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Many teachers involved in school education of Aboriginal children have, for a variety of complex reasons, found it difficult to design programmes that begin with the things children know and move to things that children have to learn. All too frequently school education offered to Aboriginal children has been conceived in western terms and delivered in that language. Programmes designed for children from mainstream Australia have simply been transposed with minimal adaptation into Aboriginal schools. In many curriculum areas the results have not been exciting. In the area of mathematics they have been dismal if not disastrous (see Williams, 1979). The introduction of bilingual education into many of the remote traditionally oriented communities of the Northern territory has made it possible for educators to re-examine the assumptions on which many of our maths offerings have been based. This chapter outlines some of the initiatives that have been taken in the Northern Territory to enable children to formally organise and classify local Aboriginal mathematical knowledge as well as begin to acquire some ideas related to the western view of the world and so provide more meaningful introductory mathematics programmes for Aboriginal children.

MATHEMATICS: A WAY OF ORGANISING RELATIONSHIPS

As children grow up, they inevitably learn those things that they need to know if they are to function effectively within their particular society. Although much of this knowledge is to do with everyday concrete realities and skills, much is in fact quite abstract and has to do with the way their particular society organises itself. Children growing up within mainstream Australia acquire, without being aware of it, a great deal of knowledge about the organisation of relationships that are vital to the functioning of a modern, technological society. In time, they come to know that people buy, sell, measure and count and that the society about them is classified and organised in certain predictable ways. This system of organisation

* This chapter was originally published in The Aboriginal Child at School Vol. 12 No. 4, 1984. It is reproduced here with permission from the editor.
of relationships can be called mathematics. Even people from our society who claim they know nothing about mathematics are in fact living their lives within this mathematical framework. These mainstream children bring this mathematical knowledge to the classroom. For example, when they start school they know people use counting in their daily lives and so find meaning and purpose in learning to count themselves. This interaction between the mathematics experiences of the home, school and society continues throughout the children's school life with the school clarifying, organising and extending the mathematical ideas children have gained in the life they live away from school.

In contrast, the hunting-gathering society of Aboriginal Australia that developed in isolation from the rest of the world, is little concerned with the organisation of the relationships between objects in the technological world, but is vitally concerned with the organisation of relationships among people. Hiatt (1965: 52) points out that not only are Aborigines placed in relationships with all other people in the group, but that this relationship bestows on a person a series of obligations to others and so provides an organisational framework for the ritual, economic, social and sustaining life of the group. Aboriginal children, therefore, grow up in a society where the emphasis is more to do with 'who' rather than 'how many' and with 'whose land' rather than 'how much' land. They learn to classify materials from the environment according to moiety, totems and in other ways, such as whether or not they are edible. In addition, many Aboriginal children are able to use mathematics in a way that is quite unfamiliar to non-Aboriginal children. For example, in the study by Pam Harris, (1980) Laughren, a linguist based at Yuendemu, makes the following comparison:

Now, while Number is considered basic and primary to the conventional European view of Mathematics and hence European children are introduced to counting at an early age and in fact the ability to count up to certain numbers is taken as a sort of intelligence test, it is also true that Mathematics covers other fields such as directional, spatial, temporal measurement and relations. It is mastery of these which is valued by the Walpiri, and their children’s ability to handle directional and spatial terminology in particular is taken as a sort of intelligence test similar to the counting prowess test amongst Europeans. Walpiri children of 3, 4 and 5 handle directional terminology (up, down, on, under, hither, thither, here, there, etc.) including the points of the compass with ease and competence.

(Harris, 1980:30)

When Aboriginal children from such traditionally oriented communities come to school, teachers too frequently ignore the local knowledge that they bring with them into the classroom. But sound educational theory would suggest that teachers should use those things children already know to help children acquire those things they need to learn. It is the familiar and predictable local knowledge that must be drawn on to help create an effective introduction to the learning of mathematics in the school situation. This local knowledge may not necessarily
lead on to a study of similar western content for this is frequently not possible. However, the information the children bring with them can be classified, organised and extended in ways that help children begin to acquire the unfamiliar and highly verbal learning strategies which are essential if they are to learn how to learn in the formal school setting. J. Harris, (1979) supports this:

An Aboriginal child entering school has, in common with all children, already started to develop cognitively. The adult community has already influenced the child's cognitive development so that he has begun, albeit at a very elementary level, to comprehend himself and the world around him in terms of the world view of the community in which he is growing up. As the child matures learning to label and order his experiences it is inevitable that his cognitive development will be very strongly influenced by an Aboriginal system of knowledge.

(Harris, 1979: 143)

Harris goes on to say:

This is the base upon which later cognitive development and learning will build irrespective of what is attempted by the school. If it is ignored, it is doubtful whether the school will play a significant part in the cognitive development of the Aboriginal child. If the school fails to recognise the importance of the child's previous cognitive development, the cognitive structures he has acquired and the Aboriginal system of knowledge which provides the context in which his cognitive development has occurred, it is unlikely that the school will succeed in assisting the child to acquire western concepts and skills.

(Harris, J., 1979: 149)

In view of these realities, it can no longer be regarded as appropriate to transpose introductory mathematics programme designed for mainstream Australian society into Aboriginal classrooms or even to expect that they will easily translate into Aboriginal languages. The early mathematical experiences now being provided by the Department of Education for Aboriginal children from traditionally oriented communities in the Northern Territory are designed to enable these children to formally organise and classify local mathematical knowledge in the language they speak. The language they use to describe the experiences can then arise directly from the experience and not from a translation of English terminology which often causes confusion. Much of this content is related to areas that we call space and measurement, although the classifications inherent in the various kinship systems will also provide a focus for
After wide experience which involves thinking, talking about and recording familiar Aboriginal knowledge in the classroom setting the children can be gradually introduced to some of the mathematical ideas that reflect the way English speakers organise reality and which therefore can be most easily expressed in English. Many of these ideas are not readily translatable into Aboriginal languages (e.g. Aboriginal people do not use superlatives, for they, like many other people around the world, find that comparatives adequately express their view of reality). So they will say, for example, 'She is tall' (in relation to others) instead of 'She is the tallest'. In addition, non-Aboriginal teachers often wrongly assume that because Aboriginal people now use such things as money, that Aboriginal children develop the same attitudes and understandings of the relationships that underlie our economic system as do children who grow up within the mainstream culture. (See Appendix 1 for a comparison of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal traditions, attitudes and values in relation to money and economic systems which was developed by P. Harris in 1982 as a result of her research into Aboriginal mathematical understandings). Without an understanding of the difference between the two cultures in relation to introduced and traditional mathematical understandings, teachers fail to appreciate the confusion that children experience as they are shunted from one mathematical milieu to another. Therefore, when teaching Aboriginal children in English, teachers are not just adding a verbal label to concepts that children have already acquired, but in fact are frequently introducing a different conceptual view of the world. This means that to learn these different concepts and a different way of organising reality, children will need many experiences that allow labelling in English (input) before they are asked to demonstrate understandings of these concepts for themselves (output).

The remainder of this chapter outlines some ways in which activities and ideas with which Aboriginal children are familiar can be used or adapted in the school context to teach (or to formalise when already unconsciously used in different Aboriginal contexts) those mathematical skills that these students must consciously control if they are to cope successfully with western mathematical/technological demands. In general, the position taken is that where possible the processes and content of mathematics should at first be drawn from Aboriginal society. As children study familiar content within the school situation they should be gradually encouraged to acquire the more familiar verbal learning strategies which are essential for learning in the school setting. Where aspects of maths that do not occur in Aboriginal society are to be taught, the children should first be exposed in many different contexts before they are exposed to formal teaching about these topics. The following diagram summarises this approach:
**SOME EARLY MATHEMATICAL IDEAS**

**Classification:** One of the first mathematical ideas that all children develop is classification (or putting things together that belong to together and labelling them). In the Aboriginal classroom, this may simply mean that on many occasion children are grouped or group themselves in ways which are relevant to their culture. These may be related to moiety, sections, subsections, totems, clans, dance groups, geographical location or other meaningful categories. The initial experiences may simply involve labelling the groups orally and then perhaps performing some appropriate activity in these groups. To help record this knowledge and so help children 'know what they know', children may draw themselves, and the pictures can be grouped, displayed and labelled at the children's direction, e.g. 'Ngilirmurru Yirritja', ('We are Yirritja moiety'). Many similar sorting and labelling activities are readily available in the surrounding environment and so in this way children come to realise that they can put things together in ways that they perceive belong together, and label their groups. As the children are working within their own culture, their own language and their own systems of knowledge, the 'belonging together' which is the essence of classification is predictable and so the activity is meaningful.

At some later time many classification experiences may be repeated and the resulting groups compared. From such experiences children will increase their understanding of one-to-one correspondence and other mathematical ideas such as 'more', 'the same', and 'not enough' will gradually emerge. In addition, children will continue to develop language and recording skills and become more conscious of the way they view the world. This is a necessary for a child who must ultimately learn not only another language, but another way of viewing the world. (For more information on this topic see Mathematics in Aboriginal Schools T - 3. Part One : Transition.)
Space: As previously noted, Aboriginal children have understandings of spatial relationships that are very different from any that we can expect from non-Aboriginal children of the same age. Children from such places as Yuendemu will say: 'I am going south to the camp'. Such language can be encouraged when going on walks and excursions and the children can then record their experiences through creating or watching adults create maps of the area. Other activities such as making models of their communities in sand trays or playing games similar to 'Here, There and Everywhere' provide other opportunities for verbalisation and so help children to become consciously aware of what they know. Using knowledge that the children bring with them into the classroom provides opportunity for children to concentrate on developing, organising and recording skills in a way that makes sense to the children because the results are predictable.

Pattern: Although such classification and space activities provide the major thrust for many of the mathematical activities that are planned for Aboriginal children in their first year at school, there are other mathematical ideas that children need to be developing. Baratta-Lorton (1976:20) has reminded us that one of the underlying themes of mathematics is pattern. The skill of recognising and using pattern is a valuable problem-solving tool for children to learn to use, for she maintains that it can have a profound effect on children's mathematical understanding. The visual patterns found in Aboriginal sand designs or on bark paintings do not seem to provide a link with the patterns they will need to discover in western mathematics. However, if patterns in sound are considered, a rhythmic combination can usually be found which Aboriginal children know intimately for it has been acquired as they sat on their mother's shoulder or stomped beside their father in the frequently experienced rhythm of traditional dancing. Patterns in sound can be interpreted in bodily movement and can become clap-clap-shake. This in turn can give way to an interpretation of the sound pattern using a group of children, e.g. sit-sit-stand, and from there it is not such a big step at some later stage to square-square-triangle or whatever is required. The use of such patterning activities encourages predicting. As these patterns are frequently represented in a line, it also enables children to begin seeing pattern as a progression (as it is in sound) rather than as an array as it is in so many of the visual patterns in Aboriginal culture. This is an important distinction and one which children need to become aware of at an early age if confusion is not to occur when they are faced with such things as number lines which of necessity progress in one direction across a page or board and the 'number after' is simply not the same as the 'number before'.

Measurement: Aboriginal people do use informal measures to organise distance and other aspects of their environment. (Harris, P. 1980) Five-year-old children bring much of this knowledge with them into the classroom and it is now being used to provide content for activities that will provide a meaningful starting point for a study of measurement. However, there may be no one-to-one correspondence between these ideas and those inherent in the western view of the world that is expressed in English. For example, when North-East Arnhem Land people talk about a big (yindi') fish they use their hands to demonstrate the width. In English when we talk about big fish
our hands demonstrate length. Hence as children begin to learn English they are not only learning words but perhaps new concepts and a different way of organising reality. Many teachers of Aboriginal children have found that the acquisition of many aspects of the western concepts of measurement present great difficulty to Aboriginal children. For example, Aboriginal languages have quite satisfactory names for the significant times of the day and the passing of the days and seasons are noted. This information provides a satisfactory introduction to a study of time in the vernacular and at a later stage provides a basis for the acquisition of similar western knowledge. However, measuring the passing of time in hours, minutes and seconds is quite unfamiliar in Aboriginal society. If Aboriginal children are to tell the time and use that knowledge in ways that are meaningful they need to become 'time-telling' people. This means that in the early years of school, teachers will have to create an environment in which the children can perceive when and why we use clocks, before they are expected to learn to tell the time in the later years of primary school. Hence non-Aboriginal teachers need to consciously refer to the clock during the day just as mothers do in western homes and comment on the relationship of time to the activity in hand. Comments such as 'We'll go out to play in two minutes', or, 'It will be lunch time when both hands point to the twelve' need to be made for perhaps many years before such things are formally taught. In this way children have the opportunity through formal experiences to lay down a foundation of ideas on which more formal teaching can be based. Therefore, while Aboriginal teachers are consolidating the measurement ideas inherent in the vernacular, the non-Aboriginal teacher must begin to verbalise for children the mathematical relationships which given the way they, as westerners, live their lives in the day to day life of the classroom, if Aboriginal children are to be able to learn these things for then at a later more appropriate time.

