

University of Tasmania

What impact does the implementation of School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support have on teachers' perceptions of their efficacy, attribution of problem behaviour and their perceived capacity to influence general school climate?

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education

By

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Declaration of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by this University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis.

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The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Louise O'Kelly', is written over a light blue grid background.

Louise O'Kelly

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Abbreviations and Terms

DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training (Australia)
DSS	District Support Services
FBA	Functional Behaviour Assessment
MACER	Ministerial Advisory Committee for Educational Renewal (Queensland Government)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OER	Office of Educational Review (Tasmanian Department of Education)
PEO-PBS	Principal Education Officer-Positive Behaviour Support (Tasmanian Education Department)
SET	School-Wide Evaluation Tool
SWBST	State-wide Behaviour Support Team
SWPBS	School-wide Positive Behaviour Support

Abstract

The aim of this research was to consider the capacity of a particular schoolwide system, Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS) to challenge and positively influence the resilience of traditional beliefs and practices in the area of student behaviour, recognising the critical role of teacher belief and practice on student outcomes. There is a strong evidence base regarding the efficacy of the SWPBS process on such things as student outcomes and academic achievement, but little or insufficient descriptive data around teachers' experiences with the process, and those variables important in the process in relation to that experience.

The nature of the research problem required the use of a Qualitative Research Approach as the priority for the research was to gain a rich and meaningful account of the experiences of teachers and principals implementing SWPBS, with particular reference to their confidence and approach in promoting positive student behaviour and their capacity to influence general school climate. A range of qualitative data gathering methods, including observation, workshop responses and semi-structured interviews, were used to facilitate a systematic and thorough investigation of participants' perceptions and understandings over a three year period. The sample comprised 44 SWPBS Leadership Teams (260 individual respondents) in Phase 2 of the study and 19 teachers and 6 principals from 6 schools in Phase 3.

A content analysis of the workshop responses and transcribed interview data, using a modified grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) enabled the extraction of themes to address the research questions. Reliability and validity was achieved through the

study's multi site, multi participant, and multi method approach allowing triangulation of the data.

Strong evidence of the capacity of SWPBS to impact positively on teacher efficacy, attribution of problem behaviour and capacity to improve school climate was provided in the study; reflected in teacher and principal reports of increased confidence, altered attribution style in considering student behaviour and its causes, and of a wider repertoire of practices to both promote positive behaviour and respond to incidents of challenging behaviour. Additionally the study provided unique insights into how significant professional learning can be achieved with compelling evidence of the efficacy of the SWPBS process to facilitate that learning. In particular the finding in relation to the impact of the data component of the SWPBS process on teacher and principal learning is noteworthy and contributes to the research in this area.

Overall, the study corroborated the literature in relation to those factors considered to be important in supporting high teacher efficacy, appropriate attribution of problem behaviour and positive school climate, and extended the research into an approach that has strong capacity to translate those factors into practice.

The study has implications for policy makers when considering how to address system-wide change, school administrators who must grapple with tight professional development budgets and multiple priorities and yet bring about significant change for student learning, and for classroom teachers who consistently request assistance to develop new skills and understanding in the area of student behaviour.

Chapter 1 Background and Context

Introduction

A 2004 review of the Tasmanian Department of Education's practice in relation to student support found that "approaches to (student) behaviour often rest on authority, coercion, exclusion and regulation, all of which are imposed on students" (Atelier, 2004, p.19). The issues and concerns raised in the Atelier report are not unique to Tasmania, but represent a challenge that faces schools and school systems internationally in relation to the resilience of particular practices and beliefs about problematic student behaviour, despite strong and growing evidence of their ineffectiveness. Indeed there is evidence that a reliance on punishment or sanction based approaches to school discipline, without an accompanying program of teaching and acknowledging positive behaviour, will result in a range of effects including the displacement of problems to the home or community, and a maintenance or even acceleration of the school disengagement trajectory for students at risk. (Jacob, 2005; Hemphill, Toumbourou & Catalano, 2005; Sprague & Horner, 2006; Riordan, 2006). The aim of this research was to consider the capacity of a particular schoolwide system to challenge and positively impact on the resilience of those traditional beliefs and practices cited above, recognising the critical role of teacher belief and practice on student outcomes.

The study reported in the thesis investigated the experience of Tasmanian principals and teachers involved in implementing SWPBS in their schools over a three year period, with particular reference to whether or not their involvement influenced the latter's personal teaching efficacy and the way they attributed problem behaviour in students, both of which are significantly linked to selection of practice

(Tchannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy & Hoy, 1998; Kulinna, 2007/08). The study also considered how teachers and principals perceived their capacity to influence school climate. Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support, was supported by the Tasmanian Department of Education as a process that appeared to have the potential to assist schools to implement positive behaviour support approaches alongside the curriculum, acknowledging these as current and evidence based (Sugai & Horner, 2001; Sugai & Horner, 2008)), and with a values base closely aligned to its statement of Values and Purposes for Schooling (Department of Education, Tasmania, 2000). A further incentive to support the adoption of the process was its attention to the professional development and support of teachers through its focus on systems.

The researcher's interest in undertaking this study was two fold; first, having the opportunity to be a participant observer (Yin, 1994; Bogden & Biklen, 1998) in an initiative with the potential to improve student outcomes, align teaching and learning with behaviour/ discipline practices, and improve teacher confidence and well being and, second, to ensure that the experience of participating teachers and principals was investigated and reported as a significant contribution to evolving policy and practice in this area.

The Tasmanian School Context

The Tasmanian Department of Education has, over many years, attempted to address the enduring concerns of schools and the wider community about student behaviour with a range of policy and associated funding initiatives (Jacob, 2005). A brief review of these from the early 1990's to the present revealed a reassuring consistency of intent in relation to having a focus on an inclusive student experience and improved outcomes, an acknowledgement of the

importance of considering best practice and evidence, and the key place of professional learning and support for teachers. What also emerged from this review was a consistency in relation to the lack of effectiveness of the initiatives in relation to their intent and outcomes, and in the factors described by reviewers and participants as being responsible for that ineffectiveness (Conway, 2003; Atelier, 2004). The following section charts these initiatives, all of which were internally or externally reviewed, albeit with varying degrees of rigour which is not surprising given the pressure on Ministers and Education Departments to respond to the immediate and often emotive concerns of the community expressed frequently in the media (Jacob, 2005; Gardner, 2006).

1. 1995-96 Key Teacher (Behaviour Management)

This Government initiative provided one key teacher (BM) to each government secondary school. The key teacher was to be provided with intensive training to enable them to become a reference point for behaviour difficulties in their school. The initiative recognised the importance of professional learning for staff, and the preference for building local capacity to support students in their local schools. It was, however, discontinued after one year despite having some support from participating schools. Tension between initiative developers and implementers and inadequate time to properly implement are cited as two of the reasons for the lack of support for this program's continuation (Gardner, 2006).

2. 1996-2004 District Support Services

In 1996, District Support Services (DSS) were established in each education district to support students with disabilities, including those with associated challenging behaviour. These multi-disciplinary Services interpreted their responsibilities in relation to students with

challenging behaviour differently across the districts, with considerable variation in relation to priority and practice. Whilst some districts reported having a role in professional learning, others saw their responsibility as being to provide individual student support, sometimes external to the school (Conway, 2003). District Support Services were replaced with Clusters in 2005 in response to concerns relating to the variation in practice and provision mentioned above, and to the perceived separation of services from schools as reported in the Atelier review (2004).

3. 1997-present Managing and Retaining Senior Secondary Students (MARSSS)

The MARSSS initiative has been in place in government secondary schools since 1997. This Government initiative was implemented with the intention of providing additional funding to schools to develop specific programs for students whose behaviour was of serious concern. The goal was to ‘retain’ the students in their local schools rather than suspend them. Like previous and subsequent initiatives, this was a response to media reports of worsening student behaviour and teacher burn-out. The MARSSS program was to be used for direct delivery of integrated programs, not for the establishment of ‘add on’ or off-site provision or for coordination purposes, and responsibility for management of the program was given to each school principal. Again, the intent was similar to previous initiatives, that is, inclusive and proactive support for students, integration of behaviour and teaching and learning, and building local capacity.

MARSSS funding is now received as part of a school’s recurrent funding and, as such, would be difficult to remove or adjust. Indeed funding to this initiative has increased since its adoption despite there being little evidence of its effectiveness in relation to its stated goals. An early review of the program by the Office of Educational Review (OER) in 1997 found only a limited effort by schools to link MARSSS programs with mainstream curriculum and

pedagogy, and recommended at the time that schools consider professional learning activities as a whole school to address this concern. A further review in 1999, again by OER, reported that whilst 58 percent of students in the MARSSS program had returned to regular classes, there was no significant change in absences, suspensions or retention of students to years 11 and 12. Suspension rates and retention to college remain significant priorities of the Department of Education and current Government.

4. 2002-2004 Statewide Behaviour Support Team (SWBST)

The SWBST was established as one strategy of *The Strategic Plan 2002-2003 for Students with Challenging Behaviours*. The plan was developed by a working group representative of the range of roles within the Department of Education with responsibility for and expertise in the area of student behaviour, as part of the then Government's *Learning Together Initiative, Goal 3*. The team was comprised of a team leader and one person in each of the education districts, (this was extended to two in the largest district.) The team's role was described as being to work with local and school communities, District Support Services (DSS) and other agencies to support the implementation of evidence- based behaviour support programs and strategies in Tasmanian government schools. The intended outcomes from the work of the SWBST were described as:

- Increased system capacity to educate and support students with challenging behaviours and students at risk of developing challenging behaviour through an equitable, sustainable and system wide approach and a range of flexible intervention strategies;
- All school and support staff having the knowledge, skills and confidence required to work successfully with students who have challenging behaviour and the capacity to provide environments that support positive behaviour;

- Increased levels of awareness and understanding in schools and the wider community concerning the complex and multi faceted nature of challenging behaviour and the need for a holistic response.

The SWBST was disbanded following its 2003 review by Professor Robert Conway from Newcastle University (NSW). The review, entitled 'Report of a Review of the Statewide Behaviour Support Team in the Tasmanian Department of Education', cited many reasons as to the lack of success of this initiative, and these were mostly concerned with systemic problems to do with implementation, rather than with the Programme's aims or intentions. Specifically, these were described as confusion on the part of existing services in relation to the role of the SWBST, and reluctance on the part of those services to acknowledge the SWBST's role and to work collaboratively towards its desired outcomes (p.30).

The scope of the review of the SWBST included consideration of the work of DSS, MARSSS and alternative provisions, recognising their relative contribution, and in so doing highlighted significant systemic issues requiring attention in the development of any future provision or initiative aimed at improving student support. Findings of note were; a lack of clarity surrounding the relative roles and relationships between the DSS, MARSSS, the SWBST and schools, the lack of rigorous evaluation of each in relation to their operation and success against student outcomes and stated goals, and the presence of practices in some parts of the state that were inconsistent with policy, and not sufficiently responsive to the needs of students and teachers, particularly those in schools outside the metropolitan areas.

The significance of these findings was recognised by an announcement from the Minister for Education of a more comprehensive review of student support services to be undertaken in 2004. This later review consulted widely with parents, teachers, senior departmental and

support staff and recommended a radical overhaul of student support services. The Atelier Report (2004), as it is widely known, prefaced its wide ranging recommendations with reference to the “...inclusive values base of Tasmanian public education...” (p.81), and described the Department’s future endeavours as having great potential due to its “...remarkable story of educational achievement.” (p.81) The recommendations contained in this report were adopted in full by the then Minister for Education, providing a challenge and opportunity for the Department to consider how best to support schools to implement current, evidence based practice, aligned with teaching and learning, and inclusive in focus. It also provided an opportunity to consider and build on the lessons learned from previous initiatives, particularly those concerned with teacher preference in relation to their own learning and support, and the need for capacity to be locally strong and available.

5. SWPBS Pilot Project

The Department of Education’s response was to create the position of Principal Education Officer, Positive Behaviour Support, (PEO-PBS) to lead the systemic adoption of positive behaviour support approaches alongside the curriculum. One of the strategies employed to support the adoption was a pilot scheme to trial the SWPBS process. The SWPBS process was developed by staff at the University of Oregon (USA), and adapted for use in Australian schools by the PEO-PBS (and present researcher), and staff from Education Queensland who were supporting a similar pilot in that state. Although a small pilot (12 schools) was proposed, expressions of interest to schools attracted 64 applications and the pilot was adjusted to cater for them all. The decision to include all schools was made in order to acknowledge the significant interest and concern from schools in relation to their practice and outcomes in the area, despite the risk such a large sample posed in terms of possible compromise to implementation fidelity. In 2006, a total of 64 schools – primary (K-6), high (7-10) and district high (K-10) - began their implementation of SWPBS. In order to join the

pilot, schools were required to attend workshops with their leadership teams (comprising teaching and non teaching staff, principal, parent and community representatives), to nominate a school or cluster based coach, and to participate in regular data collection and review.

The PEO-PBS position was discontinued at the end of 2008 as part of a departmental restructure aimed at decentralisation. Despite this, the number of schools participating has grown to 46 percent of the Tasmania's Government schools ($n = 230$) - attesting to the broad appeal of the SWPBS process.

Student Behaviour Support: The Australian Context

The broad themes and issues referred to in Tasmania exist elsewhere in Australia. Both the Atelier (2004) and Conway (2003) reports make reference to similar concerns and initiatives as those described above in other Australian Education jurisdictions. The strength of the concern around perceived student misbehaviour was highlighted by the 2002 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs' (MCEETYA) claim that behaviour problems in schools were 'ongoing, growing and of national concern' (p.3) MCEETYA established a Student Learning and Support Services Taskforce (SLSS) to provide Ministers with advice on best practice in the area of student behaviour. The taskforce commissioned Dr Terry de Jong, Edith Cowan University, Western Australia, to investigate and report on the Australian context, and to make recommendations for future policy and practice that would reflect consideration of both efficacy and alignment with international and national research. His report, entitled 'Best Practice in Addressing Student Behaviour Issues in Australia' (2004) proposed a set of core principles for best practice. These were:

1. Student behaviour needs to be understood from an eco-systemic perspective.
2. Student behaviour management programs and practices must embrace a health promoting approach to creating a safe, supportive, and caring environment.
3. Student behaviour management programs and practices must embrace inclusiveness, which caters for the different potentials, needs and resources of all students.
4. Student behaviour management programs and practices should incorporate a student centred philosophy that places the student at the centre of the education process and focuses on the whole student (personal, social and academic).
5. Student behaviour is inextricably linked to the quality of the learning experience.
6. Positive relationships, particularly between student and teacher, are critical for maximising appropriate behaviour and achieving learning outcomes, and
7. Effective student behaviour change and management is enhanced through internally based school support structures, and externally based family, education department, community and interagency partnerships. (p.5)

Also in 2003, the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) released the National Safe Schools Framework, with a resource package for use by jurisdictional officers to support schools in their implementation of the framework. The principles guiding the National Safe Schools Framework included recommendations that Australian schools; “implement policies, programmes and processes to nurture a safe and supportive school”, that these be “proactive and oriented towards prevention and intervention” that schools “regularly monitor and evaluate their policies and programmes so that evidence based practice supports decisions and improvement” and that they recognise “the critical importance of pre service and ongoing professional development in creating a safe and supportive school environment” (pp.8-9).

The policy context of each Australian jurisdiction is reflective of the principles outlined above. It would seem though, that the availability of a well articulated policy context and a knowledge base in relation to best practice is insufficient as an agent for significant change, either in practice where, "...reactive models around explicit deficit centred behaviour management programs are the most common approaches (in Tasmania) to handling behaviour issues from all sources...", or on the resultant outcomes for students "...Such deficit models of behaviour management do not appear to be working...they tend to promulgate an authority based model of interaction..." (Atelier, 2004, p.19). The Atelier report acknowledged this as a national dilemma reporting that "Across the nation there is a growing sense of pressure arising from children and young people whose needs do not seem to be well met within traditional approaches to educational service provision" (p.vii). The Queensland Government's MACER Report (2005), entitled *Smart Schools, Smart Behaviour: Report of the Behaviour Management in Queensland Schools*, supported Atelier's focus in stating:

Behaviour and behaviour management issues in schools and the development, approval, application and review of school-based policies on behaviour management, including school disciplinary absences, remain contentious and the subject of ongoing public and political debate. The historical connotation of 'behaviour management' is that of negative behaviour and its amelioration (p.2).

The influence of emotive community views in relation to student behaviour, reported in the media and responded to by governments provides some explanation as to the resilience of those practices described by MACER, Atelier and Conway. For example, a 2008 article in Brisbane, Australia's *The Courier Mail* described 'sky rocketing' suspensions in that state, with an opening paragraph stating:

A battle is brewing to contain a 26 per cent spike in students being suspended from Queensland schools over the past three years. The alarming wave of aggressive and disrespectful behaviour from southeast and north Queensland students comes as the Government pours another \$28.6 million into “positive behaviour strategies” this financial year. (p.1)

The Courier Mail article reported a ‘flood of messages from readers concerned about “soft” disciplinary codes, particularly the inability of teachers to use the threat of force, or simple punishments to exert control’ (p.1). In response, the Queensland Opposition Government Education spokesperson pledged, if elected, to employ 50 new teachers trained in behaviour management to ‘combat the problem’ (p.2). The second page of the article briefly described the evidence base for SWPBS, its success in Queensland schools and an endorsement of SWPBS from Dr Fiona Bryer from Griffith University (a Brisbane tertiary institution). This information though was overshadowed by the sensational language in the article used to describe student behaviour, and by the reported responses proposed by community and government to address the issue. *The Courier Mail* article illustrates the pressure on principals and teachers to ‘control unruly students’ and represents what is perhaps the greatest challenge facing teachers and principals in their efforts to adopt contemporary behaviour support approaches, i.e., the expressed, strong appeal of traditional, punitive responses to student misbehaviour from the community.

A Required Paradigm Shift

The apparent gap between policy, agreed best practice and school based implementation, cannot be explained simply as a conflict of ideology or intent when the contribution of principals and teachers in the development of policy and subsequent reviews of practice in each Australian jurisdiction is considered. It is important when investigating the gap between policy and practice to consider the paradigm shift required by principals and teachers in order

for them to reflect on and change their practice. Cook and Radler (2006) described the shift from traditional to contemporary thinking and practice in the area of behaviour support as moving:

1. From discipline to support; that is, moving from “using *discipline as control*, (i.e., establishing and controlling what students are not to do to adopting positive support to promote, model and teach valued codes of conduct (i.e., establishing, teaching and supporting what students are to do) (p.5)
2. From negative to positive; that is, moving from a ‘deficit’ or problem focus whereby schools “describe and explain deficits and how these can be overcome, ameliorated and corrected” (p.7), to a positive approach that attributes causation of problem behaviour to social and contextual variables as well as individual student characteristics, seeing the behaviour as an adaptive and functional response to a specific context and social environment. (p.7)
3. From reaction to prevention; that is moving from a reliance on the application of consequences following misbehaviour, to “...teaching and promoting positive behaviour and skills to all students” (p.9)
4. From recipe to robust process; that is, moving from a search for ‘silver bullets’ and single solutions to the development of a preventative, schoolwide action plan that is instructional in focus and considers the systems required for sustained implementation (p.9).

The significance of the shift in thinking and practice and associated professional learning and support required to translate policy to practice in Australian schools cannot be underestimated as a factor obstructing the implementation of seemingly efficacious models or practices. In the area of behaviour it has a special significance given the frequent reports of teacher preparation programmes’ lack of training in classroom management and behaviour difficulty,

(Gleason & Hall 1991; Merrett & Wheldall, 1993). Teachers have consistently reported unpreparedness in relation to their practice in the area of student behaviour (Mavropoulou & Padeliadu, 2009; Beaman, Wheldall & Kemp, 2007; Gulchak & Lopes, 2007), and most recently in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) 2009 *International Teacher Survey*, behaviour and discipline was cited as one of the top three areas where professional learning is required (OECD, 2009). Given these reports of inadequate pre- and in-service preparation it is not surprising that studies in relation to how teachers select their practice place research validation behind practices learned from colleagues, those used by their own teachers and 'common sense' (Boardman, Arguelles., Vaughn, Tejero Hughs, & Klingner, 2005; Shaddock, Hoffman-Raap, Smith, Giorcelli, & Waddy, 2007).

