

Positive Behaviour Management: A Critique of Literature

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Abstract

The current paper reviews literature surrounding *Positive Behaviour Supports (PBS)* and *Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L)* with reference to the findings in a number of research papers. The aim of the current critique was to review the literature, report the findings, and identify limitations to provide contexts for future research in New Zealand. The results of the review indicated that the influence of positive behaviour management strategies was mostly positive, for instance student achievement, behaviour and school outcomes were all shown to increase when positive behaviour management strategies were implemented in a range of studies. There were a number of factors identified as fundamental to the implementation of positive management strategies, such as the necessity of the whole school being involved, and accurate data gathering in order to foster efficacy of these programs. Although the findings were mostly positive, there were gaps identified in the literature. There was a lack of gender identification as reported in the results of the studies, and there was also a lack in ethnicity data provided which is important in a New Zealand context. More research is needed in the New Zealand context in order to take into account the unique culture of Aotearoa, as the results may differ from the findings of studies overseas.

Keywords: *Positive Behaviour For Learning, Positive Behaviour Support, PB4L, PBS, New Zealand, Behaviour Management*



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Introduction

Teaching in New Zealand has a strong foundation based on relationships: those built within the classroom, between teachers and their students as well as between teachers and the wider school community. Professional relationships, as outlined by the Practising Teacher Criteria, state that teachers need to build relationships that have a focus on positive well-being with ākonga ([Education Council \[EC\], 2015](#)). Teachers also need to show commitment to the profession by promotion of those positive relationships that support the well-being of ākonga. Teachers should be committed to the fact that New Zealand is a bicultural society and this should be promoted and acknowledged. Teachers have a commitment to ongoing practice and personal development, in order for them to develop and demonstrate professional relationships ([EC, 2015](#)). An area of influence on professional relationships around the world and in New Zealand is the adoption of positive behaviour support strategies in the classroom (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2015). Behaviour management in New Zealand over the past decades has seen a strong focus on the punishment of negative behaviour, but in recent years the MoE has begun to roll out a new behaviour management strategy called Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) ([Boyd, Dingle & Herdina, 2014](#); [Boyd & Felgate, 2015](#); [Savage, Lewis & Colless, 2011](#)). The purpose of this literature review is to examine some research of behaviour support

programs, both inside and outside of New Zealand, and identify future research in the New Zealand context that may be needed to support the program and successful implementation. The review will first outline what *Positive Behaviour Support (PBS)* and *Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L)* frameworks are and how they work. The review will then summarize the research conducted and the final section will outline limitations and directions for future research specific to the New Zealand context.

Positive Behaviour Management

PBS originated in the USA when teachers began to see that punitive approaches to behaviour management were not working and were seen to exclude troublesome children from the classrooms ([Sugai & Horner, 2002](#)). Research conducted has compared punitive approaches to positive behaviour approaches and has shown a significant increase in many outcomes for children with the abolition of punitive approaches to behaviour management in schools ([Sugai & Horner, 2002](#)). Punitive approaches in prior research have shown increases in antisocial behaviour and intensity, which is the opposite of the results shown in *PBS* ([Sugai & Horner, 2002](#)).

Positive Behaviour Supports (PBS)

[Lewis, Jones, Horner and Sugai \(2010\)](#) define *PBS* as a multi-tiered behaviour support system that increases the support for students to encourage positive social behaviour. Tier one, or

primary support intervention, has been seen to have very high fidelity when implemented effectively as outlined in [Horner et al. \(2009\)](#) research study, where 80% of the schools showed improvements in positive behaviour. Tier two, or secondary intervention, has resulted in improvements for specific children that still have behavioural needs after the implementation of the primary intervention. These are children that may take significant one on one support to ensure that they benefit from positive behaviour support. Examples of intervention strategies that may aid these children include daily report cards where the child can check how they are doing and to discuss any aspects that may be of concern. There are also coaches such as Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) that provide strategies for self-management of behaviour in order to aid self-regulation. Tier three, or tertiary intervention, requires that a specific behaviour intervention plan be developed for specific children in order to monitor their behaviour and provide them with significant support in order to increase positive behaviour over time. Children in tier three are usually not responsive in tier one or two ([Gage, Sugai, Lewis & Brzozowy, 2015](#); [Horner et al., 2009](#); [Horner, Sugai & Anderson, 2010](#); [Lewis et al., 2010](#); [Scott, Park, Swain-Bradway & Landers, 2007](#); [Sugai & Horner, 2002](#); [Warren, et al., 2006](#)). Consistency of behaviour management strategies is important and this is reinforced when PBS uses the support of all staff and families to keep behaviour management as consistent as possible for the children and has shown some promising results ([Sugai & Horner, 2009](#)).

Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L)

PB4L is a newly implemented framework that focuses on the promotion of positive behaviour and inclusive learning which allows teachers to foster well-being and aspects of achievement for all children (MoE, 2015). *PB4L* has been adopted from *Positive Behaviour Intervention Support (PBIS)* and *PBS* which have been implemented in the United States of America (USA), and in other parts of the world. As well as being implemented in NZ, Australia has also adopted the *Positive Behaviour for Learning* framework in many of their schools ([Yeung, Mooney, Barker & Dobia, 2009](#); [Yeung, Barker, Tracey & Mooney, 2013](#)). *PB4L* is funded primarily by the MoE in New Zealand and, similarly, is a three tier framework of core features as seen in *PBS* ([Boyd et al., 2014](#); [Boyd & Felgate, 2015](#)). However, unlike *PBS*, this framework offers core features which allows the schools that are implementing it freedom to use it in a way that caters to the needs of the school within the constraints of the core features ([Boyd et al., 2014](#); [Boyd & Felgate, 2015](#)). This framework also consists of three tiers, however to move to tier two and tier three the schools must first show that they are implementing tier one at 70-80% fidelity ([Boyd et al., 2014](#); [Boyd & Felgate 2015](#)). In contrast *PBS* just allows schools to implement the tiers as they require without a compulsory need for proven fidelity ([Sugai & Horner, 2002](#)). *PB4L*, in contrast to *PBS*, emphasises a positive culture of support and outlines expectations that schools can have in relation to the changes over time with implementation of this framework ([Boyd et al., 2014](#); [Boyd & Felgate, 2015](#)). The short term changes are in school processes and seen as surface changes, the long term changes are of outcomes such as achievement outcomes, school outcomes and whānau outcomes, in a positive direction ([Boyd et al., 2014](#); [Boyd & Felgate, 2015](#)).

Review of Findings

General findings have shown that there are a number of positive outcomes for children and teachers with reference to *PBS* and *PB4L*. The most important findings show that in almost all of the studies there were significant reductions in negative behaviour and an increase in positive behaviour. There are significant outcomes at both the school and individual levels with the correct support from staff and families ([Horner, et al., 2010](#)). Results have shown improvement in academic outcomes for the children in most studies as well as improvement in positive behaviour, with the literature showing that most schools implementing *PB4L* and *PBS* have moderate to high fidelity in the early years of implementation ([Boyd et al., 2014](#); [Boyd & Felgate, 2015](#); [Horner et al., 2010](#); [McIntosh, Bennett & Price, 2011](#); [Sugai & Horner, 2002](#)). The literature explored for this review was both qualitative and quantitative, in order to have a range of outcomes addressed. The quantitative studies were only as reliable as the data that was gathered by the teachers, which was a major limitation in many of the studies. The qualitative data consisted of teacher and student self-reports. [McIntosh et al. \(2011\)](#) found that the accurate gathering of data was one aspect that gave the strongest reliability and noted that inaccurate data was one of the downfalls to the implementation findings. [McIntosh et al. \(2011\)](#) also noted that one of the strengths in reporting results was that most of the schools data was recorded accurately, which made the results more reliable than other studies that were looked at. One such study was conducted by [Savage et al. \(2011\)](#) who examined two New Zealand primary schools that had been implementing whole school *PBS* for a number of years. They concluded that tracking behaviour with a robust data management system was seen as essential in establishing a high fidelity of implementation.

School Outcomes

A number of studies found that the overall outcomes for the school were more positive, with reference to the number of referrals that children were having to higher management, and this was identified through reported data and student and teacher self-reported evaluations ([Boyd et al., 2014](#); [Boyd and Felgate, 2015](#); [Horner et al., 2010](#); [McIntosh et al., 2011](#); [Savage et al., 2011](#); [Scott et al., 2007](#); [Warren et al., 2006](#)). In contrast, there were two studies that found no significant results between *PBS*, *PB4L* and the behaviour of the children ([Gage et al., 2015](#); [Yeung et al., 2013](#)).

The self-reported teacher data showed that teachers generally had positive responses to the implementation of the positive behaviour programs and this was most strongly felt by teachers where everyone, including whānau, teachers and support staff were on board ([Fergusson, Horwood & Stanley, 2013](#); [Savage et al., 2011](#)). The self-reported student data from [Yeung et al. \(2009\)](#) and [Yeung et al. \(2013\)](#) showed that after implementation, students had higher opinions of the school, and were able to recall and represent the school values better than before the implementation. Student reports also showed that the children wanted to come to school, and they had higher levels of motivation in the classroom when this intervention framework was implemented ([Yeung et al., 2009](#); [Yeung et al., 2013](#)).

