Supporting Future Curriculum Leaders in Embedding Indigenous Knowledge on Teaching Practicum

Final Report 2014

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Griffith University (partner institution)

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Project logo with thanks to Victor Hart, 2011.

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2014
Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Turrbal, Jagera/Yuggera, Kabi Kabi and Jinibara Peoples as the traditional owners of the lands where QUT now stands. We recognise that these lands have always been places of teaching and learning. We pay respect to their Elders—past, present and emerging—and acknowledge the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play within the QUT community.

This project would not have been possible without the knowledge and support of the following individuals and groups.

We sincerely thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers who voluntarily participated in this project. Their passion for teaching and experiences of teaching practicum inspired all of us, consistently reminding us of the support required for success in embedding Indigenous knowledges during field experiences. We extend our sincere thanks to their supervising teachers and site coordinators for their support and participation.

We acknowledge the contributions of our colleagues, whose collaborations in decolonising curricula and embedding Indigenous perspectives have been extensive and ongoing. Our special thanks go to Mr Victor Hart, Dr Mayrah Dreise and Ms Susan Willsteed for their expertise in the conceptualisation and planning stages of this project. We thank Dr Vinathe Sharma-Brymer as the Project Coordinator and Ms Sharine Ling who transcribed many interviews and began data analysis through Nvivo.

We acknowledge members of the Project Reference Group and express our sincere appreciation for their expertise, support and guidance.

Professor Martin Nakata was our critical friend, who met with us and provided advice on the project. We extend our sincere gratitude for his confidence and collegiality.

We also thank the unit coordinators from the Faculty of Education at QUT, and particularly acknowledge Ms Alice Hamilton from the Field Experience Office for her work with pre-service teachers’ placements.

We say thank you to Professor Anita Lee Hong (Director), Mr Taal Hampson (Finance Officer) and colleagues at the Oodgeroo Unit for their ongoing support for the project. We acknowledge Professor Donna Pendergast for including this project as part of Susan Whatman’s workload.

We thank the Australian Government’s Office for Learning and Teaching for funding the project.
List of acronyms used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AITSL</td>
<td>Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership</td>
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<td>ALTC</td>
<td>Australian Learning and Teaching Council</td>
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<td>APST</td>
<td>Australian Professional Standards for Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>BEd</td>
<td>Bachelor of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>C2C</td>
<td>Curriculum to Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grad Dip</td>
<td>Graduate Diploma of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EATSIPS</td>
<td>Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>EIK</td>
<td>Embedding Indigenous Knowledges</td>
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<td>EIP</td>
<td>Embedding Indigenous Perspectives</td>
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<tr>
<td>IK</td>
<td>Indigenous Knowledges</td>
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<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Indigenous Perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLT</td>
<td>Office for Learning and Teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOSE</td>
<td>Studies of Society and Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>QSA</td>
<td>Queensland Studies Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>QCT</td>
<td>Queensland College of Teachers</td>
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<td>QUT</td>
<td>Queensland University of Technology</td>
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Executive summary

This report documents the outcomes of the OLT-funded project on *Supporting Future Curriculum Leaders in Embedding Indigenous Knowledges on Teaching Practicum*. This project was completed over a 2.5 year period commencing in December 2010. The project was based at the Oodgeroo Unit at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Dr Susan Whatman’s appointment at Griffith University at the end of 2010 allowed for collaboration with Griffith University. This project investigated pedagogical relationships between pre-service teachers (engaged with embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in their teaching practice) and their supervisors. It explored the negotiations of expectations, role modelling and the interactions that occurred between pre-service teachers, supervising teachers, and QUT staff involved in supporting teaching practicum (our key stakeholders). The intent was to design a model to develop long-term, future-oriented opportunities for teachers to gain expertise in embedding Indigenous knowledges (EIK) and perspectives (EIP), specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and perspectives, in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

Project participants included 25 pre-service teachers, of whom 21 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, all with a commitment to embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in the school curriculum. A total of 23 supervising teachers in 21 schools participated in this project in both urban and rural schools in Queensland.

Key outcome 1: Affirmation of pre-service teacher agency

The pre-service teachers were committed to change and were determined to embed Indigenous knowledges and perspectives during their teaching practicum. Successful teaching practicum experiences were possible when these future curriculum leaders were supported in their preparation while at the university and on teaching practicum. Clear communication about expectations was the necessary condition for negotiating pedagogical and curricula decision-making opportunities. This supported novice teachers to claim their agency, and model exemplary cases of embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. Consequently, all pre-service teacher participants who graduated from QUT secured full time positions in Queensland schools.

Key outcome 2: Resources development

Resources are essential components to curriculum, pedagogical and assessment decision making. A Google site was developed in 2011–2013 to ensure pre-service teacher participants had access to a specific site of resources relevant to their goal of embedding Indigenous knowledges in teaching and learning whilst on teaching practicum. A project website was also developed for dissemination purposes.

Key outcome 3: A ‘process’ model for Embedding Indigenous Knowledges (EIK)

A model for supporting future curriculum leaders to embed Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in teaching practicum was designed and tested in this project. This model is informed by recognition of Indigenous knowledges (IK) and Indigenous perspectives (IP) as
the starting point through teacher preparation program and affirmation of this throughout teaching practicum. The model stems from and informs key stakeholders and policy imperatives, as per below recommendations.

Key outcome 4: Changing/shifting discourses in EIK

This project investigated the interface of teacher preparation, schools as sites for embedding Indigenous knowledges in curriculum and the pedagogical relationships between supervising and pre-service teachers. We found that despite rhetoric and policy intention, much work is needed to ensure EIK naturally occurs in the curriculum. There is a will to change and decolonise the curriculum, but affirmation and resources are required.

Recommendations for teacher education providers

That support for the embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in teacher education (university curriculum) and pre-service teacher praxis include opportunities:

- for pre-service teachers to develop depth of knowledge in IK during their compulsory coursework
- to affirm pre-service teacher decision making around IK whilst they are still on practicum, through the inclusion of facilitated ‘debriefing’ opportunities in the practicum calendar with IK lecturers/tutors
- to model ‘successful’ EIK in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment be taken in the preparation and distribution of field experience (practicum) handbooks/manuals/website provided to all stakeholders.

Recommendations for employers of teachers

That support for the embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in school curricula include opportunities:

- for registered teachers to continue to develop their depth of knowledge in IK through Department of Education-facilitated professional development
- to affirm teachers’ curriculum decision making around IK though access to exemplars in Embedding Indigenous Knowledges (EIK).

Recommendations for teacher professional standards organisations/registrar of teachers

That support for the embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in teachers’ professional work could include example statements in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) of what should constitute ‘successful’ EIK for each level of teaching—graduate, proficient, leading. These could be explicitly stated across all standards, not only Professional Knowledge but also to translate across Professional Practice and Professional Engagement.
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Who are we? The project team

*Dr Juliana McLaughlin* is a senior lecturer at the Oodgeroo Unit, QUT where she teaches Indigenous Studies, Culture Studies and Education, decolonising methodologies and research ethics. Her research interests include culture studies and education, development education, postcolonial and critical race theories, decolonising curricula, first year experience and transition programs, and critical pedagogies. She was the Project Leader at QUT, and her role included overseeing project activities such as managing the project team, leading workshops for all three stakeholder groups, and visiting pre-service and supervising teaching in schools. She conducted interviews and focus group workshops, transcribed and analysed qualitative data, initiated conference papers and publications, and took leadership with writing the final report.

*Dr Susan Whatman* is a senior lecturer in Health & Physical Education (HPE) and Sports Coaching in the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University. Sue co-wrote this grant with Juliana while working as a lecturer in the Oodgeroo Unit, a career which spanned over 17 years (from 1993–2010). Her role in the project included being a co-project leader, allowing the project to benefit from her experience and knowledge of Indigenous Studies and Indigenous Knowledge (ISIK) and Indigenous education. Like Juliana, she led focus group workshops, conducted interviews, transcribed and analysed data, and initiated conference presentations. This project extends Sue’s commitment to working and researching in curriculum development in HPE and supporting Indigenous pre-service teachers in curriculum leadership on practicum.

*Dr Vinathe Sharma-Brymer* was the project coordinator from February 2011 to February 2013. Her research interests include gender studies, education and human development, developmental psychology, early childhood development and education, postcolonialism, and interpretive phenomenology. As project coordinator, she managed all project activities, developed the Google site and contributed to conference presentations and publications. Her background in education and human development at the grassroots level in India informed different aspects of the project.

*Ms Camille Nielsen* joined the team in May 2013 as the project officer. Her main role involved supporting finalisation of data analysis and commencement of the final project report. Camille has an extensive teaching and project management experiences in primary schools and Department of Education in Queensland and the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

Our reference panel included the following colleagues:

• Ms Deanne Commins—A/Manager—Policy (Professional Standards) Queensland College of Teachers (QCT).
• Ms Marilyn Cole—Alternate QCT Representative with Ms Deanne Commins. See <www.qct.edu.au/Standards/index.html>
• A/Prof Felicity McArdle—Associate Professor and Invited Representative of the Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology (QUT). See <eprints.qut.edu.au/view/person/McArdle,_Felicity.html>
• Dr Jean Phillips—Senior Lecturer in Indigenous Education and Nominee of the Assistant Dean (Teaching and Learning), Professor Nanette Bahr, Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology (QUT). See <staff.qut.edu.au/staff/bahr/>
• Ms Alice Hamilton—Field Experience Placement Officer, Queensland University of Technology (QUT). See <staff.qut.edu.au/details?id=hamilta>

Professor Martin Nakata was our critical friend for this project. He is the Director of Nura Gili at The University of New South Wales (UNSW). He also holds the title of Chair of Australian Indigenous Education. Prof Nakata (B.Ed.Hons.PhD) is the first Torres Strait Islander to receive a PhD in Australia. His current research work focuses on higher education curriculum areas, the academic preparation of Indigenous students, and Indigenous knowledge and library services. See <www.nuragili.unsw.edu.au/director-nura-gili-professor-martin-nakata>

Original members of the project team

Mr Victor Hart was a project leader and the former manager of the Oodgeroo Unit, QUT. He has since left QUT and now continues to provide leadership for the Board of Directors, Brisbane Aboriginal and Islander Independent Community School (The Murri School) and Kulkathil Centre, Acacia Ridge. He served as a critical friend and offered advice on project activities as well as engaging with different stages of conference papers and publications. See <www.kulkathil.com.au/doku.php>

Dr Mayrah Dreise was a lecturer in the Oodgeroo Unit and contributed to the conceptualisation of the project application. Her professional experience in education spans over 20 years teaching in primary and secondary schools, TAFE colleges and universities. She has worked as a teacher, tutor, lecturer and unit coordinator. In collaboration with the team, we applied for an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Grant (ALTC at that time) in 2010. Unfortunately, Mayrah left to take up the post as Principal of Dirranbandi State School.

Ms Susan Willsteed was an associate lecturer in the Oodgeroo Unit in 2010, when the project application was developed and submitted for funding. Susan was a valued colleague in the Oodgeroo Unit and the project team. She moved on from QUT, completed a Masters in Linguistics and worked with Aboriginal communities in Northern Territory.
Project aims and rationale

Introduction

This project investigated the learning and teaching relationships between pre-service teachers and their supervisors on practicum who specifically engaged with embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in their teaching practice. It explored the negotiations of expectations, role modelling and the interactions that occur between pre-service teachers, their supervising teachers, and QUT staff involved in supporting teaching practicum. It is designed to develop long-term, future-oriented opportunities for teachers to gain expertise in embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives.

