

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DISCIPLINE ISSUES IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA: 1990 & 1995.

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Summary.

This report summarises the results of a replication study undertaken in 1995 of a 1990 survey. Both surveys were based on a random sample of 20% of the teachers drawn from metropolitan schools in Adelaide, South Australia. The focus for both studies was on teachers' perceptions of ongoing discipline problems in classrooms and school grounds together with their views on related issues such as strategies for the management of difficult behaviours and changes needed to ameliorate such problems.

Caution is needed the interpretation of results of comparative studies such as this one are interpreted. Over the five year period between each of the surveys it is possible that variables unknown to the researchers might have contributed to any observed changes recorded. Thus drawing conclusions regarding possible causal relationships between the application of new discipline policies in schools and changes (for instance, in the reported frequencies of incidents of classroom or playground misbehaviours) has been avoided.

In general the findings show little change in the types of problems most often reported as being the most prevalent in classrooms from R-12. There were however statistically significant differences across the two surveys, viz., (i) between the actual daily occurrences of incidents of difficult behaviours in classrooms and (ii) the frequencies of such occurrences. Possible explanations have been suggested within the context for the need for further research. Of particular interest have been teachers' comments regarding the strategies they have most often used to manage student discipline issues and which approaches they considered effective or otherwise.

Introduction

Over the past ten years Australian government schools have been undergoing significant changes in their approaches to discipline and student behaviour management. State governments have replaced corporal punishment with other discipline approaches. However, the proposals for dispensing with corporal punishment at the time were seen by some as an invitation for anarchy to dominate in schools, and moves by some governments were strongly and vocally resisted both by the public and many teachers. In order to meet the concerns of some groups in their reformulation of discipline policies, some state governments retained policies which ensured that schools were able to utilise some suspension and expulsion powers to deal with difficult students. For a number of government policy makers, discipline was still understood to mean the retention of power for authorities to exercise control, retribution or constraint towards students considered to be

recalcitrant or difficult to manage.

In his appraisal of the new government policy approaches, Slee (1995) concluded that inadequate consideration was given to other possible discipline practices apart from those which were designed to exercise compliance and control. Slee and others have argued for alternative approaches to discipline, and emphasised the need to view discipline from the standpoint of educational rather than purely managerial, objectives. As Knight (1991) pointed out, effective school discipline policies which are expected to extend beyond the need for student control require an informed research and theoretical framework. Ignoring these requirements results inevitably in a formulation of strategies that give educational authorities the power to exercise restraints and apply punishments, such as suspensions and expulsion

orders, to a small minority of students resulting in little or no educational gains for the school or student community overall. However, several Australian states have made conscious attempts to establish discipline policies based on approaches which extended beyond the simple application of sanctions for unacceptable behaviours. Western Australian policy-makers took into account research findings as part of their deliberations, and included pastoral care initiatives and the importance of quality working relationships between teachers and students. Tasmania (aided by local research and debate), also veered away from a purely punitive agenda in its policies, to focus on the educative role of schools as part of their discipline functions. Other states were less inclusive of processes using research or broad consultation, and appeared to be much more guided by political considerations and public and media pressures from the more conservative quarters of the community, including teacher organisations, in their deliberations over policy. The policy developed by the Education Department in South Australia in the late 1980's was particularly aimed at changing the culture of its schools. It adopted a 'whole-school' approach, which embraced a number of principles, including recognition of the democratic rights and responsibilities of all members of the school community; shared responsibilities and decision making; and discipline practices which included clear expectations and consequences (Education Department, South Australia, 1989). Since the completion of this 1995 survey, several changes have been made to that policy, notably the delegation of more power to schools and principals to suspend and expel students in certain cases.

In formulating the new school discipline policy, the then Education Department of South Australia, (now Department for Education and Children's Services:- DECS) took into account evidence for what constituted exemplary school practice. School discipline was defined as "the development of social order and of self-discipline" (Johnson, 1992, p. 99). Consultative-based processes involving schools and the community, as well as survey material which identified the characteristics of "successful schools", helped to formulate discipline

policies which were sympathetic to cultural issues in schools. Policy-makers also placed much importance on the 'whole-school' approach, to include not only teachers and students, but also parents and the community in taking responsibility for discipline and the maintenance of behavioural standards. Also, in this educationally oriented approach to behaviour management, emphasis was given to developing successful schools and acknowledging the successful achievements of all students. Five key policy statements were set out, from which schools were to design their particular behaviour management strategies, to implement policies (Education Department of South Australia, 1989).

