Teaching Aboriginal Studies: Producing Inclusive Australian Citizens

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This paper argues that Aboriginal Studies should not merely be 'taught' on the sidelines, but celebrated and incorporated into mainstream teaching. If primary teacher education institutions and departments of education’s teaching and learning mission is to produce inclusive Australian citizens, then it can be argued that primary teacher education institutions and likewise schools must incorporate Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal Studies perspectives. The paper considers the historical factors that have influenced Australia’s misunderstanding of Aboriginal people and culture, and the present plight of Aboriginal people in Australia. It examines these historical factors and how these factors have resulted in Aboriginal people and culture being perceived as insubstantial which has led, in some areas, to chronic Aboriginal disadvantage. In the 1970’s a cultural resurgence resulted in Aboriginal Studies being taught in schools. However, many primary teacher education institutions have been slow to introduce Aboriginal Studies subjects. This paper presents a rationale for teaching Aboriginal Studies within universities, schools and hence the wider Australian community.

Introduction

It is generally acknowledged in government reports that Aboriginal people in Australia remain its most disadvantaged group. This review examines public policies and practices that have directly impacted upon Indigenous educational disadvantage. These national and state government policies are analysed in relation to their intent, their often negative and disastrous implementation and the resultant consequences for Indigenous people in Australia. This research clearly demonstrates that Australia has a plethora of policies and reports, and compensatory programmes, designed to address the unacceptably high level of educational disadvantage in the majority of the Indigenous Australian population. Yet these have not worked in terms of significant change. It is further suggested that Australian institutions such as the federal and state public sectors, educational research groups and the primary, secondary and tertiary sector stop hiding behind policy failure and acknowledge there must be new solutions and directions. This paper proposes a key solution in terms of wider education. In the education of all Australians of the history of Aboriginal Australians, so that all Australian can understand and appreciate the true history of Australia, and then and only then, will Aboriginal children succeed at school.

Aboriginal Educational Disadvantage

“Access to education is an important ‘social determinant’ of health, and links with other factors, like poverty, unemployment, quality of housing and access to primary health services. People who have low educational attainment have: fewer life opportunities; poorer health; lower income; and are more likely to be unemployed. It’s a vicious cycle: poor health also leads to poor educational attainment” (Fred Hollows Foundation (pamphlet), 2004).

There are some 458,000 Indigenous people in Australia which is 2.3% of the Australian population, (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2004). The majority (60%) of the Indigenous population lives in two states: NSW and Queensland, with over 26% of Indigenous people living in remote or very remote areas National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training (Commonwealth Government, 2002). The statistics also show that over half of the Indigenous population is 24 years of age or younger. The implications of the age break up of the Indigenous population indicate a potent challenge for educators. The poor life expectancy and chronic illness health status of Aboriginal Australians is outstandingly poor on a global scale. The life expectancy of an Indigenous man is 56.3 years compared to the non-Indigenous male population that live into their late 70s. Longevity is better for the female Indigenous population at 62.8 years but is again in striking contrast to the non-Indigenous female population who, on average, live until 80 or over. As Day and Davison (2004, p. 13) state: “Right now Indigenous female life expectancy is lower
than the UN Human Rights Development Index for India and about the same as Sub-Saharan Africa with AIDS factored out. Australia has fallen behind the USA, Canada and New Zealand in life expectancy of Indigenous people, when 30 years ago Australia was equal”.

When we look at incarceration, Indigenous people make up 20% of the Australian prison population, and in areas where prisons and large Indigenous populations intersect, as for example Townsville’s Stuart Creek prison in Queensland; the Indigenous population can exceed 50%. The incarceration rate for juvenile is even more frightening, with Indigenous youth making up 42% of juveniles in detention. As the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) (Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 2004) shows, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCADC) (Johnstone, 1991), has had very little impact on the rate of incarceration or on the number of deaths in custody. From 1990–1999, 18% of all deaths in custody (115 individuals) were Indigenous Australians. Additionally, from 2000-2002 there was a 20% increase in Indigenous deaths in custody. More concerning though, is the increase of Indigenous women being incarcerated (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Social Justice Commissioner, 2005).

