

An Almost Competent look at Cultural Competency

Rose, M.



source: www.lonerangerfanclub.com

Introduction

It seems that everywhere we look at the moment in Aboriginal Affairs the term ‘cultural competency’ is popping up. ‘Cultural competency is an area of study that is gaining prominence as we encounter more human diversity in our work and our lives’ (Valaskakis, Stout, & Guimand, 2009, p.237). The concept certainly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander spectrum seems to have gained a life of its own without ever having gone through any semblance of a vigorous intellectual interrogation. Like many concepts that lay lifeless on the policy landscape in the past, cultural competency in the form it has surfaced does on closer examination present as barely more than a number of half thought out generalities. The greater danger of this is that in pursuit of such conceptual ubiquities like ‘cultural competency’ there is often massive time, effort and focus that are distracted from real goals in Aboriginal affairs. It is like pursuing a mere mirage. Currently ‘cultural competency’ has vicariously gathered gravitas in terms of profile and status way beyond its means and certainly below any real substance. Simply put ‘cultural competency’ in its current incarnation is not the panacea that it is being purported to be in universities, professions and in government who translate it into an ever growing feeding frenzy for training programs. This paper only intends to pose some critical questions around the inadequacies around the intellectual architecture of ‘cultural competency’ as it is currently being espoused and in doing so to send up something of a timely admonitory flare.

There is a place

In 2005 having co-chaired the Victorian whole of government Implementation Review of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 2005 I was privy to a whole range of services both general and those specifically targeting Indigenous people that fell well short of the mark in terms of service delivery. In fact it was the original Royal Commission that referred to a notion of 'underlying issues' that permeated service delivery. Translated this refers to a more general paradigm and mindset in the broader population that was fed by a chronic ignorance around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues. This led me in 2006 to say in the paper 'The Great Silent Apartheid' that 'It (cultural awareness) can be quantified as a competency and immersed industrially as a requirement and an ongoing KPI (Key Performance Indicator) for systems, schools and teachers'(Rose, 2006, p.1). My reference was driven by the sheer frustration of what I saw over eighteen months during the review where time and time again professional decisions and practice were inappropriately deployed from intellectually and conceptually stunted positions, driven from the core of the central ignorance of the 'silent apartheid'. The downstream result of this professional ineptitude can be measured in many ways but none as poignant as incarcerated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who found the surrealism of the criminal justice system more attractive than the realism of their life.

My further frustration was also driven by the plethora of cultural awareness exercises that take place on a daily basis around the nation. These are delivered by passionate people and attended by genuine people some albeit with a 'cucumber sandwich' dependency and who are entertained and taken on what can be a virtual cultural '*Contiki*' tour. These programs focus on 'explicit knowledge' rather than 'tacit knowledge' or the base assumption that underpin them. Failures of the general education system render generations after generations palpably ignorant about the land that they live on. They rarely embark on the next stage to challenge or translate their new found insights in viable workplace practise? The reason why cultural awareness exercises are necessary is because of the societal ramification of where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders knowledge is positioned in the national consciousness.

"Australian education systems and sectors placement of culture and tradition on the fringe has dispossessed and stunted the intellectual capacity and the national psyche of this country. For the field of education the Silent Apartheid and the range of by-products that it has developed has drastically impeded engagement and the ability of educators, schools and systems to deliver on their mandate to teach all. With this they as educators, schools and systems must seek to break the corrupted and jaundiced cycle of knowledge transfer. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders should have more confidence if it were to become industrially prescribed as a competency as opposed to relying on the mere chance of cultural conversion through awareness training" (Rose, 2006, p.3).

The need for breaking the corrupted and jaundiced cycle of knowledge transfer is as relevant now as it ever has been. There still exists, an abyss in the national psyche, that rich in the Jungian tradition an ever consuming unconsciousness. This abyss that is the 'great silent apartheid' is a gaping hole in the nation's narrative which in the absence of reality is filled with half-truths, mythologies and stereotypes that distort, and "Unfortunately contemporary culture regards truth as a subject worthy of fiction rather than intellectual pursuit" (Furedi, 2006,p.8)

Evidence abounds just in social indicators alone for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and while it would be easy to mount a statistical 'big picture' account of the effect of the continuing 'silent apartheid' a seminal representation can just as easily be drawn in the specific.

