Chapter 9
Consolidation, Power Through Leadership and Pedagogy, and the Rise of Accountability, 1980–1998

Samantha Disbray and Brian Devlin

Introduction

The chapters in this section all touch on at least one of three overarching themes: consolidation, power through pedagogy and leadership, and accountability. Chapters in the previous section are set largely in the period from 1970 to the early 1980s, the establishment phase of the Bilingual Program. The first years of the Program had been a phase of establishment, then of rapidly expanding programs. By 1984, programs in 21 schools had commenced. The level of resourcing was set (Ritchie, April 21, 1977, in NTDE file 93/483, f. 7). While a small number of programs commenced in the early 1980s, no new programs would be added after this. A period of consolidation followed for the Darwin-based Bilingual Unit and for programs in individual schools. Indeed already in 1979 the Bilingual Education Consultative Committee reflected that:

> One thing we should have learned from our experience in Aboriginal bilingual education is that it is better to do a few things well than many programs poorly. Early in the bilingual program we recognised a need for four kinds of specialists: Linguist, Teacher/Linguist, Literature production supervisor (printer), and Aboriginal Literacy Workers (writers). We have a limited number of these people and spread them fairly thinly across our programs. As a result several schools only had one, or at most two, of these specialist support people and they had to attempt to do so many urgent tasks at once that none of them were done properly […] We have learned our lesson in Aboriginal schools—we are now hastening slowly […] Our approach can now take the form of consolidation with careful expansion

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> where appropriate. One means by which to achieve this may be for the establishment of schools with bilingual programs to be filled with people competent in bilingual education techniques (Northern Territory Department of Education 1980, p. 40).

It was critical to develop staff expertise, bilingual practice, local resources, pedagogies and curriculum in this phase (see Christie, Murray, this section). A small number of Aboriginal educators had graduated as teachers in the 1970s, but with greater resourcing for recruiting and training Aboriginal staff during the establishment phase, the number of qualified Aboriginal teachers increased in the 1980s and 1990s (Tamisari and Milmilany 2003, p. 13). The growth of committed and increasingly expert Aboriginal staff fueled aspirations of Aboriginal leadership, Aboriginal authority, and new priorities for the Program (Stockley, this section). This was the period of Land Rights in Australia (Morphy 1993) and the moves described here are part of a larger program of self-determination in Aboriginal affairs (Vaarzon-Morel and Wafer, and Kral, this volume), from which governments gradually retreated in the 1990s (Disbray and Devlin 2017). The consolidation phase was a vibrant and productive time, however support from the Education Department also waned in these years (Northern Territory Department of Education 1986a, b, p. 2) and new models of accountability emerged, challenging the Program's viability.

Consolidation and Developing Bilingual Education Expertise

The urgent tasks during the establishment phase included formulating aims for the Program and clarifying bilingual models (Department of Education 1973). These included staffing the programs in schools, fostering adult vernacular literacy, creating literacy materials, producing teaching aids, adapting curriculum guidelines, and coordinating these activities across schools with bilingual programs. Throughout the consolidation phase of the mid-1980s to late 1990s, the Unit set policy to develop bilingual education practice and enacted this in various ways. One important means of dissemination was the *NT Bilingual Education Newsletter*, which appeared two or three times per year. It printed contributions from expert practitioners on all manner of topics to raise expertise and alert new staff to helpful ideas and resources. It also updated staff in remote schools on departmental policy and news. It advertised centralised professional learning workshops and meetings.

The Bilingual Unit foresaw the need to provide broader support to consolidate the Program and fostered partnerships to this end. Graham McGill, a Principal Education Advisor for the Bilingual Program, worked to involve the Darwin Institute of Technology (formerly Darwin Community College, later the Northern Territory University), and a teacher-linguist training course was established. This was later credited towards a Graduate Diploma in TESL, an on-campus and external program that included a strand especially designed for specialist staff working in

bilingual programs. The School of Australian Linguistics (SAL), established in 1974 as part of the Darwin Community College, ran courses to train Aboriginal language workers (Department of Education 1974, p. 5). In 1982 SAL and Bilingual Unit staff, under the stewardship of SAL's David Zorc, organised an 8-week training course in applied linguistics, which would become part of the Graduate Diploma of Applied Linguistics at the Northern Territory University (Black and Breen 2001).