A further element of complexity in relation to teacher practice was highlighted by Gottfredson (2000), who noted that a typical school can use up to fourteen different responses to problem behaviour at any one time, and that strategies and responses are most often implemented inconsistently or imprecisely. Morin (2001) acknowledged these findings and suggested caution in assuming that providing information about the benefits of implementing any new practice in the area of behaviour support would be sufficient to create a context in which teachers could safely consider a paradigm shift requiring adjustment of their practice. He asked, "Can we be as patient with our teachers as we are with our students?" (p.64) and proposed that any model of professional learning in the area of student behaviour consider:

- Teaching efficacy, i.e., the perception that teachers have of their capacity to make a difference in a child's education.
- Attribution Theory, i.e., the 'attributions' teachers and communities make about how or why certain behaviours occur, and

- Change Theory, i.e., the need for a systematic commitment to and support for the process of change.

Further to Morin's suggestion is the need to consider the systems and structures in schools that can either contribute to or obstruct change. The core principles described earlier by de Jong (2004), as well as the policy contexts in each Australian education jurisdiction assume a school-wide philosophy and set of practices not typically or traditionally available in schools in relation to student behaviour and support. According to Cook & Radler (2006) although long proposed, until recent years schools have struggled to agree on a common and shared approach to problem behaviour, and even more difficult has been to integrate strategies to improve behaviour with teaching and learning in the context of a schoolwide, positive plan. All of these elements require consideration in developing systemic and systematic responses for improved student outcomes.

The significance of this study

The SWPBS process has been developed with attention to those factors described above and as such ought to result in enhanced teacher efficacy, the development of an attribution style reflective of contextual or ecological factors, and a greater perceived capacity by teachers to contribute to the development of a positive school climate.

There is a strong evidence base regarding the efficacy of the SWPBS process on such things as student outcomes and academic achievement but little or insufficient descriptive data around teachers' experiences with the process, and those variables important in the process in relation to that experience (Ross & Horner, 2007). Research conducted by the University of Western Sydney on the implementation of SWPBS in schools in Sydney, Australia (Mooney et al., 2008), also reported improvements in student outcomes following implementation of

SWPBS, and recommended further investigation of the potential impact of implementation on teacher efficacy. de Jong's (2004) national report highlighted the need for Australian research in the area of effective practice in relation to student behaviour (p.10), critical components of which are to do with teacher efficacy and response to behaviour, and system support. This study has the potential to add to the literature in these important areas.

The complexity of this area, particularly in light of the influences on teacher practice of community, media and traditional approaches prevalent in schools, is acknowledged in this study by utilising a mixed-mode research method to gather relevant data in relation to the experience of teachers and their changing perceptions and practice over a three year period of implementing SWPBS. Investigating the variables considered by teachers to have been most influential in relation to that change will have implications for providing policy advice to senior bureaucrats and school-level authorities as they consider how to address the 'misbehaviour' issue.

Research Aim

This study examined the implementation of a process in relation to its capacity to provide the professional learning and support recommended in the literature to have a positive influence on the development of teacher efficacy and attribution of problem behaviour, and asked

What impact does the implementation of School-Wide Positive Behaviour Support have on perceived teacher efficacy, teacher attribution and perceived capacity to influence general school climate?

To address the study's broad aim three subsidiary questions were developed. These were:

- (i) How do teachers report their confidence in and capacity to influence student behaviour?
- (ii) How do teachers understand and attribute the causation of problem behaviour?
- (iii) How do teachers perceive the impact of implementing SWPBS on their capacity to improve school climate?

Structure of the thesis

This thesis includes four further chapters and attachments consisting of a list of references and a set of appendices. The remainder of the thesis comprises the following:

Chapter 2: The Literature Review

A review of extant Literature that examines the importance of teacher efficacy and response to student behaviour, as well as Literature in relation to the efficacy of the SWPBS process is presented in *Chapter 2*. Specific consideration is given to those variables considered important in positively impacting teacher efficacy and attribution, and the ways in which the SWPBS addresses these broad areas.

Chapter 3: The Research Methodology

Chapter 3 describes the selection of the research approach, data gathering methods and details the procedures used in the selected research methodology. The research involved qualitative data gathering with teachers and principals across multiple sites, as well as analysis of printed material pertaining to the development and implementation of the SWPBS pilot. The process involved in developing the instruments used in the research procedures for gaining approval and conducting the research as well as information regarding the demographic nature of the study's participants, how they were identified and recruited are included in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

The results of the study are presented in *Chapter 4*. In this chapter the experiences of teacher and principal participants gained through observation, workshop responses and interviews are presented in terms of similarities and variances in relation to the research questions. These were analysed and reported in terms of their capacity to inform future practice and support in the Discussion chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, discussion and suggestions indicated by the results reported in Chapter 4 are provided. Presentation of this chapter mirrors the conceptual framework and broad Research Question, and takes account of the analysed data as well as the Literature to make suggestions in relation to future practice and support.

The Appendices

The attachments complete this thesis, and include References for all of the sources cited throughout the report as well as Appendices illustrating the detail of the thesis. These are

- Ethics approvals
- Letters inviting participation in the study
- Examples of the data and data analysis illustrating the research methodology, and
- Copies of the workshop and interview questions.

Summary

The number and scope of funded initiatives described in this chapter provide evidence of a national and state policy context that is supportive of an inclusive student experience and improved outcomes. Despite this context, the difficulties in translating that policy into practice remain significant. Reviews of performance suggest that practice in the area of student behaviour continues to reflect a traditional, reactive paradigm with the resultant poor

student outcomes and continuing calls from educators for professional learning and support in this area.

Practice selection in relation to behaviour support is influenced by the enduring, often emotive community appeal of traditional approaches, reflected in media reports and reacted to by Government in ways that do not always align with policy intent or represent contemporary knowledge in the area. Teachers also consistently report a lack of pre- and in-service attention to student behaviour. The significant effect of these influences on how teachers understand and respond to student behaviour, as well as their capacity to undermine teacher confidence or efficacy, require consideration in the development of any initiative aimed at improving student behaviour outcomes. The SWPBS pilot was initiated to address the above raised concerns. The process was selected on the basis of its potential to support the use of evidence based practice and as a consequence, improve teacher efficacy and student outcomes.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Introduction

The focus of this thesis is the reported experience of Tasmanian teachers' and principals' implementation of SWPBS as part of a systemically supported pilot. The intention of the SWPBS pilot was to assist the adoption in schools of research validated, positive behaviour support approaches alongside the curriculum and was prompted by an external review of performance in the area of behaviour support (Atelier, 2004). The Atelier review suggested an urgent need to address the continuing concerns expressed by school and community respondents in relation to practice in this area by considering current research, and developing systematic and systemic support for reflection and change. The extent of the interest and concern about behaviour support practices in Tasmanian schools was evidenced by one third of them requesting participation in the pilot.

The specific aim of this study was to investigate the extent to which the implementation of SWPBS could be influential in relation to perceived teacher efficacy, attribution of problem behaviour and perceived capacity to influence general school climate, acknowledging the critical importance of these factors in creating environments likely to sustainably support positive student learning outcomes (Tshannen-Moran, Hoy & Hoy, 1998; Morin, 2004; Sugai & Horner, 2008.)

The study's particular focus recognised the importance of traditional and resilient beliefs and practices concerning student behaviour, described in the literature as well as in various Tasmanian Departmental reviews, as impeding the successful implementation of effective practice, and sought to test the perceived efficacy of SWPBS to impact positively on those.

Prior to assuming a structure that facilitates analysis and synthesis of the literature related to the research question, a summary of published research relating to student behaviour support and SWPBS is presented.

Several searches conducted prior to the commencement of the study provided guidance in relation to current knowledge and practice surrounding student behaviour, the SWPBS process, teacher efficacy and attribution of problem behaviour. The searches included the on-line databases Pro-Quest, Scopus, Illumina and ERIC. Department of Education (Tasmania), Australian Government and other Education Jurisdictions' policy and review documents relating to student behaviour and discipline were included in the search in order to gain a national and local contextual background for the study.

The search results pointed to a large body of international research concerning the broad areas of student behaviour, teacher efficacy, and school climate. The research reviewed for this study was consistent across cultures and settings regarding the resilience of traditional beliefs and practices, the impact of teacher efficacy, attribution and school climate on student outcomes, as well as in relation to the variables or conditions considered necessary to support contemporary beliefs and practices.

The majority of the reported Literature in relation to SWPBS was from the United States. The two Australian studies located presented similar broad themes and findings to the United States research (see Bryer, 2005; Mooney et al., 2008). There was no Tasmanian research available in this area. The subject of teacher attribution appeared to have received less research attention, although its connection to teacher efficacy and to school climate was evident in the studies examined.

Outline of Chapter 2

In this chapter, literature related to student behaviour support and SWPBS is reviewed prior to narrowing the focus and examining the potential impact of SWPBS on perceived teacher efficacy, how problem behaviour is attributed and perceived capacity to influence school climate. Although there is some overlap or connection between the Research Questions in terms of conditions or variables important in their development, addressing each as a subsidiary question assisted analysis and reporting. Specifically, the literature related to student behaviour, SWPBS and each of the subsidiary research questions is presented in sections in Chapter 2 as follows:

- 2-1 Literature relating to student behaviour support
- 2-2 Literature relating to SWPBS
- 2-3 Literature relating to subsidiary Research Question 1: How do teachers report their confidence in and capacity to influence student behaviour?
- 2-4 Literature relating to subsidiary Research Question 2: How do teachers understand and attribute the causation of problem behaviour?
- 2-5 Literature relating to subsidiary Research Question 3: How do teachers report their capacity to influence school climate?

2.1 Literature relating to student behaviour support**2.1.1 The influence of traditional approaches and the broader community on behaviour support practice**

The area of behaviour support remains a priority and challenge for education systems globally, and despite significant changes in practice, theoretical perspective and knowledge base, outcomes for many students remain poor (Jacob, 2005; Hemphill, Toumbourou & Catalano, 2005; Sprague & Horner, 2006; Riordan, 2006), and practice in responding to problem behaviour is generally characterised by traditional, reactive and restrictive responses

(Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000; Atelie, 2004; Luiselli, Putman, Handler & Feinberg, 2005). There is consensus in the literature regarding the need for there to be focus on systems and practices that are preventative and proactive, as well as an accompanying evidence base regarding the efficacy of that focus in supporting positive student outcomes (see Safran, Oswald, 2003; Sugai et al., 2000; Skiba et al., 2006; Todd et al., 1999).

A significant challenge in the universal adoption of contemporary practice is that the typical practices it seeks to replace represent a vastly different paradigm in terms of how problematic behaviour is explained and responded to (Medway, 1979; Beaman & Kemp, 2007; Ho, Dobbs & Arnold, 2009), with traditional and more typical approaches holding an enduring appeal for the broader community, expressed often in the media as necessary to gain and maintain control (Jacob, 2003; Beaman & Kemp, 2007).

According to Beaman & Kemp (2007) in Australia “problems of classroom order and discipline frequently stimulate public interest and debate” (p.46) with the resultant media attention often leading to political responses that are costly, but not necessarily based on accurate perceptions of need, or on research evidence (Jacob, 2005). Beaman & Kemp (2007) argued that a further concern in relation to inaccurate media reporting is its potential to “...seriously damage education systems, demoralizing staff and students and making the teaching profession an unattractive option for a future workforce.’ (p.46). Beaman & Kemp go on to suggest that it is ‘perplexing’ that ‘so few advances have been made in the successful management of disruptive classroom behaviour” (p.58), but it is perhaps less so when considered in light of traditional practice, media and political influence on decision making, and the impact of these on teacher practice and morale and general school climate.

2.1.2 Current recommended practice in behaviour support

The core principles of best practice described by de Jong (2004) and outlined in Chapter 1, suggest that the achievement of positive student behaviour outcomes relies on the adoption in schools of a preventative and proactive approach. Riordan (2006) highlights the importance of having a pedagogical rather than punitive response to student behaviour, working with parents and the broader community, and appropriately contextualising policy as key features of a preventative approach (p.239).

According to Conway (2003), research in relation to enhanced student learning and effective behaviour support entails giving attention to five key variables:

- Learning and teaching engagement by students and staff
- Educational leadership within the school (supported by leadership beyond the school)
- Collaborative practices within the school and with other educational services
- Multidisciplinary approaches with services beyond education, and
- Staff professional learning to enhance learning, teaching and management (p. 17).

In order to build these features to a level that will enhance students' academic and behavioural learning, attention to the protocols and systems enabling their implementation by teachers is required. This range of policy and action is supported by Guskey (2002), Levin, & Fullan, (2008), Kiefer Hipp, Bumpers Huffman, Pankake & Olivier, (2008) and Bryer & Beamish (2005). Other authors suggest a period of three to five years as a reasonable time in which to do this (see Bryer & Beamish, 2005; Sugai & Horner, 2001). With these conditions in place, Sprague & Horner (2000) argued 'research indicates that schools can create and establish clear expectations for learning and positive behavior, while providing firm but fair discipline' (p.5).

The establishment of the conditions outlined above are also the critical, but often overlooked, first step when planning to meet the needs of those students with persistent or more severe challenging behaviour (Freeman, Eber, Anderson, Irvin, Horner, Bounds, & Dunlap, 2006; Bambara, Nonnemacher, & Kern, 2009; Nelson, Hurley, Epstein, & Buckley, 2009; Sugai, et al., 2000). For students with more challenging behaviour the recommended practice entails ensuring that schools have the capacity to provide a continuum of support that enables function based, individualised interventions that are developed collaboratively and implemented consistently by school personnel (Sugai et al., 2000; Nelson et al., 2000; Bryer & Beamish, 2005; Sugai & Horner, 2008). For students with persistent or more challenging behaviour when more traditional or reactive approaches, including exclusionary practices are used rather than those recommended, the outcomes have been detrimental to both the individual student and to the school system. (Atelier, 2004; Jacob, 2005; Riordan, 2006).

The impact of societal influences on teacher and principal practice and morale in the area of behaviour support cannot be underestimated when considering professional learning and support models. Schools and teachers perceive intense pressure from the community to utilise punitive approaches when dealing with student misbehaviour and to deliver immediate outcomes (Conway, 2003; Atelier, 2004; Jacob, 2005; Riordan, 2006). The external demand exists despite the evidence of the ineffectiveness of those practices to improve either student outcomes or school safety and climate (Skiba et al., 2006; Riordan, 2006). Sugai et al., (2002) make the important point that ‘school administrators and their faculty face a plethora of advice on how to make schools safer but little help integrating what are often conflicting messages.’ (p.94). The additional conflict between meeting the demand from the community for immediate outcomes referred to by Jacob (2005) and Beaman (2007), and illustrated in *The Courier Mail* article cited in Chapter 1, and the recommended practices and time frames

proposed in the literature considered necessary to implement current and effective behaviour support, provide an insight into the difficulties principals and teachers face in this area of their practice.

2.2 Literature relating to Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support (SWPBS)

A recent and influential development in school disciplinary practices and behaviour support is the growing evidence base for and interest in positive behaviour support approaches (Todd, Horner, Sugai, & Sprague, 1999; Safran & Oswald, 2003; Bryer & Beamish, 2005; Luiselli, Putman, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; Walker, Cheney, Stage & Blum, 2005; Sailor, Zuna, Choi, Thomas, & McCart, 2006; Carr & Horner, 2007; Kincaid, Childs, Blasé & Wallace, 2007). The application of positive behaviour support approaches in schools known as SWPBS, represents the evolution or expansion of its basic tenets of prevention, skill building, environmental modification and the use of socially valid strategies and outcomes (Bambara et al., 2009). The SWPBS process takes account of the challenges described in the previous section and provides schools and educational systems with a process to facilitate contextually sensitive implementation (Todd et al., 1999; Cook & Radler, 2006).

Cook & Radler (2006) describe SWPBS as an approach that “aims to create a positive school climate, a culture of student competence, and an open, responsive management system for school leaders, staff, students and parents” (p 3). Horner & Sugai (2005) provide a further level of detail to Cook & Radlers’ definition, describing the purpose of SWPBS as being to assist schools to provide environments that prevent problems because they are:

- predictable - in that all community members know what is expected of them,
- consistent - expectations and standards are similar across environments in the school,
- safe - safe behaviour is taught, modelled and acknowledged, and

- positive - the emphasis is on modelling, teaching and acknowledging positive behaviour.

The model of implementation described by Sugai & Horner (2002) requires attention to a set of key elements that complement those described earlier by de Jong (2004) and Conway (2003), by adding a level of detail that ought to assist the translation of the best practice features described by de Jong and Conway. Sugai and Horner (2002) describe these as:

- Outcomes – behavioural and academic goals that are developed and shared by students families and educators
- Practices – the use of strategies and interventions that have sound evidence to support their use, and are consistent with the school's values base.
- Data – information is used to identify problem areas, need for intervention, and the effects of interventions, and
- Systems – supports needed to enable accurate and sustained implementation of PBS practices.

A summary of research outcomes relating to the implementation of SWPBS gathered over 15 years (Sugai & Horner, 2001), supports the notion of its potential to address the specific concerns raised by researchers and reviewers in relation to behaviour support and related student outcomes. The research findings included significant decreases in the number of behaviour or 'office discipline referrals' (i.e., 40-60% reduction), and improvements in the use by teachers of effective responses to problem behaviour. Included also were outcomes demonstrating improvements in the behavioural culture of schools achieved through improved student behaviour and leading to academic gains, achieved as a consequence of the increased time available for academic instruction. Finally, according to this review, when implementation is accurate, i.e., when it includes sufficient attention to systems change and

the use of research validated practices, then the effects described will endure for five to seven years (p.4).

The features of the SWPBS process as described above by these authors (Sugai & Horner, 2001; Cook & Radler, 2006) are reflective of the conditions also presented by de Jong (2004) and Conway (2003) in representing recommended practice in the area of behaviour support for Australian schools. In addition, SWPBS provides an explicit framework for schools to systematically implement those practices. The research examined confirms the positive impact of implementing SWPBS on student behaviour outcomes and school climate and is suggestive of its potential to positively impact teacher efficacy and attribution of problem behaviour (Ross & Horner 2007; Lohrmann et al., 2008). The SWPBS process also takes account of the significance of the systems and time required to support the adoption and implementation of new practices and supporting improved student outcomes (Conway, 2003; Bryer & Beamish, 2005; Cook & Radler, 2006; Sugai & Horner, 2008).

2.3 Literature relating to Research Question 1: How do teachers report their confidence in and capacity to influence student behaviour?

The area of teacher efficacy was a particular focus for this study because of its relevance in relation to the resilience of unhelpful beliefs and practices in the area of behaviour support, described in Chapter 1. Tschannen-Moran et al.'s (1998) review of the research concerning the concept of teacher efficacy concluded that the most helpful definition of teacher efficacy should include consideration of the interrelatedness of teacher belief and confidence *and* of the teaching task and the environment in which it takes place. Tschannen-Moran et al.'s definition acknowledges that interrelatedness by describing teaching efficacy as the teacher's 'belief in their capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully

accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context.’ (p.233). Teacher efficacy then can be understood as comprising both teacher’s beliefs about their teaching ability - including their confidence (beliefs about internal factors), as well as their beliefs about context, or the need for and availability of teaching resources (beliefs about external factors) (Carleton, Fitch & Krockover, 2008, p.47). In relation to professional support models, the implications of this definition are important, suggesting that there needs to be as much attention given to the context in which teaching and learning take place as there is to the currency of teacher knowledge and skills in behaviour support.

