



## Pastoral Care in Education

An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development

ISSN: 0264-3944 (Print) 1468-0122 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rped20>

# From caring *about* to caring *for*: case studies of New Zealand and Japanese schools post disaster

Peter O'Connor & Nozomu Takahashi

To cite this article: Peter O'Connor & Nozomu Takahashi (2014) From caring *about* to caring *for*: case studies of New Zealand and Japanese schools post disaster, Pastoral Care in Education, 32:1, 42-53, DOI: [10.1080/02643944.2013.875584](https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2013.875584)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2013.875584>



Published online: 11 Feb 2014.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 504



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 4 View citing articles [↗](#)

## From caring *about* to caring *for*: case studies of New Zealand and Japanese schools post disaster

Peter O'Connor<sup>a\*</sup> and Nozomu Takahashi<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Critical Studies in Education, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand;* <sup>b</sup>*Gunma University, Gunma, Japan*

(Received 7 September 2013; final version received 7 December 2013)

On 22 February 2011, a magnitude 6.3 earthquake killed 185 people in Christchurch, New Zealand. On 11 March 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck eastern Japan, and was followed by a devastating tsunami and a nuclear plant crisis. As of 16 November 2011, the official death toll in Japan had reached 15,839, with a further 3467 people still missing. This article presents two case studies of the experiences and the responses of schools in New Zealand and Japan in the immediate aftermath of these events. Although the magnitude of the events is significantly different, the authors argue that there are many similarities in their responses. These provide an opportunity to consider the manner in which schools in other settings might prepare for such events. This comparative case study includes practical recommendations for schools to consider in their pastoral care of students in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. Research in New Zealand and Japan, undertaken separately by the authors, attempted to capture the voices of principals, teachers and students to inform a series of recommendations and guidelines created from the real-life experiences of the research participants. They were collected with the primary focus of wishing to better inform the decision-making responsibilities of others who may be in a similar situation, or to guide future disaster prevention and management policies in schools.

**Keywords:** earthquakes; ethic of care; disaster management

New Zealand and Japan, both sit on major earthquake fault lines and both countries have experienced devastating earthquakes throughout their histories. In September 2010, the Canterbury region of New Zealand was rocked by a magnitude 7.1 earthquake, which caused considerable physical damage but no deaths. In 2011, within a few weeks of each other, the two countries at either end of the Pacific Ocean were each subjected to further major disasters. On 22 February 2011, a magnitude 6.3 earthquake killed 185 people in Canterbury's main city, Christchurch. On 11 March 2011, a magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck eastern Japan, and was followed by a devastating tsunami and nuclear plant crisis. As of 8 November 2013, the official death toll in Japan had reached 15,883, with a further 2651 people still missing. Although the scale of each event was clearly different, thousands of people faced the loss of loved ones, homes and work places. They are still recovering from physical injury and emotional trauma. In different but related ways, these communities shared the enormity of having to respond to and recover from large-scale natural disasters.

---

\*Email: [p.oconnor@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:p.oconnor@auckland.ac.nz)

This article presents two case studies of the experiences and the responses of schools in New Zealand and Japan in the immediate aftermath of these events. Although the magnitude of the events is significantly different, the authors argue that there are many similarities in their responses. These provide an opportunity to consider the manner in which schools in other settings might prepare for such events. This comparative case study includes practical recommendations for schools to consider in their pastoral care of students in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. Research in New Zealand and Japan, undertaken separately by the authors, attempted to capture the voices of principals, teachers and students to inform a series of recommendations and guidelines created from the real-life experiences of the research participants. They were collected with the primary focus of wishing to better inform the decision-making responsibilities of others who may be in a similar situation, or to guide future disaster prevention and management policies in schools. These experiences are supported by other recent studies conducted in both regions around the same time.

### **Case study 1: the New Zealand experience**

Peter O'Connor worked in schools across Christchurch almost immediately following the earthquakes. He ran process drama and creativity workshops with students, with the aim of keeping hope alive amongst the youth of Christchurch (see O'Connor, 2013). He returned at the end of 2012 to interview students, teachers and principals in primary schools across the city.

