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LEARNING STYLES, CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT, TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS AND RURAL-URBAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLE : SOME THOUGHTS

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A good deal has been stated and hypothesised about the essence of Aboriginal learning styles and their implication for Aboriginal education generally (see Roper, 1969; Watts, 1970; Hart, 1974; Harris, 1982). Nowhere does this hypothesising become more explicit than in the *Guidelines to Teachers* accompanying the NSW Aboriginal Education Policy. It is perhaps time to re-examine some of these propositions and to introduce a note of caution before we develop and encapsulate a whole new range of over-generalisations which will serve to lock Aboriginal people into yet another cycle of disadvantage.

Education is essentially *cultural transmission* (Singleton, 1974:27). Indeed, as Singleton (1974) points out, culture itself is frequently defined in essentially educational terms as "the shared product of human learning".

How do we learn our culture - whether this be the culture of our community or the culture of the school? We learn through the process of socialisation or enculturation. Ramirez and Castaneda (1974) provide us with a useful framework for analysing the inter-relationships among culture, socialisation and cognition. They clearly show that cultural values shape, and in turn are reflected in particular socialisation practices. These will then influence *how* we learn, *why* we learn, *for whom* we learn and *from whom* we learn, i.e. our cognitive styles.

The relationship between culture and cognition is clearly a vital one for educators, particularly those working with clients from cultural backgrounds different from their own.

We need to explore the possibility of differences *between* cultural groups, but we must ensure the validity of any conclusions we draw. Moreover, even if/when valid inter-cultural differences

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are established, we need, as educators, to be aware also of differences *within* cultural groups; even when generalisations may describe group tendencies, not all members of a group reflect these group characteristics.

In line with these comments we might profitably examine more closely each of Ramirez and Castaneda's (1974) elements.

Learning Styles: How do our clients prefer to learn? Is it by example, by rote, by inquiry? Do they have a preference for open or for structured situations?

Incentive-Motivational Styles: What encourages people to succeed, to achieve, to conform? Is the preferred pattern based on competition, on co-operation, on self or on group satisfaction?

Human-Relational Styles: With whom do people prefer to interact and what style of interaction do they prefer? Is there great need for affiliation and reliance on interpersonal relations or do people prefer a more individual, isolated style? What are their attitudes towards success or failure and how do people react and relate to authority?

Communication Style: In what way do people prefer to interact - verbally, non-verbally? What language styles are appropriate? When and how much is body language appropriate?

Clearly, all of Ramirez and Castaneda's (1974) factors interact with and are influenced by the prevailing primary socialisation practices characterising different cultural groups. How we are taught will undoubtedly influence how we prefer to learn.

As teachers, *these* are the factors we need to take into account in developing teaching strategies and classroom organisation which will meet the needs of our clients. Variations in our approaches will reflect our awareness of cultural differences and our preparedness to meet the diversity of cognitive styles which characterise any classroom/learning situation.

Unfortunately, as yet we know very little about which strategies are appropriate or successful with all children, let alone all "Aboriginal children" (or adults). Despite some excellent work in the field of Aboriginal education by Fanshawe (1976), Watts and Henry (1978) and Watts (1981), attempting to identify possibly significant trends in teacher effectiveness, parental support or learning styles, we are still very much at the learning/experimental stage ourselves. Some educators

have implemented some "successful" strategies - few of us have an overall plan which we can follow consistently and which can be expected always to produce predominantly successful results.

Nevertheless we would like to have available to us such a plan, such a blue print to "success", which would help provide a sense of security and direction in our endeavours. In the process of searching for this security we are apt to accept or invent a whole range of specific solutions out of the trends and hypotheses which are, in fact, only tentatively advanced by research and theory.

This pattern is certainly reflected in educational strategies at large. We might examine such general strategies first and then consider how a similar process of deriving guidelines is beginning to affect our approaches to Aboriginal clients.

In the 1950s and 1960s it became prevalent to examine cultural difference and its effects on education in terms of *cultural deficit* or *cultural deprivation*. Thus, in attempting to isolate factors responsible for the educational under-achievement of culturally different children, researchers set up literally hundreds of projects which tended to cluster around the following eight major hypotheses:

1. Minority group children are deprived of early sensory/experiential stimulation (Hunt, 1969).
2. Minority group children are exposed to poor mothering which fails to encourage appropriate problem-solving skills in early socialisation (Hess and Shipman, 1968).
3. Minority group children's development is inhibited by father absence which creates identity problems, particularly in boys (Deutsch, 1967).
4. Minority group children tend to exhibit primitive/pathological thought processes (Riesman, 1962).
5. Minority group children suffer language deficits (Bereiter and Englemann, 1967).
6. Minority group children are exposed to the culture of poverty (Lewis, 1966; Coleman, 1966).
7. Minority group children are likely to suffer from socio-genic brain damage (see Valentine and Valentine, 1975).
8. Minority group children may be genetically inferior (Jensen, 1969).

