Teachers supporting children with an incarcerated parent:

A pilot of the impact and applicability of SHINE for Kids' teacher training program

Final Report
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**Associate Professor Danielle Tracey
and Dr Katrina Barker**

Centre for Educational Research
Western Sydney University

Authors

Associate Professor Danielle Tracey and Dr Katrina Barker

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Executive Summary

SHINE for Kids have developed and implemented Australia's first teacher training program to develop the skills, attitudes, knowledge and confidence of teachers to support the education of students with an incarcerated parent.

This pilot study represents the first independent evaluation of SHINE for Kids' teacher training program on these teacher outcomes.

This evaluation had two core objectives:

The first was to assess if participating teachers report an increase in their skills, knowledge, and confidence as well as improved attitudes towards supporting children with an incarcerated parent, after completing SHINE for Kids' teacher training program.

The second objective was to gather participating teachers' perspectives about the applicability of the program, in terms of both pedagogy and curriculum.

The evaluation included a final matched sample of 48 educators who completed the study questionnaire at both the beginning and end of the teacher training program.

Responses to the pre and post surveys indicate SHINE for Kids' teacher training appeared to result in substantial shifts in participants' reported confidence, attitudes, and knowledge of supporting students with an incarcerated parent. Changes in participants' reported skills in supporting students with an incarcerated parent did not result in substantial shifts.

Participants rated their confidence in supporting students with an incarcerated parent as "unconfident" (1) prior to the training and then "exceptionally confident" (5) following the training.

Participants felt they became more knowledgeable about: strategies to engage students and support the family; other support services and resources available; and contextual information.

A review of the responses to the skills statements imply there may be some tension or uncertainty around deploying punishment and sanctions to manage behaviour and being supportive.

The pedagogy and curriculum of the SHINE for Kids' teacher training program was highly valued by participants.

In consideration of the project findings, the following recommendations are presented:

- Expand the offering of the SHINE for Kid's teacher training program given the dearth of similar services available; the encouraging shifts in teacher skill, attitude, knowledge and confidence; and participant high regard for the program.

- Broaden the focus of the training to include staff other than teachers (e.g. counsellors, early childhood educators) or consider differential programs for a range of staff who support these students.

- Continue to offer accreditation for attendance and consider accreditation for other professions e.g. psychologists.

- Renew the training curriculum based on the results of this report, namely addressing the complexities around skills in behaviour management and supporting the emotional needs of students.

- Renew the training pedagogy based on the results of this report, namely maintaining and enhancing active learning and the provision of handouts and resources for participants.

- SHINE for Kids and Western Sydney University partner to conduct a large scale study which will implement a more robust research design to determine the impact of the training in comparison to business as usual and the impact back in the classroom in the weeks and months following the training.

- SHINE for Kids and Western Sydney University partner to develop the new ESSEPI tool and test its reliability and validity with a larger number of participants, and with more participant diversity.

Background to the Study

Nationally, the average daily number of prisoners reached 44,159 in the March quarter 2020 (ABS, 2020). The number of prisoners with a dependent child is notable, for example, a total of 45.7% of New South Wales inmates are parents of at least one child aged under 16 years (NSW Department of Justice, 2018). It is estimated that 145,000 Australian children under the age of 16 (5%) have a parent in prison and this increases to 20% for children from Aboriginal communities (ABS, 2016).

Given the significant number of children with an incarcerated parent, over the last decade a burgeoning amount of research has examined the effects of parental incarceration on children. Research asserts that these children are more likely than any other group to face significant disadvantages (Besemer, Van De Weijer & Dennison, 2018). A recent study (Dobbie, Grönqvist, Palme, & Priks, 2018) showed that among this disadvantaged group, teen crime increased by 18.4%, teen pregnancy increased by 8%, and employment at age 20 decreased by 28%. Compared with children of never-incarcerated parents, children who experience parental incarceration have higher rates of unemployment and higher rates of welfare dependency showing a weak connection to the employment sector (Dobbie, et al., 2018). Even when controlling for other known risk factors for these problems, an increased risk for negative outcomes remains for those children who have an incarcerated parent (e.g. Geller et al., 2012).

Interestingly, most of the published research describes the average effect of parental incarceration on child outcomes. In recent years, emerging research is highlighting the variation that can exist. In short, the journey to these negative life outcomes for children with an incarcerated parent may not be set and they may in fact be malleable to change. This research is encouraging as it signals that children's development is not dependent on a single factor such as parental incarceration but is influenced by a range of factors at the individual, family and community levels (Kjellstrand et al., 2020).

Outside of the family, schools are the next most significant developmental context for children. They provide a safety net and assist in protecting children from circumstances that impact their learning, development and wellbeing (KidsMatter, 2012). Worryingly though, teachers do not receive training as part of their pre-service teaching degree, and in-service teachers do not have opportunities for professional development related to supporting children with an incarcerated parent. Many schools have no policies for this 'hidden group' and teachers are unaware of the research on how best to support children with an incarcerated parent (Morgan, Leeson, Dillon, Birgman, & Needham, 2014).

In response to this unmet need, leading not-for-profit SHINE for Kids has developed a new teacher-training program. SHINE for Kids describes their purpose as "we work with children, young people and their families to strengthen connection to community and family through education, support and mentoring to help them thrive. We are purpose driven and values led. We will stay true to our values of integrity, empowerment and being child-focused" 2019-2022 Strategic Directions (https://shineforkids.org.au). In 2019, SHINE for Kids worked with 7,148 children across Australia including 1,004 in New South Wales and 342 in Victoria (SHINE for Kids, 2020). SHINE for Kids' teacher training program is the only professional development program across Australia aimed at building the skills, knowledge, confidence and improving attitudes of teachers in order to better support children with an incarcerated parent.

Based on SHINE for Kids' extensive experience in understanding the needs of children with an incarcerated parent, they developed and implemented the new innovative teacher training to meet the following learning outcomes (Long, personal communication):

- Give an understanding of the impact of parental incarceration on children and how this affects their education
- Help staff talk sensitively with children about the issue
- Provide staff with tools to navigate the criminal justice system so that they can communicate with and involve imprisoned parents in their children's education
- Inform staff about available resources.
- Teachers demonstrate increased confidence in how to engage, support students and families affected by imprisonment
- Teachers explore the complex situation that students affected by parental incarceration experience and how it impacts their education
- Teachers demonstrate an awareness of resources and support available for schools, students and for families
- Teachers demonstrate an understanding of the importance of links between prison, community support agencies and schools.

The teacher training attracted accreditation for contributing towards Professional Development hours as it addressed standards in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers in both Victoria and New South Wales.

Objectives of the Study

This pilot study represents the first independent evaluation of SHINE for Kids' teacher training program, and addresses the following objectives:

1 To assess if participating teachers report an increase in their skills, knowledge, and confidence in supporting children with an incarcerated parent, and their attitudes towards these children, before and after the completion of SHINE for Kids' teacher training program.

2 To gather participating teachers' perspectives about the applicability of the program, in terms of both pedagogy and curriculum.

Methodology

An initial pilot

SHINE for Kids conducted a pilot teacher training session in New South Wales in the region of Western Sydney on 17th July, 2019. The purpose of the pilot was to test: 1. feasibility of the teacher training session, 2. research protocols, 3. data collection instruments, and 4. participant recruitment strategies. According to Hassan, Schattner, and Mazza (2006) an initial pilot is essential in order to identify potential problems or deficiencies in a program and its research instruments.

Consistent with the purpose of a pilot, SHINE for Kids were provided preliminary findings from the participant's evaluation from the pre- and post-training questionnaire and they used this to refine and improve both the curriculum and pedagogical approach to the program. The pilot questionnaires were refined by the Western Sydney University research team through modifications and adaptions to questions that were ambiguous. The revised teacher training program and the updated pre- and post- questionnaires were implemented in all of the subsequent training sessions conducted in New South Wales and Victoria.

