

The Peer Support Programme and Pastoral Care of Overseas-Born Students

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Abstract

This study sets out to ascertain how well the Peer Support programme meets the needs of overseas-born students in secondary schools. A total of 755 students from six secondary schools in Auckland participated in a survey. The results indicate that, while the programme successfully achieves the basic aims for which it has been established, it does not go far enough to meet the needs of migrant and international students for effective integration with their New Zealand-born peers. Recommendations for the development of the programme are discussed.

Introduction

This particular study is part of the Pastoral Care for Overseas-Born Students (PCOS) project, which was established in 2001 within the Counsellor Education Programme of the School of Education at the University of Auckland. The project's aim is to help improve pastoral care provisions for migrant and international students in New Zealand schools, in response to the significant increase in the number of overseas-born students in New Zealand schools in recent years, especially in Auckland. This increase has had a major impact on local schools, staff and students (Ward, 2001), and has raised a number of major questions and problems for all parties involved. For those responsible for the pastoral care of students, questions have arisen about the extent and cultural appropriateness of their resources in the face of major changes in the demographic characteristics of the student body (e.g. Evans, 2002; Moore, 2002; Stewart, 2002). For parents of overseas-born migrant students, many anxious but inexperienced about New Zealand schooling, it is difficult to know what they can expect for their children (Chu, 2002; Vong, 2002). For many parents of international students, there are on-going concerns about the worth of their expensive investment. For members of the general public, many questions keep coming up about the rapidly changing nature of their community, and how to relate to so many newcomers from very different cultural backgrounds. The concerns of all parties have been exacerbated

by high profile reports of friction between locals and newcomers in schools, and by persistent research evidence that integration between these groups has not been all that successful (e.g. Richardson, 1994; Ward, 2001).

A number of initiatives have been undertaken recently in response to these issues. For example, the Ministry of Education's mandatory *Code of Practice for the Pastoral Care of International Students* (2002) is a major development which has come into recent practice. Within the counselling arena, the New Zealand Association of Counsellors devoted a Special Issue of the *New Zealand Journal of Counselling* to working with Chinese immigrant students and their families (Everts, 2002). And at a practical level, educational professionals involved with the Peer Support Programme of New Zealand (Rotary Peer Support Trust, 1995) held a conference in Wellington in May 2002, at which it was decided to expand the programme's cultural awareness content to better address the needs of overseas-born students.

Within the PCOS project, we have been particularly interested in the Peer Support programme. It is "a student-help student programme for relationships and self-esteem" developed in Australia by Elizabeth Campbell, who observed how adverse reactions of the peer group and poor relationships between older and younger students influenced the culture of a school in negative ways (Rotary Peer Support Trust, 1995). The programme is designed to give all students entering secondary school:

- confidence and improved self-esteem;
- a directive and supportive network through positive interactions with older peers who lead the programme, and a supportive school environment;
- skills with regard to communication, problem-solving and self-management, and social and co-operative skills.

The programme runs for at least six weeks at the beginning of the school year, starting with an orientation to the school. It is led by form 7 (final year) students who, at the end of the previous year, participate in a two- or three-day training programme. After this training period the programme co-ordinators and teachers select those form 7 students who have displayed the qualities needed to become Peer Support leaders in their schools. As such, Peer Support would seem ideally suited to provide a welcome for overseas-born students who report struggling when they first arrive, and who are particularly ill at ease with their Kiwi counterparts (Chu, 2002; Everts, 2003). While a number of studies have evaluated aspects of the Peer Support programme (Hendrie, 1997; Lewis & Scarrold, 1989; Stotter, 1999) only one other has focused on this topic – a Masters dissertation carried out by Jean Seber (2001) as part of the present PCOS project. In this study of 78 students and teachers involved in the Peer Support programme in two high schools, she found that the programme needed to be

changed in a number of specific ways in order to meet the needs of overseas-born students. The present study pursues the same goals as Seber, but on a larger scale.

Within the broad aims of the PCOS project, we have set out a series of tasks. The first is to ascertain the needs of overseas-born students, including migrant and international ones. This task is partly addressed in the article titled “The Pastoral Needs of International Students in New Zealand Secondary Schools” (Everts, 2003). We then set out to ascertain the extent to which current provisions, with particular attention to the Peer Support programme, meet the needs of such students. This task is addressed in the current article. Finally, we hope to support and evaluate pertinent changes made to the Peer Support programme and other pastoral care provisions, especially during 2004.

The present Peer Support survey – methodology

In order to address the second task noted above, we approached a number of secondary schools in Auckland which had significant populations of overseas-born students and which operated the Peer Support programme. Six secondary schools agreed to participate in the Peer Support survey, representing co-educational, single-sex, and private schools. Survey questionnaires were developed and trialled by the PCOS research team in consultation with school staff, and administered in accordance with the University of Auckland’s ethical requirements. A total of 755 students who participated in the 2002 Peer Support programme completed the survey questionnaire.

Characteristics of the respondents

Of the 755 respondents, 115 are Peer Support leaders (seventh form students) and 640 are programme recipients (third form students). Of the latter, 364 (57%) are female, and 268 (42%) male; 1% did not provide gender information. In terms of the distribution of student category (New Zealand-born, migrant or international at different form levels), New Zealand-born students make up by far the largest group among both the recipients and the leaders, although migrants are also strongly represented. International students make up an insignificant minority among the recipients, and are totally absent from the leader cohort (*see* table 1 on page 43).

There is a wide distribution in terms of the country of origin of students in this particular cohort, as shown in table 2/figure 1. There are large groups from South Africa, Europe/North America/Australia, and Korea; smaller representations from the Pacific Islands, Hong Kong/China and Taiwan; and a very small group from the Indian subcontinent (*see* table 2 on page 43 and figure 1 on page 44).