April's Story.

My cousin April lost her mother in 2008. Being referred by the Aboriginal Health Service and admitted to hospital she would have access to the cumulative assets both physical and professional of a modern well equipped hospital. Over the matters of weeks her condition deteriorated and then got the better of her and she passed. April told me of a counselling conversation that a nurse had with her directly after. The nurse obviously a skilled practitioner empathically offered rationales on how to accept her loss and high on her list was that 'your mother was Aboriginal and Aboriginal people die earlier'.

April's mum was not Aboriginal, her father is. The nurse's rationale was way beyond a moot point or simple mistake. What needs to be asked is how that single notion that 'Aboriginal people die early' was subliminally and effectively translated into her workplace practise? How many times did her and her colleagues walk rather than run in response to her bell? Also how from the very basic tasks to the more highly sophisticated nursing activities influenced from a clouded and jaundiced praxis because of a misinformed notions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and an ongoing position of cultural ignorance?

I do believe that there is a place for and a strong argument to progress and exhort for higher standards of professional delivery which of late has somehow been surreptitiously coupled to what is being tagged as 'cultural competency' by way of panacea. However, I also feel that there is clearly a compelling disconnect between the need for programmatic delivery of superior standard and the miraculous medicinal cure of what is being touted around as 'cultural competency'.

Back in 2005 I was unashamedly was one of the proponents for 'cultural competency' and for a demonstrable level of industrial translation for the workplace. However nearly a decade years down the track I am not convinced that cultural competency as it is being packaged has the capacity to deliver. What have surfaced generally over this time seems to just semantically camouflaged cultural awareness programs or 'cultural awareness plus one' devoid of the very essential element that actually relates to the given notion of competency and that is workplace translation.

"The term cultural competency first emerged in the health care literature in a 1989 article by Cross, Bazron, Dennis" (Grote, 2008, p.14). It has since migrated across three disciplines that contest ownership. This conceptual battle has created a programmatic fog over who can claim the term 'competency'. There seems to be three separate pulls competing for conceptual probity and custodianship around 'competency' and these proponents include the disciplines of management, adult education and (VET) Vocational and Educational Training.

A Conceptual Tug of War

"Over the past decade, there has been increasing interest worldwide in the concept of cultural competence (sometimes called cultural competency), and this interest seems to be increasing" (Ranzin, McConnochie, Nolan, 2010, p.3). The first pull comes from the Vocational and Educational Training sector where the educational philosophy that defines the domain that it operates in is driven by measurement, 'It is therefore important to analyse training and development needs in the business unit to make sure business units are at the right competency level' (Miller, Brautigan, and Gerlach, 2006, p.72). The sector rightfully claims that a competency is something that can be measured and modules from this particular educational congregation are refaced by the term 'by the end of this module the student will be able to'. In

Australia VET (Vocational and Educational Training) comes under the jurisdiction of the state and all basically concur on what Queensland purports below as the frame that is competency based training,

“Competency based training (CBT) is an approach to vocational education and training that places emphasis on what a person can do in the workplace as a result of completing a program of training.

Competency based training programs are often comprised of modules broken into segments called learning outcomes. These modules are based on standards set by industry, and assessment is designed to ensure each student has achieved all the outcomes (skills and knowledge) required by each module.

Progress within a competency based training program is not based on time. As soon as students have achieved or demonstrated the outcomes required in a module, they can move to the next module. In this way, students may be able to complete a program of study much faster”

(http://www.tafe.qld.gov.au/courses/flexible_study/competency.html)

A senior public servant who had Koorie education as part of his purview once asked how he might go about doing a VET course on cultural competency. His request was possibly the clearest indicator that he was far from any semblance of cultural competency. In fact a credentialed certificate in cultural competency would be akin to a certificate in creativity – the very fact that you had one is an illuminated sign that you were not creative.

