

Pedagogical Issues Affecting Indigenous Citizenship and Education in Australia and Melanesia

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ABSTRACT

Culturally appropriate education for people of Indigenous descent is not a privilege; it is a fundamental right. Such an education is also a powerful resource for all educators and all cultures. This paper examines theoretical and pedagogical issues affecting Indigenous education, particularly those raised in my book, **Socialization, Land and Citizenship Among Aboriginal Australians: Reconciling Indigenous and Western Forms of Education** (The Edwin Mellen Press, New York, 2005). It also draws from comparative dimensions, particularly from Melanesia, acquired during my experiences of teaching and researching in Papua New Guinea and a recent sabbatical in the Department of Anthropology, Durham University, UK. The major objective is to examine issues of education and pedagogy and to suggest forms of reconciliation between the dominant Western or mainstream education and Indigenous forms of education. The work is grounded in ethnographic case studies in Melanesia and Australia, and wide-ranging interaction and consultation with Indigenous people.

We can learn a great deal from Indigenous cultures, however their knowledge and methodologies are often ignored or discounted by metropolitan, industrial societies. The presentation and paper lead the participant and reader along an alternative, arguably far more productive and equitable pathway. If you work in education, community development or many related fields, participating in this presentation, reading the paper, and, crucially, putting the recommendations into practice, should lead to a world of greater reconciliation, understanding, inclusive citizenship, peace and productivity.

It is argued that if we are to achieve a social and political reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens there is a clear need for a broad, inclusive and participatory form of citizenship and civic education, one which acknowledges Indigenous forms of learning and empowers Indigenous communities. The provision of the most appropriate education for Indigenous students is extraordinarily complex and presents an enormous challenge to educators, in Australia and elsewhere. The implications are profound; continued ignorance and arrogance from the dominant cultures will lead to even greater resentment, social alienation, poverty and divisiveness. The presentation and paper explore these issues and concerns in both the broad historical, and more particular localized sense, each informing the other.

Introduction

Of particular relevance to the analysis and discussion in this paper concerning Indigenous education in Australia and Melanesia is the manner in which schooling is caught up in the system of stratification at both the local and national level. Factors of race, class, status, economic and political power, bear down upon all who participate in schooling. While education systems in Australia and Melanesia¹ obviously facilitate some individual social mobility, making potential leaders and others more confident in dealing with outsiders, they also place people in particular race, class and status categories. They organise and structure the life-chances of both their beneficiaries and victims and legitimise their place in the system of unequal privileges and rewards. Hence, schools, despite the best efforts of many principals and teachers, do not usually contradict the local system of racial, ethnic, class and social stratification. Ultimately they, in the main, function to preserve and legitimate the existing inequalities of power, wealth, status and ownership of land. The following suggests another way, a rhizosemiotic² approach, to move sensitively and inter-connectedly, from the immanence of tradition and inequality to one of opportunity, development, increasing equality and modernity, by engendering a semiotic of inherent respect, networking and effectiveness. As Patricia O'Riley explains, "Rhizomes affirm what is excluded from western thought and reintroduce reality as dynamic, heterogeneous and non-dichotomous; they implicate rather than replicate; they propagate, displace, join, circle back, fold" (2003: 27).

Learning from the Indigenous World: Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge and Pedagogy into Education and Development

Education and culture are inextricably interwoven since the content of all education has value underpinnings that are always associated with a particular cultural agenda (Thaman, Konai Helu, 2001: 1).

Indigenous knowledge is a growing field of inquiry, both nationally and internationally, particularly for those interested in educational innovation. The question, 'What is Indigenous knowledge?' is usually asked by Eurocentric scholars seeking to understand a cognitive system that is alien to them. The greatest challenge in answering this question to find a respectful way to compare Eurocentric and Indigenous ways of knowing and include both into contemporary modern education. Finding a satisfactory answer to this question is the necessary first step in remedying the failure of the existing First Nations [Canadian] educational system and in bringing about a blended educational context that respects and builds on both Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledge systems. (Batiste, Marie, 2002: 3)

In my experience, most mainstream schools don't cater for a diverse range of students, preferring to teach in a mainly white, middle class fashion. Students who come from a different culture or background are expected to assimilate, or else face a difficult learning situation, which

¹ For this paper, most Melanesian examples come from Papua New Guinea (PNG).

² Noel Gough argues the need for a rhizo (from rhizomes- that is, tangled, heterogenic) semiotic (study of the role of signs and symbols as part of social life) for curriculum (knowledge and pedagogy) scholars who work trans-nationally. He terms it "...nomadic [rather than] sedentary thought" (2007: 283). I find the metaphor and concept helpful for exploring, explaining and justifying innovation and change. Inherently, it implies that not all from the past can or should survive.

could lead to them eventually ‘dropping out’ of school. (Indigenous teacher, Yiparinya School, Alice Springs, NT, 2002)

This paper responds to wide-ranging ethnographic studies in Australia and Melanesia³ and to recent policies and practices in Indigenous education. It recommends to all educators and community developers, in Australia, Melanesia, and elsewhere, that they consider the incorporation of elements of Indigenous knowledge and pedagogy into their organisation of learning, classroom practice and development projects.