Participants

This section outlines the demographics for the participants who are the focus for this report. These participants completed the teacher training program in New South Wales in the regions of Western Sydney and Cessnock and in Victoria in the region of Frankston. The teacher training program included 5 hours and was conducted twice in Western Sydney (20th and 23rd January, 2020), once in Cessnock (16th October, 2019) and twice in Frankston (2nd and 6th March, 2020).

The initial project plan was to include 90 participants of the teacher training in the study. As a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic, SHINE for Kids paused their delivery of the teacher training program, resulting in lower participant numbers than initially anticipated.

In total 57 participants completed the teacher training program. To assess the impact of the teacher training on these participants, only those who completed the pre- and post-training questionnaires were included and after data cleaning and the removal of two outliers, the final matched sample comprised 48 participants.

Demographics

Consistent with the profession of teaching, Figure 1 shows the sample was over-represented by females (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2017), where 85.4% of participants were female (n=41). 56.3% of participants held a Bachelor degree as their highest qualification (n=27) (see Figure 2). The mean participant age was 40 (SD = 11.96), with the youngest participant aged 20 and oldest 59 (see Figure 3). Participants reported teaching across all grades from Kindergarten to Year 12, although Kindergarten to Year 6 students were the most frequently taught by grade (see Figure 4).

Figure 1. Gender distribution for the teacher training participants

Female 85.4%
Male 14.6%
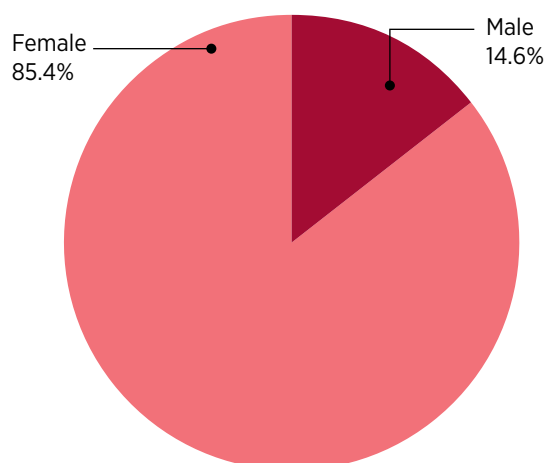
Figure 2. Highest qualifications of the teacher training participants

Masters 18.8%
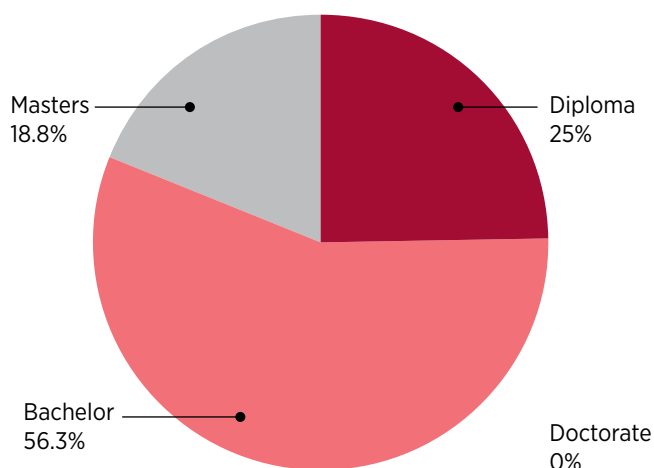Diploma 25%
Bachelor 56.3%
Doctorate 0%

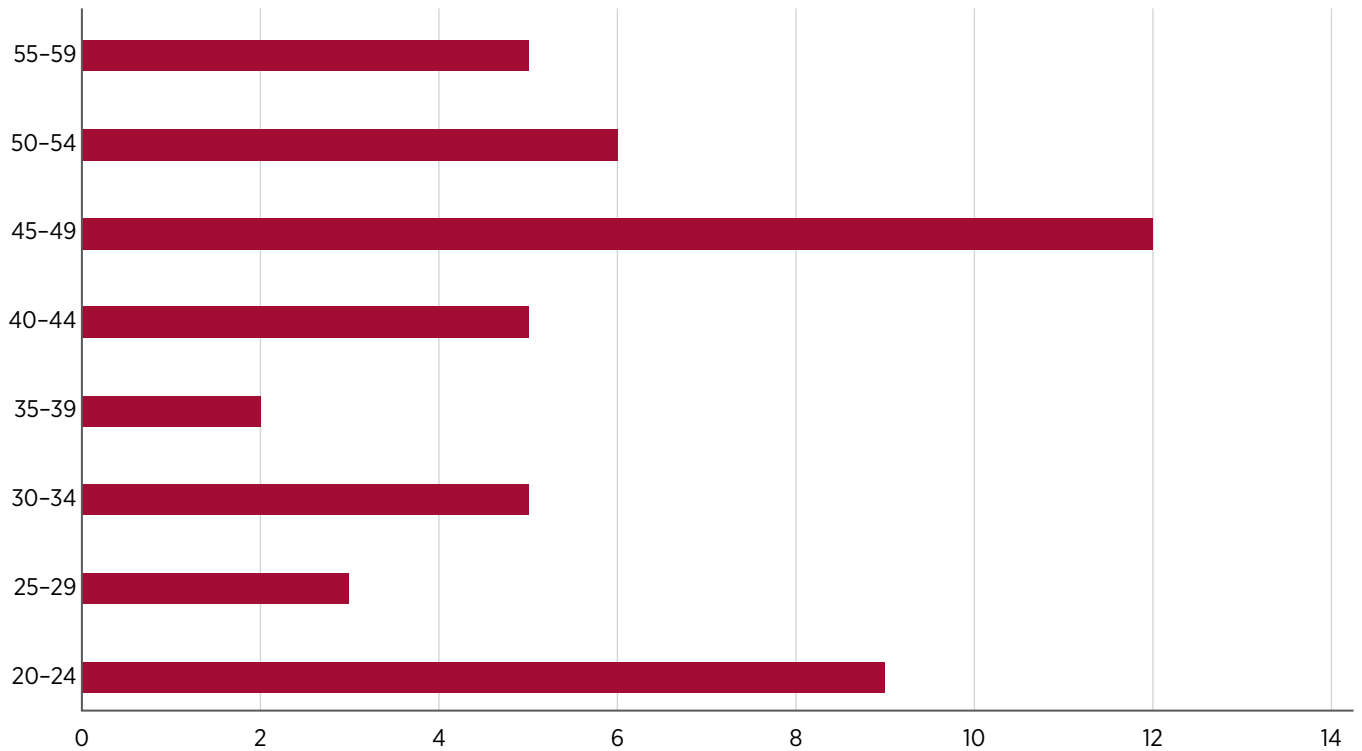**Figure 3.** Age of the teacher training participants

