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‘Looking back, looking forward’: An interview with Emeritus Professor Ted Glynn on his involvement in special education

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Abstract

In interview with Dr Peter Stanley, Professor Glynn reflects on how he became involved in special education, and on his work with the Pause Prompt Praise reading strategy, the Mangere Guidance and Learning Unit (which gave rise to Guidance and Learning Units nationally), and Glenburn Residential Centre, which was an innovative study of child behaviour management across multiple settings. Professor Glynn also talks about his time training psychologists on both the Auckland and Otago Diploma in Educational Psychology programmes and about his involvement in training Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour. Glynn advocates for inclusion, and for regular class teachers to be principally responsible for working with students with special needs. He also contends that much greater attention should be given to the cultural experiences of children in special and mainstream education.

Keywords

Glynn, special education, educational psychology, New Zealand, Pause Prompt Praise (PPP), Guidance and Learning Unit (GLU), Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB), PGDipEdPsych, inclusion, culture, applied behaviour analysis.



Interview

Peter: Ted, you have had a major role in special education in this country. What was it that drew you to special education?

Ted: I've never seen myself as being a special educator but over time I have found myself drawn inexorably into the world of "special education". Where did it start? Well, one of the people that got me interested was Marie Clay, way back when I was doing my masters degree at Auckland University. Marie offered a course on special needs and she took her students on a number of visits to special education facilities in Auckland. Those experiences were formative for me. I saw students with a wide range of physical impairments, and intellectual and behavioural challenges. It began to dawn on me that these children were experiencing the outcomes of handicapping conditions that resulted from interactions with other people and not simply from specific disabilities themselves.

As well, Marie Clay's doctoral work on how children learned literacy skills had a deep and lasting impact on me. Her work showed that if you want to help people who are struggling or don't have enough strategies to cope, then look to people who are succeeding. Careful observation of successful performance in children learning to read and write can reveal clues and strategies to help people who are not so successful. Typically, students who are struggling with learning to read and write don't necessarily need a totally *different*, or a highly *simplified* pedagogy involving more and more drill in a diminished set of strategies. Rather, they need additional support to learn all the strategies that competent students are able to pick up for themselves through engagement in effective reading programmes.

Peter: Thanks very much. As a psychologist working in education myself, I've come across your work in all manner of settings. I know that you were part of the team that developed the Pause Prompt Praise reading tutoring strategies, that you contributed to the establishment of the Guidance and Learning Units, and that you also helped to design and implement behaviour management programmes in a residential centre in West Auckland. Shall we begin with Pause Prompt Praise? I certainly found Pause Prompt Praise really effective myself, and it is such a simple intervention. Ted, is this reading strategy still in use today?

Ted: Yes, it is a simple intervention and I think that's one of its strengths. It provides a number of specific and concrete strategies that a parent, an older sibling, or a peer (a tuakana in the Māori world) can easily learn and implement. But it was also well-founded theoretically. I need to say that Pause Prompt Praise was a collaborative effort involving my University of Auckland colleagues Stuart McNaughton, Viviane Robinson, and Marianne Quinn, and the strategies also drew heavily on the work of Marie Clay. At the time, it was quite a new thing to do and it involved a lot of learning for all of us.¹

Pause Prompt Praise was one of those exciting pieces of research that produced some very positive outcomes and led on to a succession of studies over many years. Of course, I moved on to other things, but I have found that Pause Prompt Praise has kept on coming back to me as other people have implemented it successfully in other parts of New Zealand and in the UK and Australia. The good thing about it was that where the programme was implemented reasonably faithfully then good outcomes were reported in the literature.

One of most exciting later developments for me has been taking part with a team of Māori workers in the former Special Education Service, together with Māori teachers, kaumatua and whānau members, who re-worked the Pause Prompt Praise strategies for successful implementation in Māori immersion literacy contexts. In those contexts it is known as Tatari Tautoko Tauawhi (TTT). At present, I am part of a team that is providing professional development for teachers in Māori immersion contexts in TTT and in the use of a set of oral language assessment tools.