This research is based on principles of Indigenous research methodology and privileging Indigenous knowledge (voices and research). It draws specifically upon Nakata’s (2007) theory of Indigenous knowledge, that knowledge about, with and for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples occurs within a ‘cultural interface’ that requires critical reflection upon the self, the relationships between self and others, and how this informs the epistemological and ontological understandings informing knowledge production.

The case study approach took place over a two and half year period catering for three distinct stakeholder groups: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers completing an Indigenous Studies Minor who were undertaking teaching practicum units in the Bachelor of Education and Graduate Diploma of Education at QUT in 2012 and 2013; practicum supervising teachers in schools who agreed to participate in the project; and QUT staff supporting teaching practicum. A series of reflective teaching and learning activities and professional development opportunities were designed and delivered to each group over the course of the project to ensure an aligned and informed collaborative approach for all stakeholders.

Significance of the project

As Australian schools continue to advance the offering of an Australian (national) curriculum, the increased significance placed upon embedding Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum has come to the fore as a cross-curriculum priority. Schools are places where educators are concerned with what is taught and what is not taught, and about who is and who is not empowered to deal with these issues. Queensland state schools are now mandated through the Indigenous perspectives statement (Dreise & Queensland Studies Authority [QSA], 2007) to reform their curricula and teaching practices to acknowledge, respect and incorporate Indigenous knowledges (IK) and Indigenous perspectives (IP). Given that schools are sites that have long-established, non-Indigenous hegemonic methods of making curricular decisions this project acknowledges that Indigenous knowledges have traditionally been excluded in most ways possible. Yet, schools are slowly starting to respond to the mandate to embed IK and IP. Considering the small percentages of Indigenous people employed in the Queensland education system, the achievement of embedding IK and IP in all state curricula is a challenging one.
Within the debate about Indigenous knowledges within curriculum, its positioning as a distinctive process is often unclear. Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives incorporates broad and complex processes including struggles to shift mindsets and perspectives of the Australian community at large, unpacking cultural constructions and exposing hegemonic relationships, decolonising the curriculum and knowledge re-production, and focusing on systemic change within institutions. By focusing on the understandings of these knowledges by pre-service teachers and their supervisors, the project team identified and unpacked the barriers occurring within the relationships between these two stakeholder groups. An important consequence of focusing on embedding Indigenous perspectives within QUT’s institutional structures has created opportunities for the relationships developed within the practicum experience to be scrutinised from a cross-disciplinary position in future research endeavours: applicable across all faculties using field placement as a compulsory component of their degree programs. The common element in this research project has been the existing relationship between the Oodgeroo Unit staff and each of the stakeholder groups. This research then creates a holistic framework for investigating a model for more effective processes of EIP within the practicum experience, one that will extend current cultural competency projects (Grote, 2008).

This project primarily focused on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are already presumed to have the ability to demonstrate curriculum leadership in Indigenous knowledge by virtue of their cultural background, rather than through consistent explicit training. We were mindful of unfair and unrealistic expectations placed upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers to ‘know all things Indigenous’ by their supervising teachers and school administration as has been discussed in previous research work (Bin Sallik, 1991; Herbert, 2005; Nakata, 2007). This project builds upon such research via the premise that all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and non-Indigenous students with an interest in EIK, need to be provided with specific learning and teaching experiences in order to develop their expertise in embedding Indigenous knowledges.

**Rationale for embedding Indigenous knowledges**

The importance of embedding IK has been reflected in recommendations and policies of numerous research projects and reports over many years. The *Melbourne Declaration on Education for Young Australians* (2008) identified the central role that education plays in building equity and justice for all Australians and explicitly addresses the value of identifying Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures as an important part of the nation’s history, including present and future directions. The Australian Curriculum acknowledges the priorities of the Melbourne Declaration and has now articulated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as one of three cross-curriculum priorities to be embedded across all key learning areas for all students.

A national conceptual framework has been developed to provide a ‘structural tool’ to guide the embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in learning areas that have included explicit content (see <www.australiancurriculum.edu.au>). The general capabilities, also to be woven into the fabric of the Australian Curriculum, identify
intercultural understandings as an important element that allows students to explore the cultures, languages, values and beliefs of diverse cultures, as well as considering personal identities and discovering similarities and differences between individuals and groups.

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers explicitly articulates the expectation that all classroom teachers are experienced in and competent to include Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in their teaching for all students. This is rationalised as essential to not only cater more specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students but to also meet curriculum requirements around understanding, valuing and respecting Indigenous knowledges per se. The National Education Agreement similarly communicates the imperative for addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives as part of our obligation as educators at national and state levels.

In Queensland, state schools have had a policy directive to embed Indigenous perspectives since 2005, formalised through the Indigenous perspectives statement (Dreise & QSA, 2007). The Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in Schools (EATSIPS) framework developed by the Department of Education and Training (DET, Qld) offers an approach to incorporating perspectives across all schooling practices and processes. National and state agendas reflect that incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in teaching and learning is now a part of what teachers do. There is a need for coming to understand how education stakeholders are working towards supporting teachers to do this.

The context

In 2000, QUT officially launched its Reconciliation Statement, outlining key commitments to Embedding Indigenous Perspectives (EIP) and valuing Indigenous Knowledges (IK). Specifically, QUT is committed to recruiting Indigenous Australian students, providing opportunities for them to access a wide range of academic programs, and providing academic, social and cultural support services. QUT is also committed to incorporating Indigenous content and perspectives as appropriate into the university’s curriculum and teaching practices (see <www.reconciliation.qut.edu.au>). Embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives are also specific commitments in the Indigenous Education Strategy <www.equity.qut.edu.au/everyone/legislation/policiesplans/indigenoused.jsp> and QUT Teaching and Learning Blueprint. Education Queensland shares this commitment with their own state-wide policy (see <www.qsa.qld.edu.au/downloads/learning/indigenous_statement_11_08.pdf>), as does Queensland Catholic Education and Independent Schools Queensland. Hence, the project strategically focuses upon improving graduate capabilities and employability of students, the professional capabilities of teachers as practicum supervisors in schools, as well as building the capacity of QUT staff engaging with pre-service teachers to foster and support pedagogical approaches in embedding Indigenous knowledge.

QUT’s ability to support students with embedding Indigenous perspectives on practicum is predominantly achieved through the content, pedagogical approaches and assessment opportunities afforded to students who have enrolled in Indigenous studies. QUT has offered a compulsory Indigenous education unit (EDB007: Culture Studies—Indigenous
since 2003, building upon the Carrick-funded project of Aspland and Macpherson (2000), in which Bachelor of Education students enrol in either Year 1 Semester 2, Year 2 Semester 2, or Year 4 Semester 2 (during students’ last internship). An elective Indigenous Studies Minor is also concurrently offered to selected students (only in ED91 Bachelor of Education—Primary), delivered by the Oodgeroo Unit. Graduate Diploma of Education students do not have a specified Indigenous education unit in their one-year program, but participate in a two-day intensive orientation program on embedding Indigenous perspectives, with the option of Indigenous education assessment pathways. However, it is possible for Graduate Diploma students not to be explicitly assessed in their capacity to embed Indigenous perspectives in their studies before undertaking practicum.

Thus, QUT pre-service teachers might not specifically study Indigenous education issues until their final year of enrolment, already having completed several assessed practica. We contend that those students will be at a disadvantage for demonstrating expertise in embedding Indigenous knowledge in their teaching practicum. Similarly, students who undertake Indigenous education units in year 1 and who do not then elect to undertake any further Indigenous studies units throughout their coursework will have had little opportunity to develop and apply their Indigenous knowledge throughout the duration of their degree and particularly on final practicum. This provides the rationale for choosing Indigenous students in second and third year of study in this project, and non-Indigenous students who have completed a substantial Indigenous studies minor. Developing and demonstrating expertise in this area is now expected of all teacher graduates and registered teachers, as specified in the Queensland College of Teachers Professional Standard Four ‘Teachers will know and understand Australian Indigenous culture and history (and) pedagogical approaches that result in high levels of expectation and achievement by Indigenous students across all learning areas’ (see <www.qct.edu.au/pdf/standards/standard4.pdf>).

Table 1: Field Experience (Teaching Practicum) subjects at QUT

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<td>EDB031</td>
<td>Sec Field Studies 1: Development and Learning in the Field</td>
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<td>EDB032</td>
<td>Sec Field Studies 2: Practising Education in the Field</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDB033</td>
<td>Sec Field Studies 3: Immersion in Inclusive Educational Practices</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDB034</td>
<td>Sec Field Studies 4: Professional Work of Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDB035</td>
<td>Secondary Professional Internship</td>
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<td>EDP441</td>
<td>Senior Years Field Studies 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDP442</td>
<td>Senior Years Field Studies 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDB453</td>
<td>Sec Professional Practice 4: Beginning Teaching</td>
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(Table 1 Cont.)
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<td>EDB022  Prim Field Studies 2: Practising Education in the Field</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDB023  Prim Field Studies 3: Immersion in Inclusive Educational Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDB024  Prim Field Studies 4: Professional Work of Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDB025  Primary Professional Internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDP431  Middle Years Field Studies 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDP432  Middle Years Field Studies 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDP453  Reflective Practitioners 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*      Supporting Professional Program Block 4</td>
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<td>EDB433  Prim Professional Practice 4: Beginning Teaching</td>
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<th><strong>EARLY CHILDHOOD/EARLY YEARS</strong></th>
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<td>EDB014  EC Field Studies 4: The Professional Work of Educators</td>
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<td>EDB015  EC Field Studies 4: Professional Internship</td>
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<td>EDP421  Early Years Field Studies 1</td>
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<td>EDP421  Early Years: Graduate Schools Program (Commencing full time students only complete these days in addition to above)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDP422  Early Years Field Studies 2</td>
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Learning and teaching support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has been available through Indigenous Higher Education Units, such as the QUT Oodgeroo Unit, for the last 30 years or more, with numerous studies demonstrating the positive impact of such support upon Indigenous student completions (Bin Sallik, 1991; Encel, 2000; Nakata, Nakata & Chin, 2008; Whatman et al., 2008). However, over the last few years, the Oodgeroo Unit has documented a number of anecdotal cases where Indigenous students have not successfully completed their practicum. It is imperative then to investigate the expectations that Indigenous pre-service teachers have about demonstrating EIK in their practice teaching, and the criteria/expectations that supervising teachers and lecturers have. What does an effective teaching episode that embeds IK look like? How will an assessing teacher/lecturer recognise IK when they see it? What assessment and reflection tools and other resources are required to assist with this recognition? What criteria (and hence, prior teaching and learning activities and opportunities) need to be developed to enhance students’ capabilities in embedding IK?
Focus of the project

It is clear from relevant literature and through our research that the teaching profession is in the initial stages of defining and demonstrating embedding Indigenous knowledges. This identified area of need is the focus in this report: through offering substantial learning and teaching support prior to and while participating, pre-service teachers negotiated the institutional (school and university) expectations of teaching practicum. The project facilitated opportunities for these pre-service teachers as future curriculum leaders to demonstrate their knowledge and expertise in embedding Indigenous knowledge. School site coordinators and supervising teachers are crucial to this process. Successful embedding was possible with evidence of role modelling, affirmation and flexibility to accommodate Indigenous knowledges in a somewhat restricted curriculum.