According to key recent reports Commonwealth Government, 2002; Schwab and Sutherland, 2004; the ABS, 2004 the health status of Indigenous Australians is drastically below that of the rest of the Australian population. These reports also identify the connection between health and education. Indigenous people suffer outstandingly higher rates of diabetes, respiratory diseases, cancer and therefore hospitalisation, compared to the general non-Indigenous population. In some communities there is a high rate of alcohol consumption that can lead to family violence, and profound community dysfunction. Meanwhile low birth weight of Indigenous Australian babies has increased to double that of the non-Indigenous population. Schwab and Sutherland (2004, pp. 10-11) show that there is an increased body of research that indicates that ‘biological processes occurring before birth’ can affect brain development which may impact on a child’s ability to learn. Low birth weight, infant malnutrition, chronic infections such as Otitis Media, neglect and child abuse are also identified as impacting on a child’s capacity to learn in later years. In addition, other health factors such as: the health of the parents, poor hygiene and inadequate or non-existent health infrastructure, particularly in rural and remote communities, have lifelong adverse effects on children’s ability to learn, thereby impacting on educational outcomes.

**Past Policies: Setting the Scene for Disadvantage and Misconceptions**

Many colonised countries such as the United States, Canada and more closely to home, New Zealand, have forged treaties which recognise that their Indigenous people have inherent right to their lands. Unfortunately, in Australia Indigenous people have had their ‘sovereign rights’ repudiated from the first colonisation where in fact the continent was declared Terra Nullius in law (i.e. empty of people who had any rights- totally empty land for the taking). Only in the 20th century, have Aboriginal people had the right to vote and to therefore have any influence on property rights to land, water and sea country (Rowley, 1972; Stone, 1974; Bandler & Fox, 1983; Moses, 2004). Since colonisation, Indigenous Australian people were placed outside the new emerging nation. Successive policies at the commonwealth, state and territory level were constructed to manage the lives of Indigenous Australian people.

The collision of the two cultures after 1788, saw the decimation of Indigenous societies across mainland Australia and Tasmania. In this invasion of English cultural redevelopment of landscape, perhaps tens of thousands of Aboriginal deaths occurred through ‘starvation, murder, displacement and widespread disease (Connell & Irving, 1982; Moses, 2004). During the nineteenth century, in much the same way as ‘endangered species’ in the modern world are seen to need to be protected there was an emergence of state protectionist policies that in essence meant that Indigenous people were to be literally ‘protected’ for their own good. This was effected by, gathering together the remnants of a decimated Indigenous population, usually away from their ancestral lands, country and place, and directing these people onto reserves and missions where their movements were very restricted through a new ‘detention’ policy. Such government sanctioned policies meant that the states and territories were able to both exclude and confine Indigenous people while allowing their exploitation in such areas as farm and domestic labour. In terms of education, a form of schooling was established on some of the reserves and missions. (Lippman, 1981; Rowley,
A notorious Federal government policy applied to Australian Indigenous people was the Assimilation policy (Bandler & Fox, 1983). The ideology behind this policy was that if Indigenous people could be taught to embrace the values and behaviours of European Australians, then they would be assimilated into and be accepted by the invading social order as Australians (Lippman, 1981; Bandler and Fox, 1983; Connell and Irving, 1982). The assimilation policy aimed to deculturalise Aboriginal people. It assumed, without consultation with Indigenous Australian people, that they wished to be absorbed into the wider European population. However as Pearl Gibbs (quoted in Bandler & Fox, 1983, p. 115) pointed out, “no Aboriginal had been asked to help draw up the policy of assimilation; neither were they asked whether they approved of it”. Whilst Aboriginal communities released from their missions and reserves were expected to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges as other Australians, the real result was that Indigenous Australians had very little control over their lives and were cast adrift from reserves and missions. It was expected that they would now automatically assimilate and earn their own living in the wider community.

