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Teacher preparation for Aboriginal education

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Abstract

Dr Andrew Refshauge, the then-Minister for Education and Training in the New South Wales (NSW) Government, recognised the work of teachers as the ‘make or break’ element in improving Aboriginal student outcomes and recommended that non-Aboriginal teachers required better preparation in their teacher training programs. (NSW DET & NSW AECG 2004; Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2006-2008). Dr Refshauge challenged the schooling sector to dramatically improve the learning outcomes of Aboriginal students and announced that these outcomes needed to match or be better than those of the broader population by 2012.

In response to this recommendation, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) and the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG), in conjunction with the Australian Catholic University (ACU), designed The Enhanced Teacher Training Program (ETTP). The purpose of the enhanced program was for selected pre-service teachers to enhance their knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal history and cultures, develop effective cross-cultural communication skills and gain experience of appropriate pedagogy and classroom management strategies in schools with high Aboriginal student populations.

The aim of this study was to investigate the experiences of the seven non-Aboriginal preservice teachers undertaking the year-long ETTP at the University of Wollongong. A qualitative methodology was applied to this study to investigate the prospective
teachers’ experiences and the methods utilised to gather the data, including focus groups, semi-structured interviews, email communication and document analysis.

The study revealed that non-Aboriginal preservice teachers’ cross-cultural learning was enriched through the ETTP. The study highlighted that partnerships between universities, the NSW DET and highly-committed individuals were critical to ensuring policy translated effectively into practice. The findings and recommendations of this enquiry will add to the development of future ETTP at the University of Wollongong and contribute to the literature on cross-cultural teacher education for non-Aboriginal preservice teachers.
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this thesis to my Mother, Jennifer who always told her children

… to think about it …
Chapter 1. Introduction

In 2004 the Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education in NSW Government schools, “Yanigurru Muta: Ganggurrinyama yaarii Guurulaw Yirringiin gurray” [Freeing the Spirit: Dreaming an Equal Future] (2004) acknowledged that despite the many education initiatives implemented by state and commonwealth governments these past 20 years, Aboriginal students continue to be the most educationally disadvantaged student group in Australia (NSW DET & NSW AECG 2004, p2).

The Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education (AER 2004) found that while many Aboriginal students in NSW schools achieved outstanding results, Aboriginal students were: less likely to get a preschool education; remained well behind mainstream rates in literacy and numeracy skills development before they left primary school; had less access to secondary school in communities in which they lived; tended to leave school much younger; were about half as likely to progress to year 12 that there non-Aboriginal peers; were far more likely to be doing bridging and basic entry programs in vocational education and training institutions and universities; and obtained fewer and lower-level education qualifications (NSW DET & NSW AECG 2004). The Enhanced Teacher Training Program came about in recognition of and response to these serious failings (NSW DET & NSW AECG 2004).
Background of the Study

The NSW government committed itself to closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student performance, and expressed this in recommendation 15 of the Aboriginal Education Review (AER 2004). This recommendation stated that the DET needed to collaborate with the Teacher Education Council, comprised of all the deans of education at Australian universities, to work towards the inclusion of Aboriginal education as a mandatory component of all undergraduate education programs at all Australian universities.

Recommendation 14 of the AER was more specific and outlined the development of a targeted recruitment strategy for teachers in schools with significant Aboriginal enrolments, including the provision of scholarships to undergraduates willing to undertake enhanced training in Aboriginal education (Long et al. 2008). In response to recommendation 14, the NSW Department of Education and Training, in conjunction with the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) proposed the Enhanced Teacher Training Program (ETTP) which formed part of the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan 2009-2011 (Teach Our Mob, NSW Scholarship to Make a Difference Where it Really Counts Information Package, 2008).

In order to implement the ETTP initiative, the NSW DET’s Human Resource Directorate, Strategic Planning and Workforce Capability Unit, invited representatives from the education faculties of all NSW and Australian Capital Territory (ACT) universities to a briefing on the Department’s response to the AER and the implications for teacher training in Aboriginal education. NSW universities were invited to submit a proposal for the development and delivery of a pilot ETTP that
would better prepare prospective teachers for an initial appointment to schools with significant Aboriginal enrolments (Long et al. 2008).

