

Exploring the New Zealand Child and Youth Profile (NZCYP) as a Tool for Collaborative Educational Planning: Stakeholder Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Assisting students with learning support needs requires a collaborative approach to educational planning and the development of a multi-dimensional profile of the student. However, developing such a profile can be difficult when information is gathered from multiple sources, culturally-relevant information is not included, and incongruent or incompatible language is used in different settings. Tools are required to facilitate information gathering and collaborative educational planning practice. This article will present findings from three qualitative research projects that explored teams' perceptions of using the New Zealand Child and Youth Profile (NZCYP) for educational planning and collaboration. Individual interviews and focus groups were conducted and then analysed to identify key themes. The results suggested that the NZCYP helped to facilitate educational planning and collaborative practice, and that it may be useful in facilitating transition. A lack of a cultural fit, along with the complexity of the NZCYP, however, impacted on some participants' perceptions of it.

Research paper

Keywords:

collaboration, educational planning, New Zealand Child and Youth Profile (NZCYP), transition

INTRODUCTION

Research suggests that collaborative educational planning for students with learning- support needs is crucial for successful educational outcomes (Bodvin et al., 2018; Trach, 2012). A collaborative approach leads to improved communication, co-ordination, and support from professionals (Bricker, 2000), and ensures that multiple perspectives of the students' complex and diverse needs are considered (Dettmer et al., 2013; Hedegaard-Soerensen et al., 2018). The outcome of collaborative educational planning is improved classroom and school transitions and enhanced educational achievement (Blackburn, 2017; Ruppap & Gaffney, 2017). A number of factors are considered vital in ensuring successful collaborative educational planning.

Parent voice is critical (Rodriguez et al., 2017; Trach, 2012). Including parents in the planning process, and utilising their expertise leads to greater student and parent engagement (Ministry of Education, 2015) and enhanced educational planning (Billington et al., 2000; Reupert et al., 2015). In order for collaboration with parents and whānau to be successful, schools and professionals need to be culturally-responsive (Bevan-Brown, 2015). Higgins et al. (2010) argue that, to improve educational outcomes for Māori, students' home and school settings must be culturally aligned. Educators need to be aware of, and utilise, students' cultural background, experiences, viewpoints, and characteristics (Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Ford, 2013). This requires an open and effective reciprocal approach between whānau and educators (Henderson, 2013), where meetings are more informal, allow time for small talk (Bevan-Brown, 2015), and for communication to be face-to-face or *kanohi ki te kanohi* (Pere, 1991). Crucially, research suggests that a lack of open and clear communication, and a lack of understanding about cultural issues, can hinder collaboration between schools and families (Cleversey et al., 2017), suggesting that tools which can support communication and understanding between parties are vital.

The literature indicates that successful cross-disciplinary collaboration can be difficult to achieve (Connolly & Gersch, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2010; Tucker & Schwartz, 2013). A number of barriers have been identified such as difficulties with collecting and sharing information within and across educational settings (Ng et al., 2016), and problems with co-ordination, co-operation, and communication between team members (Cleversey et al., 2017; Nilsen, 2017). Also, incompatible or complex technical language can hinder the sharing and integration of perspectives (Marzano et al., 2006). Parents frequently report they feel like passive participants in planning meetings and that their voices are not heard (Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014; Cavendish & Connor, 2018; Mitchell et al., 2010; Salmon, 2008). Once again, these findings highlight the critical need for tools that enable the sharing of multiple perspectives to enhance collaborative practice.

To support collaborative educational planning, there is a need to gather clear, well-organised, individualised and strengths-based information on students to develop an in-depth and holistic profile (Hatfield et al., 2018; Strnadová & Cumming, 2014). Importantly however, this process takes time, and the additional paperwork required to complete such profiles can be viewed negatively by professionals (Frankl, 2005; Shaddock, 2002) as time constraints mean they struggle to fit planning practices into already demanding schedules (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017). Yet the ability to gather information on a child with learning support needs from multiple perspectives is considered a vital part of educational planning; accordingly, tools that can support this process are crucial. For example, McLaughlin et al. (2017) suggest that well-developed tools can help in accessing services and can improve the understanding of a child within different settings. Further, Budd (2016) asserts that tools are needed to enable multiple perspectives to be gathered to support collaborative outcomes. One such tool is the NZCYP, a tool based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health for Children and Youth (ICF-CY) (McLaughlin et al., 2017).

