment that sought to encourage conversation and unify the staff:

The whole staff room [is] set-up a lot differently to other staff rooms as well.

There are no tables so you can't segregate each other, it's all a big circle ... so everybody sits together ... you can't really sit and whisper in the staffroom and I know that does happen at other schools.

In addition to support from colleagues and leadership, another form of support for the Catholic and independent schools was through the school psychologist, counsellor, or wellbeing coordinator. Some of the schools employed one of these professionals to support both staff and students through the implementation of restorative practices. Unfortunately, no government school in this study received this type of support.

Ongoing Training and Development

Although school leadership and the leadership team could facilitate a smooth transition during the implementation of restorative practices, one other key theme emerged as being vital to sustain the approach: the need for ongoing training and development. Most of the teachers had received further training or professional development following their initial training. All teachers believed that ongoing training or professional development was crucial to remain up-to-date and keep staff on board with the approach. Ms C (IPS) spoke passionately about professional development:

Definitely PD [professional development] ... ongoing PD ... you need to have those updates and you need to have all staff on board. It has to be a whole school initiative and I think we all need to be familiar and au fait with the language of restorative practices and so certainly the advice would be [to] speak to the professionals, support your staff with PD.

The use of regular training and updated information was considered particularly important when there was staff turnover and due to different cohorts of children from year to year. Ms F (CPS) explained:

I think you always need to keep training and keep learning and keep trying to do it better. I think if you just settle for what we've got it won't be good enough in a year or two years' time and I think different teaching, different cycles, different kids.

One of the questions posed to the teachers was "What advice would you give to other schools who were seeking to implement restorative practices?" The advice offered by teachers was unanimous: ensure that there was adequate training for all staff. Teachers felt that training allowed staff to understand the approach and thought that ongoing training was useful because it kept the approach fresh. Training was also considered to be part of the planning process; to succeed at a whole-school level, everyone needed to be "on board," which could be achieved through the use of training. Teachers also said that regular professional development sessions were important to keep them informed and updated.

Each of the challenges, issues, and barriers that emerged from the data led to two key solutions. First, the leadership team should act as a mediator or facilitator to smooth the transition and change, and second, initial training of staff and ongoing training and professional development is needed to keep teachers up-to date and informed. The teachers believed that training offered them the opportunities to debrief with peers and brainstorm some of the challenges.

Despite 13 out of the 14 teachers in the study identifying both benefits and challenges, one teacher, Ms F, did not respond in the same manner as the other teachers.

Her responses were distinctive, with her knowledge about child behaviour being superior to those of her peers. The case of Ms F is discussed below.

The Unique Case of Ms F

This section of the current study is dedicated to a short description of Ms F and highlights the unique contribution her data makes to this study and our understanding of restorative practices within school communities. The interview with Ms F was conducted over 52 minutes during the course of a normal school day. She is a Level 2 classroom teacher who has been qualified for 20 years but had halted her career to have a family, only returning to work six years ago. Ms F had returned to employment at her current school, a suburban Catholic primary school, where she was initially employed as a teacher's aide before commencing full-time teaching, which she has done for the past three years. She initially attended a full-day training session of restorative practices before it was implemented in the school. Since the initial training, she had received "ongoing professional development" which involved "probably three days over the past six years."

Following the training, Ms F was "very sceptical" of the approach because she felt that younger students generally did not misbehave out of "malice" but "out of an instantaneous problem," or a rash decision, indicating this was a normal part of child development. She felt that after implementation, there was a reduction in "pointing of blame" and the classroom had "calmed" due to the use of restorative practices.

Ms F explained how her learning was supported by the use of a lanyard containing the restorative questions to refer to, which she used as a "back-up plan" if she forgot the process. A driving theme that emerged from the interview with Ms F was her belief that the use of restorative practices was not only a part of the school policy, but was a philosophy and part of the school community's "Christian ethos" that facilitated "unity of the group rather than ostracising and blaming." Ms F spoke of having a good relationship

with other staff in the school. She spoke highly of the school principal and student wellbeing officer and believed they were the driving force behind the use of restorative practices, both during implementation and through offering ongoing support and encouragement. She never felt she had been left “high and dry” to work things out for herself, and the success of the approach, she felt, was assisted by the leadership team. She believed that “if they don’t live, eat, sleep, and breathe it, we’re not going to.”

Ms F appeared to have a solid superior understanding of child development and acknowledged that the younger children she taught sometimes struggled with expressing their feelings: “They’re only six and seven, they don’t have a lot of empathy. They are not aware their actions have this ripple effect on other people.” Ms F overcame issues through the use of circle time or through using “a small group and talk about things.” Ms F also acknowledged that she felt her role was to explain to her students that “you’ve made a poor choice in judgement, you understand how that has affected someone else and what you can do about it.” She follows this up by ensuring that when she sees positive behaviour she reinforces it:

The other day I was praising my group because they were playing basketball together. At the start of the year it was just the Year 2 boys. No-one else could interfere with that game whereas [last week] they’re out on the playground and there were 20 out of my 23 children playing that basketball game. I came in and said “that’s fantastic. We’re not ones and twos, we’re not boys and girls – we are up together.”

Ms F ensured that her personal values were instilled into students, whereby they are required to address a staff member walking into their classroom saying “good morning.” She felt this taught students’ social skills, and the students were often acknowledged with a warm response by the other staff member. She believed strongly in modelling prosocial

behaviour: “I don’t yell at the kids, I don’t point the fingers, there is none of that in my classroom.” Instead, she asks her students whether they are being “the best version of you?” She taught students thinking skills and empathy through telling them that “every action you do has a reaction to it ... this is not a rehearsal; this is life as we know it.”

She believed she wasn’t acting or going beyond “what a caring and compassionate teacher would do.” This statement made Ms F unique in this study when comparing her beliefs to those of the other teachers. Ms F believed she succeeded at the approach because she described herself as “open-minded” and believed it was important to be reflective of your own childhood. One comment she made was that “a lot of children my age or older got the strap, got detention, were sat in a corner. How restorative is that? Did that behaviour teach you not to pinch Johnny’s hat or break the chalk? It didn’t teach you anything.”

Ms F believed that the restorative approach was better for the whole school community: students, staff, and parents. She spoke in terms of engaging her students through mutual respect, awareness of consequences, expressing disappointment when misbehaviour occurred, praise for good behaviour, and reacting calmly to difficult situations. Ms F didn’t use any punitive approaches, nor did she feel it necessary. She spoke of other teachers within the school in only positive terms. In contrast to the other teachers in the study, Ms F responded to the interview questions using restorative terms and was knowledgeable of the underlying philosophy behind restorative practices, despite only receiving one-day training in the past six years. She claimed to have no other training on restorative practices.

It is difficult to ascertain if it was the restorative practices training through the school that made Ms F stand out from her peers or if it was her own personality and personal style that created this distinct difference. Her final comment during the interview

indicated that she has adopted this approach as part of her own personal development. She explained “I love it. I’ve got four kids at home and it has changed the way I parent. It’s not about screaming and yelling and getting my point across, it’s not about pointing blame, it’s about ... we’re a unit here and we need to get this working, and it does. It’s better and there is no angst.” The findings from Ms F illustrate that a best-practice approach is possible by an individual teacher, despite challenges and issues evident in adopting the approach within the broader school community.

Summary

The aim of this chapter was to describe the thematic analysis and the themes that emerged from across the data. This first part of the chapter summarised the benefits of using restorative practices and how the five key benefits increase social skills. The aim of this section was to address the research questions that sought to understand the impact that restorative practices has on the school community as a whole. These benefits are illustrated in Figure 7.3.

The second part of the chapter primarily used the findings from the teacher interviews to address the research question that sought to understand the challenges that school communities face when implementing restorative practices. The findings were supported by students’ comments. The key challenges, issues, and barriers faced by those within the school community are illustrated in Figure 7.4.

The third part of the chapter discussed the factors that can help sustain the approach and assist in addressing some of those challenges. These were support from the leadership team and ongoing training or professional development. The final part of this chapter examined the case of Ms F, who appeared to be the only teacher to wholly embrace the restorative practices approach without reservation, offering a unique insight into an individual’s use of the approach and her personal perceptions.

The following chapter, Chapter 8, is the discussion. It will explore the key findings that have emerged from this qualitative study and the theories, frameworks, and research introduced in the early chapters to elucidate those findings. Strengths and limitations of the study will also be addressed.

Chapter 8: Discussion

A river of many sources. (Howard Zehr, pioneer of modern restorative justice, 2015)

Introduction

This chapter commences with a broad overview of the research findings and the unique contribution of those findings in the restorative practices field of research. There is a brief overview on the limitations of the predominant restorative practices theories. The chapter is divided into three sections. Section one, The Benefits of Restorative Practices, reports the perceived benefits identified by the participants following the introduction of restorative practices in their school communities. The section includes a discussion on understanding the benefits identified by the participants in relation to the broader frameworks and theories that were introduced in Chapter 4. The second section, Facing the Challenges, explores the perceived challenges and issues faced by school communities during implementation of restorative practices. The section discusses the two challenges that emerged from the analysis: institutional factors and personal beliefs. The section also includes a discussion on understanding the challenges in relation to the relevant theories previously introduced. The third section, Inspiring the Big Picture, discusses the implications of the results of the study and how the findings related to the perceived barriers and facilitators can inform the long-term sustainability of restorative practices. A comparison of teacher and student findings is discussed briefly. A new restorative practices framework, which was informed by the research findings, is proposed. Finally, the chapter considers the strengths and limitations of the present investigation and discusses the significance of the findings for theory, research, and practice.

Overview

The perceptions of teachers and students uncovered some interesting new findings in the current study. Teachers and students identified five key benefits of the restorative practices approach which they considered as being closely linked to building social skills and understanding of others in the community. A further finding primarily identified by teacher comments were the challenges and barriers to implementation and sustainability of the approach. These were considered as being institutional factors and personal beliefs. A comparison of student and teacher perceptions indicated that punitive approaches were still being used within the school community but were considered as being ineffective in changing behaviour. Teachers preferred to use restorative practices as a means to manage behaviour following an incident where students preferred to restorative practices as a means to learn pro-social skills and build relationships, in particular through circle time.

The aim of restorative practices is to, while supporting them in a nurturing environment, enhance a person's learning and prosocial behaviours through the development of awareness of how their behaviour can affect others (Wachtel, 2012). Successful use of restorative practices extends beyond the classroom and should involve the whole school community to consistently deal with and manage behaviour (Gregory et al., 2016).

The current study was founded upon assumptions derived from contemporary developmental and motivational theories that can offer an understanding of how restorative practices can affect behaviour and behaviour change for students in school settings. The results of this study support the growing literature that shows that while there are many perceived benefits in the use of restorative practices, there are many challenges for schools in the adoption of the approach (Corrigan, 2014; Kaveney & Drewery, 2011; McCluskey et al., 2008; Wong et al., 2011).

To date, restorative practices research has used reintegrative shame and the social discipline window as the primary theories to explain how restorative practices can change behaviour (Braithwaite, 1989; Wachtel, 2012). However, the current study has shown that reintegrative shame (Braithwaite, 1989) and the social discipline window (Wachtel, 2012) have limited application in the context of a school community. Ahmed and Braithwaite (2011) found that the use of shame in a school community can be maladaptive and can result in feelings of humiliation and anger, thereby increasing the risk of future antisocial behaviour. The social discipline window has been criticised for being open to misinterpretation if teachers believe the model is to be used as a form of control (Vaandering, 2013). Reintegrative shame and the social discipline window do not acknowledge the whole-school approach to restorative practices, nor do they acknowledge normal human development (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012).

In addition, empirical research on restorative practices has been limited and this chapter will therefore draw on understanding of approaches such as social-emotional learning and positive psychology to explore if these approaches can offer a clearer more relevant framework to understand the mechanisms of restorative practices. This chapter will reason that, to assist in the change process, there needs to be a more readily available and simplified framework for school communities to use on a daily basis to support their use of restorative practices.

The Perceived Benefits of Restorative Practices

Following the introduction of restorative practices, the teachers and students in the study identified five key benefits that the approach had on behaviour and their school communities. Each of these benefits was closely linked and was central to building prosocial skills and understanding others within the school community. The perceived

benefits were: a more harmonious environment, empathy towards other people, awareness and accountability for actions, respectful relationships, and thinking in a reflective way. Each of these benefits will be discussed in relation to prior research and relevant theory.

Harmony. The first of the five benefits of restorative practices that students and teachers believed had changed in their school communities was an increase in harmony. This was how individuals felt about themselves and how they saw other people. The school communities were considered calmer and more harmonious places.

This finding has only been reported in one other study conducted by Wong et al. (2011). Wong et al. conducted a quasi-experimental longitudinal study and found that indicators of school harmony were significantly higher in restorative schools compared with non-restorative schools. The authors also found an association between broader improvements across the school community (such as reduction in bullying) and the use of circle time. Other researchers have not directly reported harmony as a finding but identified similar constructs such as being calmer and being more relaxed with respect to the classroom atmosphere which “calmed students down” (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011, p.10; McCluskey et al., 2008).

The current study found that when teachers adopted restorative practices and followed the process, they had greater confidence to deal with situations in a calm manner. As one teacher said, “at one stage he swore at me ... I remained calm.” A calmer school environment was described as increasing students’ feelings of physical safety within their school communities as well as helping them to feel safe to express issues or concerns that affect them, thereby creating a more harmonious environment. A trusting and safe community is essential to building growth and fostering relationships. This can allow students to express their feelings and diffuse any pent-up emotions (Schumacher, 2014).

Empathy. The second main benefit that students and teachers identified was an increase in empathy. This finding is not unique when examining social-emotional learning programs.

Durlak et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis and found that social-emotional learning programs target affective competencies such as empathy. In restorative schools, affective competence is promoted through interactions such as circle time. Circle time is a well-established model that is used in school communities and has been found to increase awareness of and accountability of students' behaviour or actions (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011). Several empirical studies exploring the benefits of circle time have reported improvements in social skills, communication, and empathy (Hennessey, 2007; Mosley, 1993).

Eisenberg et al. (2005) found a linear increase between prosocial moral reasoning and empathy in adolescents. They concluded that empathy plays a key role in the development of social understanding and positive social behaviours, serving as a foundation for future relationships and a basis for resolving conflict.

Similar findings were reported by Wong et al. (2011). In their longitudinal study they assessed four schools: one school that was using a whole-school approach to restorative practices, two schools with partial implementation of restorative practices, and one school that was the control school and was not using the approach. A significant difference was found in the level of empathy displayed by students in each of these types of school communities. The control school had significantly higher levels of bullying behaviour, with less care and empathy for others, than schools who used restorative practices. Wong et al. (2011) attributed the increase in empathy following the introduction of restorative practices to be the result of clear expectations for all those within the school community. In the current study, the use of standardised written policies – as Mr M (ISS)

said “we put the behaviour policy out to parents, staff and school leaders” – was perceived to increase consistency in the adoption of the approach by all those within the school community.

Awareness and accountability. Teachers and students reported an increase in awareness and accountability. Ms K (GPS) described how this occurs: “... doesn’t have to do a lot of restoratives because my children came up from prep. They’re aware of how their actions affect others.” These findings are partially consistent with concepts found in other social-emotional learning programs that have been shown to increase awareness, not only of the self but also a broader social awareness (see Durlak et al., 2011).

Students in the current study reported that they were able to take responsibility for their own actions and they felt accountable for those actions. One male primary student explained: “both of you can overcome it ... the issues and what you can do in the future to prevent it from happening.” However, accountability is not a concept that features in social-emotional learning programs where the focus is on personal responsibility. In the current study, accountability was described by students as taking responsibility and gaining an understanding of the impact of those actions (Morrison, 2006).

Sadly, the development of healthy moral reasoning and appropriate social emotions, such as self-awareness of one’s own actions, can be damaged when the environment (e.g. parenting practices) are harmful or neglectful. Conversely, Carlo et al. (2007) and Steinberg et al. (1994) found that adaptive parenting style can enhance the development of adolescent prosocial skills.

The use of restorative practices in school communities can enhance the development of cause and effect skills that promote student self-awareness (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011). This is achieved through the use of affective questions such as “what were you thinking?” and through the use of circle time. In the current study, teachers and

students described how circle time was seen to provide an opportunity to increase personal accountability for one's own actions. Ms I (CSS) described how students sometimes approached her for this to occur. The students say to her "we need to have a circle and they'd go off and tell her [the pastoral worker] that then she'd organise that with them, and they'd have it out in the circle and they'd be fine, but they recognise in themselves that they needed to have a discussion and obviously needed an adult to lead it."

Circle time offers the opportunity to collectively establish class rules with a shared accountability for all students and their teacher that comes into force when the rules are broken. Ms E (CPS) described how "we come up with our own norms of behaviour in our classroom, with a written agreement being drawn up to reflect those agreed rules, which is referred back to during the course of the year."

Prosocial behaviour has been reported as being related to both emotional concern and perspective taking, both of which are important elements of restorative practices and social-emotional learning (Eisenberg et al., 2005). The participants in the current study believed that the use of restorative practices increased their own awareness and accountability. They also felt this resulted in an increase in respect for others.

Respect. When students in the present study observed their teachers "treat each other with respect ... that teaches us to do the same," they believed that the modelling of prosocial behaviour was beneficial because it taught them appropriate ways of behaving and they sought to emulate that behaviour. This is a unique finding. Although the concept of respect has been discussed in the literature exploring the impact of restorative practices, the concept of respect was reported as being a respect for other's views and opinions (Corrigan, 2014; McCluskey et al., 2008).

When teachers, parents, or other adults act in a positive prosocial way, they convey to students the most appropriate way of behaving in the school environment and within the

broader community (Morrison et al., 2005). When students feel cared about and respected, they are more likely to further develop their emotional and social skills. The growth of these skills can occur through watching how teachers behave and then replicating that behaviour and through opportunities to practice their skills (Weissbourd, Bouffard, & Jones, 2013). When a school community demonstrates respectful relationships between students and teachers, it can serve as a strong protective factor for young people, with outcomes such as reductions in bullying (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013).

However, the direction of causation is not currently clear and what other influences may impact on the ability to act in a respectful way. It is possible that some students may feel disconnected from the school community if they are unable to adapt to the restorative practices approach (Morrison, 2006). Similarly, teachers may struggle to adapt if they have resigned themselves to a belief that there is a culture of disrespect within the community they are unable to change (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). The direction of causation is an important aspect to acknowledge and consider in future research.

Thinking reflectively. The students and teachers in the current study reported that the use of restorative practices gave them the opportunity to think about their actions and reflect on their behaviour. As one teacher explained, “why have everyone in little rows when you actually want to create a sense of group and you want to hear ... have everyone have the opportunity to reflect on what they are doing and thinking, and experiencing.” One of the primary aims of restorative practices in school communities is to enhance reflective thinking (Porter, 2007). This is achieved through the use of affective questions that offer students the opportunity to think about and consider their own behaviour.

Corrigan (2014) suggested that the use of restorative practices in schools gives students the skills and opportunity to think about their actions and reflect on their behaviour. The teachers in the present study believed that they had also developed an

ability to reflect on their relationships with colleagues. They described greater levels of respect as a result. For example, Ms I (CSS) said, “I’ve always had good relationships, but I’ve found that my relationships with staff and students, I think, have become even more respectful.” Restorative practices can have the greatest impact on a school community when school staff members develop the ability to reflect on the process and their relationships with students and other staff members (Kehoe, Hemphill, & Broderick, 2016).

Despite many of the participants reporting an increase in reflective thinking, there were also challenges identified. Some teachers reported the need to develop the ability to reflect on their own personal values through the implementation phase. As one teacher said, “I found it challenging to think you have to change your whole persona in order to get a better result out of it.” When personal values are at odds with the change being implemented, this can create a dissonance and resistance, resulting in a failure to change firmly held beliefs (Festinger, 1962; Harmon-Jones et al., 2015).

In summary this research confirms the findings of previous studies in reporting students’ perceptions of increased levels of empathy, accountability, and thinking in a reflective manner. But this research also offers some unique findings regarding the benefits of restorative practices to the school community. The unique benefits included a belief the approach results in a more harmonious environment and more respectful relationships.

