Education success factors and barriers: Learning from the experiences of New Zealand care leavers who went to university

Iain Matheson, Matheson Associates Limited, Research Centre for Better Outcomes from Fostering and Residential Care (Better Outcomes), and Massey University
iain@mathesonassociates.co.nz

Abstract

Education can contribute towards improving the life-chances of children in residential and foster care. Yet, international research has consistently found that most in care face significant educational challenges, many do not receive a quality education, and few go on to university. This chapter reports on a qualitative doctoral study that investigated the experiences of New Zealand care leavers who went to university. While confirming that care leavers from New Zealand can and do go to university, education barriers included significant periods without schooling for some, and a lack of formal support from universities. Nonetheless, participants' educational experiences suggest the importance of early recreational reading habits, positive school experiences before going to secondary school, any behavioural issues being overcome or accommodated, supportive relationships with school staff, comparatively stable secondary education, final school perceived to be of a high quality, playing to their academic strengths, both traditional and non-traditional pathways to university, and undertaking a vocational degree at a local institution. Implications for research, policy and practice are also discussed.

Introduction

Anecdotally, remarkably few New Zealand care leavers (also referred to here as care experienced) go to university. While at an abstract level the 'power of education' is widely understood, in comparison to their social work and education counterparts in other Anglo-American jurisdictions, most New Zealand policymakers, managers, practitioners, and indeed researchers, have to date paid little attention to the education of children in statutory care (Matheson, 2015, 2016a). With 6,350 children and young people in care (at 30 June 2018), and a further 220 in youth justice custody (Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children, 2018), this represents an immense lost opportunity. By way of contrast, in the UK for example, the education of children in care has a much higher policy and practice profile, and their higher education figure for care leavers has reached 11.8% (Harrison, 2017).

However, improved educational outcomes for New Zealand's care experienced may be on the horizon with the recent establishment of a new statutory child protection agency (Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children), a major overhaul of child welfare legislation and in particular care provision, the founding of a national advocacy organisation (VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai) for children in care, new Ministry of Education national guidance for educators on supporting children in care, and the introduction of statutory national care standards (with a strong focus on education and training).

This chapter reports on findings from doctoral research on the experiences of some New Zealand care leavers who did go to university; the qualitative study used the lenses of children's rights, ecological systems theory, resilience theory, and cultural capital theory. Specific education findings are addressed here; other findings are reported elsewhere (Matheson, 2015, 2016d).

Background

Research context

Internationally, there is now a significant 'group' of academics with a long-standing research interest in the education of children and young people in care. Key figures include: David Berridge, Claire Cameron, Graham Connelly, Sonia Jackson and Judy Sebba in the UK; Robbie Gilligan in Ireland; Ingrid Höjer and Bo Vinnerljung in Sweden; Ferran Casas and Carme Montserrat in Catalonia, Spain, Peter Pecora and Andrea Zetlin in the US, and Bob Flynn in Canada. As well as a plethora of individual journal articles on the education of children in care, several journals have also published special issues on this topic, for example, *Adoption & Fostering* (Jackson, 2007), *Children and Youth Services Review* (Dill & Flynn, 2012); *European Journal of Social Work* (Jackson & Höjer, 2013) and *Developing Practice* (Matheson, 2016b, 2016c). Identified systematic reviews include four from the UK (i.e. Evans, Brown, Rees, & Smith, 2017; Liabo, Gray, & Mulcahy, 2012; O'Higgins, Sebba, & Gardner, 2017, O'Higgins, Sebba, & Luke, 2015) and another from the US (i.e. Trout, Hagman, Casey, Reid, & Epstein, 2008).

While there is now also a small body of Australasian literature, almost all has come from Australian rather than New Zealand researchers, for example, The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Judy Cashmore, CREATE Foundation, Elizabeth Fernandez, Andrew Harvey, Trish McNamara, Dee Michell, Philip Mendes, Michelle Townsend, Claire Tilbury, Jacqueline Wilson, and Sarah Wise, with only three New Zealand research studies identified (i.e. Matheson, 2014, 2015; Sutherland, 2006).