Figure 4. Teacher training participants' report of grade currently taught
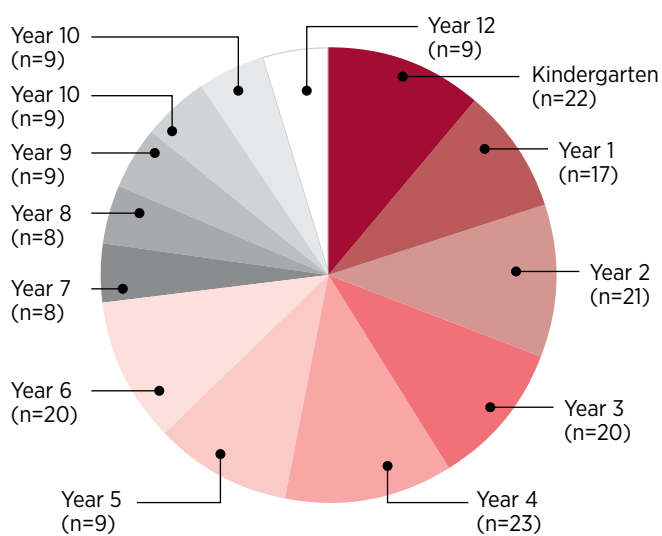
Figure 5. Current school roles for the teacher training participants
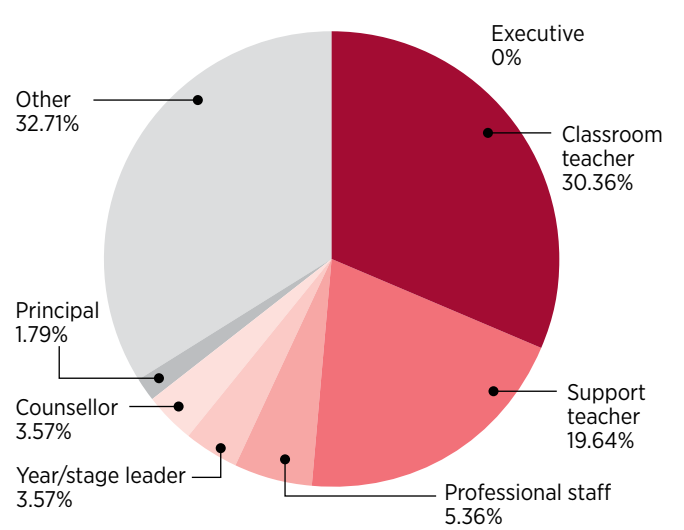
The teacher training program attracted mostly classroom teachers, support teachers and pre-service teachers who were completing a postgraduate initial teaching degree (see Figure 5). Some participants occupied more than one role. For instance, a classroom teacher may also be a stage leader. Participants were primarily classroom (n=17) or support teachers (n=11), or teachers in training; with some engagement from other professional or executive staff (including counselling and welfare services).

Interestingly, 62.5% (n=30) of participants had previously taught a student with an incarcerated parent (see Figure 6), indicating that staff may attend the program primarily due to exposure to students with an incarcerated parent, rather than preparative skills based training more generally.

There was also a reasonably large number of participants (n=18, 37.5%) who have had a family member, relative or friend who has been incarcerated (see Figure 7). This may indicate that the majority of people who participate in the SHINE for Kids program are motivated to do so due to their previous experience regarding incarcerated people or their relatives.

Figure 7. Teacher training participants who reported they have a family member, relative or friend who has been incarcerated

Yes 37.5%

No 62.5%

Figure 6. Teacher training participant reports of the number of students they have taught who had an incarcerated parent

Procedure

Prior to the commencement of the study, full ethical clearance was granted from Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. A pre-post research design was implemented where participants of SHINE for Kids' teacher training program would complete a researcher-constructed questionnaire both prior to and immediately following their completion of the teacher training.
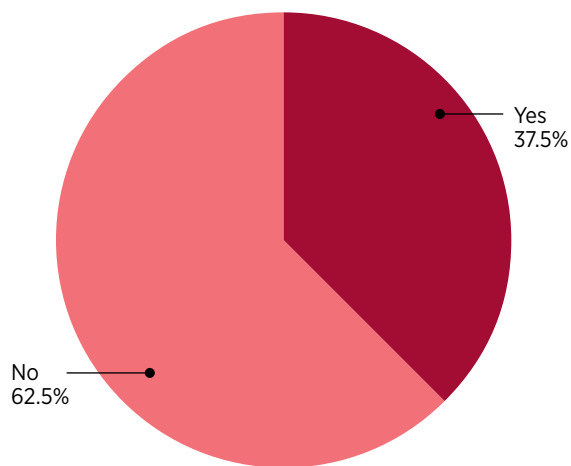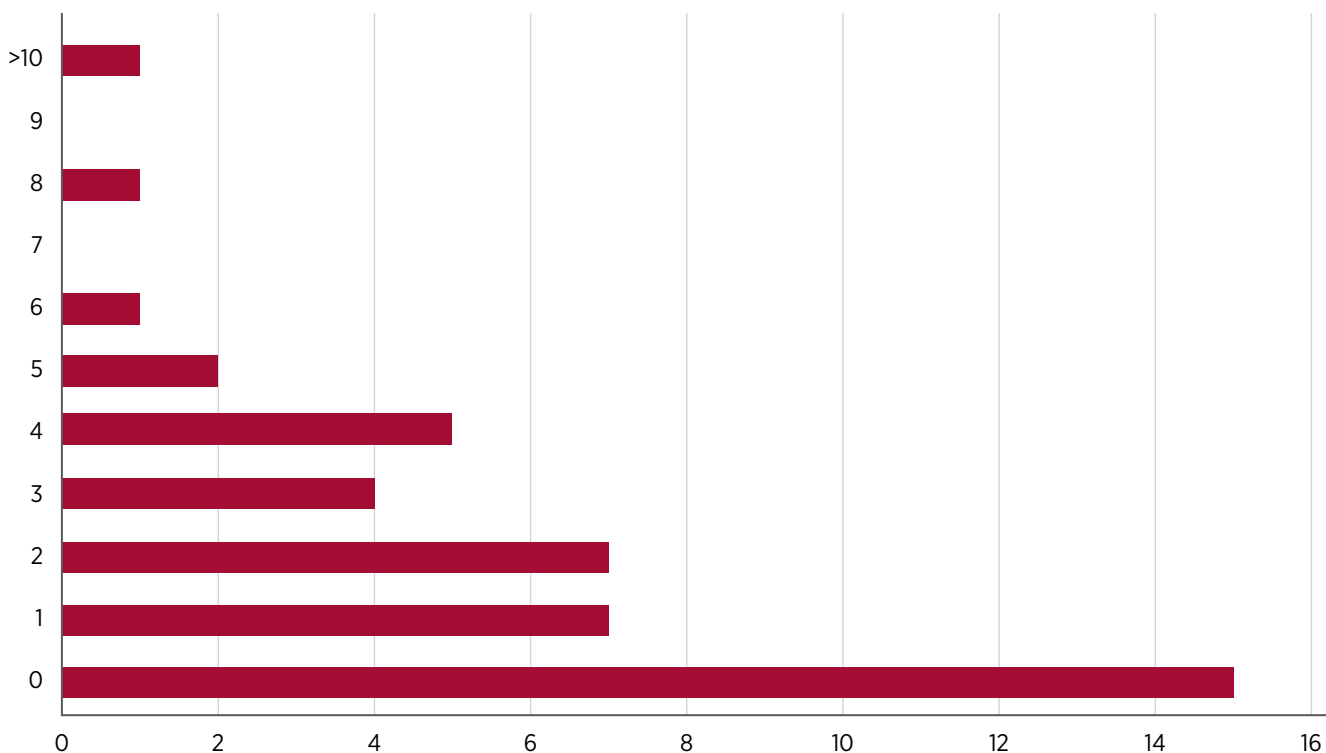
Intervention: SHINE for Kids' Teacher Training Program

SHINE for Kids have organised the teacher training program into four focus sessions (see Table 1). A personal constructivist approach underpinned the program's design, where participants were encouraged to actively make meaning through individual and group activities. The nature of the learning experiences included a quiz to start the day to address misconceptions and myths. This transitioned to small and larger group discussions which were facilitated using a range of stimulus such as: videos and written messages of young people sharing the impact of parent incarceration on themselves and their families and vignettes which highlighted implications for teachers, schools, young people and families which are associated with parent incarceration. The session concluded with SHINE for Kids sharing teacher resources such as books and programs to assist students with an incarcerated parent.