In terms of the length of time the overseas-born respondents had been in New Zealand, we found that international students were typically new to the country, and

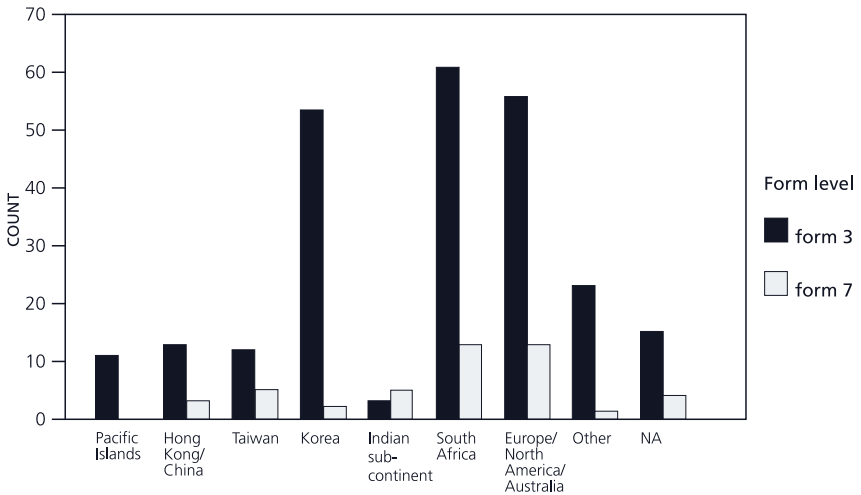
Table 1: General – Peer Support – student category by form level (n = 755)

			Form level		Total
			form 3	form 7	
Student category	NZ born	Count	392	69	461
		% of Total	51.9%	9.1%	61.1%
	Migrant	Count	218	44	262
		% of Total	28.9%	5.8%	34.7%
	International	Count	16		16
		% of Total	2.1%		2.1%
	NA	Count	14	2	16
		% of Total	1.9%	.3%	2.1%
Total		Count	640	115	755
		% of Total	84.8%	15.2%	100.0%

Table 2: Peer Support – country of origin by form level (n = 294; including migrants, internationals, and non-respondents)

			Form level		Total
			form 3	form 7	
Country of origin	Pacific Islands	Count	1		1
		% of Total	3.7%		3.7%
	Hong Kong/China	Count	13	3	16
		% of Total	4.4%	1.0%	5.4%
	Taiwan	Count	12	5	17
		% of Total	4.1%	1.7%	5.8%
	Korea	Count	54	2	56
		% of Total	18.4%	.7%	19.0%
	Indian subcontinent	Count	3	5	8
		% of Total	1.0%	1.7%	2.7%
	South Africa	Count	61	13	74
		% of Total	20.7%	4.4%	25.2%
	Europe/North America/Australia	Count	56	13	69
		% of Total	19.0%	4.4%	23.5%
	Other	Count	23	1	24
		% of Total	7.8%	.3%	8.2%
	NA	Count	15	4	19
		% of Total	5.1%	1.4%	6.5%
Total		Count	248	46	294
		% of Total	84.4%	15.6%	100.0%

Figure 1: Peer Support – country of origin by form level
 (n = 294, including migrants, internationals, and non-respondents)



that migrants varied enormously in their length of residency in New Zealand, with some 20% of the sample having been here for eight years or longer (see table 3/figure 2 on page 45).

The Peer Support survey – results

Question 1. Level of conversational English

The international students rated themselves as mostly below average to poor in conversational English, while two-thirds of migrant students rated themselves as fluent (see table 4/figure 3 on page 46).

Question 2. “How good has the Peer Support programme been in helping students to feel at home in our school and with the other students?” (Form level distribution.)

The largest number of respondents at each form level regarded the programme as fairly helpful. Beyond that, the pattern varies, with third formers being more extreme in their opinions: 65% of third formers regarded it as very helpful or fairly helpful, compared with 56% of seventh formers. At the same time, 16% of third formers regarded it as of little or no help, compared with 9% of seventh formers. (see table 5/figure 4 on page 47).

Table 3/Figure 2: Peer Support – years in New Zealand by student category (n = 248, all overseas-born third formers; the seventh form respondents were not asked this question)

			Student category			Total
			Migrant	International	NA	
Years in NZ	up to 2 yrs	Count	44	14	3	61
		% of Total	17.7%	5.6%	1.2%	24.6%
	2 yrs to 2 yrs 11 mons	Count	18	1	2	21
		% of Total	7.3%	.4%	.8%	8.5%
	3 yrs to 3 yrs 11 mons	Count	17			17
		% of Total	6.9%			6.9%
	4 yrs to 4 yrs 11 mons	Count	25		1	26
		% of Total	10.1%		.4%	10.5%
	5 yrs to 5 yrs 11 mons	Count	22		1	23
		% of Total	8.9%		.4%	9.3%
	6 yrs to 6 yrs 11 mons	Count	16		2	18
% of Total		6.5%		.8%	7.3%	
7 yrs to 7 yrs 11 mons	Count	19			19	
	% of Total	7.7%			7.7%	
8 yrs or longer	Count	47		2	49	
	% of Total	19.0%		.8%	19.8%	
NA	Count	10	1	3	14	
	% of Total	4.0%	.4%	1.2%	5.6%	
Total	Count	218	16	14	248	
	% of Total	87.9%	6.5%	5.6%	100.0%	

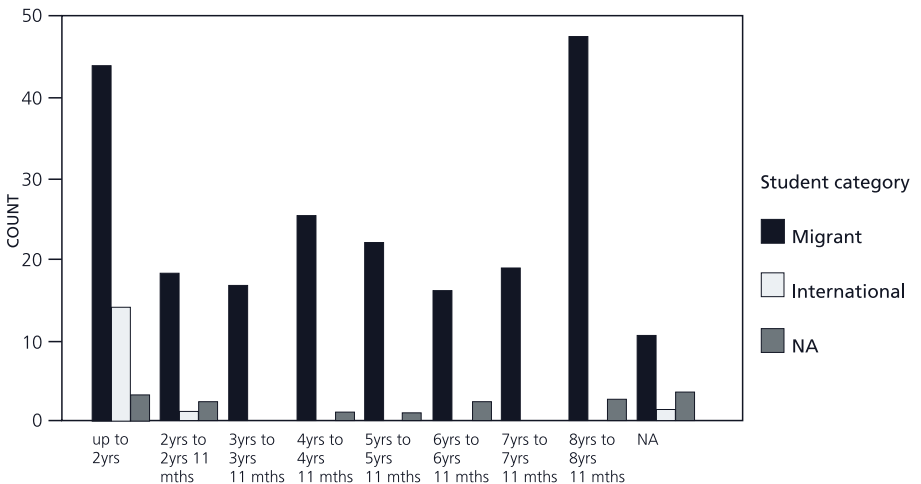


Table 4/Figure 3: Peer Support – conversational English by student category (n = 248, all overseas-born third formers; the seventh form respondents were not asked this question) (1 = Can't Talk with others; 7 = English is fluent; NA = no answer)

