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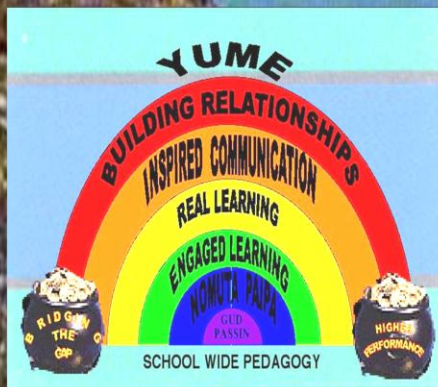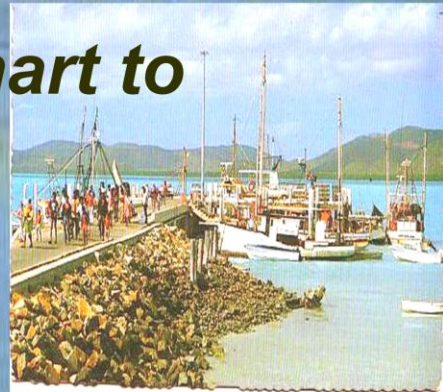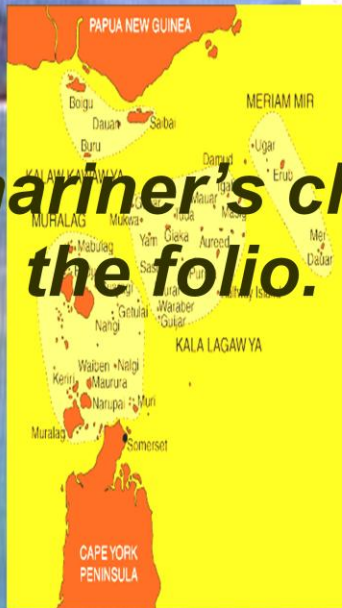
The mariner's chart to the folio.

John McMaster

November 2006

YUMI PEDAGOGY: PEDAGOGY WITH CULTURAL INTEGRITY IN THE TORRES STRAIT

John W.F. McMaster, Cert Teach., B.Ed.St., M.A.

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the

award of the Degree of Doctor of Education

Faculty of Education

University of Southern Queensland

2006

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed …………………………......................   Date

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Author

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Principal Supervisor

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Associate Supervisor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the support of my supervisors, Dr Jon Austin and Dr Patrick O'Brien. This has been a protracted and energy sapping exercise for both of them and I wish to thank them for their ongoing effort, supporting, cajoling, critiquing and encouraging me, to the very last.

I'd also like to acknowledge their professional support through the discussions and critique of ideas and the editing that has taken place over a long period of time. I'm sure that they will be as pleased as I, to have reached a point where that effort can cease.

To my editor, Dr. Helen McCann who at very short notice undertook an onerous and time consuming task. I appreciate your assistance in helping me get my thoughts together in a cohesive and idiosyncratic manner. This type of research is fraught with potential hazards and your effort when I needed it has proven crucial.

My special thanks go to the people of the Torres Strait who were happy to devote their time and energy to the realisation of this study. This is as much their work as it is mine. In particular, I value their critique of this work and look forward to their reaction to the published study. In a very real sense this work is their work and I'd hope that the study will stimulate educational dialogue both within their own communities, as they will readily recognise the locations I have collected data from, and across the Torres Strait. I would genuinely hope that positive change, Torres Strait Islander self-management whatever form that might take and dramatically improving outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students will be realised, sooner rather than later.

Finally I would like to thank my long suffering wife, Margaret and on many occasions, my children and their families, for their support and encouragement over a very long period of time. Without their support this study would never have been completed and I am genuinely grateful. Thankyou for making it possible for me to complete my voyage, so that now we can all go sailing.

Acknowledgement of External Editorial Assistance:

External editorial assistance has been provided by Dr Helen McCann. Dr. McCann's assistance has been restricted to that identified as acceptable by the University guidelines, stated hereunder;

Editorial intervention is restricted to:

1. proofreading: that is, detecting and correcting the presentation of the text to confirm with standard usage and conventions (eg spelling, quotations, italics, lists, word usage, punctuation, graphs, charts, citations, references, heading hierarchies, symbols and equations, headers and footers, style of numbers etc)

2. the identification and provision of advice, **with corrections and exemplars only**, in matters of structure (the need to restructure and reword, deletions, additions); the conventions of grammar and syntax; use of clear language; logical connections between phrases, clauses, sentences, paragraphs, and sections; voice and tone; and how to avoid ambiguity, repetition and verbosity.

Dr McCann works in the area of feminist studies, which have parallels with some of the work in this folio. Her editorial role however was limited to that acceptable under the University guidelines.

(IN) THE BEGINNING: The mariner's chart to the folio.

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The Mariner's Chart.

I've chosen to use the metaphor of the mariners chart to highlight the characteristics that are the essential elements of this study. This metaphor also sits comfortably with the Torres Strait Islander people, both historically and contemporaneously. The document '*(IN) THE BEGINNING: The mariner's chart to the folio'*, represents the chart which enables readers of this study to 'navigate' their individual progress through the study in ways that reflect the reader's motivation/s. As with most maritime voyages, destinations can be reached via a number of different routes. These routes will be partially determined by motivations including tides, winds, directness, the skill of the navigator and the whim of the skipper. These motivations also apply to any reading of this study. The essential starting point will be determined initially by reference to the chart. Being made aware of the elements of the folio (logs of the various voyages) will influence where the reader goes from there; in other words, what folio elements (logs of the voyages) the reader will go to first and the order they choose to follow, subsequent to that. There is no necessary order in which the logs of the various voyages should be read, following the initial reference to the 'chart'.

The mariner's chart identifies low water marks, channel markers, reefs, sandbanks, and unseen obstacles. These represent only a handful of the dangers the reader (mariner) will face on the voyage. Likewise the study has its share of 'dangers', both seen and unseen. The whole nature of the study is in a sense, dangerous. I anticipate that any reading of the study will necessarily reflect the idiosyncrasies of the reader, so that the conclusions that I have reached, represent only one view of the data. The identification of the data itself reflects a

level of interpretation that is also very personal, highlighting the reality that others (readers/mariners) may see greater significance in aspects of the recorded data that the author has not. The log of the voyage, *My Journey An Autobiographical Narrative,* clearly identifies a very personal journey or series of journeys, all of which reflect a range of reefs and sandbars that the author has sometimes been stranded on, between tides, giving time for reflection on actions that have either proven unsuccessful or are cause for quiet contemplation. Each of the folio elements reflects this metaphoric mix of danger and clear passage, in many different ways and at many different levels, inviting the individual and equally legitimate reactions of each reader.

Whilst Torres Strait Islanders historically navigated by the stars and the seasons today, electronic navigation charts have tended to replace these important and culturally significant practices. Torres Strait people have metaphorically experienced being stranded on reefs and shoals and being wrecked, especially in terms of the education processes they have been exposed to, by virtue of this cultural shift. The process, educationally, of replacing the reliable historic (navigation) practices of Torres Strait Islanders with contemporary, western (navigation charts) practices has frequently resulted in confusion, frustration and a failure to produce successful educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islanders - clear passage to the future. The reasons for this situation are explored in greater depth in this study.

With these explanations in mind then, the reader is invited to engage on their own voyage through this study.

The Folio

This folio takes the form of several papers or logs of voyages. Each one explores a different dimension of the whole study and they come together in the form of an analysis of education in the Torres Strait. The study itself is of educational practices in Torres Strait Island schools. I've used the differential educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students, which lag behind those of their mainland peers, as a starting point that enables me to explore several elements. These elements are elaborated in the various papers which comprise the folio and are described as the logs of each voyage:

-        The log of the voyage, *YUME Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Strait,* a research project which identifies effective educational practice (pedagogy) as it is currently expressed across the majority of Torres Strait Island schools;

-        The log of the voyage, *YUME Research: Qualitative Research in the Torres Strait,* a methodological exploration of cross cultural research practices which is designed to highlight and examine some of the problematic issues that arise in any research project set in culturally diverse contexts ;

-        The log of the voyage, *Yarning: Culturally Significant Pedagogy for the Torres Strait,* an analysis of a Torres Strait practice known as 'yarning' as culturally significant pedagogy *;*

-        The log of the voyage, *The IDEAS Process: Data Generation*, an explanation of the principal process used to generate data for this project*;* and

-        The log of the voyage, *My Journey: An Autobiographical Narrative*, an historical dimension of Torres Strait Island education which takes the form a personal narrative of the many years that I have spent engaged in Torres Strait Island education. This framework

allows me to position myself while examining some of the principal discourses that have shaped dominant teaching beliefs and practices across the Torres Strait.

Perspective.

The study is set within the critical perspective and specifically uses the narrative form as a means of data analysis (Tierney, 2003; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). In maintaining this perspective, there is no necessary order in which the papers/logs should be read, as each one tells its own story. The whole folio creates an autobiographical construction - a critical examination of my personal experience - of what I believe are important, and often overlooked or ignored, dimensions of Torres Strait Island education. It is suggested that the reader should choose for themselves the sequence in which the logs are accessed. Any paper can provide a comprehensive starting point to the whole study. However, it can help to focus the folio by starting with the personal narrative of *(In) The Beginning.* This chart provides the navigational mechanism to enable the reader to decide which voyage they will begin their journey with.

Purpose/s.

The study is not intended to be a categorical statement aimed at 'fixing' (the implied problem of) Torres Strait Island education. Rather, readers are encouraged to acknowledge that the papers re-present my own reasoning in relation to the issues, a personal position that is nevertheless based on a critical reflection on experience and practice. The study occupies one location in the multiple positions that are the ongoing dialogue surrounding Torres Strait education. My purposes require engagement with this dialogue, from a number of directions. A principle aim is to promote both the voice and agency of Torres Strait Islanders – not on their behalf but in support of their right, suppressed within a neo-colonialist context - to be

responsible and accountable for their own educational processes within increasingly contested and globalised spaces.

> *"There is probably no more pressing a set of philosophical problems in educational theory than those that fall under the broad issue of cultural difference. The question of cultural difference in the era of modernity can be considered in abstract terms, in terms of the logic of alterity, of Otherness, but it cannot be thought of without examining the historical context of colonisation, its consequences for imperial, white-settler and indigenous cultures, and the historic struggles against the exercise of imperial power: the myriad forms of decolonisation, cultural reassertion and selfdetermination."* (Canen & Peters, 2005. p 310)

Neo-colonialism, ("…the control of states by external powers despite the formal appearance of constitutional independence." [Bray,1993]),defined in relation to multicultural education is alive and well in the Torres Strait, with educational policies and practices providing extensive illustrations of the continuing dominance of neo-colonialist practice. The ways in which the language of the governmental bureaucracy still manoeuvres policy, process and procedure from an Anglo-Australian perspective, ensures that Torres Strait Islander voice and agency is restricted to those who can interpret or translate that Anglo-Australian bureaucratic discourse. In order to promote Torres Strait Islander agency, it is necessary to disrupt this frequently unchallenged and certainly invisible re-presentation of 'normality'. This disruption is part of an attempt to create the spaces within which Torres Strait Islander voice will be both audible and pre-eminent.

A reconstructed space of primacy for Torres Strait Islanders will inevitably alienate some educators and educational administrators, though this is not my intention. If this occurs however, and these same people are caused to reflect on their role, then I believe that I will have succeeded in creating an opportunity for necessary reflection. In this heightened awareness, unchallenged assumptions and pre-empted decisions might be re-thought, re-visited and re-presented, thus creating the possibility of more inclusive opportunities for Torres Strait Islanders in the process of deciding their own destinies.

These texts are radical, but not in the sense of inciting revolution. My intent is to challenge existing dogmas, established and hegemonic sociocultural practices and the blindness of paternalism in action. They are radical in demonstrating that good will is an insufficient excuse for maintaining ineffective practice. In a neo-colonialist context, it is radical to challenge the power of blind adherence to dominant educational paradigms in the face of evidence that continues to name, locate and position Torres Strait Islander children as failures. It is radical to declare that the continued dominance of such processes verges on sociocultural genocide for Torres Strait Islander peoples. In this context, it is necessary to examine the operation of taken-for-granted educational discourses and thereby to disrupt their power.

The power of language.

Language is a culturally specific tool that not only generates meaning but serves to describe and define the sociocultural milieu of the individual and groups, in meaningful and significant ways. It is also a powerful tool used to define and maintain the dominance of one group over another. This can be seen in Torres Strait education today in the reluctance of the system (i.e. the established mass educational institution, both State and private) to entertain

any challenge to current policy, procedure or practice (see the log of the voyage, *Yumi Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity)*. The system presumes its validity in the face of evidence to the contrary and rejects interrogation on the basis of political interference. Ultimately, this process only serves to perpetuate Torres Strait Islander disenfranchisement and Anglo-Australian hegemony. In order to emphasise the significance of the need to continually interrogate established (common sense) educational and sociocultural canon, I use postcolonial discourse as an analytic methodology within the critical perspective, particularly for its ability to analyse the power of language.

This folio should be read as an interloculatory interjection into the conversation that surrounds the current operation and development of Torres Strait education. It is intended to disrupt consciousness, as Freire (1972) would advocate and challenge establishment presumptions. It is not intended to offend but to discomfort. It should be read with an open mind and a critical eye and will ideally stimulate responses that further challenge and disrupt, in the search for a legitimate Torres Strait Islander educational discourse.

(http://www.tsra.gov.au/www/index.cfm?ItemID=111)
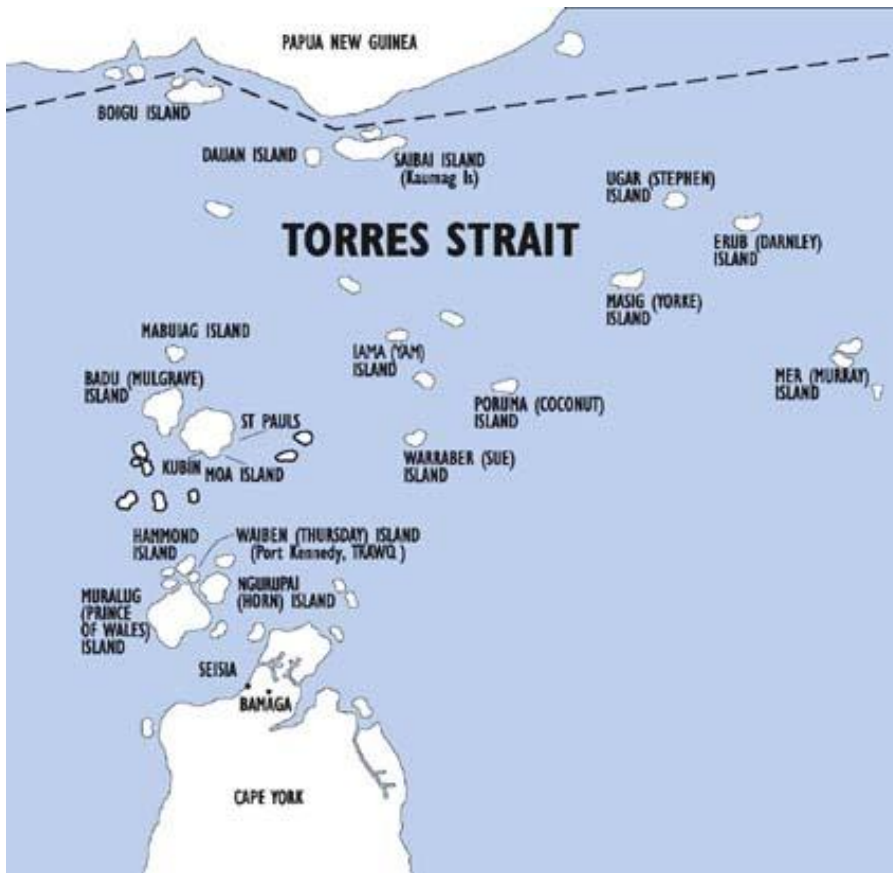
I've chosen to include this map of the Torres Strait at this point as an illustration of the power of language and the contested nature of naming. In the log of the voyage, *YUME Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity* this same map identifies the same islands. The map is intended to orient those readers who know the English language names but not the Torres Strait language names. Apart from this instance, I've used only the Torres Strait language names in the text of this folio to identify the various islands. This is done as a mark of respect for Torres Strait Islanders and their right to 'name themselves' and to continue to challenge the dominant and hegemonic practices of the majority society which locate them as 'other'.

Political context.

At this time the discussion surrounding the political status of the Torres Strait region is at a critical juncture. Because of the geography of the area, designation of the region as a territory or some other form of self managing entity linked to the Australian federation, is eminently plausible. The likelihood of sovereignty or other forms of independence is probably questionable, given the fragile resource base of the area and the reluctance of all mainland political entities to support such a move, regardless of Torres Strait Islander desires. In such a fluid environment, the importance of appropriate and effective educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islanders of all ages is a challenge that cannot be avoided, ignored or continually addressed by conventional and frequently irrelevant curriculum changes.

In late 2005 a new educational policy initiative was released by the Queensland Department of Education and the Arts, called *Bound for Success.Education Strategy for Torres Strait.* This document outlines a political process to attempt to address the education issues in Torres Strait and corresponds in some ways with some of the directions urged in this study. Any initiatives aimed at achieving this outcome should be applauded but again the document seems to fail to address much to do with the pedagogic components of education in the Torres Strait and the critical role that I'm proposing these elements play in promoting successful educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander children. Simply providing more money for student accommodation in Thursday Island only goes part of the way towards managing what are a very complex set of interrelated issues. Dealing with the immediacy of some components might solve some concerns in the short term but create longer term more complex concerns, such as unemployment.

The voyages that follow in the form of papers and articles inform one another and at the same time address specific aspects of the pedagogies that seem to be of significance in the Torres Strait. My hope is that the elements of this folio will contribute to the stimulation of a deeper and more meaningful dialogue on education in the Torres Strait that leads to sustainable, quality education for the region's children

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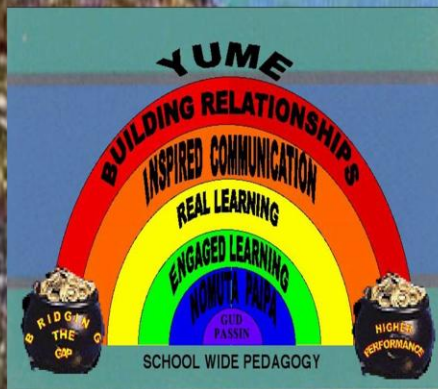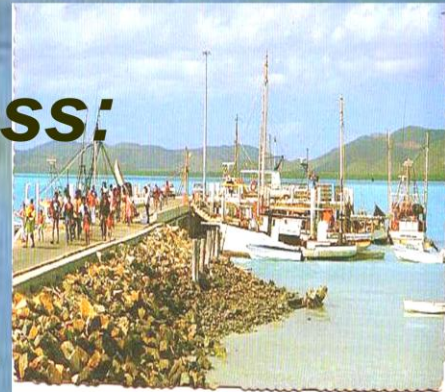
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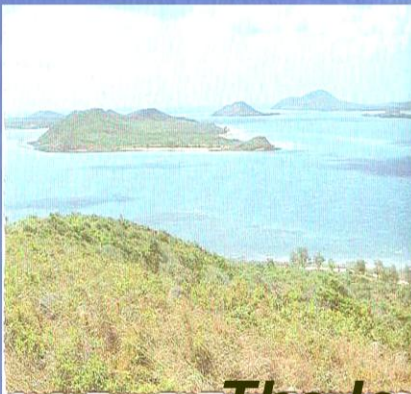
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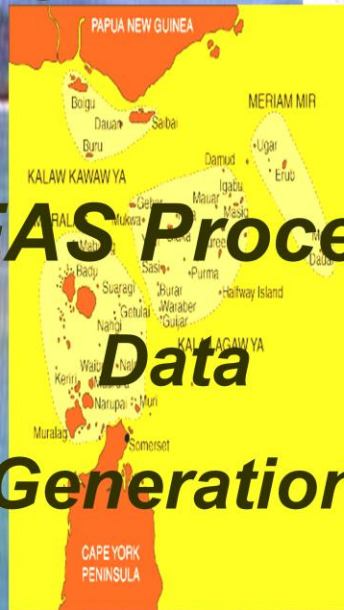
IDEAS Process:

Data

Generation

John McMaster

November 2006

The IDEAS Process: Data Generation

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Introduction.

The log for this voyage provides the chart to navigate the IDEAS process. This process was used as the data gathering mechanism in relation to Pedagogies with Cultural Integrity and might be read in conjunction with the log of the voyage, *YUMI Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Strait.*

In 2001 a school renewal process called IDEAS (Crowther, Andrews, Dawson & Lewis. 2000) was extensively trialled in schools across Queensland. (IDEAS is an acronym for **I**nnovative **D**esigns for **E**nhancing **A**chievement in **S**chools.) Those schools included several in the Torres Strait where the project continues to operate. My role in the project was as the researcher aligned with the Torres Strait Island schools to assist in the IDEAS implementation process. My engagement with those Torres Strait Island schools working with IDEAS (and several other mainland schools) has allowed me access to some valuable cross-cultural insights, which form the basis of the data for this paper.

Research Based Framework.

The IDEAS process is based on a number of years of research in Australian schools (Crowther, Hann & McMaster, 2001; Cuttance, 2001) and extends the work of Newmann and Wehlage (1995) in the United States in relation to successful school improvement. Fundamentally, IDEAS proposes that successful school renewal evidenced by the promotion of successful (measured by the dominant educational norms) student outcomes, occurs as the result of the alignment of several significant aspects of each school. These components must be functionally evident in each school and they must be aligned in ways that reflect the uniqueness of each context. Furthermore, teachers play a very significant role in managing

the process, though they cannot act alone. The significant elements of schools are identified in what is called the Research Based Framework (Figure 1.).
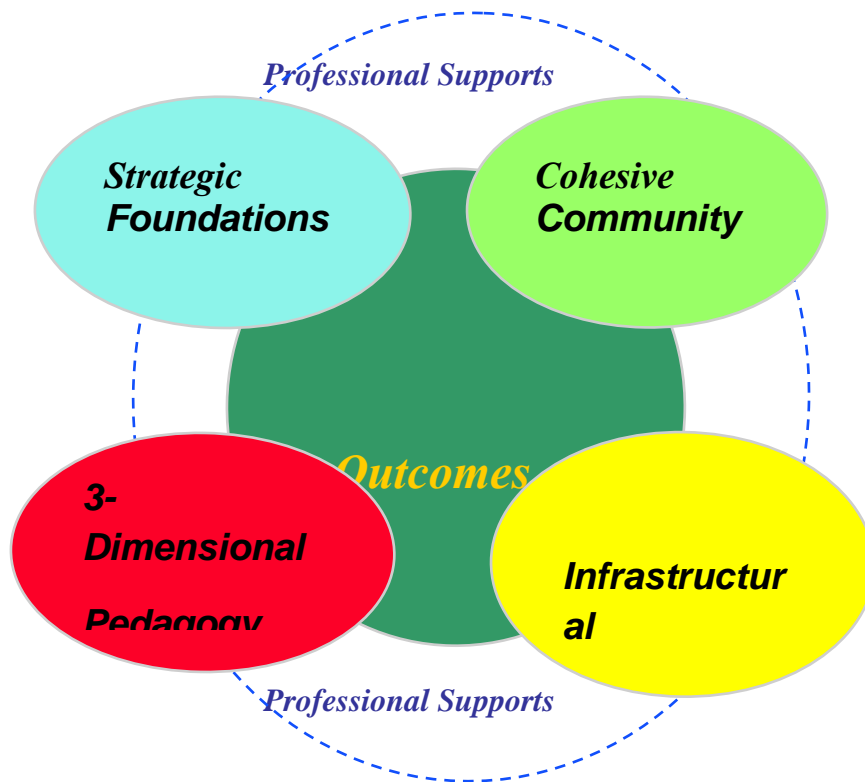
Figure 1: Research Based Framework (Crowther, et.al., 2000)

The Research Based Framework identifies the essential school components as, Strategic Foundations, Cohesive Community, Infrastructural Design and 3-Dimensional Pedagogy. These elements when suitably aligned and supported by appropriate professional supports within the school, focus on defining and delivering positive student outcomes.

Strategic Foundations includes several diverse notions of leadership, including Principal leadership, Teacher leadership and Parallel leadership. These leadership elements work together through the creation of an inclusive school vision that generates the educational,

futuristic and aspirational motivation, which drive all school processes. For an inclusive and widely 'owned' vision to be effectively created, all participants in the school, community, staff and students must be involved intimately in the visioning process. This ensures that as many people as possible are able to see their aspirations for the school and the students, who may be their own children, reflected in the vision. The vision also needs to reflect the uniqueness of the school context, further strengthening that broad ownership of the school and its directions. The visioning process, when conducted openly and inclusively, actively works towards the creation of a strong and vital school community, whose interests are directed at ensuring positive educational outcomes for all students. The focus on student outcomes is important because not only is it the work of the school but such an attitude across the school community encourages focus and can promote a more inclusive attitude towards knowledge realms.

The visioning process promotes a strong and inclusive **cohesive school community**, with an understanding of the school's direction and of those who feel part of the school. This community should ideally be, or work toward becoming, a learning community, as the IDEAS process promotes lifelong learning for all. As the school moves through the IDEAS process, knowledge is created, not just by the students but by all the participants in the change process. A new environment results, within which there are new issues needing to be addressed and so the process itself needs to be revitalised and revisited in order to keep the school moving forward. The sense of community is strong and vital in schools where the IDEAS research has identified significant outcomes occurring. One of the aims of the IDEAS process is to promote schools as learning communities, not just places where children are compelled to spend significant amounts of their time. Part of this community of learners involves the professional learning of teachers as an important component. The complex

nature of the type of learning community envisioned as the result of the IDEAS process however, is more holistic and inclusive than this one element alone and reflects the research based framework component, cohesive community.

Infrastructural design refers to the resourcing aspects of the school, both physical and human. In any school, activities need to be prioritised to enable progress to be made within the confines of limited budgets. Costly projects need to be planned over a number of years, whilst at the same time catering for ongoing maintenance and unexpected equipment failure. Reorganising or using resources in different ways is also an important skill to foster, as too frequently schools waste existing resources by replacing them with new ones designed to do the same job.

Finally, **3-dimensional pedagogy** refers to the significance of the work of teachers in the process of promoting positive educational outcomes for students. The research referred to earlier (Crowther, Hann & McMaster, 2001; Cuttance, 2001) highlights the importance of promoting educational change by identifying and focussing on the successful practices that exist in the school. Teachers, students and parents should all be involved in exploring the dimensions of these successful practices and identifying between 6 and 8 school-wide pedagogies, or successful practices that seem to occur in classrooms across the school. This nominal selection of pedagogies is made to keep the process manageable and if the synthesis of the school data is done well, many pedagogies that reflect similar processes can be combined under generic descriptors.   Whilst school-wide pedagogy is one important element of 3-dimensional pedagogy, the research underpinning the IDEAS process, also indicates that in addition to successful school practices, teachers needed to explore their own pedagogic strengths in order to identify how they can contribute to enhancing the school-wide pedagogy

or, alternatively, what they might need to do in a professional development sense to enhance their own pedagogic competencies. From a quality control perspective, it is important that the school-wide pedagogies are able to be supported by authoritative pedagogic theory, so that the breadth and extent of pedagogic expression is able to encompass the variety of educational theory, thereby facilitating inclusion of the full range of educational philosophical positions. So the three elements of 3-dimensional pedagogy are, school-wide pedagogy, personal pedagogy and authoritative pedagogy.

Illustration of the process in action.

An example of how school-wide pedagogies might be negotiated is provided by my field notes of an actual site process.

School -Wide Pedagogies identified by the staff of The Peak State School   20/08/03

These are the pedagogic expressions that are considered and described by the staff as being successful at The Peak State School. They describe The Peak's way of teaching.

- o *Culturally significant*
- o *Working together*
- o *Learning together*
- o *Striving for excellence*
- o *Continual improvement*
- o *Multiple explanations*
- o *Problem solving*
- o *Enthusiasm*
- o *Taking risks*
- o *Real learning*
- o *Caring*
- o *Encouraging*

- *Independent learner*

- *Flexible learner*

- *Responsible learner*

- *Active citizen*

- *Good relationships*

- *Supportive learning*

Staff need to talk to students about what pedagogies they like. Remember that the students experience our teaching every day and will have a good understanding of what is good teaching and what is not. Community will also have some ideas of what good teaching looks like and they should be included. The more you include people the more people will support you.

From here, staff need to reduce this large number of pedagogies to about 6. Too many will make the process of remembering them too difficult. Everyone needs to know and use the pedagogies identified.

This is my first rough take on organizing these pedagogies

Learning together	*Good relationships*
	Working together
	Learning together
Enjoyable learning	*Supportive learning*
	Caring
	Encouraging
	Enthusiasm
Emphasizing excellence	*Continual improvement*
	Striving for excellence
Child-centered learning	*Multiple explanations*
	Flexible learning
	Independent learners
Real life learning	*Real learning*
	Risk taking
	Problem solving
	Responsible learners
	Active citizens
Cultural learning	*Cultural significance*

(Field notes of the workshop to explore School Wide Pedagogy at The Peak State School, 20/08/03)

It is absolutely vital that students be significantly involved in this process as they are the ones who have to live with the daily work of teachers. If this work is effective through the eyes of the students, effective learning will occur. Sometimes, as professionals we tend to overlook the impact of our actions on students, and are too ready to exclude or ignore the views of those who really understand what good pedagogy looks, feels and sounds like.

Having identified the school-wide pedagogies, it is important that teachers reflect on their own strengths and challenges in terms of the school-wide pedagogies. Not every teacher will have strengths in all the school-wide pedagogies, so the opportunity exists for professional development that derives directly from successful pedagogies identified by the school community to occur. Not only are teachers expected to reflect on their relationship to the school-wide pedagogies but it is professionally responsible for teachers to link their own professional beliefs about good practice to the school-wide pedagogies. These professional beliefs about good practice are reflected in and related to the authoritative and theoretical underpinnings of educational practice. What I've just described are the three dimensions of pedagogy: the successful school pedagogies or school-wide pedagogies; the personal pedagogies of each teacher and how they reflect the school-wide pedagogies; and the authoritative pedagogies and how these are reflected both in the teacher's personal pedagogies and the school-wide pedagogies. Praxis arising from this tripartite reflective action drives effective pedagogy by both identifying it and refining it.

School Revitalisation.

The course of school revitalisation generated through the IDEAS process is depicted in Figure 2.

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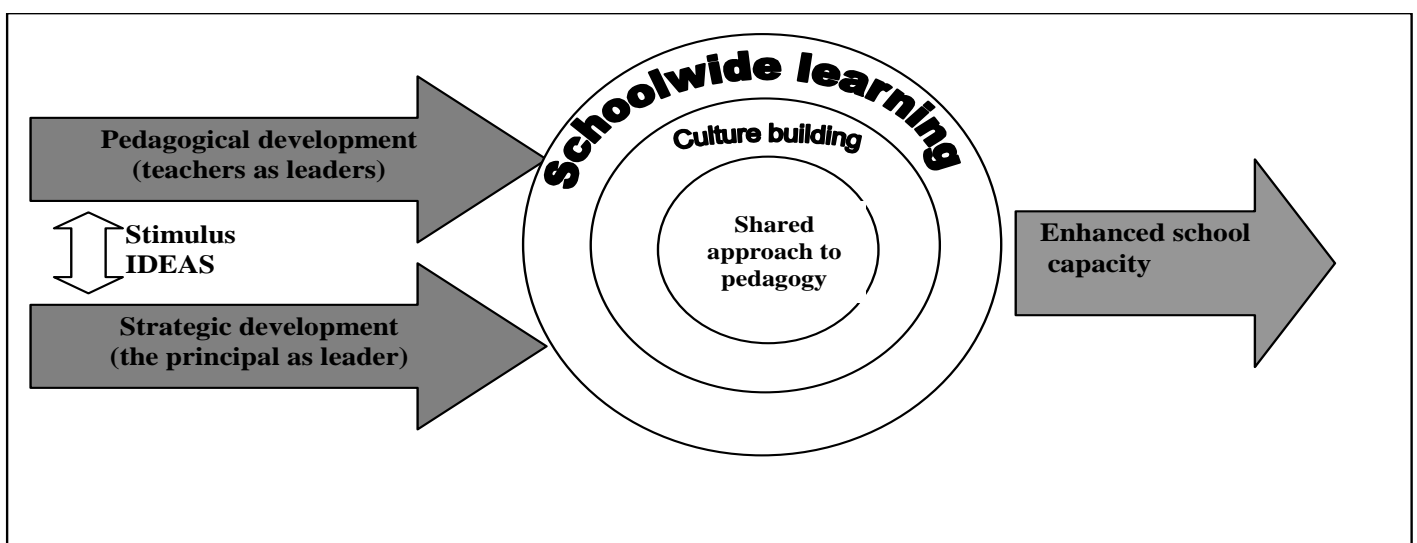
Figure 2: Processes that Enable School Renewal. (Crowther, F., Hann, L., McMaster, J., 2001).

'... in a study of selected Australian schools that initiated and sustained significant improvement in student achievement it was conclusive that parallel leadership activates three processes that enable improvements to occur. The processes are schoolwide learning, culture building and a schoolwide approach to pedagogy.'

(Crowther, Hann & McMaster, 2001).

Parallel leadership.

The relatively new idea of parallel leadership as it is defined in the literature, (Crowther, Hann & McMaster, 2001) explores the various leadership roles that can be activated in fundamental school change processes, by all engaged participants including the Principal, other administrators, teachers, teacher aides, ancilliary staff, students and community members. Every participant may be involved in a leadership role working alongside other 'leaders' as the school change processes evolve. In addition, such 'leaders' may become more or less involved in the change processes depending on the demand for their experience and expertise to facilitate the change processes. The IDEAS process encourages a very flexible and inclusive view of leadership based on both individual and collective competencies. The focus of parallelism in leadership is on the best outcome for all participants.

i.d.e.a.s.

In a practical sense, the IDEAS process involves the following stages which are identified by the lower case acronym, **ideas**, standing for **i**nitiating, **d**iscovering, **e**nvisioning, **a**ctioning and **s**ustaining. It may take considerably different periods of time to progress from initiation to sustaining, depending on the context of each individual educational site. The anticipated time frame to complete one cycle is anywhere from 12 to 18 months, although this varies considerably. IDEAS does not emphasise time constraints, as it relies on the active engagement of the school community in defining and developing the process to its most meaningful conclusion in each cycle. In some schools, developing a cohesive sense of community might be a significant task thereby taking more time to achieve; in other schools the envisioning process may stall before it is completed with the school moving on to the actioning phase, returning to clarify the vision at a later time. Some schools are a well-established cohesive community and have introduced the process through the actioning phase, prior to engaging the vision. Other schools have a well established 'vision' in the form of a motto that they are reluctant to change. They might be engaged in the process from the actioning phase only to return to their motto to discover that it is not a vision. This realisation forces them to the conclusion that they need an educational view of the future (vision) to drive their renewal, if their school is to move forward.

The Research Based Framework around which the IDEAS process functions enables school communities to define their existing educo-cultural boundaries (contexts) and identify those valued processes that occur within them. In some sense the IDEAS knowledge register presumes the capacity to transcend cultural boundaries. Consequently, the product that emerges identifies what exists as well as what is deemed to be desirable educationally and is

informed by elements of historic (traditional) and contemporary sociocultural complexes. Because Torres Strait views of educational leadership, community, pedagogy, resourcing, outcomes and support (amongst many variables) are likely to be very different from those of mainland Australian communities, the data gathered using the IDEAS process reflects those local idiosyncrasies both at the community level and at the regional level. The data demonstrate that whilst there are important similarities between Torres Strait Island communities there are also vital differences between them. This will become clear as I deal directly with the data from a number of sites across the Torres Strait. My aim in approaching the data from this perspective is to stimulate the educational dialogue in the Torres Strait and the systemic bureaucracy that defines it.

The whole school renewal process (IDEAS) is work that school communities must engage in themselves. My role as a school-based IDEAS researcher was to explain and to guide schools through the process, not to direct it, though I do acknowledge that by virtue of my 'authority' in this work, I was not able to eliminate my influence completely. Hence the statements about good pedagogy in each community, are statements made by children, teachers, other school staff including administration and ancillary staff, parents and interested community members. The community component of the research based framework provided significant flexibility, sufficient to allay my initial concerns about whether this would be just another white means of manipulating Torres Strait Islanders. What I discovered was that the process provided the platform for Torres Strait Islander people to significantly influence education in their own schools, in their own ways, using information that might be challenged but which cannot be dismissed by education authorities. My own presence, as a person of authority through my previous teacher role as well as ongoing relationships with Torres Strait

Islanders, and the possible influence it may have had on the process, was the subject of considerable interrogation and monitoring throughout the research project (see *YUMI Research* and *YUMI Pedagogy* for further discussion).

Conclusion.

Whilst the IDEAS process acts as the catalyst to move schools through an educational regeneration strategy, my use of the process for this study was as a data generation mechanism. By engaging the various schools I visited in the IDEAS process, I was able to facilitate the process for them and at the same time teach the facilitation process to a team of school personnel who could then run the process for Torres Strait Island schools.   No site became dependent on my presence for the application of the IDEAS process. When I revisited schools I was able to use the schoolwide pedagogy data where it was available to inform this current study. It is important for the reader to have knowledge of the IDEAS process, however my focus for the purposes of this study is on the pedagogic component of the process. In the major paper, *YUMI Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Strait* I have used the data relating to pedagogy at each site and generated through the application of the IDEAS process to demonstrate that there appears to be a very high level of consistency in relation to those pedagogic practices that seem to work successfully in Torres Strait Island schools.

The link between the IDEAS process and pedagogies with cultural integrity, lies in the processes capacity to identify these pedagoies in culturally inobtrusive ways. As participants in the identification process, Torres Strait Islanders were able to position themselves to clearly articulate their views, thereby giving legitimacy to their 'voice'.

I acknowledge again that the IDEAS process is a western framework and thereby inherently risks imposing hegemony and dislocation in regard to Torres Strait Islander locations. I do however believe that the nature of the process is such that it does provide a more inclusive opportunity for, in this instance Torres Strait Islanders, to be acknowledged and heard and furthermore become engaged in an active change process that is both defined and driven by Torres Strait Islander peoples and their views.

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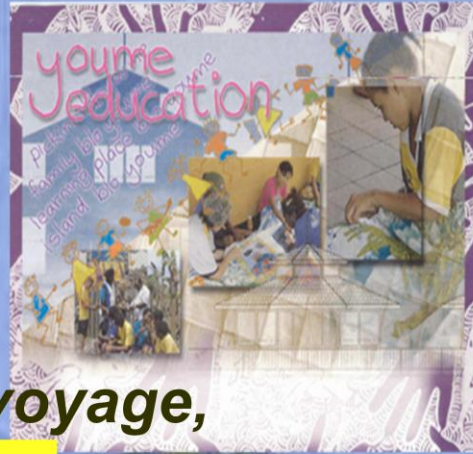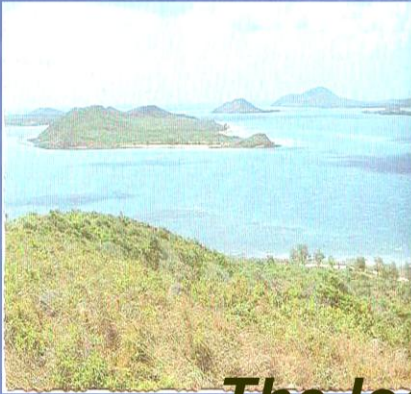
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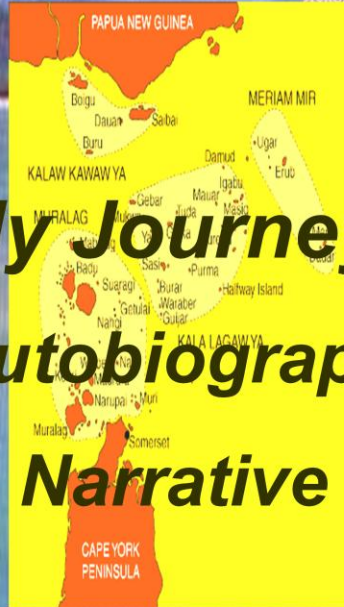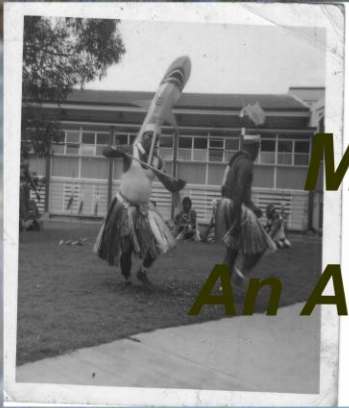
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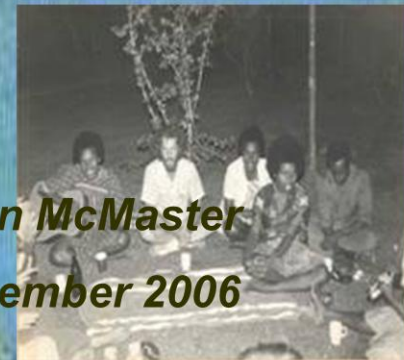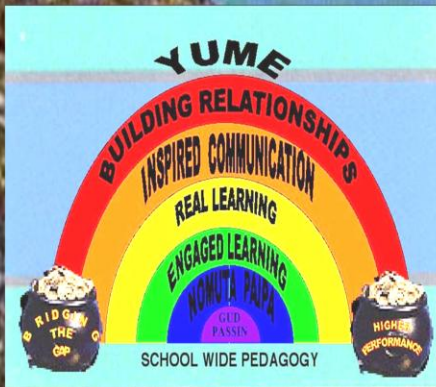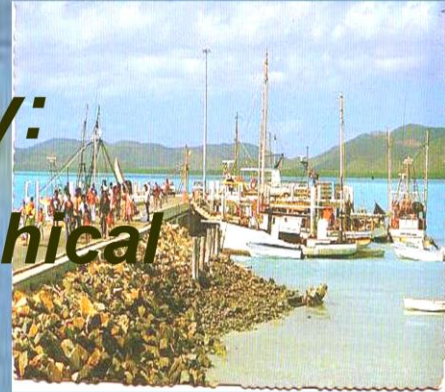
Narrative

John McMaster

November 2006

My Journey: An Autobiographical Narrative.

CONTENTS

<p style="text-align: center">***My Journey: An Autobiographical Narrative.***</p>

Introduction.

This is the story of my involvement in education in the Torres Strait. Beginning in the early 1970's I've been fortunate to witness from inside the process, education of, for and by Torres Strait Islander peoples. This has been an experience full of complexity and contradictions. Some of the processes have had my active and enthusiastic support and some of the consequences I have seen as not being favourable to Torres Strait Islander self-management or best interests. One thing I have learned is that reflection is a wonderful means of obtaining insights into past experiences and that contrary to popular opinion learning 'after the event' doesn't always produce the changes that the creation of new knowledge might suggest it should.

When I first arrived in the Torres Strait in 1974, I was the newly appointed co-ordinator of the Torres Strait Islander Teacher Education Program. As the Torres Strait Islander schools were still administered by the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement (DAIA), mine was a secondment from what was then the State Department of Education. The program itself ran out of the North Brisbane College of Advanced Education at Kedron Park, on the north side of Brisbane. Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE) were a new creation of the federal government at the time and teacher education was really still, teacher training. The Colleges were staffed by ex-teachers, most of whom had been employees of the Teachers Colleges that the CAE's had replaced. The apparently innocuous change nevertheless illustrates a predilection for cosmetic changes in preference to pursuing the more complicated and difficult processes involved in undertaking fundamental change. Education in any form, at this stage, was still very clearly located in a social transmission paradigm (Burns, 2002).

Curriculum and content dominated educational process and defined educational practice. Teaching was understood to be a technical exercise closely aligned to 'instruction' and training. The product of such a view is very closely aligned with internalising appropriate behaviour patterns for both prospective teachers and their students. Teacher 'training' was nothing more than the exposition and adoption of teaching formulae that required little thinking, encouraged no reflection and actively promoted the repetition and rote acquisition of skills.

Beginning teaching: preparing to set out.

My own early experiences as a teacher illustrate this model. On reflection, I find it fascinating to recollect my first experience in a school, with my own class. The Principal introduced me to my room and the program that I was expected to follow with my Grade 3. The official thinking then was (and still is in some cases today, unfortunately) that as a new teacher I could do the least possible damage in the lower middle school. Children at this stage of their schooling had had the benefit of experienced teachers for a couple of years before me and would have experienced teachers for a couple of years after me, so any damage I caused to their education in the interim could be easily repaired. What was even more surprising was the work program I was handed and told to have copied into a new booklet within the week – word for word! I was assured that the copy would be checked for its accuracy and that no variation from its pattern of instruction would be tolerated. This program laid out all my work for the year, down to what spelling words would be taught, on what days and at what time. The schedule was rigorously implemented and monitored by the Principal who regularly checked on my work throughout each day. Any failure to follow or keep up with the program in the grey book was met with a severe and aggressive display of intolerance directed at me, in front of my own class and within inches of my face. I think I was more intimidated by the propensity of the Principal to spit as he yelled when he was

angry. Intimidation of young/new teachers was as much a part of teacher induction then as it was a part of the education of the children. The year was 1970.

It was only four years after this quite unsettling experience, presumably aimed at modelling for my benefit the behaviour of an expert teacher, that I was undertaking the task of educating Torres Strait Islander teachers. In spite of my instincts telling me that the modelling I was observing was educationally inept and dangerously counter productive, I think it is clear that subliminally, I was internalising some bad habits and some very colonial professional behaviours,. 'Good' teachers apparently yelled, cajoled, spent all day being angry at the failure of their students to learn, forced students to learn by punishing them with more learning when they failed to learn, dominated the classroom from the front, constantly demonstrated their source-of-all-knowledge status and reigned supreme in the field of student control. Learning content for contents' sake was the main objective of classroom instruction and conformity to a predetermined and preselected set of syllabus knowledges, performance standards and behaviour patterns was the means whereby students successfully demonstrated achievement of educational outcomes. Students learned to play the school game in order to be certified by the institution. The nature of that certification then provided students access to other educational institutions, which verified their potential and probably their actual, situations in society (Willis, 1982; 2003). A significant aspect of society at this time was the ready availability of jobs, which provided extra opportunities and a variety of choices for those students who failed to be certified as successful, at one of the educational exit points. Social mobility was readily attainable through the growing middle class and affluence that characterised Australia in the 1960's and 70's.

Dajarra and Duchess: Finding my sea legs.

It is indeed fortunate both for me and for those students I was responsible for subsequent to that time, that I was transferred to an Aboriginal school, outside Mt Isa where I actually commenced a lifetime educational journey of my own. Under the mentorship of a married teaching couple in Dajarra and the professional guidance of a superior Regional Director, I began the process of learning to educate, as opposed to simply schooling, children. Dajarra is an Aboriginal community school a couple of hours by road south of Mt. Isa. At that time there were three teachers, including myself and about100 students. The teaching couple I was working with had taught at Darnley Island in the Torres Strait prior to coming to Dajarra, and they provided me with my first knowledge of the schools and people of that area.

In fact, I'd had no engagement or contact with Aboriginal people or Torres Strait Islander people, before arriving in Dajarra. My personal history is reflected in the burgeoning upper middle class expansion of the post World War 2 era. I'd received a private school education in Toowoomba and my tertiary education at the University of Queensland was a tabloid of parties and failure. Still, at that time tertiary education was free, Vietnam was a lived experience and revolution a foundation course in every university program. Perhaps that's how I came to develop an antipathy towards authority/dominance, which has remained with me for my entire life. Whilst I spent many hours linked arm in arm on the streets of Brisbane, protesting Vietnam, the National Party government and a variety of other causes that I can't even remember now and the odd few days in the Brisbane watch house because my father refused to bail me, as I've grown older my reactions have become more passive. This is not the result of a growing disillusionment with my inability to effect sustainable change, but rather of a growing awareness that resistance of the passive variety can often be

far more effective in achieving outcomes for your efforts. This is a digression but a revealing one I think. My original point was that my background was quite privileged. I never lacked anything, so in a sense I find it surprising that my views of the world are so enthusiastically egalitarian. Even more surprising is the fact that I've spent the vast majority of my working life in Indigenous communities across Queensland, developing a passion for their plight that I'd like to think has contributed to their benefit more often than it has entrenched the status quo. However, it is entirely possible maybe probable, that this reflects nothing more than a level of paternalism that I wasn't aware of until many years later. Indeed, my unthinking use of the word 'plight' in itself positions Indigenous people as helpless victims.

Dajarra was the main cattle loading point for the extensive cattle stations of north-west Queensland and as such had a significant railway infrastructure. Amongst the 'gangers' who worked the lines were several Torres Strait Islander families, including one from Darnley Island. Aboriginal people tended to stick to stock work rather than seek employment on the railway. As large mobs of cattle were driven across the Northern Territory border to the railhead at Dajarra, large populations of Aboriginal people accompanied them, as stockmen and camp workers, cooks and roustabouts. It was the children of these families as well as the families who were resident in the township who made up the population of the school. As the cattle moved on, so did the people, so education was a transitory and vicarious experience for many. After 12 months in Dajarra I moved up the road 32 kilometres to a one teacher school at Duchess, where the main Townsville – Mt. Isa rail line met the Dajarra spur line. The school population here consisted of a majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Torres Strait Islander children with a couple of white children from a nearby cattle station. I had 32 children enrolled from kindergarten, to Year 9. I firmly believe to this day that the next four years in that small school, working on my own, doing things that I decided were

educationally important and which were based on the educational needs and aspirations of the children, were the most significant and influential in forming my professional persona and in helping me to become what I consider to be 'a good educator'.

I say this not through any sense of arrogance but through the experience of having to rely on my own resources and decisions. Computers in schools were unheard of in the 1970's, so networking with other schools and teachers was largely restricted to the bi-annual seminars in Longreach and Gatton. In the meantime effective education still had to go on in the school, so the rather amateur analyses I undertook of the abilities and interests of the children formed the basis on which I structured my programs. I decided for example that there was no purpose in doing things that didn't attract the kids to come to school. I couldn't educate them if they weren't there. Timetables gradually relaxed to the point where they ceased to have any relevance to the real work of the school. School started for example when the first students arrived and finished when the last student had left for home. A majority out of 32 children on the roll was fairly easy to work with and on most days, most families would have children at school, even if the whole family wasn't there. It didn't take me long to work out that children often didn't attend school because they had other more important family or community tasks to attend to, like caring for sick younger siblings. All the ranting and raving about being late for school and how bad missing lots of school was for their education, didn't change the reality or get kids to come to school. In fact constant harping caused more children to stay away from school, which was exactly the opposite of what I wanted and what the children needed.

The work we did evolved from the needs and interests of the children. I did operate in a deficit paradigm (Bereiter & Engleman, 1966) however this was the latest thinking for improving education for culturally different children at the time and the new found flexibility that compensatory education promoted, gave me the educational basis for running the types of programs I opted for. I don't think that the work we did necessarily improved educational outcomes for the kids but it did encourage them to come to school and to engage in some interesting and different learning activities. I think that if State-wide testing had been around in those days, Indigenous kids would still have rated very poorly in terms of their performance and for the same reasons that this occurs today. At that time, reading ages were the basis for determining success. Success was deemed to have been achieved when a child's reading age matched or exceeded their actual age. I don't recall this ever occurring during my time at Duchess.

Utilising a significant degree of flexibility enabled me to learn so much about the children I was teaching and about myself and the work I was doing. This time was so far removed from my earliest teaching experiences in a classroom, as to be laughable. Here, the people who made judgements about my abilities as a teacher had professional discussions with me about the work going on in the school. They challenged and supported me, encouraged my efforts and guided my thinking. I was challenged to justify what I was doing but I was also encouraged to keep trying to improve the quality of my efforts. I recall being asked to present a paper at a conference of teachers in Townsville, based on the work I was doing in the school. I was absolutely terrified at the prospect and in the long run settled for simply documenting a day in the life of Duchess State School. I was later to learn that this work was described as 'discovery learning' and was being widely adopted in schools with culturally different populations.

