



Bali Gardens
Educational services

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE
RELATIONS

INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF BOYS

SUBMISSION FROM KERRY DAVIES^{*1*}

Inquire into and report on the social, cultural and educational factors affecting the education of boys in Australian schools, particularly in relation to their literacy needs and socialisation skills in the early and middle years of schooling.

SOCIAL FACTORS

- Family setting. Rapid changing society where much is discussed but not much done about the role of boys
- Boys and girls learn very early about their roles in society. If there is a need to change, it must come from advertising and the media as well, eg toys advertising on TV
- Social problems involving boys are already evident at pre-school. The problems are getting more aggressive and violent. The committee needs to look into the reasons behind this.
- Boys develop at different rates to girls.
- Lack of good role models. Problem of lack of male teachers needs to be addressed...*(see special appendix 1 attached)*
- Bullying. This is improving, but the whole system (Education bureaucracy) needs to be looked at as well, to follow on with the good work being done in Primary schools.

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High School teacher in NSW and ACT from 1973 until 1996 teaching Indonesian from Kinder to adults.

HSC examination Committee in the 1970's in NSW

Chairperson of Accreditation for Yr 12 Indonesian in ACT 1992-1995

Part of committee to establish Montessori pre-schools in the ACT

Award for Educational innovation and quality teaching. ACT Dept of Education 1995

Set up own business in Balinese gardens as well as educational services in 1999

Mother of three boys aged 17,19 and 21, all having gone through the government system.

Mother of boy who has been the victim of an aggressive car-jack from his school grounds in 1999

Teacher involved in school excursion critical incident in Dec 1996, where no help came from the Dept for the boy victim.

- Social factor within Montessori schools....needs research. I suspect there is a vital component in these schools which helps boys settle and “normalise” or restrain themselves. This also needs to be looked at in Steiner schools. Look at the boys who have gone through these schools. Mine went through the Montessori system from 3-6yrs old.
- Influence of American TV and aggression. Acceptance of violence not only from TV and media but also because there are no real ways of back-up for teachers to implement discipline. Children observe this, and it correlates with the difficulties they see in society where there are more acts of aggression not being dealt with to the community’s satisfaction.
- Community is less safe.
- More choice in society now. Less supervision of children or less responsibility to any individual child. In traditional societies, it was the whole village who looked after children. Everyone would take responsibility. Now no-one takes responsibility. Roles are not clearly defined enough.
- Loss of ritual and ceremony in our society.
- Lack of very early educational challenges. This is particularly applicable to boys. I had my eldest boy sap me dry when he was 1-3 yrs old. I could not provide enough for his stimulation. He was over-active and into everything. He settled down in Montessori school, which challenged him and gave him choice but later in high school he was searching for challenge. He finally got it through computing.
- The quiet –easily- intimidated boy is at risk. These gentle fellows are left behind in our system. They disappear in a class where the attention is taken by others.
- It seems (according to my boys) that if you don’t fit into the model that teachers look for in class, then you are side-stepped and either ignored or punished. I agree with this, but I don’t blame the teachers. There is not enough support for them.
- Abused or neglected boys keep quiet and when they have said something, others expect them to “get over it” and get on with life or otherwise they are sissy.
- Gay boys or boys with a perceived feminine aspect to their behaviour are picked on but even though there are sexual harassment cases not enough is being done for acceptance. Male PE teachers especially need to be re-trained in compassion.

CULTURAL

- Teachers are intimidated by cultures and certain lobby groups in society that are more likely to complain. This is a big issue.
- Multi-cultural factors present multi management, but the management hasn’t caught up yet with multi cultural factors. Some examples: religion in schools (its healthier to celebrate everything than celebrate nothing); excursions to overseas countries and their implications; PE in high schools and the calling out factor in sport where detrimental comments are made, often with a cultural backlash and so on
- I work in the speciality area of Balinese gardens. Some schools that wish to have a Balinese garden in their foyer are afraid because a fundamentalist group might complain that it has a cultural- religious base and is therefore at odds with their own culture. Principals are intimidated and don’t know how to handle it.
- Boys from some cultural backgrounds have high status at home and claim the same high status at school. If they don’t get it, they create it.
- Boys who have had racist comments made because of their background either go very quiet and are embarrassed or avoid school.

- Political and cultural news from overseas affects the students from that country. Eg at Narrabundah College in 1999, boys from Indonesia were discriminated against by other students and staff because of East Timor.