Cardinal Number and Counting: Although most Aboriginal mathematical knowledge is to do with what we call space and measurement, there are some starting points for the development of the number strand. Aboriginal languages usually have words for one, two or three and some go further. It would seem, however, that in many instances these words are not used for counting but simply as labels to indicate the size of the group. The children of North-East Arnhem Land, if asked 'how many?' will, if the group number is small enough, often respond by just displaying the appropriate number of fingers, clearly indicating their awareness of the quantity involved. Five is another term that is often a fairly familiar concept in an Aboriginal society. People often refer to a 'hand' and in one community where turtle eggs are gathered they are distributed in groups of five (four, with one on the top). This is referred to as *wangany rulu* or one group (of five). All such knowledge can be grasped by teachers to provide effective starting points for the acquisition of numerical ideas.

Aboriginal children, however, have other opportunities to recognise and have their attention focused on small groups. Aboriginal societies perceive people in groups of one, two and more than two and most languages reflect this by dividing personal pronouns not only into singular and plural as we do in English, but into singular, dual and plural. By providing activities that enable children to move about in small groups, there is an opportunity for children to use language
appropriate to the situation, e.g., 'We (two) are running,' They (more than two) are walking'. The question 'How many children?' can then provide children with an opportunity to label the group numerically, e.g., 'three', or to count the people, 'one, two, three'.

Teachers must constantly remember that Aboriginal children will have to acquire many mathematical ideas related to the number strand that are not in evidence in Aboriginal society. Counting, even today, is a largely unfamiliar approach to the organisation of life in many Aboriginal communities. Before any new or largely new mathematical idea is introduced, children must have the opportunity to experience or live the idea. Therefore, before we teach children to count they must be immersed in a counting environment. The classroom must become the equivalent of a counting home. At any appropriate time the teacher should count. In time, children (who have learned the sequence of number words through rhymes and rhythmical activities) should be encouraged to join in. In this way they become counting people before they are formally expected to learn to count, just as we encourage children to show reading-like-behaviour before we help them to become independent readers.

PLANNING FOR CHILDREN TO LEARN

The process of education should be concerned not only with what children learn but with how they can learn. There is no doubt that Aboriginal children can learn many mathematical facts by heart. The problem with this type of learning, however, is that children get their sums right in the early years of school but they are not able to go much further than this and they are not able to talk about what they have done or discover which process to use when faced with mathematical problems which are hidden within the language of daily life. Although such mathematical responses can be 'tested' in classrooms, unless they are related to meaningful experiences they are rarely applied outside the school situation and are often soon forgotten once the student has left school. Those people who have lived in an Aboriginal community can appreciate this situation operating in reverse. For example, non-Aboriginals in remote communities frequently learn to respond to the Aboriginal subsection or relationships system - much as children respond to sums - but they cannot predict and are unable to use or apply their knowledge in new situations. Soon after they leave the settlement the information is forgotten for it is irrelevant to the life they live away from an Aboriginal community.

If we are to provide children with programmes that achieve understanding and not just memorisation of isolated facts, we need to ensure that the content of their early mathematical experiences not only provides them with meaningful learning strategies that they bring with them to school. In addition, if they are to learn to handle western information in a mathematical way they will also need to begin to acquire new learning strategies. Hence all teachers of Aboriginal children need to develop the following understandings if they are to help these children acquire progressively more difficult mathematical concepts. The approach involving *experiencing, verbalising* and *recording* outlined in...
EXPERIENCING:

All the concepts (or mental pictures or ideas) that people acquire are developed through personal sensory experiences. Even those concepts developed through imagination have their roots in sensory experiences. All through our lives these ideas are being refined as new experiences expand our horizons. Many concepts, like 'tree', 'bird' or 'fish' are easy to acquire because they can be seen, tasted, touched and so on. Concepts inherent in relationship systems, however are more difficult to acquire as the central idea is more abstract. This is true whether it is a relationship between people, e.g., cousin, or in a relationship between things, e.g., size. Aboriginal people, however, intuitively know how to help their children acquire ideas about relationships between people. It is a familiar experience when walking through a North-East Arnhem land community to see a mother who is sitting with a small child, attract the child's attention and point palm up, to a passing relative and name the relationship. Language is used to focus on what Aboriginal society regards as significant in such a situation, and so the relationship rather than the name is labelled. From many such experiences Aboriginal children are able to expand and refine their understanding of such relationships. The oral labels they acquire for these 'ideas' help them build a bridge between the real-life experiences and abstract thought so that in time they come to be able to manipulate the complex kinship systems in a purely abstract way.

Aboriginal teachers need to be helped to become consciously aware that in the life children live outside school, they acquire ideas through these real-life experiences that are labelled for them. (See Graham, 1981) Aboriginal teachers also need to appreciate that this experience - verbalisation approach - can be used to help children develop and extend the ideas they bring with them into the school situation and at an appropriate time can be used as they acquire new ideas inherent in the system of relationships that we call mathematics. Even children growing up in mainstream society find difficulty in discovering some mathematical ideas because although they are in use in our society they are in themselves quite abstract, that is they cannot be tasted, eaten, touched, etc. However, in certain real-life situations the concept can be experienced and labelled. For example, although 'eightness' is an abstract idea, we can touch eight fish or eat eight chips. From many such experiences the concept of 'eightness' can be extracted. As these experiences are labelled for children, they gain the language they need to share their ideas with others and in time to use this knowledge of 'eightness' in quite abstract ways.

VERBALISING:

The importance of language in cognitive or intellectual development has only fairly recently been appreciated (see the work of Vygotsky, 1962, Tough, 1976,
and others) and language is now recognised as a major intellectual tool. As Douglas Barnes says:

If we know what we know then we can change it. Language is not the same as thought but it allows us to reflect upon our thoughts. The metaphor contained in 'reflect' is here highly appropriate: what we say and write mirrors our thought processes and enables us to take responsibility for them. Thus children and adults alike are not only receiving knowledge but remaking it for themselves.

(In Thompson et al. 1978:7)

If mathematical knowledge is to be usable it needs to be held in the conscious levels of children's minds where they know what they know and how they can apply it. Therefore, to function mathematically children need to do more than simply label their experiences. They need to be able to describe what they are doing or what is happening (i.e., verbalise the process) and ask and respond to a wide range of questions about their experiences.

Such strategies not only build bridges between concrete experiences and abstract thought but they effectively diminish the time required for this to occur. It is also verbalisation that allows children to move more easily from context-specific learning to context-free principles. This is an essential goal if children are to be able to understand and apply mathematical knowledge and not merely get sums right. Such deliberate verbal learning strategies are unfamiliar in traditional Aboriginal societies (Harris, 1980). Today Aboriginal children not only need to continue to acquire age-old knowledge in traditional ways, but they have to acquire new knowledge (particularly in mathematics) and they need to develop new ways of learning. Inevitably this involves new ways of using language, or perhaps a new emphasis on the use of language.

As Aboriginal teachers are the only people who can effectively communicate with Aboriginal children in their first language, they will of necessity have to be the teachers who provide the early learning experiences for the children they teach.

To be effective, they must begin to consciously appreciate the value of the largely informal learning styles of Aboriginal society and use and plan real-life or concrete experiences that they label for the children. However, in addition, they must develop an appreciation of the importance of helping children acquire the more verbal learning styles that these children will need if they are to learn how to learn in an increasingly complex western society. (See Graham, 1979 and 1981b for strategies to use in school-based Aboriginal teacher development programmes.)
EXPERIENCING - VERBALISING - RECORDING

Through this experiencing-verbalising-recording strategy an approach to mathematical education is developed that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children can pursue. Objectives can be defined in terms of the mathematical ideas children need to develop, which will help them move in a systematic way from those things they know to those things they need to learn. As the focus is on the acquisition of mathematical ideas or concepts, teachers can be helped to see that this can be achieved by planning experiences that can be talked about and recorded. As teachers plan they need to consider questions such as "Does this activity help children experience this idea?", "How can I talk about the idea they are experiencing?" (If questioning is not appropriate, can children be encouraged to tell a story?) "How can I help children record the experience so they can see the idea more clearly?" This simple diagram more clearly outlines the approach:

Experience

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IDEA

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Language

Creative

Recording

CONCLUSION

Much more remains to be learned about the difficulties that Aboriginal children have in learning mathematics. Experience is teaching us, however, that sound educational theory rather than expediency will provide solutions to problems that confront us in the provision or relevant curricula for Aboriginal children. This means that curriculum writers and teachers need to understand how Aboriginal children perceive and talk about their world. Not only must teachers be aware of what Aboriginal children know but also how it was learned, for it is on this foundation that meaningful programmes must be developed. If Aboriginal children are to move from those things they know to those things they need to learn, then Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal teachers must dialogue together so that the learning experiences provided (both content and process) will assist Aboriginal children acquire the skills and understandings inherent in the western system of mathematics. The acquisition of this knowledge should not ignore what the children bring with them to school. Rather, the process should be additive, for it should deepen them with those mathematical skills and understandings they will need to survive as Aboriginals in tomorrow's world.
## COMPARISON OF UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT MONEY AND THE CASH ECONOMY*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aboriginal traditions, attitudes and values</th>
<th>Anglo-Australian traditions, attitudes and values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TRADITIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No tradition of having money.</td>
<td>Share the western cultural tradition which has had coins for over two thousand years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsistence economy based on hunting and gathering.</td>
<td>Cash economy in an industrial and agricultural society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and provisions collected direct from the environment through hunting and gathering activities</td>
<td>Food and provisions mainly bought with money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation practices and the proper performance of ceremonies ensured the continuation of food supplies.</td>
<td>Money is saved so that food and other necessities can also be bought in the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Blackfella business' is mainly concerned with ceremonies and traditions.</td>
<td>'White fella business' is mainly concerned with making money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Work' is mostly that which must be done to perform ceremonies and maintain traditions.</td>
<td>Work is mostly that which is done to earn money.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade involves exchanging some goods for other goods.</td>
<td>Trade involves exchanging money for goods, either by handing over cash, or by means of a bank transaction.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## THE CASH ECONOMY

Many tribal Aborigines have only come into the cash economy in the last 50 years: it is not part of their traditional heritage. Anglo Australians and their ancestors have had a cash economy for many generations it is an essential part of their heritage.

Traditional rules of behaviour and social relationships are based on mutual sharing, kinship obligations and ceremonial. The laws of the land regard money as personal property which is protected under the law. There are fewer kin obligations.
KNOWLEDGE AND USE OF MONEY

Coins and notes are usually called by names that describe their appearance.

Knowledge of the combined value of several coins or notes together often seems to be based on seeing a pattern.

The relative values of coins and notes are not well known by most people.

Some coins and notes are not used in some local stores and so are not well known in those communities.

Prices are often rounded off to a multiple of 5c or 10c.

Money is usually spent or disposed of immediately.

Future security is achieved through debts and obligations - 'banking on people'.

Gambling is often the main way of getting large sums of money for special purposes.

Very few people have a personal cheque account.

From Harris, P., 1984: Teaching about Money in Tribal Aboriginal Communities: Mathematics in Tribal Schools, Project Series Book 3.
Chapter 12

Post-primary - education for what*
Stephen Harris

At a curriculum development workshop, a curriculum expert in the Northern Territory Department of Education, Dr. Jim Cameron, said something deceptively simple about the stages of curriculum development:

The first phase is to know where you are; the second is to know where you want to go; the third is to determine how to get there and the fourth is to monitor your progress. The first phase, 'know where you are' is more important and harder to grapple with than most curriculum designers realise.

I believe it is because we find it difficult to define the 'where we are' and the 'where we want to go' in relation to Aboriginal post-primary education that there is a good deal of confusion about how best to approach this stage of education in Aboriginal communities.

WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE MIGHT NEED TO GO

We know that there is more to education than teaching the three Rs in a vacuum. We know enough about the process of education to know that teachers must have a wider educational perspective than a focus on traditional subject areas in order to teach even those subjects effectively. There are social, psychological, economic, cultural, parental and linguistic factors which influence how children learn. The greater the cultural difference between teachers and students, the truer this is.

We know that our Aboriginal education in the past has met with limited success. By 1960 (earlier for some mission schools) most Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory were reasonably well staffed and equipped and, since

*This paper is an extension of ideas first expressed in the paper by McClelland and Harris, 1976.
the Watts-Gallacher report (1964), this situation has been consolidated. Yet, in spite of the fact that we can say that there has been a respectable schooling service in these places at least since 1964, the majority of yolngu students still seems to reach an academic plateau of about third or fourth grade primary levels and go no further academically. An educational system can hardly take too much credit for the exceptional few who achieve higher than this, because an education service should meet the needs of most students. (Harris, 1977 :79, 81)

We know that identity is as important as the three Rs. Yolngu people want their children to learn the three Rs which, in Aboriginal schools, are oral English, reading and arithmetic, but also want their children to grow up being Aboriginal. One of the important issues debated in cross-cultural education is that of 'transfer' education programmes that seek to transfer students into the national language and culture as quickly as possible, versus the 'maintenance' programmes that seek to maintain a significant educational role for the parent language and culture at all levels in the school. The real distinction between transfer and maintenance is, ultimately, not one of social change but of individual identity; that is, whether or not products of the educational system can fit in well and live satisfying lives in their home society if they choose to live there.

