Abstract: In the very first lecture that I give my students I ask the question; Hands up those who were taught that Captain Cook discovered Australia? From the amount of students that raise their hand, it would appear that many of those who write the curriculum and teach Indigenous Australian Studies in educational institutions, still have not got it right! Many of those who raise their hand have come into University straight from High School and so the questions must be asked: Who is teaching Indigenous Australian Studies? Where are they getting their information? Are Indigenous peoples being consulted? Who is being consulted? Are they the appropriate people? This paper looks not at the educational institutions as such, (the above is just an example), but rather at the processes of communication, of negotiation and of compromise; all of which fall into the realm of ‘consultation’. Subjects taught in schools for example, that cover Indigenous peoples and/or issues are in many cases, written without consultation with the appropriate Indigenous peoples, are fostered onto students with inappropriate content and do not take into account the diversity of the very peoples that they are teaching about: Indigenous peoples! Many educational institutions have got it right though. I believe that this has eventuated because those educational institutions have been aware that Indigenous peoples must be brought to the consultation table, their concerns, thoughts, ideas, wisdom, knowledge and experience must be taken into consideration when Indigenous issues come through the school gate. Not consulting with appropriate Indigenous peoples in relation to Indigenous Studies is fraught with danger. This danger lies in the misinformation that is passed to students about Indigenous people and/or issues and the perpetuation of that misinformation throughout the broader community.

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Consultation as a Teaching Resource:

A Wiradjuri Perception

A paper submitted to the Aboriginal Association Studies Journal

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In the very first lecture that I give my students I ask the question; Hands up those who were taught that Captain Cook discovered Australia? From the amount of students that raise their hand, it would appear that many of those who write the curriculum and teach Indigenous Australian Studies in educational institutions, still have not got it right! Many of those who raise their hand have come into University straight from High School and so the questions must be asked: Who is teaching Indigenous Australian Studies? Where are they getting their information? Are Indigenous peoples being consulted? Who is being consulted? Are they the appropriate people?

This paper looks not at the educational institutions as such, (the above is just an example), but rather at the processes of communication, of negotiation and of compromise; all of which fall into the realm of ‘consultation’. Subjects taught in schools for example, that cover Indigenous peoples and/or issues are in many cases, written without consultation with the appropriate Indigenous peoples, are fostered onto students with inappropriate content and do not take into account the diversity of the very peoples that they are teaching about...Indigenous peoples! Many educational institutions have got it right though. I believe that this has eventuated because those educational institutions have been aware that Indigenous peoples must be brought to the consultation table, their concerns, thoughts, ideas, wisdom, knowledge and experience must be taken into consideration when Indigenous issues come through the school gate. Not consulting with appropriate Indigenous peoples in relation to Indigenous Studies is fraught with danger. This danger lies in the misinformation that is passed to students about Indigenous people and/or issues and the perpetuation of that misinformation throughout the broader community.

For too long, the misconceptions and stereotyping of Indigenous peoples has hindered the progress of truth. Consultation is a means of creating an awareness that there is another history, other cultures, connected to this country. Whilst Furze, De Lacy and Birckhead (1996) examine, analyse and discuss various issues applicable to cultures, conservation and biodiversity, they also look at the issue of consultation. In doing so, they suggest that in the past, consultation may have been seen from an Indigenous perspective at least, as tokenistic. In order to right the ship so to speak, a number of things need to happen.

The general attitude amongst many non-Indigenous Australians must become more accepting of Indigenous peoples and/or issues (Welch, 1996). It is vitally important that those who teach in educational institutions physically participate in some form of cultural awareness training. How can teachers teach something that they know nothing of? According to the NSW Department of Education (NSWDE) ("Curriculum for primary", 1968 p. xiv), the teacher must grow in the knowledge of the subject that they are providing. The Australian Library and Information Association ("Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander", 2000) suggests that this training be delivered by the appropriate Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Craven (1999) supports the suggestion by Welch and comments that Indigenous involvement is necessary if the process of consultation is to be beneficial. In turn, both Welch and Craven are supported by the Australian Library and Information Association.