However, as one writer has argued, to fully encompass the challenges of an educationally oriented discipline policy, factors which contribute to discipline problems need to be identified as precisely as possible, for effective strategies to be formulated (Coulby, 1988). While the South Australian policy made only limited use of research sources in its formulation, it did base its policies on findings from surveys of identified good-practice schools. The policies were also developed in the context of systematic consultation, and incorporated professional development programs for school staff as part of the implementation (Education Department, South Australia, 1989; Elkins & Izard, 1992). Recognising the need for research-based information on the current status of discipline problems in schools, and because it was felt that a number of important questions about student behaviour in state schools had not been addressed, an extensive and independent survey study was initiated concurrent to the introduction of the Department's new school discipline policy (Adey, Oswald & Johnson, 1991). The

present study is a replication of that previous study investigating what impact, if any, the policy may have had on the discipline climate of schools over the five years since its inception.

Methodology

The questionnaire used in the 1995 study essentially covered those areas canvassed in the original survey (Adey et al., 1991). These included:

- (a) demographic and other background characteristics of subjects.
- (b) discipline problems including their frequency of occurrence inside the classroom, and in the school playground.
- (c) teachers' management strategies with difficult classes or students and their perceived effectiveness.
- (d) needed changes in schools to reduce behaviour problems.

Sampling Procedures:

The target populations for both studies were teachers in government schools in the metropolitan area of Adelaide who were employed on at least 50% of a teaching week. For the 1995 study 7700 teachers were identified within the target population. As before, a 20% random sample

was selected by computer with the help of the Department for Education and Children's Services in South Australia (DECS). Questionnaires were sent to all selected teachers via school courier services provided by DECS. Included in each questionnaire envelope was an individual letter to each teacher and a stamped self-addressed envelope.

Two weeks after this posting, reminder letters were sent to those teachers who had not returned the initial questionnaire, requesting a response to the study. Anonymity was assured for all participants by assigning a number which was stamped on the return envelope. This number was recorded on the returned questionnaire and checked off a master list. All numbered responses were transferred to a data file compiled by an independent computer organisation, to be analysed later using the SPSS for Windows package (Norusis, 1992). The above procedures paralleled those used in the original survey. Written responses to two open-ended questions were analysed using the NUD.IST program (Richards & Richards, 1990). The response rate for the 1995 study was 59% which was slightly less than that achieved in the 1990 study.

Representativeness of Study Sample

A gender based comparison of the samples and the parent populations (see Table 1) suggests that confidence can be assured in this aspect of making comparisons between the surveys. The random sampling in this survey resulted in a distribution of age groups skewed toward the over 50's age ranges with those under 30 years being under-represented. However, age distributions within the sample closely match those in the parent population.

Table 1: Comparisons of Samples and Parent Populations by Gender.

Gender%	Sample	1990 survey		1995 survey	
		Parent Pop.	Sample	Parent pop	
Female	63	61	61	64	
Male	37	39	39	36	

A notable change in the proportions of teachers from the various school levels who responded to the questionnaire is apparent in the fewer numbers of secondary teachers represented in this current sample (see Table 2.). Also, percentages of female teachers at all school levels were lower in the second study.

Table 2. Percentages of teachers at each school level.

School Level	% of teachers		% female		% male	
	1990	1995	1990	1995	1990	1995
Junior Primary	11.7	19.3	96.8	95.2	3.2	4.8

Primary	46.5	43.8	66.6	56.7	33.443.3
Secondary	37.7	30.5	47.1	41.9	52.958.1
Other (eg: Sp Schl)	4.1	6.4	76.5	69.0	23.531.0

Further demographic data are presented in Appendix A.

