

Neohumanist Educational Futures: Liberating the Pedagogical Intellect

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Milojević

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Introducing Neohumanism

While the roots of neohumanism are certainly based on the spiritual practice of Tantra (from the broader Indic episteme), neohumanism and neohumanistic education is situated best as a transcivilizational global pedagogy.

Neohumanism has both a linear dimension, continuing the progressive evolution of rights that the Enlightenment has given us, and a cyclical dimension, embracing our ancient spiritual traditions, creating thus a turn of the spiral, transcending and including past and present.

Neohumanism thus aims to relocate the self from ego (and the pursuit of individual maximisation), from family (and the pride of genealogy), from geo-sentiments (attachments to land and nation), from socio-sentiments (attachments to class, race and religious community), from humanism (the human being as the centre of the universe) to neohumanism (love and devotion for all, inanimate and animate, beings of the universe).

The chapters

The book itself is divided into five parts.

Chapters by Marcus Bussey, Acharya Vedaprajananda, Ivana Milojević and Sohail Inayatullah theorize neohumanist education. In these chapters, educational process is set within the context of globalisation and the theoretical domains of critical theory and social futures.

The second part is focused on the spiritual in education. Chapters by Tobin Hart and Marcus Anthony explore the genealogical and epistemic traditions that have defined the spiritual in education and with which neohumanist theory dialogues. A further chapter by Ivana Milojević offers insights into how neohumanism is situated in the discourse of collective violence pedagogy, with specific reference to the relationship of transformative educational practice to both 'hard' and 'soft' versions of religion and constructions of the spiritual.

The third section of the book focuses on particular issues in educational futures. Included are chapters on partnership education by Riane Eisler, social cohesion by Marlene de Beer, speciesism by Helene Pederson, indicators of alternative education by Vachel Miller, the teaching of neohumanist history by Marcus Bussey and Sohail Inayatullah, and finally Peter Hayward and Joseph Voros' role-playing game that provides an experiential sense of the implications of neohumanism for leadership.

Part Four presents two examples of neohumanist education in practice, with a case study by Ivana Milojević of a neohumanistic school and Mahajyoti Glassman's thoughts on how to teach neohumanism.

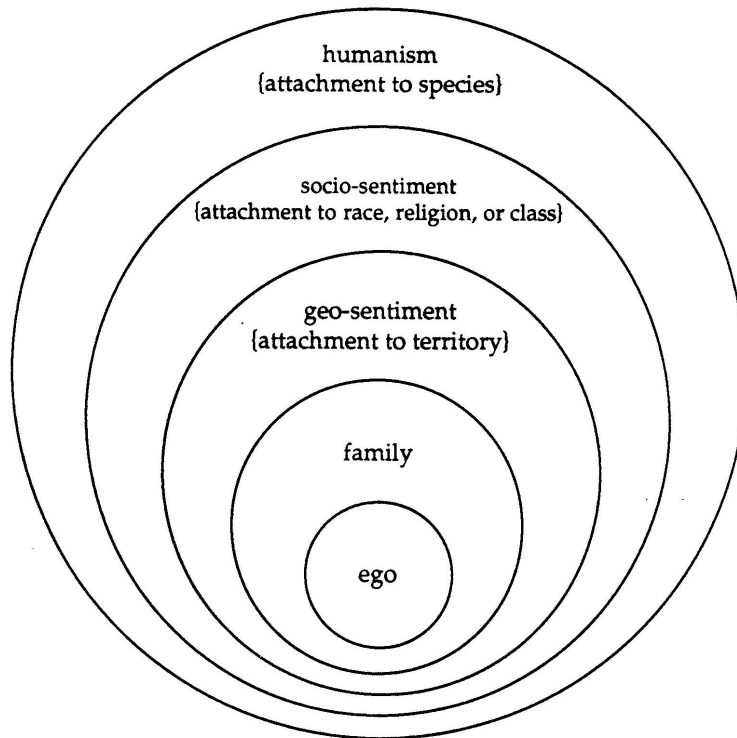
The book concludes on a futures note with an exploration of neohumanist educational scenarios by Sohail Inayatullah.