			Student category			Total
			Migrant	International	NA	
Conversational English	1	Count		2	1	3
		% of Total		.8%	.4%	1.2%
	2	Count	5	4		9
		% of Total	2.0%	1.6%		3.6%
	3	Count	8	2		10
		% of Total	3.2%	.8%		4.0%
	4	Count	1	4		15
		% of Total	4.4%	1.6%		6.0%
	5	Count	20	3	1	24
		% of Total	8.1%	1.2%	.4%	9.7%
6	Count	29		4	33	
	% of Total	11.7%		1.6%	13.3%	
7	Count	144	1	6	151	
	% of Total	58.1%	.4%	2.4%	60.9%	
NA	Count	1		2	3	
	% of Total	.4%		.8%	1.2%	
Total	Count	218	16	14	248	
	% of Total	87.9%	6.5%	5.6%	100.0%	

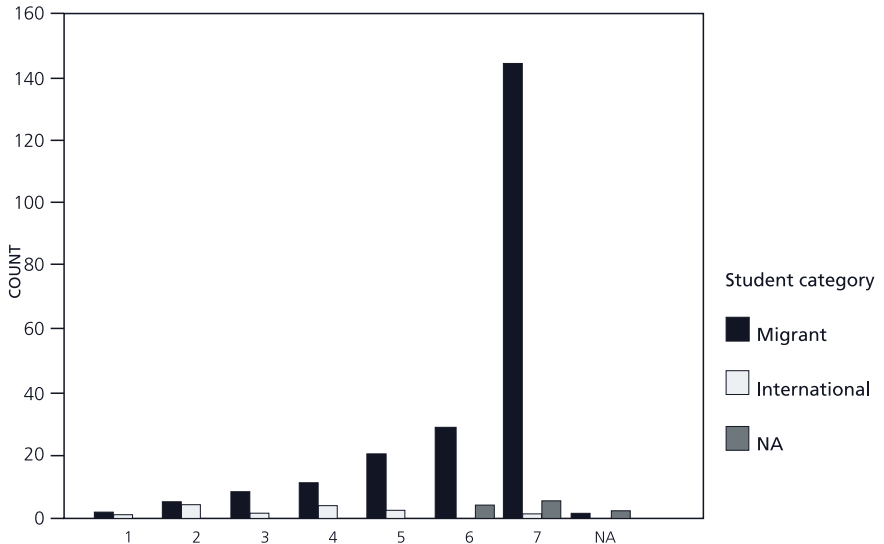


Table 5/Figure 4: Peer Support helpfulness rating by form level (n = 755)

			Form level		Total
			form 3	form 7	
Peer Support helpfulness-rating	very helpful	Count	171	1	182
		% of Total	22.6%	1.5%	24.1%
	fairly helpful	Count	242	53	295
		% of Total	32.1%	7.0%	39.1%
	some help	Count	117	40	157
		% of Total	15.5%	5.3%	20.8%
	little help	Count	67	10	77
		% of Total	8.9%	1.3%	10.2%
	no	Count	38		38
		% of Total	5.0%		5.0%
	NA	Count	5	1	6
		% of Total	.7%	.1%	.8%
Total	Count	640	115	755	
	% of Total	84.8%	15.2%	100.0%	

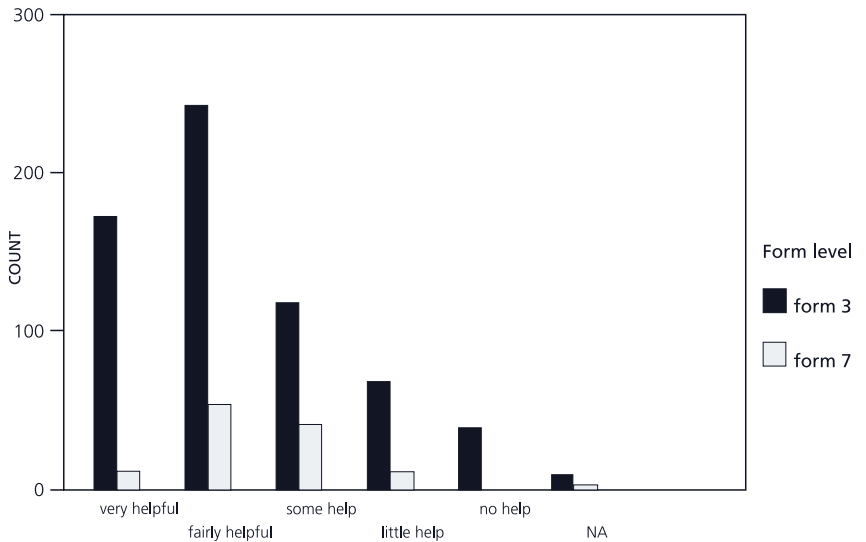
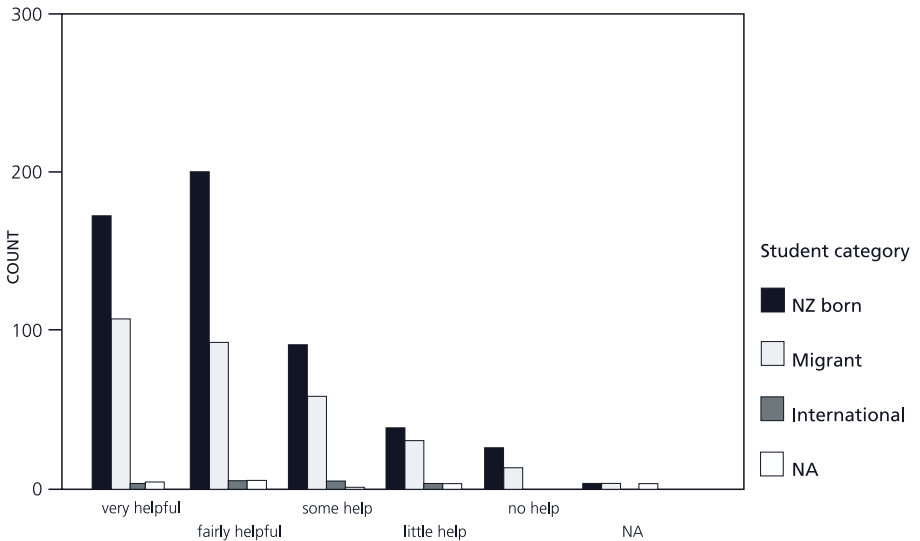


Table6/Figure 5: Peer Support helpfulness rating by student category (n = 755)

			Student category				Total
			NZ born	Migrant	International	NA	
Peer Support helpfulness-rating	very helpful	Count	107	67	3	5	182
		% of Total	14.2%	8.9%	.4%	.7%	24.1%
	fairly helpful	Count	197	91	4	3	295
		% of Total	26.1%	12.1%	.5%	.4%	39.1%
	some help	Count	91	59	5	2	157
		% of Total	12.1%	7.8%	.7%	.3%	20.8%
	little help	Count	39	30	4	4	77
		% of Total	5.2%	4.0%	.5%	.5%	10.2%
	no	Count	25	13			38
		% of Total	3.3%	1.7%			5.0%
	NA	Count	2	2		2	6
		% of Total	.3%	.3%		.3%	.8%
	Total	Count	461	262	16	16	755
		% of Total	61.1%	34.7%	2.1%	2.1%	100.0%



Question 3. “How good has the Peer Support programme been in helping students to feel at home in our school and with the other students?” (Student origin distribution.)