RESULTS

DIFFICULT STUDENT BEHAVIOURS: TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS

The major intention of the 1995 research study was to compare data collected from the questionnaire surveys, one given to teachers at the introduction of the DECS school discipline policy, the other five years after its inception. Summarised below are teachers' responses from both the 1990 and 1995 samples to a number of common questionnaire items identifying a range of discipline problems both in classrooms and around the school ground. Comparisons between the responses from each of the samples may provide evidence of the effects, if any, of the behaviour management strategies over the ensuing five years. The types of problems listed below (Table 3 to 6) are similar to those reported by a number of other researchers as being those behaviours which teachers typically report as being found to frequently (i) disrupt classes and in some instances (ii) be very difficult to manage.

Table 3: Percentages of all teachers who reported that they dealt with particular discipline problems

* All items are ranked from highest to lowest percentages on the category "ALMOST DAILY/DAILY"

** Significant differences between Almostdaily/Daily & Several Times Daily on all items (Chi-square, $p < .001$)

Table 3 shows the rankings of the items from highest to lowest percentages of teachers' reported responses for both surveys. Several notable aspects of each survey group's responses are evident; viz., (i) The rank orders of the 1995 survey responses for the category 'ALMOST DAILY/DAILY' show important differences from those in the earlier study (see Tables 3 to 6). For instance, in the second survey the item 'talking out of turn' was rated as the most commonly occurring discipline problem across all school levels. Similarly, 'making unnecessary noise' and 'cheeky remarks' were also given higher rankings in this second survey.

(ii) Higher percentages of teachers in the 1995 survey reported

problems as happening 'ALMOST DAILY/DAILY'. This second survey result reflected teachers' perceptions of increased daily occurrences of such misbehaviours.

(iii) In contrast, there were significant decreases in the percentages of teachers responding on the category 'SEVERAL TIMES DAILY'. On a

number of the items that decrease was 50% or more.

Explaining such differences presents some difficulties because of the unknown effects of a number of factors intervening during the time between the two surveys. Several possible influences, such as significant changes in the culture of schools over the five years, are discussed in the Summary.

The following tables (Table 4 to 6), show a consistent pattern of teacher responses within the categories the 'ALMOST DAILY/DAILY' and 'SEVERAL TIMES DAILY', across the three school levels, (ie, increased percentages in the former and decreased percentages in the latter category).

Table 4: Percentages of all Secondary teachers who reported that they dealt with particular discipline problems.

* All items are ranked from highest to lowest percentages on the category "ALMOST DAILY,/DAILY"

For secondary teachers in the 1995 survey, 'talking out of turn' had the highest reported once daily incidence. In contrast, the occurrence of this misbehaviour on a 'SEVERAL TIMES DAILY' basis was significantly less in comparison to the first survey results. This was also the case for teachers at the primary and junior primary levels (Tables 5 and 6). A similar trend characterised the responses to the majority of the items.

Table 5: Percentages of all Primary teachers who reported that they dealt with particular discipline problems

* All items are ranked from highest to lowest percentages on the category "ALMOST DAILY/DAILY"

Further support for the view that the classroom based behaviour management strategies might be influencing student conduct can be suggested from the item 'infringing class rules' which was ranked much

lower as a daily problem in the second survey. For example primary level teachers in the 1995 survey relegated this type of disruption to ninth ranking, compared with fourth position in the first survey.

Table 6: Percentages of all Junior Primary teachers who reported that they dealt with particular discipline problems).

* All items are ranked from highest to lowest percentages on the category "ALMOST DAILY/ DAILY"

The junior primary groups results are similar to those of the two previous school levels in that there are increased responses rates on the 'ALMOST DAILY/DAILY' category, on the 'SEVERAL TIMES DAILY' category, percentage response rates are less than half those reported

in the 1990 study.

Changes in the junior primary rankings of several items over the two surveys may point to the effects of the introduction of DECS new behaviour management guidelines. The item 'infringing class rules' moved from third to fifth ranking and 'getting out of seat' from fifth to ninth ranking, both of which have been targeted especially by teachers in formulating classroom rules.