I also examine the crucial contemporary issues of reconciliation between Indigenous and other Australians, and the lack of a sense of national identity and citizenship of people from the various provinces and social strata in Papua New Guinea, in reference to some of the roles educators and community developers can play in these social dilemmas. Elements of reconciliation and citizenship range from the wording of preambles, constitutions and treaties, to social, economic, legal, cultural and political justice and acceptance. There are numerous related issues and dilemmas all over this vast region. For all of the above elements appropriate education is vital. People learn better together if they know and appreciate something of the others’ pedagogical background. To feel comfortable and confident when learning is crucial to outcomes in education. This includes Indigenous and other students, community members, specialist educational and developmental researchers, and educators and developers who work with children, their families and communities. Adoption of the recommendations in this paper, resulting from the various ethnographic case studies, extensive ethnographic and teaching experience in schools, universities and Indigenous communities, in Australia and Papua New Guinea, review of literature in the field, plus critiques and suggestions offered by a group of eight practising Indigenous teachers from the Yiparinya School, Alice Springs, should lead to more positive outcomes and to less alienation from school and society.

Effects of the Imposition of Western Education

After the invasion and occupation of their lands by Europeans, Indigenous peoples were expected to benefit from a Western education system based on that of the dominant Europeans. The benefits were seen to be apparent, particularly in comparison to the perceived ‘stone-age culture’, ‘heathen’ beliefs and customs, and in Australia the ‘squalor and horrors of the black camp’. In the latter case, thousands of Aboriginal children, particularly those of mixed race, were taken from their parents, to be assimilated to European ways. The inadequacies, often horrors and abuses, visited upon many of those children constitute another story (see Wilson, R, 1997). Those who remained with their parents were provided with a second-rate education that not only tried to assimilate them, but also to denigrate their language, culture and community.

Of course, this is not an exclusively Australian or Melanesian experience. Educators in other regions, from all levels of the education system, may care to compare the way minorities in their country have fared in education and society. For example, in Japan, the *Burakumin* ‘untouchables’, Koreans, Indigenous Ainu, even *Kikokushijo*, Japanese returnees from extended periods overseas, also experience an educational system that is,

³ For the ethnographic case studies see Nichol, 2005, and the forthcoming book, Nichol, R., *Growing Up in Indigenous Australia and Melanesia*.

at times, less than supportive of their needs. Studies of Indian, African, Native American, South American, Maori and Sami societies, also provide telling examples of Indigenous systems of learning and knowledge being ignored or derided. The immigrant experience is often a similar one.

A major concern in education has been the lack of relevance of much of the content and methodology imposed upon Indigenous students. Gradually some educators have realised that Indigenous children learn differently and that their culture and pedagogy have validity and strength. Of course, educators also need to be acutely aware of the diversity of Indigenous cultures, particularly in Australia and PNG, and that there is not a monolithic sense of identity or pedagogy. Dispossession of land, alienation, poor health and few employment opportunities must also affect educational interest, attendance, application and performance. Issues of rights to make decisions for the community, particularly about the land and community development, also clearly affect educational outcomes.

The characteristics of Indigenous learners are examined and pedagogical strategies to assist in both students' learning and teachers' delivery are explored. The most appropriate and effective learning strategies are explained as being holistic, imaginal, kinaesthetic, cooperative, contextual and person-oriented (Craven: 1996, 1999, Nichol: 2004, 2005). To ignore key social and environmental aspects of learning, as too often occurs, is seen as being particularly damaging for marginalized Indigenous and minority students at all levels, in all places.

Relevance and Application

The message conveyed in this section has particular relevance for teachers of social education and related subjects, such as anthropology, sociology, history, geography and economics, to Indigenous learners. However, its applicability for the wider curriculum and community development is also clear. It is also of considerable value in teaching literacy, mathematics and science, to non-Indigenous students, in Melanesia, Australia and elsewhere (see Nichol, R. and Robertson, J., 1999, 2000)

I'm a hands-on teacher and the kids really enjoy all that practical stuff but they can't explain what they've done! There's no way they can work the same thing from written...directions I give them (Bucknell, 1995: 22).

Gwen Bucknell espouses the sentiments of many teachers trying to teach Western concepts to Indigenous students. The quote raises many issues of relevance to this paper, such as communication, initial literacy, language, and recognition of and catering for an Indigenous pedagogy. Also of relevance is my own awareness that if you wish to perpetuate inequalities then provide the same education for all. This latter point is of crucial importance for the many teachers and administrators who hold strongly to the view that "A 'fair go' means treating all the students the same, equally". Of course, if educational provision has been second-rate, then moves towards 'equality' or 'sameness' are improvements but, too often, are far from being engaging or culturally relevant.

I would go so far as to say, to expect one style of teaching to work for a diverse range of students is unequal, unjust and could be deemed as racist. (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, 2002)

Contemporary Indigenous culture, in Melanesia and Australia, is complex and diverse, from traditionally oriented people living in isolated communities with very little knowledge of the outside world, to people living and functioning very ably in predominantly urban, post-industrial cultures and societies. For example, at Yiparinya School, based in suburban Alice Springs, there is considerable diversity among the students. There are more than four different local language groups and the students come from 'bush communities', 'town camps', and from Alice Springs. Aboriginal English is a *lingua franca*. A teacher at Yiparinya School explained the students' backgrounds as being:

'Town Campers'- these are students who live in small Aboriginal communities in and around Alice Springs. They can still speak their languages, but are increasingly influenced by the western ways. Most of these students face an overwhelming swag of difficult issues, such as living with alcoholism, petrol sniffing, domestic violence, child abuse, racism, poor health and poor housing.