Understanding the Benefits

The following section examines the benefits of using restorative practices in school communities and how those benefits can be understood or explained using the theories discussed in Chapter 4. In the current study, students described their feelings, values, and personal beliefs. Their descriptions suggest that these students are developing some key Social-Emotional Learning competencies such as, self-awareness, social awareness,

relationship skills, empathy, and thoughtful decision-making. Healthy relationships require the ability to recognise and manage one's own emotions as well as acknowledge and respond to the feelings or emotions of others (Schumacher, 2014). These are the central components of social-emotional programs such as restorative practices (Durlak et al., 2011; Slee et al., 2009). It is possible that psychological theory such as theory of mind, social learning theory, and cognitive approaches (discussed in the next section) can explain the underlying process or mechanisms that occur in people and their behaviour when restorative practices is implemented and used in a school community.

Theory of the mind is the development of the ability to understand and accept that people have different beliefs, desires, intents, knowledge and values to one's own (Wellman, Cross, & Watson, 2001). Theory of mind is associated with social-emotional maturity and prosocial skills. Students and teachers expressed how they had developed a greater understanding of the feelings of others and believed they were more empathetic. This finding may be explained by an increase in theory of mind. Arriving at an understanding of mind is an important developmental milestone. As children grow they get more conversant at predicting the thoughts of others and explaining those actions (Sutton et al., 1999).

Developing a theory of mind is essential to reduce the risk of bullying and victimisation. A child or young person with an underdeveloped theory of mind can lack the ability to negotiate conflict and can become a bullying target (Shakoor et al., 2012). In addition, development of theory of mind encourages positive relationships and promotes greater peer acceptance (Caputi, Lecce, Pagnin, & Banerjee, 2012). The schools in the current study supported the development of theory of mind through the use circle time and affective language.

For the students, an increase in social skills such as the ability to get along with others, conflict resolution, the development of understanding, and empathy for the feelings of other people was important to them. Students believed that restorative practices improved their ways of thinking and their thinking of others. These skills are essential for healthy relationships and increased wellbeing. Children and young people require a learning environment that is caring, supportive, safe, and empowering.

Social learning theory suggests that children and young people learn behaviour and social skills through direct observation and imitation. The theory emphasises the impact of modelling appropriate behaviour, which is an important principle for schools adopting a whole-school approach to restorative practices (Bandura & McDonald, 1963). Social learning theory suggests that knowledge and thinking skills of children and young people are continually being tested both socially and academically, and these skills are learned through others who model prosocial skills (Bandura, 2001; Schumacher, 2014).

When prosocial skills are witnessed by students, they then internalise those values and behaviours. It is important that teachers and other staff members become aware of how their behaviour can affect their students and are seen to model appropriate behaviour (Bandura, 2001). This can be through everyday actions such as treating students fairly and taking a genuine interest in their views. This can also be achieved through ensuring they deal with frustration in a productive way and encourage their students to do similar. The students in the current study spoke clearly of how their teachers' behaviour and the way they treated others gave them skills that they replicated. A female secondary student explained how this affected her beliefs: "... the teachers are all really nice to each other as well, and they treat each other with respect as well, and that teaches us to also do the same."

There is also a cognitive aspect that assists a person to determine which course of action to take (Bandura, 2001). Bandura (1994) reported that people can assert self-efficacy or “exercise influence over the events that affect their lives” (p. 71). Perceived self-efficacy can directly influence choices with stronger self-efficacy the greater the effort. Teacher and student comments indicate varying levels of self-efficacy in their acceptance and use of restorative practices.

The perceptions of students indicate an increase in cognitive skills and understanding (e.g. empathy). When children develop social knowledge from their interactions with others it enables them to develop problem solving strategies (Crick & Dodge, 19994). An increase in empathy and other cognitive skills does not necessarily require a formal intervention but can result from children and young people using and practicing their cognitive and emotional responses to situations in their everyday life (Barr & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2007).

Facing the Challenges

The current study identified two main challenges or barriers to the implementation of restorative practices. These were institutional factors and personal beliefs. When these institutional factors and personal beliefs were not addressed, several issues emerged. Of note was that the school communities that participated were four years post-implementation of restorative practices but the participants reported using various amounts of punitive discipline despite acknowledging that punitive discipline was ineffective. A further finding was that despite participation in training on restorative practices prior to implementation, some of the teachers reported a lack of understanding of the benefits and a lack of general knowledge of the approach.

Successful implementation of any intervention in a school requires the school community to be ready for change (Savage et al., 2011). Wigelsworth et al. (2016)

believed that evaluation of intervention programs is vital to identify factors that can negatively affect successful implementation and to ensure that the program translates into successful outcomes in a real-world environment.

Institutional factors. In the current study institutional factors were generally those that teachers described as being beyond their personal influence but were requirements and rules that they worked within. These were policies and procedures, initial restorative practices training, and a lack of time.

The responses from the participants showed that they believed that to successfully implement and sustain restorative practices, the school community needed to realign its behaviour management policies with the approach. One participant whose beliefs appeared to clash with restorative practices said, “I felt they [a student] needed to be on a behaviour management plan and have their behaviour addressed differently [rather] than restorative which is a quick fix solution.”

Bambara et al. (2009) suggested that the most pervasive issue when adopting restorative practices is the conflicting beliefs of staff with some feeling the approach is too lenient. This can be an important issue if policies and procedures are not addressed adequately or not embedded in the school community (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005).

Conflicting beliefs can be an issue if school policies continue to promote control, obedience, and conformity (Teasley, 2014; Vaandering, 2014). Although the schools in the current study claimed to have aligned their policies with the restorative practices, most of the teachers described the continued use of punitive approaches. This suggests that either the school communities have been unable to reconcile or alter existing school structures to align with the approach or that the school communities are struggling to find ways to incorporate punitive measures alongside restorative approaches. Restorative practices are

not a panacea for fixing school behaviour and careful planning is required to successfully implement the approach (Bitel, 2005).

Initial training in restorative practices was considered vital to the implementation of restorative practices in a school community, but it was also described by one participant as being “top heavy,” indicating that the knowledge was not widely available to all staff. This finding suggests a resources issue because the cost of training and the need for casual relief teachers may exclude some school communities from being able to train their staff to the extent that ensures successful implementation and sustainability of the approach. Blood and Thorsborne (2005) recommended that successful implementation of restorative practices requires the school leadership to ensure that all staff are trained, maintained, and supported throughout the process. In July 2017, the cost for a two-day introductory restorative practices training course in Melbourne, Australia was over AUD\$600 per person (Critical Agendas, 2017). For some schools, training all staff may become unattainable and unrealistic due to the costs involved.

A further issue, that has been widely reported, is that restorative practices are considered by teachers to be time consuming (Kane et al., 2008; McGrath, 2005; Shaw, 2007). Some teachers in the current study described this as “... time does seem to be a number one issue, to make time regularly, there’s a full curriculum.” However, other teachers believed that the more conversant they were with the approach, the less time it took. These teachers found that they needed less time to address issues or behaviour issues as a result of regular use of restorative practices. For example, “I think the time to do it regularly, 20 minutes or whatever, every week will save them the hours later when there’s a problem and that’s what I’m finding.” Therefore, sustaining the approach, which may initially appear to take time, may indeed save time in the longer term.

In order to address this perception further research would need to ascertain if the investment of time using restorative practices has a long-term benefit. This could be achieved through comparing two schools. One who uses circle time as a proactive approach to managing behaviour and one who doesn't use circle time. The time spent on circle time each week being recorded by the first school. Both schools recording the amount of time spent on managing student behaviour issues (e.g. referral to the school principal, time out of the classroom for disciplinary measures (including time out), detentions, and time speaking to parents). A comparison of the time spent on reactively managing behaviour could then be compared with the time spent on proactively promoting pro-social behaviour through circle time. Any discrepancies may potentially add support for adoption of the approach being time saving. However, if no difference is identified this may support the views of some of the teachers that restorative practices is time consuming to use. The adoption of new processes and the development of a new culture can take time, regardless of the approach being adopted (Sugai & Horner, 2006; Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2003). For teachers adopting restorative practices, as they move away from the reactive approach and towards a whole-school approach, it is reported that there is less need for formal interventions (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005).

The issue of time, or a lack of time, can result in teachers failing to use the restorative practices and resorting to traditional punitive measures (Kane et al., 2008). One student in the current study explained how this continued to occur: "teachers have to be our role models but some of them – like when you are in a classroom and someone is getting yelled at ... they actually yell at them." This comment shows that despite prior perceptions the environment is not always a harmonious and calm. These inconsistencies in the use of the approach can potentially send the wrong message to the students and lead to frustration, resulting in a detrimental impact on behaviour. For example, "the kids don't

listen” because teachers were seen to hand out “empty threats.” One student described a situation where “I go and tell my teacher [about an issue] and she would say ‘don’t be a tell-tale’ ... [she should be] just helping you out and hearing both sides of the story.”

Managing student needs and addressing disruptive behaviour within the context of the broader school community can be challenging, but the findings show that there are alternative ways to address challenges. Teachers and school leadership are aware that managing disruptive behaviour and issues detracts from the time that could be spent promoting prosocial skills and meeting the educational needs of the majority of students.

Personal beliefs. Another key challenge to the implementation and sustainability of restorative practices was the personal beliefs held by teachers. The personal beliefs of the teachers, in particular their experiences and their perceptions or ability to adopt new approaches, were inextricably linked with their use of the approach. Some of the teachers described how they believed restorative practices were a “quick fix solution” and did not provide enough consequences for misbehaviour. Their beliefs were that punitive discipline measures provided those consequences.

Research suggests that the use of restorative practices could be deemed coercive if it is used inappropriately and if there is a lack of genuine conversation between those involved (Rigby, 2004; Vaandering 2014). Evidence of this type of issue was provided by a student, in the current study, who felt that their teacher didn’t listen. The perception of the teacher was seen as being manipulative and created a degree of favouritism between students. Rigby (2004) suggests that restorative practices can be problematic if the behaviour of the student, and the consequence handed down to them, as a result of that behaviour, has been made by a staff member who is part of the problem (e.g. a situation which occurred during the class which could be deemed by another teacher as appropriate). This can result in the student feeling disempowered. For example, “my English teacher

decided she didn't like me and started singling me out ... I was getting into trouble and it was hurting my feelings."

One finding that is consistent with other research is the difficulty of creating cultural change in the attitudes of staff members. When some teachers struggle to adopt the restorative practices approach and attempt to reconcile the new approach with previously used punitive measures, this can result in inconsistencies between staff members (Evans & Lester, 2012; Morrison & Vaandering, 2012). Changing the culture of a school can be difficult because it requires challenging practices that have evolved over time. When traditional ways of working are deeply embedded in the school culture, the process of change requires an alteration of mindset and behaviour (Morrison et al., 2005).

It is important that the school leadership acknowledges and addresses challenges to increase uptake of the restorative practices during the implementation phase and to sustain the new way of dealing with problem behaviour. For teachers to learn new strategies, they are required to challenge their own perceptions and require support as they transition from teacher to learner (Geijsel, Slegers, Stoel, & Krüger, 2009; Kwakman, 2003; McCormack, Gore, & Thomas, 2006; Vaandering, 2014).

Despite the challenge of addressing personal perceptions, most of the teachers in the current study believed that implementation of restorative practices was most effective when they could reflect on their personal values. McCluskey et al. (2008) and Vaandering (2014) suggested that restorative practices are most effective when teachers are willing to reflect on their daily interactions in the school community and review their own personal perceptions.

School leadership needs to be sensitive to the potential barriers that teachers encounter when faced with change. This can be achieved through school leaders who understand their own leadership style and demonstrate skills, a personal willingness to

change, and seek to earn teacher trust (Zimmerman, 2006). Blood (2005) and McCluskey et al. (2008) suggested that leadership is a critical component in the implementation of restorative practices in schools. Staff members in the school leadership team can influence school culture, promote acceptable behaviours and attitudes, and send messages to the school community about their expectations. Blood and Thorsborne (2005) proposed that it is the role of the school leadership team to “inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart” (p. 5).

Developing a shared vision or goals, a common purpose, and motivating these in the school community are key components to successful change (Zimmerman, 2006). Inclusive practice in the school community not only requires modelling of appropriate behaviour from teacher to student, but also from the school leadership team to the teaching staff, which is consistent with social learning theory (Bandura, 1977). This demonstrates a common understanding about the types of behaviour and communication that they wish to encourage to the school community. Ms E (CPS) described the benefits of effective interactions between staff: “If people [teachers] are frustrated with each other, they’ll be honest and speak openly about it, rather than some schools where there is a lot of bitching behind each other’s backs. We get along well I think, that’s because we are honest and open with each other ... this school is like a little family.”

Some of the teachers mentioned the use of restorative practices before and after the use of a punitive approach. One interesting comment came from Ms A (GSS) who said, “I got one of the secretaries to bring up all the detention data ... the kids that turn up to detention are repeat offenders. So it’s not working.” Her solution to this issue was to change the detention to regular restorative circle time because she was able to recognise that the punitive approach was ineffective.

As previously discussed, the use of punitive discipline can distract from the intended message and send the wrong idea to students who may inadvertently interpret the discipline as a personal or hostile attack, thereby damaging relationships (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). Building healthy relationships is a key component in restorative schools, so it is important that the use of any punitive measures within a school community incorporates restorative practices to mend and repair the relationships (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2011; Blood & Thorsborne 2005; Drewery & Winslade 2003; Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005; Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2017).

For schools adopting a whole-school approach to restorative practices, it is vital that their use of sanctions, such as detentions and suspension, reflect a relational approach, for example, a restorative conversation prior to and after the use of the sanction. However, these findings do not explain why punitive measures are used if the school community acknowledges this approach doesn't change behaviour. Further research could consider investigating the integration of restorative approaches with more traditional discipline measure. Although prior research has shown that punitive measure alone are ineffective in changing behaviour it is not known if a combination of restorative practices and punitive approaches could produce effective behaviour outcomes and build pro-social skills.

Understanding the Challenges

Despite the challenges of culture change the current study described the remarkable case of Ms F, which shows that change is possible and sustainable. The case of Ms F raises questions about what qualities are required to be exceptional in the use of restorative practices. This is despite the school communities who participated reporting that they were experienced in the use of a whole-school approach.

Ms F's description of how she used restorative practices and her understanding of the approach indicated she had a firm belief in the long-term benefits of the approach. Ms

F believed in using restorative values throughout her whole life, including for managing the behaviour of her own children. The concept and benefits of living restoratively has not yet been reported in the academic literature. This finding does not explain why only one person exemplified the approach. Was this due to a lack of teacher training or support? Or was it due to a lack of teacher motivation to change their way of thinking?

Motivational theories can offer an explanation as to why these inconsistencies can occur. As described in Chapter 3, motivation is engaging in a particular behaviour to attain an outcome (Deci et al., 1991). Self-determination theory of motivation suggests that when people are internally motivated, they can fulfil their potential and will perceive themselves as agents of their own behaviour. This theory explains what motivates a person to change. Feelings of competence increase intrinsic motivation. Teachers with high intrinsic motivation are more effective in the classroom, more persistent and less stressed (Niemiec & Ryan, 2009). Many teachers have intrinsic motivation to perform their jobs (e.g. a meaningful job), but when extrinsic motivation comes into play, they are doing something for a tangible reward such as payment.

Self-determination theory suggests that the context or environment, such as a lack of training, can either facilitate or hinder motivational factors. When teachers are faced with controlling factors such as “imposed goals, time restraint or other contingent issues,” this can constrain how they feel and think, leading to increases in stress (Fernet, Guay, Senécal, & Austin, 2012, p. 516). When a teacher’s self-efficacy is low, it can lead to burnout. And when teachers begin to doubt their ability to manage student behaviour, it can lead to them blaming the student and result in a negative teacher–student relationship (Fernet et al., 2012). Similarly, attribution theory suggests that when a teacher attributes a student’s misbehaviour to their internal characteristics, the teacher fails to account for the student’s context or situation. This may result in the teacher using punitive discipline as a

means to manage that behaviour. However, it is possible that when a teacher lacks motivation they may perceive their work environment as being more negative, therefore causality cannot be determined. In addition, it is possible that teacher perceptions may change over the course of the school year due to varying demands and this may impact on their perceptions. In order to minimise any bias, the timing of data collection in any future research needs to be carefully considered.

An additional motivation theory that accounts for inconsistency in personal beliefs is cognitive dissonance theory. Cognitive dissonance theory offers an understanding of why some teachers are unable to change their own firmly held beliefs. Cognitive dissonance theory explains how this resistance to change occurs and the actions that need to be taken to overcome this challenge (Festinger, 1962; Harmon-Jones & Harmon-Jones, 2012). One teacher said, “it’s band-aiding a boil at times,” believing that the students need stern punitive discipline. In a school that has adopted restorative practices, this teacher may be forced to act against their beliefs when using the approach and as a result will experience cognitive dissonance. This dissonance can be addressed through compliance with the new behaviour (use restorative practices), increasing the attractiveness of one option and decreasing the attractiveness of the other (choose the preferred technique, punitive or restorative), or acquiring a belief that the new way will result in a good or better outcome (a belief that restorative practices will create a better result; Festinger, 1962; Harmon-Jones et al., 2015).

Cognitive dissonance theory can be used as a mechanism for teachers to understand their reactions when learning new approaches that are inconsistent with their current beliefs or practices. Cognitive dissonance can be addressed through discussion of the new approach with teachers and students to engage them in the process and challenge any

firmly held beliefs. In addition, there is a need to focus on interpersonal elements for all those in the school community and this could be facilitated by the school leadership.

Inspiring the Big Picture

Ecological systems theory considers an individual is at the centre of a complex network of systems that influence their lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). This concept is similar to restorative practices, which is a community-based approach to dealing with behaviour that proactively instils social skills and is described as being akin to “a river of many sources” (Zehr, 2015, p. 62). Zehr (2015) suggested that restorative practices are a way of life and “is a reminder that all of us are indeed in a web of relationships” (p. 62). This is particularly true if we look at the case of Ms F (discussed above) who not only uses restorative practices in the classroom but lives her life using a restorative approach.

The ecological systems theory can be used to explain and understand the importance of context and environment on the development of a child or young person (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Successful implementation and sustainability of restorative practices is the responsibility of all within the school community. Bronfenbrenner (1977) describes this as the micro-level because it is a place where people interact within the school community and with family. Healthy relationships and strong connections with the school community can protect the student, not only by reducing disruptive behaviour, but also by reducing the likelihood of developing mental health issues (Bond et al., 2007).

The macro-level is the influence of the broader community, culture, and government policies on the introduction of interventions such as restorative practices into school communities. At this level, the individual has little control over elements such as government policies. As such, this can create a challenge for teachers when they are required to follow process over which they feel they have little influence. This was highlighted in the comments of some of the teachers who described a struggle reconciling

the time needed for restorative practices due to a “full curriculum” and “something’s got to go ... you can’t fit everything in to five hours.” However, a restorative school can affect its own community at the macro-level by creating a set of cultural values, rules, traditions, and norms (Leonard, 2011). This is an important component of restorative schools because it establishes agreed goals, increases motivation, and increases a sense of community (Peterson & Deal, 2011).

School leadership is another key component in the success of restorative practices in school communities. School leadership needs to act as a role model and take the time to train and support staff members. Blood and Thorsborne (2005) found that the implementation and sustainability of restorative practices would have limited effectiveness unless support from school leaders was present throughout the process. Leadership teams need to place emphasis on developing professional, supportive relationships with staff and ensure clear communication to minimise any issues that may arise (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013). Teachers need their school leadership team to give them time to collaborate with other teachers and receive professional development. This is particularly important to sustain the use of restorative practices, especially when it is in its infancy. The process of collaboration with colleagues offers teachers the opportunity to discuss the process and debrief (e.g. “I need to say to her [the school principal] ‘look there are these issues and I’m trying to work out how to approach it,’ just to get that little bit of feedback”) and as a means to debrief (e.g. “it [a situation] would come up at a staff meeting and people would air concerns or issues that had arisen and it would get discussed at the staff meeting”).

When teachers are placed under pressure during the implementation phase of a new program, there can be a drop-in morale and performance (Sunderman, Tracey, Kim, & Orfield, 2004). All of the issues or inhibitors that teachers described in the current study can be addressed through training, professional development, and leadership support.