Collegial support did not occur in isolation from other very supportive professionals, nor did it occur in isolation from a growing body of educational theory. Characteristic of the thinking of the era is 'compensatory education' and the views and thoughts of Paulo Freire (1972), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* Jonathon Kozol, (1967), *Death at an Early Age*, Ivan Illich, (1971), *Deschooling Society*, and Naom Chomsky, (1971), *Problems of Knowledge and Freedom*. It became increasingly difficult for systems to ignore the failure of their existing practices and processes to address the particular needs of significant elements of the wider society, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The State Department of Education established in the early 1970's a section headed by a Director, which was dedicated to improving outcomes for Indigenous students, through systemic initiatives. This section focussed on language teaching initiatives initially and the use of discovery learning strategies, which took advantage of hands-on, real life, active learning approaches. In many places these strategies were viewed by other educators as an indication of the inabilities of Indigenous Australians but to me they made good sense for all kids. The mainstream system focussed active learning through play in the early childhood sector but rapidly and determinedly tried to move children from concrete operations to abstract operations based on the belief that this represented higher order thought processing and reflected intellect. In another time and place I was to learn from a colleague that in fact very few adults actually ever achieve the abstract operations stage proposed by Piaget (Huitt & Hummel, 2003).

While I was in Duchess I developed discovery learning programs that deliberately linked curriculum requirements to active, realistic strategies designed to make learning fun, interesting, effective and relevant. This experience created the opportunity for me to move to

Brisbane and work directly as a curriculum developer for Indigenous schools. This work only lasted for a few months before the opportunity arose, in early 1974, for me to move to North Brisbane College of Advanced Education and take responsibility for the Torres Strait Islander Teacher Education Program (TSITEP).

Two very good teachers had run the program for several years prior to my appointment and through my eyes had done a great job. I can recall this feeling being defined by the careful and detailed curriculum planning that both had engaged in with the Torres Strait Islander program. Daily sessions began at 9.00am and finished at 3.00pm. A group of about 20 Torres Strait Islander teachers were 'selected' by the Director of the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement (DAIA). They were brought down to Brisbane for a year at a time to undertake the course, prior to returning to their schools in the Torres Strait, as teachers.

Melbidir: Beginning the voyage.

To prepare me for my role I was about to embark on I was sent to Bachelor (Northern Territory) to spend a week working in their Aboriginal teacher training program and following that, I was sent around to visit all the Torres Strait Island schools over a period of about five weeks. At that time, the only reliable mode of transport was aboard the Government boat, Melbidir. There were several other smaller boats (Torres Strait Islander, Torres Venture, Stephen Davies) that visited the outer Torres Strait Islands from time to time but Melbidir was the official government mode of supply and transport throughout the Torres Strait. I can vividly recall that trip. It was in the change of season, between the dry and the onset of the wet. The weather was indescribably glorious and on some days it was almost impossible to find the horizon, because the water was so calm. Sea snakes caught in the

currents as they boiled up through the reef constantly swam on the surface and the ever present troll line never failed to catch an evening meal.

The outer Torres Strait Island trips to both Eastern and Western Torres Strait Islands took a week to get out and a week to get back. 'Bluey' Douglas, skipper of the Melbidir, would not sail at night and so we anchored each evening at an island. As we off-loaded supplies at each Torres Strait Island, I'd go ashore, introduce myself to the Council Chairman and get permission to visit the school. In the 1970's Torres Strait Island Councils had considerable independence, though this was always sanctioned by the Government administration in Thursday Island. This authority had come about as a reaction by Government to the 1936 strike by Torres Strait Islanders working their own pearling luggers (Singe, 1979) and the 1939 Torres Strait Islanders Act, which theoretically at least, proposed a significant level of independence for Torres Strait Islanders. The reality however was and still is, that crucial influence rested with the white administration and any pretensions to independence were and still are, illusory. Nakata (2001) describes the personal impact of this disillusionment from the perspective of a Torres Strait Torres Strait Islander, reflecting on his personal Torres Strait Torres Strait Islander history and experience.

> *"… that despite some successes, despite the fact, that yes, things had changed and that we were able to go away to school, that we had 'more' education and some of us eventually made it to tertiary level, that relatively speaking, vis a vis whites, we were not really in a much better position than we had been all those years ago."*

and

> *"… despite 'changes', dealing with white control in the eighties was little different from dealing with it in the twenties."* (p.335).

Interestingly, in some ways, access to the Torres Strait Islands for me, was much easier then, than it is even today. In my current round of school visits, I was unable to get to Ugar because the weather was too rough to travel by dinghy and the university refused to pay the exorbitant cost for the helicopter trip. On the Melbidir, each island was able to be visited in pretty well all kinds of weather.   The only condition that would prevent the Melbidir anchoring at any particular island was the tide. Dinghies ferried goods and people from the Melbidir to the island in those days, so there was no point in anchoring at low tide if the island was only accessible via half a kilometre of reef. Few Torres Strait Islands had natural and safe landing areas that were close to the island at low tide and no Torres Strait Island had their own wharf in those days, as they all do today.

My first visit to the Torres Strait Island schools highlighted examples of cultural dominance that characterized those years. The 1967 referendum was a very recent victory for Indigenous peoples and the conservative Bjelke-Petersen government in Queensland had already moved to further entrench its racist policies and practices by adopting such palliative tactics as changing the name of the Department responsible for Indigenous Queenslanders, to something which on the surface appeared more positive and less invidious than it actually was. It was only after a great deal of pressure from the Federal government, that the State Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Affairs undertook a name change to the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement. At the stroke of a pen, this Department purportedly went from what was popularly feared as a repressive and colonialist bureaucracy, to a democratic and liberatory welfare agency, and all without even having to change the official stationery. I can still recall official documents with 'Affairs' whited out and

'Advancement' typed in over it. No change of personnel, policies, processes, procedures or attitudes and behaviours was considered to be necessary.   Simply a change of name made everything appear to be acceptable and further illustrated the subtle, all pervasive and invisible power of whiteness to ignore hegemony (Rothenberg, 2000).

The departmental name change just described, itself illustrates the power of whiteness to 'white-out' those things it does not feel comfortable with. It also suggests that rather than a change of heart, this move acknowledged the significance attached to the name change. When a definite change of attitude was demanded, the Queensland Government either failed to recognize the importance of its actions, or alternatively, understood them only too well. Colonialism was alive and well and bureaucrats in Brisbane continued to make decisions on behalf of Torres Strait Islanders, on the basis that the bureaucrats knew best what the people needed, for their 'advancement'. This belief invariably included a strong emphasis on Christianity, management by presumption and default and cultural validation based on vicarious experiences of what were perceived to be 'pagan' rites and rituals. It was a time of 'white protectors' who made decisions about and on behalf of Torres Strait Islander people. In an educational sense, the same could still be said about today, as my experience supported by this research demonstrates (see the voyages, *YUME Research* and *YUME Pedagogy).*

To return to the initial journey, travel around the islands in the Melbidir was a very pleasant and very colonial, way of visiting the schools. It conjures images of the white colonialist, resplendent in traditional pith helmet, relaxing on deck, cold drink in hand whilst being fanned by the obligatory and subservient dusky maiden. This was very close to the reality. Whites received preference over Torres Strait Islanders in most aspects of life. Travel

options were very limited and I am aware that on several occasions, I made trips on the Melbidir in place of Torres Strait Islanders who had been scheduled to go before me. In those days I didn't possess the courage to object to this and justified the process by convincing myself that my work in the Torres Strait Island schools was equally important. The fact that those who missed out on the trip wouldn't get back to their island for another fortnight must have conveniently escaped my attention.

These days access is much more regular and time in each location can be managed much more efficiently but in those days - and remember that I'm only talking about thirty years ago - the length of visits on shore were determined by the amount of cargo that was to be off loaded and whether or not Melbidir would sail again that day. Since visitors were a rarity, school personnel were usually very pleased to see someone. Invariably guests were treated to a level of hospitality that was difficult to maintain, given the restrictions on food and alcohol that existed then. Whilst some Torres Strait Islands had canteens, wine was a rare treat, so I usually carried a couple of bottles to each island by way of appreciation for the hospitality shown to me by others. This was only for the white teachers, as it was deemed inappropriate for Torres Strait Islanders. It may even amount to an accusation of 'grog running', if I were discovered to be sharing wine with Torres Strait Islander families. In those days, daily radio schedules were the only means of communication with the outer islands, so always before departing from Thursday Island (T.I.), I'd radio the islands I was intending to visit asking the 'schoolies' if there was anything I could bring out for them. The simplest things like fresh bread, and fruit or vegetables were always welcome, as these things were not readily available in the outer islands. I'd also end up with school equipment, medicines, food, books, newspapers and all sorts of items that ranged from essential to luxury in nature.

The Melbidir was a microcosmic reflection of the wider society in the Torres Strait. White travellers were provided a cabin, usually shared, and catered for. Torres Strait Islander crew were provided a shared cabin and catered for. Torres Strait Islanders travelling aboard were provided nothing. They ate what they could carry with them and slept where there was a space. I can recall overnighting at Nagir on one trip. We anchored in the late afternoon, alongside the reef and the crew and passengers went out onto the reef collecting clam meat, which they cooked in sea water. The muscle of the clam when cooked like this is delicious and tastes just like crab meat. The very best of the clam meat was cooked by the Torres Strait Islander people and served to the skipper and white passengers, including me. The remainder of the meat was shared amongst the crew and the passengers. Many mothers would return to their home Torres Strait Island after having a baby in Thursday Island and exist for several days on nothing but a bunch of bananas and water, which they brought with them from Thursday Island. If passengers had family members amongst the crew, they would often share the cooked food available to the crew member. If you were on your own, then you existed on what you had with you, normally fresh coconuts and bananas.

On Thursday Island, white people, especially the administrators, led a life not vastly different from those on the mainland. Travel was still restricted and so supplies were not readily available, meaning that fresh food was scarce. The Torres Strait Islander diet however had significant levels of fresh fruit and vegetables. Yams, tiaro, sweet potato and manioc, grew in profusion in the family gardens on all Torres Strait Islands. Tropical fruits including mangos, bananas, and a range of native fruits such as sorabee and wongai flourished on the Torres Strait Islands and provided a balanced diet for the people. Life across the Torres Strait

however was not nearly as comfortable then as it is today. In 1970, the water supply for the whole of Thursday Island was drawn from a small well that still exists today on the side of Green Hill. During the dry season, it was not unusual for the island to run out of water and the community had to rely totally on their household tanks. I can vividly recall the (original) Grand Hotel, where I normally stayed, closing down the showers and toilets for extended periods during both the day and night, to conserve what little water was available. Water was also a concern for the outer Torres Strait Islands. Islands like Poruma and Warraber, which are little more than coral atolls regularly had water shipped into them during the dry season, since they had no wells and tank water was the only source of their supply. Even Torres Strait Islands like Iama, where wells are still sources of water for the community, ran out of water during the dry season. All Torres Strait Islands these days have large dams with covered collection surfaces to both collect water during the wet season and prevent evaporation during the dry. Even so, increasing populations on the outer Torres Strait Islands, resulting from improved services and facilities have stretched available resource usage to the point where land, water and marine resources are being pushed to their limits. As in most communities across the globe, sustainability presents as a very real series of challenges for communities across the Torres Strait.

The impact this first trip had on me was huge. I had never encountered such diversity and such cultural difference. Everything that I'd taken for granted was challenged. I'd lived in isolation before but I'd never experienced such total isolation. If the boat didn't arrive for whatever reason, teachers just had to make do until it did. The schools were barely tins sheds in some cases and supplies of books and pencils were luxuries for many. The central government machine managed school supplies which were ordered once a year. If the orders weren't put in on time, no supplies arrived. Worse than that was the knowledge that an entire

year's supply of materials had to be transported by boat from Thursday Island. Often these were carried as deck cargo, so the whole consignment could be water damaged beyond use, as the supplies came in the wet season. On top of this, if the consignment did manage to get to the island intact, it still had to survive being shipped by dinghy from the Melbidir to the island. It was not unusual for cargo to be dropped overboard as it was being loaded into the dinghies.

For the first time in my life I was totally reliant on other people for the very basics like food and unless I'd made arrangements prior to leaving Thursday Island, I had no means of repaying their kindness. Not that anyone ever sought repayment but my sentiment was that life, through my naive eyes, on the Torres Strait Islands was so rugged that no one needed another person to look after and especially not a white one who cringed at eating turtle meat, (but only after I found out what I'd just eaten for the first time). Time was treated very differently to what I was used to. On my arrival at an island to visit the school, I may find that the teacher and the class were off doing something else and nowhere to be found. I believed that I dealt with this quite comfortably at the time, but on reflection realise how confronting I inevitably found this apparent disregard for the official timetable. I was totally dependent on the vagaries of the Melbidir and her captain for the amount of time that was at my disposal. If I were not back on board by the time the second horn sounded, the boat would depart without me. Many times I achieved nothing at all by being at the school, as there was no one there to do anything with and when the first horn sounded, I departed for the dinghy. Staying on the Torres Strait Islands was a difficult and intrusive activity. It meant living with the Principal or teacher in their home, eating their food and sharing their time. Whilst I benefited enormously from such experiences, I'm not sure that my hosts gained much in return, except perhaps some conversation.

Educational facilities likewise have experienced periods of growth and development over the years as well as periods of stagnation. The isolation of the area meant that transport costs were prohibitive and they remain largely that way today. There was a period during which repair and maintenance services for things like electricity, plumbing and general construction was not available on Thursday Island. If services broke down, it meant an expensive process of flying in crews to undertake the work from the mainland. Most of this work was done by the Government Department of Public Works but during the mid 1970's private enterprises, such as Babinda Electrics realised the potential for their business and began placing permanent workforces on Thursday Island. This has expanded considerably to the point where today, services are just as readily available as on the mainland. Transport costs however still plague the economy of the Torres Strait and continue to contribute to the exorbitant building and maintenance costs that largely define and confine development throughout the region.

North Brisbane CAE: Learning to read the stars - a case study of cross cultural learning.

In the early 1970's and up until the mid 1980's, the Department of Aboriginal and Islander's Advancement managed (in every sense of the word) the entire Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula area. This included the educational services that were available on all of the inhabited islands in the Torres Strait and in the Northern Peninsular Area. The Torres Strait Islander Teacher Education Program that I was responsible for at the North Brisbane College of Advanced Education at Kedron Park in Brisbane, ran a three year teacher education program. This program was independent from mainstream teacher education but attempted to follow a similar and parallel pattern of learning. I considered that such a process was more

likely to achieve improved educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander children, than adhering to the rigid and very structured procedures that I witnessed in Torres Strait Island schools at that time.

What I failed to appreciate for some 25 years was that what I'd considered to be an outmoded pedagogic process was in fact a very traditional Torres Strait Islander pedagogy, which had worked very effectively for those small and settled communities, for many generations. During the collection of data for recording the log of the voyage, *YUME Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Strait*, there is evidence of this same traditional and very effective teaching practice in process today. It is characterised by demonstration and observation, interlaced with questioning for clarification. Story (yarning) is a significant element, where the teacher illustrates their knowledge with real life stories and legends. Learners observe, practice and attempt to reproduce what they have observed. Skills refinement is important and the teacher takes great pains to repeat those processes that the learner is finding difficult – all the time relating appropriate stories to illustrate the significance or the application of the particular skill/s. It is interesting to note that whilst classrooms in contemporary Torres Strait Island schools tend to be active and noisy places, the groups of learners gathered to inherit the wisdom of their elders were consistently calm, quiet and focussed. I witnessed this same experience in an activity undertaken by a much younger Torres Strait Islander teacher aide in 2003. The young teacher aide conducted an art activity – lino printing, with two groups of Year 7 students. The same process of observation, explanation and demonstration had two groups of students silently captivated. Having observed this activity, my initial tendency to attribute this response to respect for their elders was changed to acknowledge that what I was seeing was a genuinely traditional and effective pedagogy, in the hands of the right teacher.

School processes in the past however were very strict and dominating and reflected the same attitudes that were modelled for me at the beginning of my own career. Torres Strait Islander teachers dominated their rooms physically, orally and intellectually. These are the lessons that they learned from observation of mainland classrooms when they undertook practicum in Brisbane. The Torres Strait Islander Teacher Education program in Brisbane was focussed on curriculum components which the Torres Strait Islander teachers were then expected to put into practice in very different settings to those in which they observed or practised, in Brisbane. Racist experiences were also common, especially when assessment of their ability to teach was involved. The program at North Brisbane College of Advanced Education involved Torres Strait Islander teachers in developing curriculum knowledge, cultural knowledge and political knowledge. The cohort of students was drawn from across the Torres Strait Islands, usually numbered about 20 and was always vetted by the Director of the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement. Students often spoke of finding themselves selected to come down to Brisbane for teacher education, in spite of indicating that they did not want to do so. Although I endeavoured to select a coherent cohort of students to come down, it took a couple of years to establish a pattern whereby student groups reflected their previous education. By that I mean that student groups consisted of: all new teachers; or teachers who had been down to Brisbane for 1 year of education; or teachers who had two years education in Brisbane. Technically this should have represented some sort of developmental progression of expertise and skill but that was never apparent in the first few years that I ran the program.

For many of the Torres Strait Islander teachers who came down to Brisbane, the experience itself was daunting. Many had never travelled by train before and the two day trip from Cairns to Brisbane was both exciting and frightening. Fortunately we never lost anyone in the time I was responsible for the course but we had several very close calls, as trains were held in stations while a student was searched for in the station complex. Brisbane itself was a new experience for many of the students. I can recall spending days in the city centre with groups of new students who spent most of their time riding the escalators in David Jones' store. Buses were a constant problem, as students would jump on the first bus that came along and I spent a lot of time travelling around the suburbs of Brisbane collecting lost and frightened students. Brisbane was a much bigger place than the communities students were used to and it was not surrounded by water, thereby limiting their ability to get lost.   Luckily they deliberately chose to travel around in company with one another, so they had some support and they always had my home phone number if things got out of control. Phones were a potential trap for the students too. I encouraged them to find their own shared accommodation so they could be as independent as possible and normally there was a telephone installed. Whether they initially understood or not, the fact that they could simply pick up the phone and ring Thursday Island, or relatives around Australia, was both positive and problematic. The number of telephone bills in the hundreds of dollars, which was a lot of money in those days that I had to sort out after students returned home, ensured that one of the first things I did with any new group was to suggest that they have pay phones in their accommodation. This idea never caught on and in the end I suggested that they use my phone at the College to ring home and not have a phone in their accommodation at all.

This sounds like a paternalistic approach on my part but the unpaid bills led Telecom, as it was then, to invoke cultural stereotypes, refusing to install phones in student accommodation

when they discovered the students were Torres Strait Islanders. Accusing Telecom of racism made me feel good but achieved absolutely nothing in terms of successful outcomes.

Some students stayed with family who lived in Morningside. This was excellent, as it provided some vital familiarity and security in an environment which was essentially alien. During holiday periods (the program had the same holidays as schools) I usually organised camps and excursions for the students. These camps illustrate even more cross-cultural complexities. I had strong links with Oodgeroo Noonuccal and the students regularly spent recess time camped at her property at Moongalba on Stradbroke Island, but they were always very wary of Oodgeroo. They had identified her as a spirit woman and some students expressed great relief when the camp was over. This association was so strong that eventually word got around all the students and teachers in the Strait and on arrival in Brisbane, I would be quizzed by the students about whether or not we would be camping at Stradbroke Island with Oodgeroo, that year. I eventually moved the camps to Adder Rock, near Point Lookout and then to Dunwich where the College had leased the old sand mining barracks, because of the reluctance of students to stay at Moongalba. I was personally disappointed by this as I counted Oodgeroo as a good friend and had no wish to offend her but the Torres Strait Islander students were obviously uncomfortable in her presence and forcing the issue would have been futile, unnecessary and disrespectful of all parties.

These camping opportunities provided students with a variety of experiences in familiar environments. They provided valuable opportunities to explore a wide range of learning and teaching opportunities and to apply what the students had learned at College. Stradbroke Island is an hour by barge away from Brisbane and, whilst not exactly tropical, it is closer to the environments the students were familiar with, than the city. The camps were often

attended by other College staff who worked with the students as part of their program and where possible entire families were included. I regularly had groups of students at my home and a kup muri pit in the backyard meant that we could relax, cook and eat great food and sing and dance, just as they would have done in their own homes. Brisbane's weather could get cold in winter time and this proved to be a problem, especially if classes started at 8.00am. As much as possible though, the program tried to balance the demands of teacher education that was appropriate for the needs of the Torres Strait Islander teachers, with a broader socio-cultural education agenda that I didn't think was intrusive but which carried clear political messages. This political agenda was aimed at educating to liberate and was quite deliberate. The students and I engaged in lengthy discussions about what purposes education served for them as Torres Strait Islander people and where their educational activities might lead them. The purposes of English literacy, as well as what sustainable lifestyles might look like in terms of the needs of the Torres Strait, were common discussion topics. Of course all these decisions were made by me, without consultation with the students, illustrating the invisibility of my own cultural locatedness.

A significant aspect of the program was that it was never acknowledged, by the College, by Education Queensland or by the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement, as a recognised qualification. Torres Strait Islander teacher salaries were nowhere near those of registered teachers and yet they were expected to do the same job. Even the Queensland Teacher's Union refused to take up the fight for reasonable salaries for Torres Strait Islander teachers, because they were employed by the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement, not the Education Department. Eventually, when Education Queensland took over responsibilities for the Torres Strait Island schools in the 1980's from the Department of Aboriginal and Islanders Advancement, moves towards equity in both preservice education

and salaries were initiated but there remains a long way to go even now, for an equitable

situation to be created for Torres Strait Islander teachers. As I noted (in the voyage, *YUME*

Pedagogy), the study I've just completed into pedagogy across the Torres Strait, preservice

teacher education both for Torres Strait Islander teachers and for non-Torres Strait Islander

teachers, needs to be addressed in significantly different ways, if educational outcomes for

Torres Strait Islander students are to be improved

The practicum aspect of the Kedron Park College of Advanced Education program provides

rich grounds for reflection on my experiences with Indigenous education. Practicum

originally took place at Wooloowin State School, just up the road from the College of

Advanced Education at Kedron. The program also used this school for elements of its work

including assessment, so it developed considerable understanding of the backgrounds of the

Torres Strait Islander student teachers as well as some of the difficulties they encountered.

Indeed, Wooloowin State School became a very respectful and supportive environment for

the students to work in, in some ways too supportive. By that I mean that the amount of

support given in some instances verged on being paternalistic. This sometimes made life

uncomfortable for me as I was constantly at pains to ensure that the Torres Strait Islander

teachers were being extended. There were occasions when I was accused by supervising

teachers of being too harsh on students and in a couple of instances, the accusation was that I

was racist. This did cause me to stop and think about what I was doing – it wasn't called

reflecting then. I also had reservations about the impact my work was having on these

people. Was what I was doing making them less 'cultural' in the sense of their Torres Strait

Islanderness? This echoes Bowers (1983) concerns with Freire's work and for the next

decade would resound within Indigenous education conferences. Did more white education

risk meaning becoming more 'white', and thereby less Torres Strait Islander? In some senses

this was indeed an accurate accusation as the clear mandate of both teachers and the system they worked in, was to try to make 'othered' peoples, including Torres Strait Islanders, more Australian. This was to be achieved through an acculturation process that required English as the medium of communication, promoted western rationalistic views of what counted for knowledge and adopted a museum approach to considerations of 'other' peoples, a clear illustration of what Said (1985) termed, 'orientalism'.

Despite the advantages associated with practicum experiences in Brisbane, the complexities such as I have described above eventually caused me to rethink the whole practicum exercise. Before I took over the program, most of the practicum was undertaken at Wooloowin State School. Whilst valuable and appreciated, it did not allow for much variation in classroom experiences. The Torres Strait Islander teachers were well known in the school by both children and teachers and whilst the support was valuable, I began to look for a variety of classroom experiences in a variety of locations. Other schools were normally happy to take the students but I found that some sites were very racist and it proved difficult to determine how students would be received by teachers and children, before they arrived for their placement. It was not unusual for me to have to remove students to new settings because of racist comments and behaviours and significantly unrealistic expectations on the part of many supervising teachers. In many cases these expectations reinforced racist stereotypes in both parties, rather than expunging them. These experiences had a profound impact on the students, not because they had never experienced racism before but because significant elements of their college program reinforced the need for teachers not to be racist or gender or class biased. The college environment itself was not overtly racist and most of the people that the Torres Strait Islander students worked with, including most other students, were very comfortable working alongside them. These experiences contributed to some of these non-

Torres Strait Islander students working in Torres Strait Island schools after they had graduated.

When the Torres Strait Islander students had difficult personal experiences in schools, we used them as discussion topics and often the program back at college would revolve around quite lengthy considerations of how, why and what to do about these issues. Whilst I wasn't aware of it at the time, I now consider this process the equivalent of praxis (Freire, 1972). The contradictions between the experiences of the Torres Strait Islander students at College and at their practicum provided the platform to engage in exploring those contradictions as an attempt to arrive at active responses both personally and professionally. These dialogues created new opportunities for the students, I believe, and contributed towards changing their previously unquestioned beliefs about the possibilities of education and their role as teachers in the education system and the society at large. The Torres Strait Islander teachers were coming to understand the ways in which education systems try to address difficult social issues such as racism. Bureaucratic systems such as education tend to take very public positions, especially by developing policies, but these often are very insubstantial in their outcomes. The overt racism experienced by Torres Strait Islander teachers in Brisbane would never have been tolerated in the Torres Strait even at this time, because racism in that region was becoming increasingly covert and subtle. This was (and remains) so, simply because Torres Strait Torres Strait Islanders are in the majority in the region. Their voice is less easily dismissed in an environment where their numbers out-weigh those of non-Torres Strait Islander peoples, even though their agency may limit the attention that is paid by white bureaucracies to their voice.

Moving Practicum to TI.

The limitations of the practicum experience in Brisbane and the unreality of the practicum settings for Torres Strait Islander teachers, caused me to start re-thinking how we might go about engaging firstly settings that were more reflective of the Torres Strait Islander teacher's actual situations and secondly, not losing sight of the importance of striving to improve the quality of teaching that was occurring, by doing so. It struck me that Thursday Island State School possibly provided a more appropriate educational environment within which to conduct student placement, than anything that existed in Brisbane. Students would be familiar with the setting, they would still have registered teachers to mentor them (this presumes that all mentor teachers provide good role models which the prac experiences in Brisbane had actually contradicted) and they would be in a position to return to their home Torres Strait Islands for their recess.

Naturally a change of this magnitude would mean significant cost increases to the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Advancement, (DAIA) so I was initially sceptical about my ability to achieve this outcome. Surprisingly however, the proposal was accepted with little or no concern on the part of the DAIA and soon the students and I found ourselves on the Sunlander (passenger train) heading for Cairns. The flight from Cairns was by DC3 aircraft flown by Bush Pilots or 'Bushies' as they were commonly known. In those days, the flight from Cairns to Horn Torres Strait Island was a four hour event. Always, the flight to Horn Torres Strait Island with the students was an exciting experience, just as the return flight after practicum and recess were finished, was a solemn one. Most people love going home.

I had managed to establish a good relationship with the Primary school Principal, who was a hard but fair man. He had clear cut expectations of his teaching staff that were cemented in explicit notions of quality and whilst I did not always agree with his views, I had a tremendous amount of respect for his enthusiasm, energy and integrity as an educator. He would often lament the quality of the Torres Strait Islander teachers and I had a demanding job ensuring that my expectations of the students were clear and justified. This enabled both of us to do our respective jobs effectively, as I have no doubt whatsoever that this man disagreed with many of my views of how I went about trying to achieve excellence with the Torres Strait Islander teachers.

The first time we undertook practicum in Thursday Island is indelibly imprinted in my memory. Placement of Torres Strait Islander teachers in Thursday Island State School was organised from the day after we arrived on the island. Initially, I was unaware of the complexities of undertaking school placement in Thursday Island, as I had presumed (only considered the things I knew & understood) that we'd arrive and start the placements the next day. Normally we'd fly in on Friday afternoon and practicum would start on the following Monday. The first time this process occurred, I arrived at the school at 7.30am on the Monday morning expecting to see all my students there and ready to go, only to find that by 10.00am, an hour after school started, only a third of the group had actually made it. It didn't take me long to understand that arriving in time for the weekend was not a good idea, if I wanted everyone to get to school ready to start their practicum, as it had been arranged. Students from nearby Torres Strait Islands like Badu, Moa and Mabuiag had jumped into a dinghy and gone home for the weekend. It was so good to be home (as I can appreciate) that many decided that they'd stay a few days longer and the placement could wait. Naturally from the white western male perspective, this was an inappropriate decision to make,

especially since all these nice white people had gone out of their way to accommodate the Torres Strait Islander teachers in their classrooms. Eventually, I managed to get everyone into their respective placements and placate the teachers. It was, in hindsight, a very good learning experience for me and one from which I managed to reorganise future placements to reduce the potential for disruption to anyone, Torres Strait Islander teachers included and maximise the benefits for everyone, Torres Strait Islander teachers especially.

Each practicum was scheduled for mid-year, as Brisbane got cold then and the Torres Strait Islanders really felt the temperature difference. We spent 3 months each year in the Torres Strait undertaking practicum experiences on Thursday Island and in their own Torres Strait Island schools. This period also included a fortnight recess. For the second and third placements in the Torres Strait I organised it so that students spent five weeks at Thursday Island, two weeks recess and then five weeks in their home Torres Strait Island. This worked reasonably well in the Torres Strait , because when the students were working in their home island schools, I was travelling on Melbidir, visiting them. The trip took two weeks to get out and back, all of the Torres Strait Islands in the group being visited. The eastern Torres Strait Islands were visited on one trip and the western Torres Strait Islands on the next. This arrangement left me with a week on Thursday Island with little to do. I enjoyed the break, but it was wasted time from my perspective, until I began work in the Primary school with the qualified teachers helping them to develop their own programs.

For the fourth placement in the Torres Strait, I decided to organised it so that the students would do three weeks at Thursday Island, followed by two weeks in their home Torres Strait Island school, followed by two weeks recess and then another two weeks placement in their

home island school before coming back to Thursday Island to complete the final three weeks there. This proved to be a more productive arrangement, as the trips on Melbidir were two weeks in length. I'd visit one group of Torres Strait Islands (eastern) before the recess and one (western) after the recess. During recess, I'd take whichever trip was going and spend time in the communities on each Torres Strait Island. I used that time to help schools program, plan and assess, even though they were technically on holidays. Sometimes I'd go to one Torres Strait Island and spend the fortnight there, doing work in the school, not always with the staff. I'd often run afternoon activity sessions for children, to give then something different to do while on holidays. If I went to one group of Torres Strait Islands one year, the next year I'd go to the other group just to maintain the balance. In its totality this process seemed to work fairly well. It gave the Torres Strait Islander teachers good exposure in Thursday Island State School, provided some time in their Torres Strait Island schools which was beneficial to their community and to themselves, enabled me to visit and contribute to each school and community in ways that effectively used the skills and competencies I possessed and finally enabled me to work closely with each Torres Strait Islander teacher when they returned to Thursday Island to work in the classrooms there, building on their experiences and expanding their pedagogies based on their experiences of the previous weeks. I hoped that the relevance of the context made students more comfortable and therefore more readily influenced by effective teaching and learning strategies and more open to developing themselves strategies might translate in classrooms in their outer Torres Strait Island contexts.

This practicum process was still operating in 1980 when I was appointed as the Principal to Bamaga State School. Then, as well as during this research, I have had to reflect on its effectiveness. I like to think that the obvious enjoyment the Torres Strait Islander teachers got

from doing prac in their own schools contributed significantly to the outcomes we were seeking but I can't categorically say how effective or not that strategy was. Data generated during this research leads me to be more critical than I was then (see the voyages, *YUME Research* and *YUME Pedagogy)*. I recognise that, inescapably, it was bounded by the dominant world's views, of which I was a part. I believed that I was doing the best thing but again in hindsight I was reinforcing those beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviours that were successful in my sociocultural complex. Whilst I do believe that I had the best interests of the Torres Strait Islander teaching force in mind, the best way to achieve positive outcomes was still my way, and not theirs. My more recent understanding of the power of 'whiteness' (McLaren, 1997; and *YUME Pedagogy)* throws powerful light on this contradiction between intention and outcome. However, I didn't have this understanding at that point. This helps to explain the affinity with which we accept the ways of the dominant world, without question or challenge, simply because that is our familiarity and anything different to that is rarely even considered let alone anticipated. The power of our whiteness to make everything invisible or to rationalise difference and diversity as deviant from our norm, never fails to astound me, particularly as I look back on these significant episodes in my teaching career. Nor does it fail to remind me of how easily we (dominant male white middle class) take this self-legitimated authority for granted.

I do think that change of placement location away from Brisbane was positive and at the same time I believe that the experiences of the students in Brisbane were also beneficial. By being exposed to another world and beginning to understand that the world only begins at the waters edge of their Torres Strait Island, these students had the opportunity to imagine lives in a world beyond the Torres Straits. Even with the internalisation of some global popular culture influences such as reggae, fashion in the form of dreadlocks and body piercing and a

startling fascination with micro technology in the form of CDMA phones, minidisk players and handheld computers, there still appears to me to be an inability or unwillingness, on the part of many Torres Strait Islander young people, to see themselves as achieving in roles outside the Torres Strait. Perhaps this is related to time and opportunity. Perhaps with a more rapidly globalising world impacting more significantly on the Torres Strait, more young people will see themselves occupying jobs and careers in locations farther afield than Thursday Island and Cairns. This is not to denigrate the Torres Strait or Torres Strait Islander peoples but being able to undertake any role in any world that they choose, is a goal of the Torres Strait Islanders Regional Education Council 2000 – 2004 Education Strategy, for all Torres Strait youth. I believe that the dual location of the Teacher Education program during my time contributed to the achievement of this goal.

Changing education in the Torres Strait.

At the same time that the practicum arrangements for the Torres Strait Islander teachers were undergoing change so too was the structure of education across the Torres Strait. When I first started with the Torres Strait Island teachers, two teachers filled the roles of advisory teachers to the Torres Strait Island schools. They too were teachers seconded from the Education Department to the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Advancement (DAIA). They spent their lives travelling on boats around the Torres Strait Island schools, working with teachers, schools and communities trying to improve educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students. It was a largely futile task because the DAIA considered education to be one of its least significant priorities and so funding was scarce and apportioned according to Departmental rather than Torres Strait Island priorities. Their lives were certainly different and diverse but the strain of trying to achieve some semblance of productivity with next no financial support for either their work or the work of the schools proved difficult to deal with. One of the catchcries of post 1967 referendum

gatherings of educators of Indigenous students was the lament that nothing seemed to have been achieved as the years rolled on. The issues seemed to be consistently the same ones relating to poor literacy, numeracy and general outcomes of education. I have to admit that whilst there is evidence of improved outcomes for Indigenous students, the issues still seem to be the same and they still relate to a consistent lack of equity in comparison to their mainstream peers.

Politics has always played a significant role in the lives of Torres Strait Islander people, and not always a negative one. From the days of the pearling strike that had such a profound potential influence on Torres Strait Islander self management, Torres Strait Islander people have understood the influence they can bring to bear on the political system. Individual Torres Strait Island Councils actively lobbied selected politicians and senior bureaucrats to achieve desired outcomes both for their families and their community. The largess of the Bjelke-Petersen government was evident at election times when politicians would visit the Torres Strait Islands and offer funding for community improvements if the community supported the government candidate for the electorate. Many Torres Strait Island communities used this knowledge to improve community facilities and those who rejected the advances of the politicians found out for themselves what a poor decision that was, as housing, Community Council infrastructure in the form of school and health buildings, airstrips and new barge berthing facilities were approved for those Torres Strait Islands who delivered the vote, but not for others. It didn't take long for Torres Strait Island communities to understand how the political process actually worked and quite naturally they fell into line. Not to do so would have seen them relegated to the bottom of the preference list again.

Remember that this is 1970 onwards, so the history that I am describing is little over 30 years old. The Bjelke-Petersen government was never really in the need of the vote of the Indigenous community to retain power but it was in need of positive publicity about its policies towards Indigenous peoples. This could be achieved if Torres Strait Islanders voted solidly for the government, as the claim could be made that Torres Strait Islanders were obviously pleased with the way they were treated by the government as evidenced in the way they voted. Other Indigenous people then, who voted or demonstrated against the government were simply malcontents and may even be radical revolutionaries who deserved nothing more than to be locked away in prison. It was this perverse justification of repression that confused and confounded many Indigenous communities. They simply could not win. If they supported the government, they continued to be oppressed by being told how lucky they were to be looked after so well and they had better keep supporting the government. If they rejected the paternalism they were told that they were ingrates and didn't deserve the good life and opportunities the government provided for them.

Across the 1970's and into the 1980's health, housing, community infrastructure, education, transport and communications continued to develop as significant and expensive issues for Torres Strait Island communities and the government. Scandals over government Ministers and senior bureaucrats abusing their privileges in the Torres Strait Islands caused considerable concern for the Bjelke-Petersen government and eventually contributed to the collapse of a corrupt and racist regime. As the decay of the government steadily progressed, money began to be directed into schemes that might tempt the Torres Strait Islanders into rekindling their support. Airstrips were proposed and constructed on each Torres Strait Island, except for two (Dauan and Ugar) because of their small size. New school buildings were designed specifically for the climate and construction begun, eventually achieving the

replacement of the galvanised iron sheds that passed for school buildings on most Torres Strait Islands. These projects have continued over recent decades so that today most of the Torres Strait Islands have excellent community health complexes; barge landing facilities and small boat jetties, with dredged swing basins for the barges to turn in; many of the airstrips are bitumened and all-weather and all Torres Strait Islands have helipads for medivac and other emergency operations; the Department of Customs and Immigration have modern complexes with communications facilities linking them directly to major mainland centres and their aircraft and patrol vessels operate out of Horn and Thursday Islands to patrol Australia's northern borders.

Thursday Island is a modern cosmopolitan community with all the amenities of a mainland community of the same size. Horn Island is a similar and growing community, servicing the newly developing international airport purported to be under construction there. This facility, if completed will give the Torres Strait some previously unthought of opportunities and no doubt some previously unthought of concerns.

Whilst these developments were occurring, education too had been changing. When the DAIA schools were finally handed over to the Education Department in the early 1980's changes were desperately needed. This is the time that saw new buildings designed and constructed and new moves to provide a quality education. The notion of bringing all the Torres Strait Island schools under one school administration run from Thursday Island was promoted and implemented. Called the Torres Strait School, the white Principal administered all 14 schools from a building in the grounds of Thursday Island Primary School. He had a deputy and several advisory teachers on his staff to assist and everyone travelled around the

outer Torres Strait Island schools assisting with curriculum development. Enormous effort and expense was attributed to the Torres Strait School but with little to show for this enthusiasm. As I've shown in the log of the voyage *YUME Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Strait*, whilst curriculum is indeed an important component of effective education, the most significant element involved in improving educational outcomes, is pedagogy. The work of teachers makes the difference and identifying successful pedagogies in each context is the mechanism that will underpin the work of successful schools.

Out of the Torres Strait School and the curriculum emphasis that it promoted, grew the quite successful Far Northern Schools Development Unit (FNSDU). Again this was a curriculum focussed team of 'expert' teachers who developed materials for all the Torres Strait Island schools. This team was based in Thursday Island, initially working under the Torres Strait School and later under the revamped Torres Strait Regional Office. The team produced some very exciting reading materials based on the language experience approach, adopting Creole as the basis from which English might be more effectively taught. Several different curriculum areas had materials produced by this team and in my view this was one of the few successful educational ventures promoted across the Torres Strait schools. Once again however sustainability proved an elusive outcome.

At the same time the Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) commenced operations at some sites in the Torres Strait. This program was directed at providing teacher education for Indigenous teachers whilst enabling them to remain in their schools and communities. The concept is a very good one that capitalises on articulation between

Technical and Further Education (TAFE) programs and university programs. The problem with the project is that it is under funded and therefore very limited in promoting large numbers of teacher education graduates. It has also suffered from poor relationships amongst the partners involved and a level of exclusivity on the part of some of the partners that would see the other partners excluded altogether, were that possible This is yet another example of Torres Strait Islander priorities suffering because of wider institutional politics outside their sphere of influence.

The current educational arrangements are managed under the auspices of a Torres Strait District and the focus has gone back to promoting systemic initiatives, regardless of how appropriate these might be for the contexts. There is a lot of good will intended by educational authorities in the Torres Strait but they remain bounded by white, middle class perceptions of knowledge and process. Torres Strait Islander input is sought but not empowered. White bureaucrats listen but they don't hear.

Bamaga.

My own career took another turn when, in 1980, I was appointed to Bamaga State School as the Principal. It was my view at the time, that I was better positioned in a school to be able to effect educational change for Indigenous children. The Torres Strait Islander Teacher Education Program had become enmeshed in bureaucracy. The program had stalled. North Brisbane College of Advanced Education refused to accredit the program because it deemed that the standards achieved in the program were not up to those of its mainstream education programs. In this regard that opinion was probably accurate, the judgement being made on mainstream criteria and not the educational realities of the Torres Strait. I examine the complex issues contained within the discourse of hegemonic criteria and mainstream

standards in more detail in the log of *YUME Pedagogy*. New curriculum had been developed specifically for Indigenous community schools in the areas of literacy and numeracy and the trial of these materials at Bamaga created an opportunity for me to influence better educational outcomes than I felt I'd been able to achieve through the teacher education program. What I failed to see was that the philosophical framework that underpinned the curriculum projects was still ignorant of Torres Strait Islander influence.

The contradiction is that this apparently culturally appropriate curriculum continued to maintain the historic experience of exclusion of marginal groups. The dominant sociocultural domain appears to listen to Torres Strait Islander views but then acts according to the motivations and agencies of the dominant culture, excluding alternative or different views. In this way the dominant sociocultural influence can be maintained; it can even be justified by virtue of having listened to the views of another group. There is no imperative to act on these divergent views and in fact inaction can be justified simply on the basis that the views are so different from what is considered to be 'normal'. When I was in the midst of these situations, I did not have the theoretical framework with which to analyse the dissatisfaction that I could only feel instinctively.

Hindsight is a great teacher and it is easier now for me to see how fundamentally nothing had changed, in reality. The school was still driven by systemic imperatives that were based on the experiences, knowledges and expectations of another and quite different sociocultural complex. Interestingly this remains the case today. Consultative processes may have improved but fundamentally schools still teach white western curriculum and judge all children by their capacity to meet the expectations of that system. Little, if any account is

taken of language differences, cultural differences or knowledge framework differences. The impact of adopting these unchallenged assumptions is documented in the log of, *YUME Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Strait.*

Bamaga is a very different community from the Torres Strait Islands, though having said that each Indigenous community is quite unique in its own way. The difference with Bamaga is that it is composed of a number of communities of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. Bamaga is the administrative centre of what is known as the Northern Peninsular Area or NPA. The NPA is constituted by the communities of Bamaga, Umagico, Injinoo, New Mapoon and Seisia. The only community that identifies as Torres Strait Islander is Seisia. This is because the Seisia community was relocated from Saibai Island after the Second World War when it was considered that exceptionally high tides would inundate the island. This never actually occurred although anyone who has been to Saibai can understand how someone could come to this conclusion. The island is low, flat and swampy even in the dry season and before the airstrip was built up for bitumening, landing on the island at high tide was a very precarious undertaking.

The majority of people in the NPA consider themselves to be Aboriginal. This is also true of the Kauareg people of the Torres Strait Islands scattered between the tip of Cape York and Badu. This distinction appears to be borne out by languages in that the linguistic roots of the peoples of the western Torres Strait Islands, which lie in a line north of the tip of Cape York to Papua New Guinea, are located with the Aboriginal languages of Cape York while the eastern Torres Strait Islands (Masig, Ugar, Erub, Mer) are linguistically linked to the Melanesian languages of the Pacific (Shnukal, 2001).

Racism is not the sole preserve of white people. There is and has historically been a degree of disenchantment between Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders. In the NPA this discomfort seems to be less significant than in other locations and communities and the level of harmony in which people live is reassuring. At least this was my impression of the communities after spending four years there and remains so to this day. Bamaga was once one of those isolated communities that teachers got sent to for disciplinary purposes. It had a worse reputation amongst teachers than did Thursday Island at that time and to be sent to either location was a severe indictment of your ability as a teacher. Why anyone would send poor teachers to any isolated place against their will is beyond me. The trauma that both teachers and their students suffered as a result can only be imagined and the fact that there are records of teachers who suicided in both locations speaks volumes for the lack of integrity of the bureaucrats of that era. In the 1980's when I was working in the NPA community, things had improved considerably. Consideration had begun to be given to who was appointed to these schools. The realisation that merely having a teacher in a room, regardless of their competence, was insufficient justification for sending just anyone to these schools, was beginning to be understood and acted on.

Today, I take considerable care when selecting preservice teachers to recommend to Principals of Torres Strait Island schools for their field experience placements, in case I inadvertently do any injustice to either preservice teacher or Torres Strait Island community. It is also enlightening that even though today this part of Australia has growing significance as a tourist attraction, it is still difficult to staff schools in the area. The official policy is to require performance commitments that may result in improved pedagogic processes and more

appropriate educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander children; however, the difficulty in achieving this makes the staffing situation even more problematic. This also does not address the issue of a lack of Torres Strait Islander influence in the development, delivery and management of educational services in the area.

As the Principal of the Primary school at Bamaga, I dutifully reinforced the demands of the State Education Department, including the curriculum initiatives that I'd helped to design. I was still convinced, as were others, that the answers to addressing low educational achievements lay in curriculum change. In some respects the changes made some difference as curriculum adopted more local content and more appropriate applications of knowledge. School work became more practical and abstract concepts were deliberately applied in concrete outcomes and real world strategies. Overall, school was changing from being a place where children had to go, to a place where learning was being actively facilitated. In many ways it could be construed that the State education authorities realised that the schools in these areas could do no worse than they were doing, so by encouraging staff to innovate and try new things in new ways, it might just be that improvements in outcomes might be achieved.

Bamaga, in line with other Indigenous community schools had significant annual staff turnovers. This increased the difficulty of achieving more appropriate outcomes, as each year virtually a new staff had to be inducted. It took at least a year for staff to settle into community life and to learn more than just the basic survival strategies for teaching in these locations. With annual turnovers so high it was impossible to achieve any consistency in pedagogic process or programming. By the time new staff was adequately inducted, there

was another new staff to induct. This has not changed significantly in these schools today

and remains the most disruptive issue militating against improving outcomes for children in

these schools.

Poor preparation of teachers to work effectively in Torres Strait Island and Indigenous

schools is a key issue that still demands attention by preservice providers. It is also an issue

for induction and professional development, as practicing teachers also need to be up skilled

and sensitised towards the demands of working in these communities. Being a good teacher

on the mainland does not guarantee success for that teacher in these environments.

Understanding Torres Strait Island people, cultures and lifestyles and being sensitive to

sociocultural ways that differ from the norms that one might be comfortable with are very

important understandings that need to be developed in teachers coming to these schools –

before they get there.

From Bamaga, I moved back to Brisbane where I suffered severe culture shock. This is

something that I've never quite recovered from and something that still surprises me, on

reflection. It never actually occurred to me that someone could suffer culture shock by being

re-emersed back into their own sociocultural environment. I can't explain why. It just never

occurred to me. I returned to a large school in Brisbane which was quite disadvantaged in

comparison to most in the city. It had a large itinerant population, sizeable numbers of single

parent families, and a significant defence force population, as well as being situated in a

fairly low socio-economic environment. I was very fond of the school because I was used to

'different' situations or situations that demanded innovative approaches because this is what I

had been involved with for many years as a teacher and Principal. Even so I was aware of a growing feeling of discomfort which I put down to relocation and coming back to the city.

It was only after I was moved up the road to a larger school with a very upwardly mobile and upper middle class environment, that I came to realise that source of my discomfort. The new community in which I was working was caught up in the paradigm of education as a commodity. I was very uncomfortable with the sense of moral superiority that I encountered here, despite the fact that child abuse, family violence and dysfunction were everyday occurrences here too. Only a handful of excellent teachers were interested in trying new things and many of the teachers were convinced that they were established in the school till they died, which added to the atmosphere of complacency. Many families only wanted the school to service those children who were headed for a large Brisbane private school after their primary schooling was finished. The truth is that I couldn't handle what I saw as self indulgence. It gnawed at me and eventually I decide that for the good of my health and my sanity I had to do something else.

Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag.

In 1990 I was appointed as the Assistant Director of the Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag Higher Education Centre at the University of Southern Queensland in Toowoomba. Apart from meaning a complete change in lifestyle moving from Brisbane to Toowoomba, working in the tertiary education sector was a completely new experience for me. My involvement in North Brisbane CAE was nothing remotely like my experiences at USQ. The Centre was the Indigenous student 'enclave', as they were known in those days. They were normally attached to one of the Faculties and their finances came directly to the University. As a consequence, many universities used the enclaves as fairly lucrative sources of funding that

they would not normally be able to access. Enclaves became very popular in all Australian Universities as a mechanism to tap into Federal funding for programs for Indigenous Australians. Unfortunately the Indigenous Centres tended to be small, poorly staffed, largely token projects with an emphasis on access. Staffing of these centres also continued to reflect a view that Indigenous students needed non-Indigenous staff to provide an appropriate education, as is evidenced by my appointment.

During the decade to 2000, this situation changed dramatically. Initially the Centres focussed on accessing Indigenous students to university programs but whilst access numbers were high, so too were the attrition rates. As a consequence, those students who did manage to struggle through to graduation were few but highly prized. For some reason, education and psychology were the two most sought after programs. I presume that many if not all Indigenous students came to university in order to achieve qualifications that would enable them to contribute something back to their communities and hence those two predominant choices. Psychology proved very popular because many students mistakenly believed that the degree would enable them to undertake social work within their communities. Contributing something back to their communities however sometimes proved an enormous pressure for the students as they would come to university indicating that their communities expected them to achieve and return to resolve all the community issues. This attitude seems to stem from constant urging by the white community for the Indigenous community to get an education, which would help them to get a job and ultimately assimilate them into the community at large. This is another example of hegemonic discourse whereby the assumed 'good will' of the dominant community pressures minority groups to become more like the dominant group, so that minority group differences would be less noticeable and thus less threatening for the dominant group.   The pressure of these so called 'common sense'

arguments is still used today, especially by white radio talk back show hosts, as justification of the same hegemonic positions that have historically defined the 'us' and 'them' oxymoron we call Australian democracy.

Frequently, the expectation on students to 'get an education' proved difficult for students to realise, as their preparation for university was not as good as for many other students, with many of them coming from isolated and distant locations, including the Torres Strait. Toowoomba is a harsh environment in winter and many students suffered from the extreme cold. It isn't difficult to understand that many students would simply return to their community where they at least had food and family. The high attrition rates could also be explained in terms of an alien environment, lack of adequate preparation for university, loss of family contacts and a range of apparently simpler but equally destructive issues. These included using telephones to run up huge bills by contacting home too frequently and for long periods; having limited budgeting skills; having few friends and usually no family; being restricted by transport limitations, being unfamiliar with the operations and restrictions of a community significantly larger than they were used to and racism.

Student orientation programs were and remain, I think, essential. Introducing students to the university environment carefully and thoughtfully means more that just giving them a map of the campus. Developing relationships with students and demonstrating that you genuinely care about them, involves spending a lot of time running students around the community; jumping on the buses with them to make sure that they know where to get off; socialising with them so that someone is around to intervene when racism arises; going to the first few lectures with them to make sure they get to the right rooms firstly and then to assist with note

taking; helping them to establish a study routine that includes accompanying them to the library and introducing them to library staff, so they at least know some faces in a very intimidating space; and then tapering this support off to encourage independence, self assurance and confidence in their own abilities to manage this initially frightening environment.

The staff of the Centre willingly acted as the de facto family for the students. I have vivid memories of giving undertakings to the magistrate's court as students, some of whom were on parole, struggled with the demands of their new environment. Study was usually a secondary concern in spite of the support that they all received from Centre staff. Many students were faced with the disquiet of having to return home to their community without realising the aspirations that their community had of them. For some this burden proved too much. Those students drifted into the twilight world of homeless people and the associated engagement with drugs, alcohol and personal abuse. Some would try to re-enrol each semester in order to get money from ABSTUDY[1] to support their habits. I'm not sure that many Indigenous people understood the enormous pressure many of their students felt they were under, as a direct result of community expectations.