The original project objectives were:

a) Pre-service teachers will identify their own strengths in curriculum innovation and demonstrate successful ways to embed Indigenous knowledge into their practicum (and future) curriculum decision making, as demonstrated through ePortfolio and other artefacts.

b) Teachers supervising practicum will have developed assessment and reflection tools to support and lead pre-service teachers and their teaching peers in the endeavour of embedding Indigenous knowledge, which will constitute part of their professional teaching portfolios required for continuing full registration as a teacher in Queensland (QCT).

c) The project team will design and deliver a model for building effective professional relationships between practicum stakeholders (pre-service teachers, supervising teachers and university staff) considering principles for embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives within the practicum experience, and existing and new units at QUT.

The project addresses practical issues and allows participants to develop solutions to the identified challenge within specific contexts. It facilitates a critically reflective approach to EIP stakeholders’ current relationships and practices. By studying and reflecting on these relationships and practices, we believe that relevant educational stakeholders are enabled to improve operational issues within their own settings, pedagogies and students’ learning outcomes.
Project approach and methodology

This research is based on principles of Indigenous research methodology and privileging Indigenous knowledges (voices and research). The project merges three different yet closely linked theoretical frameworks including the cultural interface; critical race theory; and Bernstein’s three message systems.

This project draws upon Nakata’s (2002; 2007) theory of Indigenous knowledge and the cultural interface, that knowledge about, with and for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples occurs within a ‘cultural interface’ that requires critical reflection upon the self, the relationships between self and others, and how this informs the epistemological and ontological understandings informing knowledge production. This negotiated understanding of the cultural interface using team approaches across core business activities such as teaching, student support and research at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student support centres at universities, including the Oodgeroo Unit at QUT.

Indigenous perspectives are only possessed by Indigenous peoples, although Indigenous knowledge is negotiated and understood in partnership with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people (Nakata, 2007). Non-Indigenous people cannot ‘know’ what Indigenous knowledges to embed without curricular engagement with Indigenous peoples and their perspectives. Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives can occur in multiple ways, over time and place. Indigenous knowledges then are a contested, ever-changing corpus of knowledge that Nakata (2007) argues is able to be understood by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, as their knowledge systems interface.

Figure 1: The cultural interface

The locale of the learner, a place of agency, a place of tension

... But also a space for convergence of knowledge systems

(Nakata, 2002; 2011)
Nakata (2011) welcomes the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and knowledges as reflected through the Australian Curriculum documents, yet points out that a gap still exists. The visionary ‘big picture’ statements that have been developed by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) now exist (2011), but what is now needed is the detail and the ‘real work of curriculum development’ (Nakata, 2011, p. 7) so that teachers have opportunities to develop this area of their teaching and learning and be supported adequately to do so. In this report, the findings of this project highlight some practical ways in which this can be achieved.

The positioning of Indigenous knowledge also needs to be understood with the help of a Critical Race Theory lens (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). ‘Critical race theory in education is a framework or set of basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyse and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom’ (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 25). The framework allows us to view the ground realities of racism expressed institutionally and at the policy level, at the ordinary person’s level where skin colour becomes the point of identity, human communication, relationship, and at the profound level, the confidence to be human.

For us, engaging ourselves in anti-racism pedagogies informed by a critical race theoretical framework means interrogating the complexities of the currently practised dominant curriculum taught and learnt from a homogenous standpoint—that is, dominant Eurocentric curriculum is catering to the white, European learner community. Such an engagement would also open up opportunities to question the validity of the curriculum content and legitimacy in the practice of pedagogies that silence the active presence of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge and perspectives. Bernstein (1975) argued that any educational knowledge is transmitted through three message systems: curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation (content, process and outcomes). The dominant population that develops and practices the first two systems controls the learner’s experience. Learners from the dominant population would benefit most from a privileged inclusion in the three message systems, while the effects on the excluded race can be marginalising and subordinating. Thus, a strict regulation of who learns what and how, and what is achieved through that learning has always been operative in the Australian education system.

To engage the voices of stakeholders, phenomenology was adopted. Phenomenology (for example, Brown & Gilligan, 1992) assumes a standpoint while attempting to reveal meanings in a human experience; thus it becomes an investigative process in the descriptive interpretation of individual experience. Phenomenology affirms the agency of pre-service teachers who take up the initiative of embedding IK in their teaching practice. Interpretive phenomenology allows for an interpretation of diverse types of ‘data’ including documents, journals, participants’ texts and artefacts, and recollections of situations and occurrences.

Thus, the central research question for pre-service teachers was:

What is your experience of embedding Indigenous knowledge in curriculum whilst on teaching practicum?
The central question for supervising teachers was:

*What is your experience of supervising pre-service teachers in embedding Indigenous knowledge whilst on teaching practicum?*

Examining educational experience in a phenomenological sense provides a link between a person’s relationship and their world, which in this space, this cultural interface, Nakata (2002) argues might be a competing life world. Furthermore, van Manen (2008, p. 18) observes: ‘... pedagogical practice expresses itself as an active understanding of how we find ourselves here as teachers with certain intentions, feelings, passions, inclinations, attitudes, and preoccupations’. This is helpful to investigating the pedagogical relationships between pre-service teachers and supervising teachers, their experiences with embedding IK, and how this has transpired with stakeholders such as field experience staff. The intention to uncover the particularities of pedagogical relationships between pre-service teachers and their supervising teachers will be of broader interest to an audience concerned with Indigenous knowledge in education. Furthermore, critical race theory can inform the analysis of this project and is inherently instrumental through its mandate for social change.

**Project participants**

Table 2 below illustrates the four cohorts of pre-service teachers who participated in the project. The first two cohorts comprised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers only, while the third and fourth cohorts included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers.

**Table 2: Project participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort</th>
<th>Indigenous pre-service teachers</th>
<th>Non-Indigenous pre-service teachers</th>
<th>Urban/rural school placements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011 Semester 2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>On-campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 Semester 1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012 Semester 2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Urban/rural—remote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013 Semester 1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Urban/rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The low numbers of eligible pre-service teachers and long delays with ethical clearance and approvals meant an entire semester of practicum was missed. The project team applied for a project extension for the sole purpose of increasing numbers of participants.
Data collection strategies included individual interviews, focus groups discussions and document analysis. Pre-service teacher participants were interviewed about their expectations prior to teaching practicum, and on their experiences of embedding Indigenous knowledges on completion of teaching practicum. Supervising teachers were interviewed in schools, however, some site coordinators volunteered to participate, in which case, focus group discussions occurred. Thick descriptive field notes were taken when some teachers and site coordinators wanted to participate in the conversations, but declined the request to have those discussions audio recorded. Supervising teachers were then invited to attend a workshop at Kelvin Grove campus of QUT.

The nine stages of the project included reporting to the reference panel and Indigenous community membership on the project team. An expert critical friend/evaluator has also provided critical comments, as well as review of the process and efficacy of the project.

Table 3 provides a snapshot of participants and data collection strategies employed.

**Table 3: Participants and data collection strategies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder groups</th>
<th>Individual interviews</th>
<th>Focus groups/ workshops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-service teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal &amp; Torres Strait Is.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Indigenous PST</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervising teachers and site coordinators</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University liaison academics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong> (# of interviews)</td>
<td><strong>9 focus group discussions</strong> (38 participants)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Project timeline summary**

The complete project timeline is included in the Appendix to this report. It provides a snapshot of project activities undertaken during the two and half years of the project—from December 2010 to July 2013 over ten stages of preparation, data collection and analysis, dissemination, reporting and evaluation.
Emerging themes from the project

All interviews and focus groups discussions were transcribed by the project team members, Pacific Solutions and by the research assistant, Ms Sharine Ling. Emerging themes from the literature review and conceptual frameworks guided the first level analysis. At the second level, Nvivo was also used to generate themes through frequently used words (see Figure 2).

Content analysis was conducted through the Leximancer qualitative data analysis software. Themes generated through content analysis (see Figure 3) allowed the emergence of relationships between themes and direct quotes from each participants and groups. This allowed the project team to extract both conceptual and relational analysis of data, which provided evidence for the key arguments and recommendations from this project.

Our initial analysis of the data was influenced by the theoretical perspectives and methodologies employed in this research. As the project progressed (Stages 6 and 8 on the timeline), we interpreted the data through the underlying concepts. Some of these concepts included the following:

- Curriculum
- Prepared(ness)
- Pedagogy
- Pedagogical relationships
- Indigenous perspectives
- Indigenous knowledges
- Assessment
- Embedding (experiences)
- Anxiety, stressful, workload, expectation, persistence, helping, resistance.

The following figures illustrate qualitative data analysis software independently generated clusters of key concepts and relationships within the data.
Figure 2 illustrates Nvivo independently generated cluster analysis from qualitative data from this research project. ‘Change’ is the most frequently used word in the conversation on embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges in curriculum. ‘Affirmation’ of both pre-service teachers and their supervising teachers’ knowledge and processes (what,
when, from where—community, and how) to embed is crucial. The next most significant cluster is ‘help’ around the concepts of knowledge content, curriculum intent and again the processes of embedding. Thus, the key emerging themes in the project data include:

- **Change**—curriculum content, pedagogy, assessment practice
- **Affirmation**—of knowledge, sources of knowledges, processes of teaching and learning
- **Help**—both pre-service teachers and their supervising teachers acknowledge the importance of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges in curricula and pedagogy, but collectively need help from all stakeholders.

The following figures illustrate the key concepts and their relationships within the data. Figure 3 illustrates the key concepts and highlights their significance.
All qualitative data were processed using Leximancer Content Analysis software. The previous concept map illustrates that the school and students are central to the conversations by all stakeholders in this project. There appears to be a gap with the interface/intersection between the school as the site for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and the site where the stakeholder perceived these knowledges to exist. It is, however, connected through the concept bubble of ‘probably’, which we believe indicates the uncertainty around embedding these knowledges in the curriculum.

Figure 4: Concept map: Key word—‘knowledge’

Figure 4 above demonstrates the relationship between ‘knowledge’ as the key word and all other concepts generated by all qualitative data processed through Leximancer. Sources of Indigenous knowledges and perspectives are perceived to be outside the school site. It can be argued that the only way uncertainty can be mediated is via facilitated opportunities for conversations to occur between stakeholders. The facilitated conversations will take different forms and be determined by the context and needs of various stakeholders.
Figure 5: Concept map: Key word—‘practicum’

Figure 5 establishes the relationship between pre-service teachers’ preparation for teaching practicum and the other key concepts retrieved through the independently generated concept map. Within the context, the teacher preparation concept bubble intersects with the school site, and the actual work of teaching (the doing) and the classroom context defined by class and time. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and knowledges are perceived as situated outside the usual scope of teacher preparation and the school context.

The key difference between Figures 4 and 5 is the disappearance of the ‘uncertainty’ concept bubble by itself and its appearance in the knowledge and perspectives concept bubble. It could be argued that both pre-service teachers and their supervising teachers, as seen through this project, engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives with some degree of uncertainty, for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers experienced the anxiety over their performance of embedding these knowledges while on teaching practicum.

Based on the findings of this research, we argue that the process of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in curriculum reveals the necessity for all stakeholders to include opportunities for affirmation of curriculum and pedagogical decision making.
Pre-service teacher agency and ELK decision making

Presentation of selected case studies

Case study methodology was adapted for the research component of this project. Through the case study methodological approach, the project findings and recommendations arising from our analysis, while applicable to other relevant contexts, are bounded by the time, location and participants in this research.

