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Ana Bratkovic

Today I'm interviewing experts in school preparation our experts today are Michael Boss from Moreton Bay College and Jackie Postlethwaite from Avalon College welcome experts I'd like to start with you Jackie please tell us what do you think are the benefits of undertaking a preparatory program like PSP or HSP before they enrol in the receiving school in which English is the medium of instruction?

Jackie Postlethwaite

Well, I think from my perspective the biggest advantage is familiarization and that's the familiarization of studying in an Australian mainstream school so that includes developing understanding of the classroom environment such as the role expectations of both the teacher and student which can be quite different culturally and particularly also when it comes to critical thinking and open discussions in the classroom the other familiarization that it provides is the academic expectations so students get to develop an understanding of the different text types and their structural and linguistic requirements that they'll most likely encounter when they transition into school and also obviously the Australian culture and lifestyle within the broader school communities but and obviously you'd think the PSP HSP programs also provide a safe and supportive environment where students are more likely to practise in the target language and obviously that leads to increased confidence and ultimate success I'd like to think that the majority of their programs if not I'd say all of the programs that I provided here in Australia are preparing students not only for academic skills but also you know nurturing skills for life.

Ana Bratkovic

Thank you, and Michael what are the important features of preparatory programs?

Michael Boss

So first of all we want to make sure that a program covers the basics we want integrated skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing, we want to be able to develop their grammar and vocabulary and we want some form of assessment and that can look different types of assessment you know an assessment for learning assessment learning different types of assessment but we with all of that we really want some theme based learning we want students to be able to develop their language through themes or ideas that are going to help them in the school that they're going to or any school in Australia we also look generally at 21st century skills we look at some of those skills and students developing those types of things as well and really it's about developing their autonomy in the class when they go to mainstream education we want to set them up for success we want students to be able to be independent learners and we want them to feel confident and comfortable when they go into classes and they participate with Australian students some of the other things that we probably look at would be looking at you know positive education or positive psychology type programs we want to make sure that the curriculum is a holistic one as well that it covers you know not just the English but lots of programs will cover maths science PE HSS social science for people that don't know that HSS - acronym but yeah we try to develop a range a holistic approach of linguistic non-linguistic skills in the students and 21st century skills.

Ana Bratkovic

Thank you and do teachers who teach on primary school or high school preparation programs do they need any special qualifications?

Michael Boss

Generally speaking we need to have 50% of our teachers as registered teachers, we need that as a requirement of running preparation courses most schools that I know will obviously have percentages higher than that but in my experience it's nice to have a diverse mix of teachers as well teachers with different qualifications different experience different backgrounds that they can bring to educate younger learners.

Ana Bratkovic

And what about you Jackie? What sort of qualifications to teachers on your program have?

Jackie Postlethwaite

Well, pretty much similar to what Michael said and I think an important point that Michael was attached upon there is you know the different backgrounds and qualifications interests and passions that having a variety of staff members bring to the program so because you know we do 20 hours of EAL tuition as well as instruction in other subjects as well such as art, maths and science and it's not focused on about the language around these subjects, not so much the how-to I mean a lot of the student feedback that we've received when students have transitioned into school is that maths and science are the most challenging core subjects so and not only that these additional subjects that we offer also complement the language classes you know so art is really important because it encourages creative and independent thought which you know it leads back to that familiarization.

aim and benefit of the program and those kind of skills are transferable to the academic class you know trying to brainstorm and come up with ideas for essays etc. some students can really struggle with that so encouraging and developing those kind of broader and critical and independence core skills is really important and not just in the academic and AAL class but also the other subjects as well.

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