Overview of literature

At the outset, four major research projects on the education of care experienced university students are worth highlighting: the English *Going to University from Care* (Jackson, Ajayi, & Quigley, 2005) and the more recent *Moving On Up: Pathways of Care Leavers and Care-experienced Students into and Through Higher Education* (Harrison, 2017); the European (Denmark, England, Hungary, Catalonia and Sweden) *Young People from a Public Care Background: Pathways to Education in Europe* (YiPPEE) project (Jackson & Cameron, 2014); and Australia's *Out of Care, Into University* (Harvey, McNamara, Andrewartha & Luckman, 2015).

A broad overview of the 'education of children in care' literature is presented below with a focus on what is known about success factors and barriers; schooling and universities are each presented separately.

Eight schooling success factors are identified:

1) Schools that have an ethic of care, and where all feel that they belong are valued, and have a voice (Cameron, Jackson & Connelly, 2015).

2) Attendance, and the promotion of attendance, are critical (Cameron, et al., 2015).

3) The importance of high expectations, students' academic abilities recognised early on, and sufficiently academically rigorous classes (Mendis, 2012; Merdinger, Hines, Osterling, & Wyatt, 2005; Rios & Rocco, 2014).

4) A high degree of educational stability or continuity (Jackson & Martin, 1998; Merdinger et al., 2002; Pecora, 2012; Rios & Rocco, 2014).

5) Positive relationships with supportive school teachers (Cameron et al., 2015; Sebba et al., 2015), or other school staff, who go 'the extra mile' at critical junctures (Day, Riebschleger, Dworsky, Damashek, & Fogarty, 2012; Merdinger et al., 2002; Rios & Rocco, 2014).

6) Participation in extra-curricular school activities (Day et al., 2012; Mendis, 2012; Merdinger et al., 2005).

7) Building on educational success, with education as a protective factor that further promotes the child's sense of resilience (Waxman, Gray & Padron, 2003), and strong attainment in examinations during the final compulsory year of schooling (Harrison, 2017). Pecora (2012) recommends strengths-based assessment and educational support.

8) The ability to access information on financial aid for college study, and access college preparation and advice (Merdinger et al., 2005; Rios & Rocco, 2014).

Seven schooling barriers for students are identified:

1) Literacy levels of those in care tend to be below those of their peers (Chambers & Hunter, 2016; Sebba et al., 2015).

2) Attending schools perceived to have a limited academic focus, or to be 'low-performing' (Jackson et al., 2005; Jackson & Cameron, 2014; O'Sullivan &

Westerman, 2007; Rios & Rocco, 2014), or not in mainstream schools (Sebba et al., 2015).

3) Experiencing secondary school changes (Jackson & Cameron, 2014; Jurczyszyn & Tilbury, 2012; Sebba et al., 2015).

4) Lack of training for teachers on how to support children in care (Sebba, et al., 2015), or limited recognition of learning challenges or (unmet) education needs (Day et al., 2012; Jackson & Cameron, 2014; Rios & Rocco, 2014; Sebba et al., 2015). Similarly, teachers and school managers not recognising or responding sympathetically to the trauma-related behavioural issues of those in care (Jackson & Cameron, 2014).

5) Teachers underestimating educational abilities, or a sense that negative assumptions are held about care students (Day et al., 2012; Jackson & Cameron, 2014; Jurczyszyn & Tilbury, 2012; Rios & Rocco, 2014).

6) School absences or exclusions (Sebba et al., 2015), or stigma associated with being held back a grade (Pecora, 2012).

7) Failures in the education (and child welfare) system (Mendes, Mitchell, & Wilson, 2014; Montserrat & Casas, 2017).

Turning to universities, seven success factors for students are identified:

1) Being female; few male care leavers appear to go to university (Brady, Gilligan, & Nic Fhlannchadha, 2019; Jackson et al., 2005; Merdinger et al., 2005).

2) Studying humanities subjects, (Brady et al., 2019; Jurczyszyn & Tilbury, 2012; Merdinger et al., 2005), with social work, education and law particularly common.

3) Universities having institutional awareness of the needs of care leavers, and linking care leavers to student support services and initiatives (Harvey, et al., 2015; Starks, 2013).

4) Universities developing partnerships, outreach programmes and managed transition processes that enhance integration (Gazeley & Hinton-Smith, 2018; Harrison, 2017; Harvey et al., 2015; Jackson & Cameron, 2014; Pecora, 2012).

