

I hereby submit the following to the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education.

I have been working as a secondary school science and maths teacher as well as in Primary schools teaching reading. I am also currently managing a National home tutoring service.

I have been involved in professional education for over 25 years.

From my experience involving classroom teaching, dealing with parents, children and schools, and providing educational assistance nationally through tutoring, I would offer up the following comments:

THE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT:

1. Education is primarily the responsibility of parents, not the State, however it is not treated that way.
2. Because education is primarily the responsibility of parents, they need to be able to make an informed choice about the type of education they want for their children, and about what is happening with their children in school. Schools are leaving parents in the dark.
3. Schools are generally not providing information on their students' basic skill levels, or on reports for non basic subjects.
4. Schools appear to be unaccountable to the major stakeholders so that parents, governments and various agencies have little idea about what standards are being set or achieved.
5. Schools appear to be run by state governments that have a systemic purpose involving the dumbing down of Australian children.
6. Schools appear to teach little values or respect, or be striving to excel academically unless they are selective schools.
7. Schools, specifically have failed to teach basic numeracy and literacy.
8. Reading Recovery was imported from NZ to help children recover from what they should have been taught properly in the first place. Reading Recovery has failed Australian children.

9. Reading needs to be taught using intensive phonics, not the whole language, look-say, method that has been failing students for the last four decades.
10. Bullying is rife in schools.
11. Teachers are not taught how to teach.
12. Children are not assessed at every level, and tests such as the Basic Skills (NSW) or AIMS (Vic) are not acted upon by schools.
13. Due to the failure of the school system to provide a satisfactory learning environment, not only are we dumbing down Australia, but we are producing a nation of criminals. Studies show that the number one factor leading to incarceration in Australia, is a failure to complete education.

THE SOLUTION

1. The Federal Government needs to set academic benchmarks at every grade level. Since the States receive Federal education funding, they should be accountable to the Federal Government for how our taxes are spent on our children's education, and exactly what standards are being achieved.
2. The government needs to implement an educational curriculum that will deliver on those standards.
3. Schools need to be held accountable via funding to achieve academic benchmarks.
4. Teachers who can speak, read and write excellent English, who excel in their subjects, and have a gift and desire for teaching, should be the only ones allowed to teach our children.
5. To ensure more suitably qualified teachers are attracted into education, teacher pay should be increased.
6. Principals must be given autonomy to hire , fire and reward teachers.
7. All managers involved with the State education departments must be suitably qualified.
8. Teacher training institutions must be upgraded to teach teaches how to teach, not just sociology, psychology and philosophy, but how to teach.

9. Primary school teachers must be taught how to teach phonics, not that there are several methods by which children can learn to read.
10. School discipline needs to be enhanced via a reward and punishment system. Otherwise not only will the children be learning how not to read, but also how not to behave. Furthermore, the best people will not be attracted into teaching when the school environment is more like a battlefield.
11. Bullying must be eradicated from schools by more teacher training on bullying and schools must be more diligent in supervising students.
12. Schools must be held legally responsible for negligence with respect to academic standards, violence and bullying.
13. Schools must be made into happy, healthy, safe places where learning is fun and where excellence is the benchmark for all academic standards.
14. In the long term, since it is impossible to attract suitable people to educate our children if there are none, Australia's below replacement fertility rate must be increased so that more children are being born. Currently, we are having to import teachers who barely speak English and whose accents are extremely difficult for children to understand, because for the last 30 years we have not provided the social support and encouragement for women in Australia to have children.

I attach by way of example, of how we are belittling our children, part of a letter I received from a fully registered teacher in Victoria, hoping to work as a tutor. The English is the problem.

Reasons why Applicant want to be a Tutor :

I am a Maths teacher and moved to Melbourne recently and looking for Maths teacher post. I like to start with maths tutoring so I can impart my knowledge and at the same time get acquired with VIC curriculum. I have worked with student in groups and individually and can motivate them and explain them mathematical concept .I got my full registration with Victoria Institute of Teaching. Police check has been made before giving full registration.

Thankyou for this opportunity to contribute to this vital inquiry.

David Bernard