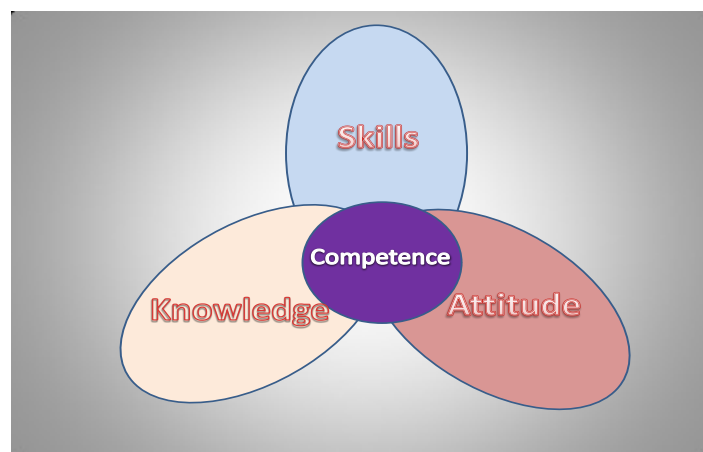
The right of VET (Vocational and Educational Training) to make a claim on cultural competency goes far beyond the basic cringe factor. As a central plank in VET (Vocational and Educational Training) philosophy is that competence is a measured phenomenon and it is this notion that congers a justifiable trepidation in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community for if it is to be measured then who will does the measuring?, ‘What cultural knowledge then becomes the core competence of the educated individuals?’ (Magnala, 2005, p.85). At the core of this concern also resides an equal concern about content and how this will be measured. Much more significantly in the VET (Vocational and Educational Training) zone and in particular for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is that a measured competency will mean an abandoned commodity. This would allow others to become static experts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and business effectively refuting the notion that, ‘people are not passive carriers of cultural meanings; they express their agency via culture and participate actively in culture’ (Elliot, 2005, p.491). The longitudinal danger in VET (Vocational and Educational Training) cultural competency program would bestow ownership away from the community and this raises significant concerns. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community will not ever abrogate culture and knowledge to an educational stream.

Likewise with all due respect to the VET (Vocational and Educational Training) sector who have for decades provided pathways for thousands of Australians through its specialised educational platform the philosophy that is enshrined in the sector does not in all balance attract critique. One such criticism is that which Hatch and Cunliffe (2006, p.261) refer to as the competency trap, “Competency traps can lead to improvements in procedures that have limited or no competitive advantage” which is further echoed in Bolman and Deal (2003, p 30) quoting the likes of ‘Argyris and Schon [who] believe that the actions we take to promote productive organisational learning actually inhibit deeper learning’. This concept simply put refers that achievement of a designated VET level can lead to person being encrusted in a shell fed by the

misconception that all the learning required has been achieved. This can freeze the desire to drill further once one has reached the credentialed level and once you are there 'reducing motivation to search for better procedures double loop sacrificed to single looped learning' (Hatch and Cunliffe, 2006, p.261).

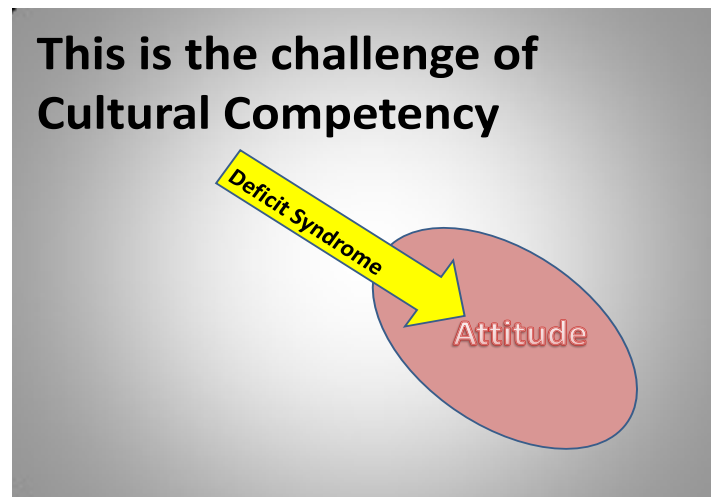
The other perspective about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency within a VET (Vocational and Educational Training) relates to the very nature of culture itself. Elliot captures the ever shifting nature of culture, 'A different view of culture, which emphasises the dynamic and agentic aspects of culture and behaviour, is assumed in our conceptualisation of cultural competence. In this view, culture consists of a network of knowledge and practices that is produced, distributed and reproduced among a collection of interconnected people (Elliot, 2005, p.490). Capturing, reproducing the natural evolution of culture of not one but almost five hundred Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations would challenge the VET (Vocational and Educational Training) sector.