Table 1. SHINE for Kids' teacher training program outline

Session	Time
Session 1 – Children of Prisoners Fact check	10.00am–11.00am
Session 2 – Stages and Impact of Parental Incarceration	11.00am–12.00pm
Lunch	12.00pm–12.45pm
Session 3 –How Teachers can be part of the solution	12.45pm–1.45pm
Break	1.45pm–2.00pm
Session 4 – Resources for Teachers to assist students	2.00pm–3.00pm

The need for a new measurement tool

The role of schools and teachers in supporting children affected by parental incarceration has received minimal attention and is under-researched (Dallaire, Ciccone, & Wilson 2010; Scharff-Smith & Gampell, 2011). Of the limited research which has been conducted, the focus has been on teachers' experiences and expectations. No studies have attempted to examine teachers' skills, attitudes, knowledge and confidence related to supporting children with an incarcerated parent.

Teacher skills, attitudes, knowledge and confidence questionnaire

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, knowledge acquisition, skill development and belief generation have been shown to influence behaviour (Ajzen, 1985; Liu, Liu, Wang, An, Jiao, 2016). Consequently, teacher training programs which aim to simultaneously build teachers' knowledge, increase teachers' skill sets and improve their attitudes and confidence can motivate teachers' behaviours.

A new measurement tool called "Educators Supporting Students Experiencing Parental Incarceration" (ESSEPI) was created by the research team for the purpose of examining teachers' knowledge, skills, attitudes and confidence towards supporting students with an incarcerated parent. This measurement tool was used to assist with evaluating the impact of SHINE for Kids' teacher training program. It comprised questionnaire statements which included Likert-scales and an open-ended section in both the pre- and post-teacher training versions.

Figure 8. ESSEPI subscales and sample statements

Skills I should…	• Set consistent rules and boundaries for a child with a parent in prison • Give warnings and punishments to manage the behaviour and learning of a child with a parent in prison (-ve)
Attitude I believe…	• I would be more accepting of disruptive behaviour if I knew that a child had a parent in prison • I would feel less likely to want to communicate with a parent about their child's education if I knew the crime their parent committed was extremely serious (-ve)
Knowledge I know…	• Warning signs to look out for to identify a child whose parent is in prison • Visiting prison is distressing for children and therefore should be avoided (-ve)

In general, the questionnaire examined three key themes regarding the participant's experience of the training program and shifts in their skills, attitude and knowledge about students with an incarcerated parent. These themes were: 1. the skills expectations and behaviours engaging students (subscale: Skills, 10 statements); 2. their attitudes regarding systems and individual students (subscale: Attitude, 12 statements); and 3. knowledge regarding the context and how to engage students (subscale: Knowledge, 11 statements). It comprised 33 statements to measure these subscales and one statement examining teachers' level of confidence in supporting students with an incarcerated parent. Responses for the three themes were provided on a 5-point Likert-type scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree), with 25 positively worded and 8 negatively worded. In addition to these themes, a single statement, also using a 5-point Likert-scale, assessed the teachers' level of confidence toward supporting a child in their class or school with an incarcerated parent (unconfident to exceptionally confident). The subscales and sample statements for ESSEPI are presented in Figure 8.

ESSEPI included open-ended questions at the end of both the pre- and post-teacher training program questionnaire. The purpose of these questions was to understand participants' motivation for undertaking the training, and garner participants' views on the strengths of the teacher training and areas for improvement to inform future iterations of SHINE for Kids' teacher training program. Figure 9 details the open-ended questions included in each of the questionnaires.

Figure 9. ESSEPI open-ended questions

Why have you registered to attend this training session?

What do you want to learn more about in relation to supporting children with a parent in prison?

What beliefs or practices do you have about supporting children with a parent in prison that you want to confirm are appropriate or not?

Pre-teacher training open-ended questions

What were three new learnings that you acquired from the training session that you didn't know before?

What belief or practices were dispelled as a result of completing the training?

What content and activities from the training do you believe were the most beneficial?

What would you change about the training session?

Post-teacher training open-ended questions

Data Analysis

Responses from the teacher training questionnaire's Likert-scale and open-ended questions were analysed to address research objectives 1 and 2. Objective 1 sought to assess whether participants from the teacher training program increased their knowledge and confidence, and improved their skills and attitudes towards supporting students with an incarcerated parent as a result of completing the training. To assess objective 1, participants' pre- and post-questionnaire responses to the relevant Likert-type and open-ended responses were compared.

Analysis of the questionnaire data proceeded with data screening and confirmation of normality. The responses to the Likert-scales were analysed with a paired-sample t-test. Despite Likert-type statements being ordinal data, it is established that parametric testing is robust and has potential advantages compared to non-parametric testing (de Winter & Dodou, 2010).

Responses from the relevant teacher training open-ended questions were analysed to address research objective 2. Objective 2 sought to obtain participating teachers' perspectives about the applicability of the program in terms of pedagogy and curriculum. Inductive thematic analysis was conducted on the participants' open-ended responses to both the pre- and post-training questionnaire.

Results

Objective 1 – Changes in teachers' reported skills, attitude, knowledge and confidence as a result of the training

1) Teachers' reported skills

A paired-sample t-test was conducted that compared each Likert-type statement for the skills section which compared the pre- and post-training responses. For the majority of the Likert-type statements there was no significant difference between the pre and post training responses (see Table 2). The only significant shift within the responses were for two statements. When asked whether the participant should be "disengaging from power battles with a child with a parent in prison" (questionnaire statement 5) there was a positive significant shift in agreement ($t(47) = 2.36$, $p = .022$) from pre-training (m= 3.81, SD 1.10) to post-training (m = 4.21, SD = .94). Similarly for the question, "I should be... avoiding moving into a counselling role with the child with a parent in prison whilst I am their teacher" (questionnaire statement 9) there was a significant shift ($t(47) = -2.34$, $p = .02$) toward a neutral stance post-training (m = 3.00, SD 1.19) rather that avoidance in pre-training (m=3.42, SD=1.07).

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and levels of significance for changes across pre and post training for teachers' reported skills

Questionnaire Statement: I should be...	Pre-Training Mean (SD)	Post-Training Mean (SD)
1/ Actively listen and provide non-judgmental support to children if they disclosed personal information about the challenges they are experiencing with a parent in prison	4.48 (1.17)	4.71 (0.99)
2/ Remaining calm and use a soothing tone when a child is exhibiting strong emotions	4.63 (.876)	4.73 (.84)
3/ Using sanctions such as removing the child following their difficult behaviour (-ve)	3.56 (.99)	3.25 (1.16)
4/ Setting equally high expectations and limits regarding acceptable behaviour for a child when they have a parent in prison	3.67 (1.21)	3.83 (1.33)
5/ Disengaging from power battles with a child with a parent in prison	3.81 (1.10)	4.21 (.94) *
6/ Openly telling other teachers, parents and professionals information about the child and their situation (-ve)	1.79 (1.07)	2.04 (1.11)
7/ Setting consistent rules and boundaries for a child with a parent in prison	4.23 (.83)	4.21 (1.15)
8/ Giving assistance to a child to help them comply with a request when they are not complying	4.35 (.73)	4.42 (.65)
9/ Avoiding moving into a counselling role with the child with a parent in prison whilst I am their teacher	3.42 (1.07)	3.00 (1.19)*
10/ Avoid giving warnings and punishments to manage the behaviour and learning of a child with a parent in prison	3.04 (1.01)	2.85 (1.19)

