



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

This article was originally published in printed form. The journal began in 1973 and was titled *The Aboriginal Child at School*. In 1996 the journal was transformed to an internationally peer-reviewed publication and renamed *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*.

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PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR ABORIGINAL TEACHER EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal teacher education is a distinctive educational activity. How distinctive Aboriginal teacher education needs to be and the forms it might take are a matter for action research (McTaggart and Garbutcheon-Singh, 1986) by Aboriginal teachers, their communities, and teacher educators working in Aboriginal schools, and from teacher education institutions. But there is experience available from which it is reasonable to propose some general principles which should guide immediate efforts in Aboriginal teacher education.

The pedagogical principles outlined below come from an action research project in Aboriginal teacher education conducted in the Northern Territory over the last two years. The project is known as *D-Bate*, the *Deakin-Batchelor Aboriginal Teacher Education Program*, a joint project of Batchelor College in the Northern Territory and the School of Education of Deakin University in Geelong, Victoria.¹

Although the Aboriginal participants in the program are already trained teachers, I will usually refer to them as 'students' for clarity. But I want to note my discomfiture about the use of that label, because our students have been very effective teachers in another way. The Deakin staff in the D.BATE Program have been so well taught about Aboriginality by our Aboriginal 'students', we feel that we have learned more than we have taught.

It is important to recognise here that the D-BATE staff from Deakin University cannot claim exclusive ownership of the pedagogical principles, or to have invented them. The work of D-BATE has been informed by extended contact with the teacher education staff of Batchelor College, and with Aboriginal and European teachers in many communities. In particular, the D-BATE principles bear a close relationship to the principles of the Remote Area Teacher Education Program conducted as part of the Associate Diploma of Teaching offered by Batchelor College. It

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is also important that Deakin University not claim an unfair share of the credit for the success of students in the D-BATE Program, Some of the credit due to educational institutions must be attributed to Batchelor College, where students completed the first three years of their teacher education. Of course, most of the credit is due to the students themselves who instituted moves for the program, and studiously and conscientiously capitalise on the opportunity the D-BATE Program presents.

THE D-BATE CREDENTIALS

Teachers enrolling in D-BATE typically hold the Batchelor College Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools). This diploma is classified as a UG2 course by the Australian Council on Tertiary Awards, meaning it is a two year undergraduate qualification. Batchelor College graduates are admitted to the Deakin University three year Batchelor of Arts in Education (BAEd) program (UG3) with two years of advanced standing for their previous studies at Batchelor. The granting of advanced standing in the BAEd for initial teacher training is standard practice at Deakin University.

The Deakin BAEd is the basic three year pre-service teacher education qualification awarded by Deakin. It is a parallel qualification to the Diploma of Teaching typically offered to primary teachers training in the colleges of advanced education. Graduates of the D-BATE Program are awarded the Deakin University degree of Bachelor of Arts in Education.²

Three Aboriginal teachers graduated from Deakin University with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Education in 1986. They were students in 1986 in the Deakin-Batchelor Aboriginal Teacher Education (D-BATE) Program. The three graduates (who were already teachers) are employed by the Northern Territory Education Department and are teaching in Aboriginal community schools. Bakamana Yunipingu is Associate Principal at Yirrkala School in north east Arnhem Land; Norma Joshua is teaching at Ngukurr School in the Roper River area; and Robyn Ramsay teaches at Kunbarlanja (Oenpelli) School in western Arnhem Land.

Ten 1987 D-BATE students are conducting fieldwork and teaching assignments in widely scattered Northern Territory school communities: Kalkaringi, Batchelor, Ali Curung, Mungkarta (McLaren Creek), Karguru (Tennant Creek), Barunga, Ngukurr, Kunbarlanja, and Yipirinya (Alice Springs). D-BATE is popular with Aboriginal teachers and is respected in Aboriginal communities.

THE PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES

These pedagogical principles should be viewed in two ways. First, they are knowledge claims proposing the appropriate way to approach Aboriginal teacher education. And second, they are working principles which must be subjected to further exploration - to testing and refinement in practice. The principles constitute a summary of the 'theory' of the D-BATE Program. The ways in which the D-BATE Program is successful will indicate which aspects of the theory outlined here are vindicated, and which need changing as the practice of Aboriginal teacher education becomes more effective and better informed.