The NZCYP

The NZCYP was developed by McLaughlin et al. (2017) and is based on core elements of the ICF-CY described by the World Health Organization (WHO) (2007). The ICF-CY is an international framework that classifies disability from many perspectives. It focuses on the functional effect of disability, the strengths and needs of the child/youth and how they participate in everyday settings to create a holistic profile (Simeonsson et al., 2014). The WHO (2007) considers the ICF-CY a universal tool applicable to all children irrespective of their health or cultural background. There is limited research on its cultural sensitivity (Zakirova-Engstrand & Granlund, 2009), however, and Conti-Becker (2009) argues that the ICF-CY overlooks contextual factors such as culture and gender. The ICF-CY is also viewed as suitable for supporting educational planning (Hollenweger, 2011; Sanches-Ferreira et al., 2014), cross-disciplinary collaboration (Salghetti et al., 2009; Snyman et al., 2016), and transition (Nguyen et al., 2018).

The NZCYP was designed to capture the essential components of the ICF-CY and modify them to support collaborative educational planning within Aotearoa/New Zealand educational settings. The NZCYP consists of a number of forms and scales: the background information page (BI), sensory

modality profile (SMP), communication profile (CP), participation and access profile (PAP), functional ability profile (FAP), adaptations and specialized equipment profile (ASEP), interests and preference profile (IPP) and priority planning pages (PPP). It is a toolkit to support teachers, families and specialists to reflect on, and organise, their understanding of a child's strengths and limitations, sensory function, participation at school, home and in the community, and interests and preferences. The NZCYP was developed in recognition that collaboration between members of a child's support team is essential to planning for their education (McLaughlin et al., 2017). Research carried out by McLaughlin et al. (2017) indicated that the NZCYP could support the development of a multidimensional educational profile of students with learning support needs, enhance team members' understanding of the student, and facilitate collaboration.

Whilst tools such as the ICF-CY and the NZCYP can be used to support collaborative practice, barriers such as complex or technical language (Marzano et al., 2006) and/or the time required to complete such tools (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017; Ellingsen et al., 2018) can hinder the ability of teams supporting students with learning support needs to work together (Pei et al., 2013; Ryan & Ferguson, 2006). This article will consider the findings of three separate research projects carried out across six settings to evaluate participants' perceptions of using the NZCYP to plan for students with learning support needs, particularly in relation to supporting educational planning, facilitating transition, and enhancing collaboration.

METHODS

Three different research projects were conducted, each exploring different applications of the NZCYP. The focus for Project 1 was on planning for two children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who were transitioning from early childhood to primary school. In Project 2, the focus was on planning for students with learning support needs who were transitioning either into or out of secondary school. Finally, the focus for Project 3 was on planning for two students with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). The three projects were considered low risk and low risk ethics notifications were submitted to the Massey University's Human Ethics Committee.

Participants

All three projects recruited participants using convenience sampling. The projects involved different educational settings as illustrated in Table 1. Settings A and B (Project 1) were two early childhood centres in a North Island city: a large daycare and a

small community centre. Settings C and D (Project 2) were in a South Island city. Setting C was an intermediate school and Setting D was a secondary school. Settings E and F (Project 3) were in a small, geographically-isolated city in the North Island.

Setting E was an intermediate school and Setting F was a secondary school. Table 1 also shows the composition of the educational support teams within each setting.

Table 1
Summary Table

Team	Education Setting	Education Team	Planning Focus	Data Collection Method
A	Early Childhood	Classroom teacher, parent	Child with ASD transitioning to primary school	Individual interviews
B	Early Childhood	Two classroom teachers, parent	Child with ASD transitioning to primary school	Individual interviews
C	Intermediate School	SENCO, classroom teacher, both parents, teacher-aide, occupational therapist, specialist teacher at post-transition secondary school	Student with learning support needs transitioning to secondary school	Focus group/ Individual interviews
D	Secondary School	Two classroom teachers, parent	Student with learning support needs transitioning out of secondary school	Focus group/ Individual interviews
E	Intermediate School	SENCO, classroom teacher, parent, grandparent	Student with FASD	Focus group
F	Secondary School	SENCO, classroom teacher, RTLB, teacher-aide, parent	Student with FASD	Focus group/ Individual interviews

Training and Procedures

Group training in the background and use of the NZCYP was carried out with the educational support teams across all settings. Each page of the profile was explained, including guidance on how to complete and use the NZCYP. Participants were provided with opportunities to ask questions and clarify any information and encouraged to contact researchers if further guidance was needed.

