

Relationships Matter: Yolŋu Models of Community-Centred Education

Claire Rafferty

December 2021

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of
The Australian National University

© Copyright by Claire Rafferty 2021
All Rights Reserved

Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author's knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Pam Firth (Detail Devil Editing Services) provided professional copyediting services according to the guidelines laid out in the university-endorsed national *Guidelines for Editing Research Theses* (Institute of Professional Editors, 2019).

This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Claire Rafferty

December 2021

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to acknowledge the Yolŋu in Northeast Arnhem Land who continue to extend such generosity and who, over the years, have taught me so much about life and death. I am deeply grateful to those who are no longer with us but whose vision and courage continues to transform education—your work is the foundation of this thesis. To the Yolŋu who continue to share your wisdom and who keep fighting for what you, and your Ancestors, know is ‘right’—thank you.

Even though I have often felt isolated on this PhD journey, there are so many people who have supported me in different ways. The thesis was co-created; it was never a journey I took on my own. To all the participants who generously shared your stories and insights with me, thank you for trust and honesty.

To all my Yolŋu family, I am deeply grateful for your ongoing connection and love. In particular, Goḏuḏ Ganambarr, Binygurr Ganambarr, Banumbu Wanambi, Dhukururru Bidingal, Mananu Wunungmurra, and all the grandkids—thank you for keeping it real and dragging me away from the computer even when I resisted because ‘I had too much work to do’.

To Yalmay Yunupiŋu, your courage and humility have never wavered in the 20 years I have known you, neither has your commitment to education in your community. You truly are inspiring! You have been a mentor to me over the years, but most importantly, you’ve been my ṇāṇḏi, and I am deeply grateful for that. Thank you for your unconditional love and support. Melanie Herdman, your courage, commitment, and deep engagement were invaluable—thank you for walking with me on this journey, for your generosity, and for your ongoing support. To Lombaŋa Munungurr, *waku*, I have appreciated our many conversations; thank you for engaging with this research in the way that you did and creating that amazing diagram that helped articulate a vision for building better relationships. The students you have worked with over the years have benefited from having you as their teacher. Thank you to my *yapas* Yurrayŋa and Djalinda Yunupiŋu, your support and guidance over the years, and with this research, is appreciated.

Thank you to the school leadership teams, including the Yirrkala Action Group, for approving the research—Merrki Ganambarr-Stubbs, Leon White, Katrina Hudson, Yalmay Yunupingu. To Leon White for your ongoing encouragement over the years and sending me your catalogued library of papers. A big appreciation to all who helped organise the Galtha Rom at Biranybirany that became a central part of this thesis—there were so many people who contributed to its success. A special thank you to Harry Thorman, Lirrpiya Mununggurr and Yalmay, what an ‘event’ to coordinate and you did it with such integrity; it was a memorable experience working closely with you.

While my family and friends on the ground were essential, there are many people who helped me understand the world of academia. I am enormously grateful to my panel who generously supported me over the last 5 years. My primary supervisor Dr. Bill Fogarty, thank you for challenging me to deeply question education in remote contexts. Frances Morphy, your forensic editing skills and insights were invaluable, and Dr. Jerry Schwab, your experience and encouragement were appreciated! The PhD was a massive initiation into the world of academia, and without your insight, guidance, and kindness, I could not have produced this thesis. Thank you for believing that I could actually make it through to the end!

I have always said one of the most valuable parts of undertaking this PhD was the great people I met along the way, especially my peers: Corinne Walsh, Kate Bellchambers, Katherine Aigner, Diana Anderson, Talia Avrahamzon, Ed Wensing, Sidha Pandain, and Kaely Woods. Benny Wilson, it has been a profound gift going on this PhD journey with you— I am deeply grateful for your unconditional support and generous spirit.

To all the staff at the National Centre for Indigenous Studies (NCIS) who, in the early days of starting this thesis, provided critical support. A special thanks to Diane Smith, Alice Wighton, and Jacob Ong for organising the research workshops in my first year; they were invaluable. A special thanks to Hannah Bulloch for your amazing writing workshops. To the staff at Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), even though life got in the way of me moving back to Canberra, it has been great to get to know some of you. Thank you, Julie Lahn, Tracy Deasey and Marnie O’Bryan for all your support with the endless administration.

I am grateful to the many people who over the years have given me vital feedback, sent me documents, engaged in deep and meaningful conversations and opened your homes and hearts to me along the way. Thank you to Teiva Heron, Prashanti Manchikanti, Dan Yore, Brian Gray, Stuart Porteous Jiminga Burton, Adele Mazoudier, Amber Kennafick, Michelle Jones, Fleur Leyden, Nicole La Gerche, Jo Ridge, Anna Doncaster, Melanie Wilkinson, and Bern Murphy. Kathy McMahon, thank you for sending me papers at critical times and for your guidance over many years; I appreciate your clarity.

A special appreciation to Samantha Muller and Maryanne Gray for your unconditional support, your open hearts, and engaged minds—knowing you were there meant the world to me. Sam a heartfelt appreciation for taking the time to read and give detailed, encouraging and insightful feedback—what an amazing gift! To Andrea Kingston, thank you for your ongoing encouragement, insightful contribution, and endless conversations – they were invaluable. There were so many times I wanted to ‘throw down the tools’ and doubted my capacity; however, you were consistently on the other end of the phone reminding me to ‘stiffen up the backbone’ and keep going. And so I did!

Closer to home—to my stepdad who died of motor neurone disease as I wrote this thesis. Witnessing your suffering as you became trapped in your body was terrifying and heartbreaking. Caring for you took me to the depths of despair but buried in the grief were moments of shared joy. It was a gift to walk with you and Mum during the last 2 years of your life. To my aunties, family, and other friends who supported us on this journey, thank you for being there for us. To Mum, I will never be able to thank enough for your unconditional love and support; I am so grateful for your strength and courage.

Finally, I extend my deep gratitude to Kamilaroi/Gomeroi Country where the actual words of this thesis took shape on the page. In particular, the Naomi River—I cried in despair when you stopped flowing and wondered who would sing you back to life. You reminded me of the urgency to protect and regenerate Country; you inspired me to learn more, to do more. I hope we can develop the humility to learn from you and do the work that is desperately needed. I am deeply grateful to the Custodians of this land—Elders past, present and emerging. I acknowledge that this land was never ceded and that we have a long way to go.

Abstract

Education is an enculturated and enculturating process that continues to privilege dominant Western structures and practices. To address this issue some communities in the Northern Territory have been reconceptualising, theorising, and applying local models of education for many decades. Both ways education, as it is often referred to on the ground, is a model of learning that includes both Western and Yolŋu knowledge systems in the process of schooling. The concept of ‘both ways’ education was first applied at Yirrkala School in the 1980s in response to education that excluded Yolŋu knowledge systems. An important aspect of the implementation of both ways education were community-based teacher education courses that gave ownership and control of the research and educational agenda to the local community. As a result of action research cycles that were directed by Yolŋu educators and elders, local educational theories were developed that are still applied today.

In this doctoral research, I examine the intercultural educational space at Yirrkala and in the Laynhapuy region. Through an ethnographic approach that included methods such as group and individual interviews, workshops, and participant observation, I examined the conditions required for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of local models of education, in particular, Galtha Rom. A place-based intergenerational pedagogy, Galtha Rom creates learning opportunities based on Yolŋu ways of being, knowing, and doing. Although the findings of this research indicate there is a high level of community and educator support for both ways education—that is, education that includes Yolŋu knowledge systems in the process of schooling—there are issues related to the lack of ongoing teacher education and funding, and systemic clarity about both ways education models. Furthermore, the capacity of schools and communities to educate young people and adults through approaches such as Galtha Rom are impacted by fluctuating government policy, the skills, values, and engagement of educators, the lack of community-centred teacher education, and the dominant ideological underpinnings of stakeholders and systems. Consequently, the teaching of English is privileged, imbalances of power are sustained, and local knowledge is marginalised. A co-designed education model that includes local epistemologies could transform Western education systems, but community-based teacher education, local decision-making, and

control, and a deep engagement with context-specific educational theories and their application, are urgently required.

List of Abbreviations

ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ITSIL	Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership
ANU	Australian National University
BIITE	Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
CAEPR	Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research
CLP	Country Liberal Party
CEC	Community Education Centre
CIP	Critical Indigenous pedagogy
D-BATE	Deakin—Batchelor Aboriginal Teacher Education
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DI	Direct instruction
EL	Essential Learnings
HLC	Homeland Learning Centre
HLCT	Homelands Learning Centre Teacher
IK	Indigenous knowledge
ILC	Indigenous Languages and Culture
LoCP	Learning on Country program
LPC	Literacy Production Centre
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy

NCIS	The National Centre of Indigenous Studies
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
NTCF	Northern Territory Curriculum Framework
PAR	Participatory action research
RLPA	Remote Learning Partnership Agreement
RATE	Remote Area Teacher Education
RLPA	Remote Learning Partnership Agreement
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
VT	Visiting Teacher
YHS	Yirrkala Homelands School
YS	Yirrkala School

Glossary

Balanda	white person, non-Indigenous person, person of European descent
bäpurru	funeral ceremony, clan (living, dead, and potential future members)
buṅgawa	boss, leader, master
buṅgul	ceremony, ceremonial dance, and song cycles
d̥ilak	elder(s), important elder in authority
dhalatj	calm water after a flood
dhamurr̥uṅ	salt water
dharrpal	inside—sacred and restricted
Dhāl̥inybuy	a Laynhapuy Homeland
dhuwaya	this (thing)
Dhuwa	name of a moiety
djalkiri	foot, footprint, foundation
djäma	work
djuṅgaya	care takers, lawyers—the relation a person has to ceremonies and land of his/her mother’s clan
Galtha	a meeting place; the place where starting points are negotiated
gaminyarr	grandchild (of opposite moiety)
Gaṇmawuy	a place in Northeast Arnhem Land

gapu	water
Garma	a public place; an open Yolŋu learning forum, a place to share ideas
Gäṅgaṇ	a Laynhapuy Homeland
gora	shy, embarrassed, ashamed
Gumatj	clan group
gurruṯu	Yolŋu kinship system, kin, kindred
gutha	younger brother or sister
gutharra	grandchild (of the same moiety)
Gutjaṅaṇ	a Homeland
manikay	song cycle
mälk	skin name/subsection
märi	kinship term—mother’s mother, mother’s mother’s brother
milkarri	keening (by women)
milŋurr	Dhuwa fresh water created by the Djaŋ’kawu creation sisters
ṇaḷapaḷ	elder(s), important (elder) person in authority
ṇathu	cycad palm
ṇayaṅu	a state of feeling, a sense of feeling among and between people
ṇayṇu	away from the speaker
ṇäṇḍi	mother, also includes mother’s sisters

Näpaki	white person, non-Indigenous person, person of European descent
ṇurru warryunapuyṇu	the group who leads the proceedings at ceremony
raki'	string, rope
rapiny	fresh water
rumaru	a relationship between avoidance kin, e.g., mother-in-law
wäṇa	home, place, land
warraṇul	open/public knowledge, outside
Yirritja	name of a moiety
Yolṇu	Aboriginal person more specifically from Northeast Arnhem Land
Yolṇu matha	Aboriginal language from Northeast Arnhem Land, tongue speech

A Note on Language

Yolŋu orthography for the spelling of most Yolŋu matha words has been used in this thesis. However, when authors have not used this orthography in their work, I have reflected this in quotes, explanations, and the names of authors. I have italicised words spelt with the Yolŋu orthography at the first mention.

I have elected to use ‘this research’ rather than ‘my research’ to describe the work that follows. I do this as the contents of this thesis were co-created, and therefore I understand ownership to be shared with the communities I worked with and have ongoing connection to.

The term Galtha and Galtha Rom are often used interchangeably throughout this thesis as this reflects the way participants used the term.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
ABSTRACT	VII
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	IX
GLOSSARY	XI
A NOTE ON LANGUAGE	XIV
TABLE OF CONTENTS	XV
LIST OF FIGURES	XIX
LIST OF TABLES	XX
CHAPTER 1 PLACE, CONNECTION, AND PURPOSE	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION, POSITIONALITY, AND CONNECTION	1
BEES AND THE POTENTIAL FOR LEARNING	1
CONNECTION TO PLACE	2
POSITIONALITY, MOTIVATIONS, AND RESERVATIONS	5
1.2 LANGUAGE AND TERMS EXPLAINED	7
1.3 CONTEXT OF YIRRKALA AND LAYNHAPUY HOMELANDS	12
YIRRKALA	12
THE HOMELANDS MOVEMENT	13
LAND RIGHTS	15
1.4 EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT	17
1.5 THESIS AIMS, QUESTIONS, AND LIMITATIONS	20
RESEARCH AIMS	20
RESEARCH QUESTIONS	21
WHY THE RESEARCH IS NEEDED	21
LIMITATIONS	23
1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS: KEY THEORIES AND CONCEPTS	23
CULTURE	24
POWER AND SETTLER COLONIALISM	28
RELATIONALITY	30
PEDAGOGY	31
1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARIES	32
CHAPTER 2 A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO EDUCATION	35
2.1 INTRODUCTION	35
2.2 EDUCATION AND SCHOOLING	36
EDUCATION IS NOT A NEW CONCEPT	36
PARADOX OF SCHOOLING	37
2.3 BOTH WAYS EDUCATION	38
GANMA: BEYOND A SIMPLE BINARY	40
CRITIQUE OF BOTH WAYS	43
MISUNDERSTANDINGS	45
THEORIES AND PEDAGOGIES	46
2.4 CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY	47
DEFINING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE	47
CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY CRITIQUED	48
EVIDENCE, APPLICATION, AND OUTCOMES	51
2.5 CRITICAL PEDAGOGY	52

DEFINING CRITICAL THEORY AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY.....	52
THE CRITIQUE	53
2.6 LAND AND PLACE-BASED PEDAGOGY	55
2.7 CONCLUSION	58
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY OF PLACE.....	61
3.1 INTRODUCTION.....	62
3.2 DESIGNING A METHODOLOGY OF PLACE: PRIORITISING THE LOCAL	62
REFLEXIVITY: THE PLACE (OR NOT) OF RESEARCH	63
ETHNOGRAPHY OF PLACE	64
PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH	65
RELATIONALITY.....	67
3.3 PARTICIPANTS AND ETHICS.....	68
SUPPORT FOR THE RESEARCH	68
PARTICIPANTS AND RECRUITMENT	69
ADVISORS, MENTORS, AND TEACHERS.....	69
MULTIPLE SITES IN 'REMOTE' LOCALITIES	70
3.4 NAVIGATING THE SPACE	71
ACCOUNTABILITY AND KNOWLEDGE	71
TRANSLATING CONCEPTS AND LANGUAGE	73
WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE.....	75
CONFIDENTIALITY.....	76
GRIEF AND LOSS	76
3.5 MULTIMETHOD APPROACH: PROCESS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS.....	76
PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND OBSERVANT PARTICIPANT	76
A CASE STUDY: GALTHA ROM AT BIRANYBIRANY	78
INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSIONS.....	80
ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF DATA.....	83
DATA ANALYSIS	83
CO-THEORISING	84
3.6 REPORTING BACK: HONOURING THE CONTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS.....	88
3.7 CONCLUSION	89
CHAPTER 4 COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATIONAL REFORM	93
4.1 INTRODUCTION.....	93
4.2 COMMUNITY ACTION	93
HOMELAND MOVEMENT AND REQUESTS FOR COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION.....	94
BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE	96
TERTIARY PARTNERSHIPS.....	98
4.3 METAPHORS AS THEORY: THE FOUNDATION OF COMMUNITY RESEARCH	100
BRACKISH WATER	100
ŊATHU: THE CYCAD NUT	104
4.4 PEDAGOGY AND CURRICULUM	105
GARMA MATHS CURRICULUM.....	105
GALTHA ROM	109
4.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY-BASED AND COMMUNITY-CENTRED TEACHER.....	112
TEACHER EDUCATION IS CRITICAL IN REMOTE EDUCATION	112
4.6 BOTH WAYS IN A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT	116
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE SCHOOLS	116
GALTHA IN THE HOMELANDS	118
4.7 CONCLUSION	119

CHAPTER 5 POLICY, POWER, AND CENTRALISED DIRECTIVES: A HELP OR A HINDERANCE?	121
5.1 INTRODUCTION	121
5.2 VIGNETTE: A CODE OF CONFLICT	121
BOUND BY GOVERNMENT POLICY AND DIRECTIVES	123
5.3 A SHIFTING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE	124
POLICY AS A PRODUCT OF CULTURE	124
POLICY ERAS	125
5.4 'PROBLEMS', DEFICIENCIES, AND NEOLIBERALISM	127
DEFICIENCIES AND 'PROBLEMS'	127
POWER: WHOSE INTERESTS ARE BEING SERVED?	128
NEOLIBERALISM IN EDUCATION	130
5.5 NORTHERN TERRITORY POLITICAL ARENA	134
DIFFERENCE AND DIVERSITY AS A STRENGTH	135
COMMUNITY AND POWER: A SITE OF STRUGGLE AND TRANSFORMATION	136
5.6 NORTHERN TERRITORY AND BILINGUAL POLICY	137
LANGUAGE IS IDENTITY	137
FOUR HOURS OF ENGLISH POLICY	140
5.7 THE REVIEW	143
THE INDIGENOUS EDUCATION REVIEW	143
DIRECT INSTRUCTION AND THE LITERACY MYTH	144
5.8 A SHIFTING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE	147
5.9 CONCLUSION: WHERE TO NOW?	149
CHAPTER 6 BALA GA LILI: OPERATIONALISING COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE	153
6.1 INTRODUCTION	153
6.2 RELATIONALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF PRACTICE	154
A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON RELATIONSHIPS	154
RELATING AND GURRUṬU: 'GURRUṬU FOLLOWS YOU EVERYWHERE'	156
CONTRASTING UNDERSTANDINGS OF RELATIONALITY IN ORGANISATIONS	158
6.3 COLLABORATION AND RELATIONALITY: PEOPLE AT THE CENTRE	161
COLLABORATION IN PRACTICE	161
'CAPABILITY' AND INCOMMENSURABILITY	164
6.4 OPERATIONALISING COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE: ṆAYṆU GA LILI	165
CONSOLIDATING RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CONTEXT OF PRACTICE	166
A MODEL OF COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE	169
6.5 CONCLUSION	183
CHAPTER 7 A GALTHA ROM PLANNING PROCESS	185
7.1 THE COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE OF PLANNING GALTHA	190
7.2 THE PLANNING PROCESS	190
PRELIMINARY CONVERSATIONS AND MEETINGS	190
CONCEPTS EXPLORED AND A CURRICULUM JOURNEY EMERGES	192
PLANNING ACTIVITIES	194
CLASSROOM-BASED LEARNING	197
7.3 GALTHA ROM PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS	200
ṆURRU WARRYUNAPUYṆU AND GURRUṬU	200
INSIDE AND OUTSIDE KNOWLEDGE	203
COLLABORATION AND REFLEXIVITY	204
RESOURCING	205
7.4 CONCLUSION	206

CHAPTER 8 GALTHA ROM IN PRACTICE	209
8.1 INTRODUCTION.....	209
8.2 CONTEXT OF THE GALTHA AT BIRANYBIRANY	209
8.3 AN OVERVIEW OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	211
8.4 THE GALTHA OFFICIALLY BEGINS.....	213
ARRIVING AT THE SITE.....	213
CONNECTING TO COUNTRY.....	215
8.5 WALKING COUNTRY	217
WALKING TO GANMA.....	217
MAPPING THE WALK.....	221
CURRICULUM LINKS.....	223
8.6 GALTHA ROM CONTENT	225
POLITICAL POWER.....	226
BUNGUL AS AN EMBODIED PEDAGOGY.....	229
THE TREATY DAY AND THE APPLICATION OF LEARNING	231
8.7 THE CONNECTION TO WELLBEING AND INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING	233
CONNECTIONS TO WELLBEING.....	233
AN INTERGENERATIONAL PROCESS.....	236
8.8 AFTER THE GALTHA ROM.....	238
AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONTINUE LEARNING IN CLASSROOMS	238
8.9 TENSIONS AND CHALLENGES	242
A PACKED CURRICULUM AND TIME PRESSURES	242
DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS.....	243
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT.....	245
PAYMENT AND RESOURCING	246
8.10 AN OPPORTUNITY TO REIMAGINE EDUCATION.....	246
8.11 CONCLUSION	248
CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION: RECLAIMING EDUCATION	251
9.1 INTRODUCTION.....	251
9.2 THE FIVE PILLARS OF REMOTE NT EDUCATION.....	253
PILLAR 1: LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY CONTROL	254
PILLAR 2: DECENTRALISING DIRECTIVES, DECISIONS, AND POLICY	257
PILLAR 3: BOTH WAYS PEDAGOGY AND CURRICULUM	261
PILLAR 4: COMMUNITY-CENTRED TEACHER EDUCATION	265
PILLAR 5: COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE	268
IN SUMMARY	272
9.3 A FINAL COMMENT: WAYS FORWARD; WAYS BACK.....	273
REFERENCES.....	275

List of Figures

Figure 1: Learning on Country Activity–Gäṇgaṇ (5 September, 2018)	2
Figure 2: Laynhapuy IPA	14
Figure 3: Mural of Rirratjinu Dilak Mala Mural, Yirrkala Store (24 November, 2021)	16
Figure 4: Dr. Marika mural with Banumbu and Djuwalpada Waṇambi, Yirrkala NT (September 2018).....	17
Figure 5: Bilingual Staircase Model	20
Figure 6: Good Relationships Between Yolṇu and Nāpaki (26 September, 2018).....	86
Figure 7: Documents Shared at Report Back (6 July, 2021)	89
Figure 8: The Image of Gaṇma (Marika, 1999. p. 113)	101
Figure 9: Gaṇma Research (B. Yunupingu, 1991, p. 105).....	103
Figure 10: Both ways education from a Yolṇu perspective (Wunungmurra, 1988, p. 14)	104
Figure 11: Garma Maths Curriculum (Yirrkala Action Group, 2014, p. 1).....	107
Figure 12: Yājunbi Galtha Rom – Yirrkala Action Group/LPC (1991)	112
Figure 13: Don’t’ Cut Off Our Tongues (Nambara School Council, 1999).....	140
Figure 14: Building Good Relationships (26 September, 2018)	167
Figure 15: The Model of Collaborative Practice (2021)	171
Figure 16: Galtha Planning Brainstorm of Potential Learning Concepts (May, 2018)	192
Figure 17: Yalmay Yunupingu Presenting concepts for Biranybirany Galtha (2018)	194
Figure 18: Group Constructed Biranybirany Galtha Timetable (11 May, 2019)	195
Figure 19: Djalinda Yunupingu Sharing Learning Activities Planned (18 May, 2019)	196
Figure 20: Front Cover of Biranybirany Galtha Rom Workbook (1 June, 2019)	197
Figure 21: Student Map of Mine Lease (2018).....	198
Figure 22: Hope for this Land (June, 2019)	199
Figure 23: The Biranybirany Site: Before and After (June, 2018)	211
Figure 24: Mapping the Area (18 May, 2018)	214
Figure 25: One of the Designated Camping Areas (5 June, 2018)	214
Figure 26: The Biranybirany Galtha Rom Timetable (4 June, 2018)	216
Figure 27: Participants involved in Galtha Rom at Biranybirany (June, 2018)	218
Figure 28: Rurruwiliny Nurruwutthun Supporting a Student (5 June, 2018).....	220
Figure 29: Mapping Activity (5 June, 2018).....	222
Figure 30: Lesson Overview (5 June, 2019).....	224
Figure 31: Political Power Lesson Plan (6 June, 2018)	227
Figure 32: Political Power Activity (June, 2019)	228
Figure 33: Plaque in Memory of Dr. Yunupingu (8 June, 2018)	232
Figure 34: Image of Wellbeing (Yunupingu, 2016).....	234
Figure 35: Reflective Writing from Boruwuy Homeland Learning Centre (June, 2018)	240
Figure 36: The Five Pillars of Community-Centred Education (2021).....	254

List of Tables

Table 1: Translation of Concepts – Building Good Relationships	168
Table 2: English Concepts.....	169

Chapter 1 Place, Connection, and Purpose

1.1 Introduction, Positionality, and Connection

Bees and the Potential for Learning

I spent most of my childhood growing up on Kamilaroi/Gomeroi Country and returned 20 years later to write this thesis. For the majority of the intervening years, I lived in and worked as a teacher in Northeast Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory (NT). When I returned to New South Wales (NSW) my lack of ‘ecological literacy’¹ (Massy, 2017, p. 64) was reinforced when I saw a hive of bees on one of my early morning walks along the Namoi River. I watched the bees dart in and out of a hive in an old eucalypt, and I had so many questions about them. There was so much I needed to learn about Place. It reminded me of a program I had been part of only months before when I had been in a remote Homeland in Arnhem Land. I was working with a group of Yolŋu school students and rangers on a school program who were researching and learning about native bees. These students and rangers had in-depth knowledge of the various species of bees and drew diagrams of the beehives, labelling each section in Yolŋu matha² (see Figure 1). After the students finished drawing their diagrams, they asked a teaching colleague and me if we could translate their labels into English. The teacher and I looked at each other. We simply did not know the English translations and could not help them. The students had so much more knowledge about these bees than we did.

The bees I observed after returning from my field site in Arnhem Land to write my thesis were a reminder of my ignorance, a reminder of my lack of connection to the ecology of Country and how Western schooling had failed to connect me with the land I grew up on. I was deflated but also inspired. Inspired because I knew what was possible. I had witnessed the agency of communities to transform dominant models of education by including local Indigenous knowledges into the process of schooling and, in doing so, connect students and teachers more deeply to the Country we live and work on. I was deflated as I had also observed the resistance from dominant systems and individuals who were unable (or unwilling) to understand the value of Indigenous epistemologies. I had seen how Indigenous ways of being,

¹ Massy (2017) defines ‘ecological literacy’ as the ability to read a landscape.

² Indigenous languages from Northeast Arnhem Land

doing, and knowing could be included in educational spaces, but such an undertaking was complex and required vision, commitment, and action from education departments, schools, educators and communities. This thesis is a story of one community's journey in articulating their vision of education and challenging the system by including Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies into the process of schooling.

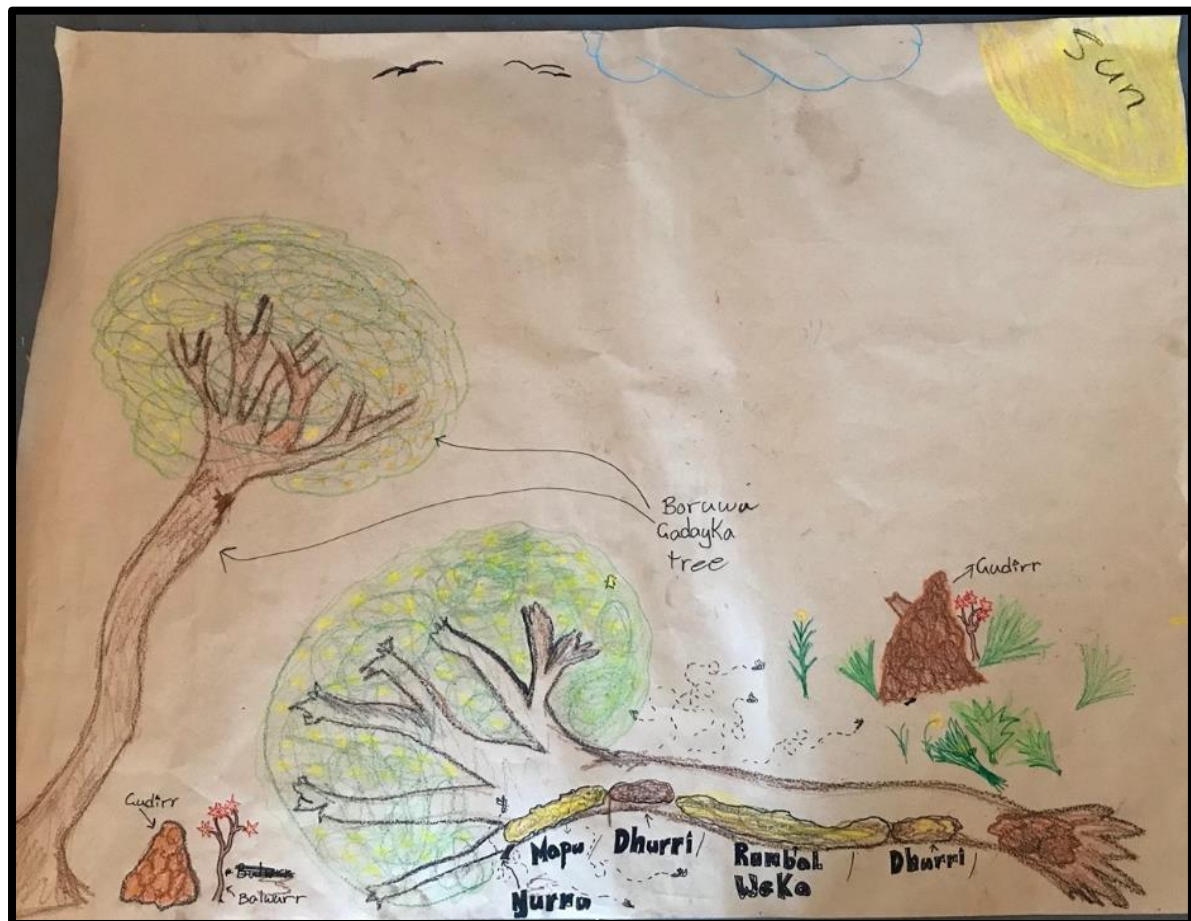


Figure 1: Learning on Country Activity—Gäṅgaṅ (5 September, 2018)

Connection to Place

My connection to Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands, where the students who drew the bee diagrams live, began nearly two decades ago. I was 21 years old when I travelled to Yirrkala on a self-initiated 4-week teaching practicum. This teaching placement was unlike anything I had experienced before, and the following year I returned as a 'qualified teacher'. I was qualified by mainstream standards but extremely underqualified and unprepared for a teaching job in this context. My initiation into teaching was in a boxy, demountable classroom

with a class of spirited 6 and 7-year-olds. Pale-green paint flaked off asbestos walls, and a loud air conditioner was a necessary intrusion in the stifling humidity. Class numbers fluctuated daily, ranging anywhere from five to 35 students. Every day was a steep learning curve, and my resilience was continually tested. I was privileged to have mentoring from both Yolŋu and non-Yolŋu educators, which was essential in developing my teaching practice. The school's vision statement and philosophy were clear; it was a both ways educational approach, and all staff were required to support the inclusion of both Western and Yolŋu knowledges in learning programs. Despite working in a both ways school and having support, I still struggled. I constantly felt like I was failing the students I was working with. I was working with a Yolŋu team teacher who spoke the language the students did. My role was to support her to develop the first language and mathematics programs, which was challenging as I was barely out of university myself. The days were chaotic. I didn't understand what students were saying and relied heavily on the team teacher to support communication. I wanted to build on student strengths, but their ability, and mine as a teacher, was measured by mainstream standards of success, mostly related to whether or not literacy and numeracy benchmarks were being met. Although important, I knew that learning was so much more nuanced and complex than meeting literacy benchmarks. Every day capable students sat in front of me and their strength, resilience, and knowledge were not recognised by the system. Even though I had high expectations of myself as a teacher, engaged in professional development to try and improve my teaching practice, worked long hours, and attempted to meet systemic requirements, I still felt incompetent and out of my depth.

The challenges were immense, but so were the rewards. There was a depth of relationality that I had not experienced in other contexts. Relationships were central to daily life in this community. I observed students with an amazing capacity to connect and relate to each other and with their natural environments. On weekends I went hunting³ with families and other teachers, often with some of the students I was teaching. While out on Country I was overwhelmed by the knowledge and competence that children and adults had in their local environment. I witnessed different ways of interacting as children wove in and out of conversations and activities, their lives not segregated from the worlds of adults. Stories and

³ Hunting mostly involved fishing, collecting oysters, mud mussels, berries, and fruit

knowledge of the land were generously shared with me on these trips. I was nurtured and cared for as it was obvious I was out of my comfort zone and lacked the knowledge to navigate the bush. During these experiences, the power was flipped, and I was no longer the ‘teacher’, I was the ‘learner’. In addition to bush trips, on weekends, I and other teachers were invited to attend ceremonies, *bäpurru*⁴ and *dhapi*⁵, and through these community ceremonies developing further insights into the lives of the students we worked with as well as developed relationships to the wider community. I witnessed young people fulfilling important ceremonial obligations at *bäpurru*. They were responsible for handling the bodies of *gurrutumi*⁶ during funerals and ensuring that *rom*⁷ was carried out. In doing so, they were fulfilling their civic duty as Yolŋu. However, when these students returned to school, they were often not accorded the same autonomy or responsibility as they had outside of school.

The years working at Yirrkala highlighted the contested and political nature of Indigenous education (Fogarty, Lovell., et al., 2015; Pearson, 2009; Spillman, 2017). I, along with my colleagues, were impacted by the changing political agendas (discussed in detail in Chapter 5) that resulted in curriculum and structural changes. I questioned why the Department of Education had so much control and power over education when Yolŋu had clearly articulated a vision for the school. Instead of improving programs, which at times did need improvement, valuable time was spent in justifying the use of first language and the inclusion of local knowledge in programs. I began to question the foundation of education and the centralised directives that seemed to conflict with community aspirations; the people making the decisions were not engaged in the life of these communities.

The systemic issues such as changing policy and curriculum were present, but it was the daily teaching and collaborating with colleagues that required the most energy and urgency for those of us working on the ground. As a teacher in this context, I needed to work closely with Yolŋu team teachers who were critical to the teaching and learning process. Working collaboratively with colleagues was critical as members of teaching teams brought unique skill

⁴ Funeral

⁵ Circumcision

⁶ Relation(ship), kin(ship) + mi: a suffix demonstrating the quality of belonging to the object

⁷ Culture, behaviour, law, rule, custom, tradition, habit, way of life or doing things (Charles Darwin University, 2020)

sets to the workplace. I had knowledge of education systems, and Yolŋu educators I worked with had language and community knowledge and skills. In addition, the more experienced Yolŋu educators also had knowledge of the education system. I learnt early on that a teaching qualification did not necessarily mean I was a competent teacher in this context. I had so much to learn. Working in this context required a high level of collaboration. If the relationships between staff were fractured and non-productive, our ability to work effectively was diminished. However, collaboration in these remote schools requires a high level of commitment and skill. I observed educators who seemed willing to step courageously into what was, at times, an uncomfortable intercultural space. There were other teachers who believed working closely with colleagues was unnecessary and seemed unaware of their bias and behaviours that perpetuated dominant ways of being, doing, and knowing. But what I found more concerning was that for those teachers who wanted to collaborate, the process was still complex at times. I was learning daily but working interculturally and critiquing my own assumptions and bias were not skills taught to me during my university training. I questioned whose responsibility it was to develop non-local teachers' competency to work in remote schools? What skills were required? Were these skills contextual or applicable to different local contexts? It was these questions, and more, that inspired me to further explore the unique and complex space of remote NT education that I had been part of for many years.

Positionality, Motivations, and Reservations

I was apprehensive about starting a PhD. I am a Balanda⁸ (white) woman, a non-Indigenous person conducting research in Yolŋu communities in the NT. Thus, I am part of the dominant culture that has enabled me to undertake a PhD. I recognise that, as researchers, we are 'unequivocally influenced by social structures that see advantage in our positions and acknowledge that we are benefited in many ways through careers involving working with Aboriginal colleagues and communities' (Guenther et al., 2017, p. 108). My intention is to be reflexive and open about the challenges and insecurities I experienced during this research process. This reflexivity is not a self-indulgent focus on the individual (D'cruz et al., 2007, p.

⁸ Hollander is adapted from the Macassan word referring to someone with white skin.

78) but rather a process of reflection that corrects bias and assumptions (Freire, 1996; Fricker, 2007; Krebler, 2012; Medina, 2013; Mezirow, 2016).

During my time at Yirrkala, I witnessed researchers with externally developed agendas come and go from the school community. Shaun Wilson (2008), Opaskwayak Cree scholar from northern Manitoba, explained that Indigenous people are 'accustomed to seeing researchers come into their communities, do whatever it is they do and leave, never to be heard from again' (p. 15). Although not reflective of all researchers, I questioned the benefits that remote NT communities gained from researchers coming and going with predetermined agendas. Historically, research has privileged Western epistemologies and I wanted to avoid the potential extractive nature of research (L. T. Smith, 1999). I was aware of avoiding the power structures that positioned Indigenous people as the 'researched' rather than as active participants in the process. As Olsen (2018) argued, 'non-Indigenous researchers and educators dwell in a highly contested space. Despite good will and academic skills, they can be seen as symptoms of the colonial aftermath' (p. 209). I found this research process unsettling, as it needed to be.

I was also concerned that a PhD would move me further away from the reality on the ground. bell⁹ hooks (1995) proposed that rather than separate one from community, 'intellectual work' might enable a deeper participation with life of family and community. hooks valued intellectual work because it provided resources to enhance survival and her pleasure in living and supported her to make sense of reality and the world around her (hooks & West, 1995, p. 150). Although at times I did feel removed from daily community life, the PhD process has supported me to develop a theoretical framework to understand the data shared with me during this doctoral research. Furthermore, it deepened the educational conversations and opened up space for continued dialogue with those involved in the research. Despite the apprehensions I have about research, my engagement in the topic is motivated by a concern about the continual marginalisation of Indigenous knowledges in the 'conventional processes of knowledge production' (Dei, 2000, p. 111) and a desire to influence thinking about this.

⁹ Intentionally not capitalised

Relationships are at the heart of this work, and I am encouraged by the investment people have made in me over the years. While living at Yirrkala and in the Homelands, I was adopted into the gurrutu¹⁰ system, as most non-Indigenous people who come to live and work in Yirrkala are. As a result of this adoption I have *bäpurru* (clan), *mälk* (skin name), *waŋarr* (totem), and *likan yäku* (surname). I recognise this connection out of respect for the many people who have supported me over the years by sharing their stories, connecting me into an intricate web of relationships, and continually encouraging me to move beyond my comfort zone. Despite these connections, I do not suggest that I have deep knowledge or extraordinary insights into Yolŋu ways of being, knowing, and doing. Nor can I ever fully embody the essence of a Yolŋu epistemology, even with enduring connections to the community. I am undeniably a Balanda woman with the values, biases, and beliefs bestowed by my cultural conditioning. Although I continually make mistakes, I am committed to taking responsibility for the ‘legacy of settler colonialism’ by recognising ‘colonial privilege’ and ‘learning to relate differently, not through exploitation or domination but with humility—yielding space, voice, and power to Indigenous peoples’ (Maddison et al., 2016, p. 232). My intention is to approach this work with the humility it deserves and help to create space for Yolŋu people to control their own lives and educational spaces.

1.2 Language and Terms Explained

The way language is used is important. Therefore, discussing key terminology used in this thesis to ensure shared understandings is necessary. As described by (Maddison, 2019), ‘both black and white identities in Australia have been constructed through the language of colonisation’ (p. xi). In a similar vein, Rudolph (2019) explained that the process of naming people and country following British colonisation created ‘conditions of power and generated particular truths’ (p. 13). While working at Yirrkala, I experienced the nuanced ways language can both empower and disempower which I discuss further in some of the definitions in this section.

Balanda: Adapted from the Macassan word, Hollander, generally referring to someone with white skin. At Yirrkala, the term *Balanda*, is often used to refer to non-Indigenous people. At

¹⁰ Yolŋu kinship

times, I use this term in this way; however, mostly I use the term *non-local* rather than Balanda when referring to people who are not from Yirrkala or the Laynhapuy Homelands (this is explained further in the *local/non-local* definition)

Community: In the context of this research, *community* does not refer to a homogenous group of people; rather, I use the term community to describe a group of people living in a specific geographic location—that is, the community of Yirrkala.

Country/Place: I refer to the terms *Country* and *Place* throughout this thesis. The concept of Country is discussed extensively in literature, and in the paper ‘Co-Becoming Bawaka: Towards a Relational Understanding of Place/Space’, the lead author is Bawaka Country, a place in Northeast Arnhem Land. The authors explore the concept of space/place as an emergent ‘co-becoming in a relational world’ (Bawaka Country et al., 2016, p. 456), looking to Country as the teacher. I have intentionally capitalised the first letter of both these words to reinforce the importance of Country in the lives of the Yolŋu participants I worked with. Country and Place can also refer to sea as well as land.

Educator/team teacher: I use the term *educator* broadly. In the context of this thesis, I understand educator to be a person who educates and supports learning. When applying the term educator, I am not only referring to an individual who is registered and meets the national requirements established by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSIL). Educator could refer to anyone who engages students in learning. For example, rangers and community members could be considered educators if they are engaged in sharing knowledge. I use the term *team teacher* to describe a local Yolŋu educator who is employed to work in a team-teaching role in the school. Mostly, these team teachers are not qualified teachers according to AITSIL standards. The term *assistant teacher* is often used in the literature, in some schools in the NT, by the Department of Education, and in the AITSIL standards. However, this is problematic and illustrates how language has the potential to disempower or empower. Assistant teacher implies that the paraprofessional’s role is to assist the *teacher* which is usually a non-local staff member. In the context of remote NT education, this can create a power imbalance by positioning formally qualified teachers as experts in teaching in this context and undervaluing the role team teachers have in the planning,

delivery, and assessment of student learning in schools. The term assistant teacher is an example of colonising language as the majority of classroom teachers are non-Indigenous and non-local, and consequently are often in the positions of power in the classroom. In an attempt to value the strength of team teachers as critical in the process of team teaching at Yirrkala, *assistant teacher* was replaced with *team teacher*. A decision made at the school level, and explained early to me when I first went to Yirrkala. Consequently, this is the language I use throughout the thesis.

Homeland Learning Centres (HLCs): There are a number of Homeland Learning Centres in the Laynhapuy region that offer educational programs to students living in these communities; this is discussed in more detail in Section 1.4.

Homeland Learning Centre teacher (HLCT) is a Yolngu educator who works at the Homelands Centre School, a resident in their own community. For reasons similar to those for the justification of the term team teacher, the term *Homeland Learning Centre teacher* is used rather than assistant teacher.

Indigenous/Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/First Nations/First Australians: In the literature there are varied terms used to refer to the original peoples of Australia, and there is debate about what language to use (Hall, 2016). The generic terms listed above are European terms applied since colonisation to describe the clan groups and polities that had their own languages, law, and culture (Maddison, 2019). In this thesis, I often use the term *Indigenous* to include both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, although I recognise that this term is not accepted by everyone, and various use of language has certain associated risk. I acknowledge that Indigenous peoples have different preferences in terminology to describe identity, culture, and heritage (Rudolph, 2019), and where relevant, I have attempted to adopt these specificities when the author or participant uses them.

Vass (2012) stated that as a non-Indigenous person he has ‘no basis from which to offer a definition of who is, or what it means to be, Indigenous. To attempt to do so would be to act upon the white power that saturates the Australian (educational) landscape’ (p. 86). I recognise that attempting to define the terms Indigenous, Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander, and First Nations to describe the original peoples of Australia is complex. Tuck and Yang (2012) provide a useful definition, describing Indigenous people as ‘those who have creation stories, not colonization stories, about how we/they came to be in a particular place—indeed how we/they came to *be a place*. Our/their relationships to land comprise our/their epistemologies, ontologies and cosmologies’ (p. 6, emphasis in original).

Indigenous education is a term that is interpreted in many different ways. Rather than define it, Vass (2012) ‘problematizes the homogenising forces that have constructed a generic understanding of “Indigenous education”’. Vass (2012) encouraged greater scrutiny of the meaning and use of the term, arguing that *Indigenous education* is an expression used in policy and practice, framed as a problem. He illustrated that uncritical use of the expression sustains deficit assumptions regarding engagement and outcomes of Indigenous students in Australia. In a similar way, Spillman (2017) argued that the language of ‘Indigenous disadvantage’ has become synonymous with ‘Indigenous education’ (p. 138), an issue I discuss in Chapter 5. In the context of this research, I rarely use the term Indigenous education but rather use terms that are connected to the community in which I conducted this research.

Laynhapuy Homelands: In the region around Yirrkala there are a number of Homelands¹¹ (see Figure 2); however, not all of them have HLCs. In this research, I focus only on the Homelands with HLCs. The concept of Homelands is explained in the Section 1.3.

Local/non-local: I often use the terms *non-local* and *local*. In a similar way to Bat and Shore (2012), I have adopted the term *local* to describe an Indigenous educator who belongs to the community where they work and *non-local* to refer to a person who has been recruited from outside the community. Therefore, a non-local teacher could be either Indigenous or non-Indigenous.

Remote: I often use the word *remote* to describe the location of Yirrkala and Homelands in the region. The NT Department of Education classifies schools outside Darwin, Palmerston, and Alice Springs as remote. However, for many local people living in these communities, it is the southern cities that are considered remote and distant (Bulloch & Fogarty, 2016, p. 78).

¹¹ I intentionally capitalise the word ‘Homelands’ and will do throughout the thesis.

So, I recognise that remote is a subjective term; however, for the purpose of this thesis and describing the context, I often use it.

Qualified teacher: I apply the term *qualified teacher* or *teacher* to describe a teacher who has met the national AITSL teaching standards. These standards are a legal requirement for classroom teaching positions in remote NT contexts. By meeting these standards it is assumed at a system level that teachers are prepared to teach in classrooms in remote contexts. However, as I discuss in this thesis, this is not always the case. The concept of who is *qualified* to teach and who is not, reinforces dominant Western structures and capabilities and if not interrogated can perpetuate power imbalances between those with qualifications and those without.

Western/mainstream/dominant/settler: In the thesis I use the terms *Western*, *dominant*, and *mainstream* interchangeably. I understand them to mean structures that are largely neoliberal, capitalist, individual, and outcomes driven. In the context of the research, dominant refers to Western beliefs and attitudes, although in Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands, the dominant ideology of the community centres on Yolŋu *rom*. However, as this is a study about education and education systems, which are based on dominant Western ideals, I use the term dominant to refer to these structures.

Settler is another term I use in the thesis. Maddison (2019) described ‘settler’ and ‘non-Indigenous’ to mean any individual or group who came to Australia from 1788 onwards after the first invasion (p. xii). Tuck and Yang (2012) argued that ‘settlers are not immigrants. Immigrants are beholden to the Indigenous laws and epistemologies of the lands they migrate to. Settlers become the law, supplanting Indigenous laws and epistemologies’ (p. 7).

Yolŋu is a word from the languages of Northeast Arnhem used to describe an Aboriginal person. Morphy (1991) suggested that the word *Yolŋu* should be understood as ‘applying to a form of social organisation, a culture area, a linguistic entity or a social universe rather than to a named group of people, for these are indeed the ways it has been used’ (p. 40). In the context of the thesis, I use the word Yolŋu to describe Aboriginal people who have family connections and cultural affiliations in Northeast Arnhem Land.

1.3 Context of Yirrkala and Laynhapuy Homelands

In this section, I introduce the community of Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands, the community I described in the first part of the thesis where I naively commenced my teaching career back in 2001. I include a brief discussion about the Homelands Movement and Bark Petition to provide context to the community, and although these broader political movements are interconnected with education, it is the activism in the educational space that is the focus of the thesis.

Yirrkala

Yirrkala is located in Northeast Arnhem Land 600 km east of Darwin. The word *Yirrkala* describes a specific freshwater stream that flows from the land to the sea. The population of Yirrkala is said to be 809 according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016). There is movement between Yirrkala and the surrounding Homelands. In terms of ‘mainstream’ standards, this is a small community but an influential one, long recognised for its political activism within the broader political domain, including education (Livett, 1988; Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990; Stewart & Ngurruwutthun, 1996; M. Yunupingu, 1989).

Yolŋu at Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands are no strangers to social and political interaction with those from outside their region. Some of the first interactions occurred in the early 1600s when Yolŋu had early contact with the Macassans making them among the first Aboriginal people to connect with outside visitors (Dewar, 1995). Yingiya Guyula MLA¹² described the relationship with the Macassans as one based on respect and honour with people who eventually became kin (Ethos Centre for Christianity and Society, 2016). Guyula argued that these early negotiations constituted the first international treaty.

Many years after the relationships with the Macassans had been established, the Methodist Mission at Yirrkala officially opened in 1935 (Dewar, 1995). It was one of the last missions established in east Arnhem Land. The Methodist Mission became the permanent place of residence for the majority of Yolŋu in surrounding areas by the end of the 1960s (F. Morphy & Morphy, 2013). Although many Yolŋu relocated to this mission, some Yolŋu stayed on their

¹² Member of the Legislative Assembly in the Northern Territory

clan estates and travelled to Yirrkala occasionally for medical attention or services (F. Morphy, 2008). The location of the mission at Yirrkala was selected because of its permanent water supply and the potential for the establishment of gardens (H. Morphy, 2005). Without oversimplifying the impact of missionary settlements, the interaction between the Methodist Overseas Mission and Yolŋu has been described as a 'relatively fortunate one' (p. 41) due to the openness of many missionaries in understanding the religious ideology of Yolŋu and how religious ideas could co-exist (H. Morphy, 2005). For a detailed historical account of Yirrkala and the region, I refer the reader to 'The Black War in Arnhem Land' (Dewar, 1995), which provides an account of the early interactions between Yolŋu and the missionaries. In addition, H. Morphy (1991) provided an in-depth anthropological text of artwork and symbolism in and around Yirrkala. Other key contributors to ethnographic research in this region include Keen (1994) and Williams (1986).

The Homelands Movement

There are a number of small communities surrounding Yirrkala (see Figure 2). These communities are referred to as Homelands, or sometimes called outstations. The geographic positioning of these is not incidental. Each of these Homelands is located on a clan estate, often with sacred sites and ceremonial grounds in close proximity (F. Morphy, 2008). In the 1970s, people left Yirrkala and relocated to these ancestral lands in what was termed the Homelands Movement. The Homelands Movement was part of a new policy framework of self-determination implemented by the Whitlam government in 1972 (Schwab, 2013). The move away from the established mission at Yirrkala has been described by F. Morphy (2008) as both 'reactive' and 'proactive' (p. 8)—reactive in the sense that Yolŋu witnessed the social challenges that were evident at Yirrkala and did not want this for themselves or their families, and proactive as living on Country is understood to be a source of wellbeing in the spiritual and social sense for Yolŋu. The Homelands Movement illustrated the desire many Yolŋu had to obtain authority over their lives and to avoid the conflict between groups that were traditionally separate (Livett, 1998). It also demonstrated a rejection of assimilationist policies and a significant strategic example of people taking responsibility to improve their own wellbeing (Amnesty International, 2011). The Homelands in the Laynhapuy region differ from

the hub community of Yirrkala as they are established according to ‘Yolŋu principles of social organisation’ (F. Morphy, 2008, p. 384).

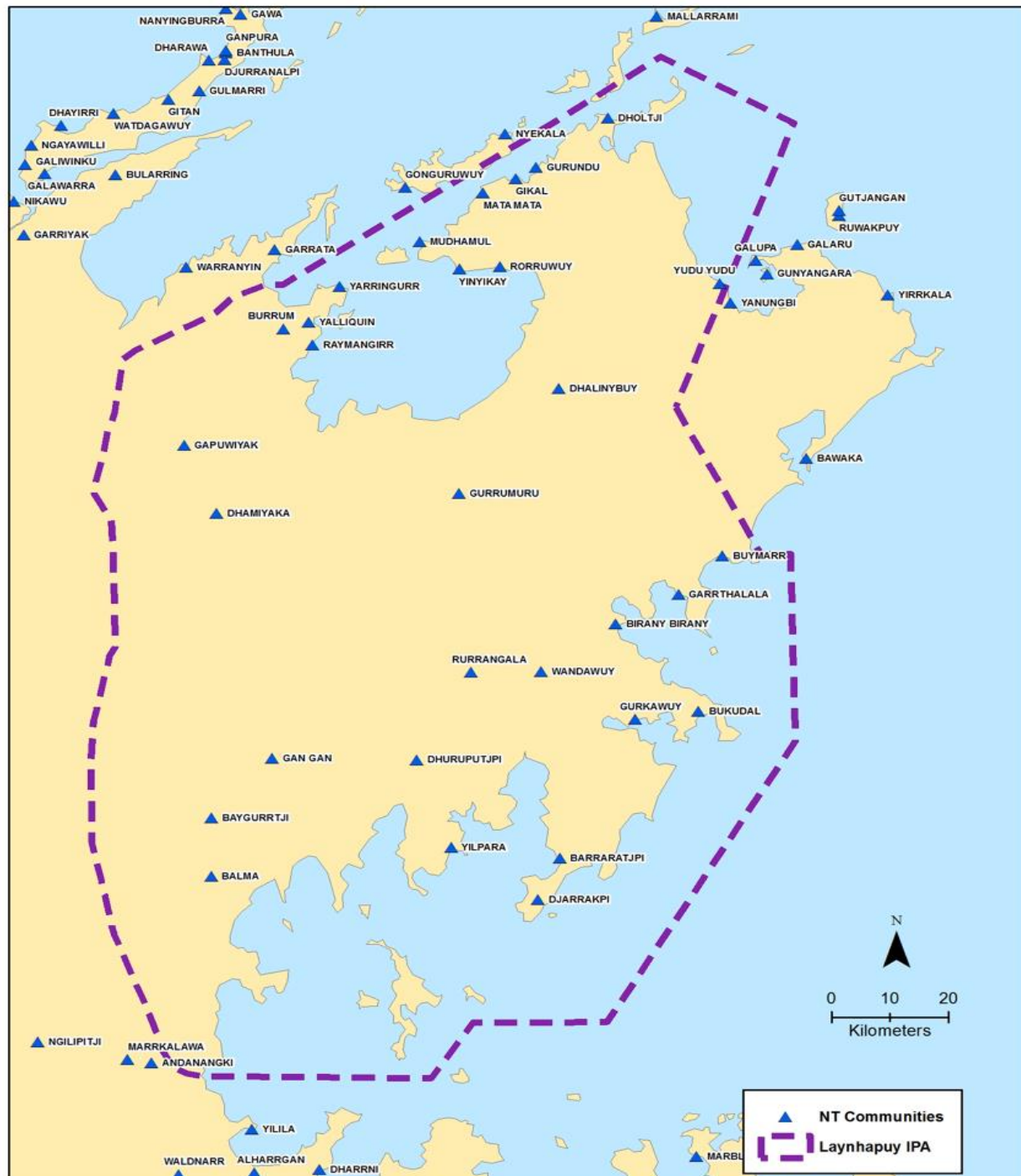


Figure 2: Laynhapuy IPA

Commonwealth of Australia (Geoscience Australia). Indigenous Protected Area (IPA)—Declared from Australian Government Department of the Environment (2017)

Education was an important consideration during the establishment of the Laynhapuy Homelands. Many elders when preparing to move back to their ancestral lands were simultaneously exploring the possibility of setting up schools in these locations. In 1974, the Brandl report researched Homelands education and concluded that as well as wanting education to include both Western and Yolŋu teachings, elders also requested that Yolŋu adults living in these Homelands received training to become educators. In Chapter 4, I explain the early establishment of education in these Homelands in more detail.

Land Rights

In addition to the Homelands Movement, the Bark Petition is another example of agency and activism in the Yirrkala region. In 1963, the first Yirrkala Bark Petition was presented to the Commonwealth House of Representatives. The petition was an attempt by Yolŋu to have their rights to land, language, and ways of life recognised by the Australian legal system (Stockley et al., 2017). Despite this coordinated attempt by clan leaders, parliament failed to deliver the justice Yolŋu demanded, resulting in Yolŋu leaders approaching the Supreme Court in 1968 to gain recognition of their right to their land. As part of this process, clan leaders objected to the imposition of English names in the mining township; English names were an erasure of Yolŋu names derived from a Yolŋu cosmology (Wilkinson et al., 2009).

Scattered throughout Yirrkala are striking murals that recognise the activism of elders. The Rirratjinu Dilak mala, in Figure 3, were the elders of the Rirratjinu clan, one of the 13 clan signatories on the Bark Petition. For further information, the Yirrkala Film Project documents the development and impact of the bauxite mine on the Gove Peninsula from 1968–1996 (Deveson, 2011).



Figure 3: Mural of Rirratjinu Dilak Mala Mural, Yirrkala Store (24 November, 2021)

Credit: Maryanne Gray

Another of the murals painted in Yirrkala is an image acknowledging Dr.¹³ Marika (see Figure 4). Dr. Marika, an academic and educator, worked for many decades at Yirrkala School. Her contribution to education is acknowledged widely in the community, and her work contributes significantly to this thesis. I am comforted by the fact that many years ago, she encouraged me to start a PhD. In the following section, I discuss the context of the two schools based at Yirrkala.

¹³ When a Yolŋu person passes away their name and other similar words cannot be said, therefore, I have used the term Dr. instead of using this person's name out of respect.



Figure 4: Dr. Marika mural with Banumbu and Djuwalpada Waṇambi, Yirrkala NT (September 2018)

Credit: Dhukururru Bidingal

1.4 Educational Context

There are two schools at Yirrkala: Yirrkala School and Yirrkala Homelands School¹⁴. Both are government schools and at the time of conducting the research had a shared school council, the Yambirrpa Schools Council. Both schools have a unifying vision statement that was written

¹⁴ While writing this thesis the name of the school changed to *Laynhapuy Homelands School*. However, I have continued to use the name that was in use when I conducted the fieldwork.

in 1996 by the late educator and elder Wäli Wunungmurra. The *Yambirrpa Schools Vision Statement* clearly documents the educational goals and aspirations for self-determination:

We see Yambirrpa Schools as an important part of the community development process which has the goal of achieving a self-determining, self-managing community. Our school programs will encourage our students to develop skills, hope and vision for their future. (Yambirrpa Schools Vision Statement, 1996, p. 1)

The collective term often used to describe both schools is Yambirrpa Schools. Despite both schools operating under one school council with a shared vision statement and students moving between these schools at various times, they are different. Yirrkala School provides education for students residing in Yirrkala and other communities close to this community. The structure of Yirrkala Homelands School is quite different. Yirrkala Homelands School is unique in the sense that the school office is in Yirrkala; however, the classrooms are located in surrounding Homelands. These classrooms are referred to as Homeland Learning Centres (HLCs) or Homelands Schools. Although there are many Homelands in the Laynhapuy regions, not all have learning centres. At the time of writing this thesis, there were six HLCs operating under Yirrkala Homelands School. These HLCs are small, with student numbers ranging from six to approximately thirty-five students. Homeland Centre Teachers (HLCTs) are community members who live in Homelands and are employed at these HLCs. Over the years the HLCTs have studied teacher education courses, and teaching experience varies. Visiting teachers (VTs) are mostly non-local teachers who have met the national AITSIL teaching standards, and they usually reside in Yirrkala and fly or 4WD into these Homeland localities during the week to support planning, learning, and assessment. It is a reciprocal relationship; the VT role is to support the HLCTs to develop their skills in teaching, and the HLCTs have a critical role in supporting VTs in their teaching roles and orienting them to the Homeland context. The important and unique role that local educators have in remote education has been documented by Guenther and Disbray (2015) and Hall (2016) and I explore this further in Chapter 6.

The most significant difference between Yirrkala School and Yirrkala Homelands School is that Yirrkala School is bilingual/biliterate and Yirrkala Homelands School is not. Since the 1970s,

students at Yirrkala School have been taught to read and write in one of the local Yolŋu languages. Although Yirrkala has continued their first language program, bilingual education has been under frequent government attack despite communities advocating for first language literacy and research proposing its benefits (Caffery et al., 2009; Devlin, 2017a; Disbray, 2016; Nicholls, 2005). I discuss these political agendas in detail in Chapter 5. The current model at Yirrkala is the staircase model¹⁵ of bilingual/biliterate instruction (see Figure 5¹⁶), which guides the percentage of first language and English language instruction during the school day. It is based on the theory that very young children need time in school for conceptual and cognitive development in their home language before English becomes the dominant language of instruction (Northern Territory Department of Education, 1989). At the time this research was conducted, students at Yirrkala Homelands School were formally taught and assessed only in English literacy, not a local Yolŋu language. First language is included in lessons and workshops at Homelands School, but when this thesis was written, there was no formal first language program.

Both ways education, a concept explained in detail in Chapter 2, is a philosophy and applied approach to education implemented at Yambirrpa Schools (Kemmis et al., 2013; White, 2015; M. Yunupingu, 1999). Garma Maths, a locally developed curriculum that represents and includes both Western and Yolŋu mathematical concepts, is one of the foundations of the both ways approach to education. Galtha Rom is Yolŋu pedagogy, a process by which Garma Maths is implemented. Garma Maths and Galtha Rom are discussed in detail in Chapters 4, 6, and 7.

Yirrkala School is clear in its philosophy of both ways. This could be attributed to it being a bilingual school for a number of decades. Participants who worked at Yirrkala School spoke about the both ways approach, including Garma Maths and Galtha. While participants from Homelands reiterated the importance of a both ways approach to education, there was less clarity about whether the schools in Homelands were both ways.

¹⁵ The staircase model develops initial literacy in first language while simultaneously developing English oracy; in Year 4, students transition into formal English literacy (Marika, 1999a).

¹⁶ The staircase model in Figure 5 is based on the bilingual model in the *Handbook for Aboriginal bilingual education in the Northern Territory* (NT Department of Education, 1989).

Staircase Model of Bilingual/Biliterate Instruction

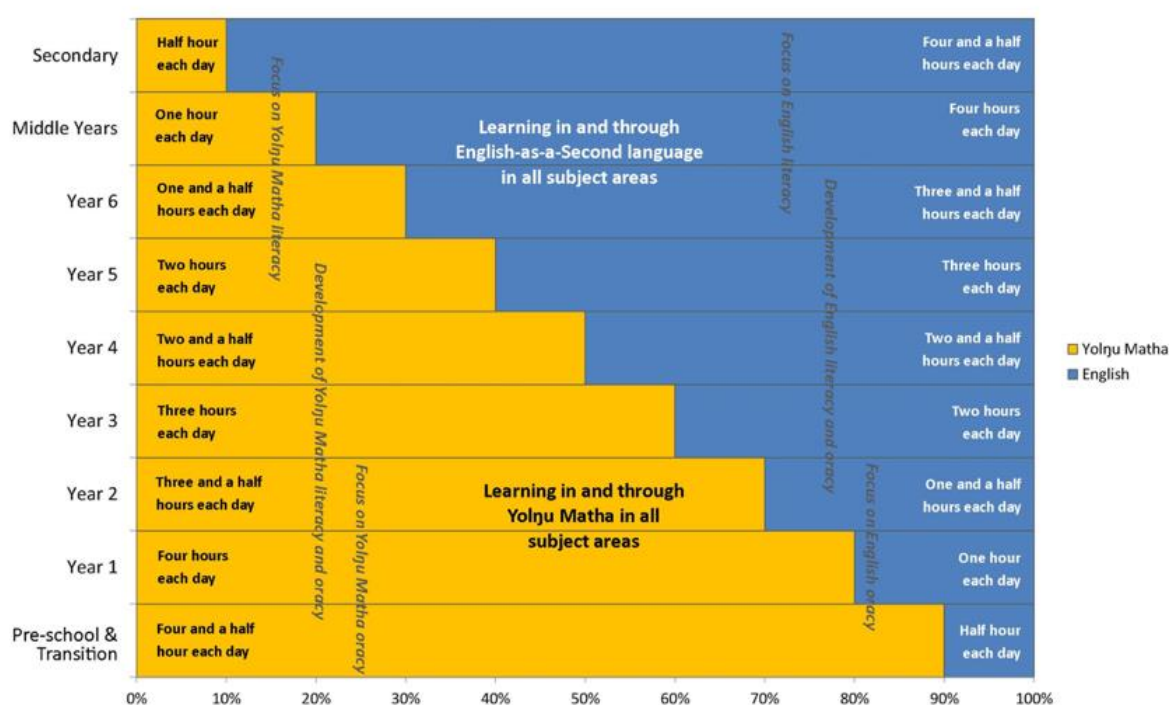


Figure 5: Bilingual Staircase Model

Credit: Yirrkala School¹⁷

1.5 Thesis Aims, Questions, and Limitations

Research Aims

Over a decade of teaching at both Yirrkala School and Laynhapuy Homelands School supported me to develop direction of this research. I aimed to critically examine the educational context at Yirrkala and in the Laynhapuy Homelands to challenge deficit assumptions evident in the policy and practice of NT education (Fogarty et al., 2017; Guenther et al., 2013; Spillman, 2017) and highlight the community-led activism that has challenged mainstream education by including local epistemologies in education (Marika et al., 1992; Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990; Stockley et al., 2017; White, 2015; M. Yunupingu, 1999). This research is based on the premise that the linguistic, cultural, and social diversity of remote regions are strengths to be developed rather than deficiencies to be addressed. As Tuck (2009)

¹⁷ The image is an updated version from the original staircase model from the *Handbook for Aboriginal bilingual education in the Northern Territory* (NT Department of Education, 1989).

stated, 'It is crucial to recognize that our communities hold the power to begin shifting the discourse away from damage and toward desire and complexity' (p. 422). I deliberately privilege community voices, drawing on local theories and concepts and analysing the complex space often referred to as 'remote NT education'. In so doing, I make sure I never lose sight of the real-world challenges that my theoretical discussions are linked to.

This research

- maps the theoretical foundation and application of both ways education as conceptualised at Yirrkala
- identifies the conditions required for the application of learning that includes Yolŋu knowledges and pedagogies
- analyses centralised directives and policy agendas that impact remote NT schooling
- constructs an applied theoretical framework to assist in transcending the limited constructs of dominant models of education

Research Questions

The research question guiding this inquiry is:

How are local models of learning applied and what is required for their implementation?

The following sub-question emerged:

What is required for engagement in an intercultural didactic space?

Why the Research is Needed

The underlying premise of this research is that community aspirations matter and 'solutions' are in the communities themselves. Over the years, community members at Yirrkala and in the Homelands have been very clear about their aspirations for education for children and adults in their community, particularly both ways education and bilingual education. However, despite the agency of Yolŋu, these aspirations have often been unsupported, ignored, or actively violated by governments, departments, and individuals. Australia is a signatory to the

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).¹⁸ Article 14.1 of UNDRIP proposes states the following:

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. (General Assembly of the United Nations, 2007, p. 13)

Although not a legally binding document, the UNDRIP sets out principles for establishing standards and rights for Indigenous peoples. In the NT, these rights are often denied: the Four Hours of English policy implemented in 2009, the government attempt to phase out bilingual education in 1998 (Devlin, 2017a), and the *Indigenous Education Review: A Share in the Future* (B. Wilson, 2014) are examples of government agendas that ignored community aspirations and attempted to erode community control. *A Share in the Future*, the most current review into Indigenous education, has been highly criticised by educators and academics as failing to recognise the needs and aspirations of communities (Fogarty, Lovell, et al., 2015; Grimes, 2014; Spillman, 2017). If the most recent review¹⁹ into NT education, which significantly influenced many aspects of schooling, fails to understand community aspiration and the strength of local knowledge systems, how can education meet the needs of students in these communities?

For many years, the community at Yirrkala have been challenging dominant education, developing their own theories and applying these in a school context. In the 1980s and 1990s, local staff studied community-based teacher education courses. Embedded in these courses was an action research model that was instrumental in developing local pedagogy and curriculum, often referred to as both ways education (Kemmis et al., 2013; White, 2015; Wunungmurra, 1989). However, since this time, there has been limited access to teacher

¹⁸ Although Australia is now a signatory to UNDRIP, it is worth noting that in 2007 Australia, along with New Zealand, Canada and USA, was one of the four settler colonial states that initially refused to sign the UNDRIP (Collingwood-Whittick, 2012).

¹⁹ As I was finalising this thesis the NT Government released the NT Education Engagement Strategy 2021-2032. This strategy acknowledges the importance of engaging with communities, relationships, wellbeing and meaningful learning (Northern Territory Government, 2021)

education that includes Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. Consequently, the theoretical and academic engagement in research and teacher education required to further develop local theories and support new Yolŋu teachers to develop their teaching capacity relevant to the context has been limited.

Limitations

The field of education is extensive. Similarly, a study of the educational context at Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands is broad. Consequently, there are limitations to the scope of this research. First, this is not a study of the theory of language learning, either in English or any Indigenous languages. The teaching of language is complex, and although I discuss bilingual education, I do not specifically examine the theory of language learning and instruction. Furthermore, although I examine the concept of both ways education, I recognise that a ‘moral evaluation between good (Indigenous) and bad (conventional/Western) knowledges is not useful’ (Le Grange, 2018, p. 41). Both ways has always been about a ‘balance’ (M. Yunupingu, 1994). Last, an in-depth analysis of the foundations of Western education, as well as the theory of teaching of numeracy and literacy, are also beyond the scope of this research.

1.6 Conceptual Frameworks: Key Theories and Concepts

The ways knowledge and skills are exchanged in the process of schooling reflect the social, political, and cultural contexts from which they emerge. Consequently, educational theory on its own is insufficient to understand the complexities inherent in educational contexts where participants—either the educated and the educators—come from different cultural backgrounds. An interdisciplinary approach is required to examine remote educational contexts that are the focus of this doctoral study. To analyse education at Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands Schools, I examine aspects of both Yolŋu and Western systems of knowledge to build a theoretical framework. In analysing how these systems of knowledge operate in the school context, I am not proposing a simple dualism; in the lived world of schooling at Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands, there is no simple dualism. There are two distinct knowledge systems present in the school context; sometimes these systems interact, and other times they remain separate. To understand how different knowledges function in

the schooling system, I use an interdisciplinary approach based on four intersecting concepts: relationships, culture, power and settler colonialism, and pedagogy.

Culture

‘You got no culture. You don’t sing and you don’t dance’, a 12-year-old Yolŋu boy responded angrily when I asked him not to kill a goanna at the local public swimming pool. I was the adult looking after him, and I tried to explain that he was not allowed to kill the goanna; at the time I assumed there would be consequences from the pool management if he did. I had been living at Yirrkala for a year, and at that time I agreed with this boy that I did not have a culture. However, now I know differently. I was blind to ‘my culture’. We all have a ‘culture’, organisations have cultures; it just happens that the Western culture I was raised in pervades most aspects of contemporary Australian society. Maddison (2019) proposed that colonial structures reinforced by the dominant society are often ‘normalised to the point of invisibility—or perhaps one should say wilful blindness’ (p. 215). As the years unfolded at Yirrkala I realised that Western cultural constructs significantly influenced my work as a teacher, and much of the time it was the dominant culture of the school. Despite the agency of Yolŋu in the process of schooling, Western ideologies often maintain the power, particularly at a systemic level, discussed in detail in Chapter 5. Over the years, Yolŋu and their co-collaborators have responded to dominant ideologies in schooling by creating their own theories of education. In doing so, they continue to challenge existing power structures and resist the ‘Western-only’ cultural framework of education.

The word *culture* is understood in different ways. Many scholars have attempted to define the concept of culture, and consequently, many models and definitions exist (Schein, 1993). While I do not extensively analyse interpretations and definitions of culture, I discuss it briefly as the concept is relevant to the process of schooling. Geertz (1973) defined culture as a ‘historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by which men [*sic*] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life’ (p. 89). The behaviours (also normalised) that result from this knowledge and these attitudes are also part of culture and influence the way we work.