Interspersed in these parts are short Perspectives by Prabhat Rainjan Sarkar, Acharya Shambushivananda, and Acharya Maheshvarananda (interviewing Paulo Freire) and the book concludes with a short set of appendices.

We hope that this book will engage the intellect; however, our intention is that this process of engagement leads to its liberation. As Sarkar wrote many years ago: "*Sa' vidya' ya' vimuktaye*" or "Education is that which liberates". Thank you for joining us on this journey.

neo-humanism

{love and respect for all beings, animate and inanimate, in the universe}



Sarkar's neohumanism: the liberation of the intellect

Chapter 15 The River School: Exploring Racism in a Neohumanist School¹

Ivana Milojević

The River School, in Queensland, Australia, is located on community land which comprises 52 acres and houses several families. The school itself is located on 21 acres, with 15 acres being a rainforest. A stream ('River') runs through the property and is a "favourite spot for daily swimming in the summer and adventure play all year round". The school opened in 1994 with 23 students and now has close to 190 students who are supported by seven primary teachers, three early childhood teachers with five assistants, and other staff members. The River School is "a community of learning, including students from kindergarten to Year 7, teachers, administrators, parents, and the hinterland community".

The school began as "the vision of the people of the community" living on the land. The members of the family community who started the school belong to a socio-spiritual movement called Ananda Marga, based on the Tantric philosophy and originating in India. The motto that is part of the philosophy of the movement is 'self-realization and service to humanity'. Self-realization is practiced through meditation and yoga which can help "discover deep spiritual fulfilment, peace and wisdom". The philosophy on which the school is based also emphasizes a "non-dogmatic code of ethics and encourages a universal outlook which rises above limited sentiments of nation, race, religion, gender and social status". Service to humanity is practiced through the movement's involvement in, for example, establishing schools and kindergartens, "orphanages, disaster relief, alternative agriculture, programs for artists and scientists".

The River School is part of a network of "over 250 schools" throughout the world that are based on the same philosophy. Since the socio-spiritual movement the school is based on is international, the school has "lots of contact with people from other countries", and benefits from getting "lots of research from other [similar] schools from around the world". It also further tries to enhance the international 'flavour' by employment of teachers and teach aids from diverse cultural backgrounds and/or with the experience of teaching overseas and also by "registering through the government" in order to be able to receive overseas students.

¹ Material in this chapter is extracted from interviews conducted in 2000.

The educational philosophy upon which the school is based is that of neohumanism. Neohumanism is the philosophy of the “innate oneness of all things”:

Studying about the 'web of life' helps understand the interconnections between self, others and the natural environment. Neohumanist education fosters love and respect for all, regardless of culture, religion, race and nationality, and for animals and plants and the earth's ecosystems. Children learn these principles both through lessons and teacher modelling, as well as through developing their own intuitional feeling of the interconnectedness of all things.

Such philosophy is reflected in the school's relationship with its environment and with the community, in its approaches to teaching and learning as well as in the daily routine in the school. It is also reflected in how personal and cultural 'difference' is being seen and understood as well as in how the conflicts within the school are resolved.

Aims and Ideals of Neohumanist Education

- To develop the full potential of each child: physical, mental and spiritual
- To awaken a thirst for knowledge and love of learning
- To equip students with academic and other skills necessary for higher education
- To facilitate personal growth in areas such as morality, integrity, self-confidence, self-discipline and co-operation
- To develop physical wellbeing and mental capabilities through yoga and concentration techniques, sports and play
- To develop a sense of aesthetics and appreciation of culture through drama, dance, music, art
- To encourage students to become active and responsible members of society
- To promote an awareness of ecology in its broadest sense: i.e. the realisation of the inter-relatedness of all things, and to encourage respect and care for all living beings
- To encourage a universal outlook, free from discrimination based on religion, race, creed or sex
- To recognize the importance of teachers and parents in setting an example

Environment

In the River School lots of the songs and the music are about environment, they can be about caring, and can be about spirituality. So the kids are getting encouraged to be more aware on all levels. If they are more aware on all levels of caring for the environment, caring for creatures, caring for caterpillars, then they know also more about caring for each other. (Parent)

In the River School, one way of teaching children to respect each other irrespective of differences is through teaching about the respect for other species and nature. The neohumanist philosophy that is the basis of the River School takes into account “the unique oneness of everything and within that, the unity and the diversity of all of creation”. Children often sing songs that reflect this attitude towards nature and

towards other species ("Feather, fur or fins, If it walks on legs, Or flies on wings, If it runs, or crawls, Or slithers or swims, Then its got its place, In the scheme of things").