Data Collection

As shown in Table 1, Project 1 used individual interviews, whilst Projects 2 and 3 utilised focus group and/or individual interviews to gather participants' perspectives on the use and application of the NZCYP. Those who participated in focus group interviews were advised that they could have a separate individual interview if they wished to share additional information, but no one requested this. Both the individual interviews and the focus group interviews took between 45 and 60 minutes to complete. All three projects developed interview guides with semi-structured questions. These focused on the participants' experiences of using the NZCYP, collaboration, and educational planning. For example, "Please describe your experience of

using the NZCYP for team educational planning for your student". Two of the projects also had specific questions on transition. For example, "Transition for a family and student can be quite a difficult time. Do you think that this toolkit will help in the transition of this student?"

Data Analysis

All three projects utilised an inductive thematic approach. This approach is data-driven and involves a close reading of the data to enable patterns or themes to be identified, coded, and revised, enabling interpreted meaning to be applied to the data (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Saldaña, 2016). The transcribed data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic approach of segmenting text and assigning codes to each segment. Code books were created documenting clear definitions for each code along with examples from the data. Once the text had been coded, codes were categorised into themes.

FINDINGS

The overarching purpose of the three research projects was to gather participants' perceptions and experiences of the NZCYP to see if it supported

collaborative educational planning for students with learning support needs. The results suggested several factors influenced the participants' perceptions of the NZCYP, and how they used it. Table 2 documents the key themes identified across the six settings.

Table 2
Key Themes

Team	Educational Planning	Collaboration	Poor Cultural Fit	Complexity
A	X	X		X
B	X	X		X
C	X	X		X
D	X	X		X
E	X		X	X
F	X		X	X

Educational Planning

Several teams suggested that the NZCYP had been useful for educational planning, including goal setting and transition planning. For example, Team C found the NZCYP useful for planning and goal setting, where a teacher commented, "I found out information about her past that I didn't know and, and yeah, really good for planning for the future", and the SENCO from the same team noted "... it's a summary all about her, what she's doing now and what we see as her goals". A participant from Team A acknowledged that whilst the NZCYP was initially daunting to use, it had improved their planning processes, commenting:

I actually quite liked it by the time I got to the end and by the time I started to put things onto this [the PPP page]. You know some things that maybe we would miss in our planning ... we would pick up from these forms.

Whilst the majority of participants from Teams C and D indicated that the NZCYP had had positive effects on planning, one participant from Team D suggested that the school's own planning document was simpler and more efficient to use, a view supported by the SENCO from Team F who asserted that the school's educational planning process was more "clear and concise," suggesting that the complexity of the NZCYP was viewed as a barrier in its use for educational planning by some participants.

Transition

The specific focus of Teams A, B, C and D was to use the NZCYP within the context of transition. However, the use of the NZCYP as an aid for planning for

educational transitions was also raised in Teams E and F. The researcher from Project 1 noted that due to time constraints the project only focused on teams supporting the student prior to transitioning to another educational setting and did not follow up with post-transition teams. In Project 2 (Setting D) it was not possible to find participants supporting the secondary school student transitioning from school out into the work force. In Setting C, where the student was transitioning from intermediate school to secondary school, both the parent and a specialist teacher at the post-transition school were able to provide information on the usefulness of receiving the information.

Many participants commented on facets of the NZCYP they considered could support educational transitions. Participants from Team B reported that the collating of comprehensive information about the child would be helpful in their transition to school, with one teacher participant stating:

Because you can kind of give comprehensive feedback to the teacher that's going to take on the next role to support the child ... all of this information is relevant in terms of their progress to kind of gauge where they're at and what support they need.