The white university system didn't offer much help either. The university system was reluctant to acknowledge the fact that the standards they set for their students could in fact be achieved in many and various ways. Even today the university struggles with any

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[1] This was a specialised federal government study support scheme for Indigenous students. It was designed to provide sufficient money for food and shelter while students were enrolled in accredited university courses. The scheme has subsequently been reviewed and replaced by a less generous and more closely monitored scheme for all tertiary students who are eligible, based on family means tests.

understanding of the importance of diversity and how diversity might be reflected in diverse ways, by diverse groups and still remain of respectable and acceptable quality to a diverse range of communities. Equal treatment and equal outcomes do not necessarily result in equity. An example of this view is reflected in the processes adopted to select Indigenous students into most of the Faculty courses when I was first appointed to USQ. Faculties 'tested' (using standardised IQ tests) and interviewed potential Indigenous students. On the basis of the outcomes of this process, students were offered places in the Faculty, or not. It was rare for Faculty staff to offer any additional support to Indigenous students and in fact many Faculties strictly enforced their rules and regulations, often marginalizing Indigenous students for other than academic reasons. Very early on in my employment with the University, I moved to have the selection processes changed, to a simple process of referral of students by Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag staff, to the receiving Faculty. This was met with considerable anxiety by Facilities, as it meant a lessening of their control over their potential students and a consequent loss of the funds that had previously flowed directly to them. Indigenous student support centres in Universities now controlled the bulk of their own funds, so the centres themselves paid for student loads in the Faculties. The more students the Faculties took, the more money they received. As federal governments focussed more on supporting students to graduation, so it became more important for the Faculties to ensure that they did more than just enrol Indigenous students into their programs. Supporting those students became an important issue, as graduands guaranteed the Faculties more money than simply enrolling them.

By the time the opportunity arose for me to move on from Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag to the Faculty of Education within the University, conditions had changed to the extent that the centres were then offering their own preparatory courses and allocating students to identified

places within Faculties, over which the Faculty had little direct control. This meant that if Indigenous communities saw a need to educate local government personnel in their community, for example, this could be targeted as an area to be supported by Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag and places for students allocated without any need for the centre to go begging to the Faculty for their indulgence. In addition, Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag was intimately involved in the initiation, development and delivery of a compulsory preservice teacher education course in Indigenous Studies. At this time (1995), this was the first compulsory course of its type on offer in Queensland universities and was a rare example across Australia. Subsequently such courses have appeared in most universities.

The Current Study.

My move from Kumbari/Ngurpai Lag to the Faculty of Education at USQ in 1997 stimulated the study I'm now documenting. It seemed to me that for all of the initiatives that governments and individuals have earnestly engaged in to try to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students and Torres Strait Islander students in particular, over the time that I've been engaged in the same pursuits, there is not a lot to show that is positive. There have been significant amounts of money and numerous genuine personal attempts to try to address this reality but without sustainable success. We do have evidence of some isolated and immediate benefits from many of these efforts but there has been nothing that has been widely successful or sustainable, since the 1967 referendum, or for that matter since invasion.

My ongoing professional contact with the Torres Strait as a member of the Education Faculty has primarily been through the implementation of the IDEAS process in many of those schools. In this capacity I've had the opportunity to work closely with many of the people I

once knew as students at North Brisbane College of Advanced Education. Like myself, many of these teachers are approaching retirement. The thought of having to find the energy to reinvigorate the struggle is sufficient to turn these people off affirmative action, as this has been their experience for their entire working life. Wisely they are looking forward to a more peaceful time where fishing, family and gardens play more significant roles in their daily lives.

I can reflect on my experiences, especially with Torres Strait Islander peoples, over many years. Sometimes, the projects that I've enthusiastically involved myself in have been consummate examples of all the things I can now identify as 'not in the best interests of Torres Strait Islander people'. Even today, with a little insight into the consequences of my actions on others and the benefit of hindsight, I still find myself tempted to pre-empt in the best interests of others and sometimes I do.

My reflections on the work that I've engaged in most recently in the Torres Strait (see the log of the voyage, *YUME Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity in the Torres Strait*) suggest that it was a constant temptation to make judgements and offer solutions. I was consistently mentally berating myself to stay quiet and not to offer my view but to assist the people I was working with at the time to articulate their own views. Unfortunately it would be easy to see that work as just another white man trying to direct education in the Torres Strait. Instead of curriculum, I now advocate pedagogy as the salient aspect of educative work in all contexts, particularly the Torres Strait. What difference is there between this initiative and those that reasonably successfully advocated the use of Creole and language reading and writing materials for nearly a decade? On the surface there doesn't seem to be

too much that has changed. Am I just another white academic attempting to make my name at the expense of some of the most intensely researched peoples in the world?

I am inescapably caught within these contradictions, and can only state my awareness of my privileged position and attempt to deconstruct it and move beyond it, even in small ways. The intent of the study is definitely not to enhance my reputation, but an attempt to arrive at some position of reflection that seems to allow me to make sense of a very intense set of personal experiences. This reflection is not what is sometimes dismissed as the self-deprecating indulgence of a post-modern persona, but a rigorous attempt at authentic and reflexive praxis.

I would argue that whilst I am not completely aware of the power of my whiteness amongst Torres Strait Islander people, I am sufficiently aware of its potential influence to take steps to try to overcome this. The paper discussing the research methods adopted in the study (see the log of, *YUME Research*) documents my attempts to overcome my influence on the outcomes of the study and concludes that regardless of how I try to avoid these biases, I can never completely do so. All I can ultimately do is acknowledge that I am aware of them and have attempted to address them to the best of my ability.

What this position illustrates is the reality that I've at last come to the conclusion that whilst I influence those that I am working with, likewise, they influence me and the work that I do. There is an essential reciprocity in these engagements that is vital to the achievement of conscientisation. Freire (1972) would describe this as praxis, as it does represent the dialogue

that leads to heightened awareness and consequent action. This is what I consider to be the salient difference between my current work and what has gone before. This is why I advocate that Torres Strait Islander people must be afforded the agency to influence education for their own children, in ways that are important to them, in order for them to be able to engage in praxis on their own behalf.

The evidence already exists (see the of the log voyage, *YUMI Pedogagy*) to identify how poorly existing educational provision addresses the needs of Torres Strait Islander students; in the light of this, my reflection on my own experience leads me to ask a number of questions that go to the heart of the discursive contradictions I have examined. Why is it that we persist in 'more of the same' in the vain hope that successful outcomes might come about one day? Why are we so resistant to trying to effectively address the issues? Why are we so entrenched in our insistence that what we've defined as being successful for our own community, will work for other quite different communities? When will we be honest enough to admit that our system has not worked effectively for Torres Strait Islander students? When will we be prepared to redistribute the power that we assume and work towards assisting Torres Strait Islander people to define and operate their own education system that reflects their aspirations and not our assumptions?

In a sense, these questions can never be answered; in another sense, they are explained by an appeal to hegemonic discourse. As such, they are unanswerable by members of the dominant culture and can only be valuable if they are used as the praxis underpinning conscientisation of education in the Torres Strait. If this were to come about, an education process may be

arrived at that provides satisfactory answers - satisfactory that is, to Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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The log of the voyage,

Yarning:

Culturally Significant

Pedagogy for the Torres

Strait

John McMaster

November 2006

CONTENTS

Introduction.

Elder: *"I go ask you for question! I go ask you for question! Now listen. "Nat".*

Everybody say "nat".

"Nat". Only a few children respond.

Elder: *Say "nat".*

"Nat". All children respond.

Elder: *Now like I say "platform". Say "platform"*

"Platform". All children repeat the word.

Elder: *"Platform is markai for nat"*   (Platform is white one for nat)

"Nat". Children respond without urging.

Elder: *"Alright".*

Yarning as pedagogy has been initiated and whilst on the surface it may appear to be simply direct instruction, implicit in the process is a complex interweaving of cultural interactions and understandings that make the process quite unique. In this group and amongst many other similar learning communities, the process of cultural and social learning has been initiated. Through the eyes of a western observer this type of pedagogy might be recognised as a very didactic process, relying on the knowledge of the adult being transmitted, fairly precisely to the children, with little room for variation, challenge or modification. In actual fact the process is far more complex than this simplistic observation might suggest. Many authentic teaching strategies are relied upon, such as repetition, skills practice and skills refinement. Knowledge refinement is a central plank of the process, involving children being encouraged to ask questions, with the elder interjecting his/her own questions into the learning activity. The children are focussed. They seek explanations from the elder, through their questions. Peer tutoring is a frequent experience, with children asking their peers for explanations or providing their own reactions to what is happening. In this example, only the opening interchange is illustrated. The entire learning sequence included extensive use of the historic language for this island, Kalaw Kawaw Ya (KKY) and Ilan Tok or Torres Strait creole. Frequent translations between KKY and 'markai' (English, literally 'white one or ghost') occurred and children were made to repeat the translations. This active parallelling of home knowledge and school knowledge reflects effective practice in Torres Strait education.

The particular cultural icon being examined by the group is a dugong hunting platform. The elder involved, who is a retired school teacher, takes special pride in explaining the structure of the platform. For a good platform special wood is required, in this case long mangrove poles. These can only be obtained from certain areas of forest on the island and must be treated in particular ways for some time after being cut to make sure that they are strong

enough to support the platform. Not everyone can access these special areas of forest, so permissions from others will have to be obtained before the wood is cut. This information reflects relationships amongst the clans of the island and acts to reinforce these relations. It also reinforces cultural practices in the minds of students in a way that reflects their world and is therefore familiar and 'commonsensical' to them.

The elder is considered to be an expert dugong hunter himself, so his knowledge is highly respected. He knows the best places to set up his platform and explains how to do this to his group. Dugong feed on seagrass, so the platform is ideally placed in areas of heavy seagrass growth. The tides and currents layer the seagrass in particular ways and since the dugong only eat the sweeter undergrowth of the grass they leave a trail of bare seabed as evidence of their feeding.   There are particular locations around the island that dugong frequent, so hunting in these areas is more likely to meet success. There are stories that go with the dugong hunt that are both historic and contemporary, ensuring the oral tradition that is so much part of Torres Strait Islander life is explicitly maintained in a globalising world.

When setting the platform up the rope that attaches to the removable head on the spear (wap) should be attached to the braces that strengthen the platform. Where these braces cross is the strongest part of the platform and can withstand the force of the speared dugong trying to escape the harpoon. The elder explains that dugong have very acute hearing underwater, so the hunter must stay still on the platform for long periods. The rope attached to the harpoon must be coiled on the platform so it does not get tangled around the hunter's legs, after a strike has been made. During all this explanation, the children are asking questions of the elder and he is responding with additional information or repeated explanations.

The elder explains that the hunter needs to 'talk' to the dugong, encouraging it by saying softly, "come ere", "come ere". He tells the group that a good hunter can get as many as four dugong in a night. He also explains that the platform was used in 'before time', meaning by their ancestors. He tells how his grandfather and his father both taught him how to hunt dugong in this way and there are many 'stories' that he learned from his father and grandfather. One of the children asks about the elder's ancestors, to be met with a cacophony of responses from most of the group, who obviously were aware of the eminence of these relatives. The elder quietly responds to the child explaining who his ancestors were, while the whole group listens intently.

This whole interchange has been marked by paralleling knowledge between cultures and languages, respect for the elder and the participants, knowledge clarification and an intricate and delicate interweaving of knowledges of many types. Whilst the session was basically oral and involved direct teaching, maths was involved in terms of the size and construction of the platform. Science was involved through the tides' and currents' impact on the seagrass and the resultant dugong feeding patterns. The elder's use of his historic cultural knowledge added a richness and texture to the session that these children might miss in classrooms where a dominant alien paradigm is presumed to be the appropriate form of education.

It might be tempting to dismiss the elder's pedagogic process as simply a reflection of conventional Anglo-Australian educational training models, however there is much more involved here than simply 'do and say' techniques. Certainly didactic methodology is

evident and this might be a reflection of the teacher education process experienced by the elder. Our personal beliefs of what constitutes good educational practice do draw heavily on our past experiences as a school student. In this instance, the elder is quite an old man who's experiences both as a student and a teacher, would have been very didactic, adult-centred and coercive. Likewise, in a Torres Strait cultural sense, educational practices too were very adult- centred and didactic focussing on learning life skills essential for the survival of the individual and the group. From this process emerged the expert hunters and fishermen, the story tellers and wise folk, and the leaders and sorcerers of clans and communities.

In classrooms in the Torres Strait the didactic practices that are evident tend to be adult driven and coercive with little if any room for engagement or integration of ideas, concepts, stories or knowledges. In the yarning process such as I have outlined, engagement of a range of integrated and related ideas and knowledges is deliberately encouraged. In the instance just described the elder not only described but interjected stories related to people, places and events connected to the dugong hunting platform that were both historic and contemporary. This parallelling of knowledge frameworks appears to be an essential element of yarning as pedagogy

Throughout all of the activities I have observed at this site and at many others in the Torres Strait over many years, there exists a strong sense of humour that is used in many different ways. Humour is used to relieve a stressful situation and restore mutual respect. It is used simply as an expression of fun and enjoyment as well as mild teasing and it forms an essential element of yarning. As such humour is often misconstrued in our classrooms, non-

Islander teachers sometimes take offence when they think they are being laughed at by children.

Yarning as pedagogy identifies elements of respect for one another, demonstration and repetition of skills and stories, storytelling, answering questions, asking questions, observing, sharing with others, including a range of age groups, working with friends, working with siblings and working with adults. Ultimately, yarning as pedagogy works in an environment of mutual respect, reciprocity and mutual obligation. Yarning as pedagogy in the context of the Torres Strait and as I've observed it there, draws strong affiliations with Torres Strait cultural processes. However, in the classrooms of the Torres Strait, there doesn't seem to be much acknowledgement of these processes as potentially significant models of effective pedagogic practice. In the log of this voyage, I will examine this process in more detail, particularly to highlight its importance for pedagogy in Torres Strait Island schools. This paper should be read in conjunction with the log of the voyage, '*YUMI Pedagogy*'.

Elders working with children.

On a day of cultural activities run by a group of elders for the school, I observed groups of up to 12 children of various ages ranging from preschool to teenagers sitting around an elder who was 'teaching' them about cultural knowledges and skills. These included how to build a 'nat' or dugong hunting platform, how to make your own wap or dugong spear, how to weave coconut fibre into fine but incredibly strong string used with the wap and how to weave a range of coconut palm mats and hats. Each of these activities was conducted in an unhurried and very patient way. Skills were demonstrated and children encouraged to practise them. Practice included refinement of the skills where children demonstrated limited expertise. This was not accompanied with any sign of impatience or frustration on the part of the elder or the children, who often assisted each other. Opportunities to refine skills were a significant and consistent aspect of the pedagogic process. Younger children relied on the support and encouragement of their siblings and older peers. This was given unreservedly and without question whenever it was sought. Mistakes were accompanied with frequent gales of laughter and mild teasing constantly accompanied the peer engagements. It did not appear as if anyone took any offence at this. In the event that younger children felt any 'shame' at not being able to perform the skills, their older siblings always took control with genuine displays of affection to soothe the injured ego and ease the child back into the group and the activity.

The elder demonstrated significant skills and processes, encouraging children to practise these and refine them without hesitation or reserve Whilst demonstrating the elder kept a constant eye on what the children were doing and often interrupted what they were doing in order to assist someone who was struggling. The attitude of the elder was characterised by

boundless patience, constantly revisiting the skills and processes and frequently engaging children, one-on-one to demonstrate and guide the child precisely. As the activity progressed the elder interwove instructions with stories related to the materials being used, the locations that were involved and the affiliations these had for children in the group, for example, clan territory is not be interfered with, without the prior approval of the correct clan authorities. Children learned about intra and inter clan affiliations and relations, the appropriate elders to refer to for approval and the required protocols attached to any approach, either within their own clan or to another clan. There was an intricate interweaving of group and individual learning that openly acknowledged the various abilities of the children in the group and generated learning that each one could grow with. Pedagogy was largely engaged through language (Kala Kawaw Ya, KKY and creole), though there were many examples of linking language terms and concepts to their English equivalent or translation, as demonstrated in the extract from the data, cited above.

The sessions that I observed right across the Torres Strait were conducted with very obvious levels of mutual respect. Whilst the noise level and physical activity of most engagements involving children in these communities is generally much higher than on the mainland, in every instance of yarning that I observed both elements were significantly reduced. Children were free to move from group to group as they wished, though very little movement of this kind actually occurred and it was generally restricted to the much younger children whose attention spans were much shorter than those of their older peers. Often these same children would return to the group for periods of time before moving off to other groups again. No one ordered others around or told others to be quiet, as there was generally no need for this to happen. The conversations that went on in the group, were consensual and usually related to the activity itself in some way. What struck me was the consistent and obvious engagement

of the children in the various activities. These sessions ran for about an hour each and children would move between two groups during each offering of the activities. This was in stark contrast to the concentration spans of children when they were in the classroom. Not only was there much more movement and noise but the level of interpersonal disruption between and amongst the children was noticeably higher, when they were in the formal classroom setting.

If one applies western ideas of pedagogy to 'yarning', it is tempting to suggest that pedagogies with cultural integrity for the Torres Strait acknowledge the reality that children grow and develop at varying rates and when particular information and knowledge become important for them, they will take the opportunity to learn it and the community will provide that opportunity. I examine other Torres Strait Islander pedagogic contexts to see whether this favourable comparison continues.

Teacher aide working with printmaking with year 7's.

In the print-making activity illustrated above, which was conducted in the classroom by a young teacher aide, I observed very similar pedagogic processes in action, to those observed with the elder's cultural groups. The aide spent a deal of time at the beginning of the activity explaining what she was going to do and how she was going to do it, to the group of girls. The girls were totally focussed on the printmaking process from the beginning. The aide demonstrated the process, identifying the potential risks and how they might be overcome as she went. During this the girls asked questions for clarification and information. The girls then set about making their own prints, while the aide assisted, observed, corrected and guided each of them. Again the activity was a complex mix of individual and group strategies, intermingled with explanations and stories which served to illustrate the aide's messages in ways that drew on Torres Strait cultural knowledges. An illustration of this is provided by the teacher aides reference to the preparation and use of traditional vegetable dyes, which might be considered instead of the commercial dyes that were used. The aide was a young woman and not an elder, yet the girls treated her with the same respect, questioning her and taking guidance from her, in an atmosphere of intense engagement in the activity.

I had thought that when the group of boys had their turn at the activity that this would prove to be a different experience. My assumption turned out to be totally wrong. The boys were a little noisier but they treated the aide with a level of respect that contributed significantly to the overall success of the activity. Likewise the aide showed the same respect for the boys, never raising her voice but demonstrating, answering their questions and providing one-on-one guidance, as and when it was sought. She also used humour

very effectively and comfortably, as part of her pedagogic repertoire making light of mistakes made by the boys and teasing them about the quality of their work in comparison to the girls. This actually motivated a couple of the boys to take the activity more seriously, resulting in their decision to focus on a level of finer detail in regard to their print. This produced more intricate work, through finer patterns and a greater attention to the detail of the animals and plants they were engraving.

I was interested to observe the gendered groups in operation at this site. My experience of another site was where deliberate programming structures were created in an island school to enable gendered groups for maths and literacy, had initially proven quite successful. Over 18 months of this some evidence was generated to support the notion that this structure promoted improved student outcomes in these areas. This evidence is based on the Year 3/5/7 testing results over that time. It was noticeable that the noise level was reduced with gender specific groups and that both boys and girls were 'on-task' for longer periods of time. Unfortunately the initiative was unable to be sustained as both boys and girls requested that the structure be changed to enable them to get back to working as mixed groups, as they felt more comfortable working this way.

Dinni Wata excursion, video, cultural record of stories; store outing and maths.

In this location, several experiences reflected the cultural importance of yarning as a culturally significant pedagogic practice. The first activity was an excursion by a group of Year 2 and 3 children to a culturally important site. On the way to the location the Islander teacher shared with children cultural stories which linked their present to their past, not only through history but through familial connections both to clan groups and family members and to local geography. There is no doubt that some of the children

would have known some of this information but it was clear during the excursion that most of the children were having this information shared with them for the first time. This generated lots of discussion amongst group members and with the teachers who accompanied the group, as they walked to the site. The discussion invoked clarification, reinforcement, repetition, retelling and construction of new knowledges. This was all recorded on video by the teachers and was later edited to form a documentary of the excursion which was made available to the community and the rest of the school to view. The experience also formed the basis of a series of reading materials that were produced by the children and used across the school.

Another experience was described to me by a very experienced Islander teacher, which again reflects elements of yarning as pedagogy. She took her class to the local store to do some shopping, where the students had real money to spend on real goods. The whole activity was very orally focussed, with the teacher engaging individuals and groups in discussions about what they might buy, whether they had sufficient money to buy all that they wanted to, what they might sacrifice in order to be able to purchase something they really wanted, how many items they might buy and what change they might expect to get from the whole purchase. This might not be viewed as anything more than good teaching practice, until one realises the depth of engagement of both teacher and children in negotiating costs and numbers of items; prioritising purchases, calculating total cost and subsequent change and rationalising the ultimate purchase. These were Year 6 and 7 children, some of whom would be moving to the mainland the next year for secondary school. The teacher talked to these children about what they might need to buy for themselves, what they needed as opposed to what they wanted, how much disposable money they might expect to have available to them and how they might save for special

purchases. All of the discussion was in Ilan Tok or Torres Strait creole. The activity was characterised by constant dialogue and negotiation between the teacher and the students, related to real world demands on the daily life of students.

Culture day, kup muri (earth oven); writers camp.

The culture day and kup muri provided the opportunity for students to work in gendered groups to learn the skills involved in this series of related cultural activities. Adults worked with groups of students on a range of activities, including butchering the turtle; portioning the meat and storing it in the shell ready for cooking in the kup muri; preparing the vegetables, chickens and fish by wrapping them in banana leaves tied with coconut fronds; preparing the sop-sop (potatoes, sweet potatoes and yams sliced finely and cooked in coconut milk); and the damper. Some of these tasks are gender specific. The boys tend to work with the turtle and the kup muri pit and the girls do the vegetables, chicken and fish and the damper. These groups of adults and students engaged in lots of dialogue about the activities whilst simultaneously observing and then practising the skills involved. This is very similar to the previously described cultural activities that occurred at a different site. Again, gendered groups were evident and acceptable, working in complimentary fashion to produce a common outcome - the feast.

The writer's camp is a very non-Islander cultural activity but the processes involved have a very strong Islander flavour. Students were motivated to write their own stories but, from the moment that the writing began, dialogue about the activity between and amongst the adults and the students rose to a new level. There was constant interaction between the writers and their mentors; skills refinement was a feature of the process; peer tutoring constantly occurred and the outcomes validated collective activity as well as individual

expertise. Learning was being shared in a way that generally didn't reflect what I've observed to be standard classroom practice across the Torres Strait. What it did reflect was community knowledge sharing processes that are inclusive and at the same time acknowledging and validating of individual expertise and influence. These are all very characteristic of the way in which Torres Strait Islanders engage and interact with one another and illustrate essential elements of yarning as pedagogy.

Resolution of the Christmas pageant.

The proliferation of various Christian religions in the Torres Strait over the past ten years has generated some competition between these groups for the hearts and minds of communities. In one site that competition almost resulted in the Christmas pageant run by the school being closed down. The conflict arose over some children being prevented from acting or singing because their religion forbade them involvement in these activities. The local Islander Principal called the parties together to try to sort the problem out by 'yarning'. The respective parties shared their points of view quite calmly and openly and in turn listened to the views of others with similar respect. It was concluded that there were things that the non-acting, non-singing children could do, that would not contravene the views of their religion, such as preparing and managing the properties and the stage area. Likewise costumes and getting the actors ready was an area of involvement they could undertake. The Christmas pageant went ahead as planned and was a terrific success.

Newspaper project with year 7's; resolving the visioning process in KKY.

The year sevens in this site engaged in a newspaper project over one term. The project required them to develop and sell a weekly newspaper in the community. The students took on all the roles from journalist and editor to newsagent and printer. Students had to collect information for the various sections of the newspaper which involved them in interviewing and researching. Daily conferences were held in the lead up to the first edition, which utilised the teacher and the teacher aide to make sure that processes and outcomes were accurate. The paper had international news as well as regional and community news. Each edition had a feature section that explored the experiences, background and education of a particular occupation such as aircraft pilot, ships engineer, ships captain, nurse, teacher, store manager, trawler owner, councillor and small business owner. Editing of work before publishing was a significant task involving all children, teachers, teacher aides and community members. There was significant community interest in this production and once again the activity involved sharing, skills refinement, cooperation and the validation of individual expertise within a familiar cultural context.

In the IDEAS visioning process at this site, I adopted a slightly different approach. I was staying for a weekend and the school was meeting with me to engage in trying to clarify their vision. I explained the tasks that we might work through during the day (see the log of the voyage, *The IDEAS process: Data Collection* .) and then opened the forum to discussion of the directions that might be taken by the group. This was unstructured in the sense that I provided no guiding questions or topics. The group talked generally about what we might do and some of the possible issues that might arise. The discussion eventually got onto the topic of what they would like their children to look like in terms of

attitudes, behaviours, skills and understandings at the end of Year seven. At this point the dialogue took a totally unexpected direction. Almost immediately group members began speaking in *language* (KKY). Prior to this the conversation had been largely in English or creole, I suspect largely for my benefit. The tenor and tone of the dialogue changed from conversational to interrogative. Every member of the group took turns in exploring and clarifying their meaning. At one point the conversation was translated for my benefit, as the participants needed to explain to me their changing views. Initially they had decided that they wanted their children to leave school like warriors, a highly respected status in the community, even today. By this they meant that their children would be armed with the necessary skills and understandings to enable them to cope effectively with a rapidly changing contemporary world. One member of the group however was quick to realise that 'warriors' were only representative of the males in the community and as such excluded the female population. This was soon understood to mean that at least half of the community was not represented by this 'vision' metaphor. A lengthy and complex dialogue followed that progressed for the remainder of the day, with the occasional involvement of myself. Whenever I was involved, careful concern was shown by all the group members to ensure that the message being conveyed to me was understood and agreed to by each member of the group. What I was privileged to be a part of was yarning as pedagogy, or in this instance, androgogy in process. Whilst consensus was the goal, the process involved repetition, clarification and negotiation of meaning, all within an historically informed Torres Strait cultural context. The constant awareness of this historical cultural context was accepted by the group members as a given, unlike Western classrooms where the future is more of a focus. In my view, these diametrically opposed positions at least partly explain the failure of western education in the classrooms of the Torres Strait. Torres Strait schools are officially defined in ways

that predetermine their operational processes according to Anglo-Australian values. The yarning process on the other hand creates an environment within which parallels are constantly drawn between cultural contexts - Torres Strait Islander and Anglo-Australian. The yarning process respects both contexts whereas the classrooms generally do not because of their alignment with hegemonic systemic demands.

Excursion to the mountain visiting special sites, plants and stories.

At this site the whole school was taken on an excursion to a local mountain, which has particular significance to this community. The excursion integrated school and cultural/community activities that required significant community and elder involvement. Along the way culturally significant sites, flora and fauna were an integral part of the overall excursion. Families also accompanied the children and their teachers. Clan related knowledge was communicated to the children as they climbed the mountain. This knowledge was enhanced by the elders through their broader community cultural knowledge and again this process was oral, it was clarified by questioning and repetition and it was focussed on the refining and clarification of collectively and individually owned cultural narratives and knowledges.

The work of teacher aides and Islander teachers – how they work with students as opposed to how non Islander staff work with students.

Careful observation of classroom practices across the Torres Strait which appear to promote effective learning, initially identifies the importance of establishing of mutual and reflective relationships between teacher and learner. In effect, both participants become learners. Respect is reflected in the calm approach adopted by the teacher and the reciprocal lowered level of noise and disruption in the room. Whilst the children are generally louder than their mainland counterparts, this is not a reflection of disrespect.

I've noted that Islander teachers and teacher aides generally approach their work with more tolerance and patience than do non-Islander teachers. This should not be taken to imply that they impose fewer demands on children, but they sometimes seem to be caught in a number of contradictory discourses. My experience in observing classrooms in action across the Torres Strait, suggests that frequently Torres Strait Islander teachers and aides believe that the Western education system demands 'good' teachers be loud and sometimes aggressive, in order to be effective. However, in cultural learning environments outside the classroom this attitude does not predominate. Islander teachers and aides tend to work in conjunction with the realities of the classroom, rather than attempt to 'control' the children and create an unnaturally quiet environment. Learning in an Islander context is a noisy, active and busy affair but extremely effective, as I have shown earlier in this paper. There is a level of energy and enthusiasm attached to Islander classrooms, which can easily be mistaken by non-Islander teachers for overactivity. I believe that there is a real risk that the provision of 'special education services' across the Torres Strait will confirm increasing rates of ADD and ADHD, based largely on different levels of noise and engagement than is anticipated in mainland classrooms. If this were true it would be a huge disservice to these children and their education, particularly in the face of my research, which demonstrates the effectiveness of pedagogic practices that are indigenous to the Torres Strait. Christensen and Baker's study (2002) of how classroom teachers constructed learning disability provides valuable evidence to support my concern for the potential risks involved.

I observed a class engaged in a Teaching Handwriting Reading And Spelling Skills (THRASS) lesson in one school, where the children were having a great time singing and actioning the movements associated with the tape, but the actual learning that was going

on was minimal. There was no attempt to link the phonetic work being done with words or word charts, no follow-up with linked content and no connection of this work to the language used in the classroom. Most Torres Strait Islander children love to move, to sing, to act and their education needs to take this reality into account, not try to change it to meet the standards or expectations of other cultural groups. However, equally ineffective is a presumption that because the children are actively involved in a session, they are learning what is intended. Activity without association to some meaning-making process is simply activity, not necessarily education.

The expectation that the classroom can't be a place of respect, reciprocation, questioning, story telling, observing.

A view dominant in many Western educational contexts, that classrooms need to be quiet places in order for learning to be going on, is not appropriate in the Torres Strait context. Torres Strait Islander contexts value movement, engagement, sharing and collective processes which also acknowledge individual expertise. Traditionally, Western educative processes tend to devalue narrative and dialogue, story telling, demonstration and repetition, clarification and questioning, skills refinement and collective learning, in favour of factual recall, correct and incorrect answers and positivistic, scientific, discipline related content knowledge. This is particularly so as children move from primary education into secondary schools. Such a view of what counts for knowledge significantly works against educational success for Torres Strait Islander students, as I've indicated in the log of the voyage, *YUME Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Strait.* The following extract from my research expands on some of the significant features of Yarning.

" Yarning, whether its culturally or socially ... it's a good thing, yeh. It breaks down barriers. It creates an environment to talk.

In yarning you can joke; you can talk freely, um ... so yarning being as you know Torres Strait, Mabuiag too, we bin still to large extent, ... we continue to talk because of our oral, um ...we bin oral storying, orally passed on important cultural things.

I can say here that yarning was a very important for information passing process. You yarn and then the information get passed on to someone else ... go to take to the next island the yarn will go and the important thing about yarning, ... especially Torres Strait, ... especially Mabuiag is that if you talking about a particular thing, even a belief, its sticks. Because through yarn you telling more than one person important information. Its an information sharing process too, yarning. 'Cause you can, ... you say things not in a, ... not in like an agenda, ... not formal, ... you talk like youme talk here."

Transcript of section of an interview with Mabuiag community member and his wife. 11/08/03. 12.25 minutes to 13.57 minutes.

Narrative research and the process of 'yarning'.

I was clear in my view that only qualitative methods would give me the insights that I was searching for and those that this study demanded. Qualitative approaches seemed to offer the most appropriate methods to enable me to begin to engage the intricate nature of the pedagogy that was being described for me, by others, alongside my own observations. Narrative methods seemed the most appropriate, as the data I was dealing with, relied heavily on the work of others, teachers, students and community members. My role in

this process was as the 'babel fish'; the universal interpreter (Adams, 1995). My job was to record (which of necessity involves some elements of translation) and assist focus groups to refine their own data (again involving elements of translation and interpretation). Yarning was the narrative process I adopted to work with. This process is well documented throughout the literature related to research amongst Indigenous peoples. Burchill (2004) describes the process.

"Yarning up is about listening to community knowledge, concerns, experience, and aspirations and building trusting respectful relationships between the researcher and the people." (p. 3 of 11)

Whilst this reflects the broad parameters of the yarning process across the Torres Strait, its expression in the Torres Strait context is quite distinct from that engaged in in Aboriginal communities, to which Burchill, (2004) refers. Yarning in the Torres Strait context, as I've observed it and had it explained to me, occurs frequently in specific locations, involves specific individuals and groups and is often driven by specific purposes. Platforms set on empty fuel drums in the shade of trees often provide the location for family and community groups to relax and 'yarn'. These events involve sharing of 'community knowledge, concerns, experience, and aspirations' and provide important opportunities to build 'respectful relationships' between and amongst community and family members (Burchill, 2004). Yarning also performs the business of making personal stories, collective ones (Beverley, 2003), an aspect of autobiographical research that reflects much of the poststructuralist methodology of collective biography increasingly accepted as authoritative by the Western academy (Davies and Gannon, 2006). I analyse yarning as a component of my research methods in some detail below.

Yarning is an educative process that occurs in an environment saturated by intricate patterns of relationships. By way of example, my association with most of the participants over many years is a significantly influential aspect of this study that cannot be discounted. On the one hand these relationships give me a level of insider status that privileges me over some researchers, whilst on the other hand these same relationships can serve to restrict the sharing of important but possibly conflicting or contradictory views, based on the pre-eminence of the Torres Strait Islander need to maintain respectful relationships in all discourse.

This research then is narrative in nature but not entirely so. There are dimensions of my research that are not adequately described simply by the notion of narrative research. In addition to significant elements of narrative research, the study also reflects elements of *testimonio* (Beverely, 2003) in my attempts to give authority to the orality of the participants. In many studies the issue of orality is problematic often being dismissed as illiteracy where, *"Illiteracy is construed as a shameful lack rather than as an alternative cultural realm of orality."* (Cowlishaw, 1998; p.147)

Not only is orality a significant aspect of the study but my role in recording and 'interpreting' – acting as the babel-fish or what Beverley (2003) describes as the 'interlocular-compiler' carries particular importance. Because of my relationship with many of the participants and their communities over many years, I am treated with a level of respect that is likely to result in deference to my views rather than contradiction of them, as I've noted earlier. While this may sound paternalistic, it is important to acknowledge, as a significant and inherent complexity of the study. The difficulty that this

creates arises from the essential contradiction between recording narrative, where there is inevitably some translation involved and relating my experiences and interpretations as my own story. Neither can ever be the case, completely, and I often had to accept uncertainty as I moved from one position to another, from observer to participant. Do I accept the stories on face value, knowing or rather presuming in some respects that my co-researcher is very likely giving me what they think I want to hear? Throughout the entire study, I've treated all participants as co- researchers. Their knowledge is acknowledged as such and whilst their intentions may not coincide with mine, they have the right to be heard with integrity and mutual respect. Do I risk damaging the relationship with my co-researcher by attempting to clarify information knowing that at some point the co-researcher is likely to conclude that I really don't believe what they are telling me anyway? Do I essentially avoid the issues by declaring the centrality of my role in the whole process and emphasise the very personal story that I am recording both on behalf of my co-researcher and myself?

 I have opted for the latter process, insisting that my interpretations may well be flawed and the stories that result from these are my re-presentations. This will be the case for every reader of this study and I anticipate and accept this as the nature of this work, while locating it within the academically respected framework of critical and reflexive research (see the log of the voyage, *YUMI research).*

Literacies and 'yarning'.

Literacy in itself is problematic in the Torres Strait. The fact that most of the participants speak several vernaculars and dialects, as well as English further complicates the study. As I've noted in the log of the voyage *YUME Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Strait*, the issue of data collection and interpretation was

complicated by my failure to initially encourage the participants to use the most comfortable means of communication, including vernaculars and creoles, to explore their school pedagogies. When I explicitly encouraged participants at one site to use langus or Kala Kawaw Ya (KKY), the whole yarning session came alive with animated dialogue and engagement that lasted for over two hours. Interspersed with the dialogue were explanatory periods for my benefit. These were shared explanations with everyone contributing to the clarification of the concepts being shared. So carefully was this clarification done, that everyone in the group had to agree as the final translation back to English was made, for my benefit. Even this statement was checked with me to ensure that I'd correctly understood what was intended. This was only one of a small number of sessions that I came away from feeling that I'd acted authentically as the 'interlocular-compiler' described by Beverley (2003). In this instance I was comfortable that the process I'd facilitated had effectively attempted to address Spivak's (1988) concern for the objectification of the subaltern which results in the subaltern not mattering, not being worth listening to and not being understood when 'heard'.

This experience, on reflection caused me to invoke a similar process with all the subsequent yarning groups. Not all of these worked as effectively as the one I have described, however the results of subsequent group sessions proved more productive and seemed to engage more group consensus and interrogation of the issues than those where I did not suggest the group use their own language. This method also forced me to more precisely acknowledge my privileges and attempt to mediate the influences of them on the entire project more proactively and effectively. The yarning process is not one that appropriates truth, and any attempt on my part to afford veracity to the narrative data I was collecting only further reinforces the reality,

*"... that the subaltern can of course speak, but only through **us**, through our institutionally sanctioned authority and pretended objectivity as intellectuals, which give us the power to decide what counts in the narrator's raw material."* (Beverley, 2003; p. 329) (emphasis in the original)

Elements of interview research also overlap this study's methodology. As Denzin and Lincoln (2003) note,

"... interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated , contextually based results." (p. 62)

The notion of yarning engages a form of interview, where stories are shared and meanings negotiated in largely unstructured groups, conversation and contexts. To adopt a positivistic interview process with established questions seeking specific information in fairly direct and directed ways, is to risk disenfranchising Torres Strait Islander peoples. Like many Indigenous peoples faced with an inappropriate and aggressive approach to information gathering, Islanders tend to give responses that they think are expected or alternatively, redirect the discussion. Either way the researcher isn't likely to get the information that is being sought. If actions are based on the conclusions drawn from evidence collected in this way, no other explanation for the failure of many government sponsored projects is needed. This frequently experienced approach to information gathering in Indigenous communities is well documented by Collishaw (1998) and reflects the acquired role of cultural broker often illustrated by the behaviours of government officials and public servants through their work with Indigenous

communities. Babha's (1983) description of colonial government actions makes this point:

"... marking out a "subject nation" , appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity ... which ... produces the colonised as a fixed reality which is at once an "other" and yet entirely knowable and visible" (p. 23)

IDEAS Workshops and yarning.

Associated with each phase of the IDEAS (Crowther, Andrews, Lewis & Dawson, 2000) process are a series of workshops that assist the school based IDEAS facilitator and management team to engage the process effectively and to keep it moving forward. It is these workshops that provided me with the opportunity to gather extensive data related to successful pedagogies in operation in schools across the Torres Strait. The workshops usually took the form of yarning groups in the Islands, as people felt more comfortable working in groups and they provided the opportunity for parents, community members and children to be involved, without any concerns about anonymity. The yarning groups generated collective and consensual responses as well as disparate and individualistic opinions. All the group members were aware of what others were saying and were free to engage in dialogue related to the issues. Since the yarning groups focussed on successful teaching practices, I was looking and listening for positive responses, jokes, laughter and multiple signs of agreement – nods, raised eyebrows, gesticulations with the head. As I've already noted yarning is a well established relational process in the Torres Strait and provides a comfortable and safe environment within which numbers of people can exchange views and express opinions. Before each session, participants had the process explained and the reasons for the activity explored. Again this was related to trying to find out more about what was good teaching practice in each community. Whilst I never used a standard format, examples of the type of stimulus questions I used include: What

did the children enjoy? What did the teacher do? What did the children do? How do you know that this was good teaching and learning? When you walk past a room and look in, what things do you see that make you feel good?

My role was to initiate and promote the yarning, not to direct it. I acted as recorder for the group in most instances, however where the group size was too big, I divided the group in two and let the group choose a recorder. I'd intended to have each group choose its own recorder from the group, but at the first group session it was made very clear to me that the participants would talk and I'd record. They would tell me if I got it wrong, as happened on several occasions. From this experience I offered both options to each session and invariably ended up recording so that everyone in the group was free to engage in and focus on, the dialogue. I made copies of the data collected and left the original material with each community, as it was needed to progress the IDEAS process. This was usually retained in the school, as the school was the focus of the yarning groups.

Yarning groups varied in time from an hour, to two and a half hours. I facilitated the yarning for as long as people were obviously comfortable to be involved. The moment that I thought that anyone was losing interest, I concluded the activity. I was deliberately attempting to have people go away from the activity still talking about things, rather than have them leave tired and bored. I made it clear that this activity was about their children and the things that went on at their school that they felt were good for their children. The groups were told that the information they gave would help to promote a higher quality of teaching and learning in their schools. Most group sessions took place after school, in the afternoon, at all locations, thereby enabling me to access a broader cross-section of the

school community, including children. A couple took place in the evening but still at the school.   Before each session got underway, I made sure that the participants were happy to have the children there, involved in the yarn. There wasn't any session where participants removed their children or indicated that they did not want them involved. In many instances, parents and grandparents used school children to help them talk through the concepts, by having the children explain things to them. This was more effective and less intrusive than asking me to explain, which many might have been loathe to do.

The yarning groups were surprisingly representative of the wider community. They consisted of parents, grandparents and carers of the school children and frequently interested community members who just wanted find out what was going on.   Island life is often fairly predictable so that any visitors become a source of interest and their activities engender inquisitiveness.

These yarning groups formed only one source of data for this study. Because I was concerned with the implementation of a more comprehensive process, I yarned with individuals and groups about the IDEAS process and the impact it was having in their school and community. I also had the advantage of established networks across the Torres Strait, as the result of my long term involvement in education in the region. Both the IDEAS process and yarns with members of my educational and social networks provided data for this study. My interest is in the pedagogical profiles of each community and how these might inform the basis of best practice in Torres Strait Island schools.

Yarning as Pedagogy and Western Pedagogies.

The foregoing detail has served to highlight the essential intimacies of Yarning as a pedagogy. Western classrooms tend to be dominated by levels of teacher directedness that are at one and the same time both overt and covert. By by this I mean that teacher planning pre-empts the learning that is going to occur and as a consequence what the child is engaged with is already predetermined and centrally located within a curriculum framework of someone else's determination. It is also to acknowledge that these learnings are frequently not directly related to real life experience and so children whose life experiences are different to those of the teacher are highly likely to wonder at the significance of the learning they are engaging. When you add to this a culturally different dimension, the potential for learning to be seen as irrelevant is significant. These issues have been raised in several of the voyage logs, so here I want to compare and contrast Yarning as pedagogic process with current Western pedagogic processes.

In the western world, teacher education is not directly a real-life focussed educational process. We approach the complex task of teaching from a very theoretical dimension and tend to deal largely with content as opposed to process. In order to assist children to effectively operate in a very complex world, we treat the process of education very differently to peoples whose immediate purpose for education is focussed on socio-cultural outcomes. In our western world, those socio-cultural outcomes are generally left to be absorbed by children through informal encounters experienced through their immersion in the socio- cultural environment of their daily lives.

Western classrooms and schools are specifically designed and designated locations where learning is expected to occur. That learning usually involves significant use of

technology related to the process of education and frequently the quality of educational outcomes is inadvertently or otherwise linked to the quality of that technology. Quality learning is not normally linked to or associated with the development of specific life skills required for survival and nor has it been linked to the environment and the individual's relationship to the environment and immediate society. Interestingly enough these issues are becoming more significant to western education as our 'civilised societies' begin to realise the impact our development is having on our environments and our global inter-relationships.

In the Torres Strait, whilst classrooms are seen as places of learning now, there is still a lot of education of children occurring outside the classroom, as is evidenced in these logs. That learning is engaged through oral and aural methods largely and is paralled with frequent and regular skills demonstrations and opportunities for children to observe actions and repeat them until they have mastered the process. These 'lessons' are usually directly related to some activity or some relationship that is important for the child, for example the construction of the dugong platform. As I noted in this example, the child observes, practices and achieves by enacting. An oral society demands serious repetition of processes, until mastery is achieved. It is also important to be exact in your story telling. Room for interpretation and creativity is usually only appropriate when new stories or rituals are developed to celebrate or explain new events.

The essential differences are evidenced through one process being very formal and the other very relational in nature. Both have structure but the structures differ considerably. One has a very organised and discipline focussed structure whilst the other has an ordered and social/relational structure. In one learning is documented, recorded and tested and in

the other learning is engaged through story, practice and informal testing. In one the

process of education is theorised and academised in its own right, whilst in the other

education has real life application and implications and the test of success is in the

successful application of what you have learned. The connection to your lived experience

is very clear and very important.

Both Freire and Giroux place reliance on the process of dialogue and the use of , in

Freire's (1973) case, Culture Circles which,

> *"... enact a radical form of pedagogy in that they refuse to succumb to passive forms*
> *of education central to traditional schooling. Rather, the culture circle incorporates*
> *multiple categories which seek to shift power and agency to foster the problem-*
> *solving abilities of the people – enabling them to return to humanized spaces as*
> *Subjects and to once again act on their world as reflective agents of social change."*
> (pp. 43-44).

This notion of culture circles parallels the Yarning places in the Torres Strait in many

respects. The whole process of yarning is related to sharing ideas, listening to other points of

view, clarifying your understanding of what you are engaged in sharing and creating new

understandings. This dialogic process applies equally where Giroux explores the concept of

transformative education (Giroux, (1988) or education based in dialogic exchange between

student and teacher, resulting in social action aimed at problematising and acting to change

perceived issues. This mirrors the Yarning as Pedagogy process in many respects as it does

Freire's culture circles process.

Too many western teachers, albeit with good intent, are still driven by a curriculum

framework, rather than being driven by the needs of their students around which they mould

relevant aspects of the curriculum. Especially in a significantly different cultural context,

such as Torres Strait Island schools, where literacy, in the western sense is relatively limited, educators should be being guided by their student's needs. It is problematic for teachers however when they are directed by systemic imperatives that are largely oblivious at least and ignorant at worst, of the Torres Strait Island context.

Yarning as Cultural Pedagogy.

Yarning has long been accepted, in fact insisted on as an essential research tool when engaging Indigenous Australian communities in the research process, especially in health related research. The report *Research partnerships: Yarning about research with Indigenous peoples* (2002), clearly identifies the process in action and offers characteristics of the process to guide further research activities. Whilst this document refers specifically to health research, the process itself is applicable to all research activities involving Indigenous peoples and communities. The process of yarning involves the generation of shared meanings and as such implies learning taking place. Clearly, then, yarning has a significant pedagogic capacity in the Torres Strait context.

I summarise my analysis of yarning as pedagogy in this final diagram.   My research has shown that effective educational practice in the Torres Strait consists of three interactive and relational elements. Firstly, educational process needs to operate within an holistic cultural context (Gud Pasin) that provides the emotional, spiritual and environmental basis upon which all educational activity can take place Freire, 1973). Secondly, the predominant pedagogic process in this educational environment needs to reflect the natural, culturally significant process of yarning. The result of these two elements interacting with each other will be the emergence of other pedagogies with cultural

integrity, some of which have been identified elsewhere in this work (see the log for the

voyage, *YUMI Pedagog: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity)*

Gud Pasin

(Context)
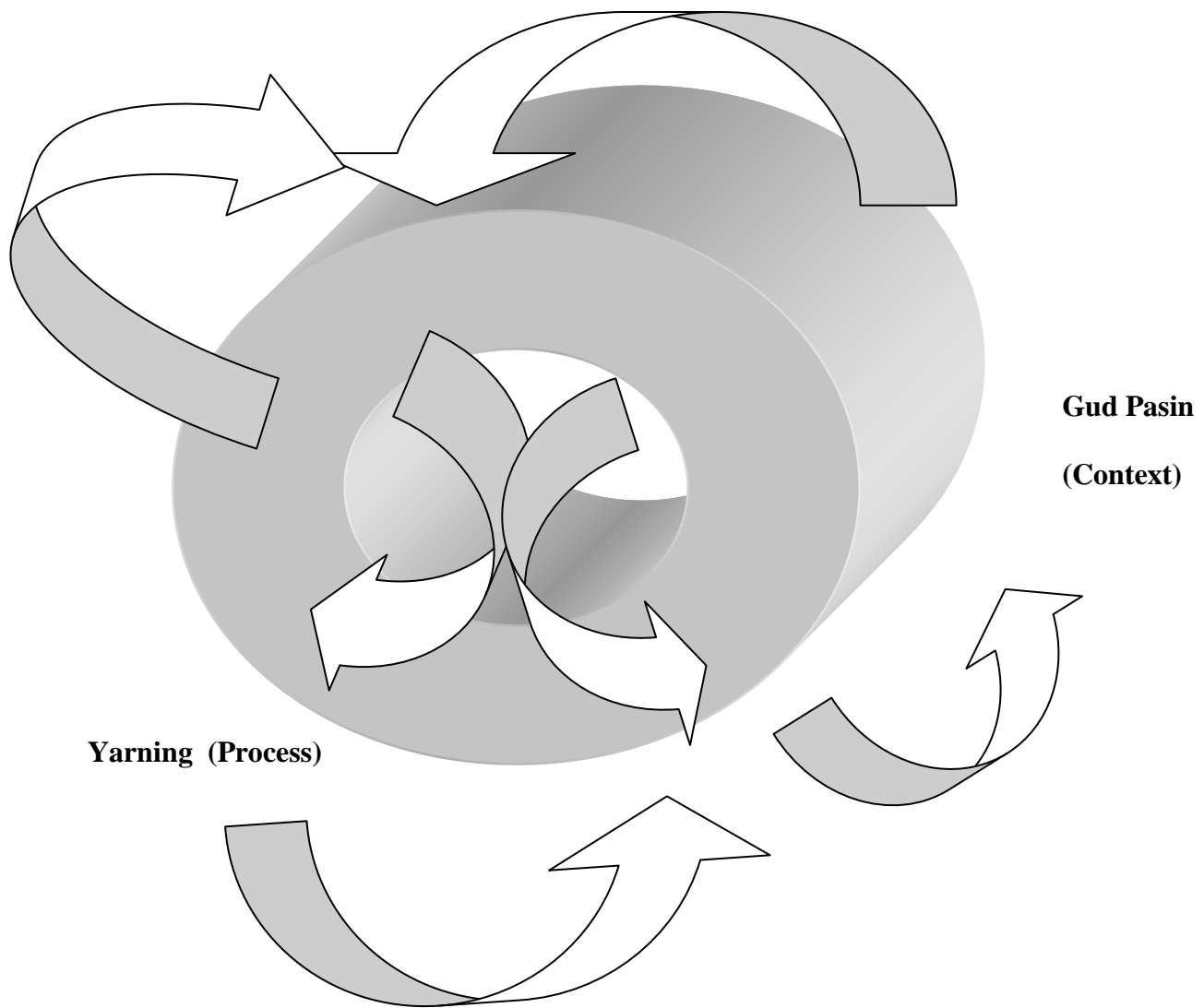
Yarning (Process)

Pedagogies with Cultural Integrity

(Real learning; Learning together; Future oriented learning; Student oriented learning;
Connected learning; Active learning; Problem solving)

I look forward to seeing Yarning achieving its rightful place as a model for effective

pedagogy in Torres Strait Island schools.

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The log of the voyage,

YUMI Research:

Qualitative Research in the Torres Strait

John McMaster

November 2006

YUMI Research: Qualitative Research in the Torres Strait.

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YUMI Research: Qualitative Research in the Torres Strait.

Introduction.

The log of this voyage provides an opportunity for me to explore the range of methodological tools I've adopted in the study undertaken. This approach is supported by the use of autobiographical methods, as a mechanism to enable me to position myself in the context of the overall study. I've chosen to locate my research in the critical paradigm. Informed by the views of such critical educators as Giroux (1983, 1997), Freire (1985), McLaren (1997) and Steinberg & Kincheloe (1998), and by the work of eminent Indigenous Australian educators including Nakata (1995, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004), Langton (1994, 1999), Moreton-Robinson (2004), Partington and McCudden (1993) and Wright and Collins-Gearing (2005), this study is presented as a discourse of possibility for Torres Strait Islander education with the genuine expectation that schools in the Torres Strait can become sites where forms of knowledge, values and social relationships are promoted as processes of critical empowerment (Giroux, 1988), (Nakata, 2001, 2004) and conscientisation (Freire, 1972) for Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As Indigenous Australian academics raise their profile and numbers in academia, so their significant impact on particularly Indigenous education across this country is beginning to be realised. Their voices, legitimized through the authority of western academic traditions, can no longer be ignored and must become the stimulus and the platform for significant and culturally informed educational revitalisation in this country.