The number of schools visited was small. The five schools were all primary schools and had widely varying degrees of damage and personal loss associated with the earthquakes. The schools were part of significantly different socio-economic and ethnic communities. Principals in all schools were interviewed individually, as were teachers. Students were interviewed in small focus groups. Occasionally, these focus groups were attended by the children's parents who also wished to talk about the earthquake's impact on the school.

Key questions informing this research included:

- What was the lived experience of the earthquakes in the school context?
- What was the nature of the initial response to major quakes?
- How did the school move towards a state of recovery?
- How did these schools begin to develop resiliency in their wider communities?
- What can schools learn from these stories to prepare for such events?
- What might we learn about how principals, teachers and students adapted to their new situations?

Interviews were semi-structured research conversations where space was given for participants to tell stories about their own personal experiences at school following the September and February earthquakes, and the ongoing thousands of aftershocks and earthquakes that have hit the region. Questions were then designed to provide a reflective opportunity for participants to move beyond their own story to consider the implications for others from these personal experiences (Gibbs, Mutch, O'Connor, & MacDougall, 2013).

The research conversations with principals, teachers and students were sprinkled with tears and laughter, anger and resignation, humility and pride at surviving. They

were very human interactions and the researchers were genuinely moved by the willingness and desire of all participants to share their stories. The emotional outpourings were neither encouraged nor discouraged. Bolton (1995) suggests that the purpose of stories is to provide an opportunity to protect people *into* emotion not *from* it. It was important, therefore, in setting up the research conversations to establish storying as a technique for people to make sense of their experiences in safety (Booth, 1990) and also to create a relationship with participants, which reassured them that their stories were valued and respected.

In an attempt to honour the storying approach taken in the research a narrative approach to analysis has been used. This means attempting to make sense of the various stages of the disaster by using story as a way of representing and theorizing from the data.

### **Response**

When the second major earthquake struck, on 22 February 22, it was 12:50 in the afternoon. A large aftershock followed 15 min later and many others shook Canterbury over the rest of the day, and into the night. On that day 150,000 students and over 10,000 adults were in schools across Canterbury (Education Review Office [ERO], 2013). Although 185 people died that day, not one child, student or teacher in the pre-tertiary sector, who was in a school or a centre at the time, lost their lives. In some schools, children were in the playground and in others they had just returned to their classrooms following lunch. In one school, the quake caused some frightened five-year olds to return to their classrooms as they had been drilled that the response to a quake was to drop and roll under your desk. Invariably, however, thousands of children throughout the city huddled on large grassed areas waiting for parents or caregivers to come and pick them up. For some it was a long wait, and for some children no parents came. One principal gave the following advice to principals who might face a similar day:

You need some calm time to stop, to talk to yourself about what has happened. To work out what you want to say and how you are going to say it. You are going to have to explain to children what will happen next and how things are going to get fixed. You need to find some time for yourself to reflect on everything.

Another principal recalled:

I put on my principal's smile. Parents arrived and were standing on the outside. I realised then that I had an audience and my response needed to be calm and instantaneous, I had to look like I was in control.

As a result of handling the crisis on 22 February 2013, and the thousands of aftershocks that followed, all of the principals spoke about the need for schools to have fully developed emergency plans. One principal said:

this is more than having a policy in a folder. It's detailing what to do in the event of an emergency, having it really clear in your mind about what will happen, where to meet and what the plan is. You have to make sure that teachers will be there to look after the children.

As the principals were interviewed, they seemed to almost randomly remember important details about what they had learnt from the experience of managing crisis on a daily basis. The conversation would veer from how to handle sewerage concerns, to how you manage distressed children, to how frustrated they were with the national office of the Ministry of Education. It was clear that, 18 months later, they still had not found time to clarify what they had learnt from the experience. The interviews became an opportunity for the principals and teachers to begin to order and make some preliminary sense of what they had been doing for so many months.

