**Closing Education Gap and Inequality in Indigenous Australian People**

Student’s Name

University Affiliation

Course

10/19/2022

**Introduction**

**Topic Background**

The presence of complex and interrelated social, employment and health outcomes has compounded the issue of ascertaining public policy challenges in Australia. The nature of the response creates a disadvantage that has often faced the Indigenous Australian, as the increasing limited understanding of finding solutions to close societal gaps between non-indigenous is overrun by both international and national high-stakes standards (Fahey, 2021). The educational landscape thus disadvantages those with weak socio-economic status, a preemptive strike that yet denies all Australians an equal chance for educational opportunities. The drive for improved quality, high standards, and excellence in changing the nature and outcome of education failure match the limited resources to the understanding of closing the educational gap. Formal schooling, further education, training, and employment opportunities provide a full range of necessary precursor skills to alleviate the social disadvantages faced by indigenous societies.

Gray, Hunter & Schwab (2018) decrees the insistence of education is the most significant factor that improves employment outcomes for all Australian communities. Malin & Maidment (2003) signifies that education will aid Indigenous Australians’ social incorporation in classes and enhance their social consensus and health. With education providing the key to self-determination and equal participation in society, Indigenous Australians’ benefits are yet to be realized as participation, access to, and retention in education showcases inequitable outcomes. The advancing nature of global decolonization accentuates increased opportunities to access resources that were otherwise restricted (Rudolph, 2011). This builds on the existing educational gap as a reflection of a broader concern with the rights and well-being of Indigenous Australians.

Indigenous Australians fall victim to multiple equity issues and equity overlap. The constant and inadvertent marginalization concerning access to quality education, wealth, and power restricts the principle of quality of life. The segment is predominantly associated with a higher birth rate and thus increases the inferiority complex of living in poverty. The demographic characteristics of indigenous with relation to equity become an overlapping issue compared to non-indigenous students. The likelihood of female Indigenous students increases compared to males; more are associated with low socio-economic status, considered responsible for caring for the dependent in the family, and likely to be first in the family to access higher education. Such staggering conditions indicate their likelihood to originate from remote regions in Australia.

As a constant concern among indigenous Australians, the discrepancy rises when school completion is brought into focus. A provocative idea in secondary school completion and the commencement of higher education showcases the number of participations from 2010. However, the 0.9% increase in enrollment to higher education (11,088 students) does not provide parity with the indigenous people making up 2.5% of the indigenous population (Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, 2006). This indication projects the underrepresentation of indigenous people in higher education and the low perception of their participation, retention, and outcomes (O’Rourke, 2008; Devlin, 2009). In contrast to indigenous students in Canada and the United States, fewer indigenous Australians hold post-qualification, and there are poor outcomes compared to western society. The pervasive nature of aligning Indigenous education with achievement or disadvantage indicates that methodological approaches are significantly relevant in boosting cultural connection, explicit and quality teaching, and irrefutable school attendance (Altman, 2018). With the disparity in outcomes through various programs being of importance and the nature to address it is deeply rooted in colonial oppression, a robust way to mitigate the problem should be subservient to a different framework.

The inception of programs and initiatives to improve the state of Indigenous students’ education engineered a framework commenced by the Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2007. A wide range of measures on inclusive education ascertain an ambitious aspiration to its targets, and therefore the enactment of the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) and six ‘closing the Gap’ targets. The measures set up by the new Closing the Gap framework ensured to boost in student achievement in school, reducing the percentage of the student at the bottom of the achievement scale and increasing it at the top (Willems, 2012). A more concerning integration of the policy ascertained the involvement of Indigenous peak bodies to further the attainment of the framework’s target on post-schooling emphasis attainment and participation and pre-schooling contribution and development.