Whilst the specialist teacher in Team C receiving the information from the pre-transition team commented, "I think it really is a good information-gatherer to share that with the new team, will be really valuable, then they can be prepared when she arrives". Although the transition for the student in Team C went well, the parent participant was undecided as to whether the NZCYP had aided this process or not, commenting, "I'm not too sure, to be honest, whether it was helpful or not in that sense. I'm undecided".

Participants particularly liked that information could be gathered from a variety of sources and felt that the NZCYP was in-depth and strengths-based. For example, a teacher from Team D commented: "... that sort of gave you really broad pictures of areas where he was experiencing difficulty, but it also gave you an idea of where all his strengths were". Teams further shared that it was easy to lose information about a student over time and that planning using the NZCYP helped to keep the information in one place and made it easier to share.

Collaboration

A perceived strength of the NZCYP among many participants was that its use improved collaboration between stakeholders and had a positive impact on information-sharing between parties. For example, a parent participant in Team B observed:

It's definitely helpful as far as being able to take time to think about it and getting everyone's perspective. Like I say, kindly [kindergarten] only see it from one side, we have our own side, you know an outside observer would get their own perspective. Being able to collaborate all those sides is definitely going to be useful.

Another teacher participant from Team D commented, “... we're all learning off each other, we've all got things to offer and it's about the student in the middle, which is great. So yeah, I find it really collaborative, which is cool”.

Participants also noted that the NZCYP enabled parents' voices to be heard, which was viewed positively by most teams. For example, a teacher in Team B acknowledged the benefit of the NZCYP in being able to gather parents' voices, expressing, “I think sometimes we miss out on the parents' thoughts, so it was really good from that angle, that we got a lot of parent information”. They further expressed that they had wanted to better capture parents' voices in previous planning but did not have adequate planning processes in place that allowed for this. One parent from Team D even declared this to be, “the biggest advantage” of using the NZCYP.

Not all teams perceived the NZCYP to be useful in facilitating collaboration. Participants in Team F stated that the NZCYP was not helpful because it lacked clarity and they already had successful collaborative practices in place at the school. In addition, participants in Team E commented on a cultural misalignment between the more informal collaborative processes of the Māori-focused classroom hub with that of the more structured and formal approach of the NZCYP, and this appeared to impact on the collaborative process. A teacher in this setting noted:

Our language was a[n] oral language not really a written language so when we need to sort things out, it wasn't send an email. It wasn't send a message. It was hey come and have a chat. And that way you can't read the wrong way into messages [...]. And sort of read that and 'Oh I am a little bit lost' it is probably best just to have a korero.

Participants in Team E preferred the more informal “kanohi te kanohi” (face-to-face) interactions between the family and the school, viewing the chance to sit and have a cup of tea and discuss the student, and have the parents come in and talk with other teachers in the student's learning hub, as more valuable.

Poor Cultural Fit

Two research settings, E and F, reported issues with the cultural fit of the NZCYP, suggesting it lacked a cultural component, with only the Background Information page providing a space to record cultural identity. Both teams from these settings indicated that the NZCYP did not provide adequate space to record important cultural information including, whakapapa (genealogy), iwi (tribe) and wairua (spirituality). For example, a teacher participant from Group E commented:

So, I looked through the form having looked at X_____ and his background, especially his whakapapa [genealogy], these are the things within te ao Māori, the tools and the taonga [treasures] which our kids just naturally [mother: gravitate] yeah. And so, within this document I couldn't see anything of that nature. Where is the Māori compartment? I just think it's boxing X_____ inside a box.

This lack of provision for cultural information was considered detrimental to the planning process, as valuable information on the student was not able to be recorded. Participants found that the NZCYP did not provide a complete picture of the student, for example the teacher-aide in Team F commented that, “It's not holistic enough. Wairua [spirituality]. It is missing that. That's what it's missing all right. Because I know for a fact that that works, not just across FASD guys, it works across the board”.

Complexity

The complexity of the NZCYP was raised by participants across all settings. Whilst the comprehensiveness of the forms was positively noted by some teams, the lack of clarity, language used, and time taken to complete the NZCYP were all issues commented on.