A further imperative to include consideration of teacher efficacy in this study was provided by Guskey and Passaro’s (1994) assertion that teacher efficacy is the most important variable in predicting the success of any program implementation (p.628), supported by their research outcomes linking high teacher efficacy to greater preparedness by teachers to try new methods. The evidence of the importance of teacher efficacy, not only on student performance and achievement, but also in relation to its effect on teacher behaviour in the classroom is compelling (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). Studies cited by Tschannen-Moran et al. demonstrated correlates of high teacher efficacy including greater enthusiasm for and commitment to teaching (Guskey, 1984; Allinder, 1994), greater levels of organisation and planning (Allinder, 1994) and, of particular relevance to this study, improved persistence in the face of set backs reflected in a greater capacity to work harder and be less critical of struggling students (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Guskey, 1988; Stein & Wang, 1988). The reverse was also demonstrated i.e., low teacher efficacy results in less teacher effort and a tendency to ‘give up easily’, leading to poor student outcomes and lower teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998 p.234).

The sources of teacher efficacy described by Bandura (1986, 1997 cited in Tschannen-Moran, 1998) are important also to consider when developing teacher professional development and support models. Bandura describes these as mastery experiences, physiological and emotional states, vicarious experiences and social persuasion, with mastery experiences considered to be the most powerful (p.211). Guskey's (2002) model of teacher change reflects the importance of mastery experiences, proposing that these precede any significant shift in teacher attitude and belief (p.385). The importance of each source though cannot be underestimated in terms of the capacity of each to enhance or decrease teacher efficacy. In relation to student misbehaviour, a high level of arousal is possible, and the potential is there for this to produce anxiety or excitement, mastery or incompetence (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Morin & Battalio, 2004). The inclusion of vicarious experiences and social persuasion in professional learning models may have less impact on teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1996; Tschannen- Moran et al., 1998; Guskey, 2002) but are none-the-less potentially helpful strategies in any model of professional learning and support.

Carleton et al., (2008) identified the need to consider the range of ways teacher efficacy can be supported, describing the development of teacher efficacy as a cyclical process whereby experiences, either mastery, physiological arousal, vicarious or social persuasion, contribute either positively or negatively depending on how they are cognitively processed by the teacher (p.49). The in-service program described in their research incorporated strategies to account for each of the efficacy sources and reported positive changes in teacher belief and attitude as a result of their participation in the program (p.61).

The influence of school context variables on teacher efficacy is clearly significant, with organisational structure and climate, principal leadership and collective efficacy all having received attention in the literature as factors important when considering how to support high teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Carleton et al., 2008; Adams & Forsyth, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, Parrish & DiPaola, 2006). Given that a teacher's perception of efficacy is not stable across contexts and can vary from subject to subject, or from one group of students to another, the need to consider contextual variables as well as teacher learning in attempts to support changes in teacher beliefs and practice is clear (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Guskey, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, et al., 2006). Specifically, working collaboratively to address school level variables, involving teachers in decision making, coaching and improving general school climate have all been shown to positively affect perceived teacher efficacy (Tshannen-Moran et al., 1998, p.239), and all are features of the SWPBS process lending support to its potential in this area.

One study specifically addressing the impact of implementing SWPBS on teacher efficacy was located in the search for this study, the results of which indicated a statistically significant relationship between SWPBS implementation and perceived teacher efficacy (Ross & Horner, 2007). The study's authors recommended further research, using a greater diversity in method, to address the gap in the literature regarding teacher outcomes from implementing SWPBS. A further study (Lohrmann et al., 2008), examined school personnel's resistance to implementing SWPBS and found teacher efficacy and belief factors to be significant obstacles and suggested the need to investigate strategies likely to prevent and transform resistance. Mooney et al.'s (2008) Australian research also considered teacher efficacy as one aspect of their broader review of SWPBS in New South Wales schools. Whilst their results did not show a statistically significant relationship between implementing

SWPBS and teacher efficacy, it was considered an area requiring further research, in particular in schools with experience implementing the full continuum of support that comprises SWPBS (p. 49).

2.4 Literature relating to Research Question 2: How do teachers understand and attribute the causation of problem behaviour?

The second focus for this study related specifically to teacher attribution of problem behaviour, in the context of acknowledging the significance of attribution style on teacher beliefs and practice, (Mavropoulou & Padeliadu, 2009; Ho, 2009; Kulinna, 2008; Beaman, Wheldall & Kemp, 2007; Morin & Battalio, 2004). Morin and Battalio (2004) stated that teachers can find themselves in a “...heightened state of subjectivity...when they encounter misbehaviour in the classrooms, hallways and school grounds they supervise.” (p. 251) and that without proper support to interpret and respond in helpful ways, can “...form an instantaneous opinion of the causes of the incident...” and may be “...launched on a trajectory fuelled by intense subjectivity, (i.e., anger retribution.)...” (p.252). This description echoes a seemingly stable tendency on the part of teachers to attribute causation for problem behaviour to student rather than teacher factors (Medway, 1979; Soodak & Podell, 1994; Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1981), even across different cultural contexts (Ho, 2009; Mavropoulou & Padeliadu, 2002). In so doing, according to Brophy & Rohrkemper (1981), teachers avoid the potential risks to their confidence, position or status inherent in attributing causation to factors within their control, which is understandable.

For students, the risks of attributing misbehaviour to student factors alone are less immediate but considerable, as teachers who attribute problem behaviour in this way reportedly use “...strategies characterised by higher frequency of punishment, restricted language, and

minimising... (the importance of)...mental health goals in favour of short term control or desist attempts” (p.308). The volume and consistency of the research in relation to teacher attribution and responses to problem behaviour, coupled with continued calls for greater access to both pre- and in- service training in the area highlight its significance, and suggest it as an area requiring consideration in any initiative aiming to improve student outcomes.

The proactive nature of SWPBS, with its emphasis on supporting teachers to understand behaviour in terms of function and environmental influences, has considerable potential to have a positive impact on how teachers and principals understand and respond to problem behaviour (Morin & Battalio, 2004; Morin, 2001.) Mooney et al., (2008) noted changes in teacher’s perceptions of behaviour and how it is best dealt with when implementing SWPBS in their schools (p.57) lending support to the potential of the process to influence positively teacher attribution. Additionally, understanding and responding to misbehaviour in ways that are likely to be effective in contributing to positive student behaviour outcomes will likely enhance teacher efficacy (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Carleton et al., 2008).

2.5 Literature relating to Research Question 3: How do teachers report their capacity to influence school climate?

The variable of school climate was included in this study because of the number of times it was raised by teachers and principals in the Tasmanian SWPBS pilot schools as having been improved through their implementation of the process. The construct, whilst difficult to define with any empirical confidence (Anderson, 1982) has none the less received considerable research attention due to its relationship to improved student outcomes, (Anderson, 1982; Roach & Kratchowill, 2004). Anderson’s (1982) review of the research in relation to school climate suggests that whilst definitions tend to be ‘verifiable intuitively rather than empirically’

(p.369), there is agreement in terms of its impact or importance on a range of factors including ‘cognitive and affective behavior’ (p.371). Hoy & Sabos’ (1998) definition of school climate (cited in Roach & Kratochwill, 2004) is illustrative of Anderson’s point about empirical confidence, their definition reading; “the pervasive quality of a school environment experienced by students and staff, which affects their behaviors” (p.12).

Of particular significance to the study reported in this thesis is Anderson’s statement that the research reviewed suggests ‘some composite of school characteristics *does* create a climate which accounts for a substantial portion of the variance in student outcomes’ (p.372), and Roach and Kratochwill’s (2004) assertion that any measure of the effectiveness of schoolwide behaviour interventions needs to include consideration of climate in order to gain a ‘complete picture of the changes required and produced by schoolwide behavioral interventions’ (p.11).

Of note were the school characteristics described in Anderson’s review that were seen to represent a positive school climate, and the relationship of these to features of the SWPBS process, as well as to the variables and conditions described by Conway and de Jong as necessary to support positive behaviour. Specifically,

- Relationships between principals and teachers that were collegial and included participatory leadership, shared decision making and good communication
- Teacher student relationships, in particular the quality of teacher student interactions
- Teacher teacher relationships characterised by cooperation and concern
- Community-school relationships characterised by high levels of parent involvement
- Culture variables, including teacher commitment, confidence in students’ abilities, rewards and praise for students and consistency (pp. 400-404)

Accordingly then, the success of systemic prevention and intervention efforts in relation to student behaviour relies on an awareness of and adjustment to the contextual variables that

comprise school climate (Roach & Kratchowill, 2004), including those likely to positively impact teacher efficacy and attribution of problem behaviour discussed in previous sections of this chapter.

Summary

The area of student behaviour continues to present a challenge for schools and education systems locally and internationally (Sugai et al., 2000; Skiba et al., 2003; de Jong, 2004; Atelier, 2004; Jacob, 2005; OECD, 2009), in relation to both poor student outcomes (Atelier, 2004; Hemphill, 2005; Riordan, 2006; Sprague et al., 2006), and to teacher practice and well being (Morin, 2001; Beaman & Kemp, 2007; OECD, 2009). Despite significant changes in theoretical perspective and knowledge base, practice in response to problem behaviour in schools remains predominately characterised by traditional, reactive and restrictive approaches (Sugai et al., 2000; Atelier, 2004; Luiselli et al., 2005; Jacob, 2005; Skiba et al., 2006), which is partly explained by the enduring appeal of these approaches in the broader community, and the consequent perceived pressure from schools and systems to respond accordingly to that pressure (MACER, 2005; Jacob, 2005; Cook & Radler, 2006; Skiba et al., 2006).

A further but related concern is to do with teacher preparation and in-service learning, which is consistently reported to be inadequate (OECD, 2009; Beaman et al., 2007; Mavropoulou et al., 2007; Gulchek & Lopes, 2007) reflected in practice selection based on personal beliefs, recommendations from colleagues and perceived 'common sense' (Boardman et al, 2005; Shaddock, 2005). The resultant effects of poor practice selection and student outcomes on teacher efficacy are significant (Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998; Morin & Battalio, 2004).

Encouragingly, the literature in relation to behaviour support suggests efficacious ways to positively address what could be perceived as insurmountable obstacles to change (Safran, 2003; Bryer, 2005; Riordan, 2006; Sugai & Horner, 2008; Mooney et al., 2008). As well the interest and commitment from teachers and principals evidenced in their contributions to reviews of practice in various education jurisdictions provide reason for optimism (Conway, 2003; Atelier, 2004; de Jong, 2004).

Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter describes the research approach developed for the study and the procedures used to address the stages of the process in relation to the research question. The chapter is presented in the following nine sections:

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Selection of Research Approach
- 3.3 Research Method
- 3.4 Varied roles of the Researcher in this study
- 3.5 Gaining permission to conduct the research and to obtain consent of the participants
- 3.6 Sample
- 3.7 Data Analysis
- 3.8 Summary

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to gain a rich and meaningful account of the experiences of teachers and principals implementing the SWPBS process in relation to its impact on their understanding and practice. The study did not seek to determine causality, rather the focus was to explore and document participants' understanding of particular phenomena or behaviour. The major research aim was considered in three parts; the first, efficacy, that is, how do teachers report their confidence in and capacity to influence student behaviour, second, attribution, that is, how do teachers understand and attribute the causation of problem

behaviour, and lastly, how do teachers perceive the impact of implementing SWPBS on school climate.

3.2 Selection of Research Approach

The broad Qualitative Research Approach was chosen as it was best placed to allow a systematic and thorough investigation of participants' perceptions and understandings gained through observation, document review and interview. (Mitchell & Jolley, 2007). A modified grounded theory approach was selected in light of its capacity to explain as well as describe (and to) "...implicitly give some degree of predictability, but only with regard to specific conditions." (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.5). The opportunity to "uncover relevant conditions...determine how the actors respond to changing conditions and to the consequences of their action." (p.5), was afforded through the use of this approach, and considered necessary to investigate fully the research questions with sufficient detail to inform future decision making at both school and system levels. The use of a Qualitative approach, and the case study in particular, enabled the identification of important processes and variables that warranted further investigation. As Rist (2000) suggested, the findings available through qualitative research are best placed to provide policy makers with 'equally grounded means of learning about program impacts and outcomes' (p. 1009).

As described earlier, there exists a strong research and evidence base regarding the efficacy of the SWPBS process on a range of outcomes concerning student behaviour and academic achievement. However, there is little or insufficient descriptive data around teachers' experiences with the process, and those variables which are important in the process in relation to that experience (Ross & Horner, 2007). The nature of the research problem required an iterative and dynamic styled investigation that considered theoretical positions

and the literature review in arriving at helpful understandings to inform future support for teachers (Burns, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The study did not seek to determine causality, but rather a deep understanding of 'if and how' participants perceived their understanding and practice to have altered through participation in the SWPBS program. To achieve this level of detail it was important to target a bounded system that was manageable for a research study (Bassey, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995), but which had sufficient size and scope to learn about the views and perspectives of a sample of policy actors (Firestone, 1987). The strength of case study research in relation to this project therefore, was in its capacity to quite intensively investigate the variables, processes and interactions deserving of close attention in seeking a deep understanding in relation to the Research Question.

Reliability and validity are typically identified as potential areas of limitation in qualitative research (Burns, 2000, p.12.) Case studies are particularly vulnerable the accusation that findings are subjective and prone to researcher bias (Burns, 2000, p.473-474). Findings from this study though are not intended to be generalised to other school settings or systems, however the information emerging from the study may contribute to a wider understanding of factors important in relation to supporting improved teacher efficacy and as a consequence, improved student outcomes.

Accordingly, the case study focussed on schools participating in the SWPBS pilot over a period of three years, and used multi data gathering elements: workshop responses, interview and document collection by a participant-observer (Merriam, 1998). The iterative style adopted by the researcher enabled the priori assumptions that formed the basis of this study to inform ongoing data gathering procedures and analysis and, with the opportunity to have repeated contact with teachers and principals, constituted a research strategy with potential to

determine changes in their perceptions over the three year period (Sturman, 1997). Some of these perceptions were brought to life through verbatim recording of their comments (Miles & Huberman, 1994) giving insight to the ‘ground level’ experience of the SWPBS approach (Rist, 2000, p.1008) not achievable through the use of quantitative methods alone. The credibility of the study was considered carefully in terms of striving for a level of trustworthiness necessary to achieve sufficient objectivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) for it to be useful for future policy and practice discussions. Acknowledging that it is not possible in qualitative research to “establish reliability in the traditional sense” (Burns, 2000, p.475) the trustworthiness and credibility of the data gathered in this study were strengthened by the use of multiple sources enabling triangulation through corroborating evidence (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Reliability was further supported by identifying the research steps and procedures used to inform the study, self reporting of bias and clear reporting of coding and thematic development (Burns, 2000, p.475.)

3.3 Research Method

This research is presented largely as a descriptive study, an attempt to ‘describe systematically the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest, factually and accurately’ (Issac & Michael, 1997, p.50). The size and scope of the SWPBS pilot in Tasmania provided the researcher with an opportunity to access and “give voice” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p.43) to the views of a large number of participants over a three year period, using a range of data gathering methods, including workshop responses from SWPBS school based teams, interviews, and document collection. Table 3.1 illustrates the data sources and data gathering timeline.

Table 3.1 Data sources and timeline

2005	June-August Document review					
2006		March SET	Ongoing Observations anecdotal reports			
2007		March SET	Ongoing Observations anecdotal reports			
2008		March SET	Ongoing Observations anecdotal reports	March April Workshop responses	September-December Interviews in case study schools	
2009		March SET	Ongoing Observations anecdotal reports			February Follow up phone interviews

Acting in the advantaged position of participant-observer, provided the researcher with an opportunity to relate a “slice of life” (Merriam, 1998, p.42) but also to “reveal how theoretical abstractions relate to common sense perceptions of everyday life” (Walker, 1993, p.166) through attempting to “describe, interpret or evoke images without making value judgements or trying to induce any change” (Bassey, 1999, p.40). The varied roles of the researcher, described in more detail later, presented a challenge in establishing a level of trustworthiness critical for ascribing credibility (Lincoln & Gruba, 1985), reliability and validity of the research. Particular care was taken to compare data from each phase of the research, rather than using the researcher’s experiences as a standard, as recommended by Strauss & Corbin (1998), acknowledging that qualitative research can never be fully values

free (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), and is inevitably permeated by the researcher's values from inception to conclusion (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Walker, 1993). Potential researcher bias was ameliorated with the use of within and cross case comparisons as well as triangulation of the data, and by seeking the input of another professional regarding the development of the interview schedule and analysis procedures thereby assisting the study's reliability and enabling the researcher to 'go beyond initial impressions.' (Eisenhardt, 1989, p.541).

Despite the advantages of the research method adopted for the study, it was recognised that a perfectly complete study or the determination of an "ultimate truth" is not possible (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p.178). Objectivity in qualitative research not entailing controlling variables (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), but rather representing as accurately as possible what respondents have to say and what they do, employing openness and a willingness to listen and "give voice" without judgement (p.43), faithfully documenting the key features of the research process (Sturman, 1997) and in so doing providing an "intimate connection with empirical reality..." permitting, according to Eisenhardt (1989), 'the development of a testable, relevant and valid theory' (p.532).

Finally, possible links between this study and theoretical offerings were provided through the presentation of the literature review and report of a case study, inviting the reader to make further generalisations through their own interpretation (Stenhouse, 1985; Simons, 1996; Sturman, 1997). In this way the report of the case study attempted to "make not only local or context-informed sense but also theoretical sense" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.237).

3.4 Varied roles of the researcher

The researcher was appointed to the position of Principal Education Officer-Positive Behaviour Support (PEO-PBS) in 2005, the year preceding the SWPBS pilot, and was responsible for leading the systemic adoption of positive behaviour support approaches across the state. One strategy employed to achieve this goal was the SWPBS pilot. The researcher's role in this initiative included adapting (with interstate colleagues) the systems and training to support implementation, providing training and follow up support to school teams and coaches, and providing interim reports to departmental staff regarding the program and in relation to broader issues pertaining to student behaviour and support.

Performing these roles provided the researcher with both opportunities and challenges in relation to the study. Proximity to, and involvement with the work of all schools through each stage of their implementation afforded the researcher an opportunity to undertake a modified form of the "participation observation" procedure described by Bogdan & Biklen (1998, pp.2-3). Introducing and then working alongside school teams to implement a process they had elected to adopt also provided the researcher with an opportunity to access an understanding of participants' actions and motives "from the inside" as described by Taylor & Bogdan (1998, p.49)

The accompanying challenges to the researcher's various roles included acknowledging and taking steps to avoid the potential loss of impartiality inherent in a participant-observer role, including losing sight of the bigger picture and representing biases of the group (Yin, 1994). These steps included placing the study in a broader national and local historical context in relation to its intentions by examining policy and review documents, thereby maintaining a record of the overall story and strengthening objectivity (Fitz et al., 1999), and by using open coding in the data gathering and analysis to enable questioning and comparing to "break

through subjectivity and bias” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.13). A sample of the briefing notes included in the document review is provided in Appendix A.

3.5 Gaining permission to conduct the research and to obtain consent of the participants

Permission to undertake the study was granted by the University of Tasmania’s Ethics Committee (Human Experimentation) (Appendix B1a), and the Tasmanian Department of Education (Appendix B1b). Schools selected for the study were then contacted by letter to each Principal inviting their participation, with copies of the University and Department of Education approvals enclosed (Appendix B2a). All Principals invited accepted the invitation and a package of information was then sent to nominated teachers in each school including a letter of invitation to participate (Appendix B2b), an information sheet about the study (Appendix B2c) and consent form (Appendix B2d).

3.6 Sample

Sample selection for the study was opportune and purposive (Burns, 1994) as the research question required input from participants who had knowledge and experience of the SWPBS process as well as with other behaviour support models. The researcher’s relationship with each of the schools in the pilot was similar in terms of involvement and influence and as such was not an issue in relation to sample selection.

