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ABORIGINAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

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Aboriginal children attending school have special needs that should be recognised and catered for by the school system. This paper will deal with the practical aspects of Aboriginal education. In particular the focus will be on Aboriginal Primary education within Western Australia. The paper also limits itself by addressing issues related to more traditionally oriented Aboriginal groups living in remote communities. However, while the main emphasis is given to more traditionally oriented Aboriginal groups, many aspects can be usefully employed and extended to Aboriginal education in general. Therefore the aim of this paper is to give teachers and educators basic information about Aboriginal education so that they can develop appropriate education programs to meet the needs of the Aboriginal children within their schools.

HISTORY

To more fully understand the situations that Aborigines face in our schools, it is necessary to give some historical account of the practices and policies that have existed in relation to Aborigines and education.

The following historical account has been based on Forrest (1981).

From the turn of the century until 1946, the exclusion of Aborigines from the State school system was a widespread practice in Western Australia. Exclusion came about due to the pressure placed on the Education Department by community and parent groups. These groups felt that, because of the living conditions of the Aborigines, diseases were spread when their children attended schools. Using this premise as an excuse, the Education Department managed to exclude Aborigines from almost the entire system in the south-west of Western Australia. Further pressures later saw individual teachers given power to suspend Aboriginal pupils on their own initiative. This policy, which was subject to wide abuse, was in vogue until 1936.

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As a result of exclusion, the then Native Welfare Department established Moore River Settlement and Carrolup as training camps to enable Aborigines to learn skills that would aid them in gaining employment. The conditions at the settlements, however, were very poor and the Aborigines were treated more like inmates than trainees. The "chief protector" of Aborigines could remove children up to the age of 16 from their parents and place them into these institutions by force, if necessary. This power was enacted under the Guardianship Clause of the 1905 Aboriginal Act of Western Australia. Later, police were used to shift Aborigines from many towns and reserves and remove them to the settlements. In January 1915, the police shifted all Aborigines from Katanning to Carrolup and similar practices occurred at Guildford in 1918, Quairading in 1919, Moora in 1920 and Northam in 1932.

It wasn't until after the war, in 1946, that the Education Department took up responsibility for educating Aborigines. This time it was conducted under the new concept of assimilation, which was introduced Australia-wide by the Commonwealth Government. A quote from the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Native Welfare, 1950, as cited by Forrest (1981, p.43) reveals the prevailing ideology - "The future assimilation of the native into the white race of Australia will present a decreasing problem." How wrong they were.

During assimilation, which is seen by Bucknall (1976) as a totally inappropriate and racist premise, Aborigines were still excluded from football matches, cricket matches, horse races, trotting meetings, cinemas and hotels. Assimilation wasn't working. Prejudice, and segregation of Aborigines on reserves was still widespread in Western Australia.

It wasn't until 1967, when Aborigines first became Australian citizens by referendum, that reform in education as well as in other areas began to take place. Things still moved slowly, however. Most schools were still institutions designed for Westernising traditional Aboriginal society (Bucknall, 1976). As Moeckel (1985, p.54) points out, "the days of the European philosophy of 'give us your children and we will educate them'" were still prevalent. Bucknall (1976, p.22) adequately summarises the new situation when he describes the change from assimilation to the new concept of integration - "the politically inspired concept of integration was little more than a subtle reintroduction of assimilation with all its monolithic overtones and destructive intent." Failure to Westernise had been interpreted as failure to educate.

Up until the mid-seventies, the good intentions of many educators went astray under the guise of "compensatory education". The programs were mostly unsatisfactory. The causes for this can best be seen by looking at the philosophical assumptions that were held by the people who defended them. Most of the compensatory programs used the word 'deprived' as the starting point for their development. As Bucknall (1976) points out, there were basically two systems of thought. There was the environmentalist argument that the child suffers from a deficit located in the Black environment and secondly, the hereditary argument that located the deficit in different or inferior Black genes. Whatever false perception was held, both were based on the philosophy that there was something wrong with the child, and the cause of the problem, "the system", was not being properly looked at. The criticism of the compensatory program's initial philosophy of deprivation are described well by Katz, as cited in Bucknall (1976, p.17) :

To talk of cultural deprivation is to patronize the poor: beyond this, people have a right to hold whatever beliefs and whatever attitudes they please; it follows that the attempt in school to define one set of attitudes as superior to another, the attempt to teach patriotism, conventional morality, or even their opposite in a compulsory public institution represents a gross violation of civil rights.