Negotiations with Batchelor College resulted in the annual Aboriginal Languages Fortnight, providing training in Aboriginal language story writing, history writing or Aboriginal vernacular literacy teaching (Christie 1994). These expanded learning opportunities for Aboriginal staff had more wide-ranging impacts than simply the skill development of individual educators. As more trained Aboriginal staff became involved in bilingual education programs, they began to query the purpose of the schooling they were helping to provide for their children, and to reflect their roles in this. This took expression in moves for power through pedagogy and leadership.

Power Through Pedagogy and Leadership

> Before the bilingual program started at Yirrkala, the Yolŋu way was irrelevant to the school. This helped the Balanda maintain power.
> Bilingual education started in 1974. How did it help? It started people in the school and the community thinking about the two cultures. Some Yolŋu content was introduced such as crafts, hunting and dancing. Now the Yolŋu had some power **inside** the classroom. But outside the classroom, the curriculum, the staff meetings and all the school decisions were still under the control of Balanda…
>
> Because they wanted more say in what was going on in the school Yolŋu formed the school council in 1984….The school council decided to adopt two policies for 'Aboriginalisation': Self-management and Self-determination.
>
> Dr M. Yunupingu, Principal, Yirrkala School. Language and Power: The Yolŋu Rise to Power at Yirrkala School, presentation to the 1987 the 'Cross Cultural Issues in Educational Linguistics' Conference (Yunupingu 1990, p. 4).

In August 1987 the 'Cross Cultural Issues in Educational Linguistics' Conference took place in Batchelor in the Northern Territory, a lead-up event to the 8th World Congress of Applied Linguistics in Sydney the following week. Three hundred delegates attended. Two hundred were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people and many were staff from the NT remote school bilingual programs. Dr M. Yunupingu opened the conference with the presentation referenced above, placing power squarely on the agenda, and Michael Christie presented 'Language and Power: How English keeps Balanda in power in schools' (Christie 1990). At Yirrkala Community School an Aboriginalisation program was underway (see Stockley, Christie, this volume). However, across schools with bilingual programs,

people shared similar concerns and aspirations. The editors of the conference proceedings, Christine Walton and William Eggington, noted that

> many Aboriginal teachers and community members have found bilingual education not only a preferable model of education for their children, but also a means whereby they have been able to take their rightful place in the schooling of their children. They see it as a vehicle for self-determination and a means whereby they have been able to incorporate their languages and cultures into the school in order to make the school an instrument of language and culture maintenance, rather than destruction (1990, p. ix).

Three key issues framed the conference and guided its break-away workshops: Language and power, language maintenance and language in education. These issues reflected the ideological spaces (Hornberger 2002, 2005) that opened up on the ground in this consolidation phase.

The growing cohort of Aboriginal teachers, along with colleagues and community members had begun to see bilingual education as more than simply an educational reform focused on introducing vernacular languages for instructional purposes (see Devlin et al., Chap. 1, this volume). The establishment of bilingual programs at some sites involved local assertions of self-determination (Vaarzon-Morel and Wafer, Kral, this volume). However, as programs became established, people began to reflect further on their schools, and how these involved processes of power (Stockley, Christie, this section) and were inherently political at the core of critical approaches to language policy and planning (Tollefson 2013; Blommaert 1999; Shohamy 2006; Alim and Paris 2015). In his characterisation of the 'evolution of bilingual theory' in the NT Bilingual Program, Harris (1995, p. 10) observed:

> any process is political when it involves decisions about who controls limited resources toward achieving different priorities. (Resources here include not only the obvious ones, but less obvious ones such as sources of identity maintenance and different ways of doing and administering.)

At the 1987 conference, one workshop group considered the topic 'Aboriginalisation of the Aboriginal School', under the language and power theme. In their discussion of control of limited resources and processes of priority setting, they posed this guiding question: "Is bilingual education enough? …or… the ups and downs of non-Aboriginal control" (Group report 1990, pp. 48–49). Three arenas for redefinition and action were identified: the classroom and the role of the assistant teacher—from aide to teacher; the school and the Aboriginal staff—from worker to director; the community—from resource to responsibility. The proposed actions, questions and redefinitions included the following:

- School policies need to be developed by community-based school councils to establish guidelines by which the school functions.
- Once school councils or action groups are formed should non-Aboriginal Principals still have right of veto?
- How can unsuitable non-Aboriginal teachers and principals be got rid of?
- There should be induction for new Non-Aboriginal teachers locally by the community.

- Who decides what should be taught? How are these decisions made?
- Aboriginal people in communities also have the right to influence decisions in the schools.
- What can Aboriginal teacher education do to assist Aboriginalisation of control?
- Who do we work for—the community or the education department?
- School resources don't stretch to educating both children and Aboriginal teachers adequately.
- Schools and communities need to be planning future directions over years—so that change will occur (Group report 1990, pp. 48–49).