Peter: Ted, can we talk about your involvement with the Guidance and Learning Units?

Ted: Around the time that Pause Prompt Praise had been getting under way, I had an opportunity to work with several schools in Manukau that had serious concerns about the challenging behaviours of their students. I was also fortunate then to be working with several excellent students engaged in applied behaviour analysis, like Dennis Moore and Matt Sanders, and we identified some clear functional relationships between teacher behaviour and student behaviour. Our work attracted the interest of the District Senior Inspector of Schools in Auckland, Dick Kirby, and with his strong support the Mangere Guidance and Learning Unit was established. The unit had two dedicated staff members who worked with teachers in their schools to develop and implement some effective behaviour management strategies, and it achieved considerable success.

The Mangere Guidance and Learning Unit had enquiries from inspectors in other regions, and we set it up so that teachers could come from other schools and spend a term or two terms in the unit. I still believe that it doesn't matter how much money or support is poured into schools, if it's all spent on trying to "fix" kids that teachers have given up on, or that teachers have had removed from their classrooms, then it's not going to ever stem the flow of more and more children being referred "out" by teachers because of their challenging behaviours. Consistent with our understanding of the behavioural "A-B-Cs" (Antecedents—Behaviours—Consequences) analyses of the time, our work in the Mangere Guidance Unit established that if schools wanted to modify challenging behaviour among their students, then teachers needed to modify their own behaviour as well.

Interestingly, while a high proportion of students referred to the Mangere Guidance Unit in the 1970s were of Māori descent, the majority of their teachers were non-Māori. We demonstrated functional relationships between teacher and student behaviour, but the need to implement culturally responsive pedagogies was not identified, let alone addressed. I am deeply grateful that later behavioural research has been with Māori colleagues and has resulted in strong positive outcomes for the learning and behaviour of Māori students. In more recent times, the work of Russell Bishop and others in the Te Kotahitanga Professional Development Project has demonstrated the effectiveness of teachers implementing culturally responsive pedagogies constructed around caring, trusting and reciprocal relationships with Māori students. One of the keys to the success of this project, I believe, has been the gathering and responding to the narratives of the Māori students themselves.

Peter: What happened subsequently to the Guidance and Learning Units, Ted?

Ted: I think that too many new units were established too quickly. As well, the core applied behaviour analysis focus, both conceptual and technical, was lost sight of, and the central professional development and monitoring components were seriously

compromised. Effectively, the work of Guidance and Learning Unit (GLU) teachers became less grounded in current applied behaviour analysis best practices. That's just my personal reflections looking back on it.

Peter: I'd like to move on now to the Glenburn residential and school programme, and your involvement in it. Would you like to comment on that?

Ted: Glenburn was one of those lucky opportunities that can come the way of an academic. At the time there was a lot of concern in the education world about whether putting children with continuing, severe and challenging behaviour problems into institutions for intensive programmes would actually "fix" them. The issue is that children's behaviour often reverts when they leave the institution because they return to their original environment, with all its contexts and contingencies that maintain challenging behaviours. Glenburn presented me with an interesting opportunity because Presbyterian Social Services had the idea of setting up residential cottages on the same property as an existing Department of Education special school. What attracted a group of us here was that we'd have the opportunity of being able to monitor and assess the behaviour of students both in the cottages—that is, their home base—and also in the school. As well, we wanted to include the referred students' parents or whānau in the behaviour management programmes we were developing. We also insisted that while the students were attending Glenburn they needed to remain on the roll of their regular primary school and these schools had the responsibility to continue with the programmes that had been started off at Glenburn. Our aim was to have everyone on the same page: Glenburn School, the cottage staff, the parents, and the referring school teachers. It was quite a radical approach for that time.

Peter: It sounds like a really positive and useful professional experience.

