



More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative

**Listening differently: an exploration
of grey literature about Aboriginal teacher
education in the Top End of the Northern Territory**

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Listening differently: an exploration of grey literature about Aboriginal teacher education in the Top End of the Northern Territory¹

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I hear non Yolŋu voices still telling us what we need if we are to lead a proper life.

They talk about excellence and quality as if these are new ideas and goals they have just thought of. Those voices are now telling us what we told them for as long as I can remember. Along the way they insult all of us who have gone before, we did not aim high enough, as if we were not smart enough, not trained properly or not excellent teachers or trainers. Well Yolŋu leaders have been talking about excellence and quality for a long time and we are still talking about it today. (Wunungmurra, 2011, p. 1)

Introduction

While much work has been published in recent years on teacher education and the importance of attracting and retaining Aboriginal teachers into the profession (Anderson, 2011; Brasche & Harrington, 2012; Patton, Hong, Lampert, Burnett, & Anderson, 2012; Thaman, 2012) this body of work has said very little about the remote experience, except to construct it as *other* to the 'attract and retain' framework of the urban experience. There is in existence a considerable body of written work by and about the remote Aboriginal teaching profession and it is to this body of work that this paper is responding.

This paper was initiated as part of a project undertaken in Arnhem Land, inspired by a range of conversations with Yolŋu women and men who reflected on their experiences as Yolŋu educators working in Northern Territory schools, mostly on or near their own country. In the initial stages the conversations were aimed at understanding the ways in which Yolŋu people enter, progress and complete an initial teacher education (ITE) qualification. As the project proceeded it became clear that these ways of doing teacher education differed markedly from the individual achievement approach exemplified by the "attract, develop, recognise and retain" (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2011, p. 1) discourses that are to be found in much of the current documentation about ITE. Furthermore, it became apparent quite quickly that the participants in the project knew there to be a substantial body of knowledge that explained the core principles, beliefs and experiences of their Yolŋu engagement with teaching and teacher education. However, little of this work seemed to have found its way into contemporary studies about remote teacher education. Nor did it seem to have been worthy of inclusion in a wider body of work on Australian teacher education.

¹ Bat, M., & Shore, S. (2013). Listening differently: an exploration of the grey literature on Aboriginal teacher education in the Top End of the Northern Territory. Review of grey literature produced for the MATSITI funded project: "Pathways for Yolŋu Teachers: rethinking initial teacher education (ITE) on country". Darwin, NT, School of Education, Charles Darwin University.

The invisibility and silence around this work and the general lack of reference to it in empirical studies of Territory teaching is one of the frustrations of working in teacher education in the Northern Territory. On the one hand there is a national agenda around the shortage of research literature about remote Aboriginal teacher education (Patton et al., 2012). On the other, a substantial body of work exists to track the 'long journey' that so many of the men and women in the accompanying project had experienced over decades of engagement with their schools and their communities (Batchelor College, 1994; Marika-Mununggiritj & Christie, 1995; Marika-Mununggiritj, 1998; Marika-Mununggiritj, 2002; Marika, 1999; Marika, Ngurruwutthun, & White, 1992; M. Yunupingu, 1989, 1993). The dissonance between these diverse impressions reinforces the need to bridge a substantial gap in communicating experiences of living and teaching on country.

The conventional notion of 'grey literature' served a useful purpose here (cf White, Thomas, Weldon, Lawrence, Galatis, & Tyndall, 2013) but it did not adequately cover the range of ways in which, as a term, it too is caught in a set of prioritising practices that sanction authorised and so also unauthorised teacher knowledge. Indeed the 'grey literature' the participants spoke of in the accompanying project disturbed the very notion of a 'body of work' about teacher education. It challenged the idea of fields with clearly defined boundaries (schooling; teaching; (Australian) curriculum; teacher education; access to higher education). In doing so it also exposed the fabrication behind statements such as the following: 'we never knew about this' or 'we haven't been told about this before' or 'we haven't seen that research'. In view of this, we began to think of the content of the grey literature as that which is negated by colonial knowledge making practices underpinning the white public space of metropolitan schooling (cf Shore 2010). In simple terms the 'grey literature' became papers, presentations, reports and speeches not widely acknowledged or disseminated through the more formal channels of academic publishing and research about teacher education.

We came to believe that an investigation and collation of that literature, much of it, in effect, Yolŋu literature, might unsettle the assumption that not much had been written about remote teacher education in Aboriginal communities in the Top End. In doing so we aimed to position some of this material in relation to the highly regulated federal space of ITE in an effort to render more visible a conversation about the extent to which current approaches to national teacher education appear to be sidelining long-standing debates about the adequacy of the national space to address preservice teacher education for and in remote communities. Nevertheless, taking such an approach brought with it the risk of colonising that space where Aboriginal voice was loudest and we have attempted to be mindful of this throughout the paper.²

² In this paper, where the terms that are used are crucial to positioning and clarity, we have used the word 'Aboriginal' to refer to the first peoples of the Top End collectively; however, when someone's specific cultural position is known, e.g. 'Yolŋu', then this is the word that is used. The word 'Balanda' is also used in much of the literature as this is a Yolŋu word for a non-Aboriginal person. By choosing to not use the word 'Indigenous' we are positioning this paper as specifically informed by the work from the Aboriginal peoples of the Top End of the Northern Territory. However, when work that is being referenced or discussed is on a national level, then 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' will be used to talk about people and the word 'Indigenous' used to refer to policies.