Professional development and training can assist in changing teacher thinking and challenging their beliefs (Kehoe et al., 2016).

Only half of the schools in the study had the support of or access to their own school psychologist or wellbeing coordinator (see Table 6.2 for details). The teachers who had this type of support reported fewer issues arising from change and greater acceptance of restorative practices compared with the teachers who did not have their own school psychologist or wellbeing coordinator. This finding has not previously been reported and has important implications for the sustainability of restorative practices.

The current findings indicate that there appears to be some benefits to school communities that employ a dedicated person to manage and support staff and student wellbeing. In Australian schools, like in many Western countries, the employment of a school psychologist requires additional funding. However, even in schools with relatively few resources, teachers said that access to progressive school leadership helped them to create and sustain change. School leaders were considered as being crucial to this process and need to ensure there is a regular time for debriefing, team support, and knowledge sharing. This could be organised within each school or through a network of schools that could support each other from pre-implementation, through the implementation process to ensure the sustainability of the approach.

When teachers were asked what advice would they offer to other schools seeking to implement restorative practices, they suggested ongoing professional training. The teachers believed that training was a key component of the sustainability of restorative practices. One teacher reported that “the training is important because it explains to you how and why it works.” This finding was consistent with research that found that “good quality training and leadership” was a key feature to successful implementation of restorative practices (McCluskey et al., 2008, p. 412). However, as previously discussed, ongoing

training and professional development on the use of restorative practices requires funding and resources that may not be feasible for some school communities. Alternative ways to support lower funded and financially disadvantaged schools need to be addressed at the federal and state government levels. To date, a cost-effectiveness analysis of restorative practices has not been undertaken in Australia

A Comparison of Student and Teacher Views

Although it would be expected that there would be both similarities and differences in perceptions, the quality and extent of the differences between teachers and students was notable. Despite the introduction of restorative practices into school communities, both teachers and students reported that punitive discipline measures, particularly detentions, were still used. Interestingly, both teachers and students also felt that punitive discipline was ineffectual because it did not teach alternative behaviours or more prosocial behaviours. For example, “the punitive approach wasn’t working ... the relationship wasn’t there and if a student was misbehaving, the automatic solution was to send them out for someone else to deal with.”

It was also clear that both teachers and students acknowledged the benefits of effective communication. Although the teachers reported that changes had occurred in the students’ behaviour and the manner in which they communicated, the students did not report the same skills being demonstrated by their teachers. There was discrepancy between the teachers modelling appropriate behaviour and the expectations that they placed on students. One student commented that “my teacher sits in assembly and she tells us to be respectful of other people, but she sits there and talks to other teachers and sometime plays on her phone.” Even though students did not clearly identify their teachers’ use of restorative practices with respect to communication, they did identify that if they were school principal, they would use restorative practices techniques to “talk about

things” and “do restorative chats” to address issues. This suggests that restorative practices are having an impact on student perceptions of the best way to manage conflict and increase communication. This finding is consistent with Morrison and Vaandering (2012), who suggested that restorative practice builds social-emotional skills by using effective communication, which increases understanding of prosocial behaviour.

Overall, it appears that teachers believed that restorative practices were a useful means for students to reflect on their behaviour, understand the consequences, and consider the feelings of others (Hopkins, 2002; Kaveney & Drewery, 2011). In contrast, the students perceived restorative practices as a means to build relationships and they wanted to see more use of circle time. For example, one student said, “some classrooms do have circle time and some don’t and I think classrooms having circle time [are better], it helps.” This comment is consistent with a proactive restorative practices approach (Harrison, 2007; Kehoe et al., 2016). Other research suggests that when circle time is not used, or is used inconsistently or ineffectively, it can be due to teachers’ beliefs that social-emotional learning is not their role or they lack confidence in promoting this type of learning (Roffey & McCarthy, 2013).

The difference in student and teacher reports on the preferred use of restorative practices illustrates the broad application of the approach. Students described a preference for restorative practice approaches such as circle time, whereas teachers described a preference for addressing misbehaviour as it occurs. The differing perspective suggests that the school communities who participated have not fully embraced a whole-school approach to restorative practices, with most teachers using the approach as an alternative discipline measure to deal with issues as they occur. This method is the traditional restorative practices approach, which was used to mend relationships following an incident, rather than the whole-school approach, which seeks to proactively build skills as

a preventive measure (Morrison et al., 2005). Teachers' use of circle time appears to be infrequent and inconsistent compared with the reports of the students. In contrast, students advocate for a more proactive approach and can see the value of effective listening, communication, and problem-solving, which lie at the core of the whole-school approach to restorative practices (McCluskey et al., 2008; Porter, 2007).

In short, the results show a dissonance in attitudes between teaching staff and students. This could, perhaps, be due to a lack of school culture that has embedded and embraced restorative practices, or there may be an inter-generational discourse between teachers and students, whereby teachers continue to hold traditional views of punishment, power, justice, and discipline. In contrast, students appear to be more accepting of the restorative practices way of doing things. However, as previously identified it would also point towards the need to consider how integrating restorative practices with some aspect of traditional discipline measures could be effective.

A New Way of Thinking

The findings from teacher and student perceptions show that restorative practices can address student behaviour in a reactive way when misbehaviour occurs and can also be used as a proactive approach to build communication and prosocial skills. Several challenges are faced by school communities when seeking to implement and sustain the approach. The philosophy underlying restorative practices is complex and competing theories (such as reintegrative shame, which was developed in the context of the justice system) do not fully account for student behaviour issues and are inconsistent with the aims and purpose of a school community. The success of new programs requires them to be incorporated into routine class time and to focus on fostering discrete skills rather than direct teaching (Durlak et al., 2011). Through the thematic analysis of the data, a new framework to highlight the benefits of restorative practices emerged.

The development of this new framework was informed by the issues and benefits raised by teachers and students. Teachers' and students' perceptions of the key ingredients for successful implementation of restorative practices were harmony, empathy, awareness and accountability, respect, and thinking in a reflective way. These five key elements are abbreviated to form the acronym HEART.

The use of the term HEART could be used as an innovative framework that represents the core restorative practices values and is synonymous with the foundations of competent social skills. Similar to other social-emotional learning programs, the aim is to provide students with the opportunity to contribute to their classroom environment and experience a sense of belonging. Durlak et al. (2011) found that, for students, a sense of belonging and the opportunity to contribute to their class environment enhanced motivation enabling both students and teachers to build competence (Durlak et al., 2011). Intrinsic motivation is a key component of positive wellbeing (Kusurkar et al., 2011), and research suggests that the use of school-wide frameworks that adopt a common language can improve relationships, conflict resolution, understanding, and empathy (Noble & McGrath, 2015; Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2014). When school communities incorporate preventive measures, they can improve wellbeing for everyone within the school community (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

The HEART framework could have several practical applications in the classroom and broader school environment. For students, the framework could be used as an everyday tool to prompt them and guide recall of the principles of restorative practices (e.g. using visual materials such as posters). The HEART framework would be particularly suited to circle time, in either a formal or informal manner, with discussion of the meaning of each main theme. For teachers, the HEART framework would act as a reminder of the benefits of social-emotional learning to the whole school community and aid in cultural

change. A visual reminder of the HEART framework may also encourage teachers to move away from punitive measures in favour of restorative methods.

Teachers can support students' social-emotional learning and encourage change by incorporating each aspect of HEART into daily learning. For the school community (including administration, parents, and visitors) evidence, such as posters that promote social-emotional learning through the use of HEART, is likely to build confidence in restorative practices. In addition, the use of a simple accessible term ensures easy availability to all school communities. Similar to other social-emotional program in schools (such as, KidsMatter, BounceBack, Better Buddies, and Tribes), there is need for restorative practices to look at ways to reframe its image and further distance itself from the justice system. It could be argued that HEART will be more memorable, simpler, and easier to remember for school communities and may aid in the uptake and sustainability of the approach. The use of the term HEART places emphasis on the proactive aspects of restorative practices and is closer to the aims of social-emotional learning (as shown on the restorative continuum in Chapter 2) than reactive measures such as restorative conferences following an incident.

Strengths and Limitations of the Present Study

There were some limitations to the current study including methodology, teachers training, and use of parent involvement. To address the trustworthiness of the research, it is necessary for the limitations and the impact of those limitations to be addressed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004). In the current study, one of the limitations was the qualitative nature of the data collection, which offered a depth of understanding rather than a breadth of understanding. The six schools cannot be considered representative of the 2,238 schools in Victoria (Department of Education and Training, 2016b). There is currently no system that records the type programs that each school uses and it was therefore not possible to

recruit from a cross-section of the number, locations, or types of schools that were using restorative practices.

In addition, within each of the schools, the teachers and students who were interviewed, and the views they expressed, cannot be assumed to be representative of their school communities. The data analysis only allows for consistency to be drawn between interviewees. Finally, there is a temporal component to this study, where the views and opinions given are limited to the time of data collection. The data can't account for any impact due to staff turnover, different cohorts of students, student maturity, and as previously described, the nature of restorative practices, which can change over time. The use of alternative methods of data collection, for example cross-sectional or longitudinal surveys, may have yielded different conclusions.

A further limitation was a lack of understanding of the depth of teacher training. Although the current research enquired about the number of days each teacher had participated in training, it was not able to establish if there was a qualitative difference in the extent or depth of the training received. Therefore, the current findings cannot be generalised to other school communities that have implemented restorative practices. There are currently no standardised restorative practices training courses available to school communities in Australia because training is provided by independent practitioners (at the school's cost or by the Catholic Education Office for Catholic schools). It was not a criterion in the methodology of the current study to examine the experience of the person conducting the training, the cost to the school for the training, and whether teacher attendance was cost dependent. Hence no assertions can be made regarding the quality of the training provided to the teachers who participated in this study.

Although the context of community beyond the school was not explored, both students and teachers felt this was important and there was value in establishing

connections outside the school community. Strong connection to the wider school community can act as a protective factor, not only reducing disruptive behaviour but improving mental health outcomes (Bond et al., 2007). Of particular note is the omission of the parent voice in this research. The current study did not include parent interviews; therefore, little is known about their demographic background or parenting style. It is possible that the parents who agreed for their child to participate have higher prosocial skills. This may mean that the experiences of the students who participated are not representative of all students at their school, with the students who participated potentially having better prosocial skills than their peers. According to Baumrind (1991), parents have a salient role in the life and development of their children. Parental communication can predict their children's development of prosocial skills such as empathy. Similarly, students' interactions with their families can be affected by their parents' views, such as beliefs around discipline and justice. When parents lack warmth, are overprotective, or neglectful, the children are at greater risk of poor psychological outcomes (White & Renk, 2011).

Despite these limitations, the current study collected some interesting new findings for restorative practices research. One of the new findings centres on students' perceptions of what constitutes appropriate behaviour. For both students and teachers, justice and a sense of fairness were intertwined with personal beliefs, but this study was unable to determine or explain the extent that personal beliefs influenced the use of restorative practices, or if restorative practices influences beliefs and in what circumstances. This finding was highlighted when students reported a disparity between the instructions given by teachers on what is appropriate behaviour but then teacher demonstrated the opposite manner themselves. The comments and beliefs creating a sense of injustice in students

whereby school rules should be for the whole school community to follow and not just the students.

One of the main strengths of this research is that the study undertook in-depth interviews with teachers and focus groups with students. The qualitative approach allowed for depth of participant understanding and allowed them the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. Of particular value were the views of the students who reported their opinions and perceptions of the impact of restorative practices on their behaviour, thinking, and attitudes. There have been few studies of student view of restorative practices, and this is a particular strength of this research. This approach allowing for depth of understanding which could not be captured using quantitative techniques. Triangulation of the findings allowed teachers' and students' views, and different school sectors to be compared (Fossey et al., 2002).

Qualitative data collection can create a challenge for researchers in making sense of the huge volume of data. This was overcome by focusing on the participants voices (see Chapter 6) and then providing a thematic analysis (see Chapter 7). The richness and depth of the data provides insights that could not be obtained through quantitative data collection.

Summary

This chapter included a discussion of the results and thematic analysis in relation to other research and broader theoretical frameworks. The discussion provided an analysis of the benefits, challenges, and sustainability of restorative practices. The aims of the chapter were to integrate the results with other research on restorative practices and to understand the approach using psychological theory to uncover any interrelationships between them. The chapter showed that developmental and motivational theories offer a comprehensive understanding of restorative practices and its impact on behaviour. Sustaining the approach

was found to be challenging; in particular, many of the issues arose from resistance to change within the school community. In addition, a lack of training (when it is needed) restricts availability and accessibility for teachers to use the approach. This chapter compared the student and teacher perspectives, which is a unique approach to restorative practices research. A new framework, HEART, was proposed to offer a user-friendly term that could be incorporated into the school community in order to simplify understanding on the benefits of the restorative practices approach. HEART epitomises the benefits of restorative practices and builds social skills. Finally, this chapter offers an overview of the limitations and strengths of the study. The following conclusions chapter will draw together the key components of this thesis. Future research will also be proposed.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and Recommendations

It's the way of the future ... it's got the power the change behaviour. (Ms H, Catholic secondary school teacher and research participant)

Introduction

This chapter draws together the findings of the research. The implications are discussed along with some practical recommendations for school communities seeking to implement or sustain restorative practices. The chapter offers recommendations for future research in this field.

Implications and Recommendations

There are many implications for school communities, school principals, teachers, and restorative practices practitioners that can be drawn from the results of the current study. School leaders are crucial for supporting the school community through the process of adopting school-wide positive behaviour programs such as restorative practices. School leaders can empower teachers and students through the implementation process and ensure that teachers have enough time for debriefing, team support, and knowledge sharing.

A school psychologist who is suitably trained to support adult learning and change would also be of benefit because the use of psychological support can help teachers understand the underlying concepts of the approach, assist with change management, as well as debriefing. Teachers described how they felt limited in their use of restorative practices due to a lack of time. They believed that leadership support and training were vital during the implementation process and to sustain use of the approach. When time, support, and resources are made available, restorative practices are more likely to be used

by teachers and sustained in the longer term. In schools with limited resources, the current findings suggest that progressive school leadership can create and sustain change.

The extent to which school communities chose to implement and adopt restorative practices can vary. Although reactive restorative practices appear to be effective in managing student misbehaviour as it occurs, at times students feel that their issues are not understood or they are not listened to by their teachers (McCluskey et al., 2013). Inconsistency in the use of restorative practices can send the wrong message to students, and potentially lead to frustration, resulting in damage to the student–teacher relationship (McCluskey et al., 2008). When teachers are under stress, there can be a tendency for them to resort to ineffective punitive actions. More importantly, stress can lead to a decline in teacher health and wellbeing, which is an important outcome for the school community to acknowledge and address (Lewis et al., 2005). Teacher stress may be perceived by students as hostility or criticism, which can lead to students becoming defensive or aggressive and perpetuating the issues (Gregory & Ripski, 2008)

It is clear that restorative practices are more than a behaviour management approach for reacting to problematic behaviour as it occurs. However, it is not known if the approach is suitable for all students all of the time, for example, students with learning or behaviour difficulties. Although some teachers in the study reported challenges with children who had learning difficulties this was not a focus of the current study and has not been reported previously in research literature.

Teachers in the study described a lack of ongoing training that led to misunderstanding and a lack of knowledge, however, it is not known if additional training and the extent of that training would alter behaviour outcomes or perceptions. The perceptions of teacher in the current study suggest that schools seeking to adopt restorative

practices need to consider providing staff members with ongoing training and professional development on the philosophy underlying restorative practices.

The following section offers suggestions about three specific aspects for potential change which emerged from the data.

Breaking the cycle. The current study offers a unique insight into the beliefs of both students and teachers about restorative practices. Although the implementation and use of restorative practices was considered, at times, to be a challenge for both students and teachers, the participants' responses suggest that it may be effective in changing student and teacher behaviour.

Both students and teachers believed that the use of restorative practices affects students' thinking and their ability to reflect, not only on their own actions, but also on the actions of their teachers. Participants reported increases in reflective thinking, problem-solving skills, and empathy. Restorative practices have the capability to create positive change within schools for both students and teachers (Corrigan, 2014; McCluskey et al., 2008). The impact of this positive change can result in long-term benefits to the broader community, by creating more socially responsible citizens, and highlights the value of developing prosocial skills in students and teachers (Johnstone, 2011; Lewis et al., 2005).

However, the teacher and student comments highlight discrepancies in the use of restorative practices and punitive discipline approaches. It could be argued there is a need to break the cycle that persists within the education system. For some teachers, punitive discipline continues to be the preferred method of managing behaviour despite the knowledge that using punitive approaches means that children and young people are more likely to replicate that behaviour (Cowie, 2013; Sanson et al., 1996). This has important implications if the student chooses to go to university to study to become a teacher. The new teacher, when faced with a new approach (such as restorative practices), has to

challenge their own perceptions. To break the cycle, there is a need to educate pre-service teachers so they know about restorative approaches from the commencement of their teaching career. Children who are introduced to restorative practices throughout their school life are more likely to accept it and embrace the skills it offers (McCluskey et al., 2008).

Pre-service or teacher training. Due to the complex and varied uses of restorative practices, as described in earlier chapters, acquiring knowledge of the approach requires formal training. Many of the teachers in the current study described the need for initial and ongoing training. Some of the teachers were critical that the training was only offered to a select few teachers. As shown in Table 6.2, seven teachers had received training more than five years prior and five teachers had received no professional development on the approach since their initial training.

It is possible that formal training may be inaccessible to many school communities due to the cost involved, as Mr M (ISS) said, “the budget is just not there.” This may be due to the cost of casual relief to cover time teaching staff are away from the classroom. There is also a need to create a means to allow restorative practices to be made available to all teachers from all school communities. The findings of this research have major implications for the training of pre-service teachers. If pre-service teachers were to gain understanding and direct learning of restorative practices during their university training, there would be a cohort of graduate teachers who have similar prosocial values and understand the benefits of proactive approaches. The cost would be incorporated into their pre-service training and would not be a burden to individual schools. However, this may hold adverse implications for University whereby the cost is simply transferred to them. Since there is no current restorative practice training offered through teacher training at

University's it is not possible to determine if this option would be cost effective or if it changes the outcomes of teacher understanding and uptake of the approach.

Lack of data. A lack of record keeping was evident throughout this study. Many schools did not keep accurate records on the number of detentions and suspensions and the reasons for those disciplinary measures. There were no records of how many restorative conferences were conducted, how many students were involved, what year levels were involved, and why the formal restorative conference was carried out. Without this data, it would be difficult for any school to accurately ascertain the impact that restorative practices are having on behaviour. This type of record keeping would allow patterns of behaviour to be identified so that an early intervention can be implemented. Accurate data collected before and after implementation would give a clear understanding of the impact of restorative practices on reducing punitive approaches. The collection of such data would be useful for individual schools and to inform government policy and practice.

From a research perspective there are a lack of instruments to measure the impact and effectiveness of restorative practices in the school community. To-date no specific measures have been specifically developed for this purpose. Prior research has tended to adapt and use a variety of instruments to measure various constructs such as bullying. However, these instruments are insufficient to understand the complex nature of restorative practices. Addressing this gap through the development of a comprehensive battery of measures which specifically addresses the complexity of restorative practices would benefit future research in this field.

Government policy. A cohesive and consistent approach to policies and procedures related to student behaviour and wellbeing is lacking at both federal and state government levels (Department of Education and Training, 2017). Policies are frequently changed and many policies are deferred from federal to state governments, which means

there are inconsistencies across the country (Department of Education and Training, 2016a).

Research exploring the wellbeing of Australian children and young people suggests that, although students consider school as an important part of their lives, they feel it is “an institution rather than part of their community” (Bessell & Mason, 2014, p. 15).

In Australia, the ratification of the United Nations rights of a child identifies the human rights of children and their ability to participate in issues that affect them (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2007). If policy makers are concerned about creating supportive places for students then students’ views and perspectives need to be listened to and taken seriously. Therefore, any future research on restorative practices needs to ensure it accounts for the student voice.