Organisations also have cultures, consisting of behaviours, assumptions, and values that are validated within that workplace, a concept that Schein (2017, p. 20) examined. Schein proposed,

The culture of a group can be defined as the accumulated shared learning of that group as it solves its problems of external adaption and internal integration; which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, feel and behave in relation to those problems. This accumulated learning is a pattern of system of beliefs, values and behavioural norms that come to be taken for granted as basic assumptions and eventually drop out of awareness. (p. 6)

In remote NT education, the majority of qualified classroom teachers, people in management positions, and senior bureaucrats are non-local and non-Indigenous, and therefore, the process of schooling continues to reinforce Western cultural values and knowledge despite the majority, if not all, of the remote student cohort identifying as Indigenous. However, in some educational contexts in the NT, education that includes Western and Indigenous knowledges, referred to as *both ways* education, has been theorised and applied. In the 1980s at Yirrkala, community members applied the metaphor of *Ganma* in the schooling context. *Ganma*, the intermingling of the salt and fresh water is used to theorise the interaction of *Yirritja* and *Dhuwa*²⁰ knowledge as well as Western and Yolŋu knowledges (Kemmis et al., 2013; B. Yunupingu et al., 1991), discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. The term *both ways* was initially used to describe the educational approach being theorised; however, the term *Ganma* education was encouraged by an elder involved in the project. As described by Kemmis et al. (2013), by encouraging the use of this term, the elder ‘repatriated the notion of education within Yolŋu knowledge, conceptual frameworks and control’ (p. 140) rather than the Balanda notion of *both ways*, which is ‘alongside and outside Yolŋu knowledge and control’ (p. 140). Yolŋu recognised that two significant knowledge systems existed in their

²⁰ Yirritja and Dhuwa are the two moieties—all things in a Yolŋu world belong to one of these moieties.

schools, but Western cultural values and knowledge were prioritised, excluding Yolŋu knowledge from the school curriculum.

There is a significant body of work to describe the existence and/or interaction of different knowledge systems. First, it is necessary to discuss how the term *knowledge* is understood in the context of this thesis, particularly Indigenous knowledge as this is rarely recognised within the NT education system as valid knowledge with an academic contribution to make in formal educational contexts, a recognition that Yolŋu and their co-collaborators have struggled for since the 1980s. Battiste (2008) explained that Indigenous knowledge is ‘a distinct knowledge system with its own concepts of epistemology and scientific and logical validity’ (p. 85). Western knowledge also has its own epistemological and scientific validity; however, unlike Indigenous knowledge, it is mostly understood as ‘truth’ rather than just one possible cultural construct of the world. Therefore, the process of schooling is rarely understood as culturally constructed. However, as schooling reflects and reinforces Western epistemologies, it is indeed cultural. In the context of this research, Yolŋu knowledge systems, not Indigenous knowledge systems more generally, are central to this thesis. Thus, I discuss how both Yolŋu knowledge and Western knowledge function in the process of schooling.

The majority of literature about different knowledge systems is not specifically applied to educational contexts, so I draw on broader theories to support the analysis of how Western and Yolŋu knowledges are (or are not) included in schools. The main two theories I draw on to explain the presence of two distinct knowledge systems, in the remote NT schools I worked with, are the ‘cultural interface’ (Nakata, 2007, p. 198) and ‘relative autonomy’ (F. Morphy & H. Morphy, 2013). Nakata has written extensively on what he refers to as the cultural interface, the contested space between two knowledge systems. Nakata argued that the cultural interface extends beyond the intersection of two cultures, and he advocated for a more expansive understanding of this space, warning against simply dropping in Indigenous knowledge into curriculum because ultimately Western and Indigenous knowledges function in different ways. The complexities inherent in this interactive process, he added, are layered trajectories and include knowledge systems and different systems of economic, social, and political organisation.

The other concept I draw on to understand the education context at Yirrkala and the Homelands Schools, specifically in relation to Gaṇma education, is relative autonomy (F. Morphy and H. Morphy 2013). The Morphys applied the concept of relative autonomy to their work in Northeast Arnhem Land. They defined it as a property of ‘social phenomena that can be identified as analytically distinguishable components of a sociocultural system’ (p. 178). They continued,

We see the principle of relative autonomy as operating both within Yolngu society and in the articulation of Yolngu society with the wider world. Both frames are necessary. They allow for the analysis of the dynamics of interaction and change in the context of the articulation between Yolngu society and the encroaching settler society without resort to the reification of cultures as bounded systems. (p. 176)

I selected both relative autonomy and the cultural interface to demonstrate how Gaṇma education sits within a larger body of literature. All three theoretical frameworks—that is, relative autonomy, the cultural interface, and Gaṇma education—are concerned with the existence of different knowledge systems and the complexities involved when they meet.

Remote NT schools could be considered intercultural spaces. Interculturality, according to García-González (2016), is the interaction and relationship between cultures ‘in their shared human and social spaces in which exchanges of patterns built into each culture take place’ (p. 3). García-González continued that ‘interculturality shows that cultures link to one another by processes located in basic experiences, implying constant exchanges between one’s own culture and that of others. These dialogic processes generate bridges that make it possible to conceive new situations’ (p. 7). However, F. Morphy and H. Morphy (2013) critiqued the concept of the intercultural, suggesting that because the settler state continued to require Aboriginal people to participate with the mainstream, the concept of the intercultural ‘tends to position Aboriginal people in a liminal, non agentive space’ (p. 177) in which the inevitable long-term result is that they become incorporated within the mainstream. At times, the dialogic process described by García-González occurs in schooling, but a deep engagement with other knowledge systems and ways of being, doing, and knowing is often sporadic and rarely occurs at a systemic level. Furthermore, working in this way requires a high level of

engagement and skill, a concept I develop in detail in Chapter 6 through what I call the ‘the model of collaborative practice’. The Morphys’ critique of the intercultural aligns with the concern the Yolŋu elder had about both ways education potentially operating outside Yolŋu structures and control. Gaṇma education was developed as a way to transfer and rebalance power so that Yolŋu knowledge and conceptual frameworks were controlled by Yolŋu, essentially resisting a process of assimilation. If schools are to be considered intercultural, according to the aforementioned definitions and critique, a considerable amount of change is required to balance the way knowledge systems are prioritised and valued in educational contexts.

Power and Settler Colonialism

Yolŋu theories and voices are amplified in this thesis, therefore, to start the discussion about power I will explain the *ṇathu* metaphor, a locally developed theory of power. The process of making sacred bread from *ṇathu* (cycad nuts) has ceremonial significance to Yolŋu because the bread can be stored, enabling large numbers of people to gather for regional ceremonies. Cycad nuts contain cyanide, and to create bread that is safe for consumption, it must undergo a lengthy process to leach the poison. In 1988, a group of educators enrolled in Stage 2 Remote Area Teacher Education²¹, as part of their action research, used the *ṇathu* production process as a metaphor to respond to a dominant Western curriculum that disrespected Yolŋu ways of being, doing, and knowing (White, 2015; M. Yunupingu, 1994). M. Yunupingu (1994) explained that if processes are hurried, the poison remains in the bread. Applying this to the concept of power, he continued, ‘There are ways of proceeding that structurally, ensure that the interest of all are recognised and respected’ (p. 118). The poison references how power manifests in structures and systems and how, through mutual respect and understanding, the right processes can be employed so that the poison can be leached (Marika et al., 2009). In addition to local theories of power, I draw on the work of Apple (2009), Bourdieu (1991), Foucault (2017), Freire (1996), Maddison and Denniss (2009), and Medina (2013) to analyse the implications of power in education systems. Michel Foucault, well known for his theories on

²¹ RATE was a community-based teacher education program for local staff—discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

power, argued that power and knowledge are inseparable, hence furthering a case for power in the context of knowledge acquisition, in this case education, to be analysed.

A discussion about power dynamics for Indigenous peoples cannot be separated from the ongoing impact and influence of settler colonial ideologies and structures. The historical conditions of the impacts of settler colonialism have been well documented by authors such as Wolfe (1999), Veracini (2010) and Cavanagh (2013). Wolfe (1999) in his seminal book, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*, explained that settler colonialism is a structure not an event. He defined settler colonialism as ‘an inclusive, land-centred project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies, from the metropolitan centre to the frontier encampment, with a view to eliminating Indigenous societies (p. 393). Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) describe settler colonialism as the ‘specific formation of colonialism in which the colonizer comes to stay, making himself the sovereign, and the arbiter of citizenship, civility, and knowing’ (p.73). Furthermore, Maddison (2019) argues that settler colonial practices, although visible to indigenous people since colonisation, the structures are mostly ‘normalised to the point of invisibility – or perhaps one should say wilful blindness – on the part of the dominant society’ (p. 215).

In their collective discussions, Snelgrove et al. (2014) add to the current debates in the growth of settler colonial studies and question if the framing of this field overshadows ‘the work that is being done by Indigenous scholars, who have been talking about the centrality of land, the specific nature of Indigenous experiences, and the role of settlers in dispossession for a long time now’ (p.11). One critique of settler colonial studies is whether at some level it is ‘self sustaining’ (p.10) on the part of settlers and is more about the establishment of the legitimacy of a field of inquiry (Snelgrove et al., 2014). In a similar way Macoun & Strakosch (2013) explain that settler colonial theory ‘places ethical demands on us as settlers, including the demand that we actively refuse its potential to re-empower our own academic voices and to marginalize Indigenous resistance’ (p.426). Rather than focus on settler colonial studies, Snelgrove et al. (2014) discuss ‘Indigenous resurgence’ (p.2), a process of reframing

conversations about decolonisation as a way to 're-centre and reinvigorate Indigenous nationhood' (Snelgrove et al., 2014, p.18).

I use settler colonialism in this thesis as way of explaining why dominant ideology is sustained and to help make these structures visible within the context of education. Understanding the influence of settler colonialism on the delivery of education in the NT is important as it is reflected in structures, including pedagogy and curriculum. However, it is the agency and activism of community I worked with that is the focus of this PhD research. In Chapter 4 I explain in detail the activism in the educational space and how this resistance became what Snelgrove et al., (2014) might refer to as a 'site of struggle' (p.7); this activism in education influenced and transformed teaching and learning. However, despite Yolŋu educators and community members articulating their vision for education, the Northern Territory Department of Education controls educational policy and programs, detailed in Chapter 5. At times, these policy agendas have conflicted with community aspirations, the dismantling of bilingual education, also discussed in Chapter 5, is one example. In adopting the definition of settler colonialism by Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández (2013), previously discussed, it is evident that the NT Department of Education is still the 'arbiter of knowing'.

Relationality

Relationality is a theoretical lens I use to develop a conceptual framework for this research. 'Relating' is the 'continuous work of connecting and disconnecting in a fluctuating network of existential events' (Cooper, 2005, p. 1689). It was my long-term relationships with the community that, first, inspired me to undertake a PhD and, second, allowed me to conduct the research in the way that I have. Through this research process it became clear that the way we relate in the context of work and practice matters, hence the title of this thesis. I draw on the anthropological literature about *gurrutu*, the Yolŋu kinship system (Aikman, 2019; Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Christie & Grotorex, 2004; Marika, 1999b; F. Morphy, 2008), as well as the lived experiences of participants to understand how relationality is operationalised in the context of practice. Despite research demonstrating that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples relationality is central to all activity, the analysis of education systems has focused on policy and activity (Guenther et al., 2013, p. 113), highlighting the need for further

analysis about the impact of relationality on work practice. Relationality is one of the foundational concepts in this thesis. Snelgove et al. (2014) explained while the word 'solidarity' (p.2) does not capture the way that they engage with the interconnectedness of the social struggles, the collective conversations between them highlighted that 'solidarity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples must be grounded in actual practices and place-based relationships and be approached as incommensurable but not incompatible' (p. 2). In Chapter 6, I develop a theoretical framework for the operationalisation of the relational process of collaboration in the context of teaching practice.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy is another theoretical lens in this research. Pedagogy is a derivative of the Greek word, *paidagogos*, used to describe the theory and practice of teaching. Pedagogy, in the context of this research, is understood to be a socially constructed practice that is the subject of a significant body of literature connected to critical theory, sociology, and education. Ohito (2020) described pedagogy as an interplay among teachers, students, curricular texts, and knowledges, 'a figurative place wherein human bodies, like that of the teacher and the student, are enmeshed with other (non-human) organisms, such as bodies of knowledge' (p. 19). Ohito's definition aligns with how I construct concepts of pedagogy in the context of this research: an interconnected relational process, which, I add, is interconnected to Place in a Yolŋu context.

Throughout this thesis, I draw on the extensive body of literature relating to pedagogy to support the analysis of current educational approaches in the communities I worked with during my fieldwork. A critical and culturally responsive approach to education that includes local knowledge in the schools has been suggested as a way to engage students in meaningful learning experiences while addressing the colonising discourse inherent in education (R. Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Fogarty & Schwab, 2012; Gonzalez, 2005). To consolidate a theoretical framework, I draw on critical pedagogy (Apple, 2000; Freire, 1996; Giroux, 2010; Kincheloe, 2012), various interpretations of culturally responsive pedagogy (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Gay, 2010; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Morrison et al., 2019; Paris, 2012; Sleeter, 2011), Place-based learning/pedagogy or Learning

on Country (Fogarty & Schwab, 2012; Gruenewald, 2003), critical Indigenous pedagogy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Grande, 2008), and both ways (Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990; M. Yunupingu, 1989). A critical pedagogy enquires into the use of 'power and the social construction of reality' (Simpson, 2010, p. 371) and extends beyond the technical skills of teaching. Critical pedagogy has a wider political application that addresses issues of equity and justice (Grande, 2015; Nakata, 2007; Sleeter, 2011), and these theories and literatures are related to the concept of power. In Chapter 2, I discuss pedagogy in detail, linking local theories to broader literatures pertaining to pedagogy.

1.7 Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2 is a theoretical discussion of pedagogy. I challenge assumptions that education only occurs in Western institutions and explain how the process of schooling often disconnects learners from their environments and knowledge systems. I examine the concept of both ways education, an approach that includes Yolŋu knowledge in the process of schooling. To theorise the concept of pedagogy, I draw on a variety of different pedagogies such as culturally responsive pedagogy, critical pedagogy, critical Indigenous pedagogy, and pedagogy connected to Country to demonstrate that local systems of knowledge are valid and rigorous modes of learning.

In Chapter 3, I describe the ethnographic methodology at the core of my research. I explain how my existing relationships with the community influenced my methodology and methods. I detail the multimethod approach that included participant observation, interviews, workshops, and ongoing conversations. I examine the ethical challenges, describe the attempts to co-theorise and share the celebrations.

Chapter 4 is a detailed account of the educational activism and agency at Yirrkala that started in the 1970s and 1980s. I discuss the historical context of community-based teacher education at Yirrkala and illustrate how an action research model embedded in the early teacher education courses facilitated the critique of dominant Western education at Yirrkala, resulting in the development of a Yolŋu curriculum and pedagogy that is still operational today. I illustrate how these approaches supported attempts at self-determination and how the absence of community-based teacher education has resulted in a lack of opportunities for

local staff to develop teaching practice, gain teaching qualifications, and continue to build on the intellectual tradition established in the 1980s. I also discuss the contemporary context and how it is clear that community members still aspire towards a model of both ways learning.

Chapter 5 is a discussion about the contested political landscape of education. I illustrate how policy agendas are constructed within a historical context and therefore can be considered in anthropological terms; that is, they are not neutral but rather are cultural products. Furthermore, I discuss how a rise in neoliberal ideology has increased standardised and competitive measurement of learning in schools and focused on training for employment rather than development of student strengths. I illustrate how a focus on workforce development and dominant ideologies often excludes Yolŋu ways of being, doing, and knowing despite some communities advocating for a both ways approach to education. The last section of the chapter is a discussion of specific examples of political agendas that have impacted remote NT schools. I conclude the chapter by explaining a potential shift in educational policy towards the recognition of ‘language and culture’ and highlight how the decades of failure to support community-based teacher education has resulted in a skills shortage.

Chapter 6 is an in-depth discussion about collaborative practice. I discuss the different ways that relationality is operationalised in the school context and how it underpins collaborative practice. I present a model of collaborative practice, identifying the key elements of this explicit process that include critical reflexivity, relationships, and being a learner.

Chapter 7 is a detailed account of the planning process of a Galtha Rom at the Homeland of Biranybirany—it is the start of the central case study of this thesis. I describe the connection between gurruṯu, the Yolŋu kinship system, and Galtha Rom and how relationships influence planning.

In Chapter 8, I explain the application of the Galtha Rom planning process discussed in Chapter 7. I demonstrate how the application of the Galtha Rom at Biranybirany has clear links to the theoretical approach to the pedagogies detailed in Chapter 2 of the thesis. This chapter

focuses on implementation and I explains a number of the learning workshops facilitated at the Galtha and how these are linked to both local and national outcomes and priorities.

In the final chapter, I conclude the thesis by summarising this doctoral research into the Five Pillars of Community Centred Education—five interdependent concepts that need urgent attention in remote NT contexts. These pillars include Yolŋu governance and local control, decentralising directives and policy, both ways curriculum and pedagogy, community-based teacher education, and collaborative practice.

Chapter 2 A Theoretical Approach to Education

2.1 Introduction

The terms *school* and *education* are often used interchangeably; however, they have significantly different meanings. Every culture has some form of education, but Western education is often recognised as the only valid system of learning, a perception reinforced by school systems. Validating only Western knowledges in schools, and at the same time excluding local Indigenous knowledges, contributes to the structural inequalities experienced by Yolŋu students in schools. However, including Indigenous knowledges is not straightforward and requires critique of the systems that continue to perpetuate dominant power structures. Both ways education—that is, an educational approach that integrates Western and local Indigenous knowledges into schooling—has been proposed as a way to address structural inequalities. In this chapter, I examine the concept of both ways education and locally developed models of education, with a particular focus on how it has been conceptualised at Yirrkala. I discuss the limits of both ways education and how the conceptual understandings are varied between the participants in this research.

In the second half of the chapter, I draw on literatures related to culturally responsive pedagogy (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Morrison et al., 2019), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1996; Giroux, 2010; Kincheloe, 2012), critical Indigenous pedagogy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Grande, 2015), and pedagogy connected to land and Country (Betasamosake Simpson, 2014; Calderon, 2014; Gruenewald, 2003; Schwab & Fogarty, 2015; M. Yunupingu, 1989) to further develop a theoretical framework of local pedagogies. By drawing on broader theories, the academic application of Yolŋu learning can be understood in the context of Western education, demonstrating that these pedagogies are valid and rigorous.

Although a large proportion of the literature about both ways education, particularly papers written or co-authored with Yolŋu, emerged during the 1980s and 1990s, the concepts developed during that time are still relevant today. The aspiration Yolŋu have to either

establish, continue, or improve both ways education was a recurring theme in this research and one of the main reasons it was necessary for me to analyse both ways education in depth.

2.2 Education and Schooling

Education is Not a New Concept

For tens of thousands of years, Indigenous communities have had highly effective teaching and learning practices in place, which sustained human and non-human communities. However, this has been severely impacted by the imposition of Western schooling little more than 200 years ago. (M Bishop et al., 2019, p. 4)

Education is not a new concept to Yolŋu, as the quote above illustrates. Teaching and learning have been part of Indigenous peoples' lives for thousands of years. However, the term *education* is often associated with the learning that occurs in institutions rather than multiple ways of being, doing, and knowing. Thus, it is important to differentiate between the terms *school* and *education* to demonstrate that education is not confined to the Western process of schooling. Levinson and Holland (1996) highlighted the difference between school and education. Education, according to them, is the knowledge and skills of various societies, and they argued that all individual societies have some form of training and criteria related to what are considered degrees of wisdom and what makes a person knowledgeable, whereas they defined school as 'a state organised or regulated institution of intentional instruction' (p. 2). In a similar way Brayboy and Lomawaima (2018) make the distinction between 'Indigenous education' and 'colonial schooling'. Indigenous education according to Brayboy and Lomawaima (2018) are the 'systems designed and honed over millennia by Native societies to enculturate their citizens as well as recent developments of Indigenous curriculum, pedagogies, and policies within schools' (p. 18). However, over the last two centuries, Indigenous education has been marginalised and even criminalised, while colonial schooling has been 'privileged as formal education, described as organized, systematic and designed; while Indigenous education has been characterised as informal, unconscious, undirected and even accidental (Brayboy and Lomawaima, 2018, p.18)

Regardless of whether local forms of education are 'legitimized by formal institutions' (p. 2), Levinson and Holland (1996) considered them to be significant and contended that they need to be taken seriously. In the context of this research, the definition of education is aligned with Levinson and Holland's broader understanding of education, which includes local knowledges.

Paradox of Schooling

Schools and institutions often reproduce the social structures of society, which can disadvantage students from minority backgrounds (Apple, 2013; R. Bishop, 2003; Freire, 1996). Significant evidence demonstrates that educational practices and policies continue to privilege dominant Western ideologies and, in doing so, perpetuate an imbalance in power that disadvantages minority students (R. Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Fogarty, Lovell, et al., 2015; Overmars, 2010; Savage et al., 2011). Stubbs (1995) went as far to say that 'schools have always been the most powerful mechanism in assimilating minority children into mainstream cultures' (p. 231). As explained by Brayboy and Lomawaima (2018), 'schools are the battlegrounds of American Indian education in which epistemologies, ontologies, axiologies, pedagogies and curriculum clash' (p. 82). However, in many ways, Western education is a paradox. It is a paradox because it has been argued as a way of addressing social inequality and disadvantage (Rudolph, 2019) while also being used over the years as a tool of oppression (Battiste, 2013; Pihama & Lee-Morgan, 2018; Maddison & Stastny, 2016; Grande, 2015; Rudolph, 2019). Battiste (2013) highlighted the tensions that Aboriginal peoples in Canada and Indigenous peoples in the world in general have experienced as a result of the Eurocentric education system that has taught them to 'distrust their Indigenous knowledge systems, their elders' wisdom and their own inner learning spirit' (p. 24). In a similar vein, Maddison and Stastny (2016) argued that colonial education has been used as a deliberate tool to subjugate and marginalise Indigenous peoples by either excluding them from education or 'by structuring inequalities into the education system' (p. 232).

A number of scholars have argued that schooling removes students from their local environment and experiences (Calderon, 2014; Higgins & Kim, 2019; McKnight, 2016; G. Smith, 2002). At the beginning of the 20th century, John Dewey's progressive education theories challenged the abstract nature of schooling that separated the student from the

world of their lived experiences. Dewey warned about the implications of ‘cutting schooling off from the pulse of cultural life and experience’ (as cited in Gruenewald, 2003, p. 625). Dewey (1959) wrote,

The great waste in the school comes from his [the child’s] inability to utilize the experiences he gets outside the school in any complete and free way within the school itself; while, on the other hand, he is unable to apply in daily life what he is learning at school. That is the isolation of the school, its isolation from life (p.76).

In a similar vein, G. Smith (2002) argued that most human learning once occurred in specific locales; however, the introduction of schools has moved students away from their own experiences and ways of knowing; they learn instead through texts. Imparting information became the focus rather than ‘full bodied encounters with the world’ (G. Smith, 2002, p. 586). Reiterating the importance of embodied learning experiences in an Australian context, McKnight (2016) proposed that the four walls of the classroom closes students off from the nonhuman teachers and argued that learning has to occur ‘with and on Country so the knowledge can be observed, felt and understood on a spiritual level of connectedness’ (p. 12). Greenwood (2015) argued that ‘whatever diversity and community might exist within classrooms, way more exists and thrives outside of them, in places, and kids know it’ (p. 6). The importance of taking students onto Country for experiential and embodied learning has a long history at Yirrkala and in the Laynhapuy Homelands. In response to a schooling system that reproduced Western structures, community members and educators at Yirrkala developed a model of learning with a theoretical framework centred on Yolŋu ways of being, doing, and knowing that connected students to Country. This is often referred to as both ways education.

2.3 Both Ways Education

Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) defined both ways as a philosophy of education that ‘brings together Indigenous Australian traditions of knowledge and Western academic disciplinary positions and cultural contexts, and embraces values of respect, tolerance and diversity’ (as cited in Ober & Bat, 2007, p. 69). Ober and Bat (2007) explained that both ways is complex due to the human and cross-cultural interactions and propose that

it is a 'continuous question rather than a definitive answer' (p. 69). Devlin (2004, as cited in Disbray 2014) described the key concept underpinning both ways, or two ways as it is often referred to, as,

...an underlying model of bilingual/bicultural education in which power is shared, the curriculum is balanced, the existence of competing knowledge systems is acknowledged and the program is related to language use and cultural observances in the community (p. 31)

The philosophy of both ways education was first documented in 1974 at Dagaragu by Pincher Nyurrmiyarri, the Gurindji activist and intellectual. Nyurrmiyarri argued that both ways was about community having control and power to make educational decisions and included a reciprocal exchange between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and between older and younger generations of Gurindji (McConvell, 1991, p. 13). Since the initial documentation of both ways education, a number of remote NT communities have engaged with this concept (Bat et al., 2014; Kemmis et al., 2013; Kral & Falk, 2004; Ober & Bat, 2007; White, 2005; M. Yunupingu, 1999), recognising the potential that a both ways approach can have in providing local people with more control and decision-making power. The aspiration for both ways models is still echoed in communities in the NT today. Reinforcing this, a research project conducted in 2011 across five Arnhem Land communities reiterated that community members and families wanted children to be competent in both Western and local Indigenous teachings. This research concluded that Western education must occur within an environment that respects Yolŋu knowledge and practices (Wearne & Yunupingu, 2011). This research is additional confirmation that many community members and educators want both ways approaches.

In a case study by Kral and Falk (2004) conducted with Alyawarr and Anmatyerr people in Central Australia, the community articulated a desire for a both ways model—in both the school and health services. They voiced concerns about mainstream agendas that often conflicted with local community 'goals':

The basis of mainstream education, training and employment rests on an assumption that all participants subscribe to the same set of socio-cultural goals, including investing in the development of *individual* competence. In comparison, the socio-cultural framework of the community through the kinship system and relationships within the Indigenous law is *communal*. (Kral & Falk, 2004, p. 59 emphasis in original)

This quote highlights what is often overlooked; that is, it cannot be assumed that all involved in the Western education process share the same sociocultural goals. However, the Western system of education is premised on the idea that all *should* share the same goals. Moreover, participants in Kral and Falk's (2004) research concluded that an existing system of knowledge through 'Indigenous law' (p. 59) already existed for their young people but questioned whether a 'culturally appropriate European' education was available.

Chris Matthews from the Quandamooka people of Minjerribah (Stradbroke Island, Queensland) is an advocate for both ways learning—particularly the connection between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and mathematics. He argued,

To achieve meaningful educational outcomes for Indigenous students, we must create an education system that values Indigenous cultures and peoples. This means that we need to have a better understanding of Indigenous cultures and how they have expressed mathematical ideas. (Matthews, 2019, para. 11)

Both ways education, and the connection between mathematics and Yolŋu knowledge systems, has a long history at Yirrkala.

Gaṇma: Beyond a Simple Binary

Both ways education is a broad concept. At Yirrkala, during the initial development of a both ways model, the term *Gaṇma education* was used. Gaṇma is an educational theory developed by Yolŋu educators to theorise an approach to education that recognises both Yolŋu and Balanda knowledge systems (B. Yunupingu, 1991). The concept of Gaṇma is Yolŋu conceptual framework that reframes how Yolŋu educators conceptualise the school and the curriculum (Kemmis et al., 2013, p. 139).

Gan̄mawuy²² is an actual place on part of Caledon Bay where the salt water (*dhamurrūn*) and fresh water (*raypiny*) meet to create brackish water (Kemmis et al., 2013; B. Yunupingu, 1991). Although Gan̄ma has many layers of meaning related to Yol̄u rom (law), the ideas around knowledges in the education system were communicated through this metaphor as it applied in the schooling context. The metaphor has been used to explain the interaction of Western and Yol̄u knowledges that is the foundation of both ways education (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Marika-Mununggiritj, 1990; M. Yunupingu et al., 1986). Although Gan̄ma is not a simple dichotomy, Yol̄u have been clear in recognising competing knowledges in the school system and have critiqued dominant models of education.

As Yol̄u educator, Wāli Wunungmurra, explained,

We cannot hold back change which will happen whether we like it or not. But as a minority society we can adapt to it by finding common ground in the majority society. It is through an exchange of meanings that we can produce a 'two way' school curriculum which will give our children the flexibility to live in both Yolngu (Aboriginal) and Balanda (European) worlds. To live in both worlds we need to achieve a high standard in education but keep our own identity. (Wunungmurra, 1989, p. 12)

During the 1980s, Wunungmurra, along with many other Yol̄u, theorised the concept of both ways or 'two ways' as referred to in the quote above (Marika, 1999b; Marika et al., 1992; M. Yunupingu et al., 1986) and in doing so created a model that included Yol̄u knowledges and control in schooling. In Chapter 1, I explained 'the cultural interface' (Nakata, 2007, p. 9) and 'relative autonomy' (F. Morphy & Morphy, 2013) to help theorise the existence of different knowledge systems in education at Yirrkala. At one level, the cultural interface is useful in elaborating the concept of Gan̄ma. Nakata (2007) described the cultural interface as a place that is not 'clearly black or white, Indigenous or Western' (p. 9) and extends beyond the intersection of two cultures (Nakata, 2007). Nakata understood the cultural interface to be contested and inherently complex, a space where histories, economics, politics, and multiple and interconnected discourses influence our worldviews – the way we understand our

²² '-wuy' is a suffix (a morpheme added to the end of a word) that can mean 'from' that place.

fluctuating realities, and how knowledge is operationalised in our daily lives. In some ways, Nakata's cultural interface shares similarities with how Gaṇma education is theorised. As a non-local participant in the research put it,

Quite often when you are working with people like [names of Yolṇu educators] you're in that swirl and you feel that what you are creating is not Balanda, it's not Yolṇu, it's like something different. That's gaṇma. Like, it was there, it's happening, it was frothing up. That's why I have always felt the metaphor so powerful. (Non-local educator, personal communication, 27 November 2018)

Both the Gaṇma theory and the cultural interface as described by Nakata (2007) differs significantly from the way Harris (1990) conceptualised two-way education. Harris proposed a 'culturally compartmentalised two-way school' (p. 16), an approach to education that developed student capability and roles in each separate cultural context. Although the brackish water is created by mixing fresh and salt water, Kemmis et al. (2013), who worked alongside Yolṇu through the development of the theory of Gaṇma, explained the following:

Yolṇu do not regard this commingling as making a solution of Yirritja and Dhuwa, something that is weakened from the strong Yirritja and the strong Dhuwa water from the two rivers. On the contrary they regard the commingling of the waters as like an emulsion, where both Yirritja and Dhuwa are intensely present. Gaṇma is a place where Yirritja-ness and Dhuwa-ness are at their most intense since each is most itself when it is in the presence of the other. (p. 139)

In documentation explaining the development of the Gaṇma theory, one of the leading Yolṇu elders warned against using the term both ways education; rather, he encouraged the use of Gaṇma education as it referred to education 'within Yolṇu knowledge, conceptual frameworks and control'. In contrast, the term both ways denotes something 'alongside and outside Yolṇu knowledge and control' (Kemmis et al., 2013, p. 140). The concept of relative autonomy (F. Morphy & H. Morphy, 2013) aligns with the elder's desire for autonomy and control in the education space. The Morphys argued that the 'process of value creation, on the Aboriginal side, are motivated by the desire and determination to maintain an

autonomous sociocultural space' (p. 185). Ganma education is an example of a 'relatively autonomous position' (F. Morphy & Morphy, 2013, p. 180) that Yolngu asserted when developing and implementing a model of Yolngu learning in the Western structure of schooling. Moreover, Ganma education described the 'nature of relationships between Yolngu and Balanda knowledge and cultures, people and communities' (p. 140), whereas both ways was an empty and abstract way to understand the relationships between Yolngu and Balanda ways of being and knowing in the world (Kemmis et al., 2013). Importantly, Henry and McTaggart (1991) concluded there are dangers in thinking that both ways is 'the answer', explaining that 'what Aboriginal teachers wanted was a form of schooling which never relented in its expression of Aboriginal culture' (p. 10). This further demonstrates the autonomous sociocultural position of Ganma education when it was originally conceptualised. While the word Ganma is no longer used in the school context, for reasons I discuss in Chapter 4, these original concepts are still relevant in education in this context.

Critique of Both Ways

Both ways, or two ways as it is sometimes referred to, is not without critique. In the 1990s, Folds (2001) criticised the concept of two way education as experienced by the Pintupi in the Western Desert. Folds argued schools that attempted two ways were focused mainly on Western knowledge and curriculum and only added bits of traditional knowledge to these programs, which resulted in an endless cycle of 'bush tucker' programs. There are also examples of Aboriginal people who advocated for a Western-only schooling model so that 'Indigenous culture' was controlled by families rather than entering the domain of 'white bureaucrats' and 'white schools' (McConaghy, 2000, p. 12). Despite the critique, both ways education as it was originally conceptualised and applied at Yirrkala has a theoretical foundation and is led by community members. However, I acknowledge that programs that claim to be both ways, as Fold suggested, may be tokenistic rather than a process of deep pedagogical engagement with local systems of knowledge.

McConaghy (2000) critiqued the concept of both ways education through a lens of culturalism, explaining,

Culturalism, in brief, refers to the use of particular anthropological notions of 'culture' by which 'Indigenous culture' enters the field as 'already read' (following Mishra 1996). Further, culturalism incorporates the ideologies and discursive regimes of universalism, cultural racism and cultural incompatibility in order to construct and perpetuate a 'two race' binary. It requires that anthropological notions of 'culture' and the 'two race' binary are privileged as the primary analytical tools for deliberations of pedagogy in all instances. (p. xi)

McConaghy (2000) proposed that there is rarely any debate about the integration of Indigenous knowledges into school systems, including debate about the pedagogical merits of Yolŋu theories in schooling. In a both ways model of education, she argued that the selection of Indigenous knowledges becomes part of an institutional decision-making process operating within the 'realm of colonial processes of legitimation' (p. 11). Arguably, this only becomes an issue if the critical role of Indigenous peoples as decision makers about the use of their Indigenous knowledges is not in place, or if Indigenous knowledges are used tokenistically as described by Folds (2001). McConaghy also fails to expand on detail or theory related to the Yolŋu pedagogies she mentions. Furthermore, her discussion positions Yolŋu as lacking in agency, a concept that is refuted in detail in Chapter 4. The literature I drew on in this research, as well as data emerging from this ethnographic study, illustrates that there has been academic engagement in the development of these theories and approaches (Kemmis et al., 2013; Marika et al., 1992; Marika-Mununggiritj, 1990; Wunungmurra, 1989; M. Yunupingu et al., 1986), discussed in Chapter 4. In addition, rather than perpetuate a two-race binary, notions of dualism are disputed:

When we talk of 'both ways' we do not have an idea of dualism. We view 'both ways' in terms of the Yolŋu word 'Garma'. This is an open word used by both Yirritja and Dhuwa clans describing the format where a Yolŋu learning environment begins. (Marika-Mununggiritj, 1990, p. 43)

I was grappling with these critiques of both ways education and discussed this with an experienced educator in remote NT and a participant in this research who responded,

It might sound simplistic but it's not academics—black or white—who make the call on both ways. It's the community, each in their own way, who decide on that. Advocating for their right to be able to do that is our job, not the content or anything else. You and I have the privilege of being a part of one such community and that's really all we can describe and advocate for. (Former educator, personal communication, 26 March 2020)

The participant reminded me that, although 'outside' critique and theory can add validity, ultimately it is up to the communities to decide the direction of education. While many Indigenous peoples in remote locations articulate a both ways approach as the desired framework, Western structures and knowledge are deeply embedded in these institutions. As Hall (2017) argued, 'Education systems have developed ways of attributing higher status to White/Western knowledge than it does to Indigenous knowledge systems' (p. 102). From the outset, Western and Indigenous knowledges are not validated by systems in the same way. These imbalances of knowledge in schools highlight the complex nature of implementing both ways models.

Misunderstandings

Both ways is often misunderstood. Nicholls (2005) identified the ambiguity of both ways and discussed how, at a policy level, despite two ways²³ replacing bilingual education, no official working definition was put forward by the Department of Education in the NT. Nicholls argued that two ways is a 'warm and fuzzy, feel-good, semantically open concept that can mean almost anything to anyone—or nothing at all' (p. 172). In a similar vein, an experienced non-local educator and a participant in my research highlighted the racism and lack of support for both ways learning in the NT Department of Education: 'These days, many outside people throw around the concept of "both ways" education but they don't have a clue what it means. It has to be coming from a special place, a place that is central to Yolŋu knowledge and practices' (Personal communication, 3 June 2018).

Findings from this research confirm that how both ways education is understood, conceptualised, and applied is variable. At Yirrkala, there is a long history of community

²³ The terms *two ways* and *both ways* are often used interchangeably in the literature.

engagement, and an overwhelming majority of Yolŋu participants in this research continually articulated their desire for education to include Yolŋu languages and knowledge, demonstrating the contemporary relevance of a both ways approach to schooling. However, a number of participants were unsure about the implementation of both ways. For example, two senior Yolŋu educators in the Homelands questioned if a school could be both ways if local languages were not included formally in the program—that is, if students were not formally learning to read and write in their first language. Pedagogical approaches for students in schools are one aspect of both ways; however, as Gurindji activist Nyurrmiyarri explained, community control is an important foundation of both ways, further reiterating why the elder involved in the development of Gaṇma education stressed education needed to be within Yolŋu conceptual frameworks and control. In summary, both ways education includes curriculum and pedagogy *and* structural elements of organisations.

Theories and Pedagogies

The theory, particularly current theory, related to both ways education is limited, and the conceptual understandings both on the ground and in the literature are also varied. However, as described by Verran and Christie (2011), the development of a both ways curriculum by the elders from various clan groups introduced Yolŋu philosophical/ceremonial vocabulary and in doing so instituted a ‘radically performative account of knowledge for school-based pedagogy’ (p. 7). The ongoing engagement with both ways at Yirrkala demonstrates the value that educators at Yirrkala understand despite their varying understandings of what it is, particularly in the Homelands. To further expand existing theories documented in the 1980s and 1990s, I examined the broader literature related to culturally responsive pedagogy (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Gay, 2010; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Morrison et al., 2019; Paris, 2012), critical pedagogy (Apple, 2000; Freire, 1996; Giroux, 2010; Kincheloe, 2012), and critical Indigenous pedagogy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Grande, 2008) to build a theoretical framework that validates, in a Western educational context, what many educators and elders at Yirrkala already know: that including local ways of being, doing, and knowing in schooling strengthens learning in remote NT contexts. I also draw on land- and place-based pedagogies (Alfred, 2015; Betasamosake Simpson, 2014; Fogarty & Schwab, 2012; Gruenewald, 2003; Wildcat et al., 2014) and, in Chapter 7, embodied pedagogies (Freiler, 2008; Shahjahan, 2015;

Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015) to further contextualise the theory underpinning local Indigenous pedagogies.

Both ways, although a locally developed theory, is supported by theory arrived at independently in the academy. By demonstrating the theoretical foundations of local pedagogies, it is hoped that at a departmental level, these approaches to learning can be recognised for the academic contribution they make and be resourced accordingly. Furthermore, the development of theoretical frameworks can make local pedagogies visible and can be useful in prompting pedagogic reform in other places. As explained by Betasamosake Simpson (2014), theory is ‘generated from the ground up and its power stems from its living resonance with individuals and collectives’ (p. 7). By strengthening local theories and their application, power can be transferred to local communities, supporting education to align with community aspirations and be more meaningful to learners.

2.4 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Defining Culturally Responsive

In the early stages of this doctoral research, I adopted the term *culturally responsive pedagogy* rather than both ways education to describe a way of teaching and learning that integrates local knowledge into the learning domain of the school. However, I returned to the term both ways because many participants in the research used this language. Despite the shift in language, in a similar way to the critique of both ways education, the term *culturally responsive* had the potential to be vague, and it did not extend to include the context of Place or Country, one of the foundations of both ways education at Yirrkala. Despite the conceptual diversity in its meaning as well as the varied language used to describe culturally responsive pedagogy, the literature is valuable in further consolidating a framework that demonstrates the broader theoretical underpinnings of both ways education.

There is a plethora of terms and conceptual understandings used in the literature to describe a culturally responsive approach to learning. Some of the terminology includes culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010), culturally responsive schooling (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012, p. 93), and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-

Billings, 1995). Thus, a variety of definitions describe the broad concept of culturally responsive pedagogy. Gay (2010) defined a 'culturally responsive curricula' as the application and integration of 'cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles' (p. 31). In a similar way, a recent review into the Australian context explained culturally responsive pedagogy as 'pedagogies that actively value, and mobilise as resources, the cultural repertoires and intelligences that students bring to the learning relationship' (Morrison et al., 2019, p. v). According to these definitions, both ways education, a process of education that includes the student's prior knowledge, would be considered culturally responsive.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Critiqued

Culturally responsive pedagogy is a debated concept. Paris (2012) questioned the use of terms such as *relevant* and *responsive*, concluding that they do not go far enough in orienting towards literacies, languages, and cultural practices of 'communities marginalized by systemic inequalities' (p. 93) to ensure the valuing of multiple knowledges. Instead, he proposed the term 'culturally sustaining pedagogy' to describe a pedagogy that 'seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling' (p. 93). Ladson-Billings (2014), one of the leading theorists of culturally responsive pedagogy, acknowledged that her ideas around culturally responsive pedagogy were continually evolving. Ladson-Billings agreed with Paris's critique and voiced concern that practitioners can become 'stuck' in superficial notions of cultures (p. 77) and concluded that the sociopolitical dimensions of education have been ignored.

Education based on cultural difference, arguably one of the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy, has been critiqued (Nakata, 2003; Pearson, 2009). Both Nakata and Pearson argue that this approach can prevent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from accessing and achieving a high level of educational standards (Nakata, 2003; Pearson, 2009). Pearson (2009) argued that a culturally 'appropriate' pedagogy is contributing to the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous students. He proposed it was 'an alibi for anti-intellectualism, substandard educational programs and ultimately an excuse for poor achievement' (p. 59). However, he differentiated between 'culturally appropriate education' and 'cultural

engagement', advocating for the latter. He understood cultural engagement to be an 'intercultural zone' (p. 58), the place where Aboriginal worldviews and culture meets Western education. In a similar but different vein, Nakata (2003) in his paper 'Some Thoughts on Indigenous Literacy Issues in Indigenous Contexts' raised concerns with the 'cultural difference' (p. 9) schemas evident in discourse. The discourse based on cultural difference, he argued, is centred on anthropological knowledge that describes people through a Western lens and at times is used to explain student failure that exonerates teacher practice (p. 9). He identified the tension between 'upholding and maintaining cultural difference and identity on the one hand and producing equal outcomes to make us competitive in the mainstream on the other hand' (p. 8). It is important to note that not all Indigenous peoples agree on culturally responsive approaches. There is merit to these critiques, especially exoneration of poor teaching practice. In the case of the Yolŋu pedagogies discussed, the discourse centres on Yolŋu articulations of difference. Furthermore, 'difference' in the context of this thesis, is understood to be a strength rather than a weakness, particularly if these similarities and differences are made explicit. In Chapter 6, I discuss how different concepts of relationality impact the work of teachers and propose that the issue is not with difference itself but rather the lack of understanding of this difference.

Castagno and Brayboy (2008) recognised the tension that exists between meeting the requirements of standardisation and accountability through a culturally responsive approach to schooling. Furthermore, they questioned whether teachers (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) are equipped and prepared to do this, questioning if, in fact, it is even possible to achieve an education that addresses both culturally responsive schooling and standardisation (p. 983). The educational dilemma of providing schooling that both nurtures identity while at the same time developing intellectual and academic outcomes is a relevant one. The approach developed and practised at Yirrkala is an attempt to navigate these tensions, which I explain in detail in Chapter 8.

Another critique of culturally responsive pedagogy is the preoccupation with knowing the 'other' rather than examining the education system and inherent racism. A number of scholars argue that a culturally responsive pedagogy, and education in general, needs to extend

beyond knowing the other and include an interrogation of power, colonisation, and racism inherent in these systems (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Knaus, 2009; F. Martin et al., 2017; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Brayboy and Castagno (2009) proposed the following:

Educators must pay more attention to the ways colonization, racism, and power matter in educational settings and work towards more effective and longer term preservice and in-service training that helps educators understand and strategize about their role as agents for social change and great educational equity (p. 20).

In a similar vein, F. Martin et al. (2017) argued that it is necessary to disrupt whiteness, white dominance, and colonialism in teacher education, arguing for a decolonising process rather than a culturally responsive pedagogy. They proposed that ‘pedagogical violence’ (p. 244) is being perpetrated against marginalised students as a result of the structures of classrooms, daily practice, and colonial pedagogies (p. 244), and ‘radical change’ (p. 236) is required both at macro and micro levels—that is, from ‘policies to practices and whole systems to classrooms’ (p. 236). Similarly, Hayes and Juarez (2012) argued that a more critical approach is required, examining the structures of education, and thus defined culturally responsive pedagogy as ‘an approach to teaching and learning that addresses the sociological context of White supremacy within education and society over time while simultaneously fostering student’s abilities to achieve high levels of academic success and cultural competence’ (p. 4). According to this definition, a culturally responsive pedagogy is threefold: it requires a critique of the structures of education, has a commitment to academic achievement, while at the same time develops ‘cultural competence’. These elements are all relevant to the concept of both ways education; however, a critique of the structures of education is often overlooked in remote NT education. In Chapter 8, I explain how both mainstream outcomes and Yolŋu educational outcomes can be achieved through local approaches – however, suggest that critical reflexivity is required, particularly by non-local staff, to examine assumptions and disrupt the reliance on dominant educational approaches. While this thesis focuses on critical reflexivity as part of the work of schools, a much larger scope of engagement with reflective practice is required. That is, teacher education needs to prioritise the unpacking of

assumptions otherwise the burden to address dominant ideology and develop capacity will continually be placed on remote communities and schools.

Evidence, Application, and Outcomes

Despite promising practices, there is limited conclusive evidence linking culturally responsive schooling to academic outcomes (Brayboy, 2005). In an extensive review of ‘culturally responsive schooling’ (p. 941) in the United States, Castagno and Brayboy (2008) concluded that although the literature was insightful, minimal systemic and institutional changes have been made over the decades that have benefited Indigenous students. A more recent literature review into culturally responsive pedagogy in the Australian context concluded that despite the encouraging outcomes of a culturally responsive pedagogy among marginalised student populations internationally, in Australia there has been minimal attention of this type of approach in educational practice and policy (Morrison et al., 2019). In addition, the review found that there was currently no ‘substantial theoretically informed and empirically substantiated Australian version of culturally responsive pedagogy available to Australian educators working in schools, or to those preparing new teachers’ (p. v). While analysis of teacher education courses, in particular mainstream education degrees, is beyond the scope of this research, it is evident that pedagogical approaches need to be addressed in these undergraduate degrees. Furthermore, there is an urgent need for community-based teacher education courses in remote NT contexts that include local epistemologies, a concept that I explore further in Chapter 4 and summarise in Pillar 4 (both ways community-centred teacher education) of Chapter 9.

Despite the plethora of terminology regarding culturally responsive pedagogy, as well as the lack of evidence, the literature discussed in this section concludes that the recognition and inclusion of the intelligences and knowledge students bring to school is critical. However, some scholars and educators argue that this alone is not enough—there must also be an interrogation of power and colonisation embedded in the structures and pedagogical practices of educational institutions.

2.5 Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is another approach that can support the disruption and analysis of current educational practices. In this section I discuss critical pedagogy (Apple, 2000; Freire, 1996; Giroux, 2010; Kincheloe, 2012). I draw on critical pedagogy to further develop a conceptual framework of reflexivity and criticality, as some of the literature I examined in the context of culturally responsive education argues is required (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; F. Martin et al., 2017; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). I also examine the critique of critical pedagogies by scholars who argue a decolonising approach that includes Indigenous knowledge systems rather than a critical approach to education is required to meet the needs of Indigenous communities and peoples (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Grande, 2008; Kincheloe, 2012).

Defining Critical Theory and Critical Pedagogy

Critical theory emerged from the Frankfurt School, a social and philosophical movement aimed to develop Marxist studies. The principles of critical theory informed critical pedagogy. However, Kincheloe et al. (2011) proposed that connecting critical theory and pedagogy is complex because of the various critical theories and traditions, as well as the specificity that critical theory attempts to avoid. Despite the complexities in connecting critical theory and critical pedagogy, they share similar 'historical and contextual territory' (Keesing-Styles, 2003, p. 2). According to Kincheloe (2005) critical theory is 'concerned with extending a human's consciousness of himself or herself as a social being in light of the way dominant power operates to manage knowledge' (p. 10). Critical theory is concerned with 'a just society in which people have political, economic, and cultural control of their lives' (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011, p. 77). In a similar way, critical pedagogy is about challenging politics, power, and oppression and is concerned with education that is emancipatory (Aliakbari & Faraji, 2011; Freire, 1996; Giroux, 2010).

Several scholars and educators are associated with critical pedagogy including Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, and Peter McLaren. However, the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire is considered to be one of the founders of critical pedagogy and one of the most important critical educators of the 20th century (Giroux, 2010, p. 715). In his influential text

Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire (1996) made clear that for him, pedagogy was not a method or technique but rather a moral practice of developing the skills, knowledge, and social relations 'to enable students to explore the possibilities of what it means to be critical citizens while expanding and deepening their participation in the promise of a substantive democracy' (as cited in Giroux, 2010, p. 716). The process of education, according to Freire (1996), could either be liberatory or continue to dehumanise people who are marginalised and oppressed. He argued that pedagogy that starts with the 'egoistic interest of the oppressors (an egoism cloaked in the false generosity of paternalism) and makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression' (p. 10). In a similar way, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) argued that the 'legacy of the helping Western colonizing Other' (p. 7) needs to be resisted. The colonial history of Australia and policies of the past have undoubtedly emerged from the egotistic interests of the oppressor, and policies have reflected these racist assumptions (L. Brown, 2019; Gray & Beresford, 2008).

Henry Giroux, a critical educational theorist, emphasised the emancipatory nature of critical pedagogy:

Critical pedagogy, unlike dominant modes of teaching, insists that one of the fundamental tasks of educators is to make sure that the future points the way to a more socially just world, a world in which the discourses of critique and possibility in conjunction with the values of reason, freedom, and equality function to alter, as part of the broader democratic project, the grounds upon which life is lived (Giroux, 2010, p. 717).

The Critique

Critical pedagogy has been critiqued by a number of scholars, even those who use critical theories to inform their work (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Grande, 2008; Kincheloe, 2012). Kincheloe (2012), in his paper 'Critical pedagogy in the Twenty-First Century: Evolution for Survival', encouraged the critique and ongoing evolution of critical pedagogy. Kincheloe has written extensively on critical pedagogy and professes commitment to the 'basic themes' (p. 147) of critical pedagogy; however, he also explains that he is 'dedicated to the principals of criticality' and therefore a 'vehement critic' (p. 147) of the tradition. Although he examines

the successes and failures of critical pedagogy, he does not position himself as one who knows best. Rather, he offers his critique humbly and in solidarity, aware of his shortcomings as a teacher and scholar, basing this on the spirit of Freire's 'radical love'. He argued for open access writing and speaking about critical pedagogy, a 'populist form of criticality' (p. 148), not in a way that undermines academic rigour but one that also ensures complex ideas are accessible to a wide range of audiences. Kincheloe concluded that one of the most significant failures of critical pedagogy is its inability to engage with people of Indigenous, African, and Asian backgrounds and consequently argued for bringing in more diversity into 'the ranks' for two reasons. First, critical pedagogy has profound insights to share with all people, and second, the 'subjugated knowledge' (p. 149) of Indigenous, African, African American, and Asian people has a lot to offer critical pedagogy. Kincheloe's argument that complex ideas need to be accessible to a range of audiences is particularly relevant to the context of Yirrkala. At Yirrkala, the majority of Yolŋu educators are not considered 'qualified' teachers according to mainstream standards; however, their knowledge and lived experiences of Yolŋu education are critical in the process of mainstream education, a concept I develop further in Chapter 6.

It has been argued that critical pedagogy fails to adequately theorise and address matters experienced by Indigenous peoples such as the importance of land, identity, sovereignty, and tradition (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Grande, 2008). Denzin and Lincoln (2008) argued for a 're-visioning of critical pedagogy, a re-grounding of Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed in local, indigenous contexts' which they described as a 'critical indigenous pedagogy' (p. 2). They described a critical Indigenous pedagogy (CIP) as an inquiry that is both political and moral, a process of emancipation and empowerment that recognises the transformative potential of Indigenous knowledges that have been subjugated. Grande (2008) also proposed an Indigenous pedagogy, 'Red Pedagogy', that 'operates at the crossroads of Western Theory—specifically critical pedagogy—and Indigenous knowledge' (p. 3). Grande argued that it is crucial that 'Native' educators insist on the inclusion of 'indigenous knowledge and praxis in school curricula' (p. 5) while at the same time transforming the structures of the schools. She concluded that 'indigenous educators need to theorise the ways in which power and domination inform the processes and procedures of schooling and develop pedagogies that

disrupt their effects’ (p. 237). In Chapter 4, I discuss how power in schooling structures were challenged and disrupted at Yirrkala.

In summary, critical pedagogy seeks to disrupt and critique existing models of education. However, as a number of scholars have illustrated, Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies are often not included in these approaches. Therefore, a critical *Indigenous* pedagogy, one that recognises the importance of land, identity, and sovereignty as well as the transformative potential of Indigenous knowledges (Grande, 2008), is needed in remote educational contexts in the NT and arguably further afield.

2.6 Land and Place-Based Pedagogy

At the beginning of the chapter, I explained how schooling often disconnects learners from their environments (Calderon, 2014; Higgins & Kim, 2019; McKnight, 2016; G. Smith, 2002). However, ‘within Indigenous ways-of-knowing-in-being, knowledge is inseparable from the relationships with/in the place from which it emerges’ (Higgins & Kim, 2019, p. 114). Ganma education, discussed in Section 2.3, emphasises the inseparable connection to Place: The metaphors and theories themselves emerge from the land. There is a plethora of terminology used to describe education that integrates place- or land-based learning—both ways education, which includes Galtha Rom²⁴ (Marika-Mununggiritj, 1990; M. Yunupingu, 1989), placed-based education (G. Smith, 2002), Learning on Country/learning through Country (Fogarty, 2013; Schwab & Fogarty, 2015), critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003), Red Pedagogy (Grande, 2015), and land-based education (Betasamosake Simpson, 2014; Calderon, 2014; Wildcat et al., 2014).

The Center for Place-Based Learning and Community Engagement at Antioch University in the United States defines place-based education as ‘the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other concepts across the curriculum’ (Antioch University, 2021, para. 1). However, place-based education does not always emerge from Indigenous realities, and it has been argued that place-based approaches rarely extend far enough to critique ongoing settler

²⁴ An intergenerational learning framework explained in Chapter 4

colonialism and how the genocide of Indigenous peoples has been linked to place (Calderon, 2014, p. 2). Throughout this chapter, I have illustrated that a critical approach to schooling, one that examines the influence of power, class, and ethnicity, is required to dismantle dominant educational structures and is required for social change and increased educational equity (Brayboy, 2005; Grande, 2015; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Knaus, 2009; F. Martin et al., 2017; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Many land-based educational approaches echo and extend this critique to include issues of sovereignty and land (Calderon, 2014; Grande, 2008; Gruenewald, 2003).

Land-based education, as described by Calderon (2014), centres Indigenous understandings of place, makes settler colonialism explicit, recognises that all places were once, and still are, Indigenous lands, and importantly, 'requires us to consider Indigenous agency and resistance tied to Indigenous cosmologies' (p. 4). In another interpretation of education grounded in Place, Gruenewald (2003) merged both critical pedagogy and place-based education into what he termed 'critical pedagogy of place' (p. 3). Place-based learning, he proposed, is needed so that people can have a 'direct bearing of the wellbeing of the social and ecological places people actually inhabit' (p. 3), and critical pedagogy is required to challenge dominant cultural constructs in education.

Despite the advocacy for the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and land-based education in school systems, implementing this is not straightforward. Betasamosake Simpson (2014) (2014) is one of the scholars who questions the Indigenisation of the academy, particularly when this knowledge is being brought in on the academy's terms. Instead, Betasamosake Simpson argues for a resurgence of 'Indigenous political cultures' that requires a 'radical break away from state education systems—systems that are primarily designed to produce communities of individuals willing to uphold settler colonialism' (p. 1). Betasamosake Simpson proposes that rather than Indigenous peoples focusing efforts to 'Indigenize the academy', the focus should be a resurgence of Indigenous intellectual systems as a way to re-establish Indigenous political systems and propel nationhood, as this will 'place people back on the land in a context that is conducive to resurgence and mobilisation' (p. 18).

This thesis rests firmly on the premise that Place-based and Land-based education are essential pedagogical frameworks for remote NT education. Despite the divergent ideas about approaches connected to Place, these approaches must clearly benefit local Indigenous peoples not systems; how they are (or not) operationalised needs to be determined by the community. The Learning on Country program (LoCP), which formalised a partnership that had previously existed between local ranger groups and schools (Schwab & Fogarty, 2015, p. 7), is an example of a community-based approach to land-based learning. In 2013, the federally funded LoCP commenced in four Indigenous communities in the NT and has expanded further in northern NT including Yirrkala, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Laynhapuy Homelands, Galiwin'ku, Ramingining, Gapuwiyak, Umbakumba, and Angurugu. The LoCP provides additional funding and valuable support to schools and takes learning outside classrooms, accessing the knowledge of rangers, scientists, and elders to develop learning connected to literacy, numeracy, and science outcomes as well as the development of work skills (Fogarty, Schwab, et al., 2015). The *Learning on Country Program Progress Evaluation Report 2015* reported that Galtha Rom is the basis of the LoCP at Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands (Fogarty, Schwab, et al., 2015, p. 52). A Yolŋu pedagogy like Galtha Rom is not necessarily synonymous with the LoCP as each communities programs are likely to be different. However, the LoCP has provided critical funding to the continuation of Galtha Rom as a facilitated school and community program.

Land-based pedagogies such as Galtha were theorised through community-based teacher education courses, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter 4. The Yolŋu involved in these teacher education programs directed and created both ways models of education in response to schooling that excludes local knowledge and Yolŋu control. The fundamental aim of these programs was to support local Aboriginal teachers to express their 'culture within the curriculum of the school' (Henry & McTaggart, 1991, p. 9) and explore theory and practice of an 'emergent Aboriginal pedagogy' (p. 13). However, there has been a systemic failure to continue teacher education in this way, and therefore, Indigenous knowledge that was once part of these teacher education programs is now sporadically present or not present at all (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5). I raise this failure now as community-based teacher education is inextricably linked to rigorous pedagogical approaches for Yolŋu students in remote NT

schools. Without community-based teacher education programs that address the pedagogical frameworks discussed in this chapter, systems will continue to marginalise Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing and both ways education will be challenging to continue.

2.7 Conclusion

I began this chapter by distinguishing between school and education, explaining that education is often portrayed as being the sole domain of Western institutions; however, as I illustrated, all societies have knowledge and skills related to what makes a person knowledgeable. I started the theoretical discussion by defining and critiquing both ways education, an approach that has been applied in some remote NT communities as a way to include both Western and Indigenous knowledges in schools. Although both ways has been critiqued, and having education that includes both Western and Indigenous knowledges is complex, Henry and McTaggart (1991) argued,

Is it possible to have any single or unified educational process which contains within itself elements of Aboriginal education and Western education? Perhaps not. Neither is it sensible to imagine a genuine education in both cultures proceeding as if the other culture did not exist (p. 9).

To move forward with education in remote contexts, recognition that different knowledge systems exist and that they all contain valid modes of learning must be recognised and the theoretical foundations understood. To develop a theoretical framework, I discussed various literatures related to culturally responsive pedagogy, Ganma education, critical pedagogy, critical Indigenous pedagogy, and land-based pedagogy to demonstrate the theory that underpins local Indigenous knowledges. In addition, I explained that a critique of the structural inequities as well as local control and governance are also required if a both ways model is to be effectively operationalised. Community control and governance in the context of both ways education are not as widely written about as pedagogy. However, they are an essential components of both ways education in remote NT schools, which I discuss further in Chapter 4 and identify as the first of the five pillars required for community-centred education; summarised in the final chapter.

Both ways cannot be operationalised without local communities governing direction and implementation. Both ways education is a framework that will vary from community to community as local peoples are given ownership to develop these models to suit the needs of their particular contexts. But considerable work is required if both ways is the preferred model of learning as in most schools in the NT English is the predominant language, non-local teachers occupy the majority of classroom teaching positions as well as management positions, and teacher education courses fail to include local theories, practices and languages. Furthermore, one of the gaps in both ways education relates to the lack of ongoing critique required to disrupt dominant structures and practices. This is where critical pedagogy and land-based education can strengthen both ways models in a contemporary context.

Chapter 3 Methodology of Place

A Vignette: Fieldwork Starts

The cock crowed at 4.00 a.m., waking me from a deep sleep. I lay there regretting my decision to walk past the earplugs in the local shop only days before. The rooster, who had become part of the family, slept in the open-air kitchen, only metres from my tent. I couldn't get back to sleep, and hours later when the sun finally rose and brought with it the tropical humidity, I emerged from my tent and sat overlooking the bay. In the early morning light, I wrote my fieldnotes. I had imagined this moment, longed for it to arrive as I endured the freezing winter months in my office at the ANU. Finally, fieldwork was here.

I heard a spoon drop in the kitchen; life was stirring in the house, and now I could go and boil the jug to make a cup of tea. I walked around the tent to the screen door of the house when suddenly there was a flap of feathers and the rooster darted towards me, trailed by two boisterous puppies, Bailey and Djindjaray. Were they simply excited to see me or were they launching an attack? Whatever their intention, by the second flap of the rooster's wing, I spun around and bolted back to my tent. I remained hostage there, desperately wanting my morning cup of tea but not willing to risk a potential attack by the cantankerous bird. I did not have to wait long until my three *gutharra*²⁵ joined me on the mat in front of my tent. I attempted to explain in a mix of English and Yolŋu matha the incident that had unfolded earlier. They were immediately angry that their '*manyi*'²⁶ had been disrespected in such a way. They threatened to punish the perpetrator on my behalf. I rearranged my story. Maybe, I said, he was only playing. I calmed the children down and reassured them there was no need for payback and tried to distract them with a modified version of eye spy, which they enjoyed playing the day before. I hoped the rooster wouldn't suffer once the children left my tent but I couldn't be sure, although, I doubt the rooster would have been as generous if he were the one under attack. My fieldwork had started!

²⁵ Maternal grandchild

²⁶ Maternal grandmother (a term younger children would use instead of *māri*)

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1, I discussed my positionality and connection to Yirrkala and how the questions that form the foundations of this doctoral research were sparked as the result of being a teacher in this context. However, the reality of being on ‘fieldwork’ started the day I was chased by the rooster.

In this chapter, I discuss the ethnographic research methodology and my attempts to implement participatory research that was more complex than I originally expected. Despite the challenges of a participatory approach, I was committed to co-creating knowledge through a process of relationality and reflexivity. I explain how my existing relationships formed the basis of the recruitment process across five geographically distant communities and Homelands and how I worked with people from eight different organisations. I document the multimethods used, including participant observation, interviews, workshops, and ongoing discussions. In addition to these methods, I supported the planning of a 4-day community-led workshop that became a case study in this thesis. I conclude the chapter by discussing the challenges, the celebrations, and how I attempted to remain accountable to the communities I worked with.

3.2 Designing a Methodology of Place: Prioritising the Local

I wanted the research design to reflect the context of Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands. The community context was familiar to me; the world of research was not. In some ways, this positioned me well; in other ways, it caused tension. The tension related to meeting the expectations of the academy including learning about the process of research while simultaneously staying committed to community processes and co-creating the research. I needed to find a balance so that I could do both well. Somerville (2007), who based her work on the early grounded theory literature, proposed the use of ‘emergent methodologies’ (p. 229). She explained these emergent methodologies as a process of ‘undoing’, an unravelling of the preconceptions of ‘left brain habits of logic’ (p. 230). The concept of emergent methodologies seemed to align with how I wanted to work—that is, creating space for the research process to generate as I progressed. In a similar way, West et al. (2012) argued that

methodological reform will help address control and power struggles between Indigenous peoples and the academy (p. 1583). Although I relied on predominantly traditional aspects of research methods, such as interviews and participant observation, the development of the ethnographic approach was based on reflexivity and relationality in an attempt to more effectively meet the needs of the communities I was researching with.

Reflexivity: The Place (or Not) of Research

Researchers working within the Indigenous paradigm understand that the very institutions in which they operate are vehicles for carrying a colonial history into the present. (Vivian et al., 2017, p. 54)

As I discussed in Chapter 1, I was hesitant to undertake a PhD. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2007) argued that, ‘The history of research from many indigenous perspectives is so deeply embedded in colonization that it has been regarded as a tool only of colonization and not as a potential tool for self-determination and development’ (p. 87). I was aware that by undertaking a PhD, despite my intentions to challenge dominant ideologies embedded in the education system, I was implicated in a colonial process. I concluded that I could not critique one system of education—that is, the current NT model—if I was not willing to analyse and acknowledge the system that I was embedded in as a researcher. I was uncertain if this research would benefit the community; I was concerned that the process might remove me from the reality of community living, and I was cognisant that the historical relationship between communities and the academy often positioned Indigenous peoples as objects (Olsen, 2018). Cochran et al. (2008) identified that our sense of conflict is an aspect of the work that researchers working to serve Indigenous communities must resolve. To make explicit these concerns and address these tensions, I engaged in an ongoing reflexive practice, named these challenges, and shared my concerns with mentors. Despite adopting a reflexive practice, I continue to grapple with the tensions and question whether they are ever resolvable.

It was important that my reflexive process was not an activity in self-indulgence. As Nagar and Ali (2003) discussed, reflexivity has often centred on examining the identity of the individual researcher rather than ‘on the ways in which those identities intersect with institutionally,

geopolitical and material aspects of their positionality' (p. 2). They continued that the focus on individual researcher's identity 'fails to adequately address how our ability to align our theoretical priorities with the concerns of communities whose struggles we want to advance is connected to the opportunities, constraints and values embedded in our academic institutions' (p. 2). My commitment to community aspirations was always the priority, although I often felt a tension between these and the requirements of the academy. In Chapter 6, I examine reflexivity in more detail in the context of teacher practice, concluding that reflexivity is critical to the work of educators. Therefore, it was important that as a researcher I applied this same reflexive practice to this work.

The tensions between dominant research approaches and Indigenous methodologies are evident in the literature. Many Indigenous scholars and thinkers have focused their work on critiquing Western-based paradigms embedded in methodologies, arguing for processes and protocols that align with Indigenous epistemologies (K. L. Martin, 2008; Nakata, 2013; Rigney, 1999; L. T. Smith, 1999; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015; S. Wilson, 2008; Grande, 2015). In doing so, these scholars have translated 'longstanding Indigenous intellectual traditions' into higher education research practice and theory (Biermann, 2011, p. 386). L. T. Smith (1999) encouraged Indigenous scholars to resist dominant production of 'academic knowledge' and develop their own methodologies. Although as a non-local, non-Indigenous researcher it was not possible for me to use an Indigenous methodology, this research was largely co-created with local community members.

Ethnography of Place

Ethnography is at the core of this methodology. Reeves et al., (2008) defined ethnography as the story of 'social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organisations, and communities' (p. 512). An ethnographic approach was the most relevant approach to support the analysis of the educational context at Yirrkala and the Homelands, and as such, the design of the research needed to reflect local epistemologies. Tuck and Mackenzie (2015) argued for a 'critical place inquiry', an approach to research that takes up critical questions and develops corresponding methodologies that are 'informed by the embeddedness of social life in and with places and that seeks to be a form of action in

responding to critical place issues such as those of globalisation, and neoliberalism, settler colonialism, and environmental degradation' (p. 2). The methodology was informed by Place that included Yolŋu principles, theories, and practices and thus responded to 'critical place issues', demonstrated through my involvement in planning a Galtha Rom workshop that became a significant component of the research

I attempted to ground the research in local epistemologies by recognising locally developed ways of knowing, an aspect that Cochran et al. (2008) argued is important when developing research methods in Indigenous communities. While I have incorporated mainstream literature to guide the development of my methodology, I also use locally developed metaphors, which I argue are local theories in their own right. One such metaphor or theory is the process of creating ceremonial bread from ŋathu (cycad), discussed in Chapter 1. It has been used to highlight the danger of power embedded in Western ideology. While this metaphor has been used to describe power in an educational context, it is also applicable to this research as it highlights that process must be followed to create the space for ideas to be engaged with and analysed. The ŋathu metaphor illustrates the importance of critical thinking and process that aligns with local protocols: 'poison can sometimes be the attitudes and mindsets of visitors who do not want to let go of the raki, the strings, because it is power' (Marika et al., 2009, p. 407). As a researcher, I was required to consider how power was embedded in the research process. Unfortunately, as proposed by Davidson-Hunt and O'Flaherty (2007), academic institutions tend to be more concerned with 'research output rather than matters of process' (p. 302). I was cognisant that the process of conducting research was just as important as the findings. That is, the way I conducted myself as a researcher by respecting gurruṯu, engaging in community life and continually engaging with Yolŋu academic advisers, was critical.

Participatory Action Research

I had hoped this research would be collaborative, and consequently, I thought a participatory action research (PAR) model would be the logical choice. Participatory research, as described by Bhattacharjee (2001), is 'a process of collective, community based participatory investigation, education and action for structural and personal transformation. It is a method

of investigating problems involving participation of marginalised people to identify their problems, for providing solutions and taking collective action' (p. 1). It was a PAR approach that was adopted at Yirrkala in the 1980s. A PAR methodology in this context aligned with Yolŋu ontologies and engendered a rebalancing of power within the institutionalised constructs of education and research (Kemmis et al., 2013).

Chiu (2006) differentiated PAR from more conventional research, explaining that it is about the 'creation, rather than the discovery, of knowledge or different forms of knowledge that help us relate internally to ourselves and externally to the social world' (p. 189). It was this co-creation of knowledge that I hoped the research would facilitate. However, early in my fieldwork, I realised that the proposed approach would be challenging to implement primarily because I was working outside organisations, which differed significantly from my experience as a teacher in this context. It was also critical to consider why I wanted to adopt a participatory approach as a PAR methodology is not without critique. In a Canadian context, Simpson (2001) argued that PAR is 'just the latest way' (p. 140) to study Indigenous peoples and the 'best way Euro-Canadian researchers' access local knowledges. However, she continued:

Solutions to our contemporary problems will come when we turn to the voices of our ancestors, when we sing our songs, dance our dances and live our traditions. Academics, researchers and development workers can support us in these aspirations. Outside researchers who are useful to Aboriginal peoples do not have their own research agendas, or they are at least able to put them aside. They are willing to spend time looking inside themselves, uncovering their own biases, and privileges and they are willing to learn *from* our people—not *about* Aboriginal peoples, but about themselves and their place in the cosmos. They are willing to be transformed, in a sense, they are willing to be *developed*. (L. Simpson, 2001, p. 144)

Despite at times being disappointed that the research was not as participatory as I hoped, it was still a process of co-creating through discussions with Yolŋu colleagues and family, as well as non-local participants. However, the opportunity to support the planning of the 4-day Galtha Rom workshop discussed later in this chapter was a co-created and participatory process.