(Katz in Bucknall, 1976, P.17)

With this type of history, it is not hard to understand why many Aborigines are highly sceptical, cynical, and hold generally negative attitudes towards the 'White' education system.

There is little doubt that the past education system in Australia has helped to destroy the traditional lifestyle of the Aborigines. It has also given them very few skills on ways in which they can deal with the dominant culture in general. The system created a group of people who could be considered culturally disadvantaged and in this respect they deserve the support of society in general to help them establish themselves in today's Australia. Education programs based on self-determination and community based education seem to offer the best types of solutions for many of today's Aborigines. It is these types of alternatives which will be discussed in more detail in subsequent sections of this paper.

TEACHING STRATEGIES AND LEARNING STYLES

Considerable emphasis in the literature has been placed on describing the learning styles of Aboriginal students - (Buschenhofen, 1982; Christie, 1982; Harris, 1984; Knapp, 1982). While there is some agreement on common characteristics of learning styles in Aboriginal students, there are also many grey areas associated with the topic. In general, more traditionally oriented Aborigines attending schools for the first time come from very different cultural backgrounds than their white counterparts. In this respect they may be totally unfamiliar with many aspects of the school environment. Things such as books, daily routines, sitting still, and instructional language may all be unfamiliar to the Aboriginal student.

In the past, attitudes to Aboriginal students were negative, as Harris, (1976 p.25) points out -

For too long have teachers held the view that
Aboriginal children are merely poor whites with
dark skins.

These attitudes reflect a total lack of understanding by whites of the situations Aborigines face in new school environments. As Buschenhofen (1982) suggests, these children are entering school not with less knowledge but with different knowledge from their urban counterparts. The responsibility therefore lies with educators and teachers of Aboriginal students to gain some understanding of the Aboriginal child entering the school system and to organise their classroom structure to meet the needs of these students.

Harris (1984) offers a good description of the major types of learning styles associated with more traditionally oriented Aborigines. It should be kept in mind, however, that these noted styles are general in nature, and the factors contributing to them are likely to be complex and involve considerable individual differences (Knapp, 1982).

TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL LEARNING STYLES

The styles listed below are generally based on informal non-verbal learning styles associated with traditional Aboriginal society and are taken from Harris (1984, p.4). It should also be said that these culturally different learning styles are not unique to the Australian Aborigine, and may be found in varying proportions in all cultures (Harris, 1984).

1. Much Aboriginal learning is by observation and imitation rather than through verbal instruction, as is often the case in classrooms. Virtually all survival skills, social skills and much learning of artistic skills such as painting and dancing are learned through observation and imitation. Aboriginal people are highly verbal, but talk has more of a social than a teaching function.
2. Much Aboriginal learning is through personal trial-and-error rather than through a combination of verbal instructions and demonstrations as is the case, for example, in a school chemistry laboratory. Put another way, Aborigines learn by doing, and this is efficient for learning their traditional technology but unsuitable, say, in a chemistry laboratory.
3. Much Aboriginal learning is through real-life-performance rather than through practice in contrived settings.
4. In Aboriginal learning experiences there is relatively little focus on sequencing of skills: rather, Aboriginal people learn through successive approximation to the efficient end product. That is, there is more learning of wholes than of parts.
5. A very common Aboriginal problem-solving technique is persistence and repetition. This, too, is suitable to their traditional economy and technology. For example, the best way to ensure spearing a fish is to keep throwing at fish until you get one.