Most difficult Behaviours Reported:

Some misbehaviours may occur more frequently than others but may not necessarily be the more difficult to manage. Behaviours which teachers identified as particularly difficult to manage were, in some cases, different from the most commonly occurring disruptive classroom behaviours (see Table 7). For example, although few teachers generally reported actual incidents of 'verbal abuse to students' or 'physical aggression to students', these items were ranked relatively highly as difficult to manage.

Table 7: Percentages of teachers who identified the most difficult behaviours to deal with.

* All items are ranked from highest to lowest percentages on the category "ALMOST DAILY/ DAILY"

Overall, the rankings of items were very similar across the two surveys. Secondary teachers reported dealing with 'idleness and work

avoidance' as the most difficult classroom behaviour to manage, possibly reflecting a concern with students' academic performance and study behaviour habits. Primary and junior primary teachers were in agreement that for them 'talking out of turn' was the most difficult to manage misbehaviour, a possible indication of their concerns with students' social interaction behaviours.

DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY TEACHERS AROUND THE SCHOOL

Discipline problems extend beyond the classroom to the school-ground. The management of discipline problems in the school-ground has been relatively poorly addressed in the textbooks, the focus having been largely on the classroom. The behaviour management policies of DECS was intended to be applied to children's' conduct in school yard situations as well as in the classroom.

The surveys into discipline in South Australian schools have given equal weight to inquiring into teachers' views on behaviour problems both inside the classroom and around the school-ground (Adey et al., 1991). The findings from the present survey showed that discipline problems in school grounds differ from those of classroom origin (Tables 8-11).

All Teachers: While the classroom-based results showed changes in teachers' perceptions of the numbers and frequencies of behaviour problems between the 1990 and the 1995 survey across the categories 'ALMOST DAILY' and 'SEVERAL TIMES DAILY', this was not as evident in perceptions of behaviours around the school.

Table 8: Percentages of all teachers who reported discipline problems around the school.

* All items are ranked from highest to lowest percentages on the category "ALMOST DAILY/ DAILY"

** Significant difference between Almostdaily/Daily & Several Times Daily (Chi-square, $p < .001$)

Secondary Teachers: There was little difference in percentage response rates for the secondary teachers' results over the two surveys (Table 9). The rank order of items was common to both apart from 'leaving school without permission' which had an increase in the percentages of teachers responding, and 'running in corridors' which decreased.

Table 9: Percentages of Secondary Teachers who reported

discipline problems around the school.

* All items are ranked from highest to lowest percentages on the category "ALMOST DAILY/ DAILY"

Primary Teachers: Some increases in the 1995 over the 1990 results for the primary teachers' response rates to 'SEVERAL TIMES DAILY' are evident. This might indicate that primary school students have yet to adjust to new school ground conduct policies (Table 10). For many of these students, differing expectations about playground behaviours might have been well established prior to the introduction of the new student behaviour management policies.

Table 10: Percentages of Primary Teachers who reported discipline problems around the school.

* All items are ranked from highest to lowest percentages on the category "ALMOST DAILY/ DAILY"

** Significant differences between Almostdaily/Daily & Several Times Daily (Chi-square, $p < .001$)

Junior Primary Teachers: In contrast, junior primary children might be more amenable to new rules and expectations, being relative newcomers to the schools at the time new management strategies were being introduced. This might account for the junior primary teachers' response patterns showing greater variation than did those of the other school levels (Table 11).

Table 11: Percentages of Junior Primary Teachers who reported discipline problems around the school.

* All items are ranked from highest to lowest percentages on the category "ALMOST DAILY, DAILY"

Notably, there has been an overall marked decrease in the percentages of the 1995 survey junior primary teachers reporting daily problems of a repetitive nature ('SEVERAL TIMES DAILY'), especially on the items

'physical aggression to students', 'running in corridors', and 'verbal

abuse to students'. Also, only 1.8% of teachers' of the second survey reported occurrences of physical aggression toward them (a reduction of from 4.5% from the first survey) .However, the differences were not statistically significant..

HOW TEACHERS MANAGE DIFFICULT CLASSES AND PUPILS

The strategies teachers used to manage and respond to classroom discipline problems and their effectiveness or otherwise are summarised in Tables 12-15. Apart from the item 'request suspension', all the rankings on the 'OFTEN' category in the 1995 survey results match those of the earlier study. However, there were smaller percentages of teachers recorded in the second survey as having actually used the management strategies listed .