The pattern of opinion is clearly positive and very similar for both New Zealand-born students and for migrants, with 66% and 60% respectively rating the programme as fairly helpful or very helpful, and 14% and 16% respectively rating it as of little or no help. For international students, however, this balance changes, with 44% positives and 25% negatives respectively (see table 6/figure 5 on page 48).

Question 4. “In what ways has the Peer Support programme been helpful?” (Form level distribution.)

There are marked differences between what third form participants and seventh form leaders regarded as having been helpful in the programme. For the third formers, increased class friendships and the school becoming familiar territory were of greatest benefit, with feeling welcomed and friendships with senior students making up the second tier of benefits. Good discussions and fun activities were of minor benefit only. For the leaders, by contrast, increased class friendships and feeling welcomed were rated as most beneficial, with good discussions in the second tier, and friendships with leaders and fun activities in the third tier. The school becoming familiar territory was rated as a minor benefit (see table 7).

Table 7: Peer Support – helpfulness description by form level (n = 755)

Helpfulness-description	Form 3 (n = 640)		Form 7 (n = 115)		Total (n = 755)	
Feel welcome and at home						
mentioned	151	20.0%	43	5.7%	194	25.7%
not mentioned	489	64.8%	72	9.5%	561	74.3%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
School is familiar territory						
mentioned	214	28.3%	7	0.9%	221	29.3%
not mentioned	426	56.4%	108	14.3%	534	70.7%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Increased class friendship						
mentioned	203	26.9%	49	6.5%	252	33.4%
not mentioned	437	57.9%	66	8.7%	503	66.6%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%

continued

Table 7: Peer Support – helpfulness description by form level (n = 755) *continued*

Helpfulness-description	Form 3 (n = 640)		Form 7 (n = 115)		Total (n = 755)	
Leader/Senior friendships						
mentioned	136	18.0%	17	2.3%	153	20.3%
not mentioned	504	66.8%	98	13.0%	602	79.7%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Good discussion/Communication						
mentioned	30	4.0%	32	4.2%	62	8.2%
not mentioned	610	80.8%	83	11.0%	693	91.8%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Good fun activities						
mentioned	29	3.8%	16	2.1%	45	6.0%
not mentioned	611	80.9%	99	13.1%	710	94.0%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Miscellaneous						
mentioned	50	6.6%	29	3.8%	79	10.5%
not mentioned	590	78.1%	86	11.4%	676	89.5%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Negative reply						
mentioned	43	5.7%	5	0.7%	48	6.4%
not mentioned	597	79.1%	110	14.6%	707	93.6%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%

Question 4. “In what ways has the Peer Support programme been helpful?” (Student origin distribution, third formers only.)

For New Zealand-born students, the most helpful aspects in the Peer Support programme were making the school familiar territory and increased class friendships; of somewhat less importance were feeling welcomed and friendships with senior students; of minor importance were fun activities and discussions.

Migrant students had the same top priorities, except that increasing class friendships were rated higher; the same was true of their second level of rating, where senior friendships were higher than feeling welcomed; and the same was also true of minor

benefits, where discussions rated higher. Thus friendships and interaction were more important for migrant students than for their Kiwi peers.

For the very few international students in the sample, increased class and senior student friendships, and feeling welcomed, were the most important benefits from the Peer Support programme – rather like their migrant peers (*see* table 8).

Table 8: Peer Support – helpfulness by student origin category (n = 640)

Helpfulness-description	NZ born (%)	Migrant (%)	Int. (%)	NA (%)	Total (%)
Feel welcome and at home					
mentioned	97 (15.2)	46 (7.2)	5 (0.8)	3 (0.5)	151 (23.6)
not mentioned	295 (46.1)	172 (26.9)	11 (1.7)	11 (1.7)	489 (76.4)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
School is familiar territory					
mentioned	149 (23.3)	60 (9.4)	2 (0.3)	3 (0.5)	214 (33.4)
not mentioned	243 (38.0)	158 (24.7)	14 (2.2)	11 (1.7)	426 (66.6)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Increased class friendship					
mentioned	122 (19.1)	72 (11.3)	7 (1.1)	2 (0.3)	203 (31.7)
not mentioned	270 (42.2)	146 (22.8)	9 (1.4)	12 (1.9)	437 (68.3)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Leader/Senior friendships					
mentioned	80 (12.5)	50 (7.8)	5 (0.8)	1 (0.2)	136 (21.3)
not mentioned	312 (48.8)	168 (26.3)	11 (1.7)	13 (2.0)	504 (78.8)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Good discussion/Communication					
mentioned	11 (1.7)	16 (2.5)	1 (0.2)	2 (0.3)	30 (4.7)
not mentioned	381 (59.5)	202 (31.6)	15 (2.3)	12 (1.9)	610 (95.3)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Good fun activities					
mentioned	20 (3.1)	9 (1.4)			29 (4.5)
not mentioned	372 (58.1)	209 (32.7)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	611 (95.5)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)

continued

Table 8: Peer Support – helpfulness by student origin category (n = 640) continued

Helpfulness-description	NZ born (%)	Migrant (%)	Int. (%)	NA (%)	Total (%)
Miscellaneous					
mentioned	33 (5.2)	14 (2.2)		3 (0.5)	50 (7.8)
not mentioned	359 (56.1)	204 (31.9)	16 (2.5)	11 (1.7)	590 (92.2)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Negative reply					
mentioned	25 (3.9)	17 (2.7)	1 (0.2)		43 (6.7)
not mentioned	367 (57.3)	201 (31.4)	15 (2.3)	14 (2.2)	597 (93.3)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)

The tenor of feeling expressed in these responses may be gauged from the following verbatim statements recorded by students:

- “I was given greatest help ... I was a migrant and very new to this school and the country.”
- “Helped me with the subject/some lessons/getting to know the teachers.”
- “You can tell them if you have any problems.”
- “At the beginning of the year, when I wasn’t very happy/hardly knew anyone/was really nervous, it made me feel heaps better.”
- “What this school does to help making the school safe.”
- “It has taught us about how you handle things in tough situations.”
- “It hasn’t been helpful because I started last term.”
- “I’ve got to know that it’s not that scary to be a third former.”
- “We can talk to the leaders if we are uncomfortable or if something is wrong.”
- “Good information about the school and what happens.”
- “Just on the first day/week of school.”
- “Met a few people – I’ve had more help from 6th-4th formers.”
- “We got to share the leaders’ experiences.”
- “To speak with eye contact and distance.”

