The Australian Journal of
INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

CAN WE EDUCATE *and* TRAIN ABORIGINAL LEADERS *within our* TERTIARY EDUCATION SYSTEMS?

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Abstract

The concept of Aboriginal leadership often results in debate. The fundamental question raised is if Australian Aboriginal people are equal members of a pluralistic society that is based on co-operation and consensuses then how can you have a leader? Consequently who determines leadership or is a leader someone that in effect is more equal than others? Is leadership an attribute gained from within Aboriginal society or is leadership as we currently define it taught within the education structures of settler society? This paper briefly examines leadership from a postcolonial contemporary Aboriginal position, reviewing existing leadership education programs.

Introduction

Arguably, Indigenous Australians have a different cultural orientation to other Australians in relation to societal structure and interaction (Budby & Foley, 1998). We should remember this in discussions regarding leadership and the subsequent control of Aboriginal knowledge systems which are based on co-operation and consensus (Agrawal, 1995; Flood, 2004, 2006; Mulvaney, 1989; Mulvaney & Kamminga, 1999). Aboriginal circles of knowledge did not allow for a single dominating leader as that imposed on us by the British military invasion in 1788 with Governor Phillip and subsequent frontier domination combined with an adaptation of a Westminster political system and its three levels of administrative government within the cultural dominance of a European monarch. Taken in context, the subsequent development of modern Indigenous Australian "leaders" has at times become a debate based on legitimacy. Are Indigenous leaders illegitimate appointments, or culturally sanctioned legitimate leaders?

Several high profile Aboriginal "leaders" over the last 30 years have been extremely popular as spokespersons, yet questioned by other Aboriginal groups as they have no authority to talk on their behalf (Foley, 2008; Butler, 2000). The personalities (perceived and real) of some of our less popular former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) representatives clearly illustrate the antonym (Sanders, 2008). Particularly those involved in protracted court actions and especially those individuals who have suffered under trial by media (Jones, 2001). Indeed, "the death" of ATSIC (Cowlishaw, 2004, p. 312) fuelled the debate and discussion over the legitimacy of Indigenous leadership and representation from "... the intended apothesis of the policy of self determination" (Cowlishaw, 2004, p. 312). For ATSIC was:

> intended to give the most disenfranchised and underprivileged of Australians a voice in their own government ... a departure from the paternalism of the past and an acknowledgement that the future of Aboriginal Australians should in part be determined by themselves, rather than remote bureaucrats. Its aim was to invoke a voice, a representation, the development of

> Aboriginal leaders, instead it became a mirror of the sort of inequities it was supposed to supplant ... it did not necessarily deliver representation (Jaspan, 2004).

Indeed, in its final days ATSIC leadership did not focus on issues such as "poverty, crime or social dislocation ... [rather]the leadership of ATSIC became largely focused on saving Geoff Clark", which proved to be a terminal mistake and a solecism in the trust that Aboriginal Australia gave its elected leaders (Jaspan, 2004).

By illustrating the ATSIC example we can begin to understand the "reflected naïve social theorising as well as a profound ignorance of conditions in most Aboriginal communities" (Cowlishaw, 2004, p. 312). For as Cowlishaw states "rural workers and mission inmates found themselves participating in a world of bureaucratic processes ... the state's activities usurped the tradition of kin-based moral authority" (Cowlishaw, 2004, p. 313). Indeed, the existing authority structures already weakened, were destroyed in this new form of representation of elected leadership. The reader may feel that this is exaggerated language, yet, from the author's perspective and research Cowlishaw's vivid image aptly illustrates the vast difference between the Aboriginal represented (be they urban or rural remote) and their "elected" leaders. Cowlishaw provides an introduction into the vast differences in attitudes, education, comprehension and social interaction of a minority population within the lower layers of Australia's social stratifications defined all too often by their economic dependence and poverty (Hughes, 2007).

Coincidently, leadership in modern times can also be a heavy burden based on representation responsibilities, especially for women who are burdened with domestic responsibilities, child rearing and other family support roles (Griffin & Houston, 2004). Or it can be an opportunity for personal gain (Cowlishaw, 2004, p. 313). Noel Pearson takes the discussion on Aboriginal leadership to another dimension by arguing that Indigenous leaders need to become "insiders" (cited in Sanders, 2008) within Australia's political processes, engaging at a strategic level with whatever political circumstances emerge and whoever is in government. He suggests however that many Indigenous leaders are psychologically locked into an "outsider" position of inflexible stand-taking that is based on history, identity or philosophical commitments (Sanders, 2008; Pearson, 2007). The historical application of misplaced leadership (insider/outsider concept) has created possible errors. The dismantlement of the former Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) is a classic example where an all-black faction forced out non-Indigenous participants who were working for the general good of the Indigenous members (Horner, 2004). Ideological mistrust from generations of the abused resulted in a faction dismantling an effective organisation. Domination by some minority sectors within the former ATSIC representation and the management of some New South Wales and Northern Territory Land Councils by usurper groups who are not representative of traditional owners are further unpleasant examples of contentious leadership (Foley, 2007; Yunupingu cited in Rothwell, 2008).