Some of these proposals or concerns came to be implemented in school policy and practice, while others failed to take hold. Christie (this volume) points out the ambiguity of the term 'Aboriginalisation'. In one sense, it meant "the process of training Aboriginal staff to take over the unreconstructed structures and practices of modern formal education (p. 35)", and this was ultimately not what prevailed in community schools. On the other hand, "there was an understanding of Aboriginalisation as assimilating in the other direction, whereby the curriculum, with its educational philosophy and pedagogy, would be radically restructured under Yolŋu authority (a common Yolŋu view) (p. 35)". To look more closely at these sites of struggle and innovation, each of the following issues is discussed in turn: school policy and practice, teachers and pedagogy, and curriculum.

Power Through School Policy and Practice

The formation of school councils, their creation of school policy documents and induction programs were significant means for communities to take greater control of schools in this period of consolidation (Stockley, this section, on the Yirrkala Action Group). For example, Lajamanu, a Warlpiri school in the Northern Tanami, embarked on an extensive process to develop its 'School Languages Policy' to assert authority over the school's aims. In its 1984 'Statement of Policy' these were:

- That Yapa [Aboriginal] Way and Kardiya [non-Aboriginal] Way be strong.
- The community decide exactly what Yapa things and Kardiya things they want children to learn.
- Yapa teach the children proper strong Warlpiri and after that Kardiya make it strong and teach the children English properly so that the children can really understand and speak both.
- There is continued support for the Bilingual Program.

The document was expanded so that by 1986 it included extensive information about the locality, pedagogy and programming (Lajamanu School 1986). It

timetabled Yapa ('Warlpiri') staff meetings, which were important for Yapa leaders in the school and the school council. The on-going collaboration between the school council, local and non-local school staff required time and investment from all involved.

Documents such as the school languages policy and evidence for the practices they prescribed became part of the community-based appraisal program. This replaced the earlier bilingual education accreditation program in 1988 and represented an important aspect of accountability (Devlin 1995, pp. 31–32). However, no structural change was undertaken to shift power away from non-local principals to school councils to manage staffing. As a result, school councils and local teachers sometimes had to assert themselves in response to less collaborative principals and teachers, sometimes without success. Former Central Australia regional linguist Robert Hoogenraad writes of these challenges in the 1980s and 1990s:

> If the principal was unwilling, then it was highly unlikely to happen and totally unlikely to succeed. A lack of sanctions and an absence of effective monitoring of what actually happens in classrooms in daily practice also meant that the classroom teacher could undermine the bilingual program with impunity, and the principal could simply not run the bilingual program in the school (Hoogenraad 2001, p. 131).

A persistent lack of mandate and resourcing for the Program would come to undermine the reassignment of power (Nicholls 2005).

Teachers and Pedagogy

The articulation of a team teaching method (Graham, this volume), English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) teaching methodology (Murray, this section) and the development of training programs established for remote Aboriginal teachers were significant developments in bilingual education practice in this phase. Team-teaching practices in bilingual programs have been essential in ensuring effective classroom instruction and interaction, as few non-local teachers can communicate in their students' home languages. Team teaching has also been a source of formal and informal teacher training and professional development and a key means of power-sharing, as they formally recognised both the crucial linguistic, cultural and social knowledge of Aboriginal teachers and the curriculum knowledge, and planning skills of non-Aboriginal teachers. According to one appraisal (Harris 1995, pp. 16–17), Graham's 1986 book *Team-teaching in the Aboriginal Schools in the Northern Territory*

> was the first clear documentation of how the Bilingual Program should (and had to in order to survive) contribute to the training and leadership growth of Aboriginal staff. At the time this book seemed to most to be simply good advice about how to organise cross-cultural team teaching, but in hindsight and in terms of the Aboriginal leadership it promoted, this was clearly a political book. Aboriginal teacher training is probably the most important achievement of the Bilingual Program.

The in-service training associated with developing the team teaching approach was an important support for accredited teacher training. The Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) program at Batchelor College (now Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education) and the Deakin–Batchelor Teacher Education (D–BATE) teaching programs fostered professional reflection and triggered sophisticated discussions, which contributed to innovations in Aboriginal pedagogy and curriculum (Marika-Mununggiritj and Christie 1995; Marika 1998, 1999; Marika et al. 1992; McTaggart 1999). Yet resources to adequately train Aboriginal staff diminished over time as on-site training programs were cut (Bat 2013, Sects. 2.6.1 and 2.6.2).