Our aim here is not to speak for the men and women who say: “We have told you this before, many times”. Rather, this paper is an attempt to understand the key messages from the literature and to re-present them here to inform the future development of Aboriginal teacher education programs in the communities of the Top End. And for those new to the field, or those new to working in the Top End of the Northern Territory, this paper may give some starting points for further reading and engaging with previous learning.

Identifying a body of literature for this paper was informed by recent literature on systematic reviews, although for some this might seem like a contradiction. What we searched for were papers that addressed the conditions and experiences of living and teaching on country and included the following considerations:

- We began by excluding work which addressed the urban experience, while simultaneously acknowledging that it was not possible to conceptualise a remote experience without a supposed urban ‘centre’.
- Another focus was work which had been written by staff employed by Charles Darwin University and its predecessor institutions. This presented some challenges because of the high levels of mobility amongst staff employed at the university. Moreover tracking conference and other publications was difficult because a) conference papers have only in recent decades been tracked through electronic processes and b) conference presentations may consist of any of a number of formats including: a PowerPoint; notes; a draft paper which never sees the light of day; a paper which is eventually published in refereed conference proceedings, an alternative research site or in a refereed journal.
- Some theses and conference papers were accessed through CDU's e-space collection (<http://espace.cdu.edu.au/>).
- Batchelor Institute's academic journal, *Ngoonjook* as well as other publicly available documents were accessed.
- Other literature came from publicly available reports from Northern Territory education department sources and from schools.
- A small network of teacher educators, long-term educators in the Northern Territory, and researchers provided papers once they heard about the review. Many of these included Aboriginal educators.

In this way, we assembled a body of literature that could in normative terms be characterised as “obscure, poorly distributed, of mixed value, ephemeral, of low value, less traded, less monetised, and used in limited ways” (Whitehead in White, Thomas, Weldon et al 2013, p. 103). Yet in terms of the purpose of the review it drew on the ‘web of connectedness’ (Christie & Greatorex, 2006) that connects people, land and story. In this way the review began to build a profile of a body of literature generated over a long period of time. Its advantage was not that it assembled an argument for a particular empirical methodology, which might be the approach of some reviews. Rather, it allowed generative engagement with each piece of literature and the various messages contained within.

In practical terms, once identified, each piece was read and the key points noted. Thematic memos were produced based on an immediate reaction to the piece and connections that could be made to current positions on the teaching profession or to other studies and articles being reviewed. In this way, an emergent thematic analysis was constructed around five key issues:

1. conceptions of 'teacher';
2. the importance of language in learning;
3. two-way and both-ways school education;
4. bothways teacher education; and
5. changes in teacher education across the decades.

Emergent themes

Overall, this paper is not an attempt to present the voice of Aboriginal people on teacher education in the Top End. They have done this with clarity and continue to speak elsewhere. Rather, we have attempted to read the concerns reflected in the papers produced over nearly four decades with an interest in *listening differently*.

Conceptions of 'teacher'

In this paper, the word 'teacher' is used to refer to a registered teacher who has met the national requirements as determined by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and the state and territory regulatory authorities. We use the term 'community teacher' to refer to a local Aboriginal educator who is employed in the school in a teaching capacity but who is not a registered teacher. This will typically include the paraprofessional workforce of Assistant Teachers and other support workers. There is another categorisation that is important for this paper and that is 'local' and 'non-local'. For this paper, 'local' refers to an Aboriginal educator who belongs to the community in which they are working. 'Non-local' is used to refer to teachers who are recruited to the community to work in the schools. Non-local teachers may be Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal. Whilst this may appear a complex web of words, this clarity is vital to understanding the roles and positioning within the education profession of the remote communities of the Top End.

As Australia heads into an era where the teaching profession is perhaps the most regulated it has ever been (Bat, 2010), the word 'teacher' has become a term that is defined within legislation rather than through pedagogical activity. To be a 'teacher' in Australia now requires a four-year degree from an accredited university program with graduates who have English literacy and numeracy comparable to the top 30 percent of the Year 12 graduates for that year (AITSL, 2011). A teacher is a member of a profession, one that holds a lot of power and social leverage and one that represents an opportunity to effect positive social change (Anderson, 2011). Membership of the teaching profession then represents a significant opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers to impact positively on the education sector and to influence society generally, but admission to this profession is regulated by the various teacher registration authorities and AITSL.

There are a large number of Top End Aboriginal teachers who are members of the teaching profession and who have made and continue to make significant contributions locally and more widely to their profession (Batchelor College, 1994; Blitner et al., 2000; Marika-Mununggiritj, 1998; M. Yunupingu, 1993). However, in this current era, the profession recognises registered teachers not community teachers. The latter belong to a separate industrial classification that positions them as assisting teachers rather than as educators in their own right. This is one of the first tensions in the literature—that the meaning of the word 'teacher' in Northern Territory contexts has changed over time and this has been driven in part by industrial change.