The respect for other animal species is further enhanced through a vegetarian food policy. The school believes that "food plays an important role in preventive medicine and also in good mental and emotional health". Parents are therefore asked to respect the food policies that are in accordance to the overall philosophy of the school: "Vegetarian food", "No junk food" and "Minimum packaging". Food is also seen as very important for child's ability to "concentrate and learn".

When introducing "special themes", for example a visit to the zoo, children not only study the animals they visit, their feeding patterns, sing animal songs, etc. They also study "the maps of the zoo to plan which animals to visit, examine the zoo habitats and their appropriateness, study how a zoo is organised, do yoga postures of the different animals they've seen and write essays, poems or stories about animals in captivity, extinction of animals, etc."

In the classroom "we look at the map of the world, and the Earth is really so tiny, and we talk about that all the time. We also talk about how different cultures view spirits, trees, [and explore] animistic ideas". The principle of neohumanist education is to "look at yourself, then yourself in relation to others and then looking at the bigger picture in relation to the whole world". So "we look at respect for self, and our environment, and other countries and other people".

During an Aboriginal reconciliation week, through the creation of Aboriginal masks of animals, dot painting and Aboriginal story telling, there was a focus on the connection between Aboriginal culture and the land, "this land that we are on right now". And it is seen as important that "we should learn that link as well".

Community

The school has very strong links with the local community. As previously mentioned, it was started through the efforts of several families living on communally owned and managed land. The school also consciously attempts to establish good relationships with other community members: by shopping locally or by participating in the local economy. The school accepts "bunyas" (an alternative currency within the LETS: local energy transfer system) and uses them to pay for jobs such as carpentry, teacher's aids, and elective teachers. The children are required to come to school by the school bus in order to avoid excessive traffic on the roads of the peaceful and relatively secluded neighbourhood.

The school also strongly encourages parent involvement. Parents are required to contribute, as an energy levy, eight hours of labour per month. This may be done in a variety of ways, including participation in working bees, volunteering in the classroom, serving on the parent committee, helping with festivals and fund-raising activities, volunteering to help on excursions and school camps and teaching an "elective", these units of study are taught by local people with skills they would like to share. They meet weekly and have included topics such as: jewellery making, cooking, drama, bush

dance, video making, computers, lead lighting and adventure thrills. At the beginning of each term, children chose their elective from what is being offered.

The parents are involved in aspects of planning activities for the school, as well as in behavioural management strategies:

Parents are generally, emotionally very present. There are many parents in different areas and they are very happy to help [the school]. There are lots of resources [amongst parents] and we usually use that.

Parents have lots of power here, and provided that you put the energy in you are really invited to contribute at all levels. I've lived in lots of places, my kids have been to about 8 different schools so I do know what the other schools are like, and this is the only school I've been involved with that has such parent input. In the state system I felt very disempowered. We wished very hard to change things and they did change but it was so slow and so difficult, it was a matter of years. There are some good state schools though, some have very progressive principles, one of our teachers was in the state school before.

In order to further enhance the connection with the local community the school has received a seeder grant to:

...see if there is enough community interest, to involve the community in our art space, to allow the community artists, artisans, musicians, sculptors, to work in some space, to get the opportunity for children to see how art is produced and somehow to help the children understand what the artistic process of different artists is or can be. In one sense is the other broadening of their horizons as far as the integration with the community at large goes. The potential is very good and it will probably be developed more and more into a specific building which will allow the community to come down and interact with the school and the artists to work from here. They would not specifically work with children, but the children would be integrated, and it is expected that artists involved would also give workshops and seminars for the children to help them see the artistic processes happen.