The VET (Vocational and Educational Training) claim can be juxtaposed to the dual counter claim that adult education and management has to the term competency. Here where the two paradigms of adult education and management merge with less distinction and measurement is abjured in favour of a more intangible but richer school of thought, 'Managerialism involves a framework of values and beliefs about social arrangements and the distribution and ordering of resources' (Becher and Trowler, 2001, p.10). This connection is often represented in terms of tacit and explicit knowledge and their processing as single loop learning being translated into double loop learning in an endless swirl of self-discovery. It is in this domain the process of learning is placed as being more important than the end point destination. Adult education and management often draw from the same pool of literature and demonstrate consensus on many points of competency, 'a competency can be thought as the ability to do something at some level of proficiency that is usually composed of some combination of knowledge, understanding, skill, attitude and values' (Knowles and Malcolm, 2005, p.267). Bakarman conveniently reduces these components into a simpler acronym ASK (Attitude, Skills and Knowledge), 'The ingredients of ASK came from Vinke's (2002) definition of competency as the ability of an individual to select and use the knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary for effective behaviour in a specific professional, social and learning situation' (Bakarman, Pg 2).



To accept skills, knowledge and attitude are the central planks derived from the dual paradigms of adult education and management then examination of all that is on offer at the moment in the world of cultural competency around Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander issues surfaces a significant flaw. There seems to be a curriculum bias towards knowledge at the expense of skills and attitude. In the very broad raft offerings

that are flooding the training landscape currently claiming to be cultural competency programs fail to recognise the centrality of competency theory. This stance projects that all three elements being skills, knowledge and attitude need to demonstrate synchronicity and that the absence of just one will result in incompetence. Possibly the hardest to influence of the skills, knowledge and attitude is the 'attitude' frame. Knowledge and skills in certain workplace settings, particularly those that are human intensive including education, health and the law are somewhat regulated by the profession however attitude is more longitudinal input and a derivative of both nature and nurture informed by the personal psyche. The attitude frame is an agnatic flavouring that one brings to skills and knowledge and is projected both intra-personally and interpersonally and is less subject to workplace regulation.



With the NTEU about to launch a 'Cultural Competency' package there are markers along the way of attempts to define the space over time. From the IHEAC (Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council) paper which was virtually an elongated literature review to a publication from the former Stronger/Smarter Institute whose authors seem to have sourced theory from that part of the library that if it were a supermarket would house 'end of run' and 'out of date' product. It was bereft of the nuances of competency theory and simply are just rebranded rhetoric from any baseline 1980 MBA (Masters of Business Administration).

