

Aurukun school review partly incorrect and inaccurate, Indigenous leader Noel Pearson says

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PHOTO: Mr Pearson said the assessment was carried out on a closed school. (ABC News: Chris O'Brien)

Indigenous leader Noel Pearson has criticised a review of his Cape York Aboriginal Academy in Aurukun, which was conducted while the school was not operating.

A security assessment and review of education at the far north Queensland primary school were released on Tuesday, more than a month after all of its teachers and staff were evacuated after violence in the community.

The State Government said all 27 recommendations would be adopted, including that the Education Department take a bigger role in the running of the school and offer a broader Australian curriculum, alongside Mr Pearson's "direct instruction" syllabus.

What is direct instruction teaching?

- Dr Chris Sarra says direct instruction is an explicit way of teaching where the student listens and responds, which is a necessary part of teaching
- The system is highly scripted, where teachers are told what to say, and students encouraged to respond in a particular way
- However, if the whole day is spent doing that, it is very boring
- It can affect the teacher-student relationship and assumes all students are at the same level
- The problem at Aurukun's school is the direct instruction teaching system is a product brought off-the-shelf from the US, Dr Sarra says

The system focuses on the needs of children with learning difficulties, and breaks each learning task to its smallest component to help students master simpler skills before moving to more difficult tasks.

Advocates of alternative Indigenous education models have previously labelled it as a failed experiment.

Speaking in Brisbane on Tuesday afternoon, Mr Pearson rejected suggestions Education Queensland should take back management of the school.

"You would have to believe in fairy tales if you think that that is a solution to Aurukun's educational needs," he said.

Mr Pearson said the review team never saw his method in action.

"Some accurate observations, some fair assessments, but also a whole lot of stuff that is patently incorrect, inaccurate," he said.

He also said the review did not include law and order problems which caused the violence and closed the school temporarily.

The State Government had floated the idea of taking control of the primary school, but Education Minister Kate Jones said instead, classes would be held for Year 7 and 8 students and distance education for later years, so not all students would have to go away for high school.

The school is due to reopen next week.