We know that students must be able to apply what they learn. Many yolngu students can perform such academic skills as sums in the four operations on paper in the classroom, but often cannot apply those skills in real-life situations outside the classroom. Some of Piaget's view about 'acts of intelligence' may explain this. Piaget said that there are two aspects to any act of intelligence:

* The comprehension of the situation, or being able to read the new reality; and
* the invention of a solution based on how the situation is comprehended.

(Kammii, 1975:230)

In effect, by concentrating on teaching yolngu students such subjects as maths skills in the vacuum of a classroom if we have not trained them to perceive a wide range of mathematical realities outside the classroom. When most people discuss yolngu intelligence they focus on the second aspect above. I believe we should focus on the first.

We know that most of our students will spend the greater part of their lives in Aboriginal communities. Because of a combination of economic and technological factors, unemployment is bad and will get worse. Some predictions say that within fifteen or twenty years 'normal' unemployment in western countries will reach similar proportions to those of the Great Depression. It is also highly probable that unemployment will be worse for non-western minority groups than for members of the dominant society. In such circumstances those yolngu who have land on which they can support
themselves with some form of intermediate technology will be relatively better off than others.

It has been implied for a long time in Aboriginal education that a good school education will allow yolngu to get jobs in towns and eventually anywhere in Australia. Where are we in relation to this? Almost no yolngu people in the Northern Territory settlements are getting jobs in Darwin. Observation of places of business in Darwin, Alice Springs or Katherine makes this obvious. It is time we accepted the fact that the vast majority of yolngu will spend most of their foreseeable future in isolated Aboriginal communities, on their own land. If we could accept this, a lot of discussion about education policy would have a different focus and some solutions would fall into place. Post-primary classes need to train yolngu teenagers for modern life in these communities and yet still leave the option open for academic and competitive trade skills advancement for those who wish to take advantage of these options through other means than attending Kormilda or Yirara residential colleges, though that needs to be an option too.

Education and unemployment. Until recently, much of the Aboriginal school curricula was based on the rather questionable assumption that Aboriginal education was directed toward making Aboriginal children employable in a western work force. However, with the increase in nationwide unemployment, the increased availability of Government benefits and mining royalties, and the movement of Aboriginal populations away from centres of employment, the proportion of Aboriginal school leavers finding jobs is probably decreasing. Some teachers have wrongly assumed that this decreasing employment rate is rendering useless their efforts as educators. In fact, these changes in lifestyle make the teacher's role more difficult, more important and very different. It is likely that, in the future, young Aboriginal adults will possess as much money as they need and a great deal of leisure time. Teachers concerned to provide the optimum 'education for life', must carefully consider the future lifestyle of the children they are employed to teach, and develop school programmes directed toward providing the best possible preparation for this new and difficult lifestyle.

We know that yolngu must learn to participate in much of the balanda system. All education systems develop in response to survival needs, in particular economics and levels of technology. The traditional Aboriginal informal education system was efficient for a hunting and gathering economy and for the levels of technology yolngu had, but it is not efficient for all aspects of survival in modern times. Although modern communities such as Milingimbi 'have' cash and a relatively sophisticated technology, in important ways yolngu do not always really participate in these features of modern life. For example, many yolngu receive pension and child endowment cheques and, because they do not understand the origin of this cash, it is fair to say that they are 'hunting and gathering' cash at the bank rather than
participating in the cash economy. And even when yolngu use the telephone or drive a bulldozer or travel by plane, if they have no idea how these machines are maintained, they can hardly be said to be participating in modern technology. To understand the cash system and a more sophisticated technology, yolngu must participate in small-scale businesses or activities that generate cash, and must first be given opportunities to control an intermediate technology. If yolngu are to be involved in self-management, they must learn the modern economy and technology by experiencing them at an appropriate level; that is, the challenge, level of complexity and degree of newness should not be too little or too great.

In terms of education, we have a basic responsibility to teach yolngu people economic skills and knowledge that will equip them for modern economic realities. This was one of the main hopes of the self-determination policy, but in many cases the aim hasn't been achieved. For example, at Elcho Island a yolngu fishing industry used to have a fairly persistent, though fluctuating, existence using a number of small aluminium boats. Then the Government decided to give this industry a boost, and provided an expensive trawler that had sophisticated propulsion and refrigeration equipment that required a highly trained person to operate. Except for the manual labour, true yolngu participation was less than before, and the industry, after a dramatic start, wound down. (Clark, 1979) Other examples of how yolngu can cope with an intermediate technology can be had from the survival of the Western Australian Strelley group since 1946 by mining tin with yandies - small dishes used for winnowing seed; and how the Oenpelli buffalo beef industry prospered more than the Oenpelli cattle industry, partly because shooting, skinning and packaging wild buffalo was a sophisticated form of hunting and gathering and less daunting than the management skills needed in cattle production. Also, in many Aboriginal communities there are sophisticated generators which produce the local power supply and require a highly qualified person to look after them, efficient in terms of electricity production but not in terms of yolngu participation. In at least one of these places, a partially trained yolngu person maintained a stand-by power plant which satisfactorily met demands while the large elaborate plant was being installed! One is tempted to ask whether two or three small plants which a partially trained yolngu could manage would not be preferable to the more 'efficient' way.

The Department of Education, it would be said, has nothing to do with this. But in our own way we fail to promote an intermediate technology and thus a real participation in the cash economy. For example, if a sheet of corrugated iron needs to be cut in half in the manual training centre, it is quite likely that the student will be urged to put on a pair of overalls and a pair of goggles and use a power saw to make the cut, rather than take a handsaw (front tooth) or woodchisel and scrape a deep line along a corrugation and then bend the iron a couple of times to produce a quick and neat break. The latter method is much more useful in most of the circumstances in which yolngu would need to break roofing iron. There are Aboriginal schools constantly being painted and maintained by balanda contractors from outside - these are jobs that teams of manual arts training students and a section of the local carpentry team or
Housing Association could do if the authority letting the contract would allow more time to get the job done. The point is clear: education for survival must include exposure to the economy and technology at a level and pace that allows real yolngu participation.

We know that yolngu think and learn differently from balanda. Most yolngu learning is achieved informally and most balanda school teaching is done formally. Some important yolngu learning methods are outlined in chapter 6.

HOW TO GET THERE

Most of this chapter is spent in defining 'where the post-primary students are' and implying 'where they need to go' because, out of the four curriculum development steps, those are probably the most difficult to get in a cross-cultural setting. If we are realistic about 'where we are' and 'where we need to go' (and it is difficult to talk about these because, in a superficial sense, one can easily be misunderstood as sounding discriminatory or neo-paternalistic), then the third step, 'how do we get there?' becomes easier. Without going into detail about the third step, partly because details of 'how to get there' have to be worked out on site, depending on the interest of local teenagers, some ideas include:

Teaching yolngu is a specialist task. If teachers are to have enough understanding of where the students are and sufficient confidence to respond to that, they must have thorough pre-service or in-service training to develop the necessary attitudes and orientation. Aboriginal education is a specialist field and specialists need to be sent on specialists' jobs. (The point was made very clear in the 'Aims for Aboriginal Education' in the Watts-Gallacher report but not a lot has been done about it.) There are numerous reasons for this, but among them is the fact that students' performance is greatly influenced by the expectations and attitudes of teachers. (See Abbott, 1979)

A post-primary teacher must be mature enough to be able to measure progress in intangible as well as tangible results. The preparation of teachers is extremely important, because it takes a mature teacher who feels secure in the soundness of this applied-skills approach to be patient enough to wait for results. In a traditional school programme, a teacher gets immediate feedback of sorts in the form of the students 'doing' a lot of sums or 'making' a lot of wood joints. I say 'of sorts', because it is doubtful that these skills can be applied outside the classroom very well or that one of these joints could be incorporated into a house that the student might help his father and uncle build in the camp. Teachers must be patient and wait for the rewards of achievements. Discouragement at lack of quick results is one of the reasons teachers tend to stay a relatively short time in Aboriginal communities. It is my conviction that we need fewer but better prepared balanda teachers in
Aboriginal schools. I believe this could be achieved by better pre-service and in-service training which alerts teachers towards development of communities rather than teaching 'subjects', and by such measures as teacher employment by contract and long-service rewards like guaranteed study leave.

Economic skills are developed through participation. Post-primary students should participate in small-scale business enterprises or 'cottage industries'. For example, they could make all the toys and equipment for the local pre-school and lower infants grades and sell these to the school. They could make school furniture and sell it to the school. Post-primary boys could run a new and used bicycle sales and repair shop. Students should participate in every process of such small businesses. They should write letters, order materials, negotiate contracts and set a proportion of profits aside for replacement equipment. Nutritious food and saleable clothes could be made by the post-primary girls and sold in the community. Fruit could be purchased by small 'companies' of post-primary students and sold in the community. In ways such as these academic knowledge could become usable knowledge; the yolngu student could participate more in the modern economy and technology.

Academic and practical skills can feed on each other. Every step of these activities should be worked through with pencil and paper in the classroom to relate academic skills and real-life applications. This is especially important because it is one way to get yolngu out of their tendency to learn skills in a context-specific manner. (The classroom is ultimately a useless specific context!)

An effort to apply classroom academic skills in various contexts outside the classroom is one important way to ensure that knowledge is absorbed and made usable. Another way to make academic skill and information more easily absorbed is to present them through yolngu learning styles where possible and where educationally sound. For example, oral English lessons should employ dialogue, role-playing and conversation techniques that immerse students in life-like situations. Such an approach provides immediate reward, allows personal independence if students can participate at their own initiative, uses repetition, observation, personal trial-and-error and person orientation by having students work in groups or in pairs selected by methods suitable to them, and with the focus on a series of small wholes rather than a series of unconnected parts.

The construction of local buildings will also illustrate how extensively yolngu learning styles can be used effectively to achieve a modern educational end. A small-scale fishing industry or craft industry or house painting industry, for example, would do just as well. If, say, a manual training teacher, a yolngu teaching assistant, two or three men and four to six students from the family or clan for whom the house was being built, worked together on a house of simple design, virtually all aspects of Aboriginal learning styles listed above would be engaged. Fairly simple houses, either from prefabricated steel frame kits which
are quite cheap or a combination of bush and sawn timber, with corrugated iron walls or adobe walls would be appropriate (See Graham, L., 1979, for some ideas).

Correspondence courses should be an available academic option. While the applied academic skills approach is sound educationally and most necessary in Aboriginal communities, true freedom implies choice and there should be further unapplied academic study options open to yolngu teenagers, young men, women and adults. One of these options is the residential colleges and another should be classes for higher academic achievement on site. However, the choices and alternatives must be real and parents and students must be able to understand the alternatives. The only way I see of making the alternative real is to have 'pure' academic classes with entrance requirements which include passing set exams, and which include parental contracts guaranteeing regular student attendance. So that parents will not pressure teachers to modify entrance requirements and so that choices remain objective and not open to either teacher or parent manipulation, I believe correspondence lessons with local tutoring help and study facilities would be best. Students must be educated for real worlds. One real world is at home; another is 'out there'.

**Adults should be more involved in their children's schooling.** Yolngu adults need to be involved in the education of their children. This should be especially beneficial if students and parents are grouped together in ways suitable to them. This kind of idea had been put forward for many years under such phrases as 'community development' and 'parental involvement'. The reason it hasn't worked too well is that there has been nothing much that the parents or the community could be significantly involved in. For example, one can't expect school boards or school councils to function very well if they don't have anything really meaningful to do.

And we can't expect parents to be involved in the proposed activities if they do not know more than the students do in these activities! For example, a yolngu male teaching assistant was observed in the embarrassing position of overseeing a group of teenage boys who knew the three Rs better than he did. What we need to do is find educationally significant activities in which adults will be comfortable and in which they will know a lot more than the students. One such field would be a local maintenance and repair project. Many yolngu people are still not decently housed (and putting up expensive, large, balanda type houses by outside contractors may do more harm than good (See Reser 1977). There is no reason why teenagers from a particular family group, together with a number of adult men from that family, couldn't contract to do repairs and maintenance on their houses. When the manual training teacher at Milingimbi tried to do this in 1975, the only problem was that so many family groups wanted to be involved that it was difficult to know which group to start with.

Another venue for adult involvement might be the study of traditional land. In the case of Milingimbi, many people are settled between thirty and one hundred
kilometres away from the traditional land of their father and mother. The attachment to this land is still very strong but teenagers rarely got to see their land. Excursions led by appropriate adults would not only expand these students' traditional knowledge in the traditional manner, but would gather many raw material experiences that could be formalised in a *balanda* manner into local histories, family histories, geography and natural science. The volume of detailed knowledge that older *yolngu* people could teach, if given the right environment in which to teach it, is quite remarkable.