In each case, researchers "measured" the minority group child, parent or community against factors considered educationally relevant and important in the middle class, white, English speaking child, parent or community. In each case the minority group child was found to be deficient, deprived or disadvantaged in terms of socialisation, values, environment, communication or even genetics. On the basis of this comparison, which was the essence of the deficit model in education, various forms of compensatory programs were designed to bring the non-middle class, non-white, non-English speaking child "up to scratch".

Today this type of approach is certainly no longer acceptable. It has, however, left its mark on generations of educators because it did support their need for security and direction and because it shifted accountability away from the institutions and their representatives and onto the life style, culture and community of the "different". In Ryan's (1976) terms, education became locked into a process of *victim blaming*.

Although we now recognise cultural difference as a valid and perhaps even positive concept, the process of enshrining a finite number of factors relevant to this concept, into "boxes", continues. Thus, our realisation that cultural differences are reflected in varying cognitive styles has already led to the creation of dichotomies such as *global/analytical* and *reflective/impulsive*.¹ These dichotomies have developed from the work of Witkin (1959) and his followers researching the concept of *field dependence/field independence*. As a result of the writings in this area, this single characteristic became linked to specific personality qualities, cultural values, educational abilities, even suitable employment.

Consequently we developed the following "boxes". A person who was classified as *field independent* would prefer to learn by inquiry, would be motivated by individual achievement and competition, would prefer to relate on an individualistic basis, would prefer a highly verbal style of communication with little physical contact and would be best suited to analytical/academic work.

A person classified as *field dependent* (later reclassified as *field sensitive*) would prefer to learn by example and guidance, be motivated by others rather than self, prefer to relate to and be part of a group, emphasise non-verbal communication and physical

¹ Note that these concepts form the basis of the document *Strategies: Teaching Aborigines and Islanders in Rural/Urban Areas*. Queensland Department of Education, 1984.

contact and would be best suited for work in "helping" professions rather than academic pursuits.

While this new "box" is no longer focused on "deficiency" or "deprivation", nevertheless it certainly generates a particular set of educational practices. Thus, if clients exhibit low concentration span, it is because they are impulsive rather than reflexive; if clients show few analytical skills they have a global learning style.

Many educators will not accept that identification of apparent group characteristics leads to the specification of educational practices; rather they claim that they treat all clients as individuals. I am not so sure that this is the reality. After discussions with many educators, both as students and professionals in the field, I believe that socio-economic background, for example, has become a fairly well established and well used "box". So - if a child does not concentrate the reasons continue to be found in the "fact" that he/she has not been exposed to the "right" childhood experiences or because the family is too poor to provide breakfast. While some children may indeed be coming to school without breakfast, the box of "poverty" or "stimulus deprivation" is a convenient remnant of the deficit model to which many educators continue to cling. Further, failure to recognise and fully appreciate the devastating and all embracing effects of poverty on educational motivation and performance may be as destructive as the generalisation that all Aboriginal children are reared in environments characterised by poverty and under-nutrition. Similarly, although many teachers may be unaware of the research into cognitive styles and cognitive difference, a lay interpretation can lead to definite educational strategies. Thus, a teacher informed me during an in-service at Coonamble (NSW) that she was giving her Aboriginal students positive self esteem by teaching them to read. However, she felt very strongly that Aboriginal people's *comprehension* skills developed later than those of non-Aboriginal people. Consequently she concentrated entirely on teaching children to *sound words* correctly - to read fluently - because this ability "Made them feel proud"; comprehension, she argued, would take care of itself, at a later stage, when the children were ready.

The example cited is obviously an extreme, perhaps even an isolated one. However, in relation to Aboriginal education generally and the NSW Aboriginal Studies Policy in particular, a number of similar "boxes" are being developed by teachers looking for security and direction in a field which is full of insecurity.