Considerable work has been and is being undertaken in the broad area of Indigenous research (see, for example, Tuhiwai Smith (1999; 2005), Moreton-Robinson (1998; 2004;

2008), Rigney (1997), Brady (1992; 1999) , Walter (2005) and the ideas being developed by these and other theorists and practitioners have informed and reaffirmed my commitment to decolonizing the research act in this thesis.

My work celebrates the fluidity of the critical tradition. This enables me to step outside or at least to interrogate my own view and position in relation to education in the Torres Strait and invite the interrogation of readers especially Torres Strait Islanders. In this way I hope to make some spaces in which to explore the variety of possibilities that might transpire. My intent is not to proscribe, (as has been the colonialist practice in relation to education) but to stimulate dialogue and explore the intricacies of the warp and weft of education in the Torres Strait. So far the artefacts (the logs of the various voyages) that have been produced by this artistry, have clear and readily identifiable connections to a dominant sociocultural group with only fragile and tentative interpretative links to Torres Strait realities. I liken the structure of Torres Strait Islander education to the mats that are traditionally made and used in the Islands; they are woven by women using the materials found on the islands, including coconut fibre, pandanus fibre and reeds to produce intricate patterns relating to historic themes and stories as well as local plants and animals. It is my view that the outcomes associated with education artefacts must change, so that Torres Strait Islanders themselves begin to choose the basic materials, define the likely patterns, decide the colours and textures of the materials and select the best artisans to create the mats that reflect educative processes in contemporary Torres Strait Island schools.

 Just as with the traditional practice of weaving, introduced materials have been adapted by the weavers to produce new products. Plastic wrapping straps have been introduced along

with the traditional coconut fibres. Sometimes they are used in combination in a mat and sometimes they are used on their own. This results in a variety of colours in mats and baskets that traditionally did not exist. This process illustrates the way in which cultures are impacted by introduced items in the environment. It also demonstrates how people adapt to changing environments. When applied to the educational context, rather than being supported in choosing what educational elements were required, Torres Strait Islanders have been forced into accepting what Anglo-Australians have deemed appropriate for their needs. As a consequence, rather than a process of adaption through the acquisition of rationalised self-selected educational elements from both (all) cultural environments, Torres Strait Islanders have been given a complete educational package that must be implemented, without any opportunity of having input that will genuinely result in Torres Strait Islander influence over the changes.

I use the weaving metaphor to illustrate the variety of possibilities and the complexity of the educational process. A small change to any one of the processes employed in 'weaving the educational mat', (and possibly other parameters), could result in the final product being completely different to what was originally intended. This realisation can also act to clarify the surety that regardless of what we try, our collective actions can only behave as indicators, as channels on a chart leading to a common destination. The colonial experience has proposed destinations that are not necessarily appropriate to Torres Strait Islanders and prescribed routes that have proven difficult, if not impossible for Torres Strait Islanders to follow, or which they do not now wish to follow by way of the same passages.   The new millennium and the neo-colonial dimensions that associate with it, define the opportunity, possibility and the necessity to address new educational directions in the Torres Strait.

The possibility that there might exist pedagogies of particular significance to the cultural contexts of the Torres Strait has largely been overshadowed by the focus in western educational systems on curriculum change to realise positive educational outcomes. As a consequence, Torres Strait education has been driven by curriculum change in the pursuit of improved educational outcomes. This study promotes the view that educational change in pursuit of improved outcomes is the result of a focus on appropriate pedagogy, expressed as successful classroom practices and particular to each context. This is not to deny the importance of curriculum change but an attempt to focus educational change on pedagogic practice. It is the quality of the work of teachers in classrooms that is the critical component in effecting positive educational outcomes. What this means in practice is explored in the log of the voyage, *YUMI Pedagogy* and influenced by the experiences documented in the log of the voyage, *My Journey*.

Researcher and researched.

This study endeavours to position the researched and the researcher as equal partners in the research process and project. The participants include, teachers, students, teacher aides, community members and elders. It also relies heavily on the relationships built up between these participants and the researcher and the researcher's desire to ensure that ownership of the research rest substantially in the hands of the participants. Having made that point, it is important to state that the folio is the work of the author and the selection and organisation of the data, the analysis and the conclusions are also mine. The folio represents my views, my interpretations and translations and my (re)presenations of the data. This position legitimizes the validity of others, be they participants or readers, to reach their own equally valid conclusions.

"How we choose to name other peoples and groups – how we categorize them – often tells more about us, about our stance on how things are, than it does about any truth of who they are. It tells us more about that which is true to the namer"
(Rinehart, 1998; p. 201)

The nature of the research that I've undertaken in this study has been the source of much concern to me. What data to collect, how the data is collected, the researchers role in the data collection, the researched's role in the data collection, data analysis and data

interpretation are all problematic considering that this research re-presents through my own historically located lens, the views and intents of peoples who are significantly culturally different to the researcher. My underlying concern is with the quality of educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students. If, as Gergen & Gergen (2003) assert,

"The intelligibility of our accounts of the world derive not from the world itself, but from our immersion within a tradition of cultural practices we inherit from previous generations." (p. 577)

then the quality is in the eyes of the beholder and my research activities can only gather data that illuminates my own historically and socioculturally located interpretations. Such data cannot be held to be the 'truth' of the participant, only my interpretation of what I've observed which suffers from all the flaws that associate with recall and translation from my own cultural perspective. I'm comfortable with this position as my desire is that the disjunctions that my research produces should provide an important dialogic interjection, creating spaces wherein Torres Strait Islanders might generate some agency over education for their children.

I could ignore the import of these interpretative aspects on the conclusions that I reach, as has been done by some researchers involved in studies where cultural difference is a factor. However, my relationship with Torres Strait Islanders has allowed me some insight into their world which demands recognition of the significance of cultural differences. This does not position me as an insider; I don't pretend to understand the worlds of Torres Strait Islander peoples or to speak for them but my involvement in educational provisions to Torres Strait Islander peoples has given me experiences and understandings that have informed my view of the their worlds in ways that cannot be duplicated (see the log of the voyage, *My Journey: An Autobiographical Personal Narrative.*). Other non-Islander academics may have had similar experiences but how each one constructs their understanding from and of them, is quite unique. As Foucault (1973) notes, social constructions, amongst which education figures prominently, are contextually and historically informed. Some of the understanding of Torres Strait Islander society that I gained gave me a glimpse of the difficulties for Torres Strait Islanders involved in this research, particularly regarding authority in a changing world. From a world away in time and place, the words of W.E.B. Du Bois' (1953) describing the duality experienced by the African-American, echo the same fundamental dilemma for Torres Strait Islanders engaged in this research. Who is it that speaks to the researcher and on what basis? Does this dialogue reflect the contemporary or the historic Islander? Which one is more significant for this current purpose and on what basis? Do I tell the researcher what I really want to say or do I tell him what I think he wants to hear?

This level of confusion is not solely located with those being researched. The researcher too is confronted with important questions about how to engage and manage the process and

whether the interpretations made by the researcher are anywhere near what was intended by those being researched. Whilst having some understanding of cultural knowledge is important for the researcher it cannot be presumed that this level of cultural understanding even remotely matches the level of implicit knowledge with which Islanders themselves grow up. Knowing in a cultural sense is very subjective and the western academic desire to confirm 'knowledge' works against any firm re-presentation of Torres Strait Islander cultural dimensions, as it should do. Couple this reality with the evolutionary nature of the cultural experience and the process of 'knowing' becomes correspondingly more complex and elusive in both process and expression.

What this level of fluidity leads to is ultimately an acknowledgement by the researcher that it is not helpful to approach this study from a 'psychometric' perspective, whereby issues such as 'validity', 'reliability' and 'generalisability' are held as crucial to academic acknowledgement of the outcomes. I had to seek other ways, other paradigms that acknowledge both the right of the researched to speak and be heard and the responsibility of the researcher to record and reflect in ways that,

> *"..... move the genre toward new projects, new relationships between the researcher*
>
> *and the researched, and away from previously constructed colonizations of the*
>
> *"Other"."*   (Tierney, 2003; p. 295).

This view is not an attempt to denigrate scientistic and rationalist approaches to research but it does acknowledge different paradigms and promote different approaches to the research of peoples and their processes, including and I'd suggest importantly, education. These

alternative views are articulated extensively by Kincheloe and McLaren, (2000) and demonstrate the impact of what they describe as "post-discourses" (p. 281) on their *'interpretation of a critical theory for the new millennium'* (p. 281).

In order to better understand and research in this complex environment, I begin from the view *"… that identity is partial, contested and, at times, contradictory."* (Tierney, 2003; p. 309). In doing so I am clearly saying that my research perspective is post-modern and critical. My purpose is to challenge the implicit power relationships located within dominant and subordinate paradigms. It is these contradictions that prescribe unchallenged acceptance of the validity of the dominant perspective and the consequent denial of agency to Torres Strait Islander peoples and their world views. Such a research framework allows for an exploration that can envisage the need for Torres Strait Islanders to operate within multiple worlds, working from multiple identity positions and consequently, the need for a system of education that acknowledges the fluidity of such identities.

This study started out to be about the role of pedagogy in promoting effective educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students and in effect, I believe it has achieved that goal (see the log of the voyage, *YUMI Pedagogy*). Along the way however the complexity of the research process and the question of the appropriateness of the research method/s have raised many challenging dilemmas. Some of these dilemmas relate to the researchers' acceptance of qualitative research methodologies as academically defensible paradigms. My method was deliberately chosen to suit the nature of the work I was doing, however when some colleagues read my initial drafts and responded asking how I intended to triangulate my data, my concerns grew. What if the study was to be criticised for its lack of rigor? I understand that I'm not the first researcher undertaking work of this kind to face this challenge.

Personalising the challenge though, makes it so much more real than simply reading about it, so I will elaborate some of the methodologies upon which I based my own.

Feminist research.

The study is heavily influenced by feminist research methodologies as well as the critical paradigm, in particular the 'feminist communitarian ethical model' described by Denzin (1989).

> *" The feminist communitarian researcher does not invade the privacy of others, use informed consent forms, select subjects randomly, or measure research designs in terms of their validity. This framework presumes a researcher who builds collaborative, reciprocal, trusting, and friendly relations with those studied … It is also understood that those studied have claims of ownership over any material that are produced in the research process, including field notes."* (Quoted in A. Fontana & J. H. Frey, The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text. p.666).

This approach is particularly important as it enables me to discuss why many Islanders simply did not want to sign the 'informed consent' forms I offered them. My relationship with a large number of the participants over several decades carried with it an element of implicit trust that was in some ways in my view, offended by any suggestion that either party would deliberately abuse the other, in any way. So in my mind, I was concerned that participants would imply from my request to sign the informed consent form, that either I did not trust them or that they could not trust me or both. In a community where relationships are built on trust, this risks seriously offending people for whom I have a great deal of respect. As Lykes (1989) comments,

"Reflecting on my experiences with the (informed consent) form revealed the

complexity of both my role as researcher/activist and the constraints on developing

collaboration between subjects in a context of real power imbalances." (p. 177)

This insistence on consent forms on the basis that they effectively inform participants whilst

at the same time effectively removing any responsibility from the institution harbours other

potentially dangerous aspects. By signing the consent form, does this effectively make the

stories of the participants, no longer theirs? The work done in this regard by Fine, Weis,

Weseen & Wong (2000) suggest that in fact this could be the case. I can imagine that if that

were the perception of Torres Strait Islanders, they would be

exceedingly reluctant to share any stories with anyone. This perception may also serve to

partially explain the reluctance of many Islanders to engage in any research projects with

people they don't know.

Data collection was undertaken using a relatively unstructured process, closely identified

with the Torres Strait Islander process known as 'yarning'(for a detailed analysis of this

process, see the log of the voyage, *'Yarning: Culturally Significant Pedagogy for the Torres*

Strait'). It is a group process similar to focus groups but with a much more significant

sociocultural component, directly linked to the context. Participants are not selected; they

self-select. Data was collected from 'yarning sessions', usually held after school. These

sessions occurred amongst those staff, students and community members who chose to

attend, out of interest or intrigue. The yarning groups were also generally composed of those

who had known me or who knew of me. Time after school to conduct these groups was

restricted by the family responsibilities of the members, so I was constantly aware of not

asking people to stay longer than they wished. Generally, as one person departed, the group

tended to break up and I often found that the conversations I had casually with people after

the yarning session as we walked home or through the village, were more informative for me, than the session just completed. This is reflected in the story told to me by a quite elderly teacher. We had just spent about a half hour in her room yarning about her room, her program and her children. She told me that she had to get to the store before it closed, so I suggested that I too had to get some food and I might accompany her. On the way she related a story that illustrated one of the school's successful pedagogies by telling me how she'd sometimes arrange to take the children to the store so they could practice their maths. She'd shop for herself and the children would sometimes do the same. As they moved around the store she would ask them about the cost of items, how much money they had and what change they'd expect to get from their purchase. She was very animated about how the children obviously loved the experience and learned so much from it as well. This story formed rich data on the significance of active learning and real life learning as successful pedagogies at that school (see the log of the voyage, *YUME Pedagogy*).

Metaphor.

> *"What is ironic is that in the professional socialization of educational researchers,*
>
> *the use of metaphor is regarded as a sign of imprecision; yet, for*
>
> *making public the ineffable, nothing is more precise than the artistic use of language.*
>
> *Metaphoric precision is the central vehicle for revealing the qualitative aspects of*
>
> *life."* (Eisner, 1991; p. 227)

This study relies heavily on the use and encouragement of metaphor. In the IDEAS (Crowther, Andrews, Dawson & Lewis, 2000) process itself metaphor underpins the choreography of successful educational practices across a variety of contexts, which in the end identifies current 'best practice' in each context. Metaphor provides the catalyst for contextuality to occur independently in each site and it guides the orchestration of site-

specific variables to produce visions and pedagogies that are unique to each site, in their interpretation and application. Metaphor creates the opportunity to give voice, form, shape, colour and texture to the expressions of cultural imperatives, whilst encouraging participants to explore the spaces and to fashion individual and group performances that reflect the distinctive educational interpretations of contextual strengths and opportunities.

By way of illustration of this view, in one site the data collection/IDEAS process took the following form. Visioning was the end result of several workshops where staff, students and community members engaged in lengthy yarning about the current nature of the school and how they would like the school to be. One element of these workshops required the participants to choose two black and white photographs, from a selection of two hundred (Cooney & Burton, 1986). The photographs related to a range of everyday experiences and activities, none of which were specifically Torres Strait Islander. They represent everyday events in Australian society and provide opportunities for metaphoric interpretations. Participants could look at a photo and respond to the situation or event, usually as the result of the emotion or the personal response the photo evoked. The use of these photo cards to stimulate metaphor has hinted at their capacity to transcend cultural boundaries, especially where the generation of metaphor is a significant interpretative focus of the exercise, as it is in these instances. Though there are photos of Indigenous Australians in the set I've no doubt that images from a Torres Strait context might work equally well, if not more effectively. I've often also encouraged participants to simply draw their own pictures to describe the image they wanted to explore.

One photo was to represent the current image of the school and the other, what the participants would like it to be. Participants were then asked to share their stories associated with the photos or drawings. Out of this exercise came a number of recurring descriptors that the facilitator/researcher recorded on whiteboards or butchers paper. The descriptors were then grouped by the participants into sets with similar meanings or intent and these sets were defined by the group under generic descriptors. In the site being used for this illustration, the generic descriptors for what participants would like their school to look like were (a) futures perspectives (about the future) (b) local environment (about the island and the Torres Strait) (c) actively involving the children in their own learning (learning by doing) (d) good/strong relationships (respect/gud pasin) (e) cultural connections (learning from community and elders). The participants were asked to try to come up with a short, motivating, catchy, educational and ethical statement that reflected these essential elements. This took several shorter meetings and lots of discussion, negotiation and sharing.

The initial statement that was arrived at was 'Nurture Our Future' but not everyone was comfortable with this. The statement was publicly displayed for comment by anyone, at school, in the staff room, outside the Council Chambers and in the store. Pens were provided for people to make comment. As it became obvious that the novelty had worn off and other imperatives had taken over, the documents were retrieved and considered at another workshop. It quickly became clear that the 'difficult' term/concept was 'nurture' and after some discussion the statement was changed to 'Catching Our Future'. The change was made because the new statement reflected some active involvement of the children and the community as well as the concept of individuality and diversity that was inclusive of everyone. It also associated with cultural imperatives and could be used to draw historic and contemporary issues together in meaningful ways for the school and the community.

Behaviour could be managed using this phrase; teacher planning could be focussed on successful school practices to enhance learning; relationships could be guided using the phrase and community engagement could be optimised.

This metaphor remains the vision for the school and is used by school staff, children and community members to guide the work that goes on in the school, as well as some sectors of the community. Playground disputes are mediated by reference to the vision; teachers plan using the vision to help them to determine what strategies and tasks they should use; administrators plan using the vision as the guide for decision making and children manage their relationships with others, using the vision as a tool. The vision (metaphor) provides the mechanism that promotes collective focus and at the same time values individual expertise in the role of searching for successful outcomes for students in the school. The vision provides the medium within which the Principal (in this case) is able to perform as a choreographer (Janesick, 2000), bringing together in harmonious and mutually supportive ways the various educative performances of staff, students and community to create a 'production' that is pleasing, mutualistic and educationally productive.

There is empirical evidence (Cuttance, 2001) for the assertion that visioning provides the cohesion and direction necessary to promote successful educational outcomes. The systemic testing data for the site discussed in the previous paragraph shows a small and steady increase each year in both literacies and numeracy. In my view this steady increase in results each year is very difficult to maintain and therefore significant as evidence of the achievement of sustainable educational outcomes. Small and consistent growth, even for those outcomes that I'd argue might be of dubious value for Torres Strait Islander students, provides better

evidence of the sustainability of this achievement, than a substantial improvement in one year followed by an equally sizeable or larger decline in the subsequent year. Unfortunately, the latter evidence tends to dominate the school data for most schools across the Torres Strait. This illustration of 'successful outcomes' is quantitative rather than the qualitative data that I find most useful in this study but the eclectic methodologies of post-modern research allow me to use whatever forms of data seem relevant. In addition, I understand that the formal Education system usually only recognises what it defines as 'hard data'. In order for the proposals developed as the result of my work to achieve some significance for the promotion of change, I am deliberately using this element of the dominant paradigm. By attracting the attention of systemic policy makers, there exists the possibility of having them consider measures to promote change that may not be considered within the context of usual bureaucratic practice around the dominant paradigm.

I have also used systemically generated data in the log of the voyage, *YUMI Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Strait*, again in the form of 'hard data' or statistics purporting to indicate improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students. Two aspects of this data are significant. Firstly, the data belongs to and is generated by the system itself, so it is reasonable to assume that there are educative purposes both for its generation and application. Apart from indicating that educational outcomes for Indigenous students are consistently lower than their mainstream peers and that the apparent achievement gap is also consistent, there don't seem to be any other purposes for or explanations of the data, identified by the system. I find it startling that extensive amounts of public finances are spent to confirm what is already widely known. One would think that as well as continuing to confirm this information year after year, the system has a responsibility to actually do something about addressing the issues.

If this has been done and the data continue to confirm the status quo, surely the system must be forced to explore why their efforts seem to be having no significant impact in promoting change. What I'm suggesting is that if we continue to do things in the way they have always been done then we must expect to achieve the same outcomes. In the light of the evidence available to the system from both inside and outside, to maintain its current approach is neither sustainable nor equitable.

Secondly, I've found that the data as they are presented are extraordinarily difficult to interpret in any consistent way. Again, in the log of the voyage, *YUMI Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Strait,* I use the data to establish both the nature and the extent of the official acknowledgement of concerns over Indigenous education, at both State and Federal levels. Both governments use different definitions of literacy and numeracy, so comparisons are impossible to make accurately. All that can be said is that both data sets show a significant and consistent achievement gap between Indigenous students and their mainstream peers. I've used this data and this interpretation to underpin the imminent need for change and whilst this has served its purpose, if that is all that the data can do, it would suggest a very superficial and methodologically skewed information base upon which important decisions are being made. To be dealing with issues of a sociocultural nature using predominantly quantitative techniques of investigation demonstrates systemic attitudes and practices that, in its lack of attention to cultural issues, amounts to racism. In addition, restricting assessment to data obtained through the use of one paradigm precludes obtaining a wider and more equitable perspective of the capacities of all children and the education process itself.

Stages of data collection and analysis.

It is clear that I have adopted a variety of techniques with which to conduct this study, all of which are interrelated and adopted with specific purposes in mind. To integrate these techniques in some meaningful way, I've found Denzin's (1989) use of bracketing and Moustakis' (1990) application of inductive analysis to be illuminating. Denzin (1989) suggests five stages in his interpretation of bracketing that will enable the phenomenon being studied to be held up to serious interrogation. These stages are:

- Locate within the descriptive data, statements that apply directly to the phenomenon under study

- As an informed reader, interpret these statements

- Seek the participants' interpretations of these statements

- Analyse the interpretation sets looking for essential and recurring themes

- Determine a tentative synthesis of the data obtained from the previous step.

Moustakis (1990) also identifies five phases in inductive analysis. These are:

- Immersion in the setting

- Allowing time for thinking, raising awareness of nuance, meaning and intuitive insights leading to understanding

- Illumination leading to greater awareness

- Describing and explaining the experience of individuals in the study

- Creative synthesis where the researcher brings together the story and the lived experience

Both processes illustrate the essential elements of my study, though I've identified the stages as:

- Raw data collection using the elements of the IDEAS process.

- Yarning.

- Recording.

- Developing the case studies of each site.

- Synthesis.

The first step in all processes is one of acclimatisation to the setting whereby appropriate data is accessed. My association with the Torres Strait has made this step much easier for me by enabling me to come into island communities as an outsider with some insights into and connections with, numbers of insiders. It has also made it easier for me to immerse myself into the Torres Strait setting by my reconnection to various people, many of whom are teachers, in each community. As a consequence, the process of yarning is more easily engaged, as my established relationships mean that I don't have to spend a lot of time creating this environment, though I do have to spend time re-establishing connections with people who I may not have seen for a number of years. I cannot afford to take relationships for granted however and where people have passed on, I may have to establish new relationships with their children. This in itself takes time and effort and cultural differences with respect to time mean that the timeline for my study is invariably of little significance to participants whose priorities are or can be quite legitimately different to my own.

Visioning – using metaphor to focus school priorities.

The initial data gathering mechanism for all sites is to sit and yarn with groups of interested people about school as it is and how they'd like it to be. This dialogue will identify the values that people attach to school and schooling. These values are important to the visioning process as they need to be reflected in the metaphor of the vision. For example, if participants see the school and the community as being separated, usually they will desire for the two to work together. This inevitably leads to talk about how this can be achieved but the reality is that that process is something that needs to be worked on over time and it cannot be expected to happen quickly. The vision then needs in this instance to capture metaphoric ways of ensuring that this desired connection is established and maintained. So, a vision statement such as "Bridging the Gap" has enormous metaphoric power to achieve the reduction or closure of any number of 'gaps'. The space between the school and the community is only one such gap. There is the space between Torres Strait culture and western culture; the space between oracy in several languages and literacy in English; there is the space between Torres Strait notions of important educational outcomes and western systemic notions; there is the space between Torres Strait knowledges and western knowledge. Each of these gaps can be addressed through this vision metaphor in different ways and with different audiences. Likewise the vision metaphor "Catching our Future" suggests the importance of the individual in education; the significance of culture; the challenge of the future and the role that the school plays in moving towards achieving this vision. Another interesting aspect of the vision is that it is never realised. The meanings able to be attached to this vision statement can accommodate change by virtue of the fact that for every child, the process of "Catching the Future" will be unique, fluid, variable and valid.

Having collected this data, the yarning process helps participant and researcher alike, to clarify and refine the meanings inherent in the dialogue. These will of necessity be negotiated meanings, as the yarning process refines and categorises concepts. In this study the first three steps are collectively managed. Even though I will draw my own conclusions about categories of values, these will be as the result of the yarning that is going on, as my purpose is to reflect the group intent as closely as possible. I recognise the impact of my privileged position, but within the group I constantly seek clarification and confirmation of meaning to try to ensure reasonable accuracy.

The log of the voyage, *The IDEAS Process* identifies the IDEAS (Crowther et.al., 2000) process and illustrates the stages that the process engages. The difference between the IDEAS process and other school renewal strategies that I've encountered is the imperative for the school community to undertake the difficult work of clarifying their contextual strengths and challenges. Only those involved, staff, students and community can do this work legitimately, if the results are to have any significance in the context. Without the ownership that results from being able to identify yourself in the practices that arise from the process, successful outcomes are jeopardised and sustainability is seriously questionable. This is not the kind of work that schools generally and Torres Strait Island schools in particular are used to being engaged in. Daily school activity is systemically defined and driven whilst cultural difference is generally attempted to be catered for in curriculum terms. This strategy usually involves having some Torres Strait Islanders draw up programs that incorporate ecological, cultural and linguistic specificities that children across the Torres Strait will be familiar with and then use these to engage the standard practices of any school. My contention is that pedagogic practices, as well as curriculum content, need to be congruent with the Torres Strait Islander context. Nakata (1995) makes just this point.

"Relevance or sensitivity to 'cultural differences' alone does not change dominant practices from alienating the Islander. Changes to dominant practices however, change dominant practices." (p. 50)

Pedagogy – teaching to our strengths.

As teachers, the way we do the work we do (pedagogy) is critical to the generation of successful outcomes of education. This work is also highly contextualised, so changing the educational site should indicate that the pedagogic process also needs to be changed , to reflect the new conditions under which the educative process is occurring.

Evidence of this lies in the commonality of many attributes of pedagogies as they are described across sites in the Torres Strait and the uniqueness of expression of those pedagogies in each site. For example, real life or real world pedagogy is expressed in one site as maths being conducted in the local store whilst in another site the same pedagogy is expressed as a newspaper publishing task undertaken as a learning experience and a community engagement exercise. In planning their work by deliberately linking learning experiences to the realities of life for children at that site, teachers are engaging, in this instance successful pedagogy in the Torres Strait context. So whilst pedagogic descriptors identify many similar pedagogic practices, their contextuality is what distinguishes between how they are practiced in each site.

Identifying significant school pedagogies is the step in the IDEAS process which normally follows the visioning process. Visioning establishes an understanding of the values that drive the school and education in that site. The next offstage of the process for staff, students and community members is to identify those practices in the school which enthuse, excite, engage and encourage students. These are the successful practices that all schools possess but which few ever understand, interrogate or promote. Again the investigative approach leading to the

identification of these pedagogies, uses yarning as the crucial mechanism. Participants are asked to identify teaching and learning incidents where students have been highly engaged in their learning and which have had obviously (measurable but not necessarily quantitative) successful outcomes. Success can be measured in any way at all. It may be related to quantitative measures or it may be related to how students enjoyed the work or how they demonstrated their understanding of the work or any one of multitudes of possibilities for categorising 'success', including such measures as how the community value the outcome.

This stage sometimes gets focussed on teachers' views of what constitutes successful pedagogy but it is important that teachers listen to others, especially students. Students experience the work of teachers and have a fundamentally accurate understanding of 'good' teaching practices that are generally described as fun or active or challenging. Teacher aides in the context of Torres Strait schools have acute insights into successful teaching and learning, as they often have to try to undo the poor work sometimes done by teachers. Teacher aides and community teachers are the permanence in these island communities and once again all too often their views are devalued. Community teachers are Islander teachers who have successfully completed three years of a Bachelor of Education degree and are given an authority to teach in Torres Strait Island schools. They are not fully registered until they complete the fourth year of their degree. Not all such teachers choose to do this and many will work through their life without ever completing their full degree.

This is not an indictment of community teachers. Many find the struggle to complete the first three years an enormously difficult task, not because of lack of academic capacity, but because their lives are frequently complicated by family and cultural demands that leave little time for or that interrupt, study and full time work. The expense of study is a further

drawback as in many instances, the community teacher will provide the only income in their family and the extended family needs food, power, fuel, clothing and living expenses. Community teacher salaries are also much lower than those of registered teachers but higher than teacher aides.

Having captured teaching and learning experiences that have been self-identified by staff, students or community members as being 'successful', the extensive list of activities generated is recorded, normally by the researcher. These experiences are now synthesised into sets of similar processes. For example, many of the experiences will be able to be identified as active learning or real-life learning or challenging learning. The experiences are collectivised under an agreed set of generic headings, just as I've documented each sites' pedagogies in Appendix C of the log of the voyage, *YUMI Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity in the Torres Strait.* Just one example of this is provided by the following data. The participants were asked to share what they considered to be an example of one successful teaching or learning experience they had managed, experienced or observed, in their school. This dialogue usually produces descriptions of strategies. The participants are then asked to determine what they (or the teachers) were doing, what the children were doing and how they determined the experience was successful. This dialogue develops a range of descriptors associated with successful school pedagogies, as the participants will quickly discover significant similarities in their collective experiences. Participants are then asked to try to describe the experience in pedagogic terms i.e., what sort of learning/teaching was going on here. The pedagogic attribute statements about the experiences were identified as:

> Good relationships; multiple explanations; caring; cultural significance; problem solving; working together; striving for excellence; risk taking; encouraging; flexible learners; learning together; responsible learners; independent learners; active citizens;

enthusiasm; real learners; continual improvement; learning together; supportive learning.

These participant generated statements were then grouped by the participants under the following headings:

- Learning together – good relationships; working together; learning together; supportive learning

- Enjoyable learning – Caring; encouraging; enthusiasm

- Emphasising excellence in learning – continual improvement; striving for excellence

- Child-centered learning – multiple explanations; flexible learner; independent learner

- Real-life learning – active citizen; real learner; risk taker; problem solving; responsible learner

- Cultural learning – cultural significance

So the successful school pedagogies or school-wide pedagogies as they are described in the IDEAS process, for this site are, Learning together; Enjoyable learning; Excellence in learning; Child-centered learning; Real-life learning; Cultural learning. There may well be others but experience using the process with a wide variety of schools/contexts has shown that to begin with each school is only capable of working effectively with between six and eight school-wide pedagogies for any given period of time. It is also important that staff, students and community are able to identify these pedagogies in order to generate a common language through which each person can engage the educative process with understanding. Where the visioning and pedagogy workshops have been genuinely collaborative and inclusive, this process will already have been started and the imperative now becomes maintaining it. Staff should be able to identify in their planning where these pedagogies are being applied, how frequently and how equitably they are being adopted. This can be very

simply achieved by allocating agreed colour codes to each pedagogy. The teachers' planning is then scrutinised to identify each pedagogywhich is highlighted by its particular colour. From this activity it is readily observable if one colour, (i.e. one pedagogy) dominates over others. Absence of any colour suggests that the teacher may not know how to go about using a particular pedagogy and so the basis for in-school professional development is laid. Since the school should be using staff who are confident with any particular pedagogy to run this professional development, important professional relationships are fostered, complimented by the need for professional conversations amongst staff members. Equally important is the resultant savings in resources achieved by not having to employ expensive consultants who's work does not always represent value for money.

The focus of my study is on pedagogy in the Torres Strait but in order to identify those successful pedagogies in each site, the IDEAS process has been used as the mechanism for data gathering and in this way it forms another important component of the methodology. Successful school revitalisation involves much more than following the relatively simple processes I've described and the facts are that of the fourteen Torres Strait Island schools to have engaged the IDEAS process, only half have managed to complete the initial round of the process and of these, only two have sustained the process further. It is too simplistic to judge the process to have been unsuccessful on this information alone, as I've made clear in the log of the voyage, *YUMI Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity in the Torres Strait.* Capitalising on successful pedagogies in each school in the Torres Strait is only one aspect, albeit an important one, of a much more comprehensive and holistic approach to reconstructing education in the Torres Strait with a focus on improving outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students.

Personal narrative.

The other major component of this study is the log of the voyage titled *My Journey: An Autobiographical Narrative.* This personal narrative is intended to provide a description of the underlying hegemonic influences of my life, in relation to my connections to education in the Torres Strait. It offers insights into the power of my history to define both myself and others, in ways that dominate and subordinate, at the same time legitimising and de-legitimising a host of human relationships and understandings.

One illustration of my meaning here is the power inherent in my role as the manager of the Torres Strait Islander Teacher Education Program at the North Brisbane College of Advanced Education. Here I was solely responsible for the definition, implementation and evaluation of the program on offer. There was no consideration, at least initially, on my part or the part of others that Torres Strait Islanders might have any interest in or knowledge of, their involvement in planning, delivering or evaluating the program. It never crossed my mind to even ask Islanders about what they might want. I was appointed to the position as a white educator with some success (as success is measured by white education systems) working with Indigenous students. I was assumed to possess the knowledge and experience that would transfer across from largely Aboriginal primary school students to positively effect success with adult Torres Strait Islander students. In hindsight, I'm sure that there was more than just a suggestion that being named as Indigenous, made all people with black or brown skin, essentially the same. I, and others, gave no consideration to notions of significant cultural differences. In fact the earliest recollection I have of this as an issue was at a conference I attended in 1975, when an Islander made the point that his people were sea

people and the issue of sea rights was a significant one for Torres Strait Islanders, just as land rights was an issue of significance for Aborigines.

I also possessed discursive power which enabled me to decide who to hear, who to listen to and who could speak. Rarely at the outset did any of these categories include Torres Strait Islanders. Even when they did, deciding whether or not to take notice was my decision, so people could speak but not be heard and advice could be given and not accepted or even understood. An example of this derives from my apparent success with what I loosely describe as 'discovery learning'. In simple terms this amounted to nothing more than activity based learning related to daily and functional tasks. Cooking is a good example where ingredients are measured and combined to produce a product that can be consumed and enjoyed. The nature of the cooking tasks involved a style of cooking that I was personally knowledgeable about and with which I was comfortable. At no time did I consider going and hunting a porcupine and having the children and their families teach me about preparing and cooking the animal. The closest I came to encountering the world of the children I was teaching in a culinary sense was to cook damper and 'johnny cakes'. Even in this instance there was a level of familiarity with the particular cuisine that enabled me to feel comfortable with this exercise and treat it almost as my own excursion into the realm of the culturally unfamiliar.

This experience illustrates the superficiality with which I approached the education of Torres Strait Islander teachers. My view of 'cultural appropriateness' was dominated by the desire to match our two environments as much as possible. This translated into trying to constantly address educational issues through curriculum responses that reflected familiar materials and experiences for the Torres Strait Islander students for whom I was responsible. The

curriculum documents themselves did not change, so that the nature of knowledge was defined from a white western view of the world but expressed using examples and materials that were familiar to Torres Strait Islanders. By way of illustration, practically, this emerged in the form of the Art syllabus exploring lots of weaving and dyeing using natural materials and dyes. The weaving activities often made use of the plastic wrap ties that packaged goods transported to and across the Torres Strait, which provided an interesting connection between two cultural worlds. Whilst these elements do possess some important educative components, challenging the whole basis on which educational provisions in the Torres Strait were and still are made was never an option that crossed my mind, at a time when I was most able to effect significant change to that system (see the logs of the voyages *My Journey* and *YUMI Pedagogy* for further exploration of this aspect of the study).

My personal narrative documents the unquestioning approach that I adopted towards my work. Unchallenged assumptions about educational process, the nature of knowledge and the pedagogic process were located in a white western paradigm that drove my work. Justification for this process, if it were needed, was further reinforced by my promotion within the system over the time I was engaged in educating both Torres Strait Islander teachers and students. What is obvious to me now is that whilst my motivation might have been worthy, the questions I was asking were all wrong. I accepted uncritically my dominant position and used the power associated with it to promote ends that, on behalf of other people, I'd decided were appropriate. Certainly, these decisions were influenced by the cultural environment of the Torres Strait but those influences were subsidiary to the dominant influences of my own language, culture and history.

In truth I suspect that whilst I cherish my experiences working with Torres Strait Islanders, much of the satisfaction I felt derived from a very paternalistic missionary zeal that I've often criticised severely in others. My work was never religious in the theological sense but I have to acknowledge that the promotions I received and the acknowledgement of my work by my colleagues and peers, were powerful motivating forces in my career. In this respect I wonder then just how different I was to any other white man working with culturally different peoples. In this respect I'm as implicated in reproducing cultural texts that reinforce ideologies of privilege as any of my colonialist predecessors (Frankenberg, 1993). An important extension of this current study would be to go back to those with whom I worked in the Torres Strait and explore with them, their views of my work. It is obvious throughout my narrative that my own views of my work are very positive most of the time. There are many statements about my desire to help but nothing about how these desires were received or interpreted by Torres Strait Islanders. It would be interesting to compare my memory against the views of those who were the subjects of my work.

The personal narrative reflects several stages of my career with specific locations in time and experience. The initial period involves my developing persona as a teacher but in environments that were largely quite different to the experiences of many beginning teachers of the era. These experiences exposed me to a wide variety of cultural differences both inside and outside of my own culture. It is at this time that I was encouraged to try different ways of dealing with the unusual educational environments I was in. At this time too I came to develop a better understanding of the diversity of my own culture, experiencing very different communities to that which I'd grown up in. In my own way these experiences marked me as unique within the context of my own family. Coming back home for holidays involved reliving the experiences of living and working in communities that only existed in the minds

of my family members. These were both exotic places and exotic experiences, marking me almost as some kind of 'pioneer' in their eyes.

In a similar way these same experiences marked me amongst my colleagues and peers and accounted for the move to the next period in my career. This was the period of the Torres Strait Islander Teacher Education Program. This was also a time characterised by a growing understanding on my part that the cultural interchanges that influenced my life were as much learning processes for me as they were for those with whom I engaged. The mutuality of the experiences enriched my life and (I hope) the lives of those with whom I shared. I also became more critically aware of the impact and subtlety of cultural and racial difference. This understanding was enhanced through my growing awareness of my own immunity from these same issues (see the discussion of 'Whiteness' in the log of the voyage, *My Journey*). I was however not totally immune, as my association with Torres Strait Islanders often drew public comment, especially in Brisbane, reflecting the inseparability of public and personal politics:

> *"… the feminist understanding of the politics of the everyday and of "personal" life."*
> (Frow & Morris, 2000; p.331)

It is this expanding understanding of my 'whiteness' and the privilege which associates with that cultural location, that has led to this study. In turn, the process of engaging in the study has forced me to interrogate that power and privilege in ways that previously I'd only been vaguely aware. Whilst heightened awareness is an important step towards addressing the privilege of our locatedness, I am constantly reminded through my own actions, of the impossibility of overcoming this dominant position. As I have explored in these papers (the

logs of the various voyages) the effort to maintain this awareness and to attempt to work

against it, requires constant vigilance.

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The log of the voyage,

YUMI Pedagogy:

Pedagogy with Cultural

Integrity for the Torres

Strait

John McMaster

November 2006

YUMI Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Strait.

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YUMI Pedagogy: Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Strait.

"More recently, we Islanders have come to administer our lives to an increasing degree under a reconstituted set of principles – those of 'self-determination' and regional autonomy. Nevertheless, the external imperatives – those endless sets of conflicting and competing interests – continue to intersect and condition our possibilities for acting in our own best interests." (Nakata, 2004. p.155).

Introduction.

This voyage will explore the impact of colonisation in the Torres Strait region of Australia, particularly as it is reflected in the outcomes of formal education for Torres Strait Islander students. It is proposed that an important and often ignored aspect of educational process that historically results in poor educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islanders, arises from the implicit assumptions of the 'other', made by Anglo-Australian dominant systems, including education. A sweep of reviews (see Appendix A) undertaken by successive Federal governments identifies an historic and ongoing concern for the educational performance of Indigenous students in Australia, amongst whom Torres Strait Islander students form a cohort. Further to these indicators, data identified (see Appendix B) by both the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST, a Federal Government body) and the Department of Education and the Arts (DEA, Queensland) demonstrate the lower success rates of Torres Strait Islander students in comparison to their non-Islander peers.

In particular, papers by Malin and Maidment (2003) and Osbourne (2003) exploring the progress of educational services and outcomes across three decades since the 1967 Referendum show some concerning and consistent trends. In the case of the Malin and Maidment paper, these academics consider the broader Indigenous education sector across Australia, which includes Torres Strait Islander peoples. They conclude that

> *"... the gaps between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations on all major educational indicators are unacceptably large."* (Malin and Maidment, 2003 p. 85)

This conclusion sits comfortably with the situation as it is described by the Federal and Queensland education authorities in Appendix B.

Barry Osbourne's (2003) paper specifically refers to the Torres Strait Islander education scene and largely mirrors the reality of the Indigenous educational experience. Osbourne however, believes that,

> *"... impressive gains are being made, ... even if the delivery of education is not yet in Torres Strait Islanders' own hands (Nakata, 1994)."* (Osbourne, 2003 p. 73)

Certainly it is difficult to deny that progress in an educational sense has occurred over that period both in many Indigenous schools and in specifically Torres Strait Islander schools. It is also a reality that what progress has been made is slow and too often of little more significance than for appearance sake.

A range of dimensions of this complex situation are discussed in context; historical, geographical and cultural. In particular, ways of knowing, knowledge registers and notions of knowledge/s are relevant to any judgements made about educational 'success' in connection with cultural diversity. These aspects underpin the discussion of what I've termed 'pedagogies with cultural integrity'. I focus on the work of teachers as the most crucial variable in determining both 'success' and 'successful outcomes' for Torres Strait Islander student's as a consequence of the educative process in the Torres Strait. Using a process understood locally as 'yarning', in conjunction with elements of a successful school revitalisation project known as IDEAS, data relating to specific pedagogic activity was

collected and refined at a number of sites (see the logs, *IDEAS Process: Data Generation*, *YUMI Research:Qualitative Research in the Torres Strait* and *Yarning: Culturally Significant Pedagogy for the Torres Strait* for more ndetailed discussion of these elements). The results identify successful pedagogic practices in those sites and form the foundations of potentially sustainable pedagogies with cultural integrity, for those sites. Comparison of the individual site data reveals the pedagogic elements of the educational process identified by the Torres Strait Islanders Regional Education Council (TSIREC), as YUMI education.

The conclusion draws together a range of salient issues that run in parallel with one another and that are all important elements in the debate over quality education for Torres Strait Islander students. Significantly the conclusion captures and emphasises the view that any move to address education in the Torres Strait in ways that are potentially positive for Torres Strait Islander people, should adopt a holistic approach. Any such initiatives will need to attempt to address as many of the variables as possible in complex and interrelated ways, all of which must be driven by Torres Strait Islander agendas if they are to be effective. These mechanisms will invariably present non-Islander education administrators with unfamiliar challenges. The fundamental issue then becomes whether the dominant Anglo-Australian management framework is able to withstand the internal and historic temptation to solve problems for (and on behalf of) Torres Strait Islanders. My contention is that the appropriate response for Torres Strait Islanders is for them to be supported in identifying Torres Strait Island solutions to the problems that they have defined.

This work offers Torres Strait Island schools one approach to concretising pedagogic practices in their settings that both reflect cultural imperatives and address contemporary educational demands.

Declaration of terms.

This work takes a personal, qualitative and reflexive perspective, reflecting my views of education in the Torres Strait as they have developed over a number of decades (see the log of the voyage titled *My Journey: An Autobiographical Narrative*). Because I use terms in particular ways there are several declarations that I need to make in order to secure common understanding of many of the terms that I choose to use. Firstly, and I will emphasise this constantly throughout the folio, the ideas that I present, the suggestions and options that I propose, the innovations that I put forward, are only my views and I place them before whoever reads this document, as such. I bring to this work some experiences, understandings and histories that profoundly influence how I view the world. Each one of us is different in biological makeup, histories, experiences, knowledges and understandings and so each one who reads this work and reflects on its significance or otherwise, will do so through the lens of their own originality. I am not a Torres Strait Islander and do not presume to represent Torres Strait Islander views of the world. On the other hand, what this study attempts to do is to re-present and interrogate my insider/outsider experiences of education in the Torres Strait, over a number of decades. Others have chosen to adopt a similar challenge (Osbourne, 2001) and, like myself unable to escape the shackles of our socioculturally located 'self', have had to work hard to find another space within which to conduct culturally respectful and meaningful research. What is important is the dialogue that emerges from these sometimes clumsy attempts. The outcome will hopefully be the commencement of a discourse, in particular, a discourse that is directed by Torres Strait Islander peoples and focussed on the

conscientisation (Freire, 1972) of individuals in Torres Strait Islander communities and within the system of education in the Torres Strait.

The terms schooling and education represent quite different things. My view is that systemic educational provisions to date in the Torres Strait, with some rare exceptions , have focussed on schooling rather than education. Schools have been driven by systemic imperatives that emphasise the knowledges and understandings of a western anglicised sociocultural milieu and as a result have demanded particular responses in order to satisfy specific culturally located and legitimised realities (Giroux, 2000; McLaren, 1997a; Ladson-Billings, 1992; Nakata, 1995; Moreton-Robinson, 1998; 2004;2008). Schools have not been able to make many attempts to either be genuinely inclusive of Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures or to promote empowerment of Torres Strait Islander peoples, to develop and define their own educational processes. On the other hand, I view education as conscientisation (the creation of awareness out of which action follows), praxis (the actioning of process), empowerment, self actualisation, liberation, equality, pride, self awareness and agency. I will adopt these terms in an endeavour to convey my meaning most effectively and to reinforce the view that education should be a transformative (the power to enact change) process (Giroux, 1992b), embodying both coming to know and action as acts of praxis (Freire, 1972).

It has taken many hours of careful and sometimes frustrating consideration, in order to try to avoid the use of the term *traditional,* when referring to historic views of Torres Strait Islander culture. We know that culture is never static (Neito,1999) and *traditional* whilst seemingly appropriate as well as commonly used, has an element of stasis about it that suggests a fixed view both in time and space, of what it means to be Torres Strait Islander. This is not my

intent. I've adopted the term *authentic* as a more acceptable and appropriate alternative. Whilst Newman & Wehlage's (1995) use of *authentic* directly relates to pedagogy, their foci on notions of personal reality (construction of knowledge), individual meaningfulness (value beyond the school) and particularity (disciplined inquiry) seem to me to emphasise and acknowledge the fluidity and highly idiosyncratic nature of culture. This notion of authenticity also emphasises the appropriateness of defining culture as capturing a moment in time and as a consequence applauds diversity, difference and inclusivity as sometimes both contradictory and complimentary concepts. In each sociocultural complex there will always be some overlap between contemporary cultural expressions and cultural expressions reflecting and deriving from the past. As globalisation takes effect the less easily located any fixed notion of culture becomes. It becomes less appropriate then to appeal to essentialism as a mechanism for identifying culture. Indeed, it could be said that any form of essentialism is inappropriate where cultural issues are involved (Said, 1985; Prakash, 1990). How individuals identify as cultural beings is complex and idiosyncratic. What it means to be Torres Strait Islander to one individual will be different to another. There will be some elements of congruence but there will also be significant elements of divergence and the resultant complexity explains why most of us try to escape any fixed response to the question of what it means to be an Australian, for example.

I've extensively used the term 'Indigenous' when referring to data and generic policy responses to and histories of Australia's original peoples. Official documentation demonstrates that Australian governments have historically been reluctant to accord any form of identity status to the original occupants of this land. Collectively identifying both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under the official descriptor 'Aboriginal', very effectively removes Torres Strait Islander people from any consideration as quite separate

and distinct peoples, for example. As a collective descriptor the term 'Aboriginal' suggests a presumption that all of Australia's original mainland peoples were and are the same or at least similar and therefore have similar needs and aspirations, thereby justifying their similar treatment, both in a policy and a practical sense. More marginalising still is the term 'ATSI' as both an acronym for and a descriptor of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This term held official sanction for many years and effectively disenfranchised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from any association with humanity.

The data and the policies that I've sourced (see Appendix B) are quantifications of all people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in Australia. They provide important evidence of the considerable disadvantages facing both groups of Australia's first peoples. The data serve both to ascribe the extent of disadvantage faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to stereotype the peoples themselves. Information and data specific to Torres Strait Islanders is only recently emerging in census statistics and hence the specific disadvantages facing these peoples, as distinct from those facing Aboriginal people, are only lately beginning to be acknowledged. There is considerable overlap in terms of disadvantage between both groups of peoples, however there are also important differences. How this information is used then is crucial in proscribing the amount of agency accessible to Torres Strait Islanders in determining their own futures

The use of the term 'Indigenous' can be seen as contentious in the Torres Strait context. While my reasons for doing so are to avoid confusion when referring to official statistics, such use illustrates a worrying official view that anyone with a dark skin is Indigenous. Torres Strait Islander peoples feel they have suffered a lack of recognition of their particular

identity through being included in the same category as mainland Indigenous/Aboriginal people. They have made a strong political point of exerting authority over and recognition of their own identity. So, my use of "Indigenous' as an identifier should be read within the context of respect for their position. There is another complex issue bound up in the use of these terms. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have had concern about the developing notion of 'multiculturalism' and 'inclusion' within Australian society. To agree to 'inclusion' as a socially just process of achieving equity for Indigenous Australians is to risk having the unique position that Indigenous Australians occupy in the history and experience of this nation disappear should they become identified as just another minority group. To deny or ignore the particular relationships that Indigenous peoples have with the land and the sea that makes up this nation, is to deny them the particular rights and responsibilities of Indigenous peoples. Australia is a very culturally pluralistic nation however only Indigenous Australians have the right to and responsibility of Native Title over land and sea, as a significant public acknowledgement of their extensive and historic connections to this country. Native Title originated in the Torres Strait with the Murray Island decision[i] and represents a hard won victory over colonial laws and policies, for all Indigenous peoples of Australia.

This folio element identifies some of the salient historical and political issues that affect Torres Strait Islander education, as well as the data that emerged from the IDEAS process. I also explore my own responses to how these might come together in pedagogies that have cultural integrity for Torres Strait islander people. Before I continue, however, it is necessary to outline the Torres Strait Islands as they are today.

Environmental picture: the Torres Strait Islands today.

All demographic data related to the Torres Straits is taken from Austats, 2001 census data (ABS, 2001b).

Figure 1: Torres Strait Regional Map showing communities across the Torres Strait.
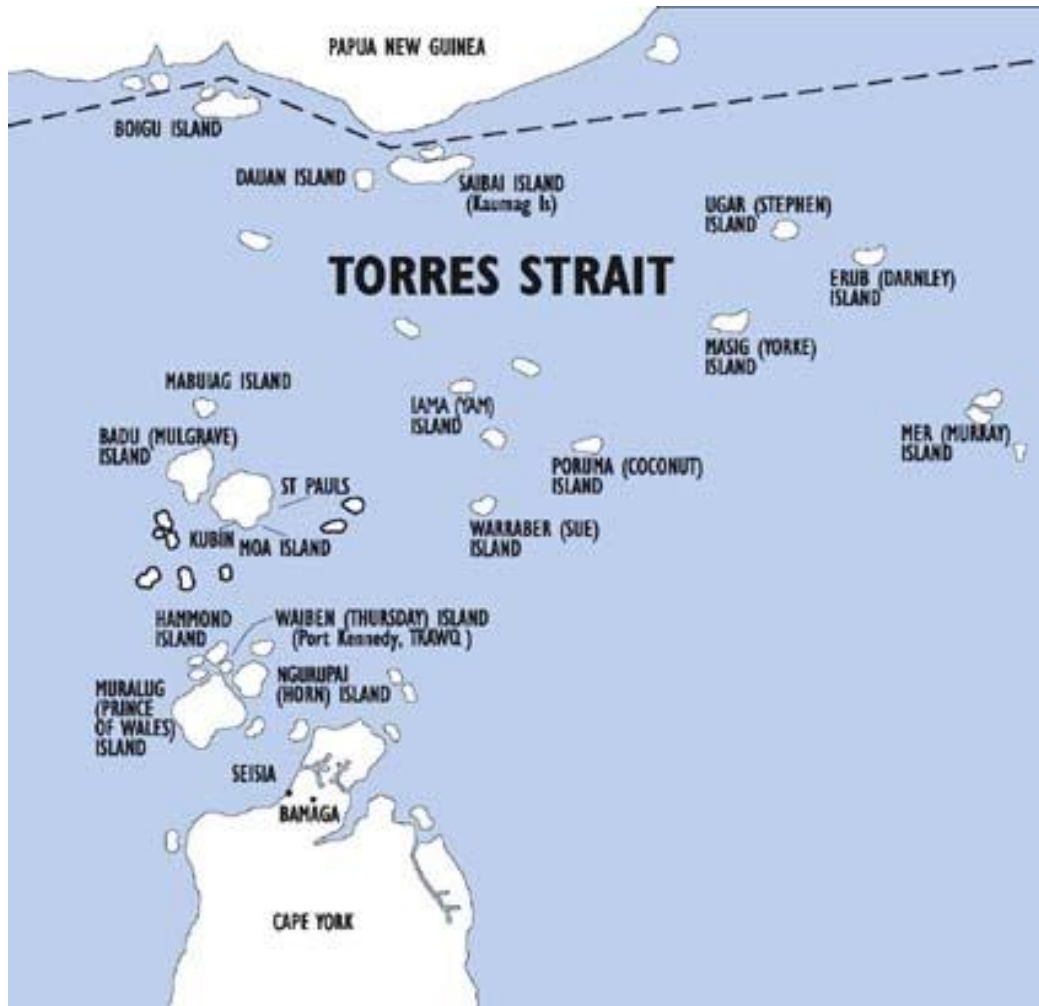
(http://www.tsra.gov.au/www/index.cfm?ItemID=111 accessed 23/05/06)

The Torres Strait area covers some 40,000 square kilometres and 150 islands. Not including the Northern Peninsular Area (NPA) which covers the area north of the Jardine River to the tip of Cape York and includes the communities of Bamaga, Injinoo, Umagico, New Mapoon and Seisia, there are 16 State primary schools, one State secondary school and one Catholic school. Of the 16 State primary schools in the Torres Strait, the IDEAS process was

implemented in all but two schools. One school was involved in the initial group of schools to engage the process and withdrew partway through its implementation due to pressures related to other school initiatives. It was later discovered that when the Research Based Framework (see log of the voyage, *IDEAS process*) was applied to this school, there was clear evidence of alignment of the components already existent in the school, so it could be said that in fact, this school was continuing to engage in the process, even though they had decided to withdraw[ii]. The other school chose not to become involved with the IDEAS process. A very significant advantage of the IDEAS process is that schools have to make a conscious choice based on information about the process shared at Principal's workshops and the experiences of other schools who have engaged the process, before making any commitment. The information can be accessed through the Education Queensland website but my preference is for schools to decide based on their observations and experiences of other Island schools who are using or have used the process. The decision is a community based decision because the entire school community is expected to be involved in the development and implementation of the process.