5) Universities providing scholarships, financial support, and accommodation support Harvey et al., 2015; Starks, 2013).

6) 'Second chance' further education pathways (Harrison, 2017; Harvey, Campbell, Andrewartha, Wilson & Goodwin-Burns, 2017; Jackson et al., 2005; Jackson & Cameron, 2014; Jurczyszyn & Tilbury, 2012; Herd & Legge, 2017).

Six university barriers for care experienced students are identified:

1) Not actually applying for a place at university, even when eligible to do so (Brady et al., 2019; Harvey et al., 2017).

2) Challenges around generating a sufficient income to live, maintaining their accommodation, and purchasing the necessary books and equipment to support their studies (Mendis, 2012).

3) Students feeling that they do not 'belong' at university and are not 'entitled' to be there (Jackson et al., 2005)

4) Minimal pastoral support, with too many universities still appearing to have a limited awareness of the needs of students from a care background (Harvey et al., 2015; Jackson et al., 2005).

5) A struggle with academic work; therefore more likely to withdraw from papers, re-submit assignments, re-take exams, or extend their time at university (US and UK) (Harrison, 2017; Jackson et al., 2005; Rios and Rocco, 2014).

6) An inability to complete the degree courses (Day, Dworsky, Fogarty, & Damashek, 2011; Harrison, 2017; Jackson et al., 2005; Merdinger et al., 2005).

Methodology

Research approach

The research paradigm for this study was constructivism, and the methodology qualitative research. The data collection method was in-depth face-to-face (informal conversational) interviews which were followed up with a second interview some weeks later by telephone. The data analysis method used was thematic analysis.

Participant inclusion and exclusion criteria

The inclusion criteria were degree students and graduates aged 17 to 24 (or potentially up to 29) who, since their 14th birthday, had spent a year or more in the care or custody of the (former) statutory child welfare agency Child, Youth and Family or an associated organisation. However, 17 year olds who were still in care or custody were excluded.

Participant recruitment

Ten different recruitment methods were utilised. The most successful method was approaching child welfare organisations; other successful methods were indirectly approaching a previous recipient of a national award scheme for children in care, use of a New Zealand research participation website, and through my own professional networks.

Participant characteristics

Seven participants took part in the study; they lived in three New Zealand cities. With one exception all were female and had a range of ethnicities. At the time of their interviews they ranged in age from 18 to 26; one had already graduated with a bachelor's degree and the other six were undergraduates. Non-kin foster care was the main form of care provision they had experienced. In terms of time in care, participants fell into three broad groups: four came into care as teenagers and remained so until discharged to live independently, two were intermittently in and out of care throughout their childhood, and one came into care as a teenager and subsequently returned to live with her family.

Ethics

The study was approved by the *University of Otago's Human Ethics Committee.*

Main education findings and discussion

The study's main education findings are reported and discussed here under the following topics: (a) primary and middle schooling; (b) secondary schooling; and (c) university.

Primary and middle schooling

Early recreational reading habits

Most participants said that during their primary schooling they had become avid readers and had established strong recreational reading habits. One described herself as always being "a real bookworm", and others also indicated that they were committed early readers. While some remembered having books at home, they and others also recalled being heavy users of school and public libraries. However, as well as enjoying reading, one also related that for her, "because of the circumstances at home, it [reading] was the only way that I could escape, temporarily even – any distraction was good".

Positive experiences of primary and middle schooling

Five participants indicated that prior to coming into care aged 13 or 14, they had experienced conventional patterns of schooling. In contrast, the two other participants attended several primary schools as they came in and out of care; both of their mothers also moved around a lot. As one explained:

> I didn't really get much of an [early] education as I was moving around quite a bit...I've still got my reports, looking back at that and some of them saying that I was not really up there - with the rest of the class - and I was quite disruptive behaviour-wise.

These two considered that they had become particularly accomplished at making new friends having got used to so many 'first days' at school, although one of them felt that with so many moves she had missed some crucial parts of the curriculum:

> The school that you went to in the first half of the year were teaching 'this' in maths, and then the school that you went to in the second half had already taught that and was now doing something else. So you missed out on certain things and there are things now that I still don't know because I missed it at primary.