This separation of the teacher as the individual in charge of the learning is counterpointed by a collaborative story of teaching and learning that emerges in the literature. In this story teachers and community teachers work as a teaching team and belong to the community (Bulliwana, Frawley, & Garnarradj, 2002). This teaching team consists of local and non-local teachers as well as the community teachers who are employed under a range of additional industrial classifications (Assistant Teachers, Inclusion Support Officers, etc). The teaching teams work together in a socially critical model that supports self-determination and community development (Gillespie, 1998). This team-teaching approach was strongly prevalent in the 1980s and early 1990s in the Northern Territory (Gillespie, 1998; Roche & White, 1990; White, 2005) and included both local staff and non-local staff who were recruited to the community as teachers and others who were living in the community and working as paraprofessionals.

The more recently published literature of the profession recognises the need for non-local teachers in terms of 'teacher shortage' or 'high turnover' and then positions their needs in terms of them moving to a new place that is most likely to be very different from what they know. From this perspective, non-local teachers need to receive strong orientation and support so as to minimise their culture shock and to retain them in their workplaces (Brasche & Harrington, 2012; Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2009; Giles, 2010; Hall, 2012). This personal support is important but it often misses the professional needs of the non-local teachers who will need to develop new ways of working and new pedagogies for what is most likely a very new teaching context for them. It also positions the individual non-local teachers as holding responsibility for the achievement of the children rather than inducting them into the role that they can play in supporting community development:

Balanda teachers should always get help from bininj teachers. Balanda teachers might not have any ideas about working with bininj children. They might not know the language, culture, customs and law. Teaching bininj kids is a lot of work but it does change things around when balanda and bininj teachers get working together as a team. (Bulliwana et al., 2002, p. 5)

A teacher, then, rather than being defined by registration, can be defined as an educator working as part of a collaborative team, a team that teaches the children while also engaging in shared learning and activity and thus contributing to the community's development as well (Marika & White, 1999). Taking this definition broadens the discussion not only into local needs but also creates the space for the non-local teacher to belong and for the recognition that Aboriginal educators have other roles that they play, as well as teacher and community teacher. An Aboriginal teacher working and teaching in their home community may have other responsibilities that extend far beyond the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers; they may hold education and cultural roles within the community that extend far beyond the school gates.

The importance of language in learning

The Northern Territory has a long history of argument around bilingual education (DEET, 2006; Marika, 1999) and the role that language plays in learning. The imposition of the 'four hours of English' rule in 1998 brought an effective end to bilingual programs that had been running, some for decades. A range of reports and literature by Top End teachers make the case for learning in first language and in English as an additional language or dialect (Bulkunu, 2010).³ This literature argues the need for integration of home, community and school languages in order to provide a strong foundation for early and continued learning.

The findings from the Senate Inquiry are clear—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages belong in education and Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments need to work together to provide adequately resourced bilingual school education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities from the earliest years of learning, where the child's first language is an Indigenous language (traditional or contact) (HRSCATSIA, 2012, p. 20). One of the impacts of having the child's home language as the language of learning in the school is that there is, by necessity, an increase in the number of local teachers required in the school and this has a flow-back effect into the kind of teacher education program required. It is worth noting that as the bilingual programs in the Northern Territory decreased in number as the result of policy changes (Marika, 1999), there was a corresponding decrease in the number of trained Aboriginal teachers graduating from Batchelor Institute (then Batchelor College) (DEET, 2006). Whether or not this is a causal factor or the result of many other policy and professional shifts is not clear, but it is recognised in the Senate Inquiry that more languages in schools will mean the need for more language teachers, which means more Aboriginal teachers. However, the inquiry itself recognises the difficulty for Aboriginal people to attain that 'professional' qualification and makes the call for a restricted authority to teach and for Assistant Teachers, as paraprofessionals, to be trained as language teachers (HRSCATSIA, 2012).

Throughout the Inquiry and across the literature there is a consistent message of repeatedly needing to remind systems of the relevance of bilingual programs to successful schooling. As indicated at the beginning of this paper, the form this literature takes varies from public lectures (Marika-Mununggiritj, 1998; M. Yunupingu, 1993) through to Senate Inquiry Submissions (Dhamarrandji, 2011; Nganbe et al., 2011; The Indigenous Teachers of Shepherdson College, 2011; Yirrkala School Literature Production Centre & Yolŋu Action Group, 2011) and journal articles and books (Christie, 2007; Ford & Klesch, 2003; M. Yunupingu, 1989). Whilst there has been a relaxing of the mandate restricting bilingual education in the Northern Territory, it remains policy that English is the language of schools while home languages are the responsibility of the community and can only be used in schools to support English language development (McCarthy, 2011). The Aboriginal teaching profession argues that these pedagogical tenets need to be reflected in policy as they are

critically important for Yolŋu people so that we can get the best outcomes in the field of education for Indigenous Australia, particularly the Yolŋu people or some other people for who English is not their first language. (Dhamarrandji, 2011)