There is considerable variety in the island environments across the Torres Strait. Some islands are little more than coral sand cays in the midst of masses of tropical coral reefs (Masig, Poruma, Warraber). These are quite small islands in area with masses of coconut palm trees providing most of the vegetation, along with the wongai (native plum) and other varieties of native fruit trees. Other islands are volcanic in origin with quite rich soils, rugged mountains and fringing reefs (Erub, Ugar, Mer). Vegetation on these islands is more tropical and in earlier times several of them were covered with groves of tropical rainforest. Still others are massive granite extrusions, with open coastal sclerophyll forests, sand pans and fringing reefs (Moa, Badu, Kauareg, Waiben, Hammond, Mabuiag, Dauan, Yam). Finally

there are the low mud islands largely composed of salt and fresh water swamps (Saibai, Boigu). These islands can be insecure locations in which to live, as much of the habitable ground lies not very far above high tide level and any tidal surge risks inundating the entire landmass. This is also true of many of the low coral islands. The earlier reference I made to people being relocated from Saibai illustrates the level of concern felt for their security when there was a warning that particularly high tides caused by a predicted tsunami may inundate the island.

The islands themselves have many more western facilities and conveniences than existed there even ten years ago. Torres Strait Islanders have experienced a rapid rate of population, goods and services growth over the past decade. Communications technologies have improved over this time so quickly that the region has virtually been thrust into the global world. All except two islands have a reliable, mostly all weather, airstrip, with two or more flights each day to and from Ngurupai where the main airport for the region is located. Health centres on each island provide access to high quality health services and helicopter evacuations mean that emergency services are readily accessible from each island. Telephone and computer communications mean that services are immediately accessible. Barges supply each island with food, fuel and other commodities on a weekly basis, so construction on each island is readily maintained and breakdowns are normally able to be resolved with minimal delay and inconvenience. Torres Strait Island stores (IBIS, Islander Board of Industry Service) carry a reasonable range of foods, including fresh fruit and vegetables and what cannot be purchased directly in the store, can usually be ordered through the main store on Waiben. Goods are also readily available from Cairns by barge on a weekly basis. Fresh water supplies have always been precarious in the Torres Strait. Today most islands have ground tanks that also serve as water collection areas, due to their surface

being covered to prevent evaporation; however, some islands are still forced to rely on desalination plants during the dry season to ensure that enough drinking water is available all year round. Housing has significantly improved and reflects the importance of the extended family, by being large, open and two stories. The under house space serves as a valuable dry area in the wet and a cool shaded space for all manner of family activities. The houses are designed with large open living spaces, with sleeping areas off the living space. They take full advantage of the environment and reflect thoughtful insights into the tropical conditions. All houses have attached rainwater tanks for independent water supplies, as well as being connected to the island supply. A reliable electricity supply now means that all the conveniences of that energy source are available on each island, including lighting, television, washing machines, refrigerators, air-conditioning and fans. Life in the islands is considerably different to what it was a decade ago. It is also much more expensive and complicated than it was then, too.

This may seem like a very western view of progress and I'm not suggesting that these changes have all been advantageous. I do think that overall, Torres Strait Island people have welcomed the western technological changes that have occurred. This doesn't mean however that any or all of these changes have necessarily brought benefit to the Torres Strait. The lifestyle of Torres Strait Islander peoples has changed significantly and I'm not sure that the changes could have been avoided or would have been rejected by Torres Strait peoples. They are the consequences of colonisation that people across the Torres Strait have become accustomed to, along with a poorer health status, a shorter life expectancy and significantly increased rates of incarceration, abuse and violence.

Likewise, the postcolonial world has its advantages and its disadvantages. The cost of living has increased considerably. Telephones and electricity have to be paid for and can be very expensive. The rapid rate of change has caught many Torres Strait Islanders unaware, so that exorbitant phone bills caused by contacting family across the region and on the mainland can prove problematic. Likewise electricity bills can prove difficult to pay, as the unit cost is much higher in the islands than on the mainland. Maintenance is an issue when electrical equipment breaks down. The reliable life of most equipment is halved because of the harsh environment. Sending material south is expensive and risky as repaired equipment often suffers damage on the return trip. Building a house is very expensive because of the cost of transporting materials, which are normally transhipped several times before arriving at the destination.

Torres Strait peoples' lifestyle has also changed significantly in other ways. Cultural processes that may have associated with particular seasons or community events have now become 'tourist' attractions, sometimes to be performed as and when visitors demand. The loss of location of these events in culturally proscribed rather than demand based sequences disrupts the cultural significance of them, though it does ensure their continuance. This has an impact on the younger generation who grow up seeing these events as performances rather than culturally significant events that have a variety of associated cultural connections through story, familial relations and historically important occurrences. The risk is that cultural processes become fragmented rather than holistic, thereby losing their acquired meanings and significance. Whilst this reflects the impact of other worlds and inevitable evolutionary change on any culture, the change processes in the Torres Strait have been so profound, so pervasive and so rapid that one wonders how much historic cultural knowledge has been lost unnoticed and replaced by global cultural knowledges that have little if any

connection to the Torres Strait, except through importation. An illustration of the complexity

of Torres Strait Islander's responses to rapid change occurred in an evening dance

performance on an island I was visiting, where the older Island people performed historic

dances and the children chose to perform contemporary Pacific Island dances. The older

generation, whilst pleased by their youth's skill and innovation, also lamented the apparent

lack of concern of their younger generation for their own cultural icons.

The emergence of the globalising world, mediated by television, computers and ease of

accessibility to the outside world, has created many quite subtle but influential intrusions into

the lives of Islanders. Giroux (1999) speaks of the impact of the Disney empire and other

multinational corporations on the global world, in terms of 'Disneyfication' and

'McDonaldisation'. He also identifies how today's youth are being demonised for their use

of popular culture, when this mirrors processes that have always occurred with the younger

generation, though in different forms. These issues are reflected in the Torres Strait. African

American influences are visible across the islands, through music, art, dress, body decoration

and clothing. Youth culture in the Torres Strait is more accepting of a world where drug use

is acknowledged as an activity engaged in by increasing numbers of young people; a world

where mobile phones, rap, manga, playstation, tattoos, body piercing and a host of

postcolonial global markers of youth culture are commonplace, and like all societies, the

previous generations look on with some disquiet. The rapidity of change, from a relatively

stable and predictable world, to one where change is the only constant, can be very

challenging, for both young people and the older generations.

Waiben (Thursday Island) is, and has been since invasion, a fairly cosmopolitan community.

Not historically occupied by any particular group of people, Thursday Island attracted

Indonesian, Japanese, Chinese and Singhalese merchants and workers in the pearling industry (Shnukal, 1997). After the Government established Thursday Island as the administrative centre for the area in 1877, the fate of the island as a growing community and the gateway to the Torres Strait was sealed. Today, there is little that residents lack by way of goods and services and what is not available on Thursday Island itself is able to be obtained from Cairns in a couple of days. Similarly, despite their relative isolation, the outer islands provide a very comfortable, well-serviced environment that is a strong attraction to both Torres Strait Islander people and others. Islanders normally resident on the mainland are seeking to return to their home islands attracted by a comfortable lifestyle and Native Title declarations. This lifestyle however has not avoided the challenges of disaffected youth, unable to get fulltime employment yet desirous of the trappings of the postcolonial world within which they live. One of the many educational challenges facing Torres Strait Islander people is how to manage to balance high quality educational outcomes in an environment that will only sustain a finite and relatively low level of permanent employment. As the Islander population grows (ABS, 2001a) data shows an increase of about 2200 in the Queensland Torres Strait Islander population between 1991 and 2001) and as goods, services and facilities in the islands create a more appealing lifestyle, it is conceivable that given that Native Title has now been granted to all of the Torres Strait Islander communities, more people who had previously lived on the mainland may choose to return to their islands of origin, to live. Inevitably if such a migration were to be extensive, it would lead to significant stress on the existing infrastructure and lifestyle options of those Islanders currently living there. The obvious links between lifestyle, education and employment will need careful consideration by Torres Strait Islander people, if unrest is to be avoided.

Colonialism.

Colonialism has been one of the significant motivations behind much of the world's exploration and exploitation. In the case of Australia's Indigenous peoples, their experiences vary little from the experiences of other colonised peoples and from time to time have included all of the variations of colonisation (Lippmann, 1991; Langton, 1994; Moreton-Robinson, 2004; Nakata, 2003) In particular, the peoples of the Torres Strait have been invaded and colonised by Anglo-Europeans, by Asians, by Pacific Islanders and by Anglo-Australians, all within the period of recorded Anglo-history (Beckett, 1987). These experiences have been variously aggressive, abusive, violent, intrusive, inquisitive and spiritual. Colonisation carries with it expenses that are increasingly difficult to sustain and colonised peoples increasingly clamour for freedom, self-determination and the opportunity to be the masters of their own fate.

Torres Strait Islanders have always been traders and as such have always been aware of other worlds and other peoples. Historic evidence points to extensive trade links with both mainland Australia and especially Papua New Guinea (Beckett, 1987), in pre-colonial times, whilst Sharp (1993) identifies the significance of iron as a prized trade item in early colonial and colonial times. Consequently whilst the colonial experience for Torres Strait Islanders has been one that has brought both benefit and detriment, it has also provided the environment within which Islanders have consistently sought to negotiate their own control over the events that surrounded them and in doing so have asserted their enduring conviction that they will be the masters of their own destinies. This characteristic, so emphatically described by authors such as Sharp (1993), Beckett (1987) and Nakata (2002, 1999) identifies the defining quality that distinguishes the colonial and postcolonial experiences of peoples

across the Torres Strait from other colonised peoples. Young (2001) recognizes this postcolonial experience as unique and contextually defined involving,

"... multiple activities with a range of different priorities and positions;" (p. 64)

which at the same time,

"... pays tribute to the great historical achievements of resistance against colonial power, while, paradoxically, it also describes the conditions of existence that have followed in which many basic power structures have yet to change in any substantive way." (p. 60).

Colonisation in the Torres Strait occurred in a number of articulated and often overlapping stages. From 1606 when Liuz Baes de Torres passed through the area, which now bears his name, European contact with the area was scant, haphazard and frequently violent. The area was known to mariners as a place to traverse as quickly and unobtrusively as possible, for the people were known to be fearsome warriors who did not hesitate to take the heads of shipwrecked sailors. It was only from the early 19th century as the New South Wales government began to establish itself that the area started to attract some attention (Beckett, 1987). The commercial pearling and trepang industries flourished in the 1860's bringing extensive European and Asian contact into the region (Ganter, 1994) and resulted in the belated interest of the Queensland Government which struggled to both maintain law and order and gain political control over the islands in the region until the passing of the *Queensland Coast Islands Act 1879* (Davis, 2004). This period was driven by the desire of the marine industry to exploit the region and Torres Strait Islanders played largely peripheral roles as readily available labour. Exploitation did not extend to dispossession, as it did for mainland Aboriginal people, though raids by individual mariners did result in food being stolen from gardens, women being kidnapped and Islanders being murdered.

Church: London Missionary Society.

In this same era, the church in the form of the London Missionary Society (LMS), established itself in 1871 in Erub, gradually extending its influence across the Torres Strait. As the Queensland government had not yet successfully annexed all the islands in the Torres Strait, law and order was not yet established and a lack of regulation of the maritime industries that were rapidly expanding in the region meant that government tariffs, charges and taxes could be easily avoided. For several decades the church was the only regulatory authority in the area. Beckett (1987) suggests that the presence of the church as a regulatory authority, in the absence of anything else, resulted in two quite contradictory outcomes. Islanders were painfully aware that they could not successfully contest the weapons that the Europeans and those who they protected possessed, so any thought of resistance was futile. On the other hand, the protection of the Europeans through the medium of the church afforded a very effective means of counteracting the violence that Islanders had perpetrated upon them by the pearlers and trepangers. The vigour with which Torres Strait Islanders accommodated Christianity can be explained as a means of self defence and preservation that contributed significantly to their ultimate survival as a group of peoples.

The missionaries were not known for their compassion and Torres Strait Islanders suffered beatings and harsh treatment at their hands. They literally ruled each island regulating peoples lives in very European ways and in many ways the church performed the role of a defacto state. As the 20th century became established the power of the LMS was challenged by the state (Beckett, 1987) leading to the withdrawal of the LMS and the emergence of the Anglican church as the next significant spiritual influence in the lives of the Torres Strait Islanders. The colonial impact of this experience was again related to conflicting and

contested positions and ideologies, the inevitable outcome favouring the missionaries. Torres Strait Islanders had welcomed christianity willingly as a means of protecting themselves from other more intrusive experiences and it didn't take them long to realise that whilst their person was protected, their 'being' was under threat.

Queensland Government.

Whilst the church scrutinised the daily lives of the Islanders, the Queensland government proceeded with legislative measures that would also serve to legitimise the regulation of Islanders lives. The church's activities were visible and tangible in the daily lives of Islanders, but the legislative activities of government were far less so pervasive. As the legislative activities of government increased, culminating in the *Aborigines Protection and Prevention of the Sale of Opium Act 1897*, so too did the regulation of the lives of Torres Strait Islanders. Nakata (2004) describes the situation in the following way,

> *"Thus, the everyday lives of Islanders were now lived at the intersection of these three competing and often conflicting interests: government, church and industry. Each of these were accountable to and bounded by different external interests and imperatives: industry to economy and profit; the church to moral imperatives supported financially and materially through missionary enterprise; and the government to electorates, public opinion and social and economic imperatives."* (p. 157).

It is not apparent that Torres Strait Islander interests or concerns are of any import or interest to these three colonising influences as they set the stage for increasingly invasive regulation. However another apparent contradiction emerged that was to provide Torres Strait Islanders with a significant and long term mechanism through which they could establish and maintain a level of self determination at a local level, sufficient to stabilise the development of Islander

society for the next 80 years. Douglas, the Government Resident on Thursday Island created in 1899, a system of elected Island Councils which had both administrative and magisterial powers (Nakata, 2004).

This relatively simplistic tool whereby each island community could maintain at least the façade of self management provided Islanders with the opportunity to come to understand the colonial and later, the postcolonial mechanisms that had so recently invaded their world. Queensland government management was as strict and as regimented as the LMS regime they had replaced. Legislative control was institutionalised alongside the growing influences of a rapidly modernising world, creating a new set of dilemmas for Islanders. Almost every facet of Islander life was confronted with change. Government intervention removed the capacity for Islanders to have any influence in determining their own outcomes, based largely on a paternalistic view of what the needs of Torres Strait Islanders were and how these would be most appropriately met. This period from the turn of the century to the 1980's is best described in the words of Kwame Nkrumah's (1965) definition of neo-colonialism.

> *" For those who practise it, it means power without responsibility and for those who suffer from it, it means exploitation without redress."* (p. xi).

Measures of control.

A measure of the level of control that existed up until the 1970's and 80's, is reflected in the management of Islander's personal incomes, expenditures and social activity. The Queensland government had Islander incomes banked directly into bank accounts which were controlled and managed by the government. Islanders were thereby forced to get permission from the protector or government agent, who might be the local school teacher, to spend their

own money. Islander's lives depended on the whims and fancies of the local

teacher/government representative. Permits were a requirement for inter-island travel, so

Islanders could effectively be imprisoned on their own islands. Laws regulated relations

between opposite sexes and the punishment for committing offences against these everyday

activities could range from fines to imprisonment (Nakata, 2004).

In this neo-colonial environment, where the discourses of development and modernisation

which led to the initial intent of the island councils as mechanisms to foster self

determination, the Councils themselves became of sites of contradictory discourse. Those

Islander families who were closely aligned with the State government were favoured by the

government administrators so in effect the councils became agents of the government and did

not necessarily represent their own people. Once again, this frustrated attempts by Islanders

to create some agency over their lives.

Another effect of colonisation was the impact of imported exotic diseases. This had an

immediate and catastrophic effect on the region with the population of Torres Strait Islanders

dropping by an estimated 3000 by the end of the 19th century. The first official population

estimates were published by the Queensland government in 1913, placing the population at

that time at 2,368 (Beckett, 1987). It was not until 1967 that the referendum conducted in

that year gave official recognition to the existence of Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines

in the Australian population, so up until that time, population numbers for Torres Strait

Islanders and Aborigines were estimates based on the best guesses of government employees.

The view that it was really not important to have an accurate knowledge of the population of

Torres Strait Islanders, reflects the irrelevance with which Islanders have been treated and the colonial lens through which Island society and culture were (de)valued.

Sharp (1993) notes the significance of the pearling industry in both providing a good income for many Torres Strait families and ensuring that Islanders were restricted to their islands for many decades. This apparent policy of containment also changed in response to neo-colonial needs, when the pearling industry collapsed in the early 1960's. Then Islanders were actively encouraged to leave their island homes in search of work and wealth on the mainland, resulting in a significant population of Islanders moving to the mainland and away from their historic homes. This same process however, stimulated the Islander desire to know those outside their world. Islanders were thereby in a better position to be able to manage the impact of both colonisation and invasion (Sharp, 1993). At the same time, this shift alleviated the government from the potential problems related to having to cater for the needs of large numbers of Islanders used to a regular income but with no longer any means of obtaining or maintaining it.

Liberty and recognition – Post colonialism.

The period following the 1967 referendum, when Torres Strait Islanders and Aborigines were recognised by being counted in the national census data moved the Torres Strait from the colonial to the postcolonial. Young (2001) defines 'post-colonial' in the following way.

> "*The postcolonial is a dialectical concept that marks the broad historical facts of decolonialisation and the determined achievement of sovereignty – but also the realities of nations and peoples emerging into a new imperialistic context of economic and sometimes political domination.*" (p. 57).

I classify the post 1967 period to date as postcolonial Torres Strait. Whilst sovereignty has been considered as an option in that time, more significantly, independence, in the sense of becoming a State or Territory within the federation of existing Australian States and Territories has been much more widely canvassed and considered (Torres Strait Regional Authority, 2003). Part of this consideration has attempted to seriously address the issues raised by the Torres Strait also being part of a more globalised world and therefore possibly being in a position to look to support and cooperation from nations other than Australia. How realistic this particular view is, will ultimately be determined by Islanders themselves. Again, Young's definition (2001) parallels the contemporary situation in the Torres Strait.

> *" The term 'postcoloniality', by contrast, puts the emphasis on the economic, material and cultural conditions that determine the global system in which the postcolonial nation is required to operate – one heavily weighted towards the interests of international capital and the G7 powers."* (p. 57).

During this same period significant moves away from the previously heavily managed government control of the protectorate system, to a more open and Torres Strait Islander controlled and managed system of local government, has provided the opportunity and the agency for Islanders to decide for themselves the direction of their lives. Having said this, the intrusion of globalisation in new and equally invidious ways has also provided Torres Strait Islanders with more challenging and potentially risky initiatives. As I've described in the log of the voyage, *My Journey*, life on contemporary Torres Strait islands is very much more comfortable but at the same time more expensive. As world oil prices skyrocket, this situation is only going to worsen. It is conceivable that contemporary Torres Strait lifestyles driven by energy hungry sources of power can only result in cost of living rises that some Islanders will be unable to sustain. Survival based on historic gardens and fishing is still a realistic option, but the question remains as to how many Islander families will willingly

forgo the Anglo-Australian imperatives that they have now accepted as daily necessities.
This suggestion provides another contradiction in that it appears to legitimate the proposed
return of non-Anglo peoples to a 'simpler life', whilst at the same time ignoring the same
implication as an option for Anglo peoples.

It is also the experience of many Pacific island nations, including Op Deudai/Mugie
Daudai/Papua New Guinea (Sharp, 1993), that postcoloniality has resulted in new forms of
coloniality derived from and directly related to the colonial experience in each context. For
many Pacific island nations, the role and involvement of the World Bank, G7 nations and
international capital ensures both their independence and their dependence. 'Third worldness'
as both a quantification of the postcolonial experience and a justification of the development
and consumerism of 'first worldness', serves only to legitimate the need of the third world to
be bound to the directions of the first world (Young, 1990; Tully, 1995; Lloyd, 1991). The
variability of these postcolonial experiences, as a consequence, is reflected in Ivison's (1997)
description of postcolonial theory and mirrored in the Torres Strait.

> *" Identity is partially shaped, as well as mis-shaped, by recognition (or its absence)*
> *by others. The specific differences that are recognised (or not), and the particular*
> *ways in which they are, have very real consequences – political, economic and*
> *cultural – for the parties involved. Postcolonial theory, in part, attempts to map and*
> *make sense of the interdependencies and asymmetrics between these differences and*
> *identities."* (p. 154).

This log emphasises the uniqueness of Torres Strait Islander postcoloniality and links the
ongoing postcolonial experiences of Torres Strait Islanders to the demonstrable lack of
success contemporary Torres Strait Islander children continue to experience under

contemporary educational provisions. I will argue that the continued subalternity (Bhabha, 1991) of Torres Strait Islanders remains a construction and a function of white Australian hegemony, via the mechanism of the education system and that this reality continues to frustrate the attempts of Islanders to manage their own affairs in ways they deem appropriate. This does not imply however that Torres Strait Islanders have been passive recipients of settler-colonizer influences, rather the tools to enable Islanders to move to genuine self management or independence have been deliberately withheld from them. The concept of hybridity comes into play here. Bhabha (1991) suggests that hybridity resulting from the colonial experience can empower the subaltern in such a way that it disrupts colonial domination. A distinctive concept of self emerges, opening up the possibility for rejection of assumed subordination. In the context of the Torres Strait, this view is supported extensively by authors including Sharp (1993), Beckett, (1987), Ganter, (1994) and Nakata, (1999, 2002, 2004), as they describe Torres Strait Islander initiatives aimed at establishing agency in their own lives and futures, over many generations.

Hybridity can be read as the obverse of another concept relevant to this discussion – that of orientalism. Said (1979) described the process of euro-colonialism in 'the East' as *orientalism*; the 'oriental', the 'other', the colonised object, is seen as the mirror image of what is inferior, alien to and feared by the West. Until recently the colonial position has focussed on the impact of colonisation on the 'othered', colonised peoples, in this case Torres Strait Islanders. It is only in the last several decades that any notion of 'whiteness' as a significant cultural identifier, has emerged. The idea that 'whiteness' might be a topic deserving of some serious consideration in the debate over the impact of colonisation has largely been stimulated through studies of race, class and power distribution. The work of hooks (1990), Stowe (1996) and Keating (1995) each contribute to a growing body of critique

that focuses on the invisibility of whiteness and the growing difficulty that white people experience in attempting to define themselves (see also, Brady, 1992; 1999; Rigney, 1997; Moreton-Robinson, 1998; 2004; 2008). They do this by juxtaposing themselves against the 'other', so that by identifying the 'other' they identify what/who they are not. This inevitably leads to a detailed definition of what and who white is not, rather than what and who white is, so that the power and agency that attaches to whiteness is neither identified nor challenged but entrenched as invisible, immutable and multi-dimensional.

'Whiteness'.

> *Whiteness is not a pre-given, unified ideological formation, but is a multi-faceted collective phenomenon resulting from the relationship between the self and the ideological discourses which are constructed out of the surrounding local and global terrain. Whiteness is fundamentally Euro- or Western-centric in its episteme, as it is articulated in complicity with the pervasively imperialising logic of the empire* (McLaren, 1997b, p 21*).*

This view links the nature of whiteness to the reality of the colonial and postcolonial experience. For Torres Strait Islanders this is a lived experience which continues to this day, echoed in the words of Henry Giroux (1997).

> *Whiteness is both invented and used to mask its power and privilege…[C]entral to such an effort is the attempt to strip Whiteness of its historical and political power to produce, regulate, and constrain racialised others within the discursive and material relations of racial domination and subjugation* (p.292)

It is the pervasiveness and tenacity of the influence of whiteness in the Torres Strait that is illustrated in conditions there today. Modernity has had its influence and in some respects

has contributed to enhancing the quality of life of Torres Strait Islanders. Improved health, housing and education facilities have added a veneer of comfort and appeal to island communities but underlying this façade is a continuing cycle of poor health, low incomes, high unemployment and educational failure.

> *"Whiteness" serves a vital function in masking the social and economic inequalities in contemporary Western cultures. By negating those people – whatever the color of their skin – who do not measure up to "white" standards, "whiteness" has played a central role in maintaining and naturalising a hierarchical social system and a dominant/subordinate worldview* (Keating, 1995, p.902)

I will examine 'whiteness' as it manifests in lifestyle, wealth, education and health and employment for Torres Strait Islanders.

Whilst the colonisation experience in the Torres Strait has resulted in lifestyle improvements such as improved services and access to a wider selection of foods and other consumer goods, it has also been the cause of some significant problems   The health status of Torres Strait Islander peoples is very poor with preventable diseases and conditions creating enormous problems for both the people and the health system (ABS, 2001b). Employment is an issue with most employable and employed Torres Strait Islanders identified as labourers or unskilled workers. The mean weekly income for Indigenous people in remote and very remote areas, which includes people of the Torres Strait Islands was $364.00 per week, compared to $585.00 for non-Indigenous people in the same localities (ABS, 2001b). The majority (70%) of Indigenous persons aged 15 years and over earned less than $400.00 per week in comparison to 54% of the non-Indigenous population (ABS, 2001b). The average weekly earnings for all Australians is $200.00 a week more than for Indigenous Australians,

in spite of the households of Indigenous Australians being about 1.5 times larger (ABS, 2001b).

Whilst the actual figures for Torres Strait Islanders are subsumed within the figures for all Indigenous Australians, the amount of disposable income available to Torres Strait Islanders has significant implications for their lifestyle. When higher than average costs of living, brought about by the influence of transportation related expenses on all goods and services in the Torres Strait are taken into account, the amount of disposable income available to Torres Strait Islanders is considerably reduced. The flow-on impact of this situation to low income and welfare dependent individuals and families can result in lifestyles that reflect embedded long-term hardship and subsequently less chance of perceiving the possibility of this ever changing. The social consequences of this scenario are increasing numbers of disillusioned and disenchanted young people, with no hope and no desire to have to struggle even harder to break out of the cycle of cynicism that entraps them. Social dislocation resulting from experiences such as these is already evidenced in increasing drug and alcohol abuse, violence and abuse, and dysfunctional families in many communities on the mainland as well as in the Torres Strait (ABS, 2001b).

Since education is a fundamental issue influencing the effective development of any community, educational demographic data can give pointers to the sustainability of a community. The following information illustrates some of the factors influencing Torres Strait Islander students in their search for successful outcomes from their educational experiences. The Queensland data show that progression from Year 8 to Year12 for Indigenous (including Torres Strait Islander) students ranged between 43.6% and 48.3% from

1997 – 2001, compared to a range for all students of between 70.8% and 73.6%, for the same period (Department of Education and the Arts, 2004a). Clearly education and employment data are interrelated, to the extent that fewer students progressing through Year 12 translates into fewer young people obtaining jobs that pay well or that lie outside the CDEP (Community Development Employment Project) and labouring sectors.

Similarly, the health data of a community can indicate ways and means of improving opportunities and choices for members of that community. If people are suffering from long term and potentially debilitating illness such as heart disease and diabetes (both widespread illnesses amongst Torres Strait Islander peoples, since invasion), their opportunity to get and hold onto employment is limited (ABS, 2001b). This has an impact on their income that will have a flow-on effect to their lifestyle options. There is little incentive for any student to further their education, when doing so results in acquiring a significant debt (HECS fees for an education degree are upwards of $9,500.00). Most Torres Strait Islander students are dependent on the Youth Allowance[iii] to enable them to undertake higher education programs and for many of these students extra income from part-time jobs is essential for their survival. Acquiring a part-time job that accommodates such things as block field experiences can be a very difficult task, even in large urban areas on the mainland. This can be further complicated by racism, which is the experience of many Torres Strait Islander students, resulting in the challenge of obtaining higher education taking on even greater difficulty.

What is important to distil from this information is that the issues to be examined in this research are neither simple nor easily resolved. They do not readily respond to quick-fix and financially focussed responses (as has been demonstrated historically) though obviously

appropriate financial support is essential. The options proposed are holistic, long term and interrelated. They demand constant reflection on and assessment of their impact. They also require constant dialogue amongst the various partners to ensure that everyone is focussed on improving educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander children. From the experience of the three decades of my involvement in Indigenous education, as well as the demographic data reviewed here, I firmly believe that there are no simple, one-off resolutions based in generic policy formulation. However this does not deny the efficacy of many of the programs attempted over the years in the Torres Strait. What has been missing is an awareness of the necessity to actively include Torres Strait Islander people in the development and management of these programs and a clear understanding that whatever is tried must be viewed as an integral part of a larger holistic approach to dealing with the issues of postcolonialism, in the Torres Strait. In the next section, I examine educational demographic data in detail in order to illustrate this claim.

Outcomes For Indigenous Students.

 "...schools which failed Island people." (Nakata, 1995, p.53)

The history of Indigenous education in Australia, since the 1967 referendum[iv] has been liberally spread with good intent, littered with reports, Royal Commissions and reviews and literally devoid of substantive educational outcomes for Indigenous peoples, so far as these are measured by Anglo-Australian standards (see Appendix A). Significant effort initially went into enabling Indigenous people to access educational services, ranging from early childhood to tertiary education. It was acknowledged very early in this process, that access could mean a wide range of quite different processes, only one of which was financial. The nature of education provision was extremely important at all stages and was reflected in the plethora of 'compensatory programs' that grew up in Indigenous education in the 1970's and

80's. It was almost twenty years after the referendum of 1967, before program providers particularly the Australian Government reviewed the impact of these initiatives on outcomes for Indigenous students. The data (see Appendix A) documents the extent of the national research, effort and money that has gone into reporting on Indigenous education over the past two decades (Ministerial Advisory Committee for Educational Renewal MACER, 2004). This does not include work done in each State by individual State Governments, over the same period.

It is clear that between 1985 and 2004 there has been considerable activity aimed at addressing the growing concerns, documented in the publications described in Appendix A, surrounding the failure of educational initiatives to achieve success for Indigenous students, as it is measured by existing systemic processes. Over that same period the policy emphasis has changed from focussing on access, to focussing on participation and completion. Increased completion rates improve the chances for Indigenous students to move into employment or higher education. Greater numbers of Indigenous students are demonstrating that they can successfully (as it is measured by the dominant systemic processes) work within the dominant educational structures, thereby providing increased numbers of role models to which younger Indigenous students may aspire. Although the relative proportion of these 'successful' Indigenous students, compared to the general population of successful students, is not increasing, this reflects the fact that there are more Indigenous students in the system. If flexibility within the dominant educational structures improves this could lead to opportunities for increasing influence over them by non-dominant sociocultural groups. This is especially the case in environments where the non-dominant group actually dominates numerically, as in the Torres Strait. The amount of influence able to be applied by any group should reflect the level of agency that the group is able to enact. It is the level of agency able

to be enacted by any group on the educational system that will determine the ultimate

efficacy of the educational provisions for the children of that particular group.

Data of failure.

Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST, 2003) data related to student success

against national benchmarks for reading and numeracy, indicated that in 2001 nationally,

72% of Indigenous students achieved the Year 3 benchmark for literacy (90.3% of all

students), whilst only 66.9% of Indigenous students achieved the Year 5 benchmark for

literacy (89.8% for all students). This represents a significant regression in outcomes for

Indigenous students over a relatively short period of time.   The data for Queensland in 2001

shows that a similar proportion (71.6%) of Indigenous students (89% of all students)

achieved the Year 3 literacy benchmarks but only 57.3% of Indigenous students (83.0% of all

students) achieved the Year 5 benchmark for literacy (see Appendix B). Since the State data

includes a greater proportion of Torres Strait Islander students than the national data, this is a

more revealing statistic for my purposes. It shows a greater variation in comparative

performance than the national data, in spite of the fact that the categories for State and

national data do not refer to precisely the same information and each data set is interpreted in

different ways. This lack of consistency across State and national data sets would seem to

run counter to the espoused objectives of each layer of government and act to disguise the

actual state of disadvantage of Indigenous peoples. The 1994 National Review of Education

for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Commonwealth of Australia, 1995),

identified 45% of Indigenous primary school children as having, *"significantly lower literacy*

and numeracy achievement" (p.90) as opposed to 16% of 'other Australian primary school

students' . If this had been the success rate for primary school students across Australia, the

country would have been in uproar. Today, however, we have no data to indicate that this

situation has improved or changed at all. What we do have are a series of reviews and reports

into the continuing failure of Indigenous students to achieve similar outcomes to other sociocultural groups in the community (Appendix A).

The data, collected by the State Department of Education and the Arts and identified in the tables in Appendix B, relate directly to the performance of Indigenous students enrolled in Queensland schools. This information has been extracted exactly as it is provided through the Department of Education and the Arts, Corporate Data website (Department of Education and the Arts, 2004a; 2004b). The data are not explained in any way as to indicate that any differences are significant or otherwise and the conclusions that I draw are indications only of a consistently lower performance on the part of Indigenous students across the State. Whether these differences are significant or not is another question entirely. In a conversation with a senior officer of the Department of Education and the Arts in 2002, I was shown data that identified the literacy and numeracy rates of Torres Strait Islander children, since state-wide testing had begun. This data located children in Torres Strait Island schools in the bottom 5th percentile for literacy and numeracy, for the State (Personal Communication, 2002). It would seem unlikely that this situation has improved over the past couple of years.

Analysis.

The following is my own analysis of the data that I could access. It does not represent a statistically valid interpretation of the information and nor is it intended to. What it does do however, is provide another perspective on the dimensions of disadvantage for Torres Strait Islander children. My focus is not on the statistical interpretations or the data itself as I consider this material to be largely invalid in relation to Torres Strait Islander students, as I will demonstrate later in this paper. The criticism that I would make is that, whilst data are

presented, the way in which they are presented militates against anyone except the informed insider being able to interpret them in any meaningful way. This may be politically expedient but it does nothing towards addressing the inequity that exists in Indigenous and specifically Torres Strait Islander, education today.

It is interesting to note in the first three tables in Appendix B, the relative consistency of difference, between each set of tests and from year to year. The evidence is there to suggest that there is a concerning and seemingly constant gap between the performance of Indigenous students and that of all students in the identified categories. The concerning aspect is the consistancy of the gap that exists in spite of the efforts made by Governments to identify and address these concerns.

Data in Figure 4 (Appendix B) show that whilst the group of Indigenous students who were tested in Year 3 in 1998 had made progress in all categories by Year 5, they still remained disadvantaged in respect of their peers' mean performance. When that same group was tested in Year 7, however, there was a marked decrease in their performance, relative to their performance in Year 5. From the same table Indigenous students seem to be making better progress from Year 3 to Year 7 than their non-Indigenous counterparts however non-Indigenous students continue to outperform Indigenous students. It is interesting however, that the gap between the performance of Indigenous students and their non-Indigenous peer group narrows from year 3 to Year 7. Achieving equity in performance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is the espoused goal of Federal and State Governments but it still remains a long way from being realised.

The State Department of Education and the Arts (2004a ; 2004b) data demonstrate that retention rates for Indigenous students rapidly decline from Year 8 to year 12. Of the 1881 students enrolled in Year 8 in 1998, only 979 made it through to full time enrolment in Year 12, 2002. This should not be taken to imply that this same number either stayed at school for the year, or more importantly exited Year 12 with any opportunity of getting employment or further education. What these figures do suggest however, is that the number of Indigenous students who are able to meet the criteria for the measurement of educational success set for them, becomes considerably reduced the longer they spend in schools.

Whilst I believe the statistics offer a positive slant on otherwise dismal data, they provide some insights into the quality of education being provided to Indigenous students generally and Torres Strait Islander students specifically. In my view, a far more significant aspect of this information is the impact that it may have on individual students and their socio-cultural complexes. This impact is of importance in multitudes of ways that need to be considered, along with funding and 'special programs', if ultimately Torres Strait Islanders are to achieve the educational outcomes that the dominant society they exist on the fringe of, is intent on judging them by.

One of the critical issues of this study is that whilst dominant/western hegemonic educational structures and processes are proven failures, the reality is that Torres Strait Islander children already live in a rapidly globalising world which reflects western ('white') imperatives that they must comprehend and be able to manipulate to their own advantage. For this to be

achieved, children need to be exposed to these imperatives. My claim however is that the manner in which this is done needs to be reconceptualized. Today's Torres Strait Islander children (as did their forebears before them) are coming to terms with a wide range of technology and other popular cultural influences, including music, fashion, dance and language that will mark them as different from their parents, though still Torres Strait Islander. Consequently, I see this work as informing the interface between historic and contemporary Torres Strait Islander worlds because the reality is that self-determination for children in Torres Strait Island schools today will be realised through their capacity to effectively engage both/all of the worlds that they live in or in the words of the Torres Strait Islanders Regional Education Council (TSIREC, 2000) *"… in the society of their choice."* (p. 3).

Being successful.

My view is that being 'successful' in this contemporary world is as much a matter of individuals believing that they can achieve whatever they want, as it is a function of the education system. The significance of role models in visibly demonstrating to others that Torres Strait Islanders are able to achieve their personal goals cannot be over stated, so the existence and visibility of 'successful' Torres Strait Islanders is critically important to the aspirations of generations of younger Islanders. Unfortunately not everyone can become a successful singer or football player so where the 'success' role models most frequently encountered by children only involve limited options, children are likely to grow up believing that their job and life choices are likewise limited.

Role models subsequently become increasingly difficult to find in environments where the day-to-day life of most employable young people revolves around Community Development

Employment Programs (CDEP)[v]. The opportunity for children and young people to envision themselves flying planes, treating sick people, running their own businesses, teaching children, is severely limited. Most Torres Strait Islander youth are exposed to very limited employment and career opportunities. Knowing about careers does not make them realistic to individuals. Seeing Torres Strait Islander people engaged in those careers does demonstrate that Torres Strait Islanders can 'succeed' in the very economically delineated western sense of the word. These models demonstrate that Torres Strait Islanders are capable of aspiring to and succeeding at anything they wish.

In 2003 a young Torres Strait Islander became the first Islander to obtain his private pilot's licence. This was not an easy achievement but he did reach his goal. It will be interesting to see if he works in the Torres Strait, as many Anglo-Australian pilots use experience in the Torres Strait to build up their flying time to help them qualify for jobs with QANTAS and other bigger airlines. Research suggests (Watson & Considine, 2003) that children seeing Torres Strait Islanders flying the planes and captaining the barges (role models) would make a significant difference in their worldviews and quite possibly stimulate broader aspirations for them. Role models such as Wendell Sailor and Christine Anu have a profound influence on the aspirations of many Torres Strait Islander youth but as Martin Nakata (2001) points out even with several generations of serious and enthusiastic support from family, making sense of the educational offerings made to Torres Strait Islander students and actually seeing and believing that, as a Torres Strait Islander, you can achieve whatever you want, can be at best a very difficult task and at worst an impossibility.

Knowledge generation for a new era underpins the policy statements surrounding educational provision in all sectors across Queensland today. The Government catchcry 'Smart State'[vi] could almost be read as a " praxis of the present" (Gramsci, quoted in Salamini, 1981, p.73), echoing the extant links between education and employment, lifestyle and economy, whilst exemplifying the political, social and lifestyle imperatives to be in education (learning) or employment (earning). As with other Government policies, 'earning or learning' cannot be applied unchanged to or be realised by, some sections of Australian society, amongst whom Indigenous people and Torres Strait Islanders in particular rank highly. As the statistical data cited later in this paper demonstrate, past and current educational experiences for Torres Strait Islander students have not been necessarily good, enlightening or liberating ones. In the next section, I identify educational strategies that actively involve and reflect Torres Strait imperatives thereby enhancing Torres Strait agency in educational provision in Torres Strait Island schools.

Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity for the Torres Straits.

Based on Giroux's (1994a) notion of the significance of an intersection of cultural studies and critical pedagogy and Freire's (1972) notion of conscientisation, this element focuses on identifying the possibilities of a pedagogic environment within which evolving Torres Strait Islander cultures can successfully engage a globalising world and still retain their authentic culturality. It is suggested that this process needs to be dialogic and thus demands the engagement of Torres Strait Islander people in its conceptualisation, implementation and evaluation. Knowledge generation in a postcolonial context raises the possibility of generating new pedagogies to address previously unencountered and what Anzaldua (1987) calls hybridised challenges. Nothing however is likely to change, unless the system itself is defined, developed and refined by Torres Strait Islanders themselves.

The Torres Strait notion of YUMI education[vii] as it is currently defined by the Torres Strait Islanders Regional Education Council (TSIREC) and the notion of hybridities as they are played out in the Torres Strait context, require educational processes to attempt to positively address a wide variety of outcomes. Drawing on what W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) described for African Americans as double consciousness, this duality is extended by Anzaldua (1987) to describe a range of hybridities including race, class, gender, sexuality, religion and also languages, which carry with them semantic frameworks that help speakers to conceptualise their various worlds in appropriate ways for the particular hybridity being engaged. The significance of languages and varying means of communication in the Torres Strait context will be explored in more detail, later in this element.

The question of what constitutes successful (positive) educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander people does not appear to have been asked of the people themselves. What is also apparent is the looming chasm between the possibility of increasingly more appropriately educated Torres Strait Islanders, as defined by Islanders themselves, and a significantly restricted employment market in the Torres Strait. The potential for social chaos created by a highly educated youth in a severely limited economic marketplace, has been documented in many countries across the globe over many generations and in this respect Paul Willis' (2003) "three waves of cultural modernization" provides some interesting and relevant insights in relation to Torres Strait Islander youth and their employment prospects.

Whilst many things have been tried in Torres Strait Island schools over many generations, it is the quality of the work that teachers do that makes the difference between positive

educational outcomes and failure in the eyes of the system. This is just as true in significantly differing sociocultural contexts, such as the Torres Strait, as it is in other culturally plural settings in schools across Queensland and in fact, the world.

Thomas (2000) notes that,

> *"… [r]esearch which identifies different cultural pedagogies, and describes the impact they may have on improving educational quality, will be a welcome antidote to the possible unifying excesses that educational change in the context of modernisation and globalisation is likely to bring."* (p. 80*)*

My research documents successful pedagogic practices in a number of Torres Strait Island schools. I am not proposing that these pedagogies are specific to Torres Strait Islanders in the same way that a few years ago, particular learning styles were attached to Indigenous children. However they describe successful practices in the Torres Strait context. The educational change that I will propose as the result of my research takes into account the reality that the Torres Strait is part of the global community. An important element of the participation of Torres Strait Islanders in that wider community relies on the ability of Torres Strait Islanders to engage in self-actualising and self-affirming ways, in those discourses that will emanate from that engagement. Education should be the mechanism whereby Torres Strait Islanders can identify and define self-actualisation and self-affirmation but thus far has failed to achieve this. This study suggests means of creating the educational environment that will foster self-actualisation and self-affirmation in ways that affirm Torres Strait Islander cultural contextualities and provide an all important bridge between many worlds (TSIREC, 2000).

Relevance is the challenge that faces schooling and education in the Torres Strait right now, as defined by Giroux (1994b):

> *"Within the next century, educators will not be able to ignore the hard questions that schools will have to face regarding issues of multiculturalism, race, identity, power, knowledge, ethics and work. These issues will play a major role in defining the meaning and purpose of schooling, the relationship between teachers and students, and the critical content of their exchange in terms of how to live in a world that will be vastly more globalized, high tech, and racially diverse than at any other time in history"* (p.235)

One example of the contradictions inherent in the issue of relevance is posed by the educational statistics by which white Australia chooses to measure its own successful educational outcomes. When applied in the Torres Strait Islands, they work effectively to marginalise Torres Strait Islanders, locating Torres Strait Islander students in the bottom fifth percentile of all Australian students, for both literacy and numeracy (Personal communication, 2002).

In terms of literacy, it is standard English literacy that is being measured; a language that rates no higher than third in significance in the literacy complex of importance for Torres Strait Islander students and people. Few Torres Strait Islanders would argue that competence in standard English is not important for the future of the Torres Strait. In fact Martin Nakata focuses much of his work on this very notion (Nakata, 2004; 2002; 2001; 1999;. 1995). However to have educational success defined in narrowly hegemonic ways denies the importance of Torres Strait Islander cultural realities. Such measures also deny the legitimacy of the languages - at least one vernacular and one Creole - which every Torres Strait Islander child grows up with and which significantly contribute to their identity

formation and their cultural affiliations. It is necessary to summarise the development of

schooling in the Torres Strait in the various eras since colonisation, in order to unravel some

of the complexities outlined here.

Colonial Schooling: Educating and Civilising.

In a socio-cultural environment as complex as the Torres Strait, the colonisation experiences

of their Papua New Guinean neighbours provide interesting parallels and document similar

experiences. Religion and education combined in both locations to severely and adversely

impact the traditions of the peoples involved. George (2004) notes,

> *"One of the major means of establishing the Christian conversion process, which had*
>
> *proven to be so beneficial in mission experience in Africa and India, was the*
>
> *establishment of schools.   …… In New Guinea, religion and education combined has*
>
> *[sic] … proven to be a powerful force resulting in the decimation of tribal traditions.*
>
> *In New Guinea, it was not so much the immediate contact with Westerners that was so*
>
> *problematic but rather the contact with Western principles passed on by other Pacific*
>
> *Islander teachers."* (p 1)

London Missionary Society.

In common with the New Guinea experience described by George (2004), the arrival in the

Torres Straits of the London Missionary Society (LMS) missionaries in 1871, commonly

known throughout the Torres Strait as the 'Coming of the Light', brought with it an

opportunity for peaceful coexistence that had not been experienced since the arrival of the

beche-de-mer and pearling industries in the region. Whilst the impact of Christianity on the

lives of the people wrought significant change, it also created an environment within which it

was possible for the Torres Strait Islanders to live in relative peace, unencumbered by the

sometimes violent intrusion of others. The pearling and beche-de-mer industries had opened the Torres Strait up to exploitation and abuse on a scale not known before, because there was no practical means of enforcing laws that were only technically in operation throughout the region (Singe, 1979). Governmental presence throughout the islands only became effective when the regional centre of Government was moved from Somerset, opposite Albany Island on the east coast of Cape York, to Thursday Island in 1877 (Haddon, 1935). The missionary message was that if Christians were peaceful people, who loved their fellow man, then it followed that when you became a Christian, you also became peace loving. As I've described earlier in this paper, the missionary experience was not always peaceful or loving and the subsequent legislative dominance that followed was no improvement, though in different ways.

Cultural practices were the first to suffer at the hands of the missionaries. Cults such as the Bomai-Malu cult (Haddon, 1935) that had significantly influenced the lives of people and clans on Mer (the Meriam name for the Murray Islands) for unknown generations, were suddenly under threat from the new religion and the associated trappings of 'westernity' that came associated with it, such as schools. Anthropologists, archaeologists and teachers who followed the missionaries, diligently collected cultural artefacts by the thousands and carted them off to foreign museums for the pleasure and entertainment of largely white audiences (Haddon, 1935). The removal of the effigy of the god Waiet from its traditional cave location on Waier, off Mer, in 1928 by the local school teacher is just one illustration of these events (Singe, 1979).

From 1871 education took the form of schools run by Pacific Islander missionaries, mainly to teach the people English so they could read the bible. Huge energy went into educating potential missionaries and at one stage the Papuan Institute on Mer was devoted specifically to training large numbers of Torres Strait Islander priests for work, primarily in Papua and New Guinea (Shnukal, 1997; Beckett, 1987). The island schools were rudimentary and teaching English to achieve religious goals remained their focus for many decades. The London Missionary Society (LMS), which was behind the push across the Pacific to bring Christianity to the peoples of the region, began to lose interest in the Torres Strait when their work in Papua New Guinea proved a greater attraction. From the 1890's onwards the LMS influence in the islands weakened. Government support increased with the appointment of teacher-supervisors to many of the islands and this led in many instances to confrontations with the churches. When the government refused to allow the church to run the education system, the LMS handed their converts over to the Anglican church, creating the secular divide between church and state that the LMS had never been interested in promoting (Beckett, 1987). Eventually, the colonial government was forced to take over the schools on the islands due to the enormous costs involved in establishing and maintaining services to the islands and peoples of the Torres Strait.

Native Affairs.

Schools on the Queensland mainland were administered by the State Department of Public Instruction, later to become the Department of Education. From the earliest times this was not the case for schools on and in Indigenous communities. These were managed by the Department of Native Affairs (DNA). All Torres Strait Island schools were considered to be 'community schools' and whilst they operated according to State curriculum and syllabus documents, the main body of teachers were Torres Strait Islander people who received only rudimentary training. Following World War 2, increasing numbers of Island school

Principals were white and attached to the DNA. These white teachers also were not always professionally prepared educationally, but, as the Government representative on the island, they also performed the duties of magistrate, health official, doctor (in emergencies), customs and immigration officer. Should the white Principal have a wife, as was preferred, she would be responsible for working with the women and girls in the community with respect to health, welfare and recreation. The position of school Principal became a very powerful one and one which was often subject to official abuse and corruption (Singe, 1979).

Education on the Torres Strait Islands through its initial association with Christianity, was seen as a 'civilising' influence. As performed by white bureaucrats it became another task that had to be done. Punishment for failure to learn (defined as the apparent inability of Torres Strait Islander children to achieve the goals the school set them) was almost ritualised and schools became places of fear and judgement, not places of enlightenment and enjoyment. Torres Strait Islander people were considered incapable of learning and were subjected to the most menial jobs on the basis that they could only be trained and not educated. Torres Strait knowledges were considered to be uncivilised and not worthy of the status of knowledge. They were definitely not scientific and therefore could not provide for the needs of a civilised world (Nakata, 2001). Torres Strait Islanders were considered to be illiterate and whilst this may have been true in the strict sense of the word, there was little or no recognition of the operation of a deficit discourse that measured Torres Strait Islanders against, culturally inappropriate standards, thereby constructing them as 'stupid'. They struggled with English, having to resort to Ilan Tok[viii] to communicate with their white masters. Some would argue that Ilan Tok enabled the less linguistically experienced invaders to communicate with the Torres Strait Islanders. It is only over the past decade that the significance of authentic cultural knowledges relating to the seasons, the weather and

celestial navigation have been given any credence in the white western world and only then as they became significant to the white man's need to understand his own world better.

Reflection on my past and recent experience in the Torres Strait demonstrates that the deficit discourse still operates. The measures, the standards and the behaviours may have changed in their details but the political project remains the same. Lip service is paid to the value of Torres Strait Islander culture and ways of knowing, but the current education system is still located in and defined by the paradigms of the dominant (white) culture. In terms of the systemic judgements made about Torres Strait Islander children's abilities, there is still an insistence on measuring these against culturally invalid benchmarks, giving no credence to Torres Strait cultural concepts. Far from encouraging children to develop skills and knowledges that will enable them to operate effectively in many worlds – a process of cultural transition - this process reinforces the stereotypes that have been handed down through the history of colonisation in the region.