Ted: There were lots of positives. One thing that comes to mind is how skilful and experienced the cottage staff became. We found it a huge challenge to keep the interaction and exchange of information going between the cottages and the school, even though they were located on the same site. Gradually, some of the strategies that we had established were eroded away. It probably went back to the stage where most decisions about the treatment of students were made by professionals, such as psychologists and psychiatrists, on the basis of one session with the parents. It's a continuing problem that the people who actually do the work on the ground (in this case, the cottage staff and the teachers) often have the least amount of power. Nevertheless, those were extremely exciting days, but also very time consuming and energy consuming. We learnt a huge amount. We learnt a lot about behaviour management skills but also about the issues of getting other people (staff, caregivers, parents, and students) to take responsibility and to own those skills.

Peter: Well, as we know, there's a continuing retreat from residential placements for children. What's your feeling about the continuing closure of residential institutions, Ted?

Ted: I have mixed feelings about this. If all we can do is to manage the kids while they're in the institution and have very little contact or no impact with their families and whānau at home then we might as well not be going there anymore. However, if there are no institutions, what do you do with these students? That's where we have to do a complete rethink. If students' challenging behaviour is occurring in the homes and in the community then that's where the programmes and support need to go. I think that as professionals we have all too often overlooked that there are people in the extended

family and in their communities, and particularly in families from Māori and Polynesian backgrounds, who are capable and are well-positioned to do this kind of work. The challenge is in handing over power to these people and communities so that they can take responsibility and devise interventions based within their own cultural frameworks, rather than simply expecting them to implement interventions designed and implemented by us.

Peter: Ted, you had really significant roles on both the Auckland and the Otago Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Psychology courses. And these courses had a high profile and status within special education in the past. Please share some observations about teaching on both of those programmes.

Ted: Well, I can share some observations and memories but I don't want them to be interpreted as judgments because we're looking at thirty or forty years of time and all sorts of things have changed. Those courses were some of the most enjoyable teaching I have done because we were able to interact closely and intensively with small numbers of very, very committed postgraduate students. Most of these students entered with teacher training, and often with experience working in other education, social welfare and health contexts as well. Something that my colleagues Keith Ballard, Dan McKerracher and others shared with our students at that time was a commitment to professional work as civil servants and to trying to improve everything we could, even if it meant challenging the relevance and effectiveness of the educational policies and practices of the day. As well, we were all caught up in the challenges and the magic of the 1960s with all the rapid societal and political changes that were going on then. I do think that the social and cultural history of the 1960s left their mark on those professional programmes and on all who engaged in them.

What else would I want to say? Teaching on the PGDipEdPsych programmes at Auckland and Otago gave me opportunities to contribute what I'd learnt about applied behaviour analysis within classrooms and schools, and what I'd learnt from working in the Mangere Guidance Unit and at Glenburn. These experiences helped me to understand that it doesn't matter what the range of skills we have to hand for promoting children's literacy learning and for solving individual behavioural challenges in classrooms, you also needed to learn how to become advocates and agents of change within the system. That meant we needed to learn how to get teachers engaged in professional development in order to change their skills at classroom level. We also needed to learn how to work at the whole-school level, particularly if we were to seriously address issues like playground behaviour and bullying.

Most importantly, we wanted our psychologists to be able to understand and connect with the families and communities of the individuals they were asked to work with. Hence we expected them to go into homes and to observe the interaction of children and adults in these settings. We believed that this approach would provide better quality information about effective strategies for improving students' learning and behaviour. In those days, referrals came from either home or school and educational psychologists had authority to work in both settings. I may be wrong, but it looks to me as if our educational psychologists do not now have that facility of access and that they may often find themselves working in isolation.

Peter: In more recent years you have been involved in the training of Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB). This involved a different group of trainees and a different model of training. What did you learn from that experience?

Ted: Working with the universities consortium responsible for the delivery of postgraduate courses to approximately 800 teachers is probably one of the biggest challenges that I've met in my academic career, but let's sort of start at the beginning. The education policy formulated at the time reflected a growing understanding that the way to deal with many classroom learning and behavioural problems was to broaden the range of pedagogical strategies that teachers had to hand. There was also an emerging and related understanding that the clearest way to assist teachers in responding to challenging student behaviour would be to support them in their own classrooms, and to observe, recommend, and model teaching strategies for them to implement with their own students. While these understandings were similar to those arising from our educational psychology training programmes, the proposed RTLB training programme was on a nationwide scale.

