The health promoting school: moving theory into practice: a case study

P. Pearson

University of Wollongong, pearson@uow.edu.au

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THE HEALTH PROMOTING SCHOOL: MOVING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

A CASE STUDY

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

Philip Pearson

1998
ABSTRACT


Pentecost College, a Catholic coeducational secondary school was a pilot for the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) project. This was an initiative of the Department of Health, Department of School Education, Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools in NSW. This research provides a case study of a school involved in trialing the Towards a Health Promoting School (Dept. of Health et al, 1996) document which provides guidelines in policy development and implementation for individual schools. The relationship between policy theory and practice was examined to determine barriers to successful health promotion initiatives and discover ways to make health promotion in schools more effective. A variety of qualitative and quantitative techniques were employed to document the initiatives as to what worked, what did not and why.

Extensive awareness raising of the HPS concept and school community health needs analyses were conducted at the college as part of the HPS process. A HPS committee was established which prioritised health promotion programs to be implemented at the college. These programs were designed to: enhance the physical environment; develop sun protective behaviours; increase physical activity and introduce a 25-hour personal development and health course for senior students. Initiatives were planned and implemented across the three areas of the HPS framework: curriculum, school ethos/environment and the school-home-community interface.

Major problems occurred in practice at Pentecost College with the policy process associated with funding, resources, time and support. The difficulty of involving parents in the secondary school, the risk-taking nature and belief systems of adolescents and competing commitments to priorities added to the problems for providing effective school health promotion initiatives. Whilst the HPS concept is high on the health sector’s list of priorities, it appears that it does not receive reciprocal priority from the education sector. Policy support from the education sector at state and local levels needs to occur for the HPS concept to be successful in NSW secondary schools. The HPS project is in danger of faltering through poor interest, lack of enthusiasm and shifting priorities if further support for teachers in schools is not forthcoming.

Declaration

This thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree to any other university or institution.

Signed: ____________________________ Date: 11/3/99
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