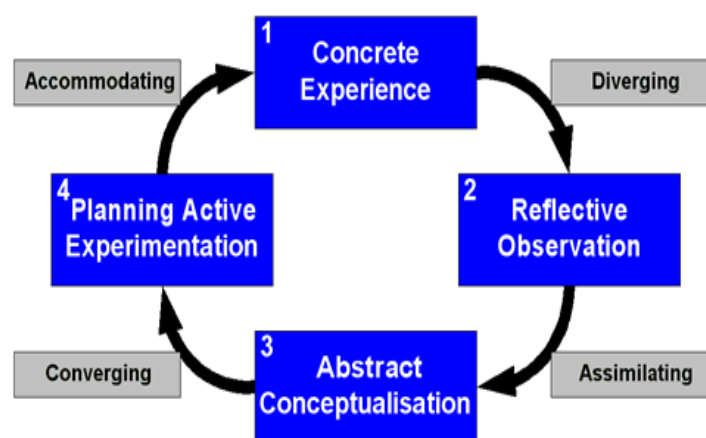
Most of the language and intent of many current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency programs seems to be locked in the same conceptual and intellectual time warp. In these programs the inputs and references consistent with contemporary 'competency theory' seem absent. This very clearly highlighted in the launch of Universities Australia National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities. The package while comprehensive could be mistaken for a raft of 'best practise' meshed with cultural awareness, 'It is about, or appears to be about, ensuring that all Australian students possess indigenous(sic) cultural competency and that all academics possess the competence to incorporate indigenous(sic) elements into their teaching and research (The Australian 2012, p.10). As succinct as this descriptor may be, the package negates any semblance of competency theory which makes it intellectually and functionally vulnerable. It is of little wonder that on its launch it immediately drew criticism from many quarters including the accusation of social engineering, 'There are those, of course, who would use universities for purposes other than criticism. They believe that universities can be used for the purposes of social engineering, to make a certain type of person, hence a "better world" (The Australian 2012, p.10). Likewise the central element in it the National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency, as part of the Universities Australia response struggles for credibility in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities where the perception is held that it

was conceived without substantive community consultation. If this is the case the irony is that the ‘cultural competency’ national frame could have been conceived in a ‘culturally incompetent manner? Missing from all of the current offerings is firstly the translation into workplace practise as the essence of ‘competency theory as well as the theoretical augmentation by leading writers in the field such the likes of Marzano (2012) and Sternberg (2007) among others?

This serious omission bolsters the claim that many so-called cultural competency programs are rarely more than cultural awareness exercises and as such fall short of authentic conceptual understanding yet alone delivering any form of competence at all. They seem to be submerged in the thick murkiness of a conceptual schizophrenic soup that emanates from the three paradigmatic pulls without any real competency that actually understands competence itself, ‘Cross cultural competence cannot be reduced to a crash course in doing business with non-western partners’ (Magnala, 2005, p.204). What they lack is the transformative process that should be emblematic of competency training which tactically takes salient lessons and insights and translates them into workplace praxis. This gives rise to skills such as, ‘Cultural frame switching which is a good example of flexible and discriminative use of cultural knowledge to grasp experiences in a changing sociocultural milieu. The reflectivity, sensitivity and flexibility that define the cultural core of cultural competence are epitomised in the following reflection of Susanna Harrington’. Harrington in Sparrow (2000) talks further of the skill when in different cultural environments of embracing convergent and divergent strategies depending on the situation. Cultural frame switching is central to the transformative process leading to the new sophisticated and informed praxis.

The Transformative Process

One of the earliest writers of transformative learning comes from the work of David Kolb (1984, p.38) whereby he saw the drive towards competence is inextricably linked to experientialism or as he would have it ‘ the process is whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience’. While also from the eighties the Kolb Learning Cycle draws on both converging and diverging skills of thinking and is used extensively still today. This is an essentially simple tool that processes any concrete experience through a filter deeper reflection to a richer level of thinking. From this abstract conceptualisations or new ideas are formed and surfaced that then lead to workplace translation through active experimentation that then leads to the next concrete experience. The new concrete experience then tests out of the abstract concept and the cycle then moves into a double cycle that is often referred and represented in organisational learning as ‘double loop’ learning.



Source: <http://www.learningtechnologies.ac.uk/kolb>

The application and relevance of this model should be translated to the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency. If the myriad of so called Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency programs were faithful to the essence of 'competency theory' then the end product would be such that it had a specific and clear 'workplace' implication. The specific ramification for the nation's professionals whether they are from education, health or the law is not the acquisition of a new competency called 'cultural competency' but rather how they use their professional skills and competencies more strategically.