Principals and teachers made some obvious, and some not so obvious, practical suggestions for schools facing a natural disaster:

- Make sure there are paper rolls for checking school attendance in case the computers go down.
- Have more than one agreed emergency evacuation area that everyone knows about.
- Make sure you are aware of who is on site, where people are at all times.
- In order to be prepared, it would be good to have more warm clothing as some children were there for a long time waiting; have more food and water ready. Extra cell phones around; it would be great to have books and games for children to stay occupied while they waited for their parents.
- Have a texting/sms system set up for all parents so with the push of one button you can inform all parents of what is happening at the school. Have that system set up on more than one phone and on different networks.
- Have a list of up to six names of people who can come and collect the child in the event of an emergency.

Children said schools need to:

- Make sure you always have some bottled water, lemonade or anything like that which will last. Keep that in your house and your school where you can find it easily.
- And you need to have food around that doesn't need to be heated or cooked or anything like that.
- Fruit trees are good. All schools should have fruit trees. You can eat fruit from fruit trees after any disaster.
- A toilet that can make its own water, so that it can stay clean.
- You need to make an emergency kit, with warm clothes and torches and food and water so you can use that if your house falls down. Maybe put some money in there so you can use it if you need it – because you can't use your ATM cards or anything.

However, it also became clear that as these stories were retold there were lighter moments on the day the February earthquake struck. These stories were told with a wry sense of the improbable, of attempting, it seemed, to alleviate the tension of telling more harrowing or difficult stories. Some of the children recalled a highlight of the day being when a local café brought over lots of ice creams for the children to enjoy, before they melted due to lack of power to the freezer. Some schools found themselves sitting around sharing food, which many children likened to a 'kind of picnic'. Another child

talked about being very sad, so his older brother and his friends gave many of the younger children piggyback rides to cheer them up.

### **From response to recovery**

Christchurch schools gradually reopened across the city over a period of three weeks. Some schools operated on a shared timetable on the sites of other schools, and some schools opened with scores of children missing as their families had fled the city. During this in-between time, one principal was frustrated:

I thought this was a great opportunity to get back into school and hold some PD [professional development] around how to support children and their families, how to support children to get back into school. But we were told not to come to school as it may not be safe and this was hard, school felt like the place where we all needed to be.

One principal realized it was vital to be completely honest with children as the Christchurch community faced ongoing aftershocks. He said:

Don't ever tell children that it won't happen again, be honest with them and explain that no one knows when or if it will happen again. Don't make promises for things out of your control. Instead talk about how we now know what we can do if or when it happens again, that we have things in place to keep us all safe now.

Students also spoke about the importance of this honesty, 'Teachers told us the truth about things; we knew we could trust them'. Providing opportunities in the first days back at school for children to retell their stories of the earthquakes was reported by all of the principals as being an important way to bring children back into the school. One principal said though to 'remember and concentrate on the funny stories and the good things that came out of their own experiences'. How long this story-telling continued varied across the schools. Another principal said:

We talked about all the feelings and ideas, what was happening for different people so they could know what was happening. We did these things for the first few days, and then it became apparent the children needed to get back into some kind of routine. Children were tired and grumpy, parents were anxious, we kind of felt it was time to find something else to talk about.

Another principal saw it as important to acknowledge that, 'school can actually be a distraction for what is going on outside of school. Use the opportunity to discuss what has happened, but also provide the space for it to be a distraction too'.

Routine was something that principals and teachers had been encouraged to return to as soon as possible by the Ministry of Education and psychologists. For one principal this meant getting everything as 'close to routine as possible, the reading/writing/ field trips and things such as that, to heal and get people as close to "back to normal" as we could'.

However, children said they thought they played more, and there was more time out of classrooms following the quake. One child said the games 'helped them feel that school could be a fun place again'.

Teachers found different ways for children to retell their experiences of the quake. One child remembered 'it was really good how we had to write two pages about the

earthquake, I was shaking because it was so sad to write about it. But it was still good to write about it'. Another said, 'writing about the earthquake was really good because I could remember what happened very clearly'. One teacher used her more senior students to work alongside young children in other classes to help them write their stories. One student saw this as important work saying, 'We did a lot of mentoring, where we went to the younger kids' classes and helped them write about the earthquake and think about the future'.