Four universities submitted proposals and the Australian Catholic University (ACU) was accepted as the successful tenderer. However, at the time, the ACU did not attract enough students to fill all of the twenty positions available in the program from students enrolled in their Bachelor of Education program at its NSW campus. It was therefore decided that the remaining scholarships should be allocated to other interested universities, including Charles Sturt University, the University of Western Sydney and the University of Wollongong (Long et al. 2008). According to the ACU the development of the ETTP across a multi-campus approach led to a greater degree of collaboration between all four participating universities along with a diverse group of prospective teachers (Long et al. 2008).

The ETTP commenced in 2007 with twenty students selected by the DET from four universities. Although each of the universities varied in the delivery of the ETTP, the following scholarship conditions remained consistent for the entire group of prospective teachers enrolled across the four campuses: the DET agreed to pay the preservice teachers’ Higher Education Contribution (HECS) associated with two enhanced training units in Aboriginal education; a training allowance would be paid to assist preservice teachers with cross-cultural community engagement and professional internships in schools with significant Aboriginal student enrolments; and the preservice teachers were guaranteed permanent employment with the DET at the completion of the first year of the ETTP (Teach Our Mob, NSW Scholarship to Make a Difference Where it Really Counts Information Package, 2008).
ETTP at the University of Wollongong

This study was carried out at the University of Wollongong (UOW) from February 2008 to January 2009. The University of Wollongong is situated in Dharawal Country, just an hour’s drive south of Sydney. It is a university of international standing with a good record of achievement in teaching and research. The ETTP at UOW was situated within a one-year add-on to the three-year Bachelor of Primary Teaching degree. This add-on year resulted in students being qualified for the Bachelor of Education (Primary). As such, those enrolled within the add-on year were already graduate teachers.

In late 2007, seven participants at UOW were successful in being awarded the ETTP scholarship by the NSW DET and were expected to commence the program in February 2008 through the Faculty of Education at the UOW and as part of the add-on year of their Bachelor of Education degree (their fourth year of tertiary study). This particular student cohort was the last to undertake the three year Bachelor of Teaching Degree offered at the University of Wollongong before it changed over to a four year program. Therefore when the participants entered the ETTP they technically were graduate teachers.

While the ACU ETTP basic training template was adopted, UOW modified the program to suit the needs of its student cohort, internship requirements, Aboriginal mentor support, community engagement activities and coursework components. The students, through engagement with the program, were expected to gain:
1. knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal history and culture;
2. a holistic understanding of Aboriginal education and of the strategies required for improving Aboriginal student outcomes;
3. effective cross-cultural communication skills and awareness; and
4. Preservice experience of appropriate pedagogy and classroom management strategies.

(Teach Our Mob, NSW Scholarship to Make a Difference Where it Really Counts Information Package, 2008).

In order to administer the ETTP at UOW a coordinator was appointed to oversee the program and ensure its success.

**Cross-cultural Mentoring**

An integral feature of the UOW ETTP was the cross-cultural mentoring component. The role of the three selected mentors was to provide participants with socio-cultural insight and guidance, with an emphasis on providing local knowledge, and to introduce and facilitate interactions within the Illawarra Aboriginal community, its elders and organisations. The structure of the UOW ETTP mentor program consisted of weekly meetings at the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre, UOW during session one of the ETTP, along with a combination of face-to-face and on-line support throughout the second session.

**Cross-cultural Immersion**
It was expected that the preservice teachers would immerse themselves within Aboriginal community networks through building meaningful relationships with individuals and become aware of the role of key Aboriginal organisations within the Illawarra. It was hoped that through the cross-cultural immersion experience participants would further develop knowledge of local Aboriginal history and gain insight into modern-day life and values of local Aboriginal families.

**The Internship**

The ETTP offered preservice teachers a six-week internship at a school with significant Aboriginal student enrolments towards the end of their second semester. The UOW ETTP required the preservice teachers to undertake their internship in a rural or remote NSW school to further develop their professional learning and exposure to Aboriginal students, their families and communities and to gain experience and preparation for teaching within unfamiliar geographical locations.

**Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this research was to explore, from a non-Aboriginal teacher’s point of view, their experiences and insights while undertaking the year-long ETTP scholarship. This is a significant contribution to the area of research in that it aims to increase the non-Aboriginal teacher’s awareness of aboriginal education through sensitive and informed cross-cultural learning experiences. Further, it provided opportunity for teacher educators to work within the ETTP program to enable them to respond and facilitate best practice for future enhanced teacher education programs.
The research questions posed for this study included:

**Question 1**

What knowledge, values and attitudes do non-Aboriginal preservice teachers bring to the ETTP?

**Question 2**

What learning experiences do non-Aboriginal preservice teachers identify as most significant within their participation in the ETTP?

**Question 3**

What challenges do non-Aboriginal preservice teachers identify within their participation in the ETTP?

**Significance of the Study**

The NSW Government Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs (2011) reported that New South Wales had the largest Aboriginal population in Australia, with about 29.5 per cent of the total population. Similar to other states and territories the Aboriginal population was young, with 35.2 per cent estimated to be under the age of 15 years. It was estimated that the Aboriginal population of NSW would grow by 35 per cent between 2006 and 2021, this trend meaning that there would be many more Aboriginal children needing education (NSW Government Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs 2011).
Research consistently reported that non-Aboriginal preservice teachers came into teacher education programs with limited cross-cultural experiences, mixed feelings, and often misunderstandings in relation to Aboriginal people and students (Causey, Thomas & Armento, 2000; Hickling-Hudson 2004; Sleeter 2001). As teachers graduate their views of Aboriginality remains limited, with The NSW Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education (2004) reporting that some teachers were anything but welcoming towards Aboriginal students:

…”Aboriginality is more often ridiculed, denied, discounted or deemed suspect and where there is a presence of Aboriginal students and their families they are begrudgingly tolerated” (NSW DET & NSW AECG 2004, p195).

In order to address such beliefs and attitudes amongst the preservice teacher education cohort, the NSW DET and NSW AECG and others recommended that new Aboriginal teacher education models were required, to ensure preservice teachers learnt effective cross-cultural knowledge and skills, including the ability to reflect on their own cultural influences and culturally informed understandings, in order to understand the socio-culturally constituted behaviour of their students (Byrnes & Kiger 2005; Allard & Santoro 2004, 2006; NSW DET 2004; Hatton 1996, 1998; Foley 2007; Sarra 2003; Long et al. 2008; Mellor & Corrigan 2004; Gray & Beresford 2008).

**Methodology**

A qualitative research methodology was selected as the most appropriate for meeting the needs of this study. Data were collected via focus groups, semi-structured
interviews, email communication, participant observation and document analysis to garner the participant’s significant insights during the 2008 UOW ETTP, each of these methods discussed in detail throughout the methods chapter. Phases of data analysis, as described by Marshall and Rossman (2006), were employed by the researcher to include organising the data, immersion in the data, generating categories and themes, coding the data, offering interpretations, searching for alternative understandings and writing up the findings and recommendations.

The following acronyms will be referred to within this thesis:

**Acronyms**

- **AECG**: Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc.
- **AEO**: Aboriginal Education Officer
- **AEP**: Aboriginal Education Policy
- **AER**: Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education
- **AETP**: Aboriginal Education and Training Policy
- **ACU**: Australian Catholic University
- **AHRD**: Aboriginal Human Resource Development Plan
- **BOS**: Board of Studies
- **COAG**: Council of Australian Governments
- **ETTP**: Enhanced Teacher Training Program
- **HREOC**: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
- **MCEETYA**: Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
- **NAEC**: National Aboriginal Education Committee
**Definitions of Terms**

The following terms are referred to within the thesis as they are relevant to the scope and context of the research:

**Aboriginal People** – is a collective name for the first Australians and their descendents. An Aboriginal person is a member of the Aboriginal race of Australia, identifies as an Aboriginal person, and is accepted by the Aboriginal community as Aboriginal.

**Indigenous** – is a term used interchangeably with Aboriginal throughout the thesis.

**Cross-cultural** - refers to successful teaching of students from cultures other than one’s own, entailing mastering complexities, awareness and sensitivities, various bodies of knowledge and a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching (Diller & Moule 2005, p5).

**NSW AECG** - NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc., a community-based Aboriginal organisation. Its purpose is to ensure social justice for Aboriginal people through education and training. The role and mandate of the AECG is to provide community based direction for Aboriginal education and training.
Community - refers to a number of important elements including country, family ties and shared experience, all of which are interrelated, and Aboriginal people may belong to more than one community.