However, by the time they had completed their middle schooling, all participants reported that they were settled at school, making satisfactory progress, and in most cases experiencing some form of educational success.

Secondary schooling

Significant periods without schooling for some

Three of the participants reported experiencing between three and twelve months without any secondary schooling. However, they coped with this in different ways. One recalled that, following her reception into care and further placement changes, it was about six months before she was enrolled in a new secondary school for Year 11. Over that time, she regularly studied all day at local public libraries. In terms of what motivated her to do so, this is how she put it:

> ...it is your – duty to study – you're a student – what else are you going to do? It is what you are supposed to do – study – and...I'm not going to let what happened to me stop me from doing what everybody else could do.

She eventually was re-enrolled in a school, but she found adjusting to being back in school very hard and never settled there. The second reported receiving no education at all during her 12 months in care, while the third was at one point suspended for three months.

Behavioural issues overcome or accommodated

Some participants clearly differentiated themselves from others in care who they considered to be 'troubled'. However most, but not all, reported that they had at some time themselves had reasonably significant periods of truanting, or presented schools with other forms of challenging behaviour, for example drunkenness or offending, to the extent that four of them were at some point stood-down, suspended or permanently excluded (and outside of school there were also some absconding, self-harm and mental health issues). However, such issues were often relatively short-lived. In other instances, schools seemed to show some participants a great deal of flexibility. For example, during their later years at secondary school, two high-achieving participants felt that they were 'cut some slack' on their school attendance issues by school personnel, on the basis that they had come from difficult circumstances but were still doing well academically.

School support through individual relationships with staff

None of the participants were provided with any formal educational support because they were in care. However, four described one or more particularly supportive and long-lasting relationship with a member of school staff. Sometimes these individuals went far beyond what would usually be expected of them, for example two participants reported being offered, and accepting, the opportunity to be fostered by members of their school leadership team. For the other two, it was long-lasting relationships with their school counsellors. As one of them said, her "any time anything went a bit crazy, she'd like 'do you just want to come along and have a Milo [hot drink brand]?'". Similarly for the other:

> She was very important because without her I think that I would just have fallen through the cracks…she really stood up for me… She had a very big impact on my schooling – because if it wasn't for her I wouldn't have remained at that school – if it wasn't for her I wouldn't have done a lot of things.

Comparatively stable secondary schooling, and final schools perceived as high quality

Two participants attended a single secondary school, while the others attended two or three each. Changes of school usually arose from an admission into care or placement move. Therefore, while almost all participants spoke of their living situations continuing to change with great regularity, their secondary schooling was comparatively stable, and particularly so towards the end of their secondary schooling. A strong theme in relation to six of the participants, was that they experienced their final secondary school as being of a high quality.

Two of the participants went to significant efforts to remain at these schools when adults suggested that a change in care placement would necessitate a change in school.

However, two participants had positive experiences with late moves to secondary schools that they considered to be better. As one of them said: "That's pretty much where my academic and [personal] life began to merge again".

Playing to their academic strengths

Almost all participants identified a favourite subject that they were good at. In most instances these subjects were from the humanities. This included one participant who hardly attended her second or third secondary schools:

> That's about the only class I ever did really well in – French. You know, I'd go to school just to do my French classes in [New Zealand city] as well. French and German were about the only classes that I ever went to.

Most participants spoke of not enjoying Maths or Science-related subjects. However, as they progressed through the secondary school system, participants described being able to play to such strengths in terms of their choice of subjects. As Lisa put it:

> I just tended to focus on what I was good at. So, by 7th form [year 13] I was taking all – it's the other side of the brain subjects like English, Social Science or Art – I didn't take any Maths or Science or anything because I said I wasn't good at it.

University

Traditional and non-traditional pathways to university

While five of the seven participants had gone straight to university from school, the other two had first taken up employment and further education. One did not pass her final school exams and took up a series of jobs. She started one vocational degree but found that she did not enjoy it. She then switched to a lower level course in another area, which led to her embarking upon her current degree course at the same polytechnic. The other had recently entered university as a mature student and her pathway was particularly circuitous. Over the course of several years, and having missed a lot of her secondary schooling, her educational pathway included her attending and completing an access to employment course, graduating from a beauty therapy college and then gaining several years' employment experience including running her own business. While she said that she was finding some aspects of the course quite challenging, she was passing her papers and discovering that her employment experience offered her some advantages:

That's one of the bonuses of having worked in various different kind(s?) of roles and then going…to Uni, because I've got the work experience and life experience and educationally when I'm finished, whereas most of those 18 or 19 year olds will have maybe just the education side of things – they won't have the life experience or the work experience.