'Bush mob'- students live a more cultural and traditional way of life. Their language and culture is very strong and they speak little English, or

'Townies'- these students live in urban Alice Springs. They either suffer from the same issues as the 'town campers', or at the other extreme they don't suffer at all. They tend to lack culture and tradition, speak little or no Aboriginal language but do speak Aboriginal English. (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, 2002)

Many of the children living on the fringes of towns and cities in PNG, the Solomon Islands and Fiji, face similar harsh realities of everyday life. One can readily see why education, if available, suffers.

Primary schools in Melanesia cater for a large minority of young children, however as 'cut-offs' occur quite drastically in secondary and tertiary education those from villages and marginalized settlements are increasingly denied opportunities, for education and employment. Decisions made are not just logistic and economic. Many students are disengaged and disillusioned by the schooling offered. Education systems, in Melanesia and Australia, need to cater for the consequent varying interests and cultural backgrounds of Indigenous students. Subjects that, by convention, have been taught to European standards and by mainstream methods, including Vocational Education Training (VET) offerings, have to take into account their relevance to the Indigenous student. Many Indigenous leaders in Australia express distaste for much of what their people have been taught; for example, it particularly galls when children are told that Captain James Cook discovered Australia, and that Australia was settled rather than invaded. So content, as well as pedagogy, needs to be accurate, appropriate and relevant. In Papua New Guinea, readers and textbook are often not relevant culturally to *wantoks* and provincial readers, or to market needs in such a diverse country. It has long been bemoaned that English is taught in the school but then, for many, has little further reinforcement or relevance.

Much of what is found in these concluding sections has wider application in contemporary education, for philosophy, policy and practice, especially engagement. Indeed, many students of Western and Asian origins experience difficulties with the subjects and methodology offered in schools.

Students whose language and culture is not based on Anglo-American Western customs and heritage often find these difficulties to be compounded with history and social studies. Conversely, many of the insights and methodologies proposed in this section to develop a more applicable and relevant general curriculum for Indigenous students in Melanesia and Australia could be used to make subjects more interesting, relevant and successful for all students. *I certainly do not intend this pedagogical model to be seen as prescriptive, compulsory for all Indigenous students, as a model for separating Indigenous from other Australians, or Indigenous wantoks from one region or island from other Papua New Guineans, Solomon Islanders or Fijians, whether Indigenous or of other ethnicity.*

Summary: History and Characteristics of Indigenous Education in Melanesia and Australia

In traditional societies young Indigenous people learned as they grew up, with an informal learning system based, in the main, on the need to know, and supported by a more formal system of initiation and organised instruction. This instruction was organised by ‘clever’, ‘powerful’ or ‘big men’ educational and political leaders, whom the anthropologist, A.P. Elkin, termed, in Australia, ‘Men of High Degree’, [while he acknowledged that older women could also qualify and practise]. In central and western New South Wales these leaders were known as *wireenan* and *walamira*. All over Australia and Melanesia they were elders, repositories and controllers of Indigenous knowledge, usually with strong genealogical ties to the learners.

All young people were ‘put through the rules’, ‘broken’, ‘tamed’ or ‘steered’ through life, and while much learning was observational and incidental, no society left learning to chance. Sanctions for going against ‘The Law’ were serious, from shaming, physical punishment, banishment, to death. Education was organic, multidisciplinary and ensured a complementarity of gender roles (if, rather frequently, with fearful, antagonistic, oppositional, violent elements, particularly in Melanesia and desert regions in Australia).

Learning took place, in the main, during day-to-day activities. Indigenous people were often fluent or could ‘hear’ in a number of neighboring dialects, allowing communication with surrounding groups. Skills were learned by observation, imitation and real life practice and from the oral tradition linking song (stories, legends, instruction), site (land, property, fishing, hunting, gathering rights), skin (kinship, family, lineage, obligations) and ceremony (rituals, dancing, instruction and ties to the past). This led to the following characteristics of traditional Indigenous education.

In brief, and recognizing significant caveats throughout this enormous region, learning was largely oral and the use of storytelling was important. Sign language also was used. Education was largely informal, except during preparation for initiation when formal, even coercive, and rigorous methods of education were used. Initiates later referred to being ‘ritually killed and born again’, ‘tied in’, ‘broken into’ or ‘steered’ through initiation. The more informal methods employed for learning included observation, imitation and casual instruction. Learning occurred through participation in the life of the community. Often instruction came as

people gathered around a fire, leading to the phrase, 'We grow them up in the ashes'. Everywhere the hearth, the family or community fire, constituted a place for gathering at the end of the day, where food was shared, stories were told, songs sung. Usually the very seating arrangements around the fire were of significance in terms of the location of the person's land (sitting in direction of country) and those with whom he or she could be close or distant, generous or practise avoidance. Through these means, a rich cultural heritage was transmitted and children learned the social, economic and religious life of the community, including philosophy, ethics, art, music, dance and mythology. Religion (perhaps better, spirituality) permeated every aspect of life. There was no purely secular education.

All hunting, food-gathering, family life and social life were intimately connected with their religious belief (Hart: 1970).

Orokaiva religious beliefs and many of their medical practices centre on two spirit concepts, *asisi* and *sovai*. ...According to the Orokaiva, all living things, animals and plants, have *asisi*. The *asisi* of things may impinge on human life in many ways [for example, causality]. The *sovai*, in contrast [are spirits of the dead] (Sillitoe, 1998: 218-228).

