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Submission to the
**Select Committee on Regional and
Remote Indigenous Communities**

Subject: Indigenous First Languages
addressing points 2-4 of the committees mandate

May 2009

To the Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities,

Friends of Bilingual Learning are a network of academics, professionals and interested citizens who recognise the importance of first languages in the acquisition of education, identity and human rights. The 'Bilingual Learning' within our name refers to a society that operates with multiple languages, and subsequently accepts a continual cultural learning throughout life.

FOBL formed in June 2008 as a response to members concerns that the above ideals are not being taken seriously in the Northern Territory (NT). Particularly this is seen in the everyday struggle that NT indigenous people experience within our community, evident in disproportionate representation within the health, welfare, and judicial systems. If there is a single reason why this injustice exists it can be found in communication issues that arise from inadequate support of Indigenous languages.

A few specific issues that the Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities might consider further are; the lack of NAATI 3&4 level Indigenous language interpreters in the NT for work in health, legal or governance situations; the lack of English to indigenous language dictionaries; and the recent discontinuation of bilingual education in the Northern Territory.

This final issue has become FOBL's focus since the NT Government introduced its Compulsory Teaching In English For The First Four Hours Of Each School Day policy in October 2008. This submission to the Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities represents FOBL's concerns in relation to this policy.

The following pages are letters, articles, essays and information papers that we hope will tell a story about;

1. The current government policy
2. And inform the committee about Bilingual Education so as to support its re-establishment as the best way to educate 1st language speakers of indigenous languages in the Northern Territory.

On behalf of FOBL we thank you for your time and good will. If you have any questions relating to this submission or would like to make contact with FOBL call **0428402929** or email **foblmail@gmail.com**.

Sincerely

Kendall Trudgen

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POLICY

COMPULSORY TEACHING IN ENGLISH FOR THE FIRST FOUR HOURS OF EACH SCHOOL DAY

Responsibility of:	Schools Policy and Operations	DET File: 2008/2492
Effective Date:	January 2009	DOC2009/00508
Next Review Date:	January 2011	VERSION NUMBER: 1

1 POLICY

Teaching and learning programs in Northern Territory (NT) schools are to be conducted in English for the first four hours of each school day, in order to improve literacy and numeracy results, particularly for Indigenous students.

The teaching and learning of Indigenous languages and culture may be scheduled during afternoon sessions.

Each school, in conjunction with its school council, will ensure that its school timetable addresses this requirement.

The requirement is subject to a common sense interpretation to allow for the timetabling of morning classes for Languages Other Than English (LOTE) in secondary schools and colleges.

2 BUSINESS NEED

In October 2008, the Minister for Education and Training directed that, as of 2009 all NT students are to undertake their teaching and learning programs in English for the first four hours of every school day. This decision was made in response to an identified need to make improvements in literacy and numeracy for all NT students, in particular the results being achieved by Indigenous students.

The ability to read and write and to be numerate is the foundation for all school learning. Good literacy and numeracy skills are critical if young people are to complete their schooling successfully. These skills are also required if they are to participate fully in the economic and social development of the NT and the nation.

Despite substantial investment by the NT and Australian governments in supporting the improvement of literacy and numeracy skills for students, and the genuine effort of Department of Education and Training (DET) staff over many years to improve results, there has been no significant improvement in NT students' literacy and numeracy outcomes.

3 RESPONSIBILITIES

Principals

Principals are responsible for:

- working together with school councils to ensure the school timetable complies with this policy
- ensuring teachers, Assistant Teachers and other support staff have access to appropriate training or professional development to enable them to operate effectively in 'English only' classrooms
- negotiating for permission to vary the school timetable from time to time to accommodate special circumstances, e.g. a cultural excursion,

Schools managers

Schools managers are responsible for

- providing advice to schools and school councils on the design of timetables that meet this requirement
- brokering of appropriate support (e.g. ESL and/or cross-cultural effectiveness training) for teachers and classroom support staff
- ratifying school timetables to ensure they meet the requirements of this policy.

General Manager Teaching Learning & Standards

The General Manager Teaching, Learning and Standards is responsible for:

- the development of suitable curriculum materials that assist schools in implementing this policy effectively
- responding to requests from schools managers to provide professional learning support for teachers and support staff, to assist in the effective implementation of this policy.

Executive Directors

The Executive Directors North and Central Australia are responsible for the effective implementation and monitoring of this policy in their regions.

4 DEFINITION

This direction should *not* be interpreted to mean that the first four hours of each school day are to be spent solely on teaching the subject English. Teaching and learning programs are to be conducted *in* English for the first four hours of each school day, and may encompass instruction in a range of learning areas, e.g. science, mathematics, health education as well as English.

5 RELATED POLICIES

English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

Length of School Day

Requirement to Provide Instruction for the Full School Year

Physical Activity Requirements for Schools

6 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Memorandum 2008/2527–MRS of 14 October 2008 from the Minister for Education and Training

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Letter to NT Education Minister Marion Scrymgour from Yalmay Yunipingu

Marion Scrymgour

Minister For Education and Training

Northern Territory

Walngakum Yolngu Dharuknha-To keep Indigenous Languages alive.

Dear Marion Scrymgour

I applaud, admire and value your leadership as a female Indigenous Minister for Education and Training, but also you mark a stepping stone to play an important role to improve Indigenous children's Education in Literacy and Numeracy in Northern Territory.

I'm writing this letter as a long-term employee of DET but also on behalf of the 10 Accredited Bilingual programs and they are:

- Areyonga CEC
- Maningrida CEC
- Lajamanu CEC
- Milingimbi CEC
- Galiwin'ku CEC
- Willowra CEC
- Yirrkala CEC
- Yuendumu CEC
- Numbulwar CEC.

Once upon a time it used to be 20 Accredited Bilingual Schools unfortunately it's now 10. We were so disappointed to see the lack of support from the CLP government in 1980 after Self-Government and now it seems that the ALP is just as bad.

I was very devastated by your announcement on 14th October 2008 of Teaching English for the first four hours every day to all Indigenous children in remote areas. I'm writing to you because of my many years experience with Yolngu children. I know that bilingual education programs operate effectively throughout the world. In the Northern Territory, the *2004-2005 Indigenous Language and Culture Report* showed that Two Way Learning Schools are performing marginally better than "Like" Schools. Those "like" schools already are teaching an English only program and our bilingual schools are doing better. So why are you saying we must abandon our first language program?

I've been an ET 2 and also a Classroom Teacher for thirty-two years, and my experience is that the children do better in reading and writing if they learn in Yolngu Matha first. Also using Yolngu matha helps children understand difficult ideas in English, this helps them learn English concepts better. This is a very important

part of bilingual education, allowing the children to think in the language they think in, the language they know when they come to school.

Marion, we are doing everything we can to bring Literacy and Numeracy to a good standard at Yirrkala. What is true is that our children are learning in a second language and it is not fair that they are tested against English speaking children when they are very young. I think it is your job to stand up for our children, to acknowledge their Yolngu skills and knowledge and not to keep saying they are failing.

Yolngu language is our Power, our Foundation, our Root and everything that holds us together. Yolngu language gives us strength, language is our identity, who we are. Yolngu language gives us pride. Language is our Law and Justice.

The importance of teaching our Indigenous language is to keep it alive and to nurture it, to preserve and to sustain our language.

We have fear that we might lose our language, our Culture, Our Values and our Beliefs. As you may know the bilingual program at Numbulwar is a Language Revitalisation program because all the children there were speaking only Kriol. Surely you do not want this to happen to all our communities, as an Indigenous person yourself.

We are also concerned about our Land because it seems that you will not support our homeland centres either. The world is rapidly changing and we must have our land, language and culture or we are lost.

I urge you to take this into consideration and to acknowledge that a lot us have done enormous work to develop our bilingual/bicultural programs. My husband Mandawuy, and my recently deceased sister, Dr Marika are only 2 of the Yolngu educators who have worked for years to develop our own Yolngu pedagogy. Please don't steal this away from us. This work is now a part of the NT Curriculum Framework in the Indigenous Languages and Culture Component Section. The last Minister, Syd Stirling, was very proud of this part of our Framework and I am confused why you are not the same.

I would really like to have a face-face meeting with you to discuss all these confusing issues. You can contact me on: 0427 610 799, by email at yalmay.yunupingu@ntschoools.net or through the Yothu Yindi office.

Yours sincerely,

Yalmay Yunupingu

Yothu Yindi Office

GPO Box 2727

Darwin,

NT 0801

89 412 900

An Open Letter to the NT Minister for Education from Northern Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia on behalf of its Aboriginal Constituents

Dear Minister,

The Standing Committee of the Uniting Church, Northern Synod, in support of the NRCC - the Synod's Indigenous Presbytery, asks you to reconsider the decision to cease bilingual education in the NT. Your announcement that in 2009 the first four hours of each school day are to be spent in English only, effectively means bilingual education cannot be conducted.

The purpose of bilingual education is to give support to Aboriginal communities which wish to maintain their language and culture as well as having positive student outcomes in Aboriginal languages and English. Where this is the expressed community view, it is difficult to see how a partnership relationship between Aboriginal communities and government can continue in the face of disregard for stated community views.

As the data (schools involved? attainment levels at Years 3, 5 and 7?) pertaining to English outcomes has not been publicly released by your Department, it is also difficult for the community, especially for those out bush, to understand what is going on.

Given that some reports have claimed positive English outcomes, it is requested that your Department enact a moratorium on the 'English for the first four hours' directive for 2009, so that Aboriginal communities who wish to achieve sound outcomes in English and Aboriginal languages have the opportunity to discuss this matter further.

At a time when the Commonwealth Intervention, the implementation of Shires and possible changes to homeland centres are causing confusion and concern in the bush, the dismantling of bilingual education is another impost from government. Indigenous members of Uniting Church have asked for support as they do not wish to have existing bilingual programs closed, hence the request for a moratorium on English only for the first four hours in 2009.

In this season of Advent, a moratorium and release of outcome reports will shine some much needed light and show respect for community views where bilingual education is a valued educational approach.

Peter Jones
General Secretary
Uniting Church
Darwin

(printed in the NT News, 3 Decemeber 2008)

Letter to NT Education Minister Marion Srymgour from Jeannie Nungarrayi Egan

Yuendumu Community
Via Alice Springs
N.T.0872
26/1/09

Marion Scrymgour,
Minister for Education,
N.T. Government
Darwin.

Dear Marion,

I was a teacher in Yuendumu School for over 30 years since before the Bilingual Program started in 1974. All my children and grand-children went to school every day and they all read and write English and Warlpiri. Now I am retired as a teacher but I still do some work for Mt Theo Youth program. I am writing about our Warlpiri language.

We want our language to be written down and stay strong into the future for generations and generations. We don't want it changing and getting mixed up and becoming weaker.

It can change very quickly. I hear the children of my relatives who live in other communities with no Two-way bilingual program talking mixed up language and not even understanding Warlpiri properly. Language is most important to think clearly and understand well.

In our communities it is most important for government people to work together with the community people to provide what the community wants, not just for the government to force their ideas.

We have already lost so much because the government didn't support out-stations where children could live in the bush and learn hunting and tracking and other bush skills every day. But at least we still have our language and our ceremonies and we know our Dreaming stories and places very well. If we start to lose our language every-thing will be lost. We will be really crying in our hearts because every-thing is taken away from us.

We really need to keep our Two-way programs in the Warlpiri schools going strongly. We can't do this if the first four hours of the day have to be English. Warlpiri is a big language just like English and it takes just as much time to learn to read and write.

We need a balance for everything, languages, timetable, jobs in the school and in the community. Our little children don't know English. It will be very hard on them and maybe they won't like school or learning to read and write.

We don't want a transition year to change over to English. We don't want to change over. We need to keep our Two-way program into 2010 and into the future. We don't want to change our language. We need to keep it as it is, so we can keep our culture going on and stay as proud Warlpiri people. Our history and knowledge is Warlpiri. When we get together with other Aboriginal people who speak other Aboriginal languages, we share our knowledge and how the dreamings carry on into other people's country. If we lose our language we will be lost people, not knowing our place in the Aboriginal world. We see other lost sad people around Australia. We don't want our children to be lost.

Please can you let us keep our Two-way programs in our Warlpiri communities going by giving Warlpiri and English equal time in the timetable and teaching staff in our schools.

Please can you answer my letter yourself so we can know what is going to happen to us Warlpiri people.

Yours Truly,

Jeannie Nungarrayi Egan

Copies to,

Kart Hampton

Warren Snowden

Paul Henderson

Kevin Rudd

Julia Gillard

Trish Crossin

Letter to NT Education Minister Marion Scrymgour from Jane Simpson

16/10/08

The Honourable Marion Scrymgour
Minister for Education and Training
Northern Territory

Dear Ms Scrymgour

I write to you as someone who has worked with Indigenous children and educators in NT schools since the early 1980s.

I applaud your determination to improve the level of English spoken and written by Indigenous children in the Northern Territory, and I agree that action is long overdue. However, I'd like to reassure you that this is quite compatible with keeping bilingual education.

In all but a handful of NT schools, children are presently being educated in English only. Their levels of written and spoken English in general are not significantly better than those of the Indigenous children in the few bilingual schools. Indeed in some respects those children are worse-off. They are more likely to speak Kriol, while the children in bilingual schools are more likely to speak standard English. The general outcomes for bilingual schools, as documented by your department's 2004-2005 report, are actually marginally better than for comparable English-only schools.

It is terribly important that children who don't understand English when they start school have teachers who can explain to them what's happening in their own language. School is bewildering enough, without the added barrier of language. That's what a good bilingual education program provides - a way for the children to make sense of what they are doing and hearing. The NT bilingual education programmes have been transition programmes - helping the children to move to English.

World-wide, the research suggests that bilingual education helps children, rather than hinders them, in learning the standard language. By contrast, South Africa abandoned bilingual education about 15 years ago (as part of dismantling apartheid), and the opinion among many Indigenous educators there now is that the move to monolingual education has actually resulted in worse-educated children. Likewise, the Pitjantjatjara chose to give up bilingual education in the early 1990s. Many have since realised that this did not noticeably improve the children's literacy or English standards. Gradually Pitjantjatjara is being reintroduced to the classes, but the loss of the staff and expertise that had been built up in the bilingual program has been very damaging.

Quality of teaching and programme is more important than time allocated. 4 hours of poor English teaching will be harmful. Instead what's needed is much better structuring and resourcing of ESL programmes, and of English literacy programmes that are geared to recognising that English IS a second language or a second dialect for these children. It also requires programmes that are based on sound educational research, and that are independently evaluated. Too often the evaluations come from the people who are running or selling the programmes.

Above all it requires both specialised ESL/ESD teachers and Indigenous teachers who can bridge the gap between the ESL/ESD teachers and the children by explaining what's happening in their own languages. It is a tragedy that the number of Indigenous teachers has declined in recent years, and that fewer students who speak Indigenous languages are enrolling in teacher training courses.

So, in conclusion, I am sure that the goal of better written and spoken English in Indigenous communities could be achieved without the cost of abandoning the important place that Indigenous teachers have in using Indigenous languages to explain what's happening to children.

Yours sincerely
Jane Simpson
Department of Linguistics
University of Sydney

Statement Supporting NT Bilingual Education From Anonymous Education Department Teacher

I have taught in two remote aboriginal schools in the northern territory. One was a 'non-bilingual school', and the other a bilingual school.

I have been trained in and have taught classes using; First Steps, Accelerated Literacy, Ann Morrice and Walking Talking Texts.

I completed my training in Queensland and have done an internship in a remote Aboriginal school in North Queensland.

I have received praise from many people, both in the education department and from other departments, when they have been into my classroom about what is happening there.

This year has been particularly exciting and the students have done better than what has been previously achieved with that age cohort.

This is the story of my professional journey.

At the non-bilingual school, the indigenous children spoke 'Aboriginal English'^[1] as their first language. The children at the school were very defiant about learning through and speaking in 'Standard Australian English'. The majority of them could read, in that they were able to sound out words. Yet they did not choose to read. They did not choose to write. As one child once told me,

"Hey Miss... what for them other fella been say we dun talk proper way? I been talk same like eberbody. You white fella dun talk proper way."

I ran a program where the children practiced becoming literate in their own language.

We spent time in the mornings writing in Aboriginal English or as we called it 'home language' then translated it into Standard Australian English or 'school language' and visa-versa. We translated texts into 'home language'... etcetera...

Once the children could see that reading and writing could be applied to their home language, and that it was in fact a distinct language and not 'bad English' they were more willing to work at developing competencies in school language.

One day a student said to me

"Miss... on the weekend we been catch big mob fish... Hey! If I been talk school way.. I been say... On the weekend I caught lots of fish... Hey Miss, that what I been say school way ...huh?!?"

The lesson that I took away from this school was that children have a fundamental need to be able to learn to read and write in their home language and to be able to have their language valued as part of the schooling system.

I purposefully applied to teach at a bilingual school for my next teaching position, as I want to see what it was like first hand.

Many people warned me off bilingual schools, saying that they were a waste of time. After reading up on the philosophy, the mountains of research that supports bilingual approaches, the complete dearth of research to support the (many) 'arguments' against bilingualism and various personal stories from people in the social networks that I am a part of, I decided that the only way to truly know would be to go and work at one.

When I arrived at the bilingual school I had to totally change my mindset.

I had to confront the very deeply inculcated 'Australian' value of monolinguality – that is the belief that to have knowledge one must speak English.

I had to re-examine my role as a teacher, from one that delivers education directly to the students, to a role of making sure that educational outcomes were being delivered to the students in the best possible way.

I will now talk about how my classroom has worked this year.

The students learnt through their mother tongue for 70% of the day, and through English for 30% or about 1 hour and 39 minutes. This class is grade 2/3. In grade 3 the students start learning how to read and write in English.

I do not speak that language, at least not to the extent that I am able discuss conceptual knowledge. That would take 5 or more years of intensive study.

Literacy is mainly taught through the students' first language. As my TA has no formal training it is my job to ensure that the students are being taught in a pedagogically sound way.

There is a real shortage of TA's that are fully trained. There is also a shortage of teachers who speak the traditionally languages as a first language. This may have something to do with them not getting the same conditions as 'blow in' teachers, for example free housing.

