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The Other Side of the Fence

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ABORIGINAL AND RURAL EDUCATION STUDIES

INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

Marion Terry, Ph.D.

Welcome to the fifth issue of the *BU Journal of Graduate Studies in Education*, devoted to rural, northern, and Aboriginal education. Our authors for volume 3, issue 1, are all graduate students (current or completed) in Brandon University's Faculty of Education. I thank these students for sharing their work. Together, they have produced a collection of articles on a variety of topics with one feature in common: creating schools of excellence.

- o Andrea Loepp's research report relates findings from her examination of how teachers perceive the role that administrators play in teacher engagement.

- o Doreen Prazak's refereed article outlines alternative high school practices that accommodate the needs of at-risk students.

- o George Lancaster's refereed article discusses the neurological consequences of caregiver-child relationships, and their effects on psychological and social development.

- o Geraldine Bator's refereed article explains autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and suggests ways to help children with ASD participate in the inclusive classroom.

- o Elena Dupuis' refereed article recommends approaches for teaching reading and writing skills to adults with English as an additional language.

- o Barbara Murphy's refereed article explores the effects of emotional abuse, as a precursor to dealing with abused children's needs in the classroom.

- o Mark Findlay's refereed article explores counselling solutions to help students who have been victims of childhood maltreatment.

- o Debra Loewen's refereed article advocates leadership development programs to prepare educators who aspire to administrative roles.

- o Karla Turton's refereed article recommends formalized mentoring as a means to build the capacity of teachers in their first year in the profession.

- o Paul O'Driscoll's special interest paper proposes a synergistic residence assistant training model that maximizes efficiencies among provincially funded post-secondary institutions.

- o David Sinclair's opinion paper warns that students' obsessions with video games have negative consequences for their schooling.

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RESEARCH REPORT

Teachers' Perceptions of the Role of Administration in Teacher Engagement

Andrea Loepp

Teachers have an inordinate number of challenges in their workplace, from programming for a wide variety of learners to managing students with numerous physical, social/emotional, cognitive, and behavioural needs. The role of the administrator becomes critical in supporting the teachers to be continually engaged in the ever-changing workplace environment. This research project examined the teacher's perception of the administrator's role in teacher engagement in the school environment.

Methodology

The methodology consisted of a mixed method of qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys. First, 14 teachers from the same school division participated in individual interviews. Then, the researcher collated the interviews and developed a survey instrument. Of the 31 surveys completed by teachers from two schools in the same division, 30 were used for data analysis. The information from the interviews and surveys comprised the research data.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of the interviews, the data were analyzed by the researcher. This initial analysis led to the development of educated guesses surrounding the data findings. Upon the completion of the interview process with all of the participants, intensive analysis took place. Data were organized by similarities, differences, and outlier comments that were not repeated.

The summary of the interviews provided a basis for the development of the survey instrument. The surveys were thus based upon the answers from the interview analysis, and were organized using the same outline as the interviews. The survey used a Likert scale that reflected the feedback given from teachers, in order to determine whether the information collected was an accurate representation of teacher engagement and administrative influence. The surveys were sent to be analyzed by an outside source, a statistician who collated the findings into figures and tables for me as the principal researcher.

Findings

Teacher engagement was defined by teachers as "teachers being involved in the practice of teaching and learning extending from the classroom to the larger school body, with a sense of enjoyment and excitement for their work." Teachers identified both the administration of a school and the teachers in the school as playing critical roles in the engagement level of the teaching staff.

Teachers who were interviewed and surveyed mentioned that making a difference in students' lives was an important factor in their own engagement level. This was considered to be just one aspect of the many features named as essential components for teacher engagement. Teachers were honest regarding their disappointments in the workplace, the challenges that they dealt with on a daily basis, and some of the idealistic goals that they held for students. Their answers, when compiled into survey form and distributed to another group of teachers, were strongly supported by the vast majority of survey respondents. The interviews

and the surveys supplied some sub-information regarding what engages teachers: the altruistic feeling of being engaged when they make a difference in a child's life.

Teachers identified the necessity for teaching staff to maintain a presence at work. To sustain this presence, teachers identified collaborating with other teachers and collegiality as essential ingredients when interacting with colleagues. Teachers also stated that their role in promoting engagement is to be involved in the school by mentoring other teachers and having a positive attitude toward the workplace.

A school administrator's ability to aid teaching staff by providing support in terms of staffing, professional development opportunities, mentoring, time, and resources was considered to be another critical factor for teacher engagement. Teachers valued autonomy and a sense of efficacy, as well as support by the administration for collaboration with other teachers and collegiality in the school workplace. Teachers reported that school administrators promote teacher engagement when they provide financial resources and other supports such as professional development opportunities.

Another factor frequently referred to was the necessity for administrators to provide professional feedback that is constructive and useful for the teacher. Specifically, teachers require that their administrators provide quality feedback that will challenge them to grow professionally in their teaching and learning.

According to the survey results, maintaining a visible presence in the school is the most critical factor for school administrators to encourage teacher engagement. This visible presence includes mentoring teachers, role modelling new initiatives, and providing effective leadership within the school. Both the positive and negative versions of the interview question regarding administrative presence and approachability elicited comments that administrators need to offer quality leadership skills and presence. This would be an area for further study to determine what teachers expect and require from administrators, particularly regarding issues such as "open door" policies and "visible presence" in the school.

Predictably, many of the administrative factors that were found to support teacher engagement in the schools were the reverse of factors that would impede teacher engagement. School administrators were found to compromise teacher engagement when they do not support teachers and initiatives with professional development, student discipline, resources, and mentorship. Teachers identified that administrators who maintain a closed door policy, are unapproachable, do not listen to teacher input, and have a top-down leadership style can hinder teacher engagement.

Summary

The process of inquiring about teacher engagement and the role of school administrators in teacher engagement has been one of discovery. Although there is a plethora of research on educational issues, there is not a substantial amount of research on teacher engagement. It is my contention that teachers have plenty to say on the subject of engagement and the school as a workplace. There is a definite need for further research on how to change schools, in order to make them more appealing organizational workplaces.

About the Author

Andrea Loepp is an administrator in the Louis Riel School Division. She recently completed her Master of Education degree from Brandon University. Andrea lives in Winnipeg with her supportive husband and family. She believes firmly in the imperative nature of capturing the heart of the staff with whom she works.

REFEREED ARTICLES

Alternative High School Programming:
Planning for Student Success

Doreen Prazak

Abstract

Alternative high school programs can be another educational option for students who wish to remain in school but whose needs can not be addressed in regular school classes. There are three elements to a successful program: the students, specific school components, and staff. At-risk indicators help to identify the students. A low student-to-teacher ratio helps to build not only positive personal relationships but also working relationships when inquiry-based learning is used. Technology and hands-on work projects engage students. Extended support staff and outside agencies support students' social-emotional well-being. These combined elements support at-risk students in their journey toward high school graduation.

Alternative high school programs offer at-risk students the opportunity to be successful academically. An alternative school program is "a public . . . secondary school that addresses [the] needs of students that typically can not be met in a regular school, provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or falls outside the categories of regular, special education, or vocational education" (Franklin, Streeter, Kim, & Tripodi, 2007, p. 134). Three elements are essential to a successful alternative high school program. An alternative school serves at-risk students. Its environment includes a number of components that support these students' academic growth. The staff of an alternative program believes in building personalized relationships with students and providing both academic and social/emotional support. The correct combination of students, school components, and staff can lead to a successful alternative program.

An alternative program is designed for students who are at risk of dropping out. Indicators of at-risk students include course performance (Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement [CCSRI], 2008), attendance (Heppen & Therriault, 2008), at-risk behaviours (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009), and social-emotional difficulties (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009). Two course performance factors strongly predict which students are most likely to drop out of high school: failure in core courses and the number of credits earned in the first year of high school (CCSRI, 2008). If a student fails more than one core course and earns less than eight out of ten credits, he or she would be considered at risk. Course performance is a strong indicator of whether a student is at risk.

Students whose attendance is significantly low are most at risk. In fact, CCSRI (2008) found that "of students who missed five to nine days during the ninth grade, only 63 percent graduated, compared with 87 percent of those who missed fewer than five days" (para. 18). Studies have found that attendance, academic achievement, and graduation are directly correlated (Heppen & Therriault, 2008, p. 2). My experience concurs with this evidence. Students can struggle due to lack of attendance or, conversely, lack of attendance can indicate academic struggle. Academic improvement occurs when students are required to let the teacher know that they are not attending that day, and give the reason why. If a teacher does not hear from a student, then the teacher phones the student. The student is then aware that he or she is expected to be there and is missed. It is a primary goal of an alternative program to increase students' attendance, thereby giving the students a better chance at academic success.

At-risk behaviour can also be an indicator that alternative programming is needed. Students contribute to their academic demise by not adhering to the school discipline policy and by

making irresponsible decisions (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009). Sexual activity, violence, and drug, tobacco, and alcohol use are examples of irresponsible behaviour (Barr & Parrett, 2003). These behaviours can lead to negative consequences such as suspension from school. When a student is suspended, an existing attendance problem is exacerbated, weakening the student's sense of self-worth and sense of belonging to the school. At-risk behaviours indicate a possible need for students to be removed from the general education program.

Social-emotional difficulties also contribute to students' decisions to drop out. Students who are experiencing social alienation and a general lack of caring from peers and educators do not feel that they belong to the school (Brown & Rodriguez, 2009). These students do not participate in school activities. Moreover, students who have experienced a stressful event such as the death of a parent, family divorce, or bullying find it difficult to concentrate or do schoolwork (Barr & Parrett, 2003). When social-emotional difficulties such as these affect students' self-esteem, attitude toward education, and attendance, they indicate a potential dropout risk.

Many possible indicators can identify at-risk students. Any student can be at risk, but the typical profile of at-risk students is that they come from "low socioeconomic homes, [and/or] live in poverty with a single parent, grandparent or foster parent" (Barr & Parrett, 2003, p. 39). However, poor course performance, a low attendance rate, risky behaviours, and social-emotional difficulties are also prime indicators of at-risk students. It is important to realize that any students, at any time of their educational careers, can exhibit one or more of these indicators. Dropping out of school is more likely to happen if any of these indicators are present in the students' first year of high school (Heppen & Therriault, 2008). The challenge for high schools is to use these indicators to identify at-risk students and to provide them with personal and academic success in an alternative program.

There are a number of integral components in a well-developed alternative high school program. These include low enrolment (Barr & Parrett, 2003), caring educators (Dynarski et al., 2008), and an inquiry-based curriculum that includes technology (Duran, 2002) and work-related topics (Stone & Castellano, 2002). In a larger school setting, students "can become alienated and uninterested to the point where they feel little attachment to school and drop out" (Dynarski et al., 2008, p. 30). Lower enrolment can mean fewer incidents of violence and lower dropout rates (Franklin et al., 2007, p. 134). When an alternative program has a smaller student-to-teacher ratio, it can provide a unique curriculum specifically tailored to the needs of the students (Barr & Parrett, 2003). A smaller student body is more likely to increase student achievement, attendance, and graduation rates, and to provide a more positive school climate (Dynarski et al., 2008). Educators have more opportunities to assist and build relationships with students when the class size is small. They can learn what motivates their students and use that knowledge to provide activities that increase student engagement.

Caring educators build positive relationships with their students. The National Research Council in the United States, after reviewing research on school programs which reduced dropout rates, concluded that the "evidence suggests that student engagement and learning are fostered by a school climate characterized by an ethic of caring and supportive relationships, respect, fairness, and trust" (Dynarski et al., 2008, p. 30). A caring, supportive teacher gives appropriate, meaningful praise to build up students' confidence. He or she gently encourages students to work toward improvement. When the student-teacher relationship is built on respect, fairness, and trust, students are more likely to take risks. They know that even if they fail, the teacher will support and guide them. Personal, supportive attention has a more positive effect on students' achievement and motivation than teacher instructional expertise (Ward, Kester, & Kouzekanani, 2009). Caring educators provide the support that at-risk students need to be successful.

Inquiry-based learning engages students in their learning. For students to experience "21st century success," inquiry-based learning enables students to learn relevant content and skills ("Buck Institute," 2010, para. 1). This style of learning is educationally sound, as its

requirements are the use of social skills, specific outcomes, and assessment as, of, and for learning (Barr & Parrett, 2003). Students can work on projects that interest them, independently or in groups. The students are the gatherers of knowledge; the teachers are the facilitators. Students have the opportunity to "express their learning in their own voice" ("Buck Institute," 2010, para. 6). This autonomy from the typical teacher-centered style of learning helps to increase students' engagement in the learning process because they are given the choice as to how and what they will learn. At-risk students can see the relevance and application of their learning to life beyond the school setting when learning is project based (Barr & Parrett, 2003). Thus, students' engagement in learning increases when inquiry-based learning fosters real-life, outside-of-school experiences. An inquiry-based curriculum makes learning relevant and meaningful to the students.