Noel Pearson has become one of the most vocal in the criticism of Aboriginal leaders in recent years and to his credit his criticism is not so much about the person or the position they occupy; rather it generally concerns the strategies these Indigenous leaders pursue. However the strategy of working with the former Howard government in 2005 is somewhat contradictory to his previous 1994 program of working closely with the Keating government. Pearson has been able to show Indigenous leadership by correctly understanding that if Aboriginal people continue to follow the path of "the victim", then the State will not "accept" us "on our own terms" (Pearson, 1994, p. 101). He places a positive construction on emerging political circumstances of the day, differencing himself from colleagues who find comfort in "the victim" mentality societal style of leadership (Sanders, 2008). Michael Mansell, another well known Aboriginal leader, correspondingly has been critical of Pearson's stance of trying to work with bureaucracy. Mansell alleges Pearson was "too close" to the Keating Labor Government in the 1993 Native Title negotiations and more recently he was seen to be "courting the conservatives" which included "slamming the left" after Howard came to power in 1996. Mansell suggests that Pearson replaced a national Aboriginal voice with his own for whilst most of the Aboriginal leaders had been sacked by Howard or "went home" (Sanders, 2008) post the demise of ATSIC and the Federal government's aggressive stance on Indigenous issues. Interestingly this was a period in Aboriginal politics where the Indigenous voice seemed non-existent as the popular media sought news elsewhere. During the demise of ATSIC, Pearson regrouped, courted the former enemy, the conservatives (Sanders, 2008). Mansell viewed Pearson's leadership as a contradiction for his reliance on the coercive powers of the government, and possibly the resultant financial support that followed in the implementation of Pearson's planned welfare reform agenda (Mansell, 2007). Mansell states that it in fact "denied the Aboriginal people the democratic right of 'choice'" (Mansell, 2007, pp. 79-80). Or did Pearson take a leadership decision; displaying the skills of the "insider" in his ability to maintain dialogue with an ideological different government to that which he had dealt with previously?

This illustration of Aboriginal leadership in modern times highlights some of its complexity; it is no longer that of the idealistic egalitarian peoples. Rather in this

example it appears to have gone full circle to become almost autocratic, in the Pearson situation as inferred by other Indigenous leaders (Malezer et al., 2007). Whilst Mansell and Pearson may differ in opinion, they are both beyond doubt Aboriginal leaders. What do they have in common apart from their Indigenity and a life of working for the betterment of other Aboriginal people? Both leaders have tertiary education in the discipline of law. Is leadership therefore something that is gained, perhaps from tertiary education and a demanding discipline such as law especially when we compare Mansell and Pearson's leadership success with that of the "uneducated" ATSIC leaders previously mentioned) and their resultant fall from grace as ineffective leaders?

What is leadership?

So what is leadership; specifically Indigenous leadership and what are the characteristics of a true Aboriginal leader? Within this analysis, can tertiary education within Australia enhance leadership aspirations, visions or is leadership as some would argue, developed within Indigenous society? Or is this quest indeed an oxymoron for if Aboriginal people of Australia are equal, pluralistic peoples based on co-operation and consensus (Agrawal, 1995; Flood, 2004, 2006; Mulvaney, 1989; Mulvaney & Kamminga, 1999) then a leader is someone who is possibly more equal than others. The very kinship connections and cultural ties that are the defining qualities that allow Aboriginal people to be equal, are subject to kinship status and knowledge. Whilst equality may be the presumption, in reality Aboriginal people are stratified into groups of equals, determined by levels of knowledge and understanding.

The anthropologist Elkin (1977) attempted to some degree to understand these issues in his text on men of high degree. However, to simply classify Aboriginal leaders as "clever men", "sorcerers" or the like, Elkin (1977) failed to understand the inherent leadership qualities of the individuals who were the object of his scientific gaze. An approach that was limited possibly to a narrow focus of research that was also gender centric. Wider insights into Aboriginal women's leadership roles can be gleaned from the writings of Bates (1938) and more recently Bird Rose (2001).

Literature tells us that leaders are managers, yet managers may not necessarily be leaders. Managers rule over people achieving orderly results but leaders share power with people creating change to obtain results (Thompkins, 1995). Managers have also been labelled as bureaucratic, stifling innovation. They are experts on budgets, procedures, policies and rules yet they rarely change from the status quo unless it is for survival (Godin, 1998). The key tools that we teach within our education systems in business faculties are generally management-based subjects. The difference in strategic leaders however is, that they have an; "ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically, and work with others to initiate changes that will create a viable future for the organisation" (Ireland & Hitt, 1999). Literature on organisational culture informs us that leaders invoke shared values and beliefs that establish behavioural norms forming accepted unseen guidelines allowing communication expectations and other organisational functions (Dess & Picken, 1999; Ireland et al., 2003). Arguably this is the foundation of solid Aboriginal leadership.