Education was closely adapted to the economy. Skills of, perhaps, hunting, fishing, farming, house building, tool and ornament making, exchange, gathering and tracking, knowledge of the seasons for fish, animals, fruits, tubers, sago, the location of water holes, methods of obtaining water from certain tree roots and plants and so on, constituted important elements of education. It was life-related and life-inspired. Children learned social responsibilities associated with relationships: the significance of certain individuals in their education; (often for boys they were father's brothers or father's father's brothers, and for girls, mothers and mother's sisters (also referred to as 'mother') and other female relatives. Knowledge and experience of the kinship system was central to learning.

Personal development, within a prescribed pattern, was encouraged. For example, each young man might be 'apprenticed' to an older master of ritual, dance, art or song, sometimes described in English as a 'boss', 'guardian', a 'clever one' or 'powerful one'. Usually this mentor was a close relative who would hand down the traditional forms of skill and ritual to the learner who, in turn, would be entrusted with preserving that part of the culture. However, sometimes it was the learner who initiated the process. For example, a person wishing to learn a particular craft would observe a specialist over quite a long period. When ready in his or her mind the 'apprentice' would manufacture the artefact, usually to a high level of replication and quality. Education extended throughout life. Definite stages of wisdom were acknowledged according to age, and status in the community.

After European Occupation

After the European occupations in Australia and Melanesia, Indigenous students were gradually introduced to the European, Dutch, German or British/Australian, form of education. Many efforts were directed to remove the Indigenous 'heathen', 'savage', 'stone-age' culture and to replace traditional learning with 'superior', dominant European knowledge.

Initially Indigenous children, and adults to a lesser extent, were taught a very basic form of Western education that allowed them to function as servants and workers for the European colonists. Advanced studies were thought impossible for the 'natives' to grasp. Until the 1930s they were considered, on an official, governmental level, over the whole region, to be virtually ineducable. Charles Barnes, a post-war Australian Minister for Territories, thought that Papua New Guineans 'might be ready for self-government in a hundred years'. Paul Hasluck, a previous Minister, had been much more positive concerning the country's potential for independence, so there was no unilateral position in Australian government. However, Barnes did state that Australia would implement a timetable for an independent Papua New Guinea if a party with a coherent program for self-government were successful in the 1972 House of Assembly elections. To the surprise of many, one of whom was undoubtedly the Minister, Michael Somare and his Pangu Party duly won the election and formed an effective coalition. A popular book around the time of Barnes' comment was "Kiki: Ten Thousand Years in a Lifetime" (Kiki, A.M., 1968), which incidentally contains some brave and barbed criticism of colonial attitudes persisting into the 1960s. These attitudes persisted in the wider community until quite recently, and, in pockets of Australian and expatriate PNG society, remain.

The curriculum until the 1960s was, in general, one deemed appropriate for the lower orders and one that, by all the evidence now available, usually failed miserably. The mid to late 1960s and 1970s in PNG signaled an enormous, last ditch push to prepare an elite for self-government and independence. It was they, the new ruling class, who were provided with vastly disproportionate levels of resources, time and energy. In the main, they and their children still are.

Attitudes towards those 'missing out'

In Australia and Melanesia, notwithstanding the reaction of some conservative elements, particularly in privileged and expatriate groups in Papua New Guinea and in rural Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, there is greater appreciation today, in terms of policy at least, by society and government of the worth of *all* citizens. In Australia, there is a considerable breakdown of societal barriers to advancement. Aboriginal students have far greater access to education, with positive community support through Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (LAECGS), and government support, for example, in Victoria's Koorie⁴ Open Door Education (KODE) schools. In Papua New Guinea, national and regional agreements in education have led to some success in education, particularly wider access to primary community schools and, at the other extreme, to tertiary education. As Prime Minister Michael Somare stated recently,

Education in PNG is a success story. And many great things have happened in our country but we have been conditioned to focus on the not so good and forget the leaps and bounds we have made. We can compare ourselves to the rest of the world and be discouraged or we can compare ourselves in terms of our own history and be encouraged to do more. It is a simple truth, that there have been more people educated in the last 30 years than ever before in PNG's colonial history. When I led the country to nationhood there was just one newly established university

⁴ 'Koorie' is a term many Indigenous people in Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales prefer to 'Aborigines'.

(UPNG) and very few university graduates around me. Today we have six universities, many colleges and other tertiary institutions for our five million people. And I have around me many well-qualified men and women who serve the country in many different ways both in the private and public sectors.

This is obviously putting the best possible construction on the present situation in his country. As for Australia there are many dysfunctional communities, particularly in fringe settlements, with poor records of achievement in education. In remote, subsistence communities, there is likely to be no access to western/national schooling. Change is desperately needed, especially to counter the sense of 'otherness', powerlessness and lack of inclusiveness and citizenship. Too many teachers in the Australian/Melanesian region, particularly in secondary education, carry a hangover of 'superior' Western or dominant culture knowledge and methods, a feeling that only they know what is 'correct to know'. They are wedded to the methods that have applied in their classrooms for many years. Their cultural background and training usually ensure this is so. Often they teach as they were taught. The traditional Western classroom, particularly in secondary schools, has a teacher who explains or demonstrates an issue, problem or concept, provides some examples and then sets the students to research and work on problems or issues of a similar kind. These problems are graded, from simple to difficult. Often they are designed to tie in other learning, concepts and themes. If a justification for the topic, issue or problem is given, it is, 'It's on the Essential Learnings, the Standards, or the Framework' (the national, state or regional-approved curriculum framework), or 'It's good for you'. Rather synthetic examples from life are often used to attempt to add relevance. The content is largely derivative and positivist and teachers and textbooks are still, in reality, seen as being the font of wisdom.