In the early 1980s a range of English language teaching programs and materials were developed for use in both bilingual and English-only programs, to promote oral and literacy skill development. These included *Pronunciation Drills for Primary Classes*, *NT Oral English Units*, *NT Upper Primary T.E.S.L course* and the *Tracks* reader series (Walton 1984). Realising the need for contextually relevant and locally effective approaches, a number of programs or approaches were developing out of, or innovating in, the NT context. Literacy approaches for emergent language learners in NT bilingual programs were adapted from Don Holloway's 'shared book experience' (1979) and this informed 'language experience' methods, which sought to link the content and topics in classrooms to what students have heard or experienced in and out of classrooms and allow them to draw on this in their own text production (See Murray, this section). On the ground, resources such as Beth Graham's *Language Power: Towards Better Teaching Methods in Language and Literacy in Aboriginal Bilingual Schools* (Graham 1986a, b), along with resources targeting early childhood and Maths programs (1983, 1984a, b), supported teachers to use Do-Talk-Record methods for situational and scaffolded learning. Relatedly, programs such as *Concentrated Language Encounters* (NT Department of Education 1986b) and *Walkin*' *Talkin*' Stories (Murray and NT Department of Education 1986) supported structured and explicit English language teaching and learning programs, while also integrating content from across the curriculum (see Murray, Freeman, this volume). Before exploring this rich local curriculum development work, it is important to recognise the attention paid to English language teaching pedagogy.

Aboriginal teachers were trained to teach in English and their own language. However, Aboriginal teachers and assistant teachers tended to be more active in first language (L1) teaching and learning, and non-Aboriginal classroom teachers in English language teaching and learning. The teacher-linguist acted as a pivot, supporting both in learning about and planning instructional activities in L1 and English. Despite developing pedagogy and resources and delivering significant professional learning, the need for ESL-trained and aware teachers always exceeded supply. This was true also in English-only schools, which did not have the support of a teacher linguist or the Bilingual Unit. Perhaps more attention should have been paid to developing all teachers' ability to teach both languages, but daily realities and demands never really allowed this. Later critique of the Program pointed to a lack of "competent pedagogy and sound teaching practices" (Collins 1999, p. 127) in some classrooms.

Power and Local Curriculum

The creation of new, vernacular materials was an outcome of education programs that were not only biliterate and bicultural, but involved new conceptualisations of curriculum and pedagogy (Disbray 2014; Gale 1992; Marika-Mununggiritj and Christie 1995). An important aspect of both the teaching and literacy production programs was going out to places of significance on country with elders. On such trips, knowledge was shared, documented and incorporated into literature and curriculum. These new materials and curricula incorporated topics such as land tenure, ceremonial life, social practice and organisation, local history and dreamtime stories, knowledge of the natural world, such as plants, animals, ecosystems, as well as hunting, tracking and resource use. Educators sought to skillfully weave locally significant concepts into the various local curricula, often incorporating science, maths and social science along with language and literacy outcomes (Disbray 2014). This work, in turn, influenced the *Northern Territory Curriculum Framework: Indigenous Language and Culture Outcomes* (2002). (See Carr et al., this section).

According to Teacher-Linguist Neil Murray at Wal̲ungurru (Kintore) in 1987,

> The singular most encouraging thing is to witness the emerging concern (and ultimately responsibility for)—by the Yan̲angu teachers for curriculum development. That they are actively embracing and translating what is essentially a whitefella concept (a difficult one at that) is more to their credit. This has been particularly engendered by the RATE [Remote Area Teacher Education] program and more recently due to the visit by Kevin Keeffe [a former teacher at Papunya school], who in conjunction with the Yan̲angu staff produced a booklet which defines their major concerns and interests […] The booklet suggests a means of devising and identifying curriculum through an Yan̲angu frame of reference (Northern Territory Department of Education 1987, p. 45).

Indeed, Aboriginal educators and community members recognised that a curriculum can represent a knowledge system. It sets out what children should learn and know on their journey to becoming competent members of their community. By the 1980s they also recognised the fragility of the knowledge system and language practices that were crucial to their communities. From the perspective of Aboriginal educators and community members, there was a growing need for language and cultural maintenance (Walton and Eggington 1990). Indeed, the documentation and transmission of traditional language and cultural knowledge must be recognised as an invaluable contribution by the NT bilingual program (see Bow, Devlin and Christie, this volume). Documenting and maintaining traditional language and cultural knowledge was not a stated goal of the bilingual program (Department of Education 1973; Northern Territory Department of Education 1986a, b; Harris and Devlin 1997) and was therefore not altogether reconciled with policy responses from above (Disbray 2016). This tension would come to the fore in the light of the policy shifts and new accountability measures that lay ahead (below and Part 3, this volume).