Approaches using personal communication with students were the most often used and generally perceived as the most effective, (although a high 'non-effective rating was also recorded). Small percentage increases occurred on those items which implied the seeking of support from another person or group to remove troublesome students, viz., 'refer pupil...', 'send pupil...', 'request suspension...'.

Table 12: Percentages of all teachers who reported using particular strategies/sanctions to deal with difficult classes or pupils.

All Teachers: The items 'discuss problem with whole class' and 'ignore minor problems' were perceived as less effective management strategies by teachers in the second sample, even though both were reported as frequently used. (Table 12). The second survey findings showed slight increases in the percentages of teachers rating as 'EFFECTIVE' those strategies which called for the involvement of parents, conferencing with pupils and parents, or the removal of students from classrooms.

Table 13: Percentages of Secondary Teachers who reported using particular strategies/sanctions to deal with difficult classes or pupils.

Secondary Teachers: Fewer percentages of secondary teachers in the 1995 sample used the most commonly reported strategies, viz., 'discuss problem with whole class', and 'reason with pupil'. While 13.4% of these teachers responded to the item 'discuss problem with whole class', none rated it as an effective approach (Table 13). It was reported by 13.3% of teachers as 'MOST INEFFECTIVE', giving rise to the

question as to why those teachers use this method for the management of behaviour problems at all.

Table 14: Percentages of Primary Teachers who reported using strategies/sanctions to deal with difficult classes or pupils.

Primary Teachers: 'Seeking parental involvement' was rated 'EFFECTIVE' by higher percentages of teachers in the second survey. In comparison to the original study, fewer percentages of the 1995 survey primary school teachers recorded using the strategies 'reasoning with pupil in class', or 'discuss problem with whole class' (Table 14). However, slightly higher percentages were noted on the items 'have pupil leave class', 'keeping pupils in', and those items which described using referral to another teacher or the principal as methods for coping. Teachers seemed to be divided on the effectiveness of using reasoning approaches with students in class. Also, a number of teachers in both surveys acknowledged that while they used the strategy 'ignore minor disruptions', this was not particularly effective as a management approach.

Table 15. Percentages of Junior Primary Teachers who reported using strategies/sanctions to deal with difficult classes or pupils.

Junior Primary Teachers: Changes across the two samples showed a trend similar to the previous groups, with a decline in the proportions of teachers using strategies reliant upon reasoning and discussing. Instead, there has been a shift toward referral and removal of students.

NEEDED STRATEGIES/PRIORITIES FOR ACTION.

Teachers' views were sought regarding needed changes which would enable the better management of discipline problems (Table 16). They were also asked to indicate what changes were most needed to lessen discipline problems in their school.

Table 16: Percentages of teachers who reported strategies needed to

help deal
with difficult pupil behaviour.

Clearly, for most teachers in the 1995 survey the problem of class size had become one of major concern. For all teachers there was an increase of 25% in the response rate over the earlier survey results, with the largest proportion being from primary level teachers (82.7%). Other important changes are evident on the items 'more counselling services', 'tougher sanctions', 'more team teaching' and 'change curriculum content'.

The 1995 survey results also suggest that these teachers may feel less need for training and other support programs intended as remedies for ameliorating student behaviour management problems (see 'staff discussion'; 'more guidance'; 'more inservice'). Instead, the results suggest a tendency toward teachers possibly evaluating their own professional approaches and skills in classrooms, as strategies for better managing difficult student behaviours (eg see items referring to changes in - '..school atmosphere', '..teaching styles', '...curriculum

content', and 'more team teaching'

SUMMARY.