All pilot schools were assessed annually using a standardised instrument to evaluate the fidelity of their implementation of the SWPBS process. The School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) is a research level instrument developed by Sugai, Lewis-Palmer, Todd and Horner (2001) that measures the extent to which the conditions or practices that comprise the

universal component of the process are in place. The SET scores provided a reliable indicator of each school’s level of fidelity in implementing SWPBS, and so were important in the selection of the schools in which interviews were undertaken. Schools with a high level of implementation fidelity as measured by the SET were selected for closer examination on the basis that it could be confidently assumed that in these schools the SWPBS process was actually being implemented. Therefore, observations and interviews were able to shed light not only on the conditions thought to be influential on perceptions and practice, but also on how participants experienced and reacted to changing conditions and to the consequences of their actions. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For the purposes of this study, the features of the SET helped to establish the core elements against which to examine changes in teacher efficacy, attribution and perceived capacity to influence school climate. Table 3.2 illustrates the number and type of schools participating in the SWPBS program.

Table 3.2 Tasmanian SWPBS pilot schools

Total Number of schools in the SWPBS program.	Primary Schools K-6	High Schools 7-10	District High Schools K-10	Special Schools K-12
67	42	13	10	2

To assist in gaining an appropriate representation of participants, six schools from the total sample were selected for closer examination. Variables such as school sector (i.e., primary, high, special and district high) and geographical location (i.e., across the state, regional and metropolitan) were considered in the selection in order to gain a reasonable cross section of the schools in the program. The Principals in selected schools then invited any staff interested in participating to do so. Further strata were added once schools were selected to account for participant’s sex, number of years teaching and their position in the school (Gilbert, 2005,

p.77). Table 3.3 describes the characteristics of the teachers and principals who participated in the interview component of the study.

Table 3.3 Phase 3 Interview Sample

School	Location	Sex	Years teaching	Position in school	Years in current school
Primary School 1	Metro South	F	28	Principal	2
		F	12	Classroom teacher	4
		F	2	Classroom teacher	2
Primary School 2	Metro South	M	9	Senior Teacher	5
		F		Principal	
		F	25	Classroom Teacher	4
		F	18	Classroom and music teacher	4
		F	2	Classroom teacher	1
Primary School 3	Metro South	M	26	Principal	4
		M	9	Senior Teacher	5
		F	27	Senior Teacher	14
		F	7	Classroom teacher	4
High School 1	Metro North	M	25	Principal	6
		M	5	Guidance Officer	5
		F	9	Grade Coordinator	5
		M	25	Classroom teacher	12
		M	20	Grade Coordinator	3
High School 2	Metro North West	F	26	Principal	3
		M	8	Senior Teacher	7
		F	3	Classroom teacher	2
		F	31	Special Education teacher	15
District High School	Rural South East	M		Principal	28
		F	4	Classroom Teacher	3
		F	17	Grade Coordinator	6
		F	13	Teacher	13

Phase 1: Local policy and review documents were gathered and examined prior to the commencement of the study in order to gain an insight into the experiential context of participants, and to identify helpful areas for investigation regarding the successes and constraints of previous initiatives to both student outcome improvement and teacher/principal perceptions. Table 3.4 lists the documents reviewed in the initial stages of the study.

Schoolwide Evaluation Tool (SET) data were collected in each phase of the study from each of the total sample of schools. The SET data were used to select the six schools for

participation in the interview component of the study as schools scoring a high SET score could be assumed to be implementing SWPBS with a reasonable level of fidelity. All of the participants in the study were teaching in schools which had been implementing SWPBS for a period of 18 months to 3 years.

Table 3.4 Documents reviewed in the initial stages of the study

Documents reviewed	Author/s Date
Factors contributing to increased rates of suspension in Tasmanian schools	Challenging Behaviour working group-meeting notes (2002)
Alternative provisions in Tasmanian schools	Estimates Committee Hearings (2003)
Minute to minister re review of behaviour support in Tasmanian schools	(2003)
Report of the Review of the Statewide Behaviour Support Team in the Tasmanian Department of Education	Conway, R. (2003)
Essential Learnings for All: A Review commissioned by the Tasmanian Department of Education	Atelier Learning Solutions, (2004)
The Implementation of Positive Behaviour Support Within the Tasmanian Department of Education	Tasmanian Department of Education Project Brief (2005)

Phase 2: During workshops conducted in March – April, 2008, responses to broad questions related to the research focus was collected for analysis from a random sample of 44 of the school based SWPBS leadership teams represented in Table 3.1. The workshops were conducted at the commencement of the schools’ third year of SWPBS implementation. Each school based team was comprised of a Principal, teaching and non teaching staff, parents and community representatives and numbered between 5 and 10 members; representing contributions from approximately 260 individuals. The workshop responses were developed and recorded by each team as part of a planning exercise for their SWPBS implementation in the 2008 school year.

The specific questions asked were:

1. Why did your school begin implementing SWPBS?
2. What is different about this process to other behaviour support programs or practices you have used?
3. Why are you still implementing SWPBS?

Phase 3: Interviews at six schools were undertaken by the researcher during September – December, 2008. The questions were developed to probe the recurring themes and issues that had emerged through the data gathering procedures in phases 1 and 2 enabling triangulation and assisting reliability and validity (Appendix C1).

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed to provide an accurate record, and a source that offered verbatim quotes for analysis and presentation in the study. A sample of the transcribed interviews is included in Appendix C.

3.7 Data analysis

The analysis of case study data is described by Creswell (2002) as “the most difficult and least developed aspect of case study methodology” (p.472). A clear system of organisation was essential due to the volume of data generated by workshop and interview responses as well as the accumulation of observational notes and related documents. The initial data analysis was approached with an appreciation of the theory available prior to the commencement of the study, and content analyses of the documents, workshop responses and interviews was undertaken using a manual coding procedure. The coding part of the process of analysing the data was used to draw out themes and develop an ‘organising scheme’ for reviewing and examining all collected data for the study (Creswell, 2002, p.266-267) enabling the identification of emerging themes and issues (Burns, 1994; Miles & Huberman,

1994). Codes that consistently emerged in the document review and workshop responses assisted in the development of the interview schedule.

The process of data analysis then, was characterised by undertaking sufficient reading and rereading of the data to enable, first, the identification of major themes, second, consistencies and inconsistencies in the data and finally, the review and reworking of interview questions for subsequent stages of data collection constituting the quasi grounded theory approach adopted for this study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this way, initial concerns or needs were able to be incorporated, as well as any unforeseen aspects arising during subsequent phases of data gathering (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Bogden & Biklen, 1998;).

The final stage of data analysis combined information gleaned through the collection of data, review of literature and deliberations of the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2002, p.493), and meaning drawn from the analysis of facts and areas for future research acknowledged (Creswell, 2002, p.493).

Analysis of the documents

In the first instance, a content analysis (Burns, 2000) of local policy and review documents was undertaken to gain contextual information regarding behaviour support provision in Tasmanian government schools, and to identify broad emerging themes and issues in relation to teacher concerns and perceptions in that area. Anecdotal reports from teachers and principals collected throughout the period of the project were analysed in the same way seeking similar or diverging issues.

Analysis of the workshop responses

Responses to the questions posed in the March-April, 2008 workshops provided a further iteration of the identified broad themes in relation to the research question, and a content analysis of these (Burns, 2000) sought commonality and consistency of themes and issues in relation to the perceived effectiveness of SWPBS as well as to the specific ways in which the

SWPBS process was perceived to be influential on respondents' teacher efficacy, attribution of problem behaviour and general school climate.

Analysis of the interview data

Audio taped, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher with teachers and principals in selected schools. The questions used at interview were developed following the content analysis of previous data as well as the related literature in order to gain greater insight into the particular aspects of the SWPBS process perceived to have been influential on teachers' understanding and practice.

Analysis of the SET Data

The SET survey was undertaken annually with all of the schools in the SWPBS pilot. The schools selected for the interview component of the study had each achieved scores of 80 per cent or above on each of the element of the survey, providing evidence that the process was being implemented with fidelity in those schools.

Summary

This study, undertaken over a three year period, used a multi-site, multi-participant and multi-method design that enabled triangulation and analysis of rich data using a quasi grounded theory approach. Its purpose, to investigate whether or not implementing the SWPBS process influenced Tasmanian teachers' and principals' teaching efficacy, how they attributed student behaviour, and how they perceived their capacity to influence school climate required ensuring that the perceptions of a large number of teachers and principals were rigorously collected and analysed. As well, a modified case study was used to gain an understanding of the particular variables or features of the SWPBS process considered by the participants, to be responsible for that influence.

The document review provided initial contextual information regarding teacher experiences and concerns and as such informed the development of the questions in the subsequent phases of the study. An analysis of the study's data and the results are presented in Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Results

Introduction

The results of this study that relate to each of the Research Questions are presented in Chapter 4, grouped according to the phases of data gathering source. The results are presented in chronological order to plot the trajectory of the SWPBS pilot from its beginning to the middle of the third year of implementation. Emerging themes that traversed the analysis of the data are presented. Data sources that contributed to the interrogation of the research questions are listed below:

- 4.1 Documents
- 4.2 Workshop Responses
- 4.3 Interviews in case study schools
 - 4.3.1 Responses in relation to teacher efficacy
 - 4.3.2 Responses in relation to attribution of problem behaviour
 - 4.3.3 Responses in relation to school climate
 - 4.3.4 Themes that traversed the data

4.1 Documents

A review of the documents relating to policy, funding and review of behaviour support programs and practices in Tasmanian schools prior to the commencement of the SWPBS pilot, listed in Table 4.1, provided a number of broad, emerging themes in relation to the issues and challenges perceived as important to address in improving behaviour support provision and student outcomes.

Each of the documents articulated difficulties in providing an inclusive educational experience for students and, while maintaining it as the ideal in the Tasmanian Public Education System, made reference to alternative or ‘off site’ provision for some students. The documents each either made reference or were produced in response to concerns from principals and teachers regarding the lack of systemic professional learning and support, and to a perceived lack of congruence between policy and practice, within and across schools, in the area of student behaviour. Specifically, the document review revealed:

- A consistency of response in relation to the ineffectiveness of current practice in improving student outcomes
- A lack of confidence or ‘efficacy’ on the part of principals and teachers to effectively teach students with difficult behaviour, manifested in repeated requests for professional learning and support
- An overuse of sanctions and consequence based approaches reflecting a tendency to attribute cause for misbehaviour primarily to student factors
- A concern about the lack of any systematic and systemic approach to student behaviour that aligned with Departmental values and with teaching and learning practices.

Table 4.1 provides some examples of where these issues were raised in the documents reviewed.

In summary, the documents revealed an enduring concern in relation to the ineffectiveness of current, generally reactive approaches to behaviour, a seeming lack of confidence or ‘efficacy’ on the part of teachers and principals reflected in continuing requests for professional learning, and a tendency to attribute causation for difficult behaviour to student factors. Also apparent from the document review was recognition of the desire for there to be

Table 4.1 Issues arising from the document review.

<i>Document</i>	<i>Issues</i>				
	<i>Ineffectiveness of current practice</i>	<i>Need for professional learning and support</i>	<i>Overuse of sanctions and reactive responses</i>	<i>Problem attribution to student factors</i>	<i>Lack of systemic, systematic response</i>
<i>Challenging Behaviour Working Group (2002)</i>	<i>Too much time spent on 'worry meetings' (p.4) Lack of consistency and internal coordination (p.4)</i>	<i>Need for whole school professional learning to assist teacher confidence (p.3)</i>	<i>Suspension rates increasing</i>	<i>Suspension episodes attributed predominantly to student factors (p.1-2)</i>	<i>Lack of whole school focus (p.4)</i>
<i>Estimates Committee Hearing (2003)</i>	<i>No evaluative data available in relation to student outcomes including attendance and return to mainstream schooling.</i>		<i>Alternative provisions exist as part of the reactive continuum (p.1)</i>	<i>Difficult to retain some students in traditional schooling (p.1)</i>	<i>Inconsistency in provision across the state in terms of policy and practice.</i>
<i>Review of the Statewide Behaviour Support Team (2003)</i>	<i>Student outcome data stable despite the increasing investment of human and fiscal resources.</i>	<i>Disconnect between behaviour and teaching and learning (p.27) Need for professional learning around proactive, positive approaches and a focus on engagement (p.27)</i>	<i>Reactive approaches most prevalent not aligned with teaching and learning (p.24). Lack of a continuum of student support (p.27)</i>	<i>Behaviour viewed as owned by student, not as a whole school, district, system issue, (p.24)</i>	<i>No systemic approach to behaviour (p.24) Behaviour support should be aligned with and linked to the Department's curriculum and school improvement processes (p.48)</i>
<i>Atelier Report (2004)</i>	<i>Undertaken in response to concerns about ineffective practices and poor student outcomes.</i>	<i>Professional learning with a focus on cultural change and proactive practices recommended</i>	<i>Reactive responses most common in Tasmanian schools (p.48)</i>	<i>Responsibility for 'behaviour change' rests with students. Deficit oriented approach prevalent (p.48)</i>	<i>New structure proposed to deliver consistent systemic provision.</i>
<i>SWPBS Project Brief (2005)</i>	<i>Proposed as a response to concerns raised in previous reviews</i>	<i>The SWPBS process involves school based teams attending training and with coaching model in place leading professional learning in own schools.</i>	<i>Proactive, preventative model</i>	<i>Focus on adult behaviour, systems change and teaching and learning.</i>	<i>Proposed as a statewide, systemically supported initiative. Research based and data driven enabling ongoing evaluation against student outcomes.</i>

a consistent, systemic response to promoting positive behaviour that aligned with teaching and learning and Departmental values, which culminated in the development of the Project Brief for the SWPBS pilot.

The evidence provided in the document review outlined in Table 4.1 supported the need to investigate how to improve teacher confidence and ‘efficacy’ and teacher attribution of problem behaviour as factors important to consider in improving student outcomes. The review revealed a context in which traditional, typical responses to student behaviour in Tasmanian schools were considered to be ineffective. What also was revealed was a persistently expressed interest from teachers and principals for professional learning and support in the area. The SWPBS pilot provided a platform from which to do this and, importantly, a forum in which to examine in some detail the elements of the process perceived by teachers and principals to be most influential in their learning. Table 4.2 illustrates the elements of the SWPBS process perceived by respondents to be effective in addressing the concerns raised in the document review.

4.2 Workshop Responses

A number of the workshop responses generated during an SWPBS training session in March 2008 was analysed for this study. Of the total sample of schools shown in Table 3.1, 44 were randomly selected for analysis. The workshop responses were developed by school based, SWPBS Leadership Teams in their third year of implementing the process. Each Leadership Team comprised the principal, teaching and non teaching staff, parents and community representatives and numbered between 5 and 10 members. The responses selected for analysis represented contributions from approximately 260 individuals. The activity in which the responses were developed was included in the workshop as a way to assist Leadership Teams to refocus on SWPBS in their own schools, with a view to planning for sustainable implementation in the 2008 school year. A content analysis of the sample of responses

revealed a high level of commonality, as well as consistency with the themes that had emerged from the document review. Table 4.3 summarises the workshop responses and illustrates their connection to the themes revealed in the document review.

Table 4.2 Data from this study in relation to issues raised in Phase 1

Issues/concerns raised in Phase 1	Phase 2 & 3 responses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A consistency of response in relation to the ineffectiveness of current practice in improving student outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data strongly suggestive of the effectiveness of the process in supporting positive student outcomes, both through teacher/principal report and Decreases in behaviour referral data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lack of confidence or 'efficacy' on the part of principals and teachers to effectively teach students with difficult behaviour, manifested in repeated requests for professional learning and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data suggestive of improved confidence and understanding about effective practice and behaviour. SWPBS process continuing to be implemented in all pilot schools.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An overuse of sanctions and consequence based approaches reflecting a tendency to attribute cause for misbehaviour primarily to student factors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data indicated both a shift in attribution style and focus from sanction use to proactive educative practices. Many respondents reported decreases in suspensions, detentions and relocations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A concern about the lack of any systematic and systemic approach to student behaviour that aligned with Departmental values and with teaching and learning practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistency of teaching and responding to students The implementation of a schoolwide approach that pays attention to the systems required to support implementation by all staff summarises responses in relation to concerns about systematic, educative approaches.

The workshop responses ($n = 44$) also revealed information in relation to which aspects of the SWPBS process were perceived by respondents to have been influential on their thinking and practice. To summarise, the elements of the process most frequently cited that could be seen as enabling prevention, increasing teacher/principal confidence and capacity to influence school climate were:

Table 4.3 Data from the workshop responses alongside themes identified in the document review

<i>Workshop questions</i>	<i>Ineffectiveness of current practice</i>	<i>Need for professional learning and support</i>	<i>Overuse of sanctions and reactive responses</i>	<i>Problem attribution to student factors</i>	<i>Lack of systemic, systematic response</i>
<i>Why did you join the SWPBS Pilot?</i>	<p>All responses cited ineffectiveness of current practices.</p> <p>Egs. ‘Despair!’ ‘staff isolation’ ‘Needed whole school approach’ ‘current procedures not consistent or shared by all staff’ ‘Wanted a proactive, positive approach’</p>	<p>The opportunity to engage in a systemic professional learning program cited in many responses.</p>	<p>Typical responses reactive and punitive.</p>	<p>Seeking a focus on teaching and learning and on environments/culture of the school.</p> <p>Eg. ‘no blame, no shame’,</p>	<p>Pilot supported at a system level. Training and coaching provided.</p> <p>Aligned with school improvement, curriculum and supportive school community’s work.</p> <p>Egs. Current practice ‘ad hoc’, inconsistent’ and often in conflict with policy’.</p>
<i>What is different about SWPBS compared to other behaviour programs/interventions you have used?</i>	<p>All responses mentioned positive focus, proactive rather than reactive, whole school involvement, data and explicit teaching of prosocial skills.</p>	<p>All responses mentioned positive, proactive nature, data, team approach, explicit teaching, and acknowledging prosocial behaviour.</p>	<p>Proactive and restorative emphasis mentioned in most responses.</p>	<p>Understanding function and the influence of the environment mentioned in many responses.</p>	<p>Most responses included reference to the involvement of the whole community, the importance of the leadership team, increased consistency and support from staff and the usefulness of using data to guide practice.</p>
<i>Why are you continuing to implement SWPBS?</i>	<p>All but two of the responses cited improvement either in relation to student outcome data, school culture, staff morale and/or parent satisfaction.</p> <p>Egs. ‘It works’ ‘we can see the improvement’, ‘our data shows us how what we are doing is working’, ‘our parents are happier’ The remaining 2 responses referred to anticipated improvements and the ‘3-5 year journey’</p>	<p>Egs ‘we are still learning’, new staff need induction to process’, want to learn more about pointy end’</p>	<p>Most responses cited decreases in the use of sanctions.</p> <p>Others of anticipated decreases.</p> <p>Improvements in ‘culture’ or climate’ were also cited in many responses.</p>	<p>All responses referred to the improved environment being established and most the positive impact of teaching preferred behaviour pointing to an amended attribution style from respondents.</p>	<p>Team aspect, whole school approach, data, community participation and consistency all cited as reasons to continue.</p>

- Consistency of teaching and responding to students achieved through the implementation of a schoolwide approach that pays attention to the systems required to support implementation by all staff (44)
- Explicit teaching of schoolwide expectations specifically, and social skills generally (42)
- The focus on understanding the function of behaviour and having consistent but positive/educative responses to behavioural errors (36)
- The consistent use of data to assist in understanding and responding to behaviour with some precision, and as a critical, ongoing evaluative tool. (42)

The content analysis of the workshop responses provided strong evidence of the perceived effectiveness of SWPBS to support the development of improved teacher efficacy, capacity to understand problem behaviour and to positively influence school climate.

The responses also provided insights in relation to those elements of the process considered to be influential on respondent's perceptions and understandings, i.e., they provided descriptions of what was being done, how this was impacting on student behaviour, and how successful teachers believed their work to be. The semi-structured interviews conducted in Phase 3 of the study provided an opportunity to probe those perceptions further and to more directly address the perceptions of teachers and principals in relation to the Research Questions.

Additionally, the workshop responses revealed the fact that all of the schools in the sample were intending to continue implementing SWPB which could, by itself be seen as evidence of the process's appeal and perceived effectiveness.

4.3 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with the Principals and 19 teachers (totalling 25 individuals) from six schools were conducted during September – December, 2008 following three years of their implementation of SWPBS. The interview questions were developed to probe the recurring themes and issues that had emerged through the data gathering procedures in Phases 1 and 2, enabling triangulation and assisting reliability and validity.