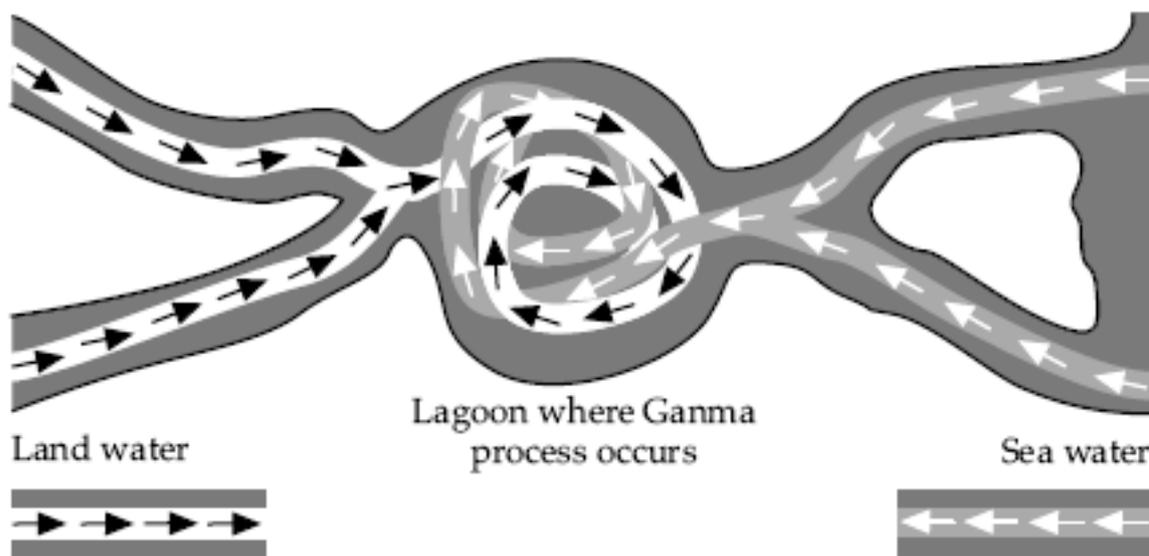
3 See also Department of Employment Education and Training (DEEWR) (2006); Silburn, Nutton, McKenzie, & Landrigan (2011) and a range of submissions made to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (HRSCATSIA) Inquiry into Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages conducted in 2011 (Australian Education Union, 2011; Christie & Groatorex, 2011; Devlin, 2011; Dhamarrandji, 2011; Graham, Gale, & Grimes, 2011; Nganbe et al., 2011; Northern Territory Catholic Education Office, 2011; The Indigenous Teachers of Shepherdson College, 2011).

Two-way/both-ways school education

The importance of language in education is further supported when a two-way or both-ways approach is used. The term two-way education and both-ways education have been used interchangeably throughout much of the literature and have in essence the same meaning—that there is a way of learning together where everyone is respected and knowledges are shared, and new relationships formed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people (Boyukarpi, Gayura, Madawirr, Nunggalurr, & Waykingin, 1994; Christie, 1987). Both-ways has been called a ‘contested space’ (Ford & Klesch, 2003; M. Nakata, V. Nakata, Keech, & Bolt, 2012). While recognised as a space of sharing, it is not necessarily a harmonious space: it is a critical space of argument and constant renewal of knowledge and practice. Who you are and how you know (re-know) is as important, or even more important, than what you know (Christie, 2007).

Both-ways has been explained by Aboriginal educators and philosophers through significant metaphors for education, as a way to ‘develop a picture in your mind to connect you with our story’ (Bandang’thun, 1995, p. 1). One of these metaphors shared by the Yolŋu people is that of the Ganma—the lagoon where the salt water and the fresh water intermingle.

Water is often taken to represent knowledge in Yolŋu Philosophy. What we see happening in the school is a process of knowledge production where we have two different cultures, Balanda and Yolŋu, working together. Both cultures need to be presented in a way where each one is preserved and respected.



(Marika, 1999, pp. 12-13)

This metaphor is cited in many different education contexts in the Northern Territory and is one of a number of metaphors used by Yolŋu as a way of helping Balanda (non-Aboriginal people) share in some of the understanding presented in metaphors, although with the understanding that “only Yolŋu really understand the metaphors which this land holds, but Balanda can learn about this too if they go about it in the right way” (Marika, 1999, p. 18). This ‘right way’ to do things is a negotiated and collaborative endeavour that is both-ways. Batchelor Institute has been part of the both-ways community of practice for many decades and some of the Institute’s recent theorising on both-ways have elicited three key principles of practice and a framework for teaching and learning:

Principle 1: Both-ways is a shared learning journey

Principle 2: Both-ways is student-centred

Principle 3: Both-ways strengthens Indigenous identity (Ober & Bat, 2007).

Both-ways is an approach to Aboriginal education that contains within it the imperative for supporting self-determination and for collaborative practice. Whilst many elements of both-ways education are resonant of general good teaching practice, it is the focus on the students’ identity formation that creates the space not only for the use of language in learning but also recognition of the role learning on country plays in Aboriginal lives (Bulliwana et al., 2002). This message was clearly expressed by Wunungmurra at the Garma festival (<http://www.yyf.com.au/>) in 2011.