The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd ("Making schools", 1992) comments that curriculum planning should include all stakeholders and be an ongoing process. This raises an important point. It is important to note that teaching Indigenous Studies is not about writing up a
lesson plan and then taking that plan to the Indigenous community. It is about partnerships between the school, the teacher and the parents. It is about equality. When looking at the issues of access and participation, the ACT Department of Education and Training ("Aboriginal education", 1997 p. 2) stated that in effort to ensure "equity of outcomes"; all students should be encouraged to "actively participate in the curriculum". Recommendation 6 outlined in the submission from the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) ("Senate Committee Inquiry", 1998 p. 4) states that "Institutions wishing (emphasis added) to be part of Equity programs for Aboriginal people need to abide by an 'Agreement' developed by State and Territories Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups...." Again, whilst the powers that be seem to be consulting, there is the very real chance that many institutions may not have taken up the offer and 'wish' to be a part of this. What does this mean for the consultation process? How will the equity issue be resolved?

A shift in thinking is needed from a government and educational institution perspective if the oft' bandied about term of 'equity' is to become a reality rather than a dream. Davison and Stanley (2001) comment that the process of consultation must be undertaken by following the appropriate protocols. In real terms, this could mean that rather than look at Indigenous issues from the sidelines, the government and education institutions need to get involved, bite the bullet and get their hands dirty.

This won't happen of course, as the shift needed to bring this about is a shift in power states the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI), ("Senate Committee Inquiry", 1998) and what government, or institution, is going to allow that to happen? The government and the educational institutions are still the dominant groups and their power base is still driven from a European stance.

Each school should have at the very least, two Indigenous people on staff; one female and one male. The reasons for this may not be that obvious to some, but there are still people in Indigenous communities that are culturally connected and that means that "there is still women's business and that there is still men's business" (Wiradjuri Elder, 2002). The Indigenous peoples who take up these positions need not be schoolteachers themselves, they may be employed as Liaison persons, or be members of the schools Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG). However, even in recognising that there are many educational institutions that do indeed have these people and/or groups in place, their importance should never be underestimated.

Most state governments have now developed, "in consultation with AECG's, study programs to teach all children about Indigenous cultures". (Welch, 1996 p. 41). Who sits on the AECG's though? Are they the appropriate persons? Do Wiradjuri peoples sit on the AECG's committees in Wiradjuri country? Or do others not from Wiradjuri, make decisions for Wiradjuri? In recognising that employment of Indigenous peoples within the educational institutions is a giant leap forward and can be very beneficial to many, many people, in many, many ways, there may be areas of conflict.
The problem may stem from the information that is provided by those who hold positions of power in Wiradjuri country that are not Wiradjuri. There is an inherent bias in people to foster their own beliefs and the information provided from them to others may not be ethical, appropriate, or even applicable. To understand where this is going, a Wiradjuri Elder provides the following example.

"A teacher may approach a member of an AECG for information on the creation of life from an Indigenous perspective and be informed that the Rainbow Serpent created all things. In Wiradjuri country the creation of all things did not come from the Rainbow Serpent and so the teacher is/has been misinformed and will take this misinformation into the classroom...[and] the result is obvious". This Elder went on to add that "whilst people cannot be stopped from working in someone else's country, if they follow protocol, then the Elders will know what it is that is going on in their country, who is teaching what and how they intend to teach it" (Wiradjuri Elder 2003).

The disadvantages of not consulting can be and in many cases are, enormous. The school itself, the teacher, the students and the community all pay a price. The school may become known in the community as a school that doesn't feel comfortable with Indigenous issues, is seen as not taking the lead and of stifling the truth. The teachers may become known in the community as people that do not teach in an ethical and appropriate manner, simply because they may not be aware that they are still indulging in misconceptions and stereotyping. The students are not aware of the true facts surrounding Indigenous peoples and/or issues and leave with a completely distorted image of Indigenous peoples, whilst Indigenous community members still carry the labels given them by those who knew better, but didn’t really care anyhow.