One of the strengths of Aboriginal history and a cherished attribute of being an Indigenous researcher is to evoke knowledge from those who have worked with and known some of our great leaders of the past. Men such as the late William Ferguson, Jack Pattern or William Cooper, and human rights activists and outstanding women in the Sydney area that include the late Elsa Dixon and "Mum Shirl" (Shirley Smith). The gift of "yarning" with those who have known them, and also the lives they have touched with their "ability to anticipate, envision, maintain flexibility, think strategically, and work with others to initiate changes that will create a viable future" (Ireland & Hitt, 1999), but above all their ability to maintain hope when there was none. Yet none of those mentioned had the gift of formal education. This then raises the question, is leadership created, taught, enhanced or modified by formal education or is it a gift learnt from within cultural resources, within the attributes of human and social capital reserves (Foley & O'Connor, 2010)?

If we revisit the leadership of Mansell and Pearson and include another outstanding Indigenous leader, Charles Perkins (the first Indigenous university graduate) (Read, 1990), then perhaps Indigenous leadership development is also subject to "other" environmental factors. These and the social opportunities that come from education were obviously unavailable to Ferguson, Patten, Cooper, Dixon and Smith. Or, coincidently did Perkins, Mansell and Pearson's education provide them with the necessary skills to manage popular media, something that the former ATSIC leaders Clarke and Robinson possibly did not possess?

Could it be that education also equips Indigenous leaders with the skill to understand settler society's demands of governance? Governance is not culture-neutral, rather assessments or principles of what constitutes "good", "strong" or "legitimate" governance, "ineffective" or "bad" governance are informed by culturally-based values and traditions. Cultural determinants of leadership that constitute representation, participation and accountability are the foundation of governance.

The rule of law for Indigenous people grounded in traditional law and values, and also in the urbanised scenario is "two-way" accountability for Indigenous organisations; internally to their members and

community residents, and externally to government funding bodies (Smith, 2005, p. 11). It is when Aboriginal Australian peoples lose the accountability of age old value systems that we have governance and resultant leadership difficulty in dealing with a cultural interface (Nakata, 2007) between the demands of settler society and the Indigenous community. The resultant reshaping of social relations and relationships within the organisational structures dedicated to Aboriginal betterment but based on complicated benign funding processes that are the states usurping of tradition and kin-based authority erodes the leadership status of the Indigenous Chief Executive Officer. Indeed in many cases this is "the Governments remedial dreams [which] were not Indigenous dreams" (Cowlishaw, 2004, p. 313). Thus leadership in these situations takes on the metaphor of the puppet or marionette with the Indigenous leader dancing to the strings pulled by government.

As a child I was blessed to be nurtured by old ones in a smelly mosquito infested swamp on the side of Narrabeen Lake. Houses were dumps; the ground was littered with too much glass. Hunger and despair existed like a curse floating as does a mist at dawn from gunya to gunya, but there was love, dignity and honesty, at least in my naïve memories as a child. I can vividly recall respect for the knowledge of elders. Now I am left pondering at the void; the loss of leadership that my family's grandparents witnessed with their elders. Elders are those with the training and extensive knowledge and skills that have been passed down to them by their elders. It is not a term applied to a senior citizen of Aboriginal descent, for they are just *elderly* Aboriginal people. Allow yourself to imagine our men (and women) sitting in a conference; deliberating strategic issues, such as planning the summer fish pens, the planting and harvest of yams, festivals, ceremony, the logistics of land use management. For example when to burn areas for the green pick in the management of Kangaroo herds, burning in the reduction of undergrowth or the use of selective fire to hollow out the old growth trees for later possum management; or the diplomatic planning required in dealing with neighbours. Before 1788 it was not naked savages living in paradise, on the contrary, Aboriginal Australia was based on established developed societies that required strong values, sound management and organisation leadership. The concept that is leadership as we accept it today is indeed as old as time. This I feel is something that Aboriginal people should once again strive to. Indeed it is written in the scarification both on our bodies and in the fabric of Aboriginal lore. However like scarification, it was learnt and earned not as a given or as a process. The current education system which potentially provides leadership/ management qualifications such as a MBA to a person that may potentially have limited life skills is potentially damaging for Indigenous leadership. A piece of paper means little within some sectors of Aboriginal society; after all it is the inherent skills of the individual that is measurable in Aboriginal leadership qualifications not a qualification from a colonial institution.

To further understand the concept of leadership education we need to look at the foundation of Aboriginal ways of obtaining knowledge, and it is accepted that this is very general due to space constraints within the paper. Aboriginal education is largely based on informal learning through observation and imitation, rather than through verbal instruction, oral or written, as is the case in European schools and society (Berndt, 1985; Edwards, 1998; Harris, 1980). An important learning strategy is learning through personal trial and feedback, as opposed to verbal instruction accompanied by demonstration. The majority of conventional Aboriginal learning is achieved through real-life performance rather than through practice in contrived settings, such as western school classrooms (Hughes & More, 1997). The focus in Aboriginal learning is on mastering context-specific skills which is in stark contrast to the settler society school education system which seeks to teach abstract context-free principles. Education is more person-oriented than information-oriented, and there is no institutionalised officer of "teacher" in Aboriginal society (Connell et al., 2010).