The value system within the school and the local community is also reflected and developed in other school activities. For example, children ran a garage sale, a dinner theatre and a bake sale to raise funds to support the protest against the Jabiluka uranium mine. Other (local and international) community involvement includes, for example, teachers active in the Amnesty International organisation or teachers who used to lobby against Apartheid in South Africa. In addition, a few teachers have “brought into the school a strong focus on Aboriginal Reconciliation”:

Every year we do the Reconciliation week and we focus on Aboriginal reconciliation and the issues around that. Especially since a few new teachers have come that have taken that on board in a big way.

A parent in the school has been active in addressing racism and developing in-service activities for parents and teachers. The workshop the parent developed is called

“embracing our differences” and has evolved from previous involvement in the community on similar issues:

We had this group in our community earlier, around the time of Pauline Hanson,² addressing racism in the community, and it went on from there, but I designed it [embracing our differences workshop] specifically for the parents and the staff.

Although the community in which the school is situated is generally “very white” the children in the school are “constantly seeing people from other places, with different skin colours and different accents”. As previously stated, the school is part of the network of several hundred neohumanist schools run by the same socio-spiritual movement throughout the world. It is often visited by Dadas (“brother”, a monk) and Didis (“sister”, a nun) who have dedicated their life to service and spiritual teaching and who run or help out with similar projects overseas. Dadas and Didis come from different cultures and are “walking around in orange robes”—the type of clothing traditionally worn in India:

They come and they are regularly appearing on the scene and it is nothing that anyone stares at, they [the children] all want to know who the person behind the robe is. For example, that is the soccer Dada, he plays soccer [with the children]. They immediately have to look behind the façade of any person, behind their skin, behind what their clothes are. (Parent/Teacher)

Teaching and learning

Apart from there being education based on ecology, neohumanist education also favours “child-centred approaches and whole child learning”. Neohumanist education aims to “facilitate the development of all levels of the human personality: physical, cognitive, creative, communicative, spiritual, social and emotional”. In the River School, great emphasis is put on a Virtues program which helps children learn and internalise moral and personal qualities. It is integrated daily with all parts of the curriculum. Some of the ethnical concepts that are encouraged and modelled include: “non-harming, truthfulness, non-stealing, universal love, simple living, cleanliness, happy heart, helpful hands, inspirational study, meditation and self-improvement”.

Within our school curriculum we have what we call the virtues program and this virtues program touches on all the different qualities and things that are good for human beings to look at, to aspire to, to make part of themselves. For example, in dealing with these issues we have made an important aspect of our virtues program to look at differences, to look at the virtue of tolerance. Then we had children discuss differences and reflect on them, do drawings and artwork, role play... all different ways the people can express their differences, and how can we bring everything “under one hat”.

² A conservative Australian politician who made openly racist statement in the media and create the One Nation Party.

Other values that are discussed in the school at various times are: peace, tolerance, creativity, positivity, justice, respect, generosity.

It may not necessarily have to be on discrimination; it could be that we look at respect.

We look at respect for self, and our environment, and other countries and other people.

But they also deal with the issue of difference directly:

The view in our school is that we should look at this aspect [differences among people] from a very rational standpoint, because [there is a rational explanation] why skin is [of different colours]. So we try to take into account having kids understand that there is a oneness between all of us... lets look at unity, lets appreciate the variety of cultural differences, physical differences. So at different times we had programs to honour the differences of the children.

In the River School diversity is seen as an extremely positive thing:

For us, the more diversity that comes to the school, the better. It gives the children an opportunity to actually integrate and to understand differences of human cultures.

And because of the nature of our society it is really important that we build the links rather they let them fall apart.

Meditation

Apart from promoting multiculturalism within the curriculum the other activity that is seen as important in addressing this issue, and that is incorporated into the routine of the River School, is regular meditation. Children do meditation three days a week and the values programme two days a week. At the beginning, the school attempted to:

join them together but we found that we'd do a little bit on values a little bit on meditation and it became a bit tokenistic. Rather than if we are really going to do meditation... we are actually going to go through the process properly. If we are going to do values we are really going to go through this process properly.