The pedagogical principles outlined here will suggest some, but not all, of the reasons the D-BATE Program has been as successful as it has. There was an important timeliness about the Program which is relevant also to its success, and to the form it took (Henry and McTaggart, 1987). But still the principles constitute the educational rationale for D-BATE as it is practised. These pedagogical principles apply to each course offered in the D-BATE Program, and also serve to integrate the whole.

Principle 1: *Courses should reflect a commitment to Aboriginal self-determination. Students' work should involve them in consultation and collaboration with senior members of their communities to help prepare and educate all for leadership roles in education in the community.*

The Aboriginal teacher education program must envisage an Aboriginal future for Aboriginal education generally, and recognise that future as one which will be determined by Aboriginal people themselves. Aboriginal self-determination will be impeded unless education in both European and Aboriginal culture is substantially directed by Aboriginal teachers and the communities in which they work.

The relationship between self-determination and education is symmetrical. Authentic education will be impeded unless it occurs in a social context which assumes self-determination.

Principle 2: *Courses must foster the exploration, understanding and practice of both ways education. Aboriginal students must play the key role (in consultation with their communities) in proposing ways of increasing Aboriginal cultural content of the school program, ethos, and message systems.*

A fundamental aim is for teacher educators and their Aboriginal students to help Aboriginal communities to develop ways of expressing their culture within the curriculum of the school. The basic commitment of Aboriginal teacher education is to explore in practice the idea of "both ways education". That is, the expressed wish of many Aboriginal communities. Both ways education will be achieved most effectively at the tertiary level when Aboriginal teachers ultimately move into teacher education roles themselves. In the meantime, both ways education is a commitment of community schools.

There is a general question about whether both ways education is possible. Is it possible to have any single or unified educational process which contains within itself elements of Aboriginal education and European education? Probably not. Neither is it sensible to imagine a genuine education in both cultures proceeding as if the other culture did not exist. Perhaps it is more feasible to think in terms of two educational processes in parallel, Aboriginal and European, working out ways in which they can be mutually supportive, and working through ways where they are antagonistic. Given that many community schools are fundamentally European and monocultural, students and teachers in Aboriginal teacher education programs confront questions about how schools might become more useful resources for *Aboriginal* education.

It is counter-productive to attempt a definitive explanation of both ways education. Definition would remove the essentially problematic character of the concept. And Europeans must recognise that they will never be as expert at explaining both ways education as Aboriginal teachers are and will become. Europeans are not bicultural people in this sense.

There are two aspects to both ways education. The first aspect is making the European curriculum less antagonistic and more supportive to Aboriginal cultural imperatives. By becoming more informed about Aboriginality, European teachers can help in this respect. The second aspect is introducing Aboriginal culture to the school, and only Aboriginal people can and should do that. This is obviously not unproblematic. School life however it is changed might be inimical in fundamental ways to Aboriginal cultural transmission. Some, perhaps all aspects of Aboriginality might better be sustained by keeping the school exclusively for European curriculum imperatives (which have been endorsed by Aboriginal people). At the very least, schools must work out ways of accommodating and nurturing Aboriginal commitments to ceremonial life. But Aboriginal teachers suggest that some initiatives in making the culture of the school itself more Aboriginal are imperative.

It is possible to identify some of the dimensions of both ways education, partly by referring to examples initiated in Aboriginal student teachers' work. It is important to recognise that these examples are only first steps, and that further steps will require considerable negotiation among Aboriginal teachers and the senior members of their communities. Some are practical ideas: teaching students kinship systems and how these affect the way in which community life is conducted; taking students on field trips to learn bush skills and associated language; and comparing the roles of symbols and icons in European art and in Aboriginal ceremonial life. At another level, problems include the ways in which the logics accessible through English language differ from the logics accessible through Aboriginal language. This problem surfaces (from a European perspective) in the practical task of Aboriginal language extension to make European mathematics more accessible to Aboriginal first language speakers. Appropriate forms of bilingual education must be explored, especially in communities where the number of speakers of an Aboriginal language is insufficient to inspire a commitment to funding a fully-fledged bilingual program. Students must also begin exploring and helping to develop the distinctive character of *Aboriginal* social and organisational relationships between school and community.