And what should be noted is that this is real history. (What is the purpose of history but to reinforce values, teach us by precedent what we can expect humans to do, and maintain every groups' identity and links with the past.) And it is real science. (The study of physics and chemistry in western schools is as beneficial in the way it teaches us how to think, as in the content learned.) The study of the local environment, whether it is through excursions as far as fifty kilometres or a study of the mangroves along the foreshore just fifty metres away, is an important way into an educationally significant body of scientific knowledge for *yolngu* teenagers, and one in which adults could play a significant role. (Davis 1979)

The involvement of adults is important, not only for educational and academic reasons but also for sociological reasons. We simply can't continue to say to parents, in effect, 'Give us your children to educate - you don't know anything that the children need to learn in school.' If we do this, parents will never wholeheartedly support the school, and, in the case of the students, their personal identity and links with their parent culture must be strong and natural, otherwise we will produce 'educated delinquents' or 'people in between'.

**Bilingual - bicultural education should continue in post-primary.** The post-primary section of the school provides continuity with the primary section, and in schools with bilingual programmes it is important that the post-primary students have a developing experience in reading and writing in their own language. This is true even if an expanding use of English at this level is also needed. Students tend to learn what teachers, through subtle (and less subtle) revelations of attitude, believe is important. If vernacular reading and writing stops within the primary school, it could be considered 'kids stuff', but a valuable means would be lost of allowing *yolngu* to modernise from within their own culture and resources, rather than by simply taking on foreign skills and content (which is not nearly so positive a kind of social change).

**There should be planned study of balanda society.** Means should be provided for *yolngu* teenage students to study *balanda* society - in both an academic and a participatory manner - including that society's major institutions such as law, family structure (kinship), religious systems, ceremonial life, land ownership, education, cash economy and rules of interpersonal communication. A basic anthropological description of *balanda* society is urgently needed.
HOW FAR SHOULD A TEACHER GO?

A teacher of post-primary yolngu students (children or adults) can operate on three levels of education. The first level would be teaching skills, whether the three Rs, manual training or home economics. The second level would involve a real effort to teach students how to apply these skills to real-life needs (or, better, to teach those skills through their real-life application.) Most of this chapter is spent urging teachers to work on the second level rather than the first. I only hint at the third level - that of education for critical consciousness. For example, I urged the teaching of local history through excursions with older knowledgeable yolngu, as contact with various historically important landmarks would prompt the older yolngu to teach and the younger to integrate the information better. But unless this study of local history is worked through to a study of outside contact, and why various outsiders and yolngu did what they did, there will be inadequate understanding of the current political, economic and social forces that are present in the local community. People cannot act intelligently in a situation unless they have some understanding of how it came to be: skills alone do not produce self-determination. It has been reported (McClelland, 1980; and personal communication), that yolngu teacher trainees at ATEC, Batchelor, Northern Territory, have shown a deep interest in topics such as stages of social evolution where egalitarian, hunting and gathering, kin-based societies (such as traditional Aboriginal society) were compared with chiefdoms or hierachical societies (like the modern Aboriginal community councils, where one group speaks for all clans) Here the students are beginning to have a critical consciousness about history.

I also urge the teaching of arithmetic and economics through small 'cottage industries'. Teaching arithmetic through such real-life activities as buying and selling oranges may be left at an applied skills level, but really should be taken through to a critical consciousness level. The aim is not only to teach maths more effectively through oranges, but to give an understanding of what the cash economy is.

All school subject areas can be taken through to this stage. As a further example, learning oral English is not enough. Students must learn to use English as a tool for self-determination - how to ask questions, how to debate and how to put a point strongly without being offensive. Teaching English is not an end in itself; it is a means to yolngu breaking out of what Friere (in talking about the Third World) calls a 'culture of silence' to a situation in which cross-cultural 'dialogue' can take place (Friere, 1973).

CONCLUSION

During discussion with a number of teachers of post-primary students, uncertainty about what should be taught and how it should be taught was often expressed.
The view of this writer is that if we accept where yolngu are rather than thinking about where we consider they should be (or hope they will be), then it will be much easier to work out what kind of educational service would be most effective. The approach that has been expressed here might well be assessed as being too idealistic. The implementation of such a programme would require mature teachers with a firm conviction that the development of people and communities is more important than the 'proper' use of tools and the 'proper' teaching of formal school subjects. Admittedly, such teachers are hard to find; but I don't really believe we have any alternative if we seriously want to profit from past experiences in yolngu post-primary education. An experienced and sincere teacher of yolngu children said:

We need to stop all these innovatory programmes in Aboriginal schools, not because they are theoretically unsound, but because the presence of young, inexperienced teachers and the rapid turnover of staff defeats them all. What we need is to design an approach to Aboriginal education that is so basic, and so comprehensible to young, poorly prepared teachers, that almost any teacher can step in and contribute something. If such teachers left records of where they went in the programme, then when they moved on after their year-long tour of outback Australia, some other naive teacher could take up where they left off and contribute a little more.

While admitting that there is a certain type of desperate logic about his view and that continuity of staff and approach is a serious matter, the real point is: could such an approach work? I believe not, because of what we know about how yolngu children learn. So we have to grasp the nettle and take steps, not only to have a more appropriate programme, but also to provide the financial and career incentives necessary to attract better equipped teachers and to get them to stay for at least three to five years. Aboriginal education should be recognised as a highly specialised task. In order to get the right kind of specialised teachers, the education authority should commit itself to invest the normal amount of money into better training for fewer, more carefully selected teachers. The quality of post-primary education depends on the quality of the people attracted to the teaching challenge, and quality teachers result partly from personality and character factors and partly from the appropriateness of the training and career incentives they receive.
Chapter 13

Discipline
Michael Christie

Arriving at Milingimbi from a city school in New Zealand, I was not struck by how different the children were, but rather how similar. Children, I suppose, are essentially much the same everywhere. On the whole, I think my Milingimbi class was easier to manage - yolngu children didn't demand so much attention - but I had to learn that the patterns of discipline and obedience that the children showed were subject to rather simple but noticeably un-balanda-like social behaviour patterns. I soon realised that teachers had no special role or status by virtue of their position. I couldn't impose my will on the children where and when I wanted to. They stubbornly maintained their independence and I slowly learned to respect it. Yolngu children don't mind obeying, provided it is not a humiliating sort of obedience. They like to be asked gently, and several times, so that they could obey without compromising their independence. They have no 'work for work's sake' ethic, so their tasks need to be enjoyable and meaningful. They liked to do things slowly, and in consultation with others, so my efforts to speed things up had to be gentle and positive. Observing principles like this certainly made life go much more smoothly.

But every school in the world, I imagine, has problem children, and in a cross-cultural situation we can expect the number of problem children to be even higher. We can't expect to be able to eradicate all these problems - the best we can do is develop strategies to cope with them. These strategies must be culturally appropriate - that is, acceptable to the yolngu teachers and the parents - as well as acceptable to the balanda teachers for whom the problem is perhaps more frustrating than for anyone else.

As European teachers in a European society, it is our right to be respected and obeyed. An old, perhaps ancient tradition has given teachers a high status in our society. Like it or not, in Aboriginal society, respect and obedience are privileges awarded, not on the basis of official rank or role, but on the basis of merit. If you are obeyed and respected, it is not because of your role as a teacher but because the children consider you personally worthy of respect. A teacher must always be exploring ways of positively fostering respect and cooperation.
The best way to earn respect is to maintain a positive and encouraging relationship with the class, focusing on cooperation and productive behaviour, and defusing potentially explosive situations quickly and quietly.

Look at the way yolngu teachers generally deal with discipline problems with the 'peace at any price' approach. It doesn't matter who's right or who's wrong; the important thing is to alleviate the conflict situation as happily and as quickly as possible.

This will often hurt our sense of justice as well as our pride. But we are working at a happy solution to a social problem. We are not trying (or should not be trying) to teach balanda patterns of behaviour, obedience and respect, no matter how noble we feel these are. Not, "I will teach this child to obey me, come hell or high water", but rather, "How can we relieve this conflict situation quickly and peacefully?" There are several reasons why this approach is best. Firstly, it is the approach which yolngu parents most typically adopt in the home situation. It is the system of control which the children are used to and which the parents support, so it will work with them. Secondly, any attempt at attaining justice (the wrong punished, the right vindicated) would be imposing balanda values in an inappropriate situation. Thirdly, experience shows that teachers who 'stick to their guns' and attempt high-handed punishment-type solutions often inadvertently stir up a storm in a teacup. Small conflict situations which are not dealt with gently very often flare up. Fourthly, the time to teach balanda values of impartial justice is not in the emotion-charged conflict situation. Fifthly, experience will show that, in little interpersonal flare-ups there is always more to the problem than meets the eye. It is nearly always impossible to follow an argument back and find out whose fault it was. As often as not, the fight goes back to old inter-family difficulties that the children don't even appreciate themselves.

Aboriginal society survives on goodwill to a much larger extent than European society. Cooperation is a higher value than obedience. So high-handedness in dealing with people almost never pays off. Having to work for cooperation rather than be able to demand obedience rather hurts some balanda teachers. It means compromising a lot and swallowing a lot of pride.

Aboriginal society also provides much more scope for non-obedience than does our society. This is a fact which balanda teachers simply have to face. We can't and we shouldn't want to do anything about it. At a yolngu ceremony, no one is forced to dance, and many people decide not to. Similarly, in the classroom, if all positive efforts to involve a child fail, negative efforts shouldn't be resorted to, unless, of course, the child's behaviour is seriously disruptive.

With all the goodwill in the world, problems still arise. Some children, no matter how hard they and you try, still get into trouble. In my experience, these yolngu children fit easily into two groups. The first group is the largest, most common but most easily cured group of 'headaches'. They are the children who are basically well-adjusted but rather high-spirited members of their own culture. When your energy is boundless, they are the most fun to have in the class, but they have a habit of talking, fighting, 'singing and swinging when they're not supposed to. To
make the misbehaviour of these children into a big issue is seldom a good idea. If you do they will be the bane of your life, and much of your energy will be expended on keeping them on the straight and narrow. But you can't extinguish their energy, and you don't really want to.

High spirited characters are the children who keep bouncing their balls when the whistle blows, or who carry on playing their tambourines when the song has finished. Try to ignore this. Quickly move onto the next activity before a child realises how much fun it is to annoy you, and before you get cross yourself. Establish a routine to prevent this from happening; tambourines must be tucked under your arm at the end of every song to keep them warm; when the whistle blows, sit on your ball so it won't roll away. At the same time, don't try to establish a routine if you know it's not going to work. No child realises that he or she is thirsty until the bell has gone, so the few stragglers must be tolerated.

These children usually get the support of the others. They are not trying to annoy; they're just thoroughly enjoying themselves. If they're not simply trying to annoy, don't punish them. Give them a cross word or two to let them know they're being nuisances, but don't harp. Just reinforce their good behaviour and keep smiling as you surreptitiously try to squash their annoying habits. I have found that the single most important factor in maintaining discipline is to keep the classroom atmosphere positive but controlled and to have the children occupied every moment of the day. The key to preventing discipline problems is to see those problems coming and to do everything you can to avoid them. As often as not this requires you to step down as well as the problem child.

Children in this group are occasionally led by their exuberance into situations they can't handle. Everyone goes quiet and suddenly it dawns on you that a fight has started. If violence bursts forth quickly stop it. The aggressor should be disarmed and held still and firm. He will probably burst into tears so you can leave him to cry. I always found loud and incessant boo-hoo-ing very irritating but attempts to quell it often increase it. Least said, soonest mended. The protagonist may break away and march off towards home. If you know him well and think he'll respond to you, you could try to stop him, bring him back and settle him down. Don't listen to the indignant pleadings of the 'wronged'. Just reiterate to the other children that all fighting, justified or unjustified, is clearly unacceptable in the classroom and try to carry on as normal. Resolve to speak to the children involved when they have calmed down.

If a situation doesn't dissolve into violence but rather into tears or high-pitched swearing, your first aim should be to smooth over the situation. Do this with a word or two of reprimand and a new injection of life and vitality into your teaching - '... and guess what else I've got to show you ...' or 'What about a game?' When its all blown over, call the offending children individually to you and explain your disappointment in them in a firm but friendly manner. You can make them feel contrite and understand that they were wrong without making them angry or hurting their pride. We want to change their behaviour and yet keep them on side. In this sort of situation it is most natural for the Aboriginal child to listen but remain completely silent, refusing to speak. You must accept this.
Discipline in the classroom is a problem of getting everyone to get along with each other. That's why an 'I'm boss' approach is dangerous. It's also why it's best to sort out the minor problems within the classroom and take only the gross infringements to the higher school authority or into the community.

The second group of difficult children is smaller but much more problematic. These children are misfits in their own society. Out of school such children are by themselves or with younger brothers and sisters. The other children in their peer group don't like them very much and you may not either. They are blamed for everything. The other children do love teasing them, you admit, but they overreact. Sometimes they fling chairs across the room, or sit as firm as a rock and bawl at the top of their voices for ten minutes. Their outbursts are regular and very distressing. One day nothing will persuade them to do any work. Then, the next day, they will work like Trojans, demanding positive reinforcement after every move.