Vocational degrees at a local university

All of the participants reported that they were taking, or had taken, professional or vocational degrees. Five of the six participants who were still undergraduates indicated that they were planning to become either a teacher, social worker or lawyer; the participant who had graduated was a teacher already. Some explicitly talked about making use of their own experiences of being in care in order to work with vulnerable children and young people. One put it this way:

I do want to work for youth. I did want to look into something around like the prisons or like juveniles – something really intense – I really do want to work with kids that really do need help – like intense help – like criminals.

Six of the seven studied locally and so stayed close to their existing support networks. For example, one looked at the numbers and with her carers' suggestion that she could remain living with them, she decided against moving away:

I wanted to go to [city B] but I couldn't afford it…[my foster carers]…thought of it sensibly…because they're like "what about your student loan - that will be really expensive if you have to pay for…accommodation and all that stuff"? …Otherwise I would have wanted to get out of [city A].

No formal educational support from tertiary institutions

As participants recalled, aside from general university scholarships that two of them received, no specific educational or pastoral support was offered, or provided to them by tertiary institutions in recognition of the fact that they had foster care backgrounds.

Course progress – mixed fortune

At the time of the face-to-face interviews, the majority of participants reported that they were making good progress and passing all of their university papers; one of them had already graduated and another was about to. One revealed that she had recently succeeded in gaining entry into second year law, while another indicated that she was, despite her limited secondary schooling, adjusting well to tertiary study as a mature student:

> I actually do really enjoy it. I thought it was going to be a lot different…I'm someone that's never been that good at assignments or been good at doing homework or self-directed learning of any description, like with university, there's mostly self-directed learning…I am actually enjoying it.

However, at times some also found university academically, socially or financially challenging. In terms of financial support, most scholarships were awarded for their first year only.

Discussion

There are inherent limitations with any and all research, and the findings from this study cannot be generalised to all New Zealand care leavers who went to university, let alone those from say Norway, the Netherlands or Nepal etc. Nonetheless, this study does support several key education findings from European, North American and Australian studies including the importance of: higher education expectations for all, positive relationships with a member of school staff; recognising educational potential early on; secondary school stability; care leavers being drawn to university courses in social work, education and law; traditional as well as non-traditional pathways to university; and pastoral and financial support from universities.

However, in terms of this study's more original findings, the education-related research, policy and practice implications will in part depend upon young people's individual education circumstances, attitudes to schooling, and engagement. Using as a framework Berridge's (2017) four group typology, possible implications are explored as follows:

'Private/self-reliant' (young people in care who are independent and autonomous): This group consists of young people with a strong individualistic orientation who do not like to feel dependent on (and/or have been repeatedly let down by) others. Those who are succeeding educationally tend to attribute such success to themselves; they can be critical of others. They also show a high level of motivation and determination which may, for example, come from: not wanting their past or current circumstances to impact on their future; wanting a better life than their parents, or wanting to prove others wrong. While they can also be very assertive and focused on their education and other needs (for example remaining at their existing school or wanting to move to another), they tend to be private and highly self-reliant. Being 'private/self-reliant' was a strong theme amongst this study's participants.

More of these young people could possibly go into higher education, if professionals were perhaps better able to support and work with their strong sense of agency, be more mindful of the education impacts of placement changes and related decisions, and always follow through on commitments that they make to young people (or at a minimum not 'mess things up' for them educationally!). Professionals should also be sensitive to, and discuss, attendance at 'parent's evenings' and school events ahead of time, and if needed facilitate or support the provision of advice on higher education and scholarships from universities and elsewhere as appropriate; these young people may also benefit from mentoring with someone from outside of the care system. Those doing well educationally, while highly engaged in their learning, may not always be as engaged with their school, for example possibly truanting but studying from home.