The complexity of the document, including a lack of clarity and complicated terminology, was highlighted by all the teams as a barrier. For example, a teacher participant from Team B commented: “Yeah, it was quite complex, lot of things to see and think and yeah, we both found it quite a lot ... and big words”. Whilst the SENCO from Team F stated, “but I think that we just want clear and concise and something that is manageable and useable”. A parent participant in Team E commented “As a mum I got absolutely overwhelmed the moment I looked at it”. She further noted that she felt that the NZCYP was, “jargon-filled and not parent-friendly and not teacher friendly”.

An issue with the complexity of the NZCYP identified by a teacher participant in Team D was that they were, *“not sure every parent is going to want to commit to doing this toolkit”*. A similar view was expressed by a teacher participant in Team B who also felt that the complexity of the document may impact on parents’ willingness to engage with the process, commenting: *“... I don’t know whether all our parents would be a) willing and b) able because it is quite tricky in parts”*. Indeed, the parent and grandparent participants from Team E only partially completed it as they felt it was too complicated to understand.

The section that was most problematic for all teams was the *Functional Ability Profile (FAP)*. Comments included that the FAP was *‘tricky’* to use (teacher participants in Teams B and D). In contrast, two participants from Team F felt the FAP was a useful page. For example, the SENCO from Group F commented: *“I reckon that’s a good page and a good sheet,”* and the Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB), also from Team F, commented that he found the FAP *“very helpful”*. Overall, whilst many of the participants indicated that would have liked further training and examples on how to use the NZCYP, participants in both Teams A and B indicated that they found the other forms *“straightforward to use”*.

The amount of time required to complete the NZCYP was an issue raised in several settings. For example, a parent participant from Team E commented: *“It was just overwhelming for me; I don’t have four hours to sit and fill out paperwork like this”*. This was a common perspective particularly among teacher participants. For example, a teacher from Team E noted: *“The time, time factor too. We’re pretty full on here at kura [school]”*. Whilst a SENCO from Team F responded: *“Yeah, just in all honesty that’s a hell of a lot of reading. You know staff are going, I’ve got 30 kids in this classroom, I haven’t got time for this”*. However, a teacher participant from Team B did acknowledge that they would improve with practice, for example,

The time factor, it’s quite labour intensive really isn’t it? But having said that, maybe if we did this regularly, it would get easier and quicker, and this was a first for us so it probably took us longer than it should have.

This participant also indicated that they would prefer to use it in place of their current system of planning. Finally, the RTLB from Team F felt that schools should persevere with the NZCYP commenting: *“I would ask the teacher or the school to be very patient*

cos it’s going to take [pause] it’s not going to happen over a week or two weeks. It’s going to take some time”.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the results suggested a number of factors influenced the participants’ perceptions and use of the NZCYP. The four key themes identified in the results will be discussed below.

Educational Planning

The NZCYP as a tool for educational planning was generally well-received, with most teams finding the in-depth information it provided about the student, from multiple perspectives, invaluable for classroom and transition planning. This finding supports McLaughlin et al.’s (2017) assertion that the NZCYP provides an in-depth profile of the student and could be useful as a collaborative tool for transition planning. The research also supports both international and local research that indicates that acquiring a wide range of information from multiple perspectives is important for developing effective educational plans (King et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2010).

Collaboration

Overall, most teams found that the NZCYP was useful for collaborative planning. The teams reported that the NZCYP enabled the sharing of multiple stakeholders’ viewpoints and they particularly valued the increased opportunities for parents’ voices to be heard. This finding corresponds with research indicating that the inclusion of parents as collaborative partners is important as they provide a unique perspective on the child (Mengoni & Oates, 2014), which can improve planning, assessment and educational outcomes (Illum et al., 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2017). The findings also support the Ministry of Education’s (2015) view that placing parents at the centre of educational planning enables them to share the wealth of information they have about their child and leads to improved parent engagement. The findings from these research projects are important as research indicates that collaboration is often lacking in educational planning (Connolly & Gersch, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2010; Tucker & Schwartz, 2013), and difficulties can occur with the transfer of information both within and between education settings (Ng et al., 2016). Also, parents frequently report feeling like passive participants in planning meetings, and not being heard by professionals (Blackwell & Rossetti, 2014; Cavendish & Connor, 2018; Mitchell et al., 2010; Salmon, 2008). The

findings suggest that NZCYP may be a useful tool in overcoming some of these challenges and supporting collaborative educational planning.