*<.05
(-ve) indicates statements are negatively worded
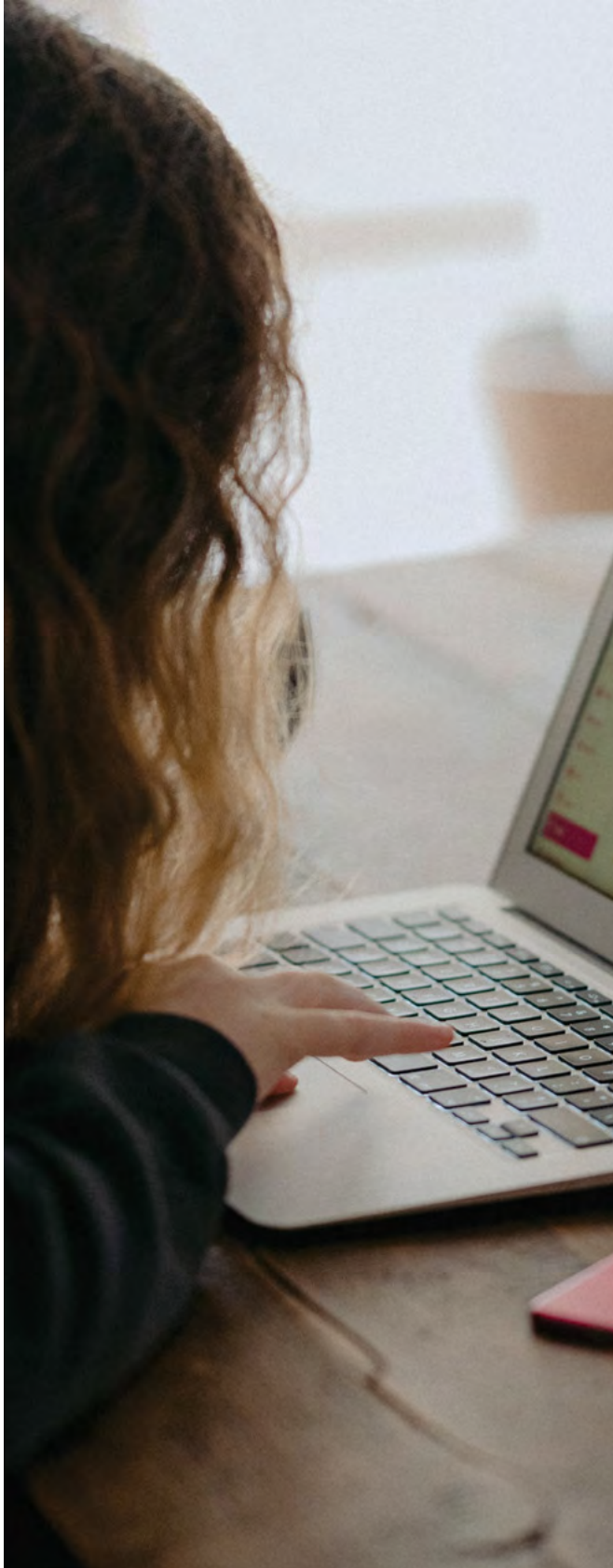
2) Teachers' reported attitudes

To determine any significant shifts in attitude, a paired-sample t-test was conducted that compared each Likert-type statement pre and post-training, for the 48 respondents. The responses of participants significantly changed from pre to post-training on 8 of the 12 statements, suggesting a broad impact on teachers' attitude (see Table 3).

There was a significant increase in agreement ($t(47) = 3.57$, $p = .001$) that schools should have a policy on how to support children with an incarcerated parent (questionnaire statement 1) from the pre-training ($m = 4.25$, $SD = .98$) to post-training ($m=4.77$, $SD = .43$).

The participants mean pre-training response regarding should government funding for support services for children with an incarcerated parent was 4.31 ($SD = .95$) and post-training mean was 4.79 ($SD = .41$) (questionnaire statement 2). The training saw a statistically significant shift to strong agreement with the idea ($t(47) = 3.36$, $p = .002$).

The training saw an increase in confidence regarding engaging an incarcerated parent with their child's education (questionnaire statement 4), shifting from a mean response of 3.81 ($SD = .79$) in the pre-training group to 4.35 ($SD = .812$) in the post training group. The significance found ($t(47) = 4.29$, $p < .001$).

Respondents originally were neutral ($m = 3.81$, $SD = 1.104$) regarding whether teaching and learning programs/resources should be including the topic about families and prison (questionnaire statement 5). The training saw a significant shift ($t(47) = 2.276$, $p < .027$) to agreement post-training ($m = 4.29$, $SD = .68$).

There was a significant increase in teachers' agreement to modify their discipline approach (questionnaire statement 7) and be more accepting of disruptive behaviour given the child's situation (questionnaire statement 8) at the end of the training program compared to prior to completing the training. Finally, it is strongly believed that the students, though disadvantaged, still have a bright future available to them ($m = 4.81$; questionnaire statement 10) and this belief significantly increased following the training.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and levels of significance for changes across pre and post training for teachers' reported attitudes

Questionnaire Statement: I believe …	Pre-Training mean (SD)	Post-Training mean (SD)
1/ All schools should have a policy on how to support children who have a parent in prison	4.25 (.98)	4.77 (.43) ***
2/ The government should fund support services for children who have a parent in prison	4.31 (.95)	4.79 (.41) **
3/ It is acceptable that some parents do not wish for their children to associate with a peer who have a parent in prison (-ve)	1.92 (.87)	1.79 (1.01)
4/ I would be comfortable communicating with a child's parent in prison about their education	3.81 (.79)	4.35 (.81) ***
5/ My teaching and learning program and resources should be modified to include the topic about families and prison	3.81 (1.104)	4.29 (.68) *
6/ I would be truthful to class parents if they confronted me about a child in the class having a parent in prison (-ve)	2.52 (.97)	2.58 (1.07)
7/ I need to modify my discipline approach for a child with a parent in prison	3.33 (1.06)	3.75 (1.33) *
8/ I would be more accepting of disruptive behaviour if I knew that a child had a parent in prison	2.88 (1.0)	3.25 (1.18) *
9/ It is better for a class teacher to have conversations about how a child is coping with their parent's imprisonment	2.46 (1.05)	4.00 (.90) ***
10/ There is hope for a bright future for a child who has a parent in prison	4.52 (.65)	4.81 (.49) **
11/ I would feel less likely to want to communicate with a parent about their child's education if I knew the crime their parent committed was extremely serious (-ve)	2.21 (1.03)	2.04 (1.05)
12/ It is best if the teacher doesn't know that a child has a parent in prison so they are treated fairly (-ve)	1.71 (.68)	1.48 (.85)

*<.05; ** <.01; *** <.001
(-ve) indicates statements are negatively worded

3) Teachers' reported knowledge

A paired-sample t-test revealed a significant shift in self-reported knowledge regarding children with an incarcerated parent for 10 of the 11 questionnaire statement (see Table 4). The significance and directions of the mean shift for each of the questionnaire statements are listed below:

In response to "Visiting prison is distressing for children and therefore should be avoided", the before-training mean score was 2.6 (SD = .77) and the after-training mean score was 1.42 (SD = .50). A significant difference was found (t(47) = -9.77, p <.001). This shift indicated a significant increase in knowledge regarding the impact on students, moving from uncertainty in the pre-training to strongly-disagreeing in the post training.

In response to "The needs of these children are very different from any other disadvantaged group", the before-training mean score was 3.08 (SD = .77) and the after-training mean score was 3.54 (SD = 1.2). A significant difference was found (t(47) = 3.29, p = .002). This positive shift indicated an increased agreement that children with an incarcerated parent are different from other disadvantaged groups.

In response to "It is necessary for a child to visit their parent in prison and therefore missing some school time is acceptable", the before-training mean score was 3.13 (SD = .79) and the after-training mean score was 4.31 (SD = .55). A significant difference was found (t(47) = 9.23, p <.001). This shift indicated increased knowledge and awareness of the needs of the student and facilitating continued familial relationships.

In response to "Communicating to a parent in prison about their child's education could be detrimental to the parent's wellbeing and set them back", the before-training mean score was 2.42 (SD = .85) and the after-training mean score was 1.81 (SD= .89). A significant difference was found (t(47) = -4.46, p <.001). The mean movement to disagreement indicates a likely increase in knowledge and dispelling of some of the negative impacts of an incarcerated parent. Though only a modest shift in means it resulted in an overall shift from uncertainty (not-sure towards disagree in the post-training response) to certainty.