Be clear about this; we say a quality education for our children must do the following things:

- 1. Respect and complement our Yolŋu cultural heritage at all times including our language, law, ceremonies and customs.*
- 2. Prepare our young people for the modern world without disadvantage and with all the opportunities available to all young Australians. Our young people must be ralpa (disciplined) and accept working to targets that we set for them and we will be there to support them.*
- 3. Involve us at every level as equal partners – put those two words equal and partners in capital letters and back it up with action. (Wunungmurra, 2011, p.1)*

A strong both-ways education in the schooling context requires collaboration and a privileging of Aboriginal knowledges and languages. This is not to say that parents don’t want a strong Western education; the literature is clear on this point. However, what is also clear is that this is not to be at the expense of the children’s own language and culture.

The general views of parents and their communities are clear and unequivocal. Children need to be competent in both western and Yolŋu teachings. Yolŋu culture is paramount and western education must be embedded in a learning context that respects and affirms traditional Yolŋu cultural knowledge, traditions and practices.

Mainstream education at all levels is essential if Yolŋu young people are to have the same life chances as other Australians. The ideas around ‘both-ways’ or ‘two-ways’ evident in... in all five communities, and mentioned often by parents, captures the importance of both Yolŋu and mainstream traditions informing both policy and practice. (Wearne & Yunupingu, 2011, p.10)

The pedagogy of such an approach has been researched and published by a team of Aboriginal teachers and teacher education students working with their Batchelor College lecturers. Resulting in the publication *Strong Voices* (Blitner, Dobson, Gibson, Martin, Oldfield, Oliver & Palmer, 2000) the program of research and practice elicited eleven principles of pedagogy summarised as follows.

Principle 1: Relationships drive teaching/learning

Principle 2: Continuous teaching, learning and assessment

Principle 3: A community of learners

Principle 4: Independence and respect

Principle 5: Use of real life experiences

Principle 6: Exploring, play and informal learning experiences

Principle 7: High expectations of achievement for all children

Principle 8: Teachers modelling behaviour for children

Principle 9: Ability to be flexible and adaptable

Principle 10: Integrating all learning

Principle 11: Teaching through many forms and texts

(Blitner et al., 2000, pp. 26-49)

Strong Voices is evidence of the development of specific pedagogies, philosophies and practices of Aboriginal teachers in the NT and its follow-up publication, *Strong Teachers* (Murphy & Railton, 2013), continues the tradition. A collaborative approach to education that implements this kind of both-ways education needs teachers with the capacity to work openly and generatively with children, school colleagues and community members. M. Yunupingu has explained how this collaboration works in practice within and beyond the school.

For the last two years I have been on leave from the school touring with the band and passing on the philosophy of my people. One of these is Ganma. This is the philosophy that allows us to open up to white society on common ground. Ganma tells about the place in Gumatj country where the salt and fresh water meet and mix. It is a metaphor with many spiritual and symbolic meanings but at its base it is about a "common ground" understanding of the world. What we are trying to say to Balanda is "try to meet us halfway, try to meet us halfway here." (M. Yunupingu in Batchelor College, 1994, p. 26)

Our examination of the literature indicates Western schooling has not met Yolŋu people halfway. The key requirements for children's schooling are repeatedly presented as language/ both-ways learning and team teaching, as evidenced in the previous three sections. Yet schooling falls short of sustained practices to maintain a presence in each of these areas. A significant element necessary to develop and sustain such practices is teacher education.

Both-ways teacher education

The above themes that have emerged from the literature on schooling are complemented by the proposition in teacher education research that the strongest teacher education programs use the same pedagogy for teacher training as that advocated for children in schools (Bat, 2010; Ingvarson, Beavis, Danielson, Ellis, & Elliott, 2005). In this context, the pedagogy that is expressed in the literature as the right one is that of both-ways/two-ways. A school that runs a both-ways learning program requires teachers who can teach both-ways. This involves co-construction of the program and conceptions of knowledge, as distinct from separately presented constructions (Batchelor College, 1994). It is exemplified by collaborative effort between community, school and provider to produce a negotiated curriculum through co-construction. In this way, the teacher education program is part of the whole learning of the school and contributes to community development.

The both-ways learning framework developed through Batchelor Institute is built on the principles and practices of both-ways and incorporates community engagement at its core.