Practical Recommendations

One of the main outcomes of this study is the proposed HEART framework, which illustrates the impact of restorative practices on student behaviour. The user-friendly term allows both students and teachers to understand the core values that underlie restorative practices. The use of the term HEART, which is easy to remember, means the application of restorative practices is more likely to occur. Noble and McGrath (2015) suggested that a common language and simplified terminology (such as the use of acronyms) can assist school staff to adopt a new approach and reflect on their practice. The use of the HEART framework sees a move away from the terms associated with crime and the justice system, towards a term that reflects the school environment and would be easily identifiable to students, teachers, and parents. The use of the HEART framework is not likely to replace other training and professional development, but will reinforce the underlying values of the approach and encourage a holistic view that promotes positive behaviour, relationships, and community.

Teachers could introduce the values incorporated into the HEART framework in several practical ways such as books, role-play, and writing tasks. The use of carefully selected books such as picture books for younger students and novels for older students enables teachers to achieve their academic literacy targets while promoting prosocial skills (Noble & McGrath, 2008). Children's literature can enhance students' positive social knowledge and teachers can select literature that introduces and promotes the values of HEART. This is another means to incorporate aspects of restorative practices into the everyday classroom without affecting time or diverting from the academic curriculum.

The school curriculum can be adapted to incorporate the HEART framework in other ways. Journal writing or creative writing in English, role-plays in performing arts, and team sport in physical education can all be used to develop awareness and thinking of others. School communities may also consider the introduction of meditation or mindfulness practices to increase harmony and bring calmness to the classroom. In the current study, harmony was one of the primary benefits of restorative practices. Harmony is an important positive emotion that enables integration of thought and emotion, reduces stress, and increases empathy (Waters, 2011). Meditation and mindfulness practice in schools has been found to cultivate wellbeing and positive mental health, particularly during times of stress (Gable & Haidt, 2005). These practical suggestions are aimed at facilitating introduction of the HEART framework to minimise both the impact on teachers and changes to the academic curriculum. A summary of the recommendations is provided below.

Summary of Recommendations

Some of the recommendations emerged as key findings of the research, while other recommendations were direct advice provided by teacher and student participants. The following is a summary:

- Promote understanding of the benefits of restorative practices by introducing the proposed HEART framework to schools through the everyday curriculum, and use meditation or mindfulness to create a more harmonious and calmer classroom
- Involve students in a child-friendly version of the restorative practices training that could be conducted by older peers and be facilitated by a teacher.
- Encourage schools to adopt a standardised restorative practices training program that will ensure consistency within and across school communities, especially to address staff turnover and teachers moving between schools.
- Create a restorative school network whereby school communities within a local area can meet regularly to discuss techniques, problem solve, and support each other. This could include a school mentoring program to match an experienced school with a school that is new to restorative practices, to offer hands-on practical advice and support.
- Provide pre-service teachers with receive restorative practices training during their undergraduate university courses. This will reduce the costs to school communities that currently have to find funding for their own training and relief teaching. This would see an influx of new teachers who will be able to re-invigorate the approach with fresh knowledge and enthusiasm.
- Formalise behaviour management recording keeping to ensure consistency of the approach and to offer evidence-based indicators of success.

The primary purpose of these recommendations is to provide practical advice to schools that are in the early stages of adopting restorative practices or are considering adopting the approach. These recommendations aim to assist school communities to think

about their processes and procedures to minimise any issues that may occur during implementation of restorative practices and to sustain the approach.

Future Research

The primary purpose of this thesis was to investigate the lived-experiences and perceptions of students and teachers on the use of restorative practices to deal with behaviour and to build social skills. Although the findings reported in this thesis include some positive perceptions, the thesis also raised questions that could be addressed in future research. The implementation of restorative practices is a complex and lengthy process, and despite the school communities that participated being at least four years post-implementation, there was a struggle in sustaining the approach (Daly, 2002; Daly & Hayes, 2001; Johnstone, 2011).

Prior research on restorative practices has not developed specific measures to understand or capture the impact and effectiveness of the approach. Restorative practices research has reported the use of various measures which have been adapted in order to measure some related constructs such attitudes towards bullying (Wong et al., 2011). However, the complex nature of restorative practices means there is a need to measure multiple constructs.

As previously described restorative practices is based on a continuum from reactive approaches to proactive approaches. To-date the focus has tended to be on understanding and measuring behaviour outcomes when a reactive approach has been used, e.g. addressing behaviour after an incident has occurred. There has been no research which has reported measuring the proactive approach despite beliefs that this can result in positive behaviour outcomes and increased pro-social skills.

This study focused on student and teacher perceptions to develop an understanding of the constructs or variables which may impact on behaviour as a result of using

restorative practices. It also sought to understand the challenges during and following implementation of the approach.

The current study found teachers and students perceptions centred around five key benefits which promoted pro-social skills which was proposed in a new framework HEART. These benefits were described by participants as harmony in the school community, empathy for other people, awareness and accountability for one's own actions, respect for others and thinking in a reflective way. It is recommended that future research should consider these aspects in the development of a measure to further understand the benefits of restorative practices in the school community.

However, students and teachers also described challenges which it is recommended should be captured in the development of a measure or in future research on restorative practices. These challenges included personal perceptions or beliefs which may impact of the adoption and sustainability of the approach. One way this could be captured is through measuring an understanding of attitudes towards change.

Finally, it is recommended that future research should consider testing the application of the proposed HEART framework described in this thesis to examine if a simplified, understandable term aids the use and broader understanding of restorative practices by teachers and whether this translates into quantifiable changes in student behaviour. This could be explored through the use of an evaluation on the impact of the framework within a school community compared with a control group or non-intervention school. The evaluation would need to measure student behaviour and pro-social skills which the framework proposes e.g. harmony, empathy, accountability, respect and thinking of others. It would also need to measure teacher attitudes towards the use of restorative practices and degree of understanding on the use of the approach.

The current study did not include an examination of the school environment prior to the implementation of restorative practices. Nor did schools keep effective data on punitive actions pre- or post-implementation of restorative practices, which could have gleaned this information. Hence, assertions cannot be made regarding the extent of change associated with restorative practices within each school and by each teacher. It was also not known if the school communities used or had previously used other similar programs which may have confounded the findings. These aspects should be considered in future research.

Conclusions

For school communities that are seeking to adopt restorative practices or are in the early stages of its use, there are many practical lessons that can be learned from these findings. Most important, the perceptions of teachers and students identified the need for open communication to ensure everyone is working towards a common goal that can be achieved through incorporating restorative practices into school policy and involving the whole school community in the process. Participants also felt that another important aspect of restorative practices was to ensure a consistent approach is adopted. Staff training and regular professional development were identified as contributing towards successful implementation of restorative practices. School administrators and teachers need to understand that cultural change can take time to be established and embedded into everyday practice. Restorative practices emphasise resilience, a quality that can help students cope with stress (McGrath, 2005). The benefits of change can be a lasting legacy for the school, the teachers, and the students.

The development of prosocial skills, in particular, a whole-school approach, is a key component of effective education in contemporary society as well as acting as a

protective factor against mental health issues (Murray-Harvey, 2010). As Ms B (IPS) summarises:

I think it's a no brainer, [for society], sometimes I watch the news and I think for goodness sake, what we need here is a restorative process, they need consequences that are meaningful and they're going to teach somebody and not put them in prison so they'll come out criminals.

Approaches such as restorative practices enhance wellbeing, prosocial skills, and resilience in young people. The current study reported participants beliefs that identified when schools adopted a holistic restorative practices approach to dealing with student behaviour, there were many benefits. These benefits were considered by both teachers and students as, increased respect, a self-awareness and awareness of others, and the importance of a calm and consistent environment. The perceptions of teachers and students suggest that cultural change had begun to occur for the school communities in this study. Despite this apparent shift in the school cultures, the teachers acknowledged the challenges they faced. Ms F said, "It's probably mellowed some of my colleagues because it's not about standover tactics, not that it used to be but certainly teaching used to be, the teacher was right, you listened to the teacher, you sit down, you do the work ..." Feeling time poor and dealing with colleagues who struggled to adopt the restorative practices approach resulted in inconsistencies in dealing with student issues. Similarly, students identified inconsistencies in the manner in which some teachers managed behaviour, with some teachers resorting to punitive discipline. Regardless, all participants identified the potential long-term personal benefits of adopting restorative practices, such as learning how to get along with others, conflict resolution, and life skills.

Building healthy relationships through connectedness and a sense of community is a key component of restorative practices (McCluskey et al., 2008; Morrison & Vaandering,

2012). As a school community-based approach, restorative practices can be particularly effective in managing student behaviour when there is commitment, enthusiasm, and modelling of appropriate behaviour from the school staff (McCluskey et al., 2008).

In recent decades, school communities have been considered places where students learn to develop resilience and wellbeing (Noble & McGrath, in press). One student believed that you need to “build healthy relationships for the future ... so you have friends if you need help,” and that this would mean there is less likelihood “they are going to suicide.” These skills are critical for today’s young people. The suicide rate in Australia in 2015 was the leading cause of death in young people aged 15 to 24 years, a figure that has risen over the previous decade (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

This thesis makes a valuable contribution to research in this field and highlights the participant views that when restorative practices are adopted as a whole-school approach to manage student behaviour, promote prosocial skills, and build healthy relationships, the potential benefits to students, teachers, and school communities can be significant. There is clearly a need for federal and state governments to support prevention and early intervention programs for young people because “the health and well-being of a country’s young people is at the heart of a country’s wellbeing” (Noble & McGrath, in press).

In concluding, I include a final quote from Ms H. Her comment epitomises perceptions about the use of effective behaviour management and the significant impact that restorative practices is perceived to have upon society: “It’s the way of the future ... it’s got the power to change behaviour.”

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Appendices

Appendix A: Human Research Ethics Approval Letters

Principal Investigator/Supervisor: Sheryl Hemphill Melbourne Campus

Co-Investigators: David Broderick Melbourne Campus

Student Researcher: Michelle Kehoe Melbourne Campus

Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:

Restorative Practices in Victorian Schools

for the period: 13/06/2012-31/05/2012

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number: 2012 128V

Special Condition/s of Approval

Prior to commencement of your research, the following permissions are required to be submitted to the ACU HREC:

N/A

The following standard conditions as stipulated in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (2007)* apply:

- (i) that Principal Investigators / Supervisors provide, on the form supplied by the Human Research Ethics Committee, annual reports on matters such as:
 - security of records
 - compliance with approved consent procedures and documentation
 - compliance with special conditions, and
- (ii) that researchers report to the HREC immediately any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol, such as:
 - proposed changes to the protocol
 - unforeseen circumstances or events
 - adverse effects on participants
 - The HREC will conduct an audit each year of all projects deemed to be of more than low risk. There will also be random audits of a sample of projects considered to be of negligible risk and low risk on all campuses each year.

Within one month of the conclusion of the project, researchers are required to complete a *Final Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer.

If the project continues for more than one year, researchers are required to complete an *Annual Progress Report Form* and submit it to the local Research Services Officer within one month of the anniversary date of the ethics approval.



Signed: Date:15/06/2012.....

(Research Services Officer, Melbourne Campus)



Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Strategy and Review Group



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2012_001643

Ms Michelle Kehoe
School of Psychology
Australian Catholic University
Room 2.96, level 2 115
Victoria Parade
FITZROY 3065

Dear Ms Kehoe

Thank you for your application of 19 June 2012 in which you request permission to conduct research in Victorian Government schools and/or early childhood settings titled **Restorative practices in Victorian schools.**

I am pleased to advise that on the basis of the information you have provided your research proposal is approved in principle subject to the conditions detailed below.

1. The research is conducted in accordance with the final documentation you provided to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.
2. Separate approval for the research needs to be sought from school principals and/or centre directors. This is to be supported by the DEECD approved documentation and, if applicable, the letter of approval from a relevant and formally constituted Human Research Ethics Committee.
3. The project is commenced within 12 months of this approval letter and any extensions or variations to your study, including those requested by an ethics committee must be submitted to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for its consideration before you proceed.

4. As a matter of courtesy, you advise the relevant Regional Director of the schools or governing body of the early childhood settings that you intend to approach. An outline of your research and a copy of this letter should be provided to the Regional Director or governing body.
5. You acknowledge the support of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in any publications arising from the research.
6. The Research Agreement conditions, which include the reporting requirements at the conclusion of your study, are upheld. A reminder will be sent for reports not submitted by the study's indicative completion date.
7. If DEECD has commissioned you to undertake this research, the responsible Branch/Division will need to approve any material you provide for publication on the Department's Research Register.

I wish you well with your research study. Should you have further enquiries on this matter, please contact Youla Michaels, Research Officer, Research and Evaluation Branch, by telephone on (03) 9637 2707 or by email at michaels.youla.y@edumail.vic.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Dr Elizabeth Hartnell-Young
Director
Research and Evaluation Branch

24/07/2012

enc

Appendix B: Student Interview Guide

Students' ages: _____

Gender: Males _____ / Females _____

ESL (number of students and language):

School in general

1. Can you tell me a bit about school and what you like or dislike about it? (ice-breaker)
2. Do you feel safe at school?
 - a. *PROMPT - What makes you feel safe or unsafe?*
 - b. *PROMPT - What does the teacher do to make you feel safe at school?*
3. Can you tell me about some of your school rules? What rules are there about how you should behave?
4. What happens in your school if/when those rules are broken? Prompt - How might the teacher or the principal react to this?)
5. What do you think about this response or reaction when others break the rules?
 - a. *PROMPT - If you are involved in an incident at school where perhaps you broke a school rule – what would happen?*
 - b. *PROMPT - How do you think this would make you feel? What sort of things would your teacher say to you? (can you give an example)*

My teacher

6. Tell me about what you like most about your favourite teacher in school (ice-breaker)
 - a. What does this person do or how do they act that makes them special?
(Prompt: - What have you learnt from them?)
7. If something happened TO YOU at school (e.g. someone hurt you or broke something that belonged to you) what would the teacher or principal do? What do you think should happen?
8. When you have a problem at school, who would you talk to? Why do you talk to this person?

- a. Do you talk to any adults? Why or why not? (If they answer I only talk to my friends)
 - b. Do you talk to any teachers about problems you may have in school? Why or why not?
PROMPT - What do they do/say when you talk to them?
 How does this make you feel?
9. How do you know if your teacher understands you and the problems or issues you have? Can you give an example or describe a situation?
10. What have you learnt from your teachers or being in school about getting along with others? (*Prompt: - Tell me about a situation*)
-

Getting along with others

11. What do you do when someone else is sad/upset at school? (Even if they are not necessarily a friend of yours)
 - a. *PROMPT - Is it important to understand other people's feelings? Why or why not?*
 - b. *PROMPT - How do we show people we care about their feelings?*
 12. Where / or from whom do you learn to treat other people? (all people including teachers)
 13. What is the best way to handle a situation where you have to deal with a person who thinks or acts differently to you?
 - a. What do you do?
 - b. How do you achieve this?
 - c. What about if you were caught in the middle of a disagreement between two people at school – how would you handle this situation?
 14. What are some of the most important reasons for getting along with other people?
-

SECONDARY SCHOOLS ONLY (if not previously answered)

1. Do you know what Restorative Practices is? Can you describe what this means? What words does your school use to describe this?
2. When do you use Restorative Practices at school?
3. What do you think about using this?
4. What do you like or dislike about this?
5. What have you learnt using Restorative Practices?

ALL STUDENTS

Finally, if you were the school principal how would you deal with students who broke the rules or who behaved as I described in the two situations?

Why would you do that?

How do you think this would make a difference?

What would you like to see happen in your school to make it a friendlier place?

Appendix C: Teacher Interview Guide

Demographics

1. Please can you clarify your position/title?
2. Do you teach? If so what grade/grades?
3. How long have you been teaching?
4. How long have you been teaching at this particular school?
5. Have you had any previous experience using Restorative Practices at other schools you have worked at?

Training

1. Can you tell me a little bit about the training you received on Restorative Practices – e.g. how long ago did you complete the training?

Prompt: Who conducted the training?

Prompt: How did you find it? (number of days, format and support material etc.)

2. What did you think of the training? Prompt - Did you feel confident to go back and use the techniques following the training?

Implementation

1. Were you at the school when Restorative Practices was introduced?

If YES - What happened when it was implemented Restorative Practices? How do you think this went? Why do you think it was implemented? What were your initial thoughts about RP?

If NO – what do you know or understand about how/why it was introduced?

2. What sort of support did you receive during the implementation phase?

What sort of support have you received after implementation?

Prompt: Has this support continued?

Impact

1. How has Restorative Practices changed the behaviour of the children in the school, give examples?

PROMPT: e.g. reduction in student suspensions, discipline etc)
2. Overall, in what way, has Restorative Practices has made a difference in your school for teachers?
3. What advice would you give to other school communities who wish to implement restorative practices in their schools?

Application

I am interested to know a little more about how you use various restorative practice techniques

1. Can you tell me about some of the restorative practices techniques you might use in the classroom?

PROMPT: For example, your use of ‘circles’ or ‘circle groups’ (or similar name) and if so what purpose are these used for, when, how often etc? If not, why don’t you use them?

PROMPT: Can you give any other example of your use of Restorative Practices in /out of the classroom? E.g. formal conferencing

2. Are there occasions when you use punitive approaches to discipline? Why or why not?
PROMPT: Can you tell me about a situation when a traditional or punitive approach was used/is used – what happened?

Dealing with parents

1. How often do you need to speak with parents at the school over their child’s behaviour issues?
Prompt: What happens if their child is the victim of bullying compared to being a bully? Can you give examples?
For example – what happens if their child is the victim of bullying compared with their child is the bully? Can you give some examples?

Sustainability and commitment

1. What sort of challenges did your school have to overcome (that you know of) when RP was introduced?

2. What do you see as being the main future challenges in using and sustaining RP in your school?

Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the use of RP in your school or in general?

Appendix D: Teacher Letter and Consent Form

INFORMATION LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF PROJECT: Restorative Practices in Victorian Schools

SUPERVISORS: Professor Sheryl Hemphill and Mr David Broderick

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Michelle Kehoe

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Dear Participant,

We are conducting a series of focus groups with school students and one-on-one interviews with teachers to learn more about the use of Restorative Practices in Victorian schools. Restorative Practices are a method of dealing with people in a respectful, positive manner with the aim of building, maintaining and restoring relationships. Restorative Practices might be used in your everyday school life through circle groups or through the language that you use to communicate to other people. Sometimes it is used more formally when a conference is held between two parties in the event of conflict.

You are invited to participate in a one-on-one interview to talk about your experiences of using Restorative Practices in your school and classroom. Interviews will be digitally audio-recorded and discussions will be confidential.

What is this study about?

The purpose of this study is to explore participants' experiences of using Restorative Practices in their school. We are interested in finding out how your school uses Restorative Practices and how you feel about using this technique, what it means to you and how it impacts upon your life at school?

We are seeking to talk to students and teachers about the use of Restorative Practices in schools. This is an opportunity for you to have your say about your feelings towards using this approach in your school.

Are there any risks in participating?

It is possible that during the course of the interview or group there may be discussion of some aspects of discipline, classroom management or Restorative Practices that you do not agree with or which cause you distress, however it is not expected that this will be any

more than you would experience in your everyday life. In the event that the interview causes distress for you it can be halted at any time.

Interviews and focus groups will be conducted at a suitable time and place to minimise any inconvenience to you.

What do I need to do to be involved?

You will be asked to participate in a 45-60-minute one-on-one interview at your school. Interviews will be conducted by Michelle Kehoe, PhD candidate at Australian Catholic University.

Are there any benefits to being involved?

Although it is not expected that you will personally benefit from being involved in this research it is possible that the research could benefit others in the future. Furthermore, the results of this study will be published in psychological or educational journals and will improve understanding of this topic.

It is anticipated that this research will be informative to other schools and will help them guide their decisions regarding the use of Restorative Practices in their school.

You will be provided with morning or afternoon tea following the interview to thank you for taking time to participate.

Do I have to be involved?

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You are under no obligation to take part and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time.

If you do not wish to take part in this study it will not affect your relationship with Australian Catholic University.

What do you do with the information?

The reports, articles and thesis prepared for publication from this research will not present any information that can identify you. Any information obtained from this study that can possibly identify you will remain confidential. Your information will only be disclosed with your permission, subject to legal requirements.