The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed to provide an accurate record, and a source that offered verbatim quotes for analysis and presentation in the study (Appendix C-1)

4.3.1 Responses to questions relating to teacher efficacy.

The first three questions in the interview were aimed at discovering the extent to which implementing the schoolwide positive behaviour support process was perceived to influence teacher self efficacy in relation to student behaviour. Specifically the questions asked respondents to consider how positive behaviour support is different to approaches they knew or had experience of, which elements of the process (if any) led them to reflect on and change their own practice, and whether implementing SWPBS had increased their confidence in both promoting positive behaviour and responding to incidents of challenging behaviour. All of the teachers and principals interviewed responded to this group of questions with reference to the proactive and positive nature of PBS, its positive impact on student outcomes and on their own confidence, affirming the idea that implementing SWPBS positively impacts teacher efficacy. A high school teacher in her second year of teaching described her increased confidence:

Of course. It gives you so much more scope to deal with things. I mean you've got a list of things you do in response to challenging behaviour and that's fantastic, but to suddenly have all this, more of a platform to work from, you're in a much better

Table 4.4 Interview responses.

What Differences have you noticed between PBS and other approaches	What has been most influential aspect of the process/practice?	Have there been any obstacles to implementation in your school?	Why do you think problem behaviour occurs in your school?	Have your views about why problem behaviour occurs changed?	Are you more confident in managing episodes of challenging behaviour?
Positive focus, Proactive, preventative 25	Research base 2	No inherent Obstacles (usual obstacles to any change) 11	Kids don't know what to do 7	Yes, 25 (<i>dramatic, immense used to describe in many</i>)	Yes (absolutely, definitely, immensely) 25 (All but one principal reported perceiving improved confidence in their staff)
Whole school 7	School wide, not reliant on principal, team 10	Time (to get started, team to meet, 'get to' all of the staff) 13	Teacher interaction, misunderstanding of function 12	Personal belief confirmed, affirmed 6	Data , helps understand function, gain and maintain perspective, and confidence 4
System team 12	Culture shift, build pos relationships 3	Establish data process 3	Disengaged students 6	Data has helped understand 10	Support form everyone, shared responsibility 9
Non punitive Not reactive 11	Focus on own teaching, explicit teaching 7	Establishing systems, coach, team, meeting Schedule 5	Not been taught, comment on explicit teaching 5	Understand behaviour function not 11	Not personalising problem behaviour any more 4
Explicit teaching 6	Data , allowing perspective and precision in interventions 15	Sustaining focus and energy, new staff induction 10	Adolescence 5	Understand my role in occurrence of problem behaviour and my impact on change 12	Because I understand the why, function of behaviour now 6
Research based 7	Emphasis on function of behaviour 5		Data shows in your school.... 6	More professional, not as punitive 9	Safe and confident to reflect on own role 3
Continuum of support for students focus on function of behaviour 3	Recognition of good practice 2			More relaxed 7	Not frightened any more 4
It works 3	Seeing improvement in student behaviour 7			(<i>All principals commented on changes in the understandings of their staff</i>)	I now know what to do 13
Data 10					I'm calmer 2

position, and plus if we use it in the way I think it's supposed to be used we may not have to use those reactions as much because most of the class will be happy and engaged – we can avoid problem behaviour. (HS 2, T, F, 2)

(Key: Primary School PS. High School HS. District High School DHS. Principal P. Teacher T. Male M. Female F. Final number represents years teaching)

The above observation, like many of the others, included reference to how increased confidence and capacity had been achieved, i.e., which elements of the process had been influential in relation to teacher/principal learning and practice, and these mirrored those described in the workshop responses listed in Table 4.3.

In relation to the differences cited by respondents ($n = 25$) as distinguishing SWPBS from other or previously used behaviour support approaches, there was again a consistent set of responses that was supportive of the data obtained through the document review and workshop responses, namely:

- SWPBS is proactive, previous approaches reactive and punitive (25)
- SWPBS relies on explicit teaching, previous approaches on correction/sanctions (24)
- SWPBS provides the systems for learning and support for teachers not previously available (25)
- SWPBS provides a whole school community approach enabling consistency and support, previous approaches were ad hoc (25)
- Data is used to understand, plan, select and evaluate practice and progress, not available previously (25)

The following observations reflect the above and are representative of this group of responses. The first, from a primary school teacher:

The biggest difference between this and other programs is the explicit teaching as well as the rewarding of positive behaviour. I think in the past schools have been into, 'well there are all these negative behaviours so how are we going to deal with those?' rather than looking at the schoolwide systems and continually rewarding when things go really well. (PS 1, T, F, 12)

And from a high school teacher; "The specific focus on preventative practice and focus on the positives, not so focussed on the consequences or the punishment. It's the first time I've seen such a focus, usually it's nothing's done 'til something goes wrong." (HS 2, T, F, 9)

And finally, in reference to the systemic support perceived to be lacking in previous programs and initiatives, one of the high school principals observed:

I think the biggest difference is that there's a holistic framework, there's actually a set of design principles that are loose enough so that you can target them to your own setting. But there's also the research background that goes with the framework that makes what you're doing very systematic and data driven as opposed to 'we'll try this and just hope for the best.' So there's a research based strategic framework that you can take and contextualise to your own setting. And mapped to that, in terms of another difference, was the ongoing support from the Department through the PEO and the network of schools doing it...the ongoing support and learning that was facilitated by the PEO. (HS 2, P, F, 26)

Included in this group of questions was one that asked whether any difficulties or obstacles had been encountered in implementing SWPBS. The question was included to acknowledge the significant paradigm shift required, (discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis), when moving from a primarily reactive, consequence based approach. The shift in thinking and practice

though, was not in itself raised as an obstacle, rather the *time* required to ensure that all staff were supported to make that shift, and implement consistently. The responses to this question were again uniform, time being cited as the main obstacle, although not one perceived to be inherent in implementing SWPBS. The following response from one of the high school principals encapsulates well the issues raised by this question:

It's probably a trite thing to say, but like so many things when you're trying to transform a school, you do it on a shoestring in terms of time. So finding the time to have the conversations we need to have to bring about that meaningful and sustained change is always a challenge, and it's a challenge in any change you're trying to bring about in a school - no less or more so in regard to PBS. (HS 2, P, F 26)

4.3.2 Responses to questions relating to attribution of problem behaviour.

The second group of questions sought to gauge the extent to which teacher's attribution of difficult behaviour was influenced by implementing SWPBS, asking respondents what they perceived to be the cause of problem behaviour in their schools, whether or not their perception of the cause of misbehaviour had changed as a result of implementing SWPBS, and whether or not they were more confident in responding to incidents of problem behaviour. Twenty five of the respondents reported changes in relation to the way they understood and responded to student behaviour, with the strength of these responses reflected in the frequent use of words like 'dramatic' and 'immense' to describe that change.

An equally strong response was provided in relation to the question regarding confidence in managing episodes of challenging behaviour, with all 25 respondents reporting increased confidence and many using the words 'absolutely', 'definitely' and 'immensely' to describe that increase. As well, all but one principal reported perceiving increased confidence in their

staff in responding to challenging behaviour, with the remaining principal reporting that assisting the development of that confidence was a key, ongoing priority in their SWPBS plan.

The majority of respondents stated that they were more understanding of ‘within school’ factors including their own contribution/role in influencing student behaviour. Of particular note was the number of teachers who answered the question ‘why does problem behaviour occur in your school?’ with responses to do with engagement (11 responses), teacher style (12 responses) and curriculum (18 responses), suggestive of an altered attribution style from one of attributing causation of problem behaviour to student factors alone, to one which considers the environment or context, including curriculum and pedagogy.

The following observation from one high school teacher illustrates the growing understanding of function and context on behaviour alluded to in most of the responses to this group of questions:

...I suppose one of the first things I took on board, and I suppose I hadn’t understood, I don’t know that I didn’t believe, I just wasn’t aware of it I guess, was that the behaviour and the student are two different things...and I hadn’t really analysed that before we started PBS, and now I can say ‘you know I really think you’re a wonderful person...but some of this behaviour...’and the kids really respond to that well because instead of it being you and them – becoming a personal thing...that it’s the behaviour that you don’t like, not them as a person, so that’s one of the first things I learned.

(HS 1, T, M, 25)

A further typical illustration of the shift in attribution, and the understanding of the impact of function and context on behaviour is provided below, again from a high school teacher:

At the moment I think probably engagement is our key thing. You only have to have five minutes in the classroom where you haven't got something that has the kids actively engaged, and you'll have issues. ...And I'd say, if we were to do an analysis today we'd find that class times have higher incidence of behaviour that isn't appropriate. Whether it's because teachers are stressed because of everything that's put on our plates at the moment or we've lost a lot of focus on those basic, structural elements around expectations. I'd probably attribute a good proportion of it to what we're putting in front of kids, what we're putting in front of kids isn't necessarily leading them to outcomes that they're looking for and they're becoming more disengaged, and that in fact is contributing to some of the behaviours that we're seeing in the classroom. (HS 1, T, M, 26)

Two other themes emerged from the responses in this part of the interview, namely:

- Understanding the function of behaviour assisted teachers and principals to respond to incidents more calmly and positively (18 responses), and
- Incidents are managed more confidently due to there being a whole school approach and ownership of students and a planned response to behavioural mistakes (21 responses).

4.3.3 Responses in relation to capacity to influence school climate.

Teachers and principals made reference to a perceived improvement in their capacity to influence school climate across the set of interview questions (25), and attributed those improvements to specific aspects of their implementation of SWPBS. The aspects cited by respondents as assisting their improved capacity in this area mirror the characteristics

described in the literature as representing positive school climate, namely collegial relationships between principals and staff and participatory leadership, emphasis on the quality of teacher student interactions, cooperation and collaboration in delivering a whole school approach and culture variables including confidence in students' abilities, rewards and praise and consistency (Anderson, 1982). For example, one high school teacher described how positive student teacher interactions and proactive collaborative staff practices impacted on her students' experience at school:

we're all more aware of it [SWPBS] and really proactive with it...even our general interactions around the school, reminding myself to be positive, I did notice a definite difference the more we did around explicit teaching of the RELS [schoolwide expectations], I think it helped the kids to feel more of a connection and belonging to the school. (HS 1, T, F, 9)

And from another high school teacher:

It's more about relationships than anything – in the classroom and outside the classroom...and the more things get in place, the more the atmosphere changes – you get a nice feeling as well. (HS 2, T, F, 31)

Similarly, 42 of the workshop responses made specific reference to improvements in school climate as being reason to continue implementing SWPBS. Table 4.4 provides a summary of the responses given at interview, as well providing an illustration of how themes traversed the data.

4.3.4 Themes that traversed the interview responses.

Several issues or themes traversed the interview responses. These could be grouped into three broad areas of: data, systems and practices, which interestingly mirror the key organising components of the SWPBS process. The first, and most significant being cited 48 times

during the interviews, was data, reported as distinguishing SWPBS from other behaviour support practices, influential in supporting teacher confidence by providing timely and objective feedback and direction, and significant in assisting understanding of behaviour function. One of the primary school principal's observations in relation to confidence and attribution highlights the significance of data:

I don't believe it (SWPBS) can be left though. It's all about confidence and people lose confidence quickly, because if what they've done works eight times, and then two times it doesn't work, they start to question - they believe they're a failure because of the two times, they forget about the other eight. So you've got to be constantly reminded of the positives, the achievements have to be revisited all the time. The data has been outstanding because it's just shown them that when things seem to be going haywire, you can show them the data, that it's not. You've got three years of data you can say 'look at this, our expectations of the kids has risen and that's why things happening today look big. Three years ago you wouldn't have even noticed those things. (PS 2, P, M, 26)

Second, the systems supporting staff including the whole school nature of SWPBS, its consistency of approach and support from leadership and colleagues were seen as significant in relation to questions concerning efficacy and attribution. One principal described the role of SWPBS systems as follows:

...probably for me this is the best opportunity that I've ever seen for a whole school design that does have that capacity to sustain beyond the Principal or a small group of people within the school. The growing capacity of the team and putting all of the structures in place so that it doesn't matter who's in the team or who's leading the team. (HS 1, P, M, 25)

A further generally noted insight into the perceived usefulness of the SWPBS systems in assisting teachers to reflect and adjust practice in this area was provided by another high school teacher:

It's been a good vehicle for getting whole school initiatives up and running, and it's been good when we're working on practice, it's less confronting, so when you're talking about what you're doing and how your classroom looks, it's less personalised, it's just PBS stuff. (HS 2, T, M, 8)

Finally, practices, the explicit teaching of behavioural expectations specifically and prosocial skills generally were cited 38 times as being significant or influential in relation to teacher efficacy and attribution of problem behaviour. The following response from a primary school teacher encapsulates how that understanding is reported to have changed, but also how this change has influenced practice choice:

It's about social skills. Some of our students haven't been exposed to ways in which they can resolve conflict, they haven't got the dialogue, they haven't got the skills to relate to one another in such a way that they can resolve an issue through discussion. That's why we now have the explicit social skills teaching, so that we can make sure that we give them the opportunity in class to learn the skills- to be able to listen, to be able to discuss, to talk about problems. So the main cause of problem behaviour is a lack of interaction and problem solving skills. (PS 2, T, F, 18)

And from another primary school teacher:

Being forced to really think about the words that you use and just that acknowledgement that you have to try to reach every student in a positive way every day – initially that felt a really difficult and daunting was – the 6-1 (ratio of positive to

corrective interactions) process, trying to capture every kid that way, but doing it was so powerful, to see the difference it made over time...I could really see the benefit of the atmosphere it created. (PS 3, T, F, 7)

Summary

A rich and meaningful account of the experiences of teachers and principals implementing the SWPBS process over a three year period was provided in this study, with particular insights revealed in the data as to how implementing the process influenced their understanding and practice. The results of this study provide compelling evidence in support of the effectiveness of the SWPBS process to positively influence teacher efficacy, teacher attribution of problem behaviour and perceived capacity to positively impact school climate.

The research design for the study enabled a large group of teachers and principals to report on their experiences implementing SWPBS, including those elements of the process considered to be important to their learning and subsequent practice, and these were able to be mapped to the issues raised in Phase 1 of the study as being important to address in achieving improved student outcomes illustrated in Table 4.2.

A high level of consistency and commonality was apparent in the data relating to improved efficacy and understanding of problem behaviour causation, as well as in relation to what specifically had contributed to those changes, lending to the study's reliability and credibility.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction

In this chapter the research questions are examined in relation to how the extant theory has been supported, illuminated, corroborated or extended by this study. Analysis of the rich data gathered has mostly corroborated or illuminated previous research in relation to teacher efficacy, attribution of problem behaviour and capacity to influence school climate, but offers a unique extension to previous research regarding the impact of implementing SWPBS on those factors in the Australian context.

The initial impetus for the focus of the Research Questions arose from recognition of the need to consider how to address those factors, described in the literature and supported in local reviews of performance as obstructing the implementation of contemporary practice in the area of student behaviour and, as a consequence, on the improvement of student outcomes (see Atelie, 2004; Jacob, 2005; Hemphill et al., 2005; Sprague & Horner, 2006; Riordan, 2006). Most compelling of these seemed to be the enduring influence of traditional, resilient beliefs about problematic student behaviour on practice selection and its impact on teacher confidence and capacity, and a perceived lack of professional learning and support for teachers in the area of student behaviour (see Beaman & Kemp, 2007; Mavropoulou & Padelidu, 2007; Gulchek & Lopes, 2007; OECD, 2009). The study sought to investigate a model of professional learning with a suggested capacity to address these factors, and as a consequence, improve student outcomes.

The data obtained from this study offered confirmation of the importance of the role of traditional beliefs and practices in obstructing contemporary, evidence-based practice and of the impact of using these practices on teacher confidence and capacity. A unique finding was the extent to which those factors described above were perceived by respondents to have been addressed, and in many contexts removed, by their implementation of SWPBS. Specifically, respondents reported substantial changes in their understanding of problem behaviour and subsequent teacher classroom practice selection and implementation, and as well were able to provide insights into how or which elements of the SWPBS process were particularly useful in their learning and practice; that is, they had developed and utilised a language of pedagogy that could be shared between them to discuss their own context.

Table 5.1 lists the elements identified in the literature and performance reviews that reflect traditional beliefs and practices, and which were seen as requiring attention, alongside the research questions in which they appeared to be addressed. The table is provided to illustrate the fact that several of elements identified as requiring attention emerged in the data analysis as important across the research questions. For example *ineffectiveness of current practice* was shown to be influential in relation to teacher efficacy as well as having an unhelpful effect on teachers' capacity to influence school climate and the *lack of a systemic, systematic response* and *ineffective practice* were significant across all of the research questions, demonstrating the interconnectedness of the questions.

5.1 The discussion related to Research Question 1

How do teachers and principals report their confidence in and capacity to influence student behaviour?

Section 5.1 discusses the major themes identified in the detailed results presented in Chapter 4 and reviews these in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Table 5.1 **Themes that traversed the research question**

Element / Theme	RQ 1	RQ 2	RQ 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ineffectiveness of previous practice			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need for professional learning and support			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overuse of sanctions and reactive responses			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Problem attribution to student factors			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of systemic, systematic response			

The impact of traditional, ineffective practices in the area of behaviour support on student outcomes (see Jacob, 2005; Skiba et al., 2006; Sprague & Horner, 2006; Hemphill et al., 2005; Riordan, 2006), and as a consequence on teacher efficacy (for example, Bandura, 1996; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Beaman & Kemp, 2007) is compelling, and was corroborated in this study. The findings of performance reviews (see Conway, 2003; Atelier, 2004) noting the prevalence of ineffective behaviour practice in Tasmanian schools, and the frequency with which this was cited as a reason for implementing SWPBS, provided a fertile context in which to consider the efficacy of the process to influence teacher capacity, and as a consequence, teacher confidence.

The ways in which ineffective practice was described in each phase of this study were reflective of its effect on teacher efficacy. Workshop responses from teachers and principals in relation to why schools had elected to join the SWPBS pilot included '*despair*', '*staff isolation*', '*tired of worry meetings*' and '*we failed the staff health survey*', all of which are illustrative of low efficacy at an individual and group level. Additional support for the idea of low teacher efficacy at the commencement of the SWPBS pilot programme, was evidenced in the constancy of requests for professional learning and support revealed in the document review. The cycle of low teacher efficacy resulting in a tendency to 'give up easily', leading to lower student outcomes and lower teacher efficacy as described by Guskey & Passaro (1994), appears to have been borne out in the experiences related by respondents in the study prior to their implementation of SWPBS. The data in relation to perceived improvement in student outcomes and the related improvement in teacher confidence following implementation though provided strong evidence of the capacity of SWPBS to reverse that cycle, with a high level of detail and consistency in responses relating to how that improvement was supported to occur. The strength of the reported improvement in teacher confidence also is noteworthy. This is illustrated particularly in the interview respondents' use of words such as: *immensely*, *absolutely* and *definitely* to describe their increased confidence as a consequence of implementing SWPBS. Elements of the SWPBS process considered by respondents to have been particularly influential on their understanding and practice are discussed below.

5.1.1 Improvement in student behaviour and general school climate.

The first factor reported to be influential in supporting teacher confidence was the perceived improvement in student behaviour following implementation of SWPBS. In both the workshop and interview data improved student behaviour was reported, and this appeared to have had an early but enduring influence on the growing confidence of the respondents in

relation to their practice. The overwhelming majority (42) of school teams ($n = 44$) in the workshop sample recorded '*it works*' and variations of that positive comment in response to the question, 'why is your school continuing to implement SWPBS?' Similarly, in the interview responses changes in student behaviour and general school climate were cited as important influences on teacher understanding and confidence. Guskey's (2002) model of teacher change, that is, that change in teacher belief and attitude follows professional learning, application and changes in student learning outcomes, was supported in the data from this study, illustrated in the following observation from a high school teacher:

Definitely [I'm more confident]...we're really aware of it and really proactive with it...even our general interactions around the school, reminding myself to be positive, I did notice a definite difference [in student behaviour] the more we did around explicit teaching of the RELS [schoolwide expectations] (HS 1, T, F, 9).