I think about how literacy is taught in a mainstream school, and apply these processes and theories to how literacy is taught in the first language.

At the start of this year, we spent a lot of time working on teaching the students the genre of narrative. This was taught in their first language.

In English we were focusing on teaching the alphabet, and basic sight words. We were teaching these through craft activities in the afternoon session. We were also doing a lot of role-playing in English, to improve their vocabulary and oracy.

Two students made benchmark in the NAP in writing.

They clearly showed how they were transferring their knowledge of genre's in their first language to English.

Every day the students in our room spend time reading and writing in their first language and in English.

They keep a daily journal in both languages.

When my TA is away, it is not possible to do the literacy side of the curriculum, unless the dedicated workers from the Literature Production Centre (LPC) can find time in their overwhelming workload to come up and assist.

The LPC has had its funding cut in real terms, by reductions and trade offs, and by not being increased in line with the CPI. So this makes it a challenge to provide quality Bilingual education. The only reason that it does work is through the sheer will of the indigenous workers.

In other subject areas for example; Mathematics, Science, Studies of society and the Environment, etc, my TA and I plan together about how to deliver the conceptual knowledge. This is a combination of my TA delivering the instruction independently and my TA translating the instructions that I give.

In other subject areas, it is the conceptual knowledge that proves difficult to communicate in a foreign language.

When my TA is not at school the children really want to do what I am asking them, however if we are talking about conceptual knowledge they often do not understand what I am asking them to do. When my TA is at school the concept is explained to the students in their home language and you can see the light bulbs going on.

After having the students for almost a whole year now.

With the appalling, yet slightly above average attendance rate of 60-70%, attendance is such a huge problem across the territory.

Children are reading and writing in English. They are reading and writing in their first language.

The children are becoming literate and are proud of their literacy. They are not ashamed of being literate in English, as the students were at the non-bilingual school. They do not see being literate in Standard Australian English as compromising who they are, as they know that their own language is a valued part of the school environment.

[1] This is a separate language. It is not 'poor English' (quote?)

Letter From Dhanara Committee Mala (group) to Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard

Dhanara Committee Mala (group)

c/- Yambirra Schools Council
po Box 496 Nhulunbuy 0881

c/- Shepherdson College School Council
pmb 74 Winnellie, NT 0822

c/- Milingimbi School Council
pmb 54 Winnellie 0822

19th November 2008

Julia Gillard Federal Minister for Education
CC: Trish Crossin Senator NT, Damian Hale MHR Solomon

Dear Ms Gillard,

We are very disappointed at the decision by the NT Minister for Education and Training, "that the first four hours of education in all NT schools will be conducted in English"(Tuesday 14th October Media Release)

We are not 'preserving' our languages and cultures. Ours our living languages to communicate and speak with each other, to think and to learn. Our languages are the main languages of our homes, families and local community. Our children's right to learn in their mother tongue is being taken away.

We are all from Yolngu communities with Bilingual schools. Bilingual Education is defined by NT DET as, "a formal model of dual language use where students' first language is used for learning across the curriculum, while at the same time they are learning to use English as a second language for learning across the curriculum."

In bilingual programs Year 5 children and older do 4 hours or more of English instruction each day. Mandating four hours of English per day is targeting the younger children (Transition to Year 4). Young children will not be able to understand four hours of English.

Thirty years of striving to deliver bilingual education in our communities is being demolished. We are dedicated people who have taken a journey that we know is not finished. It is not perfect yet. It is a journey of hard work, hardship, training, argument, debate, failures and successes. We believe that we should still strive for success. As educators and parent we must ensure the future for our children is strong and balanced in both languages.

We know bilingual education is delivered successfully for Maori in New Zealand, Inuit in Canada, students in European Union countries, as well as in Malaysia, Thailand and other Asian countries. We know that the use of first language in the early years of schooling has been proven to be essential for successful learning especially when also learning a second language.

Why are we being denied this?

We have read that the National Curriculum will not allow this either (Northern Territory News 17.11.08) Is this true?

There needs to be more research done on bilingual schools and the outcomes of these schools, by people outside DET.

DET and our communities have been consulting each other and negotiating with elders to establish a Remote Partnership agreement. One of the aims was to empower Yolngu to make decisions about education in their communities. One school has already signed a partnership with DET. In Yolngu eyes, when non-indigenous people sign a paper in public (at the Garma Festival in 2007) it shows that an agreement has been made. That agreement said DET would support Bilingual programs. This is what the community wanted.

What is really behind these partnerships? Is it just to say yes to us and make us feel happy but not really listen and be a true partner? We are tired of fighting for our rights and for justice. It is our children and grandchildren that these decisions are being made about.

We know that English is part of our world now. We know there will be challenges for our grandchildren and great grandchildren. We were not stolen. We were not put in dormitories. We are trying to find our own way, balancing the two cultures and maintaining our pride and dignity. We feel we are being removed from our language, culture and identity.

For every Yolngu child and living creature, e.g. dogs, crocodiles, stingrays etc, there is a special place where they are born and where their mother raises them, using their language and preparing them for their life's journey. When the mother goes, the child knows what to do and how to go out in the wider world. The child has to know about the dangers ahead and how to protect him and her. For example, the mother sting ray gives birth to six young light and dark sting rays. They move around with their mother; learning, following, eating, getting food. She gets them to bury themselves in the sand around the mangroves to keep them safe. She leaves when they know everything and are ready for life independently.

Our children are very special.

We want to retain the current Bilingual programs. We do not want to restructure to four hours of English in the early years but we would like to see support for the bilingual programs strengthened. A greater focus on training for both Yolngu and non-Yolngu teachers and assistant teachers will help us improve student outcomes. Please give this serious consideration. We look forward to your response to this letter.

Yours Sincerely

Dhanara Committee Mala

Letter to NT Minister for Education Marion Scrymgour from Greville Corbett

Dear Ms Scrymgour

Though resident in Britain, I have visited Australia several times, including a year-long stay some while ago, and more recently to attend the Australian Linguistic Institute in July. I have a professional interest in matters concerning language, and know several of the top Australian linguists.

I have been impressed by the dedication and commitment of the very best Australian linguists to document, maintain and support Australia's languages. They could sit comfortably in their universities writing theoretical papers, but they are out there, sometimes in difficult conditions, working on languages and supporting communities.

It is therefore rather shocking to hear of your proposal for all schools to teach all classes in English for the first four hours of each day. There is superb professional advice available in Australia, and I would respectfully ask you to consider it.

The results from the NT Department of Education and Training's (DET) 2004-2005 'Indigenous Languages and Culture in Northern Territory Schools' report show positive outcomes for children taught in the two-way model. Therefore the winding back of these programs is in direct contradiction to DET's own research.

Australia's top linguists are admired all over the world. They deserve your support. Even more do the children in NT deserve to have the best advice taken on their behalf.

Yours sincerely

Greville Corbett

--

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Letter to NT Minister for Education Marion Scrymgour from Trevor Stockley

Dear Minister Scrymgour,

It is with great disappointment and really serious concern, that I recently heard of your ill-conceived decision to insist that all Northern Territory Schools use SAE for the first four hours of instruction each day. Clearly your decision is directed at Bilingual schools, and has been made without proper thinking and definitely without proper research on your part. To compound your actions, the decision was made without consulting and negotiating with the Aboriginal people involved and who are dramatically affected by this decision, namely the children and parents of those Aboriginal children you refer to, and the communities in which the Bilingual schools they attend, are found. You say you will negotiate later - after the decision is made! Consultation is not just common decency. Consultation and negotiation are basic planks of decision making protocols, developed over many years and previously supported by you and your government, as an integral part of creating successful and empowering decisions with Aboriginal people.

Here we have a decision, motivated by the acquisition of English language and its accompanying cultural priorities, made by a politician who can say "I support preserving our Indigenous languages and culture - but! This decision Minister, is disappointing, distressing and for some people, amounts a continuation of Australia's Aboriginal linguistic and cultural devastation.

It is worth noting that Aboriginal people, all over Australia, who have 'lost' their languages, are now seeking government funding to retrieve and revive these same 'lost' languages. This is the language area in which I have been working in North Queensland. It is evident to me, that although much hard work and effort goes into attempting to retrieve and revive these 'lost' languages, at best, the learners are achieving a command over some short sentences, some questions and greetings/farewells. We all know that 'language and culture go together'. Well, yes they do, but when you are acquiring your 'lost' Aboriginal language, as a second language, the 'lost culture' isn't delivered with the language. Your worldview does not particularly change with the language learning process and the learning is not made any easier because you are of Aboriginal descent. Second language learning, is plain hard work, is often not terribly successful in gaining a command of your 'lost' language and definitely does not deliver you your 'lost culture' and deep knowledge of country. But, retrieving and reviving Aboriginal languages definitely helps the learners with some language knowledge and some historical understanding and importantly, with identity. This loss of language has been recognised as an incredibly destructive loss for Aboriginal groups all over Australia. The Northern Territory has some of the few remaining Aboriginal languages, which are still being passed on with knowledge and learnt by children, and being used in successful bilingual programs. Evidence shows that this ill-conceived government policy will sadly lead more Aboriginal people to a future situation of language retrieval and revival as described above.

You were right to say your decision would prove unpopular. It is not just unpopular - it stinks! It is blatantly wrong and at what an unbelievable intellectual and social cost to our future Aboriginal children and language speakers. This will lead to an irretrievable loss of linguistic and cultural knowledge and the decision should be rescinded before any more damage is done to Australia's rare linguistic heritage. You could also take the time, Minister Scrymgour, to apologize to your Aboriginal countrymen for making this poorly thought out public decision and for your inappropriate conduct in not consulting with them on such an important issue (before the decision was made public). Contrary to your current negative message, these successful bilingual schools, have always been supported by their language communities, while at the same time, have continually been subject to years of government under-funding. These unique Bilingual Schools should now be fully supported and generously funded by your Government.

Shame on you Ms Scrymgour! The evidence of history and current writings do not bear you out. I refer you to a paper by D P Wilkins (<http://www.australianreview.net/digest/2008/10/wilkins.html>). You could, and should be constructively supporting and expanding funding for bilingual schools (possibly as a part of the ill-advised Commonwealth intervention in the N.T.), as well as getting your

Northern Territory Government to make a strong, honest and continuing monetary and moral commitment to the traditional Aboriginal language speakers of the N.T., their children and grandchildren and their bilingual schools. Don't let this be a last gasp for Aboriginal languages Minister.

Regards,

Trevor Stockley

Letter to NT Minister for Education Marion Scrymgour from YAMBIRRP A SCHOOLS COUNCIL INC.

YAMBIRRP A SCHOOLS COUNCIL INC.

PO Box 896

Nhulunbuy NT 0881

AUSTRALIA

Phone: 08 89871988

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Email: yirrkala.cec@ntschoo ls.net

ABN: 35 131 263 614

23 October 2008

Marion Scrymgour

Minister for Education and Training

GPO Box 3146

DARWIN NT 0801

Dear Minister Scrymgour

We are the council parent representative of Yirrkala schools Yambirrp a Schools Council.

Madam, we have heard the announcement that all schools in the Northern Territory be restructured with a greater focus in teaching English.

You say minister, that you want to 'make changes' in remote Indigenous schools, you say that the results in the remote schools are still 'unacceptable'.

We don't 'preserve' language in our culture. We have lived with it since time immortal. It is not a germ to be preserved, it is a living breathing language.

In our school, bi-lingual is a strong active program between two strong languages. You say English be conducted in the first four hours of each school day. We are 'not' a school where we teach a LOTE program.

Let us remind you about our RLPA (Remote Learning Partnership Agreement).

Announcing your decision does not make us partners in this document, it sounds like another try at phasing out bilingual programs.

In light of the above, we are not ready to meet with you as indicated on your itinerary for 3 November, 2008. We will contact you at a later date to discuss our concerns following your announcement.

Yours sincerely

Barayuwa Mununggurr

Yananymul Mununggurr

Wayilu Wunungmurra

Nalwarri Ngurruwutthun

Eleven Facts about NT Bilingual Schools

FACT 1: Bilingual schools teach English and an Australian Indigenous language

Literacy in the 'mother-tongue' is taught while a child is learning to hear and understand English. Over the 12 years of schooling about 70% of teaching will be in English.

FACT 2: A small percentage of Indigenous students attend bilingual school

16% of remote Indigenous students (7.8% of all students) attend nine bilingual schools. The remaining 84% of remote Indigenous students do not attend bilingual schools.

FACT 3: Bilingual schools out perform non-bilingual schools

Previous NT studies in the 1980s and 90s have shown that bilingual schools out perform non-bilingual schools in key English literacy and numeracy areas. See Fact 3.1 references on page 2.

Both national and international studies strongly indicate that teaching literacy in the mother tongue is the better way to support the development of English literacy. See Fact 3.2 references on page 2.

FACT 4: No evidence against bilingual schooling

There has never been a formal independent published report showing that bilingual programs have been anything but successful.

FACT 5: Bilingual program achievements were noted

The achievements of bilingual schooling were noted in the Department's Indigenous Languages and Culture Report. See Fact 5 reference on page 2.

FACT 6: Bilingual schools produce more Year 12 or NTCE graduates

Of the 31 Year 12 graduates in 2007, 70% came from bilingual schools. This means that a student is almost 9 times more likely to graduate from Year 12 if they come from a bilingual school. See: NTDET 2006 Poster: You Can Do It.

FACT 7: More teacher graduates from bilingual schools

There are more teacher graduates from bilingual schools than non bilingual schools. Up to 1998, 75% of all graduates (Ass Dip and Dip Teaching) from BIITE came from bilingual schools, or up to 1998 a graduate teacher was about 20 times more likely to come from a bilingual school. See comment on page 2.

FACT 8: Indigenous ESL students have double the student/teacher ratio as migrant ESL students

Migrant children from non-English speaking backgrounds attend intensive English classes with a teacher/student ratio of 1 to 10. Indigenous students with low or no English proficiency attend classes with a teacher/student ratio of 1 to 22.

FACT 9: Labour's broken election promise on Universal Human Rights

Labour has forgotten its 2007 election promise to honour Australia's commitments to the Universal Human Rights Declaration, to which Australia became a signatory in 1948. See Fact 9 reference on page 2.

FACT 10: Labour's broken promise to endorse the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights

Labour's pre-election (2007) platform endorsing the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights Article 14 (below) has been ignored. See Fact 10 reference on page 2.

Fact 11: Labour ignores Australia's obligations under UN Convention of the Rights of Child 1989

Australia's obligations under this convention talk about discrimination on the basis of language, ethnicity and identity. See Fact 11 reference on page 2.

FACT 3.1 references:

3.1.1 Devlin, B. (1995). The evaluation of bilingual programs in the Northern Territory, 1973–1993. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 113, 2541.

3.1.2 Christie, M., Gale, K., McClay, D., and Harris, S., (1981) Academic achievement in the Milingimbi bilingual education program *TESOL Quarterly*, 297314

FACT 3.2 references:

3.2.1 Greene, J. (1998). A metaanalysis of the effectiveness of bilingual education.[WWW document.] Retrieved December 4, 2008 from <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/JWCRAWFORD/greene.htm>

3.2.2 Meyer, M. & Fienberg, S. (Eds.) (1992). *Case of bilingual education strategies*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

3.2.3 Ramirez, J.D. (1992). Executive summary of longitudinal study of structured English immersion strategy, early exit and late exit transitional bilingual education programs for language minority children. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 16 (1&2), 161.

3.2.4 Willig, A. (1985). A metaanalysis of selected studies on the effectiveness of bilingual education. *Review of Educational Research*, 55, 269317.

FACT 5 reference: NT DEET (2005) The Indigenous languages and culture in NT schools report (20042005). Pages 3537, Retrieved December 4, 2008 from:

http://www.det.nt.gov.au/education/indigenous_education/previous_publications/indigenous_languages_culture_rep_or/

FACT 7 comment: Up to 1998 there were more bilingual schools, but as 3 out of every 4 teacher graduates came from a small number of bilingual schools (which in 2008 represents 16% of Indigenous students), then calculations show that up to 1998, a graduate teacher was approximately 20 times more likely to come from a bilingual school.

FACT 9 reference: Universal Human Rights Declaration: Article 26.

(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

FACT 10 reference: UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights Article 14:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.

Article 15

1 Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.

2 States shall take effective measures, in consultation and cooperation with the indigenous peoples concerned, to combat prejudice and eliminate discrimination and to promote tolerance, understanding and good relations among indigenous peoples and all other segments of society.

Fact 11 reference: Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 29.1 "... education of the child shall be directed to (c) the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate and for civilizations different from his or her own ..."

The Fate of Aboriginal Languages.

A Statement by Wendy Baarda, resident of Yuendumu, NT for 35 years, teacher for 30 years.

The N.T. Minister for Education, Marion Scrymgour, has recently announced that the first four hours of schooling in Aboriginal community schools will now be conducted in English and further that only one hour per day may be conducted in the children's Aboriginal language.

I can see why this might seem like a good idea to many people who have never lived and taught in an Aboriginal language speaking community. This could be their logic. Aboriginal employment is very low because their education level is very low. The key to educational success and participation in the mainstream is English proficiency. They are not learning English while they are speaking their own language. Therefore we will force them to use English in school for four and a half hours a day.

There are many flaws in this logic.

Firstly low education levels are not the only reason for low employment levels. There are the bureaucratic regulations that demand completion of a literacy based course before allowing a person to work at fixing taps, bandaging sores or any of the many practical tasks which used to be done by Aboriginal people in communities. There is the three generations of Welfare dependence causing children to grow up never expecting to work. There is the imperative to employ outside contractors to do nearly all the work on Aboriginal communities.

Secondly English proficiency in Primary school is not the key to better educational outcomes and is very unlikely to be produced in this proposed way, teaching children in a language they don't understand or understand very poorly.