How these styles of learning differ from the formal learning processes characteristic of the traditional State school system can be outlined as follows:

Formal Learning Styles are:

1. decontextualised - with formal content having little immediate application to everyday life and survival;
2. deal largely with abstractions, i.e., information taken out of real-life context;
3. conducted verbally, both written and spoken;
4. largely a conscious process;
5. often involve the sequencing of parts of a skill or body of knowledge and the presence of an official 'teacher' (Harris, 1984).

If we are to accept these general corollaries about Aboriginal learning styles and their relationship to the State school system, care must be taken in developing appropriate classroom practices to meet the needs of the Aboriginal student entering the school system.

Folds (1984), discusses three different interpretations of Aboriginal classroom behaviour in traditionally oriented communities. These interpretations are by no means comprehensive. They do, however, serve to highlight the implications for classroom practices.

Firstly, deficit theory, which has been described in general terms earlier, implies the problem is with the individual, based on some cultural deficit. The theory also implies Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children learn in exactly the same way. This ill-founded theory suggests that intensive remediation programs should be set up to compensate for these perceived inadequacies (Folds, 1984). As has been pointed out earlier, these programs are racist, and based on assimilation models that help to destroy Aboriginal culture and identity.

Secondly, difference theory is viewed as a cultural phenomenon modelled on Aboriginal learning styles (Folds, 1984). The problems that develop from difference theory arise when student behaviour is taken at face value and their background is seen as equally valid. In this respect, teachers may avoid, as Folds (1984, p.23) puts it, "Stepping on cultural toes", and suggests that the first casualty here is often the curriculum.

Typically, subversion of the curriculum occurs through ad hoc development, particularly via the introduction of "busy work" on a large scale. In time, activities such as colouring, drawing and copying overtake almost every subject area. Busy work simulates educational activity in that it facilitates a teaching/learning situation where teachers look the part, i.e., in control, with students 'on task'. This is possible since busy work greatly reduces the demand for verbal interaction between teachers and students. Teachers need only hand out prepared materials and give initial instructions. Ostensibly the problems that arise through teacher/student verbal interaction all but disappear. What is more, the use of busy work may even seem defensible in terms of cultural differences in that it mimics one or two aspects of the Aboriginal learning style.

(Folds, 1984, p.23-24)

Folds goes on to state that not all outcomes are like this, and the situation is retrievable. It serves, however, as a good example of what can happen when care isn't taken.

Finally, Folds describes resistance theory: the hypothesis being that not all classroom behaviour is explicable in terms of differences. Rather, classroom behaviour is seen as embodying both the active and passive forms of resistance to an 'alien' knowledge system and instructional process. The idea then is to reduce resistance through the development of a secure and caring environment where academic goals are not compromised. This model is then based on the idea of an intercultural classroom. It should also be pointed out that the idea of an intercultural classroom is also compatible with aspects of the difference model.

The aim here has been to highlight some of the philosophical assumptions made about Aboriginal education and their accompanying pitfalls in relation to the establishment of an appropriate curriculum. More practical approaches to curriculum will be discussed in the following section. However, there are some comments that need to be made about catering for the Aboriginal child at school. Firstly, the majority of reports state that Aborigines want to maintain their own cultural identity through a school system which is structured to meet their needs at a community level and, secondly, at the same time they want to acquire the necessary skills to enable them to participate in the majority culture: for example, acquiring jobs, learning to handle the potentially destructive power of the white culture, making choices about their future (Beazley, 1984; Bucknall, 1976; Christie, 1982; Dwyer, 1981; Watsford, 1986; Watts, 1980). The second point about Aborigines acquiring the necessary skills to participate at any chosen level of the majority culture implies that they must at the same time in their education learn in traditionally Western modes of instruction. This is particularly true when secondary education needs to be undertaken. Some ways in which the primary school can facilitate these needs are through -

1. Making the child's initial experiences at school positive and relevant to the child (Walker, 1982).
2. Initially instruction should move from basically informal methods to more formalised ones (Snowdon, 1981).
3. Traditional Western modes of instruction should not be abandoned, as in the case of the 'busy work' phenomenon, but gradually introduced at appropriate levels. Often

Western modes of instruction are the most efficient method with regard to gaining mastery in many higher level skills (Buschenhofen, 1982).