How long must Indigenous peoples be the brunt of ineptness within government and educational institutions? It may be safely assumed by parents and community members that what is being taught in educational institutions in relation to Indigenous peoples and/or issues is factual and in many instances this may be correct; that in itself is not the problem. The real problem lies in those educational institutions that do not follow ethical and appropriate protocols; that do not consult with Indigenous peoples, that do not deal in the facts. The magnitude of the problem may be reduced by the employment of appropriate Indigenous peoples, in the appropriate positions and because currently the numbers of Indigenous teachers is very low, according to Welch (1996).

All teachers however, must be able to leave their cultural biases at the school gate, otherwise they will not be able to demonstrate "strong ethical standards", according to Cole and Chan, (1994 p. 19). This must be a vital pre-requisite for being employed in the discipline of education, especially where ethical standards deal with matters related to "respect for the dignity of other persons". Wood (1988 p. 36) states that children are novices, that they find a lot of the tasks and demands at school "full of uncertainty". This statement highlights the very fact that many, many Indigenous peoples keep repeating over and over again..."They still don't teach the truth...my kids used to come home from school confused over what is right or wrong and who is right or wrong...[the] teacher or
me” (Wiradjuri Elder, 2003). The NSW Department of Education, in 1963 stated that "the teachers primary interest must always be those he teaches" ("Curriculum for primary", 1963 p. 12).

The statements by Wood and the Wiradjuri Elder certainly highlight how the family institution can be undermined. Family institutions must "care for, nurture, tend to and assist" children in relation to socialisation. (Jamrozk and Sweeney, 1996 p. v111), so any teaching that is unethical and inappropriate will affect that institution according to the same authors. It should be noted here that students have a tendency to bring to the classroom, ideas and thoughts, or 'labels' of their own and this occurs because of "family background, experiences, language and cultural beliefs" (McBurney-Fry, 1998 p. 17). Whilst we now have contemporary family institutions, they are also multifunctional (Jamrozk & Sweeney, 1996). Educational institutions could also be classed as multifunctional institutions and could also be likened to an organisation, in keeping with comments by Broinowski (1994 p. 52), who points to the fact that organisations that can be classed as being successful; "constantly innovate; they change and adapt their products to suit the needs of the customers".

Let’s break down the comments of Broinowski. Innovation could mean an invitation to a Wiradjuri Elder to speak of Wiradjuri issues; change and adaptation of products could infer to the continual updating of appropriate resources; and the needs of the customers (students, teachers, parents, communities etc) may extend to the consultation process. All are ingredients that could be utilised to assist the organisation (educational institution) in its attempts to be classed as 'successful'.

Individual teachers may attempt to become autonomous. They will opt to make decisions for themselves on their own behalf and the system is set up so that it provides and allows people the freedom to do this, to make their own decisions (Broinowski, 1994). However, professional standards must be taken into account here. In reaching certain professional standards a requirement is the "cooperation with other members of the teaching profession and the community at large". (Cole & Chan, 1994 p. 19). Discussions between staff members should also be a requirement and may well be a tool; utilised to achieve the logical and systematic planning of the course to suit the "psychological development of the child" stated the NSW Department of Education in 1965 ("Curriculum for primary", p. 43). The Department went further in 1968 by stating that "there are few areas where the class teacher needs to be free to exercise his own personal choice as in the language arts, for their nature is such that anything more than a bare minimum of prescription is undesirable" ("Curriculum for primary", 1968 p. 4).