Relationality

My research is relational. Without the established connections and experience as a teacher, I would not have attempted the research or been able to conduct it in the way that I did. Kwame (2017) recognises that there are multiple identities and positions that exist between researchers and the communities they work with. I was aware of these multiple identities as I moved between feeling like an ‘insider’ but mostly an ‘outsider’. I felt like an insider in the sense that I had been a teacher in the education system for many years and this positioned me well to critique a system I was part of. Furthermore, I had a number of existing relationships with educators at the school and was part of the dominant culture. I also had many long-term relationships with Yolŋu both inside and outside the school, connected through gurrutu.²⁷ Despite this, I remained a non-local researcher in an Aboriginal community and therefore was an ‘outsider’.

Both in the educational context and in the community I grappled with the complexities of doing research. I perceived that staff at the school did not see me as part of the organisation, despite at times my participating in and facilitating meetings and workshops. I was under more scrutiny as a PhD scholar, a critique I did not experience while teaching in the community. This was reinforced one day during my fieldwork when a non-local person said to me, ‘People come in here doing research and think they know what is going on’, and after a few long seconds of awkward silence, he added, ‘You are not one of them though’. As a teacher, my intentions were rarely challenged in this way. It seemed that being a teacher was an accepted ‘job’ in the community, particularly among non-local people. I saw myself foremost as a teacher, but I was now in the community in a ‘research’ capacity. Being a researcher carried an extra responsibility as there was a research output attached to my work.

In many ways I was an outsider in the Yolŋu community and with non-local people. Interestingly, though, I felt that my relationships with Yolŋu did not change as the result of being a ‘researcher’ rather than a teacher. The gurrutu I had with my Yolŋu connections did not change. In fact, many of these relationships were strengthened as I explained my new role and often conversations deepened as we discussed concepts such as power, privilege and the

²⁷ Kinship

ethics of research. Christie and Greateorex (2004) explained that ‘Yolngu spend much time discussing and re-exploring kinship, and (re-)fitting newcomers and distant kin into the system’ (p. 4). As a researcher who had previously been adopted into the gurruṯu system, I had established connections that influenced the way I conducted the research and how people engaged with me. Most Yolngu participants that I interviewed and worked alongside were aware of my kinship connections. They referred to me by gurruṯu, and many participants I interviewed, when I asked questions about relationality, referred to my existing connections with Yolngu. As argued by Dwyer and Buckle (2009), ‘The personhood of the researcher, including her or his membership status in relation to those participating in the research, is an essential and ever-present aspect of the investigation’ (p. 5). Gurruṯu was the ‘ever-present’ element of my research. In Chapter 6, I explain gurruṯu in detail, discussing relationality in the context of practice.

In her work exploring relationality as methodology, Nicholis (2009) explained that researchers can develop trusting and meaningful relationships by demonstrating their ‘willingness to move into a liminal, in-between space, decentering themselves by challenging traditional notions of objective control between researchers and research participants’ (p. 121). Letting go of control was both challenging and liberating at times. The liminal space was not always comfortable, and I did not always get it right, but there was certainly a ‘willingness’ to let go of control and an awareness that this needed to happen.

3.3 Participants and Ethics

Support for the Research

Prior to commencing fieldwork in March 2018, the two local schools, Yirrkala Homelands School and Yirrkala School, and the Yirrkala Rangers at Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation agreed to support and participate in the research. I was also required to apply to the NT Government for permission to conduct research in NT schools. Prior to relocating for fieldwork, I engaged in many conversations with Yolngu community members both at Yirrkala and in the Homelands, including a discussion with the Yirrkala School Action Group in 2017 to explain my proposal to conduct research. Following this meeting, the Action Group wrote a letter of support. At the time of approaching the Yirrkala School Action Group, Yirrkala

Homelands School did not have a similar Yolŋu group; however, I had many discussions with people in the Homelands about the research. In the past I had worked on collaborative projects with local organisations and hoped that the PhD was another opportunity to do so. I assumed my established relationships would enable a smooth transition from teacher to researcher. In some ways this was true, but in many ways, working outside an organisation added layers of complexities and competing agendas. Even though organisations initially agreed to participate, it was challenging to work collaboratively. The lack of available time was a factor as many people were in full-time employment, I was unable to guarantee the impact of the research for people's investment of time, and I was still developing research skills and consolidating ideas. I often felt like I was intruding on people's time and, whether or not this was imagined, at times I felt a level of resistance, in particular, on the part of some non-local participants or potential participants.

Participants and Recruitment

My established relationships were key in recruiting participants as trust had already been established with many people. The criteria for selection of participants did not have defined boundaries. I had informal conversations with people, known and unknown, and explained my research and asked them if they would be interested in participating in an interview. Furthermore, a number of the participants had supported the development of the research idea as I had been working alongside them over the years and the research was in response to community identified need. There were a range of Yolŋu and non-Yolŋu participants involved in the study, including rangers, teachers, students, cultural advisors, health workers, principals, staff in management positions, as well as community members who did not work for specific organisations. The ages of participants ranged from 13 to over 65 years of age, although the majority were over 18 years. I was invited to be part of the planning process for the development of the Galtha workshop, which over 200 people attended.

Advisors, Mentors, and Teachers

It was important to have Yolŋu overseeing and guiding the research. I identified five Yolŋu women to form an Advisory Group to guide me in this process and was in regular contact with all of them before, during, and after fieldwork. It was challenging for us all to meet together as these advisors were employed full-time in different organisations and also had many

community responsibilities. However, there were times, particularly when the research directly related to their paid employment—for example, during the Galtha planning—when it was easier for us to meet together. Often, members of this group would come for dinner or we went out bush together and informally discussed the research. I constantly sought advice from people I considered mentors but also cautious of not burdening them with extra unpaid responsibilities. In addition to this group of women, I spent a considerable amount of social time with my Yolŋu family. They were aware of the research, and although they did not explicitly direct me on conducting the research, their input during my fieldwork, and over the years, informed the way I worked.

Towards the end of the fieldwork, I received a small budget to pay a community member to support me with translations. She travelled with me to one Homeland to help facilitate conversations with community members, including a number of young people. Her support was invaluable and highlights how working alongside Yolŋu researchers enhances the depth of the research and facilitates connections with Yolŋu. I felt more comfortable asking for support when people were being paid to do this. It was one small way I could acknowledge their contribution to this work.

Multiple Sites in ‘Remote’ Localities

The research was conducted across a large geographic region, adding unique complexities. I interviewed people from eight different community organisations and across five different communities and Homelands. Participants from the Homelands were from Gängan, Dhälinybuy, Waṇḍawuy, Garrthalala, Gutjaṇan; see Figure 2 (Chapter 1) for geographic location. Mostly, email and phone correspondence were not a viable option for communication as in the Homelands, there is no mobile reception, and public pay phones often do not work. Even if the public phone did work and I managed to speak to the relevant people, it was not always appropriate as face-to-face communication was preferred. Therefore, I needed to drive between 1.5 to 3.5 hours on rough 4WD tracks or alternatively catch a chartered flight (which was too expensive) to these locations. Furthermore, it was essential to gain the relevant permission from the leaders of the Homelands before I could arrive at any Homeland; an example of this is explained in detail in Chapter 7. It was important that I invested time in establishing or reconnecting with participants; in the first instance, this

meant sharing what I was researching and giving people time to decide if they wanted to participate or not.

3.4 Navigating the Space

Accountability and Knowledge

Accountability to the community was my first priority, and this required constant reflexivity, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Despite understanding the reality of working in remote communities, as a ‘researcher’, I had a new set of challenges to navigate. I was quickly reminded of this on my second day in the field when I presented my research to the Yambirrpa School Council. I had reworked my thesis proposal review to present to the Council to explain what I was hoping to research. I was aware of the political nature of Yolŋu knowledge, and I was cautious (and somewhat reluctant) to use local metaphors that I knew were the foundation of both ways education. So when I presented my research concept to the Council, I decided not to include local metaphors without first talking to relevant Yolŋu before discussing these in a public forum at Yirrkala. Prior to giving the presentation, I showed two senior Yolŋu women, who I had a close personal and professional relationship with, the slides I planned to present. Rarely as a teacher had I presented on my own, but as a PhD scholar, I was required to. In the context of education, much of the work I had done was collaborative and Yolŋu were involved in conversations. The two women said that it looked fine. Unfortunately, there was inadequate time to have any detailed discussion about the presentation as the women were busy. They were attending the council meeting, so I asked if they could support me during the presentation, and they agreed. There was my first mistake, to rush people and put them on the spot. I needed to remember where I was. Yirrkala was different to a university context, and quick decisions and speed did not work here; in fact, they could be interpreted as being ignorant and rude. I felt like I was pushing an agenda.

I delivered a 5-min presentation to the Council, conscious not to take up too much time. It was challenging articulating these concepts in such a short time. I spoke in English as my Yolŋu matha was not proficient enough to explain these concepts in detail. At the end of the presentation, the room was silent and I felt alone; however, I was reminded later, this does not necessarily signal disapproval or disinterest. Despite knowing this, I started to question if my

ideas and research project were still relevant to Yolŋu. Furthermore, I was still developing the concepts myself and therefore lacked confidence in articulating the ideas. I was also occupying a different role—I had moved from the familiarity of being a teacher into the unknown territory of being a ‘researcher’. As a teacher, I do not think I ever presented to the School Council, so this was also a new experience. The school principal broke the silence by thanking me for the presentation and linked my work to the concepts of the *ŋathu* (cycad nut) metaphor, discussed in Chapter 1. He suggested that the *ŋathu* metaphor was relevant to this research. Although I had not discussed the *ŋathu* during my presentation, I acknowledged that it was a useful theoretical framework I had included and agreed it helped conceptualise the work. In response to this comment, a Yolŋu teacher, addressing me by my *mälk* (skin name) explained the potential danger of discussing such metaphors without the appropriate clan members co-presenting the ideas. My stomach sank. I was aware of the political nature of sharing Yolŋu knowledge, a concept discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. In the past, I had used these metaphors with caution and when collaborating with Yolŋu; however, as a PhD scholar, I was required to work individually. I questioned if, in attempting to meet an academic agenda, I had moved away from what I knew about the political nature of Yolŋu knowledge and power. I felt a tension between the academy and the people I intended to work with at Yirrkala. Despite wanting to co-create and collaborate on this doctoral research, in many ways it was a solo journey. This did not sit well with me—everything that I had been taught at Yirrkala warned against working independently.

The feedback from this Yolŋu woman on the second day of my fieldwork was a stark reminder of the complexities I was so familiar with. I thanked her for her comment and left the meeting feeling unsettled and confused. I doubted my capacity to undertake this project and wondered if the tensions and differences were irreconcilable. I was conflicted. If I did not include educational theories developed at Yirrkala, it would appear there was an absence of Yolŋu intellectual engagement, which was simply not true as Yolŋu had been theorising education for decades. These theories have been documented in papers by both Yolŋu and non-Yolŋu, and the information is freely accessible. How could I *not* include these writings in a thesis of this kind? Christie (2006b) warned that the stories of Indigenous people must not be told without the proper approval. However, I was aware that approval from one person did not

mean approval from others. Yolŋu and Western knowledge operated differently, as discussed in Chapter 1—there is Yolŋu knowledge that can be shared, and some knowledge is not appropriate for public forums. The purpose of this research was not to inquire into these deeper layers of Yolŋu knowledge but rather to inquire into how public Yolŋu knowledge is included in school. In addition, there was often an expectation that a reciprocation occurred, usually financial. Put simply, if I wanted knowledge to be shared, I had a reciprocal responsibility that went beyond developing and sharing a community report. I did not have the funds to pay people for their time.

Three days later, I gave the Yolŋu woman, who cautioned me about the use of the *nathu* metaphor, a lift. We spoke about the weather and other superficial things, and as she got out of the car, very casually she commented, ‘You are doing it [the research] the right way Bulanydjan’.²⁸ I was relieved at one level but still overwhelmed by the complexity and felt conflicted about how to proceed. The research process presented different challenges to what I had experienced as a teacher. There was so much more critique as a PhD scholar, and I had no way of knowing how (or if) the research would benefit the community.

Translating Concepts and Language

Ideally, participant consent forms and interview questions would have been translated into one of the local languages. Unfortunately, the resources were not always available to support this process. I did not feel comfortable asking people to engage in the labour-intensive process of translating documents and concepts into print without payment as I did not want the research to be extractive in nature, as L. T. Smith (2012) warned it can be. However, I attempted to translate concepts and language where possible, particularly when working with students and young people as their English language was developing. I worked with two women to translate questions that I intended to ask school-aged participants after they had attended the Galtha Rom at Biranybirany. The process occurred at 8.00 p.m. and took over an hour. We only managed to translate three of the 10 questions. This illustrates the time it took to work through translations, which were not only related to language but also conceptual understandings. The two women advised me that I was asking too many questions, and

²⁸ A mälk (skin name)

students would be confused. So we agreed to only use three questions. These are the reworked questions:

What did you learn out at the Galtha?

Nhă nhe marŋgi ŋunhaya Biranybirany Galthaya?

Do you think Galtha is an important part of your learning?

Nhă nhokaya Galthaya rom latju rom marŋgithinyawu?

Why/why not?

Nhăkuwarray?

The time it took to translate these three questions highlights the complexities with this process. Although I knew that these two women were competent in first language literacy, it cannot always be assumed that people are. Translation is an ongoing community challenge, and there are often examples of organisations producing documents in first language with numerous spelling mistakes. At Yirrkala School, the Literacy Production Centre (LPC) creates resources in first language to support literacy development in the school. There are competent literacy workers who are literate in Yolŋu languages and skilled translators. However, they are mostly occupied with school-based literacy production work and are funded by the NT Department of Education, so although they do edit community documents at times, it is challenging to get documents translated if you are working outside this system. Furthermore, many of the elders who were literate in Yolŋu languages have now passed away, and there is a shortage of people literate in first language.

As an alternative to text translations, I used oral recordings as they are often less complex to develop than written material. However, there is still a considerable amount of time required to ensure conceptual understandings are translated in a way that reflects the original concept. I asked a member of my Advisory Group if she would be interested in recording her understanding of the research concepts so that I could use it as a resource to share with participants. She agreed, and on returning from a camping trip with her and her family, we unpacked the car, and I sat with her and her three children while she discussed the topic and I recorded it. For months we had been discussing the research, and consequently, she was able to competently speak about the concepts in Yolŋu matha. This oral recording became a

valuable resource when I travelled around explaining my research to community members. When I played this for people, the first question was ‘Who is speaking?’, reinforcing that relationality is the foundation of this work. It was interesting to observe the level of engagement when I played this recording. If I had more time and more support, I would have further developed these oral recordings, which may have led to deeper understandings of my inquiry questions.

In the last few weeks of my fieldwork, I was granted a small budget to employ a Yolŋu consultant to support with the translation of the research concepts. Working with this consultant had a positive impact, but unfortunately our time working together was limited. The woman, who I refer to as a co-researcher, was an educator and was interested in the content of the research. We travelled to a Homeland to speak to people about their experiences of Galtha Rom. It was crucial to have her support while working with young people as she could translate concepts and help sustain the conversation in Yolŋu matha, which I would have struggled to do on my own. It also made a difference travelling with a Yolŋu person, despite having connections in this particular Homeland; working with this co-researcher helped me navigate the process.

Working With Young People

In the original design of the research, I proposed to work with young people 12 years and above. However, this was difficult as I did not have the translation support, and the example of translating the three questions illustrates the time and resources required for accurate translation. In addition, I was not working as a teacher in the school, and when I did offer to work with students to scaffold a reflective writing activity following Galtha Rom, teachers did not respond to my request or had already implemented their own activities. Sometimes when speaking with young people, 18 and above, they suggested that instead of talking to them, I speak with the *ṇaḷapaḷ* (elders), suggesting they were not comfortable to have the conversations. The young people I spoke with were mostly over 18 years of age. However, I participated in some school-based workshops, and the Galtha Rom was a workshop planned for students 12 years and above. There were additional consent processes for the few students

that I spoke directly to – their parents were part of the discussion and consent and there were documents explaining the research protocols.

Confidentiality

Conducting research across a number of small communities presented ethical issues of confidentiality. When I interviewed any staff from health organisations, I elected to categorise them as ‘health workers’ to reduce the possibility of identification. In the participant information sheet, I clearly stated that due to the nature of small communities, confidentiality was a potential risk, and I explained that I would endeavour to reduce this risk by de-identifying data. Some participants elected to be named.

Grief and Loss

The high level of death during the fieldwork impacted me, the community, and the participants involved in the research. During the year, many people under the age of 50 died; some of these as a result of suicide. The grief and loss that accompanies these deaths are a daily reality for remote communities. One of the participants in the study who I had known for many years was tragically killed while I was there. This death, as well as others, highlights the ongoing trauma that communities experience.

3.5 Multimethod Approach: Process of Data Collection and Analysis

In the following section, I discuss the multimethods of data collection and how these methods evolved during the fieldwork. The methods included participant observation, case studies, interviews, group discussions/workshops, and what is referred to in some of the literature as *yarning* (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010), which I refer to as discussions and conversations. In addition, an unexpected method was a case study that resulted from an invitation to assist in developing an intergenerational workshop, referred to as Galtha Rom. I documented my data in fieldnotes, which included a reflective journal, and by transcribing interviews and recording notes about these interviews.

Participant Observation and Observant Participant

Observation and participation were the primary tools of ethnography I relied on for data collection. I lived at Yirrkala while on fieldwork and travelled regularly to Laynhapuy

Homelands, staying there with family. Consequently, I was actively immersed in daily experiences and had been for many years. Seim (2021) proposed that ethnographic researchers are required to address how much one should ‘involve themselves with the people, places and processes they study’ (p. 3). Seim continued that one answer proposed by several ethnographers to address this has been a movement from participant observation to observant participation. This concept, also referred to as ‘enactive ethnography’ by Wacquant (2015, p. 2), requires a deeper engagement in the field as the ‘observant participator is more likely to occupy and enact a pre-existing role in the field’ (Seim, 2021, p. 3). Wacquant (2015) described enactive ethnography as an ‘immersive fieldwork through which the investigator acts out (elements of) the phenomenon in order to peel away the layers of its invisible properties and to test its operative mechanisms’ (p. 5). Although I was no longer a teacher in this context, I had extensive experience of the education system and schools, and many of my relationships with community members and staff were formed as the result of working in this field. Furthermore, at times I continued to be involved in meetings, workshops, and activities as an active participant, not just an observer. These were tasks that an educator, particularly experienced educators, would be engaged in. I also attended funeral ceremonies as part of my life living in community, demonstrating the multiple identities that Kwame (2017) suggest researchers are likely to have with the communities they work with.

Listening and observation were critical to this research. I was already familiar with the importance and practice of listening deeply and observing; this has been taught to me over the years. As non-local teachers, we were often given feedback by our Yolŋu colleagues in teaching workshops that we talked too much—especially when explaining mathematical and literacy concepts, which were mostly delivered in English. Miriam Rose Ungunmerr, Aboriginal elder from Daly River, applied the concept of *dadirri*, a word from the Ngangikurungkurr people, to describe an ‘inner, deep listening and quiet, still awareness’; this also encompasses a stillness and waiting (Ungunmerr, 2017, p. 14). Atkinson (2002) explains that *dadirri*, as well as observing self, is about how we are in relationship with others (p. 19). Deep listening was critical, as were conversations. As a result of being an active participant in daily events, I had many conversations over the course of the fieldwork with people from Yirrkala and the surrounding Homelands. When engaging in conversations about the research I was very

transparent about the fact that I was doing a PhD. Participants in the research all signed consent forms and I would often circle back to conversations, particularly before including data in the thesis. These conversations, particularly with members of the advisory group who were also participants in the research, were ongoing and extended beyond the 11 months in the field site; as such, it is challenging to place a numerical value on how many conversations I had over the course of the PhD. Often, insights and data would present in random places and unexpected times; for example, conversations could occur while sitting around the campfire (an example is shared in Chapter 6 when a participant developed a conceptual framework of relationality) or a random phone call. These incidental encounters provided relevant data that could not have been planned; however, I was cognisant of what data to include and what to leave out, as previously mentioned I confirmed with participants if they were comfortable with me including their quotes and ideas. I asked my *yapa* (sister) if I could use a photo of her from one of the Galtha planning sessions and she said '*Gutha* (little sister), you can use any photo of me in your thesis, you don't have to ask me'. While this comment meant a lot and demonstrated the trust she had in me, I was continually aware of the ethics of the research and tried to make sure people were well aware of this research and the importance of informed consent.

A Case Study: Galtha Rom at Biranybirany

The year before I started my fieldwork, planning discussions at Yirrkala were occurring regarding a large Galtha Rom to be held at the Homeland of Biranybirany in 2019. Biranybirany was the selected location; it is where the hit song 'Treaty' was written by Yothu Yindi 30 years ago, and it was also where the metaphor for both ways learning emerged. The Galtha was a celebration of Dr. Yunupingu's contribution as an activist and an educational leader and scholar. Yalmai Yunupingu, the wife of Dr. Yunupingu, was granted 6 months study leave to lead the planning of this event. Yalmai, my *ṇāṇḍi*,²⁹ and I had a professional and personal relationship, developed over many years. Consequently, we were excited for the opportunity to work together. I was invited, and in some way it was assumed, particularly based on our relationship and the fact that we were both studying, that I would be involved. My involvement in the Galtha Rom at Biranybirany influenced the direction of the PhD and is an example of a

²⁹ Mother

participatory research approach; as a researcher, I was supporting community needs. It became a case study, detailed in Chapters 7 and 8.

As a result of being part of this process, I participated actively in meetings, was responsible for developing resources, and worked closely with the lead Yolŋu facilitators. Involvement in these meetings increased the time I spent working with rangers, teachers, and community members. It was nearly a 6-month planning process that culminated in a 4-day intergenerational workshop at Biranybirany, attended by over 200 people. At the time, I was not sure how this process contributed to the PhD data collection; however, in retrospect, if I had been more comfortable with moving into the liminal space (Nicholis, 2009), maybe I could have let go of my fears around not collecting enough data. The Galtha Rom planning process was a valuable opportunity to observe human interaction, power, and the reproduction of knowledge, and in many ways, the data that emerged through this process were more useful than formal interviews. As I was a member of the facilitation team, I was often able to move freely in and out of meetings; however, the challenge was to document and interpret these interactions. I had to be careful to be sensitive to the complexities of group dynamics and personalities.

On completion of the Galtha Rom at Biranybirany, I worked for over 12 months collating reflections, photos, lesson plans, student work samples, and speeches to create a resource that documented this event. Developing this document took a considerable amount of time as I spoke with many adults, garnering their thoughts about the Galtha and then transcribing them when required. Some adults involved wrote independent reflections, and some teachers provided student reflections to be included in this document. I sought permission to use material collated during this process in this thesis. I also documented the planning process as this was one of the key success factors of this Galtha Rom; time constraints often make it challenging for teachers to document these events and processes so I hoped that was one way I could give back to the community.

Interviews and Discussions

I was initially reluctant to conduct interviews as a form of data collection, particularly with Yolŋu participants. First, my Yolŋu matha³⁰ skills were not at a high enough standard to discuss conceptual knowledge at length, although if I asked a Yolŋu participant a question in English, I was mostly able to understand responses in Yolŋu matha as I was more confident in the receptive mode of listening than speaking in language. Consequently, a number of participants chose to answer in their first language. Furthermore, relying on English in these discussions was problematic as it reinforced the use of English, and therefore, only those willing or able to converse at a high level in English could be interviewed. Interviews as a method also ran the risk of the questions and concepts being misunderstood, potentially resulting in embarrassment for me and the participant. I was hesitant to use interviews, in particular one-on-one interviews, as many people preferred collective discussions and needed time to engage with the concepts through observation and listening. A recent research project conducted in a Homeland close to the ones I was working with concluded that Yolŋu traditionally seek knowledge through ‘nhina ga njäma ga nhäma’ which translates to mean ‘sit, listen and observe’ (Haynes et al., 2019, p. 50). This study, as well as the feedback I received from participants both verbally and through actions such as simply not wanting to engage in the interview, reinforced that one-on-one interviews were not a preferred method. In saying that, however, several people were happy to participate in interviews.

Despite my initial reluctance to use interviews as a method, I ended up defaulting to them as I became concerned that I would have inadequate data and therefore not be able to meet the requirements of the PhD. The interviews that I conducted were often informal, involved more than one person, and could be referred to in some of the literature as yarning (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010). Yarning has been defined as a semi-structured interview,

an informal and relaxed discussion through which both the researcher and participant journey together visiting places and topics of interest relevant to the research study. Yarning is a process that requires the researcher to develop and build a relationship

³⁰ Aboriginal language from Northeast Arnhem land

that is accountable to Indigenous people participating in the research. (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010, p. 38)

Bessarab and Ng'andu categorised types of yarning, and my interviews and ongoing discussions could be referred to as 'collaborative yarning' as they involved two or more people in a process of exploring ideas together to gain new insights.

Sharing food or a cup of tea while engaging in these interviews was also an important part of the process. I often cooked dinner for people, had them over for a cup of tea, or drove them places. One of the most in-depth and honest interviews occurred while eating hamburgers and watching an AFL (Australian Rules Football) semi-final with two Yolŋu women: a health worker and an educator. The TV was on mute, and scattered throughout the audio recording of the interview were cheers when goals were scored and swearing when goals were missed. The participants spoke honestly and openly of struggles with power and dominant ideology. This research facilitated conversations that did not always seem possible in daily life. The trust shared between these two participants and me, developed over the years, seemed to support deeper discussion, and having another focus, in this case the AFL, reduced the formalities that often seemed to make people uncomfortable. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) explained that the insider role often supports researchers to gain acceptance by participants, and due to this, participants are more likely to be open and therefore there may be a 'greater depth to the data collected' (p. 58). I am not suggesting that I am an insider because of the trusting relationships I have with these women, more importantly, I relate to what Dwyer and Buckle (2009) refer to as the 'notion of the space between' (p. 60) as a way to challenge the dichotomy of insider versus outsider status. I felt that the established relationship with these participants and the informal nature of the 'interview' contributed to the honest discussion. However, I often inhabited an unsettling liminal space. Although interviews like these might seem unplanned or simplistic to organise, they are not. Often it takes time, negotiation, and flexibility to organise these. Sometimes it comes together, and more often than not, it does not.

When I proposed the concept of interviews with some participants, previous interactions and discussions that were informal, natural, and insightful became more uncomfortable with an

increase in formality. For example, when I asked one of the senior rangers, who over the years I had had many conversations with about education, if he would be interested in doing an interview, he asked if payment was involved. This was a relevant question to ask. I felt awkward as it reinforced some of the reservations I had about research in the first place. Despite wanting the process to be reciprocal, I had no way of guaranteeing that it would be or that there would be any benefits to the community. As a PhD scholar I did not have a budget to work with local people on this research. I explained the constraints of the research to the ranger and that there was no financial gain for being part of an interview. Another ranger who was sitting with us at the time was eating cashews that I provided and made a joke about being paid in peanuts. The question from the ranger initiated an interesting discussion between the three of us about the benefits of research. Despite feeling uncomfortable, I encouraged questions and critique. With permission, I returned to this Homeland three times, but unfortunately, an interview with this ranger did not eventuate as I had hoped it might, possibly because he simply did not want to participate and that there was no perceived advantage to him. However, we co-facilitated an LoCP with students in his Homeland, and he was very open in articulating his ideas and commitment to continue teaching Yolŋu knowledge in the classroom. When I asked him if he could explain that to me in an interview, he cracked up laughing, patted me on the shoulder, and said ‘*yaka way gäthu*’—translating to mean ‘no, I’m not doing that daughter’. So I did not pursue it. In retrospect, I could have asked him if I could write up what he was saying and then bring it back to him to confirm—we had a good working relationship developed over a number of years and he was always very open to sharing his ideas and talking about education.

Gender was another consideration during fieldwork. I was in a *rumaru*³¹ (avoidance) relationship with some men that meant I could not talk to them and definitely could not interview them. Despite being in this relationship, I still spent time with these people in a social capacity, but there were certain rules about proximity and communication. In addition, if I was interviewing men, it was important that we sat in a location that was visible to others and that

³¹ An avoidance relationship—between a mother and her son-in-law. In this particular relationship, these two people are not permitted to speak to each other, but communication can occur through other people if necessary. In addition, these two people would not sit close together.

the nature of the interview was known. These protocols were critical in conducting the research in an ethical and responsible way in the communities I was working with.

Overall, I ‘formally’ interviewed 38 participants, 24 of whom were Yolŋu. I transcribed many interviews or sections of interviews, wrote summaries and notes, and continually returned to these throughout the write-up phase. I also engaged in hundreds of informal conversations that, as discussed, were often richer and more insightful than formal interviews. There were a number of people that I had ongoing conversations with, and allowing people the time to think about the concepts I was discussing was important. After leaving the field, some participants emailed me with further thoughts after ongoing conversations. A couple of the participants commented that the ongoing nature of the conversations allowed them time and space to consider the concepts. The interviews improved as I became more comfortable and was able to weave in and out of conversations related to the research questions and as I allowed the space for silence and for answers to emerge when and wherever they did.

Additional Sources of Data

In addition to the above-mentioned methods of data collection, I drew on literature and reports specifically related to the education context of Yirrkala that were critical to theorising local models of education. These documents included research articles, reports, and other school-related documents that were either co-authored or authored by Yolŋu. I also drew on my research journal that included personal reflections as well as fieldnotes that documented my ongoing discussions with participants. A component of my reflexive process was writing small vignettes, like the one I used to open this chapter, to descriptively document experiences. I include some of these vignettes in other chapters.

Data Analysis

The data collected were manually analysed through an ongoing process. I wrote regularly in a fieldwork journal that included photos, quotes, diagrams, reflections, and connections to literature and theories I was reading about. The manual analysis process involved coding key themes that emerged from interviews, discussions, and my fieldnotes. As new data emerged, I added these to the themes and created mind maps and diagrams to help categorise and find common links between the data. I often discussed this de-identified data with my panel,

members of my Advisory Group, and my PhD peers, sharing how my understanding of the key themes were evolving.

I created visual displays on my wall, including displaying the research questions:

- How are local models of learning applied, and what is required for their implementation?
- What is required for engagement in an intercultural didactic space?

While the wording of the questions at times changed according to the audience, these were the central questions guiding the work. As part of my PhD candidature, I was also required to undertake a midterm milestone that involved a formal presentation of the progression of the research to an academic audience. This occurred 6 months after I returned from the field. The process of explaining the emergent findings and answering questions from the audience was useful in gaining further insights into the data and the theory underpinning the research.

Co-Theorising

My long-term relationships with participants allowed me to continue to explore and gather data after I left the geographic location of the field site. This included engaging in a process of co-theorising. Members of the Advisory Group were instrumental in guiding the research. Davies (1999) explained that ‘the relationships between ethnographer and informants in the field, which form the basis for subsequent theorising and conclusion, are expressed through social interaction in which the ethnographer participates; thus ethnographers help to construct the observations that become their data’ (p. 5). The process of theorising continued up to the final stages of writing the thesis.

I was encouraged when participants reflected that our conversations had stimulated them to think more deeply about the concepts related to the research topic, as I had always hoped the process would be in some way reciprocal. Confirmation came from a participant who I had been having ongoing conversations with when I asked her if our discussions had impacted her in any way, and she responded,

Everything is here [points to her head] but this thing [the research] that you are doing, when we work together, everything is coming out. If we don't talk about these things [our conversations on relationships and power], bayju [nothing] comes out. We will keep talking forever, keep sharing.....I thought when you told me these bathala [big] nhawi [um] questions, I've got no idea but then I thought about it and wrote it down and everything comes out and I thought, this is what it looks like. (Participant, personal communication, 26 September 2018)

This participant and I engaged in hours of conversation, often while sitting around campfires, sharing food, or driving from the Homelands to Yirrkala. Her comment demonstrates the importance of ongoing dialogue and allowing people adequate time to reflect and consider the concepts being discussed. I shared the quote above from this participant in my presubmission presentation at Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) while in the final stages of writing my thesis. The academic asked me to re-read the quote and concluded,

There is a lot of talk these days especially in research about the co-creation of knowledge and it seems to me that what we are being given is a highly sophisticated Yolju theorisation of the co-creation of knowledge. What is required to actually do that in practice is something that we haven't really very often had before, we talk about it as being a really important research endeavour and goal, and what she was giving you was a theory of how the co-creation of knowledge happens in practice—the practice of it as well as the theory of it. You've been given some fantastic drawings that are ways of theorising—it seems to be at the heart of that both ways learning and education. It is not something that has to be theorised by academics, you've got a Yolju theory happening here. (Participant, personal communication, 9 September 2021)

Further demonstrating the process of co-theorising and reiterating the importance of creating the time and space occurred one night while sitting around that campfire in a Homeland I visited regularly. The participant casually showed me an image she had drawn to represent her understanding of how Balanda and Yolju could work together more effectively, illustrated in Figure 6. The image she created demonstrated her engagement with the concepts we were

discussing regularly during the year of fieldwork. This image, used with permission, helped theorise the process of collaborative practice in Chapter 6.

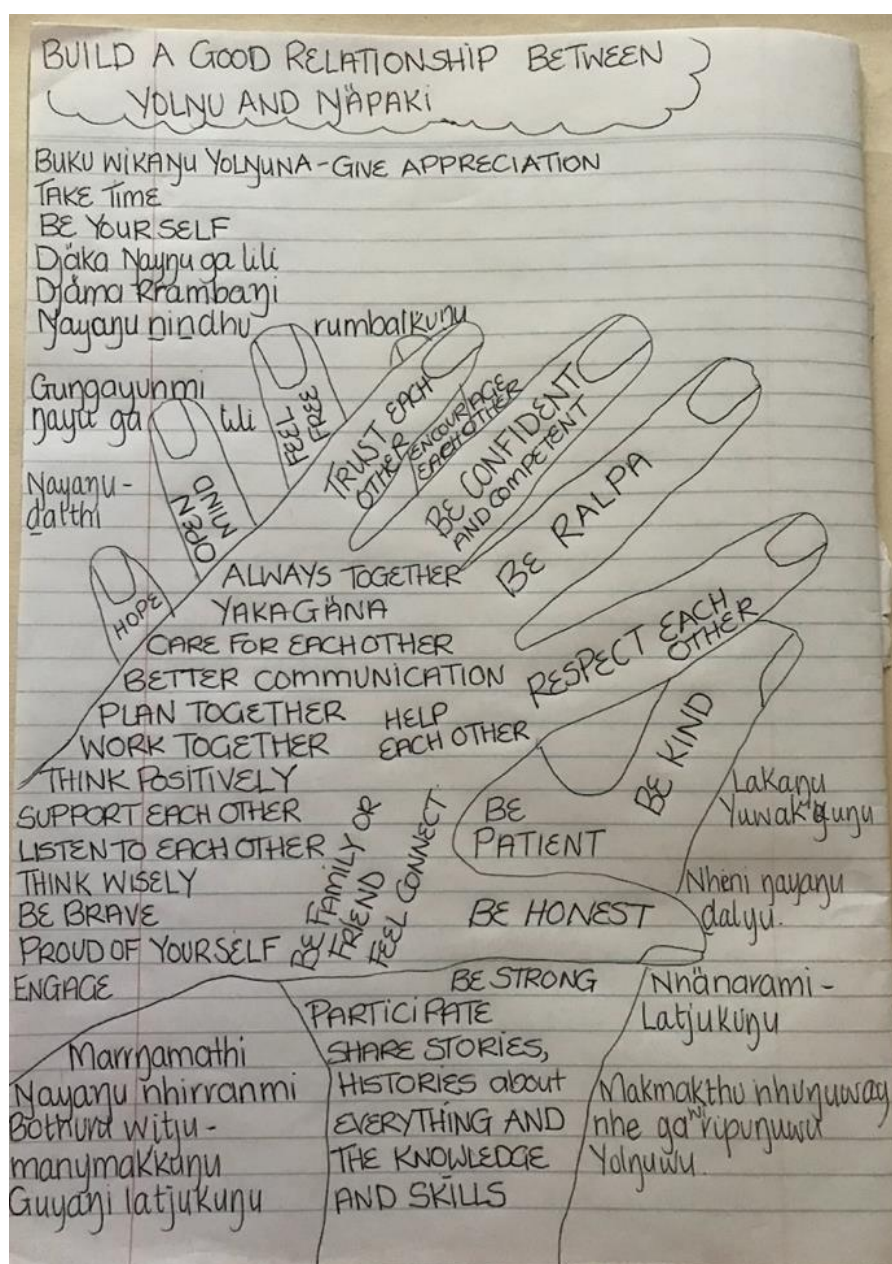


Figure 6: Good Relationships Between Yolŋu and Njāpaki³² (26 September, 2018)

Credit: Lomba Munungurr

³² Non-Indigenous person

Another participant, also a member of the Advisory Group shared with me her thoughts about the way I conducted the research. The following is an excerpt from a discussion we had at an airport when I inquired into her experience of us working together on the research:

Working with you gave me an understanding of what research should be about. The stuff that you have showed me, yes it's has been hard for you, but it's helped me along the way to understand how I should do research—not that I have ever told you that! I wasn't going to tell you this if you didn't ask me, it's something that I don't really think about, it just like 'mmmm—that's a good point' or you know something that I've gained but I don't think it would be useful for you. Do you know what I mean? But you have to ask the question—I wasn't gunna tell you that stuff like because it seems irrelevant, but it is relevant, it *is* relevant. So by talking to you about it [the research], by talking about things like when you first talked to me about it I wasn't really, not engaged, but I didn't think that it was something that I was going to be interested in. Just that the subject was—I didn't know how I was going to relate to it or how I was going to help you really 'cause I thought shit I don't know this stuff, how am I going to help her? So I just listened listened listened listened, and we've talked about this how many times. So I think that constant communication with you has helped. (Participant, personal communication, 9 September 2019)

These demonstrations of engagement with the research often occurred very casually, in a natural and unforced way, especially when space was created for discussion in an environment of trust. In the daily lives of organisations, there is rarely time to deeply and collectively examine factors that impact people's lives. In this sense, it was a privilege to undertake this thesis and have the time to reflect and analyse the educational context in which I had worked for many years. While it was a privilege, the research was challenging and required a critical approach to manage the complexities. Although the Australian National University (ANU) ethics application process required me to address ethical ways of working, there were additional context-specific aspects of the research that I continually navigated. Some of the challenges related to sharing knowledge, remaining accountable to the community, language barriers, and ongoing grief and loss, which I discussed in section 3.4.

3.6 Reporting Back: Honouring the Contribution of Participants

Reporting back and maintaining connections with the community was a priority while I wrote this thesis thousands of kilometres from Yirrkala. I was often in contact with some of the members of my Advisory Group to keep them updated with progress on the thesis. One of the members of my Advisory Group read an early draft of the Galtha case study, and her feedback was critical. After I completed the fieldwork, I was required to present an update of my research at the ANU. One of my Yolŋu advisors connected via Zoom into this seminar and on completion of the presentation sent a text saying, 'I just had a brain wave! Your PhD *djäma* (work) can also be used for health!' It was encouraging to have confirmation that the concepts were applicable across other organisations.

In April 2020, I planned a trip to Yirrkala to facilitate a small workshop to discuss the findings of the research and explain the progression of the theoretical framework. I was hoping to share the data and get feedback to co-theorise a chapter. Unfortunately, COVID-19 prevented travel and the possibility of coordinating a workshop. However, I rescheduled this trip to June 2021 and had many discussions about the work with members of my Advisory Group and other people connected to the research. I travelled to a Homeland and returned to the campfire, a familiar place where many discussions about this work had taken place. Around this campfire, I read sections of my thesis, focusing on the Yolŋu theoretical frameworks connected to both ways education and Galtha. It felt right to be in this place having the discussion, although initially I felt awkward dragging a bound draft of the thesis from my troop carrier³³ and asking people if it was okay if I read some of the work. It was in moments like these that I felt very 'white' and uncomfortable. The discussion continued for hours, and during the evening, a few different people came in and out of the conversation as it ebbed and flowed into topics related to self-determination, relationships, aspirations, and the desire for further education that recognised the value of Yolŋu knowledge and research.

Later that week, I organised a more formal discussion with some members of the Advisory Group and a few others who had been engaged in this work for a number of years to talk about the progression of the research. On brown paper (see Figure 7), I documented some of the key

³³ A type of 4WD vehicle

aspects of the work, focusing on how Galtha Rom is connected to broader literatures and theories, a policy timeline that illustrated how fluctuating policy has impacted pedagogy, and I also shared the model of collaborative practice, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 6. The discussion continued for hours, and it was reaffirmed that the right process had been followed, and I was documenting the work in the right way.

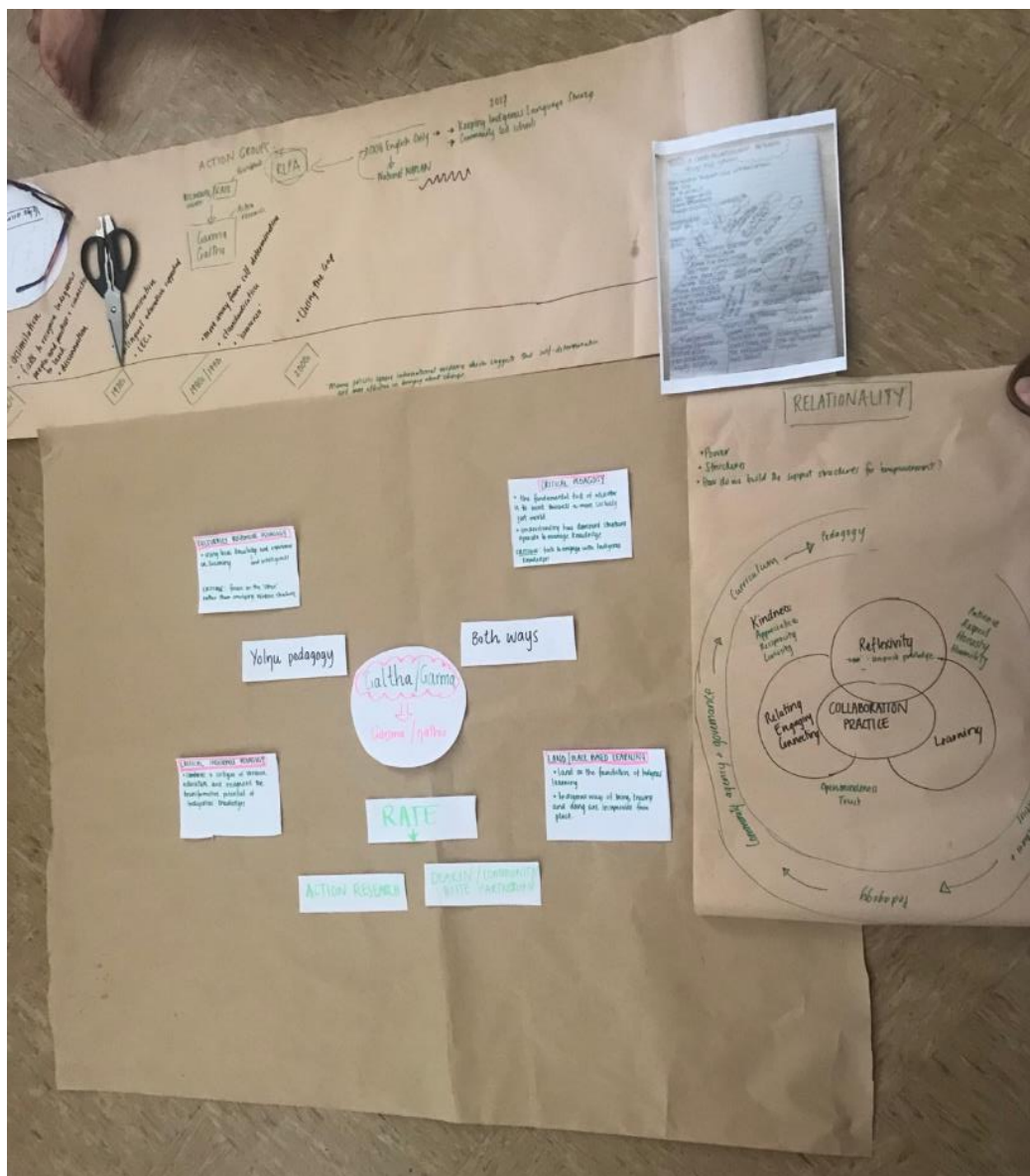


Figure 7: Documents Shared at Report Back (6 July, 2021)

3.7 Conclusion

This qualitative ethnographic research approach was designed to reflect the context, and I used a variety of methods to collect data. The research focused on learning ‘from’ and ‘with’

rather than 'about'. The research included elements of participatory research and was an ongoing relational process that required deep listening, observation, and reflexivity. Considering the historical implications of research and Indigenous peoples (K. L. Martin, 2008; Nakata, 2013; L. T. Smith, 2012; S. Wilson, 2008), it was critical that as a non-Indigenous person I adopted a reflexive approach and recognised my potential complicity in educational systems, which I discussed with mentors. I considered the *process* of this research as important as the outputs and was responsive to community programs and activities. An example of this responsiveness was my involvement in planning the Galtha Rom at Biranybirany that required me to inhabit a liminal space, an in-between space that Nicholis (2009, p. 121) argued decentres the position of researchers by challenging objective control. Although at times it was challenging to understand how this Galtha Rom would inform the thesis, it was a practice in letting go of control and designing research that responded to the needs of community.

The opportunity to engage in this doctoral research process was profound and, in many ways, life changing. S. Wilson (2008), in his book *Research Is Ceremony*, although directed towards Indigenous scholars, proposed that 'if research doesn't change you as a person, then you haven't done it right' (p. 135). It certainly changed me, and several Yolŋu participants shared with me that they learnt a lot as we journeyed through this process together.

During my candidature, I attended a workshop facilitated by Māori scholar Moana Jackson. He shared 10 ethics that he explained should underpin research, one of which was *celebration*, and this stuck with me. In an article, he was quoted as saying,

If as Indigenous peoples we are to research who we are, we should also take the time to celebrate our resilience, our survival and take joy in what we have managed to keep. For those non-Indigenous people who wish to be allies, who may wish to research Indigenous issues, take some simple pleasure in the celebration of what Indigenous peoples achieve and know that every time they exercise their right to self determination, that is not a denial of your right to be who you are, that is simply a reclaiming of what has been taken by history from us. (as cited in McInerney, 2016, ethic #9)

This research is a celebration of what has been, and continues to be, achieved over the years at Yirrkala and in the Laynhapuy Homelands. One of these areas of celebration is the extensive work, including research, that has been done by Yolngu in the educational context. It is important to remember that research is not a new concept at Yirrkala. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a focus on community-based action research, which transformed education—this research developed local theories and created an applied approach to learning. In the next chapter I discuss this process and how it continues to influence education today.

Chapter 4 Community-Based Educational Reform

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2 I explained how the term education is generally only associated with the Western schooling process that occurs in institutions. However, education is much broader than this, as all individual societies have forms of training and criteria related to what makes a person knowledgeable. In Chapter 2, I also discussed how Western schooling often disconnects learners from their environments, and I drew on educational theory to explain that a critical approach to remote schooling is required. I established a theoretical framework based on a number of pedagogies to demonstrate that local both ways education, the preferred approach to education in the communities I worked with, has clear theoretical links to broader literatures.

In this chapter, I explain the historical context of educational reform initiated at Yirrkala and the Homelands and how dominant models of education were challenged and innovative approaches to both schooling and tertiary studies, based on Yolŋu epistemologies, were developed. Importantly, in this chapter, I discuss how community-based teacher education courses enabled local staff to become teachers and engage in action research to develop local applied theories of education. I discuss how this academic and theoretical engagement resulted in the development of a Yolŋu curriculum and pedagogy that has clear links to the broader educational literature, particularly critical pedagogy and critical Indigenous pedagogy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Freire, 1996; Giroux, 2010; Grande, 2008; Kincheloe, 2012) and land-/Place-based pedagogies (Fogarty & Schwab, 2012; Gruenewald, 2003) discussed in Chapter 2. Yolŋu approaches to education, developed decades ago, are still applied on the ground today, but over the years, institutional support for them has wavered and sometimes been altogether lacking. In the latter half of this chapter, I discuss the role of local educators, government failure to continue to support community-based teacher education, and community understandings of both ways, in particular the local pedagogy of Galtha Rom.

4.2 Community Action

In this section, I examine the connection between the Homelands Movement, community-based teacher education, and bilingual education. I demonstrate how a PAR model that

involved a partnership between the schools at Yirrkala and tertiary institutions created opportunities to theorise and apply models of learning that reflected Yolŋu epistemologies, essentially leading the evolution of both ways education.

Homeland Movement and Requests for Community-Based Education

The training and education for Aboriginal staff working in schools in remote NT contexts began in the 1960s. Only short courses for assistant teachers were available, and in 1968, they expanded into a full-time teacher education course at Kormilda College in Darwin (Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990). However, these original courses were delivered only in Darwin, which meant that if local people in remote contexts wanted to gain a teaching qualification, they were required to leave their families and Homelands. At this time, there were no options for local Aboriginal people from remote contexts to study in their home communities. Elders rejected this and advocated for courses based in the community. As described by Marika-Mununggiritj (1990), requiring students to leave their home communities for study raised questions about the ‘tremendous social and human cost of study in institutions located away from the student’s community’ (p. 15). Elders concluded that study away from cultural and support systems threatened people’s wellbeing.

Another important part of the education story in the region is the opening of the residential school, Dhupuma College, in 1972, located at Gulkula in Northeast Arnhem Land. The complex was originally built to service the European Launcher Development Organisation, a tracking station connected to Woomera in South Australia. After the premises were vacated, it became Dhupuma College, a secondary education facility that supported many communities in the region. William McMahon, the then prime minister, in his opening speech at Dhupuma stated that government objectives

must be based on plans which recognise the wishes and the aspirations of the aborigines [*sic*] themselves; and which provides the opportunities to develop their own personalities and abilities: And which involve the aboriginal people themselves in the working out of those plans. (McMahon, 1972, p. 2)

These aspirations reflected the Commonwealth agenda of self-determination. However, despite community support, in 1980 the college closed abruptly, and the provision of education was transferred to the NT.

During the 1970s, several requests and submissions advocated for the teacher training courses to be delivered in home communities in the NT. Two of the most significant were the Brandl report in 1974 (Brandl, 1974) and the views communicated to Somerlad and Duke as part of 'TAFE needs Aborigines' (Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990, p. 14). These reports and requests were connected with the Homelands Movement, discussed in Chapter 1. The movement to Homelands, as Christie (2006a) explained, was as much an 'education imperative as an economic or religious one' (p. 28). From a Yolŋu perspective, 'one could participate properly in the growing up of young children, only if they were in the right place with the right people, and away from some of the bad influences of settlement life' (p. 28). These sentiments are still echoed by many adults and young people in Homelands today; participants in this doctoral research often stated that Homelands were a preferable location to bring up young people.

During the establishment of Homelands, Yolŋu elders identified the importance of teacher training and education for local Homelands people to become teachers in their communities. One of the most influential consultations was conducted in 1974 by Maria Brandl and two local elders, Daymbalipu Mununggurr and Wäli Wunungmurra, across a number of Laynhapuy Homelands including Garrthalala, Gurrumuru, Gäṅgaṅ, and Bäniyala. This team documented the aspirations of these communities to develop education in the Homelands (Brandl, 1974). The report recognised two important elements; first, training was needed for local people, and second, a both ways approach to education was required. It was clear from this consultation that people wanted what they referred to as a 'balanced' approach to education—they advocated for education that included both Yolŋu and 'European' language and culture learning:

Two cultures will be taught in the school—European and Aboriginal. To learn only the English language and European culture is too narrow-minded. If they get too much

European culture the children will turn against local Aboriginal people. It will destroy their natural identity. (Brandl, 1974, p. 64)

In addition, the elders were clear that the languages taught in schools would vary from place to place, depending on the clan on whose land the school would be located. The consultation captured local aspirations, and the responses given by the elders through this process were based on 'deep thought and inspired thinking' (Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990, p. 11) that were instrumental in guiding the community development plans for Homelands education. The report clearly articulated the desire of Yolŋu to be the primary deliverers of education. The role of Balanda teachers was to assist the process rather than direct or take over: 'We don't like Europeans in big mobs coming in all the time. Only when people want them to come in. Later on, we might ask a European teacher to come in' (Brandl, 1974, p. 84).

Bilingual Education and Local Governance

At the time of the Homelands Movement, bilingual education was being established at Yirrkala School and in other parts of the NT. In 1972 Gough Whitlam, the then prime minister, announced support for bilingual education for students who spoke an Aboriginal language. This decision came 23 years after Robert Menzies (then prime minister) had acknowledged, that for students in remote NT contexts, a bilingual approach to education may be the most relevant form of education (Devlin et al., 2017). At the time this policy decision was described as 'one of the most significant Australian Government innovations in Aboriginal education' (Tandy, 1973, p. 21). Disbray (2014) concludes that this decision sparked a time of 'remarkable creativity, educational engagement and innovation' (p. 126).

The implementation of bilingual education at Yirrkala is of historical and contemporary significance; it was a rare example of ambitious policy that shifted who had the power and controlled curriculum in remote NT schools. These NT Indigenous language bilingual programs represented a significant paradigm shift in Australian Government thinking, as Aboriginal education extended into the political, transcending linguistic and education domains (Nicholls, 2005). It was an example of the self-determination agenda extending into education (Schwab, 2013). Bilingual education supported the maintenance of languages and culture and was a crucial step in the movement towards Yolŋu control of education (Stockley et al., 2017). It is

evident that schools that commenced bilingual programs in the 1970s have led the way in both ways schooling—that is, developing programs that include local language and bilingual programs, and local knowledges. In Central Australia, four schools have a Warlpiri language and culture model that has been developed over four decades, which dates back to the commencement of bilingual education (Disbray & Martin, 2018, p. 25). In addition, Community Education Centres (CECs), as they were called at the time, became sites of meaningful employment for Aboriginal people as well as places to take leadership and roles of authority (Devlin et al., 2017a). Connected to employment through these bilingual programs was a new focus on Indigenous teachers being trained, which initiated a shift from ‘aide’ to ‘teacher’ (Ober & Bat, 2007, p. 71).

Despite the implementation of a bilingual program, many Yolŋu had concerns about the Eurocentric curriculum as well as the power held by Balanda in the school (Marika, 1999b; Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990; Stockley et al., 2017; M. Yunupingu, 1999). In response to this control, the mature children of the ‘1960s Land Rights Warriors’ emerged as activists in the struggle to gain community control of education, both at Yirrkala and in the Homelands (Stockley et al., 2017, p. 142). During this time, Yolŋu educators held meetings and formed a working group, the Djarrma Group, to discuss school policies and curriculum, and by 1986, work was underway on both ways education (Ngurruwutthun, 1991, p. 107). The Djarrma Group comprised of Yolŋu teachers from Yirrkala and the regional Laynhapuy Association. In October 1986, the group organised a conference to develop an action plan for education at Yirrkala and the Homelands schools. This group initiated educational reforms as well as structural changes to governance and leadership at the school that changed the direction of education at Yirrkala (Ngurruwutthun, 1991). The way that Yolŋu challenged these structures, as documented in the 1980s, aligns with a Freirean model of education that involves *conscientización*, a process of becoming conscious of and taking action against oppressive elements of reality (Freire, 1996, p. 35), a consciousness that supports one to see oneself as part of a world community (Blakeney, 2005, p. 121).

Tertiary Partnerships

The partnership in the 1980s between the schools at Yirrkala, the community, Deakin University in Victoria, and Batchelor College in the NT was another contributing factor in educational reform in this region. The partnership with Deakin University began when academics Stephen Kemmis and John Henry first visited Yirrkala in 1983 to engage with community leaders about establishing an appropriate model of teacher education. Deakin University had a commitment to Aboriginal education, an interest in research that was concerned with the devolution of the control of schools to local communities and an established structure for negotiating alternative school and community-based action research (Henry & McTaggart, 1991, p. 9). Considering this, Deakin University was well placed to support the development of Aboriginal teacher education programs in NT communities. It was the aspiration of community leaders for teacher education courses to be facilitated in community, and the *dilak*³⁴ played a critical role in theorising, supporting, and mentoring Yolŋu educators undertaking these courses.

Batchelor College was the NT tertiary institution involved in teacher education during this time. The Diploma of Teaching, at that stage only available on campus at Batchelor College, went through a reaccreditation process during 1984 and 1985 with input from the Yirrkala Action Group. Consequently, in 1986, a pilot Remote Area Teacher Education (RATE) program commenced for Homelands Learning Centre teachers in the Northeast Arnhem region. There were three stages to this Associate Diploma of Teaching (Aboriginal Schools), which qualified graduates to become classroom teachers in their community schools. The fourth year (Stage 4) accredited teachers with a Diploma of Teaching, qualifying community-based educators to teach outside their communities in any school in Australia. In 1986, as the result of the collaboration between Deakin University and Batchelor College, the Batchelor of Arts (Education) commenced, known as the D-BATE (Deakin–Batchelor Aboriginal Teacher Education) program. D-BATE and RATE were two concurrent paths to teacher education. By 1990, Batchelor College was offering a Stage 3 program with a community-centred approach at Yirrkala and in an additional 15 NT communities.

³⁴ Elders, important person of authority

A core component of the partnership between Deakin University, Batchelor College, and Yirrkala was the research model embedded in these courses. The PAR model validated and recognised Yolŋu as researchers in their own right (Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990). Yolŋu were given the opportunity to gain formal qualifications, and engage in and initiate learning that theorised local knowledge and languages. Dr. Yunupingu stated that it was the first time he had experienced education that was not assimilationist (M. Yunupingu, 1999). During this time, Aboriginal teachers in the NT were writing and publishing papers about the action research process and the epistemological understandings of education in their home communities (Hall, 2016). This was documented in the book edited by Henry and McTaggart (1991) *Aboriginal Pedagogy: Aboriginal Teachers Speak Out* and in doing so positioned local teachers and elders as the experts and researchers. Engaged in this PAR approach, Yolŋu worked collaboratively to critique the school context and were guided by elders to develop solutions to the Western-only models of schooling in their communities.

Throughout the process, the teachers were guided by their own collaborative research into their problems and practices. They gathered stories from the old people. They gathered information about how the school worked and did not work for them. They made changes and watched what happened. They thought carefully about the consequences of the changes they made, and then they made still further changes on the basis of the evidence they had gathered. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p. 304)

By engaging with research in this way Yolŋu theories of education, relevant to the context, were developed and conceptual frameworks constructed. Importantly, as I illustrated in the theoretical discussion in Chapter 2, these local theoretical frameworks are connected to broader theories of pedagogy such as culturally responsive pedagogy, land-based pedagogy, and critical pedagogy.

During my fieldwork, I asked an educator who had gone through the RATE program in the 1980s about her experience of RATE, and she responded,

I loved it. I loved every bit. The knowledge is here in our communities, it's with our families and our elders. The resources we need are here in our communities. In the

past when people had to go away for study there were many problems with people leaving their families. It split families up when people had to go away. RATE was an excellent idea. The elders fought for this. By having community-based education it is keeping the aspirations the elders had alive. (Yolŋu participant, personal communication, 9 May 2018)

RATE was based on the premise that local knowledge and language was an essential part of formal learning in schools. In the next section, I discuss the locally developed theories in detail.

4.3 Metaphors as Theory: The Foundation of Community Research

Brackish Water

As discussed in Chapter 2, Gaṇma (see Figure 8) is a Yirritja metaphor that theorises a local educational approach to education. Gaṇmawuy is an actual place, where fresh water (*raypiny*) and salt water (*dhamurrŋ*) mix to create brackish water (B. Yunupingu et al., 1991). It has been used as a metaphor to describe the meeting and interaction of Western and Yolŋu knowledges (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Marika-Mununggiritj, 1990; M. Yunupingu, 1989). Although this metaphor has been documented in a number of academic papers, I use it cautiously and, to some extent, reluctantly. Sophie Creighton's (2003) doctoral thesis, an ethnographic historical examination of the intercultural context at Yirrkala, was developed through the philosophy of Gaṇma. Although this Yirritja metaphor was discussed in depth in her thesis, in a statement at the start of her work, she disclosed that since the completion of the thesis, Yolŋu leaders of Northeast Arnhem Land decided that the word Gaṇma was no longer appropriate to use in the school context. Creighton continued that 'the use of the term in Arnhem Land may cause offence and caution is recommended' (p. i). Over the years, the reasons elders objected to this word being used in the school context have been shared with me. It seems that because the nature of the knowledge connected to Gaṇma is not considered to be open and public, the term should not be used. Consequently, I am presented with an academic and personal dilemma. If I included the word and metaphor in the thesis, despite it already being publicly documented, am I ignoring Yolŋu protocols? If I select not to discuss it, am I silencing the academic engagement and local theories that have been critical in shaping the progressive models of education that are evident at Yirrkala and extensively documented?

This dilemma highlights the epistemological differences between Yolŋu and Western knowledges, a tension that I identified in the methodology chapter and a concept I discuss in more detail in Chapter 6. For the purposes of this thesis, I use the writings emerging from Yirrkala, as well as information that has been shared with me with permission, to illustrate the academic engagement with education. However, it highlights an important point; that is, different knowledge systems operate in different ways and these differences must be understood in the context of the education—both in the academy, in schools and within education departments. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of Yolŋu having full control of when and how knowledge is used in schooling.

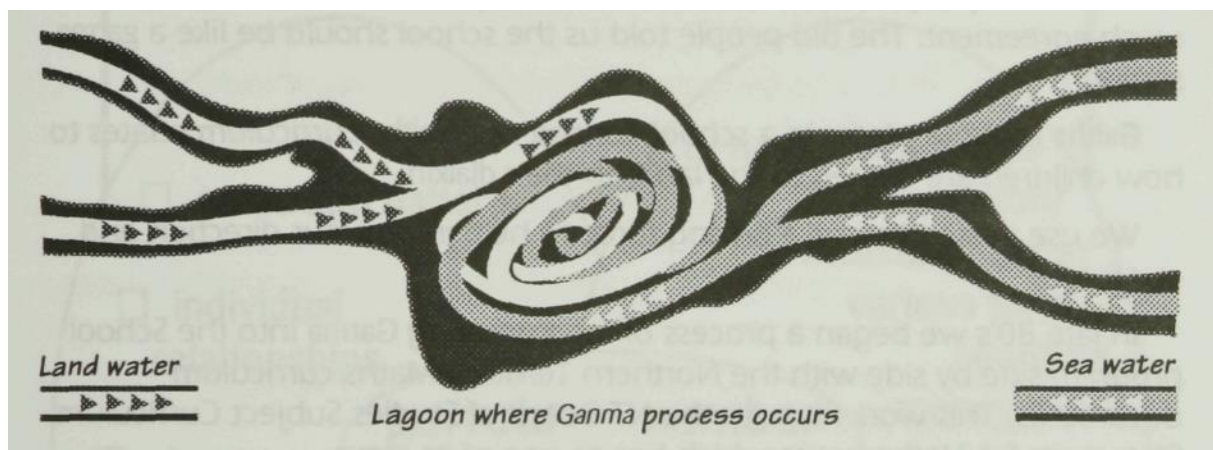


Figure 8: The Image of Ganma (Marika, 1999. p. 113)

The concept of Ganma has no English equivalent. Helen Watson-Verran, an academic from Deakin University who worked with Yolŋu on the development of this conceptual framework, explained that the Ganma metaphor needs to be used with care. She suggested that the concept may be misinterpreted by Westerners, and there are differences in the way this metaphor is understood cross-culturally:

For many non-Aboriginal people the notion of a deep pool of brackish water is an object of distaste, for Yolŋu it expresses a foundation of useful knowledge. In contrast, for Yolŋu people brackish water is a source of inspiration expressing an admirable balance of natural processes which people should seek to emulate in social life. (Watson-Verran, 1992b, p. 8)

The analysis by Watson-Verran aligns with Marika-Mununggiritj (1990) who argued that both ways education was not a dualism; rather, this brackish water creates possibility for creative intermingling and the production of new understandings. The brackish water, where the waters meet, is an ecological rich and productive place, and is integral to the lifecycles for many species. As discussed in Chapter 2, the brackish water is a comingling where Yirritja and Dhuwa are intensely present, with each moiety being ‘most intense, since each is most itself when it is in the presence of the other’ (Kemmis et al., 2013, p. 139). Dr. Yunupingu used the concept of Gaṇma and applied it to an action research model to develop a model of both ways education, as illustrated in Figure 9. He argued that the research at Yirrkala needed be ‘critical education research’ (p. 104); that is, it needed to start with what emerged from ‘Yolŋu minds’ (p. 103) rather than dominant Western ideas, and the research needed to shift power (B. Yunupingu, 1991). He explained that Gaṇma research begins with the moieties Yirritja and Dhuwa, and the *gapu* (sacred waters) are connected to these. The Yirritja fresh water represented in Figure 9, *Dhalatj*, meaning ‘calm after a flood’ (p. 193), is a water source connected to Yirritja ancestral stories (Creighton, 2003). *Milŋurr* is a Dhuwa fresh water created by the *Djaṅka’wu* creation sisters and is known as ‘the place of knowledge and seat of learning’ (Buku-Larrngay-Mulka, 1999, p. 74). As described by Creighton (2003), the waters in the diagram are the Dhuwa and Yirritja sources of life, knowledge, and identity. According to Yunupingu’s model, the arrows from both these waters lead to the word *dhawurpunaramirri* (the mouth of a river where the two waters meet).

The next layer of Yunupingu’s diagram relates to knowledge, *dharrpal* (‘inside’: sacred and restricted) and *warran(g)ul* (outside and public) (p. 101). In the same way as Yunupingu, Wunungmurra delineated dhar[r]pal (sacred knowledge) and warranul (open/public knowledge) in his diagram, which explains a ‘two way curriculum’ (Figure 10). In the centre of Wunungmurra’s diagram, the word *dhawurpunaramirri* is used to describe the process of ‘deciding what knowledge must be saved and what can be given’ (Wunungmurra, 1989, p. 14). This demonstrates that in both ways education, a process of knowledge selection is required that seems to conflict with McConaghy’s (2000) critique, discussed in Chapter 2, that there is rarely ‘any debate about the relative merits of, for example, Galtha rom theory or the *dhawurpunaramirri theory*’ (McConaghy, 2000, p. 11). Both these models clearly illustrate

that in both ways education, there is certain Yolŋu knowledge that can be shared and knowledge that must remain dharrpal.³⁵

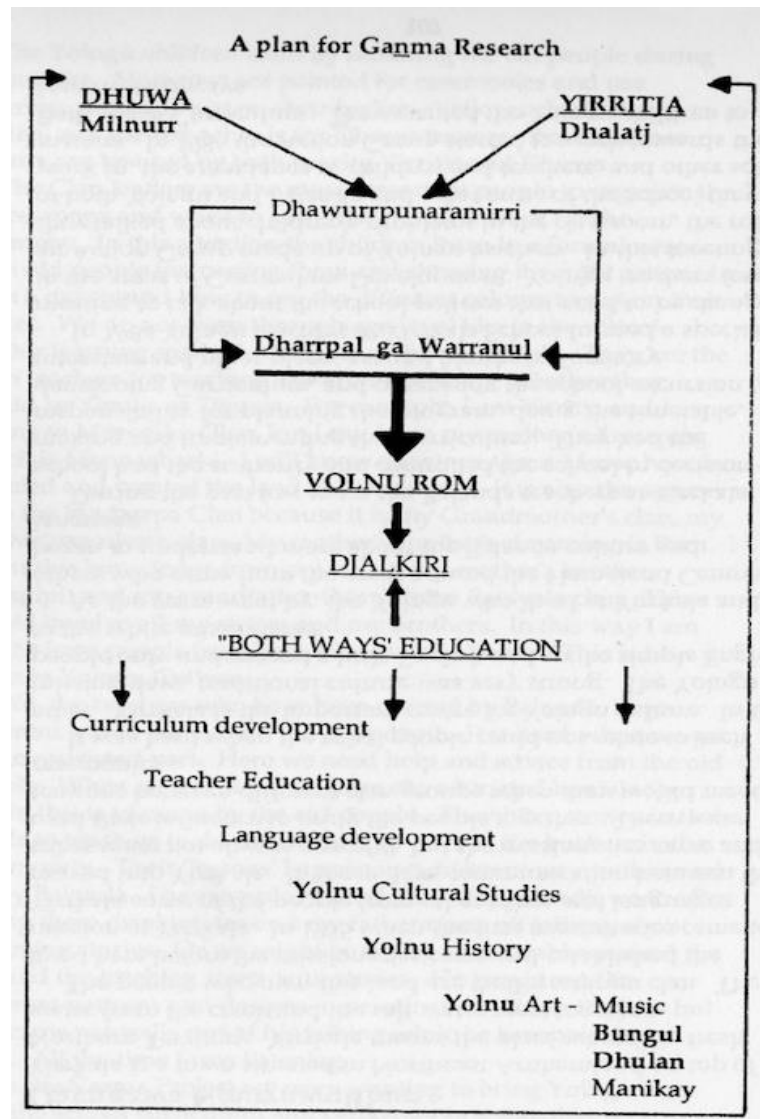


Figure 9: Gaṇma Research (B. Yunupingu, 1991, p. 105)

It is important to note that in Figure 9, Yunupingu's research model, teacher education is a component of the Gaṇma research approach to both ways education. It reiterates the ongoing aspirations for community-based teacher education and the interdependence of both ways education and teacher education.