Government policy of those times was pursuing a truly inclusive education system. It was to be a system that did not exclude children who were not succeeding, and it was to be a system that did not regard its main support strategy as withdrawal of students to special classrooms or special schools. As I have said, a major aspect of this inclusive system was to improve the quality of teaching for students experiencing learning and behavioural difficulties. I don't think that I had seen a similar example anywhere else in the world in terms of a clearly articulated and inclusive educational policy contextualised to effective classroom practices. An exciting part of developing and implementing the national RTLB programme was that we got to have some say in how that policy might be shaped. The Ministry of Education officials were committed to making this policy initiative work as well as it possibly could. We also had the very strong support of the Minister at the time, who proved to be an effective advocate for the policy, both within Parliament and within the educational community.

A really innovative and satisfying aspect of the RTLB training programme was that the three universities were contracted for the training programme for the whole country as a *collective*, and this was because we wanted to share our resources and our expertise. In terms of knowledge and experience among the RTLB National Management Team, I need to pay tribute to outstanding educational psychologists and educators like Don Brown and Lottie Thompson from Victoria University of Wellington, and Dennis Moore and Joanne Walker from the University of Auckland. I also need to pay a special tribute to my long-standing colleague at the University of Waikato, Angus Macfarlane, who brought extensive knowledge and experience of te reo and tikanga Māori, and of supporting Māori students and whānau within mainstream educational settings. Angus was a central player in establishing and delivering the content and the pedagogy of the Māori and bicultural focus of the RTLB programme.

The RTLB training programme and our involvement in it reflected our commitment to culture and our commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. We began with the proposition that a high proportion of the referrals for special education assistance came from students from minoritised cultures. We were also influenced by the Māori Renaissance in the 1990s and the choice that was presented to many Pākehā professionals to define themselves as treaty partners. Consequently, we insisted that one quarter of the RTLB training components would be devoted to learning about Māori culture, learning about Māori concerns, and learning to listen to Māori parents. In particular, we wanted RTLB to look critically at the schools in which they worked—to

look at very simple things initially, like what was the proportion of Māori students, and the proportion of Māori teachers in a school? As the course went on they were required to undertake some minimum language learning, and then to learn how many mainstream values and practice values conflicted with, and belittled, values of Māori students and families, and how this often assisted in understanding the challenging behaviours engaged in by Māori student.

One of the things that I'm most proud of is that Angus Macfarlane and I were able to work alongside senior Māori educators and practitioners like Rangiwakaehu Walker, Wai Harawira, Matewai McCudden, Dick Grace, Manu Te Pere and other people of that calibre who actually advised and guided us on the course content that RTLB needed to know if they were to become effective professionals working with Māori students and whānau. As it turned out, we received a number of challenges from students who didn't understand why they were required to experience working within someone else's cultural space. But I'm proud that we stayed with it, and we stuck to this requirement. On the basis of student evaluations, over ninety per cent of people who completed the RTLB diplomas were very positive about their experience. I also know that for many of those RTLBs the programme provided the stimulus for them to make some small but important beginnings that have led them to engage with bicultural strategies in their professional practice.

Peter: Do you feel that the RTLB training programmes achieved the goals that were set for them?

Ted: Where a school is committed to inclusive education then RTLB training is highly supportive of that, and when those stars align you'll find there's some excellent work being done by RTLBs; and you'll also find satisfaction among teachers and principals in those schools. Unfortunately, there were RTLBs who completed their training and then encountered schools that required them to work in less inclusive ways, such as working individually with small numbers of children outside of their classrooms or working in special classes, and in some cases, they may even have been discouraged from trying to connect the school and community. Many schools that were employing RTLBs should have had a better understanding of the inclusive nature of RTLB training in the context of the contemporary developments in special education policy. I don't see that difficulties arising from a mismatch between current policies, preferences and practices in schools on the one hand, and the inclusive education focus and direction of the RTLB curriculum and programme on the other was particularly the fault of the training programme. I have been surprised that some independent evaluations of the RTLB programme do not appear to differentiate between RTLB who had been trained and RTLB who had been merely appointed without training. Nevertheless, I would concede that the some evaluations did identify clusters of RTLB that were not operating in ways consistent with the thrust of the training.