The improvement in student behaviour noted by the respondents in this study could be predicted given the proactive focus, explicit teaching and acknowledging of preferred behaviour and school wide application of SWPBS, all of which reflect current evidence based practice in relation to student behaviour (Sugai et al., 2000; Conway, 2003; de Jong, 2004; Riordan, 2006). The ways in which that improvement was linked by teachers and principals to their actions though, provided an illustration of improvement in teacher efficacy, i.e., their 'belief in their capability to organize and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific task in a particular context.' (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998. p.233).

5.1.2 The explicit teaching and acknowledging of prosocial behaviour.

The second factor attributed by respondents as being influential in relation to their increased confidence was the practices component of SWPBS, specifically, the explicit teaching and acknowledging of prosocial behaviour. Researchers have been suggesting for many years that

improving student behaviour relies on a focus on pedagogy rather than discipline (see Todd et al., 1999; Conway, 2003; Safran & Oswald, 2003; Beaman & Kemp, 2007; Skiba et al., 2006; Riordan, 2006) and the results of this study support the efficacy of that change in focus. In the workshop responses frequent mention was made of the positive effect on student outcomes of explicitly teaching and acknowledging schoolwide expectations in particular and social skills generally, with “*what we are doing is working*” or similar appearing in many of the responses. Similarly, in the interview data explicit teaching was referred to either alone or included in responses concerning the proactive nature of the process by all of the respondents. It would seem that the practices used by teachers and principals implementing SWPBS alongside the resultant improvements in student behaviour, provided them with the ‘mastery experiences’, described by Bandura (1997 cited in Tschannen-Moran et al. 1998), as important precedents to change in attitude, belief and confidence.

5.1.3 The importance of whole school systems to support practice.

The systems component of SWPBS emerged as the third influential factor in relation to improved teacher efficacy.

Tschannen-Moran et al.’s (1998) suggestion that supporting strong teacher efficacy requires attention to the interrelatedness of teacher belief and confidence *and* the teaching task and the environment in which it takes place is consistent with the SWPBS process, which gives as much attention to the systems supporting both teacher learning and student progress as to the knowledge and skills required to implement contemporary practice (see Sugai & Horner, 2002; Cook & Radler, 2006; Todd et al., 1999). The systems and protocols necessary to support teacher learning and practice described in the literature (see Conway, 2003; Sprague & Horner, 2006; Levin & Fullan, 2008; Kiefer Hipp et al., 2008;) as including educational

leadership in the school, collaborative practices, multidisciplinary approaches and professional learning were cited in the workshop responses and interview data from this study as being available in the SWPBS process, and effective in enhancing teacher *and* principal confidence. In both the workshop and interview data the teachers and principals made frequent and strong reference to the influence of those systems in assisting their confidence. Specifically, the leadership team guiding the implementation by the whole school community in the adoption of a proactive and preventative approach to student behaviour was cited as being significant in assisting teacher/principal confidence. The systems component of SWPBS was described by the respondents in this study as enabling a level of consistency and collaboration not previously available to them, and is in stark contrast to Gottfredson et al's., (2000) finding that in most schools there are typically 14 different approaches to misbehaviour present in any one school.

The observation below from one of the primary school principals is illustrative of how this element of the process was reported to have been influential:

Absolutely, because apart from anything else, it's not just me as the principal making decisions about what we're going to do. I can quite honestly say that as a schoolwide community, this is what we've decided, and there's a sound philosophical and educational base for what we're doing – so I can always go back to that when I'm talking to parents, and also I can show data and I can cite examples of how what we're doing is working. (PS 2, P, F, 26)

The cyclic nature and instability of a teacher's perception of efficacy referred to in the literature (see Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Adams & Forsythe, 2006; Carleton et al., 2008) point to the importance of a particular focus on broader systems. In the area of student

behaviour, given reports of a tradition of ad hoc, inconsistent and generally ineffective practice (see for example, Sugai et al., 2000; Atelier, 2004; Luiselli et al., 2005; Riordan, 2006), and the influence of often emotive community and media scrutiny (see Jacob, 2003; Beaman & Kemp, 2007), perceived and reported teacher efficacy from practitioners is particularly vulnerable. The despair and isolation mentioned in many of the workshop responses in relation to perceived consequences of previous practice supports the idea of this vulnerability. The consistent reference by respondents in this study to the effectiveness of the explicit systems component of SWPBS though, provided strong evidence of its capacity to sustainably support teacher efficacy. The following quote from a primary school principal captures these points well:

It has. [*confidence of staff improved*] I don't believe it's something that can be left though. It's all about confidence and people lose confidence quickly, because if what they've done works eight times and then two times it doesn't work, then they start to question – they believe they're a failure because of those two times, they forget about the other eight. So you've got to be constantly reminded of the other eight ... the achievements have to be revisited all the time. (PS 3, P, M, 26)

5.1.4 The use of data to guide and evaluate practice

Finally, the use of data to guide and evaluate practice in the SWPBS process emerged in this study as very effective in sustainably supporting strong teacher efficacy. Across all of the interview questions, and in most of the workshop responses the use of data in schools was reported to be influential in assisting teacher confidence, by enabling perspective taking, understanding the function of behaviour, guiding intervention/teaching and monitoring progress. As a primary school principal reported:

The data has been outstanding because it's just shown them that when things seem to be going haywire – you can show them the data, that it's not (going haywire). You've got three years of data, you can say look at this – our expectations of the kids has risen and that's why things happening today look big. Three years ago you wouldn't have even noticed these things. (PS 3, P, M, 26)

Similarly, teachers typically reported on the importance of using data:

This is different because there's the data component. That's been really helpful for us, we can see where our trouble spots are, we can have conversations about that and be more proactive. The data, it was giving us the proof on paper that things were working, and we were seeing the results right across the school. (PS 3, T, F, 27)

The role of teacher efficacy is clearly a critical factor to consider in planning for the successful implementation of any program, high teacher efficacy being related to greater preparedness to try new methods, greater enthusiasm for teaching, greater levels of organisation and planning and, importantly for this study, improved persistence in the face of setbacks and greater capacity to be less critical of struggling students (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). This set of conclusions while reported strongly in this study fit well with Guskey & Passaro's (1994) findings over a decade ago.

In short, the findings of this study support the literature in relation to factors that can be influential, either positively or negatively on the sustainable development of teacher efficacy, and extended the literature in providing evidence of the capacity of the SWPBS process to develop these factors, and in so doing, to have a positive impact on teacher efficacy.

5.2 The discussion in relation to Research Question 2

How do teachers and principals understand and attribute the causation of problem behaviour?

Section 5.2 discusses the major themes identified in the detailed results presented in Chapter 4 and reviews these in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

The significant effect of attribution styles on student outcomes and teacher beliefs and practice is well known (see Morin & Battalio, 2004; Wheldall & Kemp, 2007; Kalinna, 2008; Mavropoulou & Padeliadu, 2009; Ho, 2009), and was corroborated in this study. Problematic student behaviour typically has been attributed somewhat simplistically to factors solely relating to the student, rather than as being more complex, interactional and reflective of teacher attitudes and behaviour or contextual factors (see, Medway, 1979; Soodak & Podell, 1994; Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1981; Ho, 2009). The accompanying risks of practice selection in the area of student behaviour can often include "...strategies characterised by higher frequency of punishment, restricted language, and minimising mental health goals in favour of short term control or desist attempts" (Brophy & Rohrkemper, 1981, p.308). This pattern of practice was strongly reported by respondent in this study in relation to Tasmanian schools prior to implementing SWPBS in the document review, workshop and interview responses.

According to Brophy and Rohrkemper (1981), this style of attribution and its accompanying responses are understandable, as they enable teachers to avoid the possible risks to their confidence, status or position inherent in attribution to factors within their control by projecting the 'cause' for the problems outside themselves. Any consideration of how to

improve student behaviour outcomes and teacher efficacy therefore depend on attention being paid to this area, as responses aligned with a narrow uni-directional, student focussed attribution style are in conflict with recent research and recommended, contemporary practice (see for example, de Jong, 2004; Bryer & Beamish, 2005; Riordan, 2006; Freeman et al., 2006). If problematic student behaviour is seen narrowly the outcomes are likely to be poor student performance both academically and behaviourally (see Jacob, 2005; Hemphill et al., 2005; Sprague & Horner, 2006; Riordan, 2006) and can, as part of a vicious cycle, seriously undermine teacher efficacy.

The results of this study confirmed the prevalence in Tasmanian schools and on a systemic level, of a student focussed attribution style, prior to implementing SWPBS. The document review revealed a consistent concern in relation to suspension rates (see Conway, 2003; Atelier, 2004) and the workshop (44 responses) and interview (22 responses) data reported the overuse of sanctions and the typical use of reactive, punitive responses to student behaviour.

The data from this study in relation to the impact of implementing SWPBS on how teachers and principals understand and respond to student misbehaviour was striking in both the workshop and interview responses. In the workshop responses understanding the function or purpose of student behaviour, as well as the influence of the environment on behaviour was mentioned in 42 responses as distinguishing SWPBS from previous practices. As well, the ineffectiveness of previous practices was specifically noted in 39 responses.

In response to the interview question ‘Have your views about student problem behaviour changed during the time that you have been implementing SWPBS and if so how?’ all 26 of the respondents answered ‘yes’, with the terms *dramatically* and *immensely* used by most to describe that change. The following extensive quote from a high school teacher is reflective of the influence of that altered understanding on teacher and principal attitude and response to problematic behaviour and is typical of the responses to this question:

Well I think I’ve become more tolerant of kids. I’ve done some of the FBA [functional behaviour assessment] training and that’s really helped me reflect on why students act in the way they do. I try to reflect on what is the nature of the problem, what exactly is the motivation, the antecedents of a behaviour, to look at it from that end, why they are doing this. It’s been a question that in the past schools have glossed over, they tend to just look at the end behaviour rather than tracing it back and I think it’s one of the powerful things about the PBS process is that you can actually see...it encourages us to go back and look at the motivation, to look at it from that end. I’ve become more aware of what we can do at the school level with PBS and that’s fantastic. (HS 1, T, M, 25)

The professional learning component of the SWPBS process, by including attention to understanding the function of behaviour in an ecological approach, effectively addressed the recommendations in the literature (see Morin & Battalio, 2004; Mavrapoulou & Padelia, 2009; Dobbs & Arnold, 2009) for there to be a focus on professional learning around attribution. The suggested benefits in relation to assisting teacher implementation of positive practices and the consequent achievement of improved student outcomes were demonstrated in the interview data from this study, providing strong support for the notion that altered attribution will result in changed teacher responses to problematic behaviour. For many

respondents this element of the SWPBS process was described as having had a profound impact on their understanding and subsequent practice illustrated in the following typically reported observation from a high school teacher:

Yeah, it (attribution) has changed. I actually found the PL [professional learning] on FBA really interesting, just breaking it down into the two, to get something or to avoid something, because it can get so complicated when you're trying to work out what's going on and just putting things as simply as that makes it much easier to understand. (HS 1, T, F, 9)

The most compelling evidence of the shift in thinking and practice around behaviour understanding in this study was found in the reasons proposed for problem behaviour provided by interview respondents, almost all of which were concerned with within school factors, including their own behaviour, engagement, curriculum and pedagogy. This contrasts significantly with the literature concerning student behaviour attribution, where a student focussed attribution style is persistently reported (see Medway, 1979; Soodak & Podell, 1994; Mavropoulou & Padeliadu, 2002; Ho, 2009). Within-child factors were not ignored, but described in ways that reflected a deeper understanding of function and context and importantly, with implications for practice. Morin's (2001) suggestion that teacher attribution styles can be altered with sufficient support and professional learning was endorsed by the respondents in this study with a high level of detail being provided at interview in relation to that change. The following quote from a primary school principal describes how the change in attribution style occurred in her staff:

...with some staff there was, I'm ashamed to say, an attitude of well what can we expect with where these kids come from...but I don't think that's the case any more. I

do think we're all working together and the use of our data, we can see patterns...It's not taking things personally...oh that student lied to me, how dare they, it's not about that, it's depersonalising understanding the reason for lying and working really hard at building positive relationships. (PS 2, P, F, 26)

Further evidence of a deeper understanding about causation, and in particular the role of school factors is provided in the following quote from a primary school principal:

Students are disengaged with what they're doing at school...what they're doing has no meaning for them and so they look for things that have meaning for them. And the reasons they're disengaged are multiple, whatever's happening in their classroom is not connecting. (PS 3, P, M, 26)

The capacity to understand the 'why' or function of behaviour, and to alter practice on that basis from punitive to educative, was overwhelmingly evidenced in the workshop and interview responses from this study. The following quotes, the first from a high school teacher and the second from a primary school teacher, are fairly typical of the ways in which the attribution styles and subsequent teaching practice of respondents were reported to have changed as a consequence of implementing SWPBS:

The difference between my first year out and them coming here to a PBS school is quite immense because the school I started in it was very much if something goes wrong...detention...here it's well there's not much point to them (detentions). It's changed my ideas about what suitable reactions are. (HS 2, T, F, 2)

And,

Yeah [my understanding has changed]. I was more of a punishment man so, it's an educating approach, and even though there needs to be consequences, PBS allows for that as part of an educating approach, and there's a whole school approach with a common language, so everything is the same in each class. (PS 3, T, M, 9)

The data from this study corroborated the research (see Conway, 2003; Atelie, 2004; Jacob, 2005) in relation to the prevalence at the commencement of the SWPBS pilot, of a student focussed attribution style in Tasmanian schools. The reactive, exclusionary responses to misbehaviour typically associated with such an attribution style (see Medway, 1979; Mavropoulou & Padelidu, 2002; Morin & Battalio, 2004; Dobbs & Arnold, 2009), were reported in each of the data gathering phases. The literature in relation to problem behaviour attribution is consistent in recommending a focus on understanding and responding to problem behaviour (see for example Soodak & Podell, 1994; Morin & Battalio, 2004; Kulinna, 2008) in pre- and in- service teacher education programs. The results from this study provided strong evidence of the capacity of SWPBS, in particular its attention to understanding behaviour, to assist teachers and principals develop a deeper and more constructive attribution style, and as a consequence to employ positive, evidence based responses to problematic behaviour, contributing to the research in this area. The resultant shift in practice of this change from reactive to proactive was described in some detail by respondents, who generally included reference to the impact of those changes on student performance in their responses. The school wide nature of SWPBS was cited frequently and strongly as enabling the implementation of practices from this different paradigm, suggesting that the process provides teachers with the necessary knowledge *and* systemic support required to reflect on and adjust their practice.

5.3 The discussion in relation to Research Question 3

How do teachers and principals perceive the impact of implementing SWPBS on their capacity to influence school climate?

Section 5.3 discusses the major themes identified in the detailed results presented in Chapter 4 and reviews these in light of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Roach and Kratchowill's (2004) assertion that any measure of the effectiveness of schoolwide behaviour interventions necessarily considers climate in order that "a complete picture of the changes required and produced by schoolwide behavioural interventions" (p.11.) is gained, suggested the need for consideration of school climate in this study. Teachers and principals implementing SWPBS made frequent reference to their school's climate in terms of the negative impact of their previous behaviour practice on its climate, providing many with a rationale for joining the SWPBS pilot. School climate was subsequently present in the data, in terms of its perceived improvement following implementation of SWPBS. Workshop responses such as "*we now have a nicer environment – more supportive*", *we had no clear behaviour rules, climate was negative*" and "*We are now proactive rather than reactive which makes for a more pleasant and supportive environment*" encapsulate the views of most respondents in relation to this area, and reflect Hoy and Sabo's (1998) definition of school climate as 'the pervasive quality of a school environment experienced by students and staff, which affects their behaviours.' (cited in Roach & Kratchowill, 2004, p.12.).

It is perhaps not surprising that school climate was reported to have improved alongside the implementation of SWPBS, considering the process's proactive and preventative focus and

the alignment of its implementation elements with what, in Anderson's (1982) review of school climate research, were described as the factors that represent a positive school climate. For example, the first factor suggested by Anderson (1982) as being representative of a positive school climate, concerns collegial relationships, participatory leadership, shared decision making and good communication, all of which were reported by respondents in this study to have been established or improved through their implementation of the SWPBS process. .

Table 5.2 illustrates the relationship between each of the factors described by Anderson as representing positive school climate with the facilitative elements of the SWPBS process, and where the implementation was reported in this study to have enabled the development of a positive school climate. Table 5.2 also illustrates the interrelatedness of the factors reported to represent positive school climate with those described by:

- Tschannen-Moran et al., (1998) and Guskey (2002) as being necessary for the development and maintenance of high teacher efficacy,
- Morin & Battalio (2008) and Mavropoulou & Padelidu, (2000) as enabling an attribution style for behaviour that considers school/teacher factors and
- Conway (2003), de Jong (2004), Riordan (2006), and Sugai & Horner, (2008) as representing current evidence based practice for supporting positive student behaviour.

5.4 Implications for policy makers and school administrators and teachers.

The implications suggested from this study are offered with consideration of the earlier acknowledgement that generalisations cannot be drawn directly from the results of a modified case study (Stake, 1995), but rather invite the reader to consider and compare their own

experience with the suggestions presented here that are based on the data analysis and underpinned by the literature.

Table 5.2 Data illustrating the ways in which implementing SWPBS was perceived to assist the development and maintenance of a positive school climate.

Factors representative of positive school climate	SWPBS Elements	Data from this study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collegial relationships between principals and teachers including participatory leadership, shared decision making and good communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWPBS Leadership Team representative of teaching staff. Team actively seeks input and participation from all staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most workshop responses mentioned the effectiveness of the SWPBS Leadership Team in achieving a high level of collaboration and participatory decision making.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher- student relationships, in particular the quality of teacher student interactions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on everyday interactions, 6:1 ratio of positive to corrective interactions. Systematic acknowledgement of prosocial behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of the effectiveness of a focus on positive student-teacher interactions cited in both workshop and interview data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher- teacher relationships characterised by cooperation and concern 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schoolwide ethos developed collaboratively, team based problem solving. Attention paid to staff well being and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support from colleagues. Shared ownership of students. Collaborative planning and problem solving all cited in workshop and interview data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community school relationships characterised by high levels of parent involvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents represented on the SWPBS Leadership Team. Parent input actively sought routinely as part of the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWPBS Leadership Team including parent and community representation cited in workshop and interview data.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture variables, including teacher commitment, confidence in students' abilities. Rewards and praise for students and consistency. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systematic use of acknowledgement. Attention to staff professional learning and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systematic use of acknowledgement of prosocial behaviour cited in workshop responses and across the set of interview questions.

The SWPBS initiative in Tasmania was developed in response to enduring concerns on a systemic and school based level in relation to student behavior outcomes, the persistence of

ineffective practice and requests from teachers and principals for professional learning and support in the area of student behaviour. The results from this study provide overwhelming support for the notion that addressing these concerns requires not only consideration of contemporary evidence-based practice, but also of the systems required to sustainably build professional knowledge. The Tasmanian initiative was supported to provide both and as a consequence, implementation in a consistent, schoolwide manner was reported.

The impact of poor student outcomes and ineffective practice on teacher confidence and morale are well known, adding to the urgency for systemic support to be sustainably available. It has been demonstrated in this study that SWPBS takes account of the challenges considered to obstruct contemporary practice, and provides schools with a process to facilitate contextually sensitive implementation. The results of this study provide strong evidence of the efficacy of the SWPBS to assist teachers and principals to adopt evidence based, positive practices, and as a result support improved student outcomes.