Blending case study methodology with decolonising research (see for example, Smith, 1999), we recognised and valued Indigenous perspectives and knowledges that pre-service and supervising teacher participants brought with them to the cultural interface of teaching and learning. Consequently, the conditions in which the project supported pre-service teachers on teaching practicum allowed them to understand the learning context in order to negotiate space for embedding Indigenous knowledges for successful practicum experiences. We contend that a decolonising approach to curricular and pedagogical decision making revealed hidden tensions that exist in these cultural pedagogical spaces in schools and university contexts that enhanced pre-service teacher agency to develop confidence and expertise in ELK, and also to demonstrate their potential as future curriculum leaders.

The following case studies demonstrate pre-service teachers’ agency and curriculum decision making with the intent of embedding Indigenous knowledges within what was considered a restricted curriculum.

Rosie

Rosie began her primary teacher education program in 2004. She was passionate about teaching and endured personal and professional challenges to achieve this goal. On hearing about the project, she approached the project team, and expressed her interest to be involved. She had just returned from her second teaching practicum and had more questions about power relationship between supervising and pre-service teachers. She recalled:

I was surprised that I passed prac, it was just hard work and stressful. I did everything the teacher asked me to do, I met all his expectations...was there on time, prepared my lessons, and remained in school after class... But he always used threatening and degrading language that I will fail...it was unprofessional. The other students on prac were having a great time, I did not feel that way, it was stressful...I hope I can do my last prac back at home...

(Rosie, in interview, December 2011)

Rosie prepared for her third teaching practicum as a pre-service teacher participant of this project. Clear communication of expectations was established between the supervising teacher and the school’s site coordinator, the university Field Experience Office and the project team. The supervising teacher assigned Rosie to teach a science lesson on natural resources. Rosie planned a unit of work emerging from the Island drum as a starting point.
The teacher has been very good, she helps you, she allows you to teach—with the last prac it was just like this is what you do—you are teaching science tomorrow and these are your resources. They don’t tell you what to do or give you information ... with the first prac, I didn’t enjoy it, I almost failed that one and the second one was rough as well. I have done two prac...it was very different here...With the last two prac, it was just like this is what you do...

(Rosie, in focus group workshop (fourth year on third practicum)

Within a restricted curriculum, Rosie found a ‘moment’ to develop and teach a unit plan from a Torres Strait Islander perspective. She utilised the knowledge she brought with her, negotiated pedagogical space with the supervising teacher and facilitated students’ learning from an Indigenous perspective. The supervising teacher’s role in recognising Indigenous knowledge and affirming this through constant support enabled a successful teaching experience to occur. Rosie moved from this experience to the final teaching practicum and internship with confidence in her ability to contribute to the teaching profession. Her internship supervising teacher commented after one of Rosie’s lessons:

A number of the children went home and spoke about the day...I had three parents come back and just said the children went home and they were just fascinated and there were passing on all of that information. It was a little spark in them as well. Because it’s not often kids will go home and say ‘mum we learned about fractions today’

(Christy, 2013)

Vanessa

Vanessa was a non-Indigenous pre-service teacher, in her fourth and final year of the Bachelor of Education—Primary (BEd Primary). Vanessa was one of the few eligible pre-service teachers to be able to take part in the project as she had completed the additional three subjects to form an Indigenous Studies Minor as a part of her BEd. Vanessa demonstrated a clear passion for Indigenous education throughout her degree studies, volunteering in the school where she completed her fourth practicum and internship as a Homework Centre tutor for several years prior.

Despite her school being an ‘EATSIPS’ school, and one with many curriculum and policy structures in place to support the embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
perspectives and knowledges, Vanessa experienced some resistance to embedding IK. Her school had their own cultural studies program (an independent subject) and Indigenous teacher with whom all classes alternated throughout the terms. It appeared that Vanessa felt her regular classroom teacher, Amanda, did not see the need to embed IK in the regular classroom because the children were receiving IK through the compulsory cultural studies program. Thus, IK was perhaps seen as peripheral by Amanda to the core learning of English, Maths, Science, History, etc., and was not ‘embedded’ in the spirit of the Australian Curriculum, C2C and QSA Indigenous Perspectives Statement.

The internal curriculum decision-making processes operating across year levels was also a significant factor when it came to opportunities for pre-service teachers to embed IK. Amanda noted that year level planning was shared across four teachers, and that she tended to plan Maths and Science, with other teachers responsible for History and Studies of Society & Environment (SOSE). Therefore, Vanessa was not afforded ‘natural opportunities’ to embed IK in subjects felt to be more appropriate by her supervising teacher.

There was no doubt that all students at the school were receiving a considerable amount of IK through the Culture Studies subject and, in that regard, the curriculum intentions were met. Vanessa also recalled several opportunities to watch the Indigenous Studies teacher in action. The tensions and anxieties evident in this pedagogical relationship extended to Vanessa’s perceived inability to engage her supervising teacher in discussions about embedding, and the lack of opportunity to do any embedding in her practicum teaching and receive feedback on her curriculum decision making as a consequence:

> I think that was what I was most hesitant about. I didn’t want to come off as one of those ‘pushy prac students’. You hear these horror stories about students who walk in and want to do whatever they want, and they take control of the class, and the teacher is left going... ‘these are my students’. I don’t want her to feel like she has to take a step backward—maybe even let her feel as though it (embedding) is her idea... she let me develop a SOSE unit on the Paralympics, which was awesome, and she let me have part of a wall, but it was one of those things that was always first to go if we were behind in maths. Like, if we had assembly, or a visitor to the school, then she would make up the lost time in maths..., she’d say ‘we won’t do your SOSE today’, and if I were the teacher, I think would do the same thing

(Vanessa, 2012)

Vanessa’s anxieties then extended to how or even whether she should showcase her abilities in embedding according to the Queensland Graduate Teacher Professional Standards, in her Teaching Portfolio and employment application with the Department of Education.

> I really didn’t know if I should make a big deal out of my passion for Indigenous studies. I thought it might work against me if I got a panel who didn’t really value it. But I spoke to one of my friends in the department and she told me to go for it. So I thought, stuff it, this is who I am. Take it or leave it

(Vanessa, 2012)
Ultimately, Vanessa decided that she would showcase her skills in embedding against the relevant professional standards and she developed an outstanding portfolio, parts of which are available to view on the project website.

Mariah

Mariah was undertaking primary teacher education as a Health and Physical Education (HPE) specialist. In her final two practicum schools, she developed a four-week unit plan, including an assessment plan, task description and marking criteria for Indigenous Games in HPE. The assessable task was for Grade Four students to research and develop an Indigenous game, based on their understanding of the transferable motor skills it would develop, the tactics required to play and the cultural knowledge to be gained from coming to learn the game. She added reflection upon the purpose and researching the origin of four games as a higher order thinking task for the Grade Four to Seven cohort. Figure 7 below shows a portion of Mariah’s assessment plan, with the remainder available to view on the project website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of assessment</th>
<th>What will be assessed</th>
<th>When it will be assessed</th>
<th>Purpose of assessment</th>
<th>Assessable elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formative:</td>
<td>What is the common element of each of the games explored in the unit?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Understand and apply the skills needed for traditional Aboriginal games in a team environment.</td>
<td>Through observation, checklists and verbal feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team cooperation</td>
<td>Why is it important for Aboriginal people to participate in physical activities or games such as these?</td>
<td>Assessment One will be assessed each week</td>
<td>Understand the cultural significance of Aboriginal games and how they apply to the need and interests of the individuals.</td>
<td>Rubric observing presentation of created games and work booklets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summative:</td>
<td>To what extent does culture influence physical activity choices?</td>
<td>Assessment Two will be assessed in week 8 of a term</td>
<td>Understand that Indigenous people participate in physical activity for many other reasons other than for improved fitness and health.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of an Indigenous game</td>
<td>To what extent does culture influence the type of games/activities in which you participate?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recognise that they can transfer skills from other games into the indigenous games.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection log in work booklet</td>
<td>What has the unit taught you about the importance of participating in games or activities that are significant or important to your culture?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Appreciate that aboriginal people use physical activity as a means of learning about their culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7: Assessment plan—Indigenous Games Unit

Her interview with the project team provided a valuable opportunity to evaluate the success of the unit and to consider how she might plan and deliver it differently next time. The opportunity to talk explicitly about the cultural knowledge to be delivered via Indigenous games was not something a HPE teacher would normally do within the expectations of the HPE syllabus and indeed her assessable task was quite unique:

*At first, because its HPE, I don’t think it was something...they don’t normally do it. Don’t do (written) assessment tasks. And that’s the thing I was really nervous about because...half of them (students) didn’t bring this (booklet) back when I*
asked them to...I gave this out to them in the first week and told them they needed to bring this back. Most of them, I think most of them did bring it back. Because I had questions for them. And this is just like a formative assessment too, as well as final... I have two different assessments. My summative is the game and the booklet, and my formative is teamwork, cooperation, talking and working together.

(Mariah, 2012)

The pedagogical conversations that Mariah had with the project team resulted not only in an opportunity for her to showcase her developing skills in designing appropriate assessment generally, but to think deeply about how IK was engaging her students in learning.

I wanted them to think about the skills that were part of each game and where it came from. Why did the people play that game that way?

(Mariah, 2012)

Mariah also concluded that she would build in more time for students to research games from their local area in future offerings of her unit.

The pedagogical relationship that existed between Mariah and her supervising teacher, Kerry, was not atypical of practicum experiences, but was clearly problematic for mentoring in IK. Kerry was a contract teacher, who had graduated only several years prior to Mariah, called in to replace Mariah’s original supervising teacher who needed to take leave at short notice. Kerry was not in a position to mentor Mariah in IK, as she had completed the Graduate Diploma at QUT that did not include compulsory Indigenous studies, and without an opportunity to debrief her unit with the project team, Mariah would not have had the opportunity to engage in these important conversations. Her practicum experience, as noted, is common—having planned supervision changed at short notice and having supervising teachers who know very little about IK—so it speaks to a necessity to address the ad hoc nature of mentoring in IK through formal debriefing opportunities in the field experience subjects of teacher preparation courses, as per our recommendations.

Mariah continued her commitment to embedding IK at her internship school, where she returned to classroom teaching, by volunteering to run a before-school Indigenous games program. She also developed a SOSE/Art unit focusing on popular Indigenous art movements in Australia. Her internship teacher Ron described her as ‘the best prac student I have ever had’.

Caleb

Caleb is in his second year of primary teacher education program and undertook his first teaching practicum in Semester 1, 2013. Involved in the university elite athlete program, Caleb divided his time between training and university study; basically, the university degree was more of ‘back filler’ for the elite sport. A shift in attitude towards the degree occurred after the first teaching practicum, when Caleb experienced respect and acknowledgement of his cultural identity, and his knowledge and ability, and he was respected and valued by
the school community. The relationships that developed between his supervising teachers, children in his class, and the school administration impacted positively on his pedagogical approaches and classroom management style.

_I made sure he was up with the behaviour management and everything when he walked in on the first day, he was instantly able to behaviour manage. He has a good persona in the classroom. He has a very good rapport with the kids. Behaviour management, excellent from day one. He will do anything that I will ask him to do and we have actually given him an entire unit to teach and assess. I will let him talk about what he has been doing_  

(Hannah, supervising teacher, 2013)

_Well like Hannah said. When I first came in she gave me the unit and it was for the two classes in the first week. Then on Friday she asked me if I wanted to teach a lesson on polygraphs...I did and it went for 40 minutes...they all learned well. Everything went good. The following week that is when we started to do the art lesson. I have this book here that I brought...this book from home and I did some planning with the PowerPoint slides from the unit and then the first lesson with both of the classes_  

(Caleb, 2013)

Without much expectation from Caleb for the first practicum (from on-campus discussions), the professional respect he received from his supervising teacher triggered his confidence and preparedness to take on the full responsibilities of a classroom teacher.