Even today Aboriginal children and adults in general will respect or ignore settler European (white) teachers more on the basis of how they relate as persons, than how they perform as teachers (Hughes & More, 1997). The personality of the teacher is the key that will allow settler society persons to be teachers. The inequality of education in contemporary Australia between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is based on a history of denial of opportunities and, in more recent year's attempts by government to assimilate or absorb Aboriginal people into mainstream society (Connell, et al., 2010). Through this latter period, "the education system ... through its curriculum and teaching strategies has attempted to 'de-Aboriginalise' Aboriginal people" (Heitmeyer, 1998, p. 198).

This has resulted in Aboriginal education systems across Australia being replaced with a Eurocentric pedagogy. The current leadership training for Aboriginal people in general is based on similar pedagogy to that found in K-12, sourced predominantly from Eurocentric-American programs, in a somewhat ad-hoc fashion and of varying applicability. Some alternatives to these are reviewed in the following discussion on leadership programs.

Leadership programs

A significant barrier in Australia is the lack of meaningful governance-leadership training and experienced trainers (Smith, 2005). A mirror to this failure is found in K-12 education (Connell et al.,

2010; Hughes & More, 1997). The failure to address a developmental approach to "governance building" and Aboriginal leadership has created significant problems for Aboriginal peoples to actively participate within the Australian economy (Altman, 2000). In an attempt to address the lack of Indigenous leaders over the last decade, numerous leadership programs have attempted to fill the void in the leadership education area at the community level. Contemporary programs are not necessarily business-oriented with many focusing on generic leadership skills; they do pertain to issues of management, governance and organisational performance that are also the realm of business education. Although the programs discussed are not exhaustive, they outline those with which the author has come into professional contact.

Indigenous Leadership Program

Perhaps one of the more politicised and contentious programs is the Australian Government's Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA) "Indigenous Leadership Program" (ILP) which was initially set up in 2004, although similar programmes had been established by the now defunct Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). They boast graduations of over 600 Indigenous women, men and youth completing their leadership journeys over three residential courses of two to five days. Training varies according to the targeted audience and is based on the needs of the Indigenous community (rural, remote or urban) and includes communication skills, conducting meetings and general forms of governance (Australian Government, 2008). A review of the programme in 2007, and consultation with a small group of participants revealed that under the previous Coalition Government the first three days of the initial five day course involved outlining the then government's alleged "new" policies "***helping***" Indigenous people. Programmes such as this need vocational accreditation otherwise we fall into the trap of over-training Indigenous Australians yet giving them no real skills (CRLRA, 2002; Downs, 2006; Perkins, 1999). No government should allow political agendas to pollute training programs such as the ILP which should be a valuable education experience strengthening Aboriginal human and social capital.

Aboriginal Indigenous Leadership Development

A commendable leadership program is the Aboriginal Indigenous Leadership Development programs run by the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre, Canberra. The first course in this programme began in July 2001 with the strong support of the Kimberley Aboriginal Tourist Association, the Australian Rural Leadership Program and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS). It commenced in AIATSIS offices and is now located on Lady Denman Drive in the Australian Capital Territory. The Centre runs several individual courses that include an accredited certificate-level qualification. The delivery of courses within the Leadership Program is flexible and has been taught in numerous locations subject to demand. Over the years the organisers have experienced difficulty in recruiting suitable participants in an on-going manner however to its praise some graduates from its earlier years have gone onto higher levels of education and leadership. The Centre which is predominantly Indigenous in its management structure is continually looking for new partners and developing its courses to suit demand. The ethos of the Centre and its programs is commendable: "legitimacy of authority and the right to represent others must originate with Indigenous communities, organisations, families or interest groups" (AILC, 2000). The small passionate team involved seek to assist graduates in pathway programs however it would appear that overall it requires further development of accreditation and alignment with vocational institutions at a national level before it can develop into an effective wide-reaching alternative leadership (management/governance) program. TAFE colleges and universities could support and maintain stronger links with this education initiative, not as a way of recruiting potential students, rather as a way of providing alternative education that is directly focused to the needs of community (AILC, 2000).

This is a program supported by the late Charles *Kumantjayi* Perkins (Film Australia, 2008). It is sobering to note however that:

> Apart from the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre, there is no national Indigenous organisation which delivers governance [leadership] training and capacity building to communities and their organisations on the ground. There is no coordinated government approach to Indigenous governance [leadership] training at either the national or state and territory levels. These are major gaps which will significantly hinder progress. Just as Indigenous capacity for governance is a critical issue, so too is the capacity of Australian governments to deliver coordinated policy, funding and program support that will support community efforts to build stronger governance. New approaches to Indigenous governance will require governments to re-think the way they carry out community development and capacity building for governance (Smith, 2005, p. 30).

The work of Smith and her colleague Janet Hunt at CAEPR (Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy

Research: the Australian National University) in identifying the shortcomings of leadership programs and the continued work of CAEPR in general is essential if we are to understand the extent of deficiencies in governance issues in Indigenous communities. If we do not have a sustained national program for governance training then the obvious alternative provision for Aboriginal Australia would be either Vocational Education Training at TAFE colleges or tertiary institutions.