Not all settings found the NZCYP useful for collaborative educational planning. One of the six settings felt that a lack of cultural alignment between the more informal approach of the Māori-focused classroom hub and the more formal and structured format of the NZCYP hindered collaborative practice. These findings support Bevan-Brown (2015) and Higgins et al.'s (2010) assertions that successful education meetings with whānau should be clear, open, and informal, along with Pere's (1991) claim that Māori expect face-to-face communication. The findings from Team E are also consistent with research by Cleversey et al. (2017) which found that collaboration between families and schools is hindered when cultural issues are overlooked.

Poor Cultural Fit

Teams E and F also reported that the NZCYP lacked cultural sensitivity and did not provide enough space to record relevant cultural information. Whilst the findings from McLaughlin et al. (2017) indicated that the cultural identity categories in the NZCYP were not comprehensive enough, the findings from these two settings indicated a more serious failure of the NZCYP to account for culturally-diverse students within the framework. The findings also support Conti-Becker's (2009) concern that the ICF-CY fails to take into account contextual factors such as culture and Zakirova-Engstrand & Granlund's (2009) suggestion that more research needs to be carried out on the cultural sensitivity of the ICF-CY. Whilst a lack of cultural fit was only raised by two of the teams, these teams were both situated in bi-cultural settings, which the other teams were not. Given the NZCYP has been designed for Aotearoa/New Zealand, the perceived poor cultural fit is a considerable barrier in its ability to facilitate the development of a holistic profile, suggesting more needs to be done to improve the cultural fit and sensitivity of the tool.

Complexity

A major finding across all three projects was that the NZCYP was perceived as being complex, and also that more training was required to improve understanding of it. These findings were consistent with the NZCYP developers' own findings that professionals, using the NZCYP with families, reported parents found the concepts and terms overwhelming, as well as noting the need for improved clarity of the instructions for use (McLaughlin et al., 2017). These findings also correspond with research suggesting that overly

complex, technical or jargon-laden documents are a common issue in cross-disciplinary collaboration (Marzano et al., 2006) and a challenge faced by teams working with students with learning support needs (Pei et al., 2013; Ryan & Ferguson, 2006). Further, the need for more training on the NZCYP identified by some of the participants is consistent with research on the ICF-CY where participants indicated the need for increased instructor-led training and examples based on 'every day' contexts (Pless et al., 2009; Sanches-Ferreira et al., 2014).

Another finding apparent across all three research projects was the perceived lengthy time to complete the NZCYP. This finding is consistent with McLaughlin et al.'s (2017) research where participants also raised concerns regarding the amount of time required to complete the NZCYP and likewise, Ellingsen et al.'s (2018) research where professionals using the ICF-CY also identified the lengthy amount of time to learn and use it as 'challenging'. The negative reaction by many of the participants to the amount of time required to complete the NZCYP is important given findings by Frankl (2005), Shaddock (2002), and Da Fonte and Barton-Arwood (2017), who found time constraints are a factor in an individual's willingness to engage with lengthy information-gathering procedures.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the NZCYP was perceived positively as a tool to support collaborative educational planning and transition. It was clear, however, that there were a number of issues raised by the research that need to be addressed to improve its use and applicability. This includes the need to improve the cultural fit of the NZCYP, and to simplify the language and instructions. Further, training on the NZCYP needs to be more comprehensive.

Poor Cultural Fit

It is recommended that consideration should be given to making cultural features of the NZCYP more clearly defined and explicit. Whilst the cultural features raised by the participants in Teams E & F were not clearly mentioned in the NZCYP, a number of the profile pages could accommodate such information. It is also recommended that a te reo Māori version of the NZCYP is developed and offered. Finally, consideration should also be given to the NZCYP incorporating dimensions found in Māori models of health such as Te Whare Tapa Wha (Durie, 1994) and Te Wheke (Pere, 1991). This is supported by McLachlan, Wirihihana and Huriwai (2017) who found that therapy models for Māori clients which incorporated dimensions of Te Whare Tapa Wha

led to increased engagement and promoted the exploration of behaviours that supported health and well-being, and the barriers that prevent it.

