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AN INDUCTION PROGRAM FOR NEW APPOINTEES TO ABORIGINAL SCHOOLS

*Ken Darvall

1. INTRODUCTION

The author was fortunate to be awarded a New South Wales Teaching Service Fellowship for 1990 to undertake an investigation of the professional development of teachers, including executive, in schools with significant Aboriginal enrolments. This fellowship was undertaken in South Australia over a four-week period in March and April this year.

Perhaps the highlight of this investigation was the emphasis placed on appropriate and adequate induction programs within the human resource management portfolio of the South Australian Department of Education. The purpose of this article is to outline the induction program for new appointees to Aboriginal schools as it occurs in South Australia. From an outsider's viewpoint, this induction program is superior in terms of need, design, organisation and support. It is certainly an ideal program that should be emulated elsewhere in Australia.

The author takes this opportunity to acknowledge the support and cooperation of the New South Wales Department of School Education, the South Australian department of Education and the staff of the schools visited. Russ Jackson, Mark Withnell, Heather Gray and Anne Stickens deserve individual recognition for their invaluable support towards this report.

2. THE INDUCTION PROGRAM

The induction program for new appointees and principals to Aboriginal schools in South Australia normally involves an initial phase over a period of four weeks. The first three weeks of this program occurs during the last three weeks of Term 4. The final week of the program is conducted during mid-January. Staff and principals who are appointed after this period of time miss out on this initial phase of the Induction Program.

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The features of this initial phase are:

Week 1: Sessions are held in Adelaide and are mainly aimed at cultural sensitisation - being part of a cultural minority for possibly the first time. It is important to note there that people have various perceptions. Everyone is at a different stage of readiness, which explains the varying opinions in regards to the effectiveness of this aspect of the induction program.

Week 2: This week is spent in the appointed schools. Teachers and executive have the opportunity to visit their new community which will more than likely be their home for the next three years. These new appointees are able to arrange their accommodation needs, meet with their future colleagues, establish the availability of school and community resources, in addition to teachers finding out their class allocations for the following year. During this week, new appointees are able to observe their predecessors in action within the classroom setting.

Week 3: New appointees return to Adelaide for review and administrative tasks. First, new appointees are able to discuss their experiences from the previous week at their new school. Administrative tasks such as appointment notices and salary details are completed during this third week.

Week 4: This week is also conducted in Adelaide and focuses on curriculum issues with special emphasis on literacy, numeracy and bilingualism.

At the commencement of the Induction Program, all participants receive copies of three booklets as well as an induction journal in which participants maintain a diary covering the various sessions including questions to raise and matters to follow-up at a later stage.

The three booklets received by participants are as follows:

Booklet 1: *Handbook for New Apointees to Aboriginal Schools in South Australia*

CONTENTS:

1. On your appointment: information that you may need to know before leaving Adelaide.
2. Arrival in the community: a summary of the various aspects of community life; health matters.

3. Teaching in an Aboriginal school: aspects of your teaching role; the role of the AEW.
4. The first school days.
5. The first few weeks.
6. Appendix.

Booklet 2: *Readings for New Appointees to Aboriginal Schools in South Australia*

CONTENTS:

1. Formal education and Aboriginal children - M. Christie
2. Keeping the teacher happy - M. Christie
3. Aboriginal learning styles and formal teaching - S.Harris
4. Using literature in an oral English program - M. Allen
5. Language learning - K. Gale & B. Parkin
6. Planning experiences - B. Graham
7. How the Pitjantjatjara reading levels list can be used to help you organise your class reading program - K. Gale
8. Towards a theoretical framework for the development of an Aboriginal pedagogy - R. Andrews & P. Hughes.
9. And leave like butterflies - P. Hughes
10. A call for an Aboriginal pedagogy - P. Hughes
11. Walkin Talkin Stories - NT Dept of Ed.

Booklet 3: *Aboriginal Schools Language Induction Program/ A Hopefully Helpful Handbook of Hints (Jenny Bishop)*

CONTENTS

1. Recording
2. Indicators checklist for written language

3. Reading checklists
4. Setting up resources
5. Supportive texts
6. Phonics
7. Individual programming
8. Resource people

3. THE RECRUITMENT/INDUCTION OFFICER

In terms of recruitment and induction, an officer for that specific purpose is employed and is attached to the Aboriginal Education Unit. It is this officer who is the lynchpin to the induction program conducted by the South Australian Department of Education for new appointees to Aboriginal schools. The duty statement for this position provides an accurate summary of the important role that this officer plays in the induction program.

TERMS 1 & 2

- Continue the Teacher Induction Program as planned.
- Visit newly appointed teachers in their communities.
- Intensive work with new teachers in their classrooms, by invitation from teacher or principal, in consultation with each other.
- Consult with and provide support for principals in establishing an appropriate induction program in their schools, both for experienced teachers, and teachers on probation.
- Organise follow-up conferences or workshops for traditional and non-traditional schools as required.
- Provide support for new teachers appointed to the Wiltja program (Adelaide).
- Liaise with Assistant Director, Curriculum, Western Area on the induction support for consultancy teams working in Aboriginal schools.
- Facilitate the meeting once per term, of the Aboriginal Schools Induction Committee.
- To apply for ongoing funding by February each year through the Administrative Officer, Aboriginal Education.