Thirdly, decreeing that children be taught in English for four and a half hours a day will not mitigate all the other factors contributing to low education levels. Poor attendance is likely to be poorer. Children say they get headaches from listening to English. Parental support and involvement is likely to be less. Imagine if Japan had successfully invaded Australia. How eager would we be, to send our children to school for four and a half hours of Japanese instruction everyday? The turnover of teachers will probably be greater. Its not a rewarding task, trying to impose a foreign culture on children in a language they barely understand, being a lone English speaker in a class of children speaking another language, never knowing why children are laughing or crying, why fights suddenly erupt, why they sometimes refuse to sit or do anything you say. Providing relevant curriculum and materials that children can relate to, becomes almost impossibility. In fact if the aim was to make children, parents and teachers hate school, this four and a half hours a day of compulsory English would be the way to go.

It must be obvious from the previous track record on retention of Australian languages, and hunting society languages worldwide, that all these languages are at risk. I am aware that Marion Scrymgour's policy is not aimed at eliminating indigenous languages. She suggests that children can maintain their first languages at home and in the one hour a day allocated in school in the afternoon when attendance is the lowest, attention is the poorest, the temperature is the highest and when most traditional Aboriginals are asleep.

English is a very seductive language. It's the language of the powerful and the world youth culture. Teenagers quickly pick up the songs and the cool expressions, banter among

themselves in pseudo English. However if the first language is firmly established, and is the accepted medium of interaction between Aboriginal speakers in or from their community, it will still be the language passed on to children.

The problem of English only for most of the school day is that new things taught in English may be only able to be thought about and talked about in English. The new learning may never be related to the first language or situations outside school. Terms and phrases in the first language for dealing with similar problems may never be recognized or learnt. Children spending most of their school day hearing and responding in English may begin to use English in the playground, a sign of success to the English teacher, but the beginning of the end of a language which was customarily always used between speakers of that language. This kept it separate from English and gave it a role and a time slot in everyday life. English is used for speaking to English speakers. When children habitually use English or a version of it between themselves, the indigenous language is then only used for speaking with older speakers. As these gradually pass away, English or Aboriginal English is the only language passed on to children. Language loss can occur over one generation as has been documented. It's very sad for the old people, the last speakers of their languages who grew up in communities where their language was spoken by everyone. They mourn the loss of their language. They cry when they hear it spoken.

Even Aboriginal people many generations removed from their language -speaking ancestors, mourn the loss of their language. There is a huge difference between migrants who lose their language and Aboriginals. Migrants come knowing they must take on another language. They have made that choice. Aboriginal families have not made that choice. Unlike migrants who know that their language is being continued in their country of origin, Aboriginal communities know that when their language fades out of use it is gone forever.

I know many people think that Aboriginal languages, (and probably Aboriginal people) are doomed to die out and it doesn't really matter.

It does, of course, matter to the people themselves. A language is a large part of identity, self esteem and a sense of belonging in your own society. Stripped of these, a person is far less able to venture out into the mainstream for work or any other form of participation. A language embodies a particular, unique way of seeing, thinking and being. Losing a language doesn't mean that you automatically take on someone else's way of seeing and being and access the advantages of that other language group. Many Aboriginals caught between cultures describe themselves as lost. Aboriginals in communities where traditional languages are no longer spoken (such as those in the Barkley area) are not achieving higher levels of education.

I suggest that retention of Aboriginal languages should also matter to all of us. All humans were hunters when language evolved. Aboriginal languages have stayed free of outside influences for a very long time. They are a window into how language was first used and constructed, where it sits in the brain, how societies attain cohesion; pass on skills and knowledge, the role of art, music and dance, the psychology of human attachment and many aspects of human communication. We can't truly know ourselves until we know where we came from.

Aboriginal languages carry information on the plants, creatures, landforms and seasons of their environment. Many of the drugs we use today contain active ingredients from plants that were once someone's bush medicine.

It's just not possible to record and archive all of Aboriginal traditional language, knowledge, social organization and arts. The questions we may need to answer may not have been thought of yet. Just as stands of original wilderness around the world have yielded solutions to control of feral plants and creatures, communities of traditional hunting peoples may provide answers to future problems. In starvation prone Niger, fast growing Australian acacias are grown for firewood and holding the soil. Aboriginal knowledge allowed them to harvest and eat the seeds of these trees, which must first be roasted before they can be ground.

The Northern Territory Bilingual Education Program: Some historical reflections (Inception-1999)

Stephen Harris and Brian Devlin

12 July 1999

(Pre-publication draft)

Overview

Preamble

1. The introduction of bilingual education in the Northern Territory
2. Key stages in the history of the program (1973-98)
3. In defence of the program: some principles and strategies
4. The achievements of bilingual education
5. Some unresolved problems
6. The evaluation of bilingual programs
7. What next?
8. References

Preamble

This paper does not set out to provide a definitive historical summary of the bilingual education program in the Northern Territory from the early 1970s until the present day. It provides too little information about the important roles played by Aboriginal people, various church groups and the Summer Institute of Linguistics, just to mention some of the more significant omissions, to warrant being regarded as a comprehensive historical overview. Rather, the starting point of this paper was a series of recollections set down by the first author. The role of the second author has been to develop the paper with the aid of NT Department of Education files and to incorporate useful suggestions made by Paul Bubb, Peter Jones, Graham McGill, Fran Murray, Sr Helen Nolan and Leon White. An authoritative history of the NT bilingual education program remains to be written.

1. The introduction of bilingual education in the Northern Territory

It is customary to say that bilingual education in the Northern Territory (NT), Australia, had its beginning in 1972 as a result of a Federal government initiative, but the foundations of this policy change were really laid in the 1960s. The *Watts-Gallacher Report* (1964, p.71) had advocated bilingual education as the ideal approach for the Northern Territory, even though the authors considered that the program would not be viable. In their view White teachers could not really be expected to learn Aboriginal languages, there were too many languages anyway, and preparing text books in all of the languages was not thought to be feasible.

In 1968 Joy Kinslow-Harris wrote a paper arguing that bilingual education was definitely possible, provided Aboriginal people were allowed to do the teaching in their own languages through a system of team-teaching in partnership with qualified non-Aboriginal teachers. Her proposal was picked up in 1971 at a National Workshop, *Aboriginal Education: Priorities for Action and Research*, organised by Professor Betty Watts in Brisbane, where it was recommended that "Pilot projects be established to test the efficiency of teaching literacy in the vernacular following the proposals put forward by Mrs. Kinslow-Harris (p. 104). Incidentally, delegates at that same meeting resolved to establish *The Aboriginal Child at School* journal, which subsequently began in 1973. The Labor Party obtained a copy of these workshop recommendations, and in December

1972, within hours of being elected, and after 24 years of Labor having been out of office, Gough Whitlam announced the beginning of the NT bilingual program.

Mr. Kim Beazley Snr. became Minister for Education in the Whitlam Government. In 1985, when visiting the Northern Territory to look at the program he had started, he told staff in the Bilingual Unit that he had begun to think about bilingual education while shaving, 14 hours after the election, then had suggested the idea to Gough Whitlam, who subsequently announced the policy change over the parliament's loud speaker system.

Shortly after Whitlam's announcement Professor B. Watts, W. McGrath (PEA Bilingual) and J. Tandy (Commonwealth Education) visited potential bilingual schools and produced a report which was very influential for a number of years as a guide to the establishment of the program.

Because linguists, not educators, had been the main advocates for bilingual education, the first funding flowed to linguist positions through two channels: to the five linguist positions in the program itself, and to positions in the School of Australian Linguistics (SAL), which formed part of the then Darwin Community College. Early funding also allowed the formation of a head office advisory team, which became known as 'the Bilingual Unit', comprising a Principal Education Adviser (Bill McGrath¹), an SEA² linguist (Toby Metcalfe³), an SEA Early Childhood (Beryl Edmunds), an SEO Anthropology (Maria Brandl) and an SEA TESL (Keryn Lynch). The program began without the supporting infrastructure in each bilingual school of four specialists – linguist, teacher-linguist, printer, and Aboriginal literacy worker – although that arrangement was in place by 1975.

By March 1973 the NT bilingual education program had begun to be implemented in line with the recommendations of the Watts, McGrath & Tandy Report. The Watts, McGrath, Tandy team had earlier travelled to potential school sites in the NT, focussing on places where mission linguists had already developed orthographies for the Aboriginal languages, and where the people agreed to choose one language variety for use as the language of instruction in the school together with English: for example, Gupapuyngu was chosen at Milingimbi, Djambarrpuyngu at Galiwin'ku, and Gumatj at Yirrkala, even though up to 12 clan languages were spoken in the latter community. On the grounds of efficiency it was agreed that one vernacular language should be chosen per bilingual program; however, this principle had been overturned by about 1988, when more Aboriginal control in the three large Arnhem Land schools became a reality, and some school time was set aside for each clan language. In 1993 Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School at Wadeye also decided to include additional languages in its program.

The Watts, McGrath & Tandy Report advocated two frameworks for bilingual education programs in schools: Model 1, which aimed to achieve literacy in two languages (English and an Aboriginal vernacular), and Model 2, which combined an oral Aboriginal language program with an English literacy program. While Model II programs were always a possibility, in practice they never drew much support or resources because Aboriginal communities mostly opted for Model I, which meant that Model I programs used up all of the resources available. In 1977 three programs were briefly identified as Model II: Angurugu, Bamyili (later called Barunga) and Oenpelli (later called Gunbalanya). The Angurugu program was terminated in 1979. There were three main reasons for this: (a) inflexibility on the part of bilingual advisors (the school wanted post-primary

¹ In April 1999 Bill McGrath retired after working 27 years in the Territory.

² Senior Education Officer

³ Toby Metcalfe was the first head of the School of Australian Linguistics.

girls to read in Anindilyakwa after initial literacy in English, but this was considered to be unacceptable, (b) the fact that only one Anindilyakwa-speaking teacher was willing to work in the program, and (c) unresolved orthography problems. In any case, what the school had proposed was in hindsight sensible under the circumstances. It was, strictly speaking, not a Model II program. Bamyili and Oenpelli soon became recognised as Model I programs.

Programs were not started without evidence of community support; for example, a letter sent to the NT Department of Education requesting a bilingual program would typically be signed by a dozen or more community-based people. However, looking back on it, Aboriginal communities were probably saying “Treat our languages seriously in school”, not “Give us bilingual education”. As a result of recommendations made by the *Watts, McGrath & Tandy Report*, five schools began bilingual programs in 1973: Angurugu, Hermannsburg, Areyonga, Milingimbi and Warruwi. However, the program at Angurugu never really got underway, nor did the one at Hermannsburg.

Once official approval had been given it wasn’t so difficult for a school to begin a bilingual program. This only required commencing the program in Pre-school and Year 1, then adding an extra year every twelve months. Preparing materials for bilingual programs became harder and more complex work beyond those initial grade levels. Table 1 gives a brief listing of the first NT programs, indicating the years they commenced.

Table 1 The establishment of NT school bilingual programs

Year	School	Language	Notes
1973	Angurugu Areyonga Hermannsburg Milingimbi Waruwi, Goulburn Is.	Anindilyakwa Pitjantjatjara Gupapuyngu Maung	
1974	Oenpelli (Gunbalanya) Shepherdson College, Galiwin'ku St Therese's ⁴ (now Murrupurtiyanuwu) Bathurst Island Yayayai (Papunya outstation) Yirrkala Yuendumu	Kunwinjku Djambarrpuyngu Tiwi Pintupi-Luritja Dhuwaya* and dialects Warlpiri	Lasted 4 years and subsequently failed accreditation Originally Gupapuyngu Moved to Papunya after about 2 years Formerly Gumatj
1975	Pularumpi (formerly Garden Point)	Tiwi	Lasted 2 years
1976	Barunga (formerly Bamyili) Haasts Bluff ⁵ Numbulwar	Kriol Pintupi-Luritja Nunggubuyu	Lasted approx. 16 years Lasted 4 years then

⁴ According to Murrupurtiyanuwu (1993, p.1) ‘The Bilingual Program began on Bathurst Island in 1975. It was pioneered by Sr. Teresa Ward with support from Marie Godfrey, the resident linguist from the Summer Institute of Linguistics’. It was accredited as a bilingual school in 1984 (p.2).

⁵ On 28 May 1975 the Council had written to the PEA Bilingual Education requesting a bilingual education program at the school.

	Wadeye	Murrinhpatha	recommenced in 1996
1977	Umbakumba Willowra	Anindilyakwa Warlpiri	Lasted approx. 5 years
1978	Maningrida	Ndjébbana ⁶	
1979	Docker River	Pitjantjatjara	
1981	M'Bunghara ⁷ Homeland Centre Waityawanu	Pintupi/ Luritja Pintupi/ Luritja	Lasted approx. 9 years
1982	Lajamanu (formerly Hooker Creek)	Warlpiri	Established as a result of agitation
1983	Walungurru (Kintore) Yipirinya	Pintupi/ Luritja Eastern Arnernte Pitjantjatjara Warlpiri Western Arnernte	Became an official independent Aboriginal school with a bilingual program in four language varieties after having operated as a 'defacto' program for several years before that.
1984	Papunya	Pintupi-Luritja	Established as a result of agitation
1986	Maningrida Nyirripi	Burarra Warlpiri	Established in response to "strong community requests" ⁸
1987	Mt Liebig	Pintupi-Luritja	
1989	Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa) ⁹	Eastern Arnernte	Established as a result of local initiative
1996	Numbulwar ¹⁰	Nunggubuyu	Re-established as a result of local initiative

(Source: NTDE documents including file 93/483, folios 27, 40-1 and 176, and suggestions made by Paul Bubb and Peter Jones)

Programs were begun at Hermannsburg, Angurugu, Pularumpi, Umbakumba, Numbulwar and Oenpelli, but later discontinued.

From the time the first bilingual programs commenced in schools a Bilingual Education Consultative Committee was established. It comprised Betty Watts (educator), Daryl Tryon (linguist), Nicholas Peterson (anthropologist), the PEO Bilingual, departmental officers such as Jim Gallagher, and Stephen Albert, the first Chairman of the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC). In 1978 Graham McGill began the process of changing the BECC away from being a committee of interstate experts towards becoming a local Aboriginal body. On 12 April 1988 BECC was formally endorsed by Feppi¹¹, the Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee, as the group to receive reports and make recommendations on bilingual education. The Bilingual Unit had to

⁶ According to McDonnell (1996, p. 5), this bilingual program actually commenced in 1978 "with a vertically grouped class away from the main school in a bush shelter in the main Kunibidji residential area known as Bottom Camp. These students did not move to a classroom until 1981".

⁷ It was established in 1987/8 according to G Benjamin (NTDE file 93/483, folio 103, 19 October 1989)

⁸ NTDE file 92/2322 folios 87-91

⁹ Santa Teresa was granted official status as a bilingual school in 1987 according to the teacher-linguist, in a letter received by the Catholic Education Centre on 10 March 1989.

¹⁰ A teacher-linguist was appointed at Numbulwar in 1996.

¹¹ The name, meaning 'rock', derives from a Murrinhpatha word.

provide an annual report to Feppi and to be available to it for questioning. Every three years schools with bilingual programs were required to undergo an appraisal which was steered by a team comprising the regional superintendent, an Aboriginal person who knew the vernacular language used in the bilingual program, an Aboriginal community representative and the PEO Aboriginal languages/Bilingual Education. (For more information about the evaluation of bilingual education programs see Devlin, 1995).

2. Key stages in the history of the program (1973–98)

The early 1970s could be regarded as a fragile beginning for bilingual education in the NT; although a honeymoon period in some ways, there was a natural disaster to contend with and the program was always politically vulnerable, given the number of politicians and bureaucrats who were opposed to it. Several programs had been established in 1973 and 1974, but after Cyclone Tracy on Christmas Eve 1974, time had to be set aside over the next few years for rebuilding. By 1 July 1978, when the Northern Territory became self-governing, the program entered a consolidation phase. This continued for some time after the NT Department of Education was established in January 1979. However, reductions in the number of staff, and a decline in funds available to support programs, began to take their toll from about 1984 onwards.

By 1987 some bilingual programs had begun to evolve in new directions, partly as a consequence of the reduction in the number of head office staff positions with any responsibility for bilingual education, but also in response to ideas generated through Batchelor College community-based education programs and assertions of Aboriginal leadership. For some teachers and language specialists, bilingual education for academic purposes began to seem a less important goal than bilingual education for language maintenance. One spin-off of this was that more thought was given to redefining the forms and functions of L1 literacy.

Although it is somewhat artificial to delineate any historical stages in the development of the program, to do so allows the characteristics of bilingual education at various points in time to be grouped and analysed. In the view of the authors three key stages in the development of the NT bilingual program up to November 1998 can be identified:

- (1) Establishment (1973–1977)
- (2) Consolidation (1978–86)
- (3) Adaptation (1987–98).

2.1 The establishment phase (1973–1977)

At first it was very hard to recruit linguists and so only three were appointed at the beginning: M. Laughren, V. Leeding and G. McKay. As a result of Cyclone Tracy in 1974, half of the senior Bilingual Education advisory staff left Darwin and the Head Office team was not properly rebuilt until late 1977¹².

The bilingual program had few supporters in the Department hierarchy above PEO level. In that context, as an aside, it might be interesting to reflect on why it was not stopped. Virtually since their establishment bilingual education programs in the Northern Territory have been opposed by

¹² It might be of interest to note in passing that on 3 Feb 1975 the Acting Principal Education Officer for Bilingual Education, Maria Brandl, observed that, because of the cyclone, there were no typists and so official letters had to be handwritten (file 85/1279, folio 19).

most senior education officers. By 1975 there was a move within the Department to reduce the program to a small pilot project. This proposal was set out in a document which 'fell off the back of a truck' and reached schools. David McClay, Principal of Milingimbi School, publicly challenged the Secretary of the NT Department of Education at the annual bilingual staff conference, held that year at St. John's College. The Secretary denied any such plans and confirmed Departmental support for the program. Among the reasons the program wasn't toppled then, these seem to be likely explanations: (1) It was imagined that there would be a huge outcry from academics 'down South'; (2) it was thought there would be a huge revolt on the part of Aboriginal schools; (3) bilingual advisors and linguists in the Department were highly qualified and the hierarchy assumed they knew more than they actually did; (4) there was respect for the obvious hard work and commitment of school staff; and (5) during the first few years of the program, there were annual Territory-wide conferences where many staff could meet for mutual support and ideas-sharing. These in turn created a wide basis of support for the program. Geoff Spring, Secretary of the NT Department of Education during the 1980s, was unusual in that he was interested in the theory and practice of bilingual education (see Spring, 1980); while he may have put pressure on the program from time to time, his value was that he understood what the program was about.