Question 5. “Has anything happened in the programme that has not been helpful?” (Form level distribution.)

Among the third formers, the recipients of the programme, 48% indicated that there was nothing in the programme they found unhelpful. The only specific item of note, identified by 19% of respondents, concerned the quality of exercises and games.

Among the seventh formers, the leaders, 37% considered that there was nothing unhelpful about the programme. The only specific item, noted by 14%, concerned difficulties with language used (*see* table 9).

Table 9: Peer Support – unhelpfulness by form level (n = 755)

("Disagrees" refers to the answer "nothing" or "no")

Unhelpfulness	Form 3 (n = 640)		Form 7 (n = 115)		Total (n = 755)	
Games, exercises						
mentioned	124	16.4%	5	0.7%	129	17.1%
not mentioned	516	68.3%	110	14.6%	626	82.9%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Language, non-understanding						
mentioned	3	0.4%	16	2.1%	19	2.5%
not mentioned	637	84.4%	99	13.1%	736	97.5%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Cultural differences uncomfortable						
mentioned	1	0.1%	6	0.8%	7	0.9%
not mentioned	639	84.6%	109	14.4%	748	99.1%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Leader attitude/approach						
mentioned	37	4.9%	2	0.3%	39	5.2%
not mentioned	603	79.9%	113	15.0%	716	94.8%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Miscellaneous						
mentioned	86	11.4%	12	1.6%	98	13.0%
not mentioned	554	73.4%	103	13.6%	657	87.0%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Disagrees						
mentioned	310	41.1%	43	5.7%	353	46.8%
not mentioned	330	43.7%	72	9.5%	402	53.2%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%

Question 6. "Has anything happened in the programme that has not been helpful?" (Student category distribution; third formers only.)

Fifty percent of New Zealand-born respondents said that nothing about the programme was unhelpful. Among specific aspects noted, 20% found the games and exercises unhelpful, while 7% cited leader attitude or approach.

Among migrant students, 46% found nothing unhelpful, while 18% cited the games and exercises, and 5% cited leader attitude or approach.

Among the very small sample of international students, 44% found nothing unhelpful (*see table 10 on page 55*).

A random selection of all responses includes the following items:

- "I can hear but I got put with the deaf people; I was put with the deaf students and felt a little out of place but felt better later."
- "Everything; we played games and that's all; done no work."
- "Not all of the PSers were there all the time."
- "They didn't explain the games; never told us anything; didn't really help us to get friends; should talk to the whole class, not just to one person; explained the wrong thing."
- "We had lots of fights with them so we were very distracted."
- "Each time we sat at the end for half an hour waiting for the bell because we had nothing else to do."
- "Maori classmates seem not very friendly."
- "All the paper work – not enough learning about peers in them; it's better when we do practical work outside (e.g. sports)."
- "Not enough peer support; didn't get much of a chance to socialise with them; they stopped and now I'm lost again."
- "The friendship programme."
- "Some games concerning personal issues are disturbing and made me feel uncomfortable."
- "They threatened us that they would not take us to McDonald's."
- "The groups we were put in – we should keep on changing groups."
- "We haven't gone to anywhere with them; didn't go on any class trips with our PS leaders."

Question 7. "What more do you think the school could do to help students feel welcome and at home?" (Form level distribution.)

Among the third form participants, 18% suggested improving the programme through more fun activities, with 14% wishing for more sessions. Among the seventh form leaders, 29% suggested improving the cultural content (*see table 11 on page 56*).

Table 10: General – Peer Support – unhelpfulness by student category (n = 640)

("Disagrees" refers to the answer "nothing" or "no")

Unhelpfulness	NZ born (%)	Migrant (%)	Int. (%)	NA (%)	Total (%)
Games, exercises					
mentioned	79 (12.3)	40 (6.3)	1 (0.2)	4 (0.6)	124 (19.4)
not mentioned	313 (48.9)	178 (27.8)	15 (2.3)	10 (1.6)	516 (80.6)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Language, non-understanding					
mentioned		1 (0.2)	2 (0.3)		3 (0.5)
not mentioned	392 (61.3)	217 (33.9)	14 (2.2)	14 (2.2)	637 (99.5)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Cultural differences uncomfortable					
mentioned			1 (0.2)		1 (0.2)
not mentioned	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	15 (2.3)	14 (2.2)	639 (99.8)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Leader attitude/approach					
mentioned	26 (4.1)	11 (1.7)			37 (5.8)
not mentioned	366 (57.2)	207 (32.3)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	603 (94.2)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Miscellaneous					
mentioned	50 (7.8)	34 (5.3)	2 (0.3)		86 (13.4)
not mentioned	342 (53.4)	184 (28.8)	14 (2.2)	14 (2.2)	554 (86.6)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Disagrees					
mentioned	195 (30.5)	101 (15.8)	7 (1.1)	7 (1.1)	310 (48.4)
not mentioned	197 (30.8)	117 (18.3)	9 (1.4)	7 (1.1)	330 (51.6)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)

Table 11: Peer Support – further developments by form level (n = 755)

("Miscellaneous" includes the answer "nothing")

Further developments	Form 3 (n = 640)		Form 7 (n = 115)		Total (n = 755)	
Improve programme understanding						
mentioned	12	1.6%	2	0.3%	14	1.9%
not mentioned	628	83.2%	113	15.0%	741	98.1%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Improve cultural content						
mentioned	18	2.4%	33	4.4%	51	6.8%
not mentioned	622	82.4%	82	10.9%	704	93.2%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Improve leader qualities						
mentioned	21	2.8%	8	1.1%	29	3.8%
not mentioned	619	82.0%	107	14.2%	726	96.2%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Increase fun activities						
mentioned	116	15.4%	6	0.8%	122	16.2%
not mentioned	524	69.4%	109	14.4%	633	83.8%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
More Peer Support sessions						
mentioned	92	12.2%	1	0.1%	93	12.3%
not mentioned	548	72.6%	114	15.1%	662	87.7%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Wider contacts						
mentioned	17	2.3%	5	0.7%	22	2.9%
not mentioned	623	82.5%	110	14.6%	733	97.1%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%
Buddy system						
mentioned	7	0.9%	5	0.7%	12	1.6%
not mentioned	633	83.8%	110	14.6%	743	98.4%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%

Further developments	Form 3 (n = 640)		Form 7 (n = 115)		Total (n = 755)	
Miscellaneous mentioned	134	17.7%	31	4.1%	165	21.9%
Miscellaneous not mentioned	506	67.0%	84	11.1%	590	78.1%
total	640	84.8%	115	15.2%	755	100.0%

Question 8. “What more do you think the school could do to help students feel welcome and at home?” (Student category distribution, third formers only.)