Perhaps surprisingly, the teachers said that although they spent time talking with children more, hugging and sharing tears with them, and playing games more, there was no change to actual curriculum content. The stories they read together and the content of their curriculum continued as if the quake had never happened. Teachers understood returning to routine meant not addressing the issues children faced on a daily basis, and instead focusing on previously decided curricular work. Without in any way diminishing the tremendous work that the teachers did, they continued with the task of modern schooling; their curricular work was about preparing children for the future, rather than about helping children to make sense of their present. The opportunity to use curricular ways to look at how things change, to consider what hope might be, to wonder about heroism, to think about how others have managed to survive was not taken up by any of the teachers interviewed. These teachers did not see there was an opportunity to use metaphor, fiction or historical situations to help children understand their changed lives. It can be argued that a curriculum, which is futures-focused, driven by literacy and numeracy demands, has relatively little to say to teachers in a time of crisis, except to carry on as if nothing has happened. When asked if what she taught had changed, one teacher said, 'Not what I teach, that can't change. But how I teach, that's changed. I'm more forgiving, I'm not so hung up on things that don't really matter'.

The strongest finding from the Christchurch study was that no matter what their own personal circumstances, principals and teachers put the children in their schools first. During the earthquakes, they organized and comforted their students. In the years of ongoing aftershocks and rebuilding of the city, they continued this care by constantly checking on children's and their families' physical needs, emotional well-being and readiness to move forward. Schools made better use of outside agencies to support students and staff. Schools became closer to their families and communities as a result of this shared experience. Schools drew from their school values of *arohanui* (love for others) and *manakitanga* (caring for others), and added resilience as a new core attribute.

There is yet very little other empirical research on how Christchurch schools coped with the aftermath of the earthquakes to supplement the author's findings. One study that is currently available was that undertaken by the ERO (the national school evaluation agency). At the time of the 22 February earthquake, the ERO was housed in the Pine Gould Corporation building, in which 18 people were to lose their lives. This meant that they were acutely conscious of the traumatic impact that the earthquakes were to have on the people of Christchurch. Schools in the affected areas were not reviewed until the following year and the review approach was adapted to focus on how schools had responded to and begun to recover from the earthquakes (ERO, 2013). The study reports on the experiences of schools and early childhood services. It gives an insight into school experiences and the lessons learnt:

It was lunchtime when the earthquake struck. The children were all outside playing. The shaking was fast and intense. A rockfall on the cliffs behind our school happened immediately. The children were covered in a cloud of brown soil and dust. The junior

children near the back of the school struggled to see where they were going. This added to the panic. Duty teachers and many other adults rushed to the junior area to help the children get to the front of the school. ... I could see children running across the front field to the fence. Others had run out the gates and across the main road. It was a natural flight instinct. (Principal cited in ERO, 2013, p. 7)

Four themes emerged from the school narratives collected by the ERO reviewers. They were the importance of (a) keeping children safe; (b) supporting children's learning; (c) supporting staff and families; and (d) managing ongoing anxiety. Improvements made to emergency systems following the February earthquake included finding other systems for accessing information following power failures, multiple ways to communicate with parents, more flexible emergency procedures and evacuation points, and encouraging parents and staff to have plans for collecting children in emergencies. The ERO study summarizes the significance of the role played by schools (ERO, 2013, p. 1):

When relating their experiences, the leaders, managers and teachers emphasized how people came first. People were more important than procedures. Leaders in schools and early childhood services became role models for others. If leaders stayed calm, then children, staff and parents were more likely to remain safe and calm. Pastoral care and wellbeing were the most important focus at the time of the immediate crisis and in the aftermath.

### **Case study 2: the Japanese experience**

During the time Christchurch was beginning to reopen its schools, Japan was struck by its largest ever recorded earthquake, which triggered a tsunami, devastating the Tohoku region in particular, although there was significant damage elsewhere. The earthquake and tsunami also triggered the nuclear power plant disaster in Fukushima. The Great East Japan Earthquake was a compound disaster and affected thousands of people, many of whom are still suffering today.

Nozomu Takahashi visited two schools in the Tohoku region as part of a research project conducted by the Japanese Association for the Study of Educational Administration, funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The data gathering was undertaken during September and October 2011. The author interviewed principals and teachers. The main questions the interviews focused on were:

- What did you do at the time of the earthquake?
- How did you organize your students and/or your school?
- What are the most important things to consider in an emergency situation?