_He has had confidence from the moment he as walked into the room. He has never, not once, come across as nervous. After every session that he has taught, I give him a print out of everything that he did, the start, middle and the end, behaviour management and feedback and so we go through everything all the time and he will say oh I was really nervous at the start and I didn’t see it! You don’t see it at all because he is just in there and it is natural to him. It is really nice to see_  

(Hannah, supervising teacher, 2013)

Caleb developed a unit of lessons and assessment on a Torres Strait Islands legend. It originated as an art lesson but also translated into a language unit. Children in the class were then asked to compose their own stories on survival on long journeys, from students’ artefacts, the lesson was fun and a meaningful learning experience.

Figure 8: The Journey
Caleb converted the storyline and moral of the story into a contemporary living experience, inviting children to situate themselves as the protagonist embarking on a journey and imagine strategies to ensure survival. The art lesson facilitated learning by engaging students on an emotional journey, yet assessed through creative art and language assessment criteria.

*He has done a good job, not just for the Indigenous kids, but for everyone in that class, he really has made it...It is nice that you come out and you two have that rapport because you know we have pre-service students from other universities and no one comes out to visit them while they are here and it is really hard for them*

(Deanne, Site coordinator, 2013)

Caleb’s successful practicum evolved from the respect and recognition by the supervising teacher, their negotiated pedagogical spaces and Caleb’s agency to position himself as teacher with responsibility to children’s learning in a culturally safe environment, a total transformation from a carefree university student. Caleb admitted in the focus group discussion: ‘I was really happy—like growing up and all’. The site coordinator concluded:

*It would be great to have him and it would be a great asset for us. I’ve said that to him a couple of times, we need to get you when you are done. Hurry up! He does have a persona and he can enrich our kids. That is what it should be all about*

(Deanne, Site coordinator, 2013)

**Taneya (rural and remote)**

Taneya was one of the two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers who undertook teaching practicum in rural and remote locations as participants of this project. Taneya is enrolled in the Graduate Diploma of Education (Grad Dip) program at QUT, and is studying externally. She commenced her first teaching practicum in a secondary school classified as remote, which is still one hour’s drive from the regional city. Our communication with Taneya was mainly through emails and a couple of phone calls. The school principal, through the site coordinator (deputy principal), communicated with the project team and expressed their interest to participate on behalf of Taneya’s two supervising teachers (English and Dance, her teaching specialisations).

Taneya was a Year 12 graduate of this school, with family connections to the ‘country’ surrounding the school site. Returning as a pre-service teacher was great news for most of the school staff, and she had relatives studying in the secondary school.

Studying in the Graduate Diploma of Education program has its challenges. There were issues of enrolment on her study plan, which would eventually delay her completion. She was concerned and wanted to discuss her options with the project team. Further, it was complicated that she had not done some curriculum units prior to the first practicum. Apart from this, Taneya commenced her teaching practicum well prepared for both Dance and English by drawing on her discipline and cultural knowledge. Her knowledge through her cultural identity and connections to place and space was a powerful tool in her planning and decision making.
It’s definitely influenced her practice as well. I remember the first lesson with this group of year 9 students, she acknowledged the traditional owners of the land and instantly that was a very powerful moment within the lesson. Instantly the students were engaged, wow. I think they were almost impressed. It was totally unexpected for them and then another lesson I remember she did quite a grounded earth sort of warm up with the students and they went through imitating different animals...and I suppose for the students to be able to experience that is very unique and I definitely think that they appreciated it

( Abby, Dance supervising teacher, 2013)

Taneya is an outstanding pre-service teacher. English may be her second area but you definitely wouldn’t know it the way she approaches it. Everything from her command of the subject itself to the way she prepares which is meticulous, organised, consultative and very, very well implemented. She is one of the better, if not the best pre-service teacher that I had over the years and there has been many, many good ones. I’ve had lots of student teachers

( Jake, English supervising teacher, 2013)

Taneya’s case demonstrates the school site as a powerful element with the cultural and pedagogical interfaces for embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives in the curriculum as demonstrated through this project (see Figure 4). While there appears to be a disconnection between university preparation in relation to curriculum studies and its impact on Taneya’s pedagogical practice, the knowledge she brought with her to the teaching practicum empowered the pre-service teacher’s agency to negotiate spaces within curricula.

It all just has to be done a one inclusive, fluent program. And I think we are very fortunate here to have such a richness and diversity of cultures. And especially with respect to the local elders being involved at times. We have connections from teaching staff with some of the local.... family who willingly give up some of their time to come and do that. In that class that Taneya got at the moment for instance she’s teaching short stories. So she’s been able to use written and oral traditional stories from ... culture and a couple of other Indigenous perspectives as well.

( Jake, English supervising teacher, 2013)
Importantly within this context, there is a clear relationship between the school and community. Jake asserted that establishing community support and participation built on mutual respect exceeds all tokenistic and political correctness of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges in the school curricula. The cultural interface becomes a place/space of knowledge convergence and opportunities are mutually created and engaged in a process of affirmation of knowledge systems (Figure 4), cultural identities and pedagogical practices.

![Figure 10: Language use—naming of school resources](image)

Naming of school buildings and resource centres through both languages represents school acknowledgement of the significance of both knowledge systems. The natural way of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, its value equally shared with the ‘normal’ curriculum, allows students to learn both knowledge systems that are uniquely Australian.

**A final comment**

The intention of the presentation of these case studies is to demonstrate how possessing genuine (innate and learnt) Indigenous knowledges can inform innovative curricula and pedagogical decision making and assessment design. Spaces and opportunities can be created for pre-service teachers to develop their expertise in embedding IK and IP whilst on teaching practicum given the right conditions. These conditions include the supervising teachers’ capacity to recognise IK and their willingness to negotiate spaces within the curriculum for embedding Indigenous knowledges. While these case studies portray successful negotiations and outcomes, the silences underpinning pre-service and supervising teacher pedagogical relationships and anxieties of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives demand further investigations.
Dissemination—Shifting discourses

The project team consistently interpreted research data against the adopted theoretical frameworks and relevant literature. The conference presentations initiated development of papers. These conference presentations captured both local and global audiences and professional networks, with invitations from journal editors to submit the papers for review and publication. In particular, the Oxford conference paper was presented with the Indigenous Knowledge special interest group, which translated into a journal publication in **COMPARE**, an A-rated journal.

Presentations—Conferences


Whatman, S., Sharma-Brymer, V., & McLaughlin, J. (2012). *Articulating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges in HPE curriculum and pedagogy: Indigenous students and their supervisors share their practicum experiences*. AARE-APERA Conference, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW.
Whatman, S., Sharma-Brymer, V., & McLaughlin, J. (2012). Articulating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges in HPE curriculum and pedagogy: Indigenous students and their supervisors share their practicum experiences. Joint Australian and Asia Pacific Association for Research in Education AARE/APERA Conference, University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW.


Publications


McLaughlin, J., Whatman, S., & Sharma-Brymer, V. (n.d.). Restorative pedagogical justice in embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) knowledges on teaching practice. [Submitted to the Asia Pacific Journal of Teacher Education—under review.]

McLaughlin, J., & Whatman, S. (n.d.). Pre-service teacher agency in pedagogical relationships in embedding Indigenous knowledges: A case study of urban and remote teaching practicum. [Submitted to Sense Publishers, Rotterdam, for Building democracy in education on diversity—chapter under review.]

Keynote lectures


**Project website**

For the purpose of this report, we include both the project website and Google site links. The project website serves as a dissemination portal for project papers and publications: <www.qut.edu.au/research/research-projects/supporting-future-curriculum-leaders-in-embedding-indigenous-knowledge-on-teaching-practicum>

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**Figure 11**: Project website

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**Project Google site**

The Google site was developed as a resource hub to support participating pre-service teachers with EIK whilst on teaching practicum. The Google site contains exemplars of graduate teacher portfolios, and unit plans in Health and Physical Education, Art, Language, Science and History. Examples of task descriptions and guides to making judgements (assessment criteria) are also included on the website. These resources will be linked to the Oodgeroo Unit website to serve as a form of ongoing support for current and future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers who embark on embedding Indigenous knowledges (IK) and perspectives (IP) on teaching practicum. Upon request, we will also share these links with interested Australian and international colleagues: <sites.google.com/site/futurecurriculumleadersandeik>
It’s the process—not a definite answer...

A model for supporting future curriculum leaders in embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives on teaching practicum

This project was informed by Indigenous knowledges and perspectives and primarily based on the recognition and valuing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing. This project facilitated opportunities to engage in affirmation by supporting professional relationships between practicum stakeholders, teacher preparation and their negotiations of EIP and EIK. The model revolves around the cultural interface as a place of convergence of knowledge systems and experiences that inspire innovative learning experiences for all students.

Figure 12: Model for the process of supporting embedding IK in teaching practicum at QUT
Key findings and implications

- We invited non-Indigenous pre-service teachers to participate in the project in the second and third cohorts. Only three out of five non-Indigenous pre-service teachers enrolled in the project. These five were identified by the field experience officer as having met our eligibility criteria (which was to be completing an Indigenous Studies minor). Given the large enrolments in the Bachelor of Education program (approximately 400), this low number suggests a lack of interest in and priority of EIK amongst pre-service teachers themselves and also program providers.

- All pre-service teacher participants concurred that their four-year Bachelor of Education program did not adequately prepare them to embed Indigenous knowledges on teaching practicum.

- Further, 90% of supervising teacher participants in this project confirmed their undergraduate teacher preparation did not prepare them to embed Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum.

- Uncertainty about EIK exists among teachers and school administration. Those schools with less well-established relationships with local Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities demonstrated greater uncertainty about EIK. Participating schools who had established relationships with those communities were more confident with EIK.

- Apart from policy statements and endorsed professional development programs, educators who explore other opportunities for professional development tend to benefit immensely. Whether these opportunities are formally negotiated or whether engagement occurs through community–school partnership programs, teachers tend to be more aware of the complexities of EIP and the gaps that continue to exist.

- Structured opportunities for conversations around EIK during teaching practicum enabled pre-service teachers and their supervising teachers to clearly communicate their expectations for successful experiences around EIK.

- Embedding Indigenous knowledges occurs in negotiated pedagogical spaces, determined by teachers’ willingness to engage and shift discourses surrounding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in curricula and pedagogy.

- Pre-service teachers who received affirmation and support of their good practice in EIK during practicum experienced an overall successful practicum.

- Schools searching for a single ‘good practice model’ of EIK are indicative of the current uncertainty surrounding EIK. Our project demonstrates that engaging in sustainable processes of negotiating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and perspectives, and Indigenous knowledges held by non-Indigenous peoples within those specific school–community contexts, models successful EIK; it is not dependent upon borrowing an imagined ideal model from elsewhere.
Evaluation report

A summative evaluation of the Supporting Future Curriculum Leaders in Embedding Indigenous Knowledge on Teaching Practicum project

Prepared by:

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August 2013

Executive summary

This project sets out to investigate the learning and teaching relationship between pre-service teachers and their supervisors on practicum to better understand their negotiations around embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in the curriculum. It addresses an important policy area for the national and state governments, and a major aspect of the MCEEDYA (Ministerial Council for Education, early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs) agenda to reform the sector in ways to make education more relevant to Indigenous learners and to make Indigenous content available to all students. This dual goal ‘for’ Indigenous learners and ‘about’ Indigenous people, histories and culture has been a complicated proposition and has proven a difficult area for curriculum writers, pedagogues and theorists alike for decades, and pragmatic options about what to do continues to escape the education profession. In many ways, this project makes a small but important step towards encouraging a process for the profession to take forward.