Cape York Institute

Noel Pearson's Cape York Institute has approached the concept of leadership training from several different levels in the development of its leadership programs over several years. Community development from within is a key component of the Cape York development ethos. The Higher Expectations Program Tertiary is just one cog within the machine that is the Cape York "Leadership Academy" (Cape York Institute, 2009), which involves developing Indigenous individuals at external institutions who will in time return and supplement and/or replace professional non-Indigenous persons within the community. At the time of writing, students in this program are at Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology, James Cook University and Cairns TAFE. Funding support is from a diverse group of private and public institutions that includes federal funding assistance (Higher Expectations Program Tertiary, 2008).

State programs

In addition to the major "high" profile programs there is a plethora of state-based "leadership" training schemes aimed at "community" development. It would appear that every state has one; some in health-based leadership: for example, Queensland University of Technology runs an Indigenous Education Leadership Institute in Brisbane. The Unity Foundation in Victoria through VicHealth funding runs the Indigenous Leaders Program and the Deadly Leaders Program. These are aimed more at people at-risk rather than overall "leadership/management skills" (Unity Foundation, 2008). They are vitally important however and deserve mentioning as they provide the basic developmental skills in governance and management that many Indigenous peoples do not receive from formal school-based education systems. Arguably this is the result of low student retention rates (ABS, 2004) and generations of educational neglect to Indigenous Australians (Connell et al., 2010).

Aurora project

The more progressive leadership training programs within the tertiary institutions include: The University of New South Wales Aurora Project (or the Aurora Programmes) which targets Indigenous Chief Executive Officers and is supported by Rio Tinto and several other groups. The project has been diluted in its evolution from a much needed senior management course for Indigenous executives to a programme that seems to drown in legal subject matter concerning Native Title (Aurora, 2008). The Aurora Programme, in its current format, is a shadow of its original planned structure that looked at amongst many things; entrepreneurial management and organisational leadership development.

Edith Cowan and the Australian Catholic University Programs

Possibly some of the most successful, least known tertiary institution courses are the Edith Cowan and the Australian Catholic University programs. They are both interesting and innovative, having been developed after assessing varying community needs. At the time of writing they include the Australian Catholic University Associate Degree in Business Administration (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies), the Diploma in Business Administration (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies), the Advanced Certificate in Business Administration (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) and the Edith Cowan University Bachelor of Social Science (Indigenous Services) degree and the Diploma in Indigenous Services. The Edith Cowan Bachelor and Diploma degrees are designed primarily for students who aspire to work in the Indigenous sector. After extensive community consultation in the development of the syllabus, the Edith Cowan programmes adopted what they refer to as the triple E approach based on *education* approaches, *experience* learnt and gained from the past and *ethical* systems within Aboriginal systems (Truscott, 2002).

In the national interest, it might be valuable to see these programmes linked up with the Aboriginal Indigenous Leadership Development Centre (and perhaps the Cape York initiatives). Best practice could then be shared across a national program or regional programs to ensure the search for excellence is maintained in Indigenous leadership education delivery.

A dichotomy within formal business training

If Indigenous Australia is to survive in a postcolonial economy it is obvious that we require strong business acumen gained from formal studies and business experience while still respecting and practising the ontologies, pedagogies and epistemologies that is from our Indigenous knowledge (Budby, 1999, pers. comm., March). This position is also supported by academics active in this area (Altman, 2000). However in accepting

these or similar statements we cannot generalise, Aboriginal Australia is not a homogenous people; one size does not fit all. Aboriginal Australians differ in relation to languages, laws, customs, education levels, and protocols, so any formal leadership program has to be flexible in its delivery and in its approach to the participants needs. Agencies that provide training pathways for Indigenous students not only need to recognise these differences they also must strengthen co-operation and synergise the operations of their agencies for effectiveness in what is loosely defined as "leadership training", to maximise opportunity within an often diverse student base.

It should be apparent to the reader that there is a need for Indigenous leaders; indeed in 1963 the need for Aboriginal leaders was publically expressed:

> a cadre of leaders ... a machinery of public order. All this must be done in the context of a traditional society, or more frequently, in the context of a plurality of traditional societies ... to create a new, modern economic order to replace the inherited one. This entails the development of new economic institutions and techniques, and persuading or coercing the ordinary members of the society into their acceptance (Shils, 1963, p. 2).

Forty seven years on, we still are searching for a workable, culturally sensitive means to integrate Aboriginal society into a new economic order. The historical record of settler society with Aboriginal Australia has not been a progressive one in the development of Aboriginal leaders. The external creation, almost modelling of leaders on Western formats and placing them within communities to govern could be interpreted as paternalistic.

Anthropologists including Hinton (1966) and Cowlishaw (1983) appear to share this view. Their early works investigated broader Indigenous societal issues surrounding leadership within Western trained leadership models. Fuller and Parker (2002) are also critical of poorly considered western models of management applied to community situations with little understanding or planning as to their suitability. Fuller draws on a lifetime of work within the communities he grew up in highlighting: "... differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous management methods of operation [which] are likely due to differences in values and priorities between the two cultures. Such differences have been exacerbated by wide differences in wealth and access to resources" (Fuller & Parker, 2002).