### **Response**

This research focused on two schools in Sendai City in the Miyagi prefecture of the Tohoku region. The earthquake struck at 2:46 pm with its epicentre about 130 km off the Pacific Coast. About 70 min later, the tsunami with waves as high as 38 m reached the eastern coast of Japan.

In one of the case studies, following the earthquake, every student, teacher and person was evacuated to the rooftop of one of the local schools. This school was the only building in the area more than three floors high. When the tsunami reached the school, the water came up to the second floor, and much of the school was destroyed.

The people remained on the rooftop until the helicopters came and rescued everyone. The last person on the roof of the school building was the principal, removed at 5.30am on the day following the earthquake. The principal, school staff, students and community members were trapped on the roof of the school for over 12 h. There was no power, as the electricity was down following the earthquake. Because of this, the school broadcasting system was no longer available and the school staff instead had to use hand-held microphones, and gestures to indicate the students where they needed to go. Fortunately, two months prior to the earthquake, the school had reviewed its emergency training plans. The school principal, aware of the close proximity of the school to the coast, had only recently changed the evacuation point from the school grounds to the rooftop. The school had also met with the community and decided to move the supplies being kept on the first floor, and instead placed them on the third. Because of this, the people in this school were able to get food and blankets while they were trapped on the roof, in the snow, waiting to be rescued.

As the school had lost electricity, the staff found themselves unable to use their computers, which they had become accustomed to relying heavily upon. They had no physical copies of lists of children's names, which were necessary for ensuring everyone was safe. The teachers also found it hard to share information due to lack of resources; so, many teachers were repeating the same actions and efforts.

These experiences echo the stories gathered by another researcher, Fumiaki Ema, who interviewed principals and teachers in Ishinomiaki City, also in Miyagi prefecture. Ogatsu Primary School was completely devastated by the tsunami. A fifth-grade teacher tells that when the earthquake happened the children knew to take cover under the desks. From the classroom, he evacuated his class to the school yard, where some children were collected by their parents. As Ema (2012, p. 156) comments, 'If the disaster ended there then it would have been no more than a large earthquake'. As the tsunami alarm sounded, the school needed to make critical decisions. Should they evacuate to the gymnasium as per the school's disaster plan or seek higher ground? The influence of experience handed down over many years stressed: 'If a tsunami comes, run for the hills', and so they made the decision to lead the children to the shrine on the hill. The fifth-grade teacher outlines what happened next:

The cries of 'It's a tsunami! Get to higher ground!' and the sound of houses and power poles being destroyed drew nearer as the tsunami approached along the road that runs straight through the centre of town. We did our best to climb the narrow path that led to the summit. We told the children to look straight ahead as they walked to prevent them from seeing the tsunami. A local elderly woman who could no longer walk was carried by two teachers. There were fallen trees along the way, but with the local residents, we were able to reach the summit. (Ogatsu fifth-grade teacher, cited in Ema, 2012, p. 156)

The story does not end there. As with the school in the author's study, they spent their night in the snow. They were evacuated to the local waste disposal plant where they slept on cardboard on the ground. Similarly, in nearby Yamashita Junior High School, they huddled together on the upper floors of the school wrapped in the classroom curtains to keep warm. The teachers ensured that students and residents were cared for and relief supplies distributed. The older students from Yamashita Junior High were encouraged to become engaged in recovery activities – cleaning the evacuation centres, sorting and giving out supplies or assisting the elderly. They were later supported by students from Maiko High School who came from outside the prefecture to assist with the clean-up (Ema, 2012).

### **From response to recovery**

The Japanese Government has put the figure on reconstruction over the next five years following the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident at 25 trillion Japanese yen (USD 251 billion). Miyagi prefecture was one of the most hardest hit, and recovery efforts have included providing immediate relief, improvement of basic living conditions, health care, debris clearing, infrastructure reconstruction, social-psychological support and getting education facilities up and running.

