Chapter VII

Can Information Communication Technological Tools be Used to Suit Aboriginal Learning Pedagogies?

Michael Donovan, University of Newcastle, Australia

Abstract

Indigenous peoples are some of the most disadvantaged groups globally; Australian aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are no different. Much of their lack of success can be related to the inappropriate educational practices directed at them through non-indigenous pedagogical filters of the Australian educational systems. There is a need for some pedagogical change to suit the needs and learning pedagogies of aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. By accessing information communication technologies (ICT), aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can improve their educational outcomes. They can design educational programs with aboriginal pedagogies at the forefront to suit their needs using ICT. Outcamp ICT learning centres, placed where aboriginal communities can gain easy access to them and staffed with educators who can help facilitate the development of learning skills, are one solution to improving educational achievement.
Introduction

Indigenous peoples are some of the most disadvantaged groups globally. When using any social indicator, indigenous communities will always be noted at the negative end. Ole Henrik Magga, Chair of the United Nations (UN) Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, states that, “[I]t is absolutely clear that with every indicator, with every statistic… on education, livelihood, economy, you name it… the indigenous groups are the lowest; in every country they are far below the average” (Logan, 2004).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are no different; much of their lack of success can be related to the inappropriate educational practices directed at them through non-aboriginal pedagogical filters of the Australian educational systems.

Aboriginal Educational History and the Current Situation

The history of aboriginal education is marked by aboriginal students being denied quality education and the process of attempting to assimilate them into the values of the wider non-aboriginal community (Heitmeyer, 2001).

When viewing aboriginal educational history, you can understand why statistical evidence of aboriginal students’ records can be so negative in comparison to non-aboriginal students’ records. Levels of retention and attendance are always down when comparing aboriginal to non-aboriginal students. For example, the retention rate for aboriginal students in Australia is relatively poor, with 38% of aboriginal students going through to senior years of school education; this is compared to 79% of non-aboriginal students (NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, 2004). Some answers to why aboriginal students do not complete these years are generally directed towards racism and culturally inappropriate curriculum (McConnochie, 1998). When reviewing literacy and numeracy benchmarks, aboriginal students are again presented less than their non-aboriginal counterparts, such as only 72% of aboriginal students compared to 90% of all students reaching the National literacy benchmarks in Year Three and this gap increasing by Year Five of primary school (NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, 2004). Since the establishment and recorded collection of basic skills testing (BST) results in the early 1970s, aboriginal students’ results have constantly been lower than their non-aboriginal counterparts. These gaps can be viewed on a larger scale, such as with an International review of educational standards of 42 Nations where Australia overall was
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