Peter: The need for interventions that are culturally responsive is a priority for you, isn't it?

Ted: I am concerned that a number of special educators still appear to be operating from the assumption that culture and ethnicity is irrelevant, and that most interventions or most strategies are culture-free. We still import overseas programmes when the people who are best able to create programmes to address the behaviour and learning needs of students from minoritised communities are the members of those communities. The challenge for us professionals is to learn to understand *why* culture counts and why

it is essential to actively support these communities, and the people in them who have the skills, to take responsibility for designing interventions, and to determine whether these interventions are effective. I know that's quite a big challenge but it's not exactly rocket science to see that a disproportionate number of referrals are from Māori, Pasifika, and other cultural minorities and to ask why we not engaging them in the process of interventions. I can draw on ten or twelve years of work with the Poutama Pounamu Education Research Centre in Tauranga. I have been working there with Māori kaumatua and kuia, and Māori professionals to support them in designing strategies for assessing and improving behaviour and strategies for assessing and improving literacy that make sense to Māori communities, and that are produced in a way that are acceptable to senior members of those communities. To my distress, there's been a lot of useful research done by the Poutama Pounamu team that has scarcely seen the light of day. However, the recent Best Evidence Synthesis documents coming out of the Ministry are now identifying and recognising the worth of some of the work that has done.

Peter: Ted, I'd now like to ask about the place of science and empiricism within special education. How do commitments to hard evidence and proof of outcomes sit with a cultural emphasis in special education?

Ted: I feel quite strongly about that. When you talk about "proof of outcomes" I think the first question to ask is, whose outcomes? And who determines what outcomes are to be looked for? In my view, so many of the outcomes selected as evidence of the effectiveness of programmes have come from mainstream Western European culture. The outcomes that are important to Māori, as Treaty partners and as New Zealanders in their own country, are often either just ignored or pre-judged to be inappropriate by the mainstream culture. People who do effectiveness studies make themselves highly accountable to the funders, to the government systems that set up the evaluations, but in this country very few make themselves so highly accountable to minoritised cultural groups, and especially to Māori as Treaty partners. This lack of accountability is evident not only during the design and execution of an evaluation project but, more importantly, after data have been gathered. Relevant questions are how are these data to be understood and interpreted, and from within whose cultural frame of reference? For me, that's one real issue that I have about effective educational psychology in New Zealand now. It's about time we started getting our head around that one.

Peter: In a word, special education is complex isn't it?

Ted: It is a complex area to work in but it's been made more complex by politics, by resource management issues, by control issues and all of that. That's why I like the inclusive education framework because it puts the focus on helping teachers to make it possible for children to be included; whether that means modifying the curriculum a bit, changing the tasks you ask students to do, or sharing the tasks around so that children can work on different aspects of a problem. The complexity arises when people believe that there has to be a separate and special pedagogy to go with every special need. Believing this, many ordinary class teacher say things like "I don't know anything about the blind, so I really don't think I can cope with a blind or partially sighted child in my classroom", or "I don't think I can have this child with such severe and challenging behavioural issues in my classroom any longer because I don't have all that specialist expertise". For me, it simplifies the process if we start from an inclusive

position that allows all children to remain in the classroom and we bring some expertise into the classroom to help teachers better include students with special needs.

Peter: Ted, you've known and worked with many prominent practitioners, policy makers and politicians in special education in New Zealand. Would you like to nominate one person who you believe has made a particularly strong contribution?