Technology is central in students' lives and can be used to deliver a positive, inquiry-based learning experience to at-risk students. Technology plays an integral role in inquiry-based learning (Stone & Castellano, 2002; Waxman, Gray, & Padron, 2002). Inquiry-based learning that uses technology can restructure learning (Duran, 2002, p. 217). It can connect at-risk students with other students from near and far, building a community of learners within and outside of the school building that is supportive and collaborative. Some additional positive results from technology use include a positive increase in students' self-concept, attitude about learning, and achievement (Duran, 2002; Ward et al., 2009). Technologies that are central to students' lives are wonderful resources and tools for learning. Technology helps to awaken curiosity, deepen learning, and provide a positive learning experience.

Inquiry-based learning infused with work-related topics can bring relevancy to student learning. Topics should be rigorous and have real-world applications structured around work and careers (Stone & Castellano, 2002). Research has shown that students who have vocational education, which includes work readiness and employment experience, appear to have a better success rate at obtaining and keeping a job (Foley & Pang, 2006). An alternative program can provide job-related workshops on topics such as resume writing, job interview skills, and interpersonal skills. If vocational programs are available, at-risk students in an alternative program should be encouraged and given the opportunity to participate (Foley & Pang, 2006). Work-based learning opportunities increase authentic learning and student engagement.

An alternative program should include a low student-to-teacher ratio, caring educators, and inquiry-based learning infused with technology and work related topics. Such a program can help students to reach goals that are "recognized and valued beyond the school" (Stone & Castellano, 2002, p. 265). These opportunities may include, but are not limited to, mentoring, contextual learning, job-shadowing, and community-centered activities (Sanders, Allen-Jones, & Abel, 2002). Teachers who are committed to educating at-risk students provide not only academic support and guidance, but opportunities that make learning relevant.

Along with academic support and guidance, an alternative program should include social and emotional support for at-risk students. A school needs to feel like "a surrogate family [;] it is a place where students feel safe, cared for, and challenged" (Barr & Parrett, 2003, p. 184). An alternative program should provide an opportunity for students to deal with their emotional issues. Providing a caring, supportive environment builds at-risk students' sense of belonging and resiliency to dropping out (McMahon, 2007). The alternative program should include staff members who believe in building relationships with students (Dynarski et al., 2008) and community services (Foley & Pang, 2006, p. 20). These two elements can provide the social and emotional support needed by at-risk students.

The staff of an alternative program should have certain characteristics. It is important that the staff members include a teacher, educational assistant, resource teacher, guidance counsellor, and social worker (Dynarski et al., 2008). The latter two staff members provide the expertise in helping students to deal with their social and emotional issues. All staff members need to value all students (McMahon, 2007), extol an "an all-for-one, one-for-all camaraderie

amongst each other, students, [and] parents" (Barr & Parrett, 2003, p. 184), and be willing to develop longer term relationships with students (Dynarski et al., 2008). These staff traits can help students to feel that they belong and are welcomed and valued in the program (Waxman et al., 2002). A positive and supportive atmosphere has been proven to improve students' attitudes toward learning, thereby improving attendance and academic achievement (Barr & Parrett, 2003). Staff characteristics are the cornerstone to an effective at-risk program.

Community services can also provide valuable services to students who attend alternative schools (Foley & Pang, 2006). Creating a Future is an example of a supportive service that helps students to be successful in school and in the workforce. This agency helps students to identify strengths, develop interpersonal skills, explore job opportunities, compile a resume with cover letter, and hone job interview skills. Developing these skills builds students' social competency, supports resiliency, and provides a sense of purpose for the future (Barr & Parrett, 2003). Students who are struggling with addictions may also benefit from special programming designed to help them overcome and deal with drug and/or alcohol abuse. In this way, outside agencies play a supportive role in the students' lives.

There are many benefits to providing a supportive student environment. Students' risky behaviours and truancy are reduced, and their grades and social skills are improved (Dynarski et al., 2008, p. 17). If students know that they are supported by the staff, they have a more positive outlook toward school and peers, feel more attached to the school, and are more involved in school life (Waxman et al,, 2002; Dynarski et al., 2008). Outside agencies can offer additional job-related and emotional support. An alternative program that offers the appropriate human resources for at-risk students also provides the social-emotional support that at-risk students need.

An alternative program can deliver an education that meets the needs of at-risk students. In order for an alternative program to be successful, its student body must first be carefully identified using at-risk indicators. There should be a low student-to-teacher ratio. Caring educators who use an inquiry-based curriculum infused with technology and work-related topics will engage students and make learning relevant to them. The students' social-emotional well-being should also be considered and addressed through the use of extended support staff and outside agencies. A well-thought-out alternative program can be the second chance that at-risk students need to be successful in school, growing socially and emotionally, and ultimately graduating from high school.

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About the Author

Doreen Prazak is currently working on a graduate degree in educational administration. She has taught grades four to twelve and adults, and has been a resource teacher and guidance counsellor. This is her first year as vice-principal at a large rural high school. In her spare time, she enjoys being outdoors.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Physical Activity

George Lancaster

Abstract

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) affects the academic, social, and emotional functioning of many children. This article discusses the challenges that children with ADHD face every day, and the treatment options that are currently available. It also describes the physiological and emotional effects of physical activity, and the possibility of using physical activity as a tool when treating children with ADHD.

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) negatively affects the lives of children, parents, and educators around the world. Despite its long history, the disorder's continually changing name, definition, and prevalence rate have impeded its study. ADHD is currently understood as a neurological disorder with academic, social, and emotional effects. Research has identified two main treatment options: pharmacological treatments and behavioural interventions. Currently, medications are the most commonly used option for controlling the symptoms of ADHD. Physical activity, however, may prove to be a valuable addition to treatment strategies, due to the physiological and emotional benefits that physical activity offers.

About ADHD

ADHD is a complex disorder that has captured the interest of researchers for over two centuries ("What is," n.d.). Over time, the name of the disorder has changed, and so have the symptoms used to diagnose it. Additionally, the estimated prevalence of ADHD in the population has varied from study to study, and region to region. It is difficult to discuss a disorder and its treatment options without a consistent definition and an accurate prevalence rate; therefore, it is important to review the history of ADHD before discussing treatment possibilities.

Although the particular behaviours of ADHD individuals have not varied greatly over the years, the social atmosphere of the times has, which has led to the redefinition of the disorder various times throughout history. In 1902, an English physician, George Still, reported that a group of children in his practice showed a "defect in moral control," and identified many of the symptoms that we associate with ADHD today (as cited in Barkley & Edwards, 2001, p. 84). Later, names such as "brain-injured child syndrome," "minimal brain damage," and "minimal brain dysfunction" were all used to describe children who had behavioural problems associated with hyperactivity and poor impulse control (Barkley & Edwards, 2001, p. 84). More recently, the terms "hyperkinetic impulse disorder," "hyperactive child syndrome," and "attention deficit disorder" have all been used to describe children with hyperactive symptoms.

Today, ADHD is primarily understood as a neurobiological disorder that is identified according to the inattentive and hyperactive actions of those affected (Barkley & Edwards, 2001). To make a diagnosis, clinicians compare an individual's symptoms with those outlined in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (*DSM-IV-TR*, 2000). Symptoms include, but are not limited to, the following: being easily distracted, having difficulty sustaining attention, failing to pay attention to details, running or climbing excessively, and talking excessively. The name of ADHD has changed many times throughout its history; however, the main symptoms of the disorder remain constant. For this reason, regardless of the label that experts have used, more research is needed to understand and treat the disorder that we now call ADHD, taking the current social context into account.

In addition to the difficulty of finding an appropriate name for ADHD, researchers have also found it difficult to agree on its prevalence rate. Rates have been identified from as low as 1% to nearly 20%, often depending on the sampling method, the definition used, and the region the

sample was taken from (Polanczyk, Silva de Lima, Horta, Biderman, & Rohde, 2007, p. 942). The prevalence of ADHD in school-aged children is estimated to be 3-7% (*DSM-IV-TR*, p. 90). This estimate is supported by a recent review of 102 studies, including 171,756 subjects, which calculated the worldwide prevalence of ADHD to be 5.29% (Polanczyk et al., 2007, p. 945). The prevalence rate of 5% is therefore well supported.

As a popular topic for researchers, ADHD has evolved since its first documentation. We currently consider ADHD to be a neurobiological disorder that is classified by hyperactive and inattentive behaviours that affect 5% of worldwide school-age population. The 5% prevalence rate of ADHD means that 1 in every 20 students has a clinically significant impairment in the ability to pay attention, and maintain focus in a traditional school setting. This disorder therefore affects many children, parents, and teachers, all of whom want effective treatment options.

Children with ADHD are negatively affected in three separate but interconnected realms. First, children with ADHD often have academic difficulties in traditional school settings, where they are required to sit at a desk and complete paper-and-pencil activities. Second, due to their impulsivity, children with ADHD tend to have a hard time making and keeping friendships. Third, they often lack feelings of competence, which leads to low self-esteem. These areas can be considered separately, but they are interrelated and therefore influence each other.

Children with ADHD tend to struggle in school. They are more likely than the average population to need remedial services, and to be placed in special education classes (Daley & Birchwood, 2010). The relationship between ADHD and academic difficulty is clearly related to the chief symptoms of ADHD, namely inattentiveness and impulse control; however, there is more to the relationship than ADHD symptoms alone. Executive functioning, also known as self-regulating skills, has been studied in relation to ADHD and academic performance (Biederman, et al., 2004; Diamantopoulou, Rydell, Thorell, & Bohlin, 2007). Executive functioning deficiencies and ADHD symptoms have both been shown to be independently related to academic performance (Diamantopoulou et al., 2007). Additionally, an interaction between executive functioning deficiencies and ADHD symptoms has been identified (Biederman et al., 2004). This means that, while children with ADHD struggle academically because of their short attention spans and hyperactive behaviour, they also have difficulties because of the executive functioning deficiencies common to children with ADHD (Daley & Birchwood, 2010). It is hard to expect children to be successful in school when they are inattentive and hyperactive due to ADHD, while also having problems with planning and self-regulation due to executive functioning deficiencies (Daley & Birchwood, 2010).

In addition to academic difficulties, children with ADHD often have problems with social relationships inside and outside of the school environment. In fact, difficulty interacting with peers has been noted as one of the most concerning impairments faced by children with ADHD (Huang-Pollock, Mikami, Pfiffner, & McBurnett, 2009). Children with ADHD are no different than other children in regards to their desire to be accepted by their peers and maintain personal relationships with other children. However, children with ADHD are very impulsive and hyperactive, which can result in negative interactions with their peers. Additionally, problems with inattention may limit the opportunities children with ADHD have to learn socially acceptable behaviour, therefore resulting in more negative interactions with peers (Hoza, 2007).

A child's self-esteem is separate from, but closely related to, the academic success and social achievement of the child. It is understandable, then, that anyone who struggles both academically and with peers will have a lowered level of self-esteem. In addition to academic and social deficits, children with ADHD are often subject to reprimand for their hyperactivity and impulsivity, which can act to further lower their self-esteem (Hanc & Brzezinska, 2009). It has been documented that children with higher levels of ADHD symptoms have a lower level of general competency, fewer feelings of possession of knowledge and skills, and a lower level of belief of success in their own work, than children with lower levels of ADHD symptoms (Hanc & Brzezinska, 2009). The cognitions that children with ADHD form in the context of continual failure have been related to the concept of learned helplessness (Milich, 1994). This belief, that

they will fail regardless of their actions, compounds the disadvantages already faced by children with ADHD, and can negatively affect the rest of their lives (Hanc & Brzezinska, 2009).

The inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity of children with ADHD can affect many aspects of their lives. They often have difficulties in academics and in maintaining social relationships, in addition to suffering from low self-esteem. Children who experience deficits in these areas are likely to have extremely negative childhood experiences. For this reason, it is essential that effective treatments are developed and made available to children with ADHD.

Commonly Used Treatments for ADHD

Currently, the most common treatments for ADHD are stimulant medication and behavioural interventions (Daley & Birchwood, 2010). Pharmacological treatments are superior in treating the core symptoms of ADHD (Roman, 2010). Behavioural treatments, such as token economies and behaviour training, are not as effective in treating core symptoms, but they can be used to decrease disruptive behaviour and improve social skills (Roman, 2010).

Medication is effective for 75-90% of children with ADHD (Surgeon General of the United States, 1999, "Treatment," para. 2). The most common medications are the stimulants amphetamine and methylphenidate (Millichap, 2009). These medications work by increasing the concentration of neurotransmitters in the synaptic cleft, the space between neurons in the brain (Millichap, 2009). Children with ADHD have lower than normal levels of the neurotransmitters dopamine and norepinephrine. Increasing these neurotransmitters, through the use of stimulant medication, corrects the imbalance and restores normal motor activity and alertness.

There are many different behavioural interventions; however, not all interventions have empirical data to support their efficacy. Interventions that do have scientific data to support them include the following: parent training, school-based classroom interventions, and cognitive behavioural therapy (Young & Amarasinghe, 2010). A great deal of evidence is available to support the effectiveness of parent training in reducing the symptoms of ADHD; however, success may depend on the age of the child and whether or not the parents of the child also demonstrate ADHD symptoms (Young & Amarasinghe, 2010, p. 122). School-based classroom interventions have also been shown to be effective in controlling behaviour. They usually involve instructing the teacher on how to carry out behavioural interventions, including the daily report card (DRC). The DRC goes home with the student every day, giving parents a detailed report of the behaviours that occurred over the course of the day. Parents are then able to administer rewards and punishments at home, based on the comments from their child's teacher (Fabiano et al., 2010). Cognitive behavioural therapy, although it is mostly used to treat adults, has been shown to be helpful in treating children with social and behavioural problems (Young & Amarasinghe, 2010). It has also been suggested that cognitive behavioural therapy may be an effective treatment of the core symptoms of ADHD in children (Young & Amarshinghe, 2010).