This in many ways has been the basis for the development La Trobe University Melbourne response in the space. Accepting that cultural competency 'can't be taught', La Trobe University prefers to engage in the domain of 'cultural literacy' through the Wominjeka La Trobe. Thus each La Trobe University student from 2014 will undertake a base online Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture program designed to equip them with authentic concepts or a literacy that equips them for their desired professions to make suitable strategic and tactical decisions in the workplace. It targets and encourages them to test basic assumptions of their tacit knowledge base and in doing so presents as a giant leap in what the earliest proponents of cultural competence sought to do. In other words how from anyone's portfolio of skills might they arrange their professional skills to better engage their client? This argument if extended may infer that there may be no such thing as 'cultural competency', just competence.

The natural extension brings into contention that cultural knowledge is part of the process towards competence and not the end product, for only in very unique situations could someone be culturally competent and certainly not anyone that is outside that particular cultural group. It is basically a matter of semantics that one can be competent in a cross cultural setting. The end product is professional competence and standard and not cultural competence. For it is difficult to fathom how accelerated 'dot paintings' or 'making meaningful damper' might influence on the ground programmatic delivery? The term cultural competency should be split and the nexus between the two words is the immutable translation process. Certainly at the core of competence is a desire for lifting your craft from proficiency to mastery and this would include knowing the client culturally through a cultural literacy, 'the justification for the pedagogy of the oppressed: the contradiction between the oppressor and the oppressed and how to overcome oppression and oppressors. Liberation is not a gift, not self-achievement but a mutual process' (Friere, 1970, p.71). There are even more obstacles in the way.

The Lone Ranger Complex

Compounding the challenge of cultural competency is the ignominious existence of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fit in the broader Australia paradigmatic landscape. Driven by over two centuries of societal marginalisation the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander is in almost every representation, from the arts to economics, on the fringe. This has seeped into the national psyche that fuelled by the great silent apartheid, 'The silent apartheid as a detrimental phenomenon is bolstered not by the vacuum that it creates through the sustenance of ignorance, but by the raft of inappropriate by-products it produces in order to fill void. These by-products are themselves often covert and present not as racism but as an 'ignorance' that elicits professional practise that is derisive and harmful to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the general population.' (Rose, 2006, p.3). As an authentic contributor to national psyche it is essentially, 'How we view humanity really matters. If we insist on seeing humans as morally degraded

parasites then every significant technical problem from the millennium bug to the avian flu will be feared as a potential catastrophe beyond our control. Today's intellectual persuasion and cultural distortion distracts all humans from confronting challenges that lie ahead.' (Donnelly, 2007, p.40).

The image used at the start of this paper is that of the iconic and enigmatic personality of the Lone Ranger. As one of America's earliest fabled super heroes donning a tight fitting body suit, a mask and an obsequious Indigenous sidekick was all he needed to assume legendary status of a bygone era. The series migrated from radio to television with very few fans ever knowing the real significance of his sidekick called Tonto. Tonto always took a subservient role with the only expertise that he offered the Lone Ranger was the mysterious and exotic peripheral 'native' wisdom all the time supporting the western dominance and reinforcing stereotypes. A deeper understanding and greater transparency lies however in Tonto's name, Tonto is a Spanish word that translated into English roughly means 'stupid or dim witted'.

Since the 1960's dedicated Lone Ranger fans around the world were subliminally bombarded with negativity about Indigenous people. As subtle and remote as it may seem in this country it did feed along with both overt and covert inputs dating as far back as Darwin's measuring skulls to some of the more recent rhetoric surrounding notion of 'closing the gap' an insatiable appetite; a deficit syndrome that has been hard to satisfy. The original Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in its reference to 'underlying issues' in service delivery to communities fell short of naming the phenomena. Professionally it is reaching for the 'ill-informed' psychologically default button that is at arm's length. The phenomenon which is the deficit syndrome can surface in a classroom numerous times a day. It is whenever a classroom teacher inadvertently ethnically profiles a student by mistaking the soft bigotry of low expectation with meeting a perceived need of the student. This is when a professional educator who sees an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student would rather do something other than invest in his/her dreams, relegates and determines their future to sport, art or a trade without investing in the child's dreams. Or when an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is incarcerated not because of criminality but because every other option in their life has evaporated and the pathology of the criminal justice system was for them the option of last resort. And it seemed to be there that night April's mother died.

