

Research Project Summary

Research Title	School Poll 2004
Name	Senator Lyn Allison
Dept/Institution	Australian Democrats spokesperson for schools
Final_Report_Received_Date	3/09/2005

Project Officer Comments

The 2004 School Poll national survey of year 11 students was conducted from August 9 to September 10 2004. It was the second School Poll, the first being in late 2002. School Poll is an initiative of Senator Lyn Allison, Leader and Schools spokesperson for the Australian Democrats.

The aim of the School Poll is to give students the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences in school and a chance to inform policy makers of their views and their experiences. It is the only national survey of its kind so far.

The survey was conducted online at www.schoolpoll.net in total anonymity. It comprised of mostly multiple choice questions, with some open-ended questions to allow for students to provide individual answers.

1013 students from across Australia participated in School Poll 2004, an increase of almost 45% on the 2002 response.

KEY FINDINGS:

Curriculum Issues - subject choice, curriculum content and quality of learning.

1. Almost 30% of students were unable to study all the subjects they wanted, with the highest response for subjects unable to be taken in creative arts subjects and social sciences.
2. Personal money management is an area of concern for students, with 27.7% disagreeing that they had been taught a lot about the area.
3. Most issues in relation to sexuality, gender and life education have been well covered in schools, but not parenthood.

Co-educational schooling

1. A large number of students in single sex schools have indicated they would prefer that their school was co-educational.
2. Almost 20% of students would prefer to have some single sex classes. Of these students 78.5% are girls.

Gifted Education

1. Only 44% of students said their school has a gifted education program, and only 59.6% of students attend a school which allows acceleration in certain subjects.

Co or extra curricular activities

1. Students indicated that a fairly wide range of activities are offered by their school, and participation is quite good, with 71.7% of students participating in one or more activities in year 11.

Range and quality of school facilities

1. Students seem fairly satisfied with the range and quality of facilities, with the exception of the school tuck-shop. An alarming high 28.8% rated the nutritional value of food available from the tuck-shop as poor or very poor, while another 27.6% found it only satisfactory.
2. Over half the respondents have classes in portable classrooms, and 54.1% of these students said the condition of these room is worse or much worse than the permanent classrooms.
3. Half the students said their school does not have a gymnasium.

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Teacher quality, access and gender balance

1. Encouragingly, 66.2% of students said their year 11 teachers were mostly good, while only 8.8% said good teachers were rare.
2. 49.1% of students said about half their teachers were male and half were female, while 42.8% said most of their teachers were female. Despite this imbalance, students seem quite happy with the gender balance of their teachers and only 17.4% wanted more male teachers.
3. Students are fairly satisfied with the amount of on to one access they have with their teachers: only 12.1% said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the amount of access.

Decision making at school

There is still a small percentage of students who have no say in the appointment of their school captains and student council representatives.

Plans after school

1. A vast majority of students intend to finish year 12.
2. While 62.5% of students intend to go to university when they finish school, only 7.7% said they intended to study at a TAFE or VET college, and only 4.6% intend to get an apprenticeship, indicating vocational education pathways may not be given enough emphasis by schools.

Working with others at school and bullying

1. Most students indicated that poor behaviour of other students in class is a problem or big problem, for the reason that it is distracting, annoying, disruptive, frustrating and intimidating.
2. 70.2% of students also said that bullying was a problem or a big problem in their school.

A full copy of the report can be found online at www.democrats.org.au

Research Project Summary

Research Title The Policy-Cultures Dilemma in Education and Training for Indigenous Australians

(Note: originally The Politics of Education and Training for Indigenous Australians)

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Final_Report_Received_Date 1/09/2005

Project Officer Comments

This study examines the issue of policy's failure, for the most part, to realise for Indigenous peoples in the NT outcomes that are equitable with those for other Territorians. The essential premise with which the study commences is that cultural difference, between the public service providers and their Indigenous clients and their circumstances, is primarily responsible for that failure.

The period covered is from the end of World War Two (WW11) to the end of the 20th century. The study has involved research in the histories of government, social and economic development, Indigenous affairs and education in the NT, policy theory and analysis, and public administration of education in cross cultural situations.

The principal issue is that, at the end of the 20th century, Indigenous students' overall achievement in formal education was unsatisfactory, distinctly below that of non-Indigenous Territorians, including non-native speakers of English, meeting neither providers' goals nor clients' expectations. Standards were perceived as having declined over the last quarter-century.

The findings of this report are not conclusive, but they point distinctly to a gap between the civic culture of the public providers and the cultures of the clients and their circumstances as being the prime cause of public education policy's failing Indigenous Territorians generally.

Paradoxes abound, however. The principal quandary is that as the process grew more inclusive, promoting client ownership and participation, and as resource allocations increased and specific needs were addressed, outcomes declined. No instant panacea has emerged, but rigor and accountability in formal education are recognised as fundamental and integral to the comprehensive approach required to address the wide ranging inter-related societal problems assailing Indigenous territorians. It is proposed as potentially advantageous that service delivery employ Indigenous instructional and learning styles, provided "culturally appropriate" does not become a euphemism for patronising diminution of rigour. Ultimately, there is no gainsaying the reality that circumstances, including educational outcomes, in any community, remote, rural or urban, will only improve and be sustainable when they are given priority and sustained commitment locally.