Separately, and in combination, stimulants and behaviour modification treatments work well for many individuals. However, 32-64% of children continue to suffer from symptoms of ADHD even after stimulant medication and behavioural interventions (Halperin & Healey, 2011, p. 622). For this reason, continual research is necessary to identify alternative or additional treatments for those whom medication is insufficient.

Another Option: Physical Activity

Physical activity shows promise in treating some symptoms of ADHD. Children with ADHD have poorer physical coordination than children without ADHD (Harvey et al., 2009; Pedersen & Surburg, 2007). Daily physical activity may help children with ADHD in two ways. First, they may benefit from the physiological changes that physical activity produces. Second, their general self-confidence may increase because of their improved physical ability due to practice.

The extra stimulation of the nervous system and increased blood flow to the brain that results from physical activity can lead to improved mood, ability to focus, alertness, and memory (Rief, 2005). Studies with non-human animals have already shown the benefits of physical activity. Physically active rats are more resistant to learned helplessness than rats that are physically inactive (Greenwood et al., 2003). Physical activity also enhances neural growth and neural plasticity in rats, and cognitive performance and brain health in adult humans (Halperin & Healey, 2011). Although this area of research is in its infancy, the results are beginning to suggest that physical activity may have a positive influence on children with ADHD.

The theory of perceived competence is based on the assumption that children do not feel equally competent in every domain. A child's perceived competence can not be measured on one dimension alone, but rather over three domains: cognitive, social, and physical (Harter, 1982). Increasing physical activity in children who are less physically competent may increase their perceived physical competence, and therefore their general self-esteem.

As a treatment for ADHD, physical activity is a long way from becoming a reality. However, it may be a useful tool if used in collaboration with other treatments. Children may benefit from physical activity in terms of physiological changes, or in terms of increased self-esteem created by improved ability. Regardless, it will be interesting to examine whether physical activity provides a potential buffering effect against the negative cognitions of children with ADHD.

Conclusion

ADHD directly affects 5% of the world's population, while indirectly affecting many more. Parents, caregivers, and educators are all affected by the hyperactivity, impulsivity, and inattentiveness of children suffering with untreated or ineffectively treated ADHD. Children who suffer from ADHD symptoms have academic, social, and self-esteem deficits. Even though pharmacological and behavioural treatments are effective for the majority of those affected, there is still a large portion of the population for whom drugs and behaviour modification are not enough. In these cases, it may be possible to include physical activity as an additional treatment option to control symptoms associated with ADHD.

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George Lancaster is in BU's Graduate Diploma program, with plans to complete his Master of Education in guidance and counselling. Research that he will develop focuses on the effect that physical activity has on the cognitions of children, specifically those with ADHD.

Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Classroom

Geraldine Bator

Abstract

Autism spectrum disorder is a neurological condition that may affect the development of social and communication skills, and behaviour in children. As a result, children with ASD may not be able to function in a regular classroom, when traditional methods of instruction are employed. Educators are encouraged to consider approaches that include visual supports and social stories when planning lessons for children with ASD, in order to assist them in gaining the skills necessary to interact with their peers successfully.

Children with autism spectrum disorder [ASD] experience many difficulties in regular daily functioning, and require special programming. They need to be assessed to determine their current levels of performance in communication and social skills, and behaviour. School support team members need to work together to evaluate daily observations, and to determine the best program of instruction for each child. Approaches that use visual supports and social stories are helpful in developing the areas in which children with ASD experience difficulties.

Characteristics of Children with ASD

Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) demonstrate delayed and/or atypical behaviours, as compared to typical children of the same age. ASD is a "neurological disorder that affects the function of the brain" (Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth [MECY], 2005a, p. 3), characterized by deficits in communication and social skills (Randi, Newman, & Grigorenko, 2010). Individuals may also demonstrate delays in behavioural development, and exhibit atypical behaviours such as hand flapping or rocking (Willis, 2006). The apparent deficits may range from mild to severe, and they may exist along with other disabilities. Communication skills, social skills, and behaviour skills are the three categories of delayed and/or atypical behaviours evident in children with ASD.

In order to communicate effectively, there must be an exchange of information between individuals. Verbal communication is the use of language in a spoken form, while nonverbal communication involves the exchange of meaning without spoken language. In nonverbal communication, information is gained from methods other than spoken words, such as body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, or implied meaning (Winner & Crooke, 2009). Children with ASD may exhibit delayed spoken language skills (MECY, 2005a; Randi et al., 2010), and insufficient communication skills. These children may not be able to communicate with words; may not initiate interactions, especially social interactions (Willis, 2006); may confuse the proper use of pronouns; and may have abnormal "pitch, stress, rate, rhythm, and intonation" (MECY, 2005a, p. 10). They may use language to communicate in a nonfunctional manner (Willis, 2006). Children with ASD are also challenged when attempting to communicate through a nonverbal mode of communication (MECY, 2005a). These communication deficiencies make it difficult for the children to interact with peers and adults in the classroom, since they lack the ability to communicate with other individuals.

In addition to difficulties with the use of language, children with ASD may have limited receptive communication skills. Receptive communication refers to the ability to process information that has been received (Flowers, 2002). For children with ASD, the difficulty occurs when attempting to transfer words into meaning. These children may not have the ability to attach meaning to verbal language, may show little interest in a conversation, or may "give insufficient attention to the speaker" (MECY, 2005a, p. 10). Nonverbal communication further complicates the message. As a result, the message that was intended to be received may be

lost or misunderstood by the individuals with ASD, due to the limitations in receptive communication skills.

Children with ASD may experience difficulty with the use of expressive communication, as well. Expressive communication refers to the ability to use language to communicate, or to send a message to other individuals (Willis, 2006). Most children with ASD experience difficulties with verbal language; for some, the ability to communicate with words may never develop (MECY, 2005a). For those who are able to use speech to communicate, the words spoken may not be practical in a given setting (Willis, 2006). Such individuals may use language in a manner that is socially dysfunctional, such as echolalia. Echolalia is the repetition of a word or phrase that has just been heard. In some instances, the use of such phrases may be delayed (Willis, 2006), such that the words or phrases are repeated some time after being heard. Other difficulties may be evident when attempting to respond nonverbally, using body language to communicate, continuing a conversation, or maintaining a conversation (MECY, 2005a, p. 11). As a result, the messages sent to others may not convey the needs or wants of the individuals.

Along with communication difficulties, children with ASD may have difficulty in developing age-appropriate social skills, and they may exhibit social impairments such as social avoidance, social indifference, and social awkwardness (Willis, 2006). Typical children usually learn social skills by observing others in social situations (Willis, 2006). The acquired skills are demonstrated when the children communicate with other individuals. However, children with ASD experience difficulty gathering social cues by watching others (Willis, 2006), and they often have limited social relationship skills (Winner & Crooke, 2009). Furthermore, the social delays are complicated by the delays involved in the development of communication skills.

Social avoidance is one type of social impairment that may be evident in children with ASD. The avoidance of a social situation by evincing behaviours that are not normally acceptable is referred to as social avoidance (Wallin, 2001-2004). Children with ASD may attempt to escape from a social situation by hiding, throwing tantrums, or shying away from others (Willis, 2006). These behaviours may be reactions to being overstimulated by certain situations. As a result, children with ASD may attempt to avoid social interactions with others altogether.

Social indifference is another social impairment that is common in children with ASD. When children behave as if others around them do not exist, they are displaying social indifference (Willis, 2006). These children may appear deaf, may not appear to be listening, tend not to generate facial expressions, avoid eye contact, or may not return the affection of other individuals (MECY, 2005a). Often, they do not attempt to interact with others. Social indifference is a social impairment in which children do not seek social interactions.

Higher functioning children who engage in interactions with others may display a third type of social impairment, known as social awkwardness (Willis, 2006). These children may appear awkward in a social situation (Winner & Crooke, 2009), because they do not follow the rules of social conduct when initiating or conducting a conversation. Awkward behaviours include standing very close to another child, or stroking another child's arm or shoulder (MECY, 2005a). When they do participate in a conversation, the children tend to focus on their own topics of interest, and they will ignore conversations that do not focus on their own interests (Willis, 2006). Of the many skills required for effective social conduct, the ability to relate to peers in a positive way, and the ability to adjust to meet the social demands of varying situations, are frequently absent for individuals with ASD (MECY, 2005a). Thus, the children who do share in conversations with other typical children appear awkward in their abilities and performance.

ASD is also characterized by behavioural deficits and atypical behaviours. The deficits in behaviour include difficulty with attention and motivation (MECY, 2005a). The atypical behaviours include attachments to unusual objects, attachment to parts of inanimate objects, repetitive body movements, a limited range of interests, "a need to follow routines in precise detail," and the exhibition of distress, such as panic or anxiety attacks, due to changes in routine or the environment" (MECY, 2005a, pp. 13-16). Challenging behaviours that last for lengthy periods of time, injure the individual or others nearby, or cause damage to the environment may

also be present (Willis, 2006,). Furthermore, the strategies that are used to deal with typical behavioural issues may not be effective when dealing with the behaviours of children with ASD. Therefore, the type of behaviours that are present, and the presence of atypical behaviours, affect the implementation of programming in the regular classroom.

Instructional Strategies for Children with ASD

The characteristics associated with ASD influence the planning and preparation of instructional activities for these individuals. These children may not respond to the traditional methods used for typical children in the same classroom. As a result, the classroom teacher, along with the school team comprised of the educational assistant, the resource teacher, administrator, counsellor, and parents, is responsible for designing and implementing a program that will focus on the individual needs of the children with ASD (MECY, 2005c). An individual education program is required to address deficits in communication skills, social skills, and behaviour, when these children are included in a regular classroom setting (Eldar, Talmor, & Wolf-Zukerman, 2010). Inclusion refers to teaching children with special needs together with typical peers in the same classroom (Eldar et al., 2010). Since children with ASD exhibit a variety of deficits not present in typical children, instructional approaches should include visuals to build communication (Arthur-Kelly, Sigafoos, Green, Mathisen, & Arthur-Kelly, 2009), and social stories to develop social skills and behaviour (MECY, 2005b).

Visual supports are especially useful for individuals who have difficulty with verbal language (MECY, 2005b), since individuals with ASD are able to process visual information (Ganz, 2007) and "they learn more easily" (Ganz, 2007, p. 249) through the use of pictures. Because they may have difficulty with verbal comprehension (MECY, 2005b), there is less reliance on the use of language to communicate. Visual supports can be used by the children as text to "express needs or wants," reveal "sensory preferences," display emotions, and seek information (Arthur-Kelly et al., 2009, p. 1476). As the learner uses the visuals to respond to others, the supports become interactive between the communicative partners, and the children with ASD may begin to develop receptive and expressive skills (Arthur-Kelly et al., 2009). Other benefits from the use of visuals include increased time on task, independence, development of concepts, and the prevention of disruptive behaviours (Ganz, 2007). The individuals with ASD achieve success with the addition of visual supports in their programming.

A variety of visual supports can be used to share information: "visual schedules, visually organized tasks" or activities, "written or pictorial scripts, rule reminder cards, and visual task analyses" (Ganz & Flores, 2008, p. 926), and cue cards for social skills (Willis, 2006). Of these, visual schedules are highly recommended, since the schedules incorporate pictures to relay information about daily routines to the children. In order for the children to be successful, they must understand the daily routines and learn the expectations (Willis, 2006). Visual schedules teach them to understand rules, routines, expectations, and the associated social conventions.

The visuals that can be incorporated into daily schedules can vary from simple object schedules, to photo schedules, to line drawings, to the use of text to relay a message, based on the developmental age of the children. By grade two, many of these children are ready to use a partial-day line drawing schedule with word cards attached to the drawings. The schedules are located where they are accessible throughout the day, so the children can refer to them regularly. As a task is completed, or an event has occurred, the children become responsible for identifying the drawing associated with the task, associating the drawing to a word for the task, and placing the drawing and word into a completed pocket or pile. As words are introduced for the drawing, the children begin to develop sight vocabulary. These words may even become a list of spelling words. The visuals incorporated into the schedule depend on the growth of the children during the school year, and they change according to the progress of each child.

Various schedules have been successful in the primary classroom for developing communication skills: vertical or horizontal strip schedules, book schedules, and magnetic

schedules. Some children in my grade two classroom have even used a necklace schedule successfully. This portable schedule travels with the children, since the pictures are laminated and worn around the neck. The schedule is effective for transitioning between classes that occur outside of the regular classroom, such as music, library, or physical education. It provides an easy-to-follow routine, and it presents a required task and choice activities. The children develop communication skills by selecting and showing a picture, especially if they are incapable of conveying this message with words.