These are important steps in the realisation and practical testing of the nascent theory of both ways education. This principle commits teacher educators to participate in that theoretical and practical enquiry - in search of both ways praxis.

Principle 3: *Courses should be research-based. They should relate to staff research work, and engage students in research to encourage them to adopt a research stance to their own teaching, and to educational practice more generally. Consequently students should be engaged in problem solving tasks which press them to adopt a critical attitude to the issues of their courses.*

Student teachers should conduct research of two kinds: action research on teaching, and case study research on the curriculum and the role of the school in the community. The research should be informed by reading from "task libraries" developed within a general framework suggested by the accreditation commitments of the institution offering the course.

The suggested reading should take into account the amount of time required for the conduct of fieldwork and for subsequent reflection. Unless the program is specifically accredited, these

readings would normally be a subset of the readings already prescribed for students in the materials of accredited programs, but should also include additional accounts of students' (or later other students') research into issues raised. Integration among courses and school and community experiences must be achieved though the practise of action research in examining the realisation of the principles advocated in 'substantive' courses in curriculum and teaching.

The research conducted by teacher educators in both ways education must take on a specific character. It must always be *participatory research* of the kind advocated and practised by Paulo Freire. The idea that academics can produce knowledge which can later be applied is especially wrongheaded in this context.

First, Europeans cannot understand sufficiently what it means to see the world in Aboriginal ways to make an Aboriginal curriculum for Aboriginal people. *Second*, Europeans have no business trying to make Aboriginal culture an object of study here, except to the extent that they can help vary the European curriculum to make it less antagonistic to Aboriginal ways of knowing. And *third*, and most important of all, knowledge and the political movement which will create and sustain self-determination are mutually constitutive. Aboriginal people must engage in and control the research which is to inform both ways education. In Freire's terms:

Knowing, whatever its level, is not the act by which a subject transformed into an object docilely and passively accepts the contents others give or impose on him or her. Knowledge, on the contrary, necessitates the curious presence of subjects confronted with the world. It requires their transforming action on reality. It demands a constant searching. It implies invention and reinvention...In the learning process the only person who really *learns* is s/he who appropriates what is learned, who apprehends and thereby reinvents that learning; s/he who is able to apply the appropriated learning to concrete existential situations. On the other hand, the person who is filled by another with "contents" whose meaning s/he is not aware of, which contradicts his or her way of being in the world cannot learn because s/he is not challenged.

(Freire, 1976, p.88)

Principle 4: *Courses should be practice-based. Students should use courses as explicit mechanisms for exploring and extending their potential as teachers. The intensity of inter-relationship between different courses will vary.*

The specific goals of Aboriginal teacher education must be the explicit examination and practical probing of the *language, activities, and social relationships* in the school from a both ways perspective. There are two practical agenda: the development of sound, critically informed educational practice, and ensuring its both ways quality. The way language is used, the kinds of activities which are in place, and the forms of social relationships in the school and classroom, can support or frustrate both-ways educational practice. The improvement of teaching practice cannot be regarded as an instrumental task - much more is involved than the acquisition of teaching techniques. Techniques themselves are value-laden and embody a view of education which in the present situation may be at odds with the commitment to both ways education.

The school is a distinctive kind of institution. As an institution in dialectical relationship with a community, the school determines forms of language, activities and social relationship which are differentiated from their occurrence in other forms of social life. Through processes of contestation the language, activities and social relationships of the social medium are institutionalised as *discourse, practice and organisation*. Each of these six categories might be termed a 'register'.

SOCIAL MEDIUM

INSTITUTIONAL FORM

Language	INSTITUTIONALISATION CONTESTATION	Discourse
Activities		Practice
Social Relationships		Organisation

The improvement of both ways educational practice through action research must take account of the interactions among all of these six registers (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1987). The institutionalisation of particular kinds of educational practice occurs through an essentially political process. But the development of both ways educational practice cannot be achieved by looking at teaching practice alone. Particular forms of words are selected and invented to form the discourse of the school; particular kinds of activities are selected and constructed to form the practice of the school; and particular kinds of social relationship are selected and constituted to form the organisation of the school. It is relatively easy to see that there can be enormous disjunctions between the social medium of traditional Aboriginal community life and the institutional form of the school. And the disjunctions are not only destructive in the school.

