



Summary of Ideas – Consultation on the Indigenous Education Action Plan

The quality of your posts on this topic demonstrates the importance of this issue. Many posts discussed personal experiences with the education system and offered some great suggestions on what could be undertaken to address some of these issues. Your posts have been provided in raw form to the broader public consultation process on the Indigenous Education Action plan currently being undertaken by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA). Your ideas and experiences will be considered along with other formal submissions to this consultation and we will endeavour to update you on the progress of the consultation.

The majority of posts were centred on several major themes:

- Improving understanding of, and respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures - You highlighted the need for the education system to have greater understanding of the cultural needs of Indigenous students and that the teaching of Indigenous culture needed to focus more on the positive aspects of the culture. One post in particular outlined an experience within a classroom “... I remember being the only Aboriginal student in my class when we got to talking about Aboriginal deaths in custody. It was treated as an intellectual curiosity not a tragedy that has relevance for the people within the class...”. Many of your posts also discussed the need for improved cultural awareness training for teachers, to ensure that teachers have a greater understanding of what may impact on Indigenous students’ participation and success in education.
- Flexibility in the delivery of education, accommodating different learning styles and cultural diversity - The idea that the education system should be more responsive to differences in learning styles of students was considered particularly important in improving educational attainment and outcomes for Indigenous students. Many of your posts highlighted issues faced by Indigenous students when cultural practices dictate absences from school. One post also shared an experience with the teaching of Indigenous culture as ‘primitive’ and ‘dying out’. Generally, it was felt that teachers need to be more flexible in the delivery of the curriculum and accommodating of the differences in students’ learning styles.
- Teaching of Indigenous languages and culture - The importance of Indigenous young people being able to speak and learn their own languages at school was raised in a number of posts, as was the need to expand and improve the teaching of Indigenous culture and history within the education system. Many of you felt that teaching Indigenous languages and expanding the teaching of Indigenous culture to the whole of the school population, would result in wider acceptance of Indigenous students within the school and would help Indigenous students feel a greater acceptance within the school community.

○ Increasing the number of Indigenous educators -

A number of people suggested that there was a need to strengthen non-Indigenous teachers' and administrators' knowledge, cultural understanding and respect for Indigenous cultures. Many of you felt that the current training for teachers on Indigenous culture was lacking and was not consistent across university courses. One respondent suggested that all teachers needed to have experience in teaching in schools with high Indigenous student populations or in Indigenous communities. There was also strong support for increasing the number of Indigenous teachers within the system, to provide Indigenous students with role models and to increase general awareness and acceptance across the school community.

○ Using role models and sharing success stories to improve educational outcomes and participation -

In addition to increasing the number of Indigenous educators in schools to provide Indigenous students with role models, a number of posts discussed the importance of celebrating the achievements of Indigenous people. It was felt that sharing stories of success with other young Indigenous people would demonstrate what could be achieved by continued education.

○ Addressing broader social issues that affect educational achievement and participation -

Many posts highlighted the complexity of this issue and the need to address other social issues in order to improve educational outcomes. It was felt that raising the living standards of Indigenous people would also assist in improving educational retention and attainment. There was also discussion of the greater need to involve Indigenous people in the development of solutions, to ensure there was greater ownership of the issues and any intervention. One post also talked about the importance of the role parents play in encouraging and supporting their children to attend and stay in school. This person felt that without a specific focus on this, the money governments spend on improving school facilities and materials may not be as effective.

Other posts discussed ideas such as scholarships for Indigenous students to encourage further study, subsidising educational materials and the importance of early learning programs to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes. One post also discussed the idea of the creation of a university of first nations, based on a Canadian model, which focuses on education of the population as a whole in Indigenous cultures, whether students are Indigenous or not. The model also ensures places for Indigenous students to become experts in fields of greatest need such as healthcare and education.