The danger lies in the provision of avenues that allow teachers to become autonomous. How can a teacher who chooses to become autonomous, let's say a 'bad teacher', provide and deliver a factual package, in relation to Indigenous peoples and/or issues, in the classroom? Could, or does, autonomy in this sense, aid and abet the acts of racism and discrimination, simply because the 'bad teacher', in becoming autonomous, attempts to teach what they prefer and to use resources they prefer to utilise; the bad resources? Can autonomy be beneficial as well? I'm informed that it can.
The 'good teacher' may decide that current resources for example are not appropriate and try to change them; may attempt to introduce new and innovative ways of teaching and dealing with Indigenous peoples and/or issues. In this case, autonomy may not be all that bad. Should the former be the case however, then the teacher must be directed to consult and cooperate with community, fellow teachers, school administrators and parents. This must be undertaken so that the content of lesson plans is in keeping with the wishes of those previously mentioned. The NSWDE so many years ago, recognised this and stated in 1968 that the school is not a separate entity and as such cannot exist without its community ("Curriculum for primary", 1968 p. x).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) cite the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey in commenting on education. It was revealed by the survey that approximately half of the survey participants aged 15 and over, had no formal education, or had not gone on to attain year 10. The reasons for this are many, but poor health, poverty, the tyranny of distance (location) and cultural duty and obligations, can be included as agents of educational disadvantage. Whilst the survey figures mentioned above paint a sad and sorry picture, it may be that there are many Indigenous peoples who drop out of school simply because the educational institution does not present Indigenous studies in an ethical, nor appropriate manner. The Government of South Australia ("Yurrekaityarindi", n.d.) states that in the past, many Indigenous parents have felt unwelcome at educational institutions, or may have felt that they and their children were unimportant; they are embarrassed by the system.

There is an inherent obligation on all schools to provide the best teaching resources in the classroom as possible. To this end, research needs to be conducted as to the appropriateness of existing and future resources. Research however has for the most part been a western construct, driven by western ideals for western ends. There are problems here..."the imposition of western ways of researching on who and what is being studied" (Naughton et al. 2001 p137). This is mirrored in the statement by the NSWDE that "the findings of research will be regarded as important contributing factors to the improvement of instructional procedures" ("Curriculum for primary", 1977 p. 131). If this was so, then the question must be asked. Why is it that students in the classroom in 2003 still raise their hands if the NSWDE had done their job way back in 1977? The answer may lay in other questions. Did the NSWDE use the research findings to improve the quality of teaching? Did the research lead to an improvement in the quality of resources? Did the research contribute to improvement in the quality of community consultation?

It is important that research of any type that has as participants; men, women and children, take into account the diversity of them and not class them as being 'homogenous' and it is also important that any research adhere to guidelines that are ethical; "that the consideration of those being researched be taken into account along with their rights and well-being" (Naughton, Rolfe & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001 pp. 143-270). This infers that research should always "involve close, ongoing consultation between those who plan, execute, and participate in and for those who will be the recipients of the results" (Naughton, Rolfe & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001 p. 3). These authors go further
and cite Williams and Stewart (1992) and comment that the case for "participatory action research involving community control" is very strong. They also examine the issue of disproportionate gains that can be attained through one-way research and comment that benefits can accrue to Indigenous communities if the one-way research is reversed and provide the community with the opportunity to have control of the research, leading to self-determination (Naughton, Rolfe & Siraj-Blatchford, 2001).

A great deal of research in relation to child development has supported the perceptions of Indigenous peoples that the teaching of some cultural practices in the classroom are "preferable, whilst others are not" (Lubeck, 1994 p. 41). This may be true and may also be culturally appropriate, if it can be contextualised. This may mean that the teacher has an awareness of and between, men's and women's business for example. It may also mean that the teacher, even with an awareness of an issue, decides that they don't want to teach it because they don't believe it anyhow; it goes against their own personal beliefs! It is possible that Lubeck could be referring to the 'hidden curriculum'. The 'hidden curriculum' emanates from the values and attitudes of a culture that is more dominant over another; the exclusion from any documented syllabus, it perpetuates the status quo of the dominant group, and "is very insidious and can be found in subtle teacher behaviour" (McBurney-Fry, 1998 p. 14). Any teacher who supports the 'hidden curriculum' could be accused of 'bastardising' the truth and of preventing the students from being taught in an ethical and appropriate manner. This amounts to the teacher handing a student a book that is minus the middle 50 pages and asking the student "What did you think of the story". The whole story in the case of 'hidden curriculum' appears to be always 50 pages short!

