

program supported by the AIEF is the only successful pathway for Indigenous students attending secondary schools away from their home communities. The most obvious comment to be made about this Compendium is that the best practice it espouses is relevant to only a small fraction of the Indigenous secondary school aged population who must transition to boarding school if they are to successfully participate in secondary education.

The Compendium recommends very strongly that those responsible for enrolling Indigenous students do so with the very clear aim of minimizing risk. Only those students with a very high probability of success and who come from families already possessed of significant social capital are to be considered for scholarship resources. In fairness to the AIEF and to those who have compiled the Compendium it is made quite clear that there will be no positive discrimination in favour of those students most in need of the resources that the scholarship program can provide. Indeed, those most in need of the government, corporate and philanthropic resources made available to the AIEF will be those most obviously denied access. They will take their chances in the schools where what is identified as 'best practice' is not relevant and where resources are scarcest.

In their introduction to the Compendium, Andrew Penfold and Warren Mundine praise the work of the AIEF staff who worked to put the Compendium together. 'This Compendium is their gift to the nation,' they write.

Unfortunately it is a gift that will most likely be denied to those who need it most and made available to those who need it least. The Compendium provides guidance specific to particular well-resourced educational contexts and for those new to the field of Indigenous education it may provide useful and practical guidance. For those individuals and learning communities outside the scope of the Compendium the value of the best practice it espouses is at best of limited value.

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Indigenous Kids and Schooling in the Northern Territory: An Introductory Overview and Brief History of Aboriginal Education in the Northern Territory

Penny Lee, Lyn Fasoli, Lysbeth Ford, Peter Stephenson and Dennis McInerney *Batchelor Press, Northern Territory, 2014, 236pp, ISBN 9781741312881*

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Drawing upon national and international research, this book is the culmination of a research project entitled 'Building the Future for Indigenous students: The relationship of future vision, learning, and motivational profiles to school success' conducted through the Batchelor Institute. It provides an overview and brief history of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory and takes as its focus the inequity prevailing in schooling in remote Indigenous communities by contrast with elsewhere in Australia where specialist language programmes are designed to meet the particular needs of English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) learners. The authors bring to this work a wide range of experi-

ence in Indigenous education that includes bilingual education in remote Aboriginal schools, 'two way' — now 'both ways' — philosophy, linguistics, environmental health and developmental psychology. They call for greater recognition of the particularity of the Northern Territory context and greater efforts to accommodate it within mainstream schooling. For example in response to the region's unique population dynamics and language diversity where Standard Australian English (SAuE) may be a student's second, third or even fourth language, within the overall context of a political climate and funding uncertainty that threatens what few specialist services remain.

Chapter One provides some background to the unique educational conditions and opportunities that characterise the Northern Territory. It puts the current discourse of deficit into perspective and helps to explain some of the anomalies that characterise schooling in remote parts of the Territory. This overview takes in the 2007 Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) and compares the distinctive make-up of the Territory's population with that of Australia as a whole. Chapter Two provides a summary of significant developments in the provision (and non-provision) of education for Indigenous children since the arrival of Europeans from mission schools to government boarding schools, from the first Aboriginal Teacher Assistants, two-way thinking and bilingual education to the English only decision and more recent developments in Homelands schooling. Chapter Three introduces some of the issues and complexities arising from the breadth of language diversity in the Northern Territory, language loss, and the challenges of accommodating different cultural schemas (and one might add different political agendas across the spectrum). Chapter Four discusses the distribution of schools and students across the Territory, distance education, opportunities for pre-school and vocational education and training (VET), attendance patterns and other prospects and challenges driven by the distribution of the population into what MCEETYA (Ministerial Council for Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs) classified as provincial, remote or very remote centres. MCEETYA developed a Geographical Location Classification that assigned students to a zone for data collection purposes and subsequent financing and human resourcing. The classification is made up of three zones and six areas — Metropolitan, Provincial and Remote; the latter being divided into Remote and Very Remote areas. The Territory has no schools classified as metropolitan. No other Australian state or territory has this pattern. Chapter Five considers in practical and ethical terms some of the vexed issues resulting from National Assessment Program 112 Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing EAL/D learners. Finally in Chapter Six, the authors offer some recommendations for how research might be refocused and redirected through the shift of attention to students' language learning needs.

This book makes a valuable contribution to understanding how schooling in the Northern Territory has come to be as we know it today. It provides a series of helpful links to follow for readers who want to know more about particular issues. The authors make a very compelling case for more EAL/D specialists in remote schools and for recognition and support of the specific needs of Indigenous learners in line with the support provided to EAL/D students in other parts of Australia. They argue for valuing Indigenous knowledges in schools and beyond as part of a wider project of conservation that takes in language, environment and science based upon the 'two way' or 'both ways' philosophy of teaching and learning.

The history of this philosophy as developed in the Northern Territory since the 1970s is described as emerging at a time when Euro-Australians began using the concept in relation to Indigenous schooling, and earlier as a concept already embedded in the desires of Indigenous people to progress the relationship between Indigenous cultures and European Australia. Within this discussion, issues over self-determination arising at the Batchelor Institute (Northern Territory), which formed the basis for the 2006 doctoral dissertation by noted Aboriginal scholar and former Batchelor Institute Director, Veronica Arbon, serve as a reminder of what may happen when the status quo is challenged (see Arbon, 2008).

