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REPORT : A SOLID LINK IN THE CHAIN -

THE ABORIGINAL TEACHING ASSISTANTS' TRAINING PROGRAMME:

AN EVALUATION

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In the following pages we present extracts from the report prepared for the Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney, by Dr A.J. More, Ph.D. The author is Associate Professor, and the Supervisor of the Native Indian Teacher Education Program in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. He is in Australia during 1977-78 on Sabbatical Leave.

2.2 ... In early 1975, 23 Aborigines were appointed to teacher aide positions throughout the state and an 11 week training programme was an integral part of the employment of the new recruits.

In 1977, 60 Aborigines filled such positions in the state. Of these 34 were enrolled in the basic training programme and 36 in an inservice programme at the University.

Each successful applicant was appointed to the local school and required to attend the training course. The course ran for 11 weeks in 2 and 3 week blocks throughout the year. In addition training staff visited the schools at which the aides were employed. There were four full-time professional and two support staff in the training programme in 1977. The salaries for all the aides and the complete costs of the training programme, except for Mr Duncan's salary which is provided by the University, were still borne by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs through the state Department of Education.

In the proposal for the training programme, the Aboriginal aides were referred to as Aboriginal Teaching Assistants to emphasize that they were Aborigines and that their duties varied significantly from those of non-Aboriginal teacher aides. This has caused some confusion because the Public Service Board in NSW does not have a job designation "Teaching Assistant". However, for this report, the term Aboriginal teacher aide is used to refer

to the general group of Aborigines working in Australian schools in a paraprofessional role. The term Aboriginal Teaching Assistant (ATA) is used to refer specifically to the Aboriginal teacher aides in NSW schools. More is said of the problem in this and subsequent chapters.

3. Objectives

The general objectives of the ATA Programme were given by the Director-General of Education in NSW:

1. "to increase the teachers' understanding of the Aboriginal child's kinship ties and value systems;
2. to provide motivation for pupils in creating additional vocational opportunities for responsible Aborigines of post-school age;
3. to allow Aboriginal communities to identify more closely with schools;
4. to provide direct assistance to the teacher in group and individual activities;
5. to provide a meaningful channel of communication between home and school." (Buggie, 1974, p.1)

The general aims of the ATA Training Programme were given by the Director of the Programme as:

1. promoting the personal development of the ATAs;
2. promoting the academic development of the ATAs and providing an opportunity for educational advancement;
3. developing a basic understanding of educational theory and method and enhancing job competence. (Duncan, Interview, August 24, 1977).

More specific aims were listed in the 1976 report on the Training Programme:

"The basic aims of the Training Course are as follows:

1. To assist the student to become an effective and useful member of the school staff.
2. To enrich the personal growth and development of the students so that their self-concept is enhanced.

3. To improve both the oral and written communication of the students to enable them to express themselves with self-confidence in a variety of situations.
4. To provide each student with basic understanding of child growth and development so that each one will be able to assist teachers and parents to relate more effectively to Aboriginal pupils at the school.
5. To equip the student with a tolerant understanding of cultural and social processes in local, national and international communities, thus enabling them to function more effectively in the school and in the local community.
6. To make students aware of their unique role as a link between the school and their own community.
7. To assist students to relate to and work with all sections of the community so that greater parental participation and community involvement will be facilitated.
8. To provide an opportunity for students, regardless of their previous educational attainments to undertake studies which will enable them to proceed to tertiary education if they so desire." (Aboriginal Teaching Assistants Training Course, 1976, p.2).

6. THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

6.1 The Four Groups

The Programme consisted of four main groups of courses - the Basic Course, the Intensive Course, the Upgrading Course and the Inservice Course.

6.1.1 The Basic Course

All ATAs were required to enrol in the Basic Course during their first year of employment. In the later part of their first year or in succeeding years they could enrol in the other courses.

All beginning ATAs, the entering group, came to the University of Sydney for a total of 5 weeks study in Term 1 and 6 weeks in Term 2. During that time they took courses in Educational Psychology, Educational Methodology, Elementary Sociology and Anthropology, English/Communications, and Government and Current Affairs. They also took the course for the First Aid Certificate from the St John's Ambulance Association.

Students lived in residence at International House on the Campus. In the first year they stayed in a hostel some distance from Campus.

As well as formal course work students had the opportunity to take field trips to various parts of the Sydney area to broaden their horizons and develop a stronger group feeling. Instructors related to the students very much on a personal level as well as an academic level.

