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I also assist tutors of Aboriginal children as a resource teacher, and co-ordinate the program between schools in the Catholic diocese (secondary) that have Aboriginal children attending.

Since this program has been started, and with the support of the hostels where the children stay, concerned and interested teachers and principals at the schools involved, the drop-out rate and absenteeism seem to be lower than in previous years. It is to be hoped that the pace can be maintained so that more students can reach higher levels of achievement, as it is of particular importance for Palm Island students to see fellow students reaching goals few of them have before.

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SOME TEACHER EXPECTATIONS OF WORKING IN QUEENSLAND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

* M.J. O'Riley

For a number of years past the Queensland Department of Education has held an annual seminar, called *Jumbunna*, at the Queensland Agricultural College, Lawes. *Jumbunna*, which usually runs for a week in early December, is designed principally as an orientation program for newly appointed principals and teachers, both primary and secondary, who have been posted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community schools for the first time. In addition, each year an invitation is extended to staff members currently working in these schools to attend the seminar and to assist the transition of new teachers through the application of their experience, as well as to review their own commitment to the work. Supervisory and advisory staff working directly in Aboriginal and Islander education as well as teacher aides with specialized knowledge or expertise then combine with the teachers for a series of discussions and workshops. In 1979 a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying for a Diploma of Teaching at the Townsville College of Advanced Education were welcome participants, often adding to the liveliness of the discussions.

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Naturally in such a seminar a heavy emphasis is placed on the examination of the special educational needs of young Aboriginal and Islander children. The achievement expectations of an education system imposed by the majority culture, which is largely foreign to them, cause immense problems.

But the children are not the only ones beleaguered. The teachers, many of whom are in their first or at least very early years of their teaching lives, must simultaneously struggle with the needs of coming to grips with their profession, of independent adulthood, often of the early years of marriage, of isolation from family and friends as well as colleagues, and the ever present misunderstandings of biculturalism and bi- and even multi-lingualism. The unfamiliar extremes of climate and season often add the capstone. This list goes a long way to explaining why the average period of service by teachers in these communities rarely exceeds two years. This lack of continuity has long been a major problem in this field of educational endeavour.

At the 1979 *Jumbunna* it was decided, as an experiment, to try to discover what degree of congruence, if any, might exist between the expectations of the newly appointed teachers and those who would be returning to the schools for a second or subsequent years and who had some of the benefit of experience. It was obvious such a survey would be best carried out near the end of the week after the newly appointed teachers had heard most of the anecdotes and at least some of the more optimistic stories.

The group was separated into two sections, continuing teachers and new appointees. Without further discussion they were placed in separate rooms and asked to write briefly on what they perceived as the major concerns in the areas of personal needs; student needs; professional needs. There is no suggestion that any special order exists in this listing, they are all considered to be closely interwoven.

The written responses were later tabulated with respect to both nature and frequency. The accompanying tables reveal some interesting information. Discrepancies in the number of responses exist because some people did not comment on all three areas or did so only briefly. In addition no attempt has been made to conceal either the humour or cynicism of some comments although, generally, the exercise was treated seriously. It should be noted that in some cases more than one response was recorded in a particular category for an individual teacher. This is seen as indicative of the

Table 1
Responses of new teachers (N=12)

Area of Need	Response	N	Response	N
Personal	Acceptance by community	6	Strain on emotional ties back home	2
	Family separations	4	Personal Satisfaction	2
	General isolation	4	Medical care	2
	Acceptance by colleagues	3	No outside social life	1
	Alcohol abuse	3	No extra payment	1
	Lack of information about new culture	3	Added expenses	1
	Transport of personal effects	3	Vehicle problems	1
	Food	3	Lack of entertainment	1
	Harsh climate	3	Council authority	1
Students	Control, discipline, obedience	12	Level of interest	2
	Acceptance by children	5	Parent/teacher co-operation	1
	Understanding children	5	Health problems	1
	Absenteeism	3	Low academic achievement	1
Professional	Knowledge of curriculum standards	11	Inspection worries	1
	Teacher/aides' relations	4	Teacher/principal relations	1
	Lack of equipment	3	Lack of teaching experience	1
	Access to resources	2	Community apathy	1
	Professional isolation	2	Dress	1
	Assistance from advisory staff	2		
	Community interference	2		