The seemingly intransigent challenge of supporting the paradigm shift required to implement contemporary practice in the area of behaviour support described by Cook & Radler, (2006) and revealed as significant in the document review for this study (see, Conway, 2003; Atelier, 2004), was not perceived by respondents to be a significant obstacle in their implementation of SWPBS. Rather, *time* and the pressures of new and varied priorities from Government and the Education Department were reported by respondents to be the main significant difficulties schools encountered. This finding fit with other recent Tasmanian research (see Gardner & Williamson, 2004.) and as such has important implications for education systems in relation to their selection of priorities for schools. In particular, aligning teaching and learning with

'behaviour' priorities and initiatives at a Departmental level thereby enabling schools to make available the time necessary to consider the paradigm shift and resultant practice change recommended in the literature and confirmed in this study. Also indicated in the literature and confirmed in this study is the need for there to be careful attention paid to, and resistance to, calls from the community for the adoption of unhelpful traditional approaches to student misbehaviour over research validated, educative approaches. A well articulated policy position with an associated and resourced implementation strategy would assist schools to educate their communities about the advantages and appropriateness of contemporary practice in behaviour support. Given the reported capacity of SWPBS to address the enduring concerns of researchers and education providers described in Chapter 1 of this thesis, it would seem that an appropriate strategy for policy makers and administrators would be to maintain the systemic support for schools to implement the process. In so doing Departmental priorities in relation to improving student outcomes and meeting the calls for professional learning and support from teachers would be met.

Teacher participants in this study reported increased confidence and capacity to both understand problematic behaviour, and to teach students with more challenging behaviour. The attention paid by the SWPBS process to spaced professional learning alongside the supported implementation of new practices enabled them to create environments in which their students could be successful, facilitating their improved efficacy. The pre- and in-service education of teachers in relation to behaviour support is frequently reported in the literature as an issue of concern. Teacher participants in this study echoed this concern describing their practice pre SWPBS as ad hoc and their confidence as low. A key implication from this study then, is for teachers to have a more comprehensive preparation

and ongoing support to learn about and implement evidence based practices to promote positive behaviour, and to respond to incidents of challenging behaviour.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

This study examined the implementation of SWPBS in relation to its capacity to provide the professional learning and support recommended in the literature to have a positive influence on teacher efficacy, attribution of problematic behaviour and perceived capacity to influence school climate, acknowledging these as critical antecedents to improved student outcomes. Given the success of SWPBS in demonstrating that capacity in this study, replication and expansion are indicated. The paucity of Australian research in the area of effective behaviour practice (see de Jong 2004) lends support to the need for further research, with a particular emphasis on whether or not the success reported in this study is sustained and, if or how, student outcomes are affected.

Suggestion 1 (Theoretical)

The evidence from this study indicates the need for further case studies in relation to the elements of the SWPBS process with potential to support teacher capacity. This might be done despite the acknowledged problems of replicating educational contexts and circumstances (Hammersley, 1993). Understanding teacher outcomes from implementing SWPBS is an acknowledged area of research need (Ross & Horner, 2007) and whilst this study has contributed to that understanding, further investigation into how teacher practice can be enhanced and supported will be of significant benefit to teacher and student well being.

An aspect of this study that was unanticipated was the significant influence of the use of data component of SWPBS across the research questions. It would appear from the data from this study, that gathering and using reliable information to guide and evaluate practice in this area

was new and novel for most of the participants. The data component was reported to be critical in supporting teacher confidence by providing timely and objective feedback and direction, as well as assisting understanding of behaviour function – leading to more productive attribution styles. For most respondents, using data effectively to understand student behaviour and to guide their teaching was novel, something new that SWPBS had introduced to them. As such, further examination of how teachers and principals understand and use data in the area of behaviour support has the potential to expand the theory, and, ultimately, the effective practice in this area.

Suggestion 2 (Methodological)

It would be helpful to revisit this sample of schools to test the sustainability of the early changes in understanding and practice, and whether or not these had resulted in continuing significant student behaviour outcomes. While the findings of this study are consistent over many school contexts they were found over a relatively short time-frame; a subsequent study could provide a more longitudinal approach to see if the teachers' and principals' perceptions and behaviour changed over time.

Summary

At the outset of this research the challenges of implementing contemporary practice in the area of behaviour support were acknowledged as enduring and resilient, the most significant seeming to be the paradigm shift required to move from a traditional, reactive position, to one with an educative and positive focus. An encouraging finding from this study was that whilst that paradigm shift was acknowledged by the participants as valid, it was *not* seen as an obstacle in implementing SWPBS. This finding is of particular importance given the apparent

failure of previous Tasmanian initiatives to achieve the shift in paradigm required to realise student outcome improvement.

Increased confidence, an altered attribution style and a greater capacity to improve school climate were all consistently and strongly reported by the participants in this study as a consequence of their participation in the SWPBS pilot. The detail provided by teachers and principals in describing their wider repertoire of behaviour support practices provided compelling evidence of the capacity of SWPBS to assist teachers and principals to translate their learning into effective, evidence-based practices and, as a consequence, to have a positive impact on their personal teaching efficacy.

Overall, the literature in relation to those factors considered to be important in supporting high teacher efficacy, appropriate attribution of problem behaviour and the promotion of a positive school climate was corroborated in this study. A unique contribution to the literature though was provided in the strong data from this study of the efficacy of the SWPBS process to support the implementation of those factors, and subsequently to significantly influence teacher and principal beliefs and practice.

The research approach for the study also enabled an investigation of the elements of the SWPBS process perceived by participants to have been most influential in their learning, leading to a further finding regarding the significance of the data component of the process. The findings from this study are strongly suggestive of the need to consider further how data are understood and used by teachers and principals to guide and evaluate practice in the area of behaviour support.

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Appendices

List of Appendices**Appendix A**

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Appendix B- contents: Sample of ethics documents: approvals received and letters sent to schools to introduce the study and invite participation

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Appendix C

Appendix C contents: Interview schedule and sample transcribed interviews.

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Appendix A

Appendix A-contents: Sample of briefing notes.

Minute to minister

Recommendation

That you approve the appointment of Associate Professor Bob Conway to conduct an external review of the Behaviour Support Team

Background: as for briefing

Current situation ;

- There is merit in conducting an external review of the Behaviour support team in order to have an objective assessment of the use of this resource.
- There is no-one with an appropriate background to undertake this review at the University of Tasmania
- Associate professor Bob Conway is Director of Special Education Centre and Disability Studies of the University of Newcastle
- He has been working in Tasmania as the academic responsible for the Graduate Certificate in Behaviour management that has been undertaken by members of the Support Team and participating teachers and district support staff
- Professor Conway has conducted similar reviews of management practices and initiatives for students with challenging behaviour in NSW and the ACT and has an excellent overview of Australian practices in this area.
- The proposed review would have a wider scope than the Behaviour Support team as Professor Conway believes the relative contribution of other services is relevant to his assessment. It would therefore include evaluation of aspects of the district support services that are responsible for students with challenging behaviour, the MARSSS program and alternative provisions.
- Stakeholder groups would be involved in the review through interviews and visits
- The quoted cost for the review is \$16,210 and would be met internally.
- A copy of Professor Conway's proposal is attached

**Factors contributing to increased rates of suspension in schools –
notes from meeting with Challenging Behaviour working group**

- 1. Clash of cultures between schools (middles class) and some communities where the values, principles for dealing with student behaviour may be very different.**
 - a. Parental views and school views on appropriate management is often very different and parents are often not supportive of a stance taken in relation to their child
 - b. Generational poverty contributes to overall issues that parents are dealing with , resulting in flow on effect to schools
 - c. Parents and students do not see the school as having authority in dealing with misbehaviour and often take the child's side in opposition to the school
 - d. Schools do not have staff nor necessarily expertise to work more generally with families
 - e. Increased emphasis on 'rights' of the child and parents with school trying to protect the safety and wellbeing of other students
 - f. Often substantial differences in terms of what is considered appropriate behaviour at home and at school
 - g. Many members of some school communities are second and third generation unemployed and increasingly alienated and isolated from mainstream community
 - h. Home environment for some children is perceived as a comfortable and non-threatening /non-challenging place to be – widescreen TV, smoking and drinking, outdoor pursuits such as wood carting – children do not see suspension as a punishment but as a desirable consequence
 - i. More children at younger age involved in petty crime/ negative activities that have flow on to behaviour at school
 - j. Contact with school is perceived as threatening and negative experience

Possible interventions

- Case for more differentiated and flexible funding provision in schools dealing with students from backgrounds of poverty – with significant program for schools with highest needs
- Need for issue to be grounded in whole of government approach to poverty – not only a school issue but more broadly based
- More early intervention and preventative programs including parenting programs that help build positive relationships between parents and schools

- More flexibility in senior staffing quotas to allow staff (especially in smaller primary schools) to deal with the issues as an alternative to suspending the child
- Keeping class sizes low in these schools
- Provision of flexible and alternative provision within the context of inclusive, supportive schooling
- ✓ ▪ Professional development focus in schools on responses to this challenge

✓ 2. There are simply more difficult children in the school system

Obviously generic strategies such as the curriculum consultation and supportive school communities developments are integral to coping with the many difficult students.

- a. View that there are more difficult children – response to increase in difficult family circumstances, poverty, substance abuse etc
- b. Children with challenging behaviour becoming evident at a younger age
- c. Older students in each school sector because of compulsory prep year

3. More mobile families and transient enrolments

- a. This is often linked to poverty – families move on because of incurred debt
- b. Lack of stability in child's life – a high risk factor for children is the lack of stability and consistency in their lives and this leads to increases in misbehaviour
- c. Difficulties in schools following through with children and families and being able to build relationship with the school
- d. Often this contributes to poor academic performance that is linked to increased misbehaviour
- ✓ e. Potential lack of continuity and consistency between approaches to behaviour management between schools – schools all have their own policies and consequences/responses to challenging behaviour
- f. Preventative and early intervention programs do not have impact if new students and parents who have not been part of these programs come into the school

Possible interventions

- More consistency between behaviour policies and approaches between schools with perhaps a standard prototype?

- Assuring efficient transfer of students' information between schools including information of strategies that are most likely to be effective with the particular student.
- Whole of government approaches to reducing family mobility

4. Schools are consciously upholding high standards of behaviour and enforcing an approach that uses suspension as a consequence for unacceptable behaviour

- a. There is more awareness of the need for schools to uphold high standards of behaviour and maintain reputation of having these high standards
- b. Policy approaches to smoking/drug education/ bullying etc all demand a response from schools to enforce the zero tolerance of such misbehaviour
- c. Suspension if the only sanction available to schools
- d. Formal sanction processes are more likely to be used than informal processes ('just take him home for the afternoon') that may have been a response in the past as schools are aware of accountability and legal liability issues
- e. Schools not able to access programs such as QUIT to assist students to stop smoking

Possible interventions

- ✓
- Improved professional development available to staff on whole school basis so they are more confident and competent in dealing with these students
 - Emphasis on ways to ensure suspension is used as effectively as possible
 - Consideration of how community based programs aimed at reducing smoking, drug use, etc could be more widely available in schools
 - Provide Professional learning and support for those in schools who are designing and implementing behaviour support plans for students with multiple suspensions.
 - Consider use of a formalised 'send home' strategy that schools could legitimately use as a pre-suspension strategy – to provide some time out for students and schools?

5. The lack of coordinated support and backup from all government agencies to work with schools

- a. Too many professional staff from different disciplines, agencies and funding structures dealing with same child/family in uncoordinated way
- b. 'Buck passing' from agency to agency as everyone is stretched and resources to not cover needs
- c. Lack of coordinated local level overall responsibility for children and their families – staff working at local level are all working to different managers with different priorities
- d. Too much time spent on 'worry meetings' rather than determining what should happen and doing it
- e. Disappearance of child health nurses meant less support people actually based in the neighbourhood
- f. High turnover of staff in child support roles means that there is a lack of continuity and local knowledge

Possible interventions

- Government commitment to a single structure for children's' services with a single line management and coordination at local level
- Co-location of services at local level
- Increased capacity at local level for family interventions
- ✓ • Better cross-disciplinary professional training for all staff working with children and their families
- Availability of alternative programs at local level

6. Responsibility for Suspension is often devolved to senior staff

- a. Principals cannot be expected to deal with every suspension themselves
- b. If multiple people are responsible for suspensions there may be lack of whole school focus and overview of suspension patterns.

Possible interventions

- ✓ • Reinforcement of principals' responsibility for suspensions
- Whole school approaches to behaviour and ways to improve internal coordination
- Perhaps provide 'alerts' similar to those in relation to attendance back to principals

Appendix B

Appendix B- contents:

Sample of ethics documents: approvals received and letters sent to schools to introduce the study and invite participation

Item B1a: Approval to conduct the study – University Ethics Committee (Human Experimentation)

COPY

Private Bag 01 Hobart
 Tasmania 7001 Australia
 Telephone (03) 6226 2764
 Facsimile (03) 6226 7148
 Marilyn.Knott@utas.edu.au
<http://www.research.utas.edu.au/index.htm>



MEMORANDUM

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (TASMANIA) NETWORK

MINIMAL RISK ETHICS APPLICATION APPROVAL

6 August 2008

Dr Kerry Howells
 Education
 Private Bag 66
 Hobart

Ethics reference: H10199

What impact does the implementation of School-wide positive behaviour support have on teacher efficacy, teacher attribution and general school climate?

Masters student: Louise O'Kelly

Dear Dr Howells

Acting on a mandate from the Tasmania Social Sciences HREC, the Chair of the committee considered and approved the above project on 4 August 2008.

All committees operating under the Human Research Ethics Committee (Tasmania) Network are registered and required to comply with the *National Statement on the Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans 1999* (NHMRC guidelines).

Therefore, the Chief Investigator's responsibility is to ensure that:

- 1) All researchers listed on the application comply with HREC approved application.
- 2) Modifications to the application do not proceed until approval is obtained in writing from the HREC.
- 3) The confidentiality and anonymity of all research subjects is maintained at all times, except as required by law.
- 4) Clause 2.37 of the National Statement states:
An HREC shall, as a condition of approval of each protocol, require that researchers immediately report anything which might warrant review of ethical approval of the protocol, including:
 - a) *Serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants;*
 - b) *Proposed changes in the application; and*
 - c) *Unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.*

The report must be lodged within 24 hours of the event to the Ethics Executive Officer who will report to the Chairs.

A PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- 5) All participants must be provided with the current Information Sheet and Consent form as approved by the Ethics Committee.
- 6) The Committee is notified if any investigators are added to, or cease involvement with, the project.
- 7) This study has approval for four years contingent upon annual review. An *Annual Report* is to be provided on the anniversary date of your approval. Your first report is due [12 months from 'Ethics Committee Approval' date]. You will be sent a courtesy reminder by email closer to this due date.
Clause 2.35 of the National Statement states:
As a minimum an HREC must require at regular periods, at least annually, reports from principal researchers on matters including:
 - a) *Progress to date or outcome in case of completed research;*
 - b) *Maintenance and security of records;*
 - c) *Compliance with the approved protocol, and*
 - d) *Compliance with any conditions of approval.*
- 8) A *Final Report* and a copy of the published material, either in full or abstract, must be provided at the end of project.

Yours sincerely



 Ethics Executive Officer

Item B1b: Approval to conduct the study – Education Department of Tasmania

Department of Education
EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE SERVICES

2/99 Bathurst Street, Hobart
GPO Box 169, Hobart, TAS 7001 Australia



File: 750012

19 September 2008

Dr Kerry Howells
Senior Lecturer
University of Tasmania
Private Bag 66
HOBART TAS 7001

Dear Dr Howells

What impact does the implementation of school-wide positive behaviour support have on perceived teacher efficacy, teacher attribution and general school climate?

I have been advised by the Educational Performance Report Committee that the above research study adheres to the guidelines established and that there is no objection to the study proceeding.

Please note that you have been given permission to proceed at a general level, in the schools listed below, and not at individual school level. You must still seek approval from the principals of the selected schools before you can proceed in those schools.

Albuera Street Primary School
Gagebrook Primary School
Mount Faulkner Primary School

Burnie High School
Prospect High School
Smithton High School

A copy of your final report should be forwarded to Patricia Lloyd, Educational Performance Services, Department of Education, GPO Box 169, Hobart 7001 at your earliest convenience and within six months of the completion of the research phase in the Department of Education schools.

Yours sincerely



Manager
(Educational Performance Services)
Cc Prof John Williamson; Louise O Kelly

Item B2a: Letter of Invitation to Principals

Dear (principal)

You and a small group of your staff are invited to participate in a research study into the impact of the Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) process on your experiences as teachers and principals.

The study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr Kerry Howells, Lecturer, UTAS and Professor John Williamson, UTAS, by Louise O'Kelly, as part of a Masters of Education degree.

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the implementation of the process has a positive and supportive role in building teacher confidence in promoting positive student behaviour, and in responding to challenging behaviour, as well as to investigate its capacity to improve general school climate.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you have been actively involved in the Department of Education's SWPBS project since it began in 2006.

If you are happy to participate your involvement would be in an audio taped interview of approximately thirty minutes duration. I would like to conduct interviews during September and October 2008. If you are happy to participate I will contact you by phone to arrange a convenient time to visit your school.

It is important that you understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. There will be no consequences to you if you decide not to participate, and this will not affect your relationship with any of the researchers or their institutions. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation. All information will be treated in a confidential manner, and your name will not be used in any publication arising out of the research. All of the research will be kept in a locked cabinet in the office of Louise O'Kelly at the Department of Education, Tasmania.

The benefits to you in participating in the study would be in contributing to a deeper understanding of how to support teachers to develop and maintain strong professional efficacy in relation to student behaviour which is critical in achieving positive student outcomes and maintaining teacher well being.

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either Louise O'Kelly on ph 62337778 or Dr Kerry Howells on ph 62262567. Either of us would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you. Once we have analysed the information we will be mailing / emailing you a summary of our findings. You are welcome to contact us at that time to discuss any issue relating to the research study.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.

Item B2b: Letter of Invitation to Teachers

Dear (Teacher)

You and a small group of your staff are invited to participate in a research study into the impact of the Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) process on your experiences as teachers and principals.

The study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr Kerry Howells, Lecturer, UTAS and Professor John Williamson, UTAS, by Louise O'Kelly, as part of a Masters of Education degree.

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the implementation of the process has a positive and supportive role in building teacher confidence in promoting positive student behaviour, and in responding to challenging behaviour, as well as to investigate its capacity to improve general school climate.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you have been actively involved in the Department of Education's SWPBS project since it began in 2006.

If you are happy to participate your involvement would be in an audio taped interview of approximately thirty minutes duration. I would like to conduct interviews during September and October 2008. If you are happy to participate I will contact you by phone to arrange a convenient time to visit your school.

It is important that you understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. There will be no consequences to you if you decide not to participate, and this will not affect your relationship with any of the researchers or their institutions. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation. All information will be treated in a confidential manner, and your name will not be used in any publication arising out of the research. All of the research will be kept in a locked cabinet in the office of Louise O'Kelly at the Department of Education, Tasmania.

The benefits to you in participating in the study would be in contributing to a deeper understanding of how to support teachers to develop and maintain strong professional efficacy in relation to student behaviour which is critical in achieving positive student outcomes and maintaining teacher well being.

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either Louise O'Kelly on ph 62337778 or Dr Kerry Howells on ph 62262567. Either of us would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you. Once we have analysed the information we will be mailing / emailing you a summary of our findings. You are welcome to contact us at that time to discuss any issue relating to the research study.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.

Item B2c: The Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (PROFORMA)
SOCIAL SCIENCE/ HUMANITITES
RESEARCH

Ethics Approval No.

What impact does the implementation of Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support have on perceived teacher efficacy, attribution of problem behaviour and general school climate?

You are invited to participate in a research study into the impact of the Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) process on your experience as a teacher or principal.

The study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr Kerry Howells, Lecturer, UTAS and Professor John Williamson, UTAS, by Louise O'Kelly, as part of a Masters of Education degree.

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the implementation of the process has a positive and supportive role in building teacher confidence in promoting positive student behaviour, and in responding to challenging behaviour, as well as to investigate its capacity to improve general school climate.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you have been actively involved in the Department of Education's SWPBS project since it began in 2006.

If you are happy to participate your involvement would be in an audio taped interview of approximately thirty minutes duration.