In response to "The processes and protocols for how to communicate with a parent in prison", the before-training mean score was 2.56 (SD = .99) and the after-training mean score was 3.54 (SD = 1.01). A significant difference was found (t(47) = 5.05, p <.001). This shift indicated increased understanding of the procedures to facilitate open communications with incarcerated parents.

In response to "I can name two social services, in addition to SHINE for Kids, that support children with a parent in prison", the before-training mean score was 2.10 (SD = .88) and the after-training mean score was 4.17 (SD = .78). A significant difference was found (t(47) = 13.48, p < .001). Participants before the training were relatively unsure about potential services available, but the training elucidated potential services thus improving overall knowledge of available sources.

In response to "In addition to the class teacher, I know who else in my school has responsibility for supporting a child with a parent in prison", the before-training mean score was 3.58 (SD = .90) and the after-training mean score was 4.19 (SD = .87). A significant difference was found (t(47) = 3.66, p = .001). A moderate mean shift shows increased knowledge of school staff responsibilities for supporting a student with an incarcerated parent.

In response to "Warning signs to look out for to identify a child whose parent is in prison", the before-training mean score was 2.88 (SD = .89) and the after-training mean score was 4.13 (SD = .73). A significant difference was found (t(47) = 7.73, p < .001). Participants agreed that they were now able to identify the warning signs for a student with an incarcerated parent, when on average they were uncertain beforehand.

In response to "Children with a parent in prison are more likely to be bullied", the before-training mean score was 3.15 (SD = .85) and the after-training mean score was 3.88 (SD =.96). A significant difference was found (t(47) = 5.81, p <.001). This result suggests a shift toward acceptance that these students are more likely to be bullied, however on average the response is not-sure towards agreement.

In response to "Children with a parent in prison are more likely to be a bully", the before-training mean score was 3.02 (SD = .84) and the after-training mean score was 2.98 (SD = 1.04). No significant difference was found (t(47) = -.38, p = .71). Participants were still uncertain about the likelihood of the student being a bully despite the training.

In response to "The development of a child with a parent in prison may be younger than their chronological age", the before-training mean score was 3.27 (SD = .74) and the after-training mean score was 3.98 (SD = .73). A significant difference was found (t(47) = 5.96, p <.001). The results suggest that the training effectively increased knowledge about the developmental impacts a student with an incarcerated parent may have.

4) Teachers' reported confidence

A paired-sample t-test was conducted that compared self-reported confidence in supporting a student with an incarcerated parent, before and after they received the SHINE for Kids' teacher training. Participants rated their confidence on a 5-point Likert-scale from "unconfident" (1) to "exceptionally confident" (5). Figure 10 shows that of the 47 respondents, confidence was lower before the training 2.53 (SD =.83) compared to after the training 3.83 (SD = .67). A significant difference was found (t(47) = 12.7, p < .001). This indicates that the training infused the participants with confidence, the average participant responding "very confident" after its completion, though more data is needed to determine if this confidence continues long-term.

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and levels of significance for changes across pre and post training for teachers' reported knowledge

Questionnaire Statement: I know...	Pre-Training mean (SD)	Post-Training mean (SD)
1/ Visiting prison is distressing for children and therefore should be avoided (-ve)	2.60 (.77)	1.42 (.50) ***
2/ The needs of these children are very different from any other disadvantaged group	3.08 (.77)	3.54 (1.2) **
3/ It is necessary for a child to visit their parent in prison and therefore missing some school time is acceptable	3.13 (.79)	4.31 (.55) ***
4/ Communicating to a parent in prison about their child's education could be detrimental to the parent's wellbeing and set them back (-ve)	2.42 (.85)	1.81 (.89) ***
5/ The processes and protocols for how to communicate with a parent in prison	2.56 (.99)	3.54 (1.01) ***
6/ I can name two social services, in addition to SHINE for Kids, that support children with a parent in prison	2.10 (.88)	4.17 (.78) ***
7/ In addition to the class teacher, I know who else in my school has responsibility for supporting a child with a parent in prison	3.58 (.90)	4.19 (.87) ***
8/ Warning signs to look out for to identify a child whose parent is in prison	2.88 (.89)	4.13 (.73) ***
9/ Children with a parent in prison are more likely to be bullied	3.15 (.85)	3.88 (.96) ***
10/ Children with a parent in prison are more likely to be a bully	3.02 (.84)	2.98 (1.04)
11/ The development of a child with a parent in prison may be younger than their chronological age	3.27 (.74)	3.98 (.73) ***

** <.01; *** <.001
(-ve) indicates statements are negatively worded

5) Teachers' reported new learnings

Following the completion of the SHINE for Kids' teacher training, participants were asked "What were 3 new learnings that you have acquired from this training session that you didn't know before?"

Table 5 depicts the main themes identified in the responses to this open-ended question. The most frequently cited new learnings include: strategies to engage students and support the family; knowledge of other services and resources available; and improved contextual knowledge (within the criminal justice system and developmental impacts on the student).

Table 5. New learnings identified by training participants, and their frequency

Themes - New learnings	Frequency
Strategies to engage students and support the family	15
Other support services and resources available	12
Contextual knowledge, such as recidivism rates	11
Impacts and benefits for visiting an incarcerated parent	9
Ways to communicate with parents and students – opening communication	8
Identifying risk factors and potential students with an incarcerated parent	7
Becoming more open in attitude and behaviour	6
Student experiences and behaviour	5
Shine for Kids' roles and services	5
Typical student development/ developmental impacts	4
Protocols and procedures	3
About the RISE programme	2
Setting achievable goals for the student	1

Figure 10. Participants' reported confidence in supporting a student with an incarcerated parent, before and after attending the SHINE for Kids' teacher training
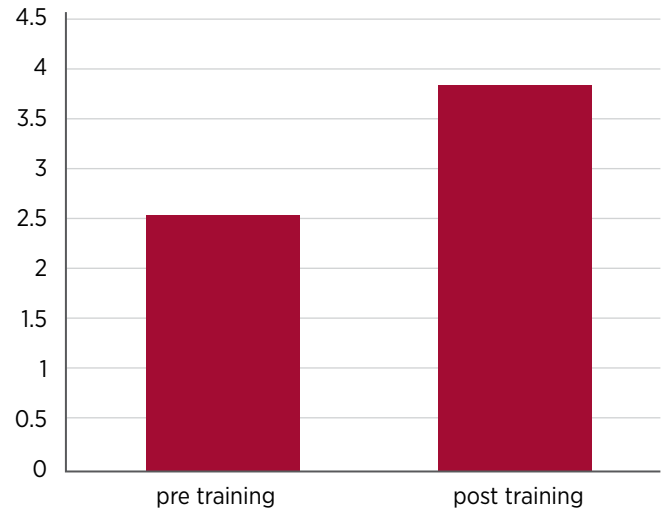
The following direct quotes from participants' responses highlight the new perspectives of teachers as a result of the SHINE for Kids' training:

"It is important not to continue the silence and shame. It is okay (better for the kids) to discuss."

"I think I now understand more about the role of teachers in the program and that it is important that they do know about the child's problem and what they can actually help with."

"Today has challenged me to consider parental incarceration as a completely different and unique type of adversity children can face. It is different to any other loss. Also, the benefits of telling children the truth regarding matters of where their family member is and the benefits of seeing each other."

Objective 2 – Teachers' perspectives about the applicability of the SHINE for Kids' teacher training program

1) Motivation to attend the SHINE for Kids' teacher training

Before completing the training, participants were asked "why have you registered to attend this training session?" which provides valuable insight into what motivates professionals to undertake the SHINE for Kids' teacher training (see Table 6). Three prominent themes emerged as most common: to learn skills and strategies to support children; the participant knows students within the school or a specific student with an incarcerated parent; and professional development. Regarding professional development, one participant was hoping "to better understand the needs of children with parents in prison and to share this with my colleagues and to help improve our mentoring program at the school."