The connection between meditation and universalism is in approaching "the unity and the diversity of all of creation" not only on rational but also on spiritual and emotional levels:

In regards to meditation and yoga perhaps the children are not able to go as deep in their meditation as adults are able to, but it is setting up a habit, a neural network, brain network within the children, a habit of going inside. And I have seen some of the children being able to really quiet their minds, to sit very peacefully. And I feel that having done mediation myself for many many years, that the more we are able to go more deeply inside ourselves the more we are able to feel this neohumanistic philosophy, to feel what it means to be in unity with other personalities and other human beings. I feel, maybe because [the movement] is so much a part of myself, I feel that it is so logical, so rational and so natural that we see creation as a unity, we feel the unity, and we approach the differences from that standpoint.

Because the teaching and learning approaches focus on the “whole child”, the school tries to concentrate on the causes of racism rather than exclusively on the behaviour. It focuses on both the rational and emotional sides of the child:

It's coming from the staff, this sense that it is not just about looking at the nice things, you are not just trying to pretend that we are all just these lovely sweet people, but also realizing that we do have darker sides and that is important in regard to racism.

Because there is a part of every person who will want to find why they are special and one of the ways they are going to say they are special is to make somebody else not special. And we can't pretend that that doesn't exist... and we can't tie a band aid³ over the top of it. We have to be able to look at it and say why? Are you fearful, are you afraid? And often this comes through when we are dealing with conflicts with kids. [We] are trying to find out what is actually working underneath it, not just punishing the behaviour. We ask why did you do that, what were you feeling, what was in your body?

For example, [they might be] feeling vulnerable, feeling trapped in a situation, feeling disempowered and that is why they might [be trying to get] the power back.

Normally we bring both children together to have them understand that such abusive language hurts, it hurts other children. We understand that it is part of the growing of children, growing up in a society which has such diverse culture and such diverse differences. It is a learning process that children also have to go through. So we don't take it as a threat to the school ... we don't see it as a negative thing. We treat it as a situation in which the children can increase their understanding and growth as far as what are racial issues, what is racism, what is being a human being in relationship to other human beings.

This attitude is in relation to the underlying philosophy, the Tantric philosophy which is...

Often being misunderstood. Issues that we see at the school, issues and obstacles and problems are there for us to learn from, they are there not to avoid but we grow by coming in contact with these obstacles, we shouldn't avoid them. It might be more difficult this way, but growth is also ensured not only in the individual but also in collective arena.

The incidents are not only seen as the learning experience for the children involved but also as a learning experience for parents and the school in general. Even the person being bullied learns from the incident:

They understand more and more where [those who bully] are coming from. They come from perhaps, not such a broad-minded family, [specific] cultural situation and do not really understand. So for them [children being bullied] to see that other children don't

³ A small adhesive cover sold to protect cuts and grazes from infection; Australian colloquialism for hiding the ugly or disturbing.

have that understanding [of difference] also increases their tolerance to a certain degree.

Cooperative learning

Other aspects of teaching and learning focus not on individual achievement but on teamwork and therefore favour cooperation over competition. Students study all academic subjects in small group settings. In the Lillypillies (Year 1) and Gumnuts classes (Year 2), the school encourages learning through group “workstations” while in middle (3-5) and big family (6-7) academic work is assigned in weekly “contracts”:

We really encourage cooperative learning. Basically we really try to make it like we are a big jigsaw puzzle, every person has to find their piece, work with other people, figure out how their piece work with other people's, and then find out how the whole works. We start with words, and then try to figure out how they go together, or in the art, everyone does a picture which becomes a part of a big picture. (Teacher)

The whole idea is teaching the whole child, not just looking at the academic marks or even conformity, the biggest goal is for the children to realise their own potential and that they are unique and perfect just the way they are. They don't have to be anything else than who they are. Their job is to experience that journey of discovering who they are, in different contexts. Neohumanism looks at all the facets, for example, at how all facets of one child fit with all the facets of another child. And from this angle anti-racism and multiculturalism would be supported. (Teacher)

The children are encouraged to actively participate in their learning and they even have had an input on the creation of school policies. For example, the children themselves created the main school policy: “Everyone to be: Safe, Happy and Free to learn”. In terms of learning, children are encouraged to “take responsibility for their own learning”. Learning in a cooperative fashion fosters self-esteem and leads to greater independence:

We try to mix the structure with creativity, we allow them to be individuals but we negotiate lots of things with them. This system gives children more advantages, the children who moved on to high school all do very well academically but not only that, the comments that's come back from the teachers from high school about the children from our school is that they all have this amazing ability to work independently. They don't have this need to be told what they “must do”. And they are not afraid of teachers, so they don't think; Oh, I shouldn't ask that. Children here have to take responsibility for their learning. I mean we teach them and we stick by the curriculum, but we do not believe that that is all you do. If you do a quality hour of maths 3 times a week you don't have to do that every single day. Or you might do it for half an hour every day. But then you also leave time for things like meditation, creative art and formal art, plus the value discussions, so we can fit all these things in and still get kids to come out as working on their own. The whole focus is for them to take responsibility for their behaviour and for their learning. (Teacher)

The belief in the River School is that if the children learn how to be cooperative they will also be better equipped to resolve conflicts among themselves. By taking responsibility for their behaviour and through the values program they are helped to become “active and responsible members of society”.

In general, the curriculum:

As far as anti-racist curriculum [goes], [is] not so much anti-racist as pro-multiculturalism. And I actually think that those two have to go hand in hand, not just for all cultures but also a specific stance against racism. In my own classroom, I believe it is anti-racist too but in general the curriculum is more pro-multiculturalism. I focus very specifically on multicultural programmes; we all focus on different issues of reconciliation. We incorporate multiculturalism in our virtues program, and usually what we work on is non-discrimination, for any purpose, any reason... That all people are equal. Rather than specifically pulling out race or sex, we talk about all people being equal.

The school strongly supports multicultural Australia. Also:

When we look at Australian society we always incorporate Aboriginal influences and I think that is the main focus in the school. When we talk about Australia, we talk about where Aboriginal people live, we talk about different rights, which area is sacred and where each of them lived.

The evidence of this focus is found in the statement of students regarding the way life has changed for Aboriginal people since the Captain Cook landed to Australia:

The life for Aboriginal people since the Europeans came here changed heaps; sacred places for them are now private properties, there was a kind of slavery. Now their life is futuristic like, different. Their life definitely changed and it was bad for a while, and still it is bad in some things.

In the classroom the teachers are also making use of children's various cultural backgrounds and are trying to appreciate everyone's experience:

At one stage they did a map of where their family was from and that was very very interesting, someone had a Hawaiian grandmother, someone else had an Aboriginal grand grandmother, so they can see even though they are white, that we come from many different places and I think that was an incredibly valuable thing to do.

One girl is really embarrassed to use her language, I get really excited and think it is great to know other languages, and I encourage them to use it, and she does at home, but for some reason she wouldn't [in the classroom]. As a teacher I don't want to push [the girl] ... to [use her language] but I do want her to know that I do value her experience, as equally as any other experience, whether it is mono or multicultural.

Apart from the state holidays, various other holidays are celebrated in the school:

We've celebrated Chinese New Year, it was the year of the Rabbit so we celebrated that and talked about it. So they know what the dragon represents, etc. Then Indonesian Independence Day is coming up on the 17 of August and I intend to do something

about that. Even doing something as simple as cooking... what everyone can appreciate about the culture.

Behaviour management

In the River School behaviour management is seen as very important when dealing with racism: "If they are clear on all sorts of bullying they are clear on racial bullying as well". It is seen as important to teach the children:

The language to use, instead of screaming and hitting back at someone, actually saying, I don't like what you are saying, and then being able to get support from an adult around them to deal with that.

The attitude of the teachers is also seen as important in regard to the frequency and the extent of the conflicts within the school. It is believed that calling teachers (and parents) by their first name, having family feeling and being a small school all contribute to the situation in which children are feeling "quite safe" and consequently "they don't need to take aggression on each other as much":

There is lots of room to be really loving in the school, like it is OK to hug kids and it is expected that you look after the children not just teach them, but treat them as equals, it is really important in the school and across the classroom.

The discipline management policy "probably took two years to develop properly":

It was good because a lot in the State education system was happening about changing all that. It was not like we were on our own here. Changing all this punishment thing to kids taking responsibility for their actions and when they do something that is inappropriate to actually get them to work it out (how they've done it and how they could have done it differently). And a warning system (first, second, time out), pocket system (pocket moves), etc. It worked incredibly well, but it took that time.