4. Finally, Knapp (1982, p.8) makes the point, "not only do teachers need to accommodate to the 'difference' by taking advantage of Aboriginal content and Aboriginal styles of teaching and learning, but teachers also need to facilitate the successful transfer of the 'similarities' or the appropriate skills to the classroom. In both cases, this facilitating factor must be a meaningful learning context."

Many of these teaching strategies and others will be clarified in the next section when curriculum development and implementation are considered.

THE CURRICULUM

Bilingual Education

When commenting on the English based speech of Aboriginal children in the Kimberleys, Hudson (1984, p.99) noted

Many consider it to be a very poor attempt at speaking English and therefore a speech form which should be stamped out at all costs.

As Burney (1983, p.28) points out, nothing could be more damaging than to denigrate the Aboriginal English -

for to do so is to lower the child's feelings of self-esteem and self-worth and to encourage him/her to avoid speech as much as possible.

The classroom teacher should therefore encourage any form of communication the Aboriginal child is likely to use and keep in mind that the language is different from and not inferior to standard English (Dwyer, 1981). The point should also be made that the so-called pidgin English of the Aborigines living in the Kimberleys is linguistically not a pidgin but a creole, which is a pidgin that has developed and become the native language of its speakers and therefore is a language in its own right (Hudson, 1984).

Yet Aborigines were, and still are, forced to learn school subjects in a language that is not in their native tongue and,

as Dosser (1975) notes, they are also deprived of the freedom to express themselves in their native tongues. Kearney (1975, p.208) takes the point further when he suggests that it is a fundamental right that an Aborigine should be able to receive at least part of his education and instruction in his own language, where feasible. He emphasises this by stating

Demanding the exclusive use of English in elementary education on settlements where the vernacular is spoken must be the ultimate insult to the culture and dignity of an individual.

There are many sound educational reasons why English should be taught as a second language to traditionally oriented Aborigines, and their own language used as the instructional language where possible. Bilingual programs are also bicultural programs, and help in the maintenance of the history and culture of the Aboriginal people (House of Representatives' Report, 1985). Bilingual programs also facilitate the educational experience. For example, the child learns to read first - he/she is not learning to read in another language first. Also aspects of the curriculum become more accessible and the child is encouraged to move from the known to the unknown and is more motivated and secure within the classroom situation. There is also clear evidence that Aboriginal children who receive bilingual education achieve significantly better academic results than Aboriginal students who receive their education in English only (House of Representatives' Report, 1985).

Since 1972, when the Whitlam Government launched its campaign to have Aboriginal children living in Aboriginal communities given their primary education in Aboriginal languages, few have actually received a bilingual education. The 1985 House of Representatives' Report puts the number at between 7% and 8%, when in fact 20% would be eligible for such programs.

A lot more needs to be done, but there are many difficulties in establishing such programs. Funding, staff turnover, finding qualified staff, producing materials such as books written in Aboriginal languages, and a range of other problems have all contributed to making bilingual programs difficult to set up and maintain. A good example of what can be achieved on limited funds can be seen in action at the La Grange School in the Kimberley Region of Western Australia. The language program that has been set up at the school was in response to the community's request for such a program because there was general

concern that their people's language may be forgotten. The main features of the program are outlined below and are taken from Heaven (1986, p.24-31).

TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE PROGRAM (La Grange W.A.)

MAIN AIMS:

1. Maintain the language component of Aboriginal culture at La Grange
2. Develop children's level of oral confidence in their tribal language to a degree of fluency commensurate with their age and ability level.
3. Stimulate an interest in preserving Aboriginal culture.

GENERAL INFORMATION - The program is run for all primary to Year 10 students ($\frac{1}{2}$ hour per day every day). The five Aboriginal languages spoken at La Grange are taught by community elders and parents in conjunction with the school staff. The success of the program is ultimately based on the interest and commitment of the Aboriginal elders and parents.