Social stories, integrated into the individual education plan, are another effective strategy when planning for ASD. Social stories can be used to teach a social skill, explain the behaviours involved in the skill, introduce the routine for development of the skill, and describe the environment in which the skill will occur (Kokina & Kern, 2010; Schneider & Goldstein, 2009). In addition to improving social skills, the stories can also be used to reduce inappropriate behaviours (Kokina & Kern, 2010). Before a social story is created, all members of the team must carefully observe the child, in order to determine areas of concern and assess the needs to be addressed in the social story (Willis, 2006). Insight can be gained from more than one point of view when the perspectives of all members of the school team are included. The social situations, which will be addressed in the social stories, are defined in the individual education plan, and the expected outcomes are written to set personal goals.

Once the area of concern has been identified, a short story called the social story is created. In order for the story to be effective, it must describe the social situation by providing information about the setting of the situation, the activities included, and the people involved in the activity (MECY, 2005b, p. 9). Also, the sentences within the social story must provide details about the emotions, thoughts, or reactions of others, and the desired responses must be identified as directive sentences ("Social Stories Therapy," 2009). The stories are usually short, with one or two concepts on each page, and they are written so that the individuals can comprehend the information within the story (MECY, 2005b). The social story is shared with the child during a scheduled time each day. For younger children, the story may be read more than once during the day. The effectiveness of the story will need to be monitored. The elements within the story may need to be altered, or a new story may be created, when a story is mastered.

In my grade two classroom, I have used social stories that address both social skills and behavioural concerns. Some stories deal with distress about personal space, the use of proper manners, and initiating conversations with peers. Other stories address aggressive behaviour toward peers in the classroom. The stories are read by an educational assistant at specified intervals, three times a day, and either just before or just after an event. Additional steps, such as picture cues, have been added to remind the students about the steps involved in the process once the stories have become familiar. The social stories have been used effectively to address personal social and behavioural concerns of children with ASD.

Conclusion

Children with ASD exhibit a variety of deficits and a range of abilities. Thus, careful consideration needs to be given to the instructional planning for these children. Instructional approaches that include visual supports and social stories can help to develop the required skills. Through careful planning, children with ASD may overcome their difficulties, and may learn to interact successfully with their peers.

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Building Literacy Skills in Adult EAL Students

Elena Dupuis

Abstract

English as an additional language (EAL) adult literacy learners have special needs and unique characteristics. The various challenges they face include decoding, comprehending, and developing basic skills for reading and writing. At the same time, it is extremely important to understand EAL adult literacy programming, as the right approaches for EAL adult literacy learners literacy learners might become a turning point in their future learning. EAL students bring positive experiences, strengths, and needs to the adult EAL classroom. Teachers need to acknowledge and address these strengths and needs.

When assessing English as an additional language (EAL) students and their literacy skills, it is difficult to determine which combination of teaching and learning activities will bring the best results. Adult EAL students own unique characteristics and abilities to handle the appropriate learning material. Building literacy skills can present many challenges. In addition to learning English, EAL learners face some challenges of developing basic skills for decoding, comprehending, and producing print (Condelli &Wrigley, 2006). EAL educators need to understand what "literacy" is, who EAL literacy learners are, what challenges EAL literacy students face, and which approaches will achieve the best possible results among Adult EAL learners.

Before analyzing the best ways to teach EAL adult literacy students, one needs to understand what literacy is. Literacy refers to the skill base that helps people to participate and adapt to certain changes in the workplace, the home, and community life (Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy, 2008). It also provides a foundation for further learning that includes "written and communication skills (reading text, document use and writing), numeracy, thinking skills to learn and solve problems, oral communication and interpersonal skills" (Manitoba Advanced Education and Literacy, 2008, p. 6). However, this definition can be extended into a broader term, whereby literacy learners, including EAL literacy learners, need to have the ability to work with computers (The Centre for Literacy, 2008). Therefore, the definition of literacy is quite complex, as it does not include just the abilities to write and read. In fact, as second language teaching has moved away from an emphasis on grammar alone toward emphasis on communication, literacy has changed its focus on skills to a focus on meaning (Guth &Wrigley, 1992).

In order to understand the complexity of the literacy issue, one needs to realize who EAL literacy learners are. In the literature, individuals are usually categorized as EAL literacy learners, based on their level of education and native language alphabet (The Centre for Literacy, 2008). The category of ESL literacy learners may also include people with up to eight years of schooling who have not acquired "'study skills' and . . . anyone who comes from a country with a non-Roman alphabet" (The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000, p. ii). It is obvious that EAL adult literacy learners will differ from one another. In skills and personal background, Ricardo (a pseudonym), for example, has only six years of schooling in his home country. He has been living in Canada for the last eight years. During these years, he did not formally attend an English literacy program, but chose to join the regular EAL classes. He is competent enough to maintain a basic conversation and shows good results in listening and speaking. Despite the fact that Ricardo can read a little, he has absolutely no writing skills that would allow him to develop further. The latest tests show that his ability to write stops when he sees a challenge (spelling a word or expressing some thoughts). The fact that he does not have necessary study skills would prevent him from exploring opportunities for self-study and advancing at a faster pace. Therefore, the individual abilities, as well as formal literacy classes,

play a large role in achieving positive results. Literacy and EAL teachers are aware of the fact that the less education students have, the more challenges and obstacles they will encounter on their way to full literacy (Guth & Wrigley, 1992).

The challenges that adult EAL learners face are different and special. Some students may have come from politically unstable countries, which means they may lack education; others may experience problems with reading (dyslexia); and still others may be physically disabled, which might affect their reading, listening and comprehension skills (Guth & Wrigley, 1992; Beatty, Mikulecky, & Smith-Burke, 2009). Immigrants from various countries, and refugees with low literacy in their own language, will experience extreme disadvantages in a culture that is governed by print (Folinsbee, 2007). Other challenges include their different approaches to learning new material, which affects their ability to comprehend a foreign language. Thus, they tend either to accept the teaching methods or to reject them completely. In addition, some students might "resist the notion that learning literacy in their own language will help them to learn English, especially if they see acquisition of English as their primary goal" (Guth & Wrigley, 1992, p. 26). Another challenge is the multilevel classroom environment. As it is complicated to decode text in a new language and impossible to comprehend text in a language one does not know, different levels of English proficiency have to be taken into account, especially if all students want to make progress in literacy skills (Condelli & Wrigley, 2006).

Because immigrant adults have a great deal of knowledge of the "real world" (Guth & Wrigley, 1992, p. 27), they bring a wealth of experience to class. Furthermore, these adult students are eager to learn, go back to school, and start from the beginning in a new country. As self-directed, practical, and resourceful learners, adults have "reservoirs of experience to help them learn new things; and they want to know why something needs to be learned and how it will be applicable to their lives" (Florez & Terrill, 2003, para. 8). Thus, the correct start is crucial, because EAL adult literacy learners come to English classes with a "knowing the world" (Alamprese, 2004, p. 263) package that, if approached correctly, can bring very good results in learning.

Adult education should therefore be oriented toward using functional context material. In teaching reading, for example, it is essential to focus on the students' particular world experience (DaSilva Iddings, Risko, & Rampulla, 2009) and make the connection to life outside the classroom (Wrigley, 2003). This connection means bringing in content such as flyers, teacher's notes, utility bills, application forms, and résumé sample, because this kind of material contains information of practical interest and importance to the learner (The Centre for Literacy, 2008, p. 5). A critical element is to find material suitable to the student's English level. Language input far beyond the learner's level (for example, original movies, and TV and radio programs) will result in no comprehension, and, therefore, no persistence by the learner (Yang, 2005, para. 5). Instead, the teachers need to find the most suitable materials for their learners.

A highly effective approach for adult learners is based on the "whole language approach" (Huerta-Macias, 1993, para. 2), as it focuses on the social and cognitive aspects of the language. Whole language teachers build on learners' existing knowledge and work with learners on authentic reading and writing activities, such as reading brochures, a bus schedule, utility bills, writing letters, or working on extended writing projects (Guth & Wrigley, 1992, p. 23). Reading becomes a very important element not only in building literacy skills for comprehension and speaking, but also for linking real-life vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling. Focusing on pronunciation, including rhythm and expression, develops phonemic awareness and fluency, listening comprehension, and verbal expression (Condelli, Cronen, & Silver-Pacuilla, 2009). Spelling is filled with hidden challenges for EAL learners: it is very difficult, confusing, and not always exciting for students. The extra practice that these students need has to be made interesting and rewarding, by means of such activities as bingo, group work wherein the words are discussed and spelled out loud, and linking particular words with real-life examples. The spelling test results for Ricardo, for example, have dramatically increased due to implementation

of these techniques and additional practice. Thus, using authentic material in a whole language approach helps students to reach their best possible results.

Students need practice not only in spelling, but in all literacy skills. Sometimes, it is easy to forget how much practice is needed before literacy and the English language become "internalized" or "automatized" (Wrigley, 2003, para. 10). Students who are given both sufficient time on task with a particular component, and a chance to encounter that component in various ways (reading, writing, hands-on activities, discussing their reading), usually show improved results. They need to "interact" (Wrigley, 2003, para. 12) with print and practise it, as they benefit from different kinds of experiences that reinforce language and literacy skills.

Writing also plays a significant role in developing strategic literacy skills. Writing instruction should be much more than filling out forms or responding to externally defined norms, because the "functional approach limits both the kinds of writing students can do and the roles for which it prepares them" (Wrigley, 2003, para. 5). Nevertheless, these small elements are crucial in building literacy blocks of any writing component. As students progress, the teacher's focus can shift to serious and complex forms of writing: free writing in journals, diaries, and stories. In dialogue journals, for example, students write about their thoughts, experiences, reactions to texts or issues of importance to them, and teachers respond to the content of students' entries by sharing their own experiences, ideas, and reactions, and by modelling correct usage (Auerbach, 1999). Authentic communication, such as the dialogue journal activity, is highly effective with adult EAL learners (Larrotta, 2009). These personalized strategies give students the freedom to express their own thoughts and ideas in writing.

In other writing contexts as well, EAL learners need opportunities to write about topics that are relevant to their lives and to feel that their writing has value. Including writing with content at every level of instruction will help learners to find their own style in their new language and develop the ability to communicate effectively in various contexts (Bello, 1997). Thus, the approaches to cultivating writing skills are critical in EAL adult literacy programs.

EAL learning activities should be based on individual students' abilities to comprehend certain material (Florez & Terrill, 2003, para. 13). For early literacy learners, for example, vocabulary-building activities should include the following: matching pictures to words, using flash cards, implementing concentration games, labeling, attempting to write vocabulary journals, using picture dictionaries, and playing bingo activities. More advanced learners will benefit from activities such as dialogues, retelling a story, finishing a story, class surveys, phonics exercises, unscrambling words, and hands-on building of sentences. The goal is to ensure that students develop a variety of skills to acquire English literacy at an appropriate level.

Thus, building a variety of teaching activities has become increasingly important in developing successful EAL adult literacy programs. EAL students bring diverse strengths and needs to the adult EAL classroom, and they require appropriate instruction that acknowledges and addresses these strengths and needs. It is important to engage these learners in challenging and relevant topics, and to provide them with tools that they can use to meet their responsibilities and goals in life.

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Effects of Childhood Emotional Abuse

Barbara Murphy

Abstract

Emotional abuse can have an enormous impact on children. Its effects can be equivalent to, or exceed, those of other forms of abuse. In today's classrooms, educators can expect to encounter numerous children who are exposed to this form of violence in their lives. It is essential that those who work with child are aware of the signs and symptoms of this excessive mistreatment. Through education and guidance, teachers and other educational staff can become proactive and empower their students who endure and suffer from emotional abuse.

Childhood emotional abuse is the harming of a child's sense of self. It can include intimidation, social seclusion, exploitation, or regularly making unfair demands; furthermore, it may include terrorization of the child(ren), or exposure to family violence (Department of Justice Canada, 2001). The impact of emotional abuse is both overlooked and understudied, because it is considered to be less noticeable or damaging than physical or sexual abuse; however, emotional maltreatment is as equally damaging as other forms of abuse (Zurbriggen, Gobin, & Freyd, 2010; Berzenski & Yates, 2010). Many children are exposed to this style of maltreatment on a regular basis in their homes or communities (Bourassa, 2007). It is imperative that those who work directly with children, especially teachers and other school staff, recognize the signs and understand the effects of emotional abuse so that help can be provided in a timely manner to prevent further negative consequences.

A common phrase relating to dealing with bullies is "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me!" Unfortunately, in cases of emotional abuse, this statement is not supportive, and the words do hurt and may even cause long-lasting damage (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). As a polite society, we are taught to ignore the bullies around us in the hope that they will go away. Sometimes, the bullies do go away, but all too often they will stay and the abuse worsens (Lueders, 2002). What starts out as thoughtless words spoken in anger may escalate with more malicious intent. It is important to teach children that the "sticks and stones" phrase is wrong, that words can hurt, and that it is appropriate to defend oneself in abusive situations.

Sometimes, emotional abuse is overlooked because of what is seen as "normal" in a culture or society. There are "differences in parenting norms across cultures as well as individual differences in children's perceptions (e.g., what is considered 'yelling' in one family or by one child might not be perceived similarly in another family or by another child)" (Riggs & Kaminski, 2010, p. 75). Some cultures use emotional abuse as a disciplinary tool, and children may be taught that to be assertive or to question an authoritarian figure is impolite and unacceptable (Lewis, 2010). In many families, it is common thought that children should be seen and not heard. In these types of families, finding support to help the victim can be difficult and change may take time because it requires a change in habits and ways of thinking that have been considered to be traditional for many generations.