The anticipated closing the gap initiative mediated its six objectives through a period and in different phases. Its first target was a pre-closing gap that accounts for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Taskforce on boosting literacy and numeracy among indigenous Australians, similar to non-Indigenous Australians. Its establishment and periodic operation did not bolster its expected goals since 1995. The 1998-2002 pre-closing gap goal through the Australian education minister endorsed the observation of minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standards (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004). The goal was not met, and the gap increased proportionally with the advancing non-indigenous Australians’ level. The Minister’s Hobart Declaration between 1998-2002 on establishing education and training systems to increase proficiency as dictated by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders failed in meeting its expected outcomes. The 1999 initiative to assure equitable access and opportunities among Indigenous and non-indigenous students also was unable to meet its expected results (Truscott & Malcolm, 2010). This was later followed by the Melbourne Declaration, supported by the COAG’s National Indigenous Reform Agreement, to halve the gap by lowering the considerable standards that enrolled students to bolster their writing, reading, and numeracy. The objective budgeted within a 10-year period (2008-2018) did not actualize its objectives (McConney et al., 2011). Such aims delivered by the pre-closing the gap targets initiative bearded no progressive results for immediate change.

Additional attempts fostered an initiative of initially closing the gap with education policies as inclusive targets. Initiated in 2008, they began by ensuring all indigenous four-year-old children access early childhood education in five years. From 2008-2013, the objective was met (Truscott & Malcolm, 2010). However, the expected goal of halving the gap with the introduction of indigenous children at national minimum standards was not met as expected from 2008-2018, and therefore pushed the 2006-2020 goal of halving the gap for indigenous students to have education access. It’s still progressive as it was not met. 2014 additional closing the gap target in increasing school attendance from 2014 to 2018 was never fulfilled. A 2015 fortified objective to improve on increased 4-year-old early childhood enrollment by 2025 is still on track (Purdie & Buckley, 2010). Initiatives of a revised draft in 2018 accentuated closing half the gap by bolstering equivalent qualifications among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous 20–24-year-olds. The objective is still on track. Prospective initiatives reduce the proportion of all students in the bottom two bands and increase the proportion of students in the top two NAPLAN bands of reading and numeracy, with an average of 6% points (Rigby et al., 2011).

**Rationale**

The current techniques have shown little to no progress as the research on Indigenous education still prompts further contextualization. Earlier research has utilized small case studies focused on a population set, incomplete or unclear in rendering its objectives. Concerns on the uniqueness of the indigenous experience of education or the isolation of the broader discourse of ongoing professional development and social-emotional readiness for formal education (Purdie & Buckley, 2010). Additionally, the discipline of categorizing cognitive and psychological endeavors predominantly focused on problems. Asserting a rather suitable relationship between cause and effect needs to be referenced with the adoption and promotion of single solutions (Brown, 2019).

**Research Question/Problems**

Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage sets an inclusive framework that pries on the key strategical policies for achieving equality for indigenous students. The notable gap between the only 77% of Indigenous students meeting the minimum benchmark for reading as compared to 93% of non-indigenous students dictates the lower numeracy score of the Indigenous students (MCEETYA, 2000). The dictation to reduce the disparity between the educational outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students are of concern, and the disadvantage experienced by many of the Indigenous students prompts addressing. The concern is to increase the academic achievement gap and empower campaigns and policies that aid in setting different starting points for the population compositions to set a common goal for Indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. Understanding the fact that indigenous students as well respond to Australia’s current educational system calls for action. Additionally, the study prompts to undertake Trauma Informed Practices to understand the system impacting students on school behavior and disciplinary absences, student engagement, academic outcomes, and retention rates.

**Aims and Objectives**

From the conception of the indigenous student, a radical approach illuminated by racial difference has contextualized the inequality in Australia. As education is associated with the standard and agreed on national goals, the research covers the following in Australian education.

* To evaluate the nature of education all young people are receiving to aid in boosting talent and capacities to full potential in cultural, social, and economic needs.
* To evaluate how a Trauma Informed Practices (TIP) will impact middle school student’s engagement, school behaviors and disciplinary absences, academic outcomes, and retention rate over one year.
* To promote the inclusion of Indigenous Australian advocates in cultivating policies, regulations, and measures that remain a backbone for an equal education system in Australia.