PROGRAM OUTLINE:

- 1) The program is based on a weekly theme for the whole school. Theme areas include - fishing, camp life, food--animal, food--plant, family structure, animals, plants, hunting, bush medicine, shop food, body parts, music/corroboree, arts. These themes are intended to be expanded in time.
2. Language structures to be taught include, vocabulary, making sentences, conversational language. Written language will only be taught where student/teacher interest is high.
3. There is a heavy emphasis on cultural components and community involvement.
4. The school has received small amounts of funding from Aboriginal groups and Government bodies in order to pay Aboriginal instructors and maintain the program.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Children are grouped according to their tribal language and the theme for the week is implemented over five days in the following way:

- Day 1 - vocabulary development, drills, picture word associations, etc.
- Day 2 - Excursion to a local venue which is associated with the theme.
- Day 3 - Language experience based on the excursion (the Kimberley Educational Printing Services has been used to print multiple copy readers in each of the five languages).
- Day 4 - Elders tell stories, legends or songs based on the theme.
- Day 5 - Sentence work.

NOTE: Constant revision is also carried out through the week.

EVALUATION:

Continuous evaluation of program effectiveness is carried out so necessary changes and modifications can be made. So far the program has been a great success and reflects in the community members pride in their language, school and culture. The program also shows what can be done when the school is properly prepared to meet the needs of the communities it serves.

READING

The purpose here is not to give a full account of appropriate strategies for teaching reading; these can be gained from any good book on the subject. The main aim is to emphasise some important points that are related to teaching reading to Aboriginal children. It is very important that the child's initial exposure to reading is an enjoyable one. This will be more likely if the child is able to read in his/her first language. Motivation will be higher, the process will be more meaningful and the child will learn the reading process more quickly than learning to read in a second language (Buschenhofen, 1982; Dosser, 1975; Knapp, 1982).

Reading is also an active process that traditional Aborigines are not used to. That is, their learning style is more passively oriented. Knapp (1982) suggests that this is the reason why so many Aboriginal children's reading plateaus by mid-primary school.

These children have learnt simple decoding skills and sight words but are not reading meaningfully. This especially applies to Aboriginal children who are learning to read for the first time in a second language, in which case the reading process is basically imitative (Dosser, 1975). It is necessary for teachers in these situations to help the child move from the mechanical action of reading, to higher skills of context and understanding (Knapp, 1982).

There are major difficulties in adapting materials to meet the needs of different Aboriginal communities. These can be overcome, as in the case of the La Grange community, where material is developed at a local level with help from outside agencies.

Teachers should try to be aware of the particular needs of Aboriginal children learning to read and organise their classrooms accordingly. As Christie (1982) points out, the classroom should become more like a "reading home" where books are talked about, shared and enjoyed in a rich reading environment.

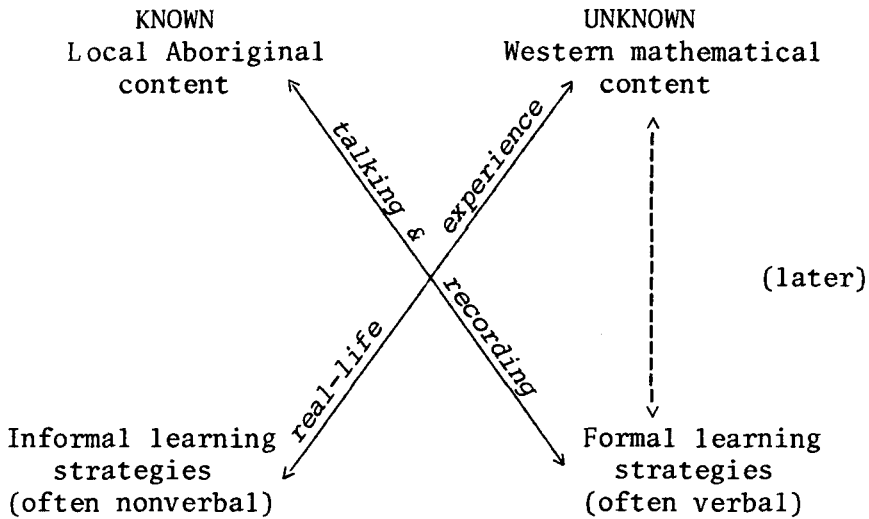
MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE

As with all maths and science programs, progression should be from what is known to what is unknown, from informal to formal and concrete to abstract. This approach is no different when it comes to teaching maths and science to Aboriginal students. Teachers too frequently ignore the local knowledge that Aboriginal children bring with them into the classroom and it is this local knowledge that should be used to introduce the learning of maths and science to these children (Ganambarr, 1982; Graham, 1984). As Graham points out -

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.

(Graham, 1984, p.26)

As a result the child should first be exposed to aspects of the maths/science program through a variety of informal real life experiences in many different contexts before he/she is exposed to formal teaching processes. Graham (1984, p.28) uses the following diagram to clarify this approach:



(Graham, 1984, p.28)

Some practical examples Graham (1984) and Ganambarr (1982) use as aids to teaching basic maths/science concepts to Aboriginal children will serve as useful suggestions to teachers.

Some Early Ideas (Graham 1984, Ganambarr 1982)

Classification: Children can be grouped or group themselves according to moiety, sections, totems, clans, dance groups and geographical location etc. These classification activities can also be used on excursions, using flowers and animals, etc.

Space: Use of walks and excursions to introduce language, e.g. (north, south - distances, etc.) map making and model making.

Pattern: Patterns in traditional painting and dance songs can be used as extensions into maths and science, e.g., introducing sequencing such as square-square triangle, and enhancing prediction skills.

Measurement: Start from the use of informal measures such as hands and any other traditionally used ways, to more standardised methods. Time can also be introduced this way if local knowledge of the seasons and times of significance are brought into the classroom and developed.

The above points are merely a basic outline of what can be done. Teachers should look for ways to extend these concepts, and children should be encouraged to experience directly, learn to verbalise their experiences and also learn to record them. It is also important to remember that, while aspects of the curriculum have been dealt with separately in this section, the real teaching program should be a fully integrative one whereby themes for particular subjects are run through many parts of the overall school program.

SELF-DETERMINATION AND COMMUNITY BASED EDUCATION

Traditionally, Aboriginal people have rightly regarded school as a place of alienation for their children. The school system has separated the child from the community and the community in turn has seen this as a threat to their own right for control over their children (Mortensen, 1981; Snowdon, 1981; Bucknall, 1976). The people have also viewed schools as places that threaten their cultural identity and they are conscious of the role schools play in creating discontinuities in the social and economic life of traditional Aboriginal society (Snowdon, 1981).

In many ways the processes of alienation still continue to this day. The education process is still conceived in Western terms, and it is still the Europeans who are in control (Bucknall, 1976; Graham, 1984). What is needed is a change in basic approaches to Aboriginal education. From the literature it is clear that what the Aboriginal people want, and what is most successful, are community based education programs which allow for self-determination (Bucknall, 1976; Dwyer, 1981; Mortensen, 1981).

Both the Beazley Commission Report (1984) and the Report of the House of Representatives' Select Committee on Aboriginal Education (1985) recommend that Aboriginal communities be given more say and more real control in the education process. Schools should be prepared to relinquish many aspects of their control to the actual community. This process should be carried out with great care. Community involvement needs to be established in order to properly define the needs of the community. This can often be a difficult process as many Aboriginal people, for a number of reasons, are often reluctant to participate in school affairs. However, through consultative processes, community needs can be defined and implemented into school programs. Aboriginal people need to participate in the actual decision making processes, otherwise the school system will be viewed as an imposition. In

this respect, the participative processes should be genuine and not a rubber stamp or token method.