Among New Zealand-born respondents, 21% suggested increasing the fun activities, and 15% suggested more sessions. Other suggestions were relatively infrequent.

Among migrants, 15% also suggested an increase in fun activities and the number of sessions.

Among the very few international students, 19% suggested improving the cultural content, while 13% suggested improving the understandability of the programme and having more fun activities(see table 12)

Table 12: Peer Support – further developments by student category (n = 640)

(“Miscellaneous” includes the answer “nothing”)

Further developments	NZ born (%)	Migrant (%)	Int. (%)	NA (%)	Total (%)
Improve programme understanding					
mentioned	8 (1.3)	2 (0.3)	2 (0.3)		12 (1.9)
not mentioned	384 (60.0)	216 (33.8)	14 (2.2)	14 (2.2)	628 (98.1)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Improve cultural content					
mentioned	2 (0.3)	11 (1.7)	3 (0.5)	2 (0.3)	18 (2.8)
not mentioned	390 (60.9)	207 (32.3)	13 (2.0)	12 (1.9)	622 (97.2)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Improve leader qualities					
mentioned	16 (2.5)	5 (0.8)			21 (3.3)
not mentioned	376 (58.8)	213 (33.3)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	619 (96.7)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)

continued

Table 12: Peer Support – further developments by student category (n = 640) *continued*
 (“Miscellaneous” includes the answer “nothing”)

Further developments	NZ born (%)	Migrant (%)	Int. (%)	NA (%)	Total (%)
Increase fun activities					
mentioned	81 (12.7)	32 (5.0)	2 (0.3)	1 (0.2)	116 (18.1)
not mentioned	311 (48.6)	186 (29.1)	14 (2.2)	13 (2.0)	524 (81.9)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
More Peer Support sessions					
mentioned	58 (9.1)	32 (5.0)	1 (0.2)	1 (0.2)	92 (14.4)
not mentioned	334 (52.2)	186 (29.1)	15 (2.3)	13 (2.0)	548 (85.6)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Wider contacts					
mentioned	12 (1.9)	5 (0.8)			17 (2.7)
not mentioned	380 (59.4)	213 (33.3)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	623 (97.3)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Buddy system					
mentioned	5 (0.8)	2 (0.3)			7 (1.1)
not mentioned	387 (60.5)	216 (33.8)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	633 (98.9)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)
Miscellaneous					
mentioned	77 (12.0)	49 (7.7)	5 (0.8)	3 (0.5)	134 (20.9)
not mentioned	315 (49.2)	169 (26.4)	11 (1.7)	11 (1.7)	506 (79.1)
total	392 (61.3)	218 (34.1)	16 (2.5)	14 (2.2)	640 (100.0)

A random selection of responses includes:

- “Ask if we’re worried about anything/about our opinions; listen to what we have to say.”
- “At the beginning, the school should organise a meeting for migrant students ... each meeting should be focusing on basic topics (e.g., respecting one’s cultural values).”
- “I’m black and I want people to accept my colour because some just don’t like me because of my colour.”

- “Increase the number of activities, ‘get to know each other’ games and activities, more question-answer opportunities, more information about the school or social events outside of the school, and more physical activities.”
- “Sports/games at lunchtime and intervals (e.g., hockey, netball, soccer).”
- “Make it more organised/fun (e.g., treasure hunting, shared lunch, year 9 party)/pleasant.”
- “Increase the number of PSers.”
- “Teachers must make sure that all kids in the class have a friend; this makes them feel more at home.”
- “More different teachers coming to talk to us.”
- “My answer is ‘nothing’ because I’ve made friends while going to other subjects like language and option.”
- “Nothing because it was very fun and well organised.”
- “Nothing – it’s up to the kids to try and make friends; it’s high school, not kindergarten.”
- “Show us all the nooks and crannies (secret places); tell us more about the school.”
- “The PS to be more friendly and the other people should be more helpful (5th + 6th formers).”

Discussion of the results

The respondents, and a caution

At the outset, some caution is needed in interpreting the significance of the survey results obtained. Firstly, the sample of Peer Support respondents is reasonable in size, with a good representation of migrant students of both sexes, from a wide range of countries, and with widely varying lengths of residency in New Zealand. Nevertheless, we cannot assume that our findings accurately reflect the experience and perceptions of students in the wider Auckland area, let alone the country as a whole. Secondly, there is an inclination by some students (especially overseas-born ones) to be polite and cautious, and say what is positive and safe – even though both positive and negative comments were invited. If anything, therefore, our findings and their implications need to be treated conservatively and with some caution.

Relevance and effectiveness of the Peer Support programme

In evaluating the worth of the Peer Support programme as it stands, some two-thirds of respondents rate it as fairly helpful or very helpful. There are a number of ways in which the Peer Support programme meets the goals for which it has been established. Both leaders and recipients consider that it helps third formers to make the school

into familiar territory, and that it creates for them a network of friends – with those at their own class level as well as with senior students. However, this situation is more true of New Zealand-born third formers and perhaps those migrant students who have been in the country for a longer time. A sizeable minority of respondents (one in seven for New Zealand-born students and migrants, one in four for international students) rate the programme as of little or no help. While not totally clear from the current data, it is likely that the more recently migrants or international students have come into the country, the more difficult it is for the Peer Support programme to meet their needs. At a specific level, it is of concern that a number of aspects of the Peer Support programme are not seen to be working well. Games, exercises, fun activities and good discussions don't necessarily come off. For those with limited English, especially international students, it is hard to understand what is going on. It is particularly concerning that, in a number of schools, some of the leaders are seen as not having the attitude or approach that recipients respect and need if they are to benefit from the programme.