It is important that you understand that your involvement in this study is voluntary. While we would be pleased to have you participate, we respect your right to decline. There will be no consequences to you if you decide not to participate, and this will not affect your relationship with any of the researchers or their institutions. If you decide to discontinue participation at any time, you may do so without providing an explanation. All information will be treated in a confidential manner, and your name will not be used in any publication arising out of the research. All of the research will be kept in a locked cabinet in the office of Louise O'Kelly at the Department of Education, Tasmania.

The benefits to you in participating in the study would be in contributing to a deeper understanding of how to support teachers to develop and maintain strong professional efficacy in relation to student behaviour which is critical in achieving positive student outcomes and maintaining teacher well being.

There are no specific risks anticipated with participation in this study.

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please feel free to contact either Louise O'Kelly on ph 62337778 or Dr Kerry Howells on ph 62262567. Either of us would be happy to discuss any aspect of the research with you. Once we have analysed the information we will be mailing / emailing you a summary of our findings. You are welcome to contact us at that time to discuss any issue relating to the research study.

This study has been approved by the Tasmanian Social Science Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have concerns or complaints about the conduct of this study should contact the Executive Officer of the HREC (Tasmania) Network on (03) 6226 7479 or email human.ethics@utas.edu.au. The

Executive Officer is the person nominated to receive complaints from research participants. You will need to quote [*HREC project number*].

Thank you for taking the time to consider this study.

If you wish to take part in it, please sign the attached consent form.

This information sheet is for you to keep.

Item B2d: Consent form for participants

Locked Bag 66
Tasmania Australia 7001
Telephone (03) 6226 2567
Facsimile (03) 6226 2569
www.utas.edu.au



SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Ethics Ref No: H9738

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

PLEASE READ THOROUGHLY BEFORE SIGNING

Project Title **What impact does the implementation of Schoolwide Positive Behaviour Support have on perceived teacher efficacy, attribution of problem behaviour and general school climate?**

- 1 I have read and understood the 'Information Sheet' for this study
- 2 The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me
- 3 I understand that the study involves participation in a thirty minute interview with the researcher.
- 4 I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will in no way effect my relationship with the researchers or the institutions they are attached to.
- 5 I understand that all research data will be securely stored on the Department of Education's premises for five years [or at least five years], and will then be destroyed [or will be destroyed when no longer required].
- 6 Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction
- 7 I agree that research data gathered from me for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a participant
- 8 I understand that my identity will be kept confidential and that any information I supply to the researcher(s) will be used only for the purposes of the research
- 9 I agree to participate in this investigation and understand that I may withdraw at any time without any effect, and if I so wish may request that any data I have supplied to date be withdrawn from the research

Name of Participant:

Signature

Date

Statement by Investigator

☐ I have explained the project & the implications of participation in it to this volunteer and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation

Name of Investigator

Signature of
Investigator

Appendix C

Appendix C contents: Interview schedule and sample transcribed interviews.

Item C1: Interview Schedule

: Interview Schedule.

School:

Male/Female:

Age:

Years teaching:

Position in the school:

Years in current school:

A) Perceived teacher efficacy.

1. Can you describe how you are involved with the SWPBS process in your school?
2. Is it possible for you to tell me how it is different to other behaviour interventions/programs you have had experience with?
3. What has been the most influential thing about the SWPBS process for you as a teacher?
4. What, if any, have been the difficulties or obstacles for you in implementing the process?

B) Attribution of problem behaviour.

5. What do you think are the main causes problem behaviours occur in your context?
6. Have your views about student problem behaviour changed during the time that you have been implementing SWPBS and if so how?
7. Has implementing PBS approaches contributed to your confidence and capacity in responding to challenging behaviour?

Item C 2a: Transcribed Interview 1

Louise: Ok John, can you describe for me how you are involved in school Positive Behaviour Support in your school as in Gagebrook

John: Yes um from the beginning or just how we currently have initiated it or what my involvement was. What would you like to know?

Louise: Um probably your involvement in relation to how it operates

John: Ok um well we had a coach which um I wasn't the coach so I was the facilitator or co-ordinator rather than the coach so um I just made sure that things that had to happen were happening um ensure that the coach called the meetings and that um the issues that were raised or the things that we wanted to do next were brought up at staff meeting and made sure they were and kept it moving

Louise: Yep and under the initiating bit which is interesting too that how did you get started really

John: Well we

Louise: You might find that some of the other questions sort of come back to this

John: Ok well PBS was something that came about or that I became aware of in my second year at Gagebrook um in the first year we had commenced a social skills program because that was something we thought we really needed and then towards the end of the year there were expressions of interest that came out probably from you , not sure who they came from

Louise: yeah

John: And explained PBS and after reading through it it seemed like it would be something that really fitted well with the social skills program which we'd started and the type of um student behaviour management, management of the student behaviour that we were trying to implement it seemed like something that would gel it all together so that was why we initially put the expression of interest in and we did it on a whole cluster basis even though we were specifically interested uh it was in the days of clusters and after talking about it in a cluster meeting we decided to put in a joint proposal from everybody

Louise: Great um it is possible for you to tell me how this process is different to other behaviour interventions or programs you've had experience with

John: Um because it wasn't just one part of the management of students' behaviour, it was something that integrated all the components um so before other behaviour management stuff that I've been in say the Bill Rodgers stuff that we've done before. Helen McGrath. Helen McGrath's probably more closely linked to positive PBS in my opinion because it contains everything in a whole package where Bill Rodgers was mainly seemed to be mainly managing the behaviour as a after the behaviours happened so nothing preventative um although there probably was but we weren't really focussing on the prevention of student behaviour it was more what to do if students are mucking up so because we'd already started on the track of uh social skills program which was demonstrating to kids the types of behaviour and actually teaching them types of behaviour that we wanted to see um and then our next step was to have a look at the management of student behaviour after things had

fallen off the rails and what to do to get them back onto the rails. The PBS the way the PBS looked on paper was going to be a whole package you know rewarded good behaviour and demonstrated good behaviour, helped to track where the things were going wrong and was able to give us the data to specifically put um interventions in place where they were needed.

Louise: Ah-ha. And what's been the most influential thing about the process for you as a principal?

John: Oh the data without a doubt. Without a doubt the data was able to help us be specific with the when and where and what of the behaviour and because we're able to have that you know really specific information then the interventions that we put in place you know it was always through our social skills program um they were always precise because yeah we're able to do exactly

Louise: Everyone's said that actually

John: Yeah

Louise: What if any have been the difficulties or obstacles you had in implementing this particular process?

John: Um I suppose um not a criticism of this at all but any change in a process the difficulties are getting everybody on board and convincing everybody that this is the way to go so I wouldn't say this had any inherent different difficulties to any change it just had to be sold as a positive change and demonstrated and role modelled and the positives continually highlighted you know so that's

Louise: What do you think are the causes, the next sort of part's around that attribution of problem behaviour. What do you think are the main causes of problem behaviour in that context?

John: In the context of Gagebrook Primary School?

Louise: Yeah

John: Uh ok

Louise: Why do you think those happen?

John: Did you want the John O'Rourke theory?

Louise: Yeah give me the John O'Rourke theory

John: The John O'Rourke, the main reasons that cause problem behaviour uh I'd say students are disengaged with what they're doing at school um and that that what they're doing has no meaning to them and so they look for things that do have meaning to them um that's what I'd say and the reason they're disengaged is multiple um could be because some of their home life, family life, family background, their attitude to school or education in general, could be their health or their wellbeing, it could be lots of things but yeah I'd say it's because they're disengaged and whatever's happening in the classroom is not connecting with them

Louise: Yep and have your views about student problem behaviour or why it happens changed during the time that you've been implementing this process?

John: Uh not really

Louise: Have you noticed a change in any of your staff in relation to how they think about it

John: Definitely, definitely. Um I would say the two years before I came to Gagebrook I had eighteen months of that at Rokeby and that was a real grounding for me because the education or the background I'd had in schools prior to going to Rokeby were um middle class schools with very compliant kids um and going to Rokeby was very different and the way that Rokeby was set up and the staff attitudes at Rokeby um helped me to form a viewpoint um about how to help kids with their behaviour and so I took that attitude to Gagebrook with me and when I got to Gagebrook of course it was it was um crisis management basically on a daily basis so a crisis would happen and they would try and manage it the best they could without any strategic philosophy and or moral purpose as to what they're doing so

Louise: And this next one will be similar for you, has implementing PBS contributed to your confidence and capacity in responding to incidents of challenging behaviour and again maybe not yours but if yours has been stable has it been helpful in um

John: Yeah it has um but I don't believe it's something that can be left because people lose confidence. It's all about being confident as you said and people/staff lose confidence quickly because if what they've done works 8 times and then 2 times it doesn't work they then start to question they believe they're a failure because of those two times, they forget about the other 8 so you've got to be constantly reminded you know the positives and the things, the achievements have to be constantly highlighted and I think need to be revisited all the time and it's got to be done regularly

Louise: So has that been easier through the team and the meetings and the data to actually

John: Definitely. The data has been outstanding because it's just shown them that when they say things are going haywire you can show them the data that it's not and then you know you've got the data back three years ago and you can say well three years ago look at this and then you know our standards have risen really and our expectations of the kids has risen and that's why these things that are happening today look big whereas three years ago you wouldn't have noticed them

Louise: That's fantastic John and that's all the questions

Item C2b: Transcribed Interview 2

Louise: Kerry can you describe how you're involved with the school Positive Behaviour Support process in your school?

Kerry: Oh I guess I'm on the school leadership team as principal of the school I guess I see I have some responsibility around oversight and supporting the communication so I was involved in setting up the leadership team and I'm actively involved in the leadership team and I attend meetings which we meet once a month so I always attend those with the leadership team. We all always attend coaching that's available so I see myself as an active participant in the process

Louise: Yep and can you tell me is it possible, can you tell me rather how you find this Positive Behaviour Support different to other behaviour interventions or programs you've had experiences with

Kerry: The things that attracted us and that we liked about it that were different to other interventions were that it has a really positive focus. That it's around supporting positive behaviour rather than dealing with negative behaviour. We like the fact that it's pro-active, we like the fact that we look at school wide systems so we're looking at primary interventions for all kids. We like the fact that it's based on data, and our own school data and we like that fact that it involves a whole team of people that are representative of our whole school community

Louise: And what's been the most influential thing about the whole process for you as a principal?

Kerry: I think probably the involvement of a whole range of people from across our school so for the first time all stakeholders in our school community were actively involved in what we do and it's not seen as the principal's responsibility as a whole staff and a whole community we're looking at supporting positive behaviour

Louise: And have there been any difficulties or obstacles for you in making the process?

Kerry: Not difficulties or obstacles, I think like implementing anything new you need to take time to actually get everybody on board. The only hiccup we had was in collecting data but now we wouldn't, we're now using Swiss so that's not a problem

Louise: Great. Um what do you think are the main causes of problem behaviour in your school?

Kerry: I suspect and I'm basing this partly on the data that we've collected that often kids don't know the right way to behave and so we need to be being a bit specific about not just what you don't want them to do but what you want them to do instead and I think that's why PBS has enabled us to focus on that and work out ways of deliberately teaching, well coming up with our expectations and then deliberately teaching what they look like in the school

Louise: And have your views on student problem behaviour changed in the time that you've been implementing the process and if so, how?

Kerry: I think they probably have changed although I came into the process with a set of personal beliefs that were consistent with school-wide PBS but I think it's probably confirmed those beliefs because I've seen it working with the kids and I've seen with staff trying to look at positives rather than negatives and look at it as it as student behaviour is something that we find challenging and we have a responsibility to do something about rather than looking as a within-child problem I think has been really supportive

Louise: And has implementing the process um contributed to your confidence and your capacity in responding to incidents of challenging behaviour?

Kerry: Absolutely because it is not just me. Apart from anyone else, it's not just me as a principal making up decisions on what we're going to do I can quite honestly say that as a school-wide community this is what we've decided and there's a sound philosophical and educational base underpinning what we're doing so I can always go back when I'm talking to parents and also I can show data and I can site examples of how what we're doing is working. it doesn't always please people that we're not giving them a johnny right now but I can show that it's part of a consistent program that we're doing throughout the school and the way the whole school has evolved

Louise: Thank you

Item C2c: Transcribed Interview 3

Jilly: And there's a group of kids that have come in. Some of them are new. There's a small handful of them who are new that have come in from another school who don't and didn't have and don't have now any of the structures that we have in place and that's probably hit them like a brick wall and they're thinking oh you know another lot of rules another lot of sensitives but na I think they're on the turn you know there's always going to be that peak in everything that you do every time you do something you're going to have that no, no, no, no, no, no and all of a sudden they're going to say oh well if you can't beat them you join them. Yeah that looks like a good thing look at all the treats they're getting, look at all the rewards they're getting and then I think we will get them I mean that's the whole point

Jilly: Yeah and teaching them skills along the way. I just think that one of the problems we have with our data is showing we have lot of aggression we have quite a bit of aggression, violence in our schoolyard at the moment at recess and lunchtime with a group of boys

Louise: Yep. And, has the way you think about the causes of problem behaviour changed over the time that you've been implementing PBS?

Jilly: Um I think uh that's hard because each time you get a I mean in some of these incidences it's so individual and that's where you look at an individual case and why is their behaviour challenging and then you get into well ok its repeating you know the normal basic structures into place that you would in your classroom with a child with a challenging behaviour. And then if that's not working obviously we go one step further we have parent interviews, we do case studies and whatever they're called and then we do FBA's which I don't know a lot about them but I know the reason for them and a Functional Behaviour Analysis and I think that each time that has happened in our school that someone that that FBA has been done there has been a change or a change in that child's behaviour um after that has been done and I think that that is, am I answering the question correctly?

Louise: Yes, the thing about how why

Jilly: And I think the point about student problem behaviour changes um that's like on an individual and I think we have to look at individuals as well coz the part of the positive behaviour thing is that we have that you know that triangle where you have this lot we have that lot and that little bit at the top and those ones at the top are the ones with challenging behaviours and those are the ones you've got to get to, try to help them as much as possible so not only do you have improved behaviour at the bottom of the whole school but you've also got to do something about the individuals at the top so what we have in the school is supporting that coz we have those things in place. Now that they are there for us to do and I don't think if you didn't have that then we would probably have a bigger cohort of kids. We would be tearing our hair out but we know that we've got this in place where we can do the best we can and the rest is up to the child or the parents when you've got to try and have that fine line level of support

Louise: Would you say

Jilly: But in general I think the behaviour in our school has improved. It has to, it has to

Louise: So would you say that you have more of a focus on looking at particular causes in the school now compared to what you did before like um he's using that behaviour because he doesn't know how to manage that conflict

Jilly: I think it's coz we can identify it now. We know how to identify we've become into understand um you know oh people used to say oh they've terrible they've come from an unfortunate background or it's a dysfunctional background and that would be it. That's where you'd leave it. But now you know we're trying to find out ok why is it dysfunctional and what can we do to make his time here at school more functional and support that when he comes to school and so I think it's it's made um a road into us being able to be more helpful, um more oh what do you say I think we're more professional about it. we're it makes the our it makes what we do here I think it's taking it back to a more professional status rather than a child-minding status which I think has happened not so much at this school but I'm saying it has happened in the past. What do we do with these if you don't have things in place and structures that you can go stage one, stage two, stage three, whatever ok if we start this, this, this, this, if you don't have those in place you're just going to babysit this kid and everyone's going to sort of walk round frightened of them and rather than trying to get to know and understand the child and I think that's what PBS has done. It has turned everything around well it has for me it has turned

everything around and you think ok this child has this problem, that's why they do that, we're starting to read behaviour. Why do that do that you know why do they blow up at whatever. Its made me when I go to um PD like I did yesterday I went on PD for supports and strategies by Greg O'Connor and I came back thinking I don't have anyone with Autism or Autism Spectrum in my class but I do have a child who um is in a wheelchair but I have a group of boys who are part of this violent group some of them who are disrupting in my class and I'm thinking what can I do to positively change or alter their environment to keep them engaged and blah, blah, blah and I'm now going to stick them with the visual strategies and supports um that the wheelchair girl has coz I think that's what they need and so you always try I always try I'm always changing everything I do. I don't plan, I'm going to be really horrible on the tape- I don't plan. I have a big idea about what I'm doing. I will write it down somewhere but in my head my priority is to get children engaged doing something that they are happy with, they can have success with. They don't realise they're learning a skill on the way but they are and to try and have positive language in our classroom as much as possible, have respect in our classroom between each child and child to adult, male to male. I build I'm trying to build the social stuff around curriculum rather than curriculum around social. Is that?

Louise: Yeah that's great. One more..

Jilly: So everything needs to be positively social because some of the fights and everything are because "no, you didn't", "yes you did", "no, you didn't" which is not social. That is you know

Louise: And then that escalates into

Jilly: Oh it does and then it escalates into a punch and abuse

Louise: And the last one is has implementing positive behaviour support approaches helped you to well contributed to your confidence um and capacity if you like, in responses to instances of challenging behaviour

Jilly: Oh well the other day I didn't respond very well at all. But at least I can come away and say I didn't. So I think it's done that um I think at the time I think it was right on the bell, classes are starting to line up, they're waiting. You can't leave them because they'll punch each other up and something. I was away from them and this kid was doing a hat taking number around the yard which we know is a form of bullying and all the rest of it and I said to him you know but I escalated it because I yelled and he said to me 'you are fucking yelling at me, I'm not going to talk to you while you fucking yell at me' and I said 'oh, fair enough, point taken'. I said ok, I'm going to go and sit on the slide how about we then come, I said I apologise, I said I'm sorry then I'm sorry for yelling at you um how about then we come back and sit down here and have a chat about it. But no he wouldn't because I'd already gone over the line with that particular child. Now if I have to deal with him again and I have dealt with him in the past and I haven't yelled at him, I think I'd just got to the point where I thought oh but then you know it's all not good

Louise: You reputated yourself

Jilly: Well it was and that's where I am not a calm person. That's not my personality I'd love to have some calming pills, do you know where I can get some

Louise: No

Jilly: Anyway but the fact was that I realised what I did, I realised at the time that I overstepped the line basically with escalation. I I um produced that escalation, I started it whatever and I then calmed down blah, blah, blah, he calmed down he wouldn't come back but then he did come back but I am still yet to reconnect with that child and I want to reconnect and I want to discuss with him about you know choices, all that sort of stuff and come back and do all that but I think for me it has. I mean I feel confidence in now that I can go up to children and I can talk to children because now I teach them all anyway because I'm the music teacher and I have all children. I've got children that come to me to solve their problems because I think they know I will follow through or blah, blah, blah, um and coz I'm not frightened to anymore. I'm not frightened to go out onto the ground. I'm not frightened to have grade 6's, I'm not frightened to go into this area up here you know. Um I'm confident enough to go to another school and sell this stuff because I think it works but then again I'm also confident to say it doesn't work all the time but at least we have it in place and at least it's there for when we need it and we do use it and we you know talk about the pros and cons well not the pros and cons but the challenges that we have but

Louise: Like Jeff Colburn's comment "If you get it wrong with escalated behaviour don't worry coz you'll get plenty of opportunity to get it right"

Jilly: Exactly! Exactly and I know I will

Louise: Yeah, And with that sort of behaviour that's one of the nice things I think for me is that it happened and next time you know we'll instead you know

Jilly: But the thing is and I think what we realise what we probably do realise it is that adults are less resilient because as we get older our resilience to bounce back lessens because we're older and we've been there and we've been hurt so many times and we remember it and our memory is long whereas children don't. Children bounce back within thirty minutes or within thirty seconds you know and they take that from us and I think we underestimate a child's ability to bounce back but we don't as much, as quick and I think that that is something like I even I'll remember that you know. Like you'll hear people say I'll remember that, I'll remember you said that, bloody oath we do. But the kid doesn't you know they only remember it as they get older and then their view of what happened is distorted because it was only those little pockets of whatever and we're like that too but I think while they're here at school to reconnect with a child is really important because then they're bouncing back quicker and we are showing them that yes we expect that, this is an expectation, I'm willing to come to the party let's come together and we build that relationship and it gets built on built on built on

Louise: Thank you Jilly

Jilly: Was that ok