'Stressed/unresolved' (young people in care experiencing high levels of stress): For this group**,** the stress they are living with is likely to impact upon their education, and sometimes the difference between adaptive and maladaptive behaviour may not always be clear cut. The possibility of going to university might only become apparent after they have left school. While education can be a protective factor and the extent of the stress that some are experiencing may actually be masked by very high educational achievement, generally schooling, let alone university, is not 'top of mind' for these young people, or indeed the professionals working with them. Although not a strong feature in this study, these characteristics can be seen in the experiences of at least some of the participants.

More of these young people could possibly go into higher education, if the level and nature of their stress was more clearly recognised and meaningfully addressed. Their education history could also be better understood, with more of an emphasis on assessing, harnessing, and building upon the educational cultural capital and strengths. While important for most children in care, a positive relationship with a senior member of school staff or school counsellor could be particularly important for this group; that person might even be the only constant reliable adult figure in their life. If young people have missed periods of schooling, they may also require compensatory education. For the professionals, these young people can take up a lot of their time, and even after personal crises have abated, realising their educational potential may require ongoing input.

'Committed/trusted support' (young people in a stable placement with highly caring foster carers): Of the four groups, this is the one that professionals tend to see as the 'ideal state' for young people in care, and most likely to go to university. For some the 'hard yards' around education (and/or care) have already been done, and with some secondary school stability, educational success, and friends at school likely to go to university too (and placements being educationally-rich), university may become an increasingly 'normal' expectation for many. However, only one of this study's participants was clearly in this group.

More young people from this group could potentially go into higher education, by ensuring that all of their foster carers have sufficient up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the higher education system, application processes, and funding systems (along with continuing high-quality foster care and the possibility of formal or informal extended care beyond the age of 18). Also, while many care leavers who go to university may make excellent social workers, teachers and lawyers, and that may be the right choice for them, with a stronger sense of security than others in care, potentially some young people in this group could take more risks with their degree choices. However, more fundamentally we need to look at how more young people could move into this group in the first place.

'Disengaged' (young people disengaged from learning): This final group comprises of those who do not appear to make much effort at school or take advantage of the supports on offer. Boys tend to be significantly overrepresented in this group. Many will have special education needs, and some may present schools with challenging behaviour. Two participants in this study were at some point in their schooling particularly disengaged from learning.

Clearly, for more of these young people to go on to university they need to somehow be (re)engaged with learning. This could be through: involvement with quality pre-school education; promoting early and ongoing reading as a gateway to learning; gaining an understanding of learning strengths and not solely focusing on weaknesses; paying particular attention to the transition from primary to secondary school; choosing a secondary school with a strong focus on student engagement; and developing informal learning through hobbies, sports, clubs and community groups, part-time employment and business, or exploration of cultural identity. These young people's right to a quality education needs to be respected and rigorously enforced irrespective of whether or not they have the potential to go to university, and any necessary change of school arising from a placement decision needs to be effected as smoothly as possible. There will also need to be a high level of productive and

child-focused liaisons between social workers, foster carers and schools on special education needs and/or behavioural issues.

Conclusion

We have long known that most children in care are educationally disadvantaged. This study, in learning from the experiences of seven New Zealand care leavers who went to university, and exploring the success factors and barriers that they faced, makes a modest contribution to the growing literature on better understanding why children in care are educationally disadvantaged, what helps, what hinders, and what can be done about it.

These participants had to contend with many barriers. However, for them education was a significant protective factor in their often challenging lives; they experienced many education success factors including the development of early recreational reading habits, positive school experiences before going to secondary school, any behavioural issues being overcome or accommodated, supportive relationships with school staff, comparatively stable secondary education, a final high school that they deemed to be of a high quality, playing to their academic strengths, both traditional and non-traditional pathways to university, and undertaking a vocational degree at a local institution.

The overall message from this study is a hopeful one. Many more care leavers could likely be supported educationally in going to university if more practitioners, managers, and policymakers (and researchers) demonstrably valued education and learning, expected more for and from children in care, increased their knowledge and understanding of the 'care/learn interface' and its centrality to quality care provision, and fully incorporated such knowledge and understanding into their work both individually and collectively. As well as increasing access to university, as importantly such measures would also help ensure that all others in care were better prepared and engaged in a lifetime of learning, whether that be in further education colleges, on training courses, online, in apprenticeships, at work, in the home, or in communities.