As raised in Hinton and Cowlishaw's early works, Fuller and Parker highlight the issue of *Aboriginal* values and priorities combined with access to wealth. There is a difference between Aboriginal and European attitudes in the competitive capitalistic view of the business world. The European association between leadership skill and achieving successful outcomes is all too often measured in dollar values, as that is the easiest way to measure success. From the Aboriginal perspective monopolistic wealth creation and the dominance of resources that are often in excess of the normal individual or clans usage, is the classic economic pretext of postcolonial leadership within a capitalistic market (Fuller & Parker, 2002). This is at odds with most Indigenous Australian approaches to "business" that are undertaken within complex protocols and agreements, based on their consumable needs, not market demand.

This possibly highlights one of the major problems faced in recruiting potential students into tertiary business degree programs. Fuller and Parker identify these issues as follows:

> from either a moral view of the world, or for pragmatic, practical reasons relating to the principles associated with distribution, obligation and reciprocity, as well as political and social influence, the high levels of individual inequality apparent within ... non-Indigenous urban centres, would prove unacceptable within an Indigenous community (Fuller & Parker, 2002, p. 33).

Obligation and reciprocation are values that rarely, if ever, form part of Eurocentric business concepts that are taught in MBA or undergraduate business programs. The inclusion of MBA's is crucial for this discussion as they are widely recognised as the "nursery for organisational leadership" (Berry, 1997 cited in Mellahi, 2000, p. 297). Yet Indigenous leaders and managers have traditionally come from ***within*** a community (AILC, 2008); they are not necessarily moulded, shaped and delivered by tertiary education. "Legitimacy of authority and the right to represent others must originate within Indigenous communities, organisations, families or interest groups". (AILC, 2008). The task is to identify, review and overcome the deficit in business-management epistemology given that the core issues that we teach within the university sector are based on a Eurocentric model of wealth creation and potential leaders are mostly self-chosen. Self-chosen within the structure of a non-Indigenous education curriculum that is seeking to equip their graduates with leadership skills and competencies preparing them for managerial and leadership roles (Mellahi, 2000). In order for Indigenous leaders and Indigenous managers to obtain legitimacy they must also obtain their authentication from ***within*** the Indigenous community, not just from a piece of university parchment.

A too simple solution would be to educate more Indigenous Australians with business skills, then let them find employment which will provide the

necessary work experience that allows them to facilitate to a degree their own self-governance and sovereignty. An ineffective solution that lacks deeper understanding of wider issues and indeed it is the very practice that is currently being attempted with poor outcomes by many universities. To illustrate the scale of the problem: in one university the unofficial success rate for Indigenous [Business] students over a 15-year period has been 52 starters and only two finishers (Truscott, 2002, p. 1). To complicate the poor graduation figures; the differences in value systems outlined by Fuller and Parker (2002), indicate that this method may well reinforce colonial practices of assimilation.

Based on the author's personal experience and a decade of providing student support to Indigenous business students, business faculties are not attractive domains of study for the Indigenous student. Business-leadership subjects that include company accounting, statistics and macro economics often lack relevance to Indigenous students. Indeed, business/management course subjects have little to no Indigenous content. Business management courses by their composition and delivery are exclusionary and divisive, creating academic isolation for the Aboriginal student. There is little to excite or feed the Indigenous students' academic appetite and often courses lack practical relevance for them for they all too often are subject to American texts and case studies which fail to include Indigenous approaches to knowledge or societal interaction.

Having taught within several large business schools, it is fair to say that they target the cash cow that is the full fee paying international student. Business schools often lack either the will or the wherewithal to vary the pedagogy and epistemological approach withing their set curricula for a handful (at best) of Indigenous students. Such a proposal would be unthinkable. However, when we think outside of the set curricula; change can occur for the author has successfully used Aboriginal business examples and invited Indigenous business people to participate as guest lecturers with positive outcomes in the teaching and learning process at several well known business schools. Change and relevance to the curriculum can occur if the educator understands the dynamics of the student base and is prepared to work outside of the all to often standardised American-styled business curriculum.

Pre-requisites are also another major concern and a factor that reduces Indigenous participation in business-leadership studies. The numeracy proficiency levels needed to successfully complete statistical-quantitative analysis type subjects that are a core component of most business degrees is often initially beyond many potential students due to our poor education opportunities/experience at high school (ABS, 2004). If Indigenous applicants are enrolled without pre-requisite knowledge, the risk of subject failure increases dramatically unless they are dedicated students receiving proficient tutoring assistance. If their enrolment is rejected and they are subsequently directed to a TAFE to undertake numeracy training, the risk of non-completion increases as additional tertiary study adds several unwanted years onto proposed study plans. Aboriginal students with families or at least family commitments often require supplementary income. The Australian Vice Chancellors Committee Advisory Group on Indigenous Higher Education has shown that family members, other than the student also "live" on the Abstudy grant, at least in part which is significant to the family group and all too often becomes the trigger which necessitates the withdrawal of the student from the course of study (AVCC, 2002). Withdrawal from study is thus not due to academic inability, for it can be because of the financial demands made on the student by their family (AVCC, 2002).

