



VIRTUS SINE MACULA

30 December 2012

To The Chairman,

Senate Committee of Inquiry into Teaching and Learning.

Submission on Teaching and Learning

I was once the Chief Legal Officer in the New South Wales Department of Education.

In that role I was involved in the prosecution of Teachers who did not measure up to the standards of teaching set by the Department.

That process was held before a senior officer of the Department, who sat as a Tribunal in judgment of the facts presented before him or her.

The facts were presented by me, as the prosecuting officer, by adducing evidence from the Inspector of the Department who was responsible for that particular subject matter. The Tribunal was an administrative tribunal, but the normal rules of appeal to a court were available for such things as questions of law.

One case, *Ex Parte Smith Re Russo* [1971] 1 NSWLR at 184, is an example of an appeal to the Supreme Court of NSW from a decision of the administrative tribunal. That case involved a Mathematics teacher who was examined by an Inspector of Schools, who sat in the classroom, watched the teacher teach his subject, and took notes.

The outcome of that case is of no consequence to my submission. But the process is.

Submission on Teaching and Learning (Contd.)

The process of an Inspector of Schools; qualified in the subject being examined; sitting in on a lesson being taught by a teacher; and providing evidence to the Teacher and the Department, of the satisfactory (or otherwise) teaching skills and content of the lesson, was a proven method of maintaining a high level of teaching skills and content.

That process was discontinued, at the insistence I believe, of the Teachers Union. In New South Wales there is not now a similar system of assessing the skills of teachers in the classroom. In my view there should be such a system.

If the Senate Inquiry wanted a system of improving the teaching skills of teachers, it could do no worse than to recommend to the States that they re-introduce the system of School Inspectors, who could be drawn from the best Teachers, and promoted to those positions.

Such an Inspector could sit in on a lesson being taught by the Teacher and evaluate the skills and knowledge of the Teacher. Advice could be given to the Teacher on ways to improve their performance.

That process would not only weed out the very bad teachers, but it would give all teachers the benefit of an assessment of their skills and knowledge, by an outside independent person.

What better way to achieve one of the objects of the Senate Inquiry ?

Sincerely,

Alan Russell LL.B.