When asked what they had learned from the experience, one Sendai school in the author's study suggested they needed to find ways around not needing a computer in order to be prepared for emergency situations. They also advocated for regular communication with community members, as this relationship with the school was really helpful in this time of crisis. The meeting with the community held just prior to the earthquake contributed to saving the lives of many people. They also recommended not just communication, but also practical training with the community. A collective approach to disaster management would be potentially beneficial to everyone.

The principal of one of the Sendai schools mentioned the need to communicate with neighbouring schools and with the Board of Education. The principal mentioned being anxious and lacking confidence over whether his decision would be appropriate or not, as there was not enough information. A communication network is important in order to receive information and give advice, to find out what is happening in other schools and to get support that will aid principals in their decision-making.

One of the Sendai schools found it difficult to establish boundaries when providing care. Teachers and schools have an obligation to provide care for their students, but they do not have the same legal responsibilities to care for the members of the wider community. Yet sometimes teachers are also community members, and people who have suffered immensely. They needed to make difficult choices to ensure that the needs of the children came first. They suggested that schools need to ensure that the school supplies are used primarily for staff and students in times of emergency to prevent shortage later on. There is not always a guarantee of timing for when external aid will arrive, so teachers and principals need to prioritize supplies and aid to ensure that the school community, which is their prime responsibility, is catered for, first and foremost.

Nine months after the multiple disasters, the Ema (2012)'s study reported that children's behaviour was changing. The stress of the disasters had caused children to become more easily frightened. They had difficulty sleeping and suffered panic attacks. This insecurity was compounded as the homes and livelihoods of many families were also destroyed and they needed to move to new areas for rehousing or work. The psychological damage from the nuclear plant damage in Fukushima was also profound. Ten thousand children were moved to schools outside the nuclear accident area (Ema, 2012). Significant findings from Ema's study were the way teachers, students and the community worked together for mutual support. Lessons were learned about future disaster prevention and mitigation, especially the importance of linking schools and communities in this planning and preparation (Ema, 2012).

### **Findings**

The range of recent international events has shown that disasters – natural or man-made – can affect any community in any country. What can be learned from the recent disaster experiences of New Zealand and Japanese schools? Although the scale was different, the

social and cultural impact and response by schools was remarkably similar. The overwhelming centrality of the experience was that principals and teachers took their responsibilities very seriously and put the interests of the children in their care before all else. An important first response to the disasters was someone taking a leadership role. In the classroom this was the teacher; when the school came together, it was the principal. These leaders needed to take control but at the same time exhibit an air of calm. They needed to weigh up the evidence, make a firm decision and prioritize needs. In the immediate aftermath, practical matters needed to be dealt with – medical attention, shelter, warmth, food, water and toilets. Survival and comfort were upper-most – reuniting children with their parents, evacuating to safer situations and keeping everyone’s spirits up. The schools all talked about coping without electricity or electronics.

When children returned to school, teachers and principals had often been there ahead of time. They would have cleaned up, put rooms back in order and made everything look as normal as possible. As a staff, they would have met and decided how they would welcome back the children, how they would provide safe opportunities for children to make sense of their experiences, what routines they would introduce first and how they would support children’s ongoing anxiety. School leaders in these case studies made use of community resources and agencies to give extra support to children and their families. Strengthened school–community relationships were a commonly mentioned outcome of the disaster experience. Part of the new relationship included improved communication systems, collaborative review of emergency procedures and consideration of capturing and maintaining the culture of care that was forged from their common experience.

### **Discussion: from caring *about* to caring *for***

Care, as theorized by Nel Noddings (1992), is about an ‘emptying of the soul to receive unto itself the being it is looking at’ (Weill, 1951, in Noddings, 1992, p. 16). To be able to see need, the carer has the responsibility of ‘attending to the other in order to know better how to meet that need, and to initiate care’ (Noddings, 1992, p. 16). In both New Zealand and Japanese schools, principals were placed in the position of leading communities that needed to care *for* each other rather than individuals that simply cared *about* each other. For Noddings, this is a move to a position of ethical care from a realm of superficial or instrumental care. The key difference is about the depth and quality of care, driven by a human connection that exceeds the legal responsibilities of principals and teachers to their communities.

It is about finding ways to truly see the needs of the community you work with, developing ways for schools to move beyond recovery to a sense of resilience and strength.