Emotional abuse does not leave bruises, marks, or physical pain like other forms of abuse. The victims can feel like they have been beaten, yet they have never been physically touched by the abuser. The scars left by emotional abuse, though hidden, are still very much present. The effects can be long term and are often the core of all other forms of abuse (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). The consequences are "tangible, quantifiable [and a] risk to healthy development" (Berzenski & Yates, 2010). When a child is physically or sexually abused, the bruises and pain may heal, but it is the negative emotions associated with these forms of violence that can cause enduring emotional damage.

Experiencing emotional abuse can have damaging and lasting consequences on children's images of themselves and can lead to interpersonal problems in the future (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). These problems can include anxiety, depression, dissociation, and relationship difficulties (McPherson, 2002). Classic signs of anxiety include worry, fear of certain situations, and feelings of panic, sadness, or hopelessness. Depression is generally characterized by a loss of interest in socializing, withdrawal from friends, frequent crying, lack of enthusiasm, and thoughts of suicide or death. Temporary amnesia about certain situations, or periods of time is a classic sign of dissociation. Relationship difficulties can arise from emotional abuse, such as difficulty relating to others and social phobias. Common symptoms can include constantly being self-conscious or worried about what others are thinking about them. It is important for people working with children to be able to recognize these signs of abuse and follow proper procedures in order to reduce the long-lasting negative effects.

Children learn from those around them, and tend to imitate what they see. In cases of abuse, this theory is accurate (Milletich et al., 2010). If children live in an abusive environment, they will "come to believe that violence is acceptable for resolving conflicts and are, consequently, likely to use violence in dealing with the people around them" (Bourassa, 2007, p. 697). Aggression will be seen by these children as acceptable behaviour in future relationships due to what they have witnessed and believed to be normal in their environment growing up (Milletich et al., 2010). Counselling and educating children, and modelling appropriate emotional behaviour, are a few techniques that can be used to stop this cycle of abuse.

Emotional regulation is important for healthy relationships (Berzenski & Yates, 2010). Being able to understand the difference between helpful emotions and harmful emotions, and to enhance or reduce these emotions as needed, are important life skills. Childhood emotional abuse may cause "interference with the ability to develop adaptive coping styles, particularly with respect to emotionally charged situations or contexts" (Berzenski & Yates, 2010, p. 182). When involved in social, and often intimate, relationships, a teen who has suffered childhood emotional abuse may have difficulty reacting to these new emotionally challenging situations in an acceptable manner. Difficulty with emotional regulation can lead to issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, smoking, or inappropriate sexual behaviour. For these reasons, it is important for those who work with children to be aware of signs of emotional abuse, so they can teach the skills needed for the victims to develop healthy emotional regulation.

Early childhood emotional abuse may well perpetuate future violent situations (Berzenski & Yates, 2010). It predicates "relationship violence victimization, and perpetration, above and beyond the contributions of childhood physical abuse, sexual abuse, and domestic violence exposure" (Berzenski & Yates, 2010, p. 193). Dating aggression or victimization, and intimate partner violence, are examples of possible negative outcomes that can develop due to childhood emotional abuse. Because of these findings, those who work with children need to be educated on the signs and symptoms of emotional abuse to better diagnose, identify, and effectively deal with victims in a timely manner, so as to prevent future violent situations.

Children develop a sense of "self" through early attachment relationships (Riggs, 2010, p. 9). Unfortunately, the abuse children experience often originates from these same pinnacle relationships with their parents, siblings, friends, and teachers. The effects can vary, depending on "the frequency with which it is delivered" (Zurbriggen et al., 2010, p. 219). The closer relationship the perpetrator has with the victim, the greater the opportunity for repeated exposure, thus the greater the chance that the emotional abuse will bring about long-term effects.

Unlike the other forms, emotional abuse has a considerably significant effect when it originates from someone who has an emotional closeness to the victim (Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Children generally want to please those who are in their lives, so when their actions or feelings are met with negativity, such as anger, or sarcasm, they are left feeling shocked, stunned, and emotionally beaten. Without an emotional connection, they may simply be words, but with an emotional bond, those words transform into feelings such as disappointment,

frustration, or unhappiness. If a complete stranger were the perpetrator, the abuse would have less emotional impact, because the victims would know that they would be unlikely to see that person again; therefore there would be little need to please a stranger. However, if the same insults were to come from someone close to the victim, such as a parent or a teacher, the impact could be significant.

In cases of domestic violence, children may be exposed both directly in the event, as witnesses, by hearing or intervening in the violence, or indirectly by experiencing the after effects (Child Welfare Information Gateway, n.d.). Nationally, between 1994 and 1999, "approximately half a million Canadian children saw or heard violence directed toward a parent" (Bunge & Locke, 2000, "Spousal Violence," para 8). Exposure to domestic violence "contributed significantly to explaining violence perpetration" (Berzenski & Yates, 2010, p. 190) in late adolescence. Whether the children have been exposed directly or indirectly, domestic violence is likely to have some negative effects on their lives.

Statistics relating to emotional abuse are difficult to find, as many cases go unreported (Department of Justice Canada, 2001). However, it has been reported that 44% of children in the United States will be victims of abuse; with 12% of those being emotionally abused (Iannelli, 2010, para. 3). In Canada's most recent study, "emotional maltreatment was the primary category of substantiated maltreatment in 14% of [abuse] cases" (Trocme et al., 2003, "Categories of Maltreatment," para. 1). Perhaps with better education, more cases will be reported and the victims will have the chance to receive the help that they need.

In an average school classroom, there will be from two to six children who have been exposed to violence in their homes (Bourassa, 2007, p. 691). For this reason, it is important for teachers and other educational staff to recognize the signs and symptoms of emotional abuse. By providing school staff with "information on screening for abuse, approaches to use with teens, . . . how to recognize warning signs, develop nonjudgmental listening skills, know when to report to authorities, develop safety plan with the child, etc." (Bourassa, 2007, p. 699), they will become positive champions for the victimized child. With emotional abuse being insidious in the lives of too many children, teachers have become the front-line advocates for their students. Despite being a polite and empathetic society, childhood emotional abuse continues to escalate. As educators, we must take every opportunity to arm ourselves with knowledge and resources to educate and empower all of our students.

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Effects of Childhood Maltreatment

Mark Findlay

Abstract

Childhood maltreatment has had a damaging effect on many people in our society. The abuser strips the victim's innocence and leaves him or her to maneuver through a lifetime of harmful residue. Creating a healthy societal awareness and offering effective counselling solutions are necessary to minimize the damage of maltreatment.

Childhood maltreatment consists of physical and/or emotional treatment that creates ongoing extreme negative emotions from the event. Childhood maltreatment touches a large number of victims and has a number of negative effects that carry on throughout the person's life. In the United States there were nearly "800,000 verified cases of child maltreatment in 2007" (Twardosz, 2010, p. 59); this figure does not include all other child maltreatment that is not reported. Children are innocent victims in these cases, and many of the damaging effects of child maltreatment linger for a long time and are often never overcome. Maltreatment has a number of negative health effects on people. Shame is a harmful emotion that causes people to withdraw from society. To compound that, victims of maltreatment have a difficult time trusting people and developing close friendships, which further increases their feeling of isolation. Anxiety and depression are also negative side-effects of child maltreatment. Creating an awareness of the healthy benefits of rehabilitation in society is necessary. People who seek re-habilitation need consistent positive reinforcement, support, and effective counselling in order to be successful. Successful counselling improves the victims' quality of life and outlook for the future, thus reducing the negative effects of maltreatment.

Shame is a harmful emotion that can stem from childhood maltreatment. In a healthy home, children believe that their parents care for them unwaveringly. Children believe that their parents care unwaveringly for them. Children have an innate need to believe that this is true in their relationship. When children are abused and their overriding need to know that their parents care unconditionally for them is compromised, it leads children to believe that there is something deeply wrong with them. This, in turn, imposes a lifelong sense of shame on them (Webb, 2007). Although maltreatment is the fault of the perpetrator, the victims feel that there is something wrong with them. The victims internalize the negative treatment and allow it to diminish their confidence and chances of success. The individuals carry on, in a downward spiral, thinking that no one else would want them. Shame is the natural response of the innocent when maltreatment occurs.

Shame is an emotion that causes the victims to withdraw from their friends, and from society, and, as a result, the individuals are left feeling further isolated and worthless. This reoccurring feeling of shame is passed on from generation to generation until the act of maltreatment can be broken. Child maltreatment causes shame, and this emotion becomes the curse on the family, passed on from one generation to the next (Webb, 2007). Shame leaves people feeling helpless and powerless. The victims then transfer their shameful abusive tendencies onto their children, and the cycle continues. Victims must be able to overcome their feelings of shame if they are going to be able to successfully break the abuse cycle and become an active part of a healthy society.

Maltreatment damages the victim's personal relationships and ability to trust people. Youth who have been maltreated run a higher rate of relationship difficulties throughout their lives (Bank & Burraston, 2001; Ehrensaft et al., 2003) and have a higher risk of becoming involved in domestic violence as adults (Wolfe, Crooks, Chiodo, & Jaffe, 2009). When close relationships, which should offer security and warmth, are riddled with maltreatment, the victim is filled with uncertainty for future relationships. It is disheartening to know that the majority of these children

are maltreated by their parents (Taylor, Guterman, & Rathouz, 2009). The victims of parental maltreatment must establish new healthy relationships with people who genuinely care for and respect them. People who have good interpersonal communication have the most friends and tend to be the happiest percentage of society (Adler, Proctor, & Towne, 2005). With every successful relationship that is established, trust and faith in humankind will be restored.

Children who have been abused develop a number of negative health effects, including anxiety and depression, and are at a higher risk to develop destructive disorders throughout their lives. Negative disorders that affect this group are anxiety, depression, interpersonal problems, hyper arousal, and dissociation (Lawson, 2009). Anxiety is a disruptive disorder that causes people to further isolate themselves from society, and causes disruptive thought patterns. Any situation that heightens anxiety levels will be avoided by the sufferer. Anxiety disorders create a flood of emotion that induces a dysfunction state of mind (Siegel, 1999). Anxious feelings cause a person to function in a limited capacity. In an uncomfortable situation, anxiety will be the main focus and everything else will seem insignificant. All of the negative health effects caused by maltreatment limit the potential of the individual. Effective counselling services are the only good option for victims to overcome the decreased quality of life caused by anxiety and depression.

Childhood maltreatment takes away a person's ability to perform everyday basic tasks. Early life maltreatment leads victims into a breakdown of fundamental self-regulatory functions (Ford, 2005), and these negative effects reduce the chances of the person developing a healthy lifestyle. Parents provide the fundamental building blocks that create a strong foundation for their children. A predictable, caring, and consistent parent is the most important influence in the development of children who are resilient, because this security promotes the attainment of self-regulatory capacities and promotes a secure attachment that stops the impact of trauma (Lawson, 2009). These positive characteristics describing an effective caregiver are the best defense that children have to create a strong identity that will serve them well during life's challenges. A person who is not reinforced this way struggles more with everyday problems. In contrast everyday challenges that seem almost unbearable to a victim of maltreatment may be easily handled by those with an unburdened past.

Depression develops in people who have been victims of childhood abuse. As time passes following the maltreatment, victims who do not have a chance to deal with their negative emotions become bitter and angry. When anger goes untreated for a long period of time, it destroys a person from the inside and eventually surfaces in the form of depression (Pelusi, 2006). Victims of childhood maltreatment have a strong correlation with adult onset of depression (Webb, 2007), which includes a number of negative feelings. Victims need to meet with a counsellor to work through the horrific events of their past. In my experience, bringing these events to light is the only way to deal with the emotional baggage from the event. Having a counsellor to assist in unlocking these memories is the best way to allow these difficult memories to surface. The longer people carry the injustice alone, the more deeply they will be affected. Depression will develop within victims of childhood mistreatment if they do not re-habilitate.

General awareness and credible counselling resources are crucial in helping children to deal with mistreatment issues. The sooner people can cope with their issues, the better off they will be. The longer the time between the abuse and treatment, the greater the amount of time and effort needed to curb the negative effects of maltreatment (Lawson, 2009). It is necessary to reach people in a manner that will empower them to retake their lives. The earlier the intervention, the sooner people can fully enjoy their lives, and the fewer economic and human resources needed for complete rehabilitation. Implementing awareness at the secondary level is necessary to reach a large group of those who are affected. Although rehabilitation takes time and effort, it makes the remaining time much more enjoyable. A healthy general awareness of this issue will give victims hope, which may empower them to seek rehabilitation. Victims need

to understand that they are not alone. When a general awareness of the topic of maltreatment is created in society and credible counselling services are offered, victims may retake their lives.

Disclosing traumatic experiences is an awkward task; therefore, it is important to have a capable counsellor and suitable environment for the participants. The counsellor needs to supply a comfortable and trusting emotional environment, so the victims feel safe and secure while disclosing their most personal material, which is most important during interpersonal victimization cases (Lawson, 2009). Victims are often maltreated by the people who are closest to them in their lives. Tainting a familiar relationship creates distrust for the sufferers, making it even more difficult for them to trust people and share their most protected shameful experiences. Each counsellor needs to get to know the client so that the client feels comfortable and has confidence in the counsellor. Building a relationship with the individual is the first step toward an effective counselling meeting. The victim's faith in people will be restored when the counsellor possesses desirable traits and creates a comfortable environment for the meeting.