Ted: I think Don Brown, who is sadly no longer with us, has to have been one of the most impressive leaders in special education in New Zealand. Don's career as Director of Special Education was an outstanding one. He introduced significant changes into the system and he never lacked the courage to challenge the politicians and administrators. He supported his psychologists when many of them rebelled against administering IQ tests "on demand", and he used a sound rationale for doing so. Don taught me a lot as an academic who was learning how to work in the New Zealand education system about how to not spit the dummy when your suggestions are not listened to, and how to keep at it and to try and come up with another way. After his career as a distinguished civil servant, Don teamed up with his partner Lottie Thompson and developed some powerful and effective means for improving the quality of pedagogy within secondary schools, particularly through helping teachers to successfully implement cooperative learning strategies. They learned that working alongside complete departments and faculties provided a more efficient entry into the challenging business of school change than trying to begin with the entire school staff. Don and Lottie's professional development workshops have assisted many teachers to include the students that they had not previously been able to include. Their contribution is less well known than it deserves to be.

Peter: What do you consider to be the most interesting or useful research that you did in special education?

Ted: Well, if I can, I would like to go back to the research around Pause Prompt Praise that I did with Stuart McNaughton, Viviane Robinson, and Marianne Quinn, because it's still influencing me today. Fundamentally, it taught me that you cannot understand children's learning until you've been into the home, talked with the parent or parents and seen for yourself how they interact. Specifically in relation to reading, I learned that by getting alongside parents and supporting them to understand and implement specific skills and strategies you could turn around very challenging situations. You can actually change the way many parents view their own children, from seeing them as ignorant, or unintelligent, or unresponsive, or whatever, to seeing them much more positively as active, engaged and competent learners. It also taught me that many schools at that time knew very little about the homes that their students came from. However, this did not stop them from making incorrect assumptions about what the homes were like, and then acting on those assumptions. Teachers were often surprised by how much children knew, and how much they could learn outside of their classroom context, and how effective parents and whānau members could be in helping their children learn to read and write.

There was an especially powerful lesson I learned from this research, and from subsequent work by others such as Stuart McNaughton. This lesson concerned the importance of teachers learning to incorporate students' and communities' knowledge and experiences within classroom and school learning contexts. This lesson is particularly critical when teachers come from different language and cultural backgrounds from those of their students. An important challenge for educators and

researchers is how to get teachers more informed about what's going on at home, and to get homes more informed about what's going on at school. Schools don't necessarily have all the answers, and that means everything from when to call a meeting, how to approach parents, what's the meeting going to be about, who draws up the agenda, who runs the meeting, and who listens and who talks. They need to take advice and guidance from their communities on how to do these things,

Peter: Are there other significant pieces of research that you'd like to mention?

Ted: Well, there's *Hei Awhina Matua*. That would be the other one that I would like to mention. Some Māori special education staff visited me in Dunedin when I was at the University of Otago to seek my help in designing and trialling a behavioural programme that would work for Māori students. In their region there was a large intermediate school where Māori students were displaying high levels of challenging behaviours in classrooms, on the playground, on the buses, and all that kind of thing. I was invited to join a team of researchers, kaumatua and teachers to work on this (and how that invitation actually came about is whole different story!).

The first thing we did was put together separate questionnaire-type tools for use with children, parents and teachers to find out about the behaviours that the kids were engaging in that were difficult. We also wanted to identify the settings where students got into trouble, and to see whether there were behaviours that the students had which were good and worth keeping. Analysing these data (and incorporating students and whānau members in the process) led us to devise a behaviour management programme which was based around a series of eleven brief (2–3 minute) sketches or skits. The skits illustrated some of the problem situations that the students had described to us. Some of these were at home with parents and family members, some of them were at school, and some of them were other places like in the supermarket or stealing stuff from shops. We then asked the students to act the skits out and we followed this with a kind of collaborative behavioural analysis about what went on and what might have been done better. We quickly learned that we didn't need the scripts. We could just give students the situation and away they'd go. What they did was realistic and it had more "street cred" than the skits we had written. The students learnt a great deal about their own behaviour and, most importantly, they were able to come up with useful and workable solutions. From then on in the project, the students were active players and they helped in developing the tools, strategies, and resources for training other people later. The big lesson for us here was that if you want to solve behaviour problems in schools you should talk to all the people that are involved, but especially to the students themselves. This was probably the second most important piece of research in terms of my own learning and growth as a researcher and it led on to a great many further research opportunities, including the establishment of the Poutama Pounamu Education Research Centre.