Apart from using the 'standard' approaches mentioned in relation to normal 'lively' children, I have found two other approaches that work wonders for these more difficult children. The best is to concentrate on improving the attitudes and behaviour of the other children (and teachers) towards them. I am convinced that most of the problems with these children are caused by other children's teasing, and reinforced by adult attitudes, both at school and at home. All children love to tease, especially if a violent or spectacular reaction is in the offering. Yolngu children are no exception. It's difficult to see this subtle teasing going on if you don't understand the language or the complexities of yolngu non-verbal communication. But watch for it. For example, it's hopeless trying to get the set-upon child to ignore it, but it is worthwhile trying to clamp down on the children who are doing it. Be as firm as you can without bringing too much attention to the mistreated child and without defending them too much. (This could cause more teasing.) 'Don't worry about her, just get on with your own work', or 'Mind your own business, Sammy, bring your work to me', are the sort of actions that will give the besieged child relief. Unfortunately this problem is just as often the fault of unsympathetic or vindictive teachers.

The second technique for these unpopular children is to concentrate on rewarding acceptable social behaviour and ignoring (rather than punishing) unacceptable behaviour. These children appear to thrive on attention, so most punishment (such as smacks and long lectures) don't have much effect, because it still provides the much-sought-after attention. But excluding a child from an activity for a few minutes seems to work well. And the amount of positive reinforcement these children can take is amazing.

With all yolngu children, the rewards and punishments should be immediate and short-lived. A single reward or punishment will not have any long-term effect on behaviour, but a consistent system of small rewards and punishments will develop behaviour patterns which are acceptable to everyone. If praise is used as a reward, it should be inconspicuous. Praise which seems to single out a child can cause such teasing from others that the opposite effect to what you aimed at will
result. Make sure the punishments are acceptable to the individual children. That may seem strange, but it is important. Some children, for example, simply will not apologise. Some children will not sit outside a classroom. A black look will reduce some children to tears of penitence, while expulsion from school would seem not to effect others.

Remember that asking advice from more experienced teachers is not 'unprofessional'. If you have a mature yolngu male on the school staff, he can often be the best source of help, either to give advice or to deal with a particular child who has got out of hand. Fortunately, that doesn't happen very often.

As you get to know the children better, you will get to know what sort of rewards and punishments are needed and which ones work best with each child. With that knowledge comes increasing peace in the classroom. Everyone (including the teacher) knows which behaviours are acceptable, which are required and which are not permitted. We don't all live happily ever after, but if we establish a consistent and positive discipline system, it will allow us to spend a greater portion of our time on the more educational areas of the school system.
Most people imagine the subject of school administration to be pretty dull and they are correct. However, unless we want to slide into anarchy, the school needs some sort of a system and some way of seeing it is administered in a reasonably smooth fashion. Solution: the principal!

The teachers at Milingimbi were once asked to define their own duties and roles and those of the other staff. This was an interesting exercise, especially for the answers that came back about the principal. The answer from one yolngu teaching assistant was typical of many comments, even if the others were couched in more elaborate terms. She saw the role of the principal as: 'To sit in the office and wait for us to send the naughty children to be sorted out'.

It's not quite that simple. The principal does indeed 'sort things out' but not only with naughty children. With the good ones too, and with the teachers and the community and the Education Department. To do this the principal requires a number of skills - diplomacy, understanding and a knowledge of what is going on. To do the job, the principal must be able to acquire knowledge - knowledge about the community: who it is made up of, how it works, and where it is going. Just like a politician, a principal needs to be able to see the mood of the people. This chapter sets out to explain why this is so important.

THE COMMUNITY

Most Aboriginal communities contain two worlds - the world of the balanda into which yolngu people come during work and school hours, and the yolngu world into which few balanda make advances. The disparity between the two worlds is very great and cannot be overemphasised. The way in which the two groups view reality is quite different and it influences all values, judgment, decisions and
actions. I believe it is important for the school principal to know about the other world and what is going on in it, even if the choice is made not to participate directly in it. The principal should be aware of the normal patterns of life and also of the things that upset that pattern, such as arguing between groups, or a decision to leave the community by one group or another. The principal should know what ceremonies are planned, who is going to be involved in them and how this is going to affect the school. The principal should constantly listen and talk and build up a picture of what the community is doing and thinking.

A new staff member went down to the local beach for a swim. She was wearing an ordinary swimming costume. After I had been approached by several Aboriginal men I suggested to her that it was inappropriate to swim on the beach in front of where many Aboriginal people lived. It was then I who got a lecture - I was out of touch, I'd been in the bush too long. Later, however, she accepted that she was in fact breaking local norms about how women should dress either in or out of the water and did not swim there again.

The point of the story is that what may seem right to balanda is often wrong in the eyes of the yolngu. The principal must be in touch with the yolngu viewpoint and try to see things from that angle as well as from his or her own. It is from the community that the school's real support. (and, for that matter, the principal's real problems) will come. The first maxim for a new principal must be: get to know your community. As school teachers we are all in loco parentis. Surely then, if we are going to stand in for parents, we really ought to know them and their aspirations. It is not easy to do, but if all else must be sacrificed, the principal must meet people - must sit with them, listen to them and let them evaluate him or her. Yolngu are not uninterested in the school principal. Because the school is a major institution and a major source of employment in the community, whether desired or not, the principal is seen to represent authority and power. The principal should identify the various groups in the community and get to know the key people in those groups. It is imperative that all the clan leaders be known and that ways of communicating with them be established, either directly through clan group meetings, or through an intermediary (such as a school liaison officer, or perhaps in the more formal Council meetings, if they are structured along clan lines). No matter how it is done, the principal should be able to talk to these people and win their confidence.

There are three main advantages in doing this. Firstly, through these people the principal will be guided as to community thinking. Secondly, yolngu patterns of authority will be followed, by referring decisions to these people. This will give the school and its programme legitimacy in the eyes of the community. The third good reason for seeking the support of these people is that it is a form of insurance. In most Aboriginal communities the clan leaders still have ultimate authority. When problems arise it is extremely comforting to know that at rock bottom you have support, even if outwardly you are in conflict with one or two people.
I once had some difficulties with a balanda staff member who tried to raise support for his cause among some of the junior yolngu community councillors. I went to see an old man, the acknowledged leader of the community. His comment was roughly: 'Bill who? Never heard of him. I'm the boss here and while I'm boss here you're in charge of the school.' End of discussion and end of problem.

Don't, however, limit yourself to the power figures in the community. Get to know the mothers and the fathers. Try to fit children and adults into large family groups and try to look at those groups from a yolngu perspective and so realise that the influential people making decisions for the child are not always the parents. Kinship is all important to yolngu people. It is the underlying structure of their society and this aspect of life must be learnt and understood; it is also a most important talking point and a great icebreaker. 'What a lovely baby. I'm Ngarritj, she's Gutjan. That makes her my daughter' In this process of getting to know people, a thick skin goes a long way, provided sensitivity is not lost. While yolngu people do not like overbearing, pushy balanda, they do appreciate people who are outward going. Gentleness, but not shyness, combined with an extrovert nature, will help you in an Aboriginal community.

THE STAFF

The second major task of the principal is know the staff. In the Northern Territory, we had an employment system that allowed neither the principal nor the community any say as to who would be sent to their school, and what a disparate bunch of characters they could turn out to be! One could assume a modicum of training and intelligence amongst them, but that was about all. Some were in the job because the teaching market was too tight down south. Others were thrill-seekers or wild-eyed romantics out to do great things for Aborigines. Then sometimes you got a committed, dedicated teacher willing to put her life on the line for the children. But mostly teachers are ordinary, average people - concerned, but not overly; hard working, but with sensible moderation. From this potpourri of people, the principal had to mould a team. For that is what a school staff is. A team with a few stars, a majority of average ones and one or two weak ones.

One year ten new balanda teachers were appointed to the staff of fifteen. They were all first year teachers and none of them had ever lived in an Aboriginal community before. It was a daunting task, trying to help these young teachers settle into the community and the casualty rate was high that year. We lost one teacher at the end of first term, another in third term and two at the end of the year. But, two years later, the remaining teachers from that group, with encouragement and guidance from other staff members, had developed considerable skills in cross-cultural education. Without exception, they were, as a result of their
experience, more sensitive to others, less ethnocentric and more flexible teachers.

Don't forget, though, that the staff team is not just composed of balanda teachers, but of yolngu teachers as well. The yolngu staff, qualified teachers or assistant teachers, are key people who play a most important role in the school. The principal must take steps to minimise clashes, and to help people to learn to work effectively together. In the back of one's mind, it should always be remembered that it is the yolngu staff who will stay, that it is their community and, although they may not be as well trained or as articulate as the balanda teachers, they, too, have ideas and a point of view that must always be sought and considered.

The Department of Education was going to do another survey to see what Aboriginal people wanted in the way of education. I decided to get in before that the survey team descended upon the place, completely clamming people up. So I asked a senior yolngu man in the school to go round and interview the yolngu staff himself and tape their replies. People who were quiet and shy and would never speak in staff meetings were outspoken in their own language. They had thought the issues through and had their own ideas on how the school should be run. One young female assistant who was noted for her shyness became quite impassioned, finishing up with, 'What do you think we are? Stupid?'

I believe that it is impossible for the principal of an Aboriginal school to spend too much time talking with yolngu staff. Often this will mean listening to all manner of problems and stories, seemingly without connection at all to the job in hand. What is happening, though, is that through these sessions a relationship of mutual understanding and trust is being built up. One of the greatest myths in Northern Territory education is that yolngu staff will not stay and work long periods in the school. Given the right conditions they will, and it is up to the principal to create those conditions.

The principal must be concerned with the staff, both inside and outside the bounds of the school. For example, their professional development is the principal's concern and, in the case of the yolngu staff, an active involvement will be necessary to make sure people are given the opportunities to develop, both formally through teaching training and, of equal importance, informally through their contacts with other more experienced teachers. In the team-teaching situations that exist in many Aboriginal schools, who is paired with whom is a critical decision. The principal must consider carefully the sensibilities of both partners in a team to see that the (admittedly apocryphal, but quite typical) story that follows does not occur:

Consider how it feels to be this yolngu teacher. She had been working in the school for seven years. She was twenty-eight years old, married, with two children, one of them in the primary school. Her own academic level was not high but she could read and write and she had done a year of teacher training. In her own eyes
she knew a lot about the children she was teaching - she knew who they are and could understand what they said and why they felt upset or happy or silly. She knew their families and how the children related to one another - who could talk to whom, who could sit together, why those two children didn't get on. She had previously taught a reading group and a mathematics group by herself. This year a new teacher had arrived to work with her. The new teacher was twenty-one and had just done her three years of training. She arrived full of enthusiasm to try out her skills on her class. She couldn't understand what the kids were saying or why they got upset, but not to worry, sit them all behind desks, give them some pronounceable names like Mary, Fred, Bill and get a bit of order and sanity into the system. She didn't know what to do with the yolngu teacher either, but soon fitted her in with the remedial groups, the sport and music lessons. The yolngu teacher became passive, withdrawn and said nothing.

Steps have to be taken to see that such situations don't occur. Both partners in a new team need to be watched carefully when they first work together and, if necessary, counselled and guided through their approach. No one should simply be 'let loose'. Another area principals should involve themselves with is the conditions of service of their staff - their pay, their physical working conditions, their housing. If yolngu staff see principals fighting to improve their conditions and not just those of the balanda staff, the task of working together as equal partners in a team will ring much truer. For the balanda staff, good housing is usually a priority. The principal who can fight the battles that are often necessary to get it will have done a lot towards retaining staff, thereby creating continuity of teaching and with it the chances of a more effective education for the children.

Much of what has been said above can be summarised by saying that it is more important to be interested in people than in programmes. It is only after the principal has won the loyalty and cooperation of staff that the programmes to be implemented can begin to function. There are often times in an Aboriginal community when the principal has to choose between people and programmes. Almost invariably, the people should be supported even if it means a loss of teaching time.

The yolngu staff in one of their meetings decided that attendances were dropping and that something had to be done about it. They came and told me they were going to have a demonstration outside the store on Friday about this. I thought it was a bit dubious, but I agreed that they could have the next morning off to get ready, as they requested. The rest of the staff were a bit put out when they had to do all the teaching the next day, but the real muttering started when they saw the year's supply of cardboard and textas rapidly disappearing from the storeroom. The day after, the yolngu teachers came to me a second time and said they wanted that day
off too. With trepidation I agreed and waited for the blasts that I knew wouldn't be slow in coming from some of the *balanda* teachers. By that afternoon (Friday), most of the *balanda* teachers were carrying on about the loss of teaching time and the damage all this nonsense was doing to their programmes. Just on home time the *yolngu* staff called an unexpected assembly. All the children were lined up and taken one at a time into a room where the *yolngu* staff had been working privately for the past two days. The kids started to come back out - everyone of the three hundred or so decked out with a sash, banner or protest poster. 'Reading and Writing are Spears with which to Fight Land Rights' said one. 'Ngarra Djal Bulu Educationgu - I want more education', said another. And then they lined up the school students and marched us down to the store in full view of the whole community, chanting, 'We want more education'. The banners were waved, speeches made and everyone had a tremendous time - a real happening. The *balanda* teachers went off saying how marvellous it all was and what a great idea, forgetting their opposition of an hour before.