The interviews will be recorded with a digital audio recorder. Storage of the data collected will adhere to the university regulations. Data will be kept in a secure locked cabinet at Australian Catholic University for 5 years from the date of publication after which time it will be destroyed.

How do I agree to take part?

If you wish to participate we need your signed consent form which can be returned in the self-addressed reply-paid envelope provided to you.

Where can I get more information?

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Supervisor and the Student Researcher:

Prof. Sheryl Hemphill (Supervisor)
Email : sheryl.hemphill@acu.edu.au

Michelle Kehoe (Student Researcher)
Ph : 0467 897440
Email: mmkeho001@myacu.edu.au

Do I get to hear about the results?

If you wish an outline of the research findings can be sent to you at the end of the study.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University, Catholic Education Office Melbourne and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.

Vic: Chair, HREC
C/- Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Melbourne Campus
Locked Bag 4115
FITZROY VIC 3065
Tel: 03 9953 3158
Fax: 03 9953 3315

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the student Researcher.

Supervisor

Student Researcher

Appendix E: Student Documentation

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: Restorative Practice in Victorian Schools

SUPERVISORS: Professor Sheryl Hemphill and Mr David Broderick

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Michelle Kehoe

I (*the parent/guardian*) have read (*or, where appropriate, have had read to me*) and understood the information provided in the Letter to the Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that my child, nominated below, may participate in this activity; audio-taped 1-1 ½ focus group, realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time up until the commencement of the focus group. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN:

SIGNATURE DATE:

NAME OF CHILD

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

DATE:

INFORMATION LETTER FOR PARENTS

TITLE OF PROJECT: Restorative Practices in Victorian Schools

SUPERVISORS: Professor Sheryl Hemphill and Mr David Broderick

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Michelle Kehoe

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We are doing a series of focus groups with school students and one-on-one interviews with teachers to find out about the use of Restorative Practices in Victorian schools. Restorative Practices is a method of dealing with other people in a respectful, positive manner with the aim of building, maintaining and restoring relationships. Restorative Practices might be used in your child's everyday school life through circle groups or through the language that they use to communicate to other people. Sometimes it is used more formally when a conference is held between two parties in the event of conflict.

Your child has been invited to participate in a focus group to talk about their experiences of using Restorative Practices in their school and classroom. Interviews will be digitally audio-recorded and discussions will be confidential.

What is this study about?

The purpose of this study is to explore participants' experiences of using Restorative Practices in their school. We are interested in finding out how your child's school uses Restorative Practices and how students feel about using this technique, what it means to them and how impacts upon their time at school.

We are seeking to talk to students and teachers about the use of Restorative Practices in schools. This is an opportunity for your child to have their say about their feelings towards using this approach in their school.

Are there any risks in participating?

It is possible that during the course of the focus group there may be discussion of some aspects of discipline, classroom management or Restorative Practices that your child does not agree with and which may upset them, however this is not expected to be any more than they would experience in their everyday lives.

In the event your child becomes distressed during the focus group the discussion will be stopped and your child will be referred to their school student welfare officer located at their school. Prior to the groups all students will be provided with the contact details for 'Kids Helpline' in the event they wish to discuss any issues with an independent person after the group.

Focus groups will be conducted at your child's school, will minimise any inconvenience to your child and will not impact upon their class time activities.

What does my child need to do to be involved?

Your child will be asked to take part in a 1- 1 ½ hour focus group with other students. These focus groups will be conducted at your child's school by Michelle Kehoe, PhD candidate at Australian Catholic University. Michelle has a valid working with children and police check.

Are there any benefits to being involved?

Although it is not expected that your child will personally benefit from their participation it is expected that there may be a benefit to others in the future. Furthermore, the results of this study will be published in academic journals and will improve understanding of this topic.

It is hoped that this research will be informative to other schools and will help guide their decisions regarding the use of Restorative Practices in their school.

Your child will be provided with morning or afternoon tea following the focus group to thank them for taking the time to participate.

Does my child have to be involved?

Participation in this research study is voluntary. If you do not wish your child to take part or if your child does not want to take part, they don't have to and you/your child are free to withdraw participation at any time up to the commencement of the focus group, at which time it will not be possible to identify individuals' data for removal from the data set.

If you do not wish your child to take part in this study it will not affect your relationship or your child's relationship with Australian Catholic University or their school.

What do you do with the information?

The reports, articles and thesis prepared for publication from this research will not present any information that can identify your child. Any information obtained from this study that can possibly identify your child will remain confidential. Your child's information will only be disclosed with your permission, subject to legal requirements.

The focus groups will be recorded with a digital audio recorder. Prior to commencement of the focus group students will be reminded that their participation is subject to group confidentiality. Therefore, the information shared in the groups is not to be discussed outside of the meeting with other students.

Storage of the data collected will adhere to the university regulations. Data will be kept in a secure locked cabinet at Australian Catholic University for 5 years from the date of publication after which time it will be destroyed.

Where can I get more information?

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Supervisor and the Student Researcher:

Prof. Sheryl Hemphill (Supervisor)
Email: sheryl.hemphill@acu.edu.au

Michelle Kehoe (Student Researcher)
Ph: 0467 897 440
Email: mmkeho001@myacu.edu.au

Do I get to hear about the results?

If you wish an outline of the research findings can be sent to you at the end of the study.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University, Catholic Education Office Melbourne and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair

of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.

Vic: Chair, HREC
C/- Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Melbourne Campus
Locked Bag 4115
FITZROY VIC 3065
Tel: 03 9953 3158
Fax: 03 9953 3315

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree for your child to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the student Researcher in the self-address reply paid envelope along with your child's signed assent form.

Supervisor

Student Researcher

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: Restorative Practice in Victorian Schools

SUPERVISORS: Professor Sheryl Hemphill and Mr David Broderick

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Michelle Kehoe

I (*the parent/guardian*) have read (*or, where appropriate, have had read to me*) and understood the information provided in the Letter to the Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that my child, nominated below, may participate in this activity; audio-taped 1-1 ½ focus group, realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time up until the commencement of the focus group. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN:

SIGNATURE

DATE:

NAME OF CHILD

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR:

DATE:

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:

DATE:

.....

ASSENT OF PARTICIPANTS AGED UNDER 18 YEARS

I (*the participant aged under 18 years*) understand what this research project is designed to explore. What I will be asked to do has been explained to me. I agree to take part in a 1-1.5 hour discussion group which will be tape-recorded, realising that I can withdraw at any time until the commencement of the group without having to give a reason for my decision.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT AGED UNDER 18:

SIGNATURE: DATE:

.....

INFORMATION LETTER FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

TITLE OF PROJECT: Restorative Practices in Victorian Schools

SUPERVISORS: Professor Sheryl Hemphill and Mr David Broderick

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Michelle Kehoe

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Dear Participant,

We are doing a series of group discussions with school students to find out about the use of Restorative Practices in schools.

Restorative Practices is a method of dealing with other people in a positive manner with the aim of building, maintaining and restoring relationships. Restorative practices might be used in your everyday school life through circle groups or through the language that you use to communicate to other people. Sometimes it is used during a formal meeting between people involved in a conflict.

You are invited to participate in a discussion group with other students to talk about your experiences of using Restorative Practices in your school and classroom. Interviews will be digitally voice recorded and discussions will be confidential.

What is this study about?

The purpose of this study is to explore your experiences of using Restorative Practices in your school. We are interested in finding out how your school uses Restorative Practices and how you feel about using this, what it means to you and how it impacts upon your life at school?

We are seeking to talk to students and teachers about the use of Restorative Practices in schools. This is an opportunity for you to have your say about your feelings towards using this approach in your school.

Are there any risks in participating?

It is possible that during the group there may be discussion of some areas of school life that you do not agree with and which may upset you, however, it is not expected that this will be any more than you would experience in your everyday life.

Who can I talk to if I need help?

If you become upset during the group then we will stop the discussion so you can leave the room and talk to your teacher or student welfare officer. Other services available for you to talk to include: -

- Kids Helpline telephone service 1800 55 1800
- Your GP, who can refer you to a local counsellor or psychologist

You will be provided with a 'help card' to pass on to a person that you trust which will let them know that you need to talk to someone about the problems you are having.

What do I need to do to be involved?

You are being asked to participate in a 1-1½ hour discussion group at your school, during the school day, with other students. Groups will be conducted by Michelle Kehoe, PhD candidate at Australian Catholic University.

Are there any benefits to being involved?

Although we do not expect you will personally benefit from being involved in this research it is possible that the research could benefit other students in the future. The results of this study will be published in research articles and will improve understanding of this topic.

It is anticipated that this research will be informative to other schools and will help them guide their decision about whether or not to use of Restorative Practices at their school.

Discussion groups will be conducted at your school to minimise any impact on you and your time at school. You will be provided with morning or afternoon tea following the focus group to thank you for taking the time to participate.

Do I have to be involved?

Participation in this research study is voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you don't have to and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time. You will be able to withdraw any information you provide up until the commencement of the focus group. Once the focus group has commenced you will be free to leave the room at any time if you wish. After this it will not be possible to separate your information from that of other students.

If you do not wish to take part in this study it will not affect your relationship with Australian Catholic University or your school.

What do you do with the information?

The reports, articles and thesis prepared for publication from this research will not present any information that can identify you. Any information obtained from this study that can possibly identify you will remain confidential. Your information will only be disclosed with your permission, subject to legal requirements.

The discussion groups will be recorded with a digital audio recorder. Prior to your participation in the group you will be reminded that it is important that all information shared by the members of the groups is not discussed outside of the meeting.

Storage of the data collected will adhere to the University regulations. Data will be kept in a secure locked cabinet at Australian Catholic University for 5 years from the date of publication after which time it will be destroyed.

How do I agree to take part?

Since you are **under 18** years old you can only take part if a parent/guardian gives their written consent, so you need to:

1. Complete the 'student' consent form that came with your version of this letter
2. Have your parent/guardian sign the 'parent/guardian' consent form
3. Send or have your parent/guardian send both consent forms back to us as soon as possible in the pre-paid and pre-addressed envelope that came with their version of this letter
4. Once we have received all consent forms and a date to conduct the focus groups has been selected you will be notified of the date and time.

Where can I get more information?

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Supervisor and the Student Researcher:

Prof. Sheryl Hemphill (Supervisor)
Email : sheryl.hemphill@acu.edu.au

Michelle Kehoe (Student Researcher)
Ph : 0467 897 440
Email: mmkeho001@myacu.edu.au

Do I get to hear about the results?

If you wish, an outline of the research findings can be sent to you at the end of the study.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University, Catholic Education Office Melbourne and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have any query that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee care of the nearest branch of the Research Services Office.

Vic: Chair, HREC
C/- Research Services
Australian Catholic University
Melbourne Campus
Locked Bag 4115
FITZROY VIC 3065
Tel: 03 9953 3158
Fax: 03 9953 3315

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the student Researcher.

Supervisor

Student Researcher



A Charter of Rights for Children and Young People

Your Rights

We are committed to making sure that children and young people who are involved in our research have choices, are protected and get the most out of being a part of our projects



You have the right to have your say

We believe that children and young people should be involved in any research that focuses on their lives

You have the right to privacy

We will not identify you in our reports unless you give us permission

You have the right to participate in a way you like

It's up to you if you get involved in the research or not and how you want to be involved

You have the right to be treated well

We will respect you for who you are and treat you well

You have the right to be informed

We will help you understand what you are being asked to do. We use child-friendly words and activities

You have the right to confidentiality

If you tell us that you aren't safe, that you are being hurt or if we are worried about you we need to tell someone about it. Otherwise people won't know which specific things you told us

You have the right not to be hurt

We will not hurt or tease you and we will stand up for you if others do

You have the right not to be discriminated against

We will not treat people badly because of who they are or where they come from

**You have the right
to stop
participating**

If you want to stop
working with us you can
at any time

**You have the
right to complain**

If you are not happy
you can tell us or us
supervisors and we'll
take it on board

**You have the right to
benefit from the
research**

We hope that our project will
make things better for
children and young people.
We will give you morning or
afternoon tea to thank you for
talking to us



Want more information?

If you would like any more information about your rights you can
talk about them to one of our researchers. If you are not happy with
how you have been treated or anything about
the research you can contact —

Michelle by calling 0467 897 440
or by email at
mmkeho001@myacu.edu.au

I _____ (*please print name*) agree to take part in a project about my time at school. My parent's/carers have agreed for me to take part in the project as well.

I would like to: (*please tick one*)

☐ talk to an interviewer with other children

☐ talk to an interviewer one-on-one

☐ I DO NOT want to be involved in this project

I Know

TICK

It's ok for me to stop being part of the project at any time but I know that the once the interview has started it is not possible for my voice to be removed from the recording.	
A researcher will come to my school and I will talk about my time at school with some other students. I know that my voice will be recorded.	
If anything we talk about makes me feel upset we will stop and the researcher will tell my teacher. I will be given the names of people I can talk to about what is making me upset, if that is what I want to do.	
What I say during the project is special and belongs to me. The researcher and others in the group won't tell anyone else I took part	
The only time the researcher would have to tell some-one else is if they are worried : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That I might be badly hurt by someone - That I am not being cared for properly - That I might hurt myself - That I might hurt someone else 	
There will be a morning or afternoon tea after talking to the researcher to say thank you for sharing the things I have to say	
If I have any questions I can contact Michelle on 0467 897 440	

My name _____

My signature _____

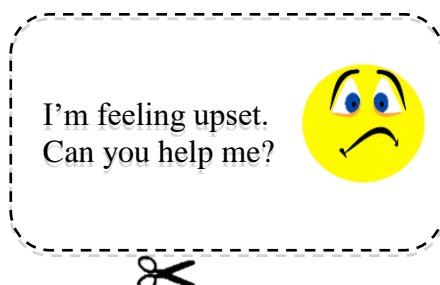
Date ____/____/____

Help Card

If thinking about the things we talked about in the discussion group has made you upset, or if you are having problems at school and don't know what to do about it, it can help if you talk to someone about your feelings. You can talk to a grown-up who you trust such as your mum, dad or teacher, about the way you are feeling and they might be able to help you. If you don't know how to tell someone that you need some help, try these sentences:

- “I’m feeling sad because I have a problem. Can we talk about it?”
- “I need to talk to a counsellor; can you help me find one to talk to?”
- “I’m having trouble at school and I don’t like it. Can you help me?”
- “I feel guilty because I did something wrong. Can we talk about it?”

If talking about your feelings is hard, try using this card instead. Give this card to a grown up you trust and so that they can try help you out.



Who else can help me?

- Call Kids Help Line to talk to a counsellor on the phone. Here's the number 1800 55 1800
- If you cannot talk over the phone, you can also write to a counsellor online at <http://www.kidshelp.com.au/teens/get-help/web-counselling/> or you can email a counsellor at this address **counsellor@kidshelp.com.au**
- Your family doctor can also help you if you are feeling bad
- Ask an adult about seeing a counsellor

Appendix F: School Principal Demographic Questionnaire

Restorative Practices - Principal questions

Please complete the following basic demographics and short questions.

1. Number of students in the school?
2. Number of staff in school?
 - a. Teaching staff inc principal and deputy
 - b. administration/Office Staff
3. How many years have you been at the school?
4. On average how many years of service do teachers have at your school? E.g. between 1 and 2 years or over 5 years etc

Professional development and training

1. How many staff have received formal training on Restorative Practice? (Percentage of the total)
2. Briefly describe how new staff members are 'inducted' in the Restorative Practices culture?
3. Is Restorative Practices formally written into your school documentation e.g. school policy? Why or why not?
4. How many years ago did the school formally implement Restorative Practices?
5. Describe the main reason/s or purpose for formally implementing Restorative Practices?
6. Who/what was the driving force behind this move?
7. Who provided the funding for the training? (inc costs of CRT's)
8. Is there anything else you feel is important that you would like to add about your schools use of Restorative Practices?


Thank you for participating in this valuable research

Appendix G: Proof of Publications

The publications listed are the original work of the author. In all published and submitted research studies the author was the Principal Investigator, contributed 50% or more, and planned and prepared the work for publication.

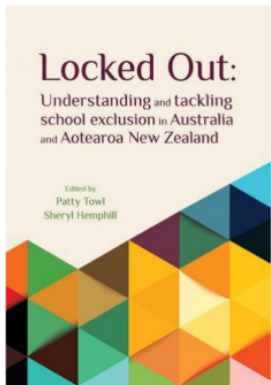
Publication 1: Book Chapter

Kehoe, M., Hemphill, S., & Broderick, D. (2016). Writing the wrong: Using restorative practices to address student behaviour. In P. Towl & S. Hemphill (Eds.), *Locked Out: Understanding school exclusion in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand* (pp. 135–152). Wellington: NZCER Press.



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Locked Out:
Understanding and tackling
school exclusion in Australia
and Aotearoa New Zealand

Edited by
Patty Towl
Sheryl Hemphill

\$44.95

[Add to cart](#)

Publisher: NZCER Press
Year published: 2016

Locked out: Understanding and tackling school exclusion in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand

ISBN: 978-1-927231-73-9

Schools work continually to keep students with challenging and difficult behaviour engaged in education. The message of this book is that more can and needs to be done. The audience of this book includes all those who work with excluded children: school, health and justice personnel; school trustees, parents and community workers.

School exclusion is a world-wide practice that disproportionately affects children from groups identified as at-risk. These students come from low-income backgrounds, are indigenous Australians, Māori and Pasifika students and many have disabilities. Being excluded from school is linked to low school achievement and youth offending, so keeping young people in school is crucial to the health of our communities.

This is the first book to describe school exclusion practices in the local context in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. It presents accessible, locally based research and includes the voices of excluded students, their parents and those who speak for them.

The second part of the book provides examples of research-based interventions that are proving effective. Common themes are early intervention, flexible approaches, robust communications and maintaining school connectedness.

Excluding a child from school affects a wide range of practitioners who work to reduce poor life outcomes for young people. For this reason the authors of this book are drawn from the health, justice and education sectors in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

With forewords by Australia's National Children's Commissioner Megan Mitchell, and Judge Andrew Becroft, Principal Youth Court Judge for Aotearoa New Zealand.

Writing the wrong: Using restorative practices to address student behaviour

Key points:

- Students' perspectives are vital to understanding their opinions on matters which affect them.
- According to students, restorative practices increased their reflective thinking and pro-social behaviour.
- Students perceived that communication throughout the school community was more effective because of RP.
- Sustaining restorative practices in schools requires a whole-school approach.

This chapter discusses the use of restorative practices (RP) as an effective means to address student misbehaviour. It draws on findings of a Victorian research study that examined teachers and students' perspectives on the use of RP. The findings suggested that RP increases effective communication in the school and increased students' pro-social skills. This chapter further presents the need for teachers, school leadership, and practitioners to acknowledge and promote the value of ongoing training and professional development. Despite positive findings in this study, the chapter concludes that we need to continue to challenge current thinking and practices to create sustainable change.

School-based Restorative Practices (RP)

School-based restorative practices are holistic methods used to build healthy relationships in the school environment. The RP approach seeks to address student behaviour as it occurs as well as building pro-social skills in students (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; McCluskey, Lloyd, Stead, Kane, Riddell, & Weedon, 2008). The restorative practices (RP) approach has an underlying philosophy that suggests when a wrongdoing has occurred the

relationship between those parties involved is damaged. School-based RP developed from restorative justice. Restorative justice is a philosophy and collection of practices used at different stages of the justice system -such as meetings with victims- not just as an alternative to retributive or punitive actions but in tandem with traditional processes (Daly, 2002; McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane, Riddell, Stead, & Weedon, 2008). The history and origins of restorative justice practices has been widely discussed and can be reviewed in various academic papers and books (Daly, 2002; Daly & Immarigeon, 1998; Morrison & Ahmed, 2006; Wachtel, 2012). The aim of RP emphasises a relational approach which aims to repair the damage caused to the relationship by supporting both the victim and perpetrator to allow all those involved to heal and move forward (Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005; Zehr & Mika, 1998). In schools, RP requires a student to reflect on their behaviour, acknowledge any wrongdoing, and offers them the opportunity to agree on an outcome (Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005). In addition, the RP approach promotes personal accountability and allows the students an opportunity to have a voice in issues that affect them (Shaw, 2007).