The project

This project is based on a conviction by the team that effective negotiations during practicum experiences between all parties around the issue of embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives for all students is an important first step towards achieving more meaningful engagements with Indigenous content in curriculum areas. By confining the project to the experiences of Indigenous and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers, supervising teacher in schools, and practicum supervisors assisted the team’s attention to be drawn to the finer details of the negotiations on what, how, and where to embed Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in the curriculum. Their focus on the subjective experiences of the negotiations subsequently informed areas to make key enquiries of pre-service courses—specifically about how well they prepare students with content and skills for these difficult negotiations. A key purpose for the project was to establish an ongoing collaborative process for negotiating the embedding of Indigenous priorities in the curriculum and teaching areas. The effect or value of this on the profession can only be gauged in the future as papers continue to be released for scholarly engagements, and as new projects are resourced to further developments in this area.
Design and method used in the project

Mapping the negotiations between the above parties and auditing the preparatory programs required a specific methodological proposition for the contemporary situation. Charting the contemporary situation as a site of convergence and productive engagements was a first crucial step to suspend canonical readings of contemporary negotiations as a site of divergence and irreconcilable differences. Nakata’s (2007) Cultural Interface and Indigenous Standpoint Theory was instrumental in making this shift. Critical Race Theory (for example, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) was also recruited to identify the important elements of the negotiations steeped in racialised behaviours and thoughts, as well as the structuralist’s position on behaviours and thoughts steeped in hegemonic traditions (for example, Bernstein, 1975). Brown and Gilligan’s (1992) phenomenology also helped to ensure the team’s attention to the subjective experiences in the negotiations (for example, what is said, how things were said, how negotiations were experienced, what was felt, what was not said in the actual response, what is produced as a result of negotiations, and journal notes). Overall, the team’s attention to the structure of the subjective experience, the manifestations of set ways that continually serve to marginalise Indigenous matters in negotiations, and seeking out productive areas of the converging elements situates well as a methodological frame for the study of how to support future curriculum leaders in embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives on teaching practicum.

A summative evaluation

This summative evaluation was requested by the project team to provide an overall perspective of the worth and value of the OLT-funded project, Supporting Future Curriculum Leaders in Embedding Indigenous Knowledge on Teaching Practicum. As the author of the Cultural Interface and Indigenous Standpoint Theory used in this project, I was recruited also to provide a critical friend role to assist the researchers on the design and method for collecting and interpreting data gathered on the project. The framework employed for this evaluation then assumes a degree of focus on the worth of the project findings to the future preparation of teachers and, where needed, the value of the critical friend in the process of getting there. I will refrain from repeating what is already contained in the final project report but will in places need to cite key items as they are stated in the report. What follows is an assessment of the areas requested by the project team. I will conclude my evaluation with remarks that are of direct interest to the Office for Learning and Teaching about the project.

An overview

The focus of this evaluation is a review of the outcomes of the project against the objectives and anticipated outcomes set out in the project proposal and claimed in the final report. It includes comments on the response to challenges and the resulting adjustments to the project along the way. The evaluation also provides some critical comments for future practice in this area given that the project aimed to ‘develop long term, future-oriented opportunities for Indigenous pre-service teachers to develop expertise in Embedding Indigenous Knowledge and perspectives’ (original ALTC grant submission, p. 1).
Relationship of the evaluator to the project

As the evaluator I could be considered as an external insider who, as a critical friend, participated in formative evaluation processes with the project team and provided feedback throughout the course of the project. I have also held longer term collegial relationships with the original and ongoing project leaders and have been involved in the broader and earlier embedding project at QUT. I have also researched and published widely in the field of Indigenous higher education and Indigenous studies (Nakata et al., 2012; Nakata, 2011; Nakata, Nakata & Chin, 2008; Nakata, 2004; 2007).

Sources for the evaluation

In much the same vein of a summative post-project completion assessment, my evaluation draws mainly on the final report, my many engagements with the project team throughout the project, and the demonstrable outputs. However, as an external insider, this evaluation also draws on my own knowledge of the field of theory and practice relevant to this inquiry, as well as knowledge gained through my role as a critical friend, particularly in relation to the interview foci, data interpretation phase, and application of the Cultural Interface and Indigenous Standpoint Theory.

Stakeholders

The project proposal clearly identified three primary stakeholders: pre-service teachers, specifically Indigenous pre-service teachers as well as non-Indigenous pre-service teachers who had undertaken a Minor in Indigenous Studies; supervising teachers in schools who guide and assess teaching practicums; and field experience officers/supervising lecturers from the QUT Faculty of Education’s Pre-Service Education Program who were involved in the practicum experience. However, much of this evaluation is directed to the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) as the funding source, and QUT and Griffith personnel involved in pre-service education, Indigenous education, and practicum supervision.

The secondary stakeholders as far as this evaluation is concerned are education departments/units, teachers and schools involved in teacher practicums and EIK projects, and pre-service education students specialising in this area. The proper dissemination of the feedback provided through this report to these stakeholders, especially project participants, is understood to be the primary responsibility of the project team.

Other universities and faculties of Education might also be considered an interested stakeholder group in understanding the aims, methods and outcomes of this project and what the findings and recommendations can offer their own practices.

This evaluation has therefore been written with this interested group of stakeholders in mind, though the project team’s final report and the project proposal should be considered primary in understanding the project goals, context, methods and outcomes.
Key evaluation areas

This evaluation addresses a number of key questions and aims to contribute constructive and critical comment about the project.

One aim of this evaluation is to encourage more educators to develop good critical practices specific to their own contexts to extend the substance of the effort required at this level in all pre-service education programs across the nation. Without effort at this level of detail, Embedding Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives, Cultural Competency, and Diversity mandates will remain rhetoric or be implemented in the usual ad hoc, patronising, and unsystematic way that has characterised much of the effort to improve practice in Indigenous education over the last 40 years.

Key areas for the evaluation are derived from the evaluation strategy set out in the original project proposal:

- The significance, value, and worthiness of the project goals.
- Did the project stay focused on its aims?
- What challenges arose and what adjustments were necessary over the course of the project?
- Were the theoretical framing, the research approach, and data collection and interpretation methods fit for the purpose of the inquiry? What were the challenges?
- Were the intended outcomes achieved?

The final point about the achievement of intended outcomes will be addressed in the following areas that concern OLT:

- An external statement on the extent to which project outcomes have been achieved.
- An understanding of the extent to which the project has contributed to the OLT mission.
- An assessment of the project operation, functioning of the project team and development of team members’ capacities.
- A demonstration of the project having been conducted to high academic standards.

1. The significance, value, and worthiness of the project goals

In broad terms, this project addressed a key area of neglect in Indigenous education. The area of neglect is the gap between advocacy and policy and mandated positions in Indigenous education, and the continual cry of educators in schools and in universities to ‘tell us what to do and how to go about it’. While there is commentary that decries the perceived resistance of educators to enact Indigenous advocated practice and/or policy
mandates, there is also consistent evidence of goodwill on the part of educators. To enact goodwill, however, educators continually ask for and are reasonably entitled to expect guidance and resources to assist them to do what is asked of them. This project is significant in trying to address this gap in a very specific area of pre-service educational practice by working towards ensuring that those pre-service teachers who are interested and have developed knowledge in Indigenous Studies subjects are given opportunities and are supported in their attempts to embed Indigenous Knowledge in their curriculum development, lesson planning, and teaching activities while on practicum.

In specific terms, this project is significant in its attempts to acknowledge and work in the somewhat unclear or blurred relations between policy mandates, pre-service education, future teaching innovations in schools, and the roles of those who support the pre-service and ongoing professional development of teachers in schools and lecturers in pre-service education. It is in these relational spaces that inaction transpires as a result of missed or unsatisfactory opportunities for pre-service teachers and supervising teachers to develop constructive dialogue for negotiating what might be possible to attempt in a particular classroom or subject area.

This relational aspect is critical because embedding Indigenous knowledge into curriculum areas is emergent practice which, if proceeding at all, is proceeding quite haphazardly. There are no tried and true methods and indeed there is very little trialled or detailed content or pedagogy for inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in different subjects at different year levels across schooling and higher education—at least not in any centrally organised and easily accessible form. Pre-service teachers attempting to do this on practicum can be considered trailblazers and they require room to experiment. As the report asserts, these pre-service students are future curriculum leaders in this area of specialisation (see p. 16 of the final report). This endeavour requires support from supervising teachers and, where appropriate, Indigenous people to maximise the chances of successful teaching of appropriate content. Supervising teachers, even those without any experience of IK or embedding IK practices can nevertheless provide constructive modelling for curriculum/lesson planning and for feedback and evaluation of practice if their roles in the process are clear to them.

However, the relational aspects are not the endpoint but the rather ‘messy’ means through which to develop embedding practice and more tangible resources to support those practices. In setting its outcomes, the project attempted to address the substance—the ‘nitty gritty’ detail—required to provide these opportunities, by building useful and necessary curriculum resources and exemplars, and by modelling up the relationships and roles associated with and necessary to this practice. This is what makes this a particularly valuable project because it suggests that a range of stakeholders can contribute different things to provide a necessary web of supportive practices. This support web is required for pre-service teachers to plan, execute and evaluate their own attempts in conjunction with more experienced teachers who may or may not have experience of embedding Indigenous materials into the curriculum areas. This supports a form of ongoing, in situ professional development based on collegial conversations and reflection on practice and applies as much to supervising teachers and faculty staff as it does to pre-service teachers.
In this context of emergent practice, everyone is learning and developing professionally and bringing different levels and aspects of curriculum development and teaching experience to bear. Respectful relationships are fundamental, but not the endpoint.

The emergent state of embedding practice, the challenges pre-service teachers have confronted, and the need for a web of supportive practice brought to light in this project also suggest that it is highly unlikely that formulaic prescriptions for all teachers to follow will encourage best practice. An important assumption of the project is that teachers’ knowledge of Indigenous content areas is foundational to their embedding practice in schools. Potential embedding practitioners require some depth of knowledge in Indigenous Studies before they can move from novice to specialist. This suggests that pre-service and serving teachers will be involved in a longer process of professional development of curriculum and teaching practices for this area and that critical conversations between pre-service, beginning, and supervising teachers, and also Indigenous Studies academics, as well as critical reflection on emerging practices will all be essential to this process. In this sense the project is a beginning and not definitive of any ‘best’ practice, though it contributes significantly to its early development.

As the final report asserted, each educational site of practice has a specific context and particular conditions to be contended with (see p. 42 of the final report). Pre-service and graduate teachers will inevitably have to respond to sets of specific or even unique circumstances. This in itself is a pertinent observation to be highlighted for other universities because too often Indigenous education advocacy generalises across the specificities of different contexts and levels of education to the detriment of developing practices attuned to the conditions of specific contexts. This strongly supports the underlying argument of this project that pre-service teachers interested in embedding practice need to be given the necessary opportunities and support required to learn and develop professionally in this regard if they are to develop the knowledge and confidence to do this in their own classrooms as teachers after they graduate. Without this growing band of practitioners, the whole curriculum embedding project mandate is likely to be unfulfilled. If the small cohort of potential practitioners in this study is indicative of current numbers of potential practitioners across the country, the process is still likely to be a slow one, unless faculties of Education promote, address and accelerate embedding schemas within their own pre-service or professional development programs. This project makes a positive contribution to this broader endeavour.