During Term 2 assignments and standards were differentiated between those who seemed to be academically capable and strongly motivated and those who were having academic and/or motivational difficulties.

By the end of the Basic Course the students were divided into three groups:

1. Those who achieved a minimal but satisfactory level of work in the courses (these were awarded the Level I Certificate later in the year).
2. Those who achieved well in the courses (these were awarded the Level II Certificate later in the year).
3. Those who achieved very well and appeared capable of going on to more intensive study (these were invited to take part in the Intensive Course in Term 3 and, if successful, were awarded the Level III Certificate).

6.1.2. The Intensive Course

The Intensive Course was open by invitation to students from the Basic Course who had done very well, and students from the Upgrading Course (see 6.1.3.) who had demonstrated they were capable of handling the Intensive Course.

The Intensive Course requires 4 weeks attendance at the University for study, and 1 week for exams in Term 3.

The Intensive Course included topics similar to the Basic Course but in more depth, requiring more independent learning and making use of more student involvement in Course content. A few new topics were added.

6.1.3. The Upgrading Course

The Upgrading Course was available only to those who had completed the Basic Course and their first year of employment.

The Upgrading Course was aimed at ATAs who showed promise in academic ability but who required more study before they could attend the Intensive Course.

The Course reviewed and re-presented topics from the Basic Course. Instructors concentrated on improving weak areas of students' work. The Course involved two weeks in each of Terms I and 2.

Highly successful students in the Upgrading Course were invited to enrol in the Intensive Course in Term 3.

6.1.4. The Inservice Course.

The Inservice Course was held for 2 weeks in Term 2, and was available to all ATAs who were not enrolled in the Basic or Upgrading Courses.

The Inservice Course included seminar discussions directly related to the ATA work in the schools. It provided the ATAs with the opportunity to share ideas and experiences, and to work together on problems. There was work on verbal and communication skills. Guest speakers were a regular part of the Programme.

6.3.6. Visits to Schools and On-the-Job Training

Although visits to schools were not part of the coursework, they were an important part of the learning process of the ATA, and helped instructors relate the formal coursework to the situation.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and discuss the information reported in the first two chapters. Conclusions and recommendations are made as part of the discussion.

The organization of this chapter parallels the first two chapters with major sections on Objectives, The Setting, ATA Role Description and The Training Programme.

2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 ATA Programme Objectives

The objectives of the Aboriginal Teaching Assistants' Programme have been organized into 7 basic objectives. This was done to provide a framework for analysing and assessing the Programme.

The objectives are:

1. To improve the achievement of Aboriginal children in school.
2. To develop the concept that Aboriginal children have of themselves particularly with regard to their self concept and Aboriginality.
3. To improve the attitudes of Aboriginal children towards school.
4. To develop and improve communication between Aboriginal parents and the school.
5. To improve Aboriginal parents' understanding of, attitudes toward and involvement in the school.
6. To improve teachers' understanding of, attitudes toward and involvement with Aborigines.
7. To provide meaningful employment for Aborigines.

2.2 Training Programme Objectives

1. Promoting the personal development of the ATAs.
2. Promoting the academic development of the ATAs.
3. Developing a basic understanding of educational theory and method.

These objectives were assembled by relating them to the objectives of the ATA Programme. The objectives of the Training Programme, if achieved, should enable the ATA to carry out the objectives of the ATA Programme.

It seems reasonable to conclude - (C1) that the objectives of the Training Programme are very appropriate to the objectives of the ATA Programme.

When objectives are stated in a general way, it is sometimes difficult to assess their appropriateness. In the case of the Training Programme it was possible to go beyond the general objectives to a statement of specific objectives for the individual Courses, these appeared in Chapter 1.

When this was done it was found that the Training Programme objectives were directly linked to ATA Programme objectives on achievement of Aboriginal children, on self concept, and meaningful employment. There were strong indirect links to ATA Programme objectives on attitudes towards school by Aboriginal children, and on teacher understanding and attitudes. There was a more tenuous link with objectives on parent-school communication, and on parent understanding and attitudes.

IT IS RECOMMENDED -

(R1) that the Training Programme include in its objectives a higher priority for parent-school communication, and parent understanding and attitudes.