If Aboriginal students are forced to study for longer periods to obtain pre-requisite skills then their financial position is weakened and demands by family can intensify. Education is not generally recognised within Indigenous circles as an investment in future income earning capacity or social capital building. In addition, Indigenous leadership acumen is seldom recognised within a family or clan structure as something obtained after high financial investment within the Western tertiary education model. Potential Aboriginal business students, unless they have had the academic foundation of a sound K-12 education will invariably suffer due to pre-requisite requirements for such a challenging academic discipline.

Financial assistance as that provided by Abstudy is not a solution as the subsistence payments fail to solve the financial needs of most Indigenous students (Gunstone, 2007), especially those in capital cities with high accommodation costs, or as the AVCC has shown those with multiple dependants (AVCC, 2002). Scholarships are also clearly not enough either as two sandstone universities that the author has taught at have failed to award undergraduate business faculty scholarships each year over the last 15 years due to the lack of suitable applicants. This is alarming, for even with financial incentives the Aboriginal student interest remains low. Why are Business Faculties not attractive? Is their course content not stimulating to the Year 12, or the mature aged student or could it be that the lack of qualified Indigenous lecturers within the discipline is also a contributing factor? If this were the case, medicine, nursing and education would also suffer similar low enrolments and yet this is not the case as these disciplines retain strong Indigenous student enrolments (DETYA, 2000). The poor enrolments in Australia and low Indigenous business graduates create concern, however there is little to no empirical data to identify the causations. We understand the need but not how to correct the situation.

Other international developments: An alternative

The former Liberal federal government initiated an interesting leadership training program in the "Enterprise Learning for the 21st Century" project. This brilliant concept was taken up by far too few schools, only 47 Australia wide (DEST, 2007). One school that did have the foresight to implement the Enterprise Learning for the 21st Century project was the Castlemaine School and adjoining TAFE in rural Victoria in 2004-6. They accepted the DEST funded project with very positive outcomes. Sadly when funding for the co-ordinator ceased, so did the initiative. The Castlemaine program was possibly one of the more successful due to the entrepreneurial drive and business expertise of the co-ordinator which resulted in numerous industry interactions and business undertakings within the areas of Art, Maths, Science, Study of Society and English. However as the co-ordinator was not a registered qualified teacher this created conflict with some teaching staff that produced school-based bureaucratic and ideological hurdles that in the end were destructive (2006, pers. comm., April).

Enterprise in education is not a novel concept. Over a decade previously the Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge, England implemented Social Enterprise teaching and research along similar lines. It has produced numerous instances of positive work-based economic development in the Midlands Districts of the United Kingdom aimed at low socio-economic minority groups based on training and implanting leadership into individuals to empower them. Other organisations that have taken up similar challenges are the New York based Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) founded by Steve Mariotti in 1987. Since its founding, it has reached over 280,000 young people from low income communities, most from minority groups. It has grown to programs in 21 states and 12 countries. The New Zealand operation that is developed for Indigenous peoples and is based on the NFTE concept is operated by the Entrepreneurship New Zealand Trust. It operates as "*Ahikaa*", a concept that refers to "keeping the home fires burning" – a reference to growing locally-based entrepreneurial spirit, skills and activity. *Ahikaa* programmes primarily target Māori and Pacifica people with entrepreneurship education. It is about empowering families and individuals, providing youth with the necessary tools to foster economic sustainability, enabling full participation in the local economies, linking with a broad range of networks and promoting the well being of the individual and their family.

Ahikaa builds on the existing human capital of Māori youth (who typically experience poor educational outcomes similar to those of Indigenous Australians). Often unrecognised skills and resources are identified, these and additional skills developed and social capital thus significantly increased. With the correct implementation and management, this program has enormous potential not only for Indigenous Australians but also other minority groups in Australia. The secret of its application is in the pedagogical delivery of the education program together with educators being specifically trained in innovative pedagogy.

NFTE operations in New Zealand began after an extensive international search beginning in 2000 by Professor Sir Ngatata Love. Sir Ngatata identified the NFTE programme as highly credible and particularly suited to minority populations after examining the robust research conducted on NFTE programme outcomes by Harvard and Stanford Universities, as well as Babson College. With generous public and private sector support, including support from Westpac New Zealand, Sir Ngatata Love formed a team comprised of academic, business and community (tribal/and pan-tribal) supporters and commenced operations from a base at Victoria University in Wellington – establishing additional centres in collaboration with credible "grass-roots" organisations within their target communities. The vision of Entrepreneurship New Zealand Trust is to provide people of all ages with the necessary skills to:

- recognise and capitalise on their strengths,
- utilise their existing resources most effectively,
- maximise their individual and group potentials, and
- create, develop, and maintain their own businesses.