Before a bilingual program could be approved certain requirements had to be met. These preconditions for starting a bilingual program were spelled out in several departmental documents¹³ in 1977. They included:

- (a) The agreement and support of the community
- (b) a community decision concerning which Aboriginal language is to be used in the school
- (c) Aboriginal teachers to teach the Aboriginal language
- (d) non-Aboriginal teachers to help the Aboriginal teachers and to teach in English
- (e) a reading scheme in the Aboriginal language as well as other materials
- (f) a linguist living in the community or a linguist who can help when needed
- (g) agreement and support of principal and staff

On 21 June 1977 David Raff, SEA Bilingual Education, wrote that "expansion of the bilingual program had been curtailed because of the problems associated with recruiting suitable advisors and manpower for support services such as literature production facilities". He explained that this shortfall had tended to slow down development in certain areas; for example, the lack of a senior early childhood adviser had inhibited the development of a philosophy and methodology "specifically appropriate to bilingual preschools" (NTDE file 93/483, folio 14). By 1 October 1977 David Raff was reporting that six of the 21 specialist bilingual education positions available were vacant (NTDE file 93/483, folio 29).

2.2 The consolidation phase (1978–1986)

Although a policy of consolidation had been recommended in 1976, and limits were placed on further expansion in 1977, it wasn't until 1978 that the era of consolidation began. A reconstituted advisory group was established and under the leadership of a new group of head office advisors, more attention was given to articulating the program's theoretical framework and to initiating solid curriculum development. It is worth noting here that Beth Graham made a particularly outstanding contribution to curriculum development in bilingual programs.

¹³ For example in NTDE file 93/483 folio 30, and in a communication from the NTDE to the Department of Education, ACT (Ritchie to Swinton), 21 April 1977 (file 93/483, folio7).

Point 9 of Feppi's 12-point plan in 1986 called for the consolidation of bilingual programs, but what was meant by the term? The official explanation that was put to Canberra in the late 1970s makes it clear that this policy was linked to available resources:

... a policy of consolidation has been adopted. The Bilingual Consultative Committee recommended in 1976 that there should be no further expansion of the program until the resources can adequately cover the additional demands.

(Ritchie, 21 April 1977, in file 93/483, folio 7)

In today's terms the advisory staff was large, including a PEO, SEO Linguistics, SEO Early Childhood, SEO Anthropology, EO Early Childhood, and EO TESL. As well, there were five field linguists, eventually 15 Teacher Linguists (in 1983), 10 printers and 22 Aboriginal Literacy Workers, who didn't become part of the Public Service until about 1988. Also included in the advisory staff team until 1980 were two EO Outstations, an EO Aboriginal Music, and an EO Southern Region. These were deployed from the Bilingual Unit, and were not part of the regional offices staff. The 1983 Review gave these positions to the Regions. An irony, despite the efforts made to meet additional demands from communities for support during the consolidation period, is that the Homeland Centres did not begin bilingual programs until much later.

2.3 The adaptation phase (1987–98)

By 1987 the 'Bilingual Unit' had been reduced to two head office position and by 1990 to a single Principal Education Officer. In 1984 the number of centrally based bilingual education positions had been trimmed to three (PEO, Principal Linguist and Education Officer) and in 1986 the Principal Linguist position disappeared as well. The main consequences of diminished head office support, in the short term, were that fewer inservice training programs were arranged for teachers and specialist staff, fewer school visits were made, and centralised curriculum development for bilingual schools virtually ceased.

A longer-term consequence of the reduction of head office staff was that bilingual programs in remote schools came under stronger community control, particularly as the number of Aboriginal teachers and principals increased. In some cases, schools trialed new 50/50 bilingual programs; in some other instances programs went into decline. However, the Principal Education officer in charge of Bilingual Education and Aboriginal Languages still had an advisory role to play; for example, as a member of school appraisal teams, or as the coordinator of inservice programs.

The reduction in head office support for bilingual schools was partly offset by a combination of Aboriginal Education Program (AEP) curriculum initiatives and stronger on-site curriculum development activities in some schools, for example at Yirrkala. By 1989 regionalisation had placed teacher-linguists under the control of Regional superintendents.

3. In defence of the program: some principles and strategies

During the consolidation phase, bilingual program advisors in head office based some of their decisions on a set of principles and strategies which, while not formally adopted, can be gleaned readily enough from the various memos, papers and curriculum support materials written at the time. We have identified nine principles in all: (1) Do it well or not at all; (2) where possible, seek the appointment of supportive principals; (3) think in terms of languages, not schools; (4) allow adequate time in order to achieve results; (5) broaden the support base; (6) conduct on-site

teacher education; (7) let Aboriginal people determine the purpose of vernacular literacy; (8) consider Aboriginal goals for bilingual programs in addition to the official aims; and (9) encourage Aboriginalisation.

(1) Do it well or not at all

The program beyond pre-school and Year 1 (when 90 per cent of teaching is in the vernacular) is harder and more complex. Among the difficult decisions are: what to teach in what language; how to teach literacy in L1; how to edit L1 materials; how to work out what was interesting in L1; and how to organise team-teaching and local teacher education.

The program had grown rapidly in the 1973-77 period and resources were being spread too thin. There were more schools than specialist positions, and in a couple of cases schools ended up with a teacher linguist but not a printer or Aboriginal literacy workers, or vice versa. The Numbulwar and Oenpelli programs probably suffered as a result of this.

The main feature of consolidation was the decision not to place specialist staff in schools without other specialist staff. For a program to survive a small critical mass was needed; in a school without a pro-bilingual principal at least three of the four specialist staff and three or four other key staff members were needed onsite.

There were several casualties of consolidation:

- (a) The Hermannsburg program never even started. In 1972 Paul Albrecht won a Churchill Fellowship to India and returned advocating a particular community development principle of decentralisation into Homeland Centres. Just at the time when the NT bilingual program was starting and it seemed that Hermannsburg would be one of the early schools to join the program, the community chose a model of English-only, whereby White teachers, driving out daily to each outstation, would do all the teaching.
- (b) Pularumpi had a Tiwi dialect that was so different from the one at Bathurst Island that it required a specialist team to prepare its materials. Another difficulty is that Cyril Rioli, then the Council chairman, was against the program. (In 1977 a Batchelor College Tiwi student had single-handedly started a bilingual education program, against the wishes of the principal).
- (c) Numbulwar lacked specialist staff and only had a teacher-linguist. Also, the growth and dominance of Kriol seemed assumed. As noted in Table 1 a bilingual program in English and Nunggubuyu recommenced there in 1996.
- (d) Indecision about the right orthography to use, coupled with a shortage of specialist staff, crippled further development of the program at Umbakumba.
- (e) Angurugu began in a struggling manner in 1973, but because there was alternative, more attractive employment available for potential Aboriginal teachers at the nearby prawning factory, the program folded in 1974. In about 1980 a request came from the school to have Anindilyakwa literacy with the post -primary girls. Those in the head office said no on the purist grounds that bilingual education meant initial literacy in the vernacular. That decision from our current perspective seems much too narrow, and a mistake.

- (f) Oenpelli experienced a series of principals not really in favour of the program and it was also slow to get specialist staff, resulting in a difficult, complex situation. A linguist and educator familiar with the community said in 1992 that the community may also have perceived Kunwinjku literacy as an adult activity and therefore felt ambivalent about it in the school.

In virtually all of the above cases it is probably true to say that the principals were either against the program or at least ambivalent, even confused, about its worth.

(2) Where possible, seek the appointment of supportive principals

The attitude of the principal was crucial. It was considered to be one of the main factors influencing the quality of a school's program. It seemed that as principals came and went, there was about a 50-50% chance of any one of them being truly committed to the program. As an aside, we had some bizarre experiences with principals. For example, one bachelor who was the host, said at evening meal time "I'm not in favour of bilingual ed. I'm going out to tea. Help yourself to anything in the pantry. See you tomorrow." Another met one of us at the airport transport putdown site and said, "Will we blue here or in my office?" Often the appointment of an unsuitable principal wasn't a result of the Department being difficult—it had to take the only person who applied. The Principal could pull all sorts of secret money and staffing strings when he or she wanted to. (A principal told one of us that he could probably be jailed for the honest 'fiddles' he worked with the school's funds to keep the program alive. He believed these were ethical but illegal.) For all decisions relating to rooms, equipment, paper, inservice courses etc. the principal was obviously a key person. If a program got two indifferent ones in a row it was in trouble.

(3) Think in terms of languages, not schools

An assumption of the consolidation process was that very small communities could not sustain a Model 1 biliteracy program unless serviced from a larger community with the same language. We informally landed on a figure of 200 population at one place to produce sufficient staff talent and continuity to maintain a program. For example, unless the two Pitjantjatjara schools, Areyonga and Docker River, worked closely together, it seemed that each community was too small to sustain a program on its own.

Related to this principle was the notion that for planning purposes it was useful to think in terms of languages, not schools; i.e., the aim should be to secure one linguist, one teacher-linguist and one literature production supervisor to work in each language area, rather than for each school; the only exception was in the case of Aboriginal literacy workers.

(4) Allow adequate time in order to achieve results.

It was argued that the academic effectiveness of the program couldn't really be judged in under eight to ten years. The Department wanted to start testing very early. However it was counter argued that two to three years were needed to organise the initial program and then, on the principle that bilingual education, in relation to programs in English, stood for a 'slower start, stronger finish', not until the end of primary school could an assessment be made (see Devlin, 1995).

(5) Broaden the support base.

The principle was established that the knowledge-base, inspiration-base, opinion-base, and moral-defender base for the bilingual program needed to be wider than the program's supporters within the NT Department of Education. Graham McGill, who became PEA Bilingual on 15 June 1977, was keen to involve the Darwin Institute of Technology (later NTU) in the bilingual program. This was achieved through the establishment of annual teacher-linguist training courses which were later recognised by DIT for credit towards their Graduate Diploma in TESL. (Until about 1985, both in Australia and overseas, TESL specialists tended to see bilingual education specialists as enemies, not as people who shared the same priorities. This was one factor in winning DIT's co-operation in this project.) Bilingual Unit staff began in 1978 by trying to persuade the School of Australian Linguistics, at Batchelor, then part of DIT, to mount courses for non-Aboriginal people in bilingual education skills, not only Indigenous people. SAL, understandably argued that if they allowed that, their energies would be diverted from their main goal – the equipping of Indigenous language workers. Then in 1982 David Zorc, a member of SAL staff, took the initiative and negotiated academic credit with DIT, which together with Bilingual Unit staff jointly organised an eight-week training course in applied linguistics, spanning the four-week mid-year break plus two weeks either side. Eight people attended this course. This initiative developed into the current Graduate Diploma in Applied Linguistics at NTU which currently includes five strands, three of which relate to teaching in Aboriginal contexts; namely, the Bilingual Education, ESL, and Indigenous Languages strands.

To broaden the base of expertise and commitment Beth Graham negotiated in 1983 with David Odling-Smee, then Deputy Principal at Batchelor College, to begin an Aboriginal Languages Fortnight within the program for training Indigenous teachers at Batchelor. Again the principle was the same: to establish a formal, knowledge and skills base for the program beyond departmental and school support groups. Prior to this we had the odd situation where Batchelor College, an organisation designed for Aboriginal people, provided no training in Aboriginal language story writing, history writing or Aboriginal language literacy teaching as part of its courses.

DIT became the Centre for Aboriginal Languages and Linguistics in 1992 and became part of Batchelor College. CALL's interpreter training course began in 1995 and became another form of support for the principle of bilingual education.

A third form of spreading commitment to the program was embodied in various senior administrators, notably Earl Watter, then Director in the Southern Region, initiating the longstanding struggle to centralise printing between 1979 and 1983. The struggle on our part was to keep printing in the schools, to aid employment and enhance local control and involvement. At least one external evaluation was commissioned to test the legitimacy of the school-based arrangement.

A fourth way of extending support to the program was to regionalise it. It was decided in 1983 to re-deploy all specialist staff under regional office control. The idea was to increase regional commitment by means of this reorganisation. Before 1983 all linguists, teacher-linguists, literature production supervisors and Aboriginal literacy workers were on the staffing establishment of the central office and bilingual unit. Further strengthening of the program's infrastructure was achieved when Aboriginal Literacy Workers were given award coverage which was linked to formally accredited courses at the Centre for Australian Languages at Batchelor College. This was the outcome of successful negotiations between Peter Jones, then the PEO, and the NT Public Service.

(6) Conduct on-site teacher education.

Connected with the principle of spreading and stabilising the expertise base was that of on-site teacher education. This came concurrently from two equally committed sources. Beth Graham promoted Learning Together Sessions which were not the same thing as daily lesson preparation. Efforts were made from 1979 to establish the principle that in bilingual programs *working with Aboriginal teachers was more important than working with Aboriginal children*. Graham's book *Team Teaching* (1986) was written in support of this principle. When Courtney Cazden read the book in 1990 she said 'This is a highly political book – it's a strategy towards self determination'. The aims of learning together sessions were both to arrange for non-Aboriginal staff to learn from Aboriginal staff, and to get partially trained Aboriginal staff to reflect on bigger issues of education than the next day's lesson.

The second source for on-site teacher training was Batchelor College's Remote Area Teacher Education program, which was strongly emphasised from about 1985. Batchelor College was aware that teacher education would never reach the people who needed it (a geographical matter) in the relevant form in which they needed it (a pedagogical matter) unless much of the training was community based.

(7) Let Aboriginal people determine the purpose of vernacular literacy.

Aboriginal-controlled social construction of appropriate forms and functions of Aboriginal-language written literatures became an important issue from about 1986. Literacy in both languages, bi-literacy, was the main focus of effort in the program from the beginning. Considering the enormous energy, skill and creativity that has gone into this activity, and the thousands of L1 booklets that have been printed, it is a little surprising that this issue, ie, the nature of forms and functions of L1 written literature, remains among the most unresolved ones in bilingual education. (The other is Aboriginalisation). Until about 1986 the uncritical assumption was that an Indigenous written literature would be very similar in scope and purpose to an English written literature. Now, while people such as Goddard, Christie, Gale, Harris and Walton have publicised the need for alternative Aboriginal literatures and literacies, not everything on the ground is clear. For example, do kids really need to learn to read in L1 and L2 sequentially, or could they safely do so concurrently if the contextual supports were present(such as 'reading homes') and if there were sufficient Aboriginal teachers highly literate in both languages? Literacy in L1 is not in itself magic, and isolatable from other contextual factors. Whether or not it works best, depends on the social conditions. Literacy in L2 worked well for migrants, but didn't work well for Indigenous groups because the social conditions were different. Are those conditions beginning to change in Aboriginal communities? Perhaps not enough yet to challenge the need for initial literacy in L1.

(8) Consider Aboriginal goals for bilingual programs in addition to the official aims.

Bilingual education as a White-conceptualised, White-led and top-down reform had to be only a temporary phase if bilingual education was to achieve its full potential as a tool of broad educational reform. Language is never a force on its own. It is only a tool to achieve various ends. What were the ends to be achieved? (Paulston, 1994, pp. 6-7). To begin with, the White policy makers and administrators' goals were as a top priority the achievement of better academic results. (This makes the program sound like a transfer model and it was never that, at least not in the minds of staff in the program, though it may have been in various policy makers' minds. The

emphases and sequencing of the Official Aims of Bilingual Education, 1983, perhaps indicate this divergence of emphasis between policy makers and school staffs.) What are the Aboriginal goals to be achieved? At the 1987 Applied Linguistics Conference at Batchelor College (the proceedings of which are recorded in Walton and Eggington, 1990) about 300 Indigenous people said, in many ways, what amounted to two ends to be achieved through bilingual education: (1) Aboriginal *control* of schools and (2) schools to become a support for Aboriginal language *maintenance*. Those are now the social pre-conditions from which bilingual education can achieve community support.

(9) Encourage Aboriginalisation.

In a sense, Aboriginalisation, whether it means Aboriginal control, Aboriginal construction of curricula or Aboriginal staffing, has been inherent in bilingual education from the beginning in that, automatically, Aboriginal staff and languages were assigned a central role in schools. In practice, however, while the bilingual program made *space* for Aboriginal people, and provided the impetus to pursue teacher education, Batchelor College's teacher education program has made Aboriginalisation more of a real possibility. This is because Aboriginalisation has been led by four-year trained, Diploma of Education graduates, and that award only became available at the College in 1986. While it was possible for Aboriginal teachers with three years of training and the Associate Diploma (Aboriginal Schools) to replace Whites in leadership roles, few did. This reluctance first appeared in 1979 when the Bilingual Unit made senior administrators in the Department aware that if Yolngu staff from Milingimbi continued to train at Batchelor College at the current rate, the whole school staff could be Aboriginalised by 1981 or 1982. Yolngu staff actually took control of Milingimbi in 1992.

The prospects of appointing a pro-bilingual principal, one of the major factors in helping to ensure a well-managed bilingual program, are likely to be increased with the appointment of bilingual Aboriginal principals. (It cannot be assumed that all Aboriginal teachers are uncritically in favour of bilingual education in that a few think school is a place for English and that the vernacular languages can be maintained at home, but most are strong advocates for the program.) There are still very few Aboriginal principals, however. It is possible that the fact that Aboriginalisation is not progressing as fast as the graduation rate from Batchelor College would suggest it should (with many of the graduates already very experienced teachers) has more to do with the presence or absence of Western culture general knowledge or culture capital in the wider education system, than it does with teaching ability and experience in community contexts. If Aboriginalisation is to progress more quickly, qualified Aboriginal Teachers may need to take graduate courses in western culture general knowledge with stronger ESL culture content. We recognise, however, that this view is controversial.