Support Document 5: Strategies for Teaching Aboriginal Children to the NSW Policy is an innovative and in many ways a valuable source of guidance. However, some of its components can, and have been, used to reinforce already existing stereotypes.

Let us consider the Support Document's comments related to cultural difference:

(d) Past and Present Orientations: It is not uncommon for Aboriginal people to base their life styles on the past and in the present rather than to worry about the future. To many non-Aborigines this may be seen as a 'meeting life as it comes' philosophy, but it has its origins in the *Dreamtime* where the emphasis is on 'being' rather than 'becoming'.

The *Dreamtime* refers to the period of Creation when the earth took on its physical form and when Aboriginal societies were given their lore and philosophy. Poor economic situations may contribute to an attitude of 'living for today'.

Directorate of Special Programs, 1982:5

Where do these ideas come from? I would suggest that their origin lies in a fairly simplistic analysis of traditional Aboriginal values. All the knowledge of traditionally oriented society we have been able to glean indicates that the cultures of Australia before colonisation were not only extremely complex and resilient but also highly dynamic. We have learned that the cultures were neither "stone-age" nor static and we have begun to realise that the concept of the Dreamtime incorporated past, present and future. As Toyne and Vachon (1984:20) so clearly describe:

There is no reason to believe that Western Desert society was timeless and static, or the *anangu* lived in a state of 'perfect harmony' with nature among themselves...Western Desert society is no different from any other: it is a combination of 'tradition and transformation' - the forces of conservation and the forces of change. The essential dynamic nature and adaptive quality of Western Desert society is no better seen than in the recent past, during the period of European contact.

Toyne & Vachon (1984:20)

Similar observations have been recorded by many ethnographers, including Bell (1984) who points out that far from stifling change, the *Dreamtime* in fact provides a structural framework for incorporating change. Consequently the equation of traditional orientations with the past appears to be indeed an over-simplification. As such, it often serves to strengthen already existing stereotypes in the wider society dating back to our heritage of scientific racism and colonisation. It gains particular credence because it appears in a document endorsed by Aboriginal people.

However, even if the premise that traditional cultures are predominantly oriented towards the past and present, were sustainable, is it then valid to draw direct comparisons between rural/urban people and traditionally oriented groups? In my opinion, such inferences display a certain naivety about the processes underlying social change.

We continue to know relatively little about the richness and complexity of rural/urban Aboriginal cultures, partly because there has been little emphasis in research except on the influence of poverty on rural/urban Aboriginal communities. Watts warned us about this trend in 1974. Transporting simplistic views of traditional values into rural/urban settings is, in my opinion, a doubtful pursuit and will do a good deal of harm to the integrity of urban/rural Aboriginal cultures. My own research (Eckermann, 1977) into value orientations among urban/rural people in South-east and South-west Queensland certainly indicates a strong first preference for the future orientation among those Aboriginal people I interviewed. Past orientations appear consistently as a second preference while the present orientation is least favoured. These results can, of course, be interpreted in many ways, and the Kluckhohn Strodbeck (1961) Schedule, which was used to investigate the people's value orientations, has many limitations. Nevertheless, the people's own interpretation of their responses is relevant. They explained that they were looking with optimism to the future, that they remembered the past with some fondness and regret but that they really did not like the present very much, given the socio-economic circumstances in which they were living. It seems reasonable to accept that orientations change (as do culture and social organisation) as people's interpretation of and interaction with their environment change. Consequently, a neat little label which places Aboriginal children - all Aboriginal children, for all time - into a box marked past/present orientation is harmful as well as incorrect. It provides us with easy explanations as to why "they" do not plan for the future, why "they" have no ambition, why "they" fail to do well at school.

Let us take another example from the NSW Aboriginal Studies Policy's Support Document 5:

(e) Time Orientation : Conventional time keeping methods are not always important to Aboriginal people, due to the influence of past and present orientation and the lack of clocks and watches in some households.