The call for more Indigenous staff in the Territory's schools is linked to the call for more teaching of vernacular languages in tandem with suitably qualified classroom teachers, who traditionally have lacked specialist English language qualifications, or with teachers operating under the guidance of EAL/D specialists in line with the both ways philosophy. This argument links into the history of Indigenous teacher education at Batchelor College and the struggles of the 1990s, and appears as a vindication of those policies and practices rejected at that time in favour of others more typically characteristic of mainstream tertiary institutions. Thus, it is suggested, that the prevailing situation in Northern Territory schools is the inevitable outcome of systemic failures then and since, including the failure to adequately embrace Indigenous knowledges in the academy. This argument will be familiar to many as will critique by other scholars including Nakata (2002) and Openshaw & Rata (2008).

The authors argue that NAPLAN testing EAL/D learners with an assessment tool primarily designed for native English speakers with its concomitant cultural schema and with no recourse to adjustment except for disability, is unjust. According to the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), NAPLAN tests skills in literacy and numeracy that are developed over time through the school curriculum. The authors (2014, p. 176) comment upon

a strange blindness to the fundamentally important fact that literacy and numeracy skills have to be demonstrated in Standard Australian English, not in the home languages or dialects the children speak fluently. No mention is made or attention paid to this reality of NAPLAN testing.

This issue underpins their argument for recognition of the EAL/D status of the majority of students in the Northern Territory and their demands for more specialised support to achieve the level of English language proficiency required for success in NAPLAN, although the authors also point out that ACARA does not have a system in place for routinely assessing the English language proficiency of any Australian child and linking it to NAPLAN. In their view, this all forms part of the wider systemic failure to provide appropriate teaching and support and an

adequate testing regime to ensure that *all* Australian children are treated equally and have equal chances to achieve at school.

It seems that Indigenous students are damned if they do and damned if they don't! Even failure to attend the NAPLAN tests translates into not meeting the minimum standard. The authors deal with a number of related issues previously raised by other scholars in the field. Kral and Falk (2004) in an article entitled '*What is all that learning for?*' explore how English language use is interrelated with meeting everyday functional needs and social obligations in one remote Aboriginal community, rather than being geared towards employment in circumstances where such opportunities are minimal. Kral and Schwab (2012) explore literacy practices and new media among youth in a remote Aboriginal community, linking together community knowledge and contemporary forms of performance and communication. Research carried out by Osborne (2012) for a remote independent school in the Northern Territory showed that many of the concepts associated with schooling do not necessarily translate across languages and the fundamental assumptions about what school is for in mainstream schools do not necessarily apply in Aboriginal cultures. Guenther (2013) in an article entitled '*Are we making education count in remote Australian communities or just counting education?*' questions how schooling in remote Australia may become more relevant. His findings confirm that the link between attendance at school and improved outcomes is statistically almost nonexistent. The authors of the publication under review (2014, p. 220) cite Freeman (2013, p. 1) (Principal at Yirrkala School, Northern Territory) to the effect that even the efforts of students who attend regularly and try hard to achieve at school cannot be picked up by an assessment tool like NAPLAN. What these writers have in common is the recognition that remote schooling requires very different approaches to those taken in the mainstream in order to be not only more effective but also more equitable.

The authors advance the proposition for change in the status of Indigenous students to EAL/D learners and in providing appropriate support also by way of raising the awareness and competencies of new graduates to include the abilities to assess the English language proficiency of students, diagnose their learning needs and deliver suitable programmes at individual and class levels, mainly on the basis of equity and the assumption that these measures are equally self-evident. While considering power as a crucial dimension in the politics of self-determination, the arguments presented in this timely new publication might however be said to perpetuate a liberal humanism that fails to recognise the limitations of dialogue and undermine its intentions. This issue also surfaces in the discussion of student engagement or lack of engagement and the failure of schools to cater adequately for their needs or interests. In this case a lack of political motiva-

tion is observed in favour of, for example, an assumed 'shyness' or reluctance to use SAuE. This is not to suggest that some students are not 'shy' about making mistakes but rather to suggest other possibilities including an unwillingness to identify too closely with forms of power linked to oppression. One might argue that shyness is a culturally appropriate medium to express resistance. So is voting with one's feet!

The authors make eight recommendations for new directions in research. The first is to identify a valid and reliable tool for assessing proficiency levels in SAuE in the Territory; second, to develop an equity-based NAPLAN program; third, to explore new strategies in early childhood education; fourth, to recruit, employ and train literacy instructors in Indigenous languages and dialects; fifth, to provide specialist EAL/D support for classroom teachers with minimal prior EAL/D knowledge and experience; sixth, to investigate the English language learning needs of senior secondary and VET students; seventh, to identify impediments to successful Indigenous teacher education; and finally, to investigate the value of linguistically focused courses in general teacher education.

It might also be worth considering that educators should be encouraged to learn the home languages of their students and the communities they serve and that support should also be provided for this initiative. Failure to attempt to comprehend the world view of these communities is a significant factor in failure to serve them adequately within a both ways philosophy. This leads to another point related to the 'The Literacy Myth' (Graff, 1979) associated with an aspirational philosophy which posits that it is mainly through (mainstream) education that individuals can 'succeed', 'progress' and 'develop'. However as Kral, a linguistic anthropologist, in her doctoral dissertation (2007, p. 264) (quoting Street, 1995, p. 24), points out literacy in itself does not promote social mobility or progress as 'literacy practices are specific to the political and ideological context and their consequences vary situationally'.

Over a decade ago, Mellor and Corrigan (2003, p. 4) claimed that their Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) review did 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. Rather, they argued, there needs to be more attention paid to understanding the influence of culture and the inclusion of Indigenous voices. The need to understand the difference that culture makes remains constant and is supported by Osborne and Guenther (2013, p. 3) and Walker (2013, p. 3).

The authors of *Indigenous Kids and Schooling in the Northern Territory* make a thought-provoking contribution to work in the field of remote Indigenous schooling and it is highly recommended reading for educators,

policy makers and all who have an interest in this challenging endeavour.

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