In Australia, past history and social studies courses, indeed even in the relatively recent Curriculum Standards Framework documents in Victoria, there is little sense of 'blood on the wattle', 'clearing the run', and the destruction, dispossession, segregation and attempted assimilation of Indigenous Australians. There are some admirable Indigenous Studies courses, particularly at primary and upper secondary levels, but delivery is patchy, methodology often questionable and community relations not necessarily enhanced. Clearly content, as well as pedagogy, needs to be accurate, appropriate and relevant.

To ignore content is to ignore why Indigenous students choose not to access mainstream schools. The learning is not relevant to them or their lives. They don't see the value of an all-inclusive white education, especially if it is at the expense of language and culture. Content is equally as important as pedagogy and learning styles (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, 2002).

In Papua New Guinea (as in India, Africa and all First Nation locations) it has been argued from the nineteenth century to the present day that a national education system should be more responsive to local and national needs, and, in particular, be more appropriate to the economic circumstances of the country. "In a few short years the school system seemed to have moved out of step with the occupational structure and was creating potentially dangerous social problems" (Smith, P., 1987: 262). Thousands of Standard 6 and higher school graduates find themselves "... not useful either in the village or in outside employment... they seek refuge in the larger towns of this country...[where] if they are lucky they find work. But most remain unemployed for long periods of time...these young men start on another kind of secondary education- that of

cowboy films, pubs and suffering [plus 'rascal' crime, drugs, violence, and so on]" (Holloway, 1967, in Smith, P (ed) 1987: 263).

The clans these young people come from are crucial to their futures. They are the basic social units, and their customary systems of education, decision-making, allocation of resources and resolution of disputation, form the basis of the political culture that pervades the state. They, and their customary ways of doing things, must be linked more closely to schooling and pedagogy.

Rhizosemiotic Links to Contemporary Constructivist Learning

Modern, constructivist, inquiry-based approaches to teaching the social sciences, sciences and other subjects, encourage the student to discover the law or concept by experiment with tactile, relevant and contextual teaching aids. They untangle, integrate, link well with traditional approaches to learning and tend to be more responsive to interests and needs, group-oriented, conceptually creative, integrated, holistic, and conducive to solving problems. Teachers have less dominance of the learning process. When working with Indigenous students, in KODE and other schools, much of the teachers' planning involves liaison with Aboriginal students, staff, parents and the LAECG. Ideally, students and staff work together more cooperatively, using field research and community experiences, computers and the Internet, as well as book research, to allow real-life data to be processed and evaluated more easily and effectively.

The ethnographic and school-based research indicates that these forms of pedagogy and teaching encourage Indigenous and other students to have ownership of their learning and to take far more interest in their subjects, general learning and even school attendance. For example, the Indigenous students in Gippsland, Victoria, went from having the highest truancy rates in Gippsland to the lowest when they began attending their community controlled and supported KODE school. The principal, chosen by the community, was non-Indigenous, but the Indigenous 'presence' in the school was and is strong. Parents and other community members are frequently in the school, supporting the students and teachers. The school is also very impressive in its use of information technology (see <http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/koorie/> Accessed 11 September, 2007).

The Indigenous Child as Learner

If we are to develop and implement an Indigenous pedagogy for learning then we require a framework for appropriate learning for children, a framework based on sound ethnographic and educational research, responding to the needs of Indigenous students and communities. Of course, I am cognizant of the dangers of over-generalisation, binarism, reductionism, dichotomous thinking, and 'tips for teachers' (see Nicholls, C, Crowley, V, and Watt, R, 1998). The following characteristics of Indigenous pedagogy, grounded in the ethnographic case study, come predominantly from the research and writings of Rhonda Craven (ed) (1996, 1999, particularly Halse and Robinson), (Nichol, 2004, 2005, and Main, D., Fennell, R., and Nichol, R., 2000). They are also influenced by 'two way', and Ganma 'both ways', forms of theorizing and developing cross-cultural dialogue, exchange and education (see Harris, S., 1990, Creighton, S., 2003).

Holistic Learners

Holistic is interpreted as meaning complete, cooperative, integrated and all-encompassing. Indigenous children tend to prefer an holistic or integrated approach to learning. This reflects the traditional Indigenous worldview in which everything is interrelated and all relationships are important. It also reflects the importance of family and place. When elders are asked how a sense of identity, of Aboriginality, or of being a wantok, a villager, Busama, Manus, Wogeo, and so on, is acquired, they often say something akin to, “We grow them up in the ashes. That is, our children learn around a campfire or hearth, in the bosom of their family and kin (or the men’s house, the women’s retreat or menstruation/birthing building).”

At Yiparinya school awareness of relationships is acute among the teachers and students. This allows students to feel safe and happy and therefore able to learn (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, 2002).

Students prefer to observe and discuss a task or topic before working through the components and activity. They learn more effectively if the overall concept and direction of a lesson is outlined, discussed and modeled before specific learning activities are introduced.

I would agree, as my experiences at Yiparinya School have confirmed this. The children tend to learn better when they can make the connection and relate it to the whole concept, as opposed to looking at concepts in an isolated manner. It has a more real life approach and is more reflective of their Indigenous worldview (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, 2002).

This is particularly significant for the early years of learning, however secondary and tertiary teachers should also endeavour to integrate learning more and to apply concepts and analysis across disciplines.