2. Did the project stay focused on its aims?

The short answer to this question is yes, but the longer answer reveals some of the characteristic dilemmas confronted in Indigenous education and Indigenous research. It should be noted that as the evaluator I can only comment on these dilemmas because I was involved as a critical friend at particular points in the project implementation. These dilemmas will be discussed in the methodology section of this report. Here, I limit my comments to noting that steerage by the Reference Group and critical friends provided a way for the project team to stay focused on its aims. I can also note that the aims were not compromised at any stage in relation to tangible outcomes in the form of artefacts and the model. Rather, when applying the chosen conceptual frameworks to the interpretation and
discussion of data, the aim of opening up possibilities for shifting discussions about embedding practice ran the risk of being closed down in favour of more predictable discussions that focused on relations between Indigenous people and the institutions of the still-colonising nation-state, of which the dominance of Western education and Western knowledge are examples. This reflected the project team’s greater facility with Critical Race Theory and Indigenous research methodology, which prioritises decolonising knowledges (Smith, 1999; Martin, 2003) political resistance and integrity, and the privileging of Indigenous voices (Rigney, 1999; Martin, 2003).

The project team was less familiar with the interpretive framework provided by Cultural Interface Theory (Nakata, 2007) and initially relied on it more for the purposes of explaining/describing the contextual conditions, rather than utilising it to frame interpretations that could open up possibilities for shifting conversations and dialogue about practice. This said, the project team did clearly stay focused on its aims to investigate ‘the learning and teaching relationships between pre-service teachers and their supervisors on practicum’, to explore ‘the negotiations of expectations, role modelling and the interactions that occur between pre-service teachers, their supervising teachers, and QUT staff involved in supporting teaching practicum’, and to ‘to design a model to develop long-term, future-oriented opportunities for teachers to gain expertise in embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment’ (see Executive summary of final report).

3. What challenges arose and what adjustments were necessary over the course of the project?

The theoretical and conceptual challenges around data generation and interpretation are discussed in the next section. Apart from these issues, the project team’s main challenges were practical and associated with the implementation of the project, including its timeline. The details of these are outlined in the final report and are not duplicated here. They concerned delays due to the ethics process, which is always complicated for Indigenous projects and projects involving schools and students. Another challenge was the retirement of key personnel associated with the original submission and vision for the project, and the transfer of one key member to a different university. A third challenge related to the recruitment of sufficient pre-service teachers who met the required criteria for participation. All these challenges were ably resolved in a timely manner by the two remaining team members without detriment to the spirit or goals of the project.

4. Were the theoretical framing, the research approach, and data collection and interpretation methods fit for the purpose of the inquiry? What were the challenges?

This was an interesting area of the project. There are many ways to conduct research and this is a matter of scholarly and disciplinary preference and consideration of what fits the purposes of the inquiry. Where Indigenous interests are at stake, approaches to inquiry must address Indigenous concerns with academic inquiry and Western methods. This was a qualitative project, focused on generating data from participants facilitating the practicum experience of pre-service teachers wanting to develop skills in embedding practice.
The research design was entirely appropriate for the purpose and I provide more detailed commentary on this in the OLT section. The Participatory Action Approach chosen is favoured by Indigenous people who want researchers to account for Indigenous perspectives on practice with a view to changing or refining those practices in Indigenous interests and in consultation with Indigenous people. As an innovation of Action Research methods, Participatory Action Research is also suitable for many educational inquiries. Qualitative interviews, focus groups, workshops and feedback sessions were appropriate methods for this project.

The conceptual framework utilised three main theoretical frames, all of which were useful to the project’s focus. The use of Cultural Interface Theory (Nakata, 2007) enabled an understanding of educational sites as ones of converging and competing knowledge and standpoints. The use of Critical Race Theory (for example, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) kept in focus the legacy of colonial racism in contemporary educational spaces. The recruitment of Bernstein’s (1975) theory of pedagogic discourse also helped to focus the attention to hegemonic conditions and behaviours in the negotiations. Phenomenological Theory (for example, Brown & Gilligan, 1992) was also employed to explore the participants’ understanding of their experience.

While all these conceptualisations and tools are useful and appropriate, they also produce some ‘sticky points’ that should be able to be acknowledged through reflexive research practice. The final report has not elaborated in great detail on this but I think it worthwhile to raise these sticky points for future researchers or stakeholders in other universities.

Theoretical frameworks highlight the lens that researchers bring to their inquiry. In this project, team members were attempting to interpret the experiences of stakeholder participants, privilege Indigenous standpoints, be mindful of the underlying racism that is normalised and often disguised in education practices, and retain an educational focus on relationships between pedagogic discourses.

These theoretical lenses also shape the generation of data through the sorts of questions pursued in the line of inquiry, and also the interpretation of data by casting a particular lens to produce a particular analysis. Sometimes frameworks marry well enough to produce a fuller account. Sometimes frameworks conflict in ways that may confound and obfuscate the interpretation process. As a critical friend to this project, I witnessed firsthand the struggle of team members to reconcile the use of Cultural Interface and Critical Race theories. Without getting too theoretical for the purposes of this evaluation, a challenge arose at points of data generation and interpretation in this project.

One theoretical framework, Cultural Interface Theory, is disposed to understanding contextual conditions in order to open up the possibilities for exploring and shifting the sorts of questions that can be asked, for shifting the sorts of conversations that can be conducted, and therefore lends itself to opening up the possibilities for shifting practice. Another, Critical Race Theory, is much more focused on uncovering and describing the evidence of underlying colonial racism in existing practice. It is more deterministic in the interpretation process and does not necessarily provide room for dealing with complexity and contradiction in practice but nevertheless provides a much cleaner analysis to argue for
systemic change. Importantly, these different theoretical frameworks tend to produce a different language set for describing, explaining and discussing dilemmas and uncertainties in messy and contested intersections. The former requires a view to the agency of the participants so that complexity of the negotiation processes can be better identified and understood, whereas the latter strips agency away from participants leaving avenues only for the identification of aggressors and victims.

At various points in the data analysis, the project team made every effort to move beyond ‘blaming' teachers/institutions for evidential complicity in ongoing colonialism and towards being satisfied to represent the data as the conditions that both pre-service and supervising teachers contend with at this site of practice. With my constructive critical input, the project leaders did move towards this latter explication as is ably evidenced in some of their case studies. The value of moving beyond deterministic frameworks is that understanding of these experiences and conditions is more likely to produce the dispositions needed for a more mutually invested discussion between stakeholders about how to facilitate the matter at hand—opportunities for pre-service teacher to practice embedding during their practicums. This is arguably more useful than turning to the larger concern with ongoing racism, which is impossible to be resolved between stakeholders in the immediate and finite context of a practicum. Instead, we have to remind ourselves that embedding practice is emerging to contend with ongoing colonial racism as a longer term project of education.

One of the reasons for raising this issue is not to prescribe ways of theoretically framing similar inquiry for others, but to urge thoughtfulness and more reflexive research practice when utilising a mix of conceptual frameworks. Here, keeping the aim of the project uppermost does assist this. The aim is not to solve all the root problems of Indigenous education; the aim is very focused on facilitating embedding opportunities during pre-service practicum. In addition, one of the skills that graduate teachers will require is to work alongside various conflicting and competing views on best practice in education, while they develop and refine their own professional principles. The ability to review practice and the assumptions on which practices rest is a core skill of thoughtful and reflective teachers. The ability to consult and learn from colleagues, without blindly following them is another.

5. Were the intended outcomes achieved?

See item 6.

6. An external statement on the extent to which project outcomes have been achieved

A key outcome of the project stated by the project team from the outset was a beginning process to a model that evolves over time to create ‘opportunities for teachers to gain expertise in embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment’. From a research perspective this required fieldwork and site visits that could provide the team data on how things work and don’t work in embedding projects, to lay down the evidence-based knowledge for future and particular action. The project team then set out to arrange engagements at school and university sites that could net for them experiences of what the curriculum embedding demands look like from the implementers’
end, and also at a point in time of a practicum, where imperatives bear down more urgently on the parties. Adopting a methodology to map the structure of the subjective experiences between the parties helped the project team to understand more about what is actually said in what is said. Having gained data on experiences in the negotiations at the surface level and then the discursive level, and having more in-depth knowledge of what facilitated and didn’t facilitate embedding negotiations in particular, led to a more informed audit of the university’s preparatory processes. In trying this approach for the first time, the project team was challenged in many ways, not least in coming to grips with a fundamentally different approach to the interface between Indigenous and non-Indigenous engagements. But with confidence that they could get to more productive elements that might inform innovative approaches and better support teachers to embed Indigenous Knowledge and perspectives they persevered. The items identified as key outcomes by the team in their report demonstrate the tentativeness by which they moved throughout the project. But these stated outcomes, however awkwardly they have been put forward, essentially contain the items needed for the beginning process to what is needed for a model that can create opportunities for growing capacity in curriculum embedding projects:

- Successful teaching practicum experiences were possible when these future curriculum leaders were supported in their preparation while at the university and on teaching practicum
- Clear communication on expectations and anxieties of teaching practicum between pre-service teachers and their supervising teachers became the necessary condition for negotiated pedagogical and curricula decision-making opportunities.
- Resources are essential components to curriculum, pedagogical and assessment decision making.
- Much work is needed to ensure IK and IP are naturally included in the curriculum.
- There is a will to change and decolonise the curriculum, but affirmation from all stakeholders is required.
- A ‘process’ model for EIK

These are good grounds for a future model to innovate pre-service education programs, school support for supervising teachers and support from university practicum supervisors. The call by the team for affirmation will figure at all levels, and this needs to be looked at further as there is a considerable lack of understanding of the complexity and degree of difficulty being faced by the teaching profession. This is perhaps better explained by asking the question all teachers are faced with: how is a teacher, experienced or otherwise, to go about embedding Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in all curriculum areas?

This project ambitiously set out to address a pressing issue in the profession. Confining the project within the dimensions of a practicum experience and narrowing the focus on the process issues was sensible. Setting out to trial and develop a process model narrowed the project further to manageable proportions. Key to this is the investment in following projects to advance the knowledge of the processes. As this is one of the earliest projects to look closely at the processes of embedding Indigenous Knowledge into curriculum areas, this was a wise decision to set the groundwork for future investigations.
7. An understanding of the extent to which the project has contributed to the OLT mission

This project provided academics, students, teaching staff, representatives from the Department of Education and Training Queensland, community members, and professional staff opportunities to explore, develop and implement innovations in learning and teaching in a particular area of Indigenous education. The project has developed the confidence and leadership capabilities of Drs McLaughlin and Whatman and established renewed confidence with the teaching profession, as well as with departmental and community representatives involved in the project. I have no doubt that both will be consulted in the future work of the Department in this important policy area. Anecdotal reports to me suggest that this is already underway. The important work, however, is ahead of them. Both need to be encouraged to publish more on their developing knowledge and capacity so that others are encouraged to take a more fine-grained look at the elements that facilitate or inhibit progress of EIK learning and teaching approaches. This will help embed good practice and, with some focused support from OLT, best practice at the level of the processes layered between much goodwill in the profession and the emerging practice in Indigenous learning and teaching areas. Drawing in these productive elements to share and develop innovative practice can only help the education of all students.