Schools are European outposts in Aboriginal communities. Because the relationship between school and community is dialectical, European forms of discourse, practice and social organisation in the school can supplant the language, activities and organisation in the community. It is in this way that schools as Europeans understand them are inevitably assimilationist.

The development of both ways practice entails the identification of *contradictions* which arise across registers within the social medium, within the institutional forms and through the dialectical process of institutionalisation and contestation. It is possible, for example, for language which is appropriate for the description of both ways ideas to be lost in the forms of discourse in the school, or to be incompatible with the particular ways in which school life is organised.

All of these interactions must be examined carefully to reveal new possibilities for educational action, and to change or subvert conditions or ways of describing situations which confound the reconstruction of effective both ways practice.

Teaching activities must be used thoughtfully to test, refine and replace the theoretical propositions and practical activities suggested in courses, or proposed through negotiation. Course commitments themselves must be regarded as problematic, and potentially inimical to the construction of effective both ways educational practice. Practices under study will be those of the students themselves, and those of other Aboriginal and European people in the school community. The essential goal is to develop the practice and theory of both ways education through critical

debate and collective action, but especially through professional action and reflection among Aboriginal teachers.

Principle 5: *Courses should provide a series of tasks or experiences from which students can construct their own model or view of teaching and education. Therefore the program should develop increasing autonomy and responsibility in the student as a learner-teacher and teacher-learner; while earlier courses done by students may have been more tightly structured, later courses should allow greater opportunities for self-initiated and self-directed enquiries by students.*

Aboriginal students are in a unique position. They will always know more than their European teacher educators about the Aboriginal aspects of the both ways notion. Europeans are in no position to interfere with Aboriginal teachers' autonomy in this respect. Once committed to the idea of both ways education, the only role open to European teacher educators is to support students' own enquiry. And that is as it should be.

Aboriginal students will exercise increasing autonomy in shaping their own enquiry. At the same time they will subject their own curriculum and teaching practice to more far-reaching critique as their understandings of the role of education in social reproduction and social transformation in *both* cultures occurs. They will become increasingly vigilant in understanding and resisting the colonisation of the mind. Wesley Lanhupuy, MLA for Arnhem, described the problem Aboriginal teachers face in this way.

Schools have been part of the process of the colonisation of Australia and its original inhabitants. Schools were introduced and imposed on Aborigines following the fierce struggles for the land between Aborigines and the new white settlers. This occurred in a predictable pattern as each state and territory of Australia was progressively colonised over the past two hundred years. This colonisation process has taken place within living memory in the northern Territory and unfortunately continues in many of our schools today. These have been difficult times, in which schools have been used quite openly to capture the minds of Aboriginal children and to turn them towards the dominant balanda [white] culture. So schools have been most significant in the attempt by non-Aboriginal Australians to assimilate Aborigines into the balanda society...

The strong balanda cultural orientation of the [school] and the dominating position of balanda teachers and administrators inevitably work to influence the minds of children in ways that undervalue the Aboriginal heritage. Aboriginal people now understand that if schools are to serve the political social and economic purposes of their own people, the school, as an institution, needs to be accommodated within Aboriginal society itself. Only when the cultural orientation of the school becomes Yolngu [Aboriginal], will schools become integral to the movement of Aborigines toward self-determination. The decolonisation of schools in Aboriginal communities is the challenge for Aborigines now.

(Lanhupuy, 1987)

Collaborative enquiry, action and critique with other students, teachers and teacher educators (and sometimes with other community members) must generate a "critical community" committed to developing the educational critique of existing practice. The critical community must move to supplant the colonisation of the mind with critically informed practice, *praxis*, in both ways education.

Principle 6: *The course should emphasize the fundamental interrelationship of both ways educational theory and practice; it should encourage students to reflect critically on theories by reference to actual teaching practices (their own and others'), and to reflect on actual practices by reference to available theories (their own and others"). Critically informed case studies and action research in curriculum, teaching and education studies are ways that investigations of the relationship between theory and practice can be structured.*

Through the study of students' own situations the relationship between existing practices and their justifications can be drawn into focus. Aboriginal students are expert and articulate about their own circumstances and can quickly learn to write freely.³ They are also aware of the ways in which their own educational biographies reveal a mismatch between their own purposes and the education they have received. They know what it means to be wrenched away from community life for a European education. Personal reflection reveals the unfortunate intersection between biography and the history of racism in Australia, but it also

underlines the strength of Aboriginal culture which has withstood extraordinary pressure.