Watts (1980) expresses the views of a variety of groups of Aborigines on what they see as the main aims of the education system in relation to Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal people want to maintain their cultural identity by learning about their own culture. This can be achieved at a community level by using tribal people to teach aspects of Aboriginal language and law, etc., or at a broader level by incorporating Aboriginal Studies into the school curriculum. NOTE - many Aborigines also want to see such studies introduced into urban schools (Watts, 1980). Things such as release from school attendance for important Aboriginal activities, the teaching of ritual, song, dance, hunting and artifact making are the sorts of things that can be incorporated into the normal school curriculum with the cooperation and participation of Aboriginal community members.

The Aboriginal people want to see important aspects of the standard school curriculum taught to their children (Watts, 1980). They need the types of skills that will enable them to participate effectively in the broader Western culture. The learning of a broad range of skills allows them greater job access and they can also use these skills to benefit their own communities. They want schools throughout Australia to promote greater cross-cultural understanding by promoting Aboriginal culture and studies through the standard school curriculum.

To conclude this section, a description will be given of the daily running of the Wiluna School in Western Australia. The school has been described as an educational 'paradise' and boasts high community involvement in its running and administration.

At the start of the day the school bus sets out to the desert camps to collect the children. Children who have been unable to have breakfast can have this at the school. When the children arrive at the school at around 6.30 a.m. they are assembled and then assigned various project work. Work includes things such as collecting eggs from the school poultry run, feeding the goats, kangaroos and turkeys, cultivating the market garden and collecting bush vegetation for animal feed. The projects emphasise the development of self-responsibility, and the food collected is used to provide lunch for the children. After the project work, the children hand their clothes in to the school laundry, shower and are then dressed in a clean school uniform. Children with ailments are then seen by the Community

Health sister, while those waiting watch video programs. Finally the children are assembled in class groups and sent to the classrooms for the day's lessons. Lessons are integrated with as many of the projects as possible. For example, children can measure and graph the growth rate of corn, and develop language experience by describing and writing about what they have done. After the morning skills session, children receive a two-course, nutritionally balanced meal and then proceed to the afternoon activities. The afternoon teaching session usually consists of sport, or some form of art and crafts. Sport is often conducted on a BMX track which the school built in 1982-83, to accommodate the growing BMX craze. Children are fully dressed in helmets, gloves and shin-pads and have use of one of the schools ten BMX bicycles. After the afternoon teaching session, the children change into their clean home clothes and are driven back to their camps in the bus.

The information about the Wiluna school comes from Patrick Bourke (1984) "Education in Wiluna: A Total Caring Environment", and should be read by anyone interested in this type of education program. The description given of the school is by no means complete and as a result many interesting aspects about the school's running have been left out. However, like the La Grange school, the Wiluna school serves as a good example of a school attempting to meet the needs of the community it is meant to serve.

CONCLUSION

The general lack of understanding about Aboriginal people, their society and culture has been the major reason why the traditional education system has failed to meet the needs of the Aboriginal people. Even in schools where attempts have been made to establish community involvement and some degree of self-determination, it is still usually the whites who are in control. It is important that more Aboriginal people are given the chance to participate in the education system at higher levels. In many schools today the Aboriginal is usually the teacher's aide. This propagates the white 'boss man' image and persists in role-modelling Aborigines as subservient to white Australians.

Governments need to act quickly on recommendations put forward by the Beazley Commission Report and the House of Representatives' Select Committee Reports on Aboriginal Education. Schools with large proportions of Aboriginal children should be bicultural, bilingual, and promote high levels of community involvement, especially at decision making levels. School staff

who are doing a 'good job' should be encouraged to remain in their positions for longer periods. Too often good systems have collapsed when staff have been transferred.

Finally, more needs to be done in the teachers' colleges. Often inexperienced teachers are transferred to isolated communities which have a high proportion of Aboriginal students in attendance. Teachers in this situation have, in many cases, done no studies in Aboriginal education, and are greatly disadvantaged in this respect. Units on Aboriginal education should be compulsory in teacher training courses, as they would prepare new teachers for teaching in Aboriginal communities, and would also foster greater cross-cultural understanding.

Sufficient research has been done to point out the areas where change needs to take place. What is needed now is for the individual communities to lobby politicians and involve themselves actively in processes that will bring about positive changes in the education of their children.

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