³⁵ Inside: sacred and restricted

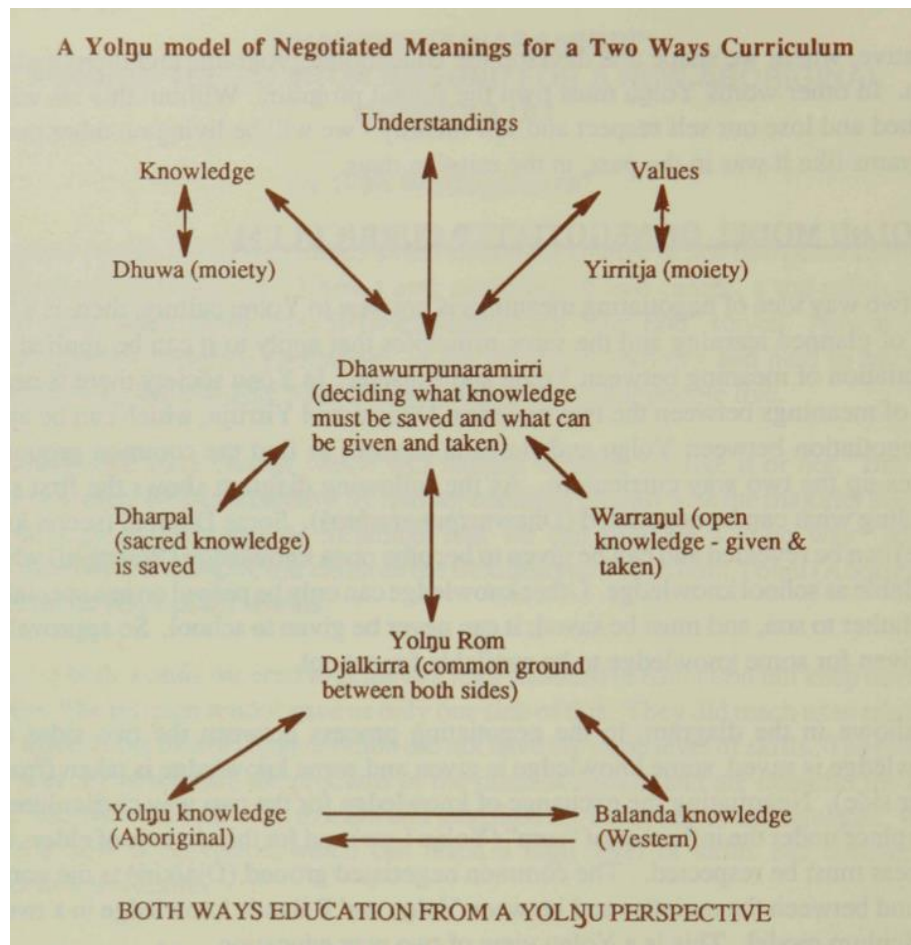


Figure 10: Both ways education from a Yolŋu perspective (Wunungmurra, 1988, p. 14)

Nathu: The Cycad Nut

Nathu is a metaphor I discussed in the theoretical framework of Chapter 1 to theorise the concept of power embedded in curriculum and schooling. The nathu metaphor was applied in the school context by a group of RATE educators as part of their action research during the community-based teacher education courses, discussed in Section 4.2. The development of the nathu metaphor by this group of Yolŋu educators further demonstrates a critical approach to education, reiterating the importance of community-based teacher education that recognises and facilitates Yolŋu epistemologies. The nathu metaphor problematises externally developed curriculum imposed *without* community input.

A participant who worked with the remote teachers during this time elaborated this in an interview:

Yolŋu were not opposed to change but they needed time to consider the consequences of the change being proposed. They objected to change being imposed without consultation. If change was required they needed the opportunity to talk through the possible solutions and identify the varied consequences. (Participant, personal reflection, 17 July 2020)

In summary, the metaphors of Gaṇma and ṇathu were critical in developing theories of education during the 1980s and 1990s. These theories continue to inform the philosophy and practice at Yirrkala School today. From this symbolic and metaphorical thinking, an applied approach to education emerged—Garma Maths and Galtha Rom.

4.4 Pedagogy and Curriculum

Garma Maths Curriculum

As part of the development of both ways curriculum, Yolŋu elders from different clan groups ‘introduced key terms from the Yolŋu philosophical/ceremonial vocabulary to institute a radically performative account of knowledge for school-based pedagogy’ (Verran & Christie, 2011, p. 7). The word Gaṇma, as it was used in the school context, was replaced with Garma. The elders wanted a word that described a curriculum that included both Yirritja and Dhuwa clans: an environment where learning begins in an open forum. The word Garma was first given to the school to use in the context of education in 1986 by Wukaka Marika, leader of the Rirratjingu clan (Garma Maths Policy, 2014³⁶). Garma is a place, an open ceremonial ground, a forum where ideas can be shared and agreement negotiated (Marika, 1999b, p. 7), and in the context of the curriculum, it refers to knowledge that is open and accessible for everyone. The term Garma begins with an agreement that ‘there is a job to be done and we are the right people in the right place to make it happen’ (Verran & Christie, 2011, p. 10).

³⁶ This is a school-based document

The term Garma

identified knowledge production analogously in the located, negotiated, problem-based work of Yolŋu ceremonials where agreement is generated through the careful collaborative performance of difference—each clan group articulating their difference (songs, paintings, dance movements, names and languages) to generate an agreed knowledge creation for the performance for the here and now. (Verran & Christie, 2011, p. 8)

As described by Verran and Christie (2011), Garma can be understood in a similar way to the Deweyan public that is called into existence ‘by a “public problem”, an issue of substantial or serious significance’ (p. 8). With careful consideration and consultation with elders, the Garma Maths curriculum was written, a document that developmentally mapped learning from a Yolŋu epistemological framework. Creighton (2003) described the goal of the elders during this time as protecting an ‘enduring Yolngu knowledge system and at the same time create a meaningful curriculum’ (p. v). It was decided that only the public/open knowledge would be taught in the school, and the sacred knowledge would be taught outside the school (Wunungmurra, 1989); the Garma Maths curriculum reflected this.

The Garma Maths curriculum has four strands: gurruṯu, number, location, and djalkiri (Marika, 1999b). The two circles on the left, see Figure 11, represent the two Yolŋu knowledge strands—gurruṯu (kinship) and djalkiri (foot, footprint, foundation), and the two red circles represent the Western mathematics curriculum—number and location. Watson (1988) explained that the Western and Yolŋu strands are not comparable as concepts but rather are ‘analogous in the role that they play in the conceptual system that underlies the Western form of life and the Yolŋu form of life’ (p. 20). In other words, ‘the use of gurruṯu and djalkiri together accomplish the same sorts of social ends that the use of number and locational practices accomplish in the ṇäpaki world’ (Yirrkala Action Group, 2014, p. 4). Through the implementation of Garma Maths, students’ first language supports concept development, and scaffolding into Standard Australian English occurs.

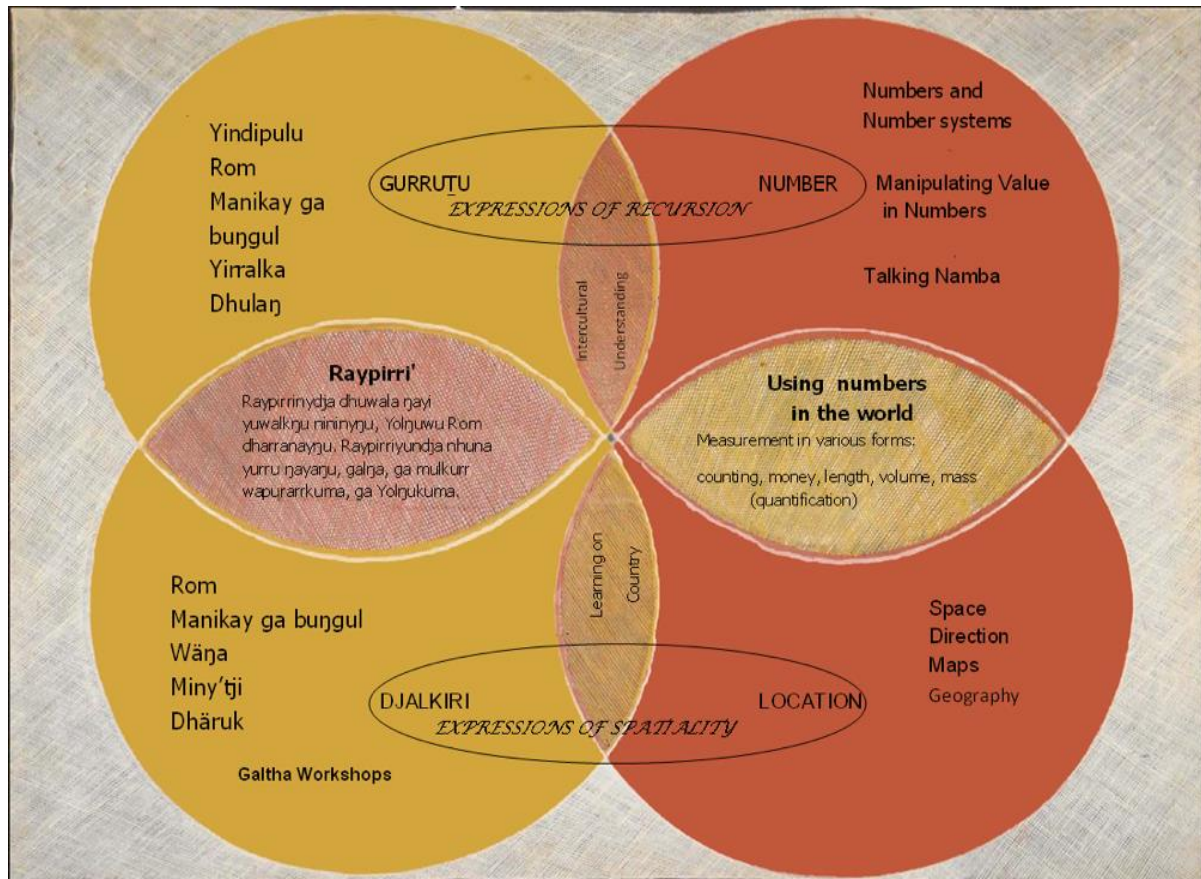


Figure 11: Garma Maths Curriculum³⁷ (Yirrkalā Action Group, 2014, p. 1)

Although the Western and Yolŋu strands emerge from different knowledge systems, there are unifying links between the gurruṭu and number strands, and the djalkiri and location strands. *Recursion* is the connection between the number and gurruṭu strands, and *spatiality* is the link between the djalkiri and location strands. Gurruṭu is the recursive kinship system that maps people not only to extended families but also to networks of clans, languages, estates, totems, and so on (Christie & Greateorex, 2004), and the number system is the 'recursive system that orders social life in contemporary Australia' (Yirrkalā Action Group, 2014, p. 3). Both gurruṭu and numbers are recursive systems. Djalkiri translates to mean foot, footprint, foundation; it is concerned with the way Yolŋu people 'locate themselves in space, understand land ownership, and negotiate kinship relationships and ceremonial responsibilities' (Yirrkalā Action Group, 2014, p. 13). Through the Djalkiri strand, students learn about 'their personal and social capability by deepening their understanding about their responsibilities and

³⁷ The Garma Maths map was painted by Ŋalawurr Mununggurr.

relationships within Yolŋu knowledge systems that connect the personal, through kin and community, to the land, the sea, the heavens, and all living things' (Yirrkala Action Group, 2014, p. 13). The Western location strand is concerned with Western concepts of geography, mapping, space, and direction. The Garma Maths curriculum is structured this way as these strands are connected to the existing 'social and intellectual context at Yirrkala and Laynhapuy homeland centre communities' (Yirrkala Action Group, 2014, p. 4).

The Garma Maths curriculum is structured developmentally in a similar way to mainstream curriculum documents, and consequently, students are expected to learn certain information at a specified age. Although this curriculum was developed in the 1980s and 1990s, it has evolved to reflect the changing national curriculums and includes clear links to the Australian Curriculum, which is documented in the Yambirrpa School Garma Maths Policy (2014) endorsed by the Yambirrpa School Council. The application of this integrated approach to curriculum is explained further in Chapter 8. By the end of their schooling, students are expected to have developed knowledge and capabilities, as identified by elders, that will support them to be citizens in a contemporary world.

The exit outcome of the Gurruṯu strand require students to 'demonstrate their understandings of ceremonies, rules, laws and relationship systems. They will begin to use their own clan language. They will be able to competently and confidently define the Yolŋu World View.' (Yirrkala Action Group, 2014, p. 7)

The exit outcome for the Djalkiri strand require students to 'confidently and competently use Yolŋu ceremonial processes and ideas to define meaning. They will be able to integrate Yolŋu knowledge about land with Western knowledge.' (Yirrkala Action Group, 2014, p. 13)

During the development of this curriculum, elders articulated that for Yolŋu students to learn about Balanda knowledge and culture, they must 'understand themselves first and foremost as Yolngu, as inheritors of and contributors to Yolngu knowledge and culture and identities and communities; only then can they take what will strengthen and help them from Balanda knowledge, culture and communities' (Kemmis et al., 2013, p. 140). The Garma Maths curriculum validates knowledge that students bring to school, positioning prior knowledge as a strength to develop. Identity is central to this curriculum.

The impact of the Garma Maths curriculum over the years extends beyond Yirrkala. Many educators involved in its development, along with many other Indigenous groups across the NT, contributed to the territory-wide curriculums such as the Northern Territory Curriculum Framework (NTCF) Indigenous Languages and Culture (ILC) and Essential Learnings (EL) written in the early 2000s. The applicability across other key learning areas demonstrates the integrated content of this curriculum; it was connected to mathematics, but it was so much more. The development of this curriculum was progressive and an example of learning with theoretical foundations grounded in Yolŋu epistemologies, as conceptualised through *ŋathu* and *Ganma*. It illustrates the high-level thinking, including metaphoric and symbolic concepts, that were required for the development and application of learning in the school. In addition, the development of this curriculum was a response to the power held by Balanda and the subjugation of Yolŋu knowledge as a result of racism and colonisation inherent in the schooling process. As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, many scholars argue that an interrogation of issues such as racism and colonisation that manifest in schooling is essential (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Denis, 2007; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Knaus, 2009; F. Martin et al., 2017). Disappointingly, the NT Department of Education has never valued this curriculum in the same way that educators at Yirrkala have, and in doing so have failed to recognise the academic rigour and community engagement required to include Yolŋu epistemologies in education. Furthermore, the failure to validate local place-based pedagogies and fund accordingly demonstrates the power inherent in systems. This lack of systemic support highlights the ongoing complicity of the Department of Education in subjugating Indigenous knowledges and languages.

Galtha Rom

Galtha Rom is an important part of Garma Maths. Galtha can be understood in different ways. It can refer to a kind of meeting place—there are Galtha located throughout the Laynhapuy region where people have gathered for millennia and where negotiations, agreements, and plans are developed. Galtha is concerned with ‘the need for a negotiated starting point for any truth claim’ (Watson-Verran, 1992b, p. 12). In the planning of Yolŋu ceremonies, the correct interrelationships are critical and negotiations take place to discern the ‘right direction to follow’ (Marika et al., 1992, p. 33). Marika et al. continued,

This negotiated starting point is called Galtha. We can describe it as if it is a spearhead. It has a point, it has direction, it has a definite place set in the Yolngu cosmology, and when it finally comes down and sets into the ground, things begin. It is like a man throwing a spear. He aims, runs, throws his spear, it flies through the air, and when it lands it digs into the ground. The point where it lands can be called Galtha. (p. 33)

In a ceremonial context, Galtha signifies the end of negotiations and the 'beginning of collaborative work in place' (Verran & Christie, 2011, p. 8). As explained by Marika-Mununggiritj and Christie (1995),

Galtha is the name the Community elders gave us for our Aboriginal curriculum in the school—a constant reminder that our knowledge comes from the context of our learning, and that we must negotiate an agreement about our perspectives if we are to produce significant knowledge. (p. 60)

Marika-Mununggiritj and Christie continued that 'Galtha is everywhere; wherever Yolngu "Aboriginal" and Balanda "non-Aboriginal" people are acting properly, there is the possibility of Galtha' (p. 8). The concept of 'working properly' is a concept that I discuss further in Chapters 6 and 7 in the context of collaborative practice. These early theoretical underpinnings illustrate that collaboration and integrity are components of Galtha Rom.

The first Galtha Rom workshops began in 1989, organised by the Stage 3 teacher education Batchelor College students at Yirrkala Community Education Centre, as components of the teacher education discussed in Section 4.2. Participants in these workshops included *mala* (clan) leaders, representatives from each Homeland, Yolngu and Balanda teachers, and students from both schools (Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990). These Galtha Rom were, and still are, community directed. The early Galtha workshops

considered mathematical form in Yolngu and Balanda terms, to find a way about how the mathematics systems works through relationship, the connection between the Balanda number systems and our system of gurrutu relations. Through working in these workshops our children will be able to understand the Yolngu skills and

knowledge and transfer them into Western skills and understanding about how Balanda mathematics system works. (Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990, p. 22)

This quote highlights the relationship between the strands of the Garma Maths curriculum, as detailed in Section 4.3, and the content of Galtha Rom workshops. The workshops were an important part of Garma Maths; the knowledge and skills in the Garma Maths curriculum were the foundation of Galtha Rom workshops facilitated as part of school programs. As explained in the Garma Math Policy, ‘for Garma Maths purposes Galtha is the place where we plan the curriculum and work collaboratively to ensure our roles in teaching and learning sessions are clear’ (Yirrkala Action Group, 2014, p. 3).

An example of content emerging from an early Galtha Rom workshop is illustrated in Figure 12. This image illustrates content that emerged through a 3-day Galtha Rom workshop at Yäjunbi, a Homeland in Northeast Arnhem Land. It illustrates the different way Yolŋu conceptualise and map land. The Galtha Rom was led by community elders who worked with students, Yirrkala School staff, and teacher education students. The map was described in the following way by a participant in the workshop:

It looks something like an aerial view. It indicates the billabong and the swamp areas around Yäjunbi. The shark represents the billabong. The actual shape of the billabong is like it is on the text. The place was created by prehistoric creatures . . . the shark, the stingray and the sawfish. These creatures all belonged to the Dhuwa moiety. The clans you see around the billabong are connected together by these creatures through songs, rituals, and how each tribe is related to each other through Yothu-Yindi, Märi-Gutharra, and Wakupulu and Yapapulu gurruṯu systems. The text was created so that workshop participants were able to see and acknowledge how Yolŋu value land. (Yirrkala Literacy Production Centre, 1991, p. 10)

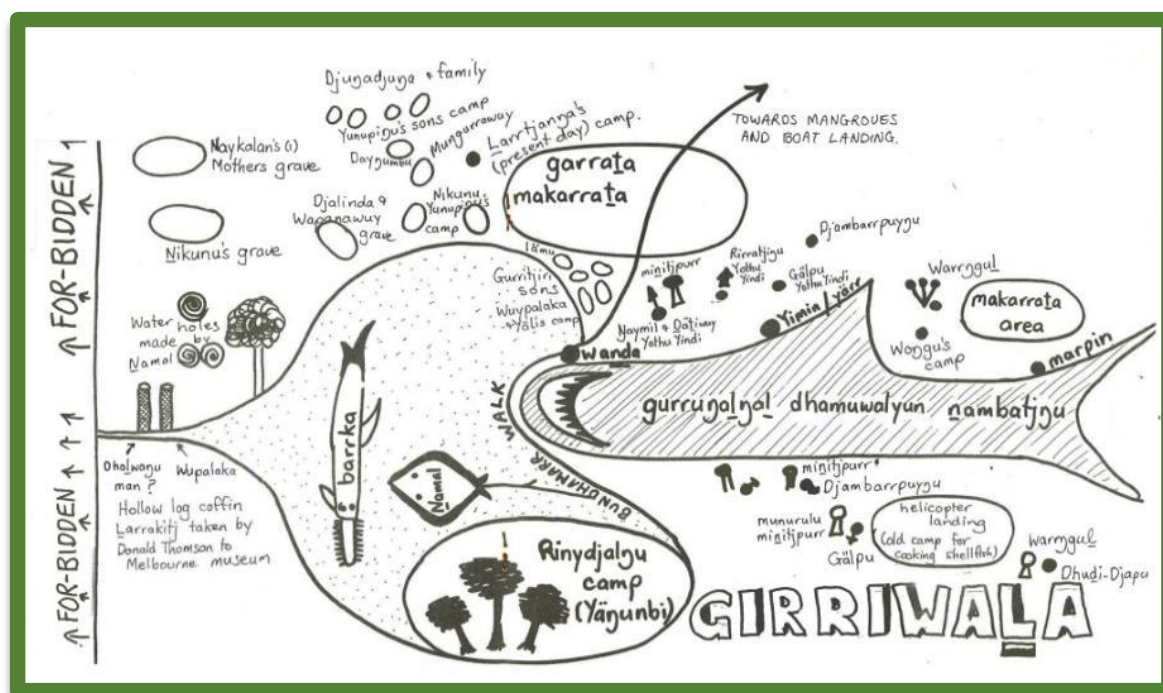


Figure 12: Yäjunbi Galtha Rom – Yirrkala Action Group/LPC³⁸ (1991)

This map is an example of the connection between the Garma Maths curriculum and its application through a Galtha Rom workshop. The map illustrates the different ways that Yolŋu see and interpret their Country. It also reiterates Watson-Verran's (1992a) discussion about the content of these curriculums accomplishing the 'same sort of social ends' (p. 5) that Western mathematical concepts achieve. That is, the knowledge represented in this map is considered important learning in a Yolŋu world, whereas, learning to interpret and understand Western mapping is valued in Western societies.

4.5 The Importance of Community-Based and Community-Centred Teacher Education is Critical in Remote Education

As discussed, the partnership between tertiary institutions, Yolŋu educators, and elders in the community was instrumental in developing a theoretical and applied approach to schooling at Yirrkala. As an educator who was involved in these programs put it,

The strength of Batchelor College and RATE [Remote Area Teacher Education] in its best days was the belief that Aboriginal students had prior teaching experience, and

³⁸ Literacy Production Centre

were bilingual and bicultural, which made them the best candidates for teaching children in their communities. Their skills and the knowledge of their communities and elders were celebrated in the course content, the mode of delivery and in the both ways philosophy. This focus was strengthened by the self-determination, self-sufficiency and self-management policies of the time no matter how vague and nebulous. What we face now is the exact opposite, with a ridiculous emphasis on academic English, no recognition of students' bilingual and language skills, their community standing all enveloped in a policy vacuum and an Education Department that is sleeping walking its way seemingly oblivious to their failure. (Non-local teacher, personal reflection, 18 September 2021)

The community-based teacher education courses during these early days challenged dominant models of schooling and included local Yolŋu epistemologies in education; essentially, it was the development of both ways education. It is also important to reiterate that as well as challenging the validation of knowledge in the process of schooling, this educational reform was also a move towards community-led and controlled Aboriginalisation of schooling. The tertiary and community-based partnership demonstrated successful outcomes such as developing a curriculum and pedagogy and, importantly, training local educators to facilitate learning. Yet, for many years, the NT Government has failed to provide teacher education courses that meet the needs of remote Aboriginal communities in the NT. This is a systemic failure that needs to be addressed because local educators are critical in the educational process in these communities, particularly if the aspiration of community is for both ways educational models.

As explained, the courses offered during the 1980s and early 1990s were delivered by Deakin University and Batchelor College, and local knowledge and language were included in relevant subjects. In doing so, they aligned with community aspirations for education. The underpinning foundation of the Deakin–Batchelor Aboriginal Teacher Education (D-BATE) program was the devolution of the control of schools to local communities (Henry & McTaggart, 1991, p. 9), a vision clearly documented in early reports at Yirrkala and in the Homelands (Brandl, 1974). These courses not only provided qualifications but also supported

Yolŋu staff to publish their action research about education in their home communities (Hall, 2016, p. 39; Henry & McTaggart, 1991; Lee et al., 2014). In addition, these courses included the development of first language literacy to prepare local educators to work in bilingual and bicultural education. An enabling aspect of these times was the support at a federal level for first language development for students who spoke an Aboriginal language. Although there were complexities, the policy initiated by Gough Whitlam is an example of the self-determination agenda extending into education (Schwab, 2013). This is in stark contrast to what is currently occurring.

Since the demise of RATE, there has been a systemic failure to provide community-based teacher education courses for local people in remote NT communities. Hall (2016) argued that the teacher education pathway is challenging for Indigenous language speaking Indigenous adults in remote communities and ‘those who have succeeded have often done so in spite of the educational system they are working in rather than being supported by it’ (p. 3). Hall continued that the nationalised conversation about ‘context driven vocational perspectives’ (p. 52) that occurred during the 1980s has now shifted towards a standardisation approach to teacher education. An example of the nationalised standardisation extending into the NT occurred in 1999 when Batchelor College became Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE), and during this time, literacy and numeracy requirements changed, which made it more challenging for students who had previously been enrolled in courses (Lee et al., 2014). While Lee et al. (2014) explained that the intention of this change was to raise the standards of Indigenous teacher education in the NT, the impact had negative consequences as there were fewer NT enrolments, and education no longer became the focus. The withdrawal of well-resourced programs of the 1980s and 1990s, which validated Indigenous knowledges and languages, has resulted in low numbers of Indigenous teachers in remote areas. The move away from these localised models of teacher education has created a reliance on non-Yolŋu teachers to fill classroom teaching positions in remote schools. The reliance on these teachers is problematic as they are often inexperienced in remote contexts, do not speak the language of the students they are working with, generally have limited training and access to ongoing professional learning to teach English to students from EAL/D (English as an

additional language/dialect) backgrounds, and many do not stay long enough to consolidate the skills and relationships required to teach in these contexts.

The lack of community-based teacher education for local teachers is a serious educational issue in remote communities in the NT. Local teachers fill a unique and critical role as educators in their home communities; in fact, often it is a role that non-local teachers are unable to fill. A consequence of the lack of relevant community-based teacher education is that the majority of Yolŋu team teachers or HLCTs are not 'qualified' according to mainstream standards of tertiary education despite them being critical in the education process. As Hall (2016) explained, local Indigenous teachers are the ones who 'implicitly and intrinsically know their students, understand their early experiences, know the environment, understand the social experiences, speak the language and can provide the continuity required for students to be successful at learning' (p. 227). In addition to being teachers of local language and culture, these educators facilitate learning at various levels by building relationships, being role models, mentoring staff, solving local problems, and dealing with conflict (Guenther & Disbray, 2015, p. 6). Guenther and Disbray (2015) continued that while in non-remote spaces the roles mentioned above could be filled effectively by non-local staff, in remote localities where cultural norms and languages are different from non-local educators, the outside teachers are unable to perform these tasks. Moreover, if students do not have empowered local role models teaching in these classrooms, what message does it send to students about the purpose and relevance of education? The absence of community-based education is a symptom of the failure to recognise the essential role of local teachers. Furthermore, aside from the time between the late 1970s and early 1990s, it illustrates the attitudes towards Indigenous teachers that 'have remained firmly entrenched in the colonial and assimilationist mindsets' (Hall, 2016, p. 227).

The lack of community-based teacher education has created a gap in the workforce and devalued the knowledge system of local teachers and their critical role in remote education. It has also created a reliance on non-local educators. There is a lot that can be learned from the community-based teacher education model that I have explained in this chapter. I am not romanticising the past or suggesting that pedagogical and curriculum engagement with Yolŋu

epistemologies has not continued, but the reality is that at a systemic level, the lack of relevant teacher education for remote local educators has been detrimental. By combining the lessons from the past with the current reality of communities, a contemporary approach to community-based teacher education can be developed. In the next section, I draw on the findings from this research to understand the current situation in the field as it relates to concepts of both ways education and Galtha Rom.

4.6 Both Ways in a Contemporary Context

During my fieldwork, many participants, both at Yirrkala and in the Homelands, referred to education that included both Yolŋu and Western knowledge, hence the focus on both ways education. However, there were variations in understandings about what this entailed.

Differences Between the Schools

In Chapter 1, I discussed some differences between Yirrkala School and Yirrkala Homeland School. One of the most contrasting differences is that Yirrkala School is bilingual/biliterate; that is, there is a dual language approach as students learn English and Dhuwaya³⁹. The data provided by participants across these two schools reflected these pedagogical differences. Senior Yolŋu teachers at Yirrkala School were clear on the philosophical and applied approach of both ways education, whereas senior Yolŋu educators at Yirrkala Homelands School did not seem to display the same clarity. Furthermore, during discussions with senior Yolŋu educators in the Homelands, they questioned why Yirrkala Homelands School was not bilingual. There appeared to be confusion among educators at Yirrkala Homelands School about what an applied approach to both ways education looked like in the process of schooling, although those that I spoke with concluded that the inclusion of first language and Yolŋu knowledge and ways of being were an important part of schooling. Concurring with this, many community members and elders in the Homelands also articulated that they wanted both Western and Yolŋu knowledges to be part of the educational approach at Yirrkala Homelands School. As I discussed in Chapter 1, when I undertook the fieldwork, there was no formal first language program at Yirrkala Homelands School; however, local educators do use first language to

³⁹ A community-based lingua franca that is now the predominant dialect of Yolŋu matha spoken in Yirrkala and surrounding regions by people aged in their 50s and younger

communicate with students, and sometimes written texts are produced. Furthermore, there are currently no accredited teacher education courses in the NT that develop first language literacy and include locally developed theories.

Bilingual education is likely one of the main reasons for the differences in how both ways education is (or is not) applied and understood across the two schools. However, bilingual education is not always synonymous with both ways. Bilingual education can still be delivered through a mainstream approach and ignore pedagogical aspects like the process of Galtha Rom and Yolŋu governance. In an interview with a senior non-local educator, she explained that one of the reasons she believed Galtha (a component of both ways) was sporadic in more recent times in the Homelands was because Yirrkala Homelands School had an English-only program and for many years did not have a senior cultural adviser. Despite the differences, in 2014, the Yambirrpa School Council endorsed the Garma Maths Policy for both schools. However, it appears that a whole-school formal engagement with this curriculum at Yirrkala Homelands School has been limited. Despite the current differences between the schools, the literature produced in the 1980s demonstrates that a both ways model was the aspiration for Yirrkala Homelands School as well as Yirrkala School. There appears to be an absence of documentation detailing how the divergence of the latter occurred. Although a comprehensive analysis of the reasons for these differences is beyond the scope of this research, the data presented in this thesis suggest that educational policy and directives (discussed in the next chapter), an absence of senior Yolŋu teachers who have been through RATE,⁴⁰ and the inexperience of non-local teachers with facilitating both ways educational models are all likely contributing factors of why both ways education is less understood at YHS.

While there are variations in how both ways is understood, data collected during this research clearly demonstrate that a both ways approach to schooling is still the aspiration of elders, community members, and local educators. In an interview with a Homelands community member, I was told emphatically, 'Both systems of education can go together but Yolŋu knowledge needs to be prioritised. It shouldn't be one way' (Former Yolŋu educator, personal

⁴⁰ Remote Area Teacher Education discussed earlier in this chapter

communication, 5 December 2018). This community member was deeply concerned about the transfer of Yolŋu knowledge to current and future generations. He reported that Galtha was needed for the health and wellbeing of his community and spoke about the importance of people being able to locate food in the bush. In Chapter 8, I discuss the interconnectedness of Galtha Rom and wellbeing. Despite the lack of clarity about both ways education, there is evidence of programs that include Yolŋu knowledge and languages in the Homelands, and a number of educators mentioned these. One of these was mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 1, the program about the bees.

Galtha in the Homelands

Yirrkala Homelands School is not bilingual; however, during the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of Galtha Rom workshops were held in Homelands. However, my findings confirmed that Galtha Rom has not been consistently implemented at Yirrkala Homelands School over a number of years. In 2017, Yirrkala Homelands School coordinated a workshop in collaboration with the local ranger organisation to discuss Galtha Rom in the Homelands. I was asked by the principal to be involved in this project. The workshop was initiated to address the lack of Galtha Rom workshops—an opportunity to determine if Homelands community members wanted to reinvigorate and continue Galtha Rom in the Homelands in partnership with the school. The workshop was attended by 24 community members from 10 Homelands and communities, predominantly rangers and cultural advisors. Homelands participants representing their communities were clear that Galtha Rom was integral in the process of intergenerational knowledge transfer and requested these Galtha be re-established at Yirrkala Homelands School. It is further evidence that communities want education that includes Yolŋu epistemologies.

Yirrkala Homelands School does not have a formal bilingual program—one of the most significant pedagogical differences between Yirrkala School and Yirrkala Homelands School—although as mentioned, in the 1980s and 1990s, Galtha Rom was facilitated in the Homelands. It was suggested in this research that the inconsistency of Galtha Rom in the Homelands after this time is likely to have been affected by the fact that Yirrkala Homelands School does not have a formal first language literacy program. A long-term non-local educator said that at

Yirrkala, there were strong, trained Yolŋu educators working at Yirrkala School that had the knowledge of Galtha, but it was not the case at Yirrkala Homelands School: ‘There wasn’t the knowledge base, the pedagogy base’. The participant continued, ‘I think it’s key Yolŋu educators at the high level where the gap has been. In recent years the role of the key Yolŋu is to negotiate with ŋaḷapaḷ⁴¹ about the content and the location’. These data further support the previous discussion about the critical roles that local staff have in these schools, again reiterating the importance of ongoing teacher education courses relevant to the context.

4.7 Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter demonstrate that schooling that includes Yolŋu epistemologies, community-based teacher courses, and local school governance has been the priority at Yirrkala and in the Laynhapuy Homelands for many years (Brandl, 1974; Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990; Marika-Mununggiritj & Christie, 1995; M. Yunupingu, 1989). The early models of community-based teacher education were critical in the development of education that validated Yolŋu knowledge systems in the process of schooling. This process, often referred to as both ways education, is a central tenet of this research and was discussed in this chapter and in Chapter 2. During the development of a both ways model, Yolŋu articulated that learning needed to sit within Yolŋu frameworks and control—Garma Maths and Galtha Rom are examples explained in this chapter. Furthermore, it was also evident that community-based teacher education during the 1980s and 1990s challenged the power structures and prioritised the devolution of control of schools. However, the findings in this research also demonstrate that there are various interpretations of both ways education. Moreover, the current absence of community-based teacher education courses that validate Yolŋu knowledge systems, languages, and ways of being mean that the theoretical engagement that once transformed education in these communities is not available for new Yolŋu teachers. If both ways education is the model that communities aspire towards, and data in this research confirms this, community-based teacher education courses that validate context-specific knowledge and the local strengths of educators is critical. Non-local teachers

⁴¹ Elders

also require ongoing professional development to support them to work in both ways schooling.

In this chapter, I highlighted the connection between governance and community control, pedagogy and curriculum, and community-based teacher education. These elements make up three of the Five Pillars of Community-Centred Education, which I discuss in the following chapters and bring together in my conclusion. I elected to use the term *community-centred* to illustrate the importance of teacher education that situates community approaches at the centre of the educational process. The interdependent nature of the pillars requires urgent attention if community aspirations of both ways education are to continue and be strengthened. One of the challenges over the years that has impacted both ways and bilingual education has been policy mandates and centralised directives. In the next chapter, I discuss the political landscape of NT education and how these decisions and mandates have often undermined community control and in doing so have continued to perpetuate dominant models of education.

Chapter 5 Policy, Power, and Centralised Directives: A Help or a Hinderance?

5.1 Introduction

Educational policy in the NT is an ideological battlefield. Early on in my teaching career, I experienced the highly political and contested space of Indigenous education (Fogarty, Schwab, et al., 2015; Patrick & Moodie, 2016) and witnessed the impact of government mandates and directives on schooling. I concluded that any discussion about education in remote parts of the NT cannot be separated from the political agenda of governments as, to some degree, they influence schooling. Although policy and government decisions are not always diametrically opposed to the aspirations of community, or at least not intentionally, the fluctuating dynamics of centralised directives and policy have contributed to the erosion of community control. In response, the community have demonstrated agency by developing both ways models of learning and challenging the structures of schooling that privilege Western structures and knowledge.

In this chapter, I discuss the shifting educational policy landscape and explain how policy agendas often view Indigenous people through a lens of deficit and in doing so fail to understand the strength of students and the communities they live in. The first half of the chapter is a discussion about educational policy and other interconnected factors that influence education, such as neoliberalism and power. In the second half of the chapter, I discuss the NT context and examine how specific mandates, policy, and reviews have impacted education on the ground. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the recently published document *Keeping Indigenous Languages and Cultures Strong*, an NT Government initiative and collaboration between members of the NT Board of Studies (NTBOS) Reference Group. This document acknowledges the relevance of Indigenous languages and knowledges in the process of remote schooling in the NT, further illustrating the changing nature of Indigenous education policy.

5.2 Vignette: A Code of Conflict

Back when I was a teacher in 2010, staff from Yirrkala Homelands School and Yirrkala School were summoned to a meeting. I arrived at the staffroom and was one of the

last to enter the room so quickly found one of the few remaining seats. There were over 50 people crammed in the room that day. Quickly I realised that I was sitting next to a senior bureaucrat who had flown from Darwin to address the staff. Immediately I regretted my decision to sit there, but it was too late to change seats. A new principal had been appointed by the Department of Education to Yirrkala School, the bilingual school. There had been limited community consultation into this decision, and many staff and community members were frustrated and angry about the removal of the previous principal without community consultation. It had been a tough 12 months. The Four Hours of English policy had been mandated the previous year by the Northern Territory Government, a controversial policy mandating that only English was to be used in classrooms for the first 4 hours of the school day. This mandate came 2 years after the commencement of the Northern Territory Intervention. All the students we worked with spoke English as a second, third, or fourth language. The following year, a principal who was supportive of bilingual education lost her job and was replaced by a man with limited remote education experience; many believed he was appointed to enforce departmental policy and remove any teachers that questioned educational policies.

There was a high level of tension as staff waited to be addressed by the bureaucrat. The new principal stood at the door silently. The bureaucrat addressed the staff 'like we were a bunch of pre-schoolers', a colleague reflected after the meeting. She spoke of reports of 'gossiping' and warned us that this behaviour would not be tolerated. I assumed by gossiping she was referring to the frustrations that had been voiced about the lack of community input into the appointment of a new principal, frustration and anger about the ongoing reduction of community control and the Four Hours of English policy. Over the years, the Yambirrpa School Council had fought hard, advocating for governance of school structures and processes, including the input into the selection process for staff. Like the Four Hours of English policy, the appointment of the new principal ignored the struggle for any form of local governance, sending a clear message about who was in control. The bureaucrat informed the staff that as part of our employment, we needed to abide by the Code of Conduct and would all be required to sign this document. The message was clear: if you wanted to keep your job, sign it and do not question policy. 'Gossiping', as it was referred to, although many of us understood it to be a struggle for Yolŋu rights and empowerment, was not

allowed. Divide and conquer. It was an attempt to silence both Yolŋu educators and their co-collaborators. It was not unfamiliar territory; Yirrkala had demonstrated ongoing activism, but people were exhausted. So much energy went into defending first language programs and challenging top-down decisions that impacted education and morale. Times were tough and many of us felt powerless.

Bound by Government Policy and Directives

The Code of Conduct that staff were required to sign stated the following:

A Public Sector Officer is also responsible for carrying out decisions and implementing programs promptly, conscientiously and with full regard to Government policy. In implementing programs, a Public Sector Officer's own values should not supplant those explicit or implicit Government policy. (Symons, 2016, p. 3)

A condition of employment with the NT public sector requires employees to implement government policy and directives—this code of conduct prevented people speaking out. While accepting government directives may seem like a reasonable request by an employer, the tension becomes apparent when these decisions and mandates conflict with community aspirations, are based on deficit assumptions, and position Indigenous peoples and communities as the cause of the 'problem'. The meeting discussed in the vignette above occurred over a decade ago; however, the memory of it, and how powerless I felt, are etched in my mind. I am not alone in feeling this way. During my fieldwork, I spoke to five other staff members who were at the meeting that day, and they shared how disempowered and fearful they also felt. One educator said, 'We were feeling so under threat at that time. We had nowhere to go, no one to turn to, even with a Labor government' (Personal communication, 15 June, 2020), while another relayed, 'I believe we were all in fear of our jobs and that's why we signed the code of conduct' (Personal communication, 6 May, 2020). The decision to impose a principal on the community, on the back of racist policies, impacted staff both professionally and personally. An experienced teacher, with connections to the community, despite wanting to stay working at the school did not have her contract renewed by the current principal which had implications for both her and her family. A long-term educator

was banned from the school, and the linguist based in the community was relocated to Darwin. It was another example of the NT Department of Education silencing dissenting voices, asserting power, and maintaining control. These were dark times for many people.

5.3 A Shifting Political Landscape

Policy as a Product of Culture

Public policy—that is, policy developed by governments (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010)—is ‘inherently and unavoidably political’ (Maddison & Denniss, 2009, p. 4). Public policy influences education, and this is particularly evident in the NT. As argued by Fogarty et al. (2017), ‘shifts in the policy landscape have direct effects on the way that literacy is taught to Indigenous students’ (p. 185). In addition to policy, centralised directives, educational reviews, mandates, and educational approaches of the day also influence education as they directly influence how funding and resources are allocated. To some degree, these dimensions are influenced by ideology; as Maddison (2012) argued, ‘Alongside race, debate about Indigenous policy has always been, at least in part, driven by ideology’ (p. 271). Government decisions are not always diametrically opposed to school and community educational aspirations, but there are often degrees of dissonance and contention, as illustrated in the vignette.

According to Dye (1992, as cited in Rizvi & Lingard, 2010), policy is ‘whatever governments choose to do or not to do’ (p. 2). Rizvi and Lingard (2010) elaborated on Dye’s definition, proposing that at times, the silences and non-decision-making are as much as an expression of policy as the policies themselves. Although policies are often viewed as being a text only, Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 4) argued that the process that created the policy is just as important. Policies are generally the end result of processes that have been shaped by knowledges and understandings (Nakata, 2003) and therefore are not neutral. As explained by Bacchi (2009), policy ‘takes shape within specific historical and national or international contexts’ and therefore it is necessary to think about policy in anthropological terms, as a ‘cultural product’ (p. ix). Macoun (2016) further expanded on this point, arguing that ‘policies presented as neutral or benevolent are almost axiomatically doing some kind of colonising work’ (p. 63). As a result of policy taking shape within particular historical contexts, policy landscapes have shifted over the decades.

Policy Eras

Commonwealth policy and national agendas influence education in the different states and territories in Australia. In an in-depth historical analysis of policy movements, Patrick and Moodie (2016) demonstrated that Indigenous affairs policy is reflected in education policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Drawing on the Review of Aboriginal Customary Laws (which was updated in 2012), Moodie and Patrick discussed the four identified eras of policy in Indigenous affairs recognised by researchers: protection, assimilation, integration, and self-determination. Furthermore, in their analysis, Moodie and Patrick included the work of Sullivan (2011) who argued that there is now a fifth era characterised by the 'Intervention' (the NT Emergency Response) and the termination of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), referred to as 'normalisation'.

Gray and Beresford (2008) traced the history of policy development in Australia, identifying the late 1960s as the era when governments first identified the educational disadvantage and started engaging with various reform measures. However, they argued that racist assumptions and ideas have rarely been acknowledged as part of this reform progress (p. 207). The formal position of the Australian Government during the 1960s was that 'the ultimate goal [of education] is assimilation (Watts & Gallacher, 1964, as cited in Street et al., 2020, p. 34). The policy structures during the 1960s failed to recognise Indigenous peoples' knowledge practices and connection to the land (Street et al., 2020). Moreover, Brown (2019, p. 55) argued that the intent of government policy of the 20th century was to disconnect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from their land, communities, and families.

In the early 1970s, a new self-determination policy framework emerged, introduced by then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam in 1972 (Schwab, 2013; Street et al., 2020). As discussed in Chapter 4, this extended into the area of Indigenous education, indicating a significant paradigm shift in the Australian Government agenda (Nicholls, 2005; Schwab, 2013). Schwab (2013) proposed that self-determination, while a complex and fraught concept, its place in the history of education 'is fundamental' (p. 210). Government support for bilingual education was a critical step towards the movement towards Indigenous control of education in the NT (Stockley et al., 2017), CECs became the sites of meaningful employment for Aboriginal people

(Devlin, 2017a), and teacher education for local staff was supported (Henry & McTaggart, 1991; Marika et al., 1992; Street et al., 2020). One of the key goals of bilingual education was the 'development of teaching skills, teaching responsibility and formal educational leadership in Aboriginal staff' (Disbray, 2013, p.128). When the language of instruction is changed in a school, the power dynamics are also fundamentally altered. As explained by McMahon (2022) non-local teachers were no longer the key players in leadership roles and classrooms at the school in Yirrkala, rather they became mentors to Yolŋu teachers and worked under the direction of community elders. The policy approach during this time was underpinned by 'aspirational goals for Indigenous peoples to have control over their own affairs' (Street et al., 2020, p. 330) and was a significant time of innovation and educational engagement (Disbray, 2014; Tandy, 1973).

However, in the 1980s and early 1990s, the educational political agenda began to move away from self-determination, instead shifting towards a focus on achieving equity and reconciliation; consequently, standardised measures to benchmark 'success' as well as to inform policy planning became more dominant (Street et al., 2020). As a result of these 'equity' approaches, Street et al. continued, Indigenous groups were 'homogenised and measured in comparison with the non-Indigenous population' (p. 333). By the late 1990s and 2000s, the policy focus in the higher education arena was concerned with 'outcomes', with contemporary policy initiatives such as Closing the Gap moving towards neoliberalist aims (Street et al., 2020). As discussed in Chapter 4, community-based teacher education shifted from 'context driven vocational perspectives' to standardised teacher education (Hall, 2016, p. 52). This impacted teacher education in remote communities in the NT as BIITE shifted its focus from community-based training for local staff and invested in online delivery to students nationally and internationally, a move to increase financial sustainability (Street et al., 2018). This illustrates how national agendas and policy directly impact NT policy education and practice. Furthermore, it demonstrates the connection between policy, practice, and community-based teacher education. As argued by Fogarty (2013), 'pedagogical practice in Indigenous education has too long been influenced by the political to and fro of the National Indigenous affairs discourse' (p. 265). If the remote NT education is to meet the needs of communities and students, the connection between key aspects affecting education need to

be addressed. This is summarised in Chapter 9 in the Five Pillars of Community-Centred Education.

5.4 ‘Problems’, Deficiencies, and Neoliberalism

Deficiencies and ‘Problems’

Policy is often developed in response to an identified ‘problem’ that needs addressing. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) warned that we need to be aware of how policies construct problems in certain ways that may differ from how they are conceptualised in theory and research. In Indigenous education, this identified problem often gets located in the communities and peoples themselves. Rudolph (2019) proposed that there are the two dominant constructions of Indigenous peoples in the educational policy discourse of disadvantage: ‘deficient’ and ‘with potential’ (p. 86). Deficit discourse is one of the dominant paradigms pervading cultural relations in Australia including in policy, the media, and statistics (Fforde et al., 2013, p. 162). Deficit discourse has been defined by Fogarty et al. (2018) as the

discourse that represents people or groups in terms of deficiency—absence, lack or failure. It particularly denotes discourse that narrowly situates responsibility for problems with the affected individuals or communities, overlooking the larger socio-economic structures in which they are embedded. It is implicated with race-based stereotypes. (p. vii)

The impact of deficit discourse is evident in schools, and these deficit assumptions about students and their communities impact classroom learning (M. Bishop & Berryman, 2010).

Despite numerous attempts and the ‘best of intentions’, R. Bishop et al. (2014, p. 185) argued the majority of educators and policymakers have been unable to create sustainable solutions in relation to the educational disparities that impact Indigenous students throughout the world. Bishop et al. continued that advancements in addressing these disparities are hindered as the ‘discursive framework of those proposing the solutions remains of neo-colonialism that continues to serve the interests of the dominant elite’ (p. 185). The focus on deficiency marginalises Indigenous strength, capacity, and knowledge in the policy discourse (Rudolph, 2019, p. 89). Later in the chapter, I provide specific examples of how deficit discourse has

played out in NT policy and the most recent review into Indigenous education in the NT, *A Share in the Future* (B. Wilson, 2014).

Rudolph (2019), using a Foucauldian lens, proposed policies that aim to close the gap could be viewed as a form of ‘disciplinary punishment’ (p. 34), a way of rectifying deviations from the norm. Closing the Gap, a national bipartisan strategy initiated by the Australian Government in 2008, is the most current example of a policy agenda that attempts to address the disparities in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Altman (2009) argued that the Closing the Gap policy overemphasises equality between Indigenous peoples and other Australians, rather than recognising difference and diversity. Maddison (2019) continued that policies focused on ‘closing the gap’ in socioeconomic indicators between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and ‘settler mainstream’ clearly reveal what she referred to as the ‘colonial fantasy’ (p. 154). She argued that despite the considerable expenditure, the disparity in statistical indicators between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the settler mainstream remains—life expectancy is shorter and educational outcomes lower. Maddison concluded that policies of the past that seek socioeconomic parity have failed, and they will continue to fail as the agendas have remained broadly the same, and the international evidence that suggests self-determination and self-government are more effective in making change are ignored.

Power: Whose Interests are Being Served?

As discussed, policy emerges from the cultural context it is situated in (Bacchi, 2009). Although the concept of *success* will always be contested to varying degrees, Marsh and McConnell (2010) proposed that in the context of policy development, ‘Success for who?’ is an important question that needs to be considered. In other words, consideration of the ethical principles that policies are founded on is required, and that means addressing who benefits from the policies in question (Street et al., 2020, p. 336). This brings us to the concept of power and the importance of identifying who is in control of the development of policies, the implementation of reviews, and the enforcement of government mandates. As proposed by D. Smith (2008), ‘As public servants are increasingly centralised and work behind the key-coded locked doors

of departmental offices, they become further distanced from the practical realities of Indigenous community governance’ (p. 80); the same can be said for education.

Maddison and Denniss (2009) defined power as the ‘the ability of individuals and groups to further their own interest via their capacity to exert control and influence’ (p. 7). A plethora of scholars argue that power in education needs to be critiqued (Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 2017; Møller, 2017). As discussed in Chapter 2, an interrogation of power, colonisation, and racism inherent in education systems is required (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Knaus, 2009; F. Martin et al., 2017; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Møller (2017) argued that the power structures education is situated in need to be problematised, but currently, this does not occur to the level required. Bourdieu (1998) argued that one of the ‘theoretical and practical errors’ (p. 53) of many theories is the failure to examine the implications of power. However, power takes many forms in educational contexts, which are often subtle, hidden, and even invisible to some. These power dynamics on which Western society, as well as many others, are based on, are very challenging to interrupt (Apple, 2009, p. 651). The vignette I shared at the beginning of the chapter is an example of power being asserted by the NT Department of Education when educators and community members applied pressure to the government to retain their bilingual education program. The power, although in this case overt, was legally consolidated with the Code of Conduct that staff were required to sign if they wanted to stay in their current employment. This legal document also prevented staff speaking out about any government policy, further highlighting the power that pervades educational spaces and the direct link between policy and practice.

The late French philosopher Michel Foucault (2017), well known for his theories of power, argued that power and knowledge are inseparable. His conceptualisation of power is centred on the understanding that truth is contested and constructed (Rudolph, 2019, p. 33). The work of Paulo Freire (1996), the Brazilian educator and philosopher, helps to theorise power evident in policy and behaviours and is particularly relevant to the example of staff being forced to sign the Code of Conduct, which opened this chapter. In his seminal text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1996) discussed the concept of ‘divide and rule’ (p. 141) to demonstrate how power is maintained. He argued that ‘concepts such as unity, organization, and struggle’

(p. 122) are often labelled as dangerous because, once realised, these concepts can lead to liberation. Freire proposed that it is in the interests of the oppressor, in which he included government bureaucracy, to weaken the oppressed and keep them passive, while creating the impression that they are being helped. Freire's theory helps analyse the situation that occurred in the vignette: The NT Department of Education attempted to silence any form of collective critique of departmental decisions. Although only one example, there are many more instances of power being asserted over the years in remote NT education. However, there are also many examples of community resistance in response to these assertions of power, as discussed in Chapter 4. R. Bishop et al. (2014) drew on the work of Freire who over 40 years ago proposed that 'discursive repositioning' was needed, meaning that

instead of working with the aspirations of the oppressors, policy makers and educators should be looking to the part they themselves might be playing in the ongoing disparities afflicting Indigenous peoples and they should also be seeking solutions within the sense-making and knowledge-generating processes of Indigenous peoples themselves. (p. 185)

Furthermore, Schwab (2012) explained that too often, policymakers have confused learning with schooling, and he argued for a 'deeper policy orientation' (p. 15) towards learning. Schwab continued that 'school is a limited institution, both temporally and socially, but learning is a fundamental feature of human life' (p. 15).

Neoliberalism in Education

Many factors other than policy impact schooling. The rise of neoliberalism⁴² and globalisation over the last few decades and its influence on current education systems throughout the world has been largely documented by educationalists and critical sociologists (Apple, 2000; Connell, 2013; Fischetti, 2014; Fogarty et al., 2017; Luke, 2008). However, Tuck (2013) described the positioning of neoliberalism which emerged in the 1970s as a more recent paradigm and explained that Indigenous and anti-colonial scholars understand neoliberalism as 'only the latest configuration of colonial imperialism' (p. 325). Tuck explained that

⁴² Neoliberalism is the way competitive markets extend into the society, politics, and the economy.

Indigenous scholars contend that neoliberalism is a 'contemporary expression and extension of colonialism', concerned with the 'dispossession and erasure of the unworthy subject' (p. 341). Lees et al. (2021) explained that the efforts of settler colonialism were advanced through the forced assimilation of Indigenous people in public schooling and that these policies have been termed 'neoliberal' (p.5) and the power inherent in this agenda has been critiqued by scholars such as Apple (2012) and Sleeter (2019); the work of these authors are discussed in Chapter 2. Settler colonialism is structure not an event (Wolfe, 1999) and neoliberalism is an extension of this. In recognising this, I explain the neoliberal ideology in education as an example of the clawing back of the power that had been somewhat relinquished during the 1970s and 1980s when bilingual and teacher education for local educators was supported in remote contexts.

The ideology of society changes with time, and George (1999) explained that the standard 'neo-liberal toolkit of today' (para. 2), which allows the market to make major social and political decisions, would not have been taken seriously during the late 1940s to 1950. The current neoliberal focus is shaping schooling today, and many have argued that generally, schools have become merely training grounds for the workforce (Fogarty et al., 2017; Giroux & Giroux, 2006). In remote communities in the NT, the focus is training for the workforce rather than developing a contextual approach to learning that develops the interconnectedness of land, family, community, and culture (Fogarty, 2012; Schwab, 2012).

Many scholars and educators warn of the dangers of neoliberalism (Apple, 2000; Connell, 2013; Giroux & Giroux, 2006). Connell (2013) suggested that there are profound consequences for education more broadly that have yet to be 'fully assimilated' (p. 99). In a similar vein, Apple (2004) warned us not to take neoliberal claims at face value and challenged us to inquire into the hidden effects that are often invisible in the discourse. Giroux and Giroux (2006) identified neoliberalism as one of the most 'pervasive and dangerous ideologies of the twenty first century' (p. 22). They proposed that 'as the prevailing discourse of neoliberalism seizes the public imagination, there is no vocabulary for progressive social change, democratically inspired visions, critical notions of social agency, or the kinds of institutions that expand the meaning and purpose of democratic public life' (p. 25).

The neoliberal agenda is evident in the private versus public school debate. Connell (2013) explained how access to educational institutions has become a process of commodification, whereby private schools use marketing and advertising to present an image of an 'orderly, disciplined, clean and uniformed little world, which the parents are invited to contrast with the undisciplined, dirty and dangerous world outside—the "outside" being understood to include the public schools' (p. 105). As the majority of children from working-class families go to public schools, Connell (2013) suggested that a winner–loser duality is created when people are required to pay to become 'winners', as suggested through private school marketing. Rudolph (2019) proposed that the concept of 'winners' and 'losers' (p. 37) is spurred on by neoliberalism. Connell (2013) opposed education as a form of social exclusion, explaining that the prerogative of education is inclusivity: 'Trust and citizenship cannot be limited, cannot be made a privilege of specific groups. Education is inherently socially inclusive; any failure of inclusion signals the presence of power. An exclusive education is a corrupted education' (p. 105).

The neoliberal logic has increasingly influenced how institutions are run and the way teaching and learning are shaped (Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015, p. 244). As the movement towards neoliberalism continues to unfold, high stakes, competitive testing, and standardisation increases (Connell, 2013, p. 106; Rudolph, 2019). Schwab explained that the stakes are high as these assessments and tests become the 'evidence', which influences decisions impacting schools, communities, families, teachers, and students. Rudolph (2019) argued that the 'policy culture of measurement' (p. 114) is implicated with the conceptual framework of neoliberalism, and in the Australian context, this is connected to the forces of colonialism that are tied to notions of racial hierarchy and civilisation. Furthermore, the narratives of schooling often prioritise individual achievement and while this is important, Brayboy and Lomawaima (2018) argue that this single measure 'erases the role of history and the impact of systems and structures on American Indian students'; they argued that it is necessary to look beyond metrics of achievement and challenge accepted notions and ideologies of schooling.

In Australia, the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is the central mechanism employed to measure performance of students, schools, and regions.

NAPLAN⁴³ is an annual literacy and numeracy assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9. In his paper critiquing high-stakes testing in the context of Indigenous education, Schwab (2012) argued that international evidence about high-stakes testing such as NAPLAN have ‘questionable validity’ (p. 13), and these type of tests can be detrimental for students from minority backgrounds, including Indigenous students. Importantly, when bilingual education was established in the NT the aims of the program were connected to local teacher training, community involvement and curriculum development in language and culture, aspects that many Indigenous peoples saw as measures of success however, an evaluation of bilingual education cannot be captured by NAPLAN data alone (Disbray, 2013). While the test itself is not the problem, Schwab (2012) explained, NAPLAN should be a locally controlled ‘formative assessment instrument’ (p. 14) that can be used to support students, teachers, and families. In a similar vein, Lingard (2018) argued that the issue with NAPLAN is the way it is used by systems for ‘top-down accountability purposes’ (p. 63) and target setting, which distorts the potential for positive uses. It was the NAPLAN results that sparked the reactionary decision by the NT Government to mandate the Four Hours of English policy in 2009 (Devlin, 2017; McKay, 2017), further illustrating how national agendas impact remote NT schooling, a concept expanded on in the Section 5.5.

Another tool that aligns with standardisation and neoliberal objectives is the latest review into Indigenous education in the NT, *A Share in the Future* (B. Wilson, 2014). This review has been described as a textbook example of the ‘global neoliberal standardization reform movement’ (Spillman, 2017, p. 145). Fogarty, Lovell et al. (2015) argued that the recommended educational approaches proposed by this review, such as Direct Instruction⁴⁴ (an approach discussed in detail in Section 5.7), fall into line with the wider neoliberal educational trends. It should also be noted that approaches such as Direct Instruction have been supported by Indigenous advocates—Noel Pearson is one of these supporters. In *Radical Hope: Education and Equality in Australia*, Pearson (2009) argued that ‘explicit instruction’ is a ‘no excuses’ (p. 54) educational approach ‘based on the principle that there are scientifically established methods of effective instruction, which, if used with fidelity, will produce learning success’ (p.

⁴³ See the NAP webpage for further information (<https://www.nap.edu.au/about>).

⁴⁴ Intentionally capitalised

54). Vass (2012) explained that the pedagogy and curriculum approach Pearson advocated are concerning as they 'resemble the assimilationist and deficit approaches that have been historically hostile to Indigenous perspectives and identities' (p. 89). Vass cited the work of Brayboy and Castagno (2009) who questioned these types of approaches and instead advocated for culturally responsive pedagogies, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The neoliberal, standardised approach to education in the NT fails to recognise the diverse knowledge systems and ways of learning that remote NT students bring with them to school, further demonstrating the relationship between global and national trends, and policy and practice in NT education.

5.5 Northern Territory Political Arena

So far, I have discussed how policy and government agendas take shape in the historical context they were developed and therefore cannot be considered neutral. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that there is a direct relationship between Commonwealth policy agendas and NT educational policy, most recently in the national movement towards standardisation and equality, evident in the Closing the Gap strategy. I have also highlighted the effects of power, explained through the vignette at the start of this chapter, drawing on scholars such as Freire (1996), Bourdieu (1991), Foucault (2017), and (Møller, 2017) to theorise this scenario and how power manifests more broadly in policy development. In the context of this research, it is critical that the impact of political agendas is made explicit as these policy decisions do not appear to address the 'problems' they intend to 'fix', and employees of the NT public service are not permitted to critique policy. As argued by Fogarty et al. (2017), literacy education for Indigenous students has become the primary focus of debates between government, Indigenous people, and development. Although the authors recognise that literacy is a component of the broader discussion related to the purpose of Indigenous education, they argued these debates are separate from the realities experienced on the ground in remote educational communities, and thus, the 'pedagogic concerns' (p. 186) are ignored. In the next half of the chapter, I examine the NT context and illustrate how directives, policy, and the latest review into remote NT education has impacted school communities and, in doing so, has failed to recognise the importance of productive relationships between school communities and governments.

Difference and Diversity as a Strength

Diversity and individual and collective strengths that exist in remote NT communities are often unrecognised. Consequently, Indigenous education in the NT is presented as a problem to be solved, resulting in continuous cycles of policy reform aimed to reduce the difference in outcomes experienced by Indigenous peoples in Australia compared to settler Australians. As argued by Fogarty et al., (2017), ‘the pervasive mindset of needing to “fix” education in the remote north has characterised the policy approach of successive Australian governments, and has led to a series of substandard results’ (p. 185). Furthermore, the linguistic and cultural diversity of remote communities is often viewed as an obstacle to overcome rather than a strength to build on (Fogarty et al., 2017). Thus, as explained by Bat and Guenther (2013), this diversity is ‘both a challenge and a celebration of remote Australia’ (p. 126). The challenge that remote NT schooling faces is to address these complexities while simultaneously celebrating and building on the strength and capacity of remote communities.

In the previous section, I explained how deficit discourse positions communities and individuals as deficient and problematises these groups and individuals rather than considering the broader socioeconomic structures that contribute to the complexities experienced. Deficit discourse is particularly relevant to how Yolŋu educators, particularly those who do not have a mainstream teaching degree, are perceived. One of the central arguments of this thesis is that the lack of community-based teacher education for local Indigenous staff in the NT has negatively impacted remote schooling and in doing so has failed to recognise the unique skill sets of local educators and their role in remote education. As discussed in Chapter 4, Yolŋu staff provide unique knowledge and skills that the majority of non-local staff are unlikely to have, such as language, kinship connection, and knowledge of the community (Guenther & Disbray, 2015; Hall, 2016). Recognising these unique capabilities does not underestimate the value of committed non-local educators; many Yolŋu over the years have discussed the important role of non-local educators in remote education. However, the reliance on non-local educators prioritises their skills and knowledge, and there is a failure to understand that many non-local teachers are also not adequately prepared or skilled enough to work in remote NT contexts. As Bat and Shore (2012) explained, non-local teachers working in remote contexts need professional support to ‘develop new ways of

working and new pedagogies’ (p. 7). Why is it that successive governments have been more willing to invest in the recruitment and training of non-local staff who often do not stay for long periods of time but are not willing to invest substantially in the teacher education of local staff who more than likely will remain living in their home communities? Both groups of educators need ongoing support, mentoring and professional development. This development needs to be funded accordingly and not only left to schools and communities to deliver. Furthermore, ongoing development in collaborative approaches to teaching are also required, an idea I develop further in Chapter 6 when I propose a model of collaborative practice to support a culturally responsive model of teaching and learning in remote NT schools.

Community and Power: A Site of Struggle and Transformation

The struggle to gain power in the Western educational system is a familiar concept and challenge for Yolŋu. As discussed in the previous chapter, the community agency and activism in the 1980s challenged the existing model and governance structures and in doing so changed the direction of education in this region and in the NT more broadly (Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990; Ngurruwutthun, 1991; Stockley et al., 2017; M. Yunupingu, 1989). As explained by F. Morphy (2008), ‘It is arguably true that Yolŋu and other Indigenous Australians have been victimised through state neglect, but this does not automatically make them victims in any simple way’ (p. 117). The community activism in the educational arena, while it has been a site of struggle, clearly demonstrates that Yolŋu are far from being victims.

The *njathu* (cycad nut) theory, discussed in Chapter 1, explains the inherent problems when Yolŋu processes, including ways of being, doing, and knowing, are ignored (White, 2015; M. Yunupingu, 1994). The following quote articulates the expectation regarding engagement with education in the context of Yirrkala:

In a Yolŋu school where do we start? Do we start from the curriculum documents which are sent to us from outside the community? Or do we negotiate together the starting point and direction on the basis of where we are, who we are, who is with us, where we are to go, who can help us, and how we can use the laws and traditions of our ancestral leaders and our community elders? This is what the *Galtha rom* shows

us. That in a Yolŋu school, there is a proper Yolŋu way to negotiate a plan of action, which takes all the important factors into account. (Marika et al., 1992, p. 32)

Negotiation is essential in the delivery of schooling in this context but it is clear that governments rarely engage in a participatory and relational negotiation process to develop policy that meets the needs of communities. For negotiations to occur, all parties must recognise each other as worthy and equal, and power structures must be addressed. However, in a settler state Aboriginal people, languages and knowledge systems are fundamentally not acknowledged. The failure of successive governments to support place-based pedagogies is an example of this. As discussed in Chapter 1, schools are ‘battlegrounds of American Indian education’, a clash of epistemologies, ontologies, pedagogies and curriculum (Brayboy and Lomawaima, p.82, 2018); the same could be said for education in remote NT contexts, and more broadly in education throughout Australia.

Freire (1996) suggested one way to address power structures is active participation and the co-construction of knowledge, which is what the ṇathu theory explains—negotiation instead of dominance by mainstream educational systems and individuals in those systems. Although not a policy decision, forcing staff to sign the Code of Conduct, as described in the vignette, was an enforced directive, a clear assertion of power by a bureaucracy. As the ṇathu theory explains in the excerpt above, ‘In a Yolŋu school, there is a proper Yolŋu way to negotiate a plan of action’. There was no negotiation when a new principal was appointed at Yirrkala, and there was no negotiation when the Four Hours of English policy (2018) was mandated. Negotiation is often one sided, and this is particularly evident in the way governments have supported, or not supported, Aboriginal languages in NT schools.

5.6 Northern Territory and Bilingual Policy

Language is Identity

The formal inclusion of first language literacy in schools in remote NT has been highly contested by governments. A number of remote schools have fought for the right to teach first language literacy, and this has been one of the most significant educational struggles facing schools and communities who have advocated for first language literacy over the

decades. As stated in Chapter 1, Article 14 of the UNDRIP ⁴⁵ states, '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' (General Assembly of the United Nations, 2007, p. 13).

Since the commencement of bilingual education in the NT in the 1970s, first language literacy in remote schools has been controversial and highly debated. The UNDRIP principles have not changed since 2007; however, there is still a concerning lack of government support for Indigenous peoples to establish and control education that includes Aboriginal languages. While I do not have space here to rehearse the 40 years of policy and resistance characterising bilingual education, understanding the inclusion and active exclusion of first language literacy in remote NT education is critical. The story of bilingual education demonstrates the NT Government's active role in attempting to control remote schooling and dictate the way first language is used in schools. For a comprehensive selection of papers written by scholars and educators with experience of bilingual programs in the NT, I refer the reader to the *History of Bilingual Education in the Northern Territory* edited by Devlin et al. (2017). These papers provide a detailed historical account of first language literacy in remote NT contexts.

Bilingual education in remote NT schools has been under attack since it first started in the 1970s. In 1988, the NT Government announced that it would be phasing out the funding for bilingual programs in opposition to the articulated wishes of communities and school staff in the schools that were impacted by the decision. Figure 13 is a postcard from the campaign to save bilingual programs—the banner on the postcard was created by community members at Yirrkala. In response to the decision to phase out bilingual education, a review into Aboriginal education was commissioned; as a result, some first language programs were dismantled and others were rebranded as 'two way learning programs' (Devlin et al., 2017b, p. xvi). The Nambara Schools Council⁴⁶ presented a submission to the Human Rights Commission in 1999 in response to the lack of support for bilingual and Homelands education. The submission

⁴⁵ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

⁴⁶ The previous name of the School Council—the representative decision-making body across both schools—now known as Yambirrpa School Council.

reported that for students in Homelands, the relocation to better serviced areas or boarding schools would be 'tantamount to cultural suicide and against the very nature of the Homelands Movement' (Nambara Schools Council, 1999, p. 5). This submission is another example of the local community's active role in challenging government decisions that they believed would impact education negatively. As articulated by Nicholls (2005),

Many very young Indigenous children enter Territory Aboriginal schools confident in their own languages and cultural framework, but unable to understand or speak English. The encounter with this refusal [bilingual education] of recognition of their core identity, their being-in-the-world for the child who is beginning school is for many, their first encounter with discrimination. (p. 174)

It is this discrimination that both ways education starts to address. Yirrkala School has continued to deliver its bilingual program despite government opposition. However, the continual attacks and the erosion of community control have been extremely detrimental, and community-based teacher education to support local teachers to develop first language literacy has been lacking—this directly impacts the availability of local teachers to teach first language literacy.

The political landscape started to shift again with the introduction of an Indigenous Language and Culture (ILC) curriculum, which was included in the NTCF⁴⁷ in 2002. This document guided content outcomes and pathways for language maintenance, revitalisation, and awareness, a formal step that supported bilingual schools. However, despite the inclusion of ILC in the NT curriculum, there has never been an explicit policy for the teaching and learning of ILC (Devlin, 2017b; Disbray, 2016). Disbray (2016) concluded that for 'practitioners on the ground, neither the ideological space nor the implementational space were ever quite clear' (p. 322). Furthermore, Nicholls (2005) discussed how to some extent during this time, bilingual programs were 'born again' as 'two way learning programs', which she described as 'ill defined, diluted, and for the most part, poorly organised versions of the former bilingual education programmes' (p. 163). Furthermore, the training for local staff and for non-local

⁴⁷ Northern Territory Curriculum Framework

staff to teach in these schools was diminished, including the ongoing departmental commitment to EAL/D support for students and teachers.

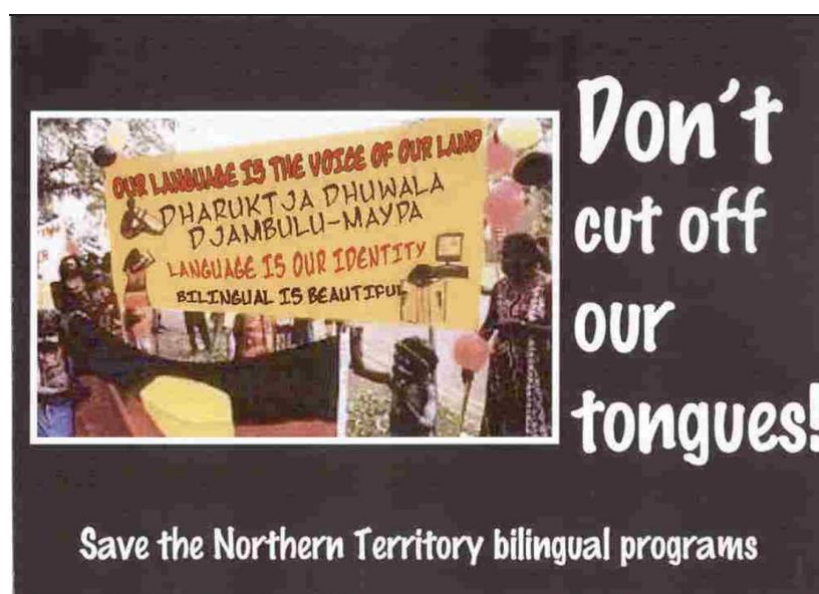


Figure 13: Don't Cut Off Our Tongues (Nambara School Council, 1999)⁴⁸

Australia is not alone in its myopic view of the role of language learning in schools. Ruiz (1984) (as cited in Petrovic, 2005) referred to 'language negative' policies in the United States that presumed 'language poses potential problems as opposed to proposing potential promise' (p. 396), clearly a view based on deficit. Petrovic (2005) described the development of language policy in the United States as ad hoc with minimal planning and inconsistent language goals. He continued that the 'English-only movement' (p. 397) in the United States is detrimental to non-English-speaking children's cultural identity and native language. This further highlights the global parallels and how the dominant role of English in the schooling process impacts students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. In the Australian context, Thomas (2017) warned that 'if we do not win the fight against neo-assimilation, all of Australia's Aboriginal languages could be lost' (p. 4).