Directorate of Special Programs, 1982:5

This statement may hold a grain of truth in that families living in poverty may not own clocks and watches. On the other hand, it is dangerous to link cultural values directly with conditions of poverty. Too easily does this approach reinforce the notion that people who suffer from poverty (i.e., a lack of adequate income) will also live in the culture of poverty, a notion which was promulgated with some conviction during the hey-day of the deficit approach. Certainly the statement reinforces the stereotypes of *Koori-Time*. Thus, children cannot come to school in time, parents will not keep appointments - all because of *Koori-Time*. We can then "blame" the culture rather than our approach, our teaching materials, our aims and objectives. If people consider something important, they *will* be there on time and, in my experience, often long before the appointed time, especially if they do not have access to clocks, because they are anxious not to miss the proceedings. Many things can, however, affect people's punctuality - whether they have transport, whether they have clothes they consider appropriate, whether the issue is perceived by them as important, whether something they consider more important has eventuated, whether they are avoiding saying "no" to a request. In my opinion these factors may be related to a diversity of forces such as their socio-economic situation, their past experiences of black/white interaction, their priorities or their legitimate ways of manipulating potentially uncomfortable and/or unproductive situations. Such forces provide a more potent explanation than the assumption of a cultural orientation to time which focuses on the past and present.

Another example from Support Document No.5 concentrates on group orientation:

(g) Group Orientation: Traditionally Aborigines depended on group participation for moral, social and physical support. This has been carried over to today's Aboriginal societies in that many Aborigines are group, rather than individually oriented.

Directorate of Special Programs, 1982:5

Once again, I believe, this analysis is highly simplistic and, because of its simplicity, may reinforce existing stereotypes rather than foster cultural awareness. "Group orientation" among rural/urban, as well as traditionally oriented groups, is a highly complex and dynamic concept. Research among traditionally oriented communities (see, e.g., Hamilton, 1981; Maddock, 1974) indicates a clear emphasis on individual rights which operate within a distinctive well-defined, often prescriptive, social framework. This perspective challenges a popular positive stereotype about Aboriginal people which alleges that, unlike Europeans, Aborigines are communally oriented, always share, make decisions by consensus, are dependent on group orientations.

It would definitely be a mistake to minimise the influence of affiliative attitudes and values among urban/rural Aboriginal groups. However, these affiliative elements should be placed within a meaningful framework which does not negate the people's emphasis on independence and individual decision-making.

I believe that, because of the influence of sociological research, there is a tendency to link individualism with materialism, nuclear family organisation, achievement and a "scientific" analysis of the cosmos. It is generally assumed that such ideal forms characterise certain sections in industrial society - heavily influenced by the value structure of western Europe and the Protestant Ethic.

It should, however, be possible for individualism to be aligned with affiliative values and, I believe, there is evidence that rural/urban Aboriginal traditions achieve this.

Again, my own research (Eckermann, 1973) into value orientations, as well as that by Watts (1970) and Hausfield (1974) indicates that in terms of orientations towards other people, rural/urban Aboriginal people interviewed showed a clear preference for individual decision-making. This was supported by a second preference for direction from the group and a third (least popular) preference for advice from lineal authority. By contrast, among non-Aborigines, the individual, first preference in decision-making, was most commonly followed by preference for direction from an authority figure, while advice from the group, the communal orientation, constituted the third and least popular choice. Thus, Aboriginal people exhibited a significantly different *direction* in value orientation (individual supported by the group) from non-Aborigines (individual supported by the leader).

Consequently, I would argue that, although many Aboriginal people are highly individualistic, their form of individualism is very different from that prevalent among many Aborigines. Aboriginal individualism appears to be supported and kept in check by the group. However, this "group" appears to be a small, well-defined kin group rather than "all" Aborigines or "the Aboriginal community".

The subtleness of this distinction is an important one for educators. Too often the concept of "group orientation" among Aboriginal people has led us to believe that Aboriginal people are not "achievement" oriented, cannot cope with praise, do not wish to "stand-out". Instead, ability to succeed may well be influenced by a number of more pressing and complex forces as outlined by Fesl (1986 personal communications). Such forces will include the level of racism experienced by Aboriginal children and, related to that, their fear of isolation in a hostile, white dominated environment should they achieve at higher levels than their peers. Further, it may be equally important to establish children's perceptions of success or failure in order to develop and evaluate appropriate educational programs. Unfortunately more simplistic approaches appear to have influenced teacher attitudes and teaching strategies as indicated by Watts (1981) when she reviewed relevant research:

The evidence that is available suggests that teachers vary in their attitudes, but that many hold unfavourable stereotypes about Aborigines. While some appear to have expectations based on a belief of a normal distribution of learning aptitude among their Aboriginal pupils, significant numbers, it would seem, do not really expect a very high proportion of these pupils to achieve success at school.

Watts 1981:231

If it is the case that individualism among rural/urban Aboriginal people is just as strong, yet *different* from that among non-Aboriginal people; if it is true that affiliative needs are more prevalent among Aboriginal than non-Aboriginal people, then the educator must provide opportunity for *individual success within the group/supported by the group*.