Academic Outcomes

Most of the literature reviewed showed positive academic outcomes over time when comparing previous years to those with

the implementation of *PBS* and *PB4L*. Horner et al. (2010) found results showing improved academic outcomes for children, but did not state the academic areas that were improved or whether this was all areas of the curriculum. In addition to these findings a number of other studies reported positive academic outcomes, for example Yeung et al. (2009) who found significant increases in motivation of children which mitigated academic success in the students. General stated improvement in academic outcomes were addressed by a number of other studies (Lewis et al., 2010; McIntosh et al., 2011; Warren et al., 2006). One study also noted that there were no significant positive academic outcomes from the implementation of *PBS* (Gage et al., 2015). But this same study also noted that much of the other research has found significant results in relation to positive academic outcomes, and while they stated this did have an effect, it should not solely be put down to the program (Gage et al., 2015).

Limitations

The findings showed a number of limitations, with reference to gender, ethnicity and data. These limitations will be outlined in more detail below with reference to the literature that was reviewed.

Gender

Out of majority of the studies that this review explored, there was only one that mentioned significant gender differences. Yeung et al. (2013) found that there was a weak but significant correlation between boys and negative behaviour before implementation of a *PB4L* program in Australia. Yeung et al. (2013) also noted that the difference between boys and girls after implementation was significant, and boys showed more improvement than girls using this initiative. Only one study mentioned the significance of gender, therefore it is a limitation that may need addressed as future research. The rest of the studies addressed did not specify gender as an important factor to consider and/or did not find any significant correlations between gender and behaviour.

Ethnicity

The MoE (2015) have a number of Māori initiatives in place that are outlined in the *PB4L* overview. MoE (2015) outlined that *Huakina mai*, is a kaupapa Māori behaviour initiative that promotes whānau, schools and iwi working together to build a positive school culture. This initiative is based on kaupapa Māori world view where five cultural principles are represented, they are; *Whanaungatanga*, *Manaakitanga*, *Pūmanawatanga*, *rangatiratanga*, and *kotahitanga* (MoE, 2015). Results of *Huakina mai* were not published in the MoE (2015) final report, which leaves a data gap in the evaluation in the effect of *PB4L* on Māori learners and from a Māori perspective. As well as *Huakina mai*, *PB4L* outlines the initiative *Te Mana Tikitiki*, a programme for students in Years 4 to 8 that uses tikanga and te reo Māori and works on building resilience, mana, self-esteem, learning, and achievement. Also, *Te Mana Tikitiki* framework and its effectiveness was not mentioned in the final MOE (2015) report. Other studies that this review looked at did not specifically address ethnicity as an important factor to consider and did not find any significant correlations between ethnicity and behaviour.

Data

The review of research has shown that while there was high fidelity in most of the schools implementing *PBS* and *PB4L*, with

more accurate data collection methods these results may have been higher (Gage et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2010; McIntosh et al., 2011; McIntosh et al., 2014; Savage et al., 2011; Sugai & Horner, 2002). All of the studies above mentioned the importance that data collection had on the accuracy of the results and stressed that this would always limit the results of fidelity and could be the difference between a school implementing with moderate fidelity, to a school implementing the initiative with high fidelity (Gage et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2010; McIntosh et al., 2011; McIntosh et al., 2014; Savage et al., 2011; Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Future Research

This literature review has outlined a number of limitations and recognises many areas for future research. Savage et al. (2011) stated a need for ethnicity data in New Zealand, due to its unique culture. The many studies that were reviewed appeared to ignore ethnicity, which is something that in future could be beneficial to look at. As well as ethnicity, another aspect of the literature that could require further research is gender. As mentioned above, only one study found notable differences between genders. The study that found this difference, noted the limitation of research into this aspect and recognised that there needed to be further research (Yeung et al., 2013). The literature reviewed showed these gaps, and future research into these two aspects will be beneficial for more accurate and New Zealand specific research in the future with regard to *PB4L*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of this literature review show that while *PBS* and *PB4L* appear to have a significant impact of the positive behaviour of students, there are a number of significant gaps in the literature. For instance, in a New Zealand context there is a need to take into account our unique culture and the influence that ethnicity and culture may have on the implementation and results of such interventions. There is also a need for more research into the gender influence on these type of programs as research has shown significant differences between male and female students.

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