The majority of participants had taught a student who had an incarcerated parent (30 out of 48 participants) with fourteen in the current response explicitly stating the frequency of the students at their school with an incarcerated parent as a reason for attending the SHINE for Kids' teacher training program. As two participants cited: "I work with Indigenous children - many of whom have parent who are or have recently been incarcerated. The youths display complex needs - both emotional and academic" and "I work in a school with challenging behaviour, 82-86% of our students have suffered trauma and 30-40% are in out of home care. We don't know the percentage with parents in prison but it is higher than many other schools." Similarly, some participants who were undertaking the training for professional development were incited by exposure to the extent of the problem and available programs, where previous education had left them unprepared: "After seeing an extensive wellbeing program at a school I was at for placement, I realised that my university degree hasn't prepared me for these situations, and so I sought out sources of education."

The key elements emerging from this, is that involvement with students with an incarcerated parent, seems to be an over-riding catalyst for participants seeking out and completing the SHINE for Kids' program. Understandably, the majority (n=21) of the participants wished to attend the program to learn strategies and practical skills to help these children. For example, one teacher explained: "I work with children with different abilities and have worked with a child whose parent was in prison. I did not feel I did my best for the child." Responses from participants indicated the type of skills they wished to acquire through the training with one teacher capturing the breadth of these skills as "to learn how to approach, teach and communicate with a child that has a parent in prison."

Table 6. Reasons for attending training, and their frequency

Themes – reason for attending the training	Frequency
Learn strategies (practical skills) to support children	21
They know a student in the school who has an incarcerated parent	14
Professional development	13
Area of interest	2
Increase their knowledge	2
Gain insights regarding trauma	1
Improve current programs at the school	1
Improve communication	1
Increase confidence	1
Improve understanding	1

2) Desired knowledge: What did they want to learn?

Before completing the training, participants were asked "What do you want to learn more about in relation to supporting children with a parent in prison?" (see Table 7).

The most compelling need was to acquire practical strategies to support students who have an incarcerated parent. The following three most frequently cited needs provided more information about the nature of these strategies or desired new knowledge and skills, and at times may appear to be complementary or competing. Improving communication with students and parents, along with supporting the emotional needs of the students were prioritised as was discipline and behaviour management. The two potentially dichotomous/dyadic skills and attitudes of discipline and support may need to be explored further.

Table 7. Desired new knowledge, and their frequency

Theme – desired new knowledge	Frequency
Strategies to support students	17
Understanding of behaviour and strategies to manage behaviour/discipline	11
Appropriate communication methods, including how to engage with the student and/or parent	10
Support students with anxiety/trauma/emotional needs	9
Understand the needs of the student	5
Improve the student's social connection and support	3
Resources available	3
General understanding/system knowledge	2
Increase confidence	1
Improve understanding	1

The following direct quotes from participants' responses highlight the particular areas they hoped the training would focus on prior to commencement of the SHINE for Kids' training:

"How to support the students in general. Whether to be nicer or stricter."

"Processes for communicating with parents. Understanding the impact that a having parent in prison has on a student's learning and wellbeing at school and what I and the school can do to help support the student."

"How to understand the signs to assist the student without having them to talk about something that may embarrass them."

"How the system works in communicating with parents, how to manage or who to refer students to with emotional or psychological conditions. How to support these children who seem to be significantly under discussed."

"Behaviours that may be exhibited in the classroom, as well as strategies to deal with these behaviours. I would also love to learn information in general to have some context when I have students in my classroom who have a parent in prison."

"Support services, identify psychological symptoms & behavioural patterns. How to increase child's weakness to strengths."

3) Most beneficial curriculum and pedagogy of the teacher training

Immediately after completing the training, participants were asked "What content and activities from the training do you believe were the most beneficial?" (see Table 8). The participant responses indicate a high level of appreciation for the incorporation of case studies into the training and development of strategies through scenarios and group work. This, supported with the introduction of identifiable strategies and resources available to the participants, produced tangible skills that may be applied to their occupation. Less of a concern was the overall broader context, but some cited this as useful and eye-opening. The key benefit appears to be a focus on practical strategies that teachers can implement within the classroom or with an individual student (aligning with the original concerns for joining the training program), which is learnt through the case study/scenario approaches. Since the question focused on the benefits of the training, it was unsurprising that there were no negative aspects of the training identified in response to the open-ended question.

Table 8. Most beneficial curriculum and pedagogy, and their frequency

Themes - Most beneficial characteristics	Frequency
Incorporation of Case Studies	13
Scenarios	9
Group work/discussions	8
Received strategies and learnt about resources available to engage the students	7
All of the training	7
Presenter's input and engagement	2
Learning about SHINE for Kids	2
Roleplaying	1

The following direct quotes from participants' responses highlight the aspects of the SHINE for Kids' teacher training they found most beneficial:

"School policy and how I can include these children in mainstream. How I can change the use of my language and how I can incorporate things they like."

"Books for the classroom, case study plans, insightful videos, the statistics, how to talk and negotiate these circumstances through the lens of an educator."

"Case scenarios were very useful as it was practical use Videos with insight from older children that have experienced this"

"All of the content was very useful. Working on case plans was helpful. The videos will be good to show to staff"

"All, I loved it all! Very eye opening in all areas."

"I think the course was great, easily understood and provided practical state-wide that could be easily applied."

4) Recommended changes to the SHINE for Kids' teacher training

Overwhelmingly, participants enjoyed the training, with 21 having no recommendations for any necessary changes and generally cited the training as professional or worthwhile (see Table 9). Some suggested it should be compulsory, with two participants responding: "Make it compulsory" and "I personally cannot think of anything, it should be a compulsory component embedded in all child related courses from early years through to high school. And! It should be in at every school." The training also addressed concerns that had not been addressed in previous teacher training, "the training was fantastic as this is an issue that has not been raised or discussed during pre-service teacher training." The necessity for further training after first-hand experience with children with an incarcerated parent was also highlighted as a reason for attending the training.

Participants largely valued the pedagogy used to deliver the training, commenting it "was delivered with great knowledge and enthusiasm. Small class participation was great" and "it was dynamic and informative".

Participants indicated a need for more specific strategies and practices that can be implemented within their workplace (n=7), as well as more notes and hand-outs after the activities and presentations (n=5). This corroborates with the strong appreciation of case studies and examples in the training, indicating a need to "make it real" and practical for the participants. Though there was an appreciation of the context of the justice system and impacts on the child and family, the majority of participants indicate a desire for more tailored skills involving a wider repertoire of strategies that may be implemented in their workplace. Additionally, the appreciation of, yet desire for more, active learning was signalled (n=5).

Table 9. Recommended changes to the training, and their frequency

Themes - Recommended changes to training	Frequency
Nothing at all (training was positive)	21
Introduce more specific strategies and practices that can be implemented on a classroom and/or individual level (e.g. behaviour management, teaching strategies, confidentiality, policy development)	7
More active learning with less presenter speaking	5
Deliver more notes and hand-outs after the activities and presentations	5
Incorporate voices of carers of children and voices of incarcerated parents	2
Individual Q&A Section	1
Have an early childhood specific program	1

Conclusions and Recommendations

The findings of this first pilot evaluation of SHINE for Kids' teacher training program provide valuable information about the promising impact of the training and participant experiences which can facilitate program improvements and further benefits for participants.

Responses to the pre and post questionnaires indicate SHINE for Kids' teacher training appeared to result in substantial shifts, which were statistically significant, in participants' reported confidence, attitudes, and knowledge of supporting students with an incarcerated parent. Changes in participants' reported skills in supporting students with an incarcerated parent did not result in substantial shifts. More specifically,

- on average participants rated their confidence in supporting students with an incarcerated parent as "unconfident" (1) prior to the training and then "exceptionally confident" (5) following the training.