Education was seen as a way to train, (not necessarily educate), Indigenous Australians in skills that were essential for performing work to support European Australians in the expanded land clearance and pastoral industry. Aboriginal workers went to jobs and more extremely indentured hard labour as farmhands and harsh domestic labour (Connell, 1977; Rowley, 1972; McConnachie, 1982). They were to have the same basic rights and privileges as all other Australians, but on average, health, education and democratic outcomes were the opposite, and disadvantage accelerated in the late 19th and up until the mid 20th century where Aboriginal children were still to be found in forced isolated homes for ‘schooling’ such as Kiama in NSW. The stories of these experiences are well document in the government review report ‘Bringing Them Home’ (HREOC, 1997a; 1997b) Aboriginal people did not and still do not have sufficient power to control, or significantly influence, the cultural message of education within schools. In discussing the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students, McConnachie (1982, p. 20) noted: “rarely has the failure been attributed to the inadequacies of the education provided, to the discriminatory nature of white society or to the active resistance of Aboriginal communities to the cultural destruction implicit in many of the education programmes”. The dominance of European expansion and culture has shaped Indigenous peoples expectations of, and the outcomes from public education.

The most devastating and destructive policy of the past was the national policy that advocated the removal of ‘half-caste’ Indigenous children from their families (HREOC, 1997a, 1997b; Johnstone, 1991). This government policy affected the very fabric of Indigenous families and their identity. In effect, it divided families, scattering them across all regions of Australia’s states and territories. The legacy of this policy had far reaching effects and continues to impact on Indigenous families, even today.

Historically, Australia has not recognised and not easily modified the government view that Indigenous Australians’ have inherent sovereign rights. The plethora of past ‘native peoples’ policies such as the restriction of Aboriginal community movement and the rounding up of inland communities into detention areas or missions has more in common with the policies of Soviet Russia in isolating prisoners in the Siberian Gulag or indeed, European prisoner of war camps, than being policies for the betterment of an Indigenous people. Such policies have left a destructive legacy in which the education of non-Indigenous Australians has been nurtured by successive government policies and practices based on western ethnocentric views of the cultural superiority, and racist assumptions of Indigenous people’s inherent inferiority. Education during the 19th and 20th Century did not support the socio-economic advancement or cultural survival of Indigenous people. In many instances it was actively used to undermine Indigenous identity and degrade Indigenous societies and culture (Stone, 1974). Schools did not take account of the wishes or aspirations of Indigenous people. Parents and families had no voice in how their children were being educated, and this was particularly true for people living in rural, remote and isolated regions.

**New Horizons**

In 1972, the Labour Government, under Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, constructed a more progressive policy, one of self-determination and self-management. Although this policy still did not address or
recognise Indigenous sovereignty. The policy did bring about a striking change in the way that governments viewed Indigenous education, and health, and a recognition of community. Indigenous people were involved in programmes and invited to choose their own goals, to make their own decisions about their way of life within Australia. Stevens (1981, p. 115) points out, “the policy of the Labour Party portended a point of departure to reverse the trend of 200 years of despoliation, injustice and discrimination”.

According to an Indigenous leader, Paul Hughes, who was a leading educationalist at the time, and an active participant in the consultative process: “these were indeed heady times”! This period saw the establishment of the Schools Commission, (with Margaret Valadian as the Indigenous member), the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC), which was able to access the Minister of Education and Aboriginal Affairs, and the establishment of Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (AECG) at state and territory levels – so that Indigenous communities and organisations’ viewpoints and priorities could be addressed. State and Federal Aboriginal Education Policies (AEPs) were also formulated (NSW AEP 1982, Federal AEP 1989). The NAEC generated slogans such as “1000 Aboriginal Teachers by 1990” and this period saw the setting up of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and many other Indigenous services and organisations.

Since the Labour Government launched large-scale programmes for Indigenous people in 1972, there have been some genuine attempts to tackle the problems of self-determination and self-management. Unfortunately, there were two consequences. One was that most Australians have never met an Indigenous Australian person and therefore knowledge of Indigenous Australians was often based on misinformation gathered from the media. Secondly, dire consequences of these past policies and injustices remained in the living memories of many Indigenous Australian people. Hence, educational institutions are regarded by many Indigenous people as just ‘another form of social and economic control’ Apple (1997, p. 63), and as a result, to be overtly and covertly avoided. It is now time that schools and teacher education institutions teach the true history of Australian colonisation and of Aboriginal cultural values to all Australians as a cultural obligation. Only by learning from the past can we hope to live in an informed and just society. To teach all teachers the historical record of European settlement and about Aboriginal culture and tradition, inclusive Indigenous history is essential. To do this primary teacher education institutions must train teachers how to teach Aboriginal Studies and how to incorporate Aboriginal perspectives into the curriculum if Australia wants to support this new vision for educational advancement.