The current study

The current research, on which this chapter is based, sought to explore the use and impact of restorative practices from the perspectives of students and teachers. Six schools, in Melbourne, Victoria, participated in the research study during October and November 2012. There were three primary and three secondary schools including State, Catholic and independent schools. The participants were teachers (one-on-one interviews) and Year 6 and Year 9 students (focus groups). The main purpose of the research was to establish the current use of RP in schools and the impact of using the technique on the school environment, teachers' attitudes, and student behaviour. Both teachers and students involved in the research project reported the use of many practices associated with RP such as restorative circles,

affective questions, written reflections, a consistent school policy, and conferencing to manage incidents as they occurred.

The various ways of using RP can be considered as being on a continuum (see Figure 1).

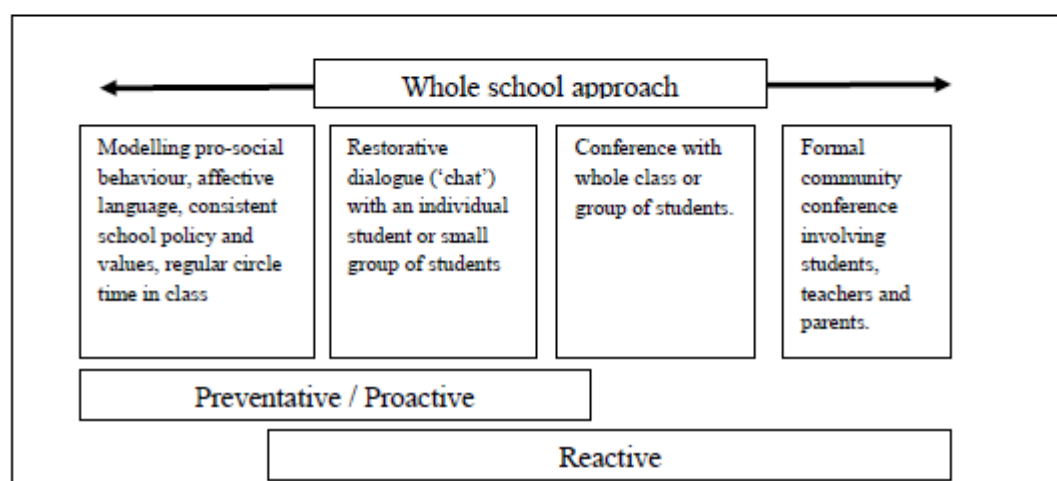


Figure 1: The RP Continuum (Adapted from Armstrong, 2007; Morrison, Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Wachtel, 2012)

The continuum shows both preventative/proactive and reactive approaches to managing student behaviour. In schools that use the various approaches outlined, the approach is described as a “whole-school” approach to RP (Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005). The whole-school RP approach engages students in formal and informal ways to promote pro-social skills and embraces RP as a philosophy throughout the school environment. The main purpose of the whole-school approach is to prevent future misbehaviour and potential exclusion from the school community.

The preventative / proactive approach to RP (as shown in Figure 1) entails direct teaching of prosocial skills, modelling those skills to students, the use of affective language and regular communication, in particular, through the use of regular classroom circle time to enhance students social skills. For the school administration, it involves ensuring consistent school policy and procedure that reflects the RP philosophy and values (Armstrong, 2007; Morrison, Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Wachtel , 2012).

The reactive approach involves addressing issues as they occur whether this involves an individual student, a small group of students or a whole class of students. Similar to the proactive/ preventative approach when reacting to a situation the use of communication and language is an important aspect used to listen and understand the student issues. Any consequence for misbehaviour is dealt with in a restorative manner and is consistent with school policy (Armstrong, 2007; Morrison, Blood & Thorsborne, 2005; Wachtel , 2012). As described, an important feature of the whole-school approach to RP is the use of effective communication to address issues not only as they occur (reactively) but as a preventative, proactive measure.

Preventative/ Proactive uses of RP

Communication

Communication is an important aspect of the RP approach when dealing with student behaviour (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011; McCluskey et al., 2008; Wachtel, 2012). Communication can be used in a reactive manner such as the use of a verbal conversation or a written letter by the student to reflect on their behaviour or in a proactive manner such as through demonstrating or modelling appropriate behaviour or language (Blood & Thorsborne, 2005). Schools in the current research study emphasised the importance of

communication to establish expectations, engage students, and build positive relationships. One form of communication in achieving these expectations is verbal communication.

Verbal communication and restorative dialogue in an RP school is achieved through use of affective language. Affective language involves the teacher (or student) addressing each other with statements such as, “When you disrupt the classroom I feel disappointed” (Wachtel, 2012). The consistent use of such language is designed to empower the individual person into reflecting on their behaviour or actions and the impact they have on other people. Similarly, teachers use affective questions when reacting to situations. Questions include the following (Wachtel, 2012):-

- Can you explain what happened?
- How did it happen?
- How did you act in this situation?
- Who do you think has been affected by this?
- How were they affected?
- How were you affected?
- What needs to happen to make things right?
- If the same situation happens again, what could you do differently?

Teachers in the current study explained that they used restorative dialogue to build clear expectations for students in their classroom and to explain the consequences for not adhering to those expectations. As one female primary school teacher explains “....to have our circle and to calm down and say, okay well here, this is the group you’re with now and this is the expectations and blah blah blah, was good for them to have that at the beginning of the day so we could set the tone for the day”. The teacher went on to say, “They know the rules, they know what’s going to happen”.

Circle time

Another key component of RP is the use of “circles” or “circle time”, and formal conferences. These can take either a reactive or a proactive approach. Circle time can involve a small group of students or a whole class of students. When used in a reactive manner the purpose of circle time is to bring students together with their teacher in a circle to discuss issues, conflicts, problems, or as a means to communicate in a supportive environment (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011). When used in a pro-active way, this method allows the teacher to establish expectations for the classroom and offers students the opportunity to speak and listen in turn thereby increasing pro-social skills (Wachtel, 2012). At the commencement of the school year, individual classroom teachers use a proactive approach by establishing acceptable behaviour with their students. Teachers use this as a way to encourage acceptable behaviour and cooperation. One primary school girl explains, *“We have like school norms and then as classes we make - every year at the start of the year we make a list of our classroom norms, of what is important to our class”*. She goes on to explain, *“I think it's good because it suits the people that are there, like it's not just a general thing”*.

Another benefit of circle time is that it offers students and their teacher the opportunity to express their thoughts and ideas from their own perspective and in their own words.

Circle time and restorative circles were a regular, key aspect used by the schools in the current research. Both students and teachers identified several benefits of this approach. Students felt that when teachers used proactive measures such as regular circle time it built healthy relationships with their peers and allowed issues to be dealt with in a respectful, non-judgemental way.

"Yeah, and we'll all go around (in a circle) and talk and then sometimes it was like your feelings and then you go around and say what you're feeling andnothing can leave the circle, no one can judge" (Female primary student)

In addition, students could identify the importance of circle time to promote self-reflection and empathy for others.

"You need to just remember – you need to be considerate of everyone.....you need to be aware everyone has different feelings" (Female secondary student)

Teachers in the current study also identified similar benefits such as taking turns, listening, sharing, and building empathy, trust and harmony within the safety of the classroom environment. As one female primary school teacher explains,

"By the teachers doing regular circle times, I believe it's going to give the children an opportunity to have a voice in their classroom with their teacher listening to them, building trust as well with their teachers."(Female primary teacher)

When restorative circles were used to address issues as they occurred, teachers identified that, on occasions, the students found this confronting. One female secondary teacher described her experience with a student,

" I remember having a conversation with her and it was one of many that we'd had – many restorative conversations that we'd hadI'd pulled her out of the classroom and I started to ask the questions and she just goes, "Oh, can you please just give me a detention and stop asking me these questions?" She was just like "oh, you're draining my life away!". It was hard work, because she had stop and think about

what she was doing and she just sort of thought she'd actually rather just be on detention."

This type of scenario being used by teachers, in the current study, to address student behaviour, offering the student the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and allowing the student the opportunity to consider how he/she could do things differently. Addressing behaviour using verbal communication was one aspect identified by schools in the current research. Another aspect was through the use of written communication.

Teachers using affective language to 'write the wrong'

All of the schools in the research study used a consistent and structured method to deal with issues as they occurred. The purpose being to build student understanding of what behaviour was expected of them and give teachers confidence in the approach they were using. The methods used were consistent with the RP philosophy and approach and involved using restorative dialogue to address issues. Teachers, particularly in the initial stages of implementation, used "prompting cards" to remind them of the affective questions (described previously). The cards were attached to a lanyard and worn around the teacher's neck. Many teachers saw this as a beneficial *"We have all these lanyards also on our duty bags outside so it's a gentle reminder all the time"*.

The use of this process has a two-fold benefit since not only are the teachers using the same language to address the issues as they occur but the students also become familiar with the expectations and the need to consider and reflect upon the incident or behaviour at the time of the incident. *"I think all teachers should learn restoratives and ... they should have a book, like Mrs 'P' does at the office where she writes everything down"* (Female primary student)

When dealing with specific incidents teachers described how they wrote down the conversation, *"I always write it down, they see me writing it down, I read it and get verbal recognition that that's okay"* (Female secondary teacher). Students reported that when their teacher took time to listen to their side of the story and write this down it gave them confidence that their issues were being understood and dealt with in a positive way.

"I could actually trust and tell them and that is Mrs B because I had to talk to her sometimes and she would understand what I was saying..." (Male primary student)

"I just spoke to Miss T and it just felt like it was just me and her. I could say, whatever I wanted to because I knew that she would help" (Female primary student)

The schools in the current study identified the importance of listening and using affective language in various situations both reactively and proactively. As mentioned, the proactive approach offering students the skills and language to consider their actions and the impact upon others. When used in a reactive manner affective questions are used in a dialogue to remind students of the restorative philosophy and values.

Students "writing the wrong"

Another method schools in the current study used was written communication known as 'reflections' to remind students of the restorative philosophy and values". As one male secondary student explains,

"We had to write out what had happened and what we should have done A reflection, behaviour reflection"

Many of the schools, who participated in the research study, used written reflections to promote pro-social skills. A reflection is a written version of the affective questions

(described previously), which encourages students to think about their actions and the ways in which they could change their behaviour. Students are required to write down what they could do better and what needs to happen to restore relationships in order for the parties to move forward.

The use of reflection sheets by schools tended to occur following misbehaviour. In secondary school, reflections were used by teachers to, gather “*both sides of the story*” from the students, prior to conducting a restorative conference or “*chat*”. A restorative chat being an informal conversation using the same series of affective questions (described previously). Using the RP approach, students take time to reflect on the issues and to write these down so that they can then be discussed and can then work out an appropriate way to resolve the issues with their teacher. The students in the current study were able to identify the benefits of writing down their thoughts and reflections, as one male primary school student identified, “*It’s good to make kids reflect on what they did*”. Both students and teachers did not consider that this was in any way an “easy” option since it challenged thinking.

“They do have to reflect more deeply on their behaviour and the consequences of it”
(Female secondary teacher)

“You just do one before or one right after you do it and then the one the next day, and then you get to see how your attitude’s changed a bit. Well, that’s what I did.... I just realised that I was in the wrong” (Male secondary student)

In primary school, the teachers would initially have a restorative conversation or chat with students. They would then send the student home to complete a reflection sheet which is signed by their parents. As one female primary school teacher explains,

“...we also have behaviour sheets which we give to children, if they need to have that, but it’s the same sort of restorative thing, so the questions on them are what you would ask them anyway but it’s just, I think, it’s a bit more formal because it’s written down and their

parents have to sign it." Teachers in the current study felt that it was an important aspect of the RP approach to keep parents informed about their child regarding social and emotional issues as well as academic achievements.

RP beyond the classroom

Schools in the current study believed that an important aspect of the whole-school approach to RP was engaging parents through written communication about their child and the school community values. This communication can involve the use of notes, emails, letters, newsletters, or students' written reflections that are sent home to parents. As one male secondary student describes "*... if it happens more than once in a row.....you get a note home*".

School staff members in the study who have adopted a whole-school RP approach believe that the most effective way to address student misbehaviour was to involve the broader school community, in particular parents. One male secondary student explains, "*Yeah, they can generally call your parents and have a meeting and stuff and work out what you can do to improve*".

Many teachers felt that involving the parents ensured there was transparency and the students were accountable for their actions.

"I think it's good that kids just can't try to get the easy way out of it... and just not tell anyone else and just cop it from one person, but they have to own up to, and tell their parents that it's happened too, and they've got to show them the facts because their parents have to sign it (the behaviour reflection sheet)." (Female secondary teacher)

In addition to written communication with parents, schools adopting a whole-school approach to RP use policies, procedures, and guidelines to reflect the restorative philosophy

and practice. This approach maintains a consistent approach across the school community including students, teachers, school administration, parents and the wider community (Blood and Thorsborne, 2005). The use of a whole-school RP philosophy and approach ensures the whole-school community have clear expectations and guidelines to manage behaviour and encourage healthy relationships. One female primary school teacher described how post-implementation *"We started doing a project to like rewrite the school's discipline policy and rein everything right in"*. The comment made by this teacher highlights the value of planning and acknowledging the importance of school policies and procedures prior to implementation of RP in order to manage expectations.

Reactive uses of RP

A restorative 'chat'

In addition to the proactive, preventative and planning aspects of RP there are also reactive approaches used to address behaviour and incidents as they occur. These reactive measures can be used in both formal and informal ways. When used in an informal manner, teachers and students in the current study describe this as a 'restorative 'chat' or simply a 'chat'. The purpose was for student and teachers to engage in an informal conversation about a particular situation or misbehaviour as it occurred. Many of the teachers identified that the use of a restorative *"chat"* meant that students felt *"out of their comfort zone"*. At times, it appeared that students' preferred their teachers to adopt a punitive approach as a consequence. The students' comments suggested that they found the punitive approach less confronting rather than working through the restorative questions, reflecting on their behaviour, and working out what they could do differently.

Despite the challenges identified by teachers and students in addressing issues through restorative conversations, one primary school student saw this as a positive, “*I think it's a good way to resolve them because it just works*” and another student felt regular “circle” time was “*kind of fun...you sit there and it makes you happy..*”. Teachers felt as long as they followed the “*script*” using the affective questions when responding to issues, and wrote down what they saw and heard, then the outcome was “*really powerful*”.

Restorative conferences

A similar method is used for conferences either informal (with just the students and teachers) or formal (involving parents or members of the broader school community). The use of conferences by schools is usually in response to a wrongdoing or misbehaviour. In a restorative conference, those involved are brought together in a circle allowing each person to discuss in turn what happened and how they have been affected. The culmination of the conference occurs when all parties agree on a way forward in order to heal the harm created by the wrongdoing (Wachtel, 2012). In the current study, no teacher identified an incident occurring which was severe enough to warrant a formal community conference. This is consistent with prior reports that have found that the use of formal community conferencing in schools tends to be used for a small percentage (between 1-5%) of the population (Morrison et al., 2005). These findings suggest that the schools in the current study appear to be successfully using preventative/ proactive RP approaches along with restorative dialogue and/or circle time to reduce or minimise escalation of behaviour

Challenges to Using the RP approach

The current research study found many positive aspects and benefits in the use of RP in schools. However, there were also challenges identified. The two main challenges teachers

described were a lack of time and resistance from other staff. A lack of time to use RP due to an over-crowded curriculum was the greatest concern expressed by teachers. As one female primary school teacher explains,

“if you’re doing a little bit of restorative and the language then you’ve lost 30/45 minutes every day and that’s a lot when you’ve only got 25 hours in the week and the Government says you have to do your five hours of maths and your five hours of language and your five... you know, it doesn’t add up”.

In contrast, other teachers felt that RP was a way of managing relationships and it was important to spend time to build those relationships and pro-social skills. As one male secondary teacher explains,

“...work on the concept of getting a rapport with students so that you have a working platform to deal with issues... spending time on friendship issues and issues where relationships had broken.....building resilience and taking responsibility ...”

One key purpose of RP is to educate students so that they communicate more effectively and develop the skills to reflect on their own behaviour (Blood, 2005). When RP is adopted as a philosophy within the school environment, it offers students the opportunity to change and creates a greater sense of community (Blood, 2005). When change occurs within the school environment teachers no longer consider that time is a barrier. One female secondary teacher describes how RP is a philosophy that the school has adopted, *“Just time and just realising it is an ongoing thing, otherwise it just sort of, yeah, in such a way as another idea, and sort of making it not just a project or a thing but just the way we do things”.*

The other major concern expressed was a lack of consistency in how RP was implemented and used. In the current study, the inconsistency was evident within the same school and across different schools due to different approaches adopted by teachers. Teachers identified a struggle between those who embraced the RP approach at a whole-school level and those who were unable to effectively implement RP in some situations. Those teachers who struggled with the use of RP would tend to resort to punitive discipline approaches. As one secondary teacher explains,

“when you come across teachers who are resistant to restorative practices, because, you just have a conversation it’s all right. They don’t understand that sitting there, having eye contact with the person, having that conversation..... it is so much easier to sit in a room for an hour and have a detention”.

Teachers suggest that, at times, they struggle to find the appropriate way of using restorative practices, especially regarding school uniform breaches. The teachers spoke of how it appeared pointless or meaningless for the student to “reflect” on their behaviour when it was only a question of wearing the correct uniform. The comments suggesting a lack of understanding of the underlying philosophy of RP, in that the focus should be in building effective, respectful relationships and not just as a means of behaviour management. One secondary school teacher explains, *“I don’t think we’ve explored restorative practices in those issues properly as a system, not just a school. Every restorative school would have similar issues like lateness and uniform and I don’t think any of us have really got into depth in how to use restoratives appropriately for those issues”.* However, consistent with an RP approach, encouraging students to reflect on why schools may need to have rules requiring that students wear a school uniform may assist students to understand the rationale behind what may seem to them to be trivial rules, and could result in a change in students’ behaviour.

Punitive discipline and the restorative school

Another teacher felt it was important to use a restorative conversation prior to taking any disciplinary action, as one female primary school teacher explains *“they're sort of for uniform infringements and - they still exist. They exist within the context of there's always a conversation first and so on. So we've sort of had to reconcile it - that - you know, element of our practice”*.

Overall, teachers explained that in the event punitive discipline was necessary, such as a detention or suspension, then it occurred within a restorative context. Teachers used a restorative conference both prior to and/or following the detention or suspension so that the student was able both to reflect on behaviour and as a time to calm down. Students were offered the opportunity to agree to a “consequence” and then “have a restorative conversation” so they could “think about what they had done”. Although teachers acknowledge the use of punitive discipline occurred when “all else fails” they firmly believed that RP is “more confronting than the punitive stuff”. All schools mentioned that they used expulsions from school *“rarely. I can't think when our last expulsion was”*.

The use of punitive discipline, even in the restorative school, still appears to be used and some of the schools in the current study suggested that this could, at times, have a place. However, a restorative school ensures the use of any form of punitive discipline is preceded or followed by a restorative conversation. Despite these findings, one interesting comment was raised by a secondary teacher who said, *“I got one of the secretaries to bring up all the detention data.....the kids that turn up to detention are repeat offenders. So it's not working”*. Her solution to this issue was to change the detention to regular restorative circle time. This teacher recognised that the punitive approach was not working and the solution was a RP approach. For schools adopting a whole-school approach to RP it is vital that their

use of sanctions such as detentions and suspension reflect a relational approach. One female secondary teacher describes such an approach,

"Yeah detention on a Thursday night for things such as lateness and uniform again, but they changed it and called it community service"

Although teachers in restorative schools react to situations as they occur these are used as learning opportunities. Such opportunities enabling students to understand, reflect and learn from their mistakes giving them the opportunity to address their behaviour and change.

Hence, despite the use of either preventative or reactive approaches the overall aim is a whole-school philosophy in dealing with issues in a consistent manner in order to increase pro-social skills.