Often, victims have been keeping their maltreatment a secret for years and are very apprehensive about telling anyone about their experiences. The best counsellor is totally non-judgmental and empathetic. An effective counsellor must have a keen interest in the person, be authentic, and must be genuinely interested in other people (Lister, 2008). Humans have an innate ability to measure the sincerity in other people. If the patients sense insincerity, they will shut down and lose faith in that professional. Patients are fragile and need complete genuineness and empathy throughout their meetings. Counsellors must be ethical and show complete discretion with every case. They must never reveal what patients say or do within the counselling meetings. When a positive environment is offered and the patient is supported in a caring manner, success of the victim's disclosure is maximized.

Child maltreatment damages many people in our society. Shame leads people to experience isolation from society and is a leading cause for continuing the cycle of maltreatment. People who have been maltreated have difficulty forming personal relationships, and they need help from counsellors who are ethically sound and caring. Anxiety and depression can also be minimized or eliminated through effective counselling. Creating an awareness of the healthy benefits of rehabilitation in society is necessary to encourage victims to step forward for help. Using social services to generate awareness and facilitate rehabilitation with professionals will create relief for some victims. Child maltreatment will continue to occur in our society; however, a comfortable awareness and sound counselling services can help victims to experience relief from its damaging effects.

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The Need for Leadership Development Programs

Debra Loewen

Abstract

The world of education is changing rapidly, and leadership demands are increasing. Many school divisions find themselves facing a shortage of leaders who are qualified and willing to take on the complex challenges of the leadership role. Leadership development programs offer a way to prepare and encourage aspiring principals by creating a network of peer support and examining issues related to instructional leadership. School divisions will be well served by offering leadership development programs that will attract new leaders and encourage current leaders to remain.

At a time when the task of leading a school is becoming increasingly more complex and challenging, many countries, Canada among them, are facing a potential leadership crisis. The world of education is in a constant state of change, and school divisions are in need of highly competent and qualified leaders who are able to deal with the high expectations surrounding school effectiveness and student learning (Normore, 2004). Strong support is required to sustain principals who are currently in the role and to attract people who are capable of meeting the continuing challenges. Leadership development programs, with an emphasis on developing, training, and supporting leaders, offer a potential solution to the need for school leaders who can pilot their school through complex times.

The shortage of school leaders is a growing problem in school divisions and districts in Canada, the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand (Cranston, 2007). A high number of retirements among principals and vice principals is a contributing factor to this shortage (Williams, 2001). This "massive exodus" (Fullan, 2005, pp. 32-33) from the profession, coupled with fewer people applying for leadership positions, is leaving schools with a limited pool of candidates from which to choose. In rural areas and those areas struggling economically, this challenge is particularly evident (MacBeath, 2006). A recent job posting for the principalship of a new middle years school in rural Manitoba resulted in applications from only two candidates. Concerns related to finding quality leaders, as the pool of applicants continues to shrink, are widespread.

As the pool of applicants for the principalship grows smaller, it is increasingly important to consider and to understand the reasons for the lack of interest in pursuing school leadership roles. Among these reasons are the changes in the nature of the role, the lack of training for the role, the increase in accountability, and the sense of being driven by forces outside of an individual's control (Chapman, 2005; MacBeath, 2006). The role of the principal has become increasingly focused on administrative and managerial tasks, and there is little time left to be a learning leader, despite the demands for higher standards and results. There is often inadequate training, or a poor match between the training that principals currently receive, and the reality of the principal's position (Mitgang, 2008). Vice principals, the most logical successors to the role of principal, are reluctant to take on a role that they see as further removed from teaching and learning, and more disruptive to their work-life balance (Cranston, 2007). The level of stress inherent in the role of principal, and brought on by the factors listed above, is largely responsible for the decreasing interest among potential applicants.

A shortage of leadership applicants is a cause for concern in light of the influence of the school principal on school effectiveness and student learning. The school principal is a key factor in the success of learning initiatives and the improvement of student learning, with only classroom instruction being seen as more significant (Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). It is the principal who is able to set the direction, organize the school, and provide for the establishment of a learning culture within the school (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Not only do principals need to know how to accomplish these tasks, but they also need to recognize the tremendous influence they have on the school as a learning organization (Beatty, 2009). Given that school principals play a large and important role in school and student success, it is imperative that a way be found to increase the pool of quality applicants.

Leadership development programs offer an intentional and sustained approach to the development of quality leaders, and are a way of attracting more people to the applicant pool (Chapman, 2005). Too often, adequate support and training have not been provided for those interested in pursuing the principalship, or those already in the role (Chapman, 2005). In a time when leaders are scarce, deliberate succession planning and support for current leaders are necessary to sustain direction and change efforts within schools (Fullan, 2005). Without this deliberate planning, the potential discontinuity in leadership increases the risk of new initiatives being forgotten and schools sliding back into old and ineffective habits. On the other hand, school divisions that have invested heavily in building leadership capacity have demonstrated noticeable growth in student performance (Leithwood et al., 2004). Successful school improvement is highly dependent on leadership development programs that provide training and ongoing development for current and future leaders.

Leadership development programs increase the number and quality of applicants to the principalship, by providing sustained support. It is not enough to go with a "sink or swim" (MacBeath, 2006, p. 197) approach to true leadership development. Leaders need to be supported throughout their careers, through a comprehensive professional development program (Chapman, 2005). They need professional development that responds to the specific needs of their profession. Those who aspire to be principals need both preparation for the role and the knowledge that ongoing support is available to them (Cranston, 2007). A well-developed leadership program, by providing sustained support to principals at various stages of their careers, will increase the attractiveness of the role and improve the quality of the leadership (Brundrett, 2006).

In response to the need for quality leaders, a number of countries have taken a close look at the development of leadership programs, among them England and Canada (MacBeath, 2006). In England, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) was established in direct response to the need for better training for both current and future school leaders (Brundrett & Anderson de Cuevas, 2008). A series of programs directed at new, emerging, and established leaders took into account the different needs of people at various stages in their careers. The data suggested that the combined effect of the leadership programs had benefits that were greater than those of the individual programs in isolation (Brundrett, 2006). While some inadequacies existed, there was evidence that a "commitment to continual professional development" (Brundrett & Anderson de Cuevas, 2008, p. 257) had been influential in developing quality leadership.

In Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Education (2009) has recently undertaken the task of leadership development, in order to ensure an adequate supply of capable leaders, and to provide for smooth succession planning. The Ministry has gone so far as to formalize a provincial leadership development strategy that focuses on providing support to school leaders, school boards, and students. Through this strategy framework, local school boards are given direction regarding the supports that need to be put into place. The goals of the three-year strategy are to draw the right people to school leadership positions, and to assist school leaders to become the best possible instructional leaders. Support is provided to first and second year principals, and vice principals, through the provision of resources and mentorship, and experienced principals and vice principals are provided with opportunities to develop their own mentoring and leadership skills. The intent of this framework is to ensure an adequate supply of high quality leaders and to benefit school leaders and, ultimately, students.

Successful leadership development programs share a number of essential components, including intentional selection and recruitment, opportunities for reflection, coaching and mentoring, and opportunities for leadership. The intentional identification of potential leaders,

early in their careers, provides the opportunity to shape and nurture future leaders who understand the complexities of the role and possess the strategies needed to rise to the challenge (Chapman, 2005). Current principals are in a prime position to scout out and identify future leaders, in order to encourage them to consider leadership roles. Intentional planning for potential leaders should be tailored specifically to the goal of understanding leadership, and could include such strategies as job shadowing and internships, thereby enabling the candidates to feel comfortable with increasing leadership responsibilities. A school district in Ontario offers interested teachers an opportunity to be involved in a study group on the topic of educational leadership (Normore, 2004). These study groups include current principals as facilitators, and focus on an examination of educational issues and case studies, in order to assist participants to develop a personal vision of leadership. The hope is that these participants will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to take on future leadership roles. The intentional recruitment of possible candidates provides the opportunity for leadership development over time, and under expert tutelage.

Opportunity for reflective practice is another feature of successful leadership development programs. The National Professional Qualification Program for Headship, a leadership program initiated in Britain, was rated highly by principals because of the opportunities it provided for reflection (Brundrett, 2006). Providing the time for genuine reflection, alone and with other trusted peers, makes the role of principal more appealing to future candidates (Bottery, Man, Wright, & Ngai, 2009). It gives principals the opportunity for critical analysis and creative solutions. It reduces the pressure that a principal faces when making complex and difficult decisions, and has been shown to boost morale. This opportunity to reflect on issues that matter in education has been identified as an important element in recruiting people to the role of principal (MacBeath, 2006). Reflective practice is an essential component of leadership development programs that seek to attract people to leadership positions.

Coaching and mentoring figure highly as elements in thriving leadership development programs. While there are slight differences between these terms, they are used interchangeably here to denote some form of partnership between an experienced principal and a newer, more inexperienced colleague. Coaching is seen as a process that has the capacity for real leadership development (Simkins, Coldwell, Caillau, Finlayson, & Morgan, 2006). Knowing that a new principal is not solely responsible to sort out all aspects of a problem or issue, and has a trusted colleague with whom to discuss matters confidentially, reduces the level of stress for school leaders and facilitates better educational decision making (Bottery et al., 2009). Experienced leaders are able to take on the role of coaches or mentors, in order to support new leaders to learn in the context of a school environment. This "job-embedded learning" (Fullan, 2005, p. 95) has the capacity to be responsive to the specific needs and priorities of the organization at a particular point in time. The external support provided by coaching and mentoring is an important element in leadership development programs.

Genuine opportunities for leadership need to be included in leadership development programs. Planning for succession is furthered when potential future leaders are given the responsibility of leadership within their own school setting (MacBeath, 2006,). High quality people are more likely to be attracted to leadership roles when a culture of shared or distributed leadership is nurtured and when real leadership engagement, with its accompanying responsibilities, is made possible. The more that leadership for all teachers is encouraged, the greater is the leadership pool from which to draw future leaders (Fullan, 2005). Providing genuine challenges and growth opportunities makes the likelihood of growing and sustaining local talent much greater.

Based on the components of leadership development programs listed above, it could be argued that there is a greater chance of success if the leadership programs operate at a local or regional level, rather than being externally mandated and delivered (Leithwood et al., 2004). Local school divisions are in the best situation to select and recruit future leaders, and to ensure a culture of collaborative and shared leadership. In-house programs can also be organized to be

more relevant to specific situational needs and to provide "ready access to an extensive repertoire of problem relevant knowledge" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 68). Mentors and coaches are in close proximity when a program is set up at a local level, thereby providing more frequent opportunities for communication. A leadership program currently running in Garden Valley School Division in Manitoba offers local and regional participants the opportunity to be involved in a three-year program. Participants who are working full time appreciate this local opportunity, as they are able to spend their time engaged in professional leadership activities rather than driving to the nearest city for courses. A locally developed program eliminates potential barriers and facilitates succession planning from within a school division.

While leadership development programs have great potential, they are not without a number of challenges. By their nature, they require a significant time commitment from the participants, beyond the already full workload of their current positions (MacBeath, 2006). They are not unlike new teacher orientation programs, which are necessary and valuable, but add to the workload and stress levels of those who are struggling to learn and adapt to new positions. Successful programs are dependent on the availability of experienced leaders and the quality and availability of mentors, and divisions may experience some challenges in finding personnel who qualify and who have time for these roles (Mitgang, 2008). In order to be effective and sustainable, leadership development programs also require a considerable financial investment on the part of the organizing body (Mitgang, 2008). Most of the programs will require release time for substitutes, meals, reference material, and speakers. The time commitment required of potential candidates, the demands on current leaders, and the financial cost to school divisions may be challenges that are difficult to overcome.

Despite these challenges, there are compelling reasons for school divisions to participate in leadership develop programs. Successful programs result in the development of school leaders who are better prepared for instructional leadership, and who are more likely to be attracted to and remain in the position (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, & Orr, 2007). Leadership development programs support the creation of peer support networks that provide ongoing assistance to those in leadership roles. Ultimately, leadership development programs help to shape future leaders who are committed to school improvement and who have an influence on teacher effectiveness. In a time when leaders are scarce, and the demands of leadership are increasingly complex, leadership development programs offer a viable solution to meeting the need for quality leaders who are willing and able to rise to the challenge.

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Supporting Beginning Teachers Through Mentoring

Karla Turton

Abstract

It is often assumed that beginning teachers possess the skills, strategies and practices necessary for effective instructional practice and classroom management. The reality is that beginning teachers struggle to overcome the many challenges and obstacles faced in the first years of teaching. Without adequate supports, beginning teachers may crumble under the pressure, assume basic survival skills, or simply quit in the face of dismay and disillusionment. A quality induction program that offers mentoring support is an ideal way to retain teachers and build capacity. A mentoring relationship, consisting of joint inquiry and reflective dialogue, should increase teacher effectiveness and professional growth.