**Aboriginal Education Policy**

In response to the acknowledged inequalities in education experienced by Indigenous Australian people, the Commonwealth Government has sponsored numerous reviews and their reports. The most significant of these, the Hughes Report, (1988), had as its main themes access to and participation in education and equity of educational outcomes. It set targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people achievement in all sectors of education. Indigenous Australians saw the development of a National Aboriginal Education policy as the ‘cornerstone’ of self-determination through the involvement and control of education for Aboriginal people in achieving equity and participation, (Hughes, 1988, p. 41). The Report also recommended “there should be at least one compulsory component of Aboriginal Studies/Aboriginal education in every preservice teacher education course, and in general all in-service courses” (Hughes, 1988, p. 28). The federal government response to the Hughes Report, led to an all State and Territory governments’ meeting in 1989, to discuss the draft implementation of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy which is commonly known as the Aboriginal Education Policy (AEP) (Commonwealth of Australia, 1993). All states and Territories approved the 21 long-term goals sets out in this policy which incorporated key recommendations advocated by the Hughes report. The four-targeted areas in the policy were: involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in educational decision-making; equality of access to education; equity of educational participation; and equitable and appropriate educational outcomes. To help combat racism and overcome the many years of exclusion of Aboriginal people from the education sector, it also stated that, all students should be taught about Aboriginal Australia.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (Aboriginal Education Policy) was endorsed in 1989 by all State and Territory governments and came into effect nationally in 1990. This
educational policy is one of the most significant in recent Australian history as it brought together all States and Territories with a unified commitment to pursuing national goals for Indigenous education. It set benchmarks for achieving these goals and anticipated that there would be a noticeable increase in Aboriginal participation by the year 2000. The policy also facilitated new initiatives in Indigenous education, raised the profile of Aboriginal Studies in schools and highlighted the critical nature of key issues in Indigenous education. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy was reviewed in 1993. The purpose of The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NATSIEP) (1993) was to build on the 1989 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy by identifying successful initiatives. When the 1993 policy reiterated the States and Territory governments’ commitment to the 21 long-term policy goals, it restated the following two goals: “20. To enable Aboriginal students at all levels of education to have an appreciation of their history, culture and identity; and 21. To provide all Australian students with the understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary culture”.

In 1995 the National Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) was formed to develop a national strategic plan to implement the AEP (1995). The MCEETYA Taskforce, “took the discussion and recommendations of the Review and cross-referenced them to systems and institutional plans to arrive at a national strategic plan achievable through to the year 2002” (1995, p. ii). Further to this, State and Territory governments developed strong policies to support Aboriginal Education. For example, the NSW Department of Education and Training (NSW DET) revised the NSW Aboriginal Education Policy in 1996. An Aboriginal Education Policy training package was developed; its implementation was backed with financial support to ensure all NSW Department staff, at all levels, and was appropriately in-serviced on the implementation of this policy. The overview of both the AEP and MCEETYA goals reveals that they primarily concentrated on improving outcomes for Aboriginal students, but also identified the need for all students in the primary and secondary school education sector to understand and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional and contemporary culture. The goals of the AEP and MCEETYA continue to be valued and were again reiterated in National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002).

Racist, segregationalist, and isolationist educational and social policies of the past, have in many ways disempowered Indigenous Australians in terms of equal status within Australian society. The development of the national Aboriginal Education Policy however was about reforming the concrete institutions of society. The AEP is in fact a policy of social change that, if implemented correctly, will have far reaching implications for Australian society. The policy deals with recognition and changes to entrenched attitudes based on emotional prejudices and ignorance that have been widely cultivated in Australian society. Hence, it is concerned with reshaping peoples’ notion of self and building a society of inclusive Australian citizens.