LITERACY NEEDS

- **THE SCHOOL PROGRAMS THAT WERE STARTED IN THE 1980'S WITH READING RECOVERY MUST BE EXPANDED, NOT REDUCED!!!!**
- I had a boy who was quiet, shy etc and could not read well. He was given reading recovery in Yr 1 and at 19yrs he has now just finished reading Lord of the Rings. He has a love of books, even though he still finds writing difficult. However, since then the reading recovery program at his school was reduced and the teacher said that if he was in Yr 1 now, there wouldn't be a chance for him to use the services. This is criminal for boys, who need that extra help.
- Self esteem in boys is essential. It is linked with the ability to read.
- There needs to be a special program to tease out these "at risk" students in Kinder and Yr 1 (best in Kinder..the teachers will know them!), then they should be given special programs that concentrate on reading. But the subject matter of what they read should also be important. The subject matter should be aimed at tolerance and compassion.
- Socialization is linked to literacy. Concentration levels are influenced by socialization. So there needs to be concentration first, then socialisation then literacy. One can't happen before the other. Don't even try a literacy program if the child cannot concentrate. (*see appendix 2 on concentration*)
- **HIGH SCHOOL**

Boys with literacy problems should be able to side step other key learning programs in order to concentrate on literacy. The literacy subject matter can cover areas of the curriculum. At the moment, it is a waste of time for them to be in classes as they riot and its no good to anyone.

Special programs should have a long term factor, not just a one year program.

Concentration programs should be taken first...multi-faceted, multi cultural, multi skilled (see appendix 2)

SOCIALIZATION SKILLS

- Lack of socialization is a reflection of changing society where no one group in society takes responsibility, therefore there is no responsibility. Each person blames another for lack of responsibility instead of roles clearly marked so each knows what to do.
- Support systems need to be true support systems, not just one-off funding projects, then they're left "high and dry".
- There needs to be a whole new way of training teachers in boy's socialisation and what to do about it. The classroom needs to have more choice and be more free, therefore the teacher needs help.
- Special programs set up for High Schools where the boys who need most help are taken away for periods of time, for concentrated programs.
- **BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS EXPANDED**, along with more support for teachers...and danger money.
- School Principals need special training to identify these students who need help and then also work out discipline programs because there is no back up for teachers now. They are abused and

we can do nothing about it. This is a HUGE problem and the basis behind why there is a shift from public to private schools.

- Special outward Bound programs need expanding (*see appendix 3*)
- Look at Maria Montessori's theory of child development and see how our schools do not fit into the teenage natural development. Between 12-14, boys need to be out bush, then come back and sit down, when they are ready!! Wear them out first. Let them sort out their roots, who they are and where they're going. When boys get direction they go for it. They need direction.

The strategies which schools have adopted to help address these factors, those strategies which have been successful and scope for their broader implementation or increased effectiveness.

- Strategies introduced at Stromlo High School in the 1990's for the Offline Boys Program by Rob Horsefield (ph home 62314535, 11 Studley St Kambah 2902.) were excellent. Unfortunately his program was changed by a new principal who did not respond kindly to this type of work and he left the system. However, this successful program was well known in the ACT and Rob Horsefield is a national treasure. I do hope this committee interviews him.
- A more flexible curriculum in schools is essential to accommodate the needs of boys. This means such things as
 Not having to undertake "compulsory" subjects where that subject is perceived by the boys to be inappropriate eg needing an ESL program instead of straight English Literature
 Having to learn a LOTE when they cannot read properly in the first place
- I was a LOTE teacher of an Asian language that had an unusually high retention rate of boys in classes over a long period of time. Considering that most elective LOTE classes are highly dominated by girls, this is significant. The program was designed to appeal to the stages of interest in boy's development and the topics chosen coordinated with interest topics of that age level. Activities were mobile and little furniture was used. This meant more movement within the class and a practical component that other classes often omitted. This strategy could be applied to literacy learning as well.
- The program of reading recovery for yr 1 students that my son did many years ago, in the 1980's was excellent. Unfortunately programs like that were either cut out or forced to downsize. These programs should be given high priority and records kept. There should be research and follow up on past students who have/have not benefited.
- Only remedial programs that fully withdraw students for a long period of time are effective. Do not attempt short term resource programs. Ineffective.
- The earlier you start the better. However, there should be more coordination between primary and high school.

APPENDIX 1

LACK OF MALE TEACHERS

How to fix the problem

- Recognise the problem
- Research why there is the problem.
- Male teachers do not have male colleagues to relate to.
- Male teachers do not get enough money to support their family, in contrast to other jobs of the same qualifications and experience.
- Male teachers do not have enough support

MALE TEACHERS DO NOT GET ENOUGH SUPPORT

In my almost 30 years of teaching, I have seen too many male teachers fall out of the system quietly in embarrassment and shame. Yet they did nothing wrong. This is a quiet story left untold. It is a sad story. I would not encourage any guy to go into teaching because of this. Let me tell you what happens.

