

TEACHING STUDENTS TO KNOW THEMSELVES

Dhāngal Gurruwiwi

from an edited interview in English with Michael Christie

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Michael: Thank you for coming to our workshop. We are hoping that you are going to be able to start doing some teaching from Birritjimi when you get back home. I am wondering if you could tell us your ideas about how teaching from country is different from teaching from inside a classroom, what are the differences and what do we need to know if we are going to do the process properly?

Dhāngal: The difference teaching from the actual homeland or the community is that the resources are all there in the first place. Yolŋu, when teaching, we don't make notes. It's all in our minds. The learnings that we've stored or documented are there, and whenever a person wants to learn about something or wants to know about something, and particularly about Yolŋu, we don't run around finding books to give to those people, but we've got it there within us and we just give to them step by step what they need to learn.

And being outside makes us feel we have that freedom to be able to talk and teach people in a way that can't be taught in the classroom, because in a classroom it usually makes us feel as if we're trapped in. But teaching outside we feel that freedom, and somehow knowledge is kept like that. If we're in a classroom, somehow that knowledge that we need to pass on or teach people about is sometimes trapped and we go out and then we think oh, 'I should have said this to them in the classroom'.

It's good to have the new technology. We just have to find out what it's like. The students are in the classroom and I guess like many other students that are in the classroom, they have to take that information in individually, and what they take in they will be able to share amongst the other students and to get much more understanding. But as for Gikal, we don't have any mobile coverage there and only the landline. I don't know whether that's appropriate or not. So we need a satellite dish to be installed, in that area, so that could make the teaching more easier.

Michael: And what would you be interested in teaching about?

Dhāᅅgal: Teach students to really know about themselves, who they are, and in ways of explaining through the Yolᅅu side, to see things which are good about it, that is within themselves, to know who each person really is and what they can achieve from the teachings, from the Yolᅅu lecturers.

Michael: And that's for Balanda students as well?

Dhāᅅgal: That's for Balanda students as well. The first of all they have to find out for themselves who they really are.

Michael: And you telling your story from Gikal will help them to do that?

Dhāᅅgal: Yes, Because I'll be at home and feel that, what you would call that power within, and Yolᅅu or any person that has the knowledge to pass things to other people, that a lot of people miss out on. Finding themselves, who they really are, what they should achieve.

Michael: So can you see how making the website, you might be able to use that in your teaching?

Dhāᅅgal: It's useful, yeah. Even though, like I said, I'm here, putting in something about myself and some things that I don't know myself that others know, yes. And that helps me when people tell me what I really know.