Assessing accurately the findings of replication studies such as this present one requires taking account of the possible effects of extraneous variables on the results. During the five years between the two surveys, a number of changes have taken place in the population of teachers from which the samples were drawn. For instance, approximately 25% or more teachers employed in 1990 left the DECS, choosing to take early and other retirement packages, and their positions have not all been replaced. School support staff numbers have also been decreased. In contrast, class sizes have generally increased by 10% to 15% or more, especially in primary and secondary schools. There have been some amalgamations of junior primary and primary schools, and a number of school closures have taken place. All these events may potentially have been influential, and need to be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

This research approached questions concerning what is meant by 'discipline' in pragmatic terms, being cognisant of the fact that a range of meanings and interpretations could be applied. Some educational theorists advocate approaches to discipline and behaviour

management in schools which embrace fundamental pedagogical principles. Others argue the need for discipline management approaches formulated in terms of strategies focussed upon responding to the ongoing, daily disruptive behaviours by small groups of students. Their emphasis is on providing ways for meeting the immediate needs of those people trying to maintain good order in the school environment and classroom.

The new student behaviour management approaches have attempted to provide structures for teachers to adopt and develop a number of new skills to deal with potentially disruptive and disturbing student behaviours, including on a day to day basis. Under the policy guidelines schools have been encouraged to adopt collaborative decision-making strategies for establishing behavioural norms in the classroom and the school ground. These have included standards related to codes of conduct and to peoples' rights and responsibilities. The new behaviour management strategies have sought to heighten both teachers' and students' levels of awareness in identifying inappropriate and appropriate behaviours in the classrooms and the schoolyard. Processes like classroom discussions have been directed toward mutual decision-making between teachers and pupils, with outcomes such as the visual display of desired behaviours in classes. These were designed to serve both as teaching aids and as reminders for children of expected modes of conduct. As an outcome, it was hoped that teachers would be able to identify and draw attention to non-acceptable behaviours when they occurred, and also to deal more immediately and effectively with the incidents of frequent low level misconduct.

The Classroom:

In comparison to the 1990 survey results, higher percentages of teachers in the second survey reported 'ALMOST DAILY/DAILY' incidents of behaviour problems in their classrooms (Table 4). These findings may be accounted for by the fact that there have been increases in the numbers of student in classes during the years spanning the two surveys. However, the reported decreased frequencies in the 1995 survey results of disruptive classroom behaviours ('SEVERAL TIMES DAILY') during the one day is more difficult to explain. These differences might find some explanation in the post-1990 implementation of the DECS

new student behaviour management guidelines. Schools and teachers have recently established procedures based on the guidelines whereby they have been able to quickly draw students' attention to expected standards of classroom conduct with greater immediacy, thus increasing prospects of circumventing repetitions of misconduct. However, further research would be needed to establish whether any causal relationships such as suggested can be established.

The School Ground:

While the results from the classroom data suggest differences between

the two surveys which possibly may be attributed to the introduction of the behaviour management policies, there is little evidence of effects over time on school grounds behaviours. An exception may be with the junior primary groups, where the new policies may have had limited impact on reducing some misbehaviours (Table 11). It could be argued that in contrast to primary and secondary children, junior primary children might have had either limited or no prior exposure to the previously established school ground cultures of their new schools, and therefore might be able to more amenable to adopting newly introduced standards of conduct. Again, further research would be needed to substantiate such arguments.

Teachers' Management Strategies:

Teachers to continue to rely upon and perceive as effective, dialogue with misbehaving students as their main strategies for dealing with discipline problems. As commented in the earlier survey (Adey, et al., 1991), the majority of the types of classroom difficulties dealt with by teachers were those of a minor nature in themselves, but their frequency and persistence contributed largely to ongoing daily disruptions to teaching. As pointed out above, teachers in the second study have reported marked decreases in the daily frequencies of such misbehaviours.

Methods of disciplining such as conferencing with parents, removal of students from class, sending students to the principal or removal (suspension) from school were seldom used and are no doubt reserved for that small group of persistently difficult to manage students.

There is some evidence to suggest a move by teachers toward reassessing their own practices as an approach for the management of difficult behaviours. Included are changes to their teaching styles, considerations of team teaching as an option, and the possible reassessment of the curriculum.