3. THE SETTING

The historical development of Aboriginal-nonAboriginal relationships was characterized by misunderstandings and European domination of Aborigines. The present situation includes continuation, in varying degrees, of the misunderstanding and domination. Discrimination is still very evident in many communities - although nonAborigines frequently refuse to accept the existence of discrimination. However, there is a slowly increasing awareness of the problems Aborigines face, and an increasing willingness by society to accept some responsibility for dealing with the problems.

Relationships within the schools are somewhat better than in the community, although some serious problems still remain in teacher attitudes and understanding. Educational institutions are making more attempts to adapt to the needs of Aboriginal students. Educational policies are slowly changing from assimilation to integration.

The schools in which the ATAs are employed vary greatly in the proportion of Aboriginal students from a very few Aborigines to over 90%.

Aboriginal children generally perform below their non-Aboriginal classmates on school tasks. Difficulties in language

skills and confidence seem to be the most serious. These factors were traced back to differences between the home and school environments, economic and social problems, and an inability of the schools to adjust adequately to the needs of Aboriginal children. An Aboriginal aide has special abilities to deal with these problems.

Most of the ATAs felt that they had a good relationship with the staff and students of their school.

One of the most notable characteristics of the school and community settings is the great variety. Not only do communities and schools differ considerably, but within communities and schools, individuals differ considerably.

It seems reasonable to conclude - (C2) that the ATAs work in difficult and varied settings, particularly with respect to attitudes, understanding and the needs of Aboriginal children.

IT IS RECOMMENDED -

(R2) that Aboriginal Teaching Assistants be encouraged to help teachers understand the Aboriginal community better by organizing orientation sessions and discussion sessions between teachers and Aboriginal parents.

A few teachers suggested that the ATAs, together with other Aborigines, could organize an orientation session that would promote better understanding of the Aboriginal community and open lines of communication between some teachers and Aborigines. There were also suggestions for discussions, or forums, away from the school, at which a small number of teachers could meet Aboriginal parents.

Given the level of misunderstanding and uneasiness that exists between the schools and Aborigines, such orientations and discussion sessions would probably not be an immediate resounding success. But they could be a beginning towards a better setting for Aboriginal children in the school.

4. ATA ROLE DESCRIPTION

4.1 Development of Role Description

The ATA role description has developed from two sources - teacher aide programmes in Australia, and the needs of the schools in which the ATAs work. There has been a significant lack of information available to principals, teachers and ATAs with the

result that some ATAs are not being used to their potential, or are being used ineffectively.

IT IS RECOMMENDED -

(R3) that priority be given by the State Dept. of Education to developing a formal role description for the Aboriginal Teaching Assistants and that the role description be flexible enough to allow for the needs of the school, the capabilities and interests of the ATA, the nature of the individual community and the educational needs of the local Aboriginal children.

Until a common, but flexible, job description is developed there will continue to be frustration at the local school level and ineffective or inappropriate use of ATAs. It is important that such a description have significant input from local principals, teachers, the ATAs and ATA Training Programme staff.

4.2 List of Duties

I have developed a list of duties from which the duties of the individual ATA might be drawn. This list is developed from suggestions of Training Program staff, ATAs and school personnel. It also includes duties from other Aboriginal teacher aide programmes. Only those duties which are appropriate to the objectives of the ATA Programme, in Section 2 of this chapter, have been included.

It is important to emphasize the need to vary the duties according to the school, the community and the ATA.

One way in which a flexible job description might be developed would be to recommend that the duties of the individual ATA be drawn from the list below.

The duties are listed approximately in decreasing order of their appropriateness to the ATA Programme objectives.

IT IS RECOMMENDED

(R4) that ATA duties be drawn from the list below:

Interacting duties

1. Tutoring small groups, especially in language, writing, spelling (either under direct teacher supervision or using a prepared kit).

2. Tutoring individuals, especially in language, writing, spelling (either under direct teacher supervision or using a prepared kit).
3. Reading to groups or individuals.
4. Listening to groups or individuals read.
5. Telling stories.
6. Assisting children doing reading or exercises at their desks.
7. Correcting work.
8. Directing pupils to teacher for special help.
9. Giving lessons in Aboriginal culture and history.
10. Supervising whole class in teacher's absence.
11. Assisting teacher in planning lessons.
12. Helping pupils with projects.
13. Helping with first aid (First Aid Officer after training).
14. Assisting young children with clothing.
15. Preparing teaching materials and displays, if ATA is also involved in planning or using them.
16. Playground supervision.
17. Assisting children in the library.
18. Assisting with excursions and sports.

