

Thoughts of A Veteran Practitioner ①

I first started teaching in 1983. I had a Primary / P.E degree. In 1983 I taught P.E and had my first class in 1984.

There were 35 Grade 4 children in the class. I wrote on a blackboard and we had one computer in the room. There were no such things as T.A's. The only condition children had was A.D.D. It was the buzz word at the time.

Children behaved and a teacher didn't have to be highly proficient with Behaviour Management. A teacher could teach and children learnt. We had one 20 minute general staff meeting per week. Teaching was a joy. If a teacher wanted to go on an excursion a note would go home.

You'd order a bus and away you'd go.

Back then we were bonded to the Department of Education. We were on

studentships and actually got paid to study! We were guaranteed a job on completion of our degree. And the transfer policy was 2 years. ②

As the years went by things changed. Now after 41 years this is the current landscape.

Teaching has become so difficult. There are so many disorders. Autism, Trauma, Explosive Anger Disorder etc, so its tough.

These children are supported but these days so many children dont respect teachers and parents don't. Young teachers are abused verbally everyday. They have to attend multiple meetings and work long hours many in preparation at home. They have to earn a contract and then it takes years to become permanent. Many young aren't studying education and these teachers are burning out and quitting within 3 to 5 years. So there is a teacher shortage at the front end and

many at the backend are retiring earlier. These young teachers finish their degrees with a debt. The occupation is at crisis point. Ridiculous things are happening. A lot of teachers have h.A.T.S (Limited Authority to teach). I have seen 2 of the best young teachers gain contracts on h.A.T.S. But then they get seconded to leave the school and do a final teaching practice. I've seen a couple of these better practitioners than their supervising teacher!

So what are the solutions?

Firstly, the conditions need to change. The workload is enormous. Secondly, better pay conditions are required. Teachers are grossly underpaid. Teachers are being head hunted for very attractive packages in other states. I was talking to a young teacher today, I told her that she'd save enough money in 3 years to buy a house.

A lot of Principals don't comprehend how 4
hard the full time base grade teachers work.
No one in a school works harder than
a base grade teacher who is in front of
the class day in and out.

Finally, the Australian Curriculum. Its
overcrowded, political and full of a lot
of concepts that ^{aren't} applicable in all schools

I saw a teacher trying to teach a
struggling class complex sentences which
was in the curriculum. They couldn't even
write a simple sentence. Some could but
others couldn't. Some could handle complex
sentences. I saw another young teacher
trying to teach Asian studies in a struggling
class. She watered ~~it~~ down the concept in
a way that simple. But what's the
point because ^{kids} didn't know where Hobart
was,

Finally, this has been cathartic to write,

I've been quoted on breakfast radio. I'm ⁵
passionate. I know these words will fall
on deaf ears but I live in hope that
maybe something I've ^{said} resonates with
someone trying to create change for
the better.

Regards David Lewis

(Teacher at Dodges Ferry P.S in
the South East of Hobart)