

Submission

to

Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Workplace Relations

on the

The Education of Boys

Submitted by: Parent

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AIM

The aim of this submission is to focus attention on the issues that are systematically avoided when assessing the deficiencies associated with the performance of boys in education.

Introduction

The poor performance of boys in education over the last fifteen to twenty years has predominantly been ignored. Any scant or dismissive reference to the poor performance has popularly been attributed to poor personal qualities of boys and the absence of appropriate role models. Also, attribution with lesser focus has been on the overwhelming imbalance of female to male teachers. This approach has fitted snugly within the prevailing social comfort zone.

However, I suggest that these are secondary matters that are peripheral to the real causes. That is these matters are more likely symptoms and not the causes. The actual causes are the systematic preference provided to girls over the last twenty years of education, and the inability of policy makers or educators to acknowledge this preferential treatment of girls as the point of commencement of boy's educational deterioration. In particular this agenda has built enormous confidence in girls but has systematically dismantled boys confidence and self-esteem.

We must be able to address the policy directions of the past, and honestly face the consequences of those policies, which have created the foundation for the present situation, if we are to productively adjust policies for equitable and productive outcomes

Background

Boys' education has degenerated through disinterest and ambivalence by the educational hierarchy with the intent of satisfying the social pressure for the improvement of the status of women throughout the community.

If there is any doubt as to this intent may I refer to a quote by Cheryl Vardon, the

then CEO of Australian Capital Territory Education, that she would use education as a means of correcting wider gender imbalances within society.

With such an agenda it is clear that boys have been subject to social engineering that has had devastating effect in education and much wider social implications.

The objective assessment and impact of preferential treatment, confidence, affirmative action, and programs singularly focussed on girls, have been systematically avoided. Further more, the overwhelming preferences in encouragement and systemic strategies that have supported the promotion of girls education, while the impact upon or encouragement to boys education was ignored, dismissed, or treated with irrelevance, has resulted in even wider social implications. One can only contemplate their influence upon confidence, self esteem, high suicide rates and anti-social behaviour amongst boys.

The disdain held for any outcome that may have modified any increase in the education outcomes for girls was dismissed in a politically correct environment that was simply to ensure greater education outcomes for girls.

To deny that there was any intention to alter the balance of education outcomes for girls versus boys is a denial of the social engineering incorporated to ensure that eventually, as women, girls would have a greater social status.

Of particular importance is the erosion of boyhood confidence due to the overwhelming attention provided for the advancement of girls, and the disastrous effect this has placed on boys behaviour in the wider social environment.

It is also quite clear that the negative feedback on boys' (and generally male) behaviour has done nothing to cultivate girls' respect for boys. In fact one could suggest that such respect have been discouraged while boys' respect for girls has been a criterion against which boys have been critically judged and chastised.

Feminist ideology has prevented objective criticism of the outcomes in favour of girls.

The point requiring most significant recognition is that the intent in the late 70s early 80s was to alter the balance of education between girls and boys. There has never been an attempt to expand the education of boys and girls together in the last 20 years, rather a focus on achieving the balance in favour of girls as has been achieved, with devastating effect on boys.

Underlying assumptions have been that if girls ever under performed it was concluded that the system was at fault. However, to date, the causes for boys poor performance have been laid at the feet of boys personality traits and poor role models rather than addressing the real changes to their educational

environment, that have seen them at conflict with the system rather than compatible with it.

What was the real aim of changes to the system? Were social pressures so great that there was social capitulation to ensure that females were better educated? Did this progress to such a stage that social political correctness prevented addressing this issue until it got to the stage of a major disaster?

Present Situation

There is no way anyone could justify that the present situation has arisen through natural evolution. There is also no point in referring back to social circumstances of the 50s and 60s that are not current today. We are talking of the here and now and must not avoid that the present system is discriminatory.

I understand that discrimination is defined by circumstances that provide a better outcome for one or more groups but a lesser outcome for others. The present education circumstances fit perfectly into this definition and therefore require addressing.