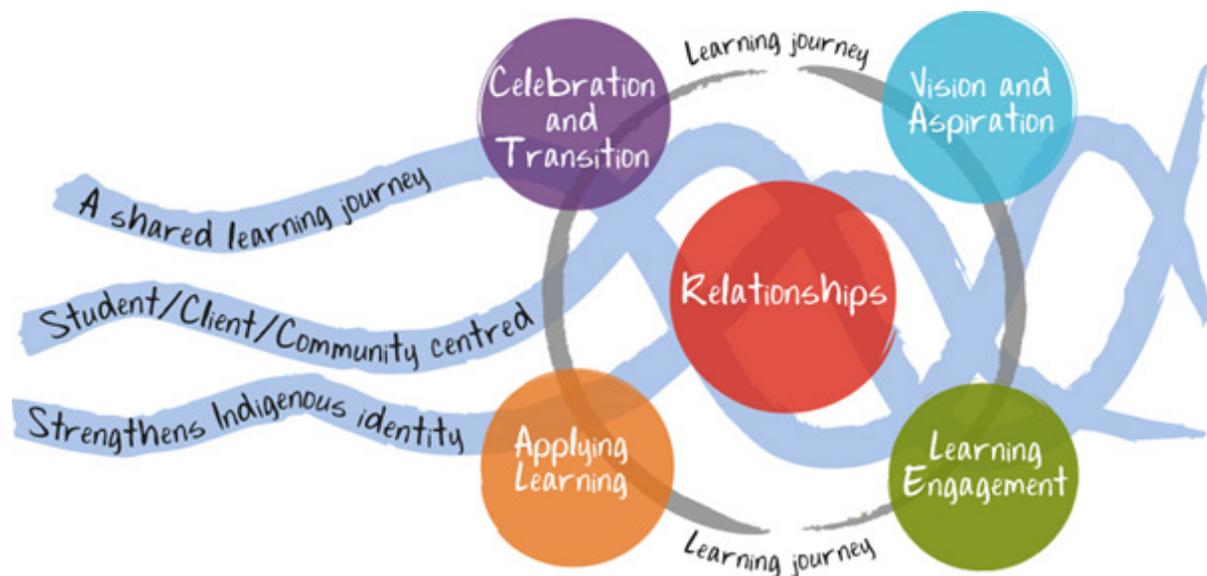


Figure 1: Both-ways learning framework, Batchelor Institute (Bat, Kilgariff, & Doe, 2013, p. 8)

This framework illustrates not only the continuous personal and curriculum negotiations that occur in a both-ways teacher education learning context but also the political and cultural imperatives that are inherent in such an approach. Both-ways is a targeted action, aimed at supporting self-determination and the privileging of Aboriginal knowledges and languages (Marika-Mununggiritj & Christie, 1995; Marika-Mununggiritj, 2002; Ober & Bat, 2007; Stage 4 Teacher Education Students, 1998; White, 2005). Relationships are at the centre of all engagement and provide the foundation of all work in this space (Blitner et al., 2000; Boyukarpi et al., 1994; Henry & McTaggart, 1987; McTaggart, 2002). A both-ways teacher education program must be much more than culturally appropriate practices or embedded Aboriginal knowledges. Both-ways teacher education programs focus on power and the role that teachers play not only in community development but also in effecting change (Marika, 1999; Marika & White, 1999). It is no surprise then that both-ways teacher education programs have used action research as a framework for learning. Student teachers undertake their training by researching issues in their communities, sharing their new knowledge and applying their learning immediately in the local contexts of their home schools.

Learning in community also means student teachers do not have to compromise identity in order to become teachers in their own schools: the ongoing need for Aboriginal teachers and community teachers to assert their right to maintain their identity in order to become a teacher is another of the tensions presented in the literature.

Yolŋu have to demonstrate that we continue to hold onto our values, otherwise we lose ourselves in this ever changing world and are accused of being like a Balanda. (Marika, 1999, p. 110)

The most important thing for everyone to understand is that our Aboriginality is still the most important thing for us and we will never give up trying to make you understand that. We will never become white teachers with black faces. (Nunggumajbarr, nd)

Another seeming contrast with the published literature of the profession is the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the teacher education program. The metaphor of the preparation of |athu (bread) and fish traps has been used to illustrate that Top End literature on teacher education emphasises 'right ways' to undertake educational activity such as developing curriculum, in the same way that there are 'right ways' to make bread and prepare fish traps (Marika, Y. Yunupingu, Marika-Mununggiritj & Muller, 2009). Different people have different roles and equally important, the processes cannot be rushed (Bandang'thun, 1995; Christie, 2007; M. Yunupingu, 1993): "Hurry, and the poison will remain in the bread. There are ways of proceeding that, structurally, ensure that the interests of all are recognised and respected". (M. Yunupingu, 1993, p. 8)

At one level, these metaphors may in fact contrast with tenets of contemporary teacher education that argue for myriad of approaches to enable individuals to arrive at the same professional standard as all other individual teachers. The metaphors speak more to a known approach that creates reflective and responsive educators through collaborative and shared engagement.

I see Batchelor College having a role where they can help Yolŋu people develop self-confidence, especially in ways of how to protect ourselves from outside influences, and to be able to expand their knowledge. But it has got to be a two way thing, Balanda teachers or tutors training Yolŋu people and Yolŋu students training the tutors. You are learning from them and they are learning from you at the same time. (Wunungmurra cited in Batchelor College, 1994, p. 21)

Inclusion then means more than presence or enrolment in a teacher education program. It means understanding how different knowledge traditions need to be rethought in the context of schooling on country where there are dynamic but clearly defined cultural authority structures that underpin how schooling happens on a day-to-day basis. Yolŋu also understand that they have an active role in making inclusion a reality but that this cannot be left to them alone:

Our job as educators is to convince the people who control mainstream education that we wish to be included. Until this happens, reconciliation is an empty word and an intellectual terra nullius. (Marika, 1999, p. 9)

Part of such a program includes a consideration of who can enrol. The literature gives advice that is somewhat different from the standard tertiary admissions process advocated by national bodies such as the AITSL.