References

Berridge, D. (2017). The education of children in care: Agency and resilience. *Children and Youth Services Review, 77,* 86-93. doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.04.004

Brady, E., Gilligan, R., & Nic Fhlannchadha, S. (2019). Care-experienced young people accessing higher education in Ireland. *Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies, 19*(1), 50-64.

Cameron, C., Jackson, S. & Connelly, G. (2015). *Educating children and young people in care: Learning placements and caring schools.* London, England: Jessica Kingsley.

Chambers, S. & Hunter, N. (2016). Educational outcomes for children in care: Comparisons of NAPLAN results for children in care and the general population. *Developing Practice 45,* 19-32.

Day, A., Dworsky, A., Fogarty, K., & Damashek, A. (2011). An examination of post-secondary retention and graduation among foster care youth enrolled in a four-year university. *Children and Youth Services Review, 33*(11), 2335–2341.

Day, A., Riebschleger, J., Dworsky, A., Damashek, A., & Fogarty, K. (2012). Maximizing educational opportunities for youth aging out of foster care by engaging youth voices in a partnership for social change. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*(5), 1007-1014. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.02.001

Dill, K. & Flynn, R. J. (Eds.) (2012). Education interventions, practices, and policies to improve educational outcomes among children and youth in out-of-home care [Special issue]. *Children and Youth Services Review, 34*(6).

Evans, R., Brown, R., Rees, G., & Smith, P. (2019). Systematic review of educational interventions for looked-after children and young people: Recommendations for intervention development and evaluation. *British Educational Research Journal, 43*(1), 68-94. doi: 10.1002/berj.3252

Gazeley, L. & Hinton-Smith, T. (2018). The 'success' of Looked After Children in Higher Education in England: near peer coaching, 'small steps' and future thinking. *Higher Education Research & Development, 37*(5), 952-965. doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2018.1467384

Harrison, N. (2017). *Moving on up: Pathways of care leavers and care-experienced students into and through higher education - project report.* National Winchester, England: Network for the Education of Care Leavers.

Harvey, A., McNamara, P., Andrewartha, L., & Luckman, M. (2015). *Out of care, into university: Raising higher education access and achievement of care leavers - Final report.* Melbourne, Australia: La Trobe University.

Harvey, A., Campbell, P., Andrewartha, L., Wilson, J., & Goodwin-Burns, P. (2017). *Recruiting and supporting care leavers in Australian higher education: Final report.* Melbourne, Australia: La Trobe University.

Herd, R. & Legge, T. (2017). The education of looked after children: the social implications of further education. *Adoption & Fostering, 41*(1), 67-74. doi.org/10.1177/0308575916681712

Jackson, S. (Ed.) (2007). [Special issue on the education of looked after children]. *Adoption & Fostering 31*(1).

Jackson, S., Ajayi, S., & Quigley, M. (2005). *Going to university from care*: *Final report – By Degrees project*. London, England: Institute of Education.

Jackson, S. & Cameron, C. (2014) (Eds.). *Improving access to further and higher education for young people in public care: European policy and practice*. London, England: Jessica Kingsley.

Jackson, S. & Höjer I. (Eds.) (2013). The education of children and young people in state care [Special issue]. *European Journal of Social Work, 16*(1).

Jackson, S. & Martin, P. Y. (1998). Surviving the care system: Education and resilience. *British Journal of Social Work, 21*(5), 349-368.

Jurczyszyn, R. & Tilbury, C. (2012). Higher and further education for care leavers. A road less travelled. *Developing Practice, 33*, 10-22.

Liabo, K., Gray, K., & Mulcahy, D. (2012). A systematic review of interventions to support looked-after children in school. *Child & Family Social Work. 18*. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2206.2012.00850.x.

Matheson, I. (2014). *Education provision for learners in Child, Youth and Family Residences*. Unpublished research report for the New Zealand Ministry of Education.

Matheson, I. (2015). *Slipping down ladders and climbing up snakes: The educational experiences of young adults who were in foster care* (Unpublished EdD thesis). Dunedin, New Zealand: University of Otago.