This is the typical scenario:

Young man goes into teaching all wide-eyed and bushy tailed. He is enthusiastic. He wants to make a difference to the world of young teenagers. He works hard. He knows his subject well. He joins associations for more professional development. His love is for the students and the classroom, not the administration. Here is your "ideal" teacher!

The teenagers like him. He is popular. The young girls talk about him. One girl got some attention for her work in one lesson. Her friend got jealous. In the playground "talk" between the girls, jealousies and rivalry are the norm. The poor teacher knew nothing of this. In a month's time, one of the girls made a remark in front of another teacher about the male teacher giving too much attention to her friend. Before long, the girl gives an exaggerated statement where it makes the male teacher vulnerable to rumours. The other teacher feels obliged to report it.

Before long the male teacher is called in to the Principal and then to the regional offices to explain himself. He is devastated. Even though he is entirely innocent, some mud still stays. There are then rumours in the community. He finds another job quickly. He is never the same person again.

HOW TO FIX THIS PROBLEM

Principals and executive staff must have training in how to handle this problem. Rumours destroy good teachers, male or female.

There has to be **more power** given to schools, principal and teachers.

There has to be a **legal avenue for teachers to sue for damages**. If students knew they could be legally challenged (or their parents) then this problem would be reduced.

Unfortunately it is some of the best teachers that have been swallowed by this injustice. They are gone forever. They keep quiet.

If the standing **committee could access some of these teachers**, they would be excellent resources for learning how to go about new training for principals and regional office employees. They would also be excellent to show how damaging this can be.

Male teachers will remain rare while this continues. The situation is becoming worse. Female teachers, while not getting the sexual implications, are still subject to damaging rumours as well.

I can tell you more.....

APPENDIX 2

CONCENTRATION PROGRAMS BOY'S DEVELOPMENT

High Schools

Teachers in High Schools do not have the time to narrow their efforts to every boy's need. Most teachers will tell you that they have more problems with boy's concentration level than girls. You do not need research to prove that.

However, there doesn't seem to be correlating programs that encourage concentration levels. Such a simple solution! Concentration programs do not have to be boring. Look at Montessori style activities in a classroom. Look at how many times boys change their activity level and how it improves over time.

I have introduced these simple activities in LOTE classes with great success. Then I apply the same principal, bit by bit, to individuals who need more practice.

A methodical approach is essential. It needs to be well thought and applied by a dedicated teacher with patience and understanding. The choice of teacher is essential. The personality of the teacher is more important than the qualification on paper.

Development needs are so obtuse at this age i.e. being a teenager. Programs should therefore be vertically structured and may have varying timelines to tune themselves to individual needs.

The programs need to be multi cultural

- Many of the boys are themselves from differing cultural backgrounds. As soon as a teacher shows respect for their culture, they have the undying respect and support from those boys. Then the teacher can begin major methodical work in reading and appropriate response.
- Many of the students are victims of racial prejudice. They also victimise others in turn. A multi cultural, cross cultural awareness program is essential.

The program needs to be multi skilled

- Choice is essential.
- Self confidence is built up by being successful at something. Create the situation where the individual boy is successful and then work on that skill, then the next skill, until that child is moving across skills with confidence.

APPENDIX 3

PROGRAMS LIKE OUTWARD BOUND

It is an illusion that these programs cost a lot of money. If you look at the results, you only need one of these to achieve what a myriad of others has tried.

The programs do not have to be the actual Outward Bound program itself. They come in all shapes and sizes for all different students.

Here are some ideas:

- Birrigai in the ACT is an outdoor school. Use some of its principles to train boys in that environment in the bush.
 - Outdoor Education excursions are very successful with problem boys and those who find it hard to read. Find out why. Ask people like Dave McCarthy (Kambah High), Rob Horsefield, any all the other male outdoor ed teachers. You can inspire remedial programs, reading extension etc through outdoor ed.
 - Overseas excursions have been doing this as a “side line” for years. Boys have become more culturally sensitive, confident and caring. For further information, see me. This isn’t the type of overseas excursion where the students just trail behind a guide. I am referring to excursions with a personal challenge overseas.
 - Long treks. Rob Horsefield used to take boys on a week walk from Katoomba to Mittagong. Ten years later, those boys say that such a trek changed their attitudes and made them ready to accept challenges such a remedial work, reading and where they are going in life.
 - Boys in teenage times look for identity. Encourage programs that give this. But with one significant challenge. All these programs need psychological strong support from the schools and regional offices. The teachers who take these trips and courses are vulnerable to rumours, jealousies (from colleagues too) and misunderstanding. There needs to be STRONG support mechanism and a good follow up. I have good ideas for that support mechanism, as I have been though the teacher’s worst nightmare already, on excursion.
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