Peter: Ted, are you optimistic about special education in this country? Do you think that there should be other priorities in terms of policies and practices?

Ted: One thing that worries me at the moment is that we appear to be going backwards in some ways. We seem to be going back to the notion that many learning difficulties or learning challenges inevitably require loads of *specialist* expertise—be it in devising effective language and literacy learning, be it in responding to challenging behaviour, or be it in encountering different cultural values and practices. I think we are undermining the basic position that, by and large, teachers are responsible for managing

the learning environments of the students that they teach. When teachers and schools need extra support—and they certainly do need additional support—then that support should be provided on school sites, or provided in a way that teachers can learn new skills.

My reading of some of the literature over the years makes it plain that we are not solely dependent on specialist pedagogies and special ways of learning to work with partially sighted people, or for people who have hearing loss; or that there are special pedagogies that only work for students from some cultures. We seem to be reverting to depending more and more on an increasing range of specialisms and specialist teachers who *withdraw* students from their regular classrooms. But this seems to me to be occurring at the expense of ensuring that all teachers are competent in teaching inclusively (albeit with *in-class* support when needed). If we choose to rely on increasing numbers of specialists, special classes and special schools to meet the needs of students with different kinds of learning difficulties, we may be signalling to regular classroom teachers that responding to challenging behaviours, and responding to the language and cultural needs of students from different home and community backgrounds (or whatever) is “not really their problem”. Simply removing students from their classrooms is not going to help teachers learn to teach more inclusively. It doesn’t help the students all that much either when we put them together with other students with high levels of challenging behaviour. Effective behavioural programmes can be devised to manage student behaviour in exclusion contexts, but there always remains the issue of transferring these same students back to their original schools and classrooms where their challenging behaviours revert to being controlled by the contingencies and contexts that helped to create them in the first place. So what’s all this saying? I’m hopeful about special education in the sense that I think that inclusive teaching is a powerful and important way to proceed, but I’m worried when we take students out for specialist treatment. And I am especially concerned about withdrawals for behavioural treatment because we’re undermining the capacities of teachers and schools to more generally handle students with challenging behaviours.

Peter: Ted, can we have a final comment please?

Ted: Well, I’ve lately been involved in a piece of research looking at Māori children in mainstream schools who are learning science topics. We’re looking at ways to engage them better within the classroom and to get them involved in learning. One of the effective strategies we have been exploring is to find ways that the knowledge and experiences that the children have as Māori can be brought into the classroom, so that Māori students feel that what they know is valued and respected. In several different studies we have taken topics like the weather and the seasons, and the universe and space, and we have looked at how these things are understood within a traditional Māori viewpoint. This has meant looking at where we might get the cultural information from; whether it is from students, koro, uncles, aunties or from other whānau members. We are finding that if these stories can be brought into the classroom alongside information from Western science, then each set of knowledge is seen as respectful of the other and as being able to learn from the other. It’s likely we’ll achieve a lot better engagement of Māori students if teachers are able to do this.

I guess my final comment would be that it’s about time we started saying that the culture of the child *does* matter in education and in special education and we should stop clinging to notions that we have interventions that are culture-free, because we

don't. If we continue to ignore the things that our students value, and if we don't find ways to incorporate these things in our classroom teaching, then we are going to continue to have challenging behaviours, truancy, and so on. The history of education for Māori in New Zealand since European contact shows me that we have been extremely and painfully slow to learn from Māori; to find out what they understand and know, how they learn and how they teach, and how they regard knowledge. Isn't it about time that we as New Zealanders, as Treaty partners, accepted that we have a lot that we need to learn from Māori and to devise interventions and strategies that reflect these things? It all starts with listening to Māori about how best to meet the needs of their students. I don't know how long it's going to take us to learn this, but I do believe that we can.

ⁱ Pause Prompt Praise is more comprehensively described in McNaughton, S., Glynn, T., & Robinson, V. M. (1981). *Parents as remedial reading tutors: Issues for home and school*. Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.