Conflict resolution we really focused on that, we think it is really important. And we usually talk to the kids, and sometimes we send them to talk to [the school administrator] and they hate it because she makes them talk a lot. Other times they are happy to talk to her because they are hurt and want to be heard.

There are very clear boundaries [now] though, very clear what we expect from those children. Each class has its own set of rules and the children help make those rules. What do we need to do to make this class work, children together with the teacher. And you get the kids to own their rules, something which will work for everyone. They know what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. We always explain the behaviour that is non acceptable and we are consistent. There is a list of things (basic stuff, be safe, happy and free to learn) and also respecting each other, respecting each other's property and individuality, so they are very much aware of the boundaries. And we are very consistent, and it runs through the school.

Because some younger kids "felt threatened in the bus" the buddy system was introduced:

We also buddy them up across age, we do buddy reading and buddy writing and that is older and younger kids together. Older children chose the younger kids and their job is to make sure that the person feels safe, in the school, in the park (where the bus stops) and in the bus. That seems to work really well, it seems to stop little kids being scared.

Kids in this school are really nice to each other, even with different ages they play together. The little ones are not scared of older kids. In state schools kids are a bit nervous and scared from big kids, but we actually do buddy system here, we buddied them up, they have to just say, "Hi! how are you doing", once a day. Not a big thing, just that, they take care of each other.

It was found that the size of the school definitely helps with the behavioural management, including management of the racist incidents:

And being a small school it is difficult for the teacher to get away with being totally not caring about prejudice. We would all know pretty soon, because something would happen. In the big state school with 600 children it is so much easier to lose an individual experience. (Administrator)

They tease much more in the state schools, there are too many kids. Teachers can't do much. (Students)

But even in a small school like the River School it is sometimes difficult to put the "hands straight on" when the incidents happen:

There was an incident that I didn't follow up and that has bugged me a lot since then. The girl came to me during very busy time and I asked her to wait but she was gone, and the boy (saying that "his little sister doesn't like brown people") was also gone. So I talked (later) to the girl and I talked in general in the class but I didn't talk specifically to that boy. He is very intuitive and I think he would have known what I was on about but I thought I haven't dealt with it [well] ... So I had it in my head, that if this ever happens again, that I would immediately talk to a person.

Suggestions:

- The child that has been bullied to be immediately supported.
- To immediately talk about the issue, with both sides (all the children involved).
- Teachers to very clearly vocalise that they do not approve racist and discriminatory behaviour.
- Parents to be informed so that they can deal with the issue at home, the same day.
- Parents to talk not only to the principle but also to the teacher(s) involved
- To encourage conflict resolution involving both (all of the) children and their parents.
- Parents (from diverse cultural backgrounds) to ask the school what policies they have in place and how they have dealt with racist incidents in the past.
- Children to be taught that it is not enough just not to be racist. They should be taught that they can actually stand up for the people who are being racially discriminated against.
- Children to be taught which words to use and what to say when the incidents (involving them or other children) occur.

Where to next?

The general belief in the school was that it is very important to keep the momentum:

It is a constant thing, with every year it has to be spelt out, what harassment is, what sort of harassment they might experience and what to do.

And because the members of Ananda Marga have experienced persecution and are in general concerned about harassment and prejudice, many felt that the issue was “not going to go away”:

We are constantly in this state of change, everybody is stimulated, staff are empowered in what they do, it is also about caring, also teachers are here to teach, they are not here to do policies, although they are involved in that, they are not here to do other things, they are here to teach. In most other schools there is lots of administrative work. We are trying to nurture the staff and in that process we nurture the children and the parents are then nurtured as well.

One thing that happened in the process of getting ready for this interview is that we realised that this could create something that we needed to do something about.

Something is going to happen and we need to go through the process, everything is timely, and out of this is going to come a policy.

It was perceived that this is a “a growing and evolving process not only for the children but also for the staff, for the administration”.

The staff believe that there is potential in the school with its emphasis on neohumanist philosophy to appropriately and effectively deal with the issue of racism:

We feel that we are on track in our approach but we still have many more skills to develop.