4. The achievements of bilingual education

The NT bilingual education program has produced some major reforms in Aboriginal schooling in the NT. These include the provision of many valued jobs in regions of high unemployment; space for Aboriginal leadership and control; and a much higher participation in teacher education than in non-bilingual schools. It has provided one agency of Aboriginal language maintenance; achieved some gains in academic areas of English and maths; fostered more Aboriginal leadership in the social construction of Aboriginal pedagogies in Aboriginal contexts, and brought about higher status for Aboriginal educators. The program has also contributed substantially to the personal and educational development of many non-Aboriginal teachers, which in turn has influenced teaching and curriculum development in wider contexts.

In the long run, the most important contribution of the bilingual program may well turn out to be its promotion of Aboriginal teacher training, which in turn has increased opportunities for Aboriginal control to be exercised in Aboriginal schools.

There have been important academic gains made (Gale, McClay, Christie & Harris, 1981; Murtagh, 1979 and Devlin, 1995). but they have not been as solid as expected, nor have they approached national norms.

The program's role in the teaching of more advanced English, while at least as respectable as non-bilingual schools, remains an area where early hopes have not been achieved. On a more personal note, the NT bilingual program has in our view demonstrated that the courage, hard work and ingenuity of individuals, both Aboriginal and White, in seemingly overwhelming circumstances can make substantial changes to the educational destinies of schools.

5. Some unresolved problems

In spite of the substantially successful struggle during the life of the bilingual program to contribute to a high educational status for Aboriginal languages, the aim to produce high standards of English language and literacy has not generally been achieved as successfully as hoped. Schools without bilingual programs have also lagged well below expectations. Bilingual education in the Northern Territory has not yet developed an approach to schooling that, with regard to academic standards, leads to substantially more challenging English programs than the English-only schools, and it should be able to. In 1981 Marta Rado, an international expert in multicultural education based at La Trobe University, attended the annual Bilingual Education Conference, held that year at Yirrkala. She said that the NT program had made schooling more accessible to more students, but did not seem to challenge the gifted to go beyond existing academic plateaus.

For some time now many working in the program have wondered when a stronger pressure for academic excellence will be felt from communities. Cummins (1986) has persuasively argued that Indigenous ethnic minorities are likely to focus on academic issues only after the political issues embodied in schooling have been taken care of. Some, again persuasively, argue that the absence of locally available high schooling imposes a psychologically low ceiling on academic expectations. Also, many would argue that since Batchelor College's community-based teacher education program has been in place (a pedagogical strategy as well as a geographical response) for a decade, the political dimensions of Aboriginal schools have largely been addressed, or at least the means to exercise political will are available.

Why then is proficiency in English not more widespread than it is? We suggest two possible reasons, or solutions. The first is that opportunities to access genuine secondary schooling must be made more readily available, whether or not academic standards in upper primary classes immediately demand it. The second is that there should be a much stronger emphasis on providing opportunities for Aboriginal teachers and teacher-trainees to learn more advanced English and to increase their general knowledge of Western culture.

6. The evaluation of bilingual programs

After the first few bilingual programs were established in 1973 one of the challenges facing the education department was the need to gauge their effectiveness. As has been previously pointed out (Devlin, 1995) the department relied at first on outside technical experts (1973-1978),

then it introduced accreditation by central-office staff (1979-1987) and, finally, it implemented a community-based appraisal scheme (1988 to the present).

In the accreditation phase bilingual programs at schools such as Yirrkala, St Therese's, Milingimbi and Oenpelli were evaluated with reference to the NT's official aims for bilingual education. Participating schools were advised that accreditation would confer two main benefits: official recognition and a permanent allocation of additional resources. Students in Years 5, 6 and 7 were assessed using criterion-referenced English and Maths tests and their results were compared with those obtained from a basket of six non-bilingual schools. As Devlin (1995) noted:

Three schools were eventually accredited: Yirrkala, St Therese's and Shepherdson's College. What the accreditation team found when they analysed the test results was that bilingually educated pupils had performed as well on the English and Maths tests as pupils in the reference group of non-bilingual schools and in some cases they had performed better

It was found that a higher percentage of Year 5 students in the bilingual program at Yirrkala obtained mastery in the English tasks compared to students in the reference group. Shepherdson College pupils "performed significantly better in enough areas, particularly in Years 5 and 7, to suggest that overall they [had] greater proficiency in school work than pupils in Reference Group schools" (Markwick-Smith, quoted in Devlin, 1985).

Accreditation was replaced in 1988 by a scheme known as appraisal or moderated self-appraisal in which each school with a bilingual program was required to compile a detailed self-appraisal report which was then moderated by a team comprising the Regional Superintendent, an Aboriginal community representative, the Principal Education Officer for Bilingual Education and a Feppi representative who spoke the local Aboriginal language.

A briefing prepared for the Minister of Education on 31 July 1990 explained that each school report would be "a valid representation of the activities of the school program. This involved checking the Student Progress section of the reports to ensure that results from the Primary Assessment Program (PAP) were included". However, throughout the 1988-1995 period school appraisal reports did not generally include student performance data¹⁴, which made it difficult to judge whether student learning outcomes were improving or not in these schools. As Devlin (1995) noted, although valuable qualitative information was contained in these short reports, their usefulness as evaluation documents was limited by the lack of detail about students' academic progress.

In 1993, Paul Bubb, the PEO Aboriginal Languages/Bilingual Education observed, in a paper on bilingual education:

It would appear that in some schools, student outcomes in Western Mathematics and English have declined. This is a personal impression I gained from observations of programs undertaking the Appraisal/ Accreditation process. It was difficult to verify this because most schools have not implemented long term assessment and evaluation strategies.

Although this report from a credible observer identified a major concern, what was almost as worrying was the apparent lack of verifiable data that would enable teachers to report trends in student achievement with any confidence.

¹⁴ However, some did. For example, the report prepared in 1993 for Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School at Wadeye covered six years of the program's operation (1988-1993) and included summaries of Primary Assessment Program test data which compared school and system averages.

However, this situation changed as schools began to implement outcomes-based assessment. Fran Murray (1999) has reported that

Quite a number of Bilingual schools, when examining their results from the Multi Assessment Program (MAP) have noted that they are achieving above average results in literacy and numeracy compared to other schools in the non-urban cohort.

For example, Yirrkala's school appraisal and accreditation report for 1998 showed that its students were achieving as well as students in non-bilingual schools on the Department's system-level English tests and were achieving above average scores in Mathematics.

7. What next?

On 1 December 1998 the Treasurer (Mike Reid) and the Minister for Education (Peter Adamson) announced in the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly that bilingual education programs would be phased out in favour of the "further development of ESL programs"¹⁵ Among the reasons given for this decision were:

- (1) the "overwhelming concern" expressed by Aboriginal people about the operation of the bilingual program and
- (2) the need to improve students' English language skills.

The Minister reported that his "own experiences visiting communities" had told him "that this is what communities want". (See http://www.ozemail.com.au/~al4pozy/bilingual/bilingual_government.html). On 28 January 1999 the NT Department of Education released a folder of materials (*Schools Our Focus – Information Package*) which included 17 fact sheets summarising policy changes, including the decision to wind up bilingual education on the grounds that the students in those programs were not attaining better literacy and numeracy scores than their peers in non-bilingual schools; in fact, they were said to be doing, "on average", slightly worse.

The two claims—(1) that Aboriginal people are overwhelmingly concerned about the operation of the bilingual program and (2) that students in bilingual programs were not performing as well as their peers—have been offered as justification for redirecting funding to ESL programs. The Minister's argument is that the decision to "progressively withdraw the Bilingual Education Program" will allow "schools to share in the savings and better resource English language programs". However, the accuracy of the two claims have been challenged; see, for example, the messages submitted to a bulletin board on bilingual education at <http://www.topend.com.au/~dharuk/wwwboard3/wwwboard3.html>.

The first claim has been strongly contested by many Aboriginal people. On 14 December 1998, in an open letter to the Chief Minister and the Minister for Education, the School Community of Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic School declared that it was "angry that the Education Review Team did not visit the school and talk with us. We were not consulted". The Indigenous Education Council NT has distributed its Charter which states that "It is a basic human right for Indigenous groups to choose their first language as the medium in teaching, particularly where that language is the first language in that community". On 11 March 1999 Milingimbi School Council restated their strong commitment to bilingual/bicultural education at the school and discussed the possibility of becoming an independent school.

¹⁵ For an early summary of reactions to this announcement see <http://www.dnathan.com/VL/alert.htm>. Additional information is available at <http://www.ntu.edu.au/education/csle>.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission at its meeting of 16–18 February prepared a paper which

- (a) CONDEMNED the decision by the Northern Territory Government, led by the then Chief Minister Shane Stone, to phase out bilingual programs, and expressed extreme concern at reported moves to speed up the phase out;
- (b) CONDEMNED the Stone Administration for the absence of any meaningful consultation with the affected schools and communities in the making of the decision and distorting the views expressed by Aboriginal people to an education review to justify the decision;
- (c) DECLARED that the decision to remove bilingual education programs is a denial of the right of Aboriginal people to equitable education services and an attack on Aboriginal cultures; and
- (d) CALLED on the new Chief Minister, Mr Dennis Burke, to seek a Cabinet review of the decision, in line with the strong community opposition, with a view to overturning it as soon as possible.

In response, Mr Adamson decried the “confusion, rumour-mongering and misconceptions”, claiming that some individuals and communities had changed their mind as a result of “threats and outright intimidation” (Hansard, 20 April 1999).

The second claim, that students in bilingual programs are not, on average, performing as well as their peers, has been made on the basis of student assessment data obtained for an 11-16 year-old cohort of students from Multilevel Assessment Program tests in English and Mathematics conducted during 1996, 1997 and possibly 1995 (Scott, pers. comm, 1999). It is not yet clear whether any consideration was given to the information and recommendations contained in the bilingual school appraisal reports which have been compiled since 1988.

Four points need to be made. The first is that if major policy decisions are to be made on the basis of students’ assessment results, with groups of schools being compared, these comparisons should be based on trend analysis rather than on cross-sectional data; it would be a concern, for example, if the decision to axe bilingual programs was simply based on comparative data for one or two years, given the length of time many of the programs have been operating. However, this appears to be the case. A second concern is whether the slight difference in average performance (obtained by comparing aggregated means for the two groups of schools) justifies the radical decision that has been made. Whether or not the differences are statistically significant, one wonders whether the quantitative techniques used to arrive at this result included factor analysis or some measure to control for possible intervening variables such as rates of attendance. Thirdly, countless person hours have been invested in school appraisals since 1988. Did the Education Review Task Force consider any of this material before arriving at their decision? We simply do not know at this stage. And finally, we are left to wonder about the schools that were classified as ‘bilingual’ or ‘non-bilingual’. Would the former category have included a school such as Numbulwar which had only re-established its bilingual program in 1996? Would the ‘non-bilingual’ group have included schools such as Ngukurr which have been running unofficial 50/50 bilingual programs for many years (Parkhill, 1999)? We will not have answers to questions such as these until we have access to a better set of data to analyse.

Nevertheless, the ‘cold hard data’ that was collected has been cited as the justification for moving four million dollars out of the bilingual education program to support “other schools that are achieving better results” (Scott, 1999). On 20 April 1999 Mr Adamson reiterated in the Legislative Assembly that the Government’s plan was “to redirect funds for the government’s schools bilingual education program to better support outcomes in English literacy and

numeracy". Although the need to save money has not been emphasised as a reason for scrapping bilingual education programs, it is likely to have been the major contributing factor, given the NT Department of Education's determination to achieve a balanced budget by scaling back expenditure in certain targeted areas. (See Devlin, 1999.)

It is true to say that the Government's decision has attracted widespread criticism. In addition to the responses mentioned previously strong protests have been lodged by a large number of community groups and concerned academics. For example, at least 6000 people have now petitioned the Legislative Assembly to reverse the decision (Hansard, 20 April 1999). On 22 February 1999 *Time* magazine published an article entitled "Divided by language: The Northern Territory axes bilingual education for Aborigines, sparking charges of cultural neglect". Letters have been sent to the Minister by a range of scholars, including Dr Jeff Siegel, Professor Peter Austin on behalf of the Australian Linguistic Society, Dr David Wilkins and 35 other researchers affiliated with the Max Planck Institute in Holland, Alasdair MacCaluim (Edinburgh University's Gaelic society), Dr Michèle de Courcy (Latrobe University), Associate Professor Lloyd Dawe (University of Sydney) and Margot Ford (NTU).

It isn't clear yet what the consequences of the Government's decision will be. What happens next will most probably be influenced by the recommendations flowing from the independent review of Aboriginal Education conducted by Bob Collins. In any event it remains to be seen whether unilaterally dispensing with bilingual programs is likely to be a more effective way to achieve better educational outcomes than, say, improving attendance rates, alleviating poverty or tackling problems relating to health and nutrition in a more concerted way. An allied question is whether the Government's centralised approach to policy making will yield better dividends than encouraging community innovation, participation and control.

In the meantime, both the Minister for Education and senior officials in the NT Department of Education are offering a number of assurances. Among them are the promises that there will be no changes for 1999, affected schools will be consulted, and no funds for Aboriginal schools will be at risk (Katherine Henderson, personal communication, 4 May 1999).

In a recent interview (Scott, 1999) the Minister for Education has said that, despite the phasing out of bilingual programs, "the Government ... will offer support by all means to encourage preservation of languages" and that "There does need to be a local vernacular component in the school system". He has also reiterated that "indigenous teaching positions will be protected". Although the Minister has said that he is willing to debate his decision to phase out the NT Bilingual Program, in his view "no one has come up with the one argument as to why it should continue". After twenty-five years of bilingual education in the Northern Territory, one would think that such arguments are readily available, but it seems that finding one that will convince the politicians is not going to be easy.

Once the Collins Review of Aboriginal Education has produced a set of recommendations and a 20-year strategy for Aboriginal education, it will become clear whether or not there is to be a next phase in the history of the Northern Territory bilingual education program.

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'The literacy question in remote Indigenous Australia'

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How do we make sense of the literacy debate in remote Indigenous Australia?

Public commentary commonly attributes blame to inadequate teaching, poor resourcing of remote schools or even lack of parental support for school attendance. Recently, in a review of education in the Northern Territory Dr Chris Sarra, from the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute in Queensland, accused NT educators of expecting less of their Indigenous students and inadvertently creating an underclass (ABC News April 13 2009). Why? Because the 2008 national English literacy and numeracy benchmarking tests indicated that the NT had some of the highest illiteracy rates in the country.

With its singular focus on schooling, benchmark testing and attendance, the drive to increase literacy in remote Indigenous Australia tends to ignore adult literacy. Yet, Australian of the Year Mick Dodson has just declared that adult literacy is the key to closing the gap in Aboriginal life expectancy (ABC Online April 17 2009).

The literacy debate rarely addresses the critical social and historical factors that also account for why literacy levels among remote Indigenous youth are lower than their mainstream, urban, English as a first language speaking counterparts. The focus on schooling obscures the less obvious fact that we must also be cognisant of the broader sociocultural factors associated with literacy acquisition, maintenance and transmission in newly literate contexts such as that of the remote Indigenous world. There are many complex and intersecting factors that can be attributed to the lower rates of literacy, many of which actually have little to do with the quality of teaching or resources, school attendance or lower expectations of competence.

Let's look at just a few.

The newly literate context

It is commonly assumed that schooling alone will achieve uniform high levels of literacy competence without acknowledging that Indigenous people in the remote world made the transition from an oral culture to a literate culture only relatively recently, in comparison to most Western or other major literate cultures. In some remote sites, this generation of school-attenders may in fact be only the first, second or third generation to pass through schooling and literacy is being learned in contexts where there are few antecedent social literacy practices. Literacy in English as we know it today has taken more than a thousand years to evolve and we still have not achieved universal literacy, despite a long history of schooling interconnected with family and community literacy practices developed over many centuries. In fact, the 2006 national Australian (i.e. mainstream, not remote Indigenous) Adult Literacy and Life Skills survey found that 16% of the adult population has reading, comprehension and maths skills so low that they would be required to undertake a Certificate I or II basic education course to attain the employability skills required by modern industry (*Literacy Link, Newsletter of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy, March 2009, Vol. 29, No. 1., p.1*).

The assumption that literacy learning is dependent on schooling alone

Academics from the disciplines of history, anthropology, linguistics and literacy studies commonly view literacy as social practice. For them, literacy cannot be understood simply in terms of pedagogy as it is part of other more embracing social institutions and conceptions. From this perspective initiatives to increase literacy also need to take account of broader issues such as the connection between language and identity and what people actually use reading and writing for in everyday life, beyond the parameters of schooling.

Researchers recognise that children who learn to read successfully do so because, for them, learning to read is a cultural and not primarily an instructed process. That is, being literate involves more than having individual technical literacy skills, it also depends on the relationship between language behaviors and supporting social relations and cultural practices. These cultural practices are what people use reading and writing for in adult everyday life in different social and cultural contexts: at home, at work, in church, and in recreational and leisure pursuits. For example, many remote Indigenous adults with strong literacy skills often did not learn to read or write well at school, but strengthened their literacy through adult participation in Christian literacy activities (such as Bible study or translation) or involvement in employment or governance roles requiring literacy.

Cultural practices result from the acquisition and transmission of everyday social habits and routines over successive generations. If the current generation of remote Indigenous children is to acquire a set of cultural practices where reading and writing are integral to everyday life, in the way that literacy is assumed practice in most European Australian families, then we also need to pay attention to incorporating literacy into life beyond the school boundary.

Following on from this, it is well understood that family literacy is an important antecedent to school success. If this is so, why are we not concerned that Indigenous families have few locations in their community to buy or access home reading materials? Community stores commonly stock DVDs, CDs and occasionally magazines, but rarely children's books, educational activities or writing materials. In the bid to improve literacy in remote communities why is the government not ensuring that community stores also sell affordable child-oriented reading and writing resources? Likewise, why is there not the demand that every remote community have a public library so that reading materials can be accessed in the out-of-school hours and borrowed by families for home literacy activities. In a number of remote communities Libraries and Knowledge Centres have been established by the Northern Territory Library, but they are unable to service every NT community.