**Methods and Methodological Approach**

The study will consider qualitative methods to cover the broader scope of the unequal distribution of educational resources in Australia. The study proposes to approach and conduct a critical analysis of the educational discourse using key Australian education policies, matters on difference, equity, social justice, and improvement in education (Altman, Hunter & Biddle, 2018). In developing both research designs, the study prompts the whole of Australia as the targeted focus, where data pertaining to indigenous and non-indigenous students, the social policies, the education sector, and people’s mindsets will be precise in offering insight (Fahey, 2021).

**Qualitative Research Method**

The research on closing the educational gap among Indigenous Australians will utilize case study research, one-on-one interviews, and ethnographic research. To mitigate the already recorded data, the environment where the research will undertake and understanding of the culture, challenge, motivations, and settings that occur within the region (Willems, 2012).

The case-study research design will focus on collecting previous trials to accentuate methods that were used to provide solutions for closing the educational gap. The innumerable prioritization given to the indigenous students is the objective. Case-study design will focus on trials, government-initiated programs, regional population research studies on indigenous and the increasing educational gap (McConney et al., 2011). Secondary resources and libraries within Australia will provide enormous exposure and focused attention to alleviate the existing challenges. This method prompts its ability to further its deep-dive and thorough understanding of the collection methods and ways to infer that data. In this case, sourcing information dating back to 1998 would prove evitable as much of the documented research programs could offer a trend in closing the educational gap and inequality among indigenous Australians (Altman, Hunter & Biddle, 2018).

An ethnographic approach takes on the current observation and fortifies it to fit the underlying environment among Indigenous Australians. The fact that it recognizes the current environment, socio-economic stature, and culture, the research design becomes speculative to render the desired results. An in-depth evaluation of regions, cities, and urban centers where indigenous people reside, will determine the associated geographical constraints in acquiring data from families, the community, and a large area compared to a sampled area. Through the ethnographic method, the research question is able to understand the challenges, cultural prejudice, motivation, and settings that occur to provide the necessitated outcome in first-hand information (Rudolph, 2011). The diverse situation projected by not only interviews or discussions on the nature of Indigenous inequality in education can be observed, documented, and linked to the desirable attempts that were earlier made. With the general target, the ethnographic method tends to be passive and thus prompts regular keen observatory inferences through recording, taking pictures, and drawing conclusions based on the acquired knowledge. Ethnography considers time as a variable to observe and dictate the noted state of indigenous peoples’ lifestyle and way of life as the dimmable state to prompt inevitable change within the educational system (Leigh & Gong, 2009).

The one-on-one interview sets the context to understand the personal position on education inequality among the indigenous people. The interview will be conversational as it invites opportunities for interviewers to acquire in-depth details, which are considered honest by the respondent. The interactive nature of this method allows the collection of precise data about people’s beliefs and associated motivations. Interviews align with the aid of the right questions in the collection of meaningful data, as it prompts voluntary follow-up questions that ascertain the collection of more information. The research encourages either performing an on-phone or face-to-face interaction. However, the desirable outcome and genuine projection of responses are ascertained by conducting a face-to-face interview, as the researcher can observe respondents’ reactions and body language.

**Data Analysis**

The above methods will lead to collecting large amounts of data which the study will make different records, tabling, and valuation. Notes on behaviors, settings, a family’s socio-economic state, and impressions will provide context to interoperation. With the results of qualitative research being open-ended, a much wider frame to interpret the data will be more concerned with who, what, and when to understand the motivations, behaviorism, and feelings of participants (Purdie et al., 2011). Analysis of the collected data will follow deductive reasoning to draw a conclusion in the developing patterns and trends within the data set. Sub-categorization of themes or patterns will aid in the summarization of the necessitated action to assist in closing the education gap and inequality among indigenous Australians.

**Limitations**

Conducting the selected qualitative analysis is timely, and with the aspect of ethnography intertwined with other research designs, months or years could be best to provide the respective results. Additionally, the prompted ethnography research is challenging and would require the expertise of an experienced researcher to observe and collect data successfully. The aim and objective could be differently exemplified by qualitative research; thus, the resultant outcomes could differ from the projected ideals to reduce the widening educational gap. Qualitative research requires resources to actualize—costs associated with travel expenses, stationery, accommodation, and sometimes salaries of experts and staff.