Accountability and Shifting Policy

A final theme, accountability, part of an international public policy shift driving education reform (Leithwood and Earl 2000), became increasingly important in this era. Key aspects of the new, technical-managerial approach are evident in the 1998 review of Indigenous education, the *Learning Lessons* report (Collins 1999). This report begins with a section 'Costs, funding and accountability mechanisms', which focus on action plans for school improvement, school annual reports, accountability of individual principals and system-wide reporting on standardised benchmarks as evaluation and accountability tools. These are clearly important to a modern education system. However, some theorists have characterised this shift as a social transformation in which economic relationships replace political relationships and the sphere of the political itself. According to Biesta (2004),

> [t]he economic grounding of the current mode of accountability is evident in the fact that the government bases its own right to accountability on the financial investment it makes into public services such as education. Put simply, schools must be accountable to the government because the government provides them with the financial resources for doing their job. At first glance, there seem to be opportunities for a more democratic "face" of accountability, based as it is in the relationship between parents and students as "consumers" of education and schools as "providers." I contend, however, that such opportunities are foreclosed by the fact that there is no direct relationship of accountability between these parties, but only an indirect one. The only role open to parents and students is that of consumers of the educational services provided. They have no opportunity to participate in a public, democratic discourse about education (pp. 239–240).

During the consolidation phase, Aboriginal people involved in bilingual programs were participating in a discourse about education in a political sphere. In 1980 the accreditation process for evaluating school programs was introduced (Devlin, Chaps. 17, 18, this volume), and in 1988 the appraisal process, and the additional funds needed to run bilingual programs were linked to accountability measures. Initially, these took seriously community involvement in schools programs and the development of local pedagogy and curriculum, along with attendance and academic progress data (Cataldi and Partington 1998; Devlin 1995). Indeed, the *Learning Lessons* report acknowledged that

> the only schools ever systematically evaluated were bilingual schools which had to undertake reaccreditation every three years, resulting in a substantial report which was assessed by an appraisal panel. The review found there is no similar documentation or appraisal of non-bilingual schools, either urban or remote (Collins 1999, p. 47).

However, in the 1990s, with the rise of standards-based accountability, both nationally and internationally, measures narrowed to English literacy and numeracy. With the introduction of national standards more recently, standardised literacy and numeracy tests, undertaken by students at Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, and in remote schools, and student attendance rates have become near exclusive accountability measures. These are critical measures of school success (Osborne and Guenther 2013), despite analysis that illustrates the poor correlation between scoring well on national benchmark tests and attendance in remote school settings (Guenther 2013).

National discourse and policy on language have intersected with education policy and practice in further ways. Standardisation of Vocational Education and Training has reduced access to training and employment (Kral, this volume). Further, a sequence of national policy turns took place from 1991 onwards, positively recognising languages of trade as resources, but positioning languages in other domains as less valued. Such moves were in part "motivated by concern that making diversity prominent in public policy would enshrine notions of language rights for minorities, or at least establish this principle as a basis on which public resourcing claims would be made" (Lo Bianco 2001, p. 18). In the narrowing policy remit, with prioritisation of the economy and national interest over the community in education policy discourse, Joseph Lo Bianco argues there that was a collapse of categories, from 'languages' to 'language' then to 'literacy', narrowly defined. Only English was appropriate in formal education or labour market settings (p. 42). With the values for language thus calibrated in discourse and policy, accountability frameworks foregrounding standardised English literacy testing, and excluding community education aspirations, almost inevitably followed.

Conclusion

This chapter has set out a number of key themes and movements that are relevant to bilingual education in the 1980s and 1990s. The many innovations and achievements are explored in depth in the chapters that follow. Despite these changes, programs also faced challenges and many ceased within the first 10 years. In schools, rapid staff turnover among non-local staff, and low education levels among local staff squeezed the limited but essential resources for in-servicing professional learning and made maintaining good systems difficult. Outside of schools, new and or rising social problems, many related to health and substance abuse, deprioritised education for many. In top-down policy, moves incongruous with the community driven, local initiatives were at play. And yet, in this period, immense energy and commitment allowed great things to happen.

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