Replicating an evidence-based peer-led parenting program in Australia

ARACY Webinar
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Three presenters – who we are

Cindy de Jong – EPEC Coordinator Tasmania

Alicia Fischer – EPEC Parent Facilitator

Paul Prichard – Child and Family Centre Learning & Development Strategy, Tasmania
The Tasmanian Context

Services individually supporting families and children
Services co-locating for families and children
Services collaborating for families and children
Services Integrated for families and children

Child & Family
Service
Organisational values, culture, beliefs and behaviour
Modelling the attributes of partnership to support true integration

Centre for Community Child Health 2010
Tasmanian CFC Project

12 Child and Family Centre communities working towards Collaborative partnerships between services and community in the design and implementation on locally responsive early childhood models

Emphasis on workers and community members being:

• Co-planners
• Co-producers
• Co-deliverers
• Co-investigators
• Co-managers
• Co-discoverers and learners
Challenges cont...

- Measuring the change is sometimes an after thought
- Cultural differences between services and their workers
- Using same words – applying different meaning
- Non Gvt. orgs are either poorly engaged OR leading the change
- Some evidence of massive over servicing & duplication

Service redevelopment is not achieved through new buildings...
...HOWEVER

Physical spaces that are warm, open, and inviting, help support broad engagement
The kitchen – a meeting place for children, parents and workers
Empowering Parents,
Empowering Communities
A program that trains, supervises and supports parents to run the “Being a Parent” course in their local communities.
• National Sure Start award for innovation and user involvement in 2010.
• Implemented in Tasmania in 2011 at the initiative of the Tasmanian Early Years Foundation in partnership with MCRI and Dept. of Education (TAS).
• A manualised, 9 session program for parents of children under 12 years.

• Encourages parents to become “reflective” rather than “reactive” in their parenting.

• Working towards accreditation to VET competency standards, encouraging educational opportunities.

• Free on-site child care is important.
Theoretical Background to EPEC

- Attachment theory (Bowlby, J.)
- Social learning theory (Bandura, A.)
- Structural family therapy (Minuchin, S.)
- Person centred approach (Rogers, C.)
BAP Course Weekly Topics

**Pre course - Information morning tea**

Week 1. Being a parent
Week 2. Feelings
Week 3. Play and listening
Week 4. Labels and praise
Week 5. Understanding children’s behaviour
Week 6. Discipline strategies
Week 7. Listening
Week 8. Review and Support
Typical responses from BAP participants

“What we’re learning to do here is just think more”

“I talk less. Now I take a step back and reflect on how my children are feeling and what they are really saying before I respond”

“I’m calmer”

“I know other people in my community who are experiencing the same things as me”
• Parents who have completed the **Being a Parent** course are able to apply to train to become facilitators of the course.

• A manualised, 10 day training program.

• A more in-depth consideration of the BAP course and group-work facilitation skills

• Parent facilitators are then supported and supervised.

• Parent facilitators receive payment. Training is accredited to the Trainer Skill Set, a level 3/4 TAFE qualification.
Supervision of EPEC Program

BAP Supervisors:
• Attend and observe every second BAP course session,
• One hour reflection with parent facilitators

Supervisors are skilled practitioners who have personal experience in BAP facilitation, practice experiences working with families and are trained in the Family Partnership Model

EPEC Clinical Supervision:
Clinical supervision is provided in groups by therapists

All Facilitators running a course are required to attend at least one group session during the running of that course.

Clinical supervisors are also available for any issues that may arise during courses for advice and referral.
“I’m doing something important in my community”

“I’ve now kinda done the course 3 times ....and now doing stuff differently. Even the kids notice it!”

“If you’d told me I’d be a paid facilitator before last year I would have fallen over. Now I’m making a real difference.”