Why Teach Aboriginal Studies

Before the 1960s Indigenous Australians were often unable to access basic schooling. School attendance was not compulsory for Indigenous secondary students, and Indigenous students could be excluded from enrolment in primary and secondary government schools simply for being Aboriginal. It was not until 1972, that the clause that enabled Principals to exclude Indigenous students on the basis of race was removed from the NSW Education Handbook. Special Aboriginal schools were sometimes provided for students excluded from the public system. Qualified teachers rarely staffed these schools.

Across Australia during the past decade there have been some small improvements in the educational outcome for Indigenous Australians. However, “serious gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes remain in literacy, numeracy, student attendance, retention into senior secondary education, Year 12 certificate and some completion rates in VET and higher education” NRPIET (Commonwealth of Australia, 2002, p. xviii). In the Northern Territory the situation is even worse, the Northern Territory Department of Education, Learning lessons: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory, (1999) found that the educational outcomes for Indigenous children were in fact declining.
As numerous government report show, Indigenous Australian children remain today the most educationally disadvantaged group in Australia. This is despite the abundance of potentially transformative educational policies. Pedersen and Walker found that “certain aspects of Aboriginality are seen negatively and seemingly stereotypically”. They concluded: “It would appear that the problems faced by Aboriginal children are only likely to be alleviated by structural change, as cultural oppressions are perpetuated by social rules” Pedersen and Walker, (2000, p. 193). Pedersen and Walkers’ comments suggest that a good place to start is within the school system itself. Pedersen and Walker’s findings reiterate the importance of breaking down stereotypes and prejudices to create a more just Australian society. Due to the considerable literature, curricula and policy development in western public education in Australia many educators have believed and continue to believe that the education system is fair and equitable. Especially since educators have generally been successful within a system which supported their own cultural mores and values. Thus naturally, they support and uphold the system in which they have succeeded. Even today some researchers and educators assume or believe that Indigenous people are genetically inferior to Europeans and incapable of attaining the same intellectual capacity as other Australians. As Carpenter (1990, p. 3) notes “The ideology of inferiority was still prevalent well beyond the 1960s where theories and conceptualisations of deficit ensured exclusion from academic knowledge through compensatory, remedial and intervention programs”. What I am suggesting is that as part of their professional training, pre-service teachers need to be given access to appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes to make an ideological shift. Many pre-service teachers have never met an Aboriginal or Torres Striate Islander person, therefore it is imperative that teacher education courses afford the opportunity for exposure to Indigenous people which in particular, core Aboriginal Studies course provide. This exposure can then be used to challenge pre-service teachers to investigate their duty of care in relation to equity of access and participation not only for Indigenous Australian students but through this ideological investigation, all marginalised groups in Australia. Without adequate pre-service teacher education and training, teachers cannot be expected to apply the appropriate knowledge, skills, curricula and attitudes to teach Aboriginal students effectively. Nor can teachers assist Australian students to understand and appreciate Indigenous Australian history and culture and facilitate an understanding of the importance of Reconciliation.

In terms of education, teaching Aboriginal Studies is about addressing Reconciliation, political reformation, and the recognition of collective rights. In short it is about equity and social justice. Equity in educational advantage and benefit leads to social justice. The dimensions of equity include: equity of access, equity of participation (not just involvement), and equity of outcomes (successful and effective completions) leading to access to employment, quality health and well being as the norm in this society. As part of achieving these objectives, all Australian children need to be taught Aboriginal Studies. A key issue is about all Australians accepting the authenticity of Indigenous Australia and for educational policy makers and teachers providing Indigenous children with appropriate curricula, which recognises their culture, with a relevant and meaningful educational experience. The exclusion of core Aboriginal Studies in primary teacher education courses sends a clear message that devalues a shared history: it can be seen as part of the ‘hidden curriculum’ Insufficient knowledge, skills and attitudes of preservice teachers need to be addressed. Institutions may argue that there are already too many subjects to be covered, but as Connell (1977) and Apple (1986) emphasise, what is omitted from the formal curriculum can be significant.