Teaching in Aboriginal teacher education must be based upon this approach to critique. The critical examination of the blend of individual and collective experience provides a powerful way of initiating reform. Description and collective reflection are ways of revealing the patterns of European dominance which are reproduced through habit and tradition. The aim is to replace European dominance with educationally justifiable forms of school life which nurture both ways education - forms of life which are not inimical to the maintenance and resurgence of Aboriginality.

Principle 7: *The value of critical reflection will also be emphasized in relation to the pedagogy of each course. The arrangement of pedagogy of each course should be explicit and self-disclosing so that students can reflect critically on how the activities of the course have related students, teachers, knowledge and the learning context. Research tasks, the nature of teaching and the character of assessment should be open to negotiation and evaluation by students and staff.*

Courses in Aboriginal teacher education must provide an explicit analysis of the research, educational and social traditions which have led to their formation - and pedagogical claims. Students must be engaged in collective reflection on, and in critique of the ways in which the theory and practice of their research for the course is informing their emergent theories and practices of both ways education. The critical community in which this reflection occurs must be extensive, including in particular members of the community in which Aboriginal teachers work.

The commitment for students, teachers and community members to engage collaboratively in *research into research* through which the learning of the course is created and justified is expressed (from the perspective of a teacher and outsider) in these terms by Friere:

I must try...to have the people dialogically involved as... researchers with me. If I am interested in knowing the people's ways of thinking and levels of perception, then the people have to think about their thinking and not be only the objects of my thinking. This method of investigation which involves study - and criticism of the study - by people is at the same time a learning process. Through

this process of investigation, examination, criticism and reinvestigation, the level of critical thinking is raised among all those involved.

(Freire, 1982, P.30)

The arts of critical reflection must be developed through group reporting and discourse, and through regular writing on the approach to research and its substance. The research tasks undertaken by students must be judged according to their utility in the community, in developing shared understanding of both ways education from a school *and* community perspective.

THE FUTURE

The pedagogical principles are a distinctively European perspective on Aboriginal teacher education. They advocate both ways education, but make no pretensions at all to understanding what both ways education might be from an Aboriginal perspective, or forms both ways education might take in the future. Whether an Aboriginal set of principles is ever written is a matter for Aboriginal teachers and their communities to decide. The substance of both ways education from an Aboriginal perspective will certainly be difficult for all but the most deeply informed (and trusted) Europeans to understand. Aboriginal people may well feel it is more appropriate to express the idea of both ways education as a form of life, leaving text production to European academics and their ideas.

In the meantime, it is important for European teacher educators to declare and examine the pedagogical principles which help constitute and reconstitute their work, and which in turn are constituted and reconstituted through the critical examination of their work.

NOTES

1. Deakin University staff involved in teaching and research associated with the D-BATE Program are Rhonda Bunbury, Frances Christie, Jenny Grenfell, Warren Hastings, John Henry, Stephen Kemmis, Robin McTaggart, Neil Pateman and Helen Watson. D-BATE students are also supported by tutors in their own communities. The tutors are often teachers or adult educators working full-time in the school and community. See Henry and McTaggart (1987) for an outline of the D-BATE Program.

The research conducted in the D-BATE program has been complemented by several research projects and consultancies conducted by the staff identified above. Robin McTaggart has worked specifically with John Henry on the *IBEAS Project (Investigating Bicultural Education in Aboriginal Schools)* supported by a research grant from Deakin University.

2. The pedagogical principles proposed here are developed from a set of principles guiding the Bachelor of Arts in Education degree program offered by the School of Education of Deakin University. The original BAEd version was prepared for the Board of Studies of the School of Education by Lindsay Fitzclarence, Stephen Kemmis and Les Lomas.
3. Aboriginal teachers for whom English is not the mother tongue experience a familiar array of problems in reading and writing. The extensive use of word-processors in students' own communities and at Batchelor College during intensive teaching sessions has been a vital feature of the D-BATE Program. D-BATE students have become confident and skilled at working and reworking texts about their teaching, schools and communities.

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