- 8 of the 12 statements related to teacher attitudes changed significantly following the training whereby more positive attitudes were witnessed.

- 10 of the 11 statements related to teacher knowledge changed significantly following the training whereby teachers rated themselves as more knowledgeable. The open-ended questions indicated that teachers felt they became more knowledgeable in three main areas: strategies to engage students and support the family; other support services and resources available; and contextual information.

- 2 of the 10 statements related to teacher skills changed significantly following the training. The direction of one of the trends suggest that they felt they were less skilled following the training in avoiding moving into a counselling role with the student. A review of the responses to the skills statements imply there may be some tension or lack of clarity around deploying punishment and sanctions to manage behaviour and being supportive.

The pedagogy and curriculum of the SHINE for Kids' teacher training program was highly valued by participants. The majority of participants had either taught a student with an incarcerated parent, or knew a family member or friend who had been incarcerated suggesting that experience with the phenomenon served as a motivator for participation. Participants reported that their main motivators to attend the training included: to learn strategies, because they know a student in this situation, and to undertake professional development.

There was alignment between what participants wanted from the training and what the participants acknowledged to be the outcomes of the training. The most commonly cited reason for choosing to undertake the training was to develop strategies to better support students who have an incarcerated parent. At the completion of the training, participants confirmed that this was achieved in their frequency of comments related to what was learnt. However, the participants recommended that the training could include even more strategies which were suggested to be more specific and targeted towards the distinction between a focus on discipline relative to support, as central tenants needing further guidance and exploration through the training. The need for specific guidance and differentiation between discipline and support was best illustrated by one participant who wanted to know "how to support the students in general. Whether to be nicer or stricter."

In consideration of the project findings, the following recommendations are presented:

- Expand the offering of the SHINE for Kid's teacher training program given the dearth of similar services available; the encouraging shifts in teacher confidence, attitude and knowledge; and participant high regard for the program.

- Broaden the focus of the training to include staff other than teachers (e.g. counsellors, early childhood educators) or consider differential programs for a range of staff who support these students.

- Continue to offer accreditation for attendance and consider accreditation for other professions e.g. psychologists.

- Renew the training curriculum based on the results of this report, namely addressing the complexities around skills in behaviour management and supporting the emotional needs of students (featured in the skills domain of the results).

- Renew the training pedagogy based on the results of this report, namely maintaining and enhancing active learning and the provision of handouts and resources for participants.

- SHINE for Kids and Western Sydney University partner to conduct a large scale study which will implement a more robust research design to determine the impact of the training in comparison to business as usual and the impact back in the classroom in the weeks and months following the training. It is a change in educational practice that will improve the futures of students with an incarcerated parent and this should be evaluated following the establishment of a theory of change.

- SHINE for Kids and Western Sydney University partner to develop the new ESSEPI tool and test its reliability and validity with a larger number of participants. This development will not only assist in the continued evaluation of the SHINE for Kids' teacher training program, but encourage further research into this important yet neglected field given the absence of a reliable and valid tool to measure teachers' skills, attitudes and knowledge of supporting students with an incarcerated parent.

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Appendix

Appendix Table 1. Paired-wise t-test for Skills questionnaire statements

Questionnaire Statement	Mean difference	Standard Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1/ Actively listen and provide non-judgmental support to children if they disclosed personal information about the challenges they are experiencing with a parent in prison	.229	1.259	1.261	47	.213
2/ Remaining calm and use a soothing tone when a child is exhibiting strong emotions	1.04	1.276	.566	47	.574
3/ Using sanctions such as removing time out so the child is removed from the situation following their difficult behaviour (-ve)	-.313	1.095	1.978	47	.054
4/ Setting equally high expectations and limits regarding acceptable behaviour for a child when they have a parent in prison	.167	1.155	1.00	47	.322
5/ Disengaging from power battles with a child with a parent in prison	.396	1.162	2.36	47	.022 *
6/ Openly telling other teachers, parents and professionals information about the child and their situation (-ve)	.25	1.229	1.409	47	.165
7/ Setting consistent rules and boundaries for a child with a parent in prison	-.021	.758	-.191	47	.850
8/ Giving assistance to a child to help them comply with a request when they are not complying	.063	.727	.596	47	.554
9/ Avoiding moving into a counselling role with the child with a parent in prison whilst I am their teacher	-.417	1.235	-2.338	47	.024 *
10/ Avoid giving warnings and punishments to manage the behaviour and learning of a child with a parent in prison	-.188	1.266	-1.026	47	.310

*<.05

Appendix Table 2. Paired-wise t-test for Attitude questionnaire statements

Questionnaire Statement	Mean difference	Standard Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1/ All schools should have a policy on how to support children who have a parent in prison	.521	1.010	3.571	47	.001 ***
2/ The government should fund support services for children who have a parent in prison	.479	.989	3.356	47	.002 **
3/ It is acceptable that some parents do not wish for their children to associate with a peer who have a parent in prison (-ve)	-.125	.981	-.883	47	.382
4/ I would be comfortable communicating with a child's parent in prison about their education	.542	.874	4.293	47	.000 ***
5/ My teaching and learning program and resources should be modified to include the topic about families and prison	.479	.956	2.276	47	.027 *
6/ I would be truthful to class parents if they confronted me about a child in the class having a parent in prison (-ve)	.063	.932	.465	47	.644
7/ I need to modify my discipline approach for a child with a parent in prison	.417	1.182	2.442	47	.018 *
8/ I would be more accepting of disruptive behaviour if I knew that a child had a parent in prison	.375	1.142	2.276	47	.027 *
9/ It is better for a class teacher to have conversations about how a child is coping with their parent's imprisonment	1.542	1.570	6.801	47	.000 ***

Questionnaire Statement	Mean difference	Standard Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
10/There is hope for a bright future for a child who has a parent in prison	.292	.617	3.273	47	.002 **
11/ I would feel less likely to want to communicate with a parent about their child's education if I knew the crime their parent committed was extremely serious (-ve)	-.167	1.018	-1.135	47	.262
12/It is best if the teacher doesn't know that a child has a parent in prison so they are treated fairly (-ve)	-.229	1.096	-1.448	47	.154

*<.05; ** <.01; *** <.001

Appendix Table 3. Paired-wise t-test for Knowledge questionnaire statements

Questionnaire Statement	Mean difference	Standard Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1/ Visiting prison is distressing for children and therefore should be avoided (-ve)	-1.187	.842	-9.772	47	.000***
2 /The needs of these children are very different from any other disadvantaged group	.458	.967	3.285	47	.002**
3/ It is necessary for a child to visit their parent in prison and therefore missing some school time is acceptable	1.188	.891	9.234	47	.000***
4/ Communicating to a parent in prison about their child's education could be detrimental to the parent's wellbeing and set them back (-ve)	-.604	.939	-4.456	47	.000***
5/ The processes and protocols for how to communicate with a parent in prison	.979	1.345	5.045	47	.000***
6/ I can name two social services, in addition to SHINE for Kids, that support children with a parent in prison	2.063	1.060	13.480	47	.000***
7/ In addition to the class teacher, I know who else in my school has responsibility for supporting a child with a parent in prison	.604	1.144	3.660	47	.001***
8/ Warning signs to look out for to identify a child whose parent is in prison	1.250	1.120	7.730	47	.000***
9/ Children with a parent in prison are more likely to be bullied	.729	.869	5.814	47	.000***
10/ Children with a parent in prison are more likely to be a bully	-.042	.771	-.375	47	.710
11/ The development of a child with a parent in prison may be younger than their chronological age	.708	.824	5.955	47	.000***

** <.01; *** <.001

Contact

Associate Professor Danielle Tracey
Western Sydney University
d.tracey@westernsydney.edu.au

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