

## Editorial

### The Current Issue

One of the objectives of our journal is to promote critical discussions on key issues in emotional education amongst researchers and practitioners working in the area. One way we are encouraging our readers to enter into this discussion is by including critical commentaries on a focus paper in particular editions of the journal. We are starting this feature by focusing on a highly pertinent issue in education, namely the suspension and exclusion of students from school. A report just published by *Civitas* suggests that school exclusion statistics in the UK may be misleading, as misbehaving students were just being removed to ‘alternative provisions’ or ‘new secret gardens’ such as Pupil Referral Units (Ogg with Kaill 2010). The decrease in official exclusion statistics in recent years has been simultaneously accompanied by an increase in the number of students with challenging behaviour being referred for alternative provision. The report concludes by underlining the risks involved in the use of permanent exclusion of students from school. This is the thrust of the focus paper in this issue by Fintan O’Regan (UK) who discusses the exclusion of students with individual educational needs, with a particular focus on students with ADHD. The author reviews various documents and reports on exclusion in the UK and suggests that students with ADHD are particularly prone to exclusion from school. One of the author’s main suggestions for the prevention of multiple fixed term and permanent exclusions of such students, is early intervention at school and subsequent screening and diagnosis, with school staff receiving adequate education in identifying such students and referring them for further assessment. In response to O’Regan’s paper, Richard Rose (UK), Paul Bartolo (Malta), Lesley Hughes (UK) and Geoff Tennant (UK) develop and challenge some of the key issues raised by O’Regan, particularly the issue of diagnosis and the ‘medicalisation’ of the condition in contrast to educational, behaviour, and systemic interventions. We encourage our readers to enter into this critical debate and send us their comments on both the focus paper and the critical commentaries. The readers’ comments will be posted on our website.

The next two papers discuss the role of social emotional education and its relationship to social, emotional and behaviour problems in young people. Maria Poulou (Greece) investigates the role of emotional intelligence as a personality trait and social and emotional skills, in the development of social, emotional and behavioural strengths and difficulties. On the basis of her study with Greek adolescents’ perceptions, Poulou describes the underlying mechanisms of students’ social, emotional and behavioural strengths and difficulties, suggesting that increased positive personality traits and social competences are associated with increased

prosocial behaviour and decreased emotional and behavioural difficulties. On a similar vein, Knut Gunderson (Norway) discusses the relationship between social and emotional competence and behaviour difficulties amongst children and young people. He argues that behaviour problems can be reduced and/or prevented by increasing the individual's social competence. On the basis of various studies, particularly ones carried out in Norway, the Gunderson identifies the constituents of effective social competence programmes, and proposes Aggression Replacement Training as a model programme. Norway has invested considerably in this programme in schools, families and other systems and institutions with emerging promising results.

### **Special issues 2011-2014**

We are pleased to launch a series of special editions in the journal in the coming years. The November 2011 issue will be dedicated to the social-emotional aspects of substance abuse in children and young people, and is being guest edited by Professor Nathaniel Riggs (University of Southern California, USA: [nriggs@usc.edu](mailto:nriggs@usc.edu)). The November 2012 issue will be dedicated to the assessment of children and young people with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties and will be guest edited by our colleague Professor Neil Humphrey (University of Manchester, UK: [neil.humphrey@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:neil.humphrey@manchester.ac.uk)) In 2013 we have a special edition on Positive Psychology for Children and Young People, guest edited by Professor Jane Gillham (University of Pennsylvania, USA: [jgillha1@swarthmore.edu](mailto:jgillha1@swarthmore.edu)). Finally, in November 2014 we are editing a special edition on Neuroscience and Emotional Education. Papers for any of these editions are welcome and may be sent to the respective guest editors.

We have opened a new page on these special issues in our website.

### **Your comments:**

Finally we encourage you to share your feedback on the papers, the critical commentaries and the book reviews in this and other editions of the journal; we will post excerpts from the feedback we receive on the journal's website.

Paul Cooper & Carmel Cefai, November 2010

[pow5@le.ac.uk](mailto:pow5@le.ac.uk), [carmel.cefai@um.edu.mt](mailto:carmel.cefai@um.edu.mt)

### **Reference:**

Ogg, T with Kaill, E. 2010 *A New Secret Garden? Alternative Provision, Exclusion and Children's Rights*.

London, Civitas. Last retrieved 15<sup>th</sup> November 2010 at:

<http://www.civitas.org.uk/pdf/NewSecretGarden.pdf>