

SUMMARY

The Present Situation of Prejudice and Racism towards
Indigenous Students in the Primary and Secondary Education

Takayuki Shimomura
[Toba High School]

In the 1967 Referendum, Australian Indigenous people became citizens of Australia. Since then, the Commonwealth government has gradually modified Indigenous policies, moving towards their improvement. This includes education, which has seen the introduction of positive education policies for Indigenous groups since 1990. However there remains prejudice and racism against Indigenous students in schools.

This paper focuses on the prejudice and racism in primary and secondary schools. The animosity towards Indigenous students is caused by backgrounds of economic disadvantages, cultural differences, ear problems, languages, stereotypes and so on. Interview research work was carried out in 2000, 2001, and 2002. These interviews were conducted with teachers, students, parents, AEA (Aboriginal Education Assistants), and other educational staff who were related to Indigenous education. This substantive research clarifies the details of prejudice and racism in present school life.

This research outcome demonstrates that cases of prejudice and racism have been decreasing recently, though it is obvious that Indigenous students still face prejudice and racism. Race related obstacles have caused students to become reluctant about attending school. Parents are also worried about this situation. Under these circumstances, some programs such as 'Stand up! Speak out!' Anti-Racism Education Conferences, Staff development days, and Anti-racism work-shops, have been held in order to counter prejudice and racism, and also to reconcile the differences between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous groups. However, a significant gulf still remains in the understanding between Indigenous people and teachers. Hence, it is strongly suggested that Indigenous education should be performed not only by some devoted teachers but also by involving all teachers and education staff in order to address prejudice and racism. In doing so, a safer and more comfortable school environment will be assured for Indigenous students.