The judgement of the old people in the community must also be heard; they are the people who are most able to judge the willingness of the student to strive for the community, and the student's willingness to learn to interpret its wishes correctly, which means within the Yolŋu law. (M. B. Yunupingu, p. 4)

Such a position sits at odds with the regulatory environment of the national space, yet it is at the centre of enrolment processes in a local space. Teachers and community teachers are more than the 'registered teacher'. A both-ways teacher education program is one that belongs to the local community and sits within the larger framework of community development. Who studies to become a teacher is a decision in which many communities want to actively participate. The challenge for tertiary institutions then is to start not with the curriculum or enrolments process, nor with the students and the knowledge and skills that they bring with them, but rather through processes and practices that facilitate relationships with local communities. Then the program that is developed will have continual reference to the society, culture and community needs of the students. Institutions need to have programs based on bi-culturalism; ongoing consultation with communities and other educational institutions; active learning by students; and, a focus on increasing the numbers of Aboriginal lecturers (Lanhupuy, 1987).

Change in teacher education across the decades

This advice noted above is not so myriad that it is unattainable. The literature suggests patterns of engagement that are responsive but also transferable to local communities. In this context it is useful to ask was there ever a time when collaborative, jointly negotiated teacher education programs were running in Aboriginal communities in the Top End, and graduating qualified Aboriginal teachers? The answer to this question is a qualified 'yes'. In the 1980s Yolŋu successfully petitioned the then Batchelor College to help them develop their own community-based teacher education programs in the Homelands through what was known as the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) Program (Reaburn, 2012).

Specifically, there were three things that they asked for: first, they wanted their teachers to have training that did not take them away from the community; second, they wanted their teachers to have a proper accredited qualification; third, they wanted the community as a whole to have a role in the development of the school program. (Livett, 1988, p. 18)

At the same time as Yolŋu were making this request, Batchelor College engaged in a significant curriculum review of its teacher education programs and shifted to a negotiated, issues-based approach that was well aligned with community-based teacher education (Bat, 2010; Livett, 1988; White, 2005). The RATE program was only ever fully implemented in the early stages of the qualification. This equated to implementation of the first two years of study with graduates receiving a Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools) and was recognised as a qualification with authority to teach in home communities. The Diploma also provided the foundation for the Deakin-Batchelor Aboriginal Teacher Education (DBATE) Program, which addressed the latest requirements for a national three-year teacher qualification: this supported Batchelor Institute to develop what was then called Stage Four (Henry & McTaggart, 1987; Marika et al., 1992) of their teacher education activity and many Stage 4 graduates became significant leaders within the Northern Territory (Batchelor College, 1994).

This era of teacher education is still regarded as an exemplar of teacher education envisaged by those educators and leaders quoted throughout this paper.

While many championed the expansion of RATE to meet national qualifications, political will and support to achieve that goal was inconsistent (Stewart, 1989). Changes to the national landscape in the 1990s saw the gradual disappearance of RATE programs. As national policy climates shifted from Indigenous specific programs to that of 'practical reconciliation' (Brabham, Henry, Bamblett, & Bates, 2002), the result was the loss of funding for community programs and resultant 'mainstreaming' of teacher education amongst other Indigenous initiatives. This effectively signalled the end of the RATE era and the end of Batchelor's community-based teacher education programs (Ingram, 2004). It also placed resourcing constraints on all practitioners (Yolŋu and Balanda) who had been following both-ways approaches in their work.

The restraints imposed by external funding bodies often meant inadequate time was being allocated to the development of the negotiated and contested site of common ground. The term two-way was losing ground and increasingly becoming the rhetoric of all expedient cross-cultural Aboriginal community interactions. (Ford & Klesch, 2003, p. 33)

The above shifts occurred in parallel with the required expansion to four years for a teaching degree, the beginning of the formalisation of registration of teachers and the regulation of the teaching profession in order that all teachers would meet national standards (Ingram, 2004). In practice this meant the end of access to the 'restricted qualification' which enabled community teachers to teach on country *and* the addition of further years of studies if they were to become registered teachers. The teacher education programs that were being run by the then Batchelor College shifted back to their campus-based approaches, but this time the full residential programs of the past were absent, nor were they community-based. Rather, the programs operated as workshop-based programs where students travelled in for workshops and then worked back at home on their studies (White, 2005). This meant that more and more time needed to be spent away from home in order to study and the curriculum shifted from an issues-based negotiated program to a uniform one that was designed as much to meet the growing national demands for consistency and conformity as it was to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across the country. In parallel, the then Northern Territory Government ended official support for bilingual programs (Devlin, 2011). Aboriginal student teachers became almost isolated from the very schools that they were training to teach in and their learning shifted to something extra that the school was required to do. Student teacher enrolments dropped, with a subsequent increase in the number of paraprofessionals working and studying (Bat, 2010).

The constant message

This paper has sourced a number of works from Aboriginal educators and colleagues and a recurring message persists across these papers to the present day: Aboriginal people of the Top End of Australia have much experience of teacher education to prepare teachers to work in their schools. They recognise the need to work both-ways so that their children are educated in both their home language and in English, and have educators who prepare them for the best of both worlds. The message discernible in the literature was a sense that their commitment to these goals was ignored: whether through absence of active listening, inconsistent political will or dismissal of the core tenets of language, land and relationships so central to successful education for Aboriginal children in the communities associated with this review. These insights frame our discussion and conclusions.