Needed Changes:

On the question of how best to reduce discipline problems, there is a marked increase between the two surveys in the percentages of teachers indicating the need for smaller classes. The issue of class size and its effects on behaviour is a contentious and at times politically sensitive one. Findings from this study which relate to this issue are as follows:

generally, class sizes have increased during the period of the research teaching staff numbers have decreased

significantly higher percentages of teachers in the second survey report increased incidents of daily disruptive behaviours in their classrooms

higher percentages of teachers (from 53% on the 1990 survey to 83% in 1995 for primary schools) have indicated that a reduction in class sizes is needed to lessen discipline problems.

These observations, while tantalising in their support of the equation

that large class sizes equals more discipline problems, highlight the need for further research to test their veracity.

Teachers' Comments:

Teachers were offered the opportunity on the questionnaire to provide written comments expressing their views on whether or not discipline standards had changed in their schools over the five years spanning the surveys. It is apparent from their responses that there were a range of perceptions on discipline standards, from positive to negative (see Appendix). Possible reasons for such ambivalence is uncertain without more detailed analysis.

However, the negative views expressed were not generally associated with the rationale of the policy nor its guidelines per se. Dissatisfactions were more related to particular outcomes of its application, such as the placing of more demands on teachers' roles. Some teachers viewed the policy as ineffective because of tensions placed on already strained teacher resources, resulting in ineffective policy implementation. Inadequate support services, over-large classes, student and parent attitudes of lack of concern or interest were also mentioned frequently. The perceived failure of both students and parents to accept their responsibilities while being very aware of and claiming their 'rights', was one that teachers considered needed to be addressed.

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APPENDIX:

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS:

The survey results showed that since the inception of the DECS new student behaviour management policy, there have been a number of

changes in the profile of the teacher population. For instance, status positions of teachers have altered. More co-ordinator appointments have been created while at the same time there has been a decline in key teacher positions. Both sample and population characteristics indicated that between the 1990 and 1995 surveys there have been fewer teacher appointments made in the lower age ranges (under 30 years).

The average age of the population of teachers has continued to increase, resulting in larger percentages of teachers closer to the retirement age levels. These findings point to the possible future trends in the numbers of teachers in DECS. Concern regarding the possible shortfalls in the number of teachers needed to staff schools over the next ten or more years might be justified, especially if, for instance:

class sizes are not increased beyond the current level
greater numbers of students are not lost to the private school sector
teachers continue to retire at 65 years or before
teachers are not transferred from the country schools to the city,
(although this could create country schools' shortages).
significant numbers of teachers are not appointed from outside South Australia.

Current Teaching Status.

Minor changes are noticeable between the two samples, with small increases the 1995 survey in the percentages of female teachers recorded as being employed full-time. What effects the apparent loss of up to 26% of the teaching population over the last five years have had on the profile of appointment status cannot be ascertained with the information available in this survey

Table I: Comparison of Percentages of teachers in each survey employed as Full Time or Part Time.

However, the imbalance in numbers between the genders as shown in Tables I and II is a relatively stable characteristic of the teaching population.

Table II: Percentages of teachers who were Permanent or Contract employees.

Gender imbalance is also evident in regard to the occupation of positions of power in schools. Principal positions are still predominantly held by males, although females have gained some ground in the less senior positions such as co-ordinator and key teacher.

Since the time of the first survey, there has been a marked increase in the number of co-ordinator positions, but at the expense of those of key teacher positions.

Table III: Percentages of all teachers at each teaching levels.

Several changes are evident in the make-up of teacher positions at the secondary level. Of special note is the increased percentages in co-ordinator and deputy principal positions, with females accounting for more of the numbers in the former, and males in the latter.

Table IV: Percentages of Secondary teachers at each teaching level.

The largest apparent increases in proportions of female teachers assuming more senior positions have taken place at the primary level. This is especially the case at the principal level, and suggests that equity issues might be having some impact on appointments processes.

Table V: Percentages of Primary teachers at each teaching level.

While the junior primary sample numbers in the 1995 survey are small, they nevertheless reflect the disproportionate percentages of males holding the more senior positions (Table V & VI). The move toward more co-ordinator and fewer key teacher appointments noted earlier is also apparent at this level.

Table VI: Percentages of Junior Primary teachers at each teaching level.

AGE OF TEACHERS.