Why are we also not noticing the important job that youth centres, media centres and arts projects in remote communities are doing to ensure that Indigenous youth have access to computers to continue reading, writing and honing their computer skills in the out-of-school hours? In many locations youth centres are seen as diversionary, rather rarely than learning, environments. Nevertheless, in youth centres and media centres across remote Australia we are seeing young people engaging in film-making, computer editing, writing film scripts and titles, as well as writing, recording, transcribing and translating songs and other oral texts, often in their own language as well as in English. These are all activities that enhance meaningful literacy acquisition, maintenance and development. During a recent visit to Warlpiri communities in the Northern Territory I noticed that youth centres had far fewer resources than schools, yet high attendance and engaged participation in activities requiring literacy. Warlpiri communities recognise the importance of youth centres having substantially funded and built them using their own money from mining royalty payments.

Language and identity

Indigenous futures are increasingly being oriented towards employment and mainstream aspirations. In Australia, despite our multilingual heritage, there is a sense that English is superior. More worryingly, there is an assumption that learning English will lead to literacy acquisition, and *ipso facto* that English literacy will result in employment and improved futures for remote Indigenous youth. Most children in remote schools come from a speech community where the mother tongue is an Indigenous language. Yet most of the teaching in remote Indigenous schools, and increasingly so in recent years, is in English. We can continue to teach more and more English, but we may never reach the desired outcomes of improved literacy and numeracy levels if we don't also take account of other sociocultural factors in the learning process, including the nuanced relationship between language and identity. For the realisation of mainstream employment goals Indigenous families have to believe that schooling is worthwhile and that the institution respects their language, culture and community.

Recently the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training (NTDET) decided to replace the bilingual education program with more intensive English teaching. There were only nine operating bilingual education programs in remote NT schools. In the Warlpiri region the bilingual program gave Warlpiri families a strong sense of ownership and pride in their school and their children's learning. Some adults became qualified teachers, Warlpiri reading materials were produced and children observed their elders taking on responsible leadership roles and using literacy in Warlpiri (and English) meaningfully. Moreover, children attended school because they accompanied their elders who were involved in the bilingual program. The move to abolish bilingual education has, in effect, given the Indigenous bilingual educators the impression that their program was a failure. I recently conducted a survey of young adult English literacy competence in the region. The findings indicate that the English literacy levels of 16-25 year olds, some of whom went through the bilingual system, are certainly equivalent to young adults in other remote locations where youngsters have had English-only schooling. I would suggest that the bilingual program has not had a negative impact on English literacy acquisition and has also given some youth foundation skills in mother tongue literacy.

Warlpiri educators believe strongly in the importance of the Warlpiri language program and identity is at the heart of this issue. In response to consultations by the NTDET around a Regional Learning Partnership Agreement the Warlpiri have repeatedly articulated their desire to teach their children Warlpiri language, literacy and culture in school. They want the Warlpiri program to sit alongside an English language and literacy program. NTDET has refused this request. These experienced Warlpiri educators are so upset by this disrespect for their language and culture and their right to decide how their children should be educated that they have refused to sign the Warlpiri Regional Learning Partnership Agreement. This conflict cannot be enhancing community support for schooling and ultimately the goal of improving literacy outcomes.

To assume that literacy is a simple skills acquisition process that can be delivered in a programmed way, in a short period of time, in a language not used by the learner in their speech community, and achieve outcomes comparable to mainstream standards is unrealistic. Literacy is a gradual process that cannot be speeded up. It will take more than two or three generations for literacy to truly seep into family and community practices. If we are serious about increasing literacy in the remote Indigenous world then, in addition to thinking about schooling, we need to pay attention to providing the resources that support everyday adult literacy practices.

Adults never read and write without a purpose. For literacy to take hold in remote communities it must have meaning and purpose over the changing domains and practices that span a person's life and this meaning and purpose must then be transmitted to the following generation. Children in remote communities need to see reading and writing as elemental to everyday life, enacted by their own community members and not just something done by non-Indigenous experts such as teachers. Rather than focus solely on schooling and laying blame for purported failures on teachers, we could instead be considering how to make literacy integral to everyday life so that remote Indigenous youth can grow up unable to imagine a life without reading and writing.

Promise and perils of mother tongue education¹

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Abstract

Under the leadership of UNESCO and other international organizations, over 150 nations have pledged themselves to provide universal basic education. They have adopted as a specific goal,

...ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality (The Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments, adopted by the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26-28 April 2000, Paris, UNESCO, 2000, para 7.)

This paper discusses means for achieving this goal in linguistically diverse societies. It describes the promises and perils of education through the child's first language or mother tongue, drawing from the speaker's experiences with three national programs, each in different phases:

- *those that are in the preparatory phase, such as the mother tongue education program in Vanuatu*
- *relatively new programs, such as the mother tongue primary education program in Eritrea*
- *well-established programs, such as the intercultural and bilingual education program in Guatemala.*

The paper goes on to discuss internal support of mother tongue-first education programs—the decision to begin, language planning and development, materials preparation, teacher selection and training, research and evaluation—and external support such as the role of national and local government, community involvement, the difficulties of taking a pilot program to a national scale, and the role of outside agencies.

Introduction

We know that most children who begin their education in their mother tongue make a better start, demonstrate increased self-confidence and continue to perform better than those who start school in a new language. The outlook for successful education is brighter when the school builds on the foundation of the mother tongue in teaching a second and third

language. Such is the *promise* of mother tongue education. But there are *perils* as well. They include the possibility of ineffective teaching for a number of reasons and lack of support for mother tongue education on the part of teachers, parents and government.

In this article I describe both the promise and perils as they have played out in three countries with three different histories of mother tongue education: Vanuatu in the South Pacific, Eritrea on the horn of Africa, and Guatemala in Central America. All three are multilingual countries, as are virtually all countries of the world, but these three are each at different stages in the development of mother tongue education programs. Vanuatu has just begun a national program for mother tongue instruction. Eritrea's program is a little more than 10 years old. And Guatemala has a national bilingual education program that goes back more than 20 years. It is centralized, but coordinates with other bilingual programs at the state (called "department") level.

Vanuatu

Vanuatu is composed of a string of small islands in the South Pacific. The population of about 200,000 speaks more than 100 languages. With those numbers, it may be one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world. Although some people speak English and French as second languages, the *lingua franca* for most is Bislama, an English-based pidgin or creole.

From 1906-1980, Vanuatu, then called "New Hebrides," was ruled jointly by the British and French. Missionaries provided schooling in local languages during the early part of this period. When the two colonial powers took over education they set up two educational systems, with roughly half of the schools using English as the medium of instruction and the other half, French.

Vanuatu gained independence in 1980. The constitution specified Bislama as the national language and English and French as the international languages. In the last 10 years the country has worked hard to unify the English and French curricula. Now Vanuatu has turned its attention to the important issue of the language of instruction.

¹ ©Nadine Dutcher, 2003

Rethinking the languages of instruction I visited Vanuatu on two occasions for the World Bank—once in 1986 and again in 1998. On both occasions I found that language was a very controversial topic. However, in 1986 there was little interest on the part of school officials in changing the language of instruction. The emphasis was on improving the teaching of English or French, according to which language the school had used historically. (When new schools were added, they were assigned to one of the two languages to keep the balance equal.) By the 1998 visit, the situation had changed. Many in the school system wanted to find a way of teaching children in a language they understood.

In 1998 I worked with a team that was developing a master plan for education. School officials were enthusiastic about the use of local languages. Some of them had been educated in mission schools that had used the local language and they had gone on to successful learning of English or French. They knew that mother tongue education in the early years could lead to educational success. In addition, the World Bank had sponsored trips for key persons in the Ministry of Education to observe the education reform in Papua New Guinea.(PNG). That country, with its more than 800 languages, was in the process of extending the use of local languages as the media of instruction throughout the first three years of primary school. They were—and are—transforming village schools that had used the local language and been outside the formal education system into schools for pre-school through Grade 3, using the local language. Grade 4 and above continue to be taught in English. The Vanuatu officials had returned to their country enthusiastic about what was happening in PNG and interested in adopting this model for Vanuatu.

According to David Klaus, a former World Bank official with whom I worked on the master plan for education in Vanuatu, the World Bank and the government of Vanuatu prepared an education project that included two years in Kindergarten in the local language and then Grade 1 in English or French. (This plan did not match the PNG model of three years of mother tongue primary school.) In 2001, the World Bank and the government of Vanuatu approved the project. But when new elections brought a change of government, the new government officials did not take the actions necessary for the World Bank loan to take effect. After a year, the Bank closed the project.

Current status of mother tongue education in Vanuatu In November 2003, when I spoke about Vanuatu at the Bangkok conference, I did not have the most recent information on mother tongue education in that country. Based on the cancellation of the World Bank project, I assumed that Vanuatu lacked the political will to go forward with vernacular

language education. However, in January 2004, I received an e-mail from Janet Stahl, an SIL educator stationed in Vanuatu, with whom I had worked on my 1998 visit to the country. She wrote, “Much is happening in the country with regard to vernacular literacy and education... The government did not accept the World Bank project because of economic concerns but they have sought smaller aid packages from Australia, New Zealand, France, Britain, and the European Union.”

Vanuatu’s master plan for education now stipulates that the vernacular be used as the medium of instruction for preschool and the first year of primary school. In addition, one subject will be taught in the vernacular throughout the primary grades. The government has decided to make the primary schools responsible for the vernacular classes, using trained teachers rather than individuals chosen by the community (as in the Papua New Guinea model). In 1998, SIL Vanuatu supported training in Papua New Guinea for four Ni-Vanuatu so that they could learn about implementing vernacular programs. The Ni-Vanuatu completed their training by initiating practical projects in their own language communities. With assistance from SIL, the four trained Ni-Vanuatu developed three two-week workshops for class 1 teachers and zone curriculum advisors. Under government sponsorship, they have been conducting this first course throughout the country. In addition, they are inviting people from the communities to help write stories that will support the literacy programs.

The Bahai’i community, SIL and World Vision continue to implement non-formal literacy programs for adults in the vernacular languages. The Oral Traditions Project of the Vanuatu Cultural Center has published four booklets in 12 languages for teaching vernacular literacy for community kindergartens. They are also developing social science and history materials appropriate for Vanuatu children.

Promise and perils The situation for effective education in Vanuatu is full of promise. As with any innovative program, there are perils associated with the Vanuatu educational plan. The vernacular pilot projects have met with mixed success. However, problems in the pilot project have been mainly the result of logistic and administrative difficulties rather than language or teaching problems. As Janet Stahl wrote, “The new government is very interested in vernacular education and improving education overall... I feel certain that progress is being made for improving education in Vanuatu. It is an exciting place to work at this time.”

Eritrea

Eritrea is a country of four million people, situated on the horn of Africa. For roughly the first half of the 20th century, it was an Italian colony. After World War II there was a short military occupation by the British, followed by federation with Ethiopia and then incorporation by Ethiopia. For over 30 years Eritreans struggled for independence. In 1991 they succeeded and in 1993 a nationwide vote ratified that independence.

Eritrea has nine indigenous languages, although most Eritreans speak either Tigrigna or Tigre, related Semitic languages, as their mother tongue. The official languages are Tigrigna, Arabic, and English. The medium of instruction for primary schools is the language of the community and English is used in Grade 6 and beyond.

During the Italian colonial period, the few schools that had been established used Italian as the language of instruction. During the Ethiopian occupation, education was in Amharic, which is not spoken as a mother tongue by any of the indigenous population. Before independence most Eritreans had decided, for both political and educational reasons, to use local languages for schooling. By 2002 the full national curriculum for elementary had been issued in eight of the nine Eritrean languages. Communities were encouraged to use their local language but were not obliged to do so.

How well is the new education system functioning? In essence it is doing well, considering the very short period—a little more than 10 years—that it has been in place. At least four evaluations have been carried out.

In 1996 I participated in the first evaluation of the mother tongue program. I was a consultant for SIL International, assigned to work with the language panels of the Ministry of Education. We found that about 60 percent of the schools had opted for the local language of the community as the medium of instruction. But there were very few textbooks available in the community languages and teachers relied on student recitation and copying. In short, there was much room for improvement. As evaluators, we recommended more textbooks and teacher training. In 1998 and 1999 the Ministry undertook its own evaluation and found effective learning in some subjects in some grades. The weakest areas were mother tongue reading in Grade 1 and English reading in Grade

4.

In 2001 the Ministry took part in a UNESCO-UNICEF international educational assessment. Student performance scores were low overall, with the lowest in mathematics and the somewhat better scores in mother tongue reading in Grades 3 and 5.

In 2002 the Ministry undertook a detailed examination of reading instruction in primary schools with the help of consultants from SIL International. The team tested 2400 students in five schools in eight language areas and interviewed 120 teachers. They found that the two most critical areas for improvement were the teaching of reading in the mother tongue in Grade 1 and preparing children to study through English in Grade 6 and beyond. Reading weaknesses were due to inadequate pre-reading instruction, poorly designed and used primers, and no practice in reading connected text in Grade 1. The evaluation team also found that the least experienced teachers were assigned to Grade 1. Their teaching emphasized copying and memorization. With regard to preparation for study in English, the team judged the English curriculum to be weak because it contained few of the words and grammatical structures that children would need later when English became the language of instruction. In addition, not enough time was allotted for English instruction.

The team made two principal recommendations. The first was to revamp Grade 1 and to assign to Grade 1 the best prepared and best paid teachers; the second was to provide an extra year between Grades 5 and 6 to support the transition into English.

The Ministry accepted these recommendations, but questions remain as to whether they will be able to implement them. They are radical recommendations and even the most established school system might find them difficult to put into place. However, there is one new and encouraging development: a new teachers college to prepare teachers for mother tongue instruction.

Promise and perils The promise of mother tongue education is there. Eritrea is a country with a strong political will to fully educate its citizens. The country is determined to provide initial education in a language children will understand and then to add a second language for wider communication. But there are perils as well. The use of the mother tongue is necessary but not sufficient for high quality education. To take advantage of schooling in the mother tongue the children must be engaged instructionally, not just talked at or required to copy from the board. As Susan Malone pointed out at this conference,² both the educational foundation established in the mother tongue and the bridge to learning through the second language must be strong and of high quality.

Guatemala

Guatemala is the oldest of the three countries, having gained its independence from Spain in 1821. It is also the largest, with a population of about 12 million, of which about 40 percent are of Mayan Indian descent. Guatemalans speak over 20 indigenous languages, most of which are Mayan languages. Spanish is the official language. Local languages may be used in primary school, but Spanish is the medium of instruction in the higher grades.

Guatemala has the highest illiteracy rate in Latin America. One reason for this is the low level of spending on education, one of the lowest in Latin America. The country has had a history of internal violence—warfare between military and paramilitary forces and the rural people (most of whom are of Mayan ancestry). The violence came to a nominal end with the Peace Accords of 1996, which brought the needs of indigenous and underserved populations to the forefront of the national agenda.

Programs Guatemala has several kinds of bilingual or mother tongue programs. In 1983 and again in 1987, as a staff member of the World Bank, I visited the oldest of these programs, now called the Directorate of Bilingual and Intercultural Education. In 1996, in connection with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), I visited another program for Mayan children. This one was geared specifically to multi-grade schools.

The Directorate of Bilingual and Intercultural Education is Guatemala's oldest and largest program for mother tongue education, operating in about 1200 rural schools throughout the country. Its origins go back 40 years to a kindergarten program for non-Spanish speaking children. This program aimed to improve learning by exposing the children to Spanish before they entered primary school conducted in Spanish.

In 1979 the government, with prodding and funds from USAID, began a pilot project in bilingual education. The pilot used the transition model, beginning instruction in the language of the children, with some instruction in Spanish and then transitioning gradually to Spanish-only in Grade 3 or 4. The pilot consisted of forty schools, ten schools in each of the areas inhabited by the four largest indigenous language groups. These forty schools were paired with a control group

of forty schools in the same areas, in which the children received instruction only in Spanish.

The pilot project was a major undertaking. Textbooks were written in the four major languages. Mayan-language speaking teachers were trained to use their Mayan mother tongue in the classroom. They were encouraged to appreciate their Mayan heritage, both language and the culture. All this occurred at a time of extensive civil strife when it was dangerous to support any initiative related to the Mayan people.

Preliminary evaluations of the pilot project showed that Grade 1 and Grade 2 bilingually taught children were learning Spanish as well as their counterparts in the all-Spanish schools and that they dropped out less and were promoted more than their peers in all-Spanish classes.

Based on this success, the program was expanded to 400 schools, then 800. By 1999 the status of the program had been raised to that of a Directorate within the Ministry structure. The program was providing instruction in 14 languages for 230,000 rural children in 1200 schools.

The Directorate of Bilingual and Intercultural Education operates in the states (or departments) with large numbers of Mayan language speaking children. There are also a number of other bilingual education programs that operate on the department level. In El Quiche, a department in the mountainous highlands, USAID is supporting the Access to Intercultural Bilingual Education Project, which aims to improve the quality of pre-primary and primary intercultural bilingual education. This program operates along four lines: training teachers and others; developing and providing classroom posters, games, and other materials; increasing parents' participation in and understanding of intercultural bilingual education; and coordinating policy with other segments of the Ministry. Other donors, such as the European Union and German Technical Assistance Agency, support bilingual education projects in other parts of the country.

² Susan Malone, plenary papers, this site.

Promise Much of the initial promise of bilingual education has been realized. The Directorate for Intercultural and Bilingual Education, which has provided relevant education to rural indigenous boys and girls, has become an integral part of the Ministry. There has been wide acceptance of bilingual education on the part of parent and community groups. For some people, acceptance has come because of the payoffs associated with speaking Spanish. For others, bilingual education has meant a way of valuing and preserving Mayan language and culture.

A major accomplishment has been the educational development of Mayan professionals supported by scholarships and work opportunities in the various programs. Twenty-five years ago, when the pilot project began, there were only a few Mayan professionals; now there are many. They belong to organizations such as the Academy for Mayan Languages, the National Council of Mayan Education and the Association of Mayan Researchers of Guatemala, organizations that work to preserve and strengthen the place of Mayan language and culture in the country.

The bilingually educated students do well in classrooms where the program is well implemented. An evaluation of students from 1986-1991 showed that bilingually taught children outperformed students in comparison schools on seven out of 10 measures of academic achievement; on the three other measures the average scores were about the same.

