



## Book Review

### **Twelve Thousand Hours: Education and Poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand by Vicki Carpenter and Sue Osborne (Eds.)**

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*Twelve Thousand Hours*, edited by Vicki Carpenter and Sue Osborne, presents a wide range of perspectives on current issues around education and poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand. With past election and recent media attention highlighting the levels and impacts of poverty in our society, this timely publication captures the relationship between poverty and educational institutions and the shortfalls that exist in our educational policies. Carpenter and Osborne (2014) in their introduction chapter emphasise that there is a direct and strongly negative relationship between poverty and educational underachievement. “These are *our* problems; no other country shares our history, Treaty obligations, mix of people, ethnic diversity, and wealth of space, fresh air and opportunities. We need to find our solutions, and we feel that is best done largely from within” (Carpenter & Osborne, 2014, p. 13-14). This strong message serves as a reminder to practitioners and policymakers that more needs to be done in order to improve this appalling situation and the responsibility lies with all working in the educational sector here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

This book is structured in three parts. The first part, forming the largest section, focuses on a presentation of issues and responses surrounding poverty and education from a range of academics, researchers and educational leaders. The second part provides a collection of findings from recent research studies on the realities of children, their families, *whānau*, their teachers and their communities, providing us with insights into how they have experienced the challenges and complexities associated within these specific contexts. The third part explores potential and actual responses to addressing the impacts of poverty in education in support of some ethical direction, strengths-based approaches and keeping up hope.

Ivan Snook and John O’Neill open the first chapter with looking at the degree that poverty contributes to one’s educational achievement, and the reliance of improved social policy in combination with improved educational policy in order to move away from competitive systems and in order to tackle current challenges. Mānuka Hēnare begins the next chapter with statistics from the 2013 census revealing the reality that of the “...200,000 children living below the poverty line in our country, just over half are Māori (59,651) and Pasifika (44, 120)” (p. 44) and that this situation of significant poverty represents a moral and ethical crisis in Aotearoa New Zealand. Other chapters examine a range of issues, influences and initiatives including options of providing food in schools; blanket approaches to deficit thinking; the impact of neoliberal politics; a specific focus on Māori and Pacific students and the experiences of their schooling; the need for dialogical reforms of professional development for teachers in low decile schools; and stories of specific schools who share their pedagogies and alternative approaches in full support of their community contexts.



When inequality between rich and poor is increasing and we hear and see that many families are struggling to survive, we know that the education and wellbeing of many children is obviously at risk. Reaching one's potential should not be a privilege of only those that can afford it. The 'twelve thousand hours' title gives the reader the message that the 12,000 hours children spend in compulsory education, when combined with a background of poverty, will most likely mean a significant shortfall in their educational and vocational opportunities, and a strong likelihood of disadvantage in a multitude of circumstances throughout their life. Even though this publication did not branch into early childhood education specifically, it is informing in terms of the current situation in Aotearoa New Zealand and certainly provokes teaching practitioners in all sectors to reflect on the necessity of transformative action and advocacy for a large proportion of this nation's children. As a professional body of student teachers, teachers, teacher educators and leaders; we need to think beyond the gates and grounds of the children we teach and those we see in our immediate surroundings and be actively concerned by the ethical and moral responsibility of providing equitable educational experiences and outcomes for all of our *tamariki* – and sooner rather than later.

### **References**

Carpenter, V., & Osborne, S. (Eds.). (2014). *Twelve thousand hours: Education and poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand*. Auckland, New Zealand: Dunmore Publishing.