

Anti-Correction Movement Pushes Boundaries of Good Practice

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First it was (and still is) anti-smacking. Now there is the latest attack of the anti-correction movement (*...no place for Supernanny – The Press 4th April*).

There is a trend from academia that seems to think correction is somehow inhibiting a respectful and responsive relationship. Pauline Bishop suggests that *“Supernanny techniques were unprofessional for teachers...what you’re really doing is punishing the child for doing something that is not appropriate, instead of teaching them, which is our mandate”*. Bishop also states *“instead of teaching them a way of communicating, we’re punishing them by putting them on a naughty chair and giving them time out”*.

It seems that the principle of ‘cause and effect’ or ‘consequences’ for undesirable behaviour is now off limits in our early childhood centres, and in effect will be discouraged for parents to use too at home.

But, I know as a mum of two young children, I have been given the responsibility to teach my child right from wrong and train them to become mature. Children are not born with adult cognitive skills – they are trained over time in their character and their will shaped. Teachers reinforce that and add to the process of becoming an adult.

The use of time-out is questioned in its use within early childhood centres, yet it is a simple, effective method and there are times when a child *must* be removed from other children as they can be a danger to others.

Bishop also states *“children are competent and capable, so we are saying that, then we should give them the opportunity to engage in problem solving, instead of putting them under a time-out sort of system”*. Yet children are just that – in the process of mastering adult skills and thought processes and they aren’t born as mini adults. We need to remember to recognise that children learn stage by stage.

The Te Whariki Early Childhood Curriculum policy states *“To **grow** up as competent and confident learners and communicators...”* It does not expect the child to have already mastered those skills and enter into adult-like dialogue or reasoning as to why they did something inappropriate. These are complex skills and in the midst of a tantrum in the kindergarten classroom ready to harm others, their reasoning skills would be less than optimum.

It sounds more like Bishop wishing to brandish her specific type of ideology onto all ECE centres. Does Bishop have a mandate to advocate for her ideology, and on what authority is she able to “launch into an investigation into the extent of Supernanny’s prevalence in Early Childhood Centres”? It sounds like a misuse of her power and a punishment to good ECE centres to me.

Te Whariki policy and curriculum guidelines also states *“...[the outcomes of a curriculum are knowledge, skills and attitudes]...**each** early childhood setting will develop its **own** emphases and priorities...”*. In other words, Bishop may interpret her brand of ideology as meeting that policy, but another centre may interpret in another way and find the use of time-out practices to be effective and may say that it even reinforces practices carried out in good family homes, therefore not confusing the child.

Apart from the growth of the anti-correction brigade, we are witnessing a growing trend for heavy-weighted bureaucrats to assert their ideology onto good, effective frontline staff at our ECE centres.

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