People are always worth supporting above programmes. A word of warning though. While the principal should be open to staff, both *yolngu* and *balanda*, he or she should still listen for the undercurrents and the murmurs that indicate all is not well. It is very easy to remain aloof and remote from the problems until one day they burst upon the principal, who is forced to cope with situations that have got badly out of hand. Provided the principal has sufficient natural leadership qualities and provided a genuine concern for people has been demonstrated in the past, a bit of talking and some quiet diplomacy go a long way to resolving these.

An Aboriginal staff member came to tell me she was leaving. I didn't argue but I offered to help arrange tickets and see pay was forwarded on to the next settlement, and then it came out. 'So-and-so is so angry with me.' 'How do you know?' 'She frowned at me.' 'Well, why do you think she did that?' 'Perhaps because I was late for work again.' And then we started talking about the underlying problems back at home causing her to be late and talked about her relationship with the other staff member and what could be done about it.

Very rarely do people actually pack up and leave if the principal is prepared to talk problems through with them.

THE PRINCIPAL'S UNDERSTANDING OF THEMSELVES

The principal should not forget who is the leader of the school. Even in our modern times where 'professionals' proliferate, all social institutions require leadership. The principal helps set the standards and, to a large measure,
determines whether the school will have an open, friendly, non-threatening atmosphere for the children or whether they will find themselves hemmed in by rules and regulations and by tense shouting people. If the principal is weak and sloppy about standards, complaints can hardly be levelled at some of the staff for being that way too. The role of principals in deciding the aims of schools is important. It is not up to them to work out 'aims' or 'policy' for a school by themselves, but it is important that they allow one to evolve and that as many as possible contribute to the process. The nature of the Aboriginal community may itself be evolving, probably at a rapid, even chaotic pace. Principals and their staffs need to be aware of the direction in which communities are going and the schools must be prepared to move in that direction. The aims of schools will change with time, too. Change is a dynamic process and involves thinking about where one is and where one wants to go next. Principals should verbalise much of this and encourage staff and community to continually debate, modify and refine.

Five of us sat down at the end of one year to commit our philosophy and policies to paper. We talked for a week and then went on holidays without writing a single word but the time wasn't wasted: we had thought through issues, we had looked at where we had come from and decided what we wanted to do next.

It is important to write down the philosophy of the school for new staff members. It also gives a base from which to work. However, it should not become an authoritative body of law that allows no room for development and growth.

Principals should also recognise their own limitations. Perhaps they know nothing about infant teaching, and are a little light on educational theory. They should use the expertise of other staff members and encourage them to contribute to policy formation and to programming in specific areas.

Most schools in the Northern Territory could improve on their approach to involving yolngu people in the determination of policy. At Milingimbi, yolngu thinking has been a major force in determining the direction of the school, but it has been indirect involvement. Much more can be done to consciously involve yolngu in setting out the way in which they want their school to run. Principals play a major role in ensuring that this involvement occurs.

One thing principal's must never forget is that they are rarely going to find one hundred percent support, either for themselves, or for the schools' policies. There always seems to be one or two who disagree with, and who may try to actively work against, the principal. It is good to identify these people early and, after reading Dale Carnegie, to try to win them over. But if this fails, the principal must act, otherwise a cancer exists in the staff and it can grow. If a teacher or group of teachers aren't fitting in and going along with general policies of the school, then it may be necessary to encourage them to transfer. A little encouragement works wonders on some people.
THE PAPER WAR

So far I haven't mentioned the sort of things an administrator is often thought of as doing - shuffling papers, signing letters, filling in forms. Unfortunately, there is a lot of that in the principal's job in an Aboriginal school. In a way, it is necessary, too. People like to get paid and that requires paper work.

One of the sewers at Milingimbi needed to be connected up to the sewer main eighteen metres away. The drainage pipes had given up and an enormous cesspool had formed. The following were required to get the job done:

Letters to the Department - 20
Replies from the Department - 10
Phone calls to the Department - 20
Phone calls from the Department - 2
Visits to personnel in Head Office - 3
Visits by Health Inspectors - 2
Visits by other inspectors - 8
Time taken to do the job - 2 hours
Time elapsed from first notification to completion of the job - 4 1/2 years

The frustrations of dealing with a remote bureaucracy are staggering, even given that the majority of those people who work within the bureaucracy are people of goodwill. As yolngu people strive to take over their schools and run them themselves, administrative aspects must be simplified. Principals who recognise this should be working towards simplifying procedures as much as possible.

SCHOOL FUNDS

Perhaps the most important side of administration revolves around money. It is a considerable advantage to be able to build up private school funds so that ready cash is available for responding to teachers' requests for equipment. 'I need twenty sheets of acrylic plastic tomorrow'. Get one within a week and the teacher will think you are a wizard. 'Why don't we buy a school vehicle?' It is always now we need it, not next year. It is also very useful to have this fund to help employ people on a casual basis, to tide a person over when their pay hasn't arrived, to retain a person while they are waiting for promised funding to come through. A good principal should be aware of the many sources of funding available to a school. The allocation provided by the Education Department is fairly generous, but this can usually be supplemented from other agencies or by fund-raising activities.
THE PRINCIPAL AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Keeping in touch with the Department is important. The image the school has in Head Office is largely created by the principal. Sometimes a school is judged by the length of the principal's reports, but over a period of time, if the school takes an active role towards the Department and uses the resources of the Department, a positive image can be built up, countering even Milimbingi's reputation for sandflies!

Some principals do their communities, their schools and themselves a grave disservice by bitterly complaining in public about how terrible it all is. This is not to deny that there aren't schools with numerous problems, but the positive aspects of their programmes are too rarely aired. The danger is that people will indeed take note and will believe that a school is a disaster, which in turn hardens attitudes and makes life even more difficult. It is a vicious circle which can only be broken by taking a positive stance about the people you are working for and with.

One area in which the principal can do some valuable work is in the rebuttal of throw away sneers that often come the way of people who work in Aboriginal communities. Often the comments stem from thinly veiled racism. Teachers need to be supported and encouraged to stay and work and to take a long-term view. The principal should convey this message to visitors and, at times, needs to do so firmly. Outsiders, however, are often very useful people to have in the school. I believe it is in the interests of the school for principals to have an 'open' policy towards visitors. The Department has many valuable specialists who are just waiting to be asked to assist and advise. Principals should seek out the people who can be of most value to their schools, ask them to visit and tell them what would be appreciated, even suggesting the approach they might use in the school.

People working in isolated communities tend to suffer both from xenophobia and paranoia. Visitors can keep them in touch with outside realities. The itinerant academics and educators who pass through Aboriginal communities are often good contacts, can stimulate the staff, be a source of new ideas and be objective judges of the work being done.

There are many unanswered questions in Aboriginal education. Basic research needs to be done in many areas. Principals can play a useful role here by supporting and even searching out academics wanting to undertake projects of real value to Aboriginal people. As part of an 'open' policy towards outsiders, principals have an obligation to allow student teachers into their schools. There are benefits on both sides - the student gains valuable teaching experiences and a principal who thinks a student will make a good teacher, can try to influence that person to apply for the school at the end of the training course.
Chapter 15

Questions and answers about bilingual education
Stephen Harris

What is bilingual education?

In the Australian context:

'Bilingual education is the use of two languages, one of which is English, as a medium of instruction for the same pupil population, in a well organised programme which encompasses part or all of the curriculum and includes the study of the history and culture associated with the mother tongue. A complete programme develops and maintains the children's self esteem and a legitimate pride in both cultures.

(Watts, McGrath and Tandy, 1973:1)

What are the basic goals of Aboriginal Education?

In the United States, which most influenced our thinking about bilingual education, there was a variety of goals set for bilingual education.

Some were political: bilingual education was used as a means to gain greater control of local school boards and to force greater majority group representation on educational organisations. The recognition of a group through bilingual education is always another step towards political recognition.

Another goal was economic: the use of vernacular languages in schools requires the presence of native speakers of those languages, and bilingual education was seen partly as a means of increasing local representation on school staffs, with subsequent reduction of local unemployment and an increase in the local cash flow.

Other goals had sociological impact, in the sense that in order to use the minority language in the school, adults from the cultural minority must be involved. This serves to reduce the gulf between the home and the school. A school which used the same language as the community and drew some of its teachers from the community serves to reinforce the strength of the social
patterns which are found in that community. Still others were psychological. Psychologists who specialise in learning theory tell us that, beyond mild levels, fear inhibits learning. The use of minority culture members as school staff members, and the use of the local language in the classroom, must reduce the culture shock of minority culture children on entering foreign classrooms, and thus increase the chances of creating a positive learning environment. There is also some evidence that being bilingual can promote flexibility of thought. Apart from that, the use of children's language in school reinforces their identification with their culture. It helps them to understand that their language and culture are worthwhile, good and important.

Perhaps the most important goal of bilingual education is in terms of educational or communication gains. Most school learning is achieved through verbal means - either spoken or written - and unless children understand that what they hear and read, they will learn relatively little. In a non-bilingual Aboriginal school, the basic educational principle of 'moving from the known to the unknown' is frequently very difficult. Perhaps the major benefit of bilingual education is that it allows the 'known to the unknown' principle to operate better. Cross-cultural education is difficult at the best of times. Supporters of bilingual education maintain that it would be more successful if the teachers, the language and the teaching methods employed were all familiar to the child. In other words, these people argue that in a cross-cultural setting the academic goals of education will be more easily achieved by bilingual education programmes.

Finally, there are ethical reasons for promoting formal bilingual programmes. It should be an inalienable human right for people to use and maintain the language and culture into which they were born. If a government is to give more than lip service to this principle, it must commit the required funds and specialist staff members to make this option available, where possible, in its schools. One of the marks of an enlightened civilisation is that it does not bully small groups - either directly or by indifference - into losing their language, heritage and cultural individuality.

Why was bilingual education introduced into the Northern Territory?

In the case of the Territory, perhaps the two most important factors in 1972-73 were political (the newly elected Labor Government wanted to be innovative in Aboriginal education) and educational (the number of Aboriginals progressing beyond the third and fourth year primary school standard was very small and this could have been connected with the overload of rote learning or the lack of true understanding that occurred in the all-English approach.)

Were Aboriginal people genuinely consulted about bilingual education?
In each case they were consulted, and to the extent that they could understand the implications of the move, they were generally enthusiastic. But, in a sense, Aboriginal people were not in a position to make a meaningful choice between all-English schooling and bilingual schooling, because they had not been exposed to both, so had no means of comparison. What probably caused Aborigines to choose bilingual education was the mention of their own language. While the communication about what constitutes bilingual education is probably very vague, the communication from them to us about how emotionally important to them was their mother tongue, was very clear.

What is needed to start a bilingual programme?

There should be sufficient preparation and specialist staff to ensure that a programme is started on a sound basis and has the means to be maintained and developed. There is a series of stages of development necessary to achieve this, and they include the following: Firstly, there must be a negotiation stage, in which the community attitude to bilingual education is confirmed and the attitude of the school principal and staff members to support for such a programme is clarified. Next is a linguistic stage, in which a linguist is appointed and linguistic analysis is undertaken towards the finalising of a practical orthography or alphabet. Next is a preparation stage, in which a teacher-linguist is appointed, a literature production centre is established, Aboriginal literacy workers are appointed, beginning reading materials are produced and the whole staff is familiarised with its future role in a team-teaching organisation. Next is a bilingual education or vernacular literacy stage, in which Aboriginal children begin to read in their own language and the Aboriginal teachers play an increasing role, teaching in the vernacular. Finally comes a bilingual/bicultural stage, in which, while all the previously started activities continued to develop and the bilingual classes progress upwards through the school, bicultural curriculum development and adaptation begins.

Is it more costly than a conventional programme?

In the short run, yes. The cost of employing linguists, teacher-linguists, printers, and other specialist personnel and the cost of literature production are high. But, in the long term, if the aims of bilingual education are fulfilled, our schools will educate children more broadly and more soundly and achieve a significantly higher academic level than has ever been the case in Aboriginal education in the past. While bilingual education is more expensive than an all-English Aboriginal education, it should be remembered that, overall, Aboriginal education in 1979 was cheaper, per capita than, say, the cost of Darwin schools, because urban schools had the services of many specialists - music teachers, remedial reading teachers, teachers of the deaf, school counsellors and so on - which, on the whole, Aboriginal schools did not. Better quality urban school construction, with air conditioning, also cost more.
What does bilingual education mean in terms of teaching children to read?

The main implication is that children learn to read in their own language. One of the fundamental principles in the teaching of reading is that children should learn to read in the language that they speak best; then they can concentrate on decoding the written symbols for a message that they can readily understand. Very few yolngu children are fluent speakers of English (and the idea of delaying the teaching of reading until they have an oral mastery of it, is, in practice, almost impossible), so the use of their mother tongue is logical. However, in those cases where yolngu students have already managed to learn to read, they can transfer the skills to reading in their vernacular without much difficulty. People only need to learn to read once in their life, and the reading skills can easily be transferred to any language by the reader.

Why write down Aboriginal languages and then print books in them, when there is already so many English books available?