Clearly to achieve such an outcome is not a short-term goal nor one that is going to be realised without both effort and struggle. It is also an effort that needs to recognise the changing and global context within which Torres Strait Islanders live and relate. To add further to the complexity, it is no longer viable, and probably never has been, to maintain a stance that demands a return to cultural ways that are no longer appropriate to a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world. Again some notion of cultural inclusivity and diversity, rather than a bi-cultural model might be considered. As Parr (2002) suggests for Maori peoples who find themselves further down the road in these endeavours than are Torres Strait Islanders currently,

"In an attempt to avoid the entrenched limitations of much of the contemporary discussion, the project abandoned the word bicultural, and looked instead to a vision for Aoteoroa/New Zealand where unity and diversity could coexist creatively, and enhance the whole." (p.3)

This paper specifically refers to conducting respectful and inclusive cross-cultural research in the Maori context, however there appears to be much overlap between the Maori context and that ofd the Torres Strait Islanders. In particular the paper targets research methodology that is mutually respectful and inclusive of both Maori and Pakeha parcitipants. This would seem to provide a good model around which Torres Strait Islanders and Anglo-Celtic institutions might begin to come together for the ultimate benefit of Torres Strait Islander children, through the education process. Just as Western educational management systems have boundaries that define their processes, so to do Torres Strait Islanders have cultural boundaries that define their processes. Too often these boundaries operate in ways that are mutually exclusive. The outcome of this exclusivity will usually see Western processes dominating over Torres Strait Islander processes, and this is what needs to be addressed in other more inclusive ways for all parties.

Identity: Hybridity and Pedagogy.

The historic role of schools as sites of cultural transmission rather than sites of cultural transition is coming under increasing scrutiny in a world where hybridity and hybridised states of existence are slowly becoming recognised as re-forming the assurances and certainties of modernity (Giroux, 1988; 2000; McLaren, 1997a; McLaren & Giroux, 1995; Freire, 1972).

Shnukal (1997) identifies the complexity of Torres Strait Islander identities.

"To outsiders, Torres Strait Islander identity appears unproblematic, demonstrated by self-reference and professed adherence to ailan pasin `island custom'. When asked about Islander identity, Islanders often define it negatively, as opposed to European and Aboriginal identity, as well as positively, as a catalogue of those aspects of their culture displayed for their own and others' consumption under the rubric of ailan pasin. Often they are unaware of its hybrid origin. They may own to a specific homeland identity, usually that of their father. In fact, like all of us, they assume rights to a multiplicity of identities." (p. 1)

The reality for people everywhere, but particularly Indigenous people, is that in terms of their identity, essentialist stereotypes are no longer sustainable. Anglas Grande's (2000) powerful discussion of the Native American Indian identity and the emergence of *mestizaje* have equal application in the Torres Strait. Torres Strait identity is also intrinsically linked to historical and colonial influences, just as it will continue to be prejudiced by contemporary and future conditions. Anyone attempting to essentially define what it means to be Torres Strait Islander begs credibility.

Whilst essentialist stereotypes have in the past attempted to locate Indigenous peoples within largely anthropological archetypes, attempts to acknowledge the hybrid nature of the identity of contemporary Indigenous peoples could conceivably lead to the reconstruction of new essential identities for all Indigenous peoples. This is no better position than Indigenous peoples have historically found themselves in and the consequences will be no better than the marginalisation they have experienced in the past. The problematic in this situation lies in the apparent impossibility of escaping essentialising influences that construct and reconstruct 'othered' identities in ways that marginalise and locate. This process only serves to enable the dominant group to construct stereotypes that they feel comfortable with and it only further

disenfranchises othered groups from any agency they may have in terms of self-affirmation and self-definition. As Anglas Grande (2000) argues:

"... the contemporary pressures of ethnic fraud, corporate commodification , and culture loss render the critical notion of "transgressive" identity highly problematic for Indigenous peoples." (p. 187).

Freire.

I have chosen to view my work through the lens of Freire's (!970; 1973; 1985; 1998) notion of concientisation and the link between conscientisation and praxis as a dialectic of theory and practice (Estrela, 1999). In doing so, it is important to explore the significant question raised by Giroux (1992a) in relation to Freire's work in pedagogy and the appropriation of his views by Western, largely US American, academics. Particularly in relation to border crossing as a mechanism for making problematic the notion of location, Giroux indicates that,

> *"....becoming a border crosser engaged in productive dialogue with others means producing a space in which those dominant social relations, ideologies, and practices that erase the specificity of the voice of the other must be challenged and overcome."*
> (p. 1)

Taken together these ideas suggest that unless pedagogy actively challenges identity location and all that is attached to that cultural positioning then the end result may be nothing more than appropriation of cultural identity in new and similarly repressive ways. These challenges must be met by all involved in the educative process. To promote pedagogies that confront the status quo, problematisation of the pedagogic process itself must underpin teaching and learning. This is not something that education systems particularly do with any excitement or success, and as teachers become servants of the system they work in,[ix] the

possibility of consistently and actively engaging the pedagogic process in transformative cultural activity, loses its likelihood of occurring. Education in such circumstances remains a process of conveying 'the basics' in the hope that something 'educational' will occur. As a result, teaching becomes a repetitive and technical activity associated with learning for the sake of learning rather than understanding or coming to know.

This implies that for non-Indigenous teachers, part of their pre-service education should require them to actively come to understand their own unchallenged cultural locations. This is a particularly disquieting experience for the dominant culture, as they must actively critique their own assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs. This process is aimed at achieving at least some positive movement in the location of the dominant individual/s and it is an informed through critical inquiry into what is taken for granted in their everyday lives. It is also challenging because the process actively interrogates those things that previously were just accepted as being the case. This Freireian process engages both the dominant and the dominated through dialogue, as it can also do in the Girouxian border crossing concept. I see that both these processes complement each other in the realisation of the 'third space'(Bhabha, 1998), achieved through praxis and concientisation (Freire, 1985).

For such activity to be undertaken in all pre-service teacher education programs is essential to the development of teachers who are critically aware of themselves and their place in the world. When this location changes then, such teachers will be in a position to better understand the reality that their familiarity may now be the unfamiliar; that this dislocation either physically or metaphorically or both, requires them to respond in possibly unfamiliar ways, to develop new understandings of their new location and consequently, possibly new attitudes, values and behaviours, all driven by the locational change. This is not just the case

for cultural changes but applies equally in terms of addressing locational change related to gender, race, sexual preference, spirituality and class. All of these and more are elements of every classroom and critically aware teachers should be prepared to accommodate and work effectively with a wide range of diversities. My immediate interest however, lies in relation to cultural variations and the real need for teachers working in the Torres Strait, to come to terms with this locational change in positive and effective educational ways, especially through the implications for pedagogies with cultural integrity. This discussion will come up later in this log.

In terms of the Torres Strait and the educational processes enacted there, this implies that assumptions relating to knowledge, based on the unchallenged location of power and privilege of the Western world will continue to disenfranchise Torres Strait Islanders. A critical pedagogy that acknowledges the hybrid identities of Torres Strait Islanders, including their languages, discourses and other forms of communication and which at the same time challenges the inherent assumptions made by non-Torres Strait Islander teachers, both by virtue of the system that they work within and their lack of understanding of Torres Strait cultures, is essential if current educational trends are to change for the benefit of Torres Strait Islander people.

The work of Freire (1998) in particular his notions about teachers as cultural workers and as learners, synergises nicely with Giroux's (1988) views about teachers as intellectuals. These two aspects are important to this work as the work of teachers, pedagogy, in the Torres Strait is influenced significantly by their dominant role in Torres Strait Island schools. I propose that this situation should change in several ways, if outcomes for Torres Strait Islander children are to be positively influenced. Firstly, the role of education as a process aligned

with that of banking, as Freire (1972) describes, is alive and well in too many Queensland schools including those in the Torres Strait. Freire's notion of reading the word and the world is particularly appropriate in this context as culturally different students need to be able to understand that without the capacity to understand their own locatedness, in their own ways, the dominant society through the medium of their dominant education system will continue to subordinate and silence Torres Strait Islander's voice and agency. Again, Freirian pedagogy (1985) speaks of the individual's subjectivity in the creation of knowledge and the importance of individuals not remaining the object in the educative process. For this to occur both teacher and student must become learners in an environment that the student is familiar with. Such a dialogue mirrors the process of lifelong learning that is hailed by educators worldwide as essential outcome of any education process. For Freire (1998), literacy is the medium through which this consciousness raising occurs and the process is one that involves teacher and student in mutual exchanges and engagements of their own realities. This is a far cry from the knowledge transfer process that constitutes much of contemporary education in the Torres Strait.

Freire (1973) extends this notion of subjectivity into the capacity of the individual to transform their reality, creating the opportunity for Torres Strait Islanders to change what currently exists into realities that they define and create themselves. Until educators working in Torres Strait island schools take up the challenge of concientization, through the process of praxis,

> *"... movement from the concrete context which provides objective facts, to the theoretical context where these facts are analysed in depth, and back to the concrete context where men experiment with new new forms of praxis."* Freire, 1970, p. 17).

their impact on producing positive educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander children will continue to be as limited as both current and historic data demonstrate. As Friere (1973) identifies, the human differs from other animal species in as much as they are,

> *"... an integrated being, in contrast to an adaptive being who merely adjusts to reality, humans are people as subjects who concurrently shape and reflect on their world."* (pp. 3-4).

As active agents in our world the significance of the work of Henry Giroux begins to emerge. Giroux's (1994a) view of the significance of pedagogy and his shared view with Freire (1985) that knowledge and power are located in the metaphorical centre of dominant groups in our society, clearly is important in the Torres Strait Islander educational context. With a history of dispossession, disenfranchisement and cultural alienation, Torres Strait Islander students and in fact Torres Strait Islander people face similar, daunting issues.

In an increasingly complex and postcolonial world, educational institutions steeped in a fixed (colonising) view of 'culture' and a hegemonic paradigm, can no longer presume to hold the answers to the issues arising in rapidly developing and ever changing sociocultural environments. This being the case the dominant power relationships attached to colonised societies such as those in the Torres Strait, which have generated and sustained hegemonic sociocultural institutions, including educational systems, can no longer be sustained.

This point is amply illustrated by reference to the English language dilemma in the Torres Strait. The systemic lingua franca is English. English is the language of the coloniser and as such is imbued with a significance and importance that demands a legitimacy denied to any

other communicative mechanisms, including those more commonly used across the Torres Strait. English is also the language of international business and therefore significant in enabling the Torres Strait to engage with the global community effectively and in a self-determinate way. Other forms of communication in the Torres Strait include several vernaculars, a Creole and a complex and intricate form of body language that to the uninitiated can pass unnoticed. What results when schools and education systems prioritise English and fail to acknowledge the significance of Torres Strait Islander forms of communication, is the validation of a conceptual and epistemological framework associated with English but not with Torres Strait Islander communication models. This leads to the delegitimisation of those frameworks associated with Torres Strait forms of communication. Denial of their sociocultural reality is a huge challenge to young Torres Strait Islander children. They are required to attend schools where they are confronted by conceptualisations of the world that deny their identity framework, and actively attempt to replace it with an alien one. No wonder Torres Strait Islander students are confused by the schooling experience and ultimately become alienated from all forms of education (Nakata, 2001).

Torres Strait Islander children, marked in this way by 'culture', are positioned as 'other', as their world-view is devalued. Martin Nakata's (1995) views regarding culture and education as a double-edged sword bring some substance to the dilemma facing education in the Torres Strait. Even apparently sympathetic attempts to include culturally appropriate components in the syllabus can be ineffectual:

> *"...the constitution of the Islander in the cultural mode has meant that the Islander's*
>
> *domestic and public 'culture' have become central areas for reform rather than the*

institutions and apparatuses that contributed to the 'low performances' in schooling.

Culturally relevant programs then, at best, become 'add-ons' to unchanged

mainstream practices in the education system." (p.48)

This position relates directly to the earlier discussion of hybridity. Nakata is saying that for

Torres Strait Islander people, the education system and schooling are themselves

essentialising processes that provide little room for critique by Torres Strait Islander peoples.

On the one hand Torres Strait Islanders are afforded no mechanisms by formal education

processes to enable them to define their Torres Strait Islanderness in ways that reflect their

hybridity and integrity. And on the other hand, the same system provides few mechanisms

whereby teachers and other education service providers are encouraged to critique their own

historical and political locations, in order to address vital issues of situatedness, privilege and

power.

In response to issues of situatedness, privilege and power, this paper takes the Freirian view

of knowing described by Roberts (2000),

> *"True or authentic knowledge for Freire arises not in some realm beyond the sphere*
>
> *of objective reality; to the contrary, knowing is thoroughly grounded in the material*
>
> *world. The origins of knowledge lie not in some form of celestial divination but in the*
>
> *day-to-day transforming moments of human activity. As Freire sees it, knowledge is*
>
> *not recollected through philosophical thought but **created** through reflective action in*
>
> *a social world."* (emphasis in the original) (p.39)

Amongst the challenges to Freire's philosophies that have emerged, one of the most

concerning is the suggestion that in fact rather than expressing a liberatory view of the world,

Freire's work may well represent new hegemonic practices. Bowers (1983) for example argues that Freirian pedagogy may actually represent further "cultural invasion" by promoting a critical worldview that contradicts "non-interventionist" Indigenous perspectives. I am aware that the same charge can be levelled against my own work. Bowers proposes that by promoting critical thinking and encouraging some Indigenous peoples to become active agents in their own lives, contemporary educational practice moves those people away from their traditional lifestyle and hence away from their cultural traditions. This argument has been part of the discussion in Australia with regard to the supposed authenticity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for many generations now. However, in order to avoid the trap of such essentialising, it is only necessary to remember that culture is an evolving reality. What is 'culturally authentic' today is not necessarily so tomorrow. The environments within which people live and socialise constantly change and whilst this may be occurring at a faster rate than might have been the case in the past, such a process has always occurred. For an informed discussion of the dimensions of 'culture', see Jeevanantham (2001). In his essay he explores the contradictions encountered in trying to define the term 'culture' and concludes that,

> *".... meanings become assimilated into and reduced to dominant understandings of cultural 'objects'. The assumption being that the vocabulary and discourse of dominance is capable of absorbing all forms of cultural meaning within its compass, without a realisation of the distortions that are being engendered."* (p.54)

This does not necessarily indicate that all cultures are slowly moving towards coalescing, as might be presumed from this position. What it does mean is that the nature of that which people choose to define as 'culturally authentic' today will be defined in different ways by others of the same culture, tomorrow. Cultural differences will still continue to exist between

groups. Songs, stories and rituals will continue but are recreated, some in slightly different forms, others in completely new forms. Bhabha (1994) notes the fluidity of culture:

> *"Cultural difference, ... is not the acquisition or accumulation of additional cultural knowledge; it is the momentous, if momentary, extinction of the recognizable object of culture in the disturbed artifice of its signification, at the edge of experience."* (p. 126)

In a global world, these transformations become even more complex and cannot be avoided or ignored. As a consequence, education systems and schools must adopt a considerably different variety of tasks to achieve from those that are proscribed through current systemic initiatives.

To try to retain a static culture of schooling in a rapidly changing world, complicated further by imposed conceptualisations of what represents 'knowledge', is simply unachievable. Cultural influences will determine the value of particular forms of 'knowledge' and 'knowledges' and in this respect Freire's (1972) views again inform the discussion through his notion of the 'banking' model of education. What the banking model identifies is an educational process wherein the teacher holds the knowledge and transmits it to the student at the teacher's discretion. This presupposes the knowledge/power relationship in the educational process and locates total control with the teacher. It also provides a very accurate picture of the systemic model of education which has operated in Torres Strait Island schools for too long.

Department of Education and the Arts syllabus documents define the content to be taught in all schools in Queensland. Government policy documents identify the anticipated outcomes for all schools and determine broad strategies that schools might pursue, however within these parameters, schools and teachers are technically free to determine the most appropriate pedagogy/ies, to achieve these goals. In the instance of the Torres Strait however, my knowledge of the schools there leads me to believe that the focus lies on mastery of (variable and inconsistent notions) of 'basic skills', broadly identified as numeracy and literacy. The lack of success in achieving mastery of these 'basic skills' as evidenced by literacy and numeracy standardised testing of Torres Strait Islander children, is demonstrated in the data explored at the beginning of this paper and referred to in the Appendices. Further evidence in the case of Indigenous education in Queensland, is provided by the most recent report to the Minister (MACER, 2004). This report identifies the singular lack of success experienced by Indigenous students in Queensland schools and documents the reality that little progress has been made in improving the quality of education for Indigenous students, even though the participation rate of Indigenous students has increased over the past five years. In this respect then the significance of the 'knowledge/power' relationship begs deeper interrogation.

Knowledges and Identities.

Vygotsky (1982) identifies notions of 'home knowledge' and 'school knowle.dge'. He describes 'scientific or 'school knowledge'' as domain specific and 'home knowledge' as the everyday knowledge that is connected to the family and community. In doing so he delineated a crucial variable impacting on the education of children from a range of cultural positions. The concepts of 'home' and 'school' knowledge are further explored and extended by the work of Lave (1996) and Tobach, Falgmagne, Parlee, Martin, & Kapelman, (1997). A sociocultural perspective similarly emphasises the relationship between the individual and the environment, drawing clear associations between the process of learning and the nature of

knowledge construction (Murphy & Ivinson, 2003). A western view of 'knowledge' in a singular form is consistent with a hegemonic view of the world. On the other hand a notion of knowledges (plural) clearly indicates a different view of not only what counts as significant content but how that content is constructed and reconstructed. For example, each time I use the term 'knowledges', my computer tells me that it is mis-spelt, reinforcing the homogenising forces that silently occupy the various voids and technologies of our 'normalised' and 'white' world.

Paechter (1998) develops the notion of 'school knowledge' as opposed to 'non-school' or 'owned knowledge'. In doing so she makes the point that not only does 'school knowledge' legitimate particular forms of mandated knowledge but the process of legitimating a particular form of knowledge over other forms of knowledge establishes and validates power relationships that confirm the importance of 'school knowledge' over 'owned knowledge'. The same process serves to marginalise those students who are unable to acquire 'school knowledge' by marking them as 'unsuccessful'. Status is thereby attached to students through their capacity to acquire one particular form of knowledge over another and if their 'owned knowledge' is not congruent with the 'school's knowledge' it is devalued.

Educators readily acknowledge that the world of the child, through the contexts of the home and the community or 'home knowledge', plays an important role in developing the child's identity from birth. The child's everyday knowledge informs and is informed by both the child's view of the world and their perceived place in it. When the images of self are consistently reinforced, sociocultural patterns are confirmed and institutions such as schools, perpetuate the sociocultural complex, reinforcing and confirming the child's identity.

Each generation of children assume their own versions of the accepted 'norms' and in doing so subtly change the subsequent sociocultural complex, thereby creating new versions of a now outdated 'normality'. However, where the sociocultural complex and the everyday knowledge of the child are contradicted by the sociocultural complex and /or the scientific knowledge of the school, the child's identity is potentially disrupted. For children from minority groups within a given society, this creates the potential for identity conflicts and adverse impacts arising from contradictions between 'home' and 'school' knowledge. I argue that such contradictions severely impact on school achievement as it might be measured by the majority society. Hedegaard (2003) notes that it is important for a child to have a degree of continuity and integration between their social world and their personal world and for children living between minority and dominant cultures, this can become difficult if not impossible to achieve.

Western scientific knowledge, until relatively recently could be described as being bounded by a positivistic view of the world. This relationship has been based on a dichotomous analysis of the world around us, resulting in the identification of binary opposite sociocultural locations to describe and define that world. Hence it has in the past been possible to arrive at a clear cut position of what was deemed to be right and wrong, acceptable and unacceptable, black and white, male and female, civilized and uncivilized, literate and illiterate, educative and uneducative. Judgements were/are made about others based on their likeness or un-likeness to the dominant, in our contemporary case, white society. These dichotomies enable individuals in the society to locate themselves at the ends of, or at some position along, a continuum, where 'sameness' and 'otherness' locate at either extreme. The variable distance

between 'sameness' and 'otherness' describes relative power distributions within the society and can be observed using axes of identity such as race, class and gender (Said, 1985; Giroux, 1985; 1988).

In culturally diverse environments there is a clear and ever present danger that the dominant society's educational beliefs and demands are interpreted to be the most appropriate for all cultures within that society. This inevitably leads to all students in the education system being judged by the same criteria, in the mistaken belief that equal treatment amounts to equity, which in turn results in equal opportunity and equality of outcomes. In a western educational environment the process of defining achievement is significantly test based and very culturally attached to 'whiteness', 'maleness' and 'middleclassness'. It leaves little room for 'other' views, 'other' knowldges or 'other' explanatory systems and often acts to marginalise even those who are like but not identical to, the dominant majority (Willis, 2003).

Standardised Testing and Marginalisation.

Three aspects of the problems associated with Standardised Testing are provided by my observation of the Queensland, Years 3/5/7 testing program as it was managed in several Torres Strait Island schools in 2003. The testing process is conducted state-wide, in all schools, State and Independent and with all children in attendance in Years 3, 5 and 7 on a nominated day in term 3 of each year. Schools are meant to receive their materials well in advance of the testing date to enable teachers and administrators to familiarise themselves with the materials and the processes. The whole process adopts a standardised and supposedly scientific approach on the presumption that this enforced objectivity lends a level of reliability and validity to the process that would otherwise be nonexistent and thereby ruin

the value of the measured outcomes. The first problem I identify is the purpose of the testing process. It does serve a very valuable and powerful purpose by reinforcing group pathologies in that the outcome each year since the process began has consistently provided 'official' evidence of Torres Strait Islander children's inabilities to cope with the content of the tests. This information might be of use to the dominant sociocultural group but it is doubtful that Torres Strait Islander peoples value further and repeated confirmation of their devalued status.   One might also ask how governments can value data which only serve to show how Indigenous communities continue to fail when the knowledge is apparently having little impact on changing government policies and procedures to try to address the situation.

The second issue is in the timing of the task. On one island that I was visiting at the time these tests were to take place, the materials arrived on the barge on the morning the testing was due to be undertaken. An hour after the testing was due to start, the teachers were still familiarising themselves with the materials. This is not a criticism of the teachers.   I later discovered that this was not an isolated or infrequent experience for any schools across the Torres Strait.

My third concern is regarding the items in the testing process. The tests are basically literacy and numeracy tests and as the dominant Australian population communicates in English, the literacy tested is English literacy.   As previously illustrated, Torres Strait Islander children are fluent in a number of literacies and may come to school speaking two vernaculars, as well as a Creole and English. The English that the children use might be described by linguists as non-standard English and it is different from Ilan Tok (Creole). There would seem to be an inbuilt bias against Torres Strait Islander children achieving comparable success with the

general school population. Further analysis of the situation of English Literacy (as expressed through print and other media) on the Torres Strait Islanders compounds my concern.

Test Items and English Literacy.

The Torres Strait Islands are still relatively isolated from mainland Australia. Particularly relevant is a lack of print based reading materials such as magazines and newspapers. A fairly impressive range of these are available at the newsagency on Thursday Island now but this is only a recent improvement. The most widely used print based media is the local newspaper, the Torres News. This paper has been in publication since the early 1970's but has only recently established itself as an important community communication tool across the Torres Strait, primarily, I believe because of the historically low print literacy levels of Torres Strait Islanders.   Print based materials have historically been in short supply and have been expensive. Their relevance to Torres Strait Islander peoples has not been established in the minds of Islander peoples themselves and the advent of television has negated any need for people to turn to print materials for their daily information and entertainment.

Whilst this paucity of print materials is changing, there is a generation of children who have gone from almost no media contact with the outside world, apart from Radio Australia out of Port Moresby in New Guinea, to television, radio, telephones, computers and a range of daily papers and regular magazines, by 1985. The Torres Strait has experienced an enormous change in a very short period of time, in relation to communications media and technologies. Almost overnight, Islanders went from having next to no communications with the outside world, to having an overload of communications. Since the basis of these communication forms was improved technology, the need for print literacy was not nearly as important as it might have been had the changes occurred much more slowly. Since information was readily

available through the radio and TV, Islanders with limited print literacy skills still didn't need reading to enable them to effectively function in their world. The fact that TV and computers had taken over as the major sources of information in the Torres Strait, is very significant. People can function very well without having to be print literate. Children were not exposed to print materials in their homes or to siblings and significant adults reading. School programs based on the expectation that children have an implicit understanding of the need to read suffer a fundamental flaw.

Many children in the Torres Strait have little opportunity to experience reading as a productive, informative and enjoyable activity. The rapid arrival of radio, television and computers in the area during the early 1980's, reduced the need to rely on print media for communication and this reliance has only lessened over the intervening period. The impact of this on children coming to school is that the systemic expectation that children entering school will have a functional understanding of the significance of print to convey meaning and information is largely misplaced in the Torres Strait context. The expectation that Torres Strait Island children will understand the need to learn to read and write is inappropriate in this context and as such the school's role in identifying and exploring the implications of these misconceptions becomes fundamental to any measure of effective educational outcomes in terms of literacy.

As applied to the testing process this fundamentally inaccurate assumption of what skills, understandings and knowledges children come to school with, has a profoundly negative impact on the child's ability to cope with ''school knowledge'' as it is presented by the school. Schooling as a system rejects the child's 'owned knowledges' as irrelevant with the

implication that the home contributes nothing of educational value to children in the Torres Strait Islander context. I elaborate this point by further analysis of the testing situation.

One of the test items asks about the 'tare' of a 'semi-trailer'. Few semi-trailers exist or operate in the Torres Strait and the notion of tare in this context is more appropriately associated with ships. There is no reason why Torres Strait Islander children should be able to make the connection between 'tare' as it might apply to ships and the same notion associated with semi-trailers. Even if students did have the conceptual experiences to enable them to interpret this question correctly, many would lose sight of the intent of the problem, because of the language involved and as a result, simply not respond to it. It stands to reason that any difficulty in interpreting the language of the test would militate against achieving accuracy when responding. If these 'non responses' were considered by the data analysts to be reflections of possibly inappropriately constructed questions that use culturally invalid concepts and language, rather than just being incorrect, then something positive may come out of this exercise. However the responses are recorded as incorrect and the subsequent results used against the individuals, and the society, as an indication of their low intellectual ability. Whilst technically the test purports to measure the student's ability to read, write and spell in English, the process is not one designed to enable Torres Strait Islander children to demonstrate their abilities in these areas. The outcome is used inappropriately to justify stereotyping Torres Strait Islander people and their presumed intellectual capacities, as the conclusion links poor reading, writing and spelling results in English with low intellectual capacity. As I have shown, this presumption is highly problematic, other than to further construct Torres Strait Islanders in negative and derogatory ways.

In another example of inappropriate test materials and items, I observed a Year 5 group trying to work with a 'magazine' that was developed as a test instrument. The group were fascinated by the magazine but when asked to identify the 'contents page', were totally confused. The booklet was designed to look like a magazine from which children would be asked to draw certain information and undertake certain tasks. No account was taken of low levels of print literacy across the Torres Strait and the shortage of print based materials in homes. They can be informed, up-to-date, literate and very capable, without necessarily having to be print literate. The test sought to have the children identify certain things, like items in the table of contents. This is a very specific request and demands very specific understandings related to print resources, that may be part of the environments of mainland children but which are still rare across many of the Torres Strait Island communities. Whilst schools use print based materials extensively, it is easy to see how these materials are located by the children as 'school' knowledge with little or no relevance to them or their lives outside the school.

As well as being an unfamiliar format, the mass of information presented in the 'magazine' was confronting for the children; they were distracted by the attractiveness of the magazine and consequently lost their focus on the test itself. The students engaged in discussions about the content and layout of the magazine and had to be called back to the main purpose of the exercise several times. This did not assist them to perform effectively let alone to the best of their ability. These skills may well be important for Islander children but it does seem to me very biased to be using these mechanisms to measure and define Torres Strait Islander children's educational levels.

Another example of the inappropriateness of the testing process is provided by the spelling component. One of the words the children were asked to spell, was the word 'special'. The teacher asked a child to say the word for the class, with the result that several vigorous nods of heads around the room followed. The teacher then asked if everyone knew the word. There was enthusiastic agreement and several verbal acknowledgements of understanding of the word, along the lines of, "Yes Miss. We know that 'special' means 'proper good one'". Whilst the children were articulating their correct understanding of the word, they were pronouncing the word as, 'spesel'. Consequently when asked to write the correct spelling for the word 'special', every child wrote the word as they sounded it. The response sheets were filled with 'spesel' and 'spesl'. The children knew the word and could articulate their understanding of its meaning, accurately. They wrote the word as they vocalised it and consequently would be recorded as wrong because of a culturally based phonetic idiosyncrasy.

In another example, children were asked about a supermarket. No doubt some of them would have had some experience of supermarkets in Cairns and some might have associated the larger shopping complex on Thursday Island with a supermarket. The issue however is that many children on the outer islands, especially, only know their island store and use that terminology or the generic term 'IBIS'[x] to describe a place where food and fuel can be purchased. Many children were confused again by the use of what was presumed by the test construction team to be a widely used and commonly understood terminology.

These examples demonstrate clearly how a supposedly rigorous testing regime provides the basis for inaccurate judgements about children based on phonetic and linguistic differences.

Information that arises from such testing could lead to well meaning remedial educators stepping in and setting up speech therapy programs in all Torres Strait Island schools, as was the reaction from a special educator I related this incident to. However, I argue that remediation of cultural differences is hegemony in the majority of cases where it is recommended From a critical perspective, the educative process is often about changing those who are different so that they become more like the dominant group, so that they avoid having to acknowledge differences and privilege.

Not only does this testing process marginalise and stereotype Torres Strait children and people, it also serves to marginalise the teachers in the schools. The poor results provided by the tests suggest that the quality of teaching in these schools is also substandard. In most cases this could not be further from the truth. Most teachers in Torres Strait Island schools go out of their way to provide the best quality education that they can for the children that they are responsible for. The testing processes and results provide no incentive for teachers, children or communities to support their schools and the educational processes that occur therein. The data reinforces a stratification of our society, in this instance on the basis of a child's ability to master the ''school knowledge'' that educational settings define and manage. No attempt to legitimise 'owned knowledge' is made in ways that acknowledge the integrity of these different but significant knowledges. As Young (1977) notes, the more 'owned knowledge' a student possesses the less 'able' the student is perceived to be, by both teachers and the system.

Knowledge registers.

This discussion of testing raises the subject of knowledge registers. Just as we acknowledge the existence of 'language registers' that people use in different socio-cultural environments, we also need to acknowledge the possibility of 'knowledge registers'. What I'm describing as 'knowledge registers' function in similar ways to language registers by validating the legitimacy of certain ways of knowing, in certain environments. Knowledge registers are associated with particular behaviours and relational patterns that are peculiar to contexts and socio-cultural expressions. They require specific expressions on the part of the participants engaging in them which validate particular values, attitudes and cultural expressions. Whilst different knowledge registers influence each other, they are highly idiosyncratic and socioculturally contextualised.

Yarning.

A manifestation of a knowledge register amongst Torres Strait Islander people is what I call the 'yarning place'. This is usually a timber platform, frequently erected on empty dinghy fuel drums, on which Islanders sit and 'yarn'. Yarning is an acknowledged Torres Strait (Indigenous) practice (see the log of the voyage, *Yarning: Culturally Significant Pedagogy for the Torres Strait*), which has been used as long as people can remember (Personal communication, John Manas, 2003). Structures such as I've described can be found on the beaches and in the yards of homes on all islands across the Torres Strait. In discussions (yarns) with Torres Strait Islanders with whom I've lived and worked over many decades, these yarning places are typically places for family groups to relax, yarn, tell stories and recount significant cultural events. They represent significant cultural spaces. Though the emphasis today may be more focussed on places to relax, they still function as significant cultural spaces. Evidence again, that the culture has and continues to evolve. Essentially

these are places of both conscientisation and praxis. The stories might be different but these places encourage relationships between and amongst people and provide opportunities for vital sharing between young and old, historic, authentic and contemporary.

How the yarning place sets up a knowledge register, is related to the specific knowledges shared there, the language used and the relationships that the socio-cultural encounters acknowledge and validate both amongst the active participants or speakers and observers. In effect this yarning place becomes a powerful pedagogic environment and activity amongst Torres Strait Islander peoples. If schools were to acknowledge yarning as a powerful culturally validating pedagogic tool, they might provide a parallel space and process within which Torres Strait people could manage their own knowledges and processes. Such an approach would see the school acting in culturally respectful and legitimising ways rather than denying the legitimacy of Torres Strait Islander knowledges and socio-cultural processes. The power of legitimising pedagogies that emerge from culturally significant practices derives from the system acknowledging the integrity of the processes and practices themselves. Rather than setting up contradictory, competing and essentially hegemonic practices, the school and by implication the whole education system, could seek to identify successful cultural pedagogies and use these to promote more effective educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students. The significance of this synergistic process lies in its relational dimensions. The system (the school) could become the tool whereby Torres Strait Islander peoples define for themselves what 'effective educational outcomes' are and how the school then goes about achieving them.

This process is not as simple as encouraging Torres Strait Islander community engagement in schools, as if often suggested. This has been an initiative for many decades across the Torres Strait and my belief is that the system has again only paid lip service to it. Every school has its P&C Association, many of which are dysfunctional largely because of the history of Torres Strait Islanders being told by white teachers and Principals, that the P&C is their 'voice'. Too often the reality is that the P&C is used to legitimise decisions and take actions that the Torres Strait Islander community has no influence over but which they are told is good for them. Parents frequently indicate to me that they don't understand the school processes and rely on the Principal to give them the advice that is in their best interests. They don't know however whether this is the case or not and this leaves a lot of room for Principals to manipulate Island people. Frequently, the processes are themselves couched in language and terminology that is impossible to understand if you are not schooled in 'eduspeak'. Again this provides an illustration of the notion of ''school knowledge'' being valued more than 'owned knowledge'. Only the most confident Torres Strait Islander will risk the personal vilification that might result from asking for an explanation. Having made this point however, it is important to note that the same criticism can be made of the majority of white parents with children attending mainland schools, and for the same reasons.

Bottom-up reform.

Rather than educational change being driven by curriculum change, which has been the usual western method of achieving more 'effective educational outcomes', I believe that the process should be driven by the identification of existing successful pedagogy, both in the sense of cultural pedagogies and school pedagogies (Crowther, Hann & McMaster, 2001). The two dimensions, curriculum and pedagogy, must support and work in parallel with one another, if education is to be meaningful for Torres Strait Islander students. What teachers, Islander and non-Islander do with children, should be premised on meaningful practice, in the

community and the school. Meaningful education is based on meaningful pedagogic practice, integrated with relevant curriculum, not driven by it. To improve educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students, Torres Strait Islanders have to identify what it is that they want their children to know and do when they leave school and be in a position to act on their decisions. To enable this identification of criteria of successful educational outcomes to be realised, non-Islander educators and politicians have to be prepared to wait (give both time and space) until Islanders invite them to be involved in their own discussions. Power is inevitable involved given the history of colonial relations in the Torres Strait, so apparently neutral terms such as discussions, consultation and negotiation are problematic. In this climate, it is often best that non-Torres Strait Islanders, having made their contributions, withdraw, so that Islanders are able – have the space, time and agency – to consider the advice put before them, in the light of their own views about what is most appropriate to their perceived needs and how their education system can move towards achieving these outcomes. In Freirian terms (Margonis, 2003), Torres Strait Islanders should be actively engaged in determining their own outcomes through, *"...dialogue and praxis.....to insure that rational considerations are not divorced from their socio-historical context;"* (p.150)

Pedagogy with Cultural Integrity.

Pedagogy with cultural integrity is a phrase I've coined to describe those practices that I believe need to occur in Torres Strait Island schools, in order for maximum benefit to result from the efforts put into education by both teachers and systems. Whilst there are elements of overlap between 'culturally relevant pedagogy/culturally responsive teaching' (Ladson-Billings, 1992; 1994; Gay, 2000; Osbourne, 1996) and 'pedagogies with cultural integrity', there are also what I consider to be significant areas of divergence. One of the most

significant differences is the fact that I'm not referring here to a discrete pedagogy or set of pedagogies. Rather the process that I used and will describe is highly idiosyncratic and contextualised. The descriptions of the various case studies I will use to explore the pedagogic data will highlight the very individual nature of both the pedagogies and the contexts. It will also serve to identify an emerging pan-Islander educo-cultural dimension to a region which historically has not reflected this characteristic, until well into the colonisation experience (Shnukal, 1997).

The data will highlight my view that 'pedagogy' is a shared experience, involving both teacher and student as learners in a dialogic praxis. As Lather, quoting Lusted, describes:

> *'the transforming of consciousness that takes place in the intersection of three agencies – the teacher, the learner and the knowledge they together produce' … (this definition) denies the teacher as neutral transmitter, the student as passive, the knowledge as immutable material to impart. Instead … (it) focuses attention on the conditions and means through which knowledge is produced* (Lather, 1991, p. 15)

It is important to emphasise that my focus is on the processional nature of pedagogies with cultural integrity. Once contexts (schools) have identified those successful pedagogic practices that they engage in and begin using these in coherent and meaningful ways, they create new educational environments within which there may be a need to re-define their pedagogies with cultural integrity. This can only be achieved effectively through a thorough analysis of the issues confronting educators in culturally diverse settings. One significant issue, segregation, opens up discussion of a number of related matters that I explored in my research.

Segregation and teachers as 'gate-openers'.

Much has been made in the US (American) literature associated with education for culturally diverse students, about segregation and the impact that this has had (Delpit, 1988; Anderson, 1988). The perspectives range from strong support of the notion and active lobbying by the African American community, to strong reaction against segregation on the basis of racism. The Torres Strait experience provides an example of segregation by isolation and default. The isolation of the various islands where schools are located has historically acted as a defacto form of segregation. Getting in and out of islands has been a difficult task and remains that way, if difficulty is equated to expense and time. Today, people may be able to fly in and out of their islands with regularity but this is also a very expensive option. The government no longer runs an inter-island boat, so the affordable, though often uncomfortable option for inter-island travel no longer exists. This means that people have to resort to travel by dinghy and whilst Torres Strait Islanders are sea people, this doesn't reduce the risks associated with sea travel in small craft in this region. Such travel is dependent upon the weather and takes time as well as money for expensive fuel costs.

Segregation then can be identified as a number of quite different experiences, all of which can potentially have the same consequences. There have been a number of attempts by the Queensland State Government at re-locating communities of Indigenous people, only some of which have proven to be successful. The community at Seisia in the Northern Peninsular Area at the tip of Cape York for example is made up of families voluntarily re-located from Saibai Island, whilst the community of New Mapoon in the same area, is the community from Old Mapoon, outside of Weipa, who were forced out of their homeland when bauxite mining

became a significant economic interest for the Queensland Government of the time. The Weipa experience was one clearly aimed at removing Indigenous people from their traditional land in order to accommodate the economic interests of the State. The reservation policy adopted by governments across Australia until the late 1980's, also reflected a segregationist view by the dominant society that resulted in identity destruction for significant numbers of Indigenous Australians and produced the current concerns of Indigenous people about the impact of drug and alcohol abuse, dysfunctional families and abuse the of women and children.

Lately, some Indigenous leaders and the Queensland Government have proposed to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students by sending them to boarding schools in the city. In my view, this suggestion flies in the face of the experiences of Indigenous families, especially ones in isolated areas such as the Torres Strait and Cape York, that decry such actions as segregationist and assimilationist in intent. Nakata (2001) illustrates this point clearly and there would be few families across the Torres Strait who cannot recount their personal experiences of family members who have found the boarding school experience to be catastrophic. Whilst I was on one of the islands in May, 2004, a 13 year old child was 'discovered' living in the community, who should have been at boarding school on the mainland. It turns out that he had been excluded from school at Easter, a month earlier and had returned home to his island. The student was 'shamed' at being expelled and simply told his family that he didn't want to return to school. The school itself did not contact the family about the matter at any stage and still has not done so to my knowledge. Stories of this kind are both regular and frequent, yet I doubt that the schools return the funding that they receive for the students they expel.

The segregation debate also implies that the best teachers of particular children are those teachers from their own socio-cultural group. Academics including Gloria Ladson-Billings (1992) and Lisa Delpit (1988) make this point cogently, yet I tend to agree with Beauboeuf-Lafontant (1999) in her view that culturally relevant teaching and from my perspective, pedagogy with cultural integrity, is a political position that can be adopted by any teacher. It may be that being a member of the same socio-cultural group gives one insights and understandings that make it easier to appreciate some issues. It may also be that affinity with the group could blind one to the potential importance of other agencies (such as some 'white' processes that may contribute to the well being of other cultural groups) and the diversity of the group within which you are embedded. Any view that contributes to the isolation of a group of peoples by virtue of their static distinctiveness can easily lead to hegemonic states just as marginalising as any applied by dominant socio-cultural groups. In this context, Koerner & Hulsebosch (1995) describe successful teachers of culturally diverse students as 'gate openers'

> *" A "gate opener" is someone who keeps a watch at the "doors", but who looks for ways to let people in; perhaps, opening up the routes to success in school, access to middle class, finding a route to teacher certification."* (p. 9)

I don't necessarily see that this description is culture specific though I do concede that culturally located 'gate openers' will probably be more successful, more quickly and with greater ease, than those who are not culturally located with their cohort of students. In another side to this question, Sleeter (2001) suggests that the issue of underachievement of culturally diverse children can be addressed by recruitment of teachers who themselves are from diverse backgrounds. She suggests that diverse backgrounds might be described by social class, ethnicity and primary language differences from the mainstream sociocultural

complex. Indeed the generally white, middleclass and female dominated nature of education in the Torres Strait may imply a clash of values not evident or significant on the mainland, with implications for student performance.

The notion of conscientisation as pedagogy with cultural integrity involves the re-creation of political positions for all involved. The enactment of the pedagogic process positions the teacher and the student as learners with enhanced understandings of themselves and their place in the world. So pedagogy with cultural integrity then, produces enhanced understanding that isn't finite or definitive but which provides a new starting point from whence new understandings will emerge as new pedagogic engagements ensue. This leads to the creation a very different learning environment to that which currently exists in Torres Strait Island schools and it demands very different pedagogues.

In the Torres Strait context, I have been inside many classrooms over many years and have experienced considerable variation in the educative value of the classroom practices of both Torres Strait Islander and non-Islander teachers. The significant roles of preservice teacher education, teacher induction and teacher professional development will be considered under a separate heading later in this folio element. However experience in the Torres Strait, has shown that these three dimensions have been and remain, depressingly poorly addressed by governments, universities and the Torres Strait Islander community. In Nakata's (1995) terms, like programs aimed at addressing the appalling access, progress and success statistics associated with education in the Torres Strait, preservice, induction and professional development programs,

".... , at best, become 'add-ons' to unchanged mainstream practices in the education system." (p. 48)

Thumbnails: Data Gathering

I've been challenged about the possibility that the IDEAS process (see the log of the voyage, *IDEAS Process: Data Generation)* may just be another hegemonic process, as other research tools used in the past might appear to have been. From the work that I've done using the IDEAS process, it is obvious that the process itself sets out to move each site towards understanding and then identifying its uniqueness. This uniqueness in every case reflects culturally specific elements, whether they be ethnically or socio-economically defined or defined by any other socio-cultural indicator. This is realised through the engagement of the participants involved at each site, by the analysis of the characteristics of each and by the assumed and evidenced particularities of each site. Once having read all of the logs of the various voyages of the folio, I believe that this will become obvious to the reader

The following series of thumbnail sketches document components of my research process and the data gathering in each location. My focus for the purposes of this study is on the processes used to identify successful pedagogy in each location. This is only part of the overall research I was involved in for the IDEAS project and it is important to stress that the actual data gathering was conducted at each site by members of the total school community, as a series of yarning groups that took place according to the participant's agendas. I was not always present at these yarning sessions but the data collected and collated was available to me when I visited the island and I copied that data for my use in this study. The nature of the IDEAS process is such that the school community generates its own data. The research and the process depend on the integrity of each site's self identified data. The data are valid for

each site only and no attempt is made to try to 'generate' similarities or divergences. These appear to become evident as the data from each site are compared.

Because of the nature of the region it would not be difficult to identify the locations of the various contexts, so where necessary, I've used fictional names for the sites. No individuals are identified to preserve anonymity. In this respect, many participants chose not to sign common language consent forms, though these were made available before each yarning session. Individuals requested anonymity, even though they verbally consented to me using the data I collected. It is important to understand that many Torres Strait Islanders are still confused and concerned by western academics 'doing research', and with plenty of justification. The research experience for Torres Strait Islander people has generally not accorded much consideration to culturally respectful processes and has objectified those being researched, with little consideration for their integrity or rights. Thankfully this is changing as academics (and others) come to understand that Torres Strait Islanders have a right to self define their integrity in ways that aren't necessarily cognisant or accepting of dominant world views.

I've devoted a major part of this folio (see the logs for the voyages, *YUMI Research* and *Yarning: Culturally Significant Pedagogy for the Torres Strait*) to analysing the research approach I've adopted, in an effort to critically interrogate the techniques and to propose greater refinement of the techniques researchers might adopt when working in similar contexts. Interestingly, I tend to believe that whilst the techniques themselves are not new, how they are developed in each context, is critical and unique. The example I've used of the yarning groups (see the log for the voyage, *Yarning: Culturally Significant Pedagogy for the Torres Strait*), is really nothing more than a variation of focus groups but I believe that being

prepared to make changes in relation to each context is critical to the success of the data gathering. Of significance also is the fact that data were gathered during multiple visits to each site over a period of two years. Each visit necessitated re-visiting the existing data to check how far the process had moved forward since the previous visit, before moving on to generate new data, using the yarning groups. In this way I was able to monitor my interpretations of the data, refining my understanding as the process evolved – critical reflexivity in practice.

A serious challenge that must be acknowledged relates to my long term associations with many of the participants and their desire to show respect to me by not disagreeing with me. This knowledge had a considerable influence on my behaviours during the yarning sessions. I tried to avoid at all times suggesting anything. My role was to stimulate, critique and raise consciousness within the group, not to propose, suggest or pre-empt in any way. This proved a very difficult thing to do at times, as there were many occasions when I believed I could verbalise the group's intent for them but had I done so, might well have resulted in loss of ownership of the outcome, which is so important in the IDEAS process. It may also have cut short continuing development of thoughts. This learning for me made me more aware of how easy it is for white people to direct processes without being aware they are doing so. I am satisfied that the IDEAS process itself does not do this, however individuals involved in the process need to be aware of the potential for themselves to drive and interpret where this is precisely what they should be resisting. Most people would think that they were helping the group by contributing their thoughts when in fact such actions could be hegemonic of the whole process. Torres Strait Islander people, generally would not challenge this paternalistic process, however this reluctance is changing and more people are becoming more willing to take the risks involved in challenging implied and overt external authority/ies. This may in

fact represent a positive outcome of colonialism but it certainly represents a survival mechanism that Islander peoples have come to understand as essential for the realisation of self-determination. Martin Nakata's (2001) work is a refreshing, though personally (for him), very taxing evidence of this sea change.

At the sites where I copied data from previously held meetings, no identifying markers existed, connecting individuals to specific data. Each site received my version of their successful pedagogies, after I was assured that they had made attempts to refine their work themselves. The refined data resulted from ongoing consultations with the yarning groups about their pedagogies, to confirm that my interpretations and compilations of their data coincided. I can only rely on the integrity of the data that was reworked by each site and in my absence. I have few concerns that the reworking of the data does not truly represent the views of the participants. This does not mean that the data is potentially unaffected by dominant group members, including white teachers and principals. I have to accept that this might well be the case in some instances and as such the data may represent hegemonic views of practice. Where there was any discrepancy between my interpretation and that of the yarning group, their view has prevailed. Each site then used this information to guide their work. This clarification process proved enlightening in terms of the issues that arose and these will be considered in the next section.

Research data.

The data collection process (using the IDEAS project as a mechanism), has already been described in the log of the voyage, *The IDEAS Process: Data Generation*, being centred on but extending beyond, the yarning process and involving self nominated interested individuals that always included school staff, students and community members. These groups maintained core members who were involved in every session and some members

who came and went as their priorities enabled them to be involved. In each community there was a level of dialogue about the yarning process that climaxed usually after each session was (officially) concluded. As noted earlier, I made every attempt to have participants leave the sessions continuing to talk about the substance of the session. Wherever possible, I followed up the yarning session with a walk through the community to 'yarn' with participants I came across, about their experiences in the sessions. There are important parallels to be made here with Baudelaire's notion of 'flaneur' or detached observer, as described by Benjamin (1997). This flaneur-like process served the purpose of enabling me to clarify things that were not necessarily clear and to gauge understanding of the content of each session. This was not always possible due to tight travel schedules. Visiting 14 islands in 10 days doesn't provide for a lot of time in each location, so the data collection took place over a three year period between 2002 and 2004. I made two sets of visits each year, spending seven to eight months in all, collecting data over the three years. My visits were designed to stimulate or reinvigorate the discussions about the various stages of the IDEAS process.

My interest for the purposes of this study are focussed on the pedagogies that appear to be of significance in each site and most of these discussion, whilst all were initiated by one of my visits, would continue for varying and sometimes considerable periods after I had left. This was evident by the amount of data that existed when I returned and the yarns that recounted the process during my absence, both from school staff and the community. The data that follows (Appendix C) is my recording and refining of material received from each site. Any refined material has been returned to the site concerned for verification. All refinement was designed to collate extensive data sets into concise statements of pedagogic principles and to limit those principles to a set of no more that 6 to 8 for each site. The reason behind this

refinement process is to keep the application of successful practices to a manageable number. As participants in the sites revisit their successful practices, the initial set may change as the result of this reflection.

The first step in the IDEAS process typically involves information-sharing before gathering data about the school. There is a tool (The Diagnostic Inventory or DI) available to assist schools to do this or schools can develop their own processes, as many Torres Strait Island schools chose to do. Schools can also choose to use their Education Queensland survey tools to amass similar data. The Diagnostic Inventory (DI) collects data in the four frames of the Research Based Framework and so makes the data more user friendly for schools and the IDEAS process. However, the language of the DI makes it virtually impossible to use in any meaningful form in Torres Strait Island communities. Most islands chose to use the teachers or the teacher aides to run yarning sessions to explain the DI and gather responses to the questions. These data, which are made available to everyone, form the basis for discussions about the future of the school, which leads into the visioning process. Visioning is the envisioning phase of the IDEAS process. Once schools and their communities have considered their vision, even if they have not decided on exactly what a statement of that should be, the process needs to move to a consideration of what successful pedagogy looks like in their school. This process represents the actioning phase of the IDEAS process.

Visioning in process in the Torres Strait.

The visioning workshop operates around a series of black and white photo cards (Cooney & Burton, 1986) as the stimulus. The group yarns generally for a time about their aspirations for their children and their school. To focus this conversation, the photo cards are laid out and participants are asked to choose two cards. The first card represents an image of the school as each individual currently perceives it to be. People are asked to share their images

and their interpretations with the group. As the recorder, I record the descriptors that are used as people share their stories. I was surprised to find that, during the process, people frequently use the same or similar descriptors to talk about their site. This is recorded by placing a tick beside the descriptor, each time it is mentioned. This shows the frequency of usage and implies the significance of the item. This documentation records how people are feeling presently about their school.

The second card is an image that represents where/what the participants would like their school to be or look like in the future. Again, people share their stories with the group. I encourage participants to draw images of both situations if they feel more comfortable with this but they must share the messages associated with their images, with the group. Again, the descriptors that people use as they yarn are recorded. The two sets of descriptors are placed for the group to see and the question is posed as to how they will move their school from where it is to where they would like it to be. Normally discussion will stall at this point, providing the opportunity for me to suggest that participants choose another photo card that represents a good teaching experience they have had at the school or heard about through their children or have seen themselves. Each person has to be able to tell everyone what they saw happening, what the teacher was doing, what the children were doing and how they knew it was good or successful. Working in smaller groups of three or four, participants share their stories of successful practice in their school. In this instance, the group keeps their own records of the discussion. Each group then gives feedback to the whole group about their yarning and as this happens, I record the descriptors that people are using to talk about the teaching or pedagogy that they observed. For example, a maths lesson at the island store buying food for an enterprise exercise that is planned, is an example of real life learning, or hands on learning or connected learning. The yarning group has to decide which term best

describes their intent, before indicating that term as one of their successful pedagogies. The group may decide that on the basis of their yarning, both real life learning and hands on learning are successful pedagogies in their school. They must be able to identify strategies that exemplify those descriptors in action in their school, thereby differentiating between the two pedagogies in practice and they must be able to demonstrate how they are successful strategies.