A school in an earthquake disaster is also metaphorically shaken to its core. The leadership of principals and teachers in establishing a physical and metaphorical safe place for students is established through a range of planned and sequential activities. Initial response must provide first and foremost reassurance for communities that children will be protected as far as humanly possible from physical harm. Risk plans should involve community consultation where possible and take on board the numerous practical suggestions that will flow from that consultation process. Principals will need to assume selfless leadership responsibilities for long periods of time following the disaster. They will need to remain long after others have gone, take and make decisions that they are unsure about and that might be highly risky. They will need to work on

occasions in the metaphorical and literal dark. Teachers will need to mop up tears, hug children and find ways of placing the needs of the children ahead of their own when they are at school. Children will need to find ways to support each other, to find ways to continue amidst the havoc and change. Communities of care were created in both Japan and New Zealand simply because there was no other way to survive.

Cygnæus (1910) argued that:

Every teacher has to blaze with the spirit of sacred love. Sacred love that does not seek its own. That kind of love towards pupils has to smoulder in a teacher's heart. That kind of teacher's love affects the whole school in a protecting way (p. 197).

van Manen (1991) asks: 'Is it possible to act as a real teacher if one is not oriented to children with loving care, trustful hope, and responsibility?' (p. 65). Paolo Friere based his revolutionary praxis on a pedagogy grounded in love. He asks (1998, p. 65), 'How can I be an educator if I do not develop in myself a caring and loving attitude toward the student, which is indispensable on the part of one who is committed to teaching and to the education process itself'. For one principal, this means been the last one winched off the roof. A principal in New Zealand explained that in the lower socio-economic area school she lead, before the earthquake her priority had been about lifting student achievement, in lifting in particular the students' scores in literacy and numeracy national standards. She said:

After February 2011 we took our eyes off student learning and spent time instead looking after students and making sure they were cared for. We talked to parents more, strengthening relationships between school, parents and home. Now we truly are known for caring for students.

People from the community want to help, they come into the school and see what they can do to help. If caring is the main attitude, and there is a culture of care, suddenly it begins to drive itself.

As parents became more involved in the school, often finding in it a place of refuge for themselves, principals talked of how 'teachers saw the needs and then got funding and help for things to help families'. The school was able to discover places to get help that typical families within the community weren't able to. One parent said:

It has been a godsend knowing that I could rely on this school to care for my son. He has found it tough coping with everything. But his teachers have loved him; they've looked after him. I am so grateful.

Disasters shattered schools in both countries. What has become clear to us is that as schools have been rebuilt, highly practical steps are an important beginning. However, the road to recovery and resilience is paved with love and care.

## References

- Bolton, G. (1995). *New perspectives on classroom drama*. Hemel Hempstead: Simon and Shuster.  
 Booth, D. (1990). Imaginary gardens with real toads. *National Association for Drama in Education Journal*, 14, 23–25.

- Cygnaeus, U. (1910). *Uno Cygnaeuksen kirjoitukset Suomen kansakoulun perustamisesta ja järjestämisestä* [Uno Cygnaeus's writings about the foundation and organization of the Finnish elementary school]. Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä.
- Education Review Office. (2013). *Stories of resilience and innovation in schools and early childhood centres. Canterbury earthquakes: 2010–2012*. Wellington: Author.
- Ema, F. (2012). Earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster in Japan: The immediate aftermath. In D. Smawfield (Ed.), *Education and natural disasters* (pp. 146–168). London: Bloomsbury.
- Friere, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of freedom. Ethics, democracy and civic courage*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Gibbs, L., Mutch, C., O'Connor, P., & MacDougall, C. (2013). Research with, by, for and about children: Lessons from disaster contexts. *Global Studies of Childhood*, 3, 129–141. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/gsch.2013.3.2.129>
- Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- O'Connor, P. (2013). Theatre in education: The pedagogic as the aesthetic in a crumbling world. In T. Jackson & C. Vine (Eds.), *Learning through theatre* (3rd ed., pp. 305–320). New York, NY: Routledge.
- van Manen, M. (1991). *The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness*. London: Althouse Press.