* Large sample size to cover for statistical measurements in a timely manner.
* Limited access to indigenous Australians’ data.
* Indigenous or non-indigenous Australian bias could alter the outcome.

**Addressing Ethical Considerations**

The study will consider ethical concerns, as illustrated by Beauchamp (2007). Ethical principles will showcase the selected participants and the concerns of consent, beneficence, non-maleficence, and confidentiality (Beauchamp, 2007). All participants in the study will have consented without being coerced or unfairly pressurized. An indication that all participants are well-informed before the study, what the study is about, the nature of the study requirements, and have the assurance that declining to participate will not affect any services they receive. All participants acknowledge the aim and objective of the study; thus, they understand their purpose and participation is for the greater good of society. The set requirements for the study are sensitive to promoting the members of the society to gain a higher and more successful front in education. The study will not conduct experimental designs that will harm the participants’ health, mental quality, or psychological underpinning. Participants are obligated to quit and report any misconduct experienced while undertaking any related activity in the study. The study sets out to secure the presented data from interference or invasion. Therefore, the identity of all collected data is protected at all times, and it’s not left on unsafe grounds or unprotected computer files.

**References**

Altman, J. (2018). *Beyond closing the gap: Valuing diversity in Indigenous Australia*. Canberra, ACT: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), The Australian National University.

Altman, J., Hunter, B., & Biddle, N. (2018). *How realistic are the prospects for’closing the gaps’ in socio-economic outcomes for Indigenous Australians?* Canberra, ACT: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), The Australian National University.

Australia. Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). (2000). Achieving educational equality for Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: discussion paper.

Beauchamp, T. L. (2007). The ‘four principles’ approach to health care ethics. *Principles of health care ethics*, *29*, 3-10.

Brown, L. (2019). Indigenous young people, disadvantage and the violence of settler colonial education policy and curriculum. *Journal of Sociology*, *55*(1), 54-71.

Devlin, M. (2009). Indigenous higher education student equity: Focusing on what works. The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 38, 1–8.

Fahey, G. (2021). Mind the Gap: Understanding the Indigenous education gap and how to close it.

Gray, M., Hunter, B., & Schwab, R. (2018). A critical survey of Indigenous education outcomes, 1986-96. Canberra, ACT: Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), The Australian National University.

Malin, M., & Maidment, D. (2003). Education, Indigenous survival and well-being: Emerging ideas and programs. The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education, 32, 85-100.

McConney, A., Oliver, M., Woods‐McConney, A., & Schibeci, R. (2011). Bridging the gap? A comparative, retrospective analysis of science literacy and interest in science for indigenous and non‐indigenous Australian students. *International Journal of Science Education*, *33*(14), 2017-2035.

O’Rourke, V. (2008, December). Invisible fences: Perceived institutional barriers to success for Indigenous university students. Paper presented at the AARE 2008 International Education Research Conference, Brisbane, Australia. Retrieved from <http://www.aare.edu.au/08pap/oro08799.pdf>

Purdie, N., & Buckley, S. (2010). School attendance and retention of Indigenous Australian students.

Purdie, N., Reid, K., Frigo, T., Stone, A., & Kleinhenz, E. (2011). Literacy and numeracy learning: lessons from the Longitudinal Literacy and Numeracy Study for Indigenous Students.

Rigby, W., Duffy, E., Manners, J., Latham, H., Lyons, L., Crawford, L., & Eldridge, R. (2011). Closing the gap: Cultural safety in Indigenous health education. *Contemporary Nurse*, *37*(1), 21-30.

Rudolph, S. (2011). Rethinking Indigenous educational disadvantage. *Unpublished master’s thesis). University of Melbourne, Australia*. the four principles of Tom

Willems, J. (2012). Educational resilience as a quadripartite responsibility: Indigenous peoples participating in higher education via distance education. *Journal of Open, Flexible and Distance Learning*, *16*(1), 14-27.