UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

Schools and the Law: Emerging Legal Issues Internationally with Implications for School Leaders in Singapore

A dissertation submitted by
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ABSTRACT

Singapore schools had encountered little involvement with legal issues in the past, and there had been a general feeling of complacency amongst educators that the situation was unlikely to change. Yet many English-speaking countries across the world had been experiencing increasing exposure to legal issues in their schools, and the question was whether Singapore was likely to share the same experience over time. Strong indications were beginning to appear that the situation was indeed changing, including a number of reported incidents in schools and evidence of changing attitudes amongst parents and educators.

The study set out, therefore, to examine the types of legal issues that were emerging on the international scene, and particularly in the major jurisdictions with relevance to Singapore, and to understand what the implications might be for Singapore. Thus, it was intended to identify the legal issues that seemed likely to become more prominent in the Singapore education system, to draw comparisons with events in other countries, and to examine the strategies that school leaders might adopt in order to manage legal risk effectively.

This exploratory study used a mixed-method design, including document analysis and legal research, exploratory pilot interviews, in-depth interviews with verbatim transcription, and Q Methodology, which combined quantitative and qualitative techniques in order to interrogate and understand opinion. The study was conducted in four phases, moving from a broad survey of developments internationally, through a detailed analysis of issues in Singapore schools, to a deep understanding of the strategy preferences for coping with legal risk amongst senior educators. This then gave rise to a set of recommendations that could be used by policy makers and implementers, and by senior personnel in schools, to avert and manage legal risk and incidence in schools.
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CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analyses, software and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate    Date

Signature of Supervisor    Date

Signature of Supervisor    Date
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