



**School social work
and the human right
to education in
Australia**

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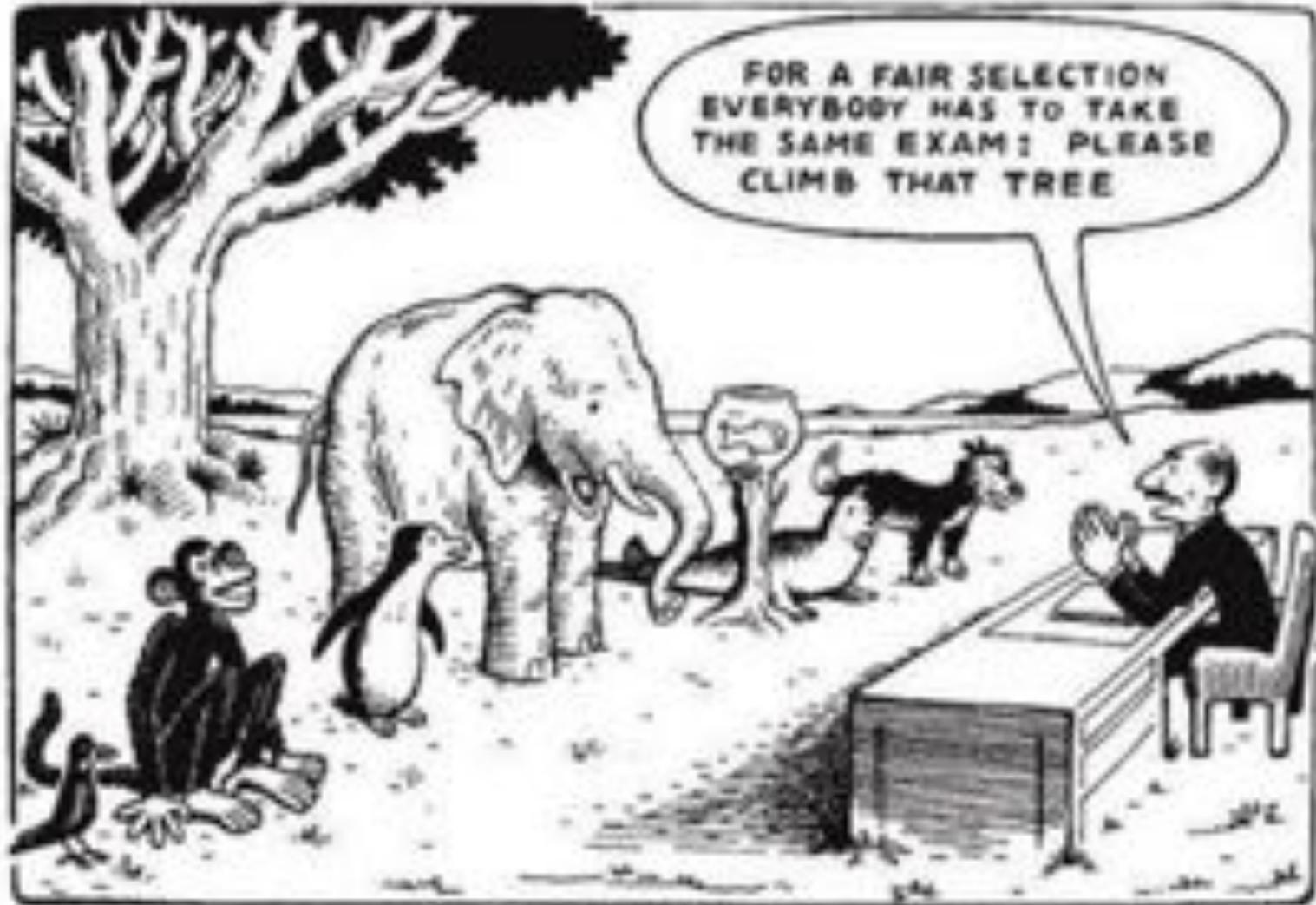
SCHOOL



“If children don’t get the support they need, when they need it, they are deprived of education as a public good. Instead, they are consigned to the bin of under-achievement, and we fail as a nation to realise our potential stock of human capital”

(Boston, 2014, para. 42).

FOR A FAIR SELECTION
EVERYBODY HAS TO TAKE
THE SAME EXAM: PLEASE
CLIMB THAT TREE





THE RESEARCH



Participants

▶ **Student Social Workers**

▶ Five students in the Bachelor of Social Work at ECU who undertook 500 hours field placement in a primary school setting.

Off-site Field Educator

All five students had the one off-site field educator.

▶ **School staff**

▶ Each student had an on-site supervisor who was not a social worker but a member of the school staff.

▶ School principal or nominee

Theme	Description
School-home connection	The relationship between the school, the students' home and the broader community
External barriers to learning	The nature and complexity of issues that students face outside of school
Capacity at the school level	The political, economic and professional context of the school
Multi-disciplinarity within schools	Reframing the school environment so the focus is not on the teaching profession
Needs for learning	The fundamentals of what children need in order to be able to have the opportunity to learn
School social work	Where does a school social worker fit in the education system and what would they do?

...within our local community we're seeing significantly increased and greater need and growing need and what that does then, it puts greater pressure on the home and the home becomes the vulnerable part. But the person who is impacted the most is the child and that's where the role of social worker [comes in] to actually link community support to vulnerable homes, [which] is going to have a beneficial effect on the child.

School staff 3.

... there is probably a significant proportion of kids that can't [learn] because of lack of food, lack of clothes, lack of equipment, lack of love, lack of sleep and we've got the generational poverty ... families here that have been on welfare for generations; they don't value education because they can't see that it got them anywhere.

School staff 5.

... schools run a risk management model and on any given day, the time and resourcing is given to the most at risk child that day.

School staff 3.

...we're not trained to deal with meth, we're not trained to deal with domestic violence, we're not trained to deal with court orders.

School staff 4.

... it definitely needs a whole mixture of different professions. I think having just teachers, or even just all social workers – it can kind of have some blind spots

Student A.

We work really hard with them to give them a break because sometimes life doesn't give them a break.

School staff 4.

I'd like to go with a qualified social worker working within the education sector and these people being common in schools and common in primary schools, not just in secondary schools because I think, unfortunately there's a belief that problems occur when kids are 13, 14, 15, 16 with engagement and drugs. Well that's rubbish. If we can do the work in earlier years, the reliance upon restorative resources in later years will be reduced.

School staff 3.

What it's done [student school social worker program] is given us an indication into what can be achieved involving a social worker at a younger age in a child's development and supporting the family to get in place some of the key elements, the key bricks that will enable a child to succeed

School staff 2.

Barriers

School-Home
Gap

Environmental

Capability at
school level

Facilitators

Needs for
learning

Multi-
disciplinary
team

School social
work



School social work: Supporting children's primary education in the South West of Western Australia

is available on Research Online at
<http://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/1979>.



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