Implications for Schools adopting RP

The implications of using a whole-school restorative philosophy and practices has obvious benefits for student learning that is a key aspect of entry into adult society. The results of this study indicated that students embrace the concept of restorative practices and although they also find it a challenge to reflect on their own behaviour, consider that this has a long-term benefit to them that will be of value in their future lives

"...like this you can use in your whole life, every life situation, like restorative practices is really helpful thing to use" (Female secondary student)

The comments made by both students and teachers from this study offer a valuable insight into the broad impact of RP, in particular, the ability to reflect on one's own behaviour and consider the long-term benefits of developing pro-social skills. Perhaps as a community, we need to support schools by acknowledging that they are educating the next generation of adult citizens and therefore making time for restorative practices is important to ensure we have responsible, well-adjusted adults in future years. As a result, this may then

place pressure on education systems to adjust their own expectations thereby allowing schools the resources and time they need to adopt the use restorative practices.

For school leadership teams, despite the initial challenges of addressing difficult behaviour, there is also a need to address and challenge the perceptions, and concerns, of teachers when implementing a whole-school philosophy and approach such as restorative practices. It would appear that despite growing recognition of the value of using social and emotional learning approaches such as restorative practices, there is still work to be done to ensure the education system can support schools adopting such approaches. The current issues identified, such as a lack of time and an overcrowded curriculum, highlight teacher concerns when adopting the restorative philosophy and practices approach. Yet it seems with adequate professional development other teachers can overcome these challenges. In order for schools to successfully implement and sustain such programs, then, policy makers need to be aware of the demands placed upon teachers. There needs to be support provided to teachers through additional training and professional development days.

Finally one female primary school teacher sums up the value of using the restorative philosophy and practices approach,

".... you know, parents drop their children here and six hours later they pick them up, they need to know in that timeframe you're doing the best job and that doesn't just mean educating them, it means making them a well-rounded child."

Conclusion

To date, the use of RP is showing positive results in managing student misbehaviour and reducing punitive disciplinary measure in schools in New Zealand, Scotland, and

Australia (Drewery, 2007; Kaveney & Drewery, 2011; McCluskey et al., 2008; Shaw, 2007). This research indicates that the use of RP allows students to become more aware of their own behaviour and the impact their behaviour can have on others. It is further suggested that this reduces the need for the student to be removed from the classroom since the classroom environment is calmer (Kaveney & Drewery, 2011, McCluskey et al., 2008). In addition, students tend to feel they are being listened to which improves the student-teacher relationship thereby reducing the need for teachers to control and discipline students (McCluskey et al., 2008). However, the implementation and successful use of restorative practices is still dependent upon the individual schools and local authorities to support the approach.

The findings of the current study described here suggest that the use of RP can be considered as an effective means of not only managing student behaviour but is a philosophy and approach that builds healthy relationship and increases pro-social skills in students. However, both students and teachers acknowledge that punitive discipline can, at times, be considered as the easier option. Despite this, the current study found the use of punitive discipline did not deter or alter student behaviour. As a result, many of the teachers were questioning and reflecting on this situation. That is, how do they address the challenges they face which can hinder broader change within the school environment? It would seem that school leadership and policy makers seeking to implement RP need to consider their use of punitive measures such as detention and suspension in the broader sense. If they choose to continue using punitive discipline approaches, they need to ask, "How will these approaches integrate into the RP framework within their school?" School need to consider how they can adapt their current approach to reflect one that is relational and incorporates the use of restorative practices as a part of this process, in a meaningful and problem solving manner.

There is no doubt the schools using RP in the current study reported a positive impact on student thinking and behaviour. The extent to which RP has an effect on teachers is mixed. Similar to students, teachers could acknowledge the positive outcomes that RP had on student thinking, behaviour, and relationships. However, the main issue teachers described were competing demands and inconsistency.

The issues raised by the teachers in the current study suggest that there is a need for policy makers and governments to re-examine the importance of prevention, building pro-social skills, social and emotional learning, and community values. Without a broader holistic approach such as a whole-school restorative philosophy and practices approach being adopted to manage student behaviour then individual teachers, students, school administrators, and parents will continue to face challenges. One female primary school teacher summarises the importance of effective behaviour management.

“I think it's a no brainer, that's society. I just - you know, I just - sometimes I watch the news and I think for goodness sake, what we need here is a restorative process, they need consequences that are meaningful and they're going to teach somebody and not put them in prison so they'll come out criminals”

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Publication 2: Journal Paper

Kehoe, M., Bourke-Taylor, H., & Broderick, D. (In press). Developing student social skills using restorative practices: A new framework called H.E.A.R.T. *Social Psychology of Education*.

Abstract

Students attending schools today not only learn about formal academic subjects, they also learn social and emotional skills. Whole-school restorative practices (RP) is an approach which can be used to address student misbehaviour when it occurs, and as a holistic method to increase social and emotional learning in students. The aim of this study was to explore the impact of RP on student behaviour from the perspectives of students and teachers. Six schools participated in interviews and focus groups. Students and teachers were asked about the use of RP and the impact on behaviour. Students and teachers identified five main themes; greater harmony, increased empathy towards others, awareness of one's own behaviour and being accountable for that, increased respect, and reflective thinking. These aspects increasing students' social skills. This paper discusses a new framework which describes the positive impact of RP on student behaviour and thinking. The findings have broad implications for school communities and highlights the need to move towards more relational behaviour management approaches.

Keywords: Restorative practices, school discipline, behaviour management, qualitative study, teachers, adolescent students, social skills

1. Introduction

Traditionally, children have attended school to be taught academic subjects that will enable them to take their place in the working world (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, and Linkins, 2009). Today, children who attend school are also taught how to work together, behave responsibly, and act with respect towards others (Seligman et al., 2009). There is an increasing emphasis on expecting students who attend school to learn a range of life skills so that they will grow up to be responsible citizens within the wider community (Lewis, Romi, Qui, and Katz, 2005). In a classic study by Dreeben (1968) he suggests that the social experiences a student encounters in the school environment offers them opportunities to learn about social norms. These experiences being an opportunity to learn resilience and ways to cope when things go wrong. Dreeben (1968) describes the school environment as providing “a broad range of experiences other than those restricted to academic in nature” (p72). The study by Dreeben highlights that within this context, there is a growing need for education to continue to move beyond the formal academic curriculum to incorporate social values, as well as developing students’ skills such as empathy, assertiveness, and problem-solving strategies (Seligman et al., 2009; Wong, Cheng, Ngan, and Ma, 2011). Teaching students these social and emotional skills reduces student behaviour problems such as aggression, and bullying as well as rates of anxiety and depression (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). For school staff one of the dilemmas facing them is finding ways to not only deal with student misbehaviour, but also to proactively teach social and emotional skills to students as a preventive measure (Payton, Wardlaw, Graczyk, Bloodworth, Tompsett, & Weissberg, 2000). One promising method is restorative practices (hereby referred to as RP) approach.

The RP approach aims to deal with student behaviour in a holistic way through increasing social and emotional skills in students and staff, as well as handling behavioural incidents as they arise (Drewery and Winslade, 2003; McCluskey, Lloyd, Kane, Riddell, Stead, & Weedon, 2008; Morrison, Blood, and Thorsborne, 2005; Porter, 2007). To date, there has been limited research that has actively engaged both teachers and students through interviews or surveys to explore their perspectives of RP in the school environment and how it influences student and teacher behaviour (Drewery and Winslade, 2003). This paper addresses this gap by reporting the perspectives of students and teachers in relation to the use of RP in their schools.

1.1 Restorative justice

School-based RP developed from restorative justice. Restorative justice (RJ) consists of a variety of practices used at different stages of the justice system. Rather than serving as an alternative to retributive or punitive actions, the approach is used in tandem with traditional processes (Daly, 2002; McCluskey et al., 2008). RJ has a long history in various indigenous cultures such as the Māori culture in New Zealand and Native American Navajo (Daly, 2002). The history and origins of RJ date back hundreds of years and can be reviewed in various books and academic journal papers (Coker, 2006; Daly and Immarigeon, 1998; Johnstone, 2011; Morrison and Ahmed, 2006; Pranis, 2005; Zehr and Mika, 1998).

The modern pioneer of the RJ approach is considered as being Howard Zehr, an American criminologist (Johnstone, 2011). Zehr (2002) described RJ as a process that involves people who have a stake in a specific wrongdoing. The wrongdoing is collectively identified, and addressed. This offers the opportunity to express remorse, forgiveness, and work towards reconciliation (Zehr, 2002). RJ places value on personal change rather than

compliance. It is considered as a reactive approach, responding to crime or other wrongdoing after it occurs (Wachtel, 2012). In the 1990's, the use of RJ was adopted in Australia as a means of preventing juvenile offenders from being subjected to the rigors of the judicial system (Blood, 2005; Fields, 2003). The purpose was to allow the offender to express guilt, and make amends, as a substitute for potential incarceration. The use of this approach is considered as less stigmatizing and allows the offender the opportunity to reintegrate into society (Fields, 2003). Subsequently, the approach was introduced into the education system in 1994 with the first restorative conference being conducted at a school in Queensland (Blood, 2005). Since this time the use of restorative conferences to respond to student misbehaviour has grown (Blood, 2005). Following the introduction of restorative conferences, the use of the term 'justice' was removed when used in the school setting. It was considered the term RJ was not reflective of how the approach was used in this environment. It was replaced by the term "restorative practices" (RP).

1.2 Restorative Practices

The restorative practices approach reflects many of the key components of RJ, however the RP approach is used to deal with student behaviour as opposed to crime and deviant behaviour which is where RJ has its foundations. Both approaches consider that when a wrongdoing has occurred it results in damaged relationships and these relationships need to be repaired by engaging the parties in conversation. Doing so allows the victim to feel empowered (Ahmed and Braithwaite, 2011; Blood and Thorsborne, 2005; Drewery and Winslade, 2003; Morrison, Blood and Thorsborne, 2005). Through this approach, there is an emphasis on maintaining and strengthening relationships to prevent the isolation and rejection that can be felt by both the victim and the wrongdoer (Morrison, Blood and Thorsborne, 2005). The philosophy underlying RP is to promote resilience in both the

person who has been harmed but also the person who has caused the harm. Ultimately, this approach helps young people become aware of how their actions affect other people and gives them the opportunity to take personal responsibility for those actions (McCluskey et al., 2008). The RP approach is in direct contrast to a punitive approach, which primarily focuses on the wrongdoer and how they defend themselves to minimise or avoid punishment (Morrison, Blood and Thorsborne, 2005).

Over time, there has been a shift in how RP is applied in schools. Johnstone (2011) describes a shift from the old ways of using RP as a reactive method (which is reflective of RJ) for dealing with misbehaviour to a proactive, holistic approach that uses modelling pro-social behaviours and a common language that avoids focusing on blame or excuses (Blood and Thorsborne, 2005). Today RP in schools is considered as existing on a continuum incorporating both reactive and proactive approaches (see Figure 1).

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

The reactive approach involves formally bringing together the students in a conference, after an incident has occurred, to discuss what happened and how to resolve the issue. Teachers ask students a series of affective questions when reacting to these situations for example; (Wachtel, 2012):

- Can you explain what happened?
- Who do you think has been affected by this? and how were they affected?
- What needs to happen to make things right?
- If the same situation happens again, what could you do differently?

Although formal, reactive approaches continue to be widely used in schools, they are enhanced through proactive, holistic and relational style of language to communicate with students (Blood and Thorsborne, 2005; Morrison, 2006). This is achieved through the use of affective language. Affective language involves using statements about how someone was impacted by the other person's behaviour with the aim of eliciting feelings. An example of an affective statement might be 'I feel sad when you call me names because it hurts my feelings'. This style of language is promoted by many schools through the use of circle time (Hopkins, 2002; Morrison and Vaandering, 2012; Mosley, 1993). During circle time, students sit in a circle with their teacher, allowing them an opportunity to speak as well as to listen to their peers. Circle time is used as a regular classroom activity, not just when a behavioural issue arises (Blood and Thorsborne, 2005; Hopkins, 2002; Morrison and Vaandering, 2012).

Many schools have adopted a whole-school approach to RP which incorporates reactive and proactive approaches, and develop a shared ethos and philosophy within the school community. This is achieved through the adoption of codes of conduct and consistent school policies reflecting restorative principles (McCluskey et al., 2008; Morrison and Vaandering, 2012). It is important to acknowledge that in many school settings, RP can co-exist with punitive measures. However, leadership teams and teachers in RP schools strive to minimise their use of punitive approaches.

The emphasis in RP schools is on prevention, education, and engagement rather than controlling students through punitive measures (McCluskey et al., 2008; Morrison and Vaandering, 2012). In addition, through the whole-school approach, school staff seek to build quality relationships through open dialogue to promote openness, honesty, and fairness for both staff and students (Wong et al., 2011).

1.3 Benefits of Using RP

To date, school communities adopting RP have identified many positive impacts on the school environment. These include reductions in bullying incidents, greater collegiality amongst staff, and more caring, positive attitudes among staff and students overall (McCluskey et al., 2008; Wong et al., 2011). A study conducted in the state of Victoria, Australia, between 2002-2004 sought to examine a pilot community and RP program, results suggested that RP could successfully address problem behaviours, develop social skills, and build quality relationships between students and teachers (Shaw, 2007).

Although there are positive impacts on student outcomes and behaviour, adoption of a whole-school approach to RP has its challenges. One of the greatest challenges identified is creating cultural change across the school environment especially where there is resistance from staff to move away from a traditional punitive approach (McCluskey et al., 2008; Morrison and Vaandering, 2012). Shaw (2007) concluded that in order for school communities to sustain RP the focus needs to move from one of behaviour management and consider one of relationship management. For successful integration of RP, there is a need for students to be considered as participants in the process and not objects that need to be controlled (Morrison, 2002; Morrison and Vaandering, 2012). Engagement of students in the process can move a school from being ruled-based to one that is relational, and seeks to nurture social engagement (Morrison and Vaandering, 2012).

1.4 Present Study

Although there has been a series of studies internationally (Drewery and Winslade, 2003; McCluskey et al., 2008; Shaw, 2007; Wong et al., 2011) that have examined the effects of RP in the school setting, most of these studies have tended to concentrate on the reactive

RP approach, as described. To date, there have been few studies that have sought to understand the direct impact that RP may have on changing students' behaviour. The current study sought to include both students' and teachers' perspectives to explore the extent to which this occurs. The main aim of the current paper was to address the following research questions:

1. What is the student experience of RP and how does RP impact on students and their behaviour?
2. What is the teacher experience of RP and how do they think it impacts on student behaviour?

2 Method

Qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups were selected to address the research questions.

2.1 School Recruitment

Participants were recruited from Catholic, government and independent schools in Melbourne, Australia. The schools needed to meet the following criteria: 1) RP had been implemented at least four years prior to the commencement of the study; 2) staff had undergone training in the use of RP; and 3) a 'whole-school' RP approach was being used. Six schools that met these criteria participated in the current study - three primary (students aged 5 to 12 years) and three secondary schools (students aged 12-18 years). Schools ranged in size from 300 students to 1350 students, with 22 to 170 teachers. The schools had diverse ethnic populations with languages other than English accounting for between 5-50% of the student population.

Prior research suggests that the change process during implementation of RP can take between 3 and 5 years (Blood and Thorsborne, 2005). The current study used a minimum criteria of 4 years post initial implementation as a recruitment strategy. This timeframe was purposely chosen to ensure sufficient time had elapsed between initial training and the data collection for the study. A further reason was to explore the use of RP in experienced schools as a 'best practice' model hence the duration or time elapsed since implementation was an important component.

All schools who agreed to participate reported implementing the approach at least 5 years prior to the study.

2.2 Participants

2.2.1 *School staff*

School principals were requested to approach and recruit teachers to participate in the research. The inclusion criterion for teachers was for them to be familiar with and using RP to manage student behaviour. It was not a requirement for the teachers to have a strong interest in RP. From the six schools, there were 14 teachers who participated in one-on-one interviews. Of the teacher participants, 79% were female ($n=11$) and 21% were males ($n=3$). This number reflected the proportion of male and female teachers in Australian schools (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). All staff participants were teachers with the exception of one participant, who was primarily a pastoral carer/school psychologist. Teachers had between five and twenty years of teaching experience. In addition, six school principals (one from each school) completed a basic demographic questionnaire.

2.2.2 *Students*

All students in Years 6 and 9 were asked by their either their school principal or classroom teacher if they would like to participate in the study. All eligible students participated. Many of the students recruited into the study were unfamiliar with the term “restorative justice” or “restorative practice” so were informed that the study was about their experience of school, school discipline, and circle time (the latter was the restorative approach term with which students were most familiar). Forty students participated in one of six focus groups. For the student participants, 52% were female ($n=21$) and 48% were male ($n=19$). Table 1 presents the number of male and female participants by school. Of the 19 secondary students, all were aged 15 years with the exception of two students who were 14 years of age. Primary school students ranged in age from 10 to 12 years.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

2.3 Materials

Questions for teachers sought to establish teacher perceptions on the impact of RP within the school and the impact on student attitudes and behaviours. Teachers were asked to describe their use of RP, in particular when dealing with issues and as a means to promote positive behaviour. See appendix A for an example of the teacher interview questions.

Similarly, the aim of the questions for students was to establish their understanding about RP and their opinions on the use of this approach to manage behaviour. In addition, students were asked how their teachers dealt with behavioural issues, if they liked the way their teachers dealt with issues, and their reasons for liking or not liking what their teachers did. Finally, students were asked to comment on what they thought was the best way to

deal with student behaviour. See appendix A for an example of the student interview questions

2.4 Procedure

Subsequent to ethical clearance from the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee and relevant education authorities, school principals were contacted to ascertain their willingness for their school to participate in the study. Each school principal was provided with an information letter that outlined the study and he/she was asked to provide written consent for his/her school to participate. Each school principal that was contacted agreed to participate. Teachers were provided with an information letter and consent form to sign prior to participation. Participation was voluntary and teachers were advised all identifying information would be removed to ensure confidentiality. Prior to commencement of the focus groups, written parental consent and student assent was required. Students were reminded that they could withdraw at any time, their names would not be identified, and all information would remain confidential.

Interviews and focus groups were conducted by an experienced researcher, between September and November, 2012. All the interviews and focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim.

2.5 Data analysis

The data analysis was managed using Nvivo qualitative data analysis software package (QSR International, 2013) and based upon an inductive approach. See table 2 for a summary of the analysis. An inductive approach was chosen since it allows themes and findings to emerge from the data. This method of analysing the data is useful to explain how people experience a situation, event, or phenomenon which allows for a theoretical

framework to be developed (Creswell, 2007). In practice, the transcripts were analysed for concepts and themes. The main themes were examined for similarities and differences then coded or grouped into categories (Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2000). Following the initial coding process, the focus was on connecting themes and finding links within the data. Within Nvivo qualitative data analysis package, the initial theme or node is labelled broadly with relevant quotes being placed within the node. This main node is then examined further for sub-themes that are delineated by sub-nodes. The process continues reducing the quotes into smaller themes. In addition, the process allows for connections to be made vertically across themes as well as horizontally along themes. As part of the analysis process the concepts continued to be developed in a systematic manner. Once the concepts had been refined, these were expanded and re-worked back into broader concepts which refined commonalities. This constructivism approach resulted in the framework illustrated in the results.

The research team had various meetings and discussions regarding the main themes and concepts to seek agreement. Verification of the main themes between the researchers allowed for triangulation to occur. Finally, excerpts from the data were assigned to illustrate the main themes based on the participants' quotes.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

3. Results

Results and key themes described were derived from all participants, primary and secondary teachers, and primary and secondary students. Both teachers and students could identify the broader benefits of the RP approach. In particular, they identified an increase in social skills which revealed benefits to personal relationships, and the overall school environment.

The results show the use of RP impacted on student behaviour and built social skills in five key ways; *Harmony* (both personal and being part of a more harmonious environment), *Empathy* for others, *Awareness* and *accountability* of one's own actions, *Respectful* relationships and *Thinking* in a reflective way (producing the acronym *H.E.A.R.T.*). Each of these aspects were described as being vital to learning, personal feelings and values. See figure 2.

All teachers, from both primary and secondary schools, agreed on the common key themes depicted. However, there were some differences between students. Primary school students spoke in broader terms about their increase in social skills and having a general insight or awareness about their behaviour. Although similar aspects were mentioned by secondary school students the older students tended to focus on the why certain skills were important, for example, having respect for others means they are more likely to respect you. Each of the key themes is described in the following section.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

3.1 Harmony

Both students and teachers described how the use of RP gave them skills which promoted a more harmonious environment.