How then in terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency programs will any program be so intrusive that it will crack the 'Lone Ranger Complex' deeply set in the tacit knowledge domain and influence the 'attitudinal frame' that resides so deeply in both the personal and the national psyche. True competency around culture will only be possible once the great collective unconsciousness is addressed and a new grand narrative falls in place. I personally struggle to see how the current offerings in cultural awareness or cultural competency alone ever permeate it but, I do have faith in the more realistic notion of 'cultural literacy'. Certainly very few cultural competency programs that I have seen provide the potential to challenge the national deficit syndrome or the Lone Ranger Complex.

The Complexity of Cultural Competency Myth

A range of mythologies circle the concept of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency. With the anticipation of the Australian Curriculum that will from the early years to the end of the compulsory years carry Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and simultaneously the Universities Australia developed the National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency out of trial sites exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency on the horizon. These

drivers may certainly bring a level of optimism but again has the necessary intellectual interrogation been done?

Certain significant contradiction exists. While most cultural competency programs deal with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture the irony is that at the seat of anything that resembles cultural competency is something that has nothing to do with Aboriginal culture itself, 'In moving towards cultural competency or awareness of self and others the caregiver explores his or her own culture and traditions to understand self, personal values, assumptions and beliefs'. (Valaskakis, Stout and Guimand, 2009, p.247). Competent professional behaviour must include the ability not to deconstruct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, but to deconstruct your own worldview. This can be initiated by cultural awareness of the other cultural state but then must be drilled into further, 'By the same argument, laypeople may also become aware of the culturocentric nature of their own cultural beliefs as they expose to ideas from foreign cultures'(Elliot, 2005, p.500). Therefore any semblance of cultural competence is vested not in understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, but understanding your own cultural setting and worldview.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is merely the trigger and not the end product. This aspect seems to be rarely evident in the current offerings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural offerings. This is part of the processing and translating work practice consistent with Kolb.

Also within the mythological window frame of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency is the proposition that 'cultural competency' is a single competency. Previously put in this paper is the concept that to be competent in service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is contingent on the appropriate deployment of professional competencies. Therefore a significant danger exists if one presumes that at the conclusion of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency program that they are in fact competent and this runs the risk of a of creating false expectations both on the part the professional and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Compounding the danger further is the possibility that as a result of the very best intentions counter intuition with the opposite result of the intention can result, 'However under some circumstances, cultural contacts may also promote culturocentrism and intercultural animosity' (Elliot, 2005, p.500).

Conclusion

As a community Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are exceptionally well endowed with thinkers from our Elders to those connected to community and family and the emerging second generation of academics. Before Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency becomes the new platform of 'political correctness' there are some questions and understandings that need to take place.

Firstly the terms culture and competency must be separated and interrogated. As the western academy has created a conceptual fog around the tripartite term competency, then what version is what we want and need? Excessive promulgation of cultural awareness programs as thinly disguised cultural awareness programs will only divert focus and resources from the greater need of higher standards in service and

operational delivery. The conceptual mire first needs to be filtered but most of all we need to understand it both from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldview and from competency theory.

We also need to be louder and more vigilant about the 'Lone Ranger Complex' for the deficit syndrome is so insidious that it can penetrate both Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews and that any semblance cultural competency should not be understood as a mere standalone competency.

And certainly new contested concepts such as 'cultural literacy' as embedded in Wominjeka La Trobe better define the pursuit needed to be considered.

