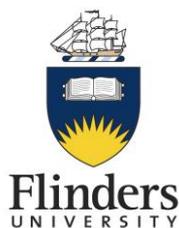


FLINDERS UNIVERSITY
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Flinders Human Behaviour & Health Research Unit

Releasing Children's Shining Potential

**Improving the social and emotional wellbeing of
primary school children through Journeywork**

Journey into Schools Report
August 2010

Study Limitations

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Chapter 11

Study Limitations

11.1 Learning the tools and integrating Journeywork into daily school and home life

Whilst Journeywork has been successfully conducted with children with minimal engagement of their parents and teachers as was the case in this study, a whole of community approach to emotional wellbeing has been shown to be more beneficial to children and their families. In this study, despite repeated attempts, teachers, parents and school staff did not avail themselves of offers to learn and engage with the tools of Journeywork, often because of conflicting priorities and workload. Consequently, the teachers and most of the parents were unable to reinforce these strategies with the children in the schoolyard and home environment.

11.2 Sample and sample size

While the children participants self-selected, this depended on their parents consenting to their participation in the first instance. Thus, there may have been children who would have liked to participate in the program, whose parents had not consented to their participation. In reverse, while parents had consented and it was stressed that the children also needed to voluntarily consent to participation, it is not known if any coercion by parents occurred. There was confusion among the children about whether they had a choice in attending each week. Once it was reinforced that they had a choice of whether to attend or not, the numbers dropped off slightly. As reported by teachers, it appeared that this cohort of children was among the more emotionally challenged in the school.

Of the 24 participating children, 19 completed all 3 emotional wellbeing questionnaires (baseline, Time 1 and Time 2). A larger sample size would have provided enough power to enable more conclusive findings of the statistical significance of the impact of the Journey Program on the children. Combining the statistical results with the qualitative results provides and increased understanding of the impact of Journeywork on the social and emotional wellbeing and behaviour of the children.

Of the 24 parents of the participating children, there were only 6-matched pairs of parent-child who completed all 3 questionnaires at baseline, Time 1 and Time 2. Consequently, comparative analysis between parents and children of the perceived impact of the Journey Program was difficult to determine. In hindsight, completing the questionnaires by telephone may have increased the return rate.

11.3 Classroom Journeywork

The original intent of the study was to conduct Journeywork with one classroom-group of children. Due to the characteristics of the school and consent given by parents and children, the participant group was from four different classrooms. There were two specific limitations of having only a few children from four different classrooms. In the first instance, it was difficult for each of the teachers to learn about and engage in Journeywork and therefore fully support the children with reminders and integration of the

tools in the classroom on a day-to-day basis. Further, it was difficult for the teachers to observe individual changes in the participating children (e.g. 4 or 5) because they had many more children (from 20 to 28) to support. Thus, the teachers reported that they were unable to accurately complete the *Emotional Behaviour Questionnaire for Teachers* at Time 1 and Time 2, therefore only results from the teacher interviews could be collected.

11.4 Academic results

An unfortunate limitation of the study was the inability to identify any significant change in academic results due to the current VELs system being used in Victorian schools. Raw scores were not available. Therefore any comparison with the South African studies, where considerable improvements in academic progress was made, was unable to be determined ^[10, 19].

11.5 Duration of the intervention

The Journey Program was conducted for two terms of a four-term year. There was a statistically significant correlation between the number of sessions attended and improvement in emotional wellbeing. Thus, evidence from this study suggests that as the number of sessions attended by the children increased, so did their emotional wellbeing. It is important to note that the South African studies were conducted over a full year, therefore, to allow for reinforcement and integration of the tools a longer program duration may be beneficial.