A later evaluation, covering 1991-1996, revealed that bilingual schools are more cost effective than Spanish-only schools, even with the additional operating costs. It costs less to produce a sixth grade graduate from the bilingual schools than from the all-Spanish schools because those in the all-Spanish schools often enter at an older age and repeat grades more often.

A 2002 study of sixth grade graduates from three phases of the bilingual program compared their achievement to counterparts in the all-Spanish schools graduating in the same years. This study found that bilingually educated students entered school at an earlier age, used more Mayan language with the investigators, and demonstrated mastery of Spanish at about the same level as their counterparts despite less time and focus on Spanish in the bilingual school.

In addition, this study of grade 6 graduates found that the importance of bilingual education and the teaching of Mayan culture have been widely accepted by graduates from both types of school, who said that, if possible, they would send their children to a bilingual school. The program has provided means for Mayans to preserve their identity and language during a period in Guatemalan history when both were threatened.

Perils Naturally the situation in Guatemala with regard to bilingual education has not been entirely rosy. The Directorate is part of the regular Ministry. It pays the salaries of the teachers and supervisors. But without the additional funds that it received from U.S. funding in its earlier years, it is able to offer little in the way of providing materials or in-service training.

Gaining support for the bilingual programs has been a challenge. Ministry support and commitment have fluctuated. In the beginning it was strong; in later years, much less so. Also in the beginning, there was the problem of a lack of community acceptance, but the study of the grade 6 graduates found that this is much less of a problem now. Some programs, like the one in El Quiche, are successfully bringing parents into the activities of the school and helping them understand the advantages of the bilingual program. Support from monolingual teachers has never been solid. This is understandable, given their background and training, but it is a factor that the programs must confront because the lack of support undermines social approval of bilingual education in general.

Coverage still falls short. Of approximately 900,000 Mayan children age 6-12 years; only about 200,000 receive some type of bilingual intercultural education.

Consistent implementation has also been a problem. Bilingually educated students do well in classrooms where the program is well implemented, but there are many gaps. One study found that in the bilingual schools, teachers used the Mayan language only 24% of the time, Spanish the rest of the time. Most of the use of the Mayan languages occurred in preschool, tapering to only 9 percent by grade 3. Many of the so-called bilingual education teachers are actually monolingual in Spanish. There have been difficulties matching teacher assignments to the local languages. And even when the language of the teacher and community are matched, the teacher who speaks the community language may not be at ease with reading or writing in the language. When using bilingual textbooks, teachers may be more comfortable with the Spanish version of the lesson, thus neglecting the Mayan language version.

There have also been problems with availability and use of textbooks. A recent study—the one of the grade 6 graduates mentioned earlier—found that both the graduates of the bilingual schools and those from the all-Spanish schools reported that they had seldom used textbooks in their classes. This was disappointing news, especially after the extensive time and

money that had been devoted to production of texts. And when textbooks *were* used, their primary function was as a model for students to copy.

Adequate teacher training has been a constant problem. Programs in some of the Guatemalan teacher colleges have trained teachers to build students' cognition in both languages, but these teacher colleges are able to graduate only 150-170 students each year. With expansion of the program, on-the-job or in-service training has attempted to fill the gap. For example, in 2001, the Directorate for Bilingual Education trained 10,000 teachers for five days in reading and writing their own language. Programs from the smaller projects have trained teachers as well. The project in El Quiche emphasizes active methods of teaching in their teacher training programs.

Limited government finances are a major problem. When outside funds are available, programs flourish. When they are not, the programs wither.

Thus, the situation in Guatemala is far from perfect. The overall political situation is delicate and dangerous. Recognizing a variety of cultures and languages involves sharing power. Not all parts of Guatemalan society may be ready for the kind of power sharing that is one of the requirements, and fruits, of bilingual education.

Conclusions

What are the lessons from these three countries? There are at least two.

First is the importance of teacher training. Planning for bilingual education programs is only the beginning of effective education in a linguistically diverse society. Teachers need training in using their first language in the classroom; materials have to be appropriate, available, and used. If they are not being used (the case in Guatemala from the recent study of the Grade 6 graduates), it is important to learn why. Most teachers need training in methodology so that they can exploit the advantages of teaching in a language children understand. This means less emphasis on rote learning, repetition, and copying and more on peer-to-peer interaction and on encouraging students to think for themselves, read, and come to their own conclusions. Teachers also need good materials and methods for teaching the second language. All of this is true for Eritrea and Guatemala, and will be the case for Vanuatu, if and when they establish mother tongue education on a large scale. Such enormous undertakings require commitment and understanding.

³ I was encouraged after I gave this talk at the Bangkok conference to learn from Vibeke Jensen of The second lesson from the experiences of Vanuatu, Eritrea, and Guatemala is that political will is essential for mother tongue programs to begin and to thrive. Vanuatu has recently demonstrated the political will—at least to begin mother tongue programs. Eritrea did so as well when, during its armed struggle for independence, the country decided that all Eritrean mother tongues would be used in education if their speakers desired. The Eritrea slogan then and now is “Unity through Diversity.” In Guatemala the bilingual programs now receive support from many indigenous groups, which represent about 40 percent of population, but much less so from the more powerful non-indigenous community. At first many in the governing elites supported bilingual education but as the program has expanded, other innovative programs have been initiated and support for bilingual education from the ruling classes has diminished. What does that mean for the future? We can hope that those educators and others who have seen the benefits of bilingual education—the promises fulfilled—will be strong enough to demand from their government the best education possible for their children—education that validates the children's home culture as well and also removes the barriers that inhibit them from participating fully in the wider world.

Sources

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UNESCO Bangkok that UNESCO Bangkok had developed a “Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments” to be used by educators and others to improve the learning within and outside the classroom. If widely used, the strategies discussed in the Toolkit would go a long way toward addressing the teaching challenges that all teachers face, whether they are working in a monolingual or a multilingual environment.

Nadine Dutcher 8

Education in a multilingual world

**_ UNESCO
Education
Position
Paper _**



Education

in a multilingual world

[_UNESCO Education Position Paper_ 2003](#)

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Introduction

UNESCO has an essential role to play in providing international frameworks for education policy and practice on key and complex issues. Language and, in particular, the choice of language of instruction in education is one such concern and often invokes contrasting and deeply felt positions. Questions of identity, nationhood and power are closely linked to the use of specific languages in the classroom. Language itself, moreover, possesses its own dynamics and is constantly undergoing processes of both continuity and change, impacting upon the communication modes of different societies as it evolves. Educational policy makers have difficult decisions to make with regard to languages, schooling and the curriculum in which the technical and the political often overlap. While there are strong educational arguments in favour of mother tongue (or first language) instruction, a careful balance also needs to be made between enabling people to use local languages in learning, and providing access to global languages of communication through education. The purpose of this position paper, therefore, is to consider some of the central issues concerning languages and education and to provide related guidelines and principles. In doing so we are conscious of the need for a clear statement on language policy in relation to education, particularly within the context of Education for All and in terms of the Dakar goals of ensuring that by 2015 all children have access to quality primary education and that there is a 50 per cent increase in adult literacy by the year 2015.

In 1953 UNESCO published the expert report on *The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education* and this continues to be the most frequently cited UNESCO document on language issues in education. Significant changes have taken place over the past fifty years, however: there have been profound political transformations leading to new language policies especially in postcolonial and newly independent countries; many hundreds of languages have disappeared throughout the world and many more remain endangered; migratory movements on a mass scale have brought new and varied languages to other countries and continents; the internet has dramatically affected the way in which language and languages are used for communication and indeed for learning; and rapidly accelerating globalization increasingly challenges the continued existence of many small, local identities frequently based on language. The time has come, therefore, for UNESCO to reconsider its position on languages and education.

This position paper is divided into three separate parts. In Part I, we present the key concepts that are used in relation to multilingual education. The aim is to clarify a set of meanings and terms used in relation to languages and education. In Part II, we present a synthesis of the normative framework for languages and education based, firstly, on an analysis of United Nations standard-setting instruments; secondly, on a discussion of specific UNESCO conventions and declarations make reference to issues of language and culture; and, thirdly, on the outcomes and recommendations of international conferences related directly or indirectly to issues of language and education. Part III of the position paper provides a synthesis of the many discussions and agreements on language issues that have been adopted under the auspices of both the United Nations and UNESCO. These are placed within a set of guidelines and principles with the objective of making UNESCO's position clear and giving them a wider distribution in a more accessible format.

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Education in many countries of the world takes place in multilingual contexts. Most plurilingual societies have developed an *ethos* which balances and respects the use of different languages in daily life. From the perspective of these societies and of the language communities themselves, multilingualism is more a way of life than a problem to be solved. The challenge is for education systems to adapt to these complex realities and provide a quality education which takes into consideration learners' needs, whilst balancing these at the same time with social, cultural and political demands. While uniform solutions for plural societies, may be both administratively and managerially simpler, they disregard the risks involved both in terms of learning achievement and loss of linguistic and cultural diversity. In this part of the document we discuss some of the basic issues which surround the provision of education in diverse linguistic situations.

⑩ Linguistic diversity and multilingualism

Linguistic diversity reflects the existence of the multitude of languages spoken in the world which is variously estimated at between 6 000 and 7 000 languages. Safeguarding this diversity today is one of the most urgent challenges facing our world. Estimates suggest that at least half of them are in danger of disappearing in the coming years.¹ While some countries are linguistically homogeneous, such as Iceland, many countries and regions display a wealth of linguistic diversity, for example, Indonesia, with over 700 languages, and Papua New Guinea with over 800 languages.² The actual distribution of linguistic diversity is uneven. Over 70 per cent of all languages in the world are found in just 20 nation states, among them some of the poorest countries in the world. In general, however, bilingual and multilingual contexts, that is, the presence of different linguistic groups living in the same country, are the norm rather than the exception throughout the world, both in the North and the South. Bilingualism and multilingualism, that is, the use of more than one

language in daily life, will be normal practice in these contexts.

Part I.

Linguistically diverse contexts cover a range of scenarios. Broadly speaking, however, these correspond either to more traditionally diverse situations where several, or even up to many hundreds of languages have been spoken in a region over a long period of time, or to more recent developments (particularly in urban concentrations), the result of migratory phenomena, where in some city schools there may be as many as 30 or 40 different mother tongues among students. In all cases, there is a need to take into consideration the specific learning needs of children in relation to the language or languages of the home and those of the school.

10 Minority and majority languages

The concept of linguistic diversity itself is relative, however, and is usually measured in terms of national boundaries, giving some languages the status of majority language and others that of minority language according to specific national contexts. Mandarin, for example, one of the most widely spoken languages in the world, which is spoken by almost 900 million people, is a majority language in China, but in other countries where only part of the population is of Chinese language and culture, it has the status of a minority language in the face of other national or majority languages of those countries. Similarly, a minority language in a large country may, be regarded as a majority language in a smaller country. However, most of the world's languages, including sign languages for the deaf and braille for the blind, are minority languages in any national context. Nevertheless, the term 'minority' is often ambiguous and may be interpreted differently in distinct contexts because it may have both numerical and social or political dimensions. In some cases it may be simply used as a euphemism for non-elite or subordinate groups, whether they constitute a numerical majority or minority in relation to some other group that is politically and socially dominant.

10 Official and national languages

Although there are more than 20 States with more than one official language (India alone, for example, has 19 official languages while South Africa has 11),

14 the majority of countries in the world are monolingual nation states in the sense of recognizing, de jure or de facto, only one official language for government and legal purposes. That is not to say that they are not bilingual or multilingual societies, but rather that while there may be many languages widely used in a country these do not necessarily have the legal authority of an official language. In many countries that were previously under colonial regimes, the official language tends to be the language of the former colonizers. In addition to official languages, several countries recognize national languages, which may be compulsory in education. The choice of language in the educational system confers a power and prestige through its use in formal instruction. Not only is there a symbolic aspect, referring to status and visibility, but also a conceptual aspect referring to shared values and worldview expressed through and in that

language. 10 **Language(s) of instruction**

The language of instruction in or out of school refers to the language used for teaching the basic curriculum of the educational system. The choice of the language or indeed the languages of instruction (educational policy might recommend the use of several languages of instruction) is a recurrent challenge in the development of quality education. While some countries opt for one language of instruction, often the official or majority language, others have chosen to use educational strategies that give national or local languages an important place in schooling. Speakers of mother tongues, which are not the same as the national or local language, are often at a considerable disadvantage in the educational system similar to the disadvantage in

receiving instruction in a foreign official language. 10 **Mother**

tongue instruction

Mother tongue instruction generally refers to the use of the learners' mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Additionally, it can refer to the mother tongue as a subject of instruction. It is considered to be an important component of quality education, particularly in the early years. The expert view is that mother tongue instruction should cover both the teaching of and the teaching through this language.

MULTILINGUAL CONTEXTS : THE CHALLENGE FOR EDUCATION SYSTEMS

The term 'mother tongue', though widely used, may refer to several different situations. Definitions often include the following elements: the language(s) that one has learnt first; the language(s) one identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; the language(s) one knows best and the language(s) one uses most. 'Mother tongue' may also be referred to as 'primary' or 'first language'. The term 'mother tongue' is commonly used in policy statements and in the general discourse on educational issues. It is retained in this document for that reason, although it is to be noted that the use of the term 'mother tongue' often fails to discriminate between all the variants of a language used by a native speaker, ranging from hinterland varieties to urban-based standard languages used as school mother tongue. A child's earliest first-hand experiences in native speech do not necessarily correspond to the formal school version of the so-called mother tongue.

It is an obvious yet not generally recognized truism that learning in a language which is not one's own provides a double set of challenges, not only is there the challenge of learning a new language but also that of learning new knowledge contained in that language. These challenges may be further exacerbated in the case of certain groups are already in situations of educational risk or stress such as illiterates, minorities and refugees. Gender considerations cross cut these situations of educational risk, for girls and women may be in a particularly disadvantaged position. In most traditional societies, it is the girls and women who tend to be monolingual, being less exposed either through schooling, salaried labour, or migration to the national language, than their sons, brothers or husbands.

Studies have shown that, in many cases, instruction in the mother tongue is beneficial to language competencies in the first language, achievement in other subject areas, and second language learning.³ The application of the principle of mother tongue instruction nevertheless is far from being the rule. Some of the difficulties encountered by the use of mother tongues as languages of instruction may include the following:

_sometimes the mother tongue may be an unwritten language; _sometimes the language may not even be generally recognized
as constituting a legitimate language;

> Part I.

_the appropriate terminology for education purposes may still have to be developed; _there may be a shortage of educational materials in the language; _the multiplicity of languages may exacerbate the difficulty of providing schooling in each mother tongue; _there may be a lack of appropriately trained teachers; _there may be resistance to schooling in the mother tongue by students, parents and teachers.

10 Linguistic rights

Language is not only a tool for communication and knowledge but also a fundamental attribute of cultural identity and empowerment, both for the individual and the group. Respect for the languages of persons belonging to different linguistic communities therefore is essential to peaceful cohabitation. This applies both to majority groups, to minorities (whether traditionally resident in a country or more recent migrants) and to indigenous peoples.

Claims for language are among the first rights that minorities have voiced when there have been situations of political change and evolution. Such claims for linguistic rights range from the official and legal status of the minority and indigenous language, to language teaching and use in schools and other institutions, as well as in the media. In regard to education, the linguistic rights that have been framed in international agreements⁴ for minority and indigenous groups include the following:

_schooling in their languages, if so desired; _access to the language of the larger community and to that of national education systems; _inter-cultural education that promotes positive attitudes to minority and indigenous languages and the cultures they express; _access to international languages.

The educational rights that have been formulated in international agreements for migrant workers and members of their families⁵ provide:

SYSTEMS _that the integration of their children should be facilitated by teaching the language in use in the school system; _that opportunities should be created for

teaching

The language of instruction in school is the medium of communication for the transmission of knowledge. This is different from language teaching itself where the grammar, vocabulary, and the written and the oral forms of a language constitute a specific curriculum for the acquisition of a second language other than the mother tongue. Learning another language opens up access to other value systems and ways of interpreting the world, encouraging inter-cultural understanding and helping reduce xenophobia. This applies equally to minority and majority language speakers. The way languages are taught is constantly changing, and may vary considerably from one country to another or even within the same country. Much depends on the prevailing concept of language and language teaching paradigms, as well as on the role that is

assigned to the language that is taught.

Bilingual and multilingual education refer to the use of two or more languages as mediums of instruction. In much of the specialized literature, the two types are subsumed under the term bilingual education. However, UNESCO adopted the term 'multilingual education' in 1999 in the General Conference Resolution 12 to refer to the use of at least three languages, the mother tongue, a regional or national language and an international language in education.⁶ The resolution supported the view that the requirements of global and national participation, and the specific needs of particular, culturally and linguistically distinct communities can only be addressed by multilingual education. In regions where the language of the learner is not the official or national language of the country, bilingual and multilingual

education can make mother tongue instruction possible while providing at the same time the acquisition of languages used in larger areas of the country and the world. This additive approach to bilingualism is different from the so called subtractive bilingualism which aims to move children on to a second language as a language of instruction.

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Normative work in language education

The status and role of languages internationally have been the subject of numerous declarations, recommendations and agreements. There are some that are particularly relevant to the discussion on language and education. We begin by placing the discussion on language within the framework of United Nations agreements and standard-setting instruments, and follow on with more references to the mandate of UNESCO's mission at an international level. Declarations and Recommendations emanating from inter-governmental conferences are then considered. For the purposes of this position paper only those agreements of an international nature are considered.⁷

The aim of presenting the framework in this way is to illustrate the broad international agreement on the issue of language and its importance in the education system, before moving on to present in Part III, UNESCO Guidelines on Language and Education.

A. United Nations standard- setting instruments

As one of the fundamental standard-setting instruments, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed in 1948, lays down the basic principle against discrimination on the grounds of language: 'Article 2.: Everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as... language'.