It is a lot of extra work, but there are a number of reasons why it is necessary. One is educational and the other is sociological. It is helpful to learners if they learn to read in a language they speak. That is a clear educational principle that cannot be implemented in the case of traditionally-oriented yolngu without first printing vernacular material. The sociological reason is harder to understand for those of us who have never experienced what it is like to be of a minority, treated as if one has nothing to contribute to the educational process. When we have a western school with balanda teachers, using the English language, books and materials, we are saying, in a loud voice to yolngu; 'We don't need you in the school. We think your children should be schooled, but you can't really contribute to the process' That is one way to keep a gap between home and school. It also does not allow yolngu the means to adapt for survival from within the culture. There is a difference between positive adaptation and destructive change.

Will a child in a bilingual school need to learn to read twice, once in each language?

No, a person only needs to read once in a lifetime. The two things to be careful of in relation to transition to English are that yolngu students are competent readers of their own language before any start is made to transfer those skills to reading in English, and that students are given English reading material that they can understand. For the actual transfer to English, a lot of informal exposure to reading in English through the 'lap method' (see chapter 10) should facilitate a smooth transition.

Does a lot of English material need to be translated into Aboriginal languages?
No. What is required is a quantity of Aboriginal material in the vernacular that is appropriate for the teaching of reading and for the continuing process of traditional education in the formal setting. Most material pertaining to western culture will be taught in English, using English materials, when the children are ready for it.

From what sources are suitable vernacular materials available?

Generally speaking, the only source of vernacular material is that developed within each bilingual school programme itself. That is why it is important to have a full specialist team of linguist, teacher-linguist, literature production supervisor and yolngu literacy workers. Provided these specialists are available to do the work, there is no reason why vernacular literature cannot be produced faster than the students need it.

Aren't there too many different Aboriginal languages to make this a viable proposition?

In some communities where the language is dying out, or where there are very few speakers of a language, literature production is not likely to be economical. However, there are a number of communities where the language situation is definitely conducive to bilingual education and to vernacular literature production.

Won't the development of written literature in Aboriginal languages destroy the capacity of Aboriginal people to maintain a rich oral tradition?

While literate yolngu may lose some facility in maintaining oral 'literature', at the same time their literature can be maintained - possibly in a modernised or modified way - in written form. It will still be distinctively 'Aboriginal', even though different in some ways from pre-literate Aboriginality. Literacy is a skill which is morally neutral - it can be potentially good or evil: literacy in Aboriginal language is more 'Aboriginal' than literacy in English alone. Also, an oral culture which becomes written may have a stronger chance of resisting the pressures for change which arise outside that culture.

Don't yolngu children need to learn English to fit into modern society, more than they need to keep their own language?
'Bilingual' means 'two languages' - so both the vernacular and English are taught. Where there is an overemphasis on one language, a programme is not truly bilingual. It is of primary importance that *yolngu* children develop and maintain their own integrity as *yolngu* and the development of their mother tongue is crucial to this. Respect for a culture and the integrity of individuals is one of the basic premises of bilingual education. However, this does not mean that the development of a child's ability in English will be prejudiced. On the contrary, current research seems to indicate that children learning English as a second language (after they have had their basic education in their own language) tend to develop sounder and more efficient skills in English. A child's brain is not a balloon, in the sense that if it is filled with one language there is no room for another. The amount of English learned is dependent on two factors: how much we can improve our teaching methodology and how receptive the children are. We are working on the development of methodology, and we believe that the children will be more receptive in English if they are confident speakers, readers and thinkers in their own language.

What about the argument that *yolngu* will eventually need to be assimilated into *balanda* society, so we might as well give them an all-'western' education?

Apart from this argument being racist and immoral, it is sociologically naive to assume that if only *yolngu* can lose their own culture and language, they will adopt the *balanda* language and culture. Indeed the kind of social change they would submit to would involve the rejection of traditional culture and value systems, with possible failure to adopt the western cultural system, leaving a kind of cultural anomie. Children whose education is firmly grounded in their own language and culture have a much better chance of understanding and coping with the complexities of a second language and culture with which they have been confronted.

Are all the lessons in the vernacular or are some in English?

Lessons are in both languages but the proportion of time devoted to each language varies according to what level in the school the students have reached. In earlier years, more than half the time is taken in the vernacular, with that situation reversing in the higher grades.

Won't this learning of two languages, in two languages, cause children to be schizophrenic?

Apparently this has not occurred over thousands of years and in many countries where children have learnt in more than one language. Many *balanda* find it hard to get used to the idea that countries with a policy of one language of
instruction in schools are very much in the minority. Bilingual education is normal by world standards. Yolngu children in an all English school are expected to operate in classrooms in a state of cultural and linguistic amnesia, for that is what, in effect, is expected of them when their traditional culture and language are not recognised and utilised in the classroom. Such children are the ones more likely to suffer from a disjointed home-school relationship.

Why are oral vernacular programmes needed?

In order to enjoy full and normal growth in intelligence, children need to become fluent speakers of any one language. Prior to modern congregation at settlements, yolngu children grew up in relatively small nomadic units, under conditions in which they were constantly exposed more to adult language use. Under modern settlement conditions, children are more exposed to peer group interaction and for this and other reasons they may not have the exposure they need to adult language models. Thus, this first language development needs to be ensured in school. It can't be done in English, because they will know too little of it at the age when this cognitive development is important. Skills of language expression learned in the vernacular will also be transferred later to the learning and expression of English. In other words, a sound foundation in one's own language is an essential prerequisite to efficient learning of a second language.

Is teaching more difficult than in a conventional all-English programme?

Teachers possibly arrive at an Aboriginal school expecting their 'own' classroom and are placed in a situation that requires diplomacy and a perception of 'education' that is wider than 'teaching children'. It may be difficult to adjust to such conditions as working in a team-teaching situation with yolngu teaching assistants or teachers who, by western standards, may not be as well trained as you. It may also be difficult at first to adjust to a situation in which you don't understand the meaning of some of the materials being used in the classroom. This situation will be worse if there is no teacher-linguist or other experienced teachers on the staff to introduce you to the (initially strange) materials and priorities. If you try to overcome this problem by learning some of the vernacular, this will bring much more satisfaction after a year or so, but this effort in itself will make the early months more tiring and sometimes embarrassing and frustrating. You have probably had inadequate preparation for work in a cross-cultural education programme so there will be some initial 'culture shock', with adjustments to be made. If you are patient, and discipline yourself to look at the situation from a yolngu perspective, and are humble enough to seek advice from other teachers in the programme, you can achieve a lot. If you insist on doing everything as it is done in a conventional western classroom, you will have an easier time in the earlier stages because everything will be predictable for you; but, in the long term, your relationships with yolngu staff members are likely to be more real and your communication with your students more effective if you try to
use yolngu strengths in a bilingual approach.

Do I have to be able to speak the Aboriginal language in order to work in a bilingual programme?

No. Knowing the local vernacular is tremendously helpful, but you don't need it to do a reasonably competent job. There will be a yolngu teacher or teaching assistant with whom you will work, who will understand you most of the time in English and be able to communicate fluently with the children in their own language. Attitude is more important for fitting in well to a bilingual programme than is language. Remember that you can take helpful steps - short of becoming fluent in the language - such as taking the trouble to learn about the community, who the children's parents are and who are the main figures in each local clan, as well as learning some words. This demonstrates your goodwill and a willingness to meet people halfway. It is surprising how quickly you can learn a few words of basic conversation, such as greetings, and how impressed people are they hear you use these with them. There needs to be a much firmer commitment to learning Aboriginal languages by those balanda working in Aboriginal communities. To make this possible, the employing Government departments could provide reasonable assistance.

What assistance is available for balanda teachers wishing to learn an Aboriginal language?

Not very much. The two sources of assistance with language learning are either after work or evening classes held by the local linguist or teacher-linguist (as happened in communities including Yuendemu, Milingimbi and Yirrkala) or, in the Alice Springs region, three-week courses in four of the local languages - Walpiri, Pintupi, Pitjantjatjarra and eastern Aranda by the Institute for Aboriginal Development. Teachers who wish to attend these courses are now funded by the Department of Education's Teacher Education Unit (TEAC). Efforts made in 1977 by the School of Australian Linguistics to provide language learning (to match those held by IAD) in the southern part of the Territory) were not supported financially by the Department of Education.

How does a programme actually work? Could you briefly describe a day in the life of a person teaching in a bilingual teaching team?

I can tell you what happened at Milingimbi school. For every bilingual class, there was a balanda teacher and a yolngu teacher. Each afternoon, for an hour, the two of them worked together preparing daily, weekly or term programmes, and designing the next day's work. All the lessons, except those in oral English were planned by the two teachers together. The work was divided up. The yolngu teacher had the bulk of the face-to-face teaching, especially in the lower grades.
The balanda teachers only taught oral English until the children's understanding of English developed to a level at which some mathematics, written English and reading could be taught (about the year four or five level). Apart from that, the balanda teacher might take demonstration lessons, supervise groups and teach any balanda children in the class. Both teachers were busy all day, with the balanda teacher more in the background.

Are yolngu teachers good teachers?

They vary as much in ability as members of any society do. They do not have such a strong tradition of 'formal' teaching - i.e. verbal instruction, with feedback about progress through questions and answer - as do balanda teachers. Questions and answers are two major aspects of the western teaching methodology. Therefore, yolngu find the role of the classroom teacher hard to adjust to. On the other hand, as they know the students' language and know each child well, they have advantages in some aspects of the teacher's role.

What initiatives do yolngu staff take in the school?

This is very much up to the principal of the school and balanda staff members. There are two kinds of school principal: the one who says:

I told them they could run such and such, and I suggested they take some initiatives in such and such areas, and I assured them that we'd be open to any ideas they had about implementing modifications in the school, but often they didn't take advantage of any of the opportunities or if they did their interest soon petered out.

and the other who has appropriate long-term vision and a set of priorities, and who says:

The school is still a foreign and intimidating institution for most yolngu staff members, and they do not really feel a part of it. One must begin a long-term programme of increasing the status and self-confidence of yolngu staff. This can be done by such means as arranging yolngu staff meetings on their own or with balanda by invitation, and by bending over backwards to act on the recommendations coming out of these meetings; by ensuring that they have the same access to the staffroom and privileges as do balanda members; by seeking to place yolngu staff in good standard accommodation where possible, by giving them as much responsibility as they feel they can handle without being pressured too much; by supporting balanda teachers in organising groups of yolngu staff in curriculum development projects; by promoting conferences with yolngu staff from other
schools; by supporting them whenever possible to further their formal teacher training and by going the 'second mile' in helping with personal interests such as letter writing, and filing in income tax forms and so on. After several years of this kind of support, yolngu staff will have a self-confidence and a perception of their genuine involvement in the school from which they can express a great deal of initiative.

What sort of yolngu people are the end products of bilingual schooling?

In relation to the wider society, these people would be yolngu who are confident in English communication with balanda and who are able to continue formal education in English if they want to, and who have a positive attitude to balanda culture. (This will partly depend on whether the larger group has respected and supported the use and maintenance of their mother tongue and culture in one of their major institutions - the school.) In relation to yolngu society, the 'products' will maintain strong involvement with their cultural groups and take part in the adaptation of that society to demands for change, without a feeling of helplessness, frustration and loss of definite personal identity.

What is the prognosis for bilingual education?

We can be fairly confident that bilingual education rests on a sound theoretical base, especially if we include sociological as well as educational considerations. Thus, our major problems in the Northern Territory bilingual programmes have been administrative ones. The first problem has been to get administrators who have some theoretical appreciation of the programmes themselves. Admittedly, an administrator cannot be an expert in every branch of educational theory, but must know how to use experts and have faith in respected theorists. The next problem is one of planning and coordinating the programmes. It is one thing to establish a policy of bilingual education and quite another to provide the resources necessary to implement that policy. To some extent this has been done. For example, the Department of Education has provided positions for necessary specialist staff, and this has been a significant step. But the coordination of this provision is still incomplete, because insufficient means have been provided for the training of new specialist staff.

The theory, then, is sound and many of the personnel required are available. What is needed is an efficient cooperative effort to result in further action. These are still early days in bilingual education in the Northern Territory. There are some things being done very well, and some schools have strong programmes. What perhaps needs to be remembered is that when bilingual education started in 1973 there was really no one available who could tell us how to do it, in detail. We have been learning by experience along the way. As we learn, the programme is improving.
Chapter 16

What we think
Faye Matjarra, Charles Manydjarrri, Gwen Warmbirrbirr and Nancy Djambutj.

Bilingual education is what people in Aboriginal communities need. This goes for the *balanda* too, so we can understand each other. It is good because we don't want to lose our culture with too many *balanda* ways of living. In other words, we don't want to learn more *balanda* education and less *yolngu* education, or more *yolngu* education and less *balanda* education. We want to learn both, with even understanding.

There is nothing wrong with English. We still need it to communicate to the wider world. Through bilingual education we will learn good English. The other thing we need is our own culture. This means respect of the law and tradition and customs and the sacred things. This is our foundation and where we were planted. When we go to other places, we will be able to show our skills to other people, *balanda* or *yolngu*, so they will understand us better. Bilingual education in the schools will help us keep our culture.