On the whole, therefore, the Peer Support programme is judged by participants to be of mixed value. For most students, it does what it is basically designed to do – make them welcome and at home in the school, and develop a network of supportive peers. For these goals and these recipients, there is no need for significant change to the programme. For a proportion of students, however, and in particular more recent migrants, the programme fails to fulfil the need they have for meaningful integration. While this was not explicit in the original aims of the programme, it has become a high priority for schools in recent years, and one which the Peer Support programme is in a uniquely strategic position to address. To this should be added the challenge posed by international students, who strongly desire more positive interactions with Kiwi peers, but who are outside the reach of the Peer Support programme as it is currently constituted. Most of them do not arrive at the school at third form level, or arrive later on in the year, and thus miss out on Peer Support altogether. Thus, while the programme meets its current aims fairly well, the entry of so many overseas-born students into our secondary schools challenges the programme to extend its focus and manner of delivery. To do so requires attention to three identifiable themes:

- *Information* – involving the content of the programme;
- *Inclusion* – pertaining to the way in which the programme is conducted, and
- *Integrity* – involving the spirit in which the programme and associated pastoral care activities are carried out.

These themes are reflected repeatedly in the issues discussed below.

The programme's content

At present, the programme's specific content in terms of exercises and activities is couched in very general terms, with the aim of enhancing an appreciation of topics like communication, co-operation or values. Some of the negative comments about exercises and games may reflect disinterest in activities that lack meaning for participants. It would give the programme immediate bite if some of the content of sessions and activities focused on the issues students face in relating to others in their actual group who come from a wide range of very different cultural backgrounds. Thus the Maori content theme present in the current programme must be honoured, but the scope of programme content extended well beyond it in a range of sessions. A lack of knowledge about each other's cultures and about the way in which students experience each other (as noted in the article on international students), prejudicial attitudes, communication difficulties, and ways of collaborating in facing the shared demands of schooling – all these topics are of immediate concern to participants, and all fit eminently into the schedule of different topics set out in the programme. This involves a great deal of desirable information, as noted by international respondents in this survey and a related article (Everts, 2003).

Programme strategies

The expanded content mentioned above should be handled in small task groups that are deliberately made up of students from different cultural and national backgrounds, ensuring the direct inclusion of students who often avoid mixing in other situations. It is through direct interaction in situations of common interest and non-competition that mutual respect and comfortable collaboration grow. What better time to do this than right at the beginning of the peer group's life in a new environment. It is important for newly arrived overseas students to have close support from some others who come from a similar background, who may be more familiar with the New Zealand scene, and who may be able to help translate and explain what newcomers don't understand. At the same time, it is important for Kiwi students to be involved in such task group interactions because it is with them that long-term relationship development is most difficult and yet most important, as noted in the international student study. Judging from comments in the present survey, having fun must remain an essential component in all such task group activities.

Programme leadership

Selection of appropriate leaders is crucial for both inclusion and integrity. It is very important, considering the modelling and facilitation which leaders do, that

representatives of a wide range of cultural and national backgrounds are selected. Between them, they model both the constructive ways in which students from different backgrounds can work together towards common goals, and the difficulties that occur in doing so. This means that the leader training must make this an explicit part of its agenda, and that leaders are selected for their ability to work together – as well as model how overseas-born leaders have successfully adapted to the New Zealand community. It also means that leaders can demonstrate from their own experience how programme recipients might approach the tasks set in different sessions – another example of making content information more relevant to the programme's learning goals. The careful selection of multi-cultural leaders, together with their thorough training in the content of the programme and on-going supervision by the adult leaders, also addresses the theme of integrity. Survey respondents noted with approval that some leaders were overseas-born themselves, but also picked up that some leaders appeared to lack enthusiasm and commitment. Facing the challenge of mutual respect and integration among themselves will weed out those who should not be in a leadership position. It is also important to consider whether some younger students could be considered as potential leaders because of their maturity, life experience, and personal qualities. To further enhance the integrity of leadership in the programme, it is essential that adult leaders and trainers exemplify these same cross-cultural skills, and that they are backed up by a school that has cross-cultural integration as an explicit part of its policy. It is also important that appropriate recognition is given to Peer Support leaders who have demonstrated successful task performance – through certificates, public acknowledgment, references or other rewards.

Alternative forms of programme delivery

Some survey respondents asked for a longer time, and this may be a function of the fact that programmes differ greatly in length and structure. If the Peer Support programme is to achieve more than its minimum aims, however, and if it is used to address cultural integration as well as initial induction, then it needs to run consistently and over a significant period of time. While this would require more staff and student time in some schools, the investment is worth it in order to help achieve positive integration and inclusion for students, and to avoid the known consequences of poor inter-cultural relationships. In order to meet the significant integration needs of international students, the Peer Support programme needs to run a special option for them at the beginning of the year. This should encompass both existing and new students at all levels of the school, and should be reactivated at other times of the year

when new students arrive. All the additional elements of the programme discussed above need to be included for this body of students, and can be expected to make a significant contribution to their settlement into the school, and thus to their overall performance during their time in New Zealand.

Peer Support, mentoring, and a buddy system

The Peer Support programme may not be sufficient to meet the needs of some overseas-born students, especially those who have just arrived or those who are at risk of not settling in adequately. As indicated in the survey of international students, some 5% of such students find the various adjustment challenges very hard to cope with, and may need more individual inclusion, support and help. Referral to such support could be made from observation of a participant in the Peer Support programme. It could then be provided by a mentor – being an older student, from a similar cultural background, and preferably of the same gender, who has adapted to being here satisfactorily, and who is personally compatible with the newcomer. Such a mentor may be a Peer Support leader, or be somewhat younger. Like Peer Support leaders, mentors must be carefully selected, systematically trained, and supervised on an on-going basis. The mentor's role needs to be carefully defined and achievable, with a focus on providing specific help with academic work, language acquisition, leisure activities, or personal functioning. Meetings with a single or small group of newcomers may take place three or four times a month, or more often in particular situations. Mentoring can run simultaneously with Peer Support activities, but could operate for a longer time if required. With such timely support, more serious problems may be avoided for a newcomer. If not, more professional help may be sought from the counsellor. A school counsellor could well run such a mentoring scheme as a preventive extension of normal counselling activities.