Achievement, I believe, is a very strong motivator among many Aboriginal people. My own experiences in teaching a group of adult Aboriginal clients in the Associate Diploma in Aboriginal Studies confirm this.

Among these students the ultimate goal was to *master* a subject, a topic or a specific task. The object for many was not so much to "get a grade", but rather to *really know they knew*. Consequently, a number of people gaining distinction-level grades would approach me and ask how they could "make it better". Similarly, those whose marks indicated clear passes, would ask whether they could do it again in order to "really do it well", knowing full well that the actual grade could not be changed.

This pattern was further exemplified in clients' reaction to comments on their papers. Nothing irritated and frustrated them more than to be told that although their work was good, displaying sound research and argument, yet they could be elaborating, here or there, discussing this or that issue. In the general course of tertiary education such comments are intended to show students their strengths while expanding their horizons. Among this group of students, as perhaps among others, this practice was acceptable for work which both teacher and student evaluated as passable or mediocre, but it was not acceptable for work thought to be good and graded accordingly.

It may well be that "achievement" is culturally based. However, it is dangerous to over-simplify. The *need to master* may equally be a result of people's adult status, of previously unsatisfactory educational achievements, and/or of insecurity in an alien, largely non-Aboriginal environment. Whatever factors underlie such a strong motivation towards mastery, it can be fostered or stifled by the learning environment we create.

Let us return to some early work by Fanshawe (1976). Fanshawe hypothesised that effective teachers of Aboriginal students

...should be *demanding*, having faith in the academic ability of their Aboriginal students, avoiding the trap of expecting little...and getting little.

...should be *warm and supportive*, giving understanding and encouragement; being sympathetic to the Aboriginal culture...

...should be *stimulating*, presenting material and organising activities which are clearly demonstrated to be relevant to the needs of their students.

...should be *responsible and organised*, eliciting from their students a trust in their professional competence.

Fanshawe, 1976:9

Perhaps these characteristics are or should be sought in all teachers, whether they are teaching Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal clients. Yet, perhaps, it is more difficult to exhibit these features when teaching students culturally different from ourselves.

In order to meet some of the guidelines developed by Fanshawe (1976), I have followed strategies outlined below:

a) *Demanding*

Working on the principle that demands are shared, the students and I have developed a contract which established our expectations of one another. Features of this contract include:

- i) mutual respect, caring and support not only between staff and students, but also between students
- ii) mutual learning
- iii) mutual discipline, e.g., in preparation of materials, attendance, research
- iv) mutual frankness as problems and/or frustrations arise
- v) a clear directive from the students that they expect me to judge their performance the same as any other students'
- vi) co-operative decision-making
- vii) mutual responsibility for the learning process

The concept of a contract is not new. Many teachers have tried to implement a similar practice. The contract should, however, be seen as a *teaching process*. It is not enough for the teacher to stipulate his/her expectations; it must be a co-operative mutually binding document. Further, it is not enough to develop the contract and then to assume that all problems will be solved. The process of the contract involves constant revision and revitalisation so that its principles remain current, applicable and clear in the minds of all parties. Overall, such a contract ensures a minimal conflict in the classroom and provides clear guidelines, thus reducing anxiety.

Having a demanding attitude towards students' performance is also reflected in how much and when the teacher "pushes". Materials presented must be appropriate to the clients, but they

must also *extend* the student. Consequently, language, concepts, materials which simply mirror and reinforce the student's "known" horizons will not satisfy their motives for seeking education, nor will such practices meet the teacher's professional needs and aspirations.

b) *Warmth and Support*

A teacher may individually extend a good deal of empathy and caring for culturally different students. However, this individual concern must find reflection in the institution and extend beyond the student body into the community. On an individual basis, knowledge about students' strengths and vulnerability, about family concerns, about community issues, is important. It is equally important that this knowledge be translated into action - through procedures such as the teacher becoming a resource person to individual students as well as the group, and through providing opportunity for community issues to become legitimate and valuable aspects of course work wherever possible. Consequently we discuss land rights and health and employment within the framework of past and present government legislation and we analyse community structures as a consequence of colonialism, the protection era and policies of "divide and rule", as well as kin-alliances, obligations and responsibilities. Such an approach reinforces the concept that learning is/should be a *sharing* experience.