Liaison duties

1. With children
 - a. counselling, assisting with personal problems;
 - b. providing support and affection, building confidence;
 - c. explaining school routines;
 - d. helping children get along with others;
 - e. some helping in vocational planning.
2. With parents (and community)
 - a. explaining school routines and procedures;
 - b. listening to parent concerns and complaints;

- c. helping principal or teachers make contact with Aboriginal parents and vice versa;
 - d. organizing mothers' or parents' group;
 - e. displaying children's work in the community;
 - f. explaining how children are doing at school;
 - g. explaining student learning difficulties;
 - h. explaining to parents how to help their children;
 - i. helping parents to prepare preschoolers for school;
 - j. inviting parents to school.
3. With teachers and principal
- a. discussing problems on behalf of Aboriginal parents and/or children;
 - b. providing orientation for teachers, explaining the Aboriginal community;
 - c. attending staff meetings;
 - d. working with teachers on problems of individual Aboriginal children.

Non-interacting duties

- 1. Preparing teaching materials and displays, if ATA is not involved in planning and/or using them.
- 2. Previewing films or film strips.
- 3. Ordering audio/video materials, tuck shop supplies.
- 4. Caring for audio/video and sports equipment.
- 5. Record keeping.
- 6. Library reshelving and cataloguing.
- 7. Operating audio/video.
- 8. Writing material on blackboard for teacher.
- 9. Answering 'phone.
- 10. Running errands.
- 11. Tidying classroom.
- 12. Collecting money.
- 13. Duplicating/typing.
- 14. Giving out/collecting.

It is further recommended that the time allocation of duties be approximately 60% for Interacting duties, 30% for Liaison duties and 10% for Non-interacting duties. This will vary considerably between schools and ATAs - especially the allocation between Interacting and Liaison duties. Non-interacting duties should not exceed 25% in any situation.

If the ATA spends more than 25% of time on Non-interacting duties then her effectiveness will be seriously limited. In a school in which the ATA spends considerably more than 25% on Non-interacting duties, I suggest 3 alternatives:

1. Change the time allocation of ATA duties.
2. Change the ATA if she is not capable.
3. Decline having an ATA in the school, to allow another school which can make better use of ATA time to have an ATA.

4.3 Spontaneous Results of ATAs Presence

The presence of an Aboriginal Teaching Assistant in the school can produce beneficial spontaneous results even when the ATA has limited direct contact with the children. If the ATA performs duties of a regular teacher's aide these spontaneous results seem to be considerably enhanced. If in addition the ATA performs duties unique to the ATA the overt *and* spontaneous results will likely be at their optimum level.

One of the more obvious spontaneous results of the ATA's presence is the increased confidence and security that it can give to Aboriginal children. Even if a child doesn't spend any time with the ATA, he or she knows there is an Aborigine available to relate to if necessary. This usually improves the attitudes of the Aboriginal children towards themselves and towards their school.

Another spontaneous result is development of more positive, Aboriginal parents' attitudes towards the school. Even if parents don't take the opportunity to talk with the ATA, they know the ATA is available if necessary. As a result some links may be established between parent and school, links that probably wouldn't have been established if the ATA wasn't in the school.

In many situations the attitudes of teachers and children improve because they see an Aborigine performing duties usually performed by nonAborigines. The opposite result can occur when

the ATA is performing unsatisfactorily, whether or not the unsatisfactory performance is the ATAs fault.

In summary, all seven of the basic ATA objectives can be achieved to a degree, as a spontaneous result of the ATA's presence.

I am concerned, after visiting schools and talking with school personnel and ATAs, that too many schools depend on spontaneous results and not enough is achieved through direct action. In such schools the ATA results are limited. For example, in those schools which do not distinguish between teacher aide and ATA duties there can be many beneficial results, but I believe the results would be even better if the ATA could spend some time with Aboriginal parents, or explain aspects of the Aboriginal community to teachers or children, or assist in counselling some of the Aboriginal children.

There is concern in some schools that too much overt attention to the Aboriginality of the ATA will destroy the spontaneous results of the ATA's presence. For example, one teacher did not want to have the Aboriginal children stand out in any way because this would make them "even more self-conscious". Another felt that the presence of the ATA might communicate that the "Aboriginal children were such poor learners only another Aborigine could help them". This is a supportable concern. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that this concern can be overcome by careful planning of ATA activities and provision of an effective support system for the ATA. The evidence also suggests to us that if this concern is overcome the ATA's effectiveness will be greatly increased.