Imaginal Learners

Imaginal is understood as being relatively unstructured and consists of thoughts, images and experiences of learning. As for holistic learning it is strongly linked with notions of identity, perhaps expression of Aboriginality, or in PNG, of being a wantok or citizen. In Indigenous societies learning occurs more frequently in informal, unstructured situations through observation and imitation rather than verbalization.

Indigenous cultures are strongly auditory, as shown by their strong oral traditions, but there is little verbal interaction for the deliberate and conscious purpose of teaching and learning. There is a tradition of oratory at ceremonial gatherings, which may well have an educative function as it often has a berating element! However, information is transmitted primarily through observation and involvement.

For the imaginal learner, images are also a more effective means of regulating classroom behavior. Imaginal learners may have difficulties with purely cognitive operations. They learn more effectively if concrete examples precede abstract understandings. Many Indigenous children are imaginal and referential learners.

They rely on and enjoy visual images, symbols, diagrams, maps and pathways to acquire new information and understandings.

Aboriginal students form pictures of tasks in their minds and then perform them through imitation. They prefer to see the 'whole' rather than 'little bit by little bit'. In this way they have the task and the expected outcome and are then prepared to give it a go... They often need concrete materials to conceptualise what they need to learn. For example, when teaching a social studies lesson we might take students on a 'bush tucker' excursion (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, 2002).

Kinesthetic Learners

This is seen as tactile learning through manipulation and movement within the learning environment. Many Indigenous students are kinesthetic learners. Information is taken in more easily through their hands and through movement. They like to handle things, to move them around, to also move around themselves. As noted above, they are often talented 'play-makers' in games and sports, anticipating and moving into an ideal position, seemingly effortlessly.

At Yiparinya, culture trips and country visits provide an excellent opportunity for this to occur (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, 2002).

Kinesthetic students prefer to learn by observing and then doing. They need learning strategies that allow them to be physically active. One of the most effective social and environmental education strategies for kinesthetic learners is to develop excursions and tasks where students, in working groups, collect data outside the classroom. This is recorded in notes and photographs for later application at school or home.

Cooperative Learners

This term places emphasis on communal, shared and group learning. As this research has revealed in abundance, Indigenous cultures often place a higher priority on the group than the individual. Learning generally takes place in groups and is a collaborative process. Peer learning is commonplace. Cooperation is more important than competition or individual achievement. Students who are given time for group discussion and interpretation of instructions and assistance are more likely to be successful.

...Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students differ in their learning styles. Indigenous students are more likely to be cooperative learners, whereas non-Indigenous students are more likely to be competitive learners. This finding would suggest that appropriate and effective pedagogical and assessment practices for Indigenous students would be ones that [incorporate] Indigenous students' learning style. (ACER, Greenwood and Cresswell, in Mellor and Corrigan, 2004: 35).

Contextual Learners

Specificity and relevance, that is placing content and pedagogy in context, are crucial to effective learning. In traditional Indigenous societies, cultural learning occurs in the specific context to which the learning relates. Children learn hunting techniques during food gathering expeditions on land and sea, songs and dances during community celebrations, kinship law by interaction with relatives, artefact construction by long observation *in situ*, and little verbal instruction. By contrast, Western schools are more artificial, human-made environments where content is removed from and often has little apparent application to daily life. By placing information, activities and learning in context, students discover that education is meaningful and relevant to their own lives. The 'expanded horizons' approach often has contextual value. Generalisations and skills acquired through a local study can be applied in a wider context. For example, studies of farm chemicals may lead to industrial applications, or local extensive farming or viticulture is contrasted with swidden agriculture or 'factory' farming.

Person-Oriented Learners

By developing person-oriented learning for Indigenous students, we emphasize that family and personal relationships are the key to positive learning outcomes. Indigenous cultures are more person-oriented than information-oriented. Teachers are assessed on the basis of how they relate to children as people rather than by their qualifications or performance as instructors. Students who feel personal connection with the teacher will be more cooperative, interested in learning, willing to take risks and attempt new tasks. Non-Indigenous teachers who take a consistent personal interest in their students' culture and life outside school will establish a more positive rapport and hence a more favorable learning environment. Peppering your discourse with 'please' and 'thank you' and other English gentilities is often disconcerting for Indigenous students. It is likely that, over time, the student will acquire some of these cultural niceties, as many a visitor has in other cultures.

Students will work well with and for you if you have established positive relationships with them and a clear understanding of reciprocity has been established. Tangible reinforcement is better than verbal. If teachers anywhere are rigid about excessive politeness and formality then they risk a breakdown of communication with their students.

This specifically relates to a feeling of 'family-ness'. At Yiparinya teachers take a particular interest in each student; they get to know their families and become part of their lives (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, 2002).

Teachers can improve student achievement through simple strategies such as acting positively and consistently, welcoming students warmly to class, and building self-esteem through positive reinforcement. Indigenous children are highly skilled readers of body language! Teachers need to 'be themselves'. Indigenous students have defined a good teacher as, 'Someone who likes us and is fair'.

Pedagogical Strategies to Promote Reconciliation and Inclusive Citizenship

Today, the ... way we think and learn largely depends on our ability to clarify for ourselves the differences between our received wisdom (from our formal, mostly western education) and the wisdom of the (home) cultures in which we grew up and were socialised, and from which we continue to learn important knowledge, skills and values (Thaman, Konai Helu, 2001: 1)

As long as Australian society contains (at least) two ethnic cultural traditions, one identifying with those who were colonised and one with those who did the colonising, then there will inevitably be conflicting attitudes towards the colonial past. [If we]...are to share a common citizenship this needs to be anchored in some shared values, such as justice, and some shared traditions, such as egalitarianism and the 'fair go' (Mulgin, R. in Peterson, N. and Sanders, W. 1998: 193).