If teachers plan their work using these descriptors as guides, then they will be teaching using those practices or pedagogies that are believed to be successful in the school. Tracking these pedagogies in their normal planning process should ensure that teachers maintain good practice in each site. Learning about successful pedagogies from their colleagues typically encourages sharing good practice across the school and professional learning. It will also reduce the schools' dependence on external experts to provide vital professional development sessions. I make no value judgements about the data schools produce. I may suggest that some things could be combined with others as they might mean nearly the same thing but I take advice from the participants about the appropriateness of these suggestions but I never change what the school has decided upon. The school may seek advice from me about changing things after some time because they may find that not all their assumptions/presumptions are correct or are functionally unable to be put into practice. In this event I'll make some suggestions and provide the school with a number of possible options, from which they must choose the most suitable for themselves, or generate new options.

By way of example, the data taken from my field notes of various sites, illustrate the process of pedagogy identification through my feedback to sites after workshops generally run along the lines I've just described (Appendix C).

The table (Figure 2) that follows, demonstrates the range and variety of pedagogies identified across nine sites in the Torres Strait. Whilst there are obvious similarities, there are also some quite distinctive differences between the sites.

Figure 2: School-wide Pedagogies for schools in the Torres Strait.

Working together	Vision:
Literacy (registers)	*Celebrating Success*
Individual learnings	
Encouraging learnings	
Real-life learnings	
Enjoying learnings	
Cultural learnings	
Celebrating successes	
Modelling success	
Building relationships – (gud pasin)	
Learning Together	Vision:
	Bridging the Gap

Good Relationships– (gud pasin) Real Life Learning Active Learning Quality Learning Structured Leaning	
Challenging learning Valuing learners/learning values – (gud pasin) Global learning Excellence in learning Real learning Individual learning Supportive learning Co-operative learning	Vision: *Reaching out from Within*
Learning together Enjoyable learning Emphasizing excellence Child-centered learning	Vision: *Working Together to Reach the Peak*

Real life learning Cultural learning – (gud pasin)	
Real world learning Co-operative learning Cultural learning – (gud pasin) Applying learning Problem solving Active learning	Vision: KKY Possible Vision Statements: *Ngoey Poeypiyamaw Mabaygal ???* *Malu Kurasar ???* *Ngalpa Mura Umaypa Minalay* *Ngalpa Mura Uthuypa Nagu* *Mura Buway Aykuyk*
Risk Takers Energetic Learning Stimulating Environments Individualised Learning Connected Learning Problematic Learning Positive Relationships - (gud pasin)	Vision: *Linking Solid Traditions to Future* *Freedoms*
Cultural learnings – (gud pasin) Child-centeredness Relatedness	Vision: *Working Hand in Hand with the* *Community*

Futures perspective Real learning Education for you and I (Individualised learning) Education for all of us (Community learning)	
Learning together Good relationships – (gud pasin) Real life learning Active learning Quality outcomes Structured learning	Vision: *Catching our Future*
Holistic learning Connected learning Two-Way learning Hands-on learning Strong relationships Real-life learning Cultural learning – (gud pasin)	Vision: *Ngulaw Ngurpai; Kayib Ngurpai; Bathaingaka* (Learning from the Past; Learning in the Present; Learning for the Future)

Empowering learning	

Perusal, of the data indicates quite clearly that there is considerable overlap in the nature of what are perceived to be successful pedagogies in schools across the Torres Strait, yet there are also clear distinctions between the sites. Not only are there distinctions between the sites in terms of the types of pedagogies identified but those pedagogies that are identified similarly, will usually have different expressions in each site, reflecting the uniqueness of each school and community. It is possible however to identify a number of pedagogies that appear to be significant in all schools. It is these that I'd suggest underpin and constitute the basis of what The Torres Strait Islanders Regional Educational Council (TSIREC, 2000) calls YUMI education.

> *"YUMI" education is culturally, spiritually appropriate education for the children of the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area, upon which they can build skills, abilities, attitudes and values needed to become valued, responsible, independent contributors in the society of their choice."* (p. 3)

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000) describes culturally relevant pedagogy as reflecting three attributes, namely high academic achievement, cultural competence and socio-political consciousness. TSIREC's definition of YUMI education acknowledges the significance of these three elements, when it identifies 'culturally (and) spiritually appropriate education', the acquisition of 'skills, abilities, attitudes and values' and the opportunity 'to become valued, responsible, independent contributors to the society of their choice' as the central tenets of their vision for education in the Torres Strait.

The following figure (Figure 3) encapsulates YUMI pedagogy, as I've currently identified it. I've implied by placing 'Gud Pasin' outside the figures, that this particular pedagogy is evident in the effective implementation of all the other pedagogies. 'Gud Pasin' then actually forms the essential condition through which effective pedagogy can emerge. From the evidence available to me, I believe this to be the case. Yarning, inside the box is the cultural pedagogy evidenced across all sites, which genuinely represents a culturally located educational process in the Torres Strait (see the log of the voyage, *'Yarning: Culturally Significant Pedagogy for the Torres Strait'*). The pedagogies clustered inside the circle describe those pedagogies with cultural integrity that have emerged as being common to all sites across the Torres Strait, from the data gathered at each site. What the diagram suggests is that all educational encounters in the Torres Strait require a mutually respectful environment within which to occur. The culturally significant pedagogic process described as yarning then needs to be engaged, resulting in the generation of pedagogies with cultural integrity which whilst being generically described will appear as different pedagogic expressions in different sites.

This Figure (Fig. 3) should be viewed in conjunction with the diagram I've created to demonstrate the centrality of *yarning* as a culturally significant pedagogic process amongst the Torres Strait community. The elements are the same however the interactions and interrelationships of the elements are more fluidly illustrated suggesting that Gud Pasin acts as the catalyst that facilitates yarning to create other pedagogies with cultural integrity. See the log of the voyage, *Yarning: Culturally Significant Pedagogy for the Torres Strait,* for a more detailed discussion of the yarning process.

Figure 3: YUMI EDUCATION

GUD PASIN

Yarning

Real learning

Learning together

Future oriented learning

Student oriented learning
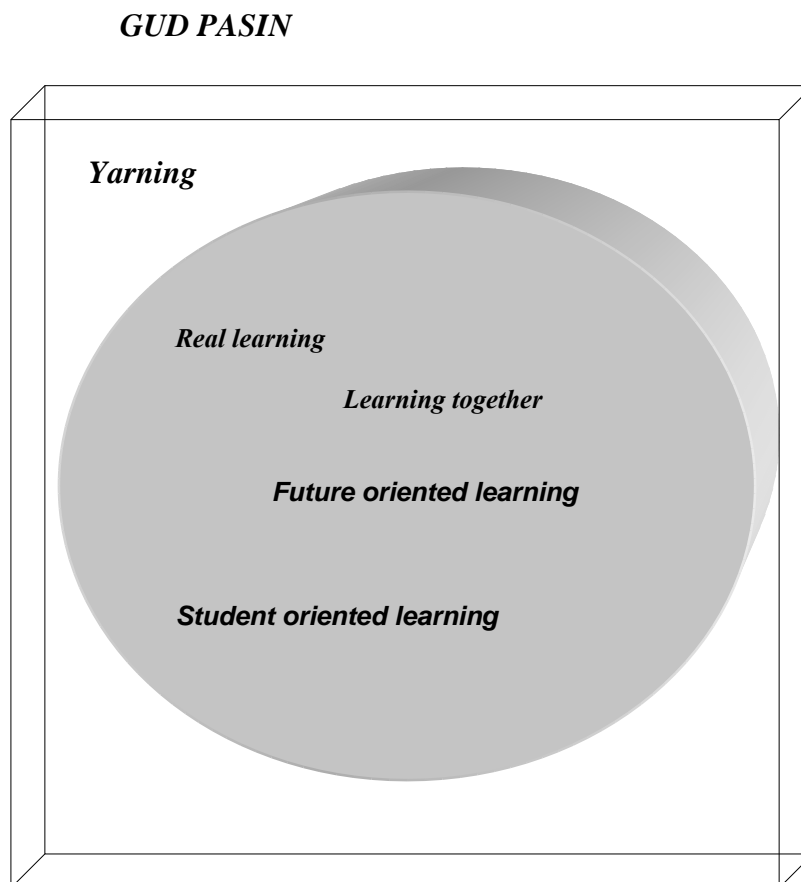
The results of this research identifies the existence of pedagogies that are successful in contexts across the Torres Strait. These have been self-identified by the contexts themselves. The extent of overlap of these successful practices suggests that there are culturally significant pedagogies, or what I've identified as pedagogies with cultural integrity, which also correlate with what other authorities have termed culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2000). In addition to pedagogies with cultural integrity, it appears that yarning may be a very significant cultural pedagogy that underpins the successful development of pedagogies with cultural integrity. In addition, yarning is a very important research tool in this context, to which every non-Indigenous researcher needs to become aware and sensitive. See the log *Yarning: Culturally Significant Pedagogy for the Torres Strait.*

Further to this, there is also a correlation between YUMI education, pedagogies with cultural integrity and culturally relevant pedagogies. This research suggests that the transformation of knowledge in Torres Strait Island classrooms is both situation specific and very subtle, illustrating the process of teaching as,

> *"… a relational orchestration of time and space, self and others, learners and knowledge, and affect and cognition."* (Edwards, 2001, p. 179)

Historically, there have been a number of significant efforts to try to improve the quality of education children in the Torres Strait receive. These have included employing Advisory Teachers whose job it was to visit schools and support teachers in their classroom work; creating the Torres Strait School managed by a Group Principal based on Thursday Island and consisting of the cluster of all the island schools, from which evolved the establishment of the Far Northern Schools Development Unit, a curriculum development group focussed on developing culturally relevant curriculum for the Torres Strait Schools; establishing school clusters headed by a cluster Group Principal; establishing school clusters managed co-operatively by the Principals of the schools in each cluster; employing Indigenous, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Executive Director of Schools for the Torres Strait District; and establishing a Torres Strait Islander Advisory (TSIREC) group to contribute to the development of educational strategy and delivery across Torres Strait schools. Usually, these initiatives have had a strong curriculum emphasis and tend to be driven by revisions of content rather than emphasising the importance of the work that teachers do, pedagogy.

The 1970's view of compensatory education blamed the victims for their lack of cultural sophistication and made every attempt to address the inadequacies of cultures other than

those of Anglo-Celtic origins, for example the mid 1970's Head Start program in the United States. Whilst this had some advantages over what previously was offered to Torres Strait children, it was a process steeped in deficit theory which was doomed to failure as a consequence. At least compensatory education raised some awareness of other cultures and generated some professional thinking about how educators might address the needs of children, particularly Torres Strait Islander children. Unfortunately the deficit approach moved teachers to lower their expectations of Indigenous children, in anticipation that they would not be able to deal with the content and quality of education provided in the mainstream. As a consequence, low expectations lead to low achievements and for several decades these outcomes were rationalised as all that could be expected of Torres Strait Islander children, given their cultured circumstances.

Low expectations also exacerbated an already regimented systemic approach to education across the Torres Strait, on the basis that, to enable them to be productive in a white world, it would only be necessary to teach Indigenous children to read and write and possibly enumerate at a very basic level. Torres Strait Islander children were only expected to aspire to become labourers, domestics and process workers, so it wasn't anticipated that they would be required to have a comprehensive education. This parallels expectations of the education of girls for many years and the issue of class in education. Girls would only end up getting married and having babies and so didn't need much of an education just as lower class students would spend their lives undertaking labouring jobs and menial tasks that didn't require them to be able to do much more than follow directions. For Torres Strait Islander children and society, in my experience, this unhealthy bias towards 'the basics' as the most appropriate education for their needs, still exists.

In the light of the history of education service delivery in the Torres Strait and contemporary empirical data (Department of Education and the Arts, 2004a ; 2004b; ABS, 2001a ; 2001b) that applies to outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students, I would argue that the time has come to step back from the imperative to maintain current educational service delivery and take a fresh look at education in the Torres Strait, through the eyes of the people who are most directly effected.

At this point I need to make it clear again that this study reflects my own view of the current educational situation in the Torres Strait. I understand that this view is necessarily hegemonic in spite of the fact that I have endeavoured to interrogate the realities and experiences that have engaged me over many years educational work in the Torres Strait. While I incorporate extensive data from Torres Strait Islander participants, this study is my interpretation of the situation. I can never hope to and nor do I try, to achieve a Torres Strait Islander perspective of these same issues. However, the data and interpretations that I present in this study are significantly impacted by my own history and location, both within and without the Torres Strait. Through this study, I am endeavouring to find that 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994; Soja, 1996),

> *"... a space of 'radical openness', which those marginalised by racism, patriarchy,*
> *capitalism, colonialism and other oppressions choose as a speaking position."*
> (Morgan, 2000, p. 280)

understanding that it is probably a position that I can never achieve completely. I would like to think however that this work will stimulate some wider dialogue particularly amongst Torres Strait Islander educators, academics and community. For too long, one view, the dominant one, has been allowed to speak about and on behalf of Torres Strait Islander people. A significant element of my work is designed deliberately to stimulate the search for those

'third spaces' wherein Torres Strait people and those educators with a concern for pedagogy with cultural integrity for Torres Strait Islander students, can give voice to meaningful and productive dialogue leading to conscientisation.

In this search the emphasis I've placed on the work of teachers, pedagogy is, in my view extremely important. The following thumbnails take the pedagogies identified as successful practice in each site in Figure 2 and expand on their expression in that site. This is done to emphasise the point that pedagogies identified in similar or identical terms will vary in their expression in different sites. This is important because these will illustrate the uniqueness of each site and at the same time, the commonality of experience across the sites.

NOTE: The photos that follow are of random locations across the Torres Strait and do not identify the specific sites whose visions and pedagogies are referred to in the text.

Vision: *Celebrating Success*

Working together: In this site this term refers to co-operative learning and group work. In a cultural day, various classes had different tasks that they were associated with.

Upper school girls were learning from elders how to make damper in the coals, while their male peers were working alongside men from the community, cutting up the turtle in preparation for the kup murri. Each of these tasks was being documented on video to form the basis of a series of class based literacies exercises that would lead ultimately to an illustrated series of books.

Literacy (registers): In this instance, the literacies exercises arising from the culture day activities were designed to enhance student English competence in a range of genres and recording mechanisms, including written and visual literacies.

Individual learnings: This relates to encouraging individual excellence in the work children do and so also emphasises the importance of the individual abilities of children. Work is recorded in electronic portfolios providing application of previously acquired skills and illustrations of student competence in a variety of areas and at a variety of levels.

Encouraging learnings: Students and teachers constantly encourage one another in a very positive and supportive environment. This can be firm but encouraging in nature when necessary. The object is to constantly encourage students to perform at their individual level of excellence.

Real-life learnings: A writer's workshop provided significant real life learning for the children involved. Books were written, illustrated and produced by the children.

Enjoying learnings: The writer's workshop and the cultural day provided activities that were both important academic milestones and very happy, enjoyable experiences.

Cultural learnings: The cultural day activities provided the opportunity for students to

gain important cultural understandings and skills through engagement with the 'cultural experts' in the community. Paralleling these experiences with follow-up school activities provided the important links between different cultural contexts, without marginalizing either one.

Celebrating successes: The school newsletter records events in the school and makes sure that the community are aware of what is happening in the school. In addition this sharing of success provides multiple opportunities for successes to be celebrated, affirming that children can and do succeed in schools.

Modelling success: This is reflected in the very co-operative and supportive culture fostered in the school. Expected responses are modelled by children and teachers and classroom rules, co-operatively developed, apply to everyone in the room, even visitors.

Building relationships – (gud pasin): The very co-operative school culture is all about building good relationships between all the participants in the education of these children and clearly underpins the work that is done in the school.

Vision: *Bridging the Gap*
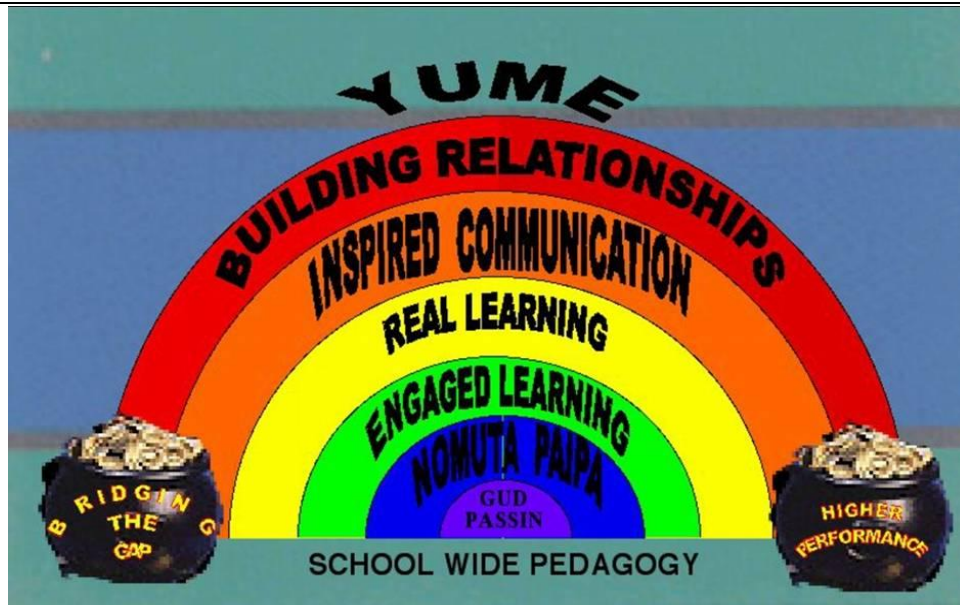
Learning Together: In this site this element refers to group work, co-operative learning and developing as a learning community. The specific activity that comes to mind is an enterprise exercise where the children ran an Italian restaurant for the community. This had a big impact on the children and the community and it represented a significant learning opportunity for both the children and the community.

Good Relationships– (gud pasin): This element recurs across all sites and underpins all teaching and learning that is considered to be successful. The restaurant activity exemplified gud pasin with one of the teacher aides telling me that she was 'treated just like a lady' when the children waited on her table – an experience that she had not had before. The experience engendered significant mutual respect.

Real Life Learning: The enterprise aspects of the restaurant activity required students to apply 'school knowledge' in multiples of practical ways, from ordering goods to preparing and serving the meal.

Active Learning: Each day all students in the school engaged in sketching. This activity was conducted outside the classroom and children were free to move about the school grounds, under supervision of the teacher and aide. Also at this site, children were encouraged to move around during learning activities, rather than locate themselves in one spot. This had a positive impact on student behaviour and time-on-task. Children readily came to understand that whilst they were free to move around, this also carried with it the responsibilities of not disturbing anyone else and completing individual work requirements.

Quality Learning: In this site this element is illustrated by a consistent and school-wide expectation of your best work, all the time. Best work was linked to student abilities and thus catered for individual differences at the same time.

Structured Leaning: This site emphasised the importance of prior learning and constructivist methodology. Children were shown how work they had previously done linked to other or new work. This process also helped link the varying cultures that impacted on the school, thereby emphasising the importance of educating the whole child. There is also a futuristic element to this component, as it provided the opportunity to link the local island context to the outside world. This was made explicit in a cooperative project run with a school in Bali. Children used the internet and email to communicate with each other and explore the environments and context of each community.

Vision: *Reaching out from Within*

Challenging learning: In this context this element refers to excellence in quality of learning outcomes and is illustrated by a project related to the history of the island. Student presentations were conducted in a well frequented public space in the community and children were expected to publicly present their contributions to anyone who asked. This exercise also provided opportunities for problem solving in a community context. At the time there was considerable construction going on in the community and whilst ultimately this was going to be for the benefit of the whole community, the process did present some issues for members of the community, due to dust created by passing heavy traffic which was not usual on the island. Since the school was directly affected, the students undertook a study and sent their report to the Community Council for their reaction. This exposed children not only to real life issues in their community but also to the various community perceptions of the activities within their community.

Valuing learners/learning values – (gud pasin): This element was highlighted by a Christmas activity that was conducted by the whole school. In many islands the existence of a number of different religious sects creates some potential difficulties. Not all the children were able to actually perform in the Christmas pageant, as was the intent of the activity, because of some of the beliefs of some of the sects in the community. In order that no child be excluded from the activity as a whole, the children decided that those who were able to sing, dance and act would do so whilst those who were not allowed to participate in this way, could manage the props, lighting, costumes, backdrops and all the non- performance activities that are so essential to any performance. In this way every child in the school was able to participate in the presentation, be acknowledged for their contribution and made to feel worthwhile, and still be able to abide by their religious beliefs. I thought this was a wonderful expression of gud pasin.

Global learning: This element was illustrated by a study that children were engaged in relating to the goods and services that came to their island. The weekly barge delivery of goods for the store provided the stimulus for the project. Goods were tracked back to their place of origin, manufacture or production. It was clear from this exercise that most of the goods coming to the island came from locations and environments far away from and very different to, the Torres Strait, providing the platform from which global learning could emanate.

Excellence in learning: A lot of emphasis was placed on testing in this site for the specific purpose of modelling quality learning. Whilst this was an element of all sites the emphasis in this site was significant and caused it to stand out from the others.

Real learning: The nature of all the activities noted so far indicate a clear emphasis on the relationship of learning to real life situations and applications. There is a significant emphasis on ensuring that school knowledge and home knowledge complement one another.

Individual learning: Classes operated using a lot of individual learning, with teachers and aides spending a lot of their time in one-on-one engagement of students.

Supportive learning: The one-on-one student /teacher time suggests the environment is very supportive. A significant amount of community involvement also points to a wider acceptance of the need of support for the school and its work.

Co-operative learning: In this instance this refers to group work across the school. Whilst a lot of time is spent in individual class work as I noted previously, project work is generally conducted by groups of students. This encourages individual children to demonstrate and contribute their particular strengths, provides models for others to emulate and provides a supportive environment for students who lack some self-esteem.

Vision: *Working Together to Reach the Peak*

Learning together (gud pasin): In this site, this relates to the energy and enthusiasm that goes into learning. Everyone participates in the learning process. For the attitudes of students, staff and community to remain so positive, there has to be lots of gud pasin and very strong relationships between learning partners and this is evidenced in this site. The school undertook an activity that involved having the whole school and some members of the community climb the actual mountain, implied in the vision statement. Whilst not dangerous, the effort required to achieve this feat is considerable and demanded a level of cooperation and support amongst the participants, not experienced before. The outcome of the activity was a very proud, successful and inclusive school community, who had developed a greater appreciation and understanding of each participant's strengths, challenges and desire to contribute to the group effort and goal.

Enjoyable learning: The site just oozes enthusiasm and enjoyment. This is partly to do with the energy of the staff and the involvement of the community but it also reflects an acceptance by all that for learning to be effective, it has to be enjoyed. To be enjoyed, however implies careful consideration on the part of teachers as they plan.

Emphasizing excellence: This is clearly about high expectations and high achievement. Children are constantly encouraged in everything that they do, symbolised by their vision of reaching the peak. This element also acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual, in terms of the strengths and abilities they bring to the learning process.

Child-centred learning: The site has lots of work centres and activity groups that are developed around the individual abilities of children. This does not imply ability grouping but rather reflects an acceptance of varying abilities and the social reality of mixed ability groups, with tasks to provide for everyone.

Real life learning: Activity work is related to the application of 'school knowledge' to the lives of children. This community has been the location for many community based initiatives that have contributed significantly to improving their lifestyle. They have also been quite innovative. Children are involved in work with their community, through enterprise projects, project clubs and community activities.

Cultural learning: The mountain in the community is very culturally significant and is symbolised in the graphic of their vision statement. Children were taken on a hike to the top of the peak as a culminating activity associated with a whole range of lead up activities that were conducted across the school. This was part of the student involvement in the visioning process for their school. Part of the activities included the cultural aspects of the mountain, the stories attached to it and special sites along the way to the peak.

Vision: (KKY) Possible Vision Statements: *Ngoey Poeypiyamaw Mabaygal Malu Kurasar Ngalpa Mura Umaypa Minalay. Ngalpa Mura Uthuypa Nagu. Mura Buway Aykuyk*.

Real world learning: At this site children were involved in a newspaper activity across one term. Students from the middle/upper school spent time analysing the roles involved in setting up a newspaper and allocated themselves to those roles. They had to find out what various people did and then sort out how they would achieve the same outcomes, given the resources they had at their disposal. The paper was to be sold to the community so the product had to be good quality and of interest to the community. World news was to be included as well as regional and local news items. This meant that students had to contact different people to get their stories or access the news items from other sources. Most national and international news was taken from the TV bulletins. The pilots flying aircraft in on a daily basis were interviewed for stories as were the barge skippers and engineers. Job descriptions and required educational standards were part of the stories. Cartooning was a genre included, along with weather conditions, tides, barge and aircraft arrival and departure schedules and anything else of significance to the community. This was a huge undertaking but a really valuable learning experience for all involved, including the community. It enhanced the school profile and provided a real life means of acquiring and performing valuable knowledges and skills.

Co-operative learning: The newspaper required significant co-operative learning strategies to be learned, as schedules had to be met, both to get stories and to have the paper available when it was expected and on a regular basis.

Cultural learning – (gud pasin): The newspaper provided an opportunity for cultural input as well as for input related to the daily lives of the community. There was a section that paid special attention to prominent members of the community and some sections were written in Kala Kawaw Ya (KKY).

Applying learning: The newspaper activity gives ample evidence of student's abilities to apply their 'school knowledge' in practical and real life ways.

Problem solving: There was plenty of problem solving as part of the newspaper activity itself however what I found more interesting was the students efforts to demonstrate how they had managed to meet the outcomes required in the various syllabus documents, by engaging in this activity.

Active learning: The physical layout of the school encourages teachers and students to work outside the classroom. This is taken advantage of and a lot of work is done in the community itself, as well.

Vision: *Linking Solid Traditions to Future Freedoms*

Risk Takers: In this setting it was felt that children needed to be encouraged to take more risks in their learning. This requires a safe and supportive environment if it is to be successful. Particular efforts were made by all the school staff to encourage students and support them, especially where they made mistakes. Errors were identified as opportunities to learn, rather than examples of the student's inability to manage the learning.

Energetic Learning: The level of enthusiasm in these schools is infectious. Maintaining this energy however takes careful planning and professional sharing, as teachers will very quickly run out of ideas. The professional conversations that staff engaged in provided significant professional learning that focussed on this element of their pedagogy.

Stimulating Environments: For the previous two elements to be achieved, the learning environments had to be stimulating. Great effort was put into creating classrooms that were not only inviting but attractive, resource intensive and easily adapted to new activities. Regularly changing the layout of the environment to reflect new themes or simply to create a new spatial arrangement was evident across the school.

Individualised Learning: Like many other locations attention was placed on meeting the needs of the individual children. Again, planning effectively and collegially enabled staff to draw on each others strengths to contribute to the overall education process in the school. This resulted in teachers working co-operatively outside their allocated groups, which stimulated timetabling and staffing modifications, in order to enable this process to work effectively.

Connected Learning: This is a small and very isolated setting with no airstrip, so connecting school learning to other contexts was considered to be necessary. Job opportunities are limited to Council workers and CDEP, as is the case in most settings, however in this instance the community was keen to have children made very aware that there are other worlds outside their home, that provide a wider variety of opportunities to them and which they can take advantage of. In this instance the internet was used extensively to provide information and awareness.

Problematic Learning: The ability of children to apply 'school knowledge' is considered to be important in this setting – as it is in all settings. The school environment was a project undertaken by the children. They re-designed the outside areas, drew up plans for their proposal, approached the P&C and Council for financial assistance to purchase materials and then undertook the work to complete the project. For a setting of this small size, this was a significant undertaking requiring extensive problem solving opportunities. The added advantage of having community assistance to do the work enabled the children to see community members helping them to solve problems as they arose.

Positive Relationships - (gud pasin): The school environment project generated a lot of gud pasin because of the nature of the work the children chose to undertake. Seeking support from the Council and P&C required students to prepare and present their case and if necessary argue in support of the venture. As essentially a community project, there was intense interest in the outcome and it was something that made everyone feel proud.

Vision: *Working Hand in Hand with the Community*

Cultural learnings – (gud pasin): Cultural knowledge is venerated in this setting and becomes an integral part of the education process. The elders drive most of the cultural learnings and support culture days enthusiastically. The school then needs to be able to respond positively to these initiatives, as it does. Critical to the success of this element in this setting is the ability of the school to react in supportive and co-operative ways to the cultural initiatives of the community. This builds strong school/community bonds and acknowledges the significance of the cultural environment within which the school resides.

Child-centeredness: Relating learning to the needs and abilities of children is a focus in this setting. Overlapping groups provide the opportunity for students to move with their peer group and work at their ability level. The sense of family in this setting is very strong and is reflected in school organization and management.

Relatedness: Showing children how 'school knowledge' helps them to understand their world better, is important in this setting. A strong emphasis is placed on ensuring that children can see and demonstrate themselves, how their 'school knowledge' links to the world that they live in. This reflects in many joint projects and activities involving both the school and the community.

Futures perspective: It is also considered important that children understand that there are worlds outside their community that provide opportunities for them. Understanding that those worlds are different to their own, necessitates some engagement of the knowldges and skills that they will need to survive effectively in them. This leads into higher order thinking and problem solving. Such experiences involve the internet and astute use of visitors to the island.

Real learning: the previous elements of this site's pedagogy require that for those elements to be successfully engaged, learning has to be real. It has to be meaningful to the child in their world and so demands application in that immediate environment as well as understanding of the intent of learning in new environments.

Education for you and I (Individualised learning): This element emphasises the importance of promoting learning as an individual growth experience, with intrinsic significance to each student, that is different from another student. This view strongly contradicts the systemic grade appropriate approach that has the impact of herding children in ability packs, thereby marginalising those who fail to meet the pack criteria.

Education for all of us (Community learning): This element emphasises the critical importance of learning for the health and benefit of the whole community. As children apply their individual learning to the community, that community is enhanced and so benefits. This also emphasises the notion of a community of learners, exemplifying the reality that we all continue to learn, as individuals and as groups/communities.

Vision: *Catching our Future*

Learning together: In this site, a good example of this element is the video and subsequent print based, illustrated story that developed from a group excursion to a cultural site. Young children were taken by elders to a site where they were told the stories associated with that site. The excursion was video taped by an aide. The tape was later used as the basis for the creation of a story book about the excursion and each child's involvement. The story book was illustrated by the children. The whole production forms part of a growing collection of student written and illustrated story books completed by children across the school. These are highly prized by the school, the children and the community.

Good relationships – (gud pasin): The cultural nature of the previous example also provides an insight into the respectful and constructive relationships between the school and the community. At this site there are numerous opportunities for children to take their 'school knowledge' into the community and likewise the community responds by constantly being engaged with the school. Whilst this is true for all sites, the relationship at this site is particularly strong and positive.

Real life learning: This element is reflected in the work done in the community by students. Classes are run in the community in order for parents to be able to see what their children do at school. The store provides an ideal site for the application of 'school knowledge' in a real context. The emphasis in this site on art as an integrating device for all manner of other learning is also important in relation to this element.

Active learning: The newly developed art complex at this site provides a variety of other opportunities for children to be engaged in active learning, particularly related to performance. The extent of activity in the community also provides opportunity for mutual and active learning. Given that the art complex is designed to foster engagement of a much wider audience including visiting artist and tourists, the opportunities for students are limitless.

Quality outcomes: The use of gendered groups to enhance learning outcomes seems to have worked positively at this site. This is an interesting experiment, as it seems to provide more positive environments within which to promote quality outcomes. The girls are much quieter and more focussed and the boys to seem to be more focussed, even though they are still more active than the girls. School data show a trend upwards in the standardised testing data over the period of this experiment.

Structured learning: Building on prior learning is significant in this setting, as is a strong constructivist view of education.

Vision: *Ngulaw Ngurpai; Kayib Ngurpai; Bathaingaka*

(Learning from the Past; Learning in the Present; Learning for the Future)

Holistic learning: This element refers to learning that takes into account the whole environment and experience of the child. Ensuring that the basic needs of all students are met, including food and health needs, provides an illustration of this element.

Connected learning: Relating learning to the world of the child by scaffolding learning.

Two-Way learning: Both teachers and children are learners. Teachers need to learn about the learners, as much as students need to learn about their world.

Hands-on learning: Modelling and practising experiences, related to cultural learning strategies particularly, forms a strong element of this site's pedagogy.

Strong relationships – (gud pasin): Learning that seeks to gain rapport with and connection to the participants. Seeking to gain mutual respect. Sharing your stories and listening to the stories of the child and community.

Real-life learning: All learning experiences are related to the world of the child. Significant use is made of narratives to express these learnings

Cultural learning: In this sense this element implies learning about identity and diversity. Extensive use is made of the community to impart cultural knowledges from a variety of cultures.

Empowering learning: This element is about futures, inclusivity and political awareness and activity. This coincides nicely with Ladson-Billings' (2000) element, socio-political consciousness.

YUMI Pedagogy - YUMI Education.

These illustrations serve only to give an indication of the possibilities for effective pedagogy across the Torres Strait.   They do not cover every possibility nor do they identify every expression of the pedagogy in each site. They do provide examples of how the sites expressed their pedagogies in practical ways. Each teacher needs to ask themselves the questions, How are these pedagogies expressed in this context? and How do my experiences and expertise help me to add value to these pedagogies with cultural integrity? The experiences that teachers bring with them will result in different expressions of the same

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pedagogy in the same site, just as the age of children and their abilities will have an impact on how the pedagogies will be expressed in terms of activities or strategies. By emphasising some elements in some sites, I do not imply that other sites didn't place equal importance on the same element. What the illustrations do reflect is the diversity of expressions of the same pedagogy in different sites. There is still however a striking similarity amongst pedagogies with cultural integrity across all the sites identified and I have no reason to doubt that when the other sites reach the stage of identifying their pedagogies, similar outcomes will be evident.

It is important to emphasise that even though the pedagogies may have a similar descriptor, they will be expressed differently in each site. This is precisely because the act of teaching is an act of agency that allows for the deliberate and informed transformation of curriculum through pedagogy. The work of teachers, pedagogy, is a reactive mechanism that is, as Edwards (2001) proposes,

> *"… a responsive interactivity, which calls for teachers' informed interpretations of and responses to the complex demands of teaching."* (p. 166)

'The complex demands of teaching' include cultural dimensions and demands, so that as transformation takes place in the classroom, the impact is on not just the educational process but also the cultural process. The two are inseparable and rely on professional and systemic trust in teachers' abilities to act with informed and deliberate agency (Edwards, 2001). The issue for non-Islander teachers lies in the potential for conflict between their own cultural ways and those of Torres Strait Islander people. If the cultural domain of teachers dominate in the classroom and subsequently act to marginalise the cultural domain of Torres

Strait Islanders, Islander children will continue to be confused by the contradictions they confront at school. The impact of this process, as I've described, is that Torres Strait Islander agency is negated. However, if the teacher acts in ways that draw parallels with and actively seek to be inclusive of, Torres Strait Islander cultural ways and knowledges, then agency becomes a positive and creative force, whereby education moves students through knowledge construction and creation, directly related to the generation of new meaning. The generation of new meaning in this way reflects Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal dissonance, Giroux's (1992b) border crossing and Bhabha's (1994) third space, in process. I'm not suggesting that these three acts of agency are similar, simply that the result of each is the creation of new meanings, new understandings and new knowledges.

The significance of pedagogies with cultural integrity lies in their impact on learning. By engaging pedagogies with cultural integrity in Island schools, the nature of learning becomes,

> *"... concerned with the learners' agency and intentional actions, opportunities for their active engagement, an understanding of their previous learning, and both the affective and intellectual features of those experiences."* (Edwards, 2001, p. 171)

Learner agency is enormously important particularly where students are preparing themselves to engage productively with a world where knowledge production and the knowledge economy underpin the postcolonial environment that they live in and of which they are part . They will at the same time still be Torres Strait Islander people and Torres Strait Islander culture will remain a significant part of their identity. How that culture is expressed in terms of beliefs, attitudes, values and practices will inevitably change from what it is today, precisely as the result of the educational agency of those students.

The data I present affords significant evidence from which to draw supportable and plausible conclusions related to pedagogy with cultural integrity, in respect of the Torres Strait region. Furthermore, whilst these pedagogies appear to be being used in schools across the Torres Strait, there does not appear to be any consistency, significance or awareness attached to their use, which I believe would increase their effectiveness. One appropriate outcome of this work might be the professional interrogation of each site's pedagogies with cultural integrity and subsequent planning in each site to ensure that the site's particular pedagogies are being consistently and equitably integrated into each classroom.

In essence, there is nothing startling about this data, it is simply good teaching. However the significance of the data lies in the opportunity for schools to come to understand what good/successful practice looks like in their context and to consciously and professionally work towards consistently implementing those pedagogies in their daily work. I believe that if this conscious effort were made in all schools across the Torres Strait, it would lead to a better understanding of the children in each context and of the abilities and expertise of the teachers, and how these dimensions are most effectively brought together in a praxis of pedagogy. Greater professional learning would result and this in turn would lead to better practice and improved outcomes for children.

The site-specific descriptions of successful pedagogies that I outlined earlier can be grouped in a set of pedagogies with cultural integrity that apply across the Torres Strait, or YUMI pedagogies. These are not intended to be interpreted as culturally specific pedagogies for Torres Strait Islanders. Quite the contrary. In the light of the adverse effects on Indigenous education created as the result of identifying supposedly Indigenous learning styles, my work

does not endeavour to result in rigid codification of pedagogies. These pedagogies represent educational processes that are successful in any classroom across the Torres Strait. How these processes are interpreted and implemented at each site, is dependent on a variety of factors which include the capacity of students, teachers and communities to influence their development and expression.

YUMI Pedagogy; *Pedagogy with cultural integrity.*

- **Gud pasin** – about developing and maintaining positive/healthy/respectful relationships. It underpins all aspects of education and guides everything that parents, teachers and children do, individually and collectively. Gud pasin is present in all the other pedagogies if they are to be effective, so in a sense gud pasin is the platform on which YUMI education is built. Gud Passin is the context within which YUMI pedagogies can be optimally developed and expressed

- **Real learning** – about linking 'school knowledge' to the real world of students. Using popular culture, and the realities of the students to engage and inspire them. Learners come to know what to focus on, what to 'background', what possibilities for action exist and how best to use the resources available to them (Greeno, 1997).

- **Learning together** – about learning co-operatively and collegially. This might be expressed as group work but it might also be expressed as consideration for others and individualised work. This can also incorporate the notion of developing communities of learners, where the outcomes are beneficial to all and the inputs acknowledge individual expertise and experience. In Edwards' (2001) words, learning together is about,

> *"… knowledge building … a socially useful enterprise that enhances each*
>
> *individual's capacity to develop as someone who learns, and his or her*

capacity to produce knowledge and to bring it to the public domain to inform the learning of others.” (p. 171)

Inevitably, this pedagogy is inextricably linked to the cultural pedagogy, yarning.

- **Future oriented learning** – about relating 'school knowledge' to a future, globalised world. This might encompass technologies, socio-political environments and encouragement of lateral thinking. It reflects Ladson-Billings' (2000) element *socio-political consciousness* and promotes Freire's (1972) notion of conscientisation.

- **Student oriented learning** – about the individual student and their desires, capabilities and aspirations. This incorporates Ladson-Billings' (2000) element *high academic achievement* and promotes individual excellence, what ever that looks like.

- **Connected learning** – about incorporating past, present and future as essential influences on what students do in schools. This reflects Ladson-Billings' (2000) element, *cultural competence* and addresses community and culturally located issues. It incorporates not only Torres Strait cultures but the widest interpretation of the term 'culture' and links 'own knowledge' and 'school knowledge' in meaningful ways. TSIREC's (2000) agreement document identifies the following statement of beliefs about what education should provide for Torres Strait Islanders.

> *"The Elders believe that there must be linkages in education to improve the learning outcomes for their children. These linkages are;*
>
> - *Linking to education and culture*
>
> - *Linking education and employment*
>
> - *Linking education with community growth and development*

- *Linking education, community growth and development with moral standards and values."* (p. 3)

These are all statements about how education needs to be connected to other aspects of learning, growth and development. They are significant because Torres Strait Elders have identified them as important.

- **Active learning** – about engagement of the learner in both physical and intellectual ways. It indicates the importance of hands-on learning and the use of physical movement as an educational tool. It also proposes that active learning responds positively to the capacities and interests of students, implying the importance of negotiated curriculum. The process of active learning doesn't only apply to students. Teachers in Torres Strait Island schools need also to be active learners. This implies a significant role for reflection on the work they do, understanding of Bakhtin's (Morris, 1994) notions of positions, meanings and possibilities for themselves, their students and the community and the implications of activity theory's interweaving of action, intention and possibility with the impact of past and future, and roles and responsibilities (Engestrom, 1996).

- **Problem solving** – about developing a sense of capacity to address real issues that impact students. This includes aspects of all three of Ladson-Billings' (2000) attributes of culturally relevant pedagogy and promotes students abilities to use 'school knowledge' to resolve issues in their own lives and in those of their community.

YUMI education then becomes the educational processes that employ YUMI pedagogies in classrooms across the Torres Strait. TSIREC's (2000) definition of YUMI education,

> " 'YUMI' education is culturally, spiritually appropriate education for the children of the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsular Area, upon which they can build the skills, abilities, attitudes and values needed to become valued, responsible, independent contributors in the society of their choice." (p. 3)

is transformed into practice through the identification and application of YUMI pedagogies, pedagogies with cultural integrity.

My belief is that all teachers, Principals, teacher aides and education workers, currently working in or intending to work in the Torres Strait should be thoroughly inducted into the two levels (regional and community) of YUMI pedagogy before they begin teaching in Torres Strait Island schools. The body responsible for educational services delivery in Torres Strait Island schools should regularly conduct research into the impact of YUMI pedagogies, in terms of outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students and in terms of the continued relevance of the identified pedagogies in each site. The pedagogies I've identified are relevant for the time that they were collected and will remain so for some time to come, I would think. However any assumption about their ongoing relevance cannot be made and they must therefore be subject to regular and thorough interrogation in order to maintain their currency and effectiveness. This is one thing that education systems and schools do not do well. Too frequently the conclusion is arrived at that what appears to work in one setting will work in another, without any consideration of the impact of the change in context. At the other end of the scale, schools too readily simply throw out programs just because a new

program has been published, with no consideration of what is working effectively and therefore what might be retained.

Whilst achieving successful outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students is the goal of this research, this must however also be sustainable. There are plenty of examples of 'one-off' success stories but there is nothing that has demonstrated itself to be sustainable to date, in the Torres Strait. YUMI pedagogy, pedagogy with cultural integrity, is one important link to sustainable educational outcomes and in conjunction with systemic support of its implementation provides a significant opportunity towards promoting positive outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students. Too much change and too many teaching personnel pass through the Torres Strait Island schools annually, for any initiative to be sustainable without systemic support. The difference between this proposal and past initiatives is that previous initiatives have largely been programmatic and thus have finite endpoints that are only sometimes characterised by measurements of success. This proposal promotes a process that is not imposed from outside but is defined and delineated by the professionals in the school, the students and the community, all of whom have vested but different interests in the successful operation of the school (Freire, 1970). The process is self-defining and based on successful practices already operating in the school. It promotes success, strengthens professional relationships in the school and requires that the partners invest in their school, in order to achieve their desired outcomes. The system is only required to insist that successful practice, practice that is shown to be successful through outcomes generated as a result, should be maintained. What is important here is that I'm not referring to specific projects or programs but to successful practices adopted by teachers in Torres Strait schools – pedagogies with cultural integrity.

YOUME/YUMI/YUME/YOUMI EDUCATION :

Pickinini blo youme

Family blo youme

Learning place blo youme

Ilan blo youme

RELATED ISSUES*;*

In this concluding section it is important to emphasise that addressing one of the issues facing Torres Strait Islander education is not going to contribute to the resolution of them all. The likely result is just what has historically been achieved by such approaches. Immediate peaks of (inflated) success followed by troughs of failure. My belief is that any approach must adopt a holistic view and attempt to deal with all of the issues in integrated and complex ways. This will require innovative and Torres Strait Islander driven initiatives. The responsibilities of systems in the process is to support Islander people to both identify the challenges and to address them in culturally appropriate ways, not to interfere or to determine on behalf of Torres Strait Islanders, those things that are appropriate. In this section I identify a number of what I consider to be salient and interrelated issues that need to be considered in any review of education in the Torres Strait.

This section also plays a significant role in unifying the whole dissertation. Throughout each 'log', I have attempted to link concepts to their location in other 'logs'. This is a deliberate process to enable the reader to make sense of the central issues of each 'log' and to provide some connection of those concepts to the other 'logs'. As I have already noted, achieving successful educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students is not a simple process and not is it a matter of trying to 'solve' a single issue. The complexity and interrelatedness of those complexities require an holistic approach and I believe, one that is rooted in raising the critical consciousness of both Torres Strait Islander peoples and that of non-Islanders who choose to work, especially in their schools. This section provides some proposed courses of action on a number of fronts and should make available the basis for "cultural action for freedom" (Freire, 1970).

Achieving successful student outcomes is not simply a matter of identifying YUMI pedagogies and applying them in a school. This is important but there are a number of issues that compound achieving successful student outcomes for Torres Strait Islanders. Both the Federal Government (DEST, 2004; MCEETYA, 2000; DEST, 2000) and the State Government (MACER, 2004; Education Queensland, 2000) acknowledge that much more needs to be done before Indigenous education can be considered to be even marginally capable of meeting the educational needs of Indigenous students.

The *Final Report of the National Evaluation of National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS)*, (DEST, 2003) identified six key elements necessary for achieving educational equity, for Indigenous students. These include increasing attendance, overcoming hearing, health and nutrition problems, improving preschool experiences, getting good teachers, using the best teaching methods and measuring success and achieving

accountability. Partington, Wyatt & Godfrey, (2001) agree with the need for a co-ordinated approach to addressing all of these issues in every setting and in doing so acknowledges the problems associated with such an enterprise, not all of which are associated with money. These issues resonate with many of the concerns that face Torres Strait Island schools in attempting to deliver effective education to their students.

Preservice Teacher Education and Quality Teachers.

Dealing with the issues of 'getting good teachers' and 'using the best teaching methods' is significantly influenced by preservice teacher education. Universities are responsible for these programs but are heavily influenced by the Queensland College of Teachers in Queensland. In 1993, the then Queensland Board of Teacher Registration adopted a recommendation that came out of a conference they sponsored on Indigenous education. It was proposed that all preservice teacher education programs in Queensland should implement compulsory Indigenous studies courses no later than 1996. This recommendation is recorded in the conference proceedings, which were published but no effective action was ever taken by the Board to ensure that it was actioned by Universities. To this day, my own University is the only one in the State to have partially adopted the policy recommendation and maintained it. Inclusion of course elements that specifically examine Indigenous education issues, use of appropriate pedagogy and delivery by Indigenous peoples or educators acceptable to Indigenous people, are essential if preservice teachers are to be adequately prepared to teach in Torres Strait Island and most other Queensland schools. Without this preparation, preservice teachers will continue to adopt racist and exclusionary practices on the basis of ignorance, with insufficient understanding of what they are doing, and educational outcomes will continue to suffer as a consequence.

The placement policies of teachers by education systems frequently act against encouraging 'good' teachers to want to teach in isolated locations such as the Torres Strait. It is insufficient to say that Torres Strait schools need good teachers, as they actually require superior teachers. The teachers need to be well aware of the nature of the community they are coming to live and work in and the community needs to have had an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the incoming teacher/s. This implies that there should be a period of mutual contact and dialogue before decisions are made about placing teachers in particular communities and the community should have the right/responsibility to determine which teachers are appointed.

Mutual obligation demands that teachers should be under no illusions about their performance in the school. It is justifiable for communities to expect that teachers should be accountable to the community for their effectiveness in their school. Likewise it is reasonable for teachers to be able to expect reward for effective performance. How this is realised might form the basis of a contractual agreement between the community and the incoming teacher. As expectations will vary so too will each contract and the terms might reflect the demands being placed on individual teacher expertise and experience. It is important that incoming teachers understand that their role is partly to support and enhance the existing pedagogies identified by the school, not to change them, unless they can adequately demonstrate how any changes will enhance student outcomes by providing evidence to support their claims. Regular reviews of each sites' pedagogies as I suggest later in this section will ensure both their effectiveness and currency. I do think however that the previously detailed discussion of YUMI pedagogy illustrates very clearly the breadth and inclusivity of the pedagogic statements.

An important aspect of cultural awareness education and one which is often overlooked as not important or ignored altogether, is the impact of 'whiteness' as a cultural identifier. I prefaced this study with a brief discussion of 'whiteness' and it remains an issue that all educators need to be mindful of. It should be a component of all pre-service education and on-going professional development as, in the foreseeable future most of the teachers going into Torres Strait Island schools will be white teachers. The majority of these teachers will never have questioned or had challenged their cultural locatedness and the power that this attaches to them (Austin, 2002; hooks, 1992; Delpit, 1988). As a consequence many will only see 'others' as having culture, and not themselves. They risk ascribing to the 'other' generalisations and stereotypes about behaviour, performance, attitude and belief and reducing the complex task of 'educating other people's children' (Delpit, 1988) to its most simple processes – 'the basics'. This position might be justified on the grounds that more complex tasks are either unattainable or too complex to be worried about. This justification however, ignores the fact that 'the basics' have been focussed on since white education came to the Torres Strait, without the successful outcomes that might be expected.

The plethora of tasks undertaken in the illustrations of pedagogies developed earlier provide essential evidence of very high level thinking and performance, so I'd argue that this demonstrates the necessity to justify teachers having high expectations of academic achievement, in these schools. As the whole of Queensland becomes more culturally diverse, preservice education needs to address the challenges for teachers who will engage culturally diverse students in many different contexts, not just isolated or Torres Strait Island schools, in order to prepare them adequately to undertake the task of ensuring,

"… that curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment policies are culturally inclusive and effective for the learning needs of …. Torres Strait Islander students (and all students)." (Education Queensland, 2000, p. 7. my parenthesis)

Preservice teacher education also needs to focus on the significance of the work of teachers, pedagogy. A good curriculum in the hands of a poor teacher may produce poor outcomes but a poor curriculum in the hands of a good teacher is likely to result in good outcomes, both because of the work of the teacher. As indicated earlier, I don't believe that simply having good teachers in Torres Strait Island schools is sufficient. These schools need great teachers and to be great, teachers need to be appropriate for the needs of the school and the community. Using the techniques described in this study, it is a relatively simple task to identify successful pedagogies for any particular school. Having done this, the quality of the teacher lies in their ability to work most effectively in the context and with the resources available to them. This demands initiative and a preparedness to innovate, reflect on their practice and to engage in professional conversations with colleagues and community people. These are abilities that can be fostered in preservice programs. There is a serious reluctance on the part of tertiary institutions providing preservice teacher education programs to address the demands of a diverse and culturally pluralistic society, which must be overcome if teachers are to be appropriately educated to ensure their effectiveness in the classrooms of our existing and future schools. Where the dominant socio-cultural complex varies significantly from mainstream society, as in the Torres Strait, it cannot be assumed that what appears to work for mainstream society will prove equally effective in all settings.

Research (Sleeter, 2001) from the United States on preservice teacher education shows that two aspects dominate most programs. Firstly, most programs are aimed at educating

preservice teachers for dominant white education settings and if anything pay little attention to the reality that all education settings are culturally pluralistic by nature. Secondly, approaches to multicultural education and preparing teachers to work effectively in culturally pluralistic settings usually adopt exotic approaches to addressing the needs of 'othered' groups and pay no attention to the impact of 'whiteness' on systemic and individual teacher attitudes, values and behaviours, of and about 'othered' groups. If anything the situation in Queensland in relation to preservice teacher education places even more emphasis on Anglocising its programs. In addition to this aspect of preservice teacher education, the reality is,

> *"In predominantly White programs, not only are the classmates mostly White, but so are the professors and teachers in the field."* (Sleeter, 2001, p. 102)

Governments have focussed on recruiting greater numbers of Indigenous people into preservice teacher education, however the goal of achieving proportionally the same ratio of Indigenous teachers as the percentage of Indigenous people in the overall population, has fallen well short of its mark. In Queensland, Indigenous peoples represent 2.9% of the population and 1.4% of the Education Queensland workforce (Education Queensland, 2000).

