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REPORT

ROUGH ROCK DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL - CAN WE LEARN ANYTHING?

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Several readers of the Journal have asked for reports on overseas projects which would be of interest in Australia. Mr. Amery agreed to provide such a report on the Rough Rock Demonstration School in Arizona. Rough Rock has been cited as one of the most dramatic attempts "to achieve community control in a school serving a disadvantaged, largely uneducated minority".

First let me state that my knowledge of Rough Rock has been limited to the reading of reports, some direct communication, an examination of their evaluation program and obtaining of school materials from the Curriculum Centre at Rough Rock.

Situated in Arizona on the Navajo Reservation, Rough Rock displays certain features that seem to me the ultimate or near ultimate in biculturalism and community involvement.

Several features stand out:

1. Educated Navajo people were prepared to participate *in the field*.
2. Navajo people had control over funds to be used in their area.
3. Expertise was brought in as required.
4. As full a community involvement as possible was introduced.
5. A curriculum centre was established.
6. An evaluation program was carried out by Navajo people in the Navajo language.

One could go on at great length discussing the work being carried out in the school, but I feel it more important that we

look into the Navajo evaluators' report of 1969, and in particular their report on school-community relations.

From the start it appeared obvious to the school board that:

"... the fact of being a demonstration school has attracted many non-Navajo evaluators. The board has witnessed these evaluators to be spending most of their time with the people with whom they can best communicate."

So it was decided that a Navajo team would conduct the evaluation. Accordingly they discussed the series of questions put to them by the school board. The questions were framed within the general reference of the school aims, namely:

- "1. the school should be under the control of the local community,
2. the school should provide bilingual and bicultural education,
3. the school should provide as good an education as any other school in academic subjects, and
4. the school should provide community school education."

Four categories of information were kept in mind throughout the evaluation, these being what powers influence education, what is communication like, what policies keep the school in operation and what is being done to follow up policies. The following questions were put to a cross section of people:

"Is the community in control of the school?"

"Is the school educating the community?"

"Do you want the community in control of the school?"

"Is it better for the child to be in a dormitory or at home?"

The following points arose from the evaluation:

1. The strongest point made was that the community felt it was in control of the school.

2. The community understood what control meant.
3. Community education is working.
4. Through involvement community education continues.
5. It was considered best if children went home each day.

From the final conclusions and recommendations I will quote some which I believe show a vital lead that could well be followed in Australia:

1. "... the need is for local control with continued Federal funding, along with funds from other sources."
2. "Follow up evaluation of every student leaving school must be initiated ..."
3. "That the Navajo Tribal Council enact by legislation a definite educational policy and actually support and enforce its policy."

One can only suggest that there is much we can learn from the experiences of others and that the Rough Rock experiences might well have a number of leads for those of us who are on the brink of community education in its "fullest" sense.

Note: One of the first school board members, John Dick, expressed this view:

"We want our children to be proud of being Navajo. We want them to know who they are ... In the future they will have to be able to make many choices and do many different things. They need a modern education to make their way, but they have to know both worlds - and being Navajo will give them strength."

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Editorial Comment: Some teachers might wish to correspond direct with Mr. Amery. His address is:
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