Four Hours of English Policy

A political decision that further impacted bilingual education in remote contexts was the announcement of the Four Hours of English policy in 2008, by Marion Scrymgour, the former

⁴⁸ This postcard was designed to protest the first bilingual closures in 1999. It was used again in 2009 when the First Four Hours of English was mandated in NT schools.

NT Labor Government education minister. In a media release, the minister announced that the 'first four hours of education in all Northern Territory schools will be conducted in English', and she claimed that this emphasis on English would deliver better outcomes in remote areas (Northern Territory Government Media Release, 2008). This reactive policy was in response to the release of NAPLAN results in 2008 that revealed remote students were underperforming in numeracy and literacy compared to other students in Australia (Devlin, 2017b, p. 204). It was also a result of the intense ideological scrutiny created by the NT intervention. There was limited evidence to demonstrate this policy would deliver the increase in literacy and numeracy that Scrymgour claimed it would. The justification for the Four Hour of English policy was to increase English literacy, and bilingual education seemed to be framed as having a monolingual aim, which had never been the case. At the time of the Four Hours of English decision, only eight schools in remote localities were classified as bilingual (Devlin, 2017b). According to the NT Education Department, formally known as Department of Employment, Education and Training (cited in Devlin, 2017), the definition, bilingual education was

a formal model of dual language use where students' first language is used as a language 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. (p. 205)

The media focused on the low NAPLAN results in remote schools; however, these results were relatively similar across the 150 very remote schools. That is, there was no evidence bilingual schools hindered English language development in remote contexts (Devlin 2020) and there was definitely no evidence that 'English-only' schools performed better than bilingual schools (Disbray, 2013). However, Disbray (2013) continued that, unlike English-only schools, bilingual schools were required to participate in an appraisal process which determined if the school was able to retain its bilingual status. This appraisal process, which I participated in as a teacher a number of times while working at Yirrkala Bilingual school, required schools to reflect on their programs and the implementation of programs and it also included engagement from the local community (Disbray, 2013).

The Four Hours of English policy also broke the Remote Learning Partnership Agreement (RLPA) between the NT Government and the Yambirrpa Schools Council.⁴⁹ The RLPA had been developed over 4 years and reflected the aspirations of community; it was coupled with a strategic plan for education at Yirrkala.

The RLPA had been signed at the Garma Festival in 2007—a significant event that publicly illustrated community and government commitment to collaboratively developing education. The first principle of the agreement read,

The YSC [Yambirrpa Schools Council] and DEET [Department of Employment, Education and Training] are committed to the philosophy of both ways schooling as the educational framework in which the NT Curriculum Framework is delivered. This includes support for the continuation of the Bilingual Education Program/ Two Way Learning Program at Yirrkala CEC. (Yambirrpa Schools Council & Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, n.d., p. 14)

Furthermore, the Indigenous Education Strategic Plan 2006–2009 committed the DEET to ‘strengthen the bilingual program and improve its effectiveness and sustainability to deliver outcomes’ (Devlin, 2017b, p. 205). The policy decision to mandate English in the first four hours of the school day, particularly after an agreement had been made to support bilingual education, shocked the communities it affected. The decision destroyed any trust communities had in negotiating with the government as it became evident that official agreements could be broken at any time. Bilingual schools were expected to dramatically change their pedagogical and curriculum approaches even if their programs had been running successfully and had community support (Devlin, 2017b). In some schools such as Yirrkala, teachers continued to deliver bilingual programs, despite being told they were no longer allowed to; however, not all schools were in a position to do so, and many first language programs were unable to continue. Moreover, the policy decision ignored local governance structures at Yirrkala that had, since the 1970s, advocated strongly for bilingual education. It

⁴⁹ The Yambirrpa School Council comprised educators, elders, community members, and parents.

clearly violated Article 14 of the UNDRIP and is an example of an NT policy decision aligning with national standardisation through high-stakes testing such as NAPLAN.

Knee-jerk political decisions, such as mandating that only English be spoken in the first four hours of the school day in remote communities where English is often a foreign language, are not based on evidence, violate UNDRIP, and exclude the aspirations of NT communities. Furthermore, mandates that enforce English and exclude other languages, whether through policy or inadequate resources, fail to consider the fundamental importance of minority languages in students' lives. Battiste (2008) argues that 'compulsory English language instruction and a prohibition on speaking Indigenous languages are part of an assimilationist strategy that has resulted in great linguistic losses worldwide' (p. 86). Battiste continued by explaining that language is more than linguistics as it includes the 'socialization of language and knowledge, ways of knowing, and non-verbal and verbal communication—the core tools of Indigenous knowledge and capacity within Indigenous cultures' (p. 86). Adding to this, Davis (2004) concluded,

Language is not merely a body of vocabulary or a set of grammatical rules. It is a flash of the human spirit, the means by which the soul of each particular culture reaches into the material world. Every language is an old-growth forest of the mind, a watershed of thought, an entire ecosystem of spiritual possibilities. (p. 1)

Since the 1970s, educators and community members at Yirrkala have advocated for the formal inclusion of first language in education and in doing so have actively resisted assimilationist policies that exclude local language and knowledge systems.

5.7 The Review

The Indigenous Education Review

Five years after the Four Hours of English policy was mandated, a review into Indigenous education in the NT, *A Share in the Future* (B. Wilson, 2014), was released. The last review of this kind had been in 1999—*Learning Lessons: an independent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory* (Collins, 1999). While a review coupled with a long-term strategic plan may have been required, this particular report has been highly criticised by many

academics and educators. It is argued that the review failed to adequately address the needs and aspirations of remote communities and did not reference the significant body of literature related to Indigenous education (Fogarty, Lovell, et al., 2015; Grimes, 2014; Ninti One Limited, 2014; Spillman, 2017). According to Spillman (2017) and Fogarty et al. (2015), Indigenous students and their families referred to in the review were framed mostly in the deficit, further reinforcing colonial power relations and ignoring the local, cultural, linguistic and relational complexity of the context.

A Share in the Future, referred to as the Review from here on, reflects neoliberal educational trends (Fogarty, Lovell, et al., 2015; Spillman, 2017). The review highlighted the need to raise the level of achievement of Indigenous students so that they could ‘participate more effectively in society and the economy’ (B. Wilson, 2014, p. 1). While it is rarely disputed that literacy and numeracy levels in remote schools need addressing, the review reinforced disadvantage and deficit, a discourse that aligned with the national approaches that reinforced equality. A statement, such as the one made above by Wilson arguing for remote Indigenous peoples to participate in society and the economy, might seem benign; however, it is important to ask whose society and economy is being referred to in this instance? It is likely that Wilson was referring to the dominant settler society. The review ignored the voices of community members at Yirrkala, who over the years had continually fought for education that recognised Yolŋu epistemologies (Marika-Mununggiritj et al., 1990; Stewart & Ngurruwutthun, 1996; M. Yunupingu, 1989). As policy approaches continue to promote ‘prescriptive pedagogic solutions’, the multilingual and intercultural realities of remote daily life are ignored by bureaucrats, policymakers, and educationalists (J. Altman & Fogarty, 2010, p. 122).

Direct Instruction and the Literacy Myth

The review proposed a number of recommendations. One was a prescriptive teaching method, Direct Instruction⁵⁰ (DI), a literacy program developed in the United States in the 1960s. Direct Instruction, designed by Siegfried Engelmann, is an ‘explicit, carefully sequenced and scripted model of instruction’ (National Institute for Direct Instruction, 2015). Aboriginal

⁵⁰ Intentionally capitalised

lawyer Noel Pearson, an advocate and supporter of Direct Instruction, provided the ‘conceptual basis for this approach’ (Fogarty et al., 2017, p. 191), which was initially implemented in two Cape York communities as a significant part of social and welfare reform (Dow, 2011). Pearson’s ultimate goal was ‘successful mainstream education leading to economic integration’ (Dow, 2011, p. 50). However, Dow drew attention to the fact that alternative literacy development approaches did not receive the media attention that Direct Instruction did.

A considerable financial investment has been made in Direct Instruction by the Australian Government. In 2014, the government announced the Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Program (FLRPSP), which was developed to improve literacy outcomes for students in remote primary schools. FLRPSP included two instructional teaching approaches: Direct Instruction and direct explicit instruction (Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2021). Over AU\$30 million was invested in this program, and 34 remote schools in Queensland, Western Australia, and the NT were involved by 2017 (Guenther & Osborne, 2020b). However, what results the program did, or did not, achieve have been contested and debated (Buckingham, 2020; Guenther & Osborne, 2020a; Pearson, 2020). Guenther and Osborne (2020b) questioned the ethical foundations of Direct Instruction and from a pedagogical perspective, concluding that ‘there is almost no evidence that universal (one size fits all) programmatic approaches do work for remote Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students’ (p. 168). Furthermore, they argued Direct Instruction had potentially further marginalised and disengaged students in remote schools. This aligns with Fogarty et al.’s (2017) concern that mandating specific literacy programs, in this case Direct Instruction, and excluding other potential approaches is problematic, particularly when there is limited evidence about the effectiveness of Direct Instruction. If programs are unable to demonstrate a benefit to their target cohort, in this context remote First Nations students, Guenther and Osborne (2020a) argued, then research that suggests harm has been caused by certain approaches, in particular with marginalised groups, needs to be taken seriously.

The parameters of Indigenous education in the NT are becoming increasingly contracted, resulting in an escalation of ‘silver bullet’ solutions (Fogarty et al., 2017, p. 190), of which

Direct Instruction was one. The underlying ideology behind silver bullet solutions is the 'literacy myth', developed by Harvey Graff, where 'literacy education is seen as the panacea to societal troubles' (as cited in Fogarty et al., 2017, p. 190). In 1979, Harvey Graff proposed the literacy myth, arguing that although literacy is important, it is not the solution to all the challenges society faces. The literacy myth refers to the idea presented in education, religious, civic, and other settings that the 'acquisition of literacy is a necessary precursor to and invariably results in economic development, democratic practice, cognitive enhancement, and upward social mobility' (Graff, 2010, p. 635). Luke (2008) argued that many researchers and educators have unintentionally bought into the literacy myth that schools and literacy education can solve all economic and social inequalities. Graff (2010), in his paper titled 'The Literacy Myth at Thirty', concluded that while literacy is important, and a link between literacy and economic success does exist, it is complex, and contradictions and variability require consideration.

When *A Share in the Future* was released, despite it appearing that all schools would be mandated to teach Direct Instruction, Yirrkala School and Yirrkala Homelands School continued to deliver programs based on EAL/D pedagogy. The review recommended that the delivery of the curriculum be in English, and the department mandate early literacy approaches in English. The review continued that 'this should occur through a whole program such as Direct Instruction (DI) and/or through the adoption of specific programs for each key area of literacy' (B. Wilson, 2014, p. 20). Furthermore, it was recommended that an internal review be conducted into EAL/D practice. Considering that the majority of students under 'review' were EAL/D learners, the fact that second language and literacy practice was not the focus was a major flaw, particularly as the review reinforced the importance of 'evidence-based' practice. As discussed, the review has been criticised for not referencing the significant body of literature related to Indigenous education (Fogarty, Lovell, et al., 2015; Grimes, 2014; Ninti One Limited, 2014; Spillman, 2017). A participant in my research shared a story of a senior bureaucrat who, when the review was released, addressed a group of educators at Yirrkala and said, 'You can fight it but you won't win'. This was in reference to the implementation of Direct Instruction and the plan to send remote secondary students to boarding schools. The community did resist, and Direct Instruction was never implemented at

Yambirrpa Schools. Despite the financial investment, as with most silver bullets in the NT, the political agenda has shifted, and the support for Direct Instruction does not seem to exist nor is it being implemented as the review recommended it needed to be. However, regardless of whether schools did or did not implement Direct Instruction, they are impacted as funding is tied to these silver bullet solutions, and the fluctuating political agendas create uncertainty.

5.8 A Shifting Political Landscape

As discussed throughout this chapter, the political landscape in the NT is always fluctuating. As explained by Fogarty et al. (2017), there have been global shifts in education as well as 'seismic movements in the underlying ideals of Indigenous affairs policy at a national level' (p. 188). These national shifts are reflected in NT policy, which impacts education in remote contexts. The rise in neoliberalism globally and the move towards high-stakes testing is an example of the connection between global, national, and NT specific agendas. Another example of how global and national agendas influence NT education is the introduction of the Australian Curriculum. In December 2008 state and federal education ministers signed the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008), which set the direction for education in Australia; the National Curriculum is one example that 'facilitated the agreement reached with this document' (Buchanan & Chapman, 2011, p. 1). The national curriculum, first implemented in the NT in 2012 (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2014), was introduced to 'improve the quality, equity and transparency of Australia's education system' and as a way to support teachers, students, parents, and the community with a 'clear understanding of what students should learn regardless of where they live or what school they attend' (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2016, para. 6). While a critique of this curriculum is beyond the scope of this research, it has been illustrated by Morison et al. (2019) that these curriculum documents suggest that developing culturally responsiveness is simply a matter of adding content to the various learning areas which side steps the 'profound socio-political issues including racism, sovereignty and self-determination that operate across the entire schooling system' (Morrison, 2019, p. 37). Furthermore, Lingard (2018) argued that the 'Australian Curriculum, amongst other things is a policy response to globalization, but also an expression of it' (p. 59). Lingard continued that there needs to be acknowledgement that

‘global factors always play out nationally and locally in respect of what comparative educators call path dependent factors, that is, local economy, history politics and culture’ (p. 59). It is clear that NT policy and practice are influenced by national agendas and globalisation; the Australian Curriculum is one example of this.

The political landscape in the NT appears to be changing yet again. There seems to be a shift towards the recognition of ‘language and culture’ in the process of education. This change in direction at a systemic level was initiated when the Labor government came into power in 2016 in the NT. The Chief Minister Michael Gunner publicly announced the implementation of a new initiative, Community-Led Schools, which would reverse the Indigenous education review (*A Share in the Future*) initiated by the Country Liberal Party. The initiative proposed to improve engagement with communities and increase participation in decision-making, arguably a shift from previous years when prescriptive models of learning were imposed and community aspirations ignored. Elements of the review, such as the boarding school agenda, appears to be still operational, but there has been a move away from full implementation of the recommendations, such as Direct Instruction.

In 2017, the year after the Chief Minister announced the move towards more community control, the NT Government released a document, *Keeping Indigenous Languages and Cultures Strong: A Plan for the Teaching and Learning of Indigenous Languages and Cultures in Northern Territory Schools* (Northern Territory Government, 2017a). Despite the history of policies that either failed to support Indigenous languages or avoided any mention of them altogether, this document positioned ‘Indigenous language and culture’ as relevant in the learning process. This document is referred to as a ‘curriculum’ on the Department of Education website (Northern Territory Government Department of Education, 2017) and was ready for implementation in 2018. It is a significant change of focus when less than 10 years ago, the educational arena was characterised by English-only models of learning. *Keeping Indigenous Languages and Cultures Strong* (2017) aims to provide

a long term vision and goal for building the capacity of our Indigenous leaders, sector and school leaders and classroom educators to implement teaching and learning programs in Indigenous Languages and Cultures. The Plan proposes a model for

curriculum and strategic actions required to guide this work across sectors and at all levels of education. (p. 4)

However, during my fieldwork, a number of participants were concerned there was a shortage of skills and remote NT experience of both bureaucrats and educators to effectively achieve the aims of the plan. While a strategic plan to support languages and cultures in schools is welcomed by many, it is clear that there is an ongoing lack of adequate funding including an investment in professional development, mentoring, teacher education and training to support effective implementation. As one of the participants in this research put it,

There has been an ongoing dearth of support for bilingual education, and EAL/D training for non local teachers.....half-hearted verbal support for local teacher education but no appropriate courses. As far as Yirrkala goes there are only two fully qualified teachers left, both of whom will retire in the next couple of years. It is crystal clear we are back where we started in 1975. Sure, we have a curriculum and Yolŋu curriculum processes but who will lead them? Nothing has changed for the better in remote schools since you started your thesis. (Personal communication, 26 March 2020)

Political moves such as the Four Hours of English and Direct Instruction are examples of fluctuating ideology eroding human resources and institutional memory. This also impacts people emotionally which ultimately impacts the capacity of schools. As I have discussed many times, the lack of community-based teacher education has significantly impacted the delivery of programs that support language and culture. This highlights a critical point: that without adequate funding, policies, curriculums, and plans, despite the best of intentions, and even if they align with community aspirations, they are likely to be ineffective if staff do not have the skills and access to the ongoing professional development required to support the implementation of such approaches.

5.9 Conclusion: Where to Now?

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the complexities inherent in policy and how these centralised directives in the NT conflict, at times, with community aspirations. Unfortunately,

tighter government control and the movement towards standardisation and high-stakes testing such as NAPLAN have not improved the outcomes in these schools. As long-term educator in the NT Beth Graham (2020) put it,

While members of the dominant society now insist that Indigenous children be educated, many don't really care if it works or not. It just lets the country off the hook and we can tell the world that we are providing schools. Whether or not Indigenous children are able to learn effectively in those schools was not, and still is not, the concern of the wider Australian community. (p. 29)

While education in remote contexts has been impacted by NT Government decisions and broader political debates, which have often been a reactive response to national and global movements, local agency has been sustained. Despite the agency, government control has had an impact. During my fieldwork, I met with the Yirrkala School Action Group to discuss my research, and I referenced the political decisions that have conflicted with community aspirations. Three senior Yolŋu educators were in the meeting, women who over the years had been active in advocating for bilingual education. There were also a number of inexperienced Yolŋu educators in the room, and I struggled to explain some of the concepts in a way that the less experienced educators might connect with. One of the senior teachers helped explain using a metaphor to explain to these young educators in Yolŋu matha that government decisions were like a fish on a hook: 'The government always has hold of us', she explained. For decades the community has continued to assert control, but this struggle has come at a cost as it has taken energy and time away from further strengthening bilingual and both ways programs. Furthermore, the struggle has taken a toll on the professional and personal lives of those involved, ultimately impacting education and students in these schools. It is clear that during the 1970s, government policy by supporting Aboriginal languages opened the way for the development of local language, curriculum, and pedagogies and their application. Therefore, it is evident that government policy, when aligned with community aspirations, in this case to teach local languages, can become a welcomed agent of change and transformation.

The political space is complex, and this chapter raised more questions than it answered. Are policy decisions and directives malicious in intent, or are those making the decisions simply oblivious to the conflicting interests on the ground? Is there a genuine perception that making decisions *for* communities, while sitting in offices removed from the realities of these contexts, is in the best interests of remote communities, especially when communities have resisted many of these policy decisions? Would genuine community involvement in the development of policies and approaches more effectively meet the needs of remote NT communities? This last question related to policy more broadly I believe needs further exploration but is beyond the scope of this research. As Maddison (2012) argued, 'A different style of Indigenous participation, not just as passive individuals to be "consulted" by government, but as partners in genuine dialogue about policy, could transform the Indigenous policy space' (p. 276). I propose that this participation in policy is one of the five key pillars critical in the development of remote education designed to meet the needs of students and their communities.

Government agendas and community aspirations are not always in conflict. The RLPA is an example of the potential for genuine dialogue and engagement between the state and the Yirrkala community—as the *njathu* theorises—the poison was leached when a starting point was negotiated and a plan of action was co-developed. However, this agreement turned out to be superficial, and the poison returned in the form of the Four Hours of English policy mandate that effectively negated the 4 years of collaborative work between the government and the community. An agreement negotiated in good faith. These memories are still alive in the communities affected, and it takes time to re-establish trust.

In the next chapter, I develop a collaborative framework as a potential tool to rebalance power, make assumptions and bias transparent, and position diversity as a strength rather than a weakness. While the focus is how productive relationships are part of collaboration between staff in organisations in remote communities, it raises questions about whether relationality of a deep kind may be a useful concept applied to government bureaucracy and the local.

Chapter 6 Bala ga Lili⁵¹: Operationalising Collaborative Practice

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the tensions that occur when the educational aspirations of community come up against centralised government control in the NT. In this chapter, I return to the current lived reality of the intercultural context of remote education in the NT and examine the process of working together with colleagues: the practice of collaboration. Collaborative practice—that is, the way people work together to develop and deliver educational programs—was identified by participants I worked with as critical to the work of educators at Yirrkala and in the Laynhapuy Homelands. Collaborative practice has the potential to rebalance power in the context of schooling by providing all educators, regardless of mainstream qualification, with the opportunity to contribute to and facilitate learning. However, power also influences these working relationships, and for these power structures to be made explicit, critical reflexivity is required. Furthermore, collaborative practice is complicated by the different ways we understand the world, and it cannot be assumed that those working together have shared understandings of how to engage collaboratively. The different ways educators understand the world influence the way they engage in collaborative practice, and if these different ways of being, knowing, and doing are understood by all involved, it is more likely that common ground can be found, and differences will be valued as strengths rather than deficits. The data collected in this doctoral research demonstrate that establishing productive and generative relationships in workplaces, of any kind in this context, is important. Although the focus of this chapter is the institution of school, there is applicability across other institutional sites.

In previous chapters, I focused largely on the structural elements related to education, including policy, centrally developed directives, pedagogy, and curriculum. In this chapter, I focus on relationships and how they are operationalised in the schooling context. I do this by exploring relationality between colleagues in the school context and how connections with the community can strengthen practice. I explain that in the context of practice, different understandings of relationality exist, and for Yolŋu, *gurrutu* is the foundation of this relating

⁵¹ Literal translation – to and from. The term is also used to describe a reciprocal process – give and take.

that differs from Western understandings of relationships. As Bat and Guenther (2013) argued, the analysis of education systems has focused on policy and activity rather than people and their relationships despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples identifying ‘relationships are central to all activity’ (p. 131). They advocated for a ‘people-based education system’ (p. 131), a process that involves working from the ground up and valuing the rich diversity of ontologies and epistemologies in remote Australia—a system where ‘everyone belongs in the system, rather than the system insisting that people belong to it’ (Bat & Guenther, 2013, p. 131). However, a people and relationship education system is at odds with the NT Department of Education who for decades have been attempting to ‘people proof’ the system with approaches such as Direct Instruction (discussed in Chapter 5). The underlying assumption of these ‘silver bullet’ solutions is that it does not matter who is doing the teaching. The data from this doctoral research clearly demonstrate that working together to co-design and co-create in a collaborative way is essential in workplaces at Yirrkala; it does matter who is doing the teaching. In this chapter I demonstrate why a people-based system is important, and bring together a relational framework of collaboration into what I refer to as the Model of Collaborative Practice—one of the Five Pillars of Community-Centred Education summarised in the conclusion.

6.2 Relationality in the Context of Practice

A Personal Reflection on Relationships

The relationships I developed at Yirrkala with Yolŋu and non-local colleagues, as well as members of the wider community, have sustained me over the years. These relationships supported the development of my teaching practice in a number of different ways—camping and hunting trips, attending ceremonies, learning local language, being mentored by experienced educators and elders, and attending Galtha Rom are some of the ways as a non-local teacher I was oriented into the community of Yirrkala, a context significantly different to the one in which I grew up. Through these relational experiences, I glimpsed into the worldviews of the Yolŋu students and the adults I worked with. I realised that developing and sustaining relationships both at school and in the community were a necessary part of the work of a teacher in this context as working with staff to develop programs and team teaching was a critical part of my job. However, relationships in the workplace at times could also be

awkward and confusing. This was not just my own experience—many people, both Balanda and Yolŋu, shared such feelings with me over the years. While I was living away from Yirrkala, a Yolŋu educator called me to debrief about the behaviour of a Balanda work colleague. The educator wanted to ask me if I thought the behaviour of her work colleague, which was about the delegation of tasks and the way this was communicated, was an assertion of power or if it was simply reflective of accepted Balanda work behaviour. I did not have a straightforward answer, but the hour-long conversation was insightful and demonstrated the complexities inherent when working in an intercultural space.

Over the years, I observed and experienced how, when trust and openness in a working relationship were present, daily work seemed to be more productive and enjoyable for the staff and students. On the flipside, there were often times when relationships between staff in the school context could become tense and unproductive, and this could result in disengagement and people feeling unsupported and sometimes unsafe. Arguably, relationships in any workplace have their challenges; however, it is particularly important that working relationships are productive between educators in this context, as often, local and non-local teachers are working in a team-teaching capacity to plan and deliver learning to students. Over the years, I reflected on how collaborative practice and productive relationships could be strengthened in this complex intercultural context and if relationships could transform practice. It was notable that, despite productive relationships in workplaces being important to the work of educators, the impact of these relationships was seldom explicitly discussed, at least not in a formal way. The schools did facilitate professional development activities that supported a relational and collaborative approach to practice, often delivered by Yolŋu, to explain aspects of *gurruṯu* and include non-local teachers into this system. Despite these activities, however, it seemed that the relationship dynamics between staff became part of the ‘hidden curriculum’⁵². Relationships were critical to the work of educators but not necessarily developed or recognised as essential, and it was assumed that as teachers we had the skills to collaborate in intercultural contexts. I wanted to understand how professional relationships could be further developed. As one non-local participant who had worked in remote communities for many years put it to me, ‘Some people do have really

⁵² A concept that refers to the unwritten and unofficial ‘rules’ of education

good relationships but they are not the kind of relationships where knowledge is shared at a deep level. They are fun, happy, have a joke relationships which is different' (Non-local educator, personal communication, 28 October 2018).

The relationships where knowledge is shared at a 'deep level', the relationships that support collaborative practice and a desire to understand and foster a sense of belonging, are the focus of this chapter. As articulated by Pádraig Ó Tuama, the poet and theologian who, among other accomplishments, was the leader of Corrymeela⁵³ in Ireland,

We need stories of belonging that move us towards each other not from each other, we need ways of being human that open up the possibility of being alive together, we need ways of navigating our differences that deepen our curiosity, that deepen our friendship, that deepen our capacity to disagree, that deepen the argument of being alive; this is what we need, this is what will save us, this is the work of peace, this is the work of imagination. (Pádraig Ó Tuama, as cited in (Peace Right Here, 2019)

It is a major premise of this thesis that 'deep level' relationality and learning within the local context is crucial to successful practice in intercultural spaces such as schools in remote NT. As proposed by Bat and Guenther (2013), a 'people-based education system' (p. 131) that values the rich diversity that exists in these communities is needed. The data in this doctoral research clearly demonstrate that working together in a collaborative way is essential in workplaces at Yirrkala and the Homelands. In this chapter, I explore possible ways of working towards a people-based system.

Relating and Gurruṯu: 'Gurruṯu Follows You Everywhere'

Understanding how collaborative practice is influenced by relationships was not as straightforward as I had anticipated. 'Relating', as explained by Cooper (2005), is the 'continuous work of connecting and disconnecting in a fluctuating network of existential events' (p. 1689). Educators at Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands are in a constant state of relating—to students, colleagues, and the wider community. Furthermore, any dialogue

⁵³ Northern Ireland's oldest peace and reconciliation organisation

about relationality with Yolŋu participants in this research inevitably involved a discussion of *gurruṯu*, the Yolŋu kinship system. *Gurruṯu*, the established Yolŋu system of relating, differs from Western constructs of relationality. F. Morphy (2008) described *gurruṯu* as ‘the foundation of the Yolngu social system and system of governance’ (p. 122), comprised of complex kinship networks that connect groups and individuals and also include the ‘more-than-human’ (Bawaka Country et al., 2016, p. 460). For example, a person’s mother or daughter could be a current, a body of water, a bird, a ceremonial practice, a wind, rock, or star (Christie & Greateorex, 2004, p. 4). In the Yolŋu social universe, everyone is thought of as related in a kinship sense to everyone else, and how people are related to one another determines or influences how they behave with each other. The connectedness of *gurruṯu* to both human kin and nonhuman entities differs from most Western people’s understandings of relationality. Although an in-depth discussion of *gurruṯu* is beyond the scope of this research, general understandings of *gurruṯu* can ‘help us grapple with some of the challenges facing academics as they try to understand place/space in relational, material and more-than-human ways’ (Bawaka Country et al., 2016, p. 457).

A participant, referring to how she understood my connection to community regardless of whether I was a ‘researcher’ or a teacher, put it, ‘*Gurruṯu* works both ways. It identifies your place through *gurruṯu* and how you are related to people around you. Instead of us talking to you as an outsider, you are addressed by your *gurruṯu* or your *mälk* [subsection name]’. When I spoke to Yolŋu about relationships, the conversation returned to *gurruṯu*, and consequently, it needed to be understood in the context of practice. It is important to understand that there may be multiple ways of how relating is conceptualised and operationalised, which is likely to influence collaborative practice. One participant stated, ‘*Gurruṯu* follows you everywhere, it doesn’t matter where you are or where you’re working. So for the organisational culture, organisational culture is about acceptance, it’s about balance, it’s about understanding why people do things a certain way’ (Yolŋu participant, personal reflection, 24 April 2018). As a non-local educator, understanding the interconnectedness of *gurruṯu* is one part of the story; recognising the expectations and responsibilities conferred by certain kin relationships is another. These expectations and responsibilities between kin, as the quote above illustrates, is the foundation of how Yolŋu relate to each other in workplaces, including classrooms.

In an interview in *The Australian*, Wukun Waṇambi proposed that if concepts like gurrutu are not explained to ‘outsiders’, it will be like ‘hitting a brick wall’, and the failure of outsiders to understand concepts like gurrutu interferes with the achievement of goals such as employment and education (Aikman, 2019). He continued to explain that Yolṁu theology is not just about self-preservation but helps non-Indigenous people find a ‘better way of being’ in a time when mainstream culture is focused on individualism, a system that is in pieces—from this perspective, it is Western culture that is deficit. As a non-Indigenous person, it may not be possible or appropriate to live ‘the ontological realities of gurrutu’ (Bawaka Country et al., 2016, p. 469). However, Waṇambi’s analysis suggests that the failure to understand these Yolṁu realities will impact education. The importance of gurrutu needs to be understood by non-local staff, but giving it space and value *inside the institutions of learning* is just as critical. Put simply, a collaborative approach based solely on Western concepts of relationality is not going to work in this context.

Contrasting Understandings of Relationality in Organisations

Although different understandings of relationality between Yolṁu and non-local participants is not a simple binary, Yolṁu participants of this research understood their worldviews as being different from Balanda/Western worldviews. Despite the different ontological understandings of relationality, both Yolṁu and non-local participants agreed that developing productive relationships was a critical component of education. Yet, while Yolṁu participants often referred to gurrutu, non-local participants rarely mentioned the interrelatedness of their own families and how relationality with their kin influenced work practices, pointing to the profound ontological differences, which inevitably influences workplace practice.

The data collected in this research demonstrate the importance of non-local educators learning about the context they are working in. However, focusing on the ‘Other’ without examining dominant Western structures and how individuals are implicated in these structures is problematic because, as argued by Maddison (2019), in a settler colonial state, the dominant society has mostly ‘normalised’ (p. 215) practices and structures. As ‘settlers’, non-local teachers’ cultural frameworks, and the values that underpin them, are reflected back by the systems they work in, in this case, the education system. Non-Indigenous teachers

are rarely challenged to formally critique their cultural assumptions about relationality or to consider how this may influence practice; nor are they challenged to understand how institutions work to sustain dominant ways of being, knowing, and doing. Yolŋu educators confront these challenges daily.

The majority of schools in remote NT are modelled on Western structures that reinforce individualism and focus on outcomes. Despite the resistance and agency enacted by the community over the years, Yirrkala School and Yirrkala Homelands School remains a predominantly Western institution controlled by the NT Government. As argued by F. Martin and Pirbhai-Illich (2016),

Westernised education has been founded on an object-focused ontology and epistemology since colonial times, which is mostly unquestioned and therefore implicitly represented as the natural way of being and knowing, and which continues to wreak violence on the Other. (p. 369)

Over the years, Yambirrpa Schools, along with other schools in remote Australia, have been impacted by political decisions and directives that, as I demonstrated in Chapter 5, are often misaligned with the aspirations articulated by the community. In addition, many non-local individuals or ‘settlers’ occupy senior management positions and, as already noted, the majority of ‘qualified’ teaching positions are held by non-local teachers. This creates a power imbalance that, unless explicitly addressed, continues to, in the words of F. Martin and Pirbhai-Illich (2016), ‘wreak violence on the Other’ and reinforces the status quo.

The reliance on a non-local workforce, in particular to fill qualified teaching positions, cannot be overlooked. According to Tuck and Yang (2012), ‘settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital’ (p. 5). The capital that non-local educators, such as myself, have received is an important factor to consider. For example, qualified teachers are on higher salaries than Yolŋu team teachers who are not qualified by mainstream standards, and in addition, non-local recruits are entitled to housing through their employment that local recruits, who are mostly Yolŋu, are not entitled to.

A participant in the research articulated the following:

There are power relationships that are invisible to people and the people in Njapaki positions seem to be better paid, have more power and more institutional clout so those relationships are always embedded in those power dynamics and make it difficult for people to relate, and supported by an institutional and government framework and an accountability framework that are all benefiting white people. So that deeply impacts—who can speak back and who can't, and whose knowledge gets valued by the people that are providing funding. (Non-local participant, personal reflection, 6 July 2021)

The majority of non-local teachers at Yirrkala relocate for work, and although many contribute significantly to the educational aspirations identified by Yolŋu in this region, schools are still 'a source of capital'. Recognising how non-local staff are implicated in systems that benefit is a concept rarely addressed. A participant shared the following:

People already feel like they are here to do good and because of coming with that intention, that motivation subsumes any possible wrongdoing. I'm not saying that I am not part of this but that actually you could be doing just as much harm as the historical harm that has been done, if you are not really willing to take on some of these small things but also to be receptive to a lot of feedback along the way. It doesn't discredit the fact that you have left your home in a nice city, that you've left a potentially cushier job, you've left somewhere where you're speaking with someone in English as a first language where communication isn't as difficult. We are not saying that you aren't doing it 'tough', but we're saying that that's not enough. Doing good is not enough, in terms of an intention. (Non-local participant, personal reflection, 27 November 2018)

In this interview, the participant, who engaged in a reflexive practice, shared stories of colleagues who seemed unable and/or unwilling to reflect on how their behaviour and the concept that they were 'doing good' reinforced concepts of paternalism. This quote reflects Freire's (1996) work: that the egoistic interests of the oppressor can often be 'cloaked in the

false generosity of paternalism’ and rather than ‘being a process of liberation can maintain and embody oppression’.

For Yolŋu, relationality is expressed through the medium and metaphor of *gurrutu*, which influences behaviour in the workplace. Yolŋu staff in workplaces, in this case the school, have life-long family connections with each other, which differs from the ‘mainstream’ culture. For the majority of non-local staff, relationality is based on the notion of a ‘team’ of ‘professionals’ rather than individuals who are related. Since collaborative practice in schools is a relational process, it is important to consider that productive relationships between team members may be understood and operationalised in different ways. I explore the concept of collaborative practice in the next half of the chapter, synthesising the data into what I have termed ‘The Model of Collaborative Practice’.

6.3 Collaboration and Relationality: People at the Centre

Collaboration in Practice

Collaborative practice, or ‘working in teams’ as it is often called, is a well-established practice at Yambirrpa Schools. Team teaching, a process through which classroom educators collaboratively plan and deliver learning, is an important aspect of working in remote schools. Team teaching, including team planning, helps all engaged in this process understand and validate both Yolŋu and Balanda systems of knowledge (Graham, 1999). However, it is only successful when individuals in these teams understand why it is important and how it can help validate both Western and Yolŋu systems of knowledge and pedagogical practices. Furthermore, working collaboratively is not necessarily a skill that all teachers have, and how this is operationalised is likely to differ between educators. A non-local teacher, a research participant, reflected,

Initially, I was quite happy to be the expert in the room and now I realise how wrong that is. I think one of the challenges of team teaching is that most fully qualified teachers don't get into the profession thinking they'll work in a team. Traditionally in the mainstream system, there is one teacher per classroom and they have almost total authority within that domain, so teaching attracts a lot of 'Type A' people who like

control. And even where a lot of schools have moved towards open-plan classrooms and 'team teaching' it's generally a negotiation between fellow professionals who recognise each other as having equal authority. It seems it's often a case of 'you look after x and I'll look after y and we'll mostly try to stay out of each other's way'. That's rarely how team teaching works in the remote Indigenous context. You're often working with someone who may not be interested at all in the kinds of professional conversations you want to be having, but may have very strong opinions about things you didn't think were important at all! And with a lot of Aboriginal colleagues I've worked with, the more a non-Aboriginal person takes on, the further back they'll step. This can create issues when you're working with people coming from a professional background that almost prizes hyperactivity and business. A lot of non-local teachers are (understandably perhaps) terrified of silence, empty time and anything unplanned—which can lead them to fill up exactly all the spaces and moments where a local teacher might step up and take on more responsibility. (Non-local participant, personal reflection, 28 October 2021)

This participant highlighted the complexities evident in the process of team teaching. Considering that it is likely educators engage with collaborative practice in different ways, it is important that the process of collaboration in school contexts is explicitly addressed. While collaborative practice is critical between individuals at the classroom level, it also needs to be supported, facilitated, and modelled at an organisational level. That is, collaborative practice needs to become part of the culture of the school and the power inherent in these systems, and structures need to be addressed otherwise one group will end up dominating the process. As discussed in Chapter 2, a pedagogy that is culturally responsive needs to interrogate power, colonisation, and racism (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Knaus, 2009; F. Martin et al., 2017; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). The critique of these aspects could also support the development of productive collaborative practices, supporting educators to work together to co-design, develop, and implement a culturally responsive pedagogy.

Collaborative practice can also extend beyond the classroom into community-facilitated learning. A collaborative approach is more likely to be successful if Yolŋu teachers bring

‘community-facilitated’ styles of teaching and learning into the classroom setting; however, this is a complex process when schools are predominantly based on Western approaches to pedagogy, and the power is often with the qualified teacher, usually a non-local person. Galtha Rom, as detailed in Chapter 4, is an example of a collaboration between the school and community. In Chapter 7 I discuss the collaborative planning process of a Galtha Rom I was involved in during my fieldwork— a process of developing community-led approaches that involve school staff working with elders and rangers to develop learning programs.

Yolŋu staff, particularly senior Yolŋu staff, have a critical role in facilitating connections between the school and community. This role requires a high level of skill and knowledge of Western structures of education and Yolŋu epistemologies. While the unique skill set required for this type of work may be recognised at an organisational level by many educators, at a system level, the high level of skills is rarely acknowledged. The majority of Yolŋu team teachers and HLCTs are not ‘qualified’ according to mainstream standards of tertiary education, and therefore, the critical role that they occupy is underestimated—an issue I addressed in Chapter 4. To reiterate, local Indigenous teachers have implicit knowledge of their students and share the same language (Hall, 2016, p. 227). In addition to being teachers of local language and culture, these educators facilitate learning at various levels by building relationships, functioning as role models, providing mentoring for staff, ‘solving local problems and dealing conflict’ (Guenther & Disbray, 2015, p. 6). As discussed in Chapter 4, Guenther and Disbray explained that while in non-remote spaces these roles could be filled effectively by non-local staff, in remote localities where cultural norms and languages are different from those of non-local teachers, these outside teachers are unable to perform these tasks. Yirrkala School and Yirrkala Homelands School has a strong approach to working in teams; however, over the years, the efficacy of this practice has fluctuated depending on the individuals involved and, to some extent, the political agendas such as policy decisions and directives, which I discussed in Chapter 5. Considering that Yolŋu team teachers have a unique contribution to make, the importance of collaboration cannot be underestimated and neither can the different ways this process is understood and engaged with.

‘Capability’ and Incommensurability

To define some of these educator roles and required skills required for work in remote NT schools, I questioned research participants about qualities that they thought were relevant in this context, particularly how educators could work effectively together. However, thinking that I could develop a list of skills and capabilities from participant responses demonstrated the cultural lens that I brought to the research—it was not as simple as this. In addition to language challenges (I was not fluent enough in Yolŋu matha to discuss concepts in depth), there were also conceptual differences, especially when I discussed ‘capabilities’ of effective teachers with Yolŋu participants. When I asked a participant to consider what makes a ‘good’ teacher, hoping that this would help inform an analysis of collaborative practice, she answered my question with another question: *‘nhakun nheya?’* (like you?). This was not the answer I was expecting, so I asked the participant to identify the qualities, skills, or capabilities I might have that were relevant to the context. However, these subsequent questions did not elicit the generic list of skills or capabilities that I had hoped it would; instead, the conversation returned to how we relate and connect through gurruṯu. My connection to people through gurruṯu was often brought up in interviews, evident when most Yolŋu participants referred to me by the appropriate kinship term. However, it was not just any kind of relationship or connection that I wanted to understand, it was as the participant shared in Section 6.2, ‘the ‘kind of relationships where knowledge is shared at a ‘deep level’.

My attempt to decontextualise and in a sense depersonalise relationality in interviews by asking participants to divorce abstract ‘capabilities’ from the individual is an important concept needing analysis. In analysing misunderstandings between people raised in different cultures, anthropologists point to differences not just in epistemologies but in the very way personhood is conceptualised in relation to the surrounding social field. The work of F. Morphy (2007) is particularly useful in examining the incommensurability of concepts in the context of Yirrkala. Morphy discussed non-translatability in a governance workshop at an organisation at Yirrkala that was ‘of its kind, a good one’ (p. 97), but that assumed the universality of Western governance concepts and the assumption that they could be grafted onto existing Yolŋu ideas. Morphy explained that the instructor delivering the governance workshop recognised difference and that two worldviews may exist, however failed to

understand the ‘nature of difference’ (p. 97). Not understanding the nature of difference becomes problematic when grafting ideas onto Yolŋu concepts fails to take, as it often does; it is often the Indigenous people themselves who are understood as a deficit ‘rather than in the nature of the training enterprise itself’ (p. 97). Moreover, it is usually assumed that Balanda concepts and ideas will be translated into Yolŋu concepts; rarely the reverse occurs. While Morphy explained the translation of English concepts into Yolŋu matha is sometimes impossible due to the different set of ideas between Yolŋu and people from English-speaking Western backgrounds, she argued that analysis (explication) of concepts *is* possible under the right circumstances. Morphy’s critique highlights the potential incommensurability of certain concepts and the failure of organisations and individuals to engage with the implications as conceptual differences are grounded in different views of the individual in relation to their surrounding social field. For example, gurruṯu and the interconnected nature of relationality differs from an individual Western concept of Self and therefore can render abstract ‘capabilities’ meaningless. In Yolŋu epistemology, ‘capability’ is envisaged in the context of a relationship, so understanding the centrality of relationality may help to develop a more nuanced understanding of workplace practice. Furthermore, understanding the nature of the incommensurability of concepts across different cultures may also be required when working in both ways educational contexts. Inevitably, when collaborating, there are bound to be differences in understandings of both the process of collaboration and the learning content being co-developed with team members. As the educator at the beginning of this section shared, there are likely to be different professional priorities that the other party has not even considered relevant. In the following section, I develop a framework to support the process of collaboration—the Model of Collaborative Practice is a key pillar I propose is essential for a both ways approach to community-centred education.

6.4 Operationalising Collaborative Practice: Njaynu⁵⁴ ga Lili

The data collected in this research demonstrate that *who* educators are matters. That is, educators need more than technical skills such as EAL/D pedagogy and content knowledge of subject matter. Although these skills are undeniably critical in education, how educators ‘show up’ in these spaces and work collaboratively with colleagues and students is also an essential

⁵⁴ Njaynu is used here rather than ‘bala’ to reflect Figure 14.

part of teaching in this context. However, inquiry into how our lived experiences, worldviews, and assumptions influence how we show up as educators and how this influences practice in remote locations is rarely explored.

Parker J. Palmer educator and author, advocates for deeper inquiry, inviting educators to ask, ‘Who is the self that teaches?’ How does the quality of my selfhood form—or deform—the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleagues, my world? To map this landscape, he suggested that the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual paths are essential for wholeness: ‘Reduce teaching to intellect, and it becomes a cold abstraction; reduce it to emotions, and it becomes narcissistic; reduce it to the spiritual, and it loses its anchor to the world’ (P. J. Palmer, 2017, p. 5). Palmer defined the *intellectual* as the way educators think about teaching and learning—the process of how people know and learn, and the nature of students and content; *emotional* as the feelings of students as they are taught and engage with learning, and the fluidity of feeling between students and teachers; and *spiritual* as the ‘diverse ways we answer the heart’s longing to be connected with the largeness of life—a longing that animates love and work (p. 5). While Palmer’s work is from a Western perspective, it speaks to education as a relational and interconnected process, which transcends the current standardised outcome-driven approach. As discussed, Yolŋu are intimately connected to an intricate and complex web of relationality through gurrutu, which can often conflict with Western education approaches that dictate what and when students must learn. For example, as discussed in Chapter 2, Western schooling often moves students away from their local environment and experiences (Calderon, 2014; Higgins & Kim, 2019; McKnight, 2016; L. T. Smith, 1999). In the next section, I discuss how deeper engagement with the self as a reflective learner within a collective of people in the workplace, in this case the school, may help to consolidate collaborative practice. I bring this together in the Model of Collaborative Practice.

Consolidating Relationships in the Context of Practice

In Chapter 3, I presented an image created by a Yolŋu participant that detailed how she thought ‘good’ relationships between Yolŋu and Njāpaki⁵⁵ could be developed. The participant and I had been having many discussions related to this research, and she casually

⁵⁵ The participant used the word Njāpaki instead of Balanda as these two words can be used synonymously.

mentioned to me one night while sitting around a campfire that she had created a diagram to represent her ideas (see Figure 14). The diagram identifies the key elements required to build productive relationships between Yolŋu and Nāpaki. The image is significant as it highlights the participant's engagement and contribution to the research, as well as provides a framework from a Yolŋu perspective to support the development of a model to operationalise productive relationships.

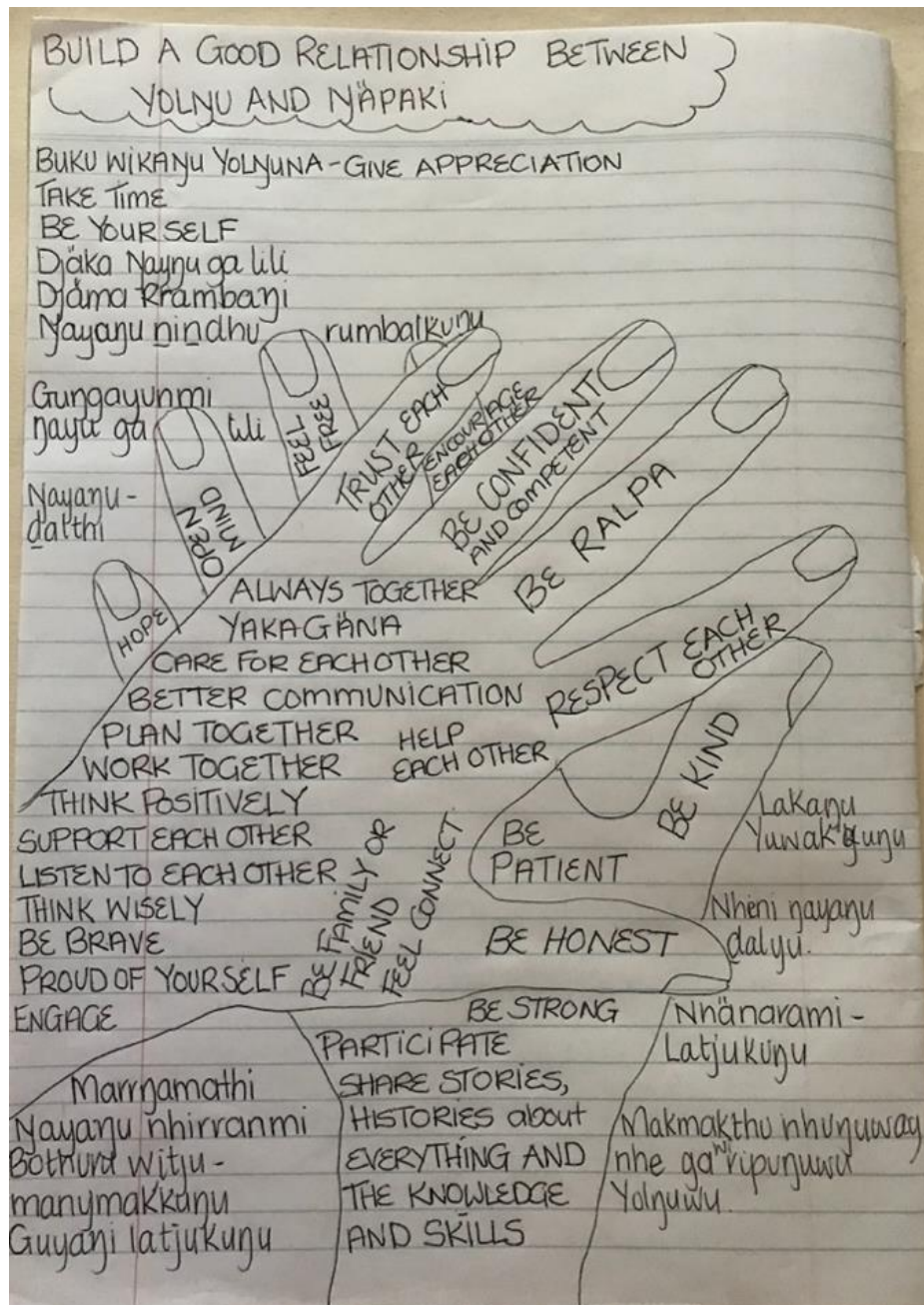


Figure 14: Building Good Relationships (26 September, 2018)

Credit: Lombija Mununggurr

The diagram in Figure 14 has layers of meaning, recorded in Yolŋu matha and in English—the translations of Yolŋu matha words and phrases are in Table 1, and the English terminology is summarised in Table 2. Many of the concepts in this diagram are concerned with collaboration. Words and phrases such as *djäma rrambanj* (work together), *yaka gäna* (not on your own), and *djäka ñayñu ga lili* (reciprocal caring) are also reflected in English words such as work together, plan together, and support each other. The phrase ‘be family or friend’ also demonstrates that the way non-local and Yolŋu educators relate to each other is an important aspect of the work of remote education. Furthermore, the concept of ‘feeling’ also features a number of times, represented by the word *ñayñu* (feeling/emotions), which is discussed in more detail later in the chapter. The phrase ‘feel connect[ed]’ reaffirms that a sense of belonging and connection is important. There are also words and phrases that map how to be together—that is, what ‘qualities’ are needed in the intercultural space. These include ‘deep honest respect’, which is documented in both English and Yolŋu matha, as well as having an open mind, being patient, and being able to listen attentively and communicate ‘better’ in a truthful manner: *lakanu yuwa[l]k’gunu* (speak truthfully). Support and care are also elements recorded, as is the ability to ‘think wisely’ and ‘be kind’. In summary, this diagram provides an in-depth framework for strengthening the way educators work together.

Yolŋu Matha	Translation
Buku wi[e]kanu Yolŋuna	Give appreciation
Djäka ñayñu ga lili	Care for each other in a reciprocal way—the spirit of reciprocal caring
Djäma rrambanj	Work together
Ñayanu ñiñdhu rumbalkuru	Deep honest respect
Gunḡayunmi ñayñu ga lili	Support and help each other
Ñayanu ḡalṯhi	A feeling of strength
Marrṇamathi	Happiness
Bothuru witju-manyamakkunu	Listen attentively
Guyaṇi latjukunu	Think well
Lakanu yuwa[l]k’gunu	Speak the truth
Nhe[i]ni ñayanu ḡalyu	Always live with deep respect/sit with strong feelings together
Nhänarami latjukunu	Look well on each other
Makmakthu nhuñuway dhe ga wiripuñuwu Yolŋuwu	Respect yourself and other Yolŋu
Ralpa	Engaged, energetic, active, hardworking
Yaka gäna	Not alone/not on your own

Table 1: Translation of Concepts – Building Good Relationships

ENGLISH TERMS – BUILDING GOOD RELATIONSHIPS				
Hope	Take time	Be yourself	Be confident and competent	Be honest
Open mind	Trust each other	Respect each other	Be patient	Be family or friend
Be kind	Feel free	Encourage each other	Feel connect	Always together
Care for each other	Better communication	Plan together	Work together	Think positively
Support each other	Listen to each other	Think wisely	Be brave	Engage

Table 2: English Concepts

A Model of Collaborative Practice

Although the educator conceptualised the map in Figure 14 as what is required to build good relationships between *Yolŋu and Njāpaki*, arguably this could be applied as a tool for how *all* staff work together. It is not always a simple binary of strengthening the way Yolŋu and non-local work together—a number of participants in the research spoke about the tensions, conflict, and misunderstandings that could occur between non-local staff. Therefore, I synthesised the data from Figure 14 and combined this with participant observations, interviews, and discussions into one framework that I term the Model of Collaborative Practice. This model brings together the key findings of what is required for collaborative practice of all staff to support them in the co-design and co-delivery of learning approaches. I summarised the key findings into three interdependent concepts (illustrated in the connecting circles in Figure 15) that are critical to the collaborative practice of educators:

- valuing relationships and connection
- being a learner
- engaging in critical reflexivity, including critique of assumptions related to the validity of knowledge.

To operationalise these three spheres in the process of collaborative practice, additional attitudes are required, including kindness, appreciation, patience, respect, honesty, humility, trust, open-mindedness, reciprocity, and love—documented around the three central tenets of collaborative practice illustrated in Figure 15. It is notable that they are not terms widely used in the context of education; however, these emerged as important attitudes required for collaborative practice. In the outside circles, there are other overarching concepts and discourses, discussed in detail in this thesis. They include the following:

- *policy and centralised directives* and how these influences teaching in remote contexts—the focus of Chapter 5
- *pedagogy and curriculum*—theory and practice, discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, as well as the application on both ways learning, which I will detail in Chapter 7 and 8
- *community-centred teacher education* including detailing the history of teacher education documented in Chapter 4
- *community agency and governance*, which was explained in Chapter 4 and 5, and continues in Chapters 7 and 8.

These four elements, plus collaborative practice, are drawn together in the Five Pillars of Community-Centred Education in my final chapter. A collaborative approach is at the heart of teaching in remote contexts, and consequently, it is placed at the centre of Figure 15.

In the next section, I discuss the three elements of collaborative practice in detail.

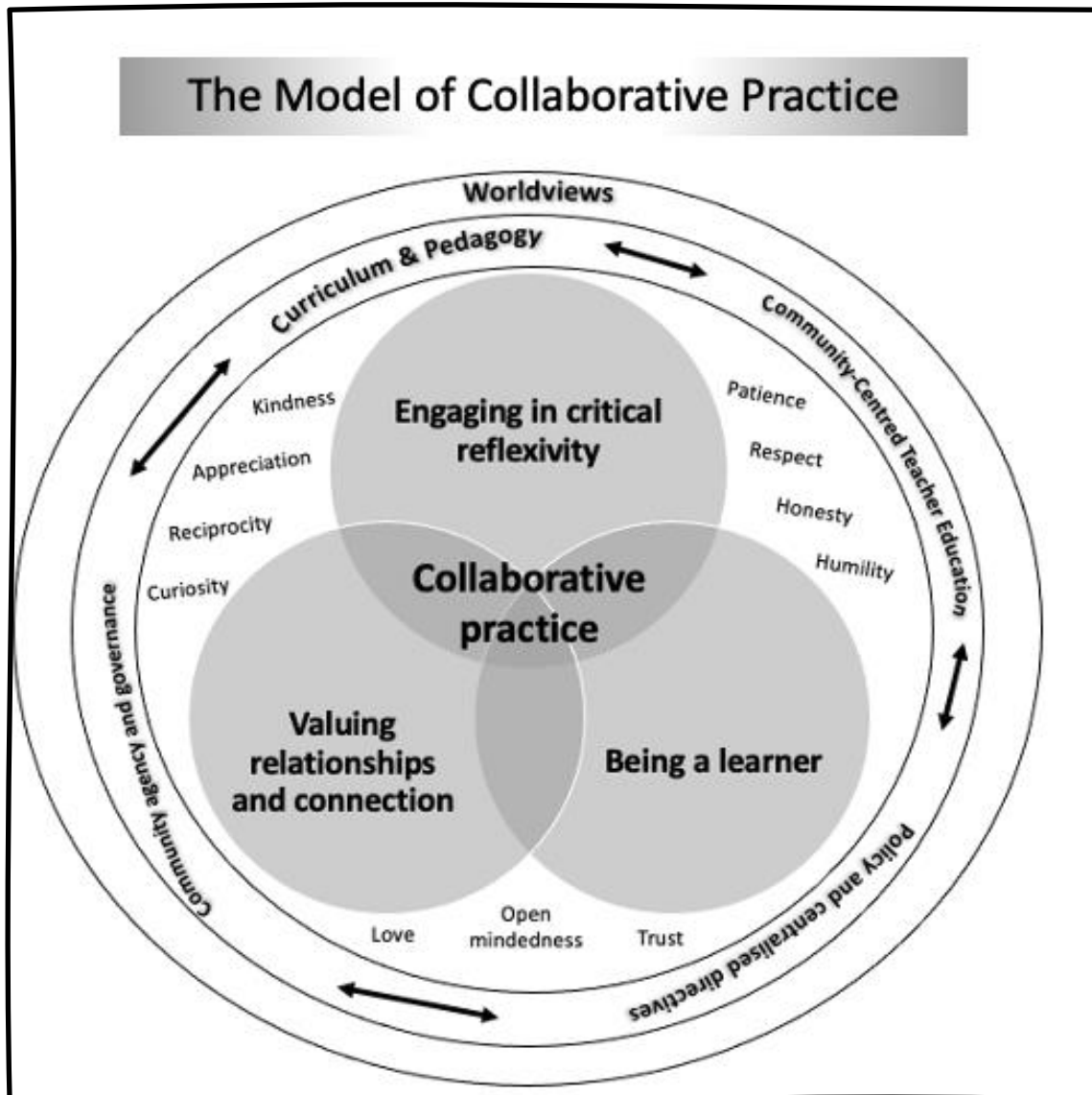


Figure 15: The Model of Collaborative Practice (2021)

Valuing Relationships and Connection

The findings in this research demonstrate that productive relationships and working collaboratively with colleagues are part of the work of educators at Yirrkala and Homelands schools. However, as discussed, it cannot be assumed that everyone inhabits these collaborative spaces in the same way. Yolŋu staff are already connected and have familial ties to other Yolŋu staff members, while non-local staff have developed or are developing relationships with both Yolŋu and Balanda (non-local) colleagues. As a result, staff will relate to each other in different ways and consequently will inhabit these spaces in different ways.

Many participants identified that investing time in relationships was important, and a number raised the concept of *ṇayaṇu*. As described by Blakeman (2013), *ṇayaṇu* relates to the interpersonal and is the ‘state or sense of feeling among and between people’ (p. 4); it is associated with the *gumurr* [chest] and is ‘always and necessarily relational’ (p. 98).

A Yolṇu educator, when reflecting on what constituted good working relationships, paused temporarily, seemingly searching for a way to describe it and then put simply, ‘sometimes it is beyond words’. Another senior Yolṇu participant shared, ‘some people understand and some just don’t’. This highlights the complexities in developing a relational model of collaborative practice. It is not straightforward, particularly when dealing with the realm of feeling or *ṇayaṇu*. It is notable, however, that the term *ṇayaṇu* is used three times in Figure 14, and a number of Yolṇu participants spoke about the interconnectedness of feeling and relationships.

Participants often discussed how working relationships were strengthened outside the work environment. A non-local participant who lived at Yirrkala for over 20 years shared,

They said [referring to elders], ‘when you come and live in the community, we want you to live in houses all dotted in the community, not just one street’. They wanted us as next-door neighbours to Yolṇu so we are living together and so we are sharing relationships, so we learn more and then we understand the children we are teaching better, they actually said that to us. So they dragged us off all the time with them but it must have been hard work for them cause I was so ‘*dhuṇa*’ [ignorant]—shocking! I could tell you many stories of what I did but they must have seen that my heart was ok. I was *dhuṇa* but I wasn’t *yätj* [bad]. (Non-local participant, personal communication, 6 November 2018)

The participant’s reference to her ‘heart’ is in a similar vein to comments from other participants about ‘feeling’, although Yolṇu would reference *ṇayaṇu*. Comments explaining the importance of being connected to the community align with a study conducted in Mornington Island that confirmed elders believed teachers needed to mix socially in the community to form ‘caring, compassionate and respectful relationships’ (Bond, 2010, p. 44).

At Yirrkala, despite the fact that community members wanted teachers' houses (that is, government-issued housing entitlements as part of their conditions of employment) to be 'spotted in the community', in the last 20 years, the majority of new teachers' houses have been built mainly in one area, now often referred to as 'teacher street', further illustrating the lack of influence the community has at the centralised bureaucratic level.

Another participant shared how her relationships with Yolŋu were strengthened outside the school, and her identity in the community could largely be attributed to her connections outside a work context:

Mostly how people saw me wasn't about how I was in the classroom, it was about who I was in the community. We work well together as I know I can talk about the good, the bad and the ugly. (Non-local participant, personal reflection, 1 September 2019)

Clearly the working relationships she had with her Yolŋu colleagues were strengthened by her engagement with the community—her participation in experiences outside school. Experiences such as being with family members after people passed away, including the suicide of young people, car accidents, attending funerals, hunting, caring for family members, and other daily community interactions were all part of this process. Despite many participants identifying that such experiences were critical in the development of relationships, a number of non-local staff shared that at times they felt developing relationships with Yolŋu colleagues outside school hours was challenging. These challenges could be connected to high turnover of non-local staff, language barriers, a lack of time, or simply seeing the value in investing in relationships.

A Yolŋu participant when asked how relationships impacted her work shared:

Good relationships are where teachers come to me and plan with me, sit down. Good relationships are when they want to listen. Good relationships are when they ask to do things. Like a commitment—being *ralpa* [engaged and motivated]. There are good relationships and bad relationships. When people don't plan with me or communicate

with me, that's when relationships can start to become bad. (Yolŋu educator, personal reflection, 25 August 2018)

Participants identified that communication was a critical skill in education. The development of the Gaṇma model, discussed in detail in Chapter 4, was the result of a collaborative process, and integral to its development was a vigorous dialogue between Balanda (non-local) and Yolŋu. A senior Yolŋu educator commented, 'communication must be the strongest working strategy in a workplace'. However, as with relationality, it cannot be assumed that modes of communication are universal. As discussed, kinship connections will influence communication, discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

A senior Yolŋu educator discussed some of the challenges that she experienced with communication:

Sometimes people are very uncomfortable to talk about things when there are a lot of people sitting around and it's very hard to throw that idea out. It is a good way to communicate, sitting face to face as it's the truth everyone wants to hear in whatever discussion we are having. Talking face to face is the right way to communicate, rather than back-talking ['gossiping' or talking negatively about another person]. (Yolŋu educator, personal reflection, 25 August 2018)

For this participant, speaking the 'truth' was important, a concept documented in Figure 14—*lakaŋu yuwa[l]k'guŋu* (speak the truth). The participant went on to discuss one of the TRIBES⁵⁶ agreements, *no put downs*, stating that as educators, they taught students to refrain from using put downs to peers but that at times there were put downs between adults. In addition, a number of participants spoke about being uncomfortable to speak up in groups, which was often related to who was in the group. For example, if senior Yolŋu were in a group, and depending on the relationships between those involved, some Yolŋu participants shared that

⁵⁶ TRIBES is an approach to build learning communities in schools. In the early 2000s, it was adapted and modified by a number of Yolŋu and non-local educators to ensure it was relevant at Yambirrp Schools. The TRIBES agreements are attentive listening, mutual respect, appreciation, participation/right to pass, and no put downs.

they were less likely to talk in these groups. This was largely due to *gurrutu*, as group dynamics influence communication and behaviour—a concept explored in the next chapter. While *gurrutu* is an influencing factor for Yolŋu, power dynamics in organisations also impact relationships. As the participant quoted in Section 6.2 continued,

So that [referring to the embedded power structures in systems that are set up to benefit ‘white people’] deeply impacts—who can speak back and who can’t, and whose knowledge gets valued by the people that are providing funding. If you are not in the meetings and there is not space in the meetings for interpretation of key ideas and other things, if all those meetings are in English—there’s a lot of that stuff. (Non-local participant, personal reflection, 6 July 2021)

Having productive relationships in remote schools is an important aspect of collaborative practice; however, these relationships are influenced by many factors including different understandings of relationality and power. *Valuing relationships and connection* is one of the three foundations of collaborative practice; the second is *being a learner*.

Being a Learner

When I speak about Learning on Country. I tell people that I am not just teaching, I am learning as well. We are in between the elders and the children. (Yolŋu ranger, personal reflection, 6 November 2018)

Learning was one of the major themes that emerged from the data, regardless of the background of the participant. Participants discussed the importance of being a learner, and many discussed the unfolding of their own learning journey. Adult learning has a long history at Yirrkala. Participants who were part of the ‘RATE days’ shared that during this time, it was critical that non-local staff were part of the learning process alongside the Yolŋu educators who were training to be teachers. Yolŋu adults studied teacher education in the community, while non-local educators also participated in further study of their own. In addition, there was an expectation that non-local teachers would support Yolŋu educators with their studies. That is, non-local educators were considered adult educators as well as teachers of school-aged students. As a non-local participant who was an educator during this time reflected on

the proposal of a new RATE model, 'Community-based teacher education simply won't work if non-local teachers don't see their role as supporting Yolŋu educators' (Former educator, personal communication, 26 March 2020).

Many Yolŋu participants discussed the importance of non-locals learning about 'our world', as this quote illustrates:

I think it is because if you work around Yolŋu people and live around us you need to learn how our culture works 'cos if—you know—saying or doing the wrong thing could cause a lot of problems. Yolŋu people love to work as a team with Balanda people. So if Yolŋu—if we're learning both worlds, we are learning the Balanda world as well, so why not the Balanda learn our world too? (Yolŋu ranger, personal communication, 6 November 2018)

Although it is necessary to move beyond solely focusing on the 'other', developing an understanding of the context, including learning about *gurruṯu*, was identified as critical when working at Yirrkala and in the Homelands. When Yolŋu staff work in institutions such as a school, they are constantly being asked to adhere to dominant organisational norms; as the quote above highlights, 'We are learning the Balanda world, so why not learn our world too?'. Every day in schools, Yolŋu learn about how Western culture 'does education'; however, this is often not explicitly discussed. The Model of Collaborative Practice suggests that creating space to learn about both Western and Yolŋu understandings of education is important, primarily so that educators can develop the pedagogical knowledge and capability to teach in remote NT contexts. As noted in Chapter 5, non-local teachers in remote contexts need professional support to develop pedagogies and new ways of working (Bat & Shore, 2012). All teachers, local and non-local, need ongoing support to develop their teaching practice.

Despite the majority of participants sharing stories about their engagement with learning, some also relayed instances of non-local colleagues being reluctant to learn about the context, accept feedback, and modify behaviour to develop more connected work relationships. As explained by a non-local participant, 'You can come in with what you think is an open mind

but if you just keep doing what you have done, it doesn't necessarily work' (Non-local educator, personal communication, 22 November 2018).

A HLC teacher spoke about how sometimes she felt the work she was invested in was not valued: 'The new teachers [referring to new non-local teachers] are still learning and sometimes they are quick to judge but they don't know the full story' (Yolŋu participant, personal communication, 7 October 2018).

This quote reiterates the importance of humility on the part of non-local teachers, one of the factors identified as being necessary to operationalise collaborative practice. Medina (2013) argued that to learn from others, a certain level of 'epistemic humility and open-mindedness is required' (p. 5). This involves having the humility to understand oneself in relation to others in the schooling context, including developing a nuanced understanding of the impact of our comments and behaviours. The quote potentially highlights the different interpretations of 'work' and illustrates how misunderstandings can occur—in this case, the team teacher felt that what she considered part of her work was not valued by a colleague.

For decades, Verran (2013) has written about the 'epistemic discomfort' and 'epistemic disconcertment' (p. 145) that she first experienced in Nigerian classrooms and when she worked with Australian Aboriginal peoples. She described a moment of 'existential panic', which she referred to as 'epistemic discomfort' when she realised she could simultaneously recognise 'the truth of both claims' when a senior Yolŋu instructor and a scientist had different ideas about whether the plants in question were the same or different. As Verran (2013) explained, 'We need to make an effort to show ourselves how to work in good faith with respect to the disparate epistemic or knowledge practice involved' (p. 146). If epistemic humility can be practised, then maybe the potential misunderstanding caused by the 'incident' above with the HLCT not feeling valued could become an opportunity for growth rather than an unresolved tension. The friction, inevitable in human interaction, becomes fertile ground for deeper inquiry into understanding the ways of the 'other'⁵⁷ if all participants are engaged in epistemic humility and open-mindedness.

⁵⁷ By 'other', I refer to both local and non-local staff.

Another participant shared a story of a Yolŋu client⁵⁸ who thanked her for pronouncing her first name correctly. The participant, a non-local staff member, was shocked that someone would thank her for this so enquired further. The client explained that she had become accustomed to non-local staff members pronouncing her name incorrectly, so when someone made the effort to learn to pronounce her name, she acknowledged and appreciated this. There are many stories of Yolŋu names, which are an integral aspect of culture (H. Morphy, 1991; Wilkinson et al., 2009, p. 403), being pronounced incorrectly. Yolŋu participants acknowledged that it could often take time for non-local staff to learn the Yolŋu orthography, which differs significantly from English; however, continually mispronouncing names was interpreted as a sign of ignorance and an inability to learn. On a couple of occasions, I heard Yolŋu joke between themselves, intentionally pronouncing a fellow Yolŋu person's name incorrectly as a form of affectionate humour,⁵⁹ imitating the poor pronunciation by non-local staff. If seemingly simple foundations such as pronouncing names cannot be consistently established, how can more complex concepts related to different knowledge systems and pedagogical approaches be engaged with? Furthermore, who has the responsibility to continually teach non-local staff? In remote schools and other organisations in remote contexts, a considerable amount of time, energy and resources are required for these seemingly simple professional learning activities that support productive workplaces. However, this ongoing learning which usually becomes the responsibility of local staff often goes unrecognised.

The inability of non-local staff and systems to engage with Yolŋu ways of being, knowing, and doing and the failure to recognise the validity of differing epistemologies could be referred to as an 'epistemic injustice' (Medina, 2013, p. 1). Medina theorised the social interactions that occur in complex and diverse communities, and he attempted to 'elucidate epistemic virtues and vices under conditions of oppression in terms of epistemic resistances and their absence' (p. 51). Medina's work is particularly useful in analysing the dynamics of relationality in the context of practice at Yirrkala; importantly, he aimed to avoid the 'romanticizing of oppressed subjects and the demonizing of their oppressors at the epistemic level' (p. 4). The Model of

⁵⁸ I use the word client here as this was a setting outside of the school context

⁵⁹ Note this is affectionate humour shared between close kin. Yolŋu names have a sacredness to them and so this humour would be used intentionally and selectively used to reflect the poor pronunciation by Balanda.