The Trust, utilising the NFTE-derived *Ahikaa* programmes, is committed to growing the skills of individuals and communities in financial literacy, and to providing tools to enable active participation in local, national and international economies. Until now, much of the work of *Ahikaa* has taken place with youth and families who are already disengaged from schools, where the youth have become the living faces of negative educational statistics (recent figures indicated that almost 50 percent of Māori leave the compulsory school system with no academic qualification at all). Working in community centres, *marae* (Māori meeting houses) and educational facilities in the poorest areas and often with third generation gang families, *Ahikaa* have produced impressive results. With a client group that have largely been "written off" by mainstream education, research indicates that programme graduates achieve significant gains in self-confidence, motivation and career direction, with 60 percent of *Ahikaa* programme graduates engaged in further career focused education within 12 months (Love, 2009, pers. comm., December).

Interestingly the former DEST funded Enterprise Learning for the 21st century project in Australia developed enterprise initiatives whilst the student was *still in* the education system. *Ahikaa* has acknowledged this gap in New Zealand. The *Ahikaa*

programme curriculum has been aligned with the National Qualifications Framework in New Zealand and Entrepreneurship New Zealand Trust is now partnering with mainstream educational organisations, implementing school based programmes in the hope of improving school attrition rates.

Based on the research undertaken by NFTE New York, young people in low-income neighbourhoods want the same things we all want – that is to get a good education, to earn enough money to live well and to make their family proud. The trouble is very few have a clear path to get there, and worst of all they may feel that society expects them to fail. Fifty percent of minority youth in the United States of America drop out of High School. Australian and New Zealand figures are similar 53.5 percent (ABS, 2007). Eighty one percent would not have dropped out if school was more relevant to real life (NFTE, 2006).

Ahikaa's school intervention programme will hopefully reverse this trend because their specific aim is to make high school more relevant to preparing minority (mainly but not exclusively Indigenous Māori) youth to succeed in their economy. One in Five, twenty percent of youth in America live in poverty. We have already illustrated that almost sixty percent of Aboriginal youth live in poverty (Hughes, 2007), and the statistics in New Zealand are similar for Māori and Pacific youth.

The NFTE programmes have been shown to be global leaders in providing entrepreneurship training, programme resources, pedagogy, and learning tools to low-income communities around the world. These resources have influenced and aligned with a number of national and international education and entrepreneurship education standards. NFTE's earlier work can be documented as having influenced public and policy perceptions regarding the capacity for youth to learn entrepreneurship concepts and participate in business ownership. Harvard Graduate School of Education's multi-longitudinal research indicates very positive outcomes in terms of general education and the capacity to develop business initiatives.

The concepts that we teach in Australia as "leadership" are incorporated within the *Ahikaa* programme. Perhaps this is an alternative approach that can be adopted in Australia to integrate and maintain Indigenous pedagogy providing we can find a tertiary institution that is prepared to adopt an adaptation of this successful program?

Where to from here?

Aboriginal Australia needs leaders, trained educated leaders (Nelson, 2003; Satcher cited in Benchley, 1999). This topic is too important to leave as a pipe dream. There are no easy solutions to resolve the lack of participants and capacity of educators to train Aboriginal leaders either within the community, or the existing Western educational systems. The certainty that we should understand and respect is that leadership in Aboriginal society ultimately comes from within. Internationally the lack of Aboriginal leaders is being addressed in diverse programs in New Zealand. The fundamental ethics of Māori society are derived from core beliefs that signify reciprocity in human relations which is a powerful leadership mechanism (Henry & Pene, 2001). In 2009 Auckland University commences its Kaupapa Māori Business Administration program within the mainstream MBA program. This is a positive example of Indigenous leadership training within a formal tertiary institution that retains Indigenous knowledge processes and content. Eight of the sixteen MBA subjects are from a Māori epistemological base and taught by Māori academics (Henry & Knox, 2008). The organisers of this program asked me if we could duplicate this in Australia by creating an Aboriginal MBA taught by Aboriginal academics. Statistically, based on current student numbers it would not be viable (ABC, 2006; Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). However if we rethink the financial bottom line of sustainable education over the loss of social capital of Aboriginal Australia then perhaps an Indigenous MBA is not unthinkable. It will need to be based on small class sizes taught within the major Aboriginal population centres that includes the urban sprawl of capital cities and regional Australia. It is important to understand however, that Aboriginal Australia is not all in the outback and definitely not concentrated in Redfern or the like (Foley, 2006). Leadership education such as an Aboriginal-focused MBA would possibly need to be a flexible delivered syllabus in small classes with regular follow up by tutors to a student base of varying skill levels if we adopt the New Zealand model. Basically a one on one education delivery that will be expensive in infrastructure and delivery costs. If we are serious about the development of Aboriginal leadership skills then as a nation we need to make this investment and we need to include the involvement of the men and women who have been active in the development of Aboriginal leadership, both the old guard and the new.

If we are to teach Indigenous leadership then we must allow the "insider" and the "outsider" leadership styles to permeate through and their voices to be heard for our youth to learn different management criteria. In the cold reality of Aboriginal life, tertiary qualifications as they stand are just silos issuing a piece of paper. Aboriginal Australian leadership has been ignored for too long. We need to watch and learn from the University of Auckland and *Ahikaa* and adopt similar programs here that are inclusive, from the Indigenous epistemological standpoint.

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