Social, Cultural and Environmental

Classroom and teaching methods that take into account the social implications of Indigenous cultures will help all students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to participate more and consequently learn more actively. The following strategies are recommended to strengthen the social aspects of learning.

Focus on tasks that can be performed as joint projects. Introduce peer tutoring. Do not insist on direct or immediate answers to questions. Avoid public confrontation and reprimands. If possible, and especially at first, avoid asking many personal questions. Work on sharing, cooperation, values clarification, and a 'fair go' for all. Ask a question to the working group and give them time to discuss and respond. In some areas, particularly in schools with bilingual programs, this enables those stronger in English to explain the concept to their fellow students. Expect a consensus of opinion; however, if there are divergent views, encourage appreciation of other viewpoints. If you consider the response requires more thought and work, explain this and repeat the process. Be explicit about the purposes of questions. Use questions to the class or small groups to reduce 'shaming'. Try directing questions to the entire class or groups of students rather than to the individual student. Allow time for students to respond to questions. Ask broad questions more often than specific questions. Finally, encourage and use peer questioning to stimulate discussion and involvement and to evaluate student knowledge.

The learning environment or context in which the student operates is important to all students and can be used to good effect in helping Indigenous students. Ensure there is as strong as possible a local presence, both with personnel and resources. Liaise with, and seek support and approval from, the local community, especially through parents, any local education consultative groups and community leaders.

I find this to be of particular importance at Yiparinya... many students come from bush communities and town camps where much of their time is spent outdoors. It is essential that this be translated into the teaching situation. We hold many classes outdoors and out bush. In the language classes, students are allowed to move about freely... (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, 2002).

Use models, the playground and familiar ground as a teaching resource. If the latter is a popular picnic, sporting or fishing place for the local community, then you are much more likely to have parents accept your invitation to be involved in activities⁵. You will find the children to be far from shy and timid.

Encourage student and teacher role-playing of various concepts, photographic or sketching activities, for later literacy, social studies, science or mathematical development. Make students responsible for their own learning by using research assignments and self-paced learning. Allow them to move around the classroom to explore and observe. Re-organise the physical learning environment to foster group work. Allow students to form their own groups. They often work better with friends and relatives, especially initially.

Currently I am employed at Yiparinya School as a literacy and numeracy tutor for Grade 1 and 2 students. In this role I deliver tutoring on a one-to-one basis. This is quite the opposite to what Nichol advocates in terms of 'best practice' teaching strategies. Whilst I agree that group work is preferable and Aboriginal students are happier in this situation, at times one on one is necessary to strengthen their skills. I develop a very strong, personal connection with each child. In this way they feel comfortable and supported. Similarly 'our room' is within the main classroom so they still have a sense of being part of the group (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, 2002).

It is often advisable to accept higher levels of 'working noise' in the classroom and use non-verbal strategies to regain attention. Also, it is enjoyable and valuable to work out a sign-language system understood by all. Organise the classroom furniture with quiet areas and areas for group activities to give students more control of their own learning. Lastly, create a comfortable, relaxed and secure learning environment with many Indigenous symbols and references.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment

Assessment can be very confronting, particularly for Indigenous students, so the teacher should aim to use methods with which the students are comfortable. Include assessment tasks that allow students to demonstrate their knowledge visually and physically rather than just in verbal and written forms.

As an Aboriginal person myself, going through school and now further study, I would say there is no comfortable way at all. Assessment is confronting and the Aboriginal student will either stay away or choose not to even attempt it. I would suggest an on-going form of 'hidden' assessment, inbuilt in all lessons as a way to get around this. I would suggest that a teacher may have 'failed' in her teaching if a student has 'failed' in assessment⁶ (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, 2002).

⁵ For NAIDOC week celebrations, 2007, the Central School, Lake Cargelligo, issued invitations to the Indigenous community through the Indigenous Classroom Aide, to participate in an excursion to the midden at Deadman's Point. Indigenous personnel of the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service conducted a presentation. Lunch was provided. Many parents and community representatives attended, including two Indigenous Aides from the Convent school. See http://www.naidoc.org.au/what_is/

⁶ Of course, if student attendance is poor, then one can hardly blame the teacher, particularly if the school is well run and welcoming.

As the students will face more formal forms of assessment for upper secondary and tertiary study I suggest that you gradually prepare your students by introducing small class tests, 'open book' at the beginning. Also, short dictation tests allow for immediate feedback and assistance from you, with the bonus of checking whether students are 'hearing' you effectively.

Teaching for Learning Together: Summary

At Yiparinya School we have programs that cater for...students' needs, such as: nutrition, personal hygiene, health worker visits, and specialist health such as hearing, eyesight, dentist. We also offer four separate language classes, country visits and cultural trips for each language class (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, 2002).

The following, if applied to teaching methodology and content, will play an important role in helping students collectively to gain, as well as to reinforce, their social and cultural knowledge. Their knowledge will then be both appropriate and relevant to their cultural background and heritage and will also equip them for life, work, and exercising citizenship rights and obligations in the two nations. There is much about the wider societies and their political and economic systems that Indigenous people need to know if they are to be empowered and confident enough to embrace citizenship fully. It has been said, somewhat ironically, that they often need a 'dominant culture' anthropology, so they can deal effectively in the wider society. 'Two way' means just that.