Current teacher education programs

Batchelor Institute has had long involvement with teacher education in the NT. Most recently, it has moved into a new relationship of collaborative delivery with Charles Darwin University and its recently formed *Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Education (ACIKE)*. The collaboration is still developing and provides potential for an increased delivery in partnership with the main employers, the Northern Territory Department of Education and the Catholic Education Office (Reaburn, 2012). Also, Charles Darwin University has initiated two community-based teacher education programs – *Remote Indigenous Teacher Education (RITE)* and *Growing Our Own (GOO)*. The literature associated with these Charles Darwin University programs promotes culturally responsive teacher education practices and a fast-track approach to teacher registration by working with Assistant Teachers who undertake higher education studies whilst working in their community school and applying their learning in the workplace (Elliott, 2009; Elliott & Keenan, 2009; Elliott & Slee, 2009; Giles, 2010). These approaches meet the requirements set by national regulators and some of the desired requirements for community-based programs. To date, published literature has been largely produced by academics working within the programs. There is evidence of substantial numbers of students graduating in some sites, while other sites show marginal numbers of completions. There is little published literature from Assistant Teachers and Community-based teachers studying within the programs. For an exception see Callahan et al. (2012) which contains some insights from Aboriginal preservice students about the need to shift perceptions within the school that they are not doing 'advanced AT training' but are training to become registered teachers.

Two different directions

Australia currently promotes a national directive aimed at increasing the quality and equity of higher education participation and completion rates (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew, & Kelly, 2012; Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008). There is recognition of the pressing need to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in Australia (Anderson, 2011; Bat, 2010; Elliott & Slee, 2009). There is a national system in place to regulate every aspect of the teacher education program and teaching standards. This is, in essence, an individual and competitive academic process that, by regulation, occurs in Standard Australian English.

Contrast this with the following insight from Christie's extensive analyses and engagement with people living on country: "education should make use of cooperative learning and avoid competition" (Christie, 1987, p. 31). The very system that recognises the need to support the development of Aboriginal teachers is one that is working in opposition to insights drawn from the Top End literature: the 'right way' to undertake teacher education is through collaborative programs that are focused on community development as a whole. Moreover these programs must recognise the Yolŋu language base which provides the starting point for most communication in so many of the communities associated with this literature review.

What can be done?

The messages from this literature are relevant to two key areas: policy and practice. Policy changes need to be considered by following the guidelines as set out by the national regulators *and* Aboriginal people (elders and communities in particular). The regulatory space in recent years has created a climate of program development that relegates an ethic of cooperation based around 'local connectedness' (Christie & Greatorex, 2006, p. 12) to the realm of personal relationships and longstanding friendships. By default this leaves the responsibility of embedding many of the issues raised in this paper in the realm of choice: choice to embed local knowledges, choice to extend program consultations to such bodies as community decision-making and land council entities, choice to reshape assessment practices and pedagogical structures to address how children engage in schooling.

Aboriginal people of the Top End have demonstrated through their literature that they do not want a 'dumbing down' of their qualifications, yet the complexity within which Aboriginal teachers provide a both ways education for children is not fully reflected in the National Professional Standards for Teachers. Rather than returning to notions of a 'restricted authority' to teach, what is required is the scope to work with local communities to develop relevant and effective teacher education programs that can still meet the national accreditation guidelines.

Such changes would then create the space for changes by the teacher education providers and teacher educators. Rather than approaching teacher education from a *delivery* perspective, the providers would be required to develop negotiating and advisory mechanisms with communities. This would require that teacher education encompass more than the nationally required ITE benchmarks. It would position ITE as a whole of school approach to learning. This may mean working with other providers in order to develop collaborative programs and to share resources. It would certainly require taking the voice of community elders more seriously in establishing sustainable support mechanisms for student preservice teachers.

Finally, in pedagogical terms, researchers and educators understand the shift involved in adopting team teaching approaches in classrooms. This involves a fundamental shift in power relations between those teachers recognised by the national teaching authority and those teachers recognised by the community. Navigating these power differentials will be critical in building a new generation of Yolŋu and Balanda teachers and learners. If the whole school is learning then the student teachers are part of the learning community and will learn their craft of teaching within an environment that respects the knowledge of community and the knowledge of both ways pedagogy they bring to the school.

Some conclusions

When reading the literature that informed this paper, there was a sense of the self-evident. What the Aboriginal teachers and leaders from the Top End had been saying about education, about language and about community development had a certain logic that resonated with broader research and public inquiries into Aboriginal education: children would learn best if their first language was a starting point for learning (note our previous fn3) – and the same would be true for adults. Of course, there should be recognition of the complexity of the knowledge and skills required of Aboriginal teachers in their home communities. Given the employment and economic returns to community through education as a system of employment, ITE should also be integrated into broader community development initiatives. Yet national policy and funding shifts in teacher education have impacted so strongly on teacher education in Top End communities this kind of integration into the wider community is far from the reality. That there is a dissonance between the episteme of the policy makers and the people for whom the policy is being made, is clear. There appears to be no evidence in this literature to impede closer alignment. Rather the dissonance seem to come from a more deep seated assumption that the national ITE space can be constituted as if disconnected from the issues canvassed here.

The need to ground Aboriginal teacher education in the Top End in local community engagement and consultation is clear. One way forward is for those in the profession to take a more proactive role in listening differently to the insights from the past and present in order to create better alignment for children and community-based teachers in the future.

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