The term "natural born teacher" is often used to describe those who seemingly have an innate ability to convey a message while reaching out to engage their audience. They possess empathy, patience, and a large repertoire of behaviour management skills and strategies (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Flores & Day, 2006; Lipton & Wellman, 2003). Although these natural born teachers appear completely at ease in their role, knowing how to teach is a demanding and complex task that requires intellect, skill, and commitment, and takes years to develop (Lipton & Wellman, 2003). Once they leave the university campus, the beginning teachers in many schools are on their own, left to "sink or swim." Unlike professions and trades that have internship or apprenticeship programs, most school divisions lack formal programs that continue training and provide support. Teachers face many challenges in their first year of teaching, and mentoring is an ideal form of support that can be provided through beginning teacher induction programs.

The Reality of Teaching

Upon receiving confirmation of their first teaching assignment, beginning teachers eagerly anticipate the arrival of September and the chorus of young voices ready to begin another year of school. Planning begins immediately: resources are bought, materials are ordered, and curriculums are read. An excitement and confidence is experienced – "This is what I've worked for; this is the dream." September finally arrives, and the idealism felt during the summer is replaced by cold reality. Nothing is as imagined: the classroom is ill-equipped, the students are not on grade level, and there are two special needs students with educational assistants who require accommodating. Excitement and confidence are quickly replaced by panic and desperation, as the beginning teacher asks, "What have I gotten myself into?"

The challenges encountered in the first year of teaching are varied and numerable, and the amount of work is grossly underestimated (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). The demands and complexity of teaching are unexpected with the pressures of daily planning, trying to juggle multiple responsibilities, and meeting the expectations of students, parents, and administrators (Helsing, 2007). Paddling furiously to keep one's head above water is an analogy common to first-year teachers. Compounding these struggles are feelings of isolation, shock, and disappointment that expectations do not match reality (Flores & Day, 2006). The first year can be exhausting at the least and traumatic at the most.

Preparation at university for a career as a teacher is often viewed by teachers and administrators as inadequate (Flores & Day, 2006). Knowledge of educational theory and subject content are superseded by the heavy workload and other pressures faced in the first year of teaching. Student-teaching experiences, comprised of six to eight-week terms in classrooms of veteran teachers who have already established procedures and routines, can not

prepare beginning teachers for the realities of their own classrooms. University programs and student-teaching experiences rarely include the culture and climate or the collective and individual needs of the school in which one is hired. Real teaching, in the classroom context, is the only viable preparation for the journey from beginning to expert teacher (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005).

Challenges and Responsibilities of Beginning Teachers

Beginning teachers have the same tasks and responsibilities as experienced teachers (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009; Lipton & Wellman, 2003). In fact, it is a common practice in many schools for the beginning teacher to have the most undesirable of teaching assignments, including large student numbers accompanied by the demands of many learning, behavioural, and/or emotional needs. Experienced teachers feel that they have "paid their dues," preferring teaching assignments that are deserving of their talents and status. Such challenges result in a pervasive feeling of failure and burn-out (Fantilli & McDougall), as beginning teachers question their effectiveness and try to be all things to all students: educator, mentor, guide, and friend (Helsing, 2007). Afraid of failure and desperate to please, the beginning teacher takes it all on, surviving through a system of trial and error. Regardless of a teacher's years of experience, the responsibilities of the classroom and the expectations of other teachers, students, parents, and administrators are the same.

Beginning teachers take ownership for problems encountered in the classroom and assume responsibility for them (Bullough, Young, Hall, Draper, & Smith, 2008). Common concerns of first-year teachers include behaviour management, student needs, time and workload management, and conflict with parents and other adults (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). During the first year, content knowledge and pedagogy can take a back seat to the daily running of the classroom. It is enough just to get through each day, and when planning does not extend beyond tomorrow, yearly goals seem impossible. Such experiences are more common than imagined and can have a catastrophic effect on the self-esteem and confidence of the beginning teacher. In a school culture in which collegiality is undervalued, the beginning teacher shoulders the entire load, and looks inward not for self-reflection but for blame.

Unique Needs of the Beginning Teacher

Realizing the numerable obstacles and challenges they face, beginning teachers welcome and seek out support. Many form close, supportive relationships not with their colleagues but with the people seen most, usually the custodian and the secretary (Doerger, 2003). Spending evenings in the classroom preparing unit plans and materials, it becomes routine to share with the custodian one's stories and struggles of the day. Additionally, the principal conduit of information in a school is usually the secretary, who is relied upon for supplies and knowledge of school procedures and protocol. The secretary is available, has his/her fingers on the pulse of the school, and usually has a sympathetic ear. The custodian and secretary may provide the necessary emotional support that the beginning teacher craves at this time. Although critical for surviving the year, emotional support is not enough, and may inadvertently encourage complacency when it is the only support provided (Lipton & Wellman, 2003).

It is important to realize that beginning teachers are still learning to teach and have emotional, instructional, and professional needs different from their more experienced colleagues (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). In response to the growing awareness of these needs, induction programs are seen as a way to aid in the transition from university to classroom, supporting the ongoing process of learning to teach. A successful induction program requires a "comprehensive plan that formulates and quantifies the expectations of the induction program" (Portner, 2008, p. 7). Programs should be structured to provide the skills necessary to assist beginning teachers in their development into high-quality, effective teachers. Such skills

are developed through problem-solving and decision-making opportunities, collegiality with experienced teachers, and support in classroom management (Doerger, 2003). These needs require addressing in the first three years of teaching, as they provide a solid foundation on which to build a teaching career.

Mentoring as a Component of an Induction Program

Quality induction programs, which are designed to meet the needs of beginning teachers by offering support and professional development, not only hasten the development of effective instructional practice but can make a difference in teacher satisfaction (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). One component of a successful induction program that can not be overlooked is mentoring. Induction programs that include a comprehensive mentoring component are significantly more effective in providing emotional and professional support (Lipton & Wellman, 2003). It usually takes educators three to seven years to "reach maximum impact on student learning" (Stanulis & Floden, p. 112). With the provision of one-on-one mentoring support, this time is significantly shortened.

Mentorship is often seen as simply easing teachers into their new role by answering questions and providing emotional support. In reality, it is much more complex, consisting of developing new teachers' learning through reflective thinking based on regular examination of themselves and their instructional practices (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005). A comprehensive definition of mentoring is the "one-to-one support of a novice or less experienced practitioner (mentee) by a more experienced practitioner (mentor), designed primarily to assist the development of the mentee's expertise and to facilitate their induction into the culture of the profession" (Hobson, Ashby, Malderez & Tomlinson, 2009, p. 207). Mentoring emphasizes engagement in joint inquiry to help beginning teachers understand the importance of learning from practice, while providing tools useful for studying teaching (Stanulis & Ames, 2009). As such, mentoring is the most "complex and intricate role in the induction process" (Portner, 2008, p. 7), and has a significant impact on the beginning teacher.

Benefits of Mentoring

As a form of beginning teacher support, mentoring offers the opportunity for improvement in teacher quality and strengthens the connection between teaching and student engagement, resulting in effective, balanced instruction (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Through reflective thinking, mentees are assisted in understanding what is happening and the reasons why, in order to act more effectively (Bullough et al., 2008). Without the process of mentoring, these beginning teachers are at risk of being inadvertently influenced by experienced teachers who resist change, resulting in a "cyclic reproduction" of teachers who are not responsive to the individual and collective needs of their students (Doerger, 2003, p. 1). The ultimate objective is to understand students' needs and to create a toolbox of strategies to meet these needs.

Perhaps the most important benefit from the viewpoint of the beginning teachers is the provision of emotional and psychological support, as the mentor assists in putting difficult experiences into perspective and creates a safe space for venting frustrations. Beginning teacher mentoring reduces feelings of isolation, increases confidence and self-esteem, and stimulates self-reflection and problem solving (Hobson et al., 2009), resulting in a win-win situation for all. Therefore, because of increased morale and greater job satisfaction, the benefits of mentoring can not be overlooked.

The Role of the Mentor

The key factor in mentoring is, of course, the skill and development of the mentor. The primary role of the mentor is to develop beginning teachers' capacity and confidence to make

informed decisions, expand their pedagogical knowledge base, and develop their teaching abilities (Portner, 2008), while guiding them to independence as competent and confident teachers. Mentoring must be responsive to the needs of the beginning teacher, as all teachers have different beliefs, values, and experiences (Lipton & Wellman, 2003). Accordingly, the beginning teacher should be treated as an adult learner, with skills, strategies, and knowledge to share and contribute (Hobson et al., 2009). The mentor's role is to assess the type of support required and decide upon the necessary action, whether guiding or coaching. The mentor's skill and expertise determine the depth and quality of the interaction.

For a mentoring relationship to work, the roles and responsibilities of mentor and beginning teacher must be clearly established (Lipton & Wellman, 2003). It must be understood that a mentor does not operate in a supervisory capacity, as it is not the mentor's role or responsibility to evaluate. Any data gathered during teacher observations are used for reflection purposes, not judging. The quality of interactions is of utmost importance with the relationship being of a collegial nature, not hierarchical, thus becoming a partnership in which learning, questioning, and challenge is shared (The Board of Regents, 2009). A relationship that is undermining and condescending is not conducive to support. There must be a willingness by the beginning teacher and the mentor to participate, with both parties perceiving mentoring as having a "substantial and meaningful influence on the novice's learning to teach" (Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005, p. 680). Vital to the mentoring relationship is the atmosphere of trust and respect between mentor and beginning teacher.

The Mentoring Relationship

The success of the beginning teacher is in large part determined by the quality of the mentoring interaction with the designated mentor. Although friendship and advice are valued at the beginning of the relationship, a more educative dialogue is necessary. In order for professional growth and development to occur, it is important to stimulate and encourage reflective thinking through learning-focused conversations regarding instructional practices and student needs. During learning-focused conversations, cognitive complexity, which includes the ability to think reflectively, is developed with the goal to create "mindful teaching" (Bullough et al., 2008, p. 1856; Norman & Feiman-Nemser, 2005, p. 681). Effective mentors are committed to the mentoring relationship and guide beginning teachers to independence as competent and confident teachers.

Mentoring should provide frequent, intensive, and individualized support (Allen, 2009). Mentoring can not be hit and miss, grabbing a few minutes of conversation in the staffroom or exchanging pleasantries in the hallway. Support needs to be specific, tailored to the individual needs of the beginning teacher over a sustained period of time. When the support is relevant and connected to the daily challenges faced in the classroom, the greatest learning occurs.

Conclusion

Beginning teachers know how to act like teachers when they graduate from university, but they require continued training in how to think like teachers (Boreen, Johnson, Niday, & Potts, 2009). This is what mentoring does. It builds capacity in the beginning teacher to respond to the ever-changing demands of the classroom. It develops the beginning teacher's confidence in his or her problem-solving and decision-making skills. It fosters a professional identity and vision as an educator. With the support of administration, team leaders, colleagues, and experienced and beginning teachers, the potential of mentoring can not be underestimated; it can only be explored, enhanced, and celebrated.

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About the Author

A lifelong Thompsonite, Karla Turton has worked as a classroom teacher and as a resource teacher in the elementary setting. In her twentieth year of teaching, she currently is working as the Induction Support Teacher for the School District of Mystery Lake in Thompson, Manitoba.

SPECIAL INTEREST PAPER

Proposal for
a Collaborative Approach to Residence Assistant Training

Paul O'Driscoll

Abstract

Manitoba's three largest universities each utilize residence assistants (RA) to help provide a safe and secure living environment for their undergraduate residential students. Until now, each of the three institutions has trained their RAs separately. Increased collaboration within each institution's RA team, and collaboration between the three institution's RA teams, will create opportunities for a synergistic training environment. This optimized training environment will potentially produce better functioning employees, capable of delivering a higher level of residential services to each institution's undergraduate residential students, in a more cost effective manner, than the current training model.

Increased collaboration within individual Residence Assistant (RA) units and among RA units from the three Manitoba provincial residential universities will result in a more dynamic, cost-efficient RA training program. This increased collaboration will encourage a synergistic work environment for the RAs, leading to a higher level of services to the respective residence populations. Intra-university RA collaboration (collaboration between the RAs of each individual institution) will be facilitated by distance pre-orientation learning, utilizing an interactive, online, electronic platform such as a wiki or a blog. Inter-university collaboration (collaboration between the RAs of all institutions) will be facilitated by the implementation of a common, in-person, combined RA orientation event.

Student Residences' Role in Academic and Personal Development

An institution's physical facilities, marketing literature, rules, regulations, support staff, and the clientele living in the student residences communicate various messages to residents, from the time they take their first residence tour until the time they eventually move out of residence (Riker & Decoster, 2008). Learning is not accomplished within the isolation of the classroom or laboratory. A wide variety of factors affect the learning process, and each student's intellectual capacity is developed in conjunction with his personality, spiritual development, and social development (Riker & Decoster, 2008). Students spend more time in their place of residence during their academic career than they do in lectures, laboratories, or libraries, and students' intellectual development occurs concurrently and is dependent upon the development of the whole person. Student residences have historically provided leadership in assisting residents to find connections between that which occurs in the classroom and that which occurs outside of the classroom (Hardy Cox, 2002).