8. Assessment of the project operation, functioning of the project team and development of team members’ capacities

In times when demands upon the teaching profession are ever pressing to be more responsive to Indigenous content in curriculum areas, the project team took on an area of work that is not only needed but filled also with tensions as teachers are asked to do more and more in their daily roles. Faced with an already overcrowded curriculum, uncertainty about the state and national curriculum priorities, pressures to undertake extracurricular activities to maintain the currency of their registration, and with little direction on how to embed Indigenous Knowledge and perspectives in the curriculum there is little wonder why teachers generally are a bit reserved when it comes to engaging on Indigenous matters. Thus, it is to the team’s credit that they were able to gain the participation of 23 teachers across 21 schools. Gaining not only the participation and cooperation of pre-service student teachers but also interest from final year student teachers to participate in the project is further testament to the team’s ability to maintain a professional approach to the issues.

Despite the delayed start, three retiring members of the team, and a change in project coordinator in such a short project time frame, Dr McLaughlin and Dr Whatman did remarkably well to complete the project. Importantly, they maintained commitment to the scheduled data gathering events, the focus groups and workshops, writing progress reports and organising reporting sessions to the Reference Group, writing and presenting papers to the scholarly community, and still found time to meet with the broader Indigenous community to keep them informed of the project—all this at the same time as fulfilling commitments to a teaching load at their universities Incredible, but hardly sustainable if focused scholarship is what is needed by OLT to drive innovation in teaching and learning areas.
My role as critical friend over the period of the project challenged their understandings of contemporary Indigenous and non-Indigenous interfaces, pushed their thinking beyond simplistic black/white readings of negotiations and experience, and confronted their theoretical understandings of agency and its significance in the interpretation of the data. Whole days were set aside for my visits and both Drs McLaughlin and Whatman struggled with the concepts initially but managed over time to not change but refine their design and method employed in the project. Their developing capabilities on interface designs were fully realised during two days of sifting through transcripts, course outlines, journals and other field notes. Suspending canonical ways of identifying dominant activities in behaviours, experience, words, statements, and other site-specific artefacts is a very difficult process to go through. Realising that more can be understood about the subjective experiences in the data that speaks of what is needed to progress embedding projects in the curriculum in pragmatic ways helps.

Drs McLaughlin and Whatman have both acknowledged that moving beyond the limits of extant paradigmatic conditions is not just revealing of old practices but is also fertile grounds for new thinking and innovation in teaching and learning practices. Both should be commended for their perseverance and commitment to scholarly advancement in this field. I highly recommend that they be encouraged to write a research paper on the shifts they made as this would assist the profession to come to terms with the need for innovation beyond the existing discourses and conversations we are having about learning and teaching issues related to Indigenous people, histories and cultures.

9. A demonstration of the project having been conducted to high academic standards

The final report provides evidence of the high academic standard of this project. The project meets both the standards of qualitative inquiry and those required by Indigenous ethics and protocols for research. Some additional comments are provided here about the project team members’ ability to manage the competing and multiple persuasions placed on them from all quarters relating to how the project should be approached, conducted, deployed, reported, and concluded. Having played a role as a critical friend to the team members, I was witness to their sensitive management of all these interests in the context of all the stakeholders in this project. At all times they were more than professional in their responses to the varied and changing suggestions, directions and demands of them and the project. In particular, Drs McLaughlin and Whatman managed an extremely heavy load to ensure the project’s success. The ability to take advice and yet maintain strong loyalty to their original project demonstrated a commitment to collaboration with their stakeholders. Taking a fairly new theoretical proposition on contemporary Indigenous and non-Indigenous interfaces and marrying it with Critical Race Theory, structuralist theories, and phenomenological theories was also a bold intellectual step but typical of their quest to find better ways to engage the learning and teaching issues in Indigenous education. The project benefitted immensely from their efforts to seek out innovative approaches to the difficult issues of embedding Indigenous content in curriculum areas. The list of conference presentations, keynotes and publications seeking out engagements on their project in their final report is testament to their agenda to engaging the highest level of scholarship around their work.
Concluding remarks

This project addressed a significant gap in a specialised and emergent area of Indigenous education practice. Its ethical orientation upheld Indigenous interests without submerging critical educational imperatives or ignoring the real constraints to innovations of practice, when working in a complex intersection of competing and contested interests, knowledge and practice. The project’s methodological approach and methods and tools not only produced valuable data of the experiences of stakeholder participants, but also enabled the production of useful resources and a model of relationship roles and expectations to encourage the ongoing development of good practice in this specialised area. Both the implications and the recommendations set out in the final report are thoughtfully restrained so as to be useful for others contemplating how to improve experiences in their own contexts.

In a very positive way, the project demonstrated—in its own implementation—the challenges involved when attempting to shift curriculum and pedagogic discourse and practices. An unintended outcome was that researchers were tested and pushed through their own limits as they investigated and explored the conditions that test and limit pre-service students, supervising teachers, and faculty officers when negotiating roles, relationships, and boundaries of curriculum development and practice. The result was a less certain but more open-ended inquiry that sets a basis for ongoing development and reflective practice in this area, both for the stakeholders in this particular educational project and for others involved in ‘embedding projects’ in pre-service education programs elsewhere.

This unintended outcome validates the intent of the original project vision, which was to begin the process of developing better practice in supporting embedding projects in pre-service practicums. This is a highly desirable outcome in Indigenous educational practice, which too often has been disappointed by placing too much hope in the certainties of advocated strategies to improve practice without a concomitant effort to work out the details required for successful, sustained or systemic implementation. What this project encourages is a focus on the detailed substance of the effort required to shift, innovate and implement improved embedding practices that can meet the goals of Indigenous advocacy, now firmly expressed in government mandates and policy statements. To this end, I encourage this particular team to keep reporting and sharing their efforts and the lessons to be learnt as they progress in this evolving process.
References


## Appendix: Project timeline

This timeline provides a snapshot of project activities undertaken during the two and half years of the project—from December 2010 to July 2013.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project stages/schedule</th>
<th>Progress and accomplishments</th>
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| **Stage 1: Preliminary planning and ethical considerations**  
December 2010 – April 2011 | Commenced ethics application for QUT and Education Queensland, contacted QUT Faculty of Education stakeholders and reference panel members. Wrote position description for project coordinator.  
Project coordinator appointed, project team convened. Induction and ethical considerations.  
Consultation with Assistant Dean, Teaching and Learning (QUT Faculty of Education).  
Talking up the research with stakeholders. |
| **Stage 2: Project scoping**  
May–July 2011 | Project coordinator undertakes drafting of ethical clearance applications.  
Literature review and methodological framework completed.  
Reference panel members confirmed.  
Talking up the research with/engaging stakeholders. |
| **Stage 2: Project scoping**  
August–December 2011  
Ethical clearance approval | Ethical clearance application (Level 3) submitted QUT University Ethics Committee and Queensland Education for approval.  
QUT approved of the project application in September 2011.  
Queensland Education approved of the application in December 2011.  
Extension of literature review and conceptual frameworks. Met with John Davis of Indigenous Schooling Support Unit (ISSU, Springfield).  
Informal conversations with pre-service (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) teachers only.  
Wrote conference presentations (see Presentations). |
| **Stage 3: Engaging stakeholders**  
September 2011 – February 2012 | Expressions of interest from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers began with informal conversations and their awareness of the project.  
Dissemination through presentations at the Oxford conference in September and AARE in December.  
Development of Google site as the resources (project) hub to cater for stakeholders and project leaders external to QUT. |
| **Stage 4: Data collection & Stage 3: Engaging stakeholders—Cohort 1**  
March–June 2012 | Formal recruitment of pre-service teachers through Faculty of Education Field Experience Office (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander only).  
Communicated with schools, delivered information packages per ethical guidelines. Met site coordinator and supervising teachers.  
Refined EIK model, conducted briefings with stakeholders, interviews and focus group workshops prior to and on completion of teaching practicum for pre-service teachers.  
Project leaders gave a keynote lecture for the Graduate Diploma in Education students.  
Project team provided ongoing support for pre-service teachers while on practicum through brainstorming curriculum topics, resources and teaching and learning activities.  
Ms Erin McDonald conducted a workshop for pre-service teachers, providing useful insights into embedding Indigenous knowledges in teaching and learning. |
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<td><strong>Stage 5: Data analysis</strong>&lt;br&gt;June–August 2012</td>
<td>Project leaders visited all participating pre-service and supervising teachers. Held the first Project Reference Panel meeting on 11 April 2012. Held the first meeting with critical friend—Professor Martin Nakata.</td>
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<td><strong>Stage 6: Data collection &amp; Stage 3: Engaging stakeholders—Cohort 2</strong>&lt;br&gt;September–November 2012</td>
<td>Commenced transcriptions by the project team. First meeting/workshop with Faculty of Education Field Experience Unit Coordinators. For project dissemination, the project team leaders presented a keynote for Stepping Out Conference for final year pre-service teachers at QUT. Project leaders presented at the QUT OLT Showcase.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 7: Data analysis and dissemination</strong>&lt;br&gt;December 2012 – February 2013</td>
<td>Formal recruitment of pre-service teachers through Faculty of Education Field Experience Office (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers with Indigenous Studies minor). Communicated with all participating schools including both urban and rural sites. Project team conducted pre- and post practicum workshops and interviews for students who volunteered. Project leaders visited all participating schools, held conversations with pre-service teachers, their supervising teachers and some site coordinators who volunteered to talk with us. Those who were too busy to participate in conversations were excused. With the experiences of transcribing of first cohort data, Pacific Solutions was contracted to process data transcription. Transition from Google site to the project website. First meeting/workshop with Faculty of Education Field Experience Unit Coordinators. Second reference panel meeting held on February 20th. Unfortunately, the project coordinator’s two year contract end. We could not extend since we did not apply for further funding with the project extension. Dissemination of project findings—see Presentations.</td>
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<td><strong>Stage 8: Data collection &amp; Stage 3: Engaging stakeholders—Cohort 3</strong>&lt;br&gt;March–June 2013</td>
<td>Project leaders oversaw all project activities with the departure of project coordinator. Formal recruitment of pre-service teachers through Faculty of Education Field Experience Office (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers with Indigenous Studies minor). Met with critical friend. Communicated with all participating schools including both urban and rural sites. Project team conducted pre- and post-practicum workshops and interviews for students who volunteered. Project leaders visited all participating schools, held conversations with pre-service teachers, their supervising teachers and some site coordinators who volunteered to talk with us. Those who were too busy to participate in conversations were excused. Project team conducted the first workshop with supervising teachers and interested site coordinators at QUT. This had not been possible with teachers’ commitment at schools.</td>
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| **Stage 9: Data analysis and dissemination**  
  June–July 2013 | Recruited a project officer to support late project activities.  
  Recruited a research assistant to complete transcription and initiate data analysis through Nvivo.  
  Met with critical friend—a valuable workshop that challenged our interpretation of data and its implications for embedding Indigenous knowledges in curricula.  
  Held the final Reference Panel meeting with great feedback from the College of Teachers representative.  
  For project dissemination, the project team leaders presented a keynote for Stepping Out Conference for final year pre-service teachers at QUT. Also see Presentations. |
| **Stage 10: Evaluation and reporting back to OLT** | Finalised project. |