The quest for quality teachers in Torres Strait Island schools does not only affect non-Indigenous teachers. Appropriate preservice and inservice education for Torres Strait Islander teachers is essential. To date this has not been achieved in spite of the existence of long running programs aimed at achieving just those outcomes (see the voyage log for, *My Journey*). One such program, the Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) is a co-operative exercise run by the Department of Education and the Arts, Tropical North Queensland TAFE (Cairns) and James Cook University (Townsville). This program came

into operation in 1987 and to date was hoping to graduate its 87th graduate by the end of 2004. This is not a very good record considering the amount of money that has been allocated to RATEP to keep it operating over that time. Additionally there have been questions raised over the quality of its graduates which should cause real concern for the Torres Strait Islander education community particularly. Torres Strait Island schools cannot afford any longer to have poor quality teachers and administrators, Torres Strait Islander or non-Islander, working in their schools.

Despite these concerns, the RATEP concept is a good one which deserves consideration in other fields of education provision. It's lack of success appears to be due largely to institutional bickering over student intakes and finances and does not reflect the genuine efforts of most of the people working in the program to achieve positive and quality outcomes for their students. A review of the program undertaken in 2003 by the University of Central Queensland makes recommendations that propose expansion of the program rather than its reduction; this outcome alone has resulted in some of the existing partners voicing concerns that seem more related to maintaining existing sectoral interests, rather than a genuine desire to further the interests of Indigenous peoples and their educational opportunities.

In the next section I explore the need for the Torres Strait Islanders Regional Education Council (TSIREC) to take more proactive and direct control of the management and development of education in the Torres Strait. Were this to be realised, then preservice teacher education in the Torres Strait potentially but not exclusively for teachers looking to work in Torres Strait Island schools, should be able to be provided through existing tertiary institutions, without the need for massive capital and infrastructural expenditure of the kind

that has already been proposed by at least one university in Queensland. Off-site, flexible and mixed-mode tertiary education is already widely available through universities and higher education institutions across Australia. Pedagogically, these provisions are evident and are being worked on innovatively in a number of universities. Broadband services are already available across the Torres Strait and schools and communities have reliable internet connectivity. Maintenance of the hardware and software of these facilities both in schools and community centres such as libraries should become the joint financial responsibility of both State and Federal Governments, in order to ensure that the services remain operational and current.

Universities then could tap into these services in order to deliver programs of all sorts, including preservice teacher education. These programs should be competitive and subject to triennial funding reviews of effectiveness. A significant element of this review should be community evaluation of the programs and the decision as to whether or not a particular program remains operative or not should rest with TSIREC. Communities should have a variety of programs from which to choose, all of which should be designed in conjunction with the community where the program will operate. It is likely that programs will be similar in each site but should provide the opportunity for site variations where the community decides that this is necessary. This may require a program to develop new components for individual sites from time to time. It might be that due to financial constraints, communities may only be able to access a certain number of programs at any one time however, as programs assume sustainability, communities should be able to be access new programs that reflect their changing needs and aspirations.

Torres Strait Islanders Regional Education Council (TSIREC).

I have asserted that Torres Strait Islander peoples should play a more informed and decisive role in defining and implementing educational services development and delivery for their own communities. This presumes that Torres Strait Islander peoples wish to do so. In the event that they do, this might be more than the traditional consultative and advisory roles paternalistically managed by white bureaucrats. The establishment of the TSIREC in 1985 indicates that Torres Strait Islanders do wish to take on such a role. However, the structure and operaton needs to be carefully monitored to take account of local authorities.

The administration and oversight of educational services in the Torres Strait needs to be directed by the Torres Strait Islanders Regional Education Council (TSIREC) and not by the Queensland Department of Education and the Arts. The resources, both personnel and financial should be made available to TSIREC to enable them to undertake this task and the final decisions should be made by TSIREC. This will inevitably require the provision of services to ensure that the members of TSIREC are suitably skilled to enable them to undertake their tasks effectively. Accountability is also an important aspect of the process and TSIREC should play a major role in defining what the accountability processes and procedures should be. The ultimate arbiter in disputes should be TSIREC. This is not such a radical proposal as it might seem at first. There is ample precedence for such a move through the various sectoral systems already operating across the State. Such a restructure would amount to creating nothing more than the equivalent of Catholic Education or any of the other private or independent systems which currently exist across the State and country.

Each island community could be intimately involved in the selection of teachers for their community. This process may involve time spent living and working in that community, so

community members are able to develop a sense of rapport with the newcomers. The community could be responsible for the appointment of teachers and Principals to their school and all appointments might be on contracts that clearly identify roles, responsibilities and expectations of all parties. Performance and accountability aspects are essential and review processes could be built into those contracts. Mutual responsibility underpins these processes. Teachers need to be responsible and accountable for the professional aspects of their work and communities likewise for issues such as attendance, disciplinary matters and cultural issues which impact the school. The entire project could be negotiated by both groups, alleviating the problems associated with an over-structured and compartmentalised view of the world that may arise from a bureaucratic process.

If quality teachers are to be attracted to the Torres Strait, incentives in return for producing outcomes are necessary. Already teachers and Principals working in the Strait have access to some very generous incentives relating to travel, health, leave and taxation. There doesn't seem to be however, much emphasis on linking these to the actual realisation of positive outcomes for students. Where this were to occur, acknowledgement of the limitations placed on identifying positive outcomes by the measurement instruments currently being used, would have to be accounted for. Realistic benchmarks would have to be set, primarily by the school in conjunction with its community and TSIREC, if this were to be an accountable goal.

A significant limitation to promoting and realising positive outcomes for Torres Strait Islander children is not only the quality of teachers but their permanence. Teacher and Principal transience is a serious concern creating inconsistency and unwarranted and unsustainable disruption across all schools in the Torres Strait. As staff change, so normally

do programs. It is possible for a child to have three or more teachers in their Primary school

experience and three or more programs. If you add to this issues related to second language

learning, attendance and quality of pedagogy, there can be no question about Torres Strait

Islander children receiving a lesser quality education than their peers on the mainland. If

staff consistency cannot be managed, as I believe it can be, then program stability must be

maintained in some way shape or form. I do not believe that setting curricula and school

programs is the answer, as these responses do not allow for teacher professionalism and

critical reflection, two of the most important elements related to effective school

revitalisation. It is possible for the education authority whoever that is, to insist on schools

identifying their pedagogies with cultural integrity and using those comprehensively and

effectively across the school. This will maintain some consistency in each site and still

encourage teachers to engage in professional conversations and critical reflection, aimed at

ensuring that what is being done in each site is success oriented and not ad hoc.

Interestingly at least one school in the Torres Strait has adopted the Research Based

Framework (refer to the voyage log for, *The IDEAS Process: Data Generation*) as the filter

by which it engages in the Triennial School Review (TSR) process. The TSR process must

be undertaken by each school and is mandated as a quality control mechanism by Education

Queensland. The Research Based Frameworks' demonstrated flexibility and capacity to

accommodate a wide range of cultural settings establishes its credibility as a quality control

mechanism and could legitimately be applied to all schools across the Torres Strait, ensuring

consistency whilst protecting the uniqueness of each site.

Central to the process of managing change is an understanding that promoting effective

educational change is a process in itself and therefore has no finite end or conclusion, when

the process actually ceases to operate. This is proving to be an exceedingly difficult understanding to have accepted by schools and teachers. Systemic initiatives historically have been solution based leading to a view that once having undertaken a series of activities, the problem should then have been solved and the school should move onto new initiatives. Even where the problem isn't solved, the solution, it is suggested, lies in moving on to new initiatives. This has resulted in the wholesale rejection of programs, strategies and processes on the basis that they are outmoded and not necessarily on the basis that they are ineffective. The literacy field provides ample illustrations of the impact of previously 'in vogue' practices being replaced without thought by 'new' processes. Examples of this include ceasing to teach phonics, the introduction of whole language approaches and the adoption of functional language approaches as opposed to critical literacy.

It is imperative therefore that whatever courses of action are decided by TSIREC they should be subject to constant reflection and regeneration. Current authoritative thinking in relation to educational change consistently identifies the significance of critical relationships that foster learning from and learning with others in professionally reflective environments (Gallego, Hollingsworth, & Whitenack,, 2001; Cuttance, 2001; Anyon, 1995; Aspland, Elliott, & Macpherson, 1995; Fullan, 1993; 1999; Hargreaves, 1994; Heslop, 1998; Hudspith, 1992; Joyce, 1990). These professionally reflective environments can only be successfully achieved where each participant is valued and respected (gud pasin) and can only be maintained where blame is not apportioned to anyone. A no-blame environment takes results, either good or bad as starting points or bases from which processes can and should move forward. Whilst everyone maintains their focus on outcomes for all Torres Strait Islander children, it limits the possibility of sectoral and personal interests taking charge and directing decision-making. It is also important that each site manages change processes in

ways that reflect and maintain the uniqueness of the site. As Partington, Wyatt & Godfrey (2001) note in respect of Indigenous education across Australia,

> *"If change is to be implemented at multiple sites, then the process of implementation at each site must be treated as a unique and problematic occurrence. Mandating change, particularly of the complex kinds envisioned ..... does not mean it will occur unless there is extensive work with each school and its constituent personnel."*
> (http://www.aare.edu.au/01pap/par01615.htm)

The nature of the educational change processes that are being explored here, are organic, in that they are site specific and they should evolve such that this uniqueness is reflected and transformed, much like the process of metamorphosis, where the system absorbs nutrients, in this case in the form of information, and changes states as it does so. The process re-presents the evolving system in synergistic forms that run counter to the intent of bureaucratic management whose purpose is to impose, direct and control rather than inform, encourage, empower and transform. Transformation is the only way, I'd suggest, for 21st century education to maintain credence in a world that is rapidly evolving.

Systemic initiatives.

Adding to the complexity of these issues are the interrelated problems of the demands made on schools by existing systemic initiatives, the limitations of isolation, the restrictions imposed by standardised testing in its current form and the looming crisis posed by unemployment.

Centralised education processes make assumptions about the impact of their deliberations on all the sites they are responsible for. For example, for Department of Education and the Arts

senior executives to presume that a policy document like *Queensland State Education 2010* will be meaningful to all schools because it is explained in brief seminars with schools, is hugely problematic. In the context of the Torres Strait, such a policy document risks being meaningless for two reasons. One, it is written and explained in such language as to exclude all except those who wrote it or who understand the educo-legal language associated with it. Secondly, even when the language issue is reduced to its simplest interpretation, most of the conceptual framework that scaffolds the policy is alien to many people, and especially Indigenous peoples. This does not imply that Indigenous peoples are less capable of understanding, rather that the frameworks, or knowledge registers that different peoples are familiar with are quite different to one another and may not be mutually intelligible. To assume that, because lots of money has been spent on informing the masses, understanding of intent has been achieved, reflects a lack of understanding on the part of policy makers, as well as ensuring the continuing invisibility and power of their 'whiteness'.

Education across the Torres Strait is already a complex and difficult set of challenges, that are not being made any easier by white middle class bureaucrats making assumptions on behalf of people of whom they have little if any understanding. To complicate the educational process by mandating rafts of inappropriate and inoperable measures for all schools across the State, further alienates those the measures are supposed to be helping. I'd argue that this does not only apply to schools in the Torres Strait but has broad application. Even though there have been significant moves by the bureaucracy to free up schools so they are better able to respond to community aspirations through their programs, the process is still defined and managed by the dominant sociocultural group, in the interests of that group. Responding to this reality by indicating that community consultation has been broadened and made more inclusive, does nothing to address the reality that ultimately, decisions will be made by the

dominant group and away from any influence of and by Torres Strait Islander peoples. These decisions reflect the sociocultural parameters of the dominant group, inevitably devaluing other positions. This is a process that denies agency to other sociocultural groups and views, further marginalizing those who are already marginalised.

Isolation.

Whilst communications have improved dramatically across the Torres Strait in the past decade, the region still remains one characterised by small, remote and insular communities. Each community may be served by twice daily air services, modern health clinics, environmentally friendly schools, stores with a variety of foods and goods and television, radio, internet and computers but they are still surrounded by vast expanses of ocean, limited in terms of access by weather conditions, subject to annual water supply problems and constrained by finite land masses. Life on the islands is conservative, predictable and quiet, compared to the hectic pace of life on the mainland. Life is much more comfortable than it might have been in the past and at the same time much more expensive. Whilst goods and services might be much more readily available, they cost more. Electrical power is an energy source which gives rise to a range of other lifestyle services such as cooking and cleaning technology, television and computers. Councils ensure that power bills don't accumulate unpaid by only issuing prepaid power cards. Much like prepaid telephone cards, power cards are purchased, prepaid and used rather than a system of billing, which is more costly and complicated. What this means however, is that the cost of living on the outer islands is more expensive than it would be on the mainland, as diesel to run the generators has to be shipped to each island, transport costs are high and maintenance and repair expenses are exorbitant.

Maintenance and repairs are costly and time consuming. Parts aren't always readily available on Thursday Island and may have to be air freighted in from Cairns or further south, adding

to the cost of the supply of services. Insurance of equipment and goods in transit is necessary and expensive, damage a constant danger from handling goods as they are loaded and off loaded several times. As the number of cars and petrol engines increases on the outer islands, petroleum products become staple requirements to maintain lifestyles. These commodities are rising in cost on the mainland as the result of rising oil costs, so their expense in the outer islands is proportionally higher. All this adds enormously to the cost of living for individuals and families. Jobs, employment and income all become important if lifestyles are to be enhanced or maintained. Sources of income are finite in each of the island communities, so the population of each island must be managed carefully, if the average community income per family is to be optimal and provide for each community member equitably.

Isolation is also related to the difficulty involved in insisting on particular projects being pursued in schools. One can work in a school and leave to visit another school thinking that you've successfully implemented a process, only to come back in a month's time to find that nothing has been moved forward. There are all sorts of good reasons why this occurs but it is also very disruptive of process activities and you run the risk of repeating yourself to the point of futility by trying to restart a process from the same point too many times. Often the problem stems from a non-Torres Strait Islander person's inability to communicate meaning sufficiently clearly so they end up leaving a site with everyone confused about exactly what they need to do. This stems from a familiarity by Torres Strait Islanders with being told what to do and when, as this is how the system operates most efficiently – for administrators and politicians, but not for the students or the community. The work with pedagogies is work that must be done by the people on site, so I facilitate their work but I cannot tell them what to do or how to do it. This is valuable in terms of outcomes because the participants own the outcomes having worked hard to create them. The complication is that I'm not always

around to facilitate their work and being a long distance away further complicates the situation even given the reality of telephones and email. One of the weaknesses of such a process is that it really needs a facilitator to be available to schools as and when they hit the wall, as they will do in this conceptual work. The answer is to educate Torres Strait Islander facilitators, which is easy to do but costly.

The issue of Native Title, which has now been granted to every Torres Strait Island community, is both a blessing and a potential problem. Community resources now find themselves located on particular family or clan land, so for example, the school may be sited on or near to land belonging to a particular family. Any new buildings or expansion of the school requires negotiation with that family and this process may be extended in time as the family works its own way through the issues. It may also be that the family rejects the proposal resulting in either further negotiations or alternative proposals. Any of these outcomes causes delays that may significantly effect the proposal or make it unviable. Dealing with such issues has to be left to the community itself to resolve, as any intervention by Governments or their institutions will be seen as unwarranted, paternalistic and further confirmation of the desire of the white majority to enforce their will.

Standardised testing.

> *"... an education system that permits sorting, selecting, and segregating through a testing industry is part of the mechanism of social inequality."* (Murrell, 2002, p. 8)

I've already indicated the inequity of the current testing process and my belief that the existing standardised testing process should be abandoned. However, assessment and quality assurance are still important. In the context of the Torres Strait they are probably more important than for a mainland setting. This is so because the accuracy of the process to

determine appropriate standards for the Torres Strait is vital. National benchmarks are irrelevant, unless they provide realistic opportunities for Torres Strait Islanders to demonstrate their capabilities. Achievement and success must be defined by Torres Strait Islanders, in ways that are significant for them. Some of these definitions will undoubtedly correspond with Queensland and national benchmarks and outcomes but many of them may not. Equal legitimacy must be accorded to the views of Torres Strait Islander academics and administrators in this search for equity.

Realistic targets must be set by each community for educational outcomes. The aim should be to see these targets rising sustainably each year rather than seeking to achieve a sudden and significant improvement that isn't likely to be sustainable. Support in whatever form is deemed appropriate must be available to schools to assist them to achieve their goals. However, because such assistance often takes the form of educational consultancies, they need to be carefully vetted for their efficacy and desirability. It is too easy for schools to be conned by the unscrupulous, in their desire to achieve outcomes for their students. Consultancies should be subject to performance review and costs should be carefully checked, before agreements are entered into. Schools should be constantly asking themselves the question, "How is this going to enhance the work that we do?"

Linking education to employment.

I've indicated earlier in this folio element that employment is an issue that educational providers and Torres Strait Islander communities need to remain acutely aware of. It is all very well for me to advocate significantly improved educational outcomes for Torres Strait Islander students but if the Torres Strait achieves a large population of well-educated, highly articulate young people, with little prospect of permanent employment or career opportunities, this would create another set of social problems. This is not to suggest that all

young Torres Strait Islanders should expect to be able to achieve employment in the Torres Strait. However, jobs, careers and employment for Torres Strait Islanders is a significant and vexatious issue, if only because one of the main constraints results directly from many employment opportunities being held by non-Islanders. This has even more significance for Torres Strait Islander autonomy as the nature of the positions change. 2001 census data (ABS, 2001a ; 2001b) shows that most of the outer islands have no Indigenous managers/administrators, very small numbers of people identifying as professional but very large numbers of people identifying as labourers. It is important that Torres Strait Islander youth are able to identify with becoming managers and professionals and can access the educational requirements that will enable them to seek these positions. The professional and managerial positions in the islands must be made available to Torres Strait Islanders, as they qualify for them. Non-Torres Strait Islander people occupying them, need to know that they then must move on to free the position up.

This does not address the reality that Torres Strait Islanders must be prepared to acknowledge that for employment purposes, many of them will have to move to the mainland, at least for short periods of time, if they are going to obtain jobs and pursue careers. Just as I firmly believe that experience teaching in Torres Strait Island schools will make white teachers better teachers of all children, likewise, I believe that Torres Strait Islander teachers should seek to work for periods of time on the mainland, particularly shadowing other teachers and administrators. These experiences will widen their professional knowledge, introduce them to other strategies and techniques and refresh their professional lives. After all, they are preparing their students to live in a global and rapidly changing world.

Exploration of the nature of employment across the Torres Strait inevitably leads to greater understanding of the limited and fragile nature of economic opportunities for the region. One of the obvious ones is tourism, however tourism depends on maintaining viable industry locations, so it becomes important to preserve the pristine nature of locations, including fish stocks and reefs. Once the reef deteriorates from the adverse impact of tourist traffic and diving, it will take a long time to regenerate and the tourists won't wait. Environmental sustainability becomes a key concern linked directly to educational provisions for Torres Strait Islanders.

Conclusion:

My work over the past several years has culminated in the substance of the current document. I recognise the complexity of responding to my call for a level of integrity and authority to be accorded to Torres Strait Islanders, in respect of their education provisions. The Anglo-Australian politicians and bureaucrats who currently manage the decision-making processes find it extremely difficult to step outside their dominant socio-cultural location and change what they have been taught to do over generations. The western democratic process is now being applauded as the global system of governance, along with western economic rationalism and western scientific knowledge. These are powerful forces backed by powerful and wealthy corporations, political parties and religions and it is easy to see how those who have little can get caught up in the marketing and rhetoric of consumerism. It is also easy to see how minority groups can be coerced into believing that commodification of cultures can lead to 'better' lifestyles.

However, unless Torres Strait Islanders adequately protect themselves from the market economy by manipulating it, rather than letting it manipulate them, they will be the last to benefit and the first to lose. Unless they are able to sustain their uniqueness in the global

world, Torres Strait Islanders will be absorbed into the masses of those who were also unable to sustain their uniqueness.   The consequences of this are social and economic alienation.

An education designed by Torres Strait Islanders for Torres Strait Islanders, in the interests of Torres Strait Islanders, will provide for these uncertain futures in ways that the current system has shown it can neither imagine nor achieve.

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APPENDIX A

Significant Australian Government documentation of the inadequacies of educational provision for Indigenous Australians.

1985: Report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs. (Miller Report)

> The Miller Report provided evidence in the Employment and Training sector of the level of Indigenous disadvantage. Being at the outcomes end of the education spectrum, one might be looking for some significant changes to be occurring, however this was not evidenced. This report also indicated the importance of the link between education and employment and subsequent lifestyle indicators, again identifying significant Indigenous disadvantage in comparison to mainstream Australia.

1988: Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce, Department of Employment, Education and Training. (Hughes Report)

> Following on the heels of the Miller Report, the Hughes Report adopted a much broader and more inclusive view of Indigenous education. Hughes recommended a national policy approach to Indigenous education and made a number of recommendations aimed at targeting improvements in outcomes for Indigenous students.

1990: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NATSIEP).

This policy was launched in 1990 and directly resulted from the Miller and Hughes reports. The Aboriginal Education Policy (AEP) as it became known set out 21 long-term goals, clustered under four aims: involving Aboriginal people in decision-making related to education and schooling; establishing equality of access for Indigenous people to educational services; promoting equality of participation in educational provisions; and promoting equitable and appropriate educational outcomes.

1990: Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program (AESIP).

This program provides the bulk of financial support for initiatives in the field of Indigenous educational, in all States across Australia. Examples of projects supported in this way include the Partners for Success strategy promoted across Queensland schools.

1991: Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC).

The Royal Commission concluded that amongst many other issues, education or the lack thereof amongst Indigenous people was a significant factor contributing to the extent of Indigenous incarceration and subsequent unacceptably high rates of unexplained injury and death in custody. Considerable sums of money were applied to dealing with these issues, both at Federal and State levels. However, as in the case

of educational outcomes, positive results measured by a drop in the incidents of deaths in custody amongst Indigenous people, has not occurred. Once again a dominant view that by fixing educational programs in prisons and introducing compulsory cultural awareness programs for police officers in training, 'the deaths in custody problem' would be resolved, prevailed. Dealing with the broader issues of health, education, employment, housing and racism was never an option and programs adopting an holistic approach to dealing with these fundamental issues were rarely canvassed.

1993: The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

This group was established as a means of reviewing the AEP's impact on Indigenous education around the four goals. This national review established a task force to develop a national strategy for education of Indigenous Australians.

1995: National Review of Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

This is the report of the MCEETYA review which was completed in 1994. This report led to the establishment of the second National Strategy in 1996.

1996: A National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 1996 – 2002, MCEETYA and Commonwealth.

http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/public/pub3312.htm

This is the first time that a national project focussed on educational outcomes for Indigenous peoples instead of inputs. Financial aspects were scrutinised and reforms to the 21 national goals, were also placed under close scrutiny.

1997: Introduction of new IESIP and the first funding quadrennium (1997 – 2000).

This funding arrangement was developed in response to the new National Strategy. Rates of funding as they applied to various schooling and educational sectors were differentially applied and the non-government sector received significantly increased funding. It is suggested that this initiative acknowledged the urgent need to address the deficiencies in Indigenous education, by focussing on the measurement of the success of programs[xi]. Short sharp projects were favoured, where indicators of 'success' could be identified and promoted. Whether these 'successes' were sustainable or not is a question that has not been raised or addressed.

1998: Indigenous school-to-work transition.

http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/indigenous/publications/schooltowork.htm

Since the Miller Report the education-employment nexus has been a matter of considerable discussion in relation to Indigenous education. The prevailing thinking, particularly in political circles appears to be that if Indigenous people can be educated into employment, then they will stand a better chance of securing an improved lifestyle and their dependence on the welfare system as their only means of survival, thereby significantly reduced. This thinking proposes that the impact of greater employment on Indigenous people will be a healthier, happier and more self-sufficient

group of people, thereby reducing racism, welfare dependency, chronic health

problems, deaths in custody, drug and alcohol abuse and family dysfunction[xii].

2000: National Indigenous Education Literacy and Numeracy Strategy.

http://www.dest.gov.au./schools/Indigenous/nielns.htm

This strategy aims to adopt a far more holistic approach to the achievement of literacy

and numeracy levels comparable to those of non-Indigenous Australians. It also sets

out a requirement for States to identify how both Commonwealth and State funds are

contributing to achieving the goals of the Strategy. There is obviously emphasis on

the financial accountability of Indigenous education provisions and whilst this is not

necessarily a bad thing, what tends to get emphasised is the financial and not the

educational aspects of educational provisions.

2000: Achieving educational equality for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Peoples MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education.

http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mctyapdf/reporta.pdf

Largely a curriculum initiative, this project endeavours to emphasise the need to

promote educational equality for Indigenous Australians. Again this approach

focuses on a single fix process to an enormously complex set of interrelated issues.

Whilst curriculum reform is an important part of the Indigenous education agenda, it

is not the only mechanism needing to be explored by national initiatives.

2002: What works: explorations in improving outcomes for Indigenous students.

http://www.acsa.edu.au/publications/whatworks_sections.htm

This professional development initiative drew on the results of the IESIP funded projects emanating from the 1997 national initiative. The short term projects were documented and compiled into reports that identified the 'successful' components of each project. These were then proposed as examples for other schools and teachers to use, adapt and modify to suit their own contexts. Some of these identified pedagogic principles which led to success in particular contexts and which might be used to further inform the work that forms the substance of this research.

2003: Second National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training 2002.

http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/Publications/2003/nrpiet/2002split.htm

Basically a funding and administration document, it forms the basis for the directions of Indigenous education initiatives in the 2005 – 2008 period. This is a national agenda but its influence will define State directions in Indigenous education for that same period. Increasingly, schools and individual communities are being encouraged to pursue their own educational agendas but in ways that focus on successful outcomes for students and communities. Whilst there is still a long way to go before equitable outcomes are being achieved for Indigenous students, the increasing opportunity for community and cultural direction of educational processes offers greater chances of achieving appropriate educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

2003: Dare to Lead Coalition.

In a different way this is quite a unique and interesting national initiative. School based networks are being established across Australia, focussed on improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students. Localised and very strategic initiatives are being promoted that have achievable targets, defined by the local school and community.

APPENDIX B

Data related to the relative educational success of Indigenous students in Queensland schools.

Figure 1:   Year 7 Data   (Department of Education and the Arts, 2004)

Year	Cultural background	Cohort (n)	Reading (Mean)	Spelling (Mean)	Number (Mean)
1999	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	2256	618	627	583
	All	35090	679	686	666
Mean performance differential			61	59	83
2000	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	2294	624	620	590
	All	35903	683	692	665
Mean performance differential			59	72	75
2001	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	2513	620	623	587

	All	36530	685	689	673
Mean performance differential			65	66	86
2002	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	2757	630	626	592
	All	37898	684	688	677
Mean performance differential			54	62	65

Figure 2:   Year 5 Data   (Department of Education and the Arts, 2004)

Year	Cultural background	Cohort (n)	Reading (Mean)	Spelling (Mean)	Number (Mean)
1999	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	2675	552	551	521
	All	36856	606	612	589
Mean performance differential			54	61	68

2000	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	2705	551	545	527
	All	37633	607	606	590
Mean performance differential			56	61	63
2001	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	2776	561	559	507
	All	37935	615	611	581
Mean performance differential			54	52	74
2002	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	3078	561	551	524
	All	38956	612	607	595
Mean performance differential			51	56	71

Figure 3:   Year 3 Data   (Department of Education and the Arts, 2004)

Year	Cultural background	Cohort (n)	Reading (Mean)	Spelling (Mean)	Number (Mean)
1999	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	291	462	457	472
	All	3526	505	515	527
Mean performance differential			43	55	55
2000	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	361	421	421	434
	All	3622	483	490	494
Mean performance differential			62	69	60
2001	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	2680	457	460	468
	All	38178	513	520	528
Mean performance differential			56	60	60

2002	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	2986	461	439	457
	All	39003	518	513	532
Mean performance differential			57	74	75

Figure 4:   Data for the group of Indigenous students who were tested over their Primary school life.

Year	Year Level/n	Reading (Mean)	n	Spelling (Mean)	n	Number (Mean)	n
1998 Indigenous	Year 3 2673	415	350	429	308	423	364
All 1998 students		484	3366	498	3073	503	3393
2000 Indigenous	Year 5 2745	551 (+136)	2705	545 (+116)	2711	527 (+104)	2765
All 2000 students		607 (+123)	37633	606 (+108)	37663	590 (+87)	37784

2002 Indigenous	Year 7 2786	630 (+79)	2757	626 (+81)	2694	592 (+65)	2776
All 2002 students		684 (+77)	37898	688 (+82)	37732	616 (+26)	38056

(Department of Education and the Arts, 2004)

APPENDIX C

Field data for various sites across the Torres Strait

1. Eagle State School: Vision: *'Linking Solid Traditions to Future Freedoms'*

This statement was derived from identification and consideration of the values that underpinned the school. These values included strong relationships, individuality, community, effective learners, critical learners, respect, self-esteem and creativity. From these values the school-wide pedagogies were distilled using a combination of statements illustrated by 'Y'chart[xiii] descriptors.

- The relationships between teachers, parents, students and visitors

   Looks like – friendly, purposeful, supportive, engaging, co-operative, respectful, interactive, responsive, meaningful, appropriate.

   Sounds like – positive, encouraging, respectful, productive, communicative, appropriate.

   Feels like – caring, trusting, respectful, exciting, motivating, happy, valued, accepting.

- Teaching and Learning should be fun and active

   Looks like – rotational, hands-on, excursions, field trips, real life experiences, experiments, talent/cultural camps, group presentations, games/puzzles, video/slides, computers.

   Sounds like – noisy, active, involved, energetic.

   Feels like – interesting, enjoyable, friendly, caring, sharing, pleasant, productive, challenging, supportive.

- Learning environments should be stimulating.

  Looks like – colourful charts, displays, timetables, class routines, learning centres, interest areas, number charts, THRASS charts, word banks, job rosters, class rules, listening post.

  Sounds like – well managed, noisy, active, involving, discussions, quiet time, energetic.

  Feels like – enjoyable, friendly, comfortable, pleasant, productive, calm, peaceful, interested, effort, everyone takes pride.

- Lessons should be planned towards ability grouping.

  Looks like – ability groups, cater for individual needs, observations, special needs, anecdotal records, checklists, criteria sheets, assessment, peer assessment, self assessment, consultation.

  Sounds like – quiet, noisy, enjoyable, active, well managed, well organised, punctual.

  Feels like – sharing, helping others, co-operative, questioning, concentration, respect for group leaders, respect for peers, accepting other points of view, confident, self-esteem.

- Learning should be practical and based on real life situations.

  Looks like – real, research, hands on, internet, interviewing, questioning, surveys, fax, excursions, trips, timeline, documenting, video making, report writing, journal, letter writing, telephone, photo taking.

  Sounds like – interesting, concentrating, analysing, data collecting.

Feels like – active, fun, interesting, quiet, noisy.

- Learning should involve discussions, explanations, concentration, thinking and listening.

  Looks like – problem solving, brain teasers, debates, meetings, storytelling, book reports, recounts, journals, diary writing, research, internet, email, telephone conversations, teleconferencing, buddy system, electronic folders.

  Sounds like – fun, noisy, quiet, active, involving, enjoyable.

  Feels like – interactive, challenging, busy, concentrating, proud, good.

Children at this site made the following observations about what they saw as 'good teaching'. They commented using terms like, fun, active, safe, caring, helpful, learning different things (meaning extending learning), practical, real life, repetitious, working together side by side. The term 'repetitious' is significant, as it has come up in many yarns with people across the Strait. One teacher said to me that 'no learning was important if it wasn't repeated', whilst an old man in the eastern islands told me 'no knowledge is worthwhile unless it is repeated'. When you attend meetings in the community messages are repeated over and over, in different ways and I suppose that in an oral society, repetition ensures that information is kept intact and transmitted accurately. It is also interesting to watch and listen to groups of children enthusiastically chanting tables, spelling, rhymes, number patterns and all manner of language games.

This was the result of a fairly lengthy process that took place between my visits to Eagle State School. All schools initially began with the same photo card workshop, as described

earlier. The pedagogies (those teaching practices that promoted effective learning through the eyes of the children, the teachers and the community) that were eventually identified were,

- Risk Taking

- Energetic Learning

- Stimulating Environments

- Individualised Learning

- Connected Learning

- Problematic Learning

- Positive Relationships - (gud pasin)

My own view is that 'risk taking' and 'problematic learning' are so similar in nature that they could be the one domain. I'm sure however that given time to put these pedagogies in place across the school and reflection on that process, that those pedagogies that are similar in intent will be coalesced. This is likely to occur as the teachers discover that similar activities are attached to closely aligned pedagogies and that identifying a single descriptor for both makes sense. I could try to force this process by asking the participants to see if they can reduce the number of pedagogies from seven to six but this might be a little risky in terms of ownership of the product. The IDEAS process suggests that schools try to work with between six and eight pedagogies, as this is the maximum number that appears to be manageable, from our experience in other schools. A large number of pedagogies also tends to be imprecise and encourages unnecessary duplication rather than precision and clarity of thought and action. The whole school community needs to know the school pedagogies and should be seen to be using them.

2. Warrior State School: Vision: (Still under refinement)

IDEAS workshop notes kept by Principal of Warrior State School

Vision statements: words that describe Warrior State School

List adjectives

Things that are working for you in your school

<u>Visions</u>

Bridging the gap (example)

Visions need to reflect your values & environment

Photo sessions to create visions

This is what Warrior State School would Look Like in the next 5/10 years time

Select a picture that look like your picture/vision

My picture: three children jumping in the water

risk taking/challenging environment

motivational/enthusiastic/fun/enjoyable learning environment

safe/caring/ supportive/loving environment

individualily/ /group/teamwork

togetherness

having a go

Describing words came out from the picture interpretation

We then had to sort the words into different headings where the words are fitting together. But cannot use two or more times when sorting.

Descriptive words:

Fun, enjoyable, challenging, risks taking, supportive, caring safe, encouragement, team work, working togetherness, individualisation, achievement, self-confident, partners, cooperation, sharing, respect, cultures, happy environment, group, problem solving, globalisation

(these words came out from when doing the picture interpretation)

SUPPORTIVE:

team work

working together

partners

caring

safe

respectful

cooperative

encouragement

sharing

HAPPY ENVIRONMENT:

individuality

globalisation (partners)

cultures

self confident

caring

fun

achieving

problem solving(challenging & risk taking)

1. CHALLENGING

2. WORKING TOGETHER

3. RESPECT

4. GLOBALISATION

5. INDIVIDUALISATION

6.PARTNERSHIPS

7.SUPPORTIVE

8.HAPPY ENVIRONMENT

Possible vision statements from Warrior State School

Sea of opportunity & challenges

Supporting children through cultures

Nurture the full potential for the future

Navigating for success in a global world

Successful navigators: Malu Kurasar

Swim safe to reach and challenge opportunity

A challenging sea navigators: Malu Kurasar

A challenging passage to an open sea

Sailing together across the sea to success

KKY (Kala Kawaw Ya) POSSIBLE VISION STATEMENT:

NGOEY POEYPIYAMAW MABAYGAL

MALU KURASAR

NGALPA MURA UMAYPA MINALAY

NGALPA MURA UTHUYPA NAGU

MURA BUWAY AYKUYK

Note: Continue to do this with students ,community and staff in creating vision.

In the preceding documentation photo cards were used to stimulate yarning. Sharing of the

participants' interpretations of the photo cards led to the development of the session. This

session was particularly interesting as almost the entire yarning was conducted in Kala

Kawaw Ya (KKY), the island dialect. Participants explained to me what was being said but

only after agreement had been reached or the dialogue had ceased. This experience

represents a reversal of the translation process and since I am not literate in KKY, I can only

rely on the interpretations as being accurate. I don't have any reason to doubt the accuracy of

what I was told as this was clarified and confirmed by several participants in very obvious

ways, including gesticulation, head nodding (of approval and denial as it was appropriate)

and clear expressions of satisfaction with the final agreed outcome. I was in no way offended

by the translation process. Rather I was gratified that so much care and precision was taken

to achieve what was obviously a satisfactory conclusion for the participants.

This workshop took place over the course of one full day, on a weekend. All staff, including

administration and ancillary staff attended for the whole day and at their own discretion. The

workshop developed quickly and engaged everyone intimately because it was run in language and by the group themselves. I simply acted as an initial stimulus, explanatory mechanism and recorder. Previous to this, the workshops had all been run primarily in English. By this I mean that apart from some interpersonal and group discussions in Creole and sometimes in *langus*, the whole process was conceptually and linguistically located in the dominant framework. I should have understood that this severely limited the engagement of many of the participants, for without some means of translation, concepts such as 'pedagogy' can be meaningless.   I need also to be mindful of the possibility of overdoing or oversimplifying explanations. If this leads to the assumption on the part of the participants that they are suspected of being unable to understand particular concepts their willingness to become engaged in the process could be diminished.

Whilst I'd not discouraged the use of Creole, dialects and vernaculars, neither had I actively encouraged their use. I had made the point in each yarning session that the dialogue might be easier if people used *langus* and/or Creole. In hindsight, this must have sounded somewhat paternalistic, rather than encouraging, since the communication forms used were done so in a very quiet and self-deprecating way, indicating possible embarrassment on the part of some participants. Whilst part of the process involved people yarning with one another using the most comfortable and effective means of communication, the recording was always in English and the descriptors and pedagogy statements were in English.

In this instance the whole process was conducted in Kala Kawaw Ya (KKY) with English playing a very secondary role. The product and process were both distinctly superior at this site. Participants sought clarification from me if they needed it but all other dialogue was

conducted in KKY. The yarning was enthusiastic, critical and interrogative. This was

obvious from the animation, and engagement of each participant and the humour with which

the dialogue took place. At one point in the discussion around the nature of the vision, the

focus was on the image of 'warrior', as this was an historic and respected image. This is how

the people saw themselves but it was also recognised by the group, that this image excluded

women and children and so could not be used as the school vision because it marginalised

better than half of the school community. From this point on I actively encouraged the use of

whatever means of communication people felt most comfortable with, including the use of

images.

3. **Seven Clans State School:** Vision: ***Working Hand in Hand with the Community***

In this school evidence of cultural learning was readily available. On several visits, cultural

activities were underway, with community elders working with groups of up to fifteen

children of varying ages, engaged in historic activities such as whap (dugong spear)

construction and string making. These groups were self selected. No one was allocated to a

group. Children were expected to stay in their group and move around the activities. Times

at each activity were monitored and children told when to move to the next activity. What I

found interesting was the ease with which the elders managed the groups of children. They

ranged in age from preschoolers to teenagers. The preschoolers and younger children usually

joined their older siblings' group but were allowed to wander from group to group as they

pleased. No one told them to sit down or come back and at no stage did I see any young child

interrupt or disrupt any of the groups. They simply moved on when their attention wandered.

The older school age children remained in their groups without any need for anyone to

organise them. They paid rapt attention to the activities and the culture teachers, often

interrupting the elder to ask questions. As part of the teaching strategy, the elders

demonstrated what they were going to produce, as the end product of their activity. They

showed the materials that they use, talking about where the materials came from, how they

were collected and what needed to be done with them to prepare them for use. Few, if any

materials could be used as they occurred naturally. They then demonstrated what needed to

be done while the children observed. Every step of the process was accompanied by an oral

description. As the activity progressed, the teachers related stories about locations or events

associated with the mats or the dugong spear or whatever it was being produced. None of the

activities were gender specific, though the elders reflected some gendered knowledge, as the

mat weaving and grass string making was done by female elders and the dugong spear

making and dugong stand construction was led by male elders.

The culturally relevant pedagogies that I observed were very didactic. The process was

clearly one of listen, observe, practice and ask questions. This was confirmed in each

community that I visited and on numerous occasions. It is also something that I've observed

over the years that I've been living and working in the Torres Strait. It is interesting to

compare these strategies with those being identified through the IDEAS process. This forms

the subject of discussion a little later in this paper. The notion of yarning as a pedagogy of

some significance is also very apparent in these processes.

School-wide Pedagogies

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┌─────────────────────┐                              ┌─────────────────────┐
│     Siba Wum         │                              │     Mura Buai        │
│                      │          ⟺                   │                      │
│   Education for      │                              │  Education for all   │
│    you and I         │                              │      of us           │
└─────────────────────┘                              └─────────────────────┘
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(cultural learnings)   **(child-centeredness)**

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┌─────────────────┐                          ┌─────────────────┐
│  Passing the    │                          │  Handling       │
│                 │                          │                 │
│  Knowledge      │                          │  the fruit      │
└─────────────────┘                          └─────────────────┘
```

(relatedness)   **(futures perspective)**   **(real learning)**

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┌─────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────┐
│  Weaving a      │    │  Connecting to  │    │  Education for  │
│  mat            │    │  the world      │    │  the whole      │
│                 │    │                 │    │  community      │
│                 │    │                 │    │                 │
│  Crosswords     │    │  Children are the│   │                 │
│  relatedness    │    │  future         │    │  Jigsaw.  The   │
│                 │    │                 │    │  whole child    │
└─────────────────┘    └─────────────────┘    └─────────────────┘
```

200
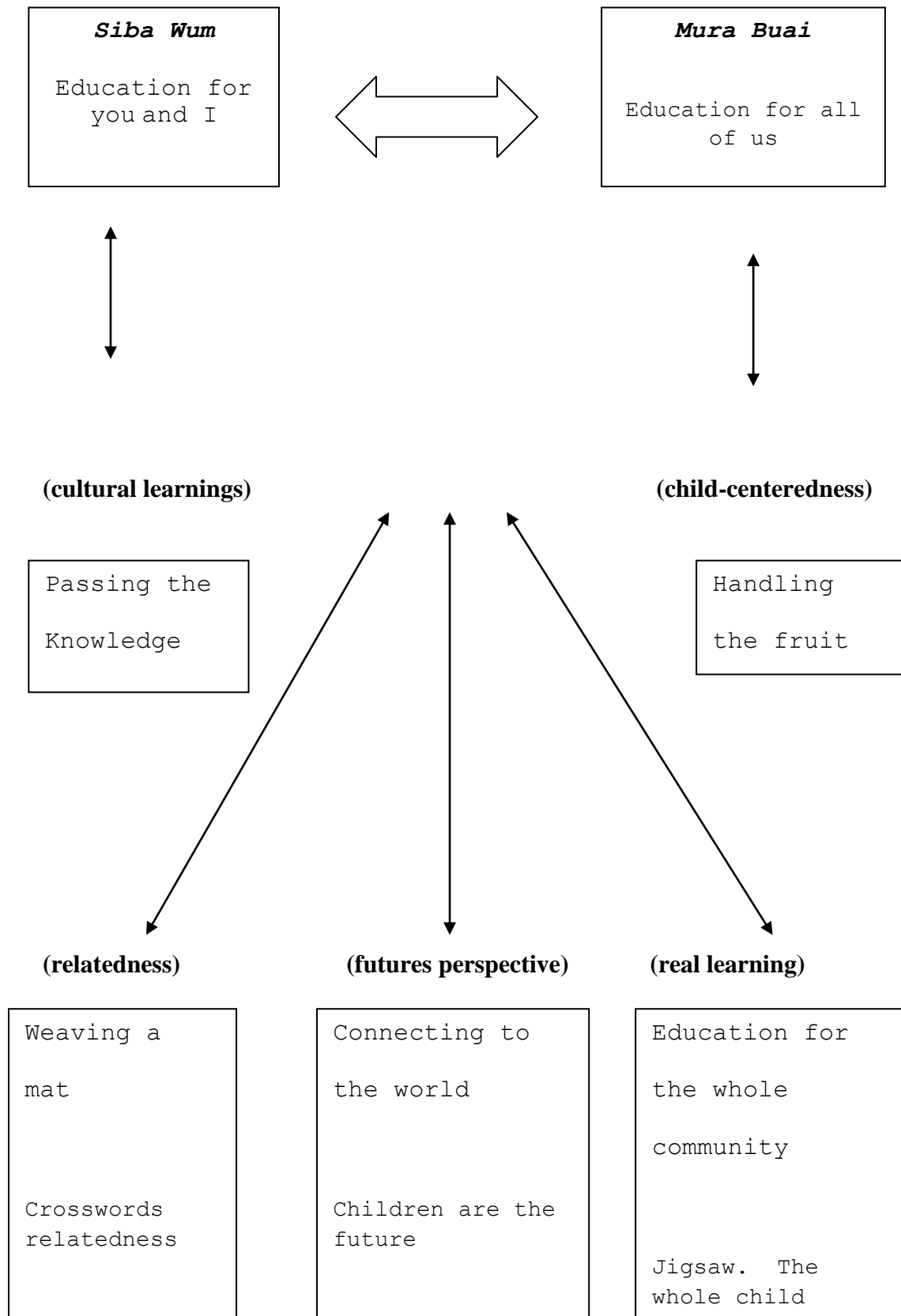
Note: You need to compile your pedagogies and reduce the number to no more than about 6. Reasoning behind this is that these pedagogies, actually define the ways of teaching in Seven Clans State School that work effectively with the children. We know this because they have been identified by you, the teachers, aides, students and community, from successful experiences that you have had or seen, in Seven Clans State School. The smaller the number of pedagogies, the easier they are to remember and thus the more likely everyone is to be able to identify them in action and process in the daily life of the school.

This site had a really interesting image of the coconut mat as representative of their desire for their school. This is a lovely image because it integrates cultural learning with functional learning, with real-life learning, with excellence in learning, with creative learning. I also loved their image of children as fruit to be handled with care. I only wish they had moved to visualising their pedagogy as I'd suggested and hoped they might do. In this latter statement, it is interesting to see the power of my privileged position coming out again. In spite of my espoused awareness of my potential to influence outcomes, try as I might, it still occurs. My timeframes are illustrated by virtue of their clash with those of Islander peoples. I had a desire to complete the study in my timeframe and not be willing to let Torres Strait participants determine their own timeline for the work. In this instance, the pedagogies were explored in English before being expressed in Kala Kawaw Ya but there didn't seem to be any difficulties with matching concepts as there was in other locations. Again it is possible that this was the result of my desire to reach a conclusion whilst I was on the island and not let it come to pass at the discretion of this community.

4. The Peak State School: Vision: *Working Together to Reach the Peak*

School -Wide Pedagogies identified by the staff of The Peak State School

These are the pedagogies that are considered by the staff to be successful at The Peak State School. They describe the The Peak's way of teaching.

Culturally significant

Working together

Learning together

Striving for excellence

Continual improvement

Multiple explanations

Problem solving

Enthusiasm

Taking risks

Real learning

Caring

Encouraging

Independent learner

Flexible learner

Responsible learner

Active citizen

Good relationships

Supportive learning

Staff need to talk to students about what pedagogies they like. Remember that the students experience our teaching every day and will have a good understanding of what is good teaching and what is not. Community will also have some ideas of what good teaching looks like and they should be included. The more you include people the more people will support you.

From here, staff need to reduce this large number of pedagogies to about 6. Too many will make the process of remembering them too difficult. Everyone needs to know and use the pedagogies you identify.

This is my first rough take on organizing these pedagogies.

Learning together

Good relationships

Working together

Learning together

Enjoyable learning

Supportive learning

Caring

Encouraging

Enthusiasm

Emphasizing excellence

Continual improvement

Striving for excellence

Child-centered learning

Multiple explanations

Flexible learning

Independent learners

Real life learning

Real learning

Risk taking

Problem solving

Responsible learners

Active citizens

Cultural learning

Cultural significance

If these categories are adopted, or whatever organization is reached, then the categories/identifiers need to be used to manage learning and planning in particular. (eg for each teaching session, what categories am I addressing? Have I overlooked any categories? How do I include particular categories? What categories have I avoided/focused on over the term?

These statements were further refined in sessions with children and community members to arrive at the following set of pedagogies.

- Learning together (gud pasin)
- Enjoyable learning
- Emphasizing excellence
- Child-centered learning
- Real life learning
- Cultural learning

In many ways these pedagogies simply represent good teaching in any environment. How these pedagogies are translated into strategies and activities is critical and will accommodate such aspects as culturally appropriate curriculum. This process defines the uniqueness of each locations' pedagogies and determines the particular ways in which teacher experience, student interest and community aspirations influence education in each site. The aim is to reduce those practices that do not promote quality education in each site and to enhance effective pedagogy.

Teachers need to identify these pedagogies or the lack of them, in their normal planning. A simple way to do this is to colour code each pedagogy and as you plan, identify each pedagogy or combination of pedagogies by its colour code. This will give the teacher a very clear picture of which pedagogies they are using and which they are not. The next step is to enhance your teaching by employing a greater or more balanced range of pedagogies in your daily work. This might mean that you need to share with your colleagues and learn from them. This encourages collegiality and professional discussion, whilst identifying and acknowledging the capacity that exists within all schools. It also opens up the opportunity for professional learning to occur across the school utilising existing expertise.

The importance of these pedagogies lies in their reflections of successful practice. It would be dangerous to assume that the same pedagogy in different contexts, reflected the same activity or process. Real life learning for example in one islands refers to preparing children for employment and productive life on their home island, so activities focus around the types of jobs that are potentially available on the island and the education necessary to enable students to do those jobs. On another island real life learning has a more global focus, associating with activities meant to expand the horizons of the students and make them aware of the possibilities of a globally influenced environment. This does not deny the significance of localised employment opportunities but it does acknowledge that these are limited and students don't need to be limited in their aspirations.

End Notes:

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[i] The Murray Island decision is a legal ruling made by the High Court of Australia in 1982 acknowledging the right of the people of the islands of Mer to Native Title over the land and surrounding reefs of those islands. The case was initiated by Eddie Koiki Mabo, James Rice and George Passi on behalf of the peoples of the islands of Mer. The ruling led the way for further Native Title claims and grants for other groups of Indigenous peoples on the mainland and islands of Australia. Currently, all the peoples of the Torres Strait have been granted Native Title to their islands and surrounding reefs.

[ii] I don't count this as a failure, as some have suggested, rather it serves as confirmation that the processes identified with and linked to achieving successful school outcomes using the IDEAS process, are valid and applicable in any context.

iii Youth Allowance is Federal government funding allocated to support young people who are studying in Higher Education or who are seeking employment.

[iv] The 1967 referendum was held to decide if Aboriginal people (which included Torres Strait islander peoples as well at that stage) would be counted in future census collections held by the Australian Government. There was overwhelming support by the people of Australia and the outcome opened the way for Indigenous people to receive acknowledgement and support in moving to a more equitable situation , as members of the Australian community

v Community Development Employment Programs (CDEP) are essentially work-for-the-dole schemes that operate in Indigenous communities across Australia. It is a Federal Government initiative that strives to provide employment and training opportunities for Indigenous communities.   The unfortunate aspect of the program is that it has become a career for many Indigenous people and it is not unusual to have children respond to the question of what they want to do when they leave school by saying that they want to work for the CDEP. The program was never intended to be a long term solution to training and employment issues.

vi Smart State is a Queensland Government initiative to have all young people either earning a living in a job or learning at an educational institution in order to enable them to get a job. It is intended to reduce unemployment and promote working smarter in the 21st century.

vii YUMI education is education for you and for me. The Torres Strait Islanders Regional Education Council (TSIREC) defines this concept specifically but the term is widely used across the Torres Strait to describe 'proper' education for Islander children.

viii Ilan Tok is the Creole spoken across the Torres Strait, largely by Islanders but also extensively by non-Islanders. It is also known as Yumpla Tok, Torres Strait Creole.

ix Giroux's (1999) notion of 'clerks of the empire'.

x 'IBIS' is the corporation that runs and manages all the stores across the islands in the Torres Strait. It is predominantly   a Torres Strait Islander venture.

xi I'd argue, as I do later in this paper, that the criteria or indicators of 'success' are still located in an inappropriate educational paradigm for indigenous peoples and therefore still result in confirmation of their inability to succeed, rather than provide evidence of their ability to succeed, especially in other educational paradigms.

xii It would seem to me that after several decades, possibly even a couple of centuries in pursuit of this goal, without apparent success, other possibilities need to be desperately considered.

xiii A 'Y' chart seeks to identify descriptors relating to the look the sound and the feel of particular things, in this case, pedagogies. So, staff, students and community are asked to describe their particular pedagogies by how they look, sound and feel in the classroom.