The Role of the Residence Assistant

Brandon University's RAs are senior students (third, fourth, and fifth year) with extensive residence life experience (Residence Hall Programs Office [RHPO], 2010). RAs are responsible for security, discipline, assisting and advising residence students, and developing residence activities, events, and programs. RAs initiate activities in which residents can socialize, learn, and develop both personally and academically. They react to all manners of emergency situations (RHPO, 2010). RAs must work well individually and equally well as part of a team,

and the position of RA is regarded as an RA's primary extra-curricular commitment (Office of the Vice-President, 2010).

Distance Pre-training

Previously, RA orientation was an intensive, week-long program wherein RAs were exposed to new skills and new information (see Appendix A). RA training, which occurs during RA orientation, can be divided into three general categories: (a) foundational information necessary to perform the job, (b) skills such as first-aid training and peer counselling training, and (c) workshop or seminar-based training such as group leadership skills. The learning of foundational information, though necessary, is time-consuming and monotonous. For example, learning the details of the residence lease is tedious, yet RAs must become expert on that document because there are occasions when each of them must explain the document accurately to residents.

A properly designed learning program, utilizing a Web 2.0 based platform such as a blog or a wiki, will provide the tool with which the vast majority of the foundational material will be acquired during the spring and summer preceding RA orientation. This collaborative learning program will free up approximately 30% of the onsite training time, which will then be used for other training purposes. Topics that can be suitably addressed via the internet are the residence contract, the RA contract, terms and conditions of occupancy, the various institutional and residence policies, and the descriptions of the roles of other residence employees (see Appendix B).

Early attempts at online training and education rendered the learner a passive recipient; Web 2.0 applications have changed this limitation (Jones, 2010, p. 228). Shared events are important in realizing success in online teaching or training: events shared between participants, and events shared between participants and the teacher/trainer (Arbaugh & Benbunan-Fich, 2007). For example, an online exercise involving RA operational practices could involve discussion on those aspects of the practices that historically have been most often misunderstood, with each RA required to paraphrase the information, and elaborate on such things as the reasoning for the inclusion of the issue in the discussion, possible consequences for ignoring the information, and possible ways to re-write the operational practices to make them more effective or more easily understood.

Collaborative learning occurs when people learn to engage with each other to make sense and meaning of an issue, topic, situation, or problem, rather than simply receiving and learning the information handed forward to them by a teacher, instructor, or trainer (Rhea, 2010). Collaborative learning has distinct advantages: learners stop relying on experts and teachers to transfer their knowledge to them and instead engage together in making sense and creating meaning for themselves.

Training programs that utilize a variety of mechanisms and modalities contribute to interested and more effective learners (Jenkinson, 2009). Web 2.0 products are effective in individual study (Karasavvidis, 2010). Individual online work for the RA pre-training will consist of studying posted material. Learners will indicate an understanding of the material through discussion with the group, or one-on-one discussion with the instructor, at the end of each training topic. Institutions that have engaged in online, interactive RA training have reported positive results, with participants providing positive feedback regarding their readiness, after taking the online training, to engage in their in-person RA orientation (Barile-Swain, 2009).

Inter-University Networking, Interaction, and Collaboration

The respective institutions have been training their RAs in the same manner for decades, and while the old one-week-of-training model has served each institution in the past, it is in need of updating or even replacing. Improvement must go beyond simple technical change; the

issues facing residence management personnel have become numerous and complex, and new experiments, new discoveries, new thoughts and actions from a variety of constituents are required (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). In the current climate of dwindling resources, growing RA job complexity, and increased availability of workshop and seminar-based resources, there is an increasing need for institutions to build a network of relationships. This network of relationships is important, and indeed is a "vital competence" in creating a learning environment where information can be accessed efficiently (Jolink & Dankbaar, 2010, p. 1437). Such networking encourages the discovery of new competencies, which can signify the beginning of collaborative relationships.

Networking can occur in person and electronically; however, it is important that the initial networking between the RAs from the three institutions take place in person. Meeting in person promotes familiarity in a manner more effective than meeting online, and sets the stage for effective collaboration, both in person and online. When people meet in person, they are far more likely to react in a friendlier, constructive manner online (Rhea, 2010).

The Inter-University Training Event

Learners with even a minimal degree of commonality will naturally learn from one another through normal social discourse, and this learning will naturally lead to collaboration (Payton, 2004). RAs at the three Manitoba residential universities perform nearly identical job functions. Instead of continuing to offer separate orientation programs at the individual institutions, it is advantageous to combine resources to offer a joint RA orientation at a central location. Following are the objectives of the combined orientation:

- To provide a synergistic, collaborative learning environment for RA training and for the residence management teams from each institution.
- To encourage inter-institutional residence programming of an academic and social nature.
- To provide RAs with the necessary software and training to continue their inter-institutional interaction and collaboration throughout the year.
- To provide enhanced RA training in a cost-effective manner, without sacrificing the integrity of the training.

The combined training event will take place at a conference hotel approximately equidistant to each of the three participating universities. The participating residence management teams will meet during the preceding spring and summer to plan the orientation week.

The combined training event is integral to the objectives of networking, interaction, and collaboration. Exchanging knowledge is a function of social interaction, and collaborative learning involves complex socialization between different individuals or groups (Jolink & Dankbaar, 2010). Trust is more likely to be generated in personal interactions, and this trust leads to increased knowledge exchange. Personal interaction helps the knowledge recipients evaluate the quality of the knowledge and, in doing so, become more confident in using the knowledge.

Inter-institutional collaboration between RAs will be encouraged by allowing the student employees to meet with each other in the training environment, and giving the normal age-appropriate social discourse room to develop. Collaboration is encouraged by normal, everyday interaction, including conversational turn-taking, and metaphors to arrive at a consensus of meaning (Gough, Lajoie, Shlonsky, & Trocme, 2010).

Constructive role-modelling behaviour on the part of the residence and housing management teams will be important in order to promote attainment of the common orientation objectives. Managers, by their own behaviour with other managers, encourage interaction and collaboration of subordinates by demonstrating that they place value on such behaviour (Jolink & Dankbaar, 2010). Constructive role modelling can be demonstrated by respectful treatment of the other managers in social and professional settings, by interest in other managers'

procedures and methods in performing their jobs, and by conduct demonstrative of appreciation of the work done by each manager.

Measuring Success

Success of the combined RA orientation will be measured by the following:
- Evidence of RA satisfaction with the orientation program, and RA preparedness for the upcoming contract period, as measured by a survey instrument.
- Evidence of interaction of RAs from each of the three participating institutions regarding residence life issues.
- Evidence of collaborative efforts to plan inter-institutional residence events.
- Identifiable operational efficiencies due to the collaboration of the three residence management teams.

Further successes may include (a) RAs from each institution learning more about the other participating institutions, and carrying this knowledge forward to their floor members and classmates at their own institutions, (b) the emergence and subsequent development of a sense of professionalism by each of the RAs, with an associated sense of pride as the RAs become cognizant of the value that their respective institution's place on them and the RA position, and (c) residence management personnel from the participating institutions developing synergy to help address other issues facing their respective areas of responsibility.

Conclusion

Universities rely upon their residences for more than student accommodation. Student residences are important in assisting in the development of the whole person, including contributing to the academic development of residents (Riker & Decoster, 2008). RAs at each of Manitoba's residential universities share a nearly identical position description, and their training is also nearly identical. RAs, by virtue of their job descriptions, are expected to contribute to the process of whole person development.

Intra-institutional collaboration between RAs will be increased by engaging the RAs in pre-training utilizing a Web 2.0 application, such as a blog or a wiki. The pre-training will focus on learning foundational knowledge necessary for RAs to efficiently perform their job duties. RAs will collaborate with each other in learning material ordinarily taught during RA orientation, leaving more time during RA orientation for face-to-face, skill-developing learning. RAs from each participating institution will learn the foundational information prior to attending RA orientation in late August.

RAs from each participating institution will be encouraged to network, interact, and collaborate with the RAs from the other participating institutions. A common orientation will be held at a location equidistant to the three universities. This orientation event will not only cover the traditional material, but will also include material and activities not previously covered at RA orientations. The objectives of the new material will be to better prepare the RAs for their jobs, and to create an environment where the RAs from each institution will develop a rapport leading to inter-residence collaboration.

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About the Author

Paul O'Driscoll is enrolled in Brandon University's Master of Education program, with a focus on educational administration. As a career administrator, Paul has spent over three decades working with undergraduate students in a residential environment. His professional interests include the potential positive effects of residence life programming on student success.

Appendix A

2010 RA Orientation

	23 Monday	24 Tuesday	25 Wednesday	26 Thursday	27 Friday
8:30	**Larrie xxxx** Communication and Team Building	8:30!! Student Services (All day)	8:30 St. John First Responders (All day)	**Facilities** Bedbug issue Room inspect.	**Student Meal Plan**
10:00	Communication and Team Building	Student Services (All day)	St. John First Responders Course (All day)	**Review of Policies:** Guest Noise/Alcohol Smoking/Flame Door Entry Sex. Har. Policy	**Inappropriate Behaviour:** Self-Injury, Suicide
11:00	Communication and Team Building	Student Services (All day)	St. John First Responders Course (All day)	Pass Key Proc. Office Proc **Crisis and Critical Incident Protocol**	**Residence Security**
1:00	**Objectives Where we Fit:** Student Services and Ancillary Services	Student Services (All day)	St. John First Responders Course (All day)	**Physical Plant Info.** Bill xxxxx Denise xxxx Gord xxxx	**Review of:** **Res. Agreement** Terms and Conditions Rights and Resp
2:00	RA Job Description RA Contract RA Meetings	Student Services (All day)	St. John First Responders Course (All day)	**7 Traits of Successful People** **Proactive Model**	**Confidentiality Referral Skills** and Info
3:00 **4:00**	Handling Discipline Reporting Incidents	Student Services (All day)	St. John First Responders Course (All day)	**Community Residence Programming**	**Orientation Wrap-up**

Note: RAs to be moved in and have room organized prior to start of orientation (Aug. 23)

Proposed RA Orientation

	Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**
8:30	8:30 Communication and Team Building	8:30 Student Services (All day)	8:30 St. John First Responders training (All day)	Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training (all day)	Advanced Communication Skills
10:00	Communication and Team Building	Student Services (All day)	St. John First Responders Course (All day)	Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training (all day)	Advanced Communication Skills
11:00	Communication and Team Building	Student Services (All day)	St. John First Responders Course (All day)	Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training (all day)	Advanced Communication Skills
1:00	Official Welcome Session: Dean of Students, U. Of M, U. Of W. Brandon U.	Student Services (All day)	St. John First Responders Course (All day)	Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training (all day)	Advanced Communication Skills
2:00	**Guest Speaker "Making a difference, one resident at a time"**	Student Services (All day)	St. John First Responders Course (All day)	Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training (all day)	Advanced Communication Skills
3:00 / **4:00**	(continued)	Student Services (All day)	St. John First Responders Course (All day)	Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training (all day)	**Orientation Wrap-up**

Note: evening program to focus on teambuilding and collaboration skills in an informal, social setting.

OPINION PAPER

School versus the Cybernetic Hero

David Sinclair

Swords are drawn, so dragons beware. Our *hero* races through the labyrinth between old stone walls, evading trolls and other enemies as he collects gold and experience. His pace is hypnotic and the luxurious world he is running through changes with his every movement. Our *hero* spills from the narrow walled passages onto an open battlefield, where other *heroes* from all over the world compete for supremacy. They make alliances with one another on the battlefield, using dozens of languages that computers translate instantly. Attacks are planned, dragons are destroyed, friends are made, and heroes remain heroes. In this world, our *hero* finds success, belonging, and excitement.

I have described a typical scene of one of the world's most popular video games, World of Warcraft (WOW). Events like this occur daily on millions of computers in Canada and the rest of the world. I use this game because it is well known, but I think that most popular video games offer the same things to players as WOW does: success, belonging, and excitement. Many of our students are paying more attention to these games than anything else in their lives. I have seen this behaviour in schools and I find it troubling.

I liked video games when I was younger. They were relatively simple games in the eighties, and when I ran out of quarters I was done. Most had a simple premise: kill the bad guy(s) while music made of beeps and pauses guided you through simple mazes. The games of today are very different. When I see a game today, I compare it with a movie: breathtaking landscapes, incredible soundscapes, voice actors, complex scripts, realism, psychological complexity, infinite choice, almost never ending, and deeply inviting. I have tried these games on occasion and I can see why they are popular. How can a simple brick building called a school compete?

For some of our students, video games are more than just a game; they are a problem. I go a step further and say they are an addiction. When we are addicted to something that we do not ingest, it is called a process addiction. Video games are ingested through the eyes and ears.

I can recall several students quitting school because playing video games was more important. I would talk to their siblings in the building, or moms, only to find out that many of them were playing games for 12 to 18 hours at a time (sometimes longer). In complex video game worlds like World of Warcraft, 12 hours barely gets you started.

I am shocked that the reaction to this problem has been slow. I recently completed a review of literature on video game addiction and there is hardly anything out there. Officially, video game addiction has not yet been defined, and I think that the psychological effects of games are poorly understood. As educators, we are coming across a challenge that we do understand. It is in our schools that we want students to feel success, belonging, and excitement.

Not staring at a screen in a dark room.

About the Author

David Sinclair is a guidance counsellor and teacher in Mountain View School Division. He is a recent M.Ed. graduate from BU with a specialization in guidance and counselling.

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