If the teaching and learning mission of primary teacher education institutions and departments of education is to produce inclusive Australian citizens, it is vital for all primary teacher education courses to implement the NSW mandator Aboriginal Education Policy and Federal government Aboriginal Education Policy. To do this primary teacher education courses first need to audit their units of study to ensure that Aboriginal perspectives are included across all of the key learning areas. Secondly, they need to introduce a core Aboriginal Studies subject. The impact on pre-service teachers who have taken a core Aboriginal Studies subject can be seen in the preliminary research on ‘Learning Journals’ by Day (2005). As part of her preliminary study Day reviewed the impact of the learning journals on non-Indigenous students’ exposure to a core Aboriginal Studies subject taught by the Koori Centre University of Sydney. The preliminary study has indicated the shock and dismay of non-Indigenous pre-service teachers learning of Indigenous history and educational disadvantage. The inclusion of a core Aboriginal Studies subject has been shown to be successful by Craven, Halse, Marsh, Mooney, and Wilson-Miller (2005 a & b) in their
nationwide commissioned report to the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), which examined postgraduate teachers’ ability and commitment to teach Aboriginal Studies in Australian schools. This study utilised a blend of quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect data from primary school teachers across Australia. Craven et al. concluded that core Aboriginal Studies does assist graduate teachers in teaching Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal students more effectively. Their findings suggest that teachers who undertake core or elective Aboriginal Studies subjects as a component of their teacher education degree learn more about Aboriginal Studies subject matter, and how to teach Aboriginal Studies and Aboriginal students, compared with teachers who did not undertake such subjects. They also found that teachers undertaking Aboriginal Studies units had a higher self-concept; felt they were more capable of teaching Aboriginal students, and were more likely to enjoy teaching Aboriginal Studies compared to teachers who did not undertake Aboriginal studies. The study also showed that pre-service teachers who had been taught Aboriginal Studies were more likely to go on to undertake postgraduate studies in the area. The study by Day et al. shows that there is still a lot of ignorance in the community about the extraordinary exclusionary policies that have led to vastly unequal outcomes for Indigenous Australians Indigenous Australian experience. Equally, the Craven et al. study proves that undertaking a core Aboriginal Studies subject does make a significant difference to teachers’ attitude in, and ability to, teach Aboriginal students and teach Aboriginal Studies.

**Conclusion**

In the 19th and 20th century by ignoring and erasing Aboriginal community culture and rights, a succession of Australian governments designed a plethora of culturally disenfranchising and destructive policies. These paternalistic and exploitative social policies were judiciously enacted at both at the federal, state and territory level. The result was an isolated, emasculated and neglected Indigenous population. Much of this situation remains today, the best evidence being the geographical distribution of Aboriginal people outside mainsteam urban and rural settlements and the poor provision of appropriate health, education and housing and cultural support. The time is now, if we as a nation want to make a positive impact on the current educational disadvantage for Indigenous Australians. A number of innovative programmes have now emerged which address the low literacy and numeracy rates of Indigenous children, and there is an urgent need for a nationally coordinated approach to identify the most effective and successful of these programmes, so they can be implemented across all states and territories of Australia. This educational innovation needs further development, including implementation and monitoring and review for further successful development.

While there have been some improvements in Indigenous education, it is apparent when examining educational and other national statistics relating to Indigenous Australians, that there is still a long way to go. This situation can be improved by identifying the most effective and successful innovative programmes within Australia that have demonstrated proven outcomes that impact on the learning outcomes for Indigenous students. It is equally crucial that educational institutions and schools embrace the federal Aboriginal Education Policy to ensure that it is implemented to produce results.

Indigenous Australian voices cannot be allowed to fall upon deaf ears as they have over the past 217 years. To begin to break down this vicious cycle of poverty, and create a more equitable society the truth about the past must be acknowledged. Primary teacher education institutions and departments of education need to embrace the Aboriginal Education Policy and implement it in their work places. By teaching teachers we are teaching the next generation of Australian’. If we really want to see Indigenous children succeed at school, we need to eliminate racism, therefore it is crucial that Indigenous history, the true history of discrimination and segregation, be taught to all Australian people. For this to happen we must first teach preservice teachers, only then will they be equipped to address the needs and aspirations of Indigenous children. Additionally, they will then be equipped to teach an inclusive Australian history and therefore, successfully include Indigenous perspectives into the school curricula. Ensuring that there is at least one core Aboriginal Studies subject in all preservice primary teacher education courses delivered by our educational institutions is essential, so that our true history can be understood and shared then hopefully we can all move ahead as an inclusive, one nation.
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