A buddy system would fulfil a somewhat different function. Typically, it involves other students in a newcomer's class, who would be designated to provide information, and immediate academic or personal support on an informal basis. A buddy carries less responsibility for the newcomer's progress, and works under the direct supervision of the teacher or dean. While somebody from the newcomer's own country or culture would make the best buddy (integrity) at the outset, as indicated in the international student survey, New Zealand-born students should be involved as early as possible. This maximises the degree of integration, and minimises the risk of newcomers getting stuck in their own nationality or cultural group. For example, Kiwi buddies may be of great help to newly arrived overseas-born students by including them in a local sports team or social club.

Other specific and special programmes

It is important to establish clearly how activities like the enhanced Peer Support programme fit in with other existing school provisions to provide overall programme integrity. For example, it is important that the Peer Support and health education programmes do not run counter to each other in terms of underlying assumptions and strategies. Similarly, an effective Peer Support programme, with associated mentoring and buddy systems, must link in to specific health services provided within and around the school. They must also operate with careful consideration to the very different health-related values and practices in countries from which these students come – an issue of cultural integrity.

Additional specialised programmes for overseas-born students may be available in some places. For example, a programme has been developed by Sylvia Chu titled “A life skills training programme for Chinese migrant students in New Zealand” (Chu, 2003). It is a ten-session psycho-educational programme which focuses on self-improvement and cultural adaptation. Such programmes can make a distinctive contribution alongside Peer Support and associated activities, and may be promoted through the school.

The role of the school counsellor

For students who are psychologically at risk and who require more intensive help, like the 5% identified in our international student survey, school counsellors are the obvious resource of first choice. However, counselling is not a familiar notion for most migrant students, and the involvement of school counsellors in preventive programmes makes it easier for troubled students to seek their professional help when needed (Au, 2002). Beyond that, involvement in preventive activities is a very appropriate expression of the counsellor’s role integrity in its own right. For example, the selection, training and supervision of Peer Support leaders or mentors extends the resourcefulness of the guidance network, and may prevent some young people from developing more serious problems. At the most general level, the counsellor needs to be involved in the development of school policy with regard to the psychological well-being and pastoral care of overseas-born students.

Staff development and the school’s culture

Some staff are directly involved in or responsible for activities like the Peer Support programme, mentoring, or peer mediation – whether out of personal interest or as part of their official role in the school. Beyond that, there are issues that come up at particular points which need to be incorporated into the school’s general staff development

programme. This may arise out of a lack of information, or misinformation, about issues that affect the migrant community around the school – like religious customs that impinge on school activities. Something may come up within the context of some serious incident between local and overseas-born students, like a serious accident or fight that calls for articulation of school policy. To the extent that a school considers itself to have a certain integrity in terms of its overarching culture or policy with respect to cultural diversity, all activities by staff and students are calibrated against this. Being faced with an increasingly multi-cultural constituency as well as a desire to attract international students, it is our hope that many schools will become increasingly proactive in their promotion of the various programmes and activities propounded in this article.

Reaching out to the community within which the school is situated

The relationship between the school and its surrounding community runs both ways. On the one hand, there are various ways in which the various ethnic communities can be of help to the school as it addresses the needs of its multi-cultural student population. This may involve providing information for staff and students, consultation around particular issues, helping organise cultural functions, or providing teacher aid. Such activities build bridges of inclusion between school and migrant community, and are of benefit to both parties. They can, in fact, be seen as therapeutic or esteem boosting for migrant families insofar as they foster closer collaboration between the two parties who are responsible for the well-being of the children of migrant families.

By the same token, the school can act as a promoter and springboard for the provision of activities and programmes that are designed to benefit migrant families. One example of this is the Migrant Family Resilience (MFR) project that has been created alongside the PCOS project within the Counsellor Education programme at the University of Auckland. Through the MFR project we have developed an eight-session, 16-hour parenting programme for migrants (Everts et al., 2003) which has been translated into Chinese and Korean and which is currently being field tested. We are also developing a similar-sized couple resilience training programme, designed to help couples cope with the multiple challenges of migration, while maintaining or even enhancing the quality of their relationship (Everts & Shih, 2003; Wong & Everts, 2002). The ultimate challenge is to attend to all the specific aspects of such projects, while at the same time having a sense of how they all maintain meaning and integrity.

Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, it is clear that the current Peer Support programme fulfils its basic goals of making schools into familiar territory and creating friendship networks for newly arrived third formers in the schools surveyed. However, it is equally clear that it does not adequately meet the needs of overseas-born students, especially those who have arrived more recently. In fact, it fails to explicitly address the very pressing challenge faced by all new arrivals for mutual understanding and on-the-ground integration across the multiple cultural divides they face in our secondary schools. The Peer Support programme is ideally situated to address these challenges, and the current study's findings suggest that the following developments be considered for the programme to enhance the quality of its information, its inclusiveness, and its integrity in addressing the needs of overseas-born students:

- To alter Peer Support programme content to directly address multicultural issues faced by students, pertaining to mutual understanding, prejudice, communication problems and cross-cultural collaboration;
- To deliberately mix students from different cultural and nationality backgrounds in all groups and specific activities in the programme;
- To deliberately include both New Zealand-born and overseas-born students in leadership teams, and to have them model and illustrate cross-cultural integration in the running of programme sessions;
- To provide specific and formal acknowledgement by the school's senior management team of the way in which the Peer Support programme addresses the integration of overseas-born students;
- To ensure that the Peer Support programme operates for long enough to achieve its aims of initial welcome as well as relationship-establishment across cultural and national divides;
- To operate a special option of the programme for international students who miss out on Peer Support participation because they arrive in school at higher form levels or at different times of the year;
- To operate a formally organised mentoring system which can extend the scope of support and guidance for overseas-born students whose needs are not adequately met through the Peer Support programme;
- To operate a systematic but more informal buddy system within the class programme to provide immediate support for overseas-born students;
- That both New Zealand-born and well-established overseas-born senior students be selected, trained and supervised for both the mentoring and buddy systems;
- That the Peer Support and associated programmes be seen to operate in harmony

with health education and other academic programmes in the school;

- That other relevant specialised programmes be sought out and offered to augment existing activities;
- That school counsellors be fully involved in the development and supervision of all the above activities, with special attention to those which provide a preventive function for at-risk overseas-born students, and that they play an active role in the promotion of school policy which fosters the active integration of overseas-born students;
- That school policy specify an explicit commitment to the pastoral care of overseas-born students, and express this commitment through the promotion of pertinent programmes and activities, through staff development, and through its collaboration with relevant community organisations;
- That the school act as a base for the promotion of community programmes and activities which enhance the quality of functioning of migrant families and families which host international students, in harmony with its own internal programmes for such students.

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