“I think more now. I don’t just react – I think and explain how I feel about things that have happened”
Implementation within Tasmania

2011
- 17 practitioners attended 5 day training with UK authors of EPEC in Tasmania
- 6 BAP courses involving 51 parents

2012
- 8 BAP courses involving 62 parents
- 2 Parent Facilitator Training Courses (18 parents)

2013
- 14 BAP courses involving 110 parents (parent facilitators).
Alicia’s journey with EPEC

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How we came to be trialing EPEC

& why EPEC?
Sound evidence base

• UK – Randomised Control Trials (Institute of Psychology, Kings College) found:
  – Significant reduction children’s behaviour problems
  – Improved competencies in ‘hard to reach’ parents
  – Higher retention rates than conventional parenting programs
  – Size of the improvement in child behaviour compares favourably with outcomes from trials involving professional therapists

• Tasmania – An externally commissioned evaluation report found:
  – “Parents and parent facilitators have reported increases in social, human, and identity capital, targets have been met in terms of courses run, and communities involved with EPEC are demonstrating increased social capacity around parenting skills”
Thematic analysis of data from seven participant interviews over three separate intervals

BEFORE BAP COURSE
• Isolation
• Difficulty coping with child/rens behaviour
• Stress

FOLLOWING BAP COURSE
• Increased connections – “I’m not alone”
• A shared language - “Good enough parent”
• Decreased stress - Feeling calmer
• Parent reflection - thinking about my child and her/his feelings
Thematic analysis of data from seven participant interviews over three separate intervals

TWO MONTHS FOLLOWING BAP COURSE

• Enjoying parenting more
• Improved parent child relationship – “I explain things to my children”, “listening to children and others”
• Assuming other roles in the community
• Shared language with other parents and local workers
• “I think more, and listen better”

• “I think about my children and I know that they have feelings too. Just like me, they can feel sad and lonely and angry. I can talk about these feelings with them now”

Parent as ‘Reflective Practitioner’ (Penney et al, 2009)
“I know other people in my community who are experiencing the same things as me”

“Making new friends, time to vent, listen, learn and receive feedback with no judgement”

Course graduation - photo used with permission, 2013
Theory evidenced through the study

Social Learning Theory (Bandura)
External influences through which the learner develops, adapts and changes – modeling and observation

Person-Centred Approach (Rogers)
Developing empathic care, importance of acknowledging feelings

Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner)
Critical role played by influences outside of the program that help or hinder the parent in their reflection and learning
Data also indicates a resonance with:

Communities of Practice (Lave and Wenger, 1983) “joint enterprise ... mutual engagement ... shared repertoire” (Wenger, 1998)

Reflective Practice (Schon, 1983) Parent participants ‘wondering about’, and reflecting on feelings of child and discovering new ways of approaching Parenting difficulties
Implications for practice or policy

• Benefit of supervised peer-led interventions in communities characterised by disadvantage.

“I found that when the information was coming from another parent [it] made a big difference to me. It made it more relevant.”

• Exploration of parent facilitator / practitioner relationship (parent facilitator as co-worker and co-learner)

“I’ve got a job for the first time in my life. I get paid and I am helping other parents while I do it. It makes me smile just telling you – I have to pinch myself. I just can’t believe it.” (Parent facilitator June 2013)
Guiding principles for working with parents:

• Positive effect of external factors outside of the intervention that reinforce and support the new skills acquired in the program. (Peers, practitioners, service environments, common language, opportunity for practice, reflection)

• Reflecting with parents (wondering about child’s feelings – modelling empathy)

• Partnership across services with parents (reinforcing a shared language)
Preliminary findings from the data

• Participants report experiences that indicate transformation in their perceptions of themselves as parents and on their parenting relationships

• Participants acknowledge an improvement in personal parenting skills

• Some participants acquire knowledge and confidence that supports them to move on to further training and community roles
What we’ve found

• Difficulty in relaying the message to other services & funders that EPEC is not just a manualised parenting education program
• Maintaining quality across larger geographical area is difficult
• Maintaining a balance between the number of active trained parent facilitators and number of BAP courses
• Providing timely facilitation opportunities for newly trained parent facilitators
• Parent facilitators move on to work, study etc. (A strength and a difficulty!)
• EPEC relies on an informed and supportive local service system
• “supply and demand” – A balance between trained facilitators and capacity to manage courses (incl. supervision)
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