The school and university curriculum can provide the above, and more, if teachers provide opportunities to learn by doing, with as much community involvement and teaching by Indigenous people as possible. They should emphasize 'showing' or modeling rather than explaining, and use models and examples to demonstrate concepts, in particular from the local environment and resources. For the humanities adopt an 'expanded horizons' approach, commencing with the familiar before moving to broader conceptual understanding, for example from family, community organisations and local governance, to State, Federal and international politics. However, for any level, try to provide local, relevant experiences and information for all topics. If possible, use images, charts, diagrams and models to convey information and concepts.

It is advisable to use multimedia resources, including Internet, computers and video to explore and demonstrate concepts. The websites of Victorian KODE schools are particularly illustrative of how creative and talented Indigenous students are when provided with such opportunities

(<http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/Koorie/index.htm>). For Papua New Guinea the following site is helpful:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_schools_in_Papua_New_Guinea#Schools).

Incorporating 'real-life' experiences and the manipulation of materials into lessons demonstrate the meaning of terms and concepts. Students need to be able to use their everyday literacies to learn the new literacies of contemporary schooling, verbal, visual, graphical and numerical. They need to connect learning to their everyday worlds and values.

Conclusion

Indigenous pedagogy should be embraced by all teachers, and, indeed, all students would benefit from this. In terms of reconciliation this is only one part, but it is certainly an essential one (Yiparinya Teacher, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, 2002).

My research, teaching and experience in this field, indicate that Indigenous students and their families must not continue through the new century seeing schooling as being alien and threatening, as they have too often in the past. Learning about their own culture and community, as well as Western education, should lead to positive self-identity, to study, experience, confidence and power in the wider social world (Purdie, N. *et al*, 2000). If the learning strategies presented are trialed and implemented, then educators, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, will be far more likely to assist their Indigenous students to negotiate their place in contemporary Melanesia and Australia, in the global economy and a world of rapid technological change.

Educators of Indigenous students need to both examine and appreciate the cultural constraints on learning faced by their students within the context of a mainstream curriculum and to build on the large pool of knowledge and pedagogy that the diverse Indigenous societies bequeath to their students. We can all learn a great deal from the Indigenous world. The astute, culturally sensitive and professional educator can apply the cultural differences and knowledge base of Indigenous communities as a force to promote learning. While we should be aware of the diversity within Indigenous societies, the strategies recommended in this paper have wide application. In fact all teachers and others working with Indigenous communities, can learn much from Indigenous pedagogy.

As well as diversity there is often dispossession or anomie, enormous socio-political problems and few or inferior employment opportunities. In Australia, social justice and acceptance of an inclusive paradigm of citizenship are needed to complement the Federal Government's policy of 'practical' reconciliation in health⁷, housing, employment, economic development and education. Therefore, it is crucial that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations and teachers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, work hard to ensure schools develop programs that meet the specific needs of students and their communities. In Meanesia, the dilemma is that national incomes are not generating resources sufficient to meet the burgeoning population and raised expectations, particularly for health and education. The 'informal', subsistence economy does, however, meet most basic needs.

As noted previously, I am acutely conscious of valid criticism of 'tips for teachers' and the dangers of stereotyping Indigenous students and their cultures. Educators who turn to social science research in order to discover the most appropriate forms of pedagogy may be victims of neo-positivistic over-generalisation, hoping for 'recipes' applicable in almost every classroom and community. And yet, a specialist *is* turned to for advice.

⁷ The poor health and high levels of substance abuse in many Indigenous communities remain crucial factors in determining educational outcomes. For example, Dennis Gray (2004) reports that since 1994 the level of substance use in the Indigenous population has increased relative to that in the non-Indigenous population. He states that despite long recognition of "the primary role that social factors play in poor health and substance misuse, Indigenous people experience absolute material deprivation on all key social indicators- post-secondary qualifications, employment status, and individual and family income" (2004: viii).

The approach taken with the findings in this paper is to recommend, but to qualify. I am also aware that ACER “Research data...does not support the current policy contention that culturally inclusive curriculum and/or the presence of Indigenous teachers will *automatically* lead to an improvement in Indigenous student outcomes” (my emphasis), (Mellor, S. and Corrigan, M., 2004, Foreword). This study shows that education, while a key factor, is not a sole solution. It does, however, concur with Paul Sillitoe’s view that Indigenous knowledge is “a unique formulation of knowledge coming from a range of sources rooted in local cultures, a dynamic and ever changing pastiche of past ‘tradition’ and present invention with a view to the future” and that development cannot be meaningful unless Indigenous knowledge is integrated into the development process (2002: 113).

In conclusion, the research indicates that Indigenous students need to have positive relationships with teachers (who *must* include a representative number of local Indigenous teachers), a sense of ownership of knowledge, appreciation of their cultural background, and knowledge that the school is a relevant and productive environment. Cognizance and appreciation of that cultural, educational and historical background, and application of the Indigenous pedagogy explored in the case study and wider research, is, I argue, crucial to these outcomes.

This paper has examined policies and practices of educating Indigenous people for cultural and economic integration and assimilation into dominant cultures and societies. It has also explored more recent approaches, which reflect, albeit often in action rather ineffectively, notions of self-determination, self-management, cultural recognition, and inclusive membership of their societies and polities.

Those who have ‘grown up in the ashes’, wherever they live, should experience success in education and in their lives as fully participating citizens of their own country. This is the hope and demand of Indigenous and minority people everywhere.

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