The way out of 'hidden curriculum' country may be present in the process of consultation. The way forward of course would be to "promote positive discrimination policies, curriculum reform and teaching practices" according to (McBurney-Fry, 1998 p. 5). Cole and Chan (1994 p. 20) agree but stress however, "that it is axiomatic that teachers should have a good knowledge of what it is they are teaching and a sound knowledge of curricula content and the aims and objectives included in the curricula". Cole and Chan, it appears, have not taken into account 'hidden curriculum'.

McBurney-Fry (1998 p. 16) stated that it is becoming less rare to hear that teachers and standards are no longer "professional nor committed" as may have been the case in years past. Jonassen, Peck and Wilson (1999 p117) as cited Scardamalia & Bereiter (1996) comment that educational institutions such as schools, "stifle, rather than support, knowledge- building" and can do this in a number of ways. One of those ways points to the belief that the teacher is a "knowledge miser and keeps information and experiences to themselves, hence student knowledge tends to be ignored, downplayed or devalued, leading to the conclusion that knowledge and understanding, from a students perspective, may be seen as unimportant". One could safely assume then, that the process of consultation with other staff members, let alone with community peoples, would never eventuate here.
Teachers especially, have an obligation to acknowledge and to use culturally appropriate methods when providing the service that they do and so ensuring that the policies and strategies developed within the curriculum are well-informed, "inclusive and based on justice, fairness and equity" (Bessarab, 1991 p. 90) (as cited in Pearson Education Australia Pty Limited, 2000). In this instance, curriculum planning should seek and include input from stakeholders at the local level. It is very important to remember to consult with people who are accepted members of the community and consult with those who have an understanding of the issues under discussion. Consultation with community is an important process in which the teacher can be guided to reflect on school policies and programs, content of lessons and attitudes that may have a biased leaning (York, 1991). Evaluations should be undertaken on an ongoing basis, thus allowing teachers the opportunity to reflect more and to become more responsive to change.

Parents could rightly assume that the educational setting will assist in the extension of the "intellectual, social and personal development" of their children (Bennett, 1986 p. 2). According to UNICEF ("The state of", 2001, p. 15) various agencies, organisations, groups and individuals for example should assign responsibility and accountability for ensuring that every child has the best possible start in life. UNICEF are moved to state that "unless society's leaders step up to these responsibilities; the children and adolescents of this world, then their parents and families will be left to absorb the effects of poor public policy into their private lives, before passing them on to the next generation" ("The state of", 2001 p. 15).

Just as important is the realisation that an Indigenous perspective, or definition of family, may be different from those of non-Indigenous people. This realisation is important because of the need to understand how the extended family can and does, influence and have an impact on the immediate family, or an individual perspective of things both within and outside, of the family (Bessarab, 1991) (as cited in Pearson Education Australia Pty Limited, 2000). Families are what we build our future upon, but they do not fit the one mould and so policy must take this into account and aspire to "meet the different needs of different families" (Keating, Baldwin & Crowley, 1995).

"What is taught in the classroom regarding Indigenous peoples and/or issues, affects most Indigenous peoples. From the child, to the parents, to his/her brothers and sisters, uncles and aunties, cousins, grandparents, nephews and nieces; all are connected and all will feel the impacts if the child is affected in any way, shape or form" (Wiradjuri Elder, 2003).

Whilst culture is acquired through family, it is important to reiterate the diversity of those families, especially Indigenous families. Indigenous peoples believe in different aspects of spirituality, they bring their children up in different ways, they have very different cultural values (Arthur, Beecher, Dockett, Farmer & Death, 1993). However, the time spent as a family unit is being
impacted upon each and everyday, leading in turn to the "imbalance of parental attention" (McBurney-Fry, 1998 p. 15). Where many older Indigenous peoples still have memories of the policies that led to their children being excluded from schools, the values may not be the same as for areas where those policies had less of an impact. These values are in many instances however, passed on to the child, who in turn may come to look at schools in a less favourable light.