Further, through organising avenues by which students can share their experiences with members of the community, the institution itself loses its mystique and awe. Certainly institutionally supported social activities, e.g., barbeques, lunches and sports afternoons, play their part. More important perhaps are formal discussions and seminars facilitated through the institution but organised by the students themselves: for example, their attendance at various conferences, and their hosting of motivational visits from numerous school groups.

Warmth and support cannot exist in a vacuum - they must be linked with and reflected in activities relevant to students, staff, the institution and the community.

c) *Stimulation*

In order to be stimulating, to maintain students' interests and attention, teachers present material in many different ways - audio-visual approaches, seminar/problem solving, lecturing/discussion sessions. While it is a mistake to over-verbalise with any students, whether they be Aboriginal or not, some materials,

some subject matters, require extensive verbalisation; it is as dangerous to bore students as it is to trivialise the information they are seeking. We have developed a number of strategies to ensure that variety and diversity of presentations will maximise interest and attention. In our initial discussions we agreed that there was no virtue in sitting still for its own sake. My own teaching/thinking style makes it very difficult for me to teach without moving around, without using my body for expression, without using blackboards and overhead projectors. Students, similarly, felt that they needed to move, to shift their positions, to interrupt with questions, in order to keep their attention as focused as possible. Consequently, it was not unusual for us to change seating, to get up and to stretch. This pattern should not be interpreted as a "free for all" where some members of the group would, or could interrupt the proceedings to the annoyance or detriment of others. Rather, our approach was based on an understanding that concentration tends to flag after about 20 minutes and that a short break, a joke, a stretch, would enhance rather than inhibit learning.

Teachers generally use themselves as the teaching instrument - they project their information through the medium of self. Consequently our approaches to stimulating clients will depend on what techniques suit our personal interaction styles. There can be no "right" or "wrong" approaches. If there are preferable styles, these will emerge through experimentation, through the trialling of a variety of techniques. We experimented a good deal with student involvement in various classroom activities. Thus, because students were vitally concerned about derogatory images about Aborigines relating to government expenditure and Aboriginal mismanagement, they created a video to combat these new stereotypes. Because students were asked to respond to a series of questions about Aborigines for which some health professionals sought answers, they wrote an article, which was later published in *The Aboriginal Child at School*. We set up a number of group projects, some of which developed teaching resources for primary schools. As a result students learned new skills. However, they were also provided with concrete evidence that these skills were valuable, relevant and useful to a whole range of people outside their classroom as well as to themselves.

One further comment on "group activities" is appropriate. Students choose their own groups, i.e. they nominate the activities and people with whom they choose to become involved. Not all groups work well. Interestingly, those where people choose co-workers belonging to their own particular, well-defined kin-group, concerned

with similar interests, prove most productive. Other groups, where individuals join together for convenience sake, achieve very little. Perhaps this may be seen as another example of the inappropriateness of applying labels such as "group oriented" to all Aboriginal students.

d) *Responsibility and Organisation*

Organisation for curriculum design and curriculum content primarily falls on the shoulders of teachers. Here too structure, guidance and support are important. In order to minimise anxieties and maximise students' learning, we have developed study guides - each unit is divided into clearly defined tasks, research and study areas are identified, learning steps are discussed, not only at the beginning of the course but continuously reinforced throughout the program. Students may take these study guides home and plot their own progress, assured in the knowledge that following such a guide might help them monitor their own progress.

Each classroom session is carefully structured in relation to time, content and tasks. Students are provided with a clear overview of aims and objectives as well as lecture notes. Co-ordinating note-taking, listening and understanding is a difficult task for most students, particularly those beginning tertiary education. This group of Aboriginal students has proven to be no different. Clearly structured lecture notes and glossaries of important jargonistic terms and concepts relieve some of their anxiety so that they can afford to listen and participate without feeling constantly pressured to record.

In order to monitor progress I have kept a diary recording each session in terms of my feelings, perceived student reaction and comments relating to future strategies. Further, student tasks and *student evaluations* both of their own work as well as mine, have provided all of us with indications about how and where we were going.

What are the implications for teaching practice of the issues I have raised in the paper? There are no magic answers. Perhaps the best guidance, which we have tended to ignore, is to experiment, record our experiments, share our results and from this basis plan further experiments. Perhaps such procedures should be the focus of guidance in Aboriginal Studies Education Policies. Perhaps such practices should be our professional commitment to *all* our clients, Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal.

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