
Editorial

What is the state of play in Indigenous education today? What kind of thinking is driving the reform agenda in Indigenous education right now? What kinds of gains have we made and what work is there yet to do? In an era of unprecedented ‘gap’ talk, these are pressing questions, which the articles in this issue address and explore.

The seventeen articles included in this issue are grouped into five themes. The first theme brings together four articles focused on the big picture of Indigenous Australian education, including history, discourse, reform and theory. Gunstone’s paper deconstructs the disparity between the actions and discourses of governments as seen in reports, policies and legislation, and educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. He argues that governments are indeed part of the problem due to their complicity, complacency and lack of commitment to address Indigenous educational disadvantage. The following article by Vass continues Gunstone’s interrogation of practices, policy and research in Indigenous education by provocatively asking: ‘So, what *is* wrong with Indigenous education?’ Employing a Foucauldian lens, Vass draws attention specifically to the legacy of ‘gap talk’ and deficit discourse, once more in relation to Indigenous student achievement in education. The third article by McGollow on this theme takes a micro-look at a targeted program of educational reform, specifically the Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy founded and led by well-known Indigenous spokesperson Noel Pearson. McGollow’s discussion provides the reader with an ‘inside tour’ of some of the key factors related to rationale, implementation, and how we might gauge the success of the Academy. Hook concludes this theme with a discussion of decolonising pedagogy and critical whiteness theory in the context of teaching about power, privilege and colonisation in Indigenous Australian Studies through the medium of film.

The second theme in this issue draws our attention to engagement with Indigenous community in localised contexts. Maxwell’s article explores the ways in which teachers in senior secondary classrooms are consulting with community to develop Indigenous Australian Studies curriculum. Her discussion highlights the urgent need for such consultation to take place in the current reform environment of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives as a cross-curricular priority in the

Australian National Curriculum. Ewing’s article presents the ways in which Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems and mathematical processes are being incorporated into numeracy lessons through community consultation. Harrison and Murray’s work similarly demonstrates the value to be gained from community engagement in educational processes. From their experiences working with the Darug community in Sydney, New South Wales, they provide important suggestions for ways to build positive relationships with local Indigenous people. Jahnke’s discussion describes a New Zealand Maori educational intervention strategy aimed at immersing children in local language, culture, landscapes, opportunities and experiences. Similarly to the other articles linked to this theme, Jahnke’s discussion reminds us of the significance of Indigenous community relationships, connections and knowledge systems as key factors in educational achievement and success for Indigenous students.

The next three articles by Plater, El Sayed and colleagues, and Richardson focus specifically on Indigenous health education programs. Plater’s paper explores the reasons why a large proportion of Indigenous students enrolled in a Graduate Diploma of Indigenous Health Promotion at The University of Sydney struggle to complete the course. El Sayed, Soar, and Wang present the steps taken to develop a culturally appropriate, interactive, multimedia and informative program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health workers. Richardson similarly describes the establishment of a health education program for First Nation’s Indigenous students in the area of Social Work at the University of Victoria in Canada. Collectively, this suite of articles expose the many challenges faced in bringing Indigenous knowledge systems, educators, students and pedagogy into mainstream settings.

The fourth theme shifts our attention to rural and remote contexts of Indigenous education in Australia. The article by MacGill centres on the central role Aboriginal Community Education Officers play as support workers for the safe transition of Indigenous children and their families from their traditional country in remote settings into new schools in semi-rural and urban contexts. Hall explores why non-Indigenous teachers ‘come and go’ from with high regularity and why Indigenous teachers tend to

'stay and stay and stay' in remote Indigenous schools. The voices of Indigenous teachers and community are privileged in this paper, and Hall presents an often-ignored or sidelined perspective on the high turnover of non-Indigenous teachers.

The fifth and final group of articles draw our attention broadly to schooling and literacy. Given the limited value of grade repetition for educational achievement, Anderson asks questions about the high instances of early grade repetition among Indigenous students in Prep to Year 3 in Queensland state schools. She urges educators in this setting to reevaluate the possible negative academic, social and emotional consequences of this long-term early intervention practice. Bennett and Lancaster explore the capacity of pre-service teachers to teach reading to Indigenous students in the context of a supported field placement in an Indigenous community. Significantly, they report that a key success factor in teaching reading is the use of running records and development of meaningful relationships with Indigenous students and community in the learning environment. Ketsitlile's work provides a snapshot of literacy and formal schooling education among San people, the Indigenous people of South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia. San languages, systems of literacy and ways of life are not taught in schools and as such, San children are highly disadvantaged. Ketsitlile presents an understanding of why this is the case and what needs

to be done to cater for San people in education. The final article in this section by Oliver draws upon second language acquisition research to explore ways to address the language and literacy needs of Aboriginal high school students in vocational education and training programs. Her work highlights the importance of developing oral language and literacy skills, and strategies for interacting confidently with non-Indigenous people as key success factors.

Collectively, the articles in this issue provide us with enormous insight into what is happening on the ground right now in a diverse range of educational settings to improve the educational outcomes for Indigenous students nationally and in global contexts. This issue presents macro-mezzo-micro pictures of knowing, being and doing in Indigenous education, and provides us with a sense of hope that there are, as bell hooks suggests, many 'locations of possibility'. The articles in this volume demonstrate the continued commitment, passion and determination of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, teachers, community and students are working persistently, strongly and creatively towards a positive educational future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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Editors