The need though is for the broader communities to understand these different values; hence the need for them to undertake an education states (Welch, 1996). In educational institutions for example, this would have to be consistent to what it is that parents would like teachers to teach. The educational systems also need to understand and comprehend the experiences of Indigenous adults where schools were and in many instances still are, perceived as threatening, or places connected to assimilation and discrimination (Arthur et al. 1993 p27). Welch (1996 p. 44) agrees and states that there is still not enough people that know about Indigenous peoples and issues and those that do have some knowledge of such things, find it hard to accept the fact that "Australia has a black history". It is also important that teachers understand how current politics may and often do, impact on Indigenous families, so that the teacher does not fall into the trap of stereotyping Indigenous peoples. This allows the teacher to look at problems in a much wider context and may in many instances, highlight what is or is not happening to both the individual and the family (Bessarab, 1991) (as cited in Pearson Education Australia Pty Limited, 2000). Once a teacher has become aware of the impacts that politics have had on Indigenous families especially, the consultation process will become a little easier and a deeper understanding between them is a distinct possibility.

The opportunity may now arise where parent and teacher meet on an agreed, ongoing basis. Many parents may feel uneasy about having teachers visit them at home for any number of reasons however and many teachers may feel unwelcome in the homes of students, so the parent, or teacher, may suggest another place, one in which they both feel more comfortable and less threatened (Kostelnik et al. 1993). There may also be instances where parents for one reason or another, may prefer to have their children at home with them all the time. Some parents may prefer to educate their children at home because the standard of education at a school may not be to their liking and may feel forced to undertake education at home, according to Lowe and Thomas (2002). York (1991) agrees by commenting that children are entitled to be protected and supported, both from a cultural roots perspective and from the education system as a whole.

Teachers also need to be "explicit in the texts that they need" so that they do not perpetuate disadvantage, comments Harris et al (2001 p. 137). Teaching resources must look at Indigenous peoples and/or issues in a more holistic manner also. Indigenous peoples do not just exist in the remote areas of far north WA for example; they exist in suburbia where culture is also "strong and alive" (Inglis & Rogan, 1994 p. 5). Teachers should approach families and seek input in relation to the appropriate resources and family history of education (York, 1991) and in doing so may create the culture- inclusive classroom, where diversity has a permanency that is, according to Sinclair and Wilson (1999 p. 13) "integrated into the overall learning of all students".
There are many resources in schools that tell of Indigenous peoples as being 'primitive', of being the first people to migrate to this country (Fox, 1978). These comments are endorsed by Tindale and George (1971) in stating that Indigenous peoples came from three (3) distinct groups (Negritos, Murrayians and the Carpentarians), that mixed with each other so much that original features, colour and appearance became merged. Watson (1984 p. 31) also perpetuated the misconceptions and stereotyping of Indigenous peoples by commenting that "Cook had discovered Botany Bay in 1770".

The importance of material such as this must be put into context. Material of this type tell a story of their own; of how the history of this country and its peoples were recorded and written by people other than the people who were being researched and without consulting with them. The materials are full of condescending attitudes, inappropriate comments and utter falsehoods and there are many such resources 'out there', but by utilising them in an appropriate manner, and in consultation with educational and Indigenous communities, they can become extremely valuable resources. We must not 'burn the books'.

Partnerships between schools, teachers, parents and communities are just some of the major benefits of the consultation process. Goffin and Lombardi (1988) disagree with the autonomous teacher as highlighted earlier. They comment that teachers can attract support for programs through the network of parents, other staff members, local stakeholders and the media should the issues warrant it; that these partnerships can accomplish change where the individual cannot. However, what changes are made to a "segment of a program, can affect the rest of the program" and in doing so, affect the other teachers and students, as well as parents and community, warns (York, 1991 p. 48). A senior Wiradjuri Elder (2003) takes up the issue and comments; "It is important to realise that what is done upstream affects those downstream and so if the process of consultation is not undertaken in the early stages then the domino effect can result".

