

# Viewpoint

Barry Dwyer

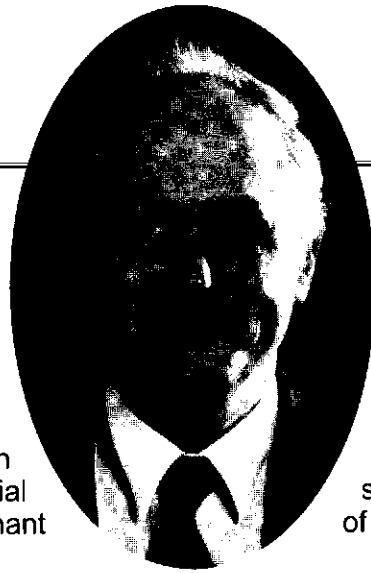


## Ready, set ... get selected!

In my home state of New South Wales, education has grabbed the headlines yet again.

'Axe hovers over selective high schools' shout

It appears that a major inquiry has recommended extensive selective high school system (in which cally promising youngsters are educated in special be progressively dismantled, leaving only a remnant lished schools.



the placards.

that the state's certain academi- schools) should of more estab-

Newspaper columnists, letter writers and spokespersons for various vested interest groups are out in full battledress defending (or attacking) 'selectivity'.

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Leaving aside for the moment the political provenance of the many initiatives designed to raise flagging public confidence in public schools, the debate itself has proved useful. People have actually been addressing some pretty basic questions about the functions of schools.

Even when specific debates, such as this one, do not touch Catholic schools directly, there is surely a Catholic educational perspective that can contribute to the general conversation.

It might be useful, for instance, to set propositions such as these before any of our fellow citizens who are seriously considering the nature and tasks of schooling -

1. Authentic schooling is not a race. And genuine education is not a commodity. Rather, education is more appropriately understood as a process whereby individuals grow in wisdom, slowly bringing into harmony their emerging core beliefs, their expanding experiences of life, and the culture in which they live.
2. Education is rightly concerned with the whole person: mind, body and spirit. It should develop character as well as competence, a sense of social responsibility as well as commitment to personal academic achievement.
3. Effective schooling teaches values that will guide a student's attitudes and responses towards self, others and God. High amongst these values is that of service.
4. The most life-giving form of school education takes place, not in a training camp where each student is preoccupied with 'personal bests', but in a learning community where individuals learn with, from and for others.

And - as they say in the advertisements - there's much more!

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In today's educational climate, so influenced by an efficiency syndrome that overloads teachers and overlooks their core work, Catholic educators have a prophetic contribution to make within the wider society.

Perhaps it's time to get the light out from under that bushel.

# A Page for Parents

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## Some thoughts on discipline

The word discipline can have very negative associations. To some people, it suggests only punishment, penalties and control.

Properly understood, however, discipline is more about genuine love and true freedom.

We all want our children to develop self-control, to be courteous and thoughtful people, to be loyal friends and good citizens, to be **self-disciplined** individuals.

The topic itself is worth discussion by parents away from the heat of a particular situation. Here are some suggestions that might get the conversation moving -

1. Be clear about your purpose. What qualities and behaviours do you want your children to be developing?
2. Reinforce good behaviour by naming and praising it.
3. Be consistent in enforcing the limits of behaviour, but be flexible. Remember that all children are different. What works with one may not work with another.
4. Help the children to understand that all of our decisions – those of both adults and children – have consequences.
5. Think about the actual causes of misbehaviour. What seems to lead to squabbling, rudeness, disobedience and so on? How can these triggers be avoided?
6. Teach by example. Courteous parents teach courtesy; hostile parents teach hostility.