Elders – are custodians of knowledge who have been chosen and accepted by their own community and are highly respected.

Consultation –is an ongoing process of working at and towards meaningful two-way relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

**Thesis Overview**

Chapter 1 introduces the NSW DET initiative of the ETTP and outlines the key components significant to the UOW ETTP. The purpose and significance of the study are outlined along with the methodology. Acronyms and definitions of key terms used throughout this thesis are also explained.

Chapter 2 critically examines Aboriginal education policies leading to the NSW DET initiative of the ETTP and reviews relevant literature, theories and practices underpinning cross-cultural teacher education programs.

Chapter 3 outlines the qualitative methods selected to investigate the significant insights of the seven non-Aboriginal teachers undertaking the UOW ETTP. This chapter provides a description of the data collection methods and outlines a rationale supporting the selection and appropriateness of each for this study.
Chapters 4, 5 and 6 address the three research questions posed for this study and prominently includes the voices of the participants by incorporating their insights and experiences of the UOW ETTP. Key themes are identified, along with a discussion of the major findings in relation to the supporting literature.

Chapter 7 draws key conclusions and provides recommendations for further advancement and conceptualisation of the model of Enhanced Teacher Training (Aboriginal Education) based on the findings of this study at The Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong. The researcher discusses the transformative nature of the study and the perceived limitations.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter provides a framework for the research undertaken in this study. The first part of the literature review critically examines historical and contemporary policies and practices implemented by western education systems aimed at educating Aboriginal children, and offers a broader context and insight into the rationale of the Enhanced Teacher Training Program (ETTP) for selected non-Aboriginal prospective teachers. The review then critically examines cross-cultural teacher education theory and practice, and argues that research illuminating the perspectives of non-Aboriginal teachers’ cross-cultural learning experiences in an intensive Aboriginal education training program will add to the scholarly literature in the field and contribute to the longer-term benefits of improving Aboriginal student learning outcomes.

Colonialism

Colonial educational policies were influenced by the perceptions of early European explorers and the theories and grand narratives of the day. For example, the first recorded European sighting of Australia in 1606 by William Jansz, the Dutch captain of "Duyfken" depicted the natives as "... savage, cruel, black barbarians who slew some of our sailors" (Evans 2007, p16). Muecke and Shoemaker (2001) noted William Dampier, the first Englishman to anchor along the Western Australia coastline with the view of colonial expansion, described his first contact with Aboriginal Australians as the most ‘Miserablest People in the World’, thus beginning
a trend to place Australian Aboriginal peoples on the lowest rung of the scale of humanity (p13).

One century later, in 1788 the first English governor of New South Wales, Arthur Phillip was instructed to live in amity and kindness with the ‘savages’. In order to fulfil his instructions, Phillip ordered the capture of Wangal/Darug men, Bennelong local Aboriginal population had died (DEC’S 2009). Through Bennelong, Phillip acquired knowledge of the local customs and languages. Despite Phillip’s attempts at befriending the local Aborigines, colonial forces prevailed, and were dictated by ethnocentric views of culture, the development of capitalism and economic productivity (Broome 2009).

The Eora and Gadigal peoples of the outer Sydney region were drawn into frontier settlements, due to being dislocated from their homelands, and consequent poverty. Governor Macquarie in 1816 invited the natives to "relinquish their wandering, idle and predatory habits of life, and to become industrious and useful members of a community where they will find protection and encouragement" (Broome 2009 p. ). Not surprisingly, the local custodians did not want to give up their connection to country and their social, cultural, spiritual and political way of life and enthusiastically embrace the ways of the newcomers, who in turn found their reluctance only further proof of the Aboriginal people’s inferiority (Memmi, 1967).

By the latter half of the 19th Century Charles Darwin’s theories on evolution and survival of the fittest were being distorted to justify the approach taken by settlers to expand colonialism. Scientists and anthropologists ranked races according to the level
at which their society was perceived to be at, and compared them to, the ideal of western society. Aboriginal peoples from around the world were declared inferior savages and ranked as sub-human. At the time a majority of early settlers believed that their race was superior to the Aboriginal race. Many believed that because they were the fittest and most superior race, by the process of natural selection the more ‘primitive’ Aboriginal race was destined for extinction (Hollingsworth 1998; McGregor 1997; Rigney 2002).