TERM 3

- As above, plus:
- Review the previous year's program, and make recommendations for the following year's program.
- Begin to foster interest nationally in teaching in South Australian Aboriginal schools through:
 - a) writing or facilitating the writing of articles for appropriate journals and magazines (e.g., SAIT Journal, Pivot, Australian Teacher, A.R.A. Journal, The Aboriginal Child at School, N.T. Bilingual Newsletter);
 - b) recruitment drive at all campuses of SACAE and Flinders University;
- Assist the Supervisor of Aboriginal Schools in national advertisements for teachers to South Australian Aboriginal Schools.

TERM 4

- Continue recruitment efforts as appropriate.
- Organise the four week Induction Program (December-January).
- Assist the Supervisor of Aboriginal Schools in interviewing and appointing teachers to Aboriginal schools in time for the December program.

4. FINDINGS

The participants to whom I spoke during the Fellowship regarded the Induction Program as extremely beneficial. There were contrasts in opinion of the accuracy of information supplied during the first week of the program. However, this contrast relates to the perceptions of individuals in relation to Aboriginal education in general. All participants regarded the visit to the appointed schools as the highlight of the program. In fact, many would have preferred two weeks in the schools. It was generally considered by the participants that the third and fourth weeks of the program could have been streamlined into one week. However, it is important to note that all participants regarded the completion of administrative details (for example, salary information) and the curriculum perspectives to be all essential components of the Induction Program.

There were some hiccups to the Induction Program. Some sessions were cancelled due to last minute cancellations or priority appointments. The session on driving four wheel drive vehicles, that was cancelled at the last moment for reasons beyond the control of the organising committee, was a great disappointment to the participants. Also, the Recruitment/Induction Officer was appointed as Relieving Principal of Amata Aboriginal School, which meant that the normal duties of this officer were not carried out during the first term. This provided a major source of concern for appointees who were unable to attend the initial phase of the Induction Program (as their appointments were made after this initial phase had been conducted.)

The four week Induction Program has now been conducted for several years. Annual evaluations of the program have led to its present organisation. It was interesting to note that all appointees were placed on full salary for this four week period, in addition to schools receiving relief where staff were required to attend this initial phase of induction. Unfortunately, most schools had difficulty in securing relief for their schools so, in fact, the relief for which schools were eligible was rarely secured.

While the Induction Program is highly effective and successful, an emerging trend in the staffing operation of South Australian schools will require the drastic reorganisation of the Induction Program as well as emphasising the importance of the role of the Recruitment/Induction Officer. "Rolling Staffing" where the selection and appointment process commences at the time of a vacancy, means that staff are being appointed to Aboriginal schools without undertaking the initial phase of the Induction Program. Having spoken to teachers who had undertaken the Induction Program and those teachers who expressed disappointment and some frustration at not being able to experience the program, I believe that the possible demise of the Induction Program as it now exists would be a backward step.

5. CONCLUSION

Induction is the process of introducing new employees to the organisation. Induction also marks the beginning of the process by which employees are integrated into the organisation. The induction process can be undertaken at the formal level and the informal level. Most schools undertake informal induction

programs. This article has focussed on the formal induction process implemented by the South Australian Department of Education.

This South Australian model is one which has proved successful. Importantly, adequate time has been allocated to the program to ensure its success. The support of the recruitment/induction officer is invaluable to the program and the participants. The aspect of allowing appointees to visit their appointed school for a week prior to commencing duties needs to be duplicated throughout Australia. It is far better to know what lies ahead, instead of remaining blindfolded to possible future frustrations that often reflect individual perception.

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ALIVE AND WELL:

Aboriginal Education in South Australia

*Ken Darvall

During a four-week period in March and April, 1990, I had the opportunity to visit several Aboriginal and mainstream public schools in South Australia as part of a Fellowship sponsored by the New South Wales Department of School Education.

The selection of South Australia as a location to visit was recommended to the author by various colleagues in Aboriginal education who considered that "many fine things were happening" in South Australia in the area of Aboriginal education. My impressions confirmed what I had been told by others.

This article will outline some of the outstanding features of Aboriginal education in South Australia from an outsider's perspective. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the cooperation, support and goodwill from the following schools which ensured a most personal and professional educational experience: the Port Augusta schools; Maitland Area School; Point Pierce Aboriginal School; Yalata Aboriginal School; Koonibba Aboriginal School; Indulkana Aboriginal School; Amata Aboriginal School; and Pipalyatjara Aboriginal School.

FEATURES

Departmental Commitment to Aboriginal Education

Perhaps the most striking feature of Aboriginal education in South Australia is the high priority which the South Australian Department of Education places on Aboriginal education.