

*Parent Advocacy: A Private Role in a Public Institution*

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*Abstract*

Parental involvement in schools has been contested for decades. Although it is clear that parents have a responsibility to care for and nurture their children, the legislated role of schools to educate children leaves somewhat ambiguous the role of parents.

Using Hannah Arendt's notions of public and private and the emergence of a social sphere this conceptual research examines the complex relationship of parents to schools. Using the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) Parent Advocacy Project as one model, this study illustrates how parents can play an important role in the public school education of their children.

Parental involvement and legislated governance of schools have emerged as major educational issues in Canada. The struggle for control in education has its roots in the history of public education, legislation, the emergence of unions and the postindustrial global production/consumption market place economy. These issues reveal the emergence of a "social" sphere blurring the public/private distinctions, dominated by bureaucracy and alienating citizens from their political responsibilities to determine a good life.

The emerging role of parents as advocates for their children in the schools may restore some balance to the public/private relationship, however, it may also reveal some of the problems of power and control within the system.

The full thesis may be read at: <http://members.shaw.ca/johncmoss/johnmossthesis.pdf>