The system and quite definitely a majority of teachers require adjustment if correction to the present imbalance is to be effected.

Social Implications

Probably the most significant social implications from the present situation are the low self-esteem, the eroded self-confidence, and the incompatibility within society experienced by boys generally. The visibility of preferential treatment of girls can do nothing but convince girls that the world is their oyster with no impediments, while alternatively convincing boys that their welfare is of secondary importance and that they have to do things differently to that which comes naturally - an induced mental complex.

The poor self-esteem is broad terminology that can include both confidence and crippled social skills. Dare I suggest that collectively these issues would be an important factor in the levels of young male suicide, anti-social behaviour, and poor tertiary entrance qualification.

The level of ingrained social prejudice is evidenced by the copy of a letter I have enclosed from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, that clearly states that 'it is not unlawful to discriminate against males in education on the grounds of their sex'. For the HREOC to deny that such a law regulation is not

discriminatory is not a sustainable argument. If social regulations are locked into this mindset there is an obvious requirement for corrective action.

Probably the most offensive outcome is that with culpable intent boys have been handicapped in a very competitive environment for individual independence within today's society. It is of significant importance that equal education be given if everyone is to commence with a firm foundation for the competitive commercial environment, where the platform for lifetime development is laid. Once, although presently less, girls have an option of support through partnership and family structures. Young men have never had this option and their adult welfare is predictably a reflection of their own achievement. The starting platform in this environment is presently uneven, favouring girls where their opportunity for career success has a momentum boost from the culpable education outcomes.

It is particularly unfair that tampering and undermining of boys' psychology in their developing period has been tolerated to any degree. It is akin to breaking down and destabilising their mental state, which amounts simply to mental cruelty.

Tertiary Status

My understanding is that university entrance levels presently favour girls in a ratio of 3:2. If this situation were reversed social outcry would have been already deafening, promoted through self interest pressure groups with a vested interest in sustaining the present situation.

Media Responsibility

The media has been very consistent in undertaking the populous approach by sustaining partisan support to preferential treatment of women and indeed girls in the education system. It is evident that some watch and influence needs to be placed upon the media to ensure it does not provide imbalanced agendas in covering education issues

Recommendations

- Acknowledge that there is a preferential focus on girl's education.
- Acknowledge that there are discriminatory actions and programs in favour of girls.
- Recognise that the social environment leading to preferential promotion of girls in education have changed.
- Adopt a corrective action to raise the status of boys ie in the areas of curriculum, personal encouragement, self-esteem, confidence building, and

masculine attributes channeled in to a productive environment.

- Where necessary raise with girls the esteem of boys and their abilities and overcome elements of disdain.
- Explore incentive schemes to encourage boys in programs, particularly literacy and debating.
- Redevelop teachers in appropriate aspects.

Follow up Process

If any correction action is to be taken seriously, it is necessary that an oversight committee be established to ensure that recommended actions be implemented in accordance with the House of Representatives findings. If such a committee is not established the prevailing, established organisations pursuing the present agenda will prevail against any findings and recommended actions.

Summary

The subject inquiry is probably the one and only opportunity to make objective assessment and initiate appropriate action. It can also be the catalyst to broadening the social vision in such a fundamental component of the human development process. To continue to aid and abet an intentional social debilitation that has had a devastating effect on boys' education and personal development, would be a departure from the highest held principles in a democratic society. Having said this, a visible social acknowledgment (by the House of Representatives Committee) of the intent, outcomes and discriminatory processes presently in train is required. This should be supported by some justified corrective action.

In closing may I respectfully suggest that existing affirmative action groups, local, State and Federal "Equity" Groups, and others such as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Office of the Status of Women and other female representative groups will have a vested interest in suppressing outcomes of the inquiry. In some cases the performance of such organisations may require public auditing. It may require great courage, fortitude and an ability to repel vested personal attack on legitimate findings on matters such as have been raised in this submission. The aforementioned groups have been very successful in sending underground any challenge to their established ideology.

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