Teachers described how the RP framework gave them the skills to manage student behaviour in a calmer manner. As Ms H, a secondary school teacher, describes, *"I deal with it [the behaviour] in a more calm manner knowing that if I follow the process then we can have a good outcome"*.

It was felt that when this process occurred then it resulted in more effective communication and a more harmonious environment as Ms C, a primary school teacher,

explains *"You don't hear raised voices or that sort of thing as you walk through the corridor. It's got a very warm feel about it and it's very much a community based school in that we have a strong sense of community"*.

Student reported similar beliefs and could identify that when their teacher was calm it was beneficial to how they felt. One female secondary student believed that *"...them [the teacher] being calm and understanding and stuff, that really helps"*. Students describe how a harmonious school makes them feel safe. Another student explains *"them [the teachers and staff] being calm and understanding and stuff, that helps...everyone is so genuinely nice and [they] make you feel safe"* (female secondary student).

One female primary school student describes how she felt a sense of community was built through peer mediation with older students assisting younger ones. This created a safer calmer school playground, provided reassurance to younger students and gave a sense of responsibility to older students. This concept was supported by one male primary student who explains *"Sometimes you are dealing with one problem and then another problem comes alongone good thing about peer mediating is that the little kids trust you with their problems"*

3.2 Empathy

When teachers were asked about the biggest impact RP had on the school culture the common response was empathy. Ms N, a primary school teacher, described how she identified this by the way students spoke and the language they used, *"I think the language...they are aware of the language and the empathy...they now talk more about the effect...when you deal with them they are talking about how their behaviour is affecting*

others". Mr M, a secondary school teacher, supported this belief and described how RP was *"powerful in terms of developing empathy"*.

Similar to the teachers, students also identified their ability to empathise. One female secondary school student gave a definition of empathy *"...it's a two-way street so it's the way you feel [you] might affect someone else of vice-versa"*. Students tended to offer examples of how they thought about other people in an empathetic way and why it was important to think of others. One female primary school student describes, *"It makes me upset to see other people upset because no-one deserves to be put through bad times at school"*. Another female secondary student explains, *"they were calling her midget and pushing her around and stuff and it made us feel really bad – we really wanted to help her"*.

3.3 Awareness and accountability

Another key response from teachers was how the regular use of RP in the classroom through circle time created conversations which allowed students to build awareness of their own behaviour and take accountability for their actions. Ms H, a secondary school teacher, described the change she saw within students *"it would be the responsibility the kids take for their actions...there tends to be that tendency for them to straight away stop and go 'oh great, what have I done in this situation?' ...instead of always going 'but she said this' 'but that teacher hates me' or whatever. You don't get nearly as much. So less of that victim mentality"*.

One male secondary student supported this by explaining how teachers use circle time to help build this awareness *"when we're really unsettled she'll be like 'all right, everyone in a circle' and we all know"*. All students were able to explain why it was important to be

aware of their behaviour, *"Yeah, and how both of you can overcome it, the issues and what you can do in the future to prevent it from happening as well"* (male primary school student). Students explained how building awareness gave them the skills to see how situations can affect people in different way, one female secondary student describes a situation *I had a bit of a situation just recently in my class, and a few other girls, and something Ms 'X' helped me and a few friends work out that everyone is completely different. No matter what you do, you just – it affects other people in different ways"* (female secondary school student).

3.4 Respectful Relationships

Both primary and secondary students described how they learnt from their experiences and how they observed other people behaving helped them distinguish between socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. In particular, students could identify the benefits of acting in pro-social ways when they witnessed these behaviours being demonstrated by their teachers, as one female primary school student comments *"... the way they talk to each other and the way our teachers interact with each other, basically just looking up on people and how everybody else acts to each other, like how they treat each other"*

In addition, students' comments suggested that they valued a positive student/teacher relationship. Students were astutely aware of the need to respect their teachers, believing if they treated their teacher with respect then their teacher would treat them in the same manner, as one female secondary student describes, *"...the teachers are all really nice to each other as well, and they treat each other with respect as well, and that teaches us to also do the same"*. Similarly, Ms I, a secondary school teacher identified that she had more positive and respectful relationships with colleagues, as well as with students *"I've always*

had good relationships but I've found that my relationships with staff and students I think have become even more respectful".

Teachers' and students' spoke of how the use of circle time was a way to develop respect and practice skills for each other. Ms C, a primary school teacher, said "*... the use of circle time [to] develop those open lines of communication and develop respect for all students, all people within the class and even across the class levels*". When the students were asked what they learnt from circle time they gave a similar response, one female secondary student said "*...respecting others. Just understanding where people come from*".

3.5 Reflective Thinking

The final main theme which emerged was 'thinking', in particular, thinking in a reflective way. Both students and teachers were asked a variety of questions about life at school including relationships and dealing with behaviour. Students across all schools described situations where they were encouraged to think in a reflective way which generally involved having a conversation or meeting with their teacher to address issues, one male primary student explained how teachers use a restorative session to achieve this "*...you hear the other side of the story then you can hear what annoyed them and they can see what annoyed you so then you can sort of see...*". Other students spoke of how RP "*helps you reflect on a lot of things*" and "*put themselves in someone else's shoes*". One female secondary student felt this was important because "*you need to be considerate of everyone...you need to be aware that everyone has different feelings*".

Teachers also identified that students demonstrated thinking in a reflective way "*...they come in and you can just see them and go 'is everything all right?' and they'll just say 'I did this and I know I shouldn't have'.*" (Ms F, primary school teacher). Another female

primary teacher explained how the use of RP had, overtime, increased students' ability to think of others "...I don't think they'd [the students] ever been forced to think about it [their behaviour] from the other person's point of view. Whereas now, well I personally don't have to do a lot of restoratives because my children have come up from Prep. They're aware of how their actions affect others".

The five key themes described were collectively seen to develop, and build social skills with others, such as more effective communication and understanding. In particular, students spoke of how the skills they learnt at school improved their social skills. As one female, primary student explains "it's important to go to school because it teaches you social skills...if you wagged you wouldn't have any social skills". A male secondary student elaborated on this "I think to do well you have to have [social] skills. Yeah, you need to be able to get along with people because if your boss hates you they're not going to promote you". The students were aware that they needed the skills to get along with other people, resolve conflict and communicate effectively to build healthy relationships. Teachers made similar comments explaining that 'conflict management' and an increase in social skills would be beneficial in future relationships.

4. Discussion

This study explored both the experiences and the impact of RP on student behaviour using an inductive qualitative approach. Five key themes emerged from the data summarised as the acronym *H.E.A.R.T.* to reflect a new framework. The five themes were, *Harmony* (feelings of calmness and a more harmonious environment), *Empathy* towards others feelings, *Awareness* and accountability for personal actions, *Respectful* relationships and *Thinking* in a reflective way. *H.E.A.R.T.* is a framework that represents core RP values and is synonymous with the foundations of competent social skills (see figure 2).

4.1 Harmony

When RP was successfully implemented, a more harmonious school environment was described by both students and teachers in the study. This finding is similar to Wong et al. (2011) who reported that RP contributed towards a more harmonious school and classroom environment. Wong identified circle time as attributing to improve relationships. The current study found that when teachers used RP, the process following gave teachers confidence to deal with situations in a calm manner. Students and teachers thought this calm response and the more harmonious environment increased the sense of community within the school. Consequently, students felt safe at school. Other previous research concurs with these findings (Kaveney and Drewery, 2011; McCluskey et al., 2008).

4.2 Empathy for others

The current findings showed that empathy was one of the greatest effects of implementing RP in a school. Students were able to think about the language they used and how that could impact on the feelings of others. Prior research has also identified that one of the benefits of RP is an increase in students' understanding of others feelings and this enhances their empathy (Wong et al., 2011). Wong et al. suggested that the increase in empathy was due to clear and consistent guidelines within the school. The current study concurred with such findings. Further, the current study attributed empathy to the style of language used. RP uses an affective style of language such as 'when you disrupt the classroom I feel disappointed' (Wachtel, 2012, p. 9). The use of this style of language aims to empower the individual to reflect on their behaviour.

4.3 Awareness and accountability

The current findings demonstrate that awareness and accountability was also built through the use of language. In particular, through regular conversations such as those promoted through circle time. Circle time can be used proactively such as a general discussion with the teacher about the weekend or when reacting to a particular issue, thereby offering students the opportunity to problem solve (Blood and Thorsborne, 2005; Morrison and Vaandering, 2012). The main purpose is to promote open dialogue and build healthy relationships. Prior research findings suggest that there is an increase in awareness following class meeting such as circle time (Kaveney and Drewery, 2011). A unique finding in the current study included that students reported development of an increase in awareness through circle time with consequential increase in respect for their peers. This finding links with the fourth main theme in the current study, respectful relationships.

4.4 Respectful relationships

The current study found that when students observed their teacher treating others with respect, they then could see the benefit of behaving in a similar way. This finding is consistent with the principles of Social Learning Theory (Bandura & McDonald, 1963). When teachers, parents, or other adults act in a positive pro-social way it conveys to students the most appropriate ways of behaving in the school environment (Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005). In a school using RP, there is a high level of importance placed on fostering quality relationships between students and teachers. Teachers in such schools are aware of the influence their own behaviour has on the children they teach (Morrison et al., 2005). A community-based approach, such as RP, is particularly effective in managing and melding student behaviour when there is commitment, enthusiasm and modelling of appropriate behaviour from the school staff (McCluskey et al., 2008).

4.5 Thinking in a reflective way

The final theme and finding was thinking in a reflective way. Research suggests that the use of RP in schools gives students the skills and opportunity to reflect on their behaviour (McCluskey et al., 2008). Consequently, students take personal responsibility for their actions. In the current study, students who took responsibility for their behaviour developed an awareness and were prepared to reflect on the impact of their behaviour toward others. In addition to the students, teachers also reflected on their relationships with colleagues and described greater levels of respect. This finding is consistent with McCluskey et al (2008) who suggested that RP could have the greatest impact on the school environment when staff developed the ability to reflect on the process and their relationships with students and other staff. Building healthy relationships through developing connectedness and a sense of community is a key component of the RP model (McCluskey et al., 2008; Morrison and Vaandering, 2012). These aspects are important components to a healthy school environment.

This study found that students had a good understanding of RP and were engaged with the process. Prior research has suggested that in order for RP to be successfully implemented into the school environment students need to be actively engaged in the process as opposed to being subjected to a rule-based approach that controls behaviour (Morrison, 2002; Morrison and Vaandering, 2012). The current study found that there were many perceived benefits when schools adopted a holistic RP approach. The findings highlight how the use of RP can foster social skills and relationships, taking responsibility for one's own behaviour, and develop understanding and empathy for the feelings of other people. Students described how RP and the use of circle time was a means to enhance these pro-social skills and ways of thinking. All participants, both students and teachers, identified

the potential long-term personal benefits of adopting the RP approach such as getting along with others, and conflict-resolution which they considered as important social skills.

4.6 Limitations

There were some limitations to the current study. The qualitative nature of the study means the methodology limits the generalizability of the findings. While the findings advance the knowledge about the impact of RP on student behaviour and social skills it did not determine whether students in other schools gain these skills. Further, with regard to the use of focus groups with students. The use of focus groups can create challenges in the management of participant responses to ensure a balance in views and opinions. As such, the skill of the researcher is an important component in managing group interactions. However, the authors acknowledge that the various ages and comprehension of the students may have a limiting impact on the findings. Despite these limitations, the current study collected interesting new data on the impact RP on student behaviour. Of particular value were the perceptions of the students reflecting on their own behaviour.

Due to limited prior research examining students' perspectives on the use of RP, the findings of the current research offer a perspective that has not previously been reported. The current findings suggest that students not only embrace and value the RP approach they also learn some key skills that seemed to further their own social skills, emotional wellbeing and impact the whole school community. Such a finding supports the importance of RP in the development of a school community with students who are capable of connectedness, reflection, and whom can build healthy relationships. When students gain skills to get along with others they can feel connected to their school community, and academic performance can improve (Mirsky, 2007).

Future research might explore the extent to which changes in student behaviour are sustained over time. The purpose of RP is to promote personal accountability, change and increase pro-social skills. To date, no longitudinal studies have determined the long-term benefits of schools adopting an RP approach. Future research should include longitudinal studies to gauge the long-term impact on the use of RP on individuals and the whole school community. In particular, the extent to which the use of RP influences use of punitive disciplinary measures and changes long-term pro-social outcomes for students.

4.7 Implications and Conclusion

One of the main strengths and outcomes of this study is the development of the *H.E.A.R.T.* framework which illustrates the impact of RP on student behaviour. The user-friendly term allows both students and teachers to understand some of the core values which underlie the RP approach. The authors suggest that the term is easy to remember so application is more likely. The use of the *H.E.A.R.T.* framework sees a further move away from the terms associated with crime and the justice system using a term which is more reflective of the school environment and would be easily identifiable to students of all ages. The focus being one which promotes positive behaviour, relationship and community.

The authors suggest that the *H.E.A.R.T.* framework might be used in various practical applications throughout the classroom and school environment. For students, the framework could be used as an everyday tool to prompt them and to guide recall of the principles of RP, for example, through the use of visual material such as posters. The framework and contents would be particularly suited to circle time in either a formal or informal manner, for example with discussion on the meaning of each main theme. For teachers, the *H.E.A.R.T.* framework can act as a reminder about the benefits of social / emotional learning to the whole school community. It may encourage teachers to move

away from punitive measures in favour of restorative methods. Teachers can support student social and emotional learning and change by incorporating each aspect of *H.E.A.R.T.* into daily learning. For the school community including administration, parents and visitors seeing evidence, such as posters, which promote social and emotional learning through the use of *H.E.A.R.T.* is likely to build confidence about the outcomes of the RP approach.

The study highlights the benefits that using the RP approach can have as opposed to only being considered as a process to manage student behaviour. Future research might further explore the use of *H.E.A.R.T.* during implementation, evaluation and explore if it aids in the sustainability of the RP approach. In conclusion, the findings make a valuable contribution to research in this field and highlights that when RP is adopted as a whole-school approach to manage student behaviour and promote pro-social skills the potential benefits to students, teachers and school communities can be significant.

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Appendix A – Interview guides

Teacher questions

1. *How do you think using restorative practices techniques have influenced or impacted on the students?*
2. *Can you tell me about some of the restorative practices you might use in the classroom?*
3. *How has student behaviour changed over time?*
4. *What do you see as being the main challenge in sustaining restorative practices?*

Student questions

1. *What have you learnt from your teachers or being in school about getting along with others?*
2. *What have you learnt using restorative practices?*
3. *Tell me about some of your school rules?*
4. *If you were involved in an incident at school or broke one of the school rules what would happen?*

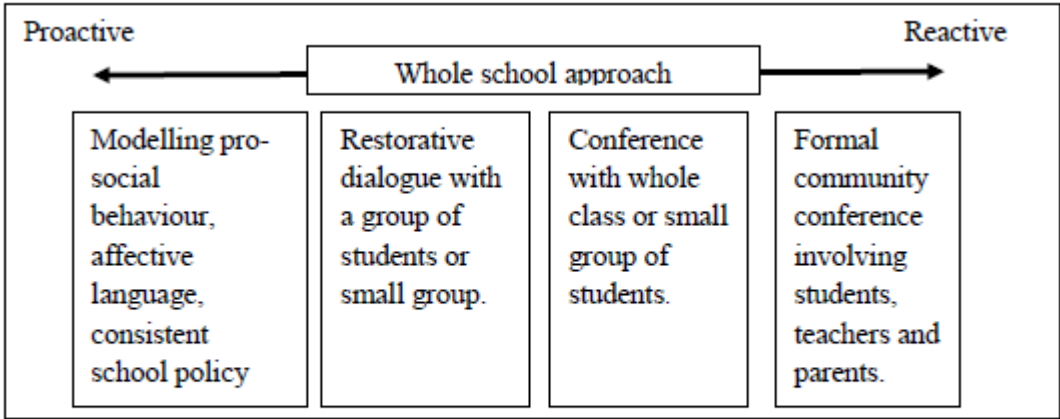


Fig. 1 The RP continuum (Adapted from Armstrong, 2007; Morrison, 2002; and Wachtel 2012)

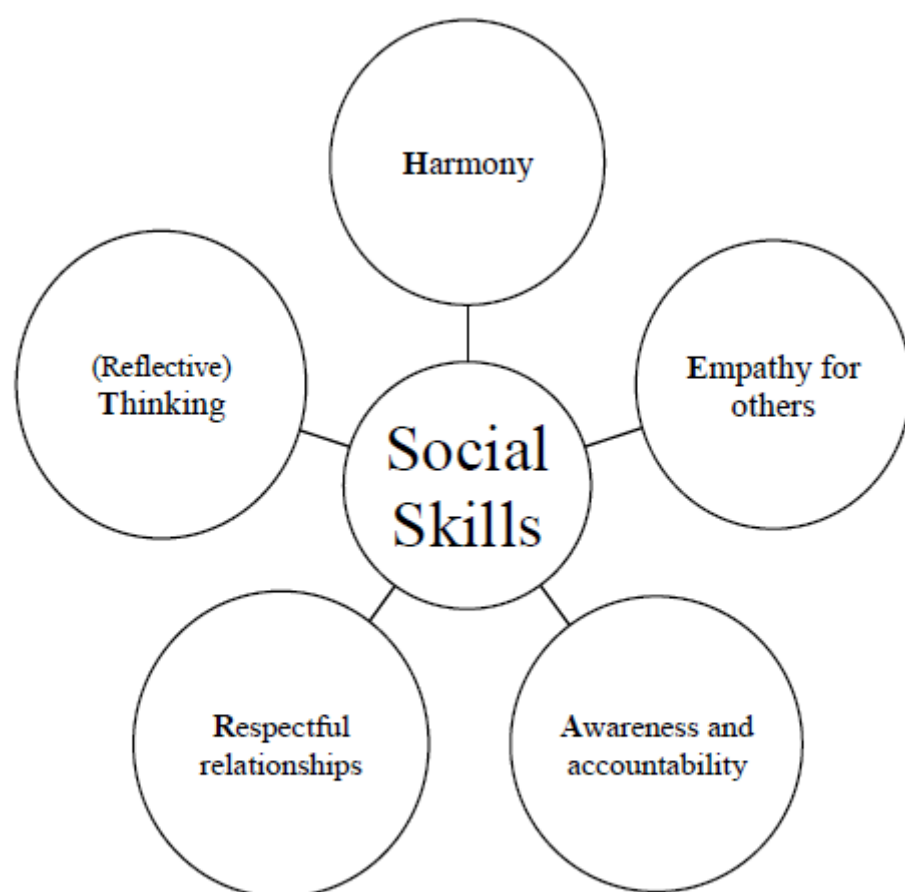


Fig 2 Key themes – Social skills and H.E.A.R.T.

Table 1

Number of male and female student participants by school

School	Males	Females	Total participants
Primary school 1	5	3	8
Primary school 2	4	3	7
Primary school 3	2	4	6
Secondary school 1	3	2	5
Secondary school 2	-	9	9
Secondary school 3	5	-	5
Total	19	21	40

Table 2 Data analysis process from transcribed interviews to deriving themes

Stage	Analysis activity	Researcher involvement
1	Interviews were read and re-read with initial coding using Nvivo data analysis software. Subsequently, interviews were hand coded with pen and paper. Key concepts were extracted and placed in a table indicating which of the interview participants identified with which concept	1
2	Researcher 3 independently read and re-read 1/3 of the transcripts and rich text/ key concepts	3
3	Rich text quotes to represent each of the key concepts was extracted and placed in a table with the key concepts	1,3
4	Three researchers examined the rich text quotes and discussed the concepts and categories, thereby refining these into themes and sub-themes	1,2,3
5	Once the themes and sub-themes were agreed upon by all researchers a continual process of comparison occurred. This process continued until thematic saturation occurred. Thematic saturation occurred when no new concepts emerged from one interview and continued until there were no new concepts from all interviews identified.	1,2,3
6	Reconstruction of the main themes commenced in a systematic manner. The themes were expanded and re-worked back into broader concepts through a process of meaning making. This process occurred over several months	1,2
7	The analysis stage was finalized with an illustrative concept map and representational quotes were identified as common or contrasting views.	1,2