The rights of persons belonging to minorities are furthermore established by the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the 1992 Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. Whereas Article 27 of the International

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Covenant refers more generally to the right of persons belonging to minorities ‘to use their own language ... in community with the other members of their group’, the Declaration is of explicit relevance to the language issue in the field of education as it formulates in Article 4 that persons belonging to minorities should have adequate opportunities ‘to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue’ and that measures should be taken ‘in order to encourage knowledge of the ... language and culture of the minorities’.

The educational rights of indigenous peoples are addressed by the 1989 ILO

Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries. Article 28 requires that ‘children belonging to the peoples concerned shall, wherever practicable, be taught to read and write in their own indigenous language or in the language most commonly used by the group to which they belong’ and that ‘adequate measures shall be taken to ensure that these peoples have the opportunity to attain fluency in the national language or in one of the official languages of the country’. The Article provides at the same time that ‘measures shall be taken to preserve and promote the development and practice of the indigenous languages of the peoples concerned’.

As far as non-nationals are concerned, the 1985 Declaration on the Human Rights of Individuals who are not Nationals of the Country in which they live

provides in its Article 5 that ‘Aliens shall enjoy ... the right to retain their own language, culture and tradition.’ The 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families puts forth that ‘States of employment shall pursue a policy ... aimed at facilitating the integration of children of migrant workers in the local school system, particularly in respect of teaching them the local language’, and ‘the teaching of their mother tongue and culture’; they may furthermore ‘provide special schemes of education in the mother tongue of children of migrant workers’ (Article 45).

The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child sheds light on another aspect of the language issue in education. It emphasizes that language also has to be considered as an educational value. Article 29 sets up that ‘the education of the child shall be directed to... the development of respect for the child’s... cultural identity, language and values’.

> Part II.

B. UNESCO declarations and conventions

UNESCO's mandate charges it to deal with language issues. In this sense, Article 1 of the UNESCO Constitution sets forth the fundamental principle that language should not induce any kind of discrimination: 'the human rights and fundamental freedoms... are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion'.

More specifically relating to education, the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education lays down the educational rights of persons belonging to minorities. Article 5 has a particular relevance to the language issue as the respective roles of the mother tongue and of the majority language are defined: 'the members of national minorities [have the right] to carry on their own educational activities, including... the use or the teaching of their own language, provided... that this right is not exercised in a manner which prevents the members of these minorities from understanding the culture and language of the community as a whole and from participating in its activities'.

The 1976 Recommendation on the Development of Adult Education reinforces the role of the mother tongue as it explicitly recommends mother tongue instruction and it adopts a broader perspective on language learning: 'Article 22.: With regard to ethnic minorities, adult education activities should enable them to... educate themselves and their children in their mother tongues, develop their own cultures and learn languages other than their mother tongues.'

The role of the mother tongue in education was also referred to in the 1978 Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice that recommends in Article 9 that 'steps should be taken to make it possible for [the] children [of population groups of foreign origin] to be taught their mother tongue.'

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The 1995 Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy promotes foreign language learning ([Article 19](#)) and the ‘respect for the educational rights of persons belonging to ... minorities, as well as indigenous peoples’ in order to foster understanding between communities and nations ([Article 29](#)).

The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, adopted in 2001, likewise touches upon the importance of languages for the promotion of cultural diversity. Article 6 of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Declaration defines the role that languages should play in the field of education including respect for the mother tongue, linguistic diversity at all levels of education and the promotion of multilingualism from an early age.

C. Outcomes from international conferences

Many of the world summits held in recent years under the auspices of the United Nations and following an inter-governmental logic have noted the core importance of languages. A case in point is The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women affirms the principle of equal access to education which has to be achieved through the elimination of ‘discrimination in education at all levels on the basis of ... language.’

Mother tongue instruction appears to be a recurrent issue. The Delhi Declaration and Framework for Action, adopted in 1993 at the Education for All Summit, takes an explicit stand on the issue of mother tongue instruction by supporting ‘initial instruction in the mother tongue, even if it may in some cases be necessary for the students to subsequently master a national language or other language of wider usage if they are to participate effectively in the broader society of which they are part.’ The need to acknowledge ‘the

[> Part II.](#)

essential role of the mother tongue for initial instruction' is also formulated in the 1996 Amman Affirmation, the final communiqué of the Mid-Decade Meeting of the International Consultative Forum on Education for All.

The 1997 Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning, adopted at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, states the importance of the issue for minority groups and indigenous peoples and proposes that 'the right to learn in the mother tongue should be respected and implemented' ([Article 15](#)). The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights (1993) provides more generally in section I, paragraph 19 that the 'persons belonging to minorities have the right... to use their own language in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination'.

The 1998 World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action puts forth the importance of multilingualism in higher education: in order to encourage international understanding, 'the practice of multilingualism, faculty and student exchange programmes... should be an integral part of all higher education systems' ([Article 15](#)).

In the field of language and education, the recent reports and recommendations of the International Conference on Education (ICE) have emphasized the importance of:

_mother tongue instruction at the beginning of formal education for pedagogical, social and cultural considerations;⁸

_multilingual education with a view to the preservation of cultural identities and the promotion of mobility and dialogue;⁹

_foreign language learning as part of an intercultural education aiming at the promotion of understanding between communities and between nations.¹⁰

UNESCO guidelines on language and education

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There are certain basic guiding principles which have been common to all the documents, agreements and recommendations produced throughout the years of UNESCO's mandate for action in this field. These have led us to produce a set of guidelines which represent the organization's current approach to language and education in the twenty-first century, and which should serve to state the position of the international community in its various member states. These guidelines are entirely based on a review of previous declarations and recommendations, and represent the diversity of thinking on this complex and challenging issue.

They are divided into three basic principles:

1. UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.
2. UNESCO supports bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies.
3. UNESCO supports language as an essential component of inter-cultural education in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights.

A series of more specific orientations corresponds to each of these basic principles.

Principle I

UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction¹¹ as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.

(I) Mother tongue instruction is essential for initial instruction¹² and literacy¹³ and should 'be extended to as late a stage in education as possible':¹⁴

_ 'every pupil should begin his [or her] formal education in his [or her] mother tongue';¹⁵

_ 'adult illiterates should make their first steps to literacy through their mother tongue, passing on to a second language if they desire and are able';¹⁶

_ 'if a given locality has a variety of languages, ways and means should be sought 'to arrange instruction groups by mother tongue';¹⁷

_ 'if mixed groups are unavoidable, instruction should be in the language which gives the least hardship to the bulk of the pupils, and special help should be given those who do not speak the language of instruction'.¹⁸

(II) 'Literacy can only be maintained if there is an adequate supply of reading material, for adolescents and adults as well as for school children, and for entertainment as well as for study':¹⁹

_ 'The production and distribution of teaching materials and learning resources and any other reading materials in mother tongues should be promoted.'²⁰

(III) With regard to teacher training and mother tongue instruction: 'All educational planning should include at each stage early provision for the training, and further training, of sufficient numbers of fully competent and qualified teachers of the country concerned who are familiar with the life of their people and able to teach in the mother tongue.'²¹

> Part III.

Principle II

UNESCO supports bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education²² as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies.

(I) 'Communication, expression and the capacity to listen and dialogue [should be encouraged], first of all in the mother tongue, then, [if the mother tongue is different from the official or national language,] in the official [or national] language in the country, as well as in one or more foreign languages'²³ through:

_'the early acquisition... of a second language in addition to the mother tongue';²⁴

_'the introduction of 'the second language... as a subject of instruction'²⁵ the amount of which 'should be increased gradually'²⁶ and which should not become the medium of instruction 'until the pupils are sufficiently familiar with it'.²⁷

_'further education in this second language at primary-school level based on its use as a medium of instruction, thus using two languages for the acquisition of knowledge throughout the school course up to university level;

_'intensive and trans-disciplinary learning of at least a third... language in secondary school, so that when pupils leave school they have a working knowledge of three languages – which should represent the normal range of practical linguistic skills in the twenty-first century'.²⁸

(II) 'International exchanges of primary- and secondary-school teachers [should be promoted] for teaching their subjects in schools in other countries, using their own languages and thus enabling their pupils to acquire both knowledge and linguistic skills'.²⁹

(III) Emphasis should be given to the formulation of 'strong national policies designed to promote... language teaching in cyberspace [and the strengthening and extension of] international support and assistance to developing countries to facilitate the development of freely accessible materials on language education in the electronic form and to the enhancement of human capital skills in this area'.³⁰

Principle III

UNESCO supports language as an essential component of inter-cultural education in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights.

(I) Measures should be taken ‘to eliminate discrimination in education at all levels on the basis of gender, race, language, religion, national origin, age or disability or any other form of discrimination’.³¹

(II) The ‘educational rights of persons belonging to ... minorities, as well as indigenous peoples’³² should be fully respected, through:

_the implementation of ‘the right to learn in the mother tongue’³³ and the ‘full use of culturally appropriate teaching methods of communication and transmission of knowledge’;³⁴

_the teaching of and through, not only the mother tongue, but also the national or official languages, as well as global languages of communication, so that minority and indigenous peoples have the opportunity to participate in and contribute to the larger community.³⁵

(III) Education should raise ‘awareness of the positive value of cultural [and linguistic] diversity’,³⁶ and to this end:

_‘curriculum [should be reformed] to promote a realistic and positive inclusion of the minority [or indigenous] history, culture, language and identity’.³⁷

_the cultural component of language teaching and learning should be strengthened in order to gain a deeper understanding of other cultures;³⁸ ‘languages should not be simple linguistic exercises, but opportunities to reflect on other ways of life, other literatures, other customs’.³⁹

> Part III.

Notes

1. cf. Wurm, S. (Ed.) (2001): *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing*, Paris, UNESCO Publishing.
 2. cf. Grimes, B. (Ed.) (2000): *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, 14th Edition, Dallas, Texas, SIL International.
 3. cf. the findings of a comprehensive research review carried out for the World Bank: Dutcher, N. in collaboration with Tucker, G.R. (1997): *The Use of First and Second Languages in Education: A Review of Educational Experience*, Washington D.C., World Bank, Country Department III: 'The most important conclusion from the research and experience reviewed in this paper is that when learning is the goal, including that of learning a second language, the child's first language (i.e. his or her mother tongue) should be used as the medium of instruction in the early years of schooling. ... The first language is essential for the initial teaching of reading, and for comprehension of subject matter. It is the necessary foundation for the cognitive development upon which acquisition of the second language is based'; cf. also Mehrotra, S. (1998): *Education for All: Policy Lessons From High-Achieving Countries: UNICEF Staff Working Papers*, New York, Unicef: 'In a situation where the parents are illiterate..., if the medium of instruction in school is a language that is not spoken at home the problems of learning in an environment characterized by poverty are compounded, and the chances of drop-out increase correspondingly. In this context, the experience of the high-achievers has been unequivocal: the mother tongue was used as the medium of instruction at the primary level in all cases. ... There is much research which shows that students learn to read more quickly when taught in their mother tongue. Second, students who have learned to read in their mother tongue learn to read in a second language more quickly than do those who are first taught to read in the second language. Third, in terms of academic learning skills as well, students taught to read in their mother tongue acquire such skills more quickly'; cf. also Dutcher, N: *Expanding Educational Opportunity in Linguistically Diverse Societies*, Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington DC.(2001)
 4. cf. *Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning UNESCO (1997); The Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992); Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (1960); 18 C/Resolution 1.41: Co-operation with international non-governmental organizations active in the field of education (1974); cf. also Chapter III: UNESCO Guidelines on Language and Education, Principle III.*
 5. cf. *International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990).*
 6. *30 C/Resolution 12.: Implementation of a Language Policy for the World Based on Multilingualism (1999). UNESCO.*
 7. In addition, there are many regional agreements and declarations which make reference to languages and education (cf. the *Durban Statement of Commitment*, Seventh Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States 1998; *Harare Declaration*, Intergovernmental Conference of Ministers on Language Policy in Africa 1997; *Final Report Seventh Conference of Ministers of Education of Latin America and the Caribbean*, Kingston, 1996).
 8. cf. *International Conference on Education 46th Session 2001: Final Report*, p.11: 'It is increasingly obvious that the language of instruction at the beginning of one's education, at such a crucial moment for future learning, should be the mother tongue.'
cf. *International Conference on Education 46th Session 2001: Final Report*, p.17: 'Educational content needs to reflect 'the growing importance of communication, expression and the capacity to listen and dialogue, first of all in the mother tongue, then in the official language in the country as well as in one or more foreign languages'; *International Conference on Education 43rd Session 1992: Final Report*, p.20: 'When choosing the language of instruction, in particular at the level of basic education, account should be taken both of the efficiency of the educational process and the right of individuals and various ethnic groups to preserve their cultural identity, of which their language is one of the most important vehicles'.
- cf. *International Conference on Education 46th Session 2001: Final Report*, p.11: 'Language learning is a key element for living together'; *International Conference on Education 44th Session 1994: Final Report*, p.26: 'learning foreign languages offers a means of gaining a deeper understanding of other cultures, which can serve as a basis for building better understanding between communities and between nations'.
- cf. *International Conference on Education 46th Session 2001: Final Report; World Education Forum 2000: Final Report; The Delhi Declaration and Framework for Action, Education for All Summit 1993; The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, UNESCO, Paris, 1953.*
- cf. *Amman Affirmation (1996): 'the essential role of the mother tongue for initial instruction' must be acknowledged; The Delhi Declaration and Framework for Action, Education for All Summit (1993): 'Where the language of instruction is other than the mother tongue of the learner, it is likely that initial learning will be slower and achievement lower. For this reason, educators have long advocated the benefits of offering, wherever possible, initial instruction in the mother tongue'.*
- cf. *International Conference on Education 42nd Session 1990: Final Report: 'In multilingual situations, the policy regarding the language of literacy should be carefully formulated, especially where the national or official language is different from local languages. Use of the mother tongue is desirable.'*

The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, p.35 UNESCO, Paris, (1953).

idem, p.68.

idem, p.69.

idem, p.51.

idem, p.51.

idem, p.69.

cf. International Conference on Education 1992: 'the preparation of teaching materials in the mother tongue should be encouraged'. Final Report, p.21

Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers adopted by the Special Intergovernmental Conference on the Status of Teachers 1966.

30 C/Resolution 42.: Towards a culture of peace (1999); cf. also: 30 C/Resolution 12.: Implementation of a language policy for the world based on multilingualism (1999). UNESCO.

International Conference on Education 2001, Proposals for Action. (para 18)

30 C/Resolution 12.: Implementation of a Language Policy for the World Based on Multilingualism (1999), UNESCO.

25. The Use of Vernacular Languages in Education, UNESCO, Paris, (1953).
26. idem, p.69.
27. idem, p.69.
28. 30 C/Resolution 12.: Implementation of a Language Policy for the World Based on Multilingualism (1999).
29. 30 C/Resolution 12.: Implementation of a Language Policy for the World Based on Multilingualism (1999).
30. Draft Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace, Paragraph 1 [NOTE: as requested by the 2001 General Conference 31 C/Resolution 33, this Draft recommendation will be submitted to the executive Board at its 165th session].
31. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, (1995); see also: -Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (1960), Article 1: 'the term 'discrimination' includes any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference which, being based on race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth, has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education'.
32. 28 C/Resolution 5.4: Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy (1995). UNESCO.
33. Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning, Fifth International Conference on Adult Education 1997, Article 15; the ILO Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (1989) provides that 'children belonging to the peoples concerned shall, wherever practicable, be taught to read and write in their own indigenous language or in the language most commonly used by the group to which they belong' (Article 28.1); the Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992) requires States to 'take measures so that, wherever possible, persons belonging to minorities may have adequate opportunities to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue' (Article 4.3).
34. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), Action Plan, paragraph 8.
35. cf. Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (1960), Article 5: 'the members of ... minorities [should not be prevented] from understanding the culture and language of the community as a whole'; 18 C/Resolution 1.41: Co-operation with international non-governmental organizations active in the field of education, 1974: UNESCO 'everyone is entitled to have a thorough knowledge of his own language and a good knowledge of another language, preferably a language of international communication which enables him, in conjunction with the grounding which he receives in his national culture, to have full access to world culture and to the universal exchange of ideas'; ILO Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (1989): 'Adequate measures shall be taken to ensure that these peoples have the opportunity to attain fluency in the national language or in one of the official languages of the country' (Article 28.2); Our Creative Diversity : Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development (1995) UNESCO : 'Schools should teach several languages, in particular both the local [or minority] and majority language', p.59. UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), Action Plan, paragraph 7.

Fifth International Conference of Adult Education 1997: Workshop Report: Minorities and Adult Learning; cf. also: The Declaration on the Rights of Persons belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992): Article 4.4: 'take measures in the field of education, in order to encourage knowledge of the... language and culture of the minorities'; and: Our Creative Diversity: Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development (1995), p.60, UNESCO: 'Minority [or indigenous] cultures [should have] a better place not only in the educational system but also in the image of the 'national culture' each country seeks to adopt and project.'

cf. 28 C/Resolution 5.4: Declaration and Integrated Framework of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy (1995), UNESCO, Article 19: 'Learning foreign languages offers a means of gaining a deeper understanding of other cultures, which can serve as a basis or building better understanding between communities and between nations.'

Our Creative Diversity: Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development

UNESCO has an essential role to play in providing international frameworks for education policy and practice on key and complex issues. Language and in particular the choice of language of instruction in education is one such concern and often invokes contrasting and deeply felt positions. Questions of identity, nationhood and power are closely linked to the use of specific languages in the classroom. Language itself, moreover, possesses its own dynamics and is constantly undergoing processes of both continuity and change, impacting upon the communication modes of different societies as it evolves. Educational policy makers have difficult decisions to make with regard to languages, schooling and the curriculum in which the technical and the political often overlap.

While there are strong educational arguments in favour of mother tongue (or first language) instruction, a careful balance also needs to be made between enabling people to use local languages in learning, and providing access to global languages of communication through education. The purpose of this position paper, therefore, is to consider some of the central issues concerning languages and education and to provide related guidelines and principles. In doing so we are conscious of the need for a clear statement on language policy in relation to education, particularly within the context of Education for All and in terms of the Dakar goals of ensuring that by 2015 all children have access to quality primary education and that there is a 50 per cent increase in adult literacy by the year 2015.

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> **Education in a multilingual world _UNESCO Education Position Paper_**