Updating the NZCYP to include a Māori cultural perspective is an important and necessary step in supporting Māori students with learning support needs. However, it is important to note Durie's (2001) point that Māori culture is diverse and not all Māori share the same cultural background or experiences. Therefore, Durie (2001) argues that while Māori may feel disadvantaged without the opportunity to access cultural frameworks, it should not be assumed that all Māori will wish to have cultural components included in assessments and supports. Accordingly, the NZCYP, and the training, needs to be flexible to accommodate the cultural preferences of those it is being used to support.

Complexity

A key finding from the three research projects was that the NZCYP was perceived as complex, time-consuming, and difficult to complete. This perception likely impacted on the participants' willingness to engage with the NZCYP and their thoughts on it. The findings suggest that more needs to be done to reduce the complexity of both the forms and language used. Simplifying the terminology, as well as providing training to enhance users' understanding of terms and instructions in the NZCYP, may improve perceptions regarding its use, and reduce the length of time required to complete it. Further, setting realistic expectations from the outset around the length of time to complete the NZCYP is recommended.

Training

Findings from the data across most settings suggest that improving the training teams receive on the NZCYP is critical to improving both participants' perceptions and use of it. The findings indicate that training should be more comprehensive with a focus on explaining the terminology and how the NZCYP can be applied to everyday settings of the student. Case studies may help demonstrate how the NZCYP can be utilised. It is also recommended that for first time users of the NZCYP, a coach/support person remains involved after the initial training is completed to support teams in its use and application.

Limitations

A number of challenges were noted during these research projects that should be considered. The timing of the research impacted on the projects in a number of ways. For Project 1, time constraints

on the researcher, and the fact that planning for transition to school often begins some months before the child begins school, meant that it was not possible to include receiving teachers in the research. A longer term study would have enabled receiving teachers to be involved, thereby gaining valuable insight into their perspectives of the NZCYP. This was also the situation for Project 2, Team D, where the student did not transition from the secondary setting within the timeframe. For Project 3, training was held at the start of Term One, as both students were transitioning into a new school. This meant staff had limited knowledge about the student. From a methodological viewpoint, it would have been more suitable to carry out the training and focus groups later in the school year.

Two of the settings lost parent participants. In research Project 1, a breakdown in the relationship between one team of participants meant that the parent removed the child from the setting. This occurred after each participant had filled in the NZCYP, but before the forms could be used for planning. It was decided that the research with the remaining participants would continue as their perspective on the NZCYP would still provide valuable feedback. In Project 3, the mother in one team completed the training, however she was unable to complete the research for personal reasons. The loss of the parents from these two projects removed the important parent perspective from the research. The parents' absence will have reduced the ability to draw conclusions about the overall findings, especially regarding collaboration, where the parents' views of the NZCYP in this regard would have added a valuable perspective.

The intent of the research was to recruit a broad disciplinary mix of participants to reflect cross-disciplinary educational teams. Whilst every effort was made to recruit all key members of the students' educational teams, the final composition of the teams reflected the availability and capacity of the families and professionals at that time. For example, a psychologist from Infant, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services had originally agreed to participate in Team E but had to pull out due to work and personal commitments. This situation is indicative of challenges with cross-disciplinary collaborative teamwork in general. Research with a wider disciplinary mix of team members is required.

Finally, the three research projects did not include the student as a participant as the focus was on cross-disciplinary collaboration of those supporting the student with LSN. However, given the aim of the NZCYP is to support learning and participation for

students with disabilities, including their perspective and voice in future research, is important in order to draw conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the toolkit from their perspective.

Final Thoughts

The NZCYP offers teams supporting students with learning support needs a means to work collaboratively to develop a holistic profile of their students for educational planning. This profile can be used to support transition as it can be updated regularly and travel with the student as they move on to different educational settings. The NZCYP enables the voices of all who support a student with learning support needs to be heard, enabling a broader, deeper understanding of the student to be developed. However, improving the cultural fit, and reducing the complexity of the NZCYP, along with developing training methods and opportunities for users to gain familiarity with it, will be critical in enhancing the effectiveness of its use.

If you are interested in using the NZCYP, or would like further information on the NZCYP please contact: Sally Clendon, S.Clendon@massey.ac.nz, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442.

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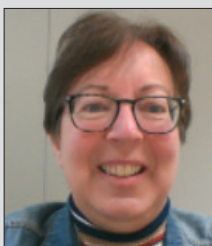
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