Matheson, I. (2016a). State of indifference? An overview of residential and foster care in New Zealand. In T. Khalil, & L. Fulcher (Eds.), *Residential child and youth care in a developing world* (pp. 311-328)*.* Cape Town, South Africa: CYC-Net Press.

Matheson, I. (Ed.) (2016b). The education of children in out-of-home care [Special double issue]. *Developing Practice, 45*.

Matheson, I. (Ed.) (2016c). The education of children in out-of-home care [Special double issue]. *Developing Practice, 46.*

Matheson, I. (2016d). The importance of individual personal factors: The experiences of care leavers who went to university [Special issue]. *Developing Practice, 46,* 42-54.

Mendes, P., Mitchell, D, & Wilson, J. Z. (2014). Young People transitioning from out-of-home care and access to higher education: A critical review of the literature. *Children Australia, 39*(4), 243-252. doi.org/10.1017/cha.2014.25

Mendis, K. (2012). Exploring ways in which to support the education of children in care. *Developing Practice, 33*, 26-34.

Merdinger, J. A., Hines, A. M., Osterling, K. L., & Wyatt, P. (2005). Pathways to college for former foster youth: Understanding factors that contribute to educational success. *Child Welfare, 84*(6), 867-896.

Montserrat, C. & Casas, F. (2017). The education of children and adolescents in out-of-home care: A problem or an opportunity? Results of a longitudinal study. *European Journal of Social Work, 21*(5), 750-763. doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2017.1318832

O'Higgins, A., Sebba J., & Gardner, F. (2017). What are the factors associates with educational achievement for children in kinship or foster care: A systematic review. *Children and Youth Services Review, 79*, 198-220. doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.06.004

O'Higgins, A., Sebba J., & Luke, N. (2015). *What is the relationship between being in care and the educational outcomes of children? An international systematic review*. Oxford, England: University of Oxford Rees Centre for Research in Fostering and Education.

O'Sullivan, A. & Westerman, R. (2007). Closing the gap: Investigating the barriers to educational achievement for looked after children. *Adoption and Fostering, 31*(1), 13-20. doi: 10.1177/030857590703100104

Pecora, P. (2012). Maximizing educational achievement of youth in foster care and alumni: Factors associated with success. *Children and Youth Services Review. 34*(6), 1121-1129 doi: 10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.01.044

Rios, S. J. & Rocco, T. S. (2014). From foster care to college: Barriers and supports on the road to postsecondary education. *Emerging Adulthood, 2*(3), 227-237. doi:10.1177/2167696814526715

Sebba, J., Berridge, D., Luke, N., Fletcher, J., Bell, K. Strand, S.,…O'Higgins, A. (2015). *The educational progress of looked after children in England: Linking care and educational data*. Oxford, England: Rees Centre for Research on Fostering and Education.

Starks, L. (2013). *Assessing the impact of the Buttle UK Quality Mark in higher education*. London, UK: Buttle UK

Sutherland, A. (2006). *From classroom to prison cell: Young offenders' perception of*

their school experience (Unpublished PhD thesis). Wellington, New Zealand.

Trout, A. L., Hagaman, J., Casey, K., Reid, R., & Epstein, M. H. (2008). The academic status of children and youth in out-of-home care: A review of the literature. *Child and Youth Services Review, 30*(9), 979-994.

Waxman, H. C., Gray, J. P., & Padron, Y. N. (2003). *Review of research on educational resilience*. Houston, TX: Centre for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.

Biographical note

Iain is a New Zealand-based consultant, researcher, author, trainer, and speaker, the inaugural Director of the *Research Centre for Better Outcomes from Fostering and Residential Care* (Better Outcomes), the co-founder of the 3,000+ member *Education of Children in Care Network* on LinkedIn, and Adjunct Lecturer in Social Sector Evaluation Research at Massey University. His recently completed doctorate was on the experiences of care leavers who went to university, and was deemd by the University of Otago to be exceptional; his thesis has also been cited during New Zealand Parliamentary Social Services Select Committee oral evidence proceedings in 2015, and again in 2016 in the New South Wales Parliament's Inquiry into Child Protection. In 2016 he was the guest editor of the special double issue of the Australian refereed journal, *Developing Practice*, on education and out-of-home care.

Acknowledgement