The "first policy for Aboriginal education in NSW was released in 1982" and focused on the advancement of Aboriginal communities and appreciation of Aboriginal cultures and societies by other Australians stated the NSW Department of Education and Training (NSWDE) (2002 p. 1). It can be seen though that early school curriculum included the need to consult, as can be seen in the New South Wales Department of Education (NSWDE) Curriculum for Primary Schools for example. The NSWDE stated "that cooperation between the school and community agencies will be mutually beneficial" (Curriculum for primary", 1965 p. 53). They have not however, anywhere in the curriculum, acknowledged the existence of Indigenous peoples. In 1977 the NSWDE provided teachers with a syllabus that included grade word lists to assist in the preparation of spelling lessons. The grade word lists do not have the word 'Aboriginal' entered ("Curriculum for primary", 1977 p. 10).
The NSWDET ("The NSW Aboriginal", 2002 p. 1) stated that they are "informed by certain policies and reports" pertaining to issues Indigenous. The policies and reports are said to highlight the importance of literacy skills for Indigenous students and encourage the integration of Aboriginal Australians studies into all school curricula. However, the government informed in 1999, that they were "adopting another approach to meet the needs of Indigenous students" (Kemp, 1999 p. 10). One must ask why, if the government thought that education which was "goal based and outcomes driven" in relation to Indigenous students would be successful, it wasn't adopted earlier. This approach will mean that educational institutions will be driven by the 'need for greed' because Federal funding is geared to performance (Kemp, 1999). In order to fend off any conflict in regards to this issue, Kemp (1999) stated that there should be a system set up to monitor 'outcomes' in relation to the education and skills of school children. But who monitors the system? Who monitors what the teacher tells the children? Would there be a conflict of interest if people involved in education monitored themselves? Of course there would! After intensive consultation with communities, an impartial committee should be developed to undertake monitoring of 'outcome' in order to be affective and in order to be supported by parents, as well as the teachers themselves.

There appears to be inconsistency in the statement by both the NSWDET (2001) and Kemp (1999) when one looks at the racist statement that emanated from the Bennalong Society (2001). The Society is headed by the former Aboriginal Affairs Minister, John Herron and labelled the "pursuit of traditional cultural values" as 'disastrous' (The Northern Territory News, 2001) (as cited in Yalmambirra, 2002 p. 14). What chance has the educational institutions of teaching the 'truth' if any one of them were to adopt the approach taken by the Society? Would the process of consultation stand a chance of working? The only disaster here is that the government has not taken the Society to task over the matter and have, it would seem, turned a blind eye to the issue; racism!

It doesn’t end there. The Victorian State Government in partnership with the VAEAI Committee of Management endorse the concept of Yalca: A Partnership in Education and Training for the New Millennium, but in doing so have neatly grouped all Indigenous peoples into the one basket, under the one label of Koorie. Objective 1 of their policy states that "koorie students" will be placed at the "centre of educational policy and decision making" ("Senate Committee Inquiry", 2001 p. 8). To be labelled as a Koorie is offensive to those who are not and no mention is made of other Indigenous peoples, or of Torres Strait Islander people.

Perhaps it’s time to look back to the past in order to find the answers to the education dilemma confronting Indigenous peoples today. Perhaps this could start with The Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers (FIAEP). This organisation was "formed in 1996 to facilitate cooperation among independent community controlled providers of adult education to 'Indigenous' communities". The Federation rejects "attempts by agencies and institutions within mainstream non-Indigenous education to force its members and programs to conform strictly to educational philosophies and structures for provision which has not be determined as appropriate by 'Indigenous' communities" ("The Federation of", n.d p. 1). The possibility of Indigenous peoples
teaching Indigenous peoples from pre-school to higher educations such as those offered by Universities and TAFE, would be a giant step in the continuation of cultural practice, whereby education was handed down by those with the appropriate knowledge.

It doesn’t take courage to consult with Indigenous peoples, just commonsense. Sinclair and Wilson (1999) stated however, that it does take courage to use the information in such a way as to teach the truth and if all teachers were to do this, then the ethics and appropriateness of Indigenous Studies would become the norm. A dedicated teacher is a teacher of the truth, a teacher that will plan ways to make each and every persons educational experience “a positive one”, stated (Fujawa, 1998 p. 26). For this to eventuate, the process of consultation as a teaching resource must be recognised for what it is and for what it can achieve; a way of teaching the truth and a pathway to reconciliation.
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