As tomorrow dawns and across the nation literally thousands of people both Indigenous and non-Indigenous will partake in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness/cultural competency exercises. When the last cucumber sandwich has been consumed along with the last gulp of filtered conference coffee what will be taken back to and what will change in the workplace the next day?

References

- Bakarman, A. Attitude, Skills and Knowledge: (ASK) A new model for Design Education. King Saud University, Saudi Arabia. <http://faculty.ksu.edu.sa/10177/Documents/ASK>. sourced 01.10.2010.
- Becher, T & Trowler, P. (2001) *Academic Tribes and Territories: intellectual enquiry and the cultures of disciplines* (2nd edition), Open University Press/SRHE, Buckingham, UK
- Bolman, L & Deal, T. (2003), *Reframing Organisations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*, Jossey-Bass. San Francisco, USA
- Donnelly, K. (2007) *Dumbing Down: Outcome based and politically correct – the impact of the culture wars on our schools* Hardie Grant Books, Prahran.
- Elliot, A. (2005), *Handbook of Competence and Motivation*, Guilford Press, New York.
- Furedi, F. (2006), *Where Have All the Intellectuals Gone?: Confronting 21st Century Philistinism*, Continuum Press, London
- Grote, E. (2008), 'Principles and Practices of Cultural Competency: A Review of Literature', *Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC)*, Canberra.
- Hatch, M. & Cunliffe, A. (2006), *A Organisational Theory: Modern, Symbolic and Postmodern Perspectives*, Oxford University Press, United Kingdom
- Friere, P. (1970), *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Continuum International Publishing. New York. USA
- Queensland Government, TAFE Queensland.
http://www.tafe.qld.gov.au/courses/flexible_study/competency Sourced 15.10.2010
- Hofstede, G. (2001), *Cultural Consequences*, Sage Press, California, USA.
- Knowles, M. & Malcolm, S. (2005), *The Adult Learner*, Butterworth-Heinemann Press, Burlington, USA.
- Kolb, D. (1984), *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey, USA.
- Leavitt, R. (2010), *Cultural Competency – A Lifelong Journey to Cultural Proficiency*, Slack Incorporated Press, New Jersey. USA.
- Magnala, S. (2005), *Cross Cultural Competence*, Routledge Press, New York, USA
- Marzano, R. and Yanoski, D. 2012, *Using Common Core Standards to Enhance Classroom Instruction & Assessment*, Solution Tree Press, USA
- Miller, G. Brautigan, D. & Gerlach, S. (2006), *Business Intelligence competency Centers: A team approach maximising competitive advantage*, John Wiley and Son, New Jersey, USA

- Pollock, M. (2008), *Everyday Racism*, New Press, New York, USA.
- Ranzin, R., McConnochie, K. and Nolan, W. (2010), *Psychology and Indigenous Australians: Foundations of Cultural Competence*, Palgrave-Macmillan Press. South Yarra Australia.
- Rose, M. (2006), The Great Silent Apartheid. Centre for Strategic Education,
file:///C:/Users/a1013316/AppData/Local/Temp/Mark_Rose_community_development_11Oct07.pdf
- Sparrow, L. (2000), Beyond Multicultural Man: Complexities of Identity, *International Journal of Multicultural Relations*, N24: p.173-202
- Sternberg, R.J. 2007, *Wisdom, Intelligence, and Creativity Synthesized*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Teel, K. and Obidah, J. (2008), *Building Racial and Cultural Competence in the Classroom*, Teachers College Press, New York, USA.
- The Australian, Tuesday, January 17th 2012. "Universities are not social engineering schools". Greg Melleuish, Page 10
- Universities Australia, (2011), National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities, Canberra ACT.
- Valaskakis, G., Stout, M and Guimand, E. (2009), *Restoring the Balance- First Nations Women, Community and Culture*, University of Manitoba Press, Canada.
- Yukl, G. (1981), *Leadership in Organizations*, Prentice Hall Publishers, New Jersey, USA.
- Zapf, P. and Roesch, R. (2008), *Evaluation of Competence to Stand Trial*, OUP Oxford, Oxford, UK