In school we want children to read and write in their own language, as well as in English. We don't see why it's not good to teach this way. We also want to see *yolngu* culture in the school - things like singing and dancing. *Yolngu* culture can also come into the school when we take the children on excursions to study nature science. Sometimes the parents will go with us and so bilingual education helps to bring them into the school.

When bilingual education was first introduced, the community did not really understand it. They understood only that we would use *yolngumatha* (Aboriginal language) in the school. They agreed that we should use Gupapuynyu as the language, because that was the language that the *yolngu* Bible was written in. Today the community thinks it is a good way of teaching. They want their children to learn reading and writing through *yolngumatha*. They want them to learn the *yolngu* way of living as well as the *balanda* way of living.

Bilingual education has been good for the Aboriginal children. It is much
easier for the children to understand when we are talking to them in *yolngumatha*. The children learn better because they can understand their own language. They have not lost their language and speak only English all the time.

The teachers have been helped by bilingual education. Before, we did not always have important positions in the school. But bilingual education means that *yolngu* people are now needed in the school. In the future, we want to do things on our own. We want to learn and get educated as much as possible so we can really and truly understand the *balanda* and not just say 'yes' and 'no', when we don't know what they mean. So we want to learn and get educated, and get ideas on how to work with our people so we can protect and respect both cultures. We want to see our own *yolngu* teachers in the school, with the help of the *balanda*. That may not be for some time. But the future is really for the *yolngu* people.
How can my people know about future
Chapter 17

Bicultural education: A third way
Stephen Harris

Education has not been sufficiently responsive to the needs of Aboriginal communities. Nor is it likely to become responsive ... unless and until the efforts of the school are guided by and reinforced by the Aboriginal parents.

From the earliest times, schools and school people have concentrated on the Aboriginal children and excluded their parents from meaningful involvement: as a result many of these parents have come to believe that they have no role at all to play in the education of their children. Recognition of the complementarity of home and school in fostering the academic progress of children and recognition of the rights of parents in relation to the education of their children are relatively recent developments. Earlier policy makers were relatively ignorant of the complexity of the interacting forces shaping school achievement.

Current policy makers do not have this excuse of ignorance: they have 'lost their innocence' :

Will Australian educators and policy makers relinquish their ignorance and assume the new responsibilities, especially those which recognise the critical roles of parents? Unless they do, what hopes may we reasonably have that education in the future will be more than in the past in discharging its responsibilities to this Aboriginal clientele?

(Watts and Henry, 1978: 181-182.)

The most arresting word in the above is innocence: innocence on the part of administrators and teachers about the 'complexity of the interacting forces shaping (Aboriginal) school achievement' Educators who can see the writing on the wall but rigorously fight for their ignorance are worse. They are a liability. The way in which some Northern Territory educators continue to plead innocence is alarming. Below are a few of the more obvious examples of 'innocence'.

THE 'PSYCHOLOGY' OF HELPING PEOPLE

Few people respond well to continually being 'helped'. Whether they express it or not most people really want to help themselves. To constantly help people and
know what's best for them (even if you're right) takes their pride and initiative away, and in the long run makes them almost impossible to 'help'.

As an example, if we can forget for a moment the educational debate about bilingual education, its rationale in the terms of sound psychology of helping is enlightening. Firstly, it seeks to build reading skills out of something that yolngu already have - their language. In contrast, an all-English approach says in loud, unspoken terms to them: 'Look, nothing you have is really useful in the school. Let us help you by giving you English. Let's face it, your language has so few speakers, and such a little amount of material written in it that it just can't be considered important.' To tell people that their language is not important is equivalent, emotionally, to telling them they are not important. Secondly, bilingual education provides an educationally significant role to yolngu teaching staff. This is important, because if they are to have a deep commitment to the schooling of the local children, a yolngu teacher's role must be more than child-minding, discipline and classroom maintenance. The essential role of teachers is to impart knowledge and skills, and yolngu teachers know when they are not really doing this. That the yolngu staff members be involved in this way of 'helping themselves' is important for the teachers themselves, for the children they teach and for the community at large.

CONSULTATION WITH YOLNGU

Under the policy of self-management, we seem to accept the fact that we must consult yolngu, but few of us recognise how difficult a process this is. The result is that well intentioned balanda, often in all honesty, end up putting words into the mouths of yolngu, or at least not getting clear the range of their wishes. An example of this is the emphasis many of us put on the desire yolngu have for their children to learn the three Rs, without also emphasising equally that yolngu want their children to remain Aboriginal.

If we don't find out what yolngu really want in education, we are likely to spend a lot of time and money on programmes which they do not support and which, for that reason, will be largely unsuccessful. Because yolngu do not always quickly verbalise their wishes, to find out what they want takes time: lengthy discussions with local yolngu and also, if possible, with some balanda person who is fluent in the local vernacular. To carry out accurate consultation also requires a real knowledge of recent history, and local cultural priorities; otherwise inquirers will not be able to integrate their findings into a meaningful pattern. One must also 'consult' by observation. Actions speak louder than words. A two hour discussion after taking a charter flight into a community will not uncover many facts, and an inquirer will depart with their innocence intact.

PREPARATION OF TEACHERS

The majority of teachers of yolngu children have been sent to teach in Aboriginal communities without much knowledge of Aboriginal society, without receiving
any help in learning the local vernacular, and without any knowledge of Aboriginal learning or teaching styles. With this kind of preparation, all these teachers can do is struggle to 'give' yolngu some education. There is only limited hope of quickly building support between teacher and student and little hope of building establishing programmes based on the children's strengths and needs. The degree to which Aboriginal education is a specialist's task has never been fully acknowledged. If we had more appropriately trained teachers - even if there were then fewer of them - we would have a more effective education service.

PRE-SCHOOLS

We have largely tried to ignore Aboriginal parents in our pre-schools and have instead tried to 'give' very small yolngu children a western education. The sociological innocence of this approach is that we try to bypass yolngu in our efforts to help them. A more profitable approach would be to focus on language development and concept development, and to enlist yolngu parents and relatives to achieve this. The learning of concepts and thinking skills can be achieved most efficiently in a language that the learners know well. In our eagerness to promote second language development - oral English - in young yolngu children, we may be bypassing the most effective and available means of stimulating cognitive development at this stage, which is the children's own vernacular. Too early an emphasis on learning English causes some yolngu children not to learn any language well and can damage the development of normal intelligence in yolngu children. Therefore, among those yolngu children who are not yet fluent speakers of English from their homes, it is important, for the development of their full intelligence potential, that they be given full opportunity for concept development in their own language. Thus, our efforts in regard to yolngu pre-schooling should be directed, not to teaching pre-schoolers in English, but to organising yolngu parents and teachers into programmes that stimulate concept development through vernacular language development, in the context of parent-child centres and pre-schools located in the camp or village.

POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION

It is in the area of post-primary education that we tend to be most innocent, by ignoring the importance of experience-based learning. Manual training classes often teach teenage boys skills that are unrelated to any reality they know. Modelling with clay, enamelling work, work with plastics and the elements of various trade skills away from the context of the real-life application of those skills, are examples of this practice. Such activities are legitimate if they are treated in areas of new aesthetic expression, but when they pass as preparation for economic survival in later life it is difficult to expect such subjects to be regarded seriously. My point is not only that such activities will not have any survival benefit after school, but that they probably won't even be learned well because their content is foreign. People learn best what they can relate to their own experience. If what students learn in school cannot be hooked into their own world, it will only be superficially learnt. The skills will be performed, but will not
become part of the learner's deep mental competence.

**ADULT EDUCATION**

In the Territory there is a vast disparity between the number of teachers of *yolngu* children and adult educators. Adults need appropriate education for their own sakes but, just as importantly, unless adults are exposed to modern educational change, schools will have limited effect in educating children. We know that in terms of motivation for learning, parental pressure on children is one of the strongest sources of their efforts at school. Yet if Aboriginal parents have never themselves experienced school learning, or really understood the benefits of it, how can they be expected to encourage their children to participate more fully in school (especially when *yolngu* parents are not particularly future-oriented)? Home background is a good predictor of school success. For example, in all the debate about the best way to teach reading, one of the surest facts is that children who come from 'reading homes' always learn to read. This is an example of the influence of parents in academic terms on their children. But adult education is important, too, in terms of race relations and cross-cultural respect. It can also be argued that putting much less effort into teaching adults than children undermines self-determination and self-management for the present adult generation. In other words, it begins to look more as if we support a 'smooth the dying pillow' policy (which officially ended in the 1940s) for the present adults, and a 'self-management later' policy for the children of today.

**BICULTURALISM - THE THIRD WAY**

A bicultural person has the ability to shift into and operate in two cultures with relative ease and comfort. Such a person has access to, and is able to empathise with, the points of view of both cultures, without losing identity with the primary reference group.

Bicultural education, in its broadest sense, is the teaching of two ways of life. A bicultural Aboriginal school is one in which at all levels the *yolngu* and *balanda* staff ratios, classroom subject content, languages of instruction, teaching styles and sources of decision making significantly represent both cultures. A bicultural school is one where the *balanda* staff thinks of itself as a servant of the local community rather than one of the direct sources of leadership in the process of social change. The staff in a bicultural school seeks to develop racial harmony and functional academic skills in the school community. Bicultural schooling involves the community, therefore, in such matters as the definition of the aims and objectives of the school, the design and siting of school buildings, the employment of school staff and the use of the school’s financial resources. Such a school must develop out of consistent and lengthy consultation between appropriate representatives of both cultures.

There are good sociological reasons for developing bicultural schooling.
There is today among *yolngu* people a desire to learn the three Rs, but this desire has not by itself narrowed the gulf between schools and communities. Nor has this recognised need for the three Rs lessened the desire of *yolngu* parents for their children to grow up Aboriginal. *Yolngu* adults still generally seem to feel that schools are really *balanda* domain. Until this gap breaks down, the commitment of communities to schools will remain half-hearted. Allowing *balanda* teaching processes and content to dominate in schools says to *yolngu* 'You don't have much schools can use.' In emotional terms, this downgrades *yolngu* generally. When the visiting Canadian education consultant, Andre Renaud, was asked, 'How did you in Canada reach a take-off point where Indian initiatives for their own education were harnessed?' he said, among other things:

> We consulted them - we asked them what they wanted. We realised the strength of a tree is at the bottom - the sap goes up, it doesn't go down.

In 1974, Julius Nyerere said something very similar in relation to the efforts of expatriates to help Tanzanians:

> Development brings freedom, provided it is the development of people. But people cannot be developed. They can only develop themselves. For a while it is possible for an outsider to build a man's house, but an outsider cannot give the man pride and self-confidence in himself as a human being.

*(Nyerere, 1973:29)*

Schools must take serious notice of what *yolngu* want, and must start in school with what *yolngu* have, in terms of both processes and content if their pride and initiative is to be translated into action within the school.

Some people assume that there are only two possible alternative courses open to *yolngu* people: either to retreat into the bush and try to retain a fairly traditional *yolngu* life style, or to undergo rapid social change and become 'white Australians with black skins.' There is, however, a third way - that of the bicultural Aboriginal person. Those who are sympathetic to *yolngu* people must not be against all social change because the assimilation policy may have espoused a certain approach to social change. Cultural and social change among *yolngu* is inevitable. Our responsibility is to see that where formal education is a source of change, it builds on *yolngu* strengths and initiatives. The development of Aboriginal art is a good example of a positive kind of social change. Modern Aboriginal bark painting is very different from what it was thirty years ago. Today cross-hatching features much less, and figures, such as animals, appear much more, in response to market demands. The contexts in which the paintings are done are very different. Modern glues are used as fixatives rather than orchid juice, and the artists cope with a cash economy. However, the art is still uniquely Aboriginal. It still uses much Aboriginal content and many Aboriginal processes, it fits with traditional authority patterns and perpetuates traditional skills in a modern context and is a facet of settlement life over which *yolngu* have
considerable control and pride. I believe bicultural curriculum development and further training and responsibility of *yolngu* teachers can involve the same kind adaptation. Friere talks about positive change having to build from what is within people, where their level of consciousness is raised in the course of active participation in an activity. The same kind of a parallel can be drawn from different building programmes on settlements. Shimpo (1978), in his extensive travels in the Northern Territory, observed that buildings in which *yolngu* had been closely involved during the construction were not vandalised, yet sophisticated imported buildings, constructed largely by outsiders, were often damaged. At Port Keats, I saw two kinds of building projects: one of houses of completely local construction (welded angle iron frames, and round log walls,) built by teams of *yolngu* with one *balanda* and the other of extremely expensive imported houses, built entirely by *balanda* labour. Of which houses do we imagine local *yolngu* are most proud? The log houses are not traditional; houses and were not built entirely by them, but the building of them probably changed their thinking patterns in a much more constructive way than did the glossy imports.

We cannot continue to hand *yolngu* people skills or the three Rs in a prepackaged, ready-made, foreign form. If we do, their involvement will then be on a superficial level and the social change, when it becomes more apparent, will be more destructive and confusing. A school must not be allowed to carry the unspoken message from western society that 'nothing you have is really very usable in these days, so do everything our way.'
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