In all of this it is assumed that the ATAs work with both Aboriginal and nonAboriginal children in many, if not most, situations.

4.4 Aboriginal Teaching Assistants' Title

There is some confusion and some negative reaction to use of the title "Aboriginal Teaching Assistant" rather than Aboriginal teacher aide.

It was pointed out in the first chapter that the purpose of the title was to recognize that they were Aborigines and that their duties varied considerably from those of a regular teacher's aide. Chapter Two demonstrated that the differences exist.

It is important to distinguish between the regular teacher aide and the ATA in most circumstances. It is reasonable to suggest that such a distinction be reflected in the job title. I would strongly recommend that a job title, such as Aboriginal Teaching Assistant, be formally adopted by the State Department of Education and the state Public Service Board, to emphasize the differences in duties between ATAs and teacher aides.

4.5 Working Conditions

Working conditions appear to be outside the terms of reference of this report. However, salary difficulties have affected a significant number of ATAs, and have prevented some well qualified ATAs from applying.

The salary of an ATA in 1976 ranged between \$3,718 and \$6,320 per annum. ATAs are not paid during school vacations.

More than half of the ATAs were married and had children. In many cases the ATA was the sole breadwinner in the family, and often was a single parent.

Many ATAs found it impossible to support themselves on the salary provided. Some had offers of better paying but less satisfactory jobs. Others said they could receive more on welfare payments. Many found that the cost of working (baby-sitting, after school care, clothing and transportation) used up most of their salary.

Many pointed to worries about their financial position as limiting their effectiveness on the job and studying.

IT MUST BE RECOMMENDED

(R5) that high priority be given to increasing the wages paid to Aboriginal Teaching Assistants.

At a time of fiscal restraint in government spending, and at a low point in the economy it is very difficult to obtain additional funding. Salary needs must be compared to other priorities before a higher wage scale can be achieved.

Nevertheless the impact of wage benefits on the effectiveness of the ATAs warrants serious consideration.

5. THE TRAINING PROGRAMME

5.1 General

"Is the ATA Training Programme effective?" is the underlying question in this report. The evidence can only point to one answer, a resounding "Yes".

That is not to say the Training Programme has no problems, or that there is not room for improvement. A large portion of this section deals with the problems and recommends improvements.

It is reasonable to conclude - (C3) that in general the Aboriginal Teaching Assistants' Training Programme is doing a very effective job.

It is a credit to the staff and the students as well as the many supporters in schools, Aboriginal communities and government agencies that such an effective Programme has been developed.

One of the most effective components of the Training Programme is the provision of the four Courses: Basic; Intensive; Upgrading; and Inservice. This arrangement of Courses provides for a great range of academic background without diminishing course standards. The arrangement also allows the ATAs to increase their education at their own pace and to their own level.

The other major component that makes the Training Programme so effective is the excellent rapport between staff and ATAs. The teacher-student relationship is very effective in almost all cases. The interpersonal relationship is even more effective. So much has happened to the confidence and motivation of the ATAs because on top of the support from their own school is a feeling of admiration and respect from the Training Programme staff.

Another advantage of the Training Programme is that it improves the opportunity for ATAs to continue on into teacher training. Yet it doesn't decrease the feeling of accomplishment of those ATAs who can't or don't wish to become teachers. While completion of Level III does not guarantee acceptance into College or University, every ATA who has completed Level III and applied to a tertiary institution has been accepted.

Many of the ATAs and school personnel indicated that ATAs should not be given the feeling that they have failed if they don't wish to go into teacher training. Many ATAs are very effective and happy in their present jobs. At the same time, ATAs, school

personnel and the general Aboriginal community felt there was a desperate need for Aboriginal teachers. Aborigines who show potential should be given every encouragement to continue. The ATA Training Programme has established a working relationship with a small number of teachers colleges to ease entry of ATAs into teacher training.

IT IS RECOMMENDED

(R6) *that the Training Programme strengthen its relationship with those teacher training institutions which are interested in accepting ATAs; and that the relationship provide for contact while the ATAs are in the Intensive Course, and continuing contact and support for the ATAs while they are in the teacher training college.*

5.2 The Individual Courses

The individual Courses, in terms of their contact and the way in which they are taught, appear to be very helpful and useful to the ATAs. They are also appropriate to the objectives of the Training Programme and the ATA Programme.