Collaborative Practice is concerned with making explicit the requirements for engagement in remote education in a way that is mutually beneficial for all staff involved. However, educators need to be prepared to be a learner in this context, and this involves acknowledging that the different ways we understand the world influence teaching practice. Furthermore, to engage in learning in remote schools in the NT, *critical reflexivity* is required—the third foundation I propose as necessary to operationalise collaborative practice.

Engaging in Critical Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a necessary element of collaborative practice. Although reflexivity has the potential to become a self-indulgent focus on the individual (D’cruz et al., 2007, p. 78), scholars have argued that reflexivity is required to correct bias (Freire, 1996; Fricker, 2007; Krebler, 2012; Medina, 2013; Mezirow, 2016). As Krebler (2012, p. 1) explained, the ability to critically reflect on underlying assumptions and how these inform our thoughts, feelings, and perceptions is essential in addressing the complexities and challenges of adult life. Both Medina (2013) and Fricker (2007) have written extensively on the importance of being critically aware of social identity. Medina (2013) explained,

Those who are not critically aware of their own social identity and that of others, those who are not sensitive and responsive to the epistemic consequences of social positionality and relationality, cannot correct biases and achieve (or contribute to the achievement of) epistemic justice. (p.54)

Medina continued that knowing oneself and knowing others with whom one’s life and identity are bound up with is essential. He argued that ‘in order to acquire and transmit knowledge responsibly, one needs to be critically aware of one’s identity and that of others; one must have at least a minimal amount of self-knowledge and social knowledge of others’ (p. 55). In the context of Yirrkala, Helen Watson, a key academic involved in the theoretical development of both ways/Ganma education, was quoted saying that ‘it is only self-aware, cross-cultural teachers who could conceivably engage in active, self-researching teaching in a truly Yolngu school’ (as cited in Marika et al., 1992, p. 29). The concept of reflecting on practice has a long history at Yambirrpa Schools.

The Model of Collaborative Practice applies equally to both Yolŋu and non-local educators. Critical reflexivity is relevant for all educators, but how individuals and groups might engage in this may vary. However, it is particularly important that non-local staff engage with this process. As noted previously, dominant schooling structures, bias, and behaviours often become invisible to non-local staff as educational structures reflect Western worldviews, and the system reinforces and rewards these ways of working. A non-local participant who had decades of experience working in remote communities in the NT explained the following:

Often non-Indigenous teachers feel disempowered because they are in an unfamiliar cultural context [the school] and are relying on team/homelands teachers for support. But the Njapaki teacher's knowledge of the nature and structure of the education system actually gives them the power in the decision making in the way the classroom is managed and the curriculum is delivered. We like to think that there is an even balance in a team-teaching situation but most of the times, in my experience, there is not. (Non-local educator, personal communication, 25 August 2020)

A reflective practice has the potential to make explicit the power imbalances in team teaching, as mentioned in the quote above, but a safe and supportive space needs to be created and the critical reflection cannot be one way. In Chapter 2, I discussed how only focusing on the Other in the context of pedagogy can be problematic.

As Bulloch and Fogarty (2020) explained:

Aboriginal people are objects of a neo-colonial gaze cast by non-Indigenous residents, government administrators, anthropologists and journalists among others, and Aboriginal people receive those objectifying discourses through speeches, the media, conversations with workmates and so forth. While Bininj/Yol people have their own powerful discourses about Balanda, as these circulate largely orally and in local languages, they remain considerably more contained in time and space. As such, non-Indigenous people in this context (aside from a handful of anthropologists, teachers, health workers and others who have deeper and more long-term interactions) are

seldom confronted with, or compelled to respond to, Bininj/Yol peoples' views of them.
(p. 413)

Bulloch and Fogarty (2020) make an important point, rarely are non-local people required to engage with the discourse around how they are perceived in remote contexts. Through a process of reflexivity, assumptions and discourses can be further explored to understand how they impact education. A number of participants identified reflexivity as an important skill for practitioners working in remote contexts—the very nature of this research required a certain level of critical reflection to make transparent my positionality in this research. One participant with over a decade of experience working in the context put the following:

I think if we were to look at one skill that is really important for a person that works in this environment, it is reflective practice. Understanding your own culture, being able to see through your own biases, or even be able to uncover your own biases and then reflect on your own practice. It seems like an unusual skill, or an uncommon skill. It's sort of like, the really basic level, what we see is Aboriginal people being blamed for poor outcomes without the services involved ever reflecting on their practice and asking why it isn't working. (Non-local health worker, personal communication, 12 November 2018)

The fact that this participant referred to 'reflexivity' as an 'unusual skill' implies that it was not a common practice in his workplace despite the participant identifying it as one of the most important skills for people working in that remote context. The schools, on the other hand, although often dependent on leadership, have a history of reflexive practice as part of school practice. For example, at Yirrkala Homelands School, during workshops held every term, reflection is part of daily routines. At the end of each day, teachers individually write a reflection of the day, and the following morning, educators divide into groups (Yolŋu and non-local teachers separately) and a shared reflection is written and then reported back to the other group. Everyone is encouraged to be reflexive, and this gives participants in the workshop an opportunity to develop understandings of the needs and positions of the 'other'. However, the reflexivity to explicitly address assumptions and bias, imbalances in power, and racism in these systems and how this impacts learning, which, as noted in Chapter 2, many

scholars argue is necessary for a culturally responsive approach to education, does not always occur. The Model of Collaborative Practice could be used as a framework to support and structure reflexivity in schools. While this model could be a useful tool for both Yolŋu and non-local, a considerable amount of work is required by non-local educators to critically engage with their own culture and the impacts of colonialism.

As discussed, humility was identified by some participants as an important attribute that also applies to the practice of reflexivity. A number of Yolŋu participants shared that, at times, they felt ‘bossed around’ in their communities by their non-local colleagues: ‘When Njapaki come to the community sometimes they are *bungawathi* [become like bosses]’ (Personal communication, 13 November, 2018) meaning that sometimes they exhibited behaviour that was interpreted by some Yolŋu people as unnecessarily directive and lacking in humility, although when I inquired if these people felt comfortable addressing this with their colleagues, there was often a reluctance to do so. Behaviours that are perceived to be *bungawathi* are unlikely to promote collaborative practice. On the flipside, there are also instances when non-local participants felt obligated to take on certain roles as part of their employment, which may be interpreted by some as *bungawathi*. These reflections further illustrate how tensions arise when different behaviours are interpreted according to different cultural frameworks, strengthening the case for practising and creating opportunities for honest and reflective dialogue.

Attempting to clarify the roles of educators in remote NT contexts is an ongoing challenge and process of navigation. A non-local teacher articulated how they understand their role in this context:

The prime role of Balanda like me is to create space conceptually (in a post-colonial, epistemic-validating way, which would include behind the scenes advocacy up the line in the Department or with resistant staff) and physically (creating a quiet, calm space, with a cup of tea and something to eat, all the right people and just space to rest and chat) for the key Yolŋu to do what they do best in creating rich learning experiences. (Non-local teacher, personal communication, 25 October 2018)

It is clear from the data in this thesis that space needs to be created for these rich learning experiences to occur, a concept that I discuss in more detail in Chapter 7.

6.5 Conclusion

The central theme of this chapter was the relational practice of collaboration. Collaborative practice is one of the Five Pillars of Community-Centred Education that I discuss in Chapter 9. It is clear that relationships and the way educators relate to each other is important work in the education process. The Model of Collaborative Practice is a synthesis of findings from this research and provides a framework to support the work of collaboration in schools. There are, however, multiple challenges and barriers to the implementation of this proposed collaborative practice model. Australia is currently in the middle of a teacher shortage crisis. The most significant contributing factors to these national teacher shortages are excessive teacher workloads and burnout as a result (Longmuir et al., 2022). It is not surprising then that many teachers are feeling increasingly ‘stressed, disengaged, and undervalued in their work’ (Sahlberg, 2022, para 3). So, to add a model of collaborative practice to current work requirements in remote NT contexts is likely to be challenging but it may also help teachers to build connections with staff and the community and develop support structures. Although, unless relationships are seen as the core business of teaching and teachers understand themselves as learners, investing time and energy into consolidating collaborative practice is likely to be met with resistance. For this model to be operationalised, factors such as imbalances in power, different understandings of relationality such as *gurrutu*, and dominant Western structures of education need to be understood, and an integrated approach is required. That is, school leadership need to create the space and time for this collaboration to occur, the NT Department of Education need to recognise the relevance of relationships and fund this accordingly, and tertiary institutions need to develop the skills of reflexivity and build the capacity of pre-service teachers to unpack their assumptions. In addition, non-local educators, it this has not been a focus of their teacher training, need to be willing to critically analyse their assumptions and bias, and understand how this analysis can contribute to achieving ‘epistemic justice’ (Medina, 2013, 54).

In the intercultural contexts of remote schools—where the majority of qualified teachers do not speak the language of the students they are working with, have limited experience in teaching EAL/D students from minority language groups, and do not have intricate knowledge of the community—considerable work is required if both ways education is to be operationalised. A process of collaboration based on trust, humility and connection, where all involved understand themselves as learners, is critical in a both ways context. In order for Western and Yolŋu knowledge systems, and ways of being, doing and knowing, to be valued in remote NT schools, a commitment to support, model, and facilitate collaborative practice is required.

In the following chapter, I describe the central case study of this thesis, an example of a Yolŋu-led collaborative planning process, the Galtha Rom in the Homeland of Biranybirany. I describe this process, opening the chapter with a vignette as an analytical springboard into broader discussions about the planning process of the Galtha Rom.

Chapter 7 A Galtha Rom Planning Process

The reality started to sink in. It was only one month until 200 people would attend a 4-day Galtha Rom workshop at Biranybirany, a Gumatj Homeland in Northeast Arnhem Land. Biranybirany had been selected for a number of reasons. First, Biranybirany was where the well-known Yothu Yindi song 'Treaty' had been written 30 years prior. Second, it was at Biranybirany where the philosophy of 'both ways' education was conceptualised through the metaphor of Ganma in the 1980s. The 2018 Galtha Rom was a recognition of both these facts. Many people would be involved in the planning and implementation of this Galtha Rom including rangers, teachers, elders, cultural advisors, school principals, and people from Homelands scattered across hundreds of kilometres. There were four main organisations involved: the two schools, Yirrkal School and Yirrkal Homelands, and the two local ranger groups, Yirralka Rangers and Dhimurru.

Plans for this Galtha had been set in motion the previous year; these learning programs took considerable time to plan and implement. It was 8.00 p.m., and I sat on my linoleum lounge room floor, the fan whirled, and sheets of brown paper were scattered around me. I was redrafting a timetable recently developed by a group of educators for this workshop. I had many questions. How, I wondered, was the content of a large Galtha going to be communicated with the people facilitating the workshop when they weren't involved in the planning meetings? At times, the communication didn't seem consistent. With four organisations involved, there were many people in the mix. I was concerned that Yirralka rangers had limited input so far despite the expectation that, at an organisational level, they were overseeing the Galtha. Perhaps, I wondered as I sat on my lounge room floor, we could drive to the workshop at Garrthalala where rangers from several different Homelands were working. It was potentially the only opportunity before the Galtha started to share these plans and ideas with them. Transporting people from different Homelands spread over large geographic regions was expensive and challenging to coordinate, so it seemed like too good an opportunity to miss.

Yalmai was the lead coordinator of the Galtha so I drove to her place. After I discussed my proposal with her, she agreed it was important to include the rangers and that the

school's cultural advisor would be the appropriate person to join us in making the trip to Garrthalala to talk to the rangers. We called the principal for permission to discuss this proposal with the cultural advisor, and when this was granted, we drove to his house. When Yalmay called out to him, he emerged from the front door and walked to the closed gate to speak to us. I assumed that the conversation would be short and simple. Instead, he opened the gate and found some chairs for us to sit on. It felt unusually formal but, on reflection, having two women arrive at his house late in the evening to talk about the Galtha may have taken him by surprise. It wasn't unusual for Yalmay and me; much of our work was done in the evenings. Yalmay explained our proposal, and he agreed to travel with us. After calling the rangers again at Garrthalala to confirm that it was okay for us to drive out for a meeting, our trip was consolidated. Organising this took considerable time. There were many phone calls and conversations with different people to confirm the trip, but it would have been inappropriate for us to arrive at Garrthalala without permission—we needed to discuss our visit with the leaders of the Homelands as well as the cultural advisors and senior Yolŋu running the workshop. So much of this 'work' occurred outside of hours. At times, I found the protocols, politics, and personalities exhausting. I was often conflicted, feeling that I wasn't the 'right' person to be sharing the plans, but with only one month to the event, I thought that those involved should be aware of them. Yes, things would have happened without me, but if I didn't step in at times, such as organising the trip to speak to the rangers, would the message have got to them, I wondered? I was also feeling anxious as I was aware that, based on previous experience, some teachers and a senior cultural advisor doubted that a Galtha this size would produce valid learning opportunities for students. With the effort, energy, and resources that were being invested in this Galtha Rom, it needed to be a success.

Early the next morning I picked up my two passengers. After a 2-hour drive along corrugated dirt roads so bumpy that the gear stick jumped into neutral at times, we saw the hand-painted sign 'Welcome to Garrthalala'. The rangers were involved in a wellbeing camp with a group of male school students. I was aware of the gender dynamics and workshop content so drove to the old school building, away from where they were working. I knew that our presence would be observed and discussed as my 4WD became visible on the track—I had been in many classrooms when vehicles

entered Homelands, and students and adults would discuss who, what, and why the car was there. Not much goes unnoticed or undiscussed in Homelands.

I parked the car, and Yalmai and I walked down to the local Homeland teacher's house, while the cultural advisor went in the other direction to visit his extended family. We walked slowly to the house that overlooked the bay. This unhurried pace, in contrast with the chaos and urgency of schools, reminded me to slow down. It was intentionally slow. It is easy to pick out the whitefellas in Homelands, merely by the way we walk. We often walk around like we are on some important mission, like there is so much to do (and there usually is). The Senior Homeland Centre Teacher, my waku (daughter), emerged from her house. We drank tea, admired the plants and flowers in her garden, and explained the purpose of our visit before returning to the veranda of the old school building. It was important to take time to do this; even though I knew this, it was still challenging for me to slow down.

One by one, rangers casually walked towards the school building where we were waiting. Slowly they ascended the four wooden stairs to the veranda, greeting me by gurrutu, and found a place to sit down. I was either daughter, sister's daughter, or granddaughter to these men, so was permitted to speak to them all. Some of them acknowledged Yalmai, depending on their relationship; others did not speak to her and positioned themselves in a respectful seating arrangement. There were 10 of us altogether: rangers, teachers, cultural advisors, and a learning on country coordinator. Yalmai unfolded the butchers paper containing Galtha plans worked on so far, including themes, names of people who would be running the groups, as well as the timetable. In my mind, the papers with the names of people were problematic. I had been present when these documents were brainstormed with a group of Yolŋu team teachers, and it seemed that elders and rangers were assigned to groups without much thought about the purpose and activity or how this program was going to be developed. But was I imposing a Western understanding about what good planning was, and were there other elements at play that I did not know about?

Yalmai led the discussion with the rangers and shared the documents, letting people know that they had been assigned to groups. People soon focused on the names scrawled on the brown paper, searching for their own names, seeing who else was on

there, adding the names of other elders. The meeting was not going how I imagined. Weren't we there to engage with the rangers and ask for their input? The meeting seemed to be more focused on assigning names to groups rather than thinking about the content and how it would be delivered. I tried to interject at times as there seemed to be confusion, particularly about the small groups that had been created to create resources for the learning. As teachers, Yalmay, my waku, and I had curriculum and pedagogy background and knew that plans and resources needed to be developed to consolidate and document the learning—this is the job of educators and highlights the important role that Yolŋu educators have in making these connections. The people who I assumed would have contributed to the discussion sat silently for most of the meeting. Sitting to my right was my waku the Homelands teacher, a young woman who was competent in the intercultural space. I thought that she might be able to help navigate the conversation and explain resources and planning were needed that might guide the rangers to share their ideas. I had worked with her long enough to know that it was inappropriate for me to ask her to do this, especially in front of the group of mainly men, all of who were older than her. I also knew that it would be inappropriate for me to interrupt Yalmay. This was a Yolŋu domain; if I was to 'work' in a way where I embodied my Balanda idea of what a meeting was, I would risk being considered rude and disrespectful by those in the meeting. Furthermore, why would a non-local teacher be discussing the content of Galtha Rom in a Yolŋu forum? I had been reprimanded by my Yolŋu family before for talking too much in meetings and, on occasions, for being bungawathi (bossy). As the discussion progressed, slowly the rangers started to share their ideas. In Yolŋu matha, the rangers spoke between themselves and suggested that in the afternoon at the Galtha, men's business would occur. Finally, the meeting started to shift in a direction I hoped it would, to some engagement with the content. However, there still didn't seem to be many people offering to take responsibility for the delivery of learning, likely because it was understood that the Gumatj would determine the content as it was on their Homeland. Without getting much further than the suggestion of men's business, the meeting concluded. At least the plans were shared, and we had made the effort to be inclusive and keep people informed about the progress of the planning. Importantly, people had started the process of focusing on the learning.

After the meeting, Yalmai and I returned with waku to her house and sat cross-legged on an old school carpet, drinking tea. The ocean was calm; I was not.

‘That meeting didn’t go how I thought it would.’ I verbalised my disappointment to the women, sharing that I thought that people were confused.

‘Ni bay’ (yes, we agree), they both responded. However, I am sure our interpretation of what was occurring in the meeting differed. There was silence. I was interested in why waku remained quiet at the meeting, despite her ability to work competently in both Yolŋu and Balanda contexts. I assumed it was related to gender, age and gurruṯu.

‘The cultural advisor is my wäwa’, she answered me. He was her older brother and many years her senior. It would have been disrespectful for her to interject.

There were many different dynamics playing out in this meeting. Yalmai was navigating two contrasting spaces—the school/organisation and her Yolŋu domain. There were time pressures from organisations, and then there were Yolŋu protocols about the ‘right’ way to proceed that didn’t have the same time constraints. I reflected on how challenging this must be for her. If these sociocultural understandings and, in particular, Yolŋu ways of being, knowing, and doing were explicit and guided the way meetings were conducted, could we move to more productive collaboration? Did this mean that we needed to find new ways to work together that centred a Yolŋu ways of being, doing and knowing? I contemplated these questions, and more, as I drove back to Yirrkala. Sometimes I thought I understood the context, and other times, I felt the more time I spent in these contexts, the less I knew.

I continued to reflect on this meeting well into the night, attempting to analyse how the meeting could have been more ‘effective’. Ultimately, despite having extensive experience working in this context and hoping to be an empathetic Balanda, I was still caught up in my own cultural frameworks; I was still trying to seize an opportune moment and do planning ‘quickly’. On reflection, maybe I would have been better off not attempting to orchestrate the meeting out at Garrthalala with the rangers. I would have had more sleep, it would have cost me less in fuel, and I wouldn’t have been stressed trying to make it happen. But this meeting began a process that might not have occurred otherwise. Importantly, rangers were kept across the development of

plans. There was a tension between the school's need for timelines and plans and Yolŋu protocols—was it possible to meet both these sets of expectations?

In the following section, I discuss the planning process of the Galtha Rom at Biranybirany, explaining some of the unique challenges and processes involved in this type of collaborative planning.

7.1 The Collaborative Practice of Planning Galtha

Galtha Rom is a relational process grounded in gurruṯu. In the previous chapter, I explained how gurruṯu is the foundation of relationality in a Yolŋu world, and the vignette above is an example of gurruṯu influencing behaviour in a work context. As discussed in detail in Chapter 4, Galtha Rom is a Yolŋu directed and facilitated model of learning that first became part of school programs in the 1980s. It is a process of meeting, discussing, negotiating, planning, agreeing, and acting (Christie & Yirrkala Action Group, 1992, p. 6). While it is a Yolŋu model of learning, as it sits within a predominantly Western structure of schooling, there are organisational and systemic protocols related to occupational health and safety, timeframes, and curriculum requirements that add to the complexity of the implementation of this local pedagogy. The vignette highlighted some of these complexities and considerations inherent in Galtha Rom.

This chapter documents the planning process of the Galtha at Biranybirany. Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009) proposed that at the interface of mainstream curricula and local Indigenous knowledge, the focus has often been the *what* and *why* rather than the *how*. This chapter is concerned with the 'how'—that is, how one particular Galtha Rom was planned. Understanding the process of Galtha Rom planning is important as it has the potential to rebalance power and create space for Yolŋu processes and content in Western education; at the core, Galtha Rom is an example of how to decolonise education.

7.2 The Planning Process

Preliminary Conversations and Meetings

In Galtha Rom, elders and senior Yolŋu teachers direct the content of the learning. Galtha Rom cannot occur without the support, engagement, and endorsement of appropriate elders as

well as the expertise and input of senior Yolŋu educators. School-based Yolŋu educators are a vital conduit between the school and the community. They understand Western educational requirements and community processes, and importantly, they have curriculum and pedagogical knowledge. Furthermore, for Galtha Rom to be successful, intensive planning is needed, a process that needs endorsement from school leadership.

Many people were involved in planning and implementing the Galtha Rom at Biranybirany, and consequently, considerable time was invested in negotiating the proposed 4-day program. The planning meetings were held in various locations: in the school, in the community of Yirrkala, and out in Homelands. It was critical that Yolŋu directed the learning content and led the process. The Gumatj clan elders from Biranybirany (and others who were connected through gurruṯu) were part of the initial planning; this engagement was the foundation of the subsequent planning. In one of the planning meetings, the Biranybirany Gumatj decided they wanted to take students to Gaṇmawuy, the sacred place where fresh and salt water meet. Later they shared that they had not opened up this site in this way before. There were a number of meetings with members of this clan, and leadership across the four organisations, before any substantial school-based planning occurred.

There was also a high level of support from non-local staff from the schools and the ranger groups, particularly with the logistical planning of the event. Most of the participants involved in the curriculum planning meetings (not the logistical planning) were experienced teachers (both Yolŋu and non-local) or elders/community members who had participated and planned Galtha Rom before and therefore were familiar with the process. If leadership is supportive and recognises the value of Yolŋu knowledge, which these leaders did, approaches like Galtha Rom can continue to be supported. However, it can become problematic when leadership does not fully understand the value and academic contribution of Galtha Rom. Furthermore, the lack of systemic validation also devalues these approaches and controls the funding available to support them. Yolŋu need to lead the planning of Galtha; however, the space needs to be created for this process to occur.

Concepts Explored and a Curriculum Journey Emerges

Yalmai, one of the lead Yolŋu coordinators of this Galtha, had done a considerable amount of conceptual planning. She had taken 6 months' study leave to plan and implement this event. One of the brainstorms is illustrated in Figure 16.

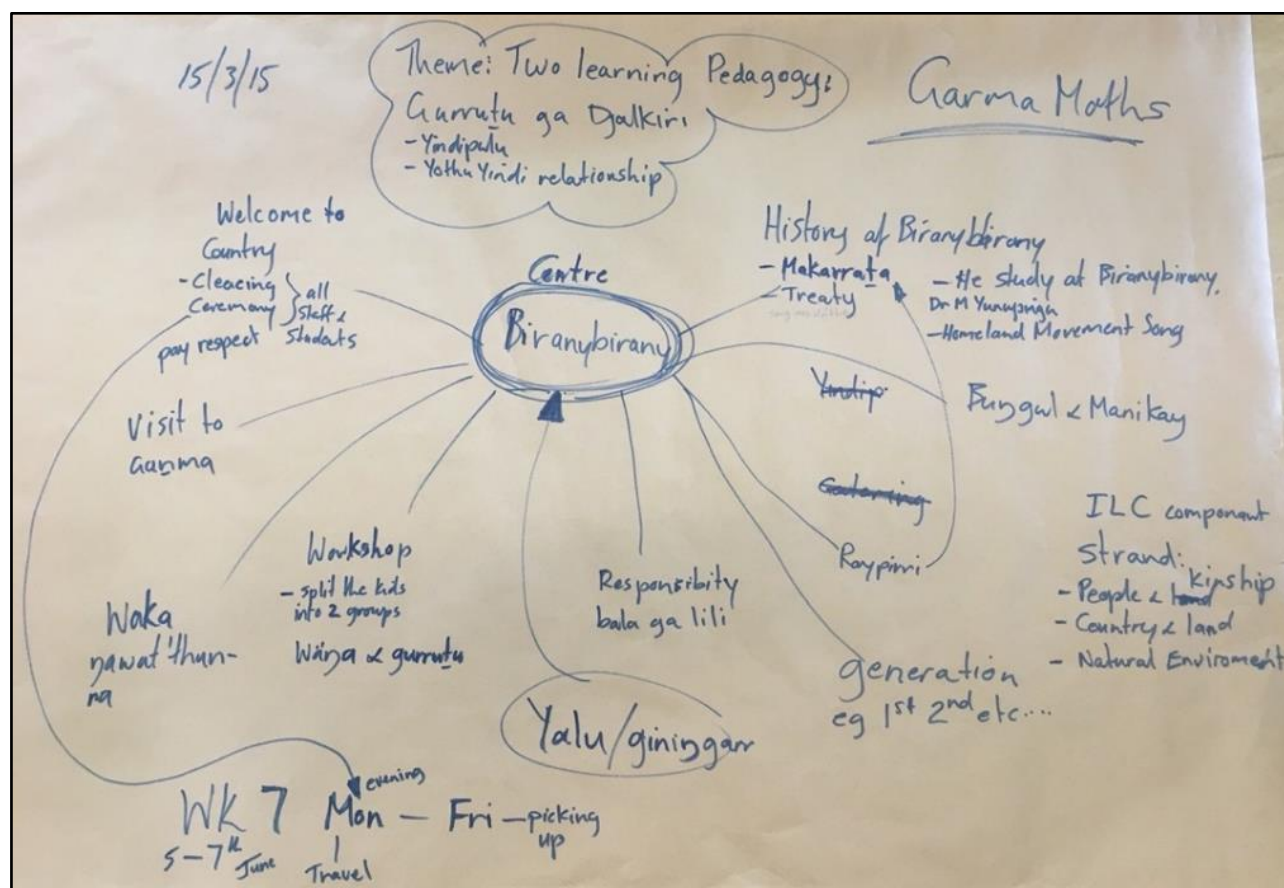


Figure 16: Galtha Planning Brainstorm of Potential Learning Concepts (May, 2018)
(Reproduced with permission)

One of the tools she used to help organise her thinking about the content of the Galtha Rom were the 'curriculum journey' (CJ) questions:

1. Where are we now? (Wanhaka ṇilimurru dhiyanjynda wala?)
2. Where are we going? (Nhälili ṇilimurru marrtjinynda yukurra?)
3. Why are we going there? (Nhäku ṇilimurru marrtjinynda yukurra?)
4. How are we going to get there? (Nhäyu ṇilimurru yurru marrtjinynda ṇayjuwala?)

5. What do we need to help us get there? (Nhäyu njilimurruna yurru gunga'yundja njunhamala?)
6. How will we know we have arrived where we wanted to go? (Nhäyu njilimurruna njuli marngiyirnydja njunhi njilimirru bilinha dhanuyurrunana/ bununa?)

These questions have been used across both schools for many years. They were first developed in 1989 at Batchelor College and are a narrative approach to support local educators to develop learning programs for students. Many Indigenous educators at the time, who were studying teaching, were confused with the Balanda terminology related to key performance indicators and outcomes. These six questions helped guide the development of programs. As a RATE⁶⁰ lecturer involved in the early community-based teacher education courses shared with me, importantly, the six questions structured a public discussion about learning rather than producing programs that were only ever seen and developed by the classroom teacher.

At one of the planning meetings, Yalmay presented her planning (see Figure 17) to a group of school leadership and representatives from the Dhimurru and Laynhapuy ranger groups. The practice of visually representing, presenting, and discussing ideas with colleagues is a part of collaborative practice at Yambirrpa Schools. It encourages a public discussion. Every term, teaching teams at Yirrkala School present their programs—a process referred to as CJ sharing—to the whole of staff and a public discussion ensues. A senior educator at Yirrkala School stated in an interview with me, 'We do CJ sharing every term in Week 3, we do language floods⁶¹ in Week 7—it's just there. It's non-negotiable'. These non-negotiable best practice approaches encourage consistency across the schools and provide a familiar structure; this is particularly important with the high turnover of staff. Practices such as using

⁶⁰ See Chapter 4 for a detailed account of the RATE program.

⁶¹ The language flood the participant referred to is a practice of all staff visiting each classroom in the school and explaining their programs, the set up of the classroom and the environmental print displayed in the room. The language flood walks are a practice embedded in [Walking Talking Texts](#), an EAL/D pedagogy, developed by Fran Murray.

the curriculum journey questions to guide planning and then discussing these ideas are as equally relevant to planning Galtha Rom as they are to planning daily classroom learning.



Figure 17: Yalmay Yunupingu Presenting concepts for Biranybirany Galtha (2018)

(Reproduced with permission)

Credit: Harry Thorman

Planning Activities

As noted, the Biranybirany elders decided they would facilitate a walk to Ganmawuy with Galtha participants. This walk would create a shared experience from which other learning activities could be developed. Other potential learning areas had been identified during planning meetings leading up to the Galtha Rom. After the initial ‘big picture’ planning had occurred—that is, meetings with the appropriate Gumatj clan leaders and other senior Yolŋu—a series of school-based planning meetings between a group of senior Yolŋu elders, leadership, teachers across both schools, and cultural advisors from the ranger groups began. These meetings were critical in developing the activities, resources, and curriculum links. It was a large group of students to plan for, potentially over 80 students across both schools, so some structure was required.

It was decided that in addition to the walk, which would be the first learning experience, *manikay* (songlines), *gurrutu/gingarr* (kinship/navel, umbilical cord), and *political leadership* would be central themes of the other group activities. A timetable was created to reflect this, which helped structure the 4 days of learning (see Figure 18). The political leadership activity was a continuation of the pre-Galtha program being implemented in classrooms, discussed further in the next section. Once these content areas had been identified, participants involved in the planning split into groups according to interest and expertise. These groups consisted of a mix of Yolŋu educators, elders, and either one or two non-local teachers. After these groups had decided on the content of the activity, curriculum links were identified, a lesson plan for each activity developed, and resources created; this is detailed in Chapter 8. The non-local teacher in each group took direction from senior Yolŋu and played an important role in developing resources and curriculum links. An important part of the process was each group discussing the learning activity they had developed with the group (see Figure 19). This provided an opportunity for collective input into activities; that is, senior Yolŋu in the room could discuss the content of all activities, not just ones they were specifically involved in planning.

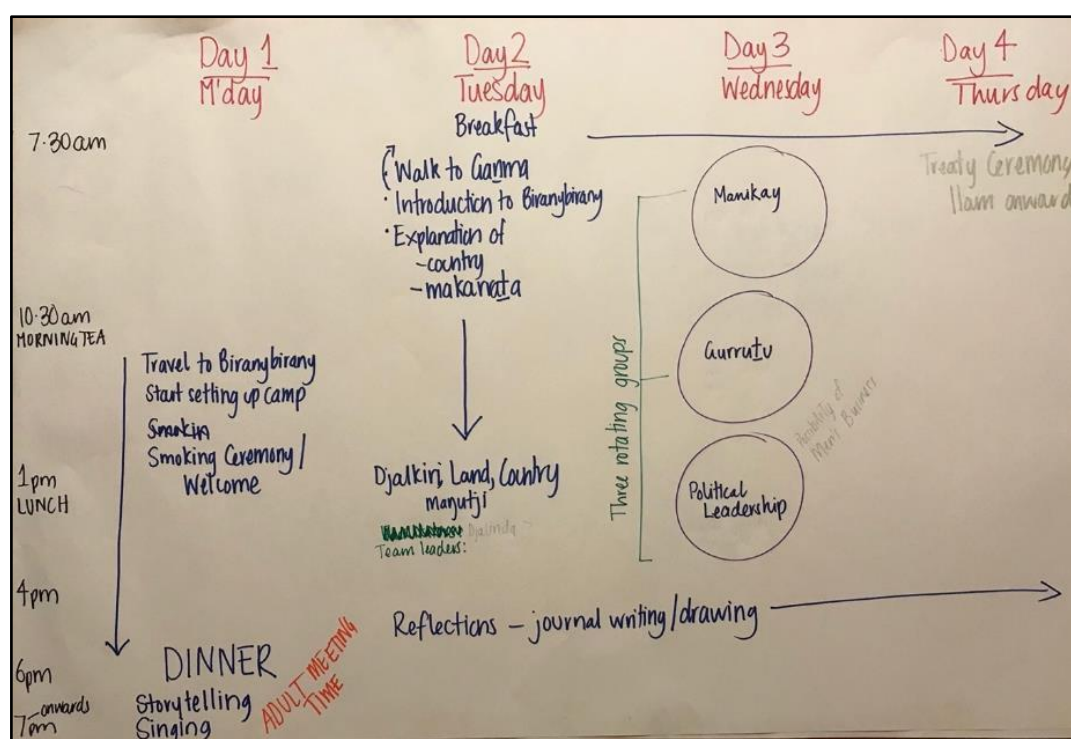


Figure 18: Group Constructed Biranybirany Galtha Timetable (11 May, 2019)

Once the content was agreed, the lesson activities were either translated or written in Dhuwaya, the language selected by the Yolŋu in the group. After the resources had been developed, they were collated into a workbook (see Figure 20) for both students and adults to record their learning. The non-local educators who participated in the planning process, particularly towards the final stages of planning, had been previously involved in this type of community-directed learning, and they supported the process by making curriculum links to the content identified by elders and senior Yolŋu educators. These teachers also created resources to support student learning. The planning was a collaborative both ways process, although Yolŋu took a leading role, particularly in directing content, and tasks were shared.



Figure 19: Djalinda Yunupingu Sharing Learning Activities Planned (18 May, 2019)

(Reproduced with permission)

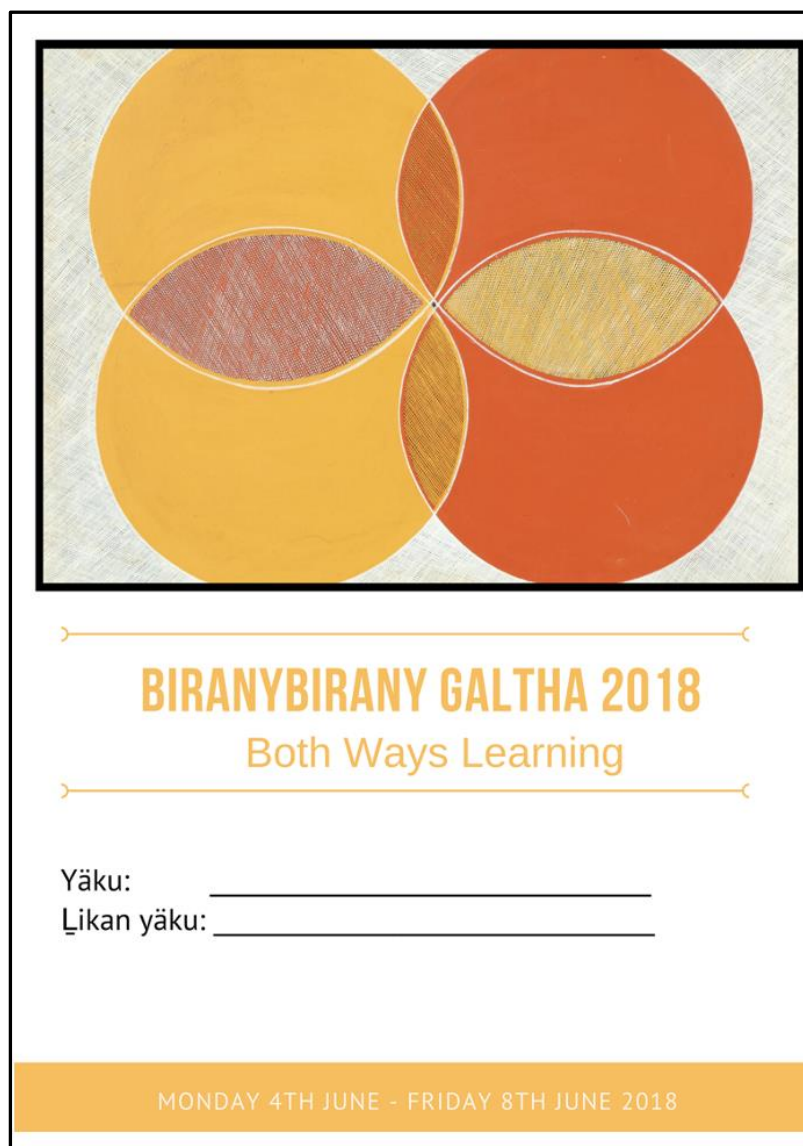


Figure 20: Front Cover of Biranybirany Galtha Rom Workbook⁶² (1 June, 2019)

Classroom-Based Learning

There was opportunity to link classroom-based learning to the content of Galtha Rom prior to the event taking place. Developing a learning program connected to the content of the Galtha at Biranybirany was particularly evident at Yirrkala School. For many months leading up to the Galtha, classroom programs included a focus on land rights and Treaty, with clear curriculum outcomes and assessment. The learning program included a study of maps of the mine lease in comparison to students' clan estates, as illustrated in Figure 21, as well as a study of the

⁶² Likan yäku in this context is 'family name'.

Mabo case in 1992 and the 2008 Blue Mud Bay sea rights case. Students also watched and studied the documentary *Pain for This Land*,⁶³ a film made in 1970 to 1971, which documented the impact of the bauxite mine and the Yolŋu fight for land rights. A number of students in the Homelands also watched this documentary. In addition, senior secondary students, in collaboration with their woodwork, art, and classroom teachers, created a display depicting a selected land rights event. They researched and recorded information about the significance of the event they selected (see Figure 22). The artwork and information were displayed at the Galtha site at Biranybirany and became a teaching tool for the rotating groups during the week.



Figure 21: Student Map of Mine Lease (2018)

Credit: Yirrkala School

⁶³ *Pain for this Land* was directed by Ian Dunlop and produced by Film Australia—The Yirrkala Yolŋu Project.



Figure 22: Hope for this Land (June, 2019)

Credit: Yirrkala School

These programs leading up to the Galtha Rom had clear links to the Australian Curriculum, including language and literacy outcomes, in both English and first language. This is evidence that both NT Department of Education approved outcomes, as well as local curriculum outcomes, are being achieved through this approach to learning. These both ways approaches, which include Garma Maths and Galtha Rom, emerged from a theoretical framework, discussed in Chapter 4. However, in the political debate about remote education, the intellectual depth and rigour of bilingual education and programs that include Yolŋu epistemologies are often not acknowledged at the system level. Yet Galtha Rom is a clear

example of a valid pedagogy that connects both Western and Yolŋu knowledges, which has application both in and out of the classroom. Galtha Rom includes a complex planning process that differs from how classroom learning programs are usually developed. In the next section, I discuss in more detail some of these complexities related to gurruṯu, inside and outside knowledge, resourcing, and how the Model of Collaborative Practice I explained in Chapter 6 could be used to further expand Galtha Rom as a learning opportunity for all staff.

7.3 Galtha Rom Planning Considerations

Nurru Warryunapuyŋu and Gurruṯu

Gurruṯu is the foundation of Galtha Rom. The social reality of clan relationships and gurruṯu is complex and sophisticated, and each person is ‘understood not only as an individual personality but also having obligations and rights on a matrix of kinship and clan relations that constantly and concretely signal the connectedness and locatedness of every person in the highly differentiated social whole’ (Kemmis et al., 2013, p. 146). With this relatedness, gurruṯu as its foundation, Galtha Rom processes differ significantly from how non-local educators normally engage with school-based planning. Although at an organisational level, Yolŋu ways of being, knowing, and doing may to some extent be supported by the organisation during Galtha planning, at a systemic level, the relevance of Yolŋu processes are ignored. The Western institution of school assumes that we all inhabit, or should inhabit, these spaces in the same way. This research clearly demonstrates that we do not, and the Galtha Rom process demonstrates these differences.

The vignette at the start of the chapter described how gurruṯu influenced the way people interacted at one of the planning meetings. The roles, and what capacity people were employed in, also influenced behaviour. For example, Yalmay was an experienced teacher with understanding of school processes and pedagogy, and the school-based time constraints and timelines. However, the rangers who were familiar with Galtha Rom in a Yolŋu context were not necessarily experienced in the facilitation of school-based Galtha Rom. Yalmay and I discussed what seemed like some reluctance by those at the meeting to commit to roles or initially offer input into the content. There are likely to be a number of reasons for this, in particular, gurruṯu and clan affiliations. I spoke at length with a Yolŋu mentor about the

process of Galtha Rom and shared with her my reflections of the meeting described in the vignette. The mentor explained the following:

Galtha is not just politics. It is about who you are, where you stand within gurruṭu and your responsibility to other clans, especially your ṇāṇḍipulu [mother's clan]. It identifies when and where you assert your authority as an agreed clan representative/spokesperson. Your clan connection also limits what you can do or say in certain places or around certain people. (Yolṇu participant, personal communication, 27 January 2020)

While I attempted to interpret the meeting in the vignette, Yolṇu Rom, including the deeper layers of clan connections, were beyond me. I felt comfortable critically reflecting with certain Yolṇu who I had long-term trusting relationships with and learned so much through these discussions. One of these critical reflections occurred the following morning after the meeting. Yalmay and I spoke at length about the meeting and decided we needed to talk to the cultural advisor who had attended the meeting with us. We suggested to him that the potential confusion about the names already assigned to groups may have been a result of rangers understanding that the elders connected to Biranybirany would facilitate the Galtha, and possibly, they were unclear why other Yolṇu who were not considered to be senior had been allocated the planning groups. It is the elders of the appropriate gurruṭu and bāpurru (clan) affiliation, depending on the Galtha Rom, who are required to take the leading roles. However, from a school or organisational perspective, a high level of planning was required to develop resources and connect activities to relevant curriculum areas to ensure the students were provided with a rich learning opportunity. After listening to this explanation by Yalmay and me, the cultural advisor was silent for a few minutes and then suggested that the planning groups needed to be referred to as the *ṇurru warryunapuyṇu*. For my benefit, he explained that the term *ṇurru warryunapuyṇu* is used to describe the group that leads the proceedings at ceremony. Both he and Yalmay were very satisfied with the application of this word in the context of the Galtha Rom planning at the school. It added clarity to the planning process. It clarified these planning groups had a role and so did other key Yolṇu who were not in these groups. When Yalmay shared the name *ṇurru warryunapuyṇu* with other Yolṇu, it made the

role of the school-based groups explicit, and Yolŋu responded very positively. The application of this word and concept seemed so simple but so important in helping to clarify roles. Adequate time is required during planning to negotiate and come to shared understandings; this is one example of why time and reflection are important.

A senior Yolŋu educator reflected the following about the value of both ways planning processes:

Working with both Yolŋu and Njāpaki educators to create this Galtha was such a great pleasure. Many people worked together to create the program and it was like we were building a structure, creating a solid framework, Djalkiri nherran̄ [putting down solid foundations]. The ideas were there and all you had to do is give these ideas to the ones who know best how to do it. Once those groups of people got it, then they moulded into that being of knowledge. They reported back to the whole group with what they came up with and that's when it started. That was the most beautiful thing I saw, with all these educators, Balanda and Yolŋu ideas mixing. It was so rich and so beautiful to see and the rest was easy. Then it was ŋurru warryunapuyŋu who led these groups of learning stations. Everyone knew what everyone else was doing and that made the teaching stronger. (Senior Yolŋu educator, personal communication, 15 November 2018)

The power of working together was reiterated by many participants in this research. The quote below is by a non-local teacher who reflected on the planning sessions he had been involved in during his time working at Yirrkala:

As many of those fantastic planning sessions transpired in my short time there with the likes of Merrki, Djalinda, Rārri, Yalmay and Vanessa, it followed a dynamic conversation grounded in web of interconnected relationships (both Yolŋu-Yolŋu, Balanda-Balanda & Yolŋu-Balanda) that afforded the trust to just be with each other but to also deeply value each other's world views. There was always an inductive exploratory element to it as it felt like we were going on a journey together unpacking and testing ideas, the Njalapaḷ with that perspective arcing in space and time into the song spirals they talk

about and ‘the land as a mnemonic as Djalinda always extolled, balanced with the pragmatism that Vanessa and I would bring, knowing what it was going to be like to ‘groove’ any proposal with the young people we were spending all day in the classroom with. (Non-local participant, personal communication, 18 October 2021)

The development of educational programs is strengthened by working together, and in a Yolŋu context, a collaborative approach is essential.

Inside and Outside Knowledge

Another consideration in the planning and delivery of Galtha Rom, and other school-based programs that include Yolŋu knowledge, is access to information and knowledge. In the Yolŋu world, certain knowledge is not available to all. Some Yolŋu participants discussed the distinction between dharrpal (‘inside’: sacred and restricted) and warranŋul (outside and public) knowledge (Wunungmurra, 1989; B. Yunupingu et al., 1991). A senior Yolŋu man, also an experienced educator, shared the reality of the complexities he experienced when including Yolŋu knowledge in school programs. He referred to the dangers faced by Yolŋu teachers if they were not careful in the way Yolŋu knowledge was shared in school programs. He expanded on the tensions of inside and outside knowledge:

Galtha is about sharing the outside knowledge but the deeper one it’s really *yätj* [bad]. There are lots of people watching from different areas, different mala groups. If a Yolŋu person doesn’t follow our rom [law] about sharing information, they will be questioned by *ŋalapa* [senior people/elders] and Yolŋu teachers can get in a bathala mari [big trouble] and there are lots of stories about galka, bilinya— *marŋgi nhe* [sorcery and things like that, you know] what happened. (Senior Yolŋu educator, personal communication, 13 November 2018)

In this quote, the participant refers to the layered (from open and public to highly restricted) nature of Yolŋu knowledge and how this responsibility for knowledge extends beyond one clan group. By saying ‘there are lots of people watching from different areas, different mala groups’, he is referring to the interconnectedness of rom to other Yolŋu regions. An example of the rom around sharing layers of knowledge was discussed in Chapter 4 when I explained

how the original metaphor of Gaṇma was changed to Garma Maths for this reason. The rom around knowledge translation is also another reason it is critical that processes are given the time and space required to ensure that the people with the right degree of authority are involved. As described in the quote above, failure to do this can be dangerous for those involved. In addition, inappropriate disclosure of restricted knowledge interferes with the Yolṅu pedagogical system, with its rules about how, when, and to whom knowledge is disclosed. That is why the collaborative planning process of Galtha Rom is critical, and the power to direct and lead approaches such as these need to be firmly in the hands of Yolṅu.

Collaboration and Reflexivity

In Chapter 6, I explained how collaborative practice is influenced by our worldviews and life experiences. Galtha Rom is an example of this. The Model of Collaborative Practice (Figure 15), is a framework that could be applied to the Galtha Rom planning process. For example, including critical reflexivity into the Galtha Rom planning may help to navigate and make transparent the different expectations people bring to the space and support educators to develop both ways pedagogical approaches. While reflective practice might not be a Yolṅu process employed in Galtha Rom, creating space for critical reflexivity may support the dismantling of assumptions about the validity of knowledge held by non-local teachers; this is discussed in the next chapter.

Critical reflexivity may also support educators to reflect on what they have learnt during the planning process and the implications of this on their classroom practice. Furthermore, critical reflexivity may help support the clarification of roles when Galtha Rom is applied in the school context. As explained, following the meeting described in the vignette, Yalmay and I debriefed between ourselves and then with the school cultural advisor, and through this process, we moved towards greater clarity. It did not mean that the planning process described in this chapter was always comfortable or that confusion and tension was not present, but when participants were willing to engage, listen and discuss, there was the potential to develop deeper clarity. It was because of these discussions, which I classify as critical reflexivity, that the term ṅurru warryunapuyṅu was given to describe the groups who were involved in the lead-up work. The term helped clarify that members of those groups, in particular the non-

local teachers, did not have full responsibility (in fact they may have had no responsibility) for facilitating this learning but that they had a role in the process.

Collaborative engagement in critical reflexivity, in this case conversations between Yalmai, the cultural advisor and myself, created an opportunity for deeper discussion and moved us towards shared understandings and clarity. Brené Brown uses the term ‘rumble’ to describe a discussion, meeting or conversation where there is a ‘commitment to lean into vulnerability, to stay curious and generous, to stick with the messy middle of problem identification and solving, to take a break, to circle back when necessary, to be fearless in owning our parts and as Harriet Lerner teaches, to listen with the same passion with which we want to be heard’ (B. Brown, 2019, para. 3). While Yalmai and I did not refer to this process as ‘rumbling’, the process described by Brown (2019) had aspects of what was required for us to engage in critical reflexivity—it was necessary for us both to lean into our individual discomforts, stay in the ‘messy middle’ and be vulnerable as we ‘circled back’ to debrief about the meeting. For Brown (2019), the phrase ‘let’s rumble’ is a cue to her to ‘show up with an open heart and mind so we can serve the work and each other, not our egos’ (para. 4). There is a connection between Brown’s research and the findings in this doctoral study. For example, an ‘open mind’ was recorded in the image created by Yolŋu educator, Lombinga Mununggurr (Figure 14 in Section 6.4), as essential in the process of developing good relationships in the context of remote education. Furthermore, engaging in discussions with respect, patience, kindness, honesty and a sense of openness (findings this research documented in the Model of Collaborative Practice in Section 4 of Chapter 6) is likely to have similarities to Brown’s concept of an ‘open heart’ (para. 3). Therefore, when developing and implementing Galtha Rom, or other similar both ways approaches, it is important that there are opportunities to reflect, connect, and engage, and that those involved show up with a willingness to do so.

Resourcing

Lastly, but importantly, resourcing is a consideration in both planning and implementing Galtha Rom. There is a significant financial investment required to ensure the success of Galtha Rom learning in schools. Although Galtha Rom has been implemented over the years, albeit more consistently at Yirrkala School, the funding available to support these programs

has fluctuated. As discussed in Chapter 5, government agendas influence the allocation of funding available to support programs like Galtha Rom. In the last 10 years, the federally funded Learning on Country Program (LoCP) has been critical in supporting the resourcing and planning of these Galtha Rom workshops (Fogarty, Schwab, et al., 2015). Without adequate funding, these intergenerational community-led learning opportunities are challenging to sustain. It is likely that programs will only be funded when those assigning the funds see the relevance of programs, which highlights the importance of Galtha Rom and other similar local pedagogical programs being recognised for their academic contribution.

7.4 Conclusion

The meetings and the Galtha planning process described in this chapter might sound relatively straightforward, but this was certainly not the case! This planning process was a complex endeavour, requiring an investment of time, leadership, resources, and an understanding of the epistemic virtues of Galtha Rom. There were multiple organisations, elders, and community members involved, so bringing these groups and individuals together and navigating agendas and expectations was complex. The diversity of aspirations of different groups and individuals may or may not be open or understood by non-local actors locally and, importantly, may not be understood at all at a systemic level. Furthermore, those involved were spread across large geographic distances, and planning for a large number of students and community members attending the Galtha Rom added additional complications. Overall, collaborative practice, of which Galtha Rom is one example, is messy but indispensable in producing cutting-edge, successful, and relevant community-based learning. The term Galtha Rom may have signalled to some participants that something different from everyday schooling was happening, a space in which special considerations applied that did not necessarily translate to the 'normal' school. However, Galtha Rom can be seen as a testing ground for collaborative ideas and principles that can then be translated into the wider school context.

Galtha Rom planning speaks to several of the Five Pillars of Community-Centred Education summarised in the final chapter. First, Galtha Rom planning is a community-led educational process. Second, it is an example of a planning process that involves collaboration, and last, it

is a both ways pedagogy and curriculum. In the next chapter, I continue this case study by discussing the implementation of the Galtha Rom at Biranybirany, further demonstrating the pedagogical and theoretical underpinnings of the application of this local approach.

Chapter 8 Galtha Rom in Practice

8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed the planning process of the Galtha Rom at Biranybirany, and in this chapter, I document its application. The data presented is the result of 11 months of intensive fieldwork at Yirrkala and in the Homelands, working with rangers, teachers, and community members to support the planning of this intergenerational learning program. Initially, I had not planned for this Galtha Rom to become a central case study of this thesis. However, as a result of my teaching experience in the community as well as gurrutu connections, particularly to Yalmai, one of the key organisers, I became involved in the planning process. Consequently, this case study was a participatory process for me—a response to the identified community and school needs and contributing accordingly.

As discussed in Chapter 4, in the 1980s and 1990s at Yirrkala, a local curriculum and pedagogy was developed, documented in academic papers written and co-authored by Yolŋu educators. However, since then, there has been a decline in academic writing; the community-based teacher education courses that facilitated this academic engagement no longer exist in the same form. As a result, there are limited contemporary papers to draw from that relate to the theory of Galtha Rom as an educational pedagogy. But on the ground, Galtha Rom continues, and the academic writing from decades ago is just as relevant today. This chapter focuses on how Galtha Rom in a contemporary context was applied. In Chapter 2, I examined both ways education and how this was initially theorised at Yirrkala. I drew on a number of culturally responsive and land-based pedagogies to develop a theoretical framework that demonstrated the connection between Galtha Rom and these broader pedagogies. Through analysis of this particular Galtha Rom, I demonstrate how it meets local and national agendas and outcomes, at the same time supporting the educational aspirations of the community that have been articulated for decades.

8.2 Context of the Galtha at Biranybirany

The Biranybirany Galtha was a significant Galtha for the reasons discussed in Chapter 7. Importantly, it was a celebration of the work of Dr. Yunupingu and his contribution to the development of both ways education. He was one of the key participants in the RATE program

discussed in Chapter 4 and this pedagogical work that informed Galtha Rom. Yalmai Yunupingu/Marika, Dr. Yunupingu's wife, had been granted 6 months' study leave to help coordinate and plan this Galtha. In addition to the 3-day Galtha Rom planned for students, the fourth day was an open forum, and a plaque recognising Dr. Yunupingu's contribution to education was to be unveiled. A number of dignitaries and government officials had been invited to the last day. Logistically, for a small remote Homeland, this event was a significant undertaking.

Many weeks prior to the Galtha, the Biranybirany community, along with the support of Yirrlaka and Dhimurru rangers, prepared the community for the event. This included mowing grass, erecting long-drop toilets, and clearing overgrown bush to make camping sites. There was also a concern that there might be insufficient water for so many people, so this needed to be addressed. Figure 23 shows before and after photos, illustrating some of the work that went into preparing the site, including the shelters that were constructed. To ensure that the site was suitable for the estimated 200+ participants required commitment from residents, as well as others connected to Biranybirany, and the undertaking required external funding and manual labour by many. The Galtha inadvertently helped support a Homeland, which was particularly important considering that funding for housing and infrastructure over the years had been directed towards centralised communities (K. Palmer, 2016, p. 194).

Before*After*

Figure 23: The Biranybirany Site: Before and After (June, 2018)

Credit: Harry Thorman

8.3 An Overview of the Theoretical Framework

By analysing selected activities at the Galtha Rom and combining this with participant data, I identified a number of interrelated pedagogies that explain the application of Galtha Rom in a contemporary context. The connection to broader pedagogies is important as it validates what many educators and elders at Yirrkala already know—that a both ways approach to education works.

The theoretical discussion in Chapter 2 focused on a plethora of pedagogies, including culturally responsive pedagogy (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Gay, 2010; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Morrison et al., 2019; Paris, 2012), critical pedagogy (Apple, 2000; Freire, 1996; Giroux, 2010; Kincheloe, 2012), and critical Indigenous pedagogy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Grande, 2008). One of the critiques of culturally responsive pedagogy and critical pedagogy is that they do not go far enough in recognising the connection to Country. Therefore, I also drew on pedagogy that centres Country, one of the foundations of Galtha Rom. There are many pedagogies in the literature related to learning that includes the connection to land. Some of these include place-based education (G. Smith, 2002), Learning on Country/learning through country (Fogarty, 2013; Schwab & Fogarty, 2015), critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003), red pedagogy (Grande, 2015), and land-based education (Betasamosake Simpson, 2014; Calderon, 2014; Wildcat et al., 2014). While acknowledging the contemporary theories of place-based education and other aforementioned pedagogies, the locally developed theories and pedagogies are at the centre of this thesis (Marika-Mununggiritj, 1990; M. Yunupingu, 1989).

In addition to land-based pedagogy, Galtha Rom is an example of an intergenerational pedagogy. However, less has been written about the intergenerational aspect of pedagogy in a school context. Intergenerational learning programs have been described by Hatton-Yeo & Ohsako (2000) as the 'vehicles for the purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and young generations for individual and social benefits' (p. 6). The evidence clearly demonstrates that Galtha Rom is intergenerational. That is, young people and adults learn together. Galtha Rom largely focuses on school-aged students and their learning; however, there is potential to formalise adult learning and integrate this into community-based teacher education courses. Unfortunately, as noted, the community-based teacher education courses that developed the original theory and practice of Galtha Rom in the school context have been absent for decades. In addition to being an intergenerational pedagogy, Galtha Rom is an embodied pedagogy, discussed later in the chapter.

Galtha connects learners to the land and to kin. As discussed in Chapter 2, the process of schooling often alienates learners from their local environments and experiences

(Greenwood, 2015; McKnight, 2016; G. Smith, 2002). McKnight (2016) proposed that the four walls of the classroom close students off from the nonhuman teachers, and he argued that learning has to occur ‘with and on Country so the knowledge can be observed, felt and understood on a spiritual level of connectedness’ (p. 12). During the Galtha, elders continually connected students to the wāṇa (land) through gurruṭu. It was noted by a number of senior Yolṟu that reinforcing young people’s connection to land was particularly critical in contemporary life. As a senior Yolṟu participant put it,

Learning about country is very emotional and important. When we connect back to country, our ancestors welcome us when we walk on the land and hunt on the land. Our land means so much to us because it feeds us, and we know that we come from the land. That is how we are connected—land and Yolṟu. (Yolṟu participant, personal reflection, 3 August 2018)

In the next section, I explain the implementation of selected activities at the Biranybirany Galtha Rom.

8.4 The Galtha Officially Begins

Arriving at the Site

The first official day of the Galtha was Monday 4 June 2018, and half the day was spent transporting large numbers of people to Biranybirany 135 km from Yirrkala on mostly a dirt road. Students and adults from surrounding Homelands also required transport from their home communities to Biranybirany. It was a complicated and expensive undertaking that required coordination and funding. Four-wheel drive buses from Katherine were hired, flights chartered, and every 4WD available through various organisations used. In the logistical meetings leading up to the Galtha, a map deciding on camping areas was developed (Figure 24) as it was critical that there were adequate camping areas for participants. There were many designated areas for the schools and camps where community members and elders stayed. By the afternoon on the first day, most people had arrived and settled into their camps; one of these is pictured in Figure 25.

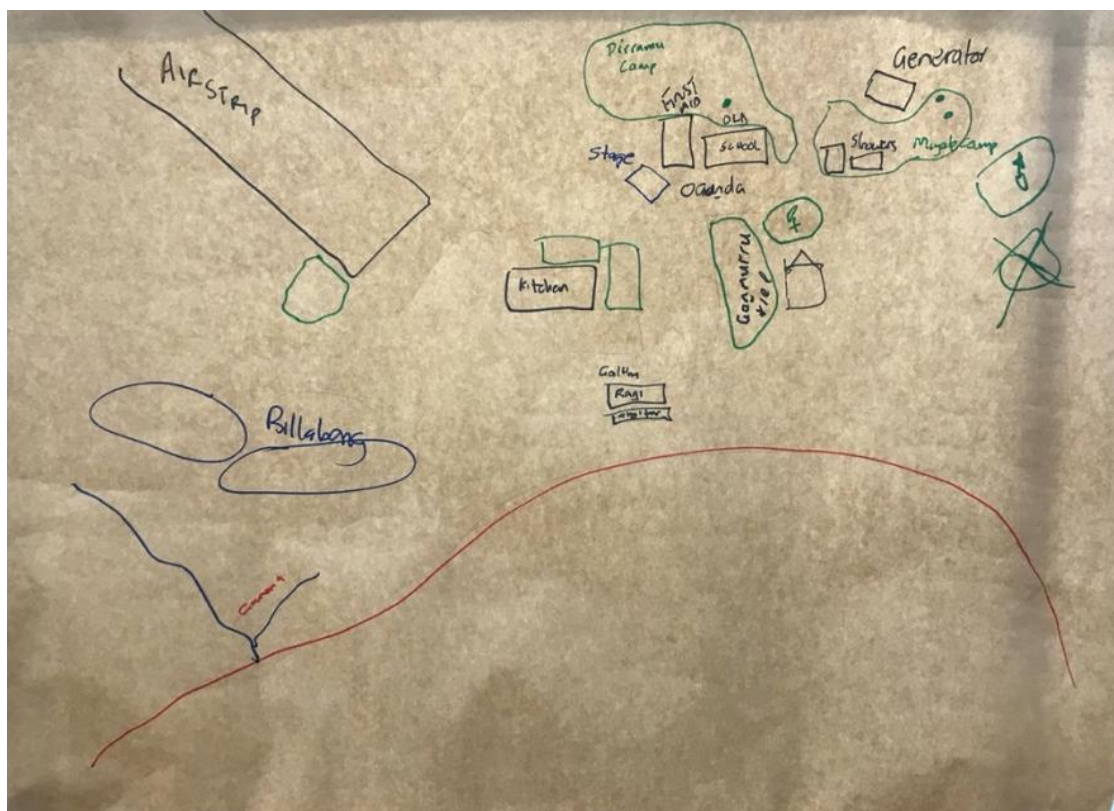


Figure 24: Mapping the Area (18 May, 2018)



Figure 25: One of the Designated Camping Areas (5 June, 2018)

Connecting to Country

The first official event of the Galtha was a Welcome to Country by Gumatj *ṇaḷapaḷ* (elders) as well as speeches by *djuṅgaya*.⁶⁴ The *ṇaḷapaḷ* expressed their gratitude for all those attending the event, recognising that it had been years since there had been a Galtha of this size between Yirrkala Homelands School and Yirrkala School. In the opening address, *ṇaḷapaḷ* discussed the history of the Homeland Movement and explained the connections the students had to each other and the *wäṇa* through *bäpurru*⁶⁵ and other *gurruṭu*. The *wäṇa* (place) and *gurruṭu* were central themes discussed in this opening address. Some participants shared with me that the families of some of the young people who attended the Galtha had prior conversations with their children. These conversations reinforced and explained their specific connections to Biranybirany. *Wäṇa* is central in Galtha. In some ways, there is no separation between the person and the land (Bawaka Country et al., 2016, p. 358). A person's spirit and their identity come from the land.

There was a high level of emotion from the speakers as this Galtha was a celebration and recognition of Dr. Yunupingu's contribution, a formal opportunity for various clans and organisations to recognise this. A non-local participant who had been connected to Dr. Yunupingu and his family for over 20 years commented, 'It felt like it was full *bäpurru*'.⁶⁶ She meant that the seriousness of this Galtha equalled that of a funeral. The way the elders took responsibility for addressing the group was a strong statement of 'community-based power' (Grande, 2008, p. 27); this was clearly a Yolṅu-led event. The support for this Galtha and the seriousness of the workshop was evident. It was an important community event.

In the evening, after the welcome by the elders, the educators, rangers, and elders met to discuss the program for the week. Everyone in the meeting was given the workbook produced by the *ṇurru warryunapuyṇu* that contained the timetable for the week (Figure 26), lesson plans, activities, and program. It was the first time that some of the adults in the group had seen the final plan for the week, so learning intentions and program were shared. In the

⁶⁴ *Djuṅgaya* are 'caretakers' who are *waku* [children] of Gumatj women. Senior *waku* have many ceremonial responsibilities towards their mother's Country.

⁶⁵ Used here to mean clan

⁶⁶ In this context, the word *bäpurru* means ceremonial funeral.

original planning meetings, it was decided that at the end of the day, the adults would meet to discuss the day to reflect and adjust the program if required. At the event, these formal meetings did not occur. It was also decided in the planning meetings that adults would participate in daily reflections, this also did not happen. There could be multiple reasons for this. Participants were likely to have had other priorities rather than participate in an organised reflection. Galtha Rom provided a forum for people to connect, and during the 4-day workshop, continuous dialogue occurred. Also, the days were full, so it is likely that people needed some down time without structured activities, and most nights there was bungul (ceremonial dancing). In addition, there was not a designated person or group coordinating these activities. Importantly, it also suggests that critical reflection may be enacted differently to how non-local teachers might envisage it. While I have concluded that critical reflection is an important part of collaborative practice, further work is needed to understand how it connects to these Galtha forums, the purpose of reflection and what this looks like in practice.

Biranybirany Galtha Timetable

Time	Monday 4 th June	Tuesday 5 th June	Wednesday 6 th June	Thursday 7 th June	Friday 8 th June
Breakfast 7.30am		Introduction to Biranybirany Walk to Ganma – explanation of country and water including Makarraja	Rotations (Learning areas – 1hr rotations) - Manikay - Gurruju - Political Leadership Rotation (a) Rotation (b)	Preparation for the ceremony Reflection and Journal Writing	Travel from Biranybirany
Morning Tea 10.30am					
	Travel to Biranybirany Start setting up Camp		Rotation (c)	Treaty Ceremony and Plaque Unveiling	
12:30 pm Lunch					
	Welcome to country	Djalkiri <i>*The activity will be explained and then students will form their groups</i> - Locating significant sites - Reflection and Journal Writing	Reflection and Journal Writing		
4pm	Complete camp set up Exploring the site What do you know about Biranybirany?	Men's and Women's Business (4.30-6.30pm)	Men's and Women's Business (4.30-6.30pm) Reflection and Journal Writing		
Dinner 6pm					
7pm Onwards	Storytime /Singing <i>Adult Meeting Time</i>	Storytime /Singing <i>Adult Meeting Time</i>	Storytime /Singing <i>Adult Meeting Time</i>		

Figure 26: The Biranybirany Galtha Rom Timetable (4 June, 2018)

8.5 Walking Country

Walking to Gaṇma

The second day of the Galtha started with the walk to Gaṇmawuy, the sacred site where the fresh and salt waters meet. It had been decided that the group would need to leave early in the morning as even in the dry season, the 'coolest' part of the year, it was still hot. Students and adults had been given a calico bag, donated by the Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre at Yirrkala, which contained the workbook, a pencil, and a water bottle. Participants were instructed to take this bag with them to each of the activities during the week. As it was a Gumatj wäṇa, the elders from that community led the walk. Over 150 people walked along the beach, stopping at a number of important sites so that elders could explain the stories related to that wäṇa and discuss the names of those sites (see Figure 27). Yälpi, one of the Gumatj leaders of this walk, explained that the site Gaṇmawuy had not been open to the public in a forum like this. He explained that the students were allowed there because the elders were concerned that the young people were not learning Rom (law), and they wanted to encourage and support learning. Yalmay reflected,

We all sat and Yälpi told us the big history about the land and the connection of the land with people. All the students were very interested, sat still and were engaged. It was the first time most of the students had been to Biranybirany and learnt about the history. They took notes as he talked. It was just amazing to see all the students gathered around Yälpi. I was so interested in the stories. (Yolṇu educator, personal communication, 6 June, 2019)



Figure 27: Participants involved in Galtha Rom at Biranybirany (June, 2018)

Credit: Yambirrpa Schools

The learning was intergenerational—students and adults (both local and non-local) were all learning on the walk and throughout the duration of the Galtha. Yalmay shared how being at Gaṇmawuy encouraged her to think more deeply about the concept of both ways learning in the educational context and about the rom related to the water:

After that, our next walk was to the Gaṇma site where the two waters meet, the fresh and sea waters. These waters mix together to form foam which represents new knowledge. These two waters also represent the *Dhalatj* [the brackish water in this place] of Gumatj and Maḍarrpa people, *märi ga gutharra gapu* meeting together, becoming one. This is the two *märi gutharra bäpurru* relationship that have strong connections with these waters and a strong connection with Yolṇu Rom. Over the years I have listened to all the stories at school about Garma and here we were at the important place called Gaṇmawuy. The place where it all started. (Yalmay Yunupingu, personal reflection, 6 July 2018)

In a similar way, another senior Yolŋu participant shared,

I heard about the place Boluwuy before, and I had been there. I had heard the stories from the old people, but I had never been to the place, that was the first time I had been to the place to actually see the place where the makarraṯa⁶⁷ took place. Everyone learns in Galtha, it is important learning for the whole community. We learn together. It's for adults to learn. Dhiyaŋu [now, present moment], this generation, the old people when I grew up. It's different now. (Senior ranger, personal communication, 19 November 2018)

It was evident that physically being on Country was important in making the connection to the history that this ranger had previously learnt about. If students had been sitting in classrooms learning about this history in an abstract way, it would have been a different experience. Betasamosake Simpson (2014, p. 7) discussed how, within her Indigenous knowledge system, stories can be interpreted at different levels; for example, initially, young people might just understand the literal meaning, but as they develop, more conceptual layers can be understood and with more experience, metaphorical meanings interpreted. The activities at the Galtha created the space for learners to interpret and engage with the information and learning at the level they were at.

Reinforcing the intergenerational learning that Galtha embodies, another senior Yolŋu participant shared the following:

The students learnt about the history of the area. It was a good opportunity for students to be there on country and hear the stories about the old times, how people lived there, how many different clan groups came together for ceremonies such as ṇārṛa⁶⁸, dhapi⁶⁹, makarraṯa and other important roles. It wasn't only the students that were learning, the Njapaki were learning too. Yolŋu adults were also learning, I learnt

⁶⁷ Dispute resolution ceremony

⁶⁸ Regional ceremony with components restricted to senior men. It affirms the connection between people and place. Yolŋu use the word cultural 'parliament' to describe it.

⁶⁹ Circumcision ceremony

so much. It is my yapa wäŋa⁷⁰ and I learnt so many stories about the land. Everyday djamarrkuḷi (young people/children) learned at Biranybirany about the land. For example, how the clouds come out from the horizon, from the Yirritja wäŋa and meets the Dhuwa wäŋa. Those were the stories that were told to us at Biranybirany. (Senior Yolŋu participant, Galtha reflection, 13 November 2018)

During the Galtha there were many opportunities for small group and one-on-one connections between adults and students. Adults and young people working together was a common occurrence during the Galtha; Figure 28 is a snapshot of this. One or two educators working with a group of students is in contrast to classroom settings with large numbers of students and a small number of teachers. Furthermore, the importance of students witnessing Yolŋu at Galtha Rom as the primary deliverers of education cannot be underestimated. Often in the classroom context, non-local teachers occupy the qualified classroom teaching positions; however, in Galtha, the power is flipped, and Yolŋu are the main facilitators.



Figure 28: Rurruwiliny Njuruwutthun Supporting a Student (5 June, 2018)

(Reproduced with permission)

⁷⁰ The term yapa [sister] is used to denote the relationship between clans that share the same ancestral beings [wäŋarr] and related ceremonies.