In the 1990 sample the average age of teachers was 42.5 years whereas the mean age of teachers in the current survey was higher at 47 years. The results (Table VII) show the disparity in the distribution of the

age groups between the two samples, with the majority of the 1995 survey subjects tending to cluster around the mean, ie., fewer teachers in this sample were in the lower age range. The concern raised in the 1990 survey (Adey et al., 1991) of very limited numbers of younger teachers coming into the profession remains unchanged.

Table VII: Percentages of teachers in various age groups.

* It is evident that the 1995 sample is skewed toward the older age groups with 29 and under age groups being under-represented.

1995 parent population percentages for metropolitan teachers are <25 1.0% (F=99%, M=1%); 25-29 4.2% (F=80.8%, M=19.2%);

30-34 8.5% (F=72.5%, M=27.5%); 35-39 19.1% (F=69%, M=31%); 40-44 28.2%:(F=62.7%, M=37.3%);

45-49 22.6%: (F=58%, M=24%); 50-54 12.0%: (F=59%, M=41%); 55-59 3.4% : (F=72.5, M=27.5%) 60+1.0%:(F=821%, M=19%)

Of equal concern are the large percentages of teachers in the upper age echelons within striking distance of retirement. It is possible that a significant number of metropolitan-based teachers might leave the profession over the next ten to fifteen years through retirement. The data suggests that there are reasonable grounds for concern that there may be a critical shortage of teachers in the foreseeable future, given current trends.

YEARS AT CURRENT SCHOOL, AND YEARS OF SERVICE.

The 1990 survey findings indicated that up to 25% of teachers in that sample were eligible to be moved from their current school, having been placed for ten or more years in that school and consequently subject to the '10 year transfer' regulation. As the results in Table VIII show, this transfer policy appears to have had some impact. Percentages of teachers of ten or more years service in their current school have dropped from 24.7% in the 1990 survey to only 9.2% in this recent review. These changes have involved much larger percentages of females than males (especially in the 'more than fifteen years service in current school' groups).

Table VIII: Percentages of teachers who have taught at their current school for identified lengths of time.

Table IX summarises years of teacher service, with the majority the sample showing relatively long years of employment. Male teachers predominate in the 20 plus years of teaching service. The overall picture is one of a largely experienced but rapidly aging teaching population.

Table IX. Percentages of teachers identified with their years of teaching service.

RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED QUESTION: 'In your opinion what changes if any have occurred generally in the discipline climate of schools in which you have taught over the last five years

From the 1995 survey, 660 teachers (60% female and 40% male) responded to the open-ended question (above). Teachers comments were categorised as 'positive' (indicating positive changes had occurred in the discipline climate of schools) 'negative' (indicating negative changes have occurred) 'both positive and negative' (where both are given) or 'no change'.

Typical positive responses by teachers are comments referring to 'rules clear', 'clear behaviour guidelines', 'greater consistency in staff practices' and 'more parental involvement'. Common negative comments included those making references to 'less respect by students', 'more rights for children and less responsibility' (also reported in regard to parents), and 'students more unruly'. The over-riding issue associated with the negative comments was that of the lack of responsibility both by students and parents alike, who are perceived as being more concerned about exercising their own rights.

Teachers who gave both types of responses acknowledged some positive benefits from the introduction of the policy guidelines, but expressed a number of concerns, such as that some students and parents were not supportive of their schools'efforts ; that staff were having extra demands made on them; and that there was a lack of support systems. These matters were believed to be contributing toward creating difficulties for teachers to deal effectively with less manageable students.

The findings from the teachers' written responses suggest some possible effects on schools of the student behaviour management policies. Analysis of the secondary teachers' responses exposed concerns associated with the existing classroom structures, where teachers contact with classes of students are largely subject-based. This has been seen to pose some practical difficulties for the implementation of the DECS policy. Primary and junior primary schools with one teacher to a class group structures seem to have been able to apply policy guidelines more effectively to date.

Table X. Percentages of teachers reporting particular changes in discipline climate in schools.

From the results (Table X) there is a general perception amongst teachers at all levels of there being both positive and negative

changes in the discipline climates of schools since the inception of the DECS student behaviour management policies. The results suggest that the changes have been most evident at the junior primary and primary levels.