Table 2
Responses of returning teachers*

Area of Need	Responses	N	Responses	N
Personal	Positive attitude	8	Tolerance	1
	Recreational	5	Consideration of others	1
	Transportation & leave from community	5	Patience	1
	Humour, optimism, confidence	4	Mental health	1
	Sociability	4	Versatility	1
	Accommodation, privacy	4	Community involvement	1
	Cross-cultural understanding	3	Female companionship	1
	Commitment	2	Stereo, entertainment etc.	1
	Clothing, medical supplies	2	Communication with outside world	1
	Accounts in Cairns	2	Toilet paper	1
			A transfer	1
Students	Health, diet problems	12	Motivation	3
	Affection, understanding	8	Staff stability, longer terms of duty	2
	Better student materials	7	Confidence in teacher	1
	Improved home life, sleep, regular routines	4	More experienced teachers	1
	Interested teacher	4	Teacher sociability	1
	Better maths and language courses	3	Absenteeism	1
Professional	Lack of equipment	13	Relations with principal, colleagues, aides	2
	Access to in-service seminars	11	Interest, dedication	2
	Advice from advisory staff	6	Access to resources	1
	Lack of teaching experience	3	Patience	1
	Perspective of Aboriginal life	3	Good community relationships	1

* For professional & personal needs N=13; for student needs N=14.

importance that person placed on the category. Since the teachers were asked to comment only on the three broad headings, an exact congruence of summary headings was not possible but some general similarities will be noticed.

PERSONAL NEEDS/CONCERNS

Amongst the new appointees, the most frequently recorded response was Acceptance by the Community. This could be viewed as a success for the sensitization program which is deliberately undertaken at *Jumbunna*. It is a positive beginning in that these people accept that they will have to do some behaviour modification in a two-way association. Separation from Family and General Isolation scored next highest with this group. Such uncertainty is easily understandable. The highest response from the Returning Teachers on this heading was the need for a Positive Attitude. Recreational needs and the need for Transportation and (more frequently) Leave from the community were equally next highest responses from this group. Recreational facilities are available on the communities but it is the type of facility which is often unfamiliar to a person with an urban social background. The ability to entertain oneself is a valuable personal asset. The contributor to recreational pursuits is frequently more successful than the consumer personality.

STUDENT NEEDS/CONCERNS

The most frequent response from the new teachers concerned Control, Discipline and Obedience. This is probably the result of two factors. Many of the stories the new appointees hear at *Jumbunna* have a sensational flavour. As well, this area is usually of considerable concern to teachers going into their first postings or in the early years of their careers. In contrast the Returning Teachers saw Health and Diet Problems as the most pressing student need. The need for Affection and Understanding from the Teacher ranks second and for Better Student Materials third with this group.

PROFESSIONAL NEEDS/CONCERNS

The New Teachers were very concerned about their lack of knowledge of curriculum and standards. This is a genuine worry to many people each year. Unfortunately the major reaction seems to be one of simply muddling through as best one can. *Jumbunna* provides some initial help and there are several supervisory and advisory personnel who visit the schools, but an area which seems to need a concentrated

effort and which is generally not the case now, is for an effective on-going, in-school, in-service program conducted on a weekly basis by the school administrators with help if necessary. Interestingly, the Returning Teachers gave Access to In-Service Seminars and Inter-School Visits their second highest rating. So it is safe to say this is a genuine area for concern.

The Returning Teachers ranked Lack of Equipment most highly in this section and this relates to their second highest response in the previous section. Climatic conditions in the remote areas of Cape York and the Gulf do pose some special problems, particularly for electrical equipment. Servicing and repairs are difficult to obtain, expensive, and time consuming. However, through special spending by the Department of Education and through Special Programs Schools Funds and Innovations Grants, many of these schools have received a great deal of equipment and yet much of it is unserviceable. Observations over a number of years of visits to these schools indicate that a uniqueness syndrome seems to develop very quickly amongst teachers on these communities. Whereas it is accepted that equipment is subjected to especially harsh conditions, it does not seem to be expected that extra special conditions of care are necessary. Keeping photographic equipment away from humidity and dust in containers with drying agents and the removal of leaking batteries and so on fall into this category. Amateurish attempts by some people to repair complex equipment, often defended on the grounds of expediency, are also contributing factors. In the area of software, the schools consume their supplies rapidly and are then often without equipment. Better management routines would help here.

The outcomes of this brief survey could hardly be called revelations. They are, in fact, very much along the lines of what anyone familiar with the conditions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community schools could have predicted. However, one particular perceived need, for improved Access to In-Service Assistance and Better Knowledge of Curriculum and Standards, ranked highly with both groups. Such a need would seem to relate significantly to the area of Job Satisfaction. If this could be improved, perhaps teachers would be prepared to work for longer periods in community schools. There is little doubt that the frequency of staff turnover is one of the most significant factors affecting student progress.

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