Mapping the Walk

After the walk to sacred sites, a mapping activity to consolidate student learning was facilitated. The activity was introduced by elders who recapped information previously shared about the sites. Students and adults then formed groups and, on large pieces of brown paper, collectively mapped and labelled sites that had been discussed. The majority of participants sat on the ground around the pieces of brown paper; creating opportunities for students and adults to work as a group was an intentional pedagogic practice that encouraged discussion. Rangers and elders with the knowledge supported students. There was constant dialogue to confirm the names of places and the structure of the land and waterways to make certain information was mapped correctly.

Once the groups had mapped the area, students were asked to present their maps to the whole group. There was some resistance from students. This resistance is often referred to as *gora* (ashamed, embarrassed or shy) which is not uncommon. A few students, after they were asked a number of times, presented their maps with some support from adults. Over the years, I had often heard Yolŋu adults explaining to students that it was important for them to learn to present and develop confidence to share ideas and information. However, students were often reluctant to present to large groups. In this case, it was understandable as the group was particularly large and many students may have felt that they did not have mastery of the content to put themselves forward to present the information. Presenting information in this way is a very Western process and is an example of how even in both ways learning students are still expected to perform in quite Western ways that may clash with their lived experience.

Following the mapping process, students were required to complete the activity in their workbooks. An example is illustrated in Figure 29.

Djalkiri

Learning Goal	<i>Students will learn the names of significant places at Biranybirany (including water), listen to the songlines and understand their own connections to the country.</i>

1) Mittji jurrkun wo dambumiriw, gulk-'gulk'thunmi bala map-nha djāma bathalayi djoura'yi wanhaku nhuma gurrana njirimbunaya, ga yāku wukirri nunhi wāṇa ga gapu.

(Work in small groups to draw a map of the walk onto brown paper and label significant places.)

2) Nunhi nhe yurru dhawar'yundja map-ṇuya djāmanu, djāma nhuṇuwaynha map.

(When you finish drawing this map with your group, draw your own map here.)



Figure 29: Mapping Activity (5 June, 2018)

To conclude the activity, a reflective process was encouraged, but time was limited to complete the reflection questions developed by the ṇurru warryunapuyṇu. Students were encouraged to work in either small groups with adults or independently to answer the following questions:

1. Nhā nhe marngithinaya ṇunhi nhe marrtjina ṇunhima wāṇayi?
(What did you learn on the walk to that place?)

2. Nhä nhuṇu gurruṭu dhipaya wäṇayi?
(How are you connected to this land?)]

3. Nha nhe ṇäkuya dhäwu'ya?
(What stories did you hear on the walk?)

4. Yolthu yukurrana dhäwu'ya ḷakanaya?
(Who was telling the stories?)

The reflective process demonstrates the critical reflection involved in this learning process. Galtha Rom has clear links to both mainstream and Yolṇu identified outcomes.

Curriculum Links

The learning intention and curriculum outcomes were explicit at the Galtha Rom. As noted in Chapter 7, the learning direction was developed by Yolṇu, and following that, curriculum links were made. The learning goals for the walk to Gaṇmawuy were clearly articulated in lesson overviews included in the workbook (see Figure 30) that both students and adults were given. The learning goals were as follows:

- Students will learn the names of significant places at Biranybirany (including water), listen to the songlines, and understand their own connections to the country.
- Students will understand the connection between Biranybirany and the song 'Treaty'.

The intensive collaborative planning by the ṇurru warryunapuyṇu included links to three different curricula area outcomes: Australian Curriculum (the geography and history strands), Garma Maths, and NTCF ILC. Furthermore, language outcomes, including English and Yolṇu matha, although not officially documented, were also part of the activity.

The curriculum links to the walk included the following:

Garma Maths: Djalkiri Band 5

- *Wirrku*⁷¹ *ga ḍarramu*⁷²: Listen to the songlines and understand the story being told

Northern Territory Curriculum Framework Indigenous Languages and Culture: Band 5

- *Country/land*: Explain how the actions of the ancestral beings created the landscapes

⁷¹ Young woman

⁷² Young man

- *Natural environment*: Explain Dreaming stories about water and waterholes and why they are important

ACARA Geography: Year 7—Geographic knowledge and understanding

- *Content descriptions*: Economic, cultural, spiritual, and aesthetic value of water for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and peoples of the Asia region (ACHGK041)
- *Elaborations*: Explore the multilayered meanings (material, cultural, and spiritual wellbeing) associated with rivers, waterways, waterholes, seas, lakes, soaks, and springs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Lesson Overview – Djalkiri			
Date Time	Tuesday 5 th June 2018 11am onwards after the walk	Location	Biranybirany
Nurru warryunapuyñu	Lirripiya, Djalinda, Claire, Djuna	Naḷapaḷ	Dhungala, Yinimala Malalakpuy, Mandaka, Nulwurr, Yälpi, Maḷalay
Learning Goal	Students will learn the names of significant places at Biranybirany (including water), listen to the songlines and understand their own connections to the country. Students will understand the connection between Biranybirany and the song treaty.		
Curriculum Links			
Garma Maths & NTCF ILC	Djalkiri Band 5 (wirkuḷ ga ḍarramu): Listen to the songlines and understand the story being told ILC NTCF – Band 5 Country/Land: explain how the actions of the ancestral beings created the landscapes Natural Environment: explain Dreaming stories about water and waterholes and why they are important.		
ACARA Geography	Year 7 – Geographic knowledge and understanding Economic, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic value of water for people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and peoples of the Asia region - exploring the multilayered meanings (material, cultural and spiritual wellbeing) associated with rivers, waterways, waterholes, seas, lakes, soaks and springs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples		

Figure 30: Lesson Overview (5 June, 2019)

These various curriculum outcomes demonstrate that Galtha Rom meets national, NT, and local outcomes. As there were a range of ages attending the Galtha, students ranged from Year 7 to Year 12, so it was not possible to document the breadth of levels according to age; however, the school-based programs completed prior to the Galtha that were related to land rights and treaty were more targeted to specific age levels. Despite illustrating that Galtha is clearly connected to curriculum outcomes, it is also important to recognise that the concept of all students needing to learn the same content and progress in the same way is a Western

construct. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2014), Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, when speaking about the learning process of her people, explained that within that system of knowledge there is

no standard curriculum because it is impossible to generate a curriculum for that which is giving to us lovingly from the spirits and because it doesn't make sense for everyone to master the same body of factual information. Nishnaabeg society, in its fullest realization requires a diversity of excellence to continue to produce an abundance of supportive relationships (p.10).

While Betasamosake Simpson's comment is related to a different context, the tensions when attempting to meet school agendas and community models of learning are continually being navigated by Yolngu educators and some non-local educators. It becomes problematic when the academic validity of local models of education such as Galtha are misunderstood and undervalued by educators working in remote contexts. Adding further complexity is when the education system does not validate these models of learning and therefore fails to provide the necessary support to develop the skills required to work in these schools. As discussed in the previous chapter, the educators involved in the planning process were experienced in the context and had previously been part of Galtha Rom. While it is beyond the scope of this research, how educators, both local and non-local, are supported to develop the skills to participate in this process needs to be considered. As explained in the conclusion, both ways teacher education is one of the pillars of community-centred education—without the ongoing development and mentoring of educators, these models of learning will be challenging to sustain. Furthermore, while over the years Yambirrpa Schools has developed the capacity of staff in these contexts, funding has failed to adequately reflect the professional development needs of remote schools.

8.6 Galtha Rom Content

While it is not possible to discuss all the activities facilitated at the Galtha Rom, I selected two additional learning activities to explain: the political power workshop and bungul sessions. Following this, I explain how the learning was applied on the fourth day of the Galtha at the Treaty Open Day.

Political Power

One of the workshops planned by the *nurru warryunapuyngu* was Political Power. The learning goals for the Political Power workshop included the following:

- Students will identify the features of the 'Australian settler colonial state' and the events that led to its existence.
- Students will create a hopeful vision for themselves and how they can change the balance of power.

The Australian Curriculum links were connected to Cross Curriculum Priorities and History curricula. As discussed in Chapter 7, students at Yirrkala School had engaged in a program about land and sea rights prior to the Galtha Rom taking place.

The learning goals connected to the Australian Curriculum Cross Curriculum Priorities included the following:

- Organising idea 6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples live in Australia as first peoples of Country or Place and demonstrate resilience in responding to historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation.
- Organising idea 9: The significant contributions of Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the present and past are acknowledged locally, nationally, and globally.

There were also connections made to the history curriculum:

- background to the struggle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples for rights and freedoms (ACDSEH104);
- methods used by civil rights activists to achieve change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACDSEH134).

The Political Power workshop was detailed in a lesson plan in the student workbook, illustrated in Figure 31.

<i>Lesson Overview – Political power</i>	
Learning Goal	1) <i>Students will identify the features of the ‘Australian settler colonial state’ and the events that led to it’s existence</i> 2) <i>Students will create a hopeful vision for themselves and how they can change the balance of power.</i>
Learning Activities	
1. Introduction (5 minutes) • Talk about the session goals • General overview of political power structures in Australia and how they affect peoples ability to make choices e.g. hierarchies of power, conflicting constitution, maze of bureaucracy 2. Group Activity: pictures of power in the Australian settler colonial state (25 minutes) • Get into five groups around the five laminated pictures • Students and adults talk about what is happening in the picture. They specifically explore how <u>power</u> is being used • Groups report back and notes are written on butchers paper 3. Individual Activity: a hopeful vision for changing the balance of power (30 minutes) • The group is shown the storyboard that gives an overview of significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander acts towards gaining recognition and Land Rights • Students and adults return to small groups and work on individual ‘hopeful visions for changing the balance of power’. These can be drawn with annotations if necessary	

Figure 31: Political Power Lesson Plan (6 June, 2018)

Credit: Yambirrpa Schools

A member of the Political Power ṇurru warryunapuyṇu, also a secondary teacher involved in planning the classroom-based program prior to the Galtha Rom, explained,

The first part of the workshop focused on a ‘deconstruction process’ where students analysed a series of historical photos [see Figure 32] depicting scenes of political power and subjugation and reported back to group. This was a powerful experience as Elders, rangers and the young people worked through the country series of events post-colonisation.

The second half of the workshop was much more upbeat with students invited to partake in a constructive process of articulating what they see as their personal role in fighting for the rights of their peoples. An inspiring sharing indeed and for *Nyäpaki*, an utter privilege. (Educator, personal reflection, June 2018)

This workshop demonstrates the high level of intellectual engagement and how Galtha Rom creates forums to discuss contemporary political issues—addressing the lived reality of students.

Political Power

“This land was never given up.”

Learning Goals	Students will identify the features of the 'Australian settler colonial state' and the events that led to it's existence.
	Students will create a hopeful vision for themselves and how they can change the balance of power.

Group Activity

- 1) Get into small groups.
- 2) Look at the picture your group has been given and talk about what is happening. Focus on how power is being used and by whom.
- 3) Report back to the whole group.







18

Figure 32: Political Power Activity (June, 2019)

Credit: Yambirpa Schools

Bungul as an Embodied Pedagogy

Every night at the Galtha at Biranybirany, there was *bungul*⁷³. Keen (1994) described bungul as ‘ceremony’, where at least one man sings *manikay* (songlines), or it can also refer to a complex sequence of songs that can continue for weeks. The *yidaki* (didjeridoo) and *bilma* (clapsticks) are part of these songlines; both men and women dance. Many adults, both Yolŋu and non-Yolŋu, commented on the student engagement at the bungul during this particular Galtha. Over the years, Yolŋu have reiterated the importance of young people learning bungul as it is part of their identity and civic responsibility as Yolŋu community members. One elder on the first night of the bungul commented to me, ‘I have never seen my *gutharra* (grandson) dance before’. Watching her 16-year-old gutharra dance that night was a significant moment for her. Comments like these were common from many adults as they watched students engage in bungul.

A ranger commented,

It was really great to see the kids involved with the bungul. That was the first time I had seen them all dance. At other Galthas we have tried to get them to dance but sometimes they don’t want to. Even though we have been working with them for a while now, we hadn’t seen them dance like that before. The old people didn’t have to argue with them to get up and dance, the kids just got up and participated. (Yolŋu ranger, personal reflection, 6 July 2018)

The quote by this ranger, backed up by other participant comments, is evidence that encouraging students to participate in bungul is often challenging. It was inspiring for many people to witness students enjoy participating in what is an important part of Yolŋu rom. The young people participating were not *gora* (ashamed, shy, or embarrassed) to dance, a reason that is sometimes given; rather, the bungul at this Galtha promoted a sense of connectedness among participants. One night during the bungul, a young Yolŋu educator, who had herself left school the year before, shared with me that deep layers of knowledge were coming out of the land. She looked like she was in awe of the information being

⁷³ Ceremony

shared. As senior Yolŋu educator and academic Marika-Mununggiritj (1990) proposed, 'Young adult Yolŋu learners are looking for quality and know it when they are given it' (p. 47). It was obvious that this young teacher recognised the relevance and depth of knowledge as part of her own learning process.

The power and significance of the bungul was also felt and witnessed by non-local staff. A participant shared, 'The atmosphere created by this bungul was welcoming, joyful and inclusive. It made us feel we were in the right place, right where we needed to be' (Non-local participant, personal reflection, 15 July 2018).

Galtha is an embodied learning process; both bungul and walking the Country are examples. An embodied pedagogy is learning that 'joins body and mind in a physical and mental act of knowledge construction'; this union involves 'thoughtful awareness of body, space and social context' (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 332). In a similar vein, Freiler (2008) defined embodiment as 'a way to construct knowledge through direct engagement in bodily experiences inhabiting one's body through a felt sense of being-in-the-world' (p. 40). Freiler added that embodiment also involves

a sense of connectedness and interdependence through the essence of lived experiencing with one's complete humanness, both body and mind, in perceiving, interacting and engaging with the surrounding world. Simply stated, embodied learning involves being attentive to the body and its experiences as a way of knowing (p. 40).

In contrast, a disembodied education is one that is overly focused on the cognitive or abstract part of learning and on end results. As argued by Shahjahan (2015), 'mind supremacy' is ingrained in the Western academy and the mind-body duality has roots in colonial logic that framed non-white races to be more associated with their bodies than minds (p. 495). Wagner and Shahjahan (2015) proposed that an embodied pedagogy dismantles neoliberalism and addresses oppression, power, and privilege. Galtha Rom, as a land-based embodied pedagogy, challenges the dominant structures of education—one of the reasons Garma Maths and Galtha were originally conceptualised in the 1980s, as discussed in Chapter 4. Both the

planning process and facilitation of Galtha Rom demonstrate how power is flipped and Yolŋu knowledges, processes, and pedagogies become a learning framework validated by the school and the community. The challenge on the ground is for local embodied pedagogies, of which Galtha Rom is one, to be understood by educators and recognised by the wider educational system as a valid learning framework so that funding and resourcing can support local models of learning. As discussed in Chapter 5, often non-local teachers need support to navigate the unique working contexts of remote education; in particular, they require professional support to develop ways of working and the pedagogical approaches required for the context (Bat & Shore, 2012, p. 7).

The Treaty Day and the Application of Learning

On the fourth day, the Galtha concluded with an open public forum. Many guests from interstate attended this event, including songwriter Paul Kelly who co-wrote the song ‘Treaty’, the Chief Minister Michael Gunner, and Yingiya Guyula MLA⁷⁴. While it added an additional dimension and an extra workload, it also created an opportunity for students to apply their learning in a public forum. The bungul sessions described in the previous section and the men’s business in the afternoons helped prepare the students for the required events at the Treaty Open Day, including a ceremony to unveil a plaque in recognition of Dr. Yunupingu (Figure 33). In addition, there had been regular choir practices to learn two Yothu Yindi songs that were to be performed at the open day. The choir further highlights the way literacy (both Yolŋu matha and English) were included in the activities at Galtha—all students were given the lyrics of the songs and required to learn them. It was a meaningful and real context for students to apply their knowledge and learning. I distinctly remember a week later going to a Homeland and hearing a secondary student, who attended the Galtha, singing the lyrics of the song we had learnt—those songs were etched in many of our minds for a long time after the Galtha!

A senior Yolŋu educator explained the following:

During the Galtha we created a choir and learnt the lyrics of *Homeland Movement* and *Our Generation* by Yothu Yindi. Not many people, especially young people actually

⁷⁴ Yingiya is Yolŋu (Djambarrpuyŋu) from further West.

listen to the lyrics and understand them. If you sing those lyrics, learn the song, it tells you a story about the ṇalapaṃi [elders] involved in the Homeland Movement and explains why there was such a big movement in the history of Yirrkala and its Land Rights. The song also explains how important it is for Yolŋu and families to stay in their own Homelands.

It gives them that power, that pride [*ḍoṭurrk ga ṇoy-ḍālthirr ga mārriu ḍapmaram ga ganytjarrmirriyam*] to be in their own Homeland, to walk in their Homelands, to survive on their land. That's why I wanted the children to learn that song and when they sang it I could see that they had that power to say, 'hey this is me and I am strong, and no one will say anything about me because I own my own land'. (Senior Yolŋu educator, personal reflection, 15 November 2018)

The comment made by this Yolŋu educator reflects the holistic nature of Galtha Rom, extending beyond what could be measured or assessed. In the next section, I discuss how participants made references to wellbeing and the intergenerational nature of Galtha Rom.



Figure 33: Plaque in Memory of Dr. Yunupingu (8 June, 2018)

8.7 The Connection to Wellbeing and Intergenerational Learning

In this section, I discuss two concepts: wellbeing and intergenerational learning. While it is not possible to go into an in-depth discussion about these concepts, they are interconnected with the pedagogy of Galtha Rom and therefore need to be addressed.

Connections to Wellbeing

Yolŋu pedagogies are an important part of identity and belonging that ultimately supports wellbeing *as well as* academic engagement. A number of participants referred to ‘wellbeing’ in interviews and discussions, often in the context of Galtha Rom. While an in-depth discussion about wellbeing, including the various understandings and interpretations, is beyond the scope of this research, it is necessary to reference the connection between Galtha and wellbeing. Wellbeing is a complex concept to define, and it is likely that participants had varied understandings of this concept. A number of scholars have discussed the complexities of defining wellbeing, arguing that caution is needed when applying Western models of health to Indigenous peoples (Taylor, 2008; Yap & Yu, 2016). The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013–2023, which draws on the Aboriginal Health Strategy (1989), shifts the focus from the individual to the community, proposing that wellbeing relates to the ‘social, emotional, and cultural wellbeing of the whole community’, and that for Aboriginal people this is understood as a ‘whole-life-view’ (Australian Government, 2013, p. 9).

The link between wellbeing⁷⁵ and Yolŋu epistemologies was evident in 2016 when I co-facilitated a workshop at Yirrkala as part of my Master of Education (Student Wellbeing) at the University of Melbourne. Yolŋu participating in the workshop were asked to draw and write about their understanding of wellbeing. I hoped that through this process, a concise definition of wellbeing could be developed from a ‘Yolŋu perspective’. However, I was naïve. As I stood at the whiteboard ready to help construct a definition of wellbeing, the group started to call out words and phrases. I could not write quickly enough to record the information, and eventually I gave up, realising that the concept of wellbeing was complex; ultimately, it related to Yolŋu rom as all the words referred to Yolŋu ways of being, knowing,

⁷⁵ I use this term as the schools were focused on what was referred to as wellbeing in response to the plethora of health/wellbeing issues including suicide, suicide attempts, high levels of diabetes, and rheumatic heart disease etc.

and doing. Figure 34 reflects the group consensus about wellbeing which I have used with permission. The content depicted in this diagram is the foundation of Garma Maths and includes *manikay* (songlines), *wäŋa* (land), and *milkarri* (keening). As discussed in Chapter 4, the term Galtha was given by the elders as a way of situating the Garma Maths curriculum work in time and place. It became obvious that wellbeing was a complex concept to define but was connected to Garma Maths and Galtha Rom.

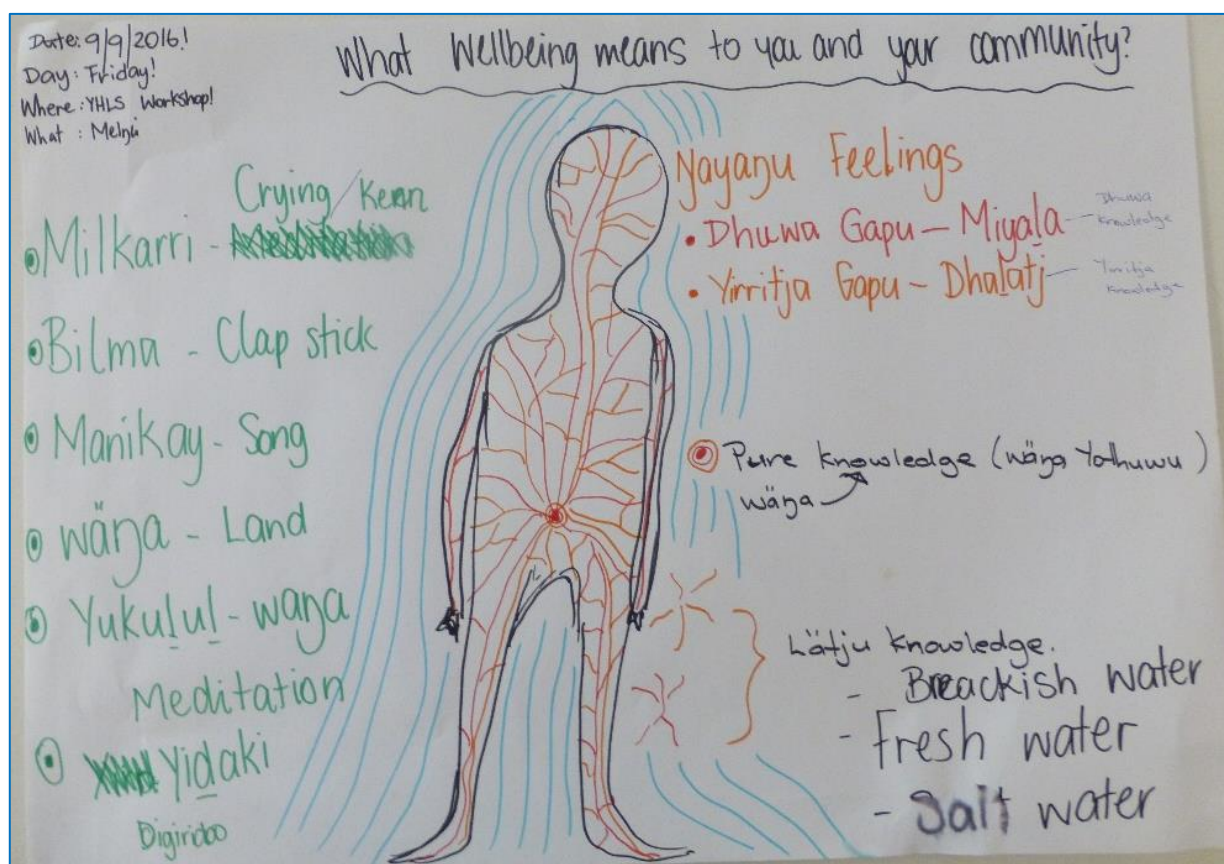


Figure 34: Image of Wellbeing (Yunupingu, 2016)

(Reproduced with permission)

While health is not synonymous with wellbeing, research suggests that strong language and culture contribute to positive health outcomes (Lowell et al., 2003; Oster et al., 2014; Rowley et al., 2008). Research conducted by Lowell et al. (2003) demonstrated that Yolŋu systems, practice, and knowledge play a crucial role in influencing health. Following on from this, a 10-year research study demonstrated a connection between strong language and culture in Indigenous Homeland communities in Central Australia. This longitudinal study attributed ‘connectedness to culture, family and land, and opportunities for self- determination’ as

contributing factors in the lower than expected mortality and morbidity rates (Rowley et al., 2008, p. 283). In a similar vein, Oster et al.'s (2014) findings reinforced that cultural continuity, including Indigenous languages, is 'inextricably linked to health' (p. 4). Evidence also demonstrates the connection between 'caring for country (which Indigenous people assert is a health promotion activity) and health outcomes relevant to excess morbidity and mortality' in an Arnhem Land community (Burgess et al., 2009, p. 571).

These research findings correlate with what many Yolŋu are saying on the ground, that cultural continuity and rom are implicated with leading a healthy life.

A senior Yolŋu man I interviewed was very clear in articulating that Yolŋu processes such as Galtha are critical to Yolŋu survival:

Galtha is the way we look forward and will keep Yolŋu strong. If the Western side of life keeps coming in and overtaking, we will forget our Yolŋu ways of being—how to live from the land, how to sustain ourselves. Both systems of education can go together but Yolŋu knowledge needs to be prioritised. It shouldn't be one way. (Yolŋu participant, personal communication, 5 December 2018)

In this interview, the participant spoke about Yolŋu ways of being, doing, and knowing as critical and spoke at length about how young people were not necessarily learning the skills of collecting and preparing bush foods. This lack of knowledge and reliance on processed food, he argued, contributed to the high level of ill health experienced by many of his family members.

Another participant and senior Yolŋu person shared, 'We are living in two worlds now. Galtha is the only way to show the djamarakuḷi' how to do this. Galtha is teaching our kids respect. Raypirri [discipline] comes from the land, comes from the gapu [water]' (Yolŋu participant, personal communication, 3 August 2018).

Yingiya Guyula MLA, in a speech at the Galtha Open Day, also stated his concern about the damaging impact of Western ways:

In the last 30 years Yolŋu have felt the full force of oppression. Government policies like the Intervention, super-shires, English-only schools have impacted greatly on our wellbeing. We are being pushed to suicide and we suffer from ill health, low education levels, and high incarceration rates. Balanda ways/Njapaki ways are failing us, strangling our spirit. Balanda governance is failing us. It is time for self-governance. (Speech at Biranybirany Galtha Rom, 7 June, 2018)

I was reminded about wellbeing as I rewrote this section. Two students I taught died tragically—one murdered and the other from suicide—adding to the number of young people who have died prematurely. These two tragic deaths of young people are a reminder of the relentless challenges and grief that is continually experienced in the community. While I have not detailed these ongoing and daily challenges, they are real and have a significant impact on education. More needs to be done to understand and, importantly, to make the changes, to support young people and the communities they live in. Wildcat et al. (2014) argued that longitudinal evaluations of land-based education and land-based healing would support organisations to secure funding to continue the work that they understood to be ‘vitally important’ (p. XIII). As Taiaiake Alfred (2015) put it, ‘When I talk about cultural strength in land-based cultural revitalisation I know that not only is it good for individuals but it is absolutely crucial to the cultural survival and the nationhood of our people’ (p. 11). For years the community at Yirrkala have advocated for educational change, as documented in Chapter 4 and 5, and Galtha Rom is one approach that requires ongoing support and funding, as well as community-led research into the multifaceted ‘benefits’ of locally designed and delivered education.

An Intergenerational Process

Galtha is an intergenerational approach to learning. As discussed, participants in this research, both local and non-local, spoke of the profound learning opportunity that the Galtha at Biranybirany provided. A non-local educator explained that Galtha Rom is intergenerational:

Galtha is not just important for kids, it is important for everyone, for the staff, having been a staff member at Galtha, it is very important for us. I think it is important for Galtha to consider that it is not just for kids actually, there are lots of levels of learning

going on, all the way up to some of the older rangers. (Non-local school staff member, personal communication, 12 November 2018)

Galtha is a reciprocal learning process; often Yolŋu took the time to teach non-local staff. A senior Yolŋu woman involved in the planning shared with me that the Galtha ‘was an opportunity to share what was talked about to our non-Indigenous family’ (Yolŋu participant, personal communication, 7 June 2018). It was evident that Yolŋu wanted to include non-local staff in this process.

A practicum teacher who was on a 4-week placement at the time explained what she witnessed at the Galtha and how it impacted her engagement with her own family histories and genealogy:

This invaluable experience has given me a better understanding of the importance of Both-ways learning and its attendant challenges. What I saw at Biranybirany: people determinedly looking after their own stories, songs, dances, rituals. I saw young people transcribing ancient songlines and envisioning an empowered future. I saw them writing out their own family trees, creating a web of connectedness. A few of us Njapaki guests attempted the same and struggled to recall the names of our great-grandparents. Some of us did not know where our grandparents were born. We decided to ask our families, when we returned home, to tell us more stories about who we are, where we fit, how we are connected to others. Like the Yolŋu students, we are not automatically equipped with this knowledge: we need older relatives to share their stories with us. (Practicum teacher, Galtha reflection, 12 June 2018)

These comments, and many others like them, demonstrate that Galtha Rom is an intergenerational learning process for both Yolŋu and non-local people of all ages. Intergenerational learning and knowledge transmission is not a new concept. However, I am not referring to the socialisation and learning that occurs in homes and communities but rather the learning that occurs as a result of Galtha Rom facilitated through the school system. There is limited research pertaining to intergenerational pedagogy delivered through processes like Galtha Rom. Cartmel et al. (2018), who conducted a review into

intergenerational learning programs, practices, and principles, concluded that intergenerational programs were in their infancy in Australia and currently not based on evidence-based pedagogy (p. 80). In addition, their review focused on the concept of 'intergenerational care' (p. 73) between older adults (65+ years old) and young children, which is quite different to the intergenerational learning experienced at Galtha Rom. The lack of available literature identifies a gap for future research; in particular, research that is directed and led by the community.

8.8 After the Galtha Rom

After the Galtha had finished, I offered to document the process. The documentation included the planning process, the workshops at Biranybirany, speeches from dignitaries, participant reflections, and activities in classrooms after the Galtha. However, as minimal reflections were recorded by participants while at the Galtha, I needed to speak to people individually and in small groups to collate information for this book. There is a history of documenting Galtha. In the LPC at Yirrkala School, the 'Galtha books' document the initial Galtha that started in the 1980s, and these resources are still referred to today. These days, audiovisual documentation in the form of films is often used to record Galtha;⁷⁶ however, as access to computers and internet is not always available, a hard copy account of the process ensures participants in the Homelands have access to this as well. In the following section, I discuss and analyse reflections, conversations, and interactions that transpired following the Galtha, as I attempted to create a document to record this significant Galtha Rom.

An Opportunity to Continue Learning in Classrooms

I started the chapter by explaining how classroom-based learning could be linked to Galtha prior to it taking place. Equally, there were classroom-based learning opportunities once the Galtha had finished. It seemed that in most classrooms where students attended the Galtha, a reflective writing process of some kind was facilitated. In one HLC, students and teachers documented their reflections on poster-size paper; an example can be seen in Figure 35. The Yolŋu educator facilitating this process was an experienced teacher, so the process would have been different if a non-local educator had delivered the session. The differences would

⁷⁶ A documentary about the Galtha Rom at Biranybirany was created.

have related to the depth of knowledge being shared and understood, and the discussion would have been in first language and possibly scaffolded to English literacy. These differences further highlight the unique role of Yolŋu educators in remote NT contexts (Guenther & Disbray, 2015). The reflective writing in Figure 35 refers to the connection to the land and the relationality with the 'old people'. It is unclear if the student was referring to the old people who were with them in person or if they were referring to those who had passed away. Either way, the student mentioned the connection with land twice in this small piece of writing, reinforcing the previous discussion in Section 8.5 about Galtha being centred on land and people. The students in this class recorded their reflections in English as Homelands School does not have a bilingual program. This further supports the fact that Galtha Rom learning can meet mainstream outcomes; in this case, the Galtha Rom was used as an English literacy writing task. It is important to note that not every learning opportunity through the process of Galtha Rom needs to be linked to mainstream outcomes, the point being that multiple learning opportunities stem from Galtha Rom, depending on the learning focus.

The educator who facilitated this writing session shared the challenges he had in articulating how the students felt about the Galtha: 'It is very hard to explain exactly what they said and how they talked about it.' He continued that the students were so 'happy', but he was not satisfied with the word happy and struggled to capture this feeling in words. He added, 'It was so good and we want that to happen again. Students are asking if it can happen again. Maybe it could happen in other Homelands as well because different Homelands have their own stories in their own land' (Yolŋu participant, personal communication, 13 November 2018).

This educator seemed re-inspired to restart Galtha Rom out at his Homeland, although he had concerns about the crocodiles in the river that would likely prevent a Galtha from happening at that time.

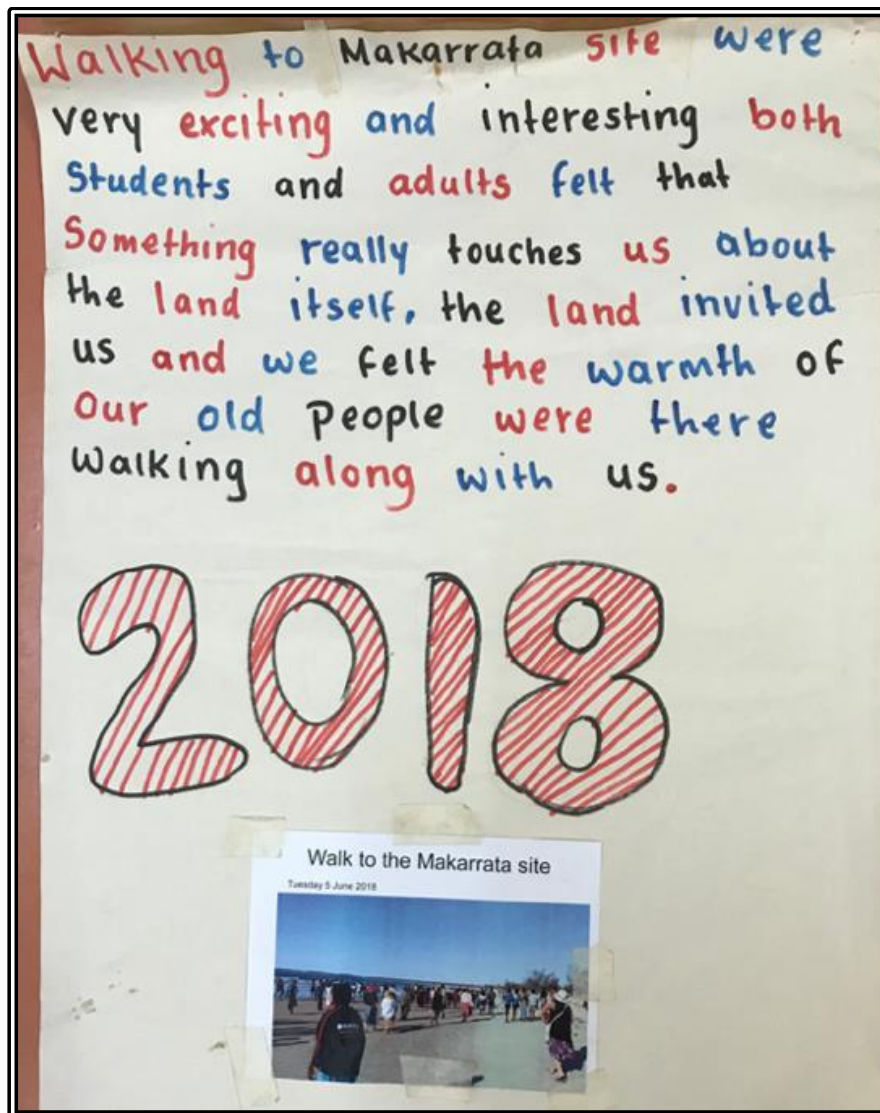


Figure 35: Reflective Writing from Boruwuy Homeland Learning Centre (June, 2018)

Credit: Djarraṅ Wunṅmurru

The spiritual and ‘felt’ connection was spoken about by many at the Galtha. A young ranger acknowledged the importance of land in the process of healing and learning: ‘All the kids listened during the Galtha and everybody, adults and students, had a really good feeling at that Galtha. The land was healing us all’ (Yolḷu participant, personal communication, 6 November 2018).

These comments, along with many others that participants shared with me, speak to the argument by McKnight (2016) that when learning on and with Country, knowledge can be felt and observed through a sense of spiritual connectedness. Despite curriculum outcomes for

Galtha being clearly connected to curriculum-based learning, measuring the connection to Country is complex. However, the comments by participants clearly link the experience of Galtha with something deeper than what curriculum outcomes can measure.

In an interview with a non-local teacher, I inquired into how (or if) learning connected to the content of the Galtha continued in the classroom after the it had finished. The teacher shared that classroom learning was more related to Western events:

I didn't really bring back Yolŋu concepts into the learning, it was more like, I guess I thought that, like I was saying before, if Galtha is like the cultural event and then that can link to our learning in class and you try to match that up, I guess I kind of hoped that, trust that, whatever cultural learning had to happen, would be there and then I can kind of jump into the history of land rights, from a Western political perspective. (Non-local educator, personal communication, 22 November 2018)

In the same conversation, I asked the teacher if he saw a place for Yolŋu to come into classrooms to work with students on language and conceptual understandings emerging from the Galtha. He replied,

That would be great. Even in the sense that, there are so many levels but even showing the kids that these cultural events and the school classroom are working together, it would be great to get people who were at the Galtha into the classroom. I guess there is the risk that otherwise you go to Biranybirany to the Galtha and then you go back to school and they are separate things. I guess to truly marry them up, get the people who so effectively spoke with the kids and engaged with the kids at the camp to come back in. There would have been so many things that I completely missed, even what the bungul was about or what the stories were about. I got some very basic kind of concepts but in terms of the stories and meanings behind them. But the kids deserved to have the meanings, have a discussion about it. They probably have questions about it, they probably heard the story and thought 'can we talk about that', but I can't, I don't have the story.

This quote suggests a disconnect between the learning that occurs in the classroom following the Galtha and what occurs at the Galtha. It is often challenging to get elders into the classrooms after Galtha to support with follow-up work. This is an area that needs further exploration to reduce the separation between what occurs at Galtha and learning in the classroom.

The non-local educator quoted above was a reflective practitioner. He commented that students were likely to have questions about the Galtha but recognised his limits in facilitating these conversations as an English language speaker without content knowledge. It was evident that while the teacher was committed to both ways education, there were limits in his capacity to deliver a model of both ways learning, particularly when there are no senior Yolŋu teachers in the classroom. He understood his role as supporting 'Western concepts' that linked to the learning at the Biranybirany Galtha, including Treaty and land rights. The lack of availability of Yolŋu, in particular trained Yolŋu teachers, was identified as a concern by a number of participants. This highlights the importance of adequate funding of Yolŋu staff to work in all classrooms. Furthermore, it is an example of the need for fully qualified Yolŋu educators and the professional development of non-local staff. It also highlights the impact of the absence of community-based teacher education courses for local staff, as discussed in Chapter 4. Yolŋu educators were critical in the Galtha planning, and they played a key role in negotiating between elders, rangers, and teachers.

8.9 Tensions and Challenges

An overwhelming majority of people I spoke with after the Galtha Rom were positive about the learning experience. However, there were many challenges and conflicting priorities to navigate. In this section, I explore some of these including the pressure on school leadership and staff to meet departmental requirements, varying experience and attitudes of staff, and resourcing.

A Packed Curriculum and Time Pressures

In Chapter 5, I discussed how remote NT education has been impacted by global and national agendas, which has resulted in an increase in high-stakes testing and standardised educational approaches. Consequently, there is considerable pressure on school leadership and educators

to deliver and meet multiple outcomes. This creates a high-pressure work environment and, in the scramble to meet the plethora of outcomes, prioritising the inclusion of local educational approaches is challenging in an already packed curriculum. These competing agendas are likely to impact on local pedagogical approaches such as Galtha Rom.

Differing Interpretations and Expectations

During a casual conversation with a non-local teacher, I was reminded that not everyone observed the learning potential of Galtha Rom in the same way. The teacher shared that she had completed reflections with the class she was working with following the Galtha but seemed concerned that the students only wrote about the bands and having fun with their friends. As such, she questioned how much they learnt during this experience. ‘Times are changing’, she continued. Considering that I had spent 6 months invested in this workshop, working alongside a number of Yolŋu who were passionate and committed to the process, I felt too deflated to inquire nonjudgmentally what she meant by her comments. She did not seem to understand, or articulate, that as a non-local teacher who did not speak the local language, there were limits to how she engaged with the students about their learning. If only I was the objective academic researcher in that moment. This teacher seemed to question the validity of Galtha, which contradicted other participants I had spoken to. One experienced Yolŋu teacher who was involved in the planning and delivery of a workshop at Biranybirany shared with me,

When I was at the Biranybirany Galtha I saw lots of people, both young and old, participating and being curious about what we were going to see and learn during that four-day Galtha workshop. So for me I have to put all of my effort to be present in each and every learning activity. (Personal communication, Yolŋu educator, 20 June, 2019)

When this educator witnessed student engagement, it motivated her to perform at a high standard. However, the non-local teacher’s comment about the students only being interested in the bands and their ‘friends’ reminded me of the tensions and how non-local teachers can often misinterpret the Yolŋu academic learning that takes place—an example of epistemic injustice (Medina, 2013) discussed in Chapter 6.

While Galtha Rom challenges Western agendas and assumptions about learning, this is not always done explicitly. That is, non-local educators' assumptions about the value of knowledge, as I illustrated in the non-local teacher's comments about students only being interested in the bands and their 'friends', are not always addressed formally. These divergent opinions about the validity of Yolŋu educational processes can create additional tension and dissension, especially when they are not addressed and explored at an organisational level. During the ŋurru warryunapuyŋu planning meetings, it was decided that participants would engage in a reflective process during the Galtha, but this did not occur for the reasons shared in Section 8.8. However, it is important to distinguish between formal reflections that were recorded and documented, and those that were occurring orally during and after the Galtha Rom. Limited reflections were documented at the Galtha, but this did not mean participants were not discussing the content and what was occurring. In a feedback meeting with school staff, it was identified that reflections about learning and the way they were recorded could be improved. For example, expecting students and adults who did not necessarily have the literacy levels to reflect on learning would restrict the reflective process. The process I engaged in after the Galtha Rom, documenting reflections by talking to individuals, was evidence of participants engaging in reflexivity. After a conversation with a Yolŋu mentor about the concept of reflexivity, she explained the following:

I went out to Biranybirany weeks after the Galtha and one of the djungaya [caretaker⁷⁷] spoke to me about the bungul that he and others performed. As I was another djungaya, it was right that he had this conversation with me. There was also trust there between us. There were a lot of Yolŋu talking about what happened out there. It's not that we don't reflect but we do it in different ways and at different times. We might not use that word 'reflection' but we talked about what was happening at that Galtha. (Yolŋu participant, personal communication, 22 October 2021)

⁷⁷ ⁷⁷ Djungaya are 'caretakers' and many ceremonial responsibilities towards their mother's Country.

As proposed in the previous chapter, reflexivity is important in collaborative practice, necessary in correcting bias (Freire, 1996; Fricker, 2007; Krebler, 2012; Medina, 2013; Mezirow, 2016).

Medina (2013) noted,

those who are not critically aware of their own social identity and that of others, those who are not sensitive and responsive to the epistemic consequences of social positionality and relationality, cannot correct biases and achieve (or contribute to the achievement of) epistemic justice. (p. 54)

In a similar way, Thornton (2020) explains that ‘to engage with Indigenous philosophies in a way that breaks with present-day colonial practices, we argue that educators embedded within Western institutions need to become reflective traitorous identities’ (p. 241).

Developing a more formal approach to reflexivity in the Galtha process may help to disrupt power inherent in Western curriculum and pedagogy (Neelands, 2006) as well as identify deep-seated assumptions and unquestioned norms (Fook & Askeland, 2007; Mezirow, 2000) held by non-local teachers. However, with an already packed curriculum and increasing teacher workloads, bringing non-local teachers along on this journey highlights that resourcing and availability of time are real considerations. Furthermore, applying Western models of reflective practice, particularly in English literacy, is unlikely to elicit deep learnings to emerge from Galtha Rom. The intention for the reflection needs to be made explicit.

Student Engagement

The Galtha at Biranybirany was an engaging learning experience, although this did not mean that all students were engaged all the time. One morning I found a group of about six, school-aged males playing cards at the camp when the expectation was that they participated in workshops. However, the context of Galtha is significantly different from school as there were many Yolŋu men who could be called on to address these behaviours. Instead of speaking to the boys myself, I found one of the men from Biranybirany to talk to the boys and re-engage them in the activities. While student engagement can be a challenge, having a large number

of Yolŋu role models leading the learning, engaging in learning and supporting the learning process is likely to encourage re-engagement in learning.

Payment and Resourcing

Another tension that occurred after the Galtha related to payment. That is, who was paid for the work prior and during the event. While it is not the place to go into details about this as I do not have all the facts, it was clear that who was entitled to payment became an issue in the days following the Galtha. As there were four organisations involved, clarity about payment became blurred, and while it was raised in one of the logistics meetings that payment needed to be addressed, it did not seem to be discussed or planned for. One elder, after seeing the total sum he was being paid, referred to this amount as ‘rubbish’; he believed his stories were worth more than that. There did not seem to be senior Yolŋu involved in facilitating the process of payment, and I heard stories of many people turning up to organisations expecting to be paid. There are times when the payment for Galtha is seemingly administered without too many issues, and one of the key factors appeared to be senior Yolŋu involved and a strategic plan about how payment would be administered and who was entitled to be paid. As a participant shared with me during my research when I discussed these payment issues, ‘someone will always start the mari [conflict]’. Maybe these challenges and realities were inevitable, but maybe anticipating the potential issues and being clear from the outset could have reduced the fall out at the end.

8.10 An Opportunity to Reimagine Education

Despite the challenges and complexities, this Galtha Rom will be remembered by many for a long time. The interviews and discussions I had after the event demonstrated an overwhelming support for Galtha Rom and confirmed that students and adults were engaged in learning. A non-local teacher acknowledged the difference she observed when students were out on Country:

When you go on to homelands with students you see a different side to them [the students], a side you don’t see in the classroom much. This side is filled with confidence, leadership and cultural intellect. The once dis-engaged kid is leading the

bungul. This is what I saw and experienced at the Biranybirany Galtha. (Non-local teacher, personal reflection, 6 July 2018)

Galtha Rom challenges dominant models of education and demonstrates that multiple ways of understanding the world are not only relevant but essential in the education of students at Yirrkala and in the Homelands. Considering that the 'institutionalized suppression of indigenous knowledge systems was a key strategy of the colonial project within Australia' (Corn & Gumbula, 2006, p. 170), Galtha Rom demonstrates agency and how communities have challenged colonial agendas, by applying Yolŋu models of learning. It is not a silver bullet solution to the complexities of education in this context, but it has the potential to make explicit embedded assumptions about schooling and create space for Yolŋu leadership and facilitation.

A non-local teacher who had been involved in supporting Galtha Rom for a number of years wrote,

Whilst we can surely deepen the ways we learn to analytically think in school, of greater concern is a complete lack of focus on developing the means to reimagine a broken world. It is no wonder that we are experiencing a broader community and political paradigm that is seemingly paralysed in its inability to move forward in creative and authentic dialogue towards imagining a 'better us'.

Both Ways approaches like Galtha Rom are not necessarily a silver bullet to these problems. Like always, the most powerful solutions are those organically and collaboratively developed locally. However, what it does do is provide a broad framework for processes that could be used to reimagine our reality through inclusive dialogue and that leverages knowledge systems that for many generations have gone untapped and have huge potential to augment the dominant ways of 'seeing' the world. (Non-local educator, personal reflection, 28 November 2018)

Galtha Rom is a local approach that creates communities of learners by creating forums to support the exploration of concepts—both Yolŋu and Western. In the case of the Biranybirany Galtha, land rights, treaty, and power were critically analysed, meeting the requirements of the Australian Curriculum. I also demonstrated how Galtha Rom can integrate literacy outcomes in both first language and English. As the participant above suggested, locally developed both ways processes, of which Galtha Rom is one, have the potential to ‘augment the dominant ways of seeing the world’. Dominant ways of seeing the world have for too long marginalised diverse knowledge; Galtha Rom rebalances this and provides a foundation for critically examining the role of education in the lives of students and communities.

8.11 Conclusion

Galtha Rom is a community-directed and community-centred pedagogy first conceptualised in the 1980s when community-based teacher education and action research were institutionally supported. In this chapter, I discussed the application of Galtha Rom, an educational approach with theoretical underpinnings in broader literatures. Importantly, it is a land-based relational pedagogy, an intergenerational model of learning that adds depth and rigour to educational frameworks, which contributes to the process of decolonising dominant models of education. Despite the pedagogical contribution of Galtha Rom, the potential for student and adult learning is not recognised in policy or reflected in community-based teacher education. It is important that Yolŋu models of education are validated by institutions and systems as they require funding and resourcing. Importantly, educators working to support these approaches need further training. Without skilled Yolŋu educators, it will be challenging to deliver these approaches and develop best practice learning that aligns with curriculum outcomes and at the same time meets community objectives. In the fluctuating landscape of educational policy in the NT, an approach like Galtha Rom that has continued for decades needs be taken seriously. Since its inception, Yolŋu at Yirrkala have clearly articulated their support for both ways education, which includes Galtha Rom. Failure to take seriously community aspirations to include Yolŋu epistemologies in the education process is a missed learning opportunity and advances the agenda of education as an act of assimilation. In the final chapter, I summarise this thesis into the Five Pillars of Community-Centred Education

and explain that if education is to meet the educational needs of remote NT communities, much work is needed to address the interdependent nature of these pillars.

Chapter 9 Conclusion: Reclaiming Education

9.1 Introduction

In this thesis, I analysed a number of interrelated factors, including policy, pedagogy, and practice and how these influence education at Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands. For many years, Yolŋu in this region have engaged with education, advocating for and applying a model of what, on the ground, is referred to as both ways education. Both ways education, as it was originally conceptualised, refers to the formal inclusion of both Western and Yolŋu knowledges in schooling as well as a movement towards Yolŋu control of education (Marika, 1999b; Marika et al., 1992, p. 92; M. Yunupingu et al., 1986). However, the ongoing theoretical engagement and local governance required for the continued development, evaluation and evolution of this model have been lacking, misunderstood and actively resisted by the wider educational system. At best, both ways is misunderstood by governments and departments and, at worst, sustaining dominant models of education that fail to recognise the diversity of knowledge systems, is complicit in pursuing an assimilationist agenda. This agenda, whether deliberate or not, has been further advanced by the absence of contextualised community-based teacher education courses.

To critique the educational context at Yirrkala, I analysed the interaction between knowledge systems as they came together in the context of schooling. Although not reducing both ways to a simple binary, some analytical distinction was required to understand how and why certain knowledge is privileged in education systems. Yet although Yolŋu knowledge and Western knowledge are at times delineated, in the process of schooling, they are heavily imbricated with each other. If these differences are not more effectively critiqued and made transparent, dominant Western systems will continue to privilege non-local people and systems, as highlighted in Chapter 1.

Although not an Indigenous scholar, I was committed to privileging Yolŋu voices by adopting a relational methodology; that is, my existing relationships supported me to have ongoing honest conversations throughout the 5 years of this research. Importantly, these relationships did not start and end with this research; rather, they added to the high level of accountability I had towards the community. In addition, my methodology also reflected local

metaphors and theories originally developed during the action research in the 1980s and early 1990s (Marika, 1999b; Marika et al., 2009; M. Yunupingu, 1999). Many Indigenous academics have critiqued the Western paradigms embedded in research, encouraging Indigenous scholars to resist the dominant production of academic knowledge (Grande, 2015; K. L. Martin, 2008; Nakata, 2013; L. T. Smith, 1999; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015; S. Wilson, 2008). The local theories developed at Yirrkala and discussed in this thesis are an example of Indigenous scholars and educators resisting dominant forms of knowledge.

As this doctoral research evolved, both ways education became one of the theoretical foundation. I traced the concept of both ways education as it was conceptualised at Yirrkala in the 1980s and 1990s and drew heavily on the literature produced at this time to examine the contemporary application of Galtha. Although I do not advocate a return to the past, the intellectual and theoretical engagement with education over the years demonstrates the progressive nature of thinking about education in this region. The academic papers written by Yolŋu during the 1980s and 1990s became a central framework of this research as there have been limited published writings by Yolŋu in recent years. However, the content of these early papers is still as relevant today as it was decades ago—this was confirmed by participants in this doctoral research. The lack of published contemporary writing further highlights the failure of education systems to provide relevant both ways teacher education courses, that include first language development and local knowledge systems, for local staff. In addition, the teachers who gained their qualifications during the 1980s have not been supported to undertake masters and PhD programs to develop the theoretical depth that is required for bilingual and both ways education in these contexts. To expand these early theories and develop a conceptual framework for this research, I drew on literature pertaining to specific pedagogies such as culturally responsive pedagogy (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Gay, 2010; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Morrison et al., 2019; Paris, 2012), critical pedagogy (Apple, 2000; Freire, 1996; Giroux, 2010; Kincheloe, 2012), critical Indigenous pedagogy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Grande, 2008), critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003,) and learning on/through Country (Fogarty, 2010; Schwab & Fogarty, 2015). Contemporary literature is clearly aligned and applicable to the concepts and theories proposed in the 1980s and 1990s at Yirrkala as well as the application of Galtha today, as

explained in Chapters 7 and 8. Education at Yirrkala during this time was conceptually and theoretically ahead of its time.

The data collected in this ethnography demonstrate that both ways community-centred education is the preferred model of learning at Yirrkala and Yirrkala Homelands School. The findings demonstrate that local approaches to learning, underpinned by theory, are critical in education in this region but more is needed to operationalise and develop these types of approaches. Consequently, as a result of this research, I identified five interconnected ‘pillars’ that form the foundation of what needs to be addressed if education is to meet the needs of remote NT communities. These pillars, which I foreshadowed throughout this thesis, are central to my theoretical framework. All these pillars need to be attended to, and it will require a commitment from governments, schools, individuals, and communities. A failure to understand, reflect on, and address the concepts delineated by these five pillars will continue to privilege non-Indigenous ideas and systems. Prioritising dominant models of education and failing to support community to achieve educational aspirations on their terms has implications in turn for local employment and consequently the economic and social fabric of remote NT communities.

9.2 The Five Pillars of Remote NT Education

The Pillars of Community-Centred Education (see Figure 36) include:

- local governance and community control
- decentralising directives, decisions, and policy
- community-based teacher education
- both ways curriculum and pedagogy
- collaborative practice.

For each pillar I have developed a core statement which I place in italics as an epigraph at the start of the discussion. While the focus of this research is the specificities of Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands, the pillars discussed in the following section have broader applications for other remote NT schools and potentially for education more generally.

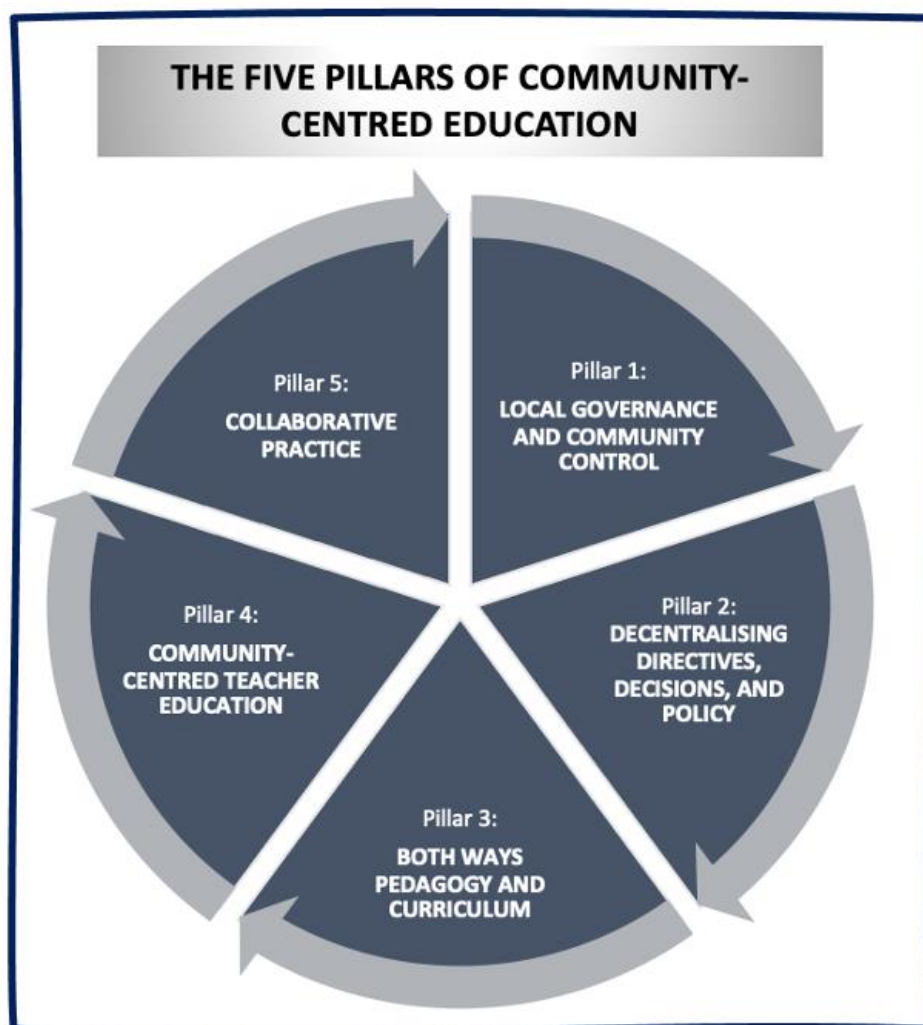


Figure 36: The Five Pillars of Community-Centred Education (2021)

Pillar 1: Local Governance and Community Control

Communities should have the right to govern and lead their own models of education.

Educational governance has been defined as ‘the process through which the school builds its intellectual, social, financial and spiritual capital and aligns them to achieve its goals’ (Caldwell & Harris, 2008, p. 9). Yirrkala and the Laynhapuy Homelands have a long history of advocating for the inclusion of Yolŋu knowledge in education while simultaneously developing local educational governance structures, as Chapter 4 illustrated. There has been ongoing activism in education by Yolŋu and non-local collaborators who, since the 1970s,

have worked towards developing the intellectual, social, and spiritual elements of the schools. In the 1980s, dominant models of education were challenged, and this ultimately changed the direction of education at Yirrkala (Marika, 1999b; Ngurruwutthun, 1991; Stockley et al., 2017; M. Yunupingu, 1999). Although this is not an in-depth study of current educational governance, any discussion about education in remote communities cannot be separated from local governance and community control. Yolŋu have advocated for control and decision-making power in the process of schooling; however, this desire has been met with resistance, detailed in Chapter 5. As Stockley et al. (2017) argued, ‘The Yolŋu story has changed little—their desire for the right to gain control of their lives resounds through the decades’ (p. 142).

Australia is a signatory to UNDRIP. Article 14.1 of UNDRIP proposes, ‘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’ (p. x13). Despite Australia being a signatory, the Australian Government has not ‘taken steps to implement the UNDRIP into law, policy and practice’ (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2021). Although not a legally binding document, the UNDRIP sets out principles for establishing standards and rights for Indigenous peoples. While there has been movement towards local governance and local pedagogical approaches, the systemic support for Yolŋu and other First Nations peoples in the NT to govern their own models of education in remote NT is lacking. As explained in Chapter 4, bilingual education has undergone decades of government attacks and attempts to dismantle the teaching of first language despite the community commitment to bilingual education. These political decisions were not based on evidence but rather an ideology. Government interventions have continually attacked the teaching of first language, failed to adequately fund and provide secondary education for remote students, and have not provided teacher education courses relevant to the needs to local staff. All of these are examples of how power has been asserted and community voices have been ignored. This lack of government support denies the rights of Indigenous peoples to control education, as stated in the UNDRIP. The Four Hours of English policy (2009) is a stark example of local community aspirations being silenced and a blatant lack of support for local governance.

The ongoing aspiration for community control is connected to the concept of both ways education. As argued by Gurindji activist Pincher Nyurrmiyarri in 1974, both ways was about community having control and power to make educational decisions (McConvell, 1991). Both ways education cannot be reduced to a curriculum and pedagogy; it is an interconnected approach to education that includes community control and governance. However, community control and governance is often not discussed or connected to the discourse of both ways education despite this being one of the foundations of the community-based teacher education work in the 1980s. An example of the implementation of a both ways approach in education documented in Chapters 7 and 8 was the Galtha Rom at Biranybirany. The Galtha process was largely led by Yolŋu and although not an example of whole-school governance, it speaks to Caldwell and Harris's (2008) definition of governance as building the intellectual, social, and spiritual capital of the school. The Galtha case study illustrates the potential of community-led and community-centred education.

The current NT Government initiative Community-Led Schools suggests a shift in government agenda towards more community-governed models of education. The Department of Education avows that it is 'working to support families in remote Aboriginal communities to have a bigger say in the education and training of their children' (Northern Territory Government, 2017b). It states that as part of this process, local engagement and decision-making committees will be established in over 50 remote communities to reflect the aspirations of parents and the community in education. However, considering the history of government resistance to engaging with models of local governance and the lack of support for remote NT communities to gain control of education, how this is operationalised, and whether the NT Government has the capacity to support this process, is unclear. Furthermore, communities require the support and time to engage with these local decision-making processes, as explained by the theory of *ŋathu* (Marika et al., 2009; White, 2015; B. Yunupingu et al., 1991).

It is clear from this research that Yolŋu governance has been part of the narrative of education at Yirrkala for decades (Marika, 1999b; Marika et al., 1992, 2009; Stockley et al., 2017), however, the government has consistently failed to support this process. Furthermore, the

lack of community-based both ways teacher education courses and other relevant adult education training opportunities fails to support the development of Yolŋu models of governance. The ongoing educational governance and the struggle to gain community control continues, but the epistemological foundations of a Yolŋu governance structure need to be better understood if they are to underpin the governance of Yolŋu schools. That is, it cannot be assumed that a Western governance structure will meet the needs of remote NT communities. As Holcombe (2008) proposed ‘the concept of “governance” is multi-dimensional as it moves between layers of institutions, governments, localities and discourses’ (p. 58). In Yolŋu schools, the governance space is multidimensional, so articulating a local model of governance with the wider system could be problematic if Yolŋu are not leading this process. Defining models of educational governance and community control in remote NT schooling is crucial if local people are to be given the right, as they have so long advocated for, to contribute to the governance of their own models of education. The inescapable conclusion is that more work is needed to critique the epistemological foundations of governance in remote NT schooling and how it impacts education.

Pillar 2: Decentralising Directives, Decisions, and Policy

Directives and decision-making need to be decentralised, and policy design needs to be flexible to accommodate the educational aspirations of remote NT communities. All decisions and policy must recognise the validity and contribution of Indigenous knowledge systems in the schooling process and support the development of both ways education where the community has requested it.

Decentralising directives, decisions and policy is connected to ‘local governance and community control’ discussed in Pillar 1. Both pillars highlight that a reduction in centralised control and an increase in local decision-making is critical. Policy design and centralised decisions must support communities to develop models of learning that meet the needs of the context. This is a clear finding of this research. As discussed in Chapter 5, policy is developed within a historical context and thus is a cultural product (Bacchi, 2009, p. ix). As argued by Macoun (2016), despite policies being framed as neutral or benevolent, they are usually doing ‘some kind of colonising work’ (p. 93). Over the years, remote NT education has

seen a number of significant policy changes that have either been supported or resisted by the community at Yirrkala. Despite the tension between centralised policy agendas and community aspirations, government policy and the aspirations of community are not always diametrically opposed. A policy change that was welcomed by the community, as discussed in Chapter 4, was when Gough Whitlam, former Prime Minister of Australia, supported the teaching of first languages in remote NT schools (Schwab, 2013; Street et al., 2020, p. 20). This government support for Aboriginal languages was critical in validating and recognising the role of local languages in the process of schooling; the policy framed these languages as a strength rather than a deficit. However, often, the linguistic and cultural diversity of remote NT communities is seen as an obstacle rather than a strength (Bat & Guenther, 2013; Fogarty et al., 2017). Altman (2009) argued policies that attempt to address the disparities in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, such as Closing the Gap, fail to recognise difference and diversity. As Altman explained,

Balancing the need for a framework based on equality and difference is currently beyond the capacity of the Australian state, where the dominance of the equality approach based on neoliberal principles of individualism and unfettered economic growth is overpowering a subordinate culturalist discourse that values diverse life worlds and resistance to transformation and homogenisation. (p. 1)

In the decades following the decision by the Whitlam government to support Aboriginal languages, a number of policy decisions have attempted to dismantle bilingual programs in the NT. In 1999, a submission by Nambara School Council⁷⁸ was made to the Human Rights Commission. The report responded to the threat of withdrawal of government support for bilingual education as well as the lack of support for Homelands education. A decade later in 2008, the Four Hours of English policy was announced, as discussed in Chapter 5. This policy overrode the RLPA⁷⁹ that had been developed over 4 years of collaboration between the NT Government and Yambirrpa School Council. The government and the School Council had agreed on an educational approach that included bilingual education. The failure of the

⁷⁸ The School Council was originally called the Nambara School Council, now referred to as the Yambirrpa School Council.

⁷⁹ Remote Learning Partnership Agreement

government to uphold their agreement in good faith with the community is a clear example of the assertion of power. Power, as argued by Maddison and Denniss (2009), is the 'ability of individuals and groups to further their own interest via their capacity to exert control and influence' (p. 7). The NT Government exerted control and mandated a policy that violated their own agreement. Furthermore, they presented the decision as being in the best interests of community, a strategy that Freire (1996) argued government bureaucracies employ by weakening the oppressed, keeping them passive, and creating the impression they are being helped. Although this research clearly demonstrates that Yolŋu have agency and are far from being passive and helpless, the inevitable fact is that the NT Government has argued that decisions and policies are made in the best interests of communities, despite often community members disagreeing with decisions.

Despite government asserting control in the education space, the English literacy and numeracy outcomes in the NT have not improved. As argued by Fogarty et al. (2017), the 'pervasive mindset of needing to fix' (p. 185) education in remote NT has characterised the policy approach of successive governments, which has led to a series of substandard results. While participants in this study wanted young people to succeed in the acquisition of English literacy and numeracy, the evidence in this research clearly demonstrates that a both ways approach is the desired model. Community members from both Yirrkala and the Homelands want young people to be able to live in 'both worlds'. Yolŋu participants in this study consistently reiterated that they wanted students to be strong in their Yolŋu identity. The Yambirrpa Schools Vision Statement clearly articulates the importance of students developing the skills required to live in a contemporary world, and this requires the development of both Western *and* Yolŋu knowledges (Yambirrpa Schools, 1996). As one senior Homeland Yolŋu participant put it, 'If the Western side of life keeps coming in and overtaking, we will forget our Yolŋu ways of being. Both systems of education can go together but Yolŋu knowledge needs to be prioritised. It shouldn't be one way'. (Former Yolŋu educator, personal communication, 5 December 2018).

Despite for decades the local articulation and advocacy for both ways education, the development and support of both ways education has lacked systemic support and policy

clarity. As discussed in Chapter 2, at a policy level, both ways education has never been clearly defined (Nicholls, 2005). Despite the lack of political clarity, bilingual education and Galtha, approaches that come under the umbrella of both ways, have continued despite the fluctuating policy agendas, directives, and the deployment of ‘silver bullets’. However, as was the case with one of the most recent ‘silver bullets’, Direct Instruction, funding and resources target these often-short-term approaches, diverting money away from developing context-specific both ways approaches, including the support and training for EAL/D pedagogy and first language.

As discussed in Pillar 1, there is a policy shift in education in the NT—a potential move away from the more draconian ‘English-only’ era to the inclusion of ILC. Community-Led Schools, an NT Government strategy, recognises the importance of community-governed models of education. Furthermore, the document *Keeping Indigenous Languages and Cultures Strong—A Plan for the Teaching and Learning of Indigenous Languages and Cultures in Northern Territory Schools* sets a change agenda for sectors, schools, and teachers. This document recognises the contribution of Aboriginal languages to the ‘social and economic fabric of the Territory’ (Northern Territory Government, 2017a, p. 4). The document develops a comprehensive plan for the inclusion of Indigenous language, community expertise, and ownership through a ‘two way’ (p. 18) teaching approach. However, the implementation of the document does not seem to be supported by the resources required for its implementation. For example, 4 years on, there is limited both ways community-based teacher education courses that arguably would be essential for effective implementation of the document. Having an official government document that clearly articulates and validates the use of ‘language and culture’ in the learning process is critical; it is equally important to have the structures, resources and expertise to support a both ways model of education.

In summary, more support is required to enable remote NT communities to co-design long-term educational approaches and context-specific policies based on local theories and EAL/D methodologies. For this to occur, centralised directives and approaches should not be forced onto communities as has been the practice in the past. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 4, the *ṇathu* metaphor, developed by Yolṇu educators, problematised power and imposed

curriculum without community input (M. Yunupingu, 1994). For many years, the community at Yirrkala have objected to top-down educational decisions. The failure of systems to engage critically with education and understand that education is a cultural product contributes to the epistemic injustice inherent in political agendas

Pillar 3: Both Ways Pedagogy and Curriculum

A both ways pedagogy and curriculum has the potential to support the development of Western and Yolŋu academic learning. A critical approach to education is required in remote NT contexts to consolidate the development of theoretical frameworks that validate local knowledge systems.

Education is a political endeavour. The transmission of knowledge in Western schooling is an enculturated (and enculturating) process, and policies and educational practices continue to privilege dominant Western ideologies (M.Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Fogarty et al., 2015; Overmars, 2010; Savage et al., 2011). In many remote schools in the NT, the majority of students are Indigenous; however, curriculum and pedagogy continue to perpetuate dominant educational models, often taught by non-local teachers. As discussed in Chapter 2, pedagogy is the central theoretical framework of this thesis. Pedagogy is theory and practice of teaching as it is socially constructed. Ohito (2020) understood pedagogy to be an interplay between teachers, students, and knowledges, as well as an interconnection between humans and nonhumans.⁸⁰ This definition was useful in expanding the definition I began with.

Many scholars have argued that current educational practices and structures require critique and disruption so their inherent racism, power, and colonisation can be addressed (Brayboy & Castagno, 2009; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Knaus, 2009; F. Martin et al., 2017). In the 1980s, a process of critiquing educational practices began with the initial development of a both ways approach to education, discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Yirrkala School is bilingual and has been since the 1970s. The participants involved in this research from Yirrkala School refer to the school as a both ways school. On the other hand, Yirrkala Homelands School does not have a formal bilingual program and, as discussed in Chapter 1, the data in this research

⁸⁰ Ohito describes knowledge as being one of the 'non-human' elements (p.19).

suggest educators at Yirrkala Homelands School were unclear if the school was both ways or not. It is likely that the bilingual program has supported the development of what is considered a both ways approach to education as language teaching and the inclusion of Yolŋu knowledge is formally recognised in school programs. However, as noted, both ways is more than a pedagogy and curriculum; it needs to include governance and Yolŋu control in decision-making. It is clear that if Yolŋu knowledge and processes are to be included in the structure of schooling, then leadership, community control, and governance is required. Some of the pedagogies that contributed to the development of the theoretical framework in Chapter 2 include locally developed theories of pedagogy (Marika et al., 1992; Marika-Mununggiritj, 1990; M. Yunupingu, 1999; M. Yunupingu et al., 1986) as well as culturally responsive pedagogy (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008; Gay, 2010; Hayes & Juarez, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Morrison et al., 2019; Paris, 2012), critical pedagogy (Apple, 2000; Freire, 1996; Giroux, 2010; Kincheloe, 2012), and critical Indigenous pedagogy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Grande, 2008). In addition, as land is central to both ways education, I drew on place-based education (G. Smith, 2002), learning on/through Country (Fogarty, 2013; Schwab & Fogarty, 2015), critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003), red pedagogy (Grande, 2015), and land-based education (Betasamosake Simpson, 2014; Calderon, 2014; Wildcat et al., 2014). I connected Galtha Rom to these pedagogies and literatures to illustrate the connection to broader pedagogies. Furthermore, I discussed how Yolŋu pedagogies, such as intergenerational and embodied approaches to learning, contribute to educational research. It was local theories and frameworks that were privileged.