Course content was reviewed in comparison to the objectives of the ATA Programme and the ATA duties. This review suggests that there is insufficient work related to working with Aboriginal parents and developing better home-school liaison. It is not a coincidence that principals rated the importance of liaison very high, and the effectiveness of ATAs in liaison as relatively low.

IT IS RECOMMENDED

(R7) *that the Training Programme include greater attention to working with Aboriginal parents and developing better home-school liaison,*

(R8) *and that schools which attach a high importance to home-school liaison be encouraged to schedule more time for ATAs to carry out this activity.*

It is possible to improve the effectiveness of the ATAs in home-school liaison, but it must be emphasized that this liaison work requires different skills than those required of Teaching Assistants. As long as the ATAs' main responsibilities are in the school (as should be the case), their effectiveness at liaison will be limited. Those schools which require assistance mainly in

liaison require a person with different skills, training and experience.

5.3 Field Work

Relations between the Training Programme staff and the schools are generally good, and the coursework has many very practical components. But the coursework and the day-to-day functioning of the ATA are two separate worlds.

The Training problem has not exploited the potential of the on-the-job training, or involved teachers and Principals in developing and carrying out the Training. Yet one of the most useful Training resources are the teachers.

THEREFORE IT IS RECOMMENDED

(R9) That the Training Programme increase its involvement in on-the-job training experiences for ATAs,

further

(R10) that the Training Programme in co-operation with school personnel, develop a series of on-the-job training experiences coordinated with the coursework,

(R11) and that the Training Programme develop a series of regional workshops for ATAs and teachers together, and that these workshops be integrated with the coursework.

The major benefit of these recommendations would be an increase in the amount of training without an increase in the time that ATAs were away from the classroom. If the experiences were developed carefully there would not be an increase in the time most teachers spend with their ATAs, but there would be a more efficient use of that time.

The recommendations should result in a much closer working relationship between Training Programme staff and school personnel. In particular, the recommendations would emphasize the role of the classroom teacher in the Training Programme.

Recommendation 10 would allow an even greater degree of individualization in the training. The guided experiences on-the-job would permit the ATA to take general ideas from the Courses in Sydney and put them into practice in her individual school situation.

Another major benefit should be better use of ATAs. The prescribed experiences should enable the ATA to attempt a broad range of experiences and allow the teacher to observe the ATA performing duties that the ATA might not otherwise be asked to perform. The workshops should enable the ATA and teacher together to develop the duties of the ATAs, with the Training Programme staff as resource people.

The use of on-the-job experiences would facilitate the inclusion of work at the school as a component in determining levels of attainment of the ATAs.

There would certainly be an additional load on Training Programme staff. I would suggest that the Elementary Anthropology and Sociology Course and the Government and Current Affairs Course be combined into one Course, thus releasing the staff from about 15% of its instructional load. In my opinion, increasing field participation is a higher priority than presenting all of the content of these two Courses. I would also suggest that the Training Programme explore the possibility of "purchasing" some instruction for coursework at Sydney from a nearby college. This is usually less costly than hiring fulltime staff and the savings could be redirected to increased field participation.

At least one Training Programme staff member would have to make a large time commitment to travelling. This could be accomplished by reassigning existing staff or by making travel a major commitment of replacement staff. This second suggestion seems the most feasible because of the need to replace one staff member who died in tragic circumstances in July.

The effectiveness of the on-the-job training experiences could be maximized by:

1. including a broad range of experiences with particular emphasis on the most important duties of the ATA;
2. gradually increasing the level of difficulty and responsibility, appropriate to the capabilities of the ATA; and
3. developing a set of prescribed and optional experiences.

The prescribed experiences would be required of all ATAs and would reflect the duties that all ATAs would be expected to perform. The prescribed experiences would be required of all Level I ATAs.

The optional experiences would reflect duties that some but not all ATAs would perform. They could be basic or required experiences, but at a higher level of proficiency. The optional experiences would vary according to the level (Level II or Level III) that the ATA was working towards.

In some schools, the ATA did not have one particular teacher as a main contact. The Principal or Infants Mistress was often the main contact, but sometimes was unable to spend enough time with the ATA. If the recommendations are instituted, it will be very important to assign a particular teacher as contact-teacher or supervising-teacher for all ATAs.

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THE ABORIGINAL CHILD AT SCHOOL

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