In this research, I have demonstrated that Galtha Rom, a both ways approach to education, is a valid model of learning with a theoretical framework. However, I have also explained that educators and community members on the ground already know this. Furthermore, it can become problematic when Yolŋu are continually required to justify these ways of learning to Western educational systems and individuals in those systems. In Chapters 7 and 8 I provide evidence that Galtha Rom is a community-led process— it is an example of Yolŋu engaging with education on their own terms and delivering Yolŋu education within a Western model of schooling. Research demonstrates that schooling often alienates learners from their local environments (Greenwood, 2015; McKnight, 2016; G. Smith, 2002), and Galtha Rom is an

example of education that connects learners to Country. As land is inextricably interconnected with Yolŋu rom and identity, schooling that reconnects learners to Country is a radical act in disrupting dominant education practices. As discussed in Chapter 8, a Yolŋu ranger who was at the Galtha at Biranybirany put it, 'The land was healing us all'.

One of the least documented and recognised potential applications of Galtha Rom, discussed in Chapter 8, is related to the concept of an embodied pedagogy. Research pertaining to embodied pedagogy as it is expressed through Galtha Rom is limited. An embodied pedagogy has been described as learning that 'joins the body and mind in a physical and mental act of knowledge construction which engages an awareness of body, space and social context' (Nguyen & Larson, 2015, p. 332). Galtha Rom is an embodied process; walking Country, bungul and manikay discussed in Chapter 8, validate this. Community members and elders discussed the importance of learners engaging in bungul during this Galtha Rom, and for many participants, this was one of the highlights. The embodied pedagogy is in contrast to more Western models of learning that require learners to engage only the mind, which Shahjahan (2015) argued has roots in colonisation as history has often framed non-Whites as being more associated with their bodies rather than minds. Galtha Rom emphasises learning through connection (to land, nonhuman, and kin), observation, and doing. This approach to learning often differs from more Western approaches that ensure students all learn the same thing at the same time and then requires students to demonstrate their learning through standardised tests such as NAPLAN. To non-local educators, especially those that cannot understand that education is a cultural construct, a Yolŋu pedagogy may not be understood for the academic value it provides, but Galtha Rom has clear links to the mandated Australian Curriculum. This demonstrates that more mainstream outcomes can also be achieved through Galtha Rom.

A number of factors impact Galtha Rom being implemented as part of the schooling process. Most significant are the lack of ongoing government support, policy clarity, and the lack of both ways community-based teacher education courses. The senior Yolŋu teachers who were students in the early D-BATE and RATE programs in the 1980s played a critical role as the conduits between community elders and the school in planning and facilitating the Biranybirany Galtha. Their theoretical understanding of the pedagogy of Galtha, as well as

knowledge of the curriculum and more mainstream educational practices, were critical to the success of the Galtha. The absence of context-specific teacher education programs is therefore highly problematic to the sustainability and development of approaches like Galtha Rom in schools. Furthermore, as there are limited opportunities for Yolŋu adults to engage in formalised both ways learning, Galtha provides an opportunity for adult learning that validates Yolŋu epistemologies. The evidence in this research demonstrates that Galtha is an intergenerational learning process; however, it is currently underutilised as a formal learning opportunity for adults. Under the control of Yolŋu experts, both ways models of learning could be further developed into formal pathways for adult learners and, in doing so, local knowledge could contribute to the ongoing development of staff in remote organisations—both local and non-local, as explained in Chapter 8.

Galtha is not a silver bullet to the challenges facing remote NT education—silver bullet solutions to education in these contexts do not exist. However, for decades many communities in the NT have been developing and implementing programs like Galtha Rom with limited resourcing and support by the NT government; see Browne & Napaljarri (2021) for an overview of the four decades of work in Warlpiri communities in Central Australia. In reference to successful American Indian models of education that are local, contextual and meet the needs to children and their communities, Brayboy and Lomawaima (2018) explained these approaches ‘they help us stretch our thinking beyond best practices to principles of *promising practices*’. Importantly, local Indigenous models of education are contextual and make explicit the ‘possibility and necessity of achieving successful schooling practices without sacrificing ties to language and culture; set high expectations in both schooling and education...and remain committed to justice (Brayboy and Lomawaima, 2018, p.147). The approaches to both ways and bilingual education in the NT are examples of promising practices and need to be engaged with seriously.

Teaching and learning in remote NT communities is complex and consequently requires a multidimensional approach. Developing theoretical models of both ways pedagogy and curriculum, of which Galtha is one approach, is complex. Galtha is underpinned by theory; however, both ways approaches like these are not recognised for their academic rigour at a

system level. Theoretical approaches to both ways curriculum and pedagogy are critical if dominant educational practices are to be disrupted and the diversity and strength of Yolngu students celebrated rather than subjugated.

Pillar 4: Community-Centred Teacher Education

Community-centred teacher education that validates and engages with local knowledge systems and language is critical in the process of remote NT schooling.

Evidence from this research confirms teacher education courses that validate local Indigenous epistemologies and language are needed to strengthen both ways models of education in remote contexts. These courses need to be delivered in community and be centred on local knowledges and language, which I refer to as community-centred teacher education. For the continuation and development of high-quality both ways models, ongoing support for local educators to develop their teaching practice is urgently required. Although in this research the focus has been teacher education, the application of these findings extends to adult education more broadly as there is an absence of community-based courses that create space for Yolngu epistemologies across other fields as well. For example, there are limited courses for rangers and health workers that formalise local epistemologies and develop first language literacy. If organisations promote themselves as ‘both ways’, the training and education need to be ongoing to support both local and non-local teachers to develop practices that recognise both Western and Yolngu epistemologies, and local governance structures. This training needs to be adequately funded and recognised as integral to ongoing development of people and organisations. Ongoing adult education is critical to the success of both ways schooling.

As detailed in Chapter 4, the teacher education courses offered in the 1980s were instrumental in developing local, context-specific pedagogy that supported local staff to become qualified teachers in their home communities. The partnership between the schools, the community, Deakin University, and Batchelor College (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; M. Yunupingu et al., 1986) did not simply reproduce dominant approaches to teacher education, but rather, they were a negotiation of community-directed models of learning and community-based action research (Henry & McTaggart, 1991). These courses developed a

theoretical and applied contextual pedagogy and curriculum in collaboration with community elders (Hall, 2016; Henry & McTaggart, 1991; Marika-Mununggiritj, 1990; M. Yunupingu, 1999). The action research process embedded in these courses was integral in supporting the development of locally based models of Aboriginal education *by* local people. In the text *Aboriginal Pedagogy: Aboriginal Teachers Speak Out* (Henry & McTaggart, 1991), local Indigenous teachers authored papers related to curriculum and pedagogy. However, since then, there has been a move away from the community-based teacher education courses towards a more standardised model of teacher education which that has contributed directly to the current low numbers of Aboriginal teachers in remote NT schools (Hall, 2016). Despite the lack of availability of courses for local educators, the application of pedagogy and curriculum continues today. The Yolŋu educators involved in these early courses currently play a critical role in the planning and delivery of Galtha; however, many have passed away, and others are nearing retirement. The lack of community-based adult education is highly problematic if both ways education, which this research clearly identifies as a community aspiration, is to be further developed, theorised, and applied.

While this pillar is mainly concerned with access and availability of community-based teacher education courses for local educators, non-local educators are also a critical part of both ways models, and therefore ongoing training for these staff is also necessary. As previously established, current models of schooling and educational policy continue to privilege Western ideologies (M. Bishop & Berryman, 2010; Fogarty, Lovell, et al., 2015; Overmars, 2010; Savage et al., 2011), and considering that the majority of qualified teachers in remote NT schools are non-local, dominant education practices often become 'normalised'. In a both ways model, these dominant educational practices need to be critiqued if both Western and Yolŋu knowledges are to co-exist. F. Martin et al. (2017) argued that a decolonising process in education is necessary: a disruption of Whiteness, White dominance, and colonialism. They continued that 'pedagogical violence' (p. 244) is being perpetrated against marginalised students as result of classroom structures, daily practices, and colonial pedagogies. Ongoing learning, including professional development, for all staff in remote NT schools is critical to reduce the potentially damaging impacts of education and support educators to develop their teaching practice.

Galtha Rom is an example of an approach to both ways education that challenges dominant norms of schooling. Chapter 8 details evidence of educators engaged in a learning process, both local and non-local staff. A number of non-local participants in this research spoke about being out of their 'comfort zones' during the Galtha but also reiterated the profound and transformational experience of Galtha. As one participant put it, 'It was a kind of role-reversal for me, and I think this is the magic of such an experience of bungul and the Galtha more broadly. It put me out of my comfort zone, feeling quite uncertain, needing to open my mind and learn' (Non-local educator, personal reflection, July 2018).

Galtha Rom is an intergenerational approach to both ways, which can support all educators, and others involved, to further their learning and consolidate pedagogical practices that contribute to their development as teachers. While many non-local teachers contribute significantly to education in remote schools, many are unprepared and lack the experience and skills to work in the complex intercultural contexts of remote NT schools. Non-local teachers often require ongoing mentoring and training to understand the complex linguistic needs of students and how to engage students. Education departments assume that if a teacher is qualified by mainstream standards, they are therefore equipped to work in remote contexts. However, this is not always the case. An ongoing process of adult learning is required, but schools are not always resourced to do this, and mentors do not always exist, as participants in this research noted. The Department of Education needs to recognise the high level of pedagogical professional learning required to support local and non-local teachers, and fund this accordingly.

At the time of writing this thesis, the NT Labor government announced the re-establishment of the RATE program. In a media release on 29 April 2020, the Education Minister, Selena Uibo, stated that a pilot program would commence in 2021 and would support remote residents to access formal training while working in remote schools (Northern Territory Government, 2020). The minister stated that the recommencement of RATE would include a partnership between Charles Darwin University and BIITE.⁸¹ While the re-establishment of

⁸¹ From what I understand, some NT schools are participating in this program; however, feedback is that these courses do not meet the needs of local communities and are not based on the pedagogical foundation of the original RATE program. Therefore, they are only RATE in name, not in methodology, pedagogy, or curriculum.

RATE is a promising move towards supporting local teachers to develop their teaching practice and gain qualifications, these courses will require a high level of engagement with Indigenous epistemologies and languages; failure to do this will continue the ‘pedagogical violence’ (F. Martin et al., 2017, p. 244). Furthermore, it is critical that schools commit and are resourced to support local teachers with their tertiary studies and be willing to address the epistemic injustice (Medina, 2013) embedded in educational structures and practices. Non-local educators with the commitment, experience, and skills are also required to support local educators with this process if it is to be successful. If implemented with vision, a commitment to disrupting dominant ideology and a willingness to listen to local aspirations for education, community-based and community-centred teacher education is likely to contribute to increased community engagement with education, as it did in the 1980s. Training local teachers is not a quick fix to the problem of low numbers of qualified local teachers in remote NT schools. It will take time and a shift in discourse to critique the assumptions that have been codified into institutions such as schools. The process of developing community-centred teacher education will also require reframing the critical role of local staff in education in remote contexts. It will also require clarification of the role of non-local staff in the process of education and this will need to be reflected in the recruitment process. This brings me to the final pillar of community-centred education, collaborative practice.

Pillar 5: Collaborative Practice

Collaborative practice is a relational process critical to the work of educators in remote NT schools. By positioning themselves as learners, critiquing assumptions and behaviours, and recognising multiple ways of being, knowing, and doing, educators can move deeper into the necessary work of collaboration.

The findings from this research conclude that collaborative practice—that is, the way people work together—is critical in planning and facilitating learning programs in remote NT schools. To operationalise collaborative practice, positive and productive relationships are required. However, as collaborative practice is influenced by worldviews and experiences, the way individuals ‘show up’ in these spaces varies. Participants working in the schools understand

relationality in different ways. In Chapter 6, I highlighted these differences and discussed how everyone in the Yolŋu social universe is connected through a complex system of *gurruṯu* (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Christie & Grotorex, 2004; F. Morphy, 2008). This interconnectedness differs significantly from understandings of relationality that non-local staff bring into these educational settings. As one Yolŋu participant put it, ‘*gurruṯu* follows you everywhere’ (Yolŋu participant, personal reflection, 24 April 2018). This participant shared that for Yolŋu, kinship is the organising framework of interaction, and this relatedness determines behaviour in the workplace. In contrast to the centrality of relationships in a Yolŋu world, the ‘mainstream’ culture that the majority of non-local staff bring to the institutional educational setting is based on the notion of a ‘team of professional individuals’ who are not necessarily otherwise related.

Concepts of relationality cannot be reduced to a simple binary—the individuals that make up these ‘teams of professionals’ in remote NT schools will have varying understandings and experiences of relationality. Explicitly addressing assumptions and behaviours will help support collaborative practice by finding common ground and understanding difference. Therefore, the analysis of these assumptions and behaviours is important. However, the ongoing work of ‘educating’ non-local teachers to adopt reflective and collaborative practices required in these contexts mostly falls to local communities; at a system level it is not recognised or funded, and arguably the important work of relationships and connection in the context of work practices is not seen as core business. Maddison (2019) argued that in a settler colonial state, practices and structures often become normalised and invisible to those that come from the dominant culture. Since educational settings are dominated by mainstream structures and processes, Yolŋu are continually required to evaluate their concepts of relationality as they often differ from those that motivate the workings of Western systems and institutions. Moreover, as these systems often reflect the dominant culture, the assumptions of non-local educators about productive relationships required for collaboration are often not made explicit—they are simply viewed as ‘normal’.

In Chapter 6, I discussed how relationality often becomes part of the ‘hidden’⁸² curriculum, despite it being integral to the work of educators. As explained by Bat and Guenther (2013), analysis of education systems has focused mostly on policy and activity, despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples identifying relationships as ‘central to all activity’ (p. 131). One such analysis of remote NT education that significantly influenced education in the NT, *A Share in the Future* (B. Wilson 2014), discussed in Chapter 5, was ‘devoid of the words “relationships”, “relating” or “relational” in reference to human interaction’ (Spillman, 2017, p. 142). Spillman argued that the failure to reference relationality demonstrates the ‘complete lack of acknowledgement of the locally nuanced complexity of Indigenous education settings’ (p. 137). Spillman’s research further reiterates the disconnection between systems and practice on the ground. Evidence in this doctoral research confirms that relationality, which is inextricably linked to collaboration, is critical to the practice of working in remote NT schools. However, the importance of this can be overlooked and consequently risks becoming part of the hidden curriculum rather than understanding how this impacts schooling. By positioning relationality as central to the work of educators (in particular, the relationships between adults), a ‘people-based education system’ (Bat & Guenther, 2013, p. 131), in which multiple systems of relationality are recognised and given value, can be further developed.

Team teaching is an element of what I refer to as ‘collaborative practice’. Team teaching is a familiar concept to staff at Yirrkala School and Yirrkala Homelands School. Team teaching was originally established at Yirrkala in the 1970s and is still practised today. The term describes a practice of qualified⁸³ classroom teachers and team teachers⁸⁴ working together to plan, facilitate, and assess student learning (Graham, 1999). The practice works when both systems of knowledge and pedagogy are given equal value in the process of schooling. However, all educators come into educational institutions with different understandings of schooling and different interpretations of the role of team teaching in remote NT schools. There are always

⁸² A concept that refers to the unwritten and unofficial ‘rules’ of education

⁸³ As explained in Chapter 1, the term *qualified teacher* refers to educators who have met AITSIL teaching standards.

⁸⁴ *Team teacher* refers to predominantly Yolŋu educators who work in the classroom and are not ‘qualified’ by the AITSIL standards.

power imbalances because of the nature of Western education systems, including the fact that the system only recognises a teacher as ‘qualified’ if they have obtained a mainstream education degree. Consequently, one way of being, knowing and doing dominates. Therefore, much work is required, particularly by non-local staff, to reflect on, recognise and address these power imbalances. Team teaching has a critical place in education across both schools as the majority of qualified classroom teachers are non-local, do not speak the local language, and often have limited experience working in remote contexts. As discussed in Chapter 4, the absence of community-based teacher education courses has resulted in a decline in qualified local teachers in schools. Yolŋu educators and staff bring with them ‘community-facilitated’ styles of teaching and learning into the classroom setting, and Indigenous teachers in these remote schools have a skill set that differs from non-local teachers. They speak the local languages and have direct lived experiences of the context (Guenther & Disbray, 2015; Hall, 2016), whereas most non-local teachers bring with them understandings about Western educational practices as they have been part of these systems. If these teams can understand individual and collective strengths, as well as critically analyse the cultural systems we work in, collaborative practice can be strengthened.

Drawing on participant data, particularly Yolŋu voices, I developed a model of collaborative practice, a framework to support the operationalisation of collaboration. During my fieldwork, a Yolŋu participant, after many discussions about relationality in the workplace, developed her own model of what she titled ‘Build a good relationship between Yolŋu and Njāpaki’,⁸⁵ as illustrated in Figure 14 of Chapter 6. The model produced by this participant provided a comprehensive guide about how to strengthen relationships between Yolŋu and non-local staff. I developed this model further by linking it to relevant theories and literature such as explication of concepts rather than simple translation (F. Morphy, 2007), *gurrutu* (Bawaka Country et al., 2016; Christie & Grotorex, 2004; F. Morphy, 2008), epistemic injustice (Medina, 2013), and reflexivity. The Model of Collaborative Practice consists of three overarching concepts: valuing relationships and connection, being a learner, and engaging in critical reflexivity. I drew on the literature relating to the practice of reflexivity, one of the foundations of the collaborative model. Reflexivity has been identified by many scholars as a

⁸⁵ An alternative word to Yolŋu

necessary process required to correct bias (Freire, 1996; Fricker, 2007; Krebler, 2012; Medina, 2013; Mezirow, 2016). Medina (2013) argued that those who are 'not sensitive and responsive to the epistemic consequences of social positionality and relationality' (p. 54) will not be able to achieve epistemic justice. As noted in Chapter 6, one participant in this research put it,

I think if we were to look at one skill that is really important for a person that works in this environment, it is reflective practice. Understanding your own culture, being able to see through your own biases, or even be able to uncover your own biases and then reflect on your own practice. (Non-local health worker, personal communication, 12 November 2018)

Considering the subjugation of Indigenous knowledges in schooling, the historical exclusion of Indigenous peoples from education, as well as educational policy that frames Indigenous people as deficient (L. Brown, 2019; Fforde et al., 2013; Gray & Beresford, 2008; Rudolph, 2019), it is critical that bias and assumptions related to knowledge, and ways of being, doing, and knowing are challenged. The Model of Collaborative Practice detailed in Chapter 6 positions relationships as central to the practice of teaching and considers that there are different ways relationality is operationalised in the intercultural contexts of schools in these remote localities. While the Model of Collaborative Practice is specific to education in this context, there is applicability across other institutional sites. Participants in organisations outside the school, such as health and the ranger groups, also highlighted those productive relationships as important in the contexts they worked in.

In Summary

Remote NT education is complex and multifaceted. The overarching concepts summarised in the five pillars illustrate this. Unfortunately, educational policies have failed to include the theoretical foundation of Indigenous knowledges and support approaches that develop local epistemologies. Fortunately, communities have continued to practise what they know works. One of the most obvious and urgent changes needed in remote NT education is contextualised community-centred learning opportunities for local Indigenous educators. Although the NT Government has announced the reinstatement of the RATE program, if

courses are to include local Indigenous epistemologies and action research cycles, as they did in the 1980s and 1990s, a lot of work is needed to ensure the reiteration of RATE is not just rehashing of standardised teacher education courses that fail to meet the needs to communities.

9.3 A Final Comment: Ways Forward; Ways Back

In this thesis, I drew on the Yolŋu metaphors of Gaṇma and ṇathu to explain theories of education and the power that exists in institutions. Yolŋu have used metaphors from time immemorial as a way to share messages (Marika et al., 2009). I discussed the dilemma I felt about including these metaphors and theories when it is not my knowledge to share. However, to exclude these Yolŋu theories in the context of this research would ignore the intellectual, academic and practical contribution Yolŋu have made in education over decades. As demonstrated in the ṇathu metaphor, it is not that Yolŋu are opposed to new ideas but that *process* is important. As M. Yunupingu (1994) explained, ‘There are ways of proceeding that structurally ensure that the interests of all are recognised and respected’ (p. 118). Creating education that truly meets the needs of the community is not a quick fix; it will require dismantling assumptions and structures so that education becomes a co-designed and co-created process where power is balanced. At one level, dismantling structures seems counterintuitive to building local education models, but for co-design to occur, restructuring will be required. Some people will need to give up power, and others will need to take it up. This is critical if the next generation of local teachers and their knowledge systems are to be validated in remote NT education contexts.

Finally, this thesis, while it highlights the need for community-led *process*, is more of an invitation than a roadmap as each community needs to decide what education in their communities looks like. This thesis is an invitation to engage more deeply, to transcend the dominant ways of learning and to, as Higgins and Kim (2019) proposed, ‘honour the learning Spirit in us all’ (p. 12). My hope is that the next generation of Yolŋu activists, academics, and educators, who have enriched my life in so many ways over the years, can use the voices of their community members documented in this thesis, as well as the theoretical foundations from which this work emerges, and continue the journey that their elders started many

decades ago. My hope for non-local educators, researchers, and policymakers is that we support Yolŋu on this journey, that we listen and recognise that local pedagogies have theoretical frameworks even if we cannot understand them. Importantly, I hope we can critically reflect on the ways the very systems that we are implicated in, and often benefit from, continue to marginalise and disempower.

I started the thesis with the story of the bees, and I will conclude by mentioning them again. The bees, which I first observed three years ago when I returned to Gomeroi Country to write this thesis, I now understand were an invitation. They are an invitation to learn, observe, and engage with the world around us, to develop a deep sense of curiosity, and importantly, to understand the interconnectedness of life so that we can care for each other and the Country we live on, no matter where that is.

References

- Aikman, A. (2019, October 5). Behind these walls. *The Australian*.
- Alfred, T. (2015). Cultural strength: Restoring the place of Indigenous Knowledge in practice and policy. *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 2015(1), 3–11.
- Aliakbari, M., & Faraji, E. (2011). Basic principles of critical pedagogy. In *2nd International Conference on Humanities, Historical and Social Sciences IPEDR*, 17, 78–85.
- Altman, J. C. (2009). *Beyond closing the gap: Valuing diversity in Indigenous Australia* (Vol. 54). Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research: The Australian National University.
- Altman, J., & Fogarty, W. (2010). Indigenous Australians as 'No Gaps' subjects: Education and development in remote Indigenous Australia. In *Closing the gap in education: Improving outcomes in southern world societies*. Monash University Publishing.
- Amnesty International. (2011). *Australia: 'The land holds us': Aboriginal Peoples' right to traditional homelands in the Northern Territory*.
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa12/002/2011/en/>
- Antioch University. (2021). *Centre for Place-Based Education*.
<https://www.antioch.edu/centers-institutes/center-place-based-education/>
- Apple, M. W. (2000). Can critical pedagogies interrupt rightist policies?. *Educational Theory*, 50(2), 229–254.
- Apple, M. W. (2004). Creating difference: Neo-Liberalism, neo-conservatism and the politics of educational reform. *Educational Policy*, 18(1), 12–44.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904803260022>
- Apple, M. W. (2009). Is racism in education an accident? *Educational Policy*, 23(4), 651–659.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904809334371>
- Apple, M. W. (2013). *Can education change society?* Routledge.
- Atkinson, J. (2002). *Trauma trails: Recreating song lines: The transgenerational effects of trauma in Indigenous Australia*. Spinifex Press.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2016).
http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2016/quicksat/SSC70299?opendocument
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA]. (2014). *State and Territory Implementation of the foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum*.
https://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/State_and_Territory_F-10_Australian_Curriculum_Implementation_Timelines_August_2014.pdf
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA]. (2016). *About Us*.
<https://www.acara.edu.au/about-us>
- Australian Government. (2013). *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013–2023*. <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health-plan-2013-2023>

- Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. (2021). *Teaching and School Leadership: Flexible Literacy for Remote Primary Schools Program*. <https://www.dese.gov.au/australian-curriculum/flexible-literacy-remote-primary-schools>
- Australian Human Rights Commission. (2021). *Implementing UNDRIP*. https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/implementing_undrip_-_australias_third_upr_2021.pdf
- Bacchi, C. L. (2009). *Analysing policy: What's the problem represented to be?* Pearson Higher Education Australia.
- Bat, M., & Guenther, J. (2013). Red dirt thinking on education: A people-based system. *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, The*, 42(2), 123.
- Bat, M., Kilgariff, C., & Doe, T. (2014). Indigenous tertiary education—we are all learning: Both-ways pedagogy in the Northern Territory of Australia. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 33(5), 871–886.
- Bat, M., & Shore, S. (2012). *Listening differently: An exploration of grey literature about Aboriginal teacher education in the Top End of the Northern Territory*. Charles Darwin University.
- Battiste, M. (2008). The struggle and renaissance of Indigenous knowledge in Eurocentric education. In M. Villegas, S. R. Neugebauer, & K. R. Venegas (Eds.), *Indigenous knowledge and education: Sites of struggle, strength, and survivance* (pp. 85–91). Harvard Education Press.
- Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit*. Purich Publishing Limited.
- Bawaka Country, Wright, S., Suchet-Pearson, S., Lloyd, K., Burarrwanga, L., Ganambarr, R., Ganambarr-Stubbs, M., Ganambarr, B., Maymuru, D., & Sweeney, J. (2016). Co-becoming Bawaka: Towards a relational understanding of place/space. *Progress in Human Geography*, 40(4), 455–475.
- Bessarab, D., & Ng'andu, B. (2010). Yarning about yarning as a legitimate method in Indigenous research. *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, 3(1), 37–50.
- Betasamosake Simpson, L. (2014). Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 3(3).
- Bhattacharjee, P. (2001). Social mapping at Thenganayakanahalli village. *Participatory Learning and Action*, 41, 33–35.
- Biermann, S. (2011). Knowledge, power and decolonization: Implication for non-Indigenous scholars, researchers and educators. *Counterpoints*, 379, 386–398.
- Bishop, M., Vass, G., & Thompson, K. (2019). Decolonising schooling practices through relationality and reciprocity: Embedding local Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 1–19.
- Bishop, R. (2003). Changing power relations in education: Kaupapa Maori messages for “mainstream” education in Aotearoa/New Zealand. *Comparative Education*, 39(2), 221–238.

-
- Bishop, R., & Berryman, M. (2010). Te Kotahitanga: Culturally responsive professional development for teachers. *Teacher Development*, 14(2), 173–187.
- Bishop, R., Ladwig, J., & Berryman, M. (2014). The centrality of relationships for pedagogy: The Whanaungatanga thesis. *American Educational Research Journal*, 51(1), 184–214.
- Blakeney, A. M. (2005). Antiracist pedagogy: Definition, theory, and professional development. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 2(1), 119–132.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15505170.2005.10411532>
- Bond, H. (2010). “We’re the Mob You Should be Listening to”: Aboriginal Elders at Mornington Island Speak Up about Productive Relationships with Visiting Teachers. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 39(1), 40–53.
<https://doi.org/10.1375/S1326011100000909>
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Acts of resistance*. New Press.
- Brandl, M. (1974). *Report on Homeland Centres education visits to outstations in the Yirrkala area 4–22 June 1974*. 56–76.
- Brayboy, B. M. J. (2005). Toward a Tribal Critical Race theory in education. *The Urban Review*, 37(5), 425–446. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-005-0018-y>
- Brayboy, B. M. J., & Castagno, A. E. (2009). Self-determination through self-education: Culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous students in the USA. *Teaching Education*, 20(1), 31–53. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10476210802681709>
- Brayboy, B. M. J., & Lomawaima, K. T. (2018). Why Don’t More Indians Do Better in School? The Battle between U.S. Schooling & American Indian/Alaska Native Education. *Daedalus*, 147(2), 82–94. https://doi.org/10.1162/DAED_a_00492
- Brown, B. (2019, May 1). *Brené Brown*. Let’s Rumble.
<https://brenebrown.com/articles/2019/05/01/lets-rumble/>
- Brown, L. (2019). Indigenous young people, disadvantage and the violence of settler colonial education policy and curriculum. *Journal of Sociology*, 55(1), 54–71.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783318794295>
- Browne, E., & Napaljarri, F. G. (2021). Communities of Practice in the Warlpiri Triangle: Four Decades of Crafting Ideological and Implementational Spaces for Teaching in and of Warlpiri Language. *Languages*, 6(2), 68.
- Buchanan, R., & Chapman, A. (2011). *Utopia or Dystopia? A critical examination of the Melbourne Declaration*. Proceedings of the 40th Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia Conference.
- Buckingham, J. (2020). Direct Instruction in very remote schools: A rejoinder to Guenther and Osborne (2020). *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 49(2), 171–172.
- Buku-Larrngay-Mulka. (1999). *Saltwater: Yirrkala bark paintings of sea Country: Recognising Indigenous sea rights*. Buku-Larrngay Mulka Centre in association with Jennifer Isaacs Publishing.

- Bulloch, H., & Fogarty, W. (2016). Freeing the 'Aboriginal individual': Deconstructing 'development as freedom' in remote Indigenous Australia. *Social Analysis*, 60(3), 76–94.
- Bulloch, H., & Fogarty, W. (2020). Alterity and the asymmetric gaze: Aboriginal constructions of self and other in northwest Arnhem Land. *Anthropological Forum*, 30(4), 398–418.
- Burgess, C., Johnston, F., Berry, H., McDonnell, J., Yibarbuk, D., Gunabarra, C., Mileran, A., & Bailie, R. S. (2009). Healthy country, healthy people: The relationship between Indigenous health status and "caring for country." *Medical Journal of Australia*, 190(10), 567–572.
- Caffery, J., McConvell, P., & Simpson, J. (2009). Gaps in Australia's Indigenous language policy: Dismantling bilingual education in the Northern Territory. *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies*, 24.
- Calderon, D. (2014). Speaking back to Manifest Destinies: A land education-based approach to critical curriculum inquiry. *Environmental Education Research*, 20(1), 24–36. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315657950-8>
- Caldwell, B., & Harris, J. L. (2008). *Why not the best schools?* Aust Council for Ed Research.
- Cartmel, J., Radford, K., Dawson, C., Fitzgerald, A., & Vecchio, N. (2018). Developing an Evidenced Based Intergenerational Pedagogy in Australia. *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships*, 16(1–2), 64–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15350770.2018.1404412>
- Castagno, A. E., & Brayboy, B. M. J. (2008). Culturally responsive schooling for Indigenous youth: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(4), 941–993.
- Cavanagh, E. (2013). *Settler colonialism and land rights in South Africa: Possession and dispossession on the Orange River*. Springer.
- Charles Darwin University. (2020). *Yolngu Matha Dictionary*. http://yolngudictionary.cdu.edu.au/fuzzy_find.php
- Chiu, L. F. (2006). Critical reflection: More than nuts and bolts. *Action Research*, 4(2), 183–203.
- Christie, M. (2006a). Local versus global knowledges: A fundamental dilemma in "remote education." *Education in Rural Australia*, 16(1), 27–37.
- Christie, M. (2006b). Transdisciplinary research and Aboriginal knowledge. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 35, 78–89.
- Christie, M., & Greateorex, J. (2004). Yolngu life in the Northern Territory of Australia: The significance of community and social capital. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration*, 26(1), 55–69. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23276665.2004.10779285>
- Christie, M., & Yirrkala Action Group. (1992). *Garma Maths*. Yirrkala Literature Production Centre.
- Cochran, P. A., Marshall, C. A., Garcia-Downing, C., Kendall, E., Cook, D., McCubbin, L., & Gover, R. M. S. (2008). Indigenous ways of knowing: Implications for participatory research and community. *American Journal of Public Health*, 98(1), 22–27.

-
- Collingwood-Whittick, S. (2012). Australia's NT Intervention and Indigenous Rights on Language, Education and Culture: An Ethnocidal Solution to Aboriginal 'Dysfunction'? Indigenous Rights in the Age of the UN Declaration.
- Collins, B. (1999). *Learning lessons: An independent review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory*.
- Connell, R. (2013). The neoliberal cascade and education: An essay on the market agenda and its consequences. *Critical Studies in Education*, 54(2), 99–112.
- Cooper, R. (2005). Peripheral vision: Relationality. *Organization Studies*, 26(11), 1689–1710. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840605056398>
- Corn, A., & Gumbula, N. (2006). Rom and the academy repositioned: Binary models in Yolŋu intellectual traditions and their application to wider intercultural dialogues. In L. Russell (Ed.), *Boundary writing: An exploration of race, culture, and gender binaries in contemporary Australia* (pp. 170–197). University of Hawaii Press.
- Creighton, S. (2003). *The Yolngu Way: An ethnographic account of recent transformations in Indigenous education at Yirrkala, Northeast Arnhem Land* [[Doctoral dissertation]]. The Australian National University.
- Davidson-Hunt, I. J., & O'Flaherty, M. (2007). Researchers, indigenous peoples, and place-based learning communities. *Society and Natural Resources*, 20(4), 291–305.
- Davies, C. A. (1999). *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203069370>
- Davis, W. (2004). Keynote speech: The Ethnosphere and the Academy. *Explorer in Residence. Nacional Geographic Society*.
- D'cruz, H., Gillingham, P., & Melendez, S. (2007). Reflexivity, its meanings and relevance for social work: A critical review of the literature. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 37(1), 73–90.
- Dei, G. J. S. (2000). Rethinking the role of indigenous knowledges in the academy. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 4(2), 111–132.
- Denis, V. S. (2007). Aboriginal education and anti-racist education: Building alliances across cultural and racial identity. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue Canadienne de l'éducation*, 1068–1092.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2008). Introduction: Critical methodologies and Indigenous inquiry. In L. T. Smith, N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and indigenous methodologies* (pp. 1–28). Sage Publications Inc.
- Deveson, P. (2011). The agency of the subject: Yolŋu involvement in the Yirrkala Film Project. *Journal of Australian Studies*, 35(2), 153–164. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443058.2011.553839>
- Devlin, B. (2017a). A thematic history of bilingual education in the Northern Territory. In S. Disbray, N. Devlin, & B. Devlin (Eds.), *History of bilingual education in the Northern Territory* (pp. 1–10). Springer.

- Devlin, B. (2017b). Policy change in 2008: Evidence-based or a knee-jerk response? In B. Devlin, S. Disbray, & D. Nancy (Eds.), *History of Bilingual Education in the Northern Territory People. Programs and Policies* (pp. 203–218). Springer.
- Devlin, B., Disbray, S., & Devlin, N. (2017a). A thematic history of bilingual education in the Northern Territory. In *History of bilingual education in the Northern Territory* (pp. 1–10). Springer.
- Devlin, B., Disbray, S., & Devlin, N. (Eds.). (2017b). *History of bilingual education in the Northern Territory*. Springer Nature.
- Dewar, M. (1995). *The Black War in Arnhem Land: Missionaries and the Yolngu 1908–1940*. The Australian National University, North Australia Research.
- Dewey, J. (1959). *Dewey on Education: Selections with an Introduction and notes by Martin S. Dworkin*. Teachers College Press.
- Disbray, S. (2014). At benchmark? Evaluating the Northern Territory bilingual education program. 44th Conference of the Australian Linguistics Society, University of Melbourne.
- Disbray, S. (2014). Evaluating Bilingual Education in Warlpiri schools. In Rob. Pensalfini, M. Turpin, & Diana. Guillemin (Eds.), *Language description informed by theory*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Disbray, S. (2016). Spaces for learning: Policy and practice for indigenous languages in a remote context. *Language and Education*, 30(4), 317–336.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2015.1114629>
- Disbray, S., & Martin, B. (2018). Curriculum as Knowledge System: The Warlpiri Theme Cycle. In *Language Practices of Indigenous Children and Youth* (pp. 23–48). Springer.
- Dow, L. (2011). Spiders are mammals: Direct instruction in Cape York. *Literacy and Numeracy Studies*, 19(1), 50–65.
- Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), 54–63.
- Ethos Centre for Christianity and Society. (2016, December 5). *Ethos*.
<http://www.ethos.org.au/online-resources/blog/yingiya-mark-guyula-mla-s-first-speech-in-nt-parliament>
- Fforde, C., Bamblett, L., Lovett, R., Gorringer, S., & Fogarty, B. (2013). Discourse, deficit and identity: Aboriginality, the race paradigm and the language of representation in contemporary Australia. *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture & Policy*, 149, 162–173.
- Fischetti, J. C. (2014). Issues in education: The rubber duckies are here: Five trends affecting public education around the world. *Childhood Education*, 90(4), 316–318.
- Fogarty, W. (2010). *Learning through country: Competing knowledge systems and place based pedagogy* [[Doctoral dissertation]]. The Australian National University, Canberra.

-
- Fogarty, W. (2012). Country as classroom. In J. C. Altman & S. Kerins (Eds.), *People on country: Vital landscapes, indigenous futures* (pp. 82–93). Federation Press.
- Fogarty, W. (2013). Indigenous education-policy, pedagogy, and place. In R. Craven, A. Dillon, & N. Parbury (Eds.), *In black & white: Australians all at the crossroads* (pp. 247–265). Connor Court Publishing.
- Fogarty, W., Bulloch, H., McDonnell, S., & Davis, M. (2018). Deficit discourse and Indigenous health: How narrative framings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are reproduced in policy. *Deficit Discourse and Indigenous Health: How Narrative Framings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Are Reproduced in Policy*, 1–36.
- Fogarty, W., Lovell, M., & Dodson, M. (2015). *A view beyond review: Challenging assumptions in Indigenous education development*.
- Fogarty, W., Riddle, S., Lovell, M., & Wilson, B. (2017). Indigenous education and literacy policy in Australia: Bringing learning back to the debate. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 47(2), 185–197. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2017.18>
- Fogarty, W., Schwab, J., & Lovell, M. (2015). *Learning on Country program progress evaluation report 2015*. National Centre for Indigenous Studies (NCIS) and Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR).
- Fogarty, W., & Schwab, R. (2012). Education, Land and Learning. *Ngiya: Talk the Law*, 4, 98–121.
- Folds, R. (2001). *Crossed Purposes: The Pintupi and Australia's indigenous policy*. Thomas Telford.
- Fook, J., & Askeland, G. A. (2007). Challenges of critical reflection: 'Nothing ventured, nothing gained.' *Social Work Education*, 26(5), 520–533.
- Foucault, M. (2017). *Subjectivity and truth: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1980–1981*. Springer.
- Freiler, T. J. (2008). Learning through the body. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 2008(119), 37–47. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ace.304>
- Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Fricke, M. (2007). *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198237907.001.0001>
- García-González, D. E. (2016). Reflections on Peace from Interculturality. *Peace and Conflict Studies*, 1–25.
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays*. Basic Books.
- General Assembly of the United Nations. (2007). *United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples*. https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf

- George, S. (1999). *A short history of neoliberalism*. Conference on Economic Sovereignty in a Globalising World, Bangkok. <https://www.tni.org/en/article/short-history-neoliberalism>
- Giroux, H. A. (2010). Rethinking education as the practice of freedom: Paulo Freire and the promise of critical pedagogy. *Policy Futures in Education*, 8(6), 715–721.
- Giroux, H. A., & Giroux, S. S. (2006). Challenging neoliberalism's new world order: The promise of critical pedagogy. *Cultural Studies? Critical Methodologies*, 6(1), 21–32.
- Gonzalez, N. (2005). Beyond Culture: The Hybridity of Funds of Knowledge. In N. Gonzalez, L. Moll, & C. Amanti (Eds.), *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities and classrooms* (pp. 29–46). Erlbaum.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410613462>
- Graff, H. J. (2010). The literacy myth at thirty. *Journal of Social History*, 43(3), 635–661.
- Graham, B. (1999). Growing into bilingual education: Jottings from the journey. *Ngoonjook*, 16, 55.
- Graham, B. (2020). *Living and working in a Yolngu world: Recollection and reflections*. Publicious Book Publishing.
- Grande, S. (2008). Red pedagogy: The un-methodology. In N. K. Denzin, Y. S. Lincoln, & L. Tuhiwai Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical Indigenous methodologies* (pp. 223–253). SAGE Publications.
- Grande, S. (2015). *Red pedagogy: Native American social and political thought*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Gray, J., & Beresford, Q. (2008). A 'formidable challenge': Australia's quest for equity in Indigenous education. *Australian Journal of Education*, 52(2), 197–223.
- Greenwood, D. (2015). *Reclaiming the promise of place: An interview with David Greenwood*. (R. Altman, Interviewer) [Interview].
<https://educate.bankstreet.edu/occasional-paper-series/vol2015/iss33/2/>
- Grimes, C. (2014). *DRAFT REPORT on the Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory by Bruce Wilson, The Education Business (2013)*. Australian Society for Indigenous Languages. Australian Society for Indigenous Languages
- Gruenewald, D. A. (2003). The best of both worlds: A critical pedagogy of place. *Educational Researcher*, 32(4), 3–12.
- Guenther, J., Bat, M., & Osborne, S. (2013). Red dirt thinking on educational disadvantage. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 42(2), 100–110.
- Guenther, J., & Disbray, S. (2015, December). Why local staff matter in very remote schools. [Conference Presentation]. The Australian Association for Research in Education, Fremantle.
- Guenther, J., McRae-Williams, E., Osborne, S., & Williams, E. (2017). Decolonising Colonial education researchers in "near remote" parts of Australia. In G. Vass, J. Maxwell, Rudolph, Sophie, & Gulson, Kalervo N. (Eds.), *The relationality of race in education research* (1st ed., pp. 108–119). Taylor and Francis.

-
- Guenther, J., & Osborne, S. (2020a). Did DI do it? Response to a rejoinder. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 49(2), 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2020.19>
- Guenther, J., & Osborne, S. (2020b). Did DI do it? The impact of a programme designed to improve literacy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in remote schools. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 49(2), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2019.28>
- Hall, L. (2016). *Moving Deeper Into Difference: Developing Meaningful and Effective Pathways Into Teacher Education for Indigenous Adults from Remote Communities* [[Doctoral dissertation]]. Charles Darwin University.
- Hall, L. (2017). Making space for knowledge intersections in remote teacher education—ways of being and tools for doing. *Knowledge Intersections*, 100–112.
- Hatton-Yeo, A., & Ohsako, T. (2000). *Intergenerational Programmes: Public Policy and Research Implications—An International Perspective*. Beth Johnson Foundation.
- Hayes, C., & Juarez, B. (2012). There is no culturally responsive teaching spoken here: A critical race perspective. *Democracy and Education*, 20(1), 1.
- Haynes, E., Marawili, M., Marika, B., Mitchell, A., Phillips, J., Bessarab, D., Walker, R., Cook, J., & Ralph, A. (2019). Community-based participatory action research on rheumatic heart disease in an Australian Aboriginal homeland: Evaluation of the 'On track watch' project. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 74, 38–53.
- Henry, J., & McTaggart, R. (1991). *Aboriginal pedagogy: Aboriginal teachers speak out*. Deakin University Press.
- Higgins, M., & Kim, E.-J. A. (2019). De/colonizing methodologies in science education: Rebraiding research theory–practice–ethics with Indigenous theories and theorists. *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, 14(1), 111–127.
- Holcombe, S. (2008). Constraints on researchers acting as change agents. In J. Hunt, D. Smith, S. Garling, & W. Sanders (Eds.), *Contested Governance: Culture, power and institutions in Indigenous Australia* (pp. 55–74). ANU E Press.
- hooks, bell, & West, C. (1995). Black women intellectuals. In *Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life* (Vol. 3, pp. 146–165). Routledge.
- Keen, I. (1994). *Knowledge and secrecy in an Aboriginal religion*. Clarendon Press.
- Keesing-Styles, L. (2003). The relationship between critical pedagogy and assessment in teacher education. *Radical Pedagogy*, 5(5), 1–19.
- Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (1988). *Participatory Action Research: Communicative action and the public sphere*. Sage Publications.
- Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (2005). *Participatory action research: Communicative action and the public sphere*. Sage Publications Ltd.
- Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R., & Nixon, R. (2013). *The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2005). *Critical Constructivism*. Peter Lang Publishing, New York.

- Kincheloe, J. L. (2012). Critical pedagogy in the twenty-first century: Evolution for survival. *Counterpoints*, 422(Journal Article), 147–183.
- Kincheloe, J. L., McLaren, P., & Steinberg, S. R. (2011). Critical pedagogy and qualitative research. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 163–177.
- Knaus, C. B. (2009). Shut up and listen: Applied critical race theory in the classroom. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 12(2), 133–154.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13613320902995426>
- Kral, I., & Falk, I. (2004). *What is all that learning for? Indigenous adult English literacy practices, training, community capacity and health*. National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd.
- Krebler, C. (2012). Critical reflection and transformative learning. In E. W. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice*. (1st ed). Jossey-Bass.
- Kwame, A. (2017) Reflexivity and the insider/outsider discourse in indigenous research: My personal experiences. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 13(4), 218–225. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180117729851>
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally Relevant Pedagogy 2.0: A.k.a. the Remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74–84.
<https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.p2rj131485484751>
- Le Grange, L. (2018). The notion of Ubuntu and the (post) humanist condition. In J. E. Petrovic & R. M. Mitchell (Eds.), *Indigenous philosophies of education around the world* (pp. 46–66). Routledge.
- Lee, P., Fasoli, L., Ford, L., Stephenson, P., & McInerney, D. (2014). *Indigenous kids and schooling in the Northern Territory*. Batchelor: Batchelor Press.
- Lees, A., Vélez, V., & Laman, T. T. (2021). Recognition and resistance of settler colonialism in early childhood education: Perspectives and implications for Black, Indigenous, and Teachers of Color. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2021.1891319>
- Levinson, B. A., & Holland, D. (1996). The cultural production of the educated person: An introduction. In B. A. Levinson, D. Holland, & L. Weis (Eds.), *The cultural production of the educated person: Critical ethnographies of schooling and local practice* (pp. 4–54). SUNY Press.
- Lingard, B. (2018). The Australian curriculum: A critical interrogation of why, what and where to? *Curriculum Perspectives*, 38(1), 55–65. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41297-017-0033-7>
- Livett, G. (1988). Homeland centre teacher education: The influence of the land rights and homeland centre movements on teacher education in remote communities. *Ngoonjook*, 1, 13.

-
- Longmuir, F., Heffernan, A., Gallo Cordoba, B., Allen, K.-A., & Phillips, M. (2022). *Inquiry into teacher shortages in New South Wales* (NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee NO.3 - Education). Faculty of Education Monash University.
<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/79454/0125%20Faculty%20of%20Education%20Monash%20University.pdf>
- Lowell, A., Maypilama, E., Biritjalawuy, D., & Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health. (2003). *Indigenous health and education: Exploring the connections*. Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health.
- Luke, A. (2008). Using Bourdieu to make policy: Mobilizing community capital and literacy. *Pierre Bourdieu and Literacy Education*, 347–362.
- Macoun, A. (2016). Colonising white innocence: Complicity and critical encounters. In S. Maddison, T. Clark, & R. de Costa (Eds.), *The Limits of Settler Colonial Reconciliation* (pp. 85–102). Springer.
- Maddison, S. (2012). Evidence and contestation in the Indigenous policy domain: Voice, ideology and institutional inequality. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 71(3), 269–277. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8500.2012.00775.x>
- Maddison, S. (2019). *The colonial fantasy: Why white Australia can't solve black problems*. Allen & Unwin.
- Maddison, S., Clark, T., & De Costa, R. (2016). *The limits of settler colonial reconciliation: Non-Indigenous people and the responsibility to engage*. Springer.
- Maddison, S., & Denniss, R. (2009). *An introduction to Australian public policy: Theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- Maddison, S., & Stastny, A. (2016). Silence or deafness? Education and the non-Indigenous responsibility to engage. In S. Maddison, T. Clark, & R. De Costa (Eds.), *The Limits of Settler Colonial Reconciliation* (pp. 231–247). Springer.
- Marika, R. (1999a). Milthun latju wäŋa romgu Yolŋu: Valuing Yolŋu knowledge in the education system. *Ngoonjook Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues*, 16, 107–120.
- Marika, R. (1999b). The 1998 Wentworth lecture. *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 1, 3.
- Marika, R., Ngurruwutthun, D., & White, L. (1992). Always together, yaka gäna: Participatory research at Yirrkala as part of the development of a Yolngu education. *Convergence*, 25(1), 23.
- Marika, R., Yunupingu, Y., Marika-Mununggiritj, R., & Muller, S. (2009). Leaching the poison—the importance of process and partnership in working with Yolngu. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 25(4), 404–413.
- Marika-Mununggiritj, R. (1990). Workshops as teaching learning environments. *Ngoonjook*, 4, 43.
- Marika-Mununggiritj, R., & Christie, M. J. (1995). Yolngu metaphors for learning. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 113(1), 59–62.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.1995.113.59>

- Marika-Mununggiritj, R., Maymuru, B., Mununggurr, M., Munyarryun, B., Ngurruwutthun, G., & Yunupingu, Y. (1990). The history of the Yirrkala community school: Yolngu thinking about education in the Laynha and Yirrkala area. *Ngoonjook*, 3, 32.
- Marsh, D., & McConnell, A. (2010). Towards a Framework for Establishing Policy Success. *Public Administration (London)*, 88(2), 564–583.
- Martin, F., & Piribhai-Illich, F. (2016). Towards decolonising teacher education: Criticality, relationality and intercultural understanding. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 37(4), 355–372.
- Martin, F., Piribhai-Illich, F., & Pete, S. (2017). Beyond culturally responsive pedagogy: Decolonizing teacher education. In *Culturally responsive pedagogy* (pp. 235–256). Springer.
- Martin, K. L. (2008). *Please knock before you enter: Aboriginal regulation of outsiders and the implications for researchers*. Post Pressed.
- Massy, C. (2017). *Call of the reed warbler: A new agriculture—A new earth*. University of Queensland Press.
- Matthews, C. (2019, December 5). *Indigenous perspectives in mathematics education*. Teacher. https://www.teachermagazine.com/au_en/articles/indigenous-perspectives-in-mathematics-education?lang=en
- McConaghy, C. (2000). *Rethinking Indigenous education: Culturalism, colonialism, and the politics of knowing*. Post Pressed.
- McConvell, P. (1991). Cultural domain separation: Two-way street or blind alley? Stephen Harris and the neo-Whorfians on Aboriginal education. *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 1, 13–24.
- McInerney, M. (2016, November 18). *Courage, honesty, celebration and imagination – and other ethics for Indigenous health research*. Croakey. <https://www.croakey.org/courage-honesty-celebration-and-imagination-and-other-ethics-for-indigenous-health-research/>
- McKay, G. (2017). The policy framework for bilingual education in Australian Indigenous languages in the Northern Territory. In B. Devlin, S. Disbray, & N. Devlin (Eds.), *History of bilingual education in the Northern Territory* (pp. 85–99). Springer.
- McKnight, A. (2016). Meeting Country and self to initiate an embodiment of knowledge: Embedding a process for Aboriginal perspectives. *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 45(1), 11–22. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2016.10>
- McMahon, K. (2022). Muḷmuḷ—Flecks of foam in an everchanging educational world: Community-based participatory research. In B. C. Devlin, J. Kinslow-Harris, N. R. F. Devlin, & J. E. Harris (Eds.), *Stephen Harris—Writer, Educator, Anthropologist: Kantriman Blanga Melabat (Our Countryman)* (pp. 235–249). Springer Nature.
- McMahon, Hon. W. (1972, July 1). *Opening of Dhupuma College*. <https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/original/00002639.pdf>
- Macoun, A., & Strakosch, E. (2013). The ethical demands of settler colonial theory. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 3(3–4), 426–443. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2013.810695>

-
- Medina, J. (2013). *The epistemology of resistance: Gender and racial oppression, epistemic injustice, and the social imagination*. Oxford University Press.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core Concepts of Transformation Theory. In E. Taylor & P. Cranton (Eds.), *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice* (pp. 73–96). Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint.
- Mezirow, J. (2016). On critical reflection. *Adult Education Quarterly (American Association for Adult and Continuing Education)*, 48(3), 185–198.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/074171369804800305>
- Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. (2008). *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*.
http://www.curriculum.edu.au/verve/_resources/National_Declaration_on_the_Educational_Goals_for_Young_Australians.pdf
- Møller, J. (2017). Leading education beyond what works. *European Educational Research Journal*, 16(4), 375–385.
- Morphy, F. (2007). The language of governance in a cross-cultural context: What can and can't be translated'. *Ngiya: Talk the Law*, 1, 93–102.
- Morphy, F. (2008). Whose governance, for whose good? The Laynhapuy Homelands Association and the neo-assimilationist turn in Indigenous policy. *Contested Governance: Culture, Power and Institutions in Indigenous Australia*, 113–152.
- Morphy, F., & Morphy, H. (2013). Anthropological theory and government policy in Australia's Northern Territory: The hegemony of the "mainstream." *American Anthropologist*, 15(2), 174–187.
- Morphy, H. (1991). *Ancestral connections: Art and an Aboriginal system of knowledge*. University of Chicago Press.
- Morphy, H. (2005). Mutual conversion?: The methodist church and the Yolngu, with particular reference to Yirrkala. *Humanities Research*, 12(1), 41.
- Morrison, A., Rigney, L.-I., Hattam, R., & Diplock, A. (2019). *Toward an Australian culturally responsive pedagogy*. University of South Australia.
- Nagar, R., & Ali, F. (2003). Collaboration across borders: Moving beyond positionality. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 24(3), 356–372.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9493.00164>
- Nakata, M. (2003). Some thoughts on literacy issues in Indigenous contexts. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 31, 7–16.
- Nakata, M. (2007). The cultural interface. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 36(S1), 7–14.
- Nakata, M. (2013). The rights and blights of the politics in Indigenous higher education. *Anthropological Forum*, 23(3), 289–303.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00664677.2013.803457>
- Nambara Schools Council. (1999). *Education in the Yirrkala Area: Our children, language, land and identity: Our most precious resources*. Nambara Schools Council.

- National Institute for Direct Instruction. (2015). *National Institute for Direct Instruction*. NIFDI's Mission. <https://www.nifdi.org/about/nifdis-mission.html>
- Neelands, J. (2006). Re-imagining the Reflective Practitioner: Towards a philosophy of critical praxis. In J. Ackroyd (Ed.), *Research Methodologies for Drama Education* (pp. 15–40). British Library Cataloguing.
- Nero, S. (2015). Language, identity, and insider/outsider positionality in Caribbean Creole English research. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 6(3), 341–368.
- Ngurruwutthun, D. (1991). The Garma project. *Aboriginal Pedagogy: Aboriginal Teachers Speak Out*, 107–122.
- Nguyen, D. J., & Larson, J. B. (2015). Don't forget about the body: Exploring the curricular possibilities of embodied pedagogy. *Innovative Higher Education*, 40(4), 331–344.
- Nicholis, R. (2009). Research and Indigenous participation: Critical reflexive methods. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 12(2), 117–126.
- Nicholls, C. (2005). Death by a thousand cuts: Indigenous Language bilingual education programmes in the Northern Territory of Australia, 1972–1998. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 8(2–3), 160–177. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050508668604>
- Ninti One Limited. (2014). *Submission to the Indigenous Education Review—Draft Report*. Ninti One: Innovation for Remote Australia. http://www.nintione.com.au/resource/Submission_IndigenousEducationReviewDraftReport.pdf
- Northern Territory Department of Education. (1989). *Handbook for Aboriginal bilingual education in the Northern Territory*. Educational Resources Section of Northern Territory Department of Education.
- Northern Territory Government. (2017a). *Keeping Indigenous Languages and Cultures Strong*. Northern Territory Government.
- Northern Territory Government. (2017b, August 28). *Indigenous Education Strategy—Issue 15*. <https://education.nt.gov.au/statistics-research-and-strategies/indigenous-education-strategy/indigenous-education-strategy-issue-15/keeping-indigenous-languages-and-cultures-strong>
- Northern Territory Government. (2020, April 29). *Northern Territory Media Release*. Re-Establishing Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) in the Territory. <https://newsroom.nt.gov.au/article?id=33200>
- Northern Territory Government. (2021). *NT Education Engagement Strategy 2021-2032*. <https://haveyoursay.nt.gov.au/education-engagement-strategy>
- Northern Territory Government Department of Education. (2017). *Indigenous Education Strategy—Issue 15: Keeping Indigenous Languages and Cultures Strong*. <https://education.nt.gov.au/statistics-research-and-strategies/indigenous-education-strategy/indigenous-education-strategy-issue-15/keeping-indigenous-languages-and-cultures-strong>

-
- Northern Territory Government Media Release. (2008). *Education restructure includes greater emphasis on english* (Northern Territory Government Newsroom) [Media Release]. <http://newsroom.nt.gov.au/mediaRelease/4656>
- Ober, R., & Bat, M. (2007). Paper 1: Both-ways: The philosophy. *Ngoonjook*, 31, 64.
- Ohito, E. O. (2020). Fleshing out enactments of Whiteness in antiracist pedagogy: Snapshot of a White teacher educator's practice. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 28(1), 17–36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2019.1585934>
- Olsen, T. A. (2018). Privilege, decentring and the challenge of being (non-) Indigenous in the study of Indigenous issues. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 47(2), 206–215. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jie.2017.16>
- Oster, R. T., Grier, A., Lightning, R., Mayan, M. J., & Toth, E. L. (2014). Cultural continuity, traditional Indigenous language, and diabetes in Alberta First Nations: A mixed methods study. *International Journal for Equity in Health*, 13(1), 92.
- Overmars, D. (2010). Indigenous knowledge, community and education in a western system: An integrative approach. *First Peoples Child and Family Review*, 5(2), 88–95.
- Palmer, K. (2016). Homelands as outstations of public policy. In N. Peterson & F. Myers (Eds.), *Experiments in self-determination: Histories of the outstation movement in Australia* (pp. 181–200). Australian National University Press.
- Palmer, P., J. (2003). Teaching with Heart and Soul: Reflections on Spirituality in Teacher Education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 54(5), 376–385. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487103257359>
- Palmer, P. J. (2017). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93–97.
- Patrick, R., & Moodie, N. (2016). Indigenous education policy discourses in Australia. In T. Barkatas & A. Bertram (Eds.), *Global learning in the 21st century* (pp. 165–184). Springer.
- Peace Right Here. (2019). *Imagination*. Peace Right Here. <https://www.peacerightthere.org/imagination>
- Pearson, N. (2009). *Quarterly essay 35 radical hope: Education and equality in Australia* (Vol. 35). Black Inc.
- Pearson, N. (2020). Yes, DI did it: The impact of Direct Instruction on literacy outcomes for very remote Indigenous schools. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 1–10.
- Petrovic, J. E. (2005). The conservative restoration and neoliberal defenses of bilingual education. *Language Policy*, 4(4), 395.
- Pihama, L., & Lee-Morgan, J. (2018). Colonization, education, and Indigenous peoples. In E. A. McKinley & L. Tuhiwai Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of Indigenous Education* (pp. 1–9). Springer.

- Reeves, S., Kuper, A., & Hodges, B. D. (2008). Qualitative research: Qualitative research methodologies: Ethnography. *British Medical Journal*, 337(7668), 512–514. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.a1020>
- Rigney, L. I. (1999). Internationalization of an Indigenous anticolonial cultural critique of research methodologies: A guide to Indigenist research methodology and its principles. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 14(2), 109–121.
- Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2010). *Globalizing education policy*. Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203867396>
- Rowley, K. G., O’Dea, K., Anderson, I., McDermott, R., Saraswati, K., Tilmouth, R., Roberts, I., Fitz, J., Wang, Z., & Jenkins, A. (2008). Lower than expected morbidity and mortality for an Australian Aboriginal population: 10-year follow-up in a decentralised community. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 188(5), 283–287.
- Rudolph, S. (2019). *Unsettling the gap*. Peter Lang Publishing.
- Savage, C., Hindle, R., Meyer, L. H., Hynds, A., Penetito, W., & Sleeter, C. E. (2011). Culturally responsive pedagogies in the classroom: Indigenous student experiences across the curriculum. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 39(3), 183–198.
- Schein, E. H. (1993). On dialogue, culture, and organizational learning. *Organizational Dynamics*, 22(2), 40–51.
- Schein, E. H. (2017). *Organizational culture and leadership* (Vol. 2). John Wiley & Sons.
- Schick, C., & St. Denis, V. (2005). Troubling national discourses in anti-racist curricular planning. *Canadian Journal of Education/Revue Canadienne de l’éducation*, 295–317.
- Schwab, R. (2012). Indigenous early school leavers: Failure, risk and high-stakes testing. *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 1, 3.
- Schwab, R. (2013). “You are boss for me!” A case study of the erosion of Indigenous self-determination in education. In R. Craven, A. Dillon, & N. Parbury (Eds.), *In Black & White: Australians All at the Crossroads* (pp. 209–228). Connor Court Publishing.
- Schwab, R., & Fogarty, B. (2015). *Land, learning and identity: Toward a deeper understanding of Indigenous Learning on Country*.
- Sahlberg, P. (2022, June 8). *New Education Minister Jason Clare can fix the teacher shortage crisis – but not with Labor’s election plan*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/new-education-minister-jason-clare-can-fix-the-teacher-shortage-crisis-but-not-with-labors-election-plan-184321>
- Seim, J. (2021). Participant observation, observant participation, and hybrid ethnography. *Sociological Methods & Research, Journal Article*, 4912412098620. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124120986209>
- Shahjahan, R. A. (2015). Being “lazy” and slowing down: Toward decolonizing time, our body, and pedagogy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 47(5), 488–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2014.880645>
- Simpson, L. (2001). Aboriginal Peoples and Knowledge: Decolonizing Our Processes. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 21(1), 137.

-
- Simpson, L. B. (2016). Indigenous resurgence and co-resistance. *Critical Ethnic Studies*, 2(2), 19–34.
- Sleeter, C. (2011). The quest for social justice in the education of minoritized students. *Professional Development for Culturally Responsive and Relationship-Based Pedagogy*, 1–21.
- Smith, D. (2008). Cultures of governance and the governance of culture: Transforming and containing Indigenous institutions in West Arnhem Land. In J. Hunt, D. Smith, S. Garling, & W. Sanders (Eds.), *Contested Governance: Culture, power and institutions in Indigenous Australia*. The Australian National University E Press.
- Smith, D., Hunt, J., Garling, S., & Sanders, W. (Eds.). (2008). *Contested Governance: Culture, power and institutions in Indigenous Australia*. ANU E Press.
- Smith, G. (2002). Place-based education: Learning to be where we are. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 83(8), 584–594. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172170208300806>
- Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Smith, L. T. (2007). On tricky ground. *The Landscape of Qualitative Research*, 1, 85–113.
- Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (Second). Zed Books.
- Snelgrove, C., Dhamoon, R. K., & Corntassel, J. (2014). Unsettling settler colonialism: The discourse and politics of settlers, and solidarity with Indigenous nations. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 3(2).
- Somerville, M. (2007). Postmodern emergence. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 20(2), 225–243.
- Spillman, D. (2017). A share in the future. . . Only for those who become like 'us'!: Challenging the “standardisation” reform approach to Indigenous education in the Northern Territory. *Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 46(2), 137–147.
- Stewart, M., & Ngurruwutthun, N. (1996). Learning to walk behind; learning to walk in front: A case study of the Mentor Program at Yirrkala Community Education Centre. *Unicorn*, 22(4), 3–23.
- Stockley, T., Ganambarr, B., Munungurr, D., Munungurr, M., Wearne, G., Wunungmurra, W., White, L., & Yunupingu, Y. (2017). The quest for community control at Yirrkala school. In B. Devlin, S. Disbray, & D. Nancy (Eds.), *History of Bilingual Education in the Northern Territory* (pp. 141–148). Springer.
- Street, C., Smith, J., Robertson, K., Guenther, J., Motlap, S., Ludwig, W., Woodroffe, T., Gillan, K., Ober, R., Larkin, S., Shannon, V., & Hill, G. (2020). Exploring definitions of success in Northern Territory Indigenous higher education policy. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 52(4), 323–343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2020.1719391>
- Stubbs, M. (1995). Educational language planning in England and Wales: Multicultural rhetoric and assimilationist assumptions. *Policy and Practice in Bilingual Education. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters*, 25–39.

- Sullivan, P. (2011). *Belonging together: Dealing with the politics of disenchantment in Australian Indigenous affairs policy*. Aboriginal Studies Press.
- Symons, G. (2016). *Code of Conduct*. <https://ocpe.nt.gov.au/nt-public-sector-employment/Information-about-ntps-employment/code-of-conduct>
- Tandy, J. L. (1973). Australian government initiatives in Aboriginal education. *The Aboriginal Child at School*, 1(2), 17–22. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1326011100003021>
- Taylor, J. (2008). Indigenous peoples and indicators of well-being: Australian perspectives on United Nations global frameworks. *Social Indicators Research*, 87(1), 111–126. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-007-9161-z>
- Thomas, A. (2017). It is still the Balanda way. *Overland*, 226, 3–10.
- Thornton, S., Graham, M., & Burgh, G. (2020). Reflecting on place: Environmental education as decolonisation. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*, 35(3), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1017/aee.2019.31>
- Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), 409–428.
- Tuck, E. (2013). Neoliberalism as nihilism? A commentary on educational accountability, teacher education, and school reform. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies (JCEPS)*, 11(2), 324–347.
- Tuck, E., & Gaztambide-Fernández, R. A. (2013). Curriculum, replacement, and settler futurity. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 29(1).
- Tuck, E., & McKenzie, M. (2015). *Place in research: Theory, methodology, and methods*. Routledge.
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1).
- Ungunmerr, M.-R. (2017). To be listened to in her teaching: Dadirri: Inner deep listening and quiet still awareness. *EarthSong Journal: Perspectives in Ecology, Spirituality and Education*, 3(4), 14.
- Vass, G. (2012). ‘So, what is wrong with Indigenous education?’ Perspective, position and power beyond a deficit discourse. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 41(2), 85–96.
- Veracini. (2010). *Settler colonialism: A theoretical overview*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Verran, H. (2013). Engagement between disparate knowledge traditions: Toward doing difference generatively and in good faith. In L. Green (Ed.), *Contested ecologies: Dialogues in the South on nature and knowledge* (pp. 141–161). HSRC Press.
- Verran, H., & Christie, M. (2011). Doing difference together: Towards a dialogue with aboriginal knowledge authorities through an Australian comparative empirical philosophical inquiry. *Culture and Dialogue*, 1(2), 21–36.
- Vivian, A., Jorgensen, D., Bell, R., Cornell, S., & Hemming, S. (2017). Implementing a project within the indigenous research paradigm: The example of nation building research. *Indigenous Methodologies: Ngiya Talk the Law*, 5, 47–74.

-
- Wacquant, L. (2015). For a sociology of flesh and blood. *Qualitative Sociology*, 38(1), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-014-9291-y>
- Wagner, A. E., & Shahjahan, R. A. (2015). Centering embodied learning in anti-oppressive pedagogy. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 20(3), 244–254.
- Watson-Verran. (1992a). *We've Heard You Teach Maths Through Kinship: Garma Maths*. NT Government Department of Employment, Education & Training, Literacy Resources Development Unit–Yirrkala. <http://espace.cdu.edu.au/view/cdu:39997>
- Watson-Verran, H. (1992b). *Garma maths. A Garma maths course of study in the Yirrkala and Laynhapuy Schools community*. Yirrkala Literature Production Centre.
- Wearne, G., & Yunupingu, M. (2011). Into the mainstream: Supporting parental engagement in the education programs offered in five north-east Arnhem Land Yolngu communities. *Canberra, Australia: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations*.
- West, R., Stewart, L., Foster, K., & Usher, K. (2012). Through a critical lens: Indigenist research and the Dadirri method. *Qualitative Health Research*, 22(11), 1582–1590.
- White, L. (2005). Batchelor Institute's both-ways' journey: 1968-1985. *Ngoonjook*, 27, 6.
- White, L. (2015). Finding the common ground with Indigenous and western knowledge systems and seeking the common good for all present and future Australians—Where is the common ground if we are going to find it? In H. Huijser, R. Ober, S. O'Sullivan, E. McRae-Williams, & R. Elvin (Eds.), *Finding common ground: Narratives, provocations and reflections from the 40 year celebration of Batchelor Institute* (pp. 8–20). Batchelor Press.
- Wildcat, M., McDonald, M., Irlbacher-Fox, S., & Coulthard, G. (2014). Learning from the land: Indigenous land based pedagogy and decolonization. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 3(3).
- Wilkinson, M., Marika, R., & Williams, N. (2009). This place already has a name. In H. Koch & L. Hercus (Eds.), *Aboriginal placenames: Naming and re-naming the Australian landscape* (pp. 403–462).
- Williams, N. M. (1986). *The Yolngu and their land: A system of land tenure and the fight for its recognition*. Stanford University Press.
- Wilson, B. (2014). *A share in the future: Review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory*. Education Business.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Fernwood Publishing.
- Wolfe, P. (1999). Settler colonialism and the transformation of anthropology: The politics and poetics of an ethnographic event. Continuum.
- Wunungmurra, W. (1989). "Dhawurrpunaramirra" finding the common ground for a new Aboriginal curriculum. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 8(2), 69.
- Yambirra Schools. (1996). *Yambirra Schools Vision Statement*. Yambirra Schools.

- Yambirrpa Schools Council & Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training. (n.d.). *Remote Learning Partnership Agreement*.
- Yap, M., & Yu, E. (2016). Operationalising the capability approach: Developing culturally relevant indicators of indigenous wellbeing—An Australian example. *Oxford Development Studies*, 44(3), 315–331.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2016.1178223>
- Yirrkala Action Group. (2014). *Garma Maths Policy*. Literacy Production Centre.
- Yirrkala Literacy Production Centre. (1991). *Yäṇjunbi Galtha Rom workshop*. Literacy Production Centre.
- Yunkaporta, T., & McGinty, S. (2009). Reclaiming Aboriginal knowledge at the cultural interface. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 36(2), 55–72.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03216899>
- Yunupingu, B., Henry, J., & McTaggart, R. (1991). A plan for Ganma Research. In *Aboriginal pedagogy: Aboriginal teachers speak out* (pp. 98–106). Deakin University Press.
- Yunupingu, M. (1989). Language and power: The Yolngu rise to power at Yirrkala School. *Ngoonjook*, 2, 1–6.
- Yunupingu, M. (1994). Voices from the land (Boyer lectures). In *Voices from the land*. Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
- Yunupingu, M. (1999). Double power. *Double Power: English Literacy and Indigenous Education*, 1–4.
- Yunupingu, M., Watson, H., & Kemmis, S. (1986, March 3). *The Ganma Project in Mathematics Curriculum*.