Rowley (1970) argues that Aboriginal people were under oppressive and punitive colonial instruction due to their inferior status and were viewed as less intellectually capable. Therefore treating the Aborigines as belonging to a lower order than themselves and dispossessing Aboriginal people of their land and language, was seen as the natural order of colonial society (Muecke & Shoemaker 2001; Reynolds 2005; Foley 2007). Partington (1998) wrote, “Indigenous society demanded much of its members in the way of learning but because there was an absence of written texts and an emphasis on oral culture there was little respect among the Europeans for the educational processes employed in these societies” (p28). Under colonial rule, every facet of Aboriginal society, from passing on of knowledge through to law, economy and social structures was oppressed.

The loss of passing on oral knowledge within Aboriginal kinship groups meant that ceremonial, hunting and gathering activities were difficult to carry out and recover. Even the introduction of a stone axe which was only for use by powerful older Aboriginal men destabilized the internal power dynamics of the community structures by allowing access to younger men and even women (Muecke & Shoemaker 2001,
Rum was used as currency by soldiers and convicts, drawing some Aboriginal people into an alcoholic culture. Aborigines were extremely vulnerable to the destructive effects of alcohol with some trying to avoid it. However resistance to colonial rule was fierce, with Aborigines retaliating by killing settlers’ stock and using guerrilla warfare strategies, along with their knowledge of the bush, to ambush and resist colonial expansion.

It became apparent that Aborigines were not going to die out simply as proposed by Social Darwinism, therefore the colonial government set out to protect Aboriginal people from the worst of settler behaviour (Rowley 1970). By the early 1800s the government administrators appointed a protector of Aborigines to investigate the ‘Aboriginal problem’ and make recommendations (Hollingsworth, 1998; Rowley 1970; Gale & Brookman 1975). By 1883 the Aboriginal Protection Board was established in NSW and the Protector of Aborigines had the power to create reserves and force Aboriginal people to live on them. The Protection Board also instructed the Governor of the day to promote measures that would lead to the conversion of Aborigines to Christianity and their advancement to civilisation (Fletcher, 1989; Goodall, 1996; Beresford & Partington, 2003; Kidd 1997).

**Protection**

The pressure to provide schooling for Aboriginal children came from protection policies. Hollingsworth (1998) notes that the efforts to protect the Aborigines were usually half-hearted, compromised and largely ineffectual and it was within the education system that can most clearly be seen the result of the protection policies’ racist ideologies and beliefs. Segregation was a key focus of the Aboriginal Protection
Policy, so that by the end of the 1880s several reserves had been established in NSW and were set up far enough away from towns so that contact with Europeans was limited. Reserves or missions were often located near rubbish dumps, cemeteries, and sanitary-disposal sites on the fringes of towns. Furthermore protection policy was stringent, placing restrictions on a person’s ability to move in and out of the reserves (Hollingsworth, 1998)

Gale and Brookman (1975) state that an Aboriginal person was not allowed in towns after a certain time of day and could not be employed without permission from the protector. Further, missions and reserves lacked clean running water, adequate housing, and nutritional food, seriously stunting Aboriginal children’s physical and social development. The third world living conditions meant Aboriginal children were vulnerable to state welfare authorities, and could be made wards of the state at the hands of a government official (Beresford & Partington, 2003; Goodall 1996).

In keeping with the times, missionaries rather than the state took on the responsibility of educating Aboriginal children. Partington (1998) argues missionaries operated from the perspective that “the function of education was to civilise the natives: to teach them Christianity and the Western way of life and to rescue them from their heathen ways” (p33). In 1814 the establishment of the first Native Institution located in Parramatta aimed to assimilate Aboriginal children into western values, beliefs and Christianity (Foley 2007; Parbury 2005).

Beresford and Partington (2003) highlighted that paternalistic government authorities assumed that Aborigines would want to attain all the advantages of the western way
of life. However throughout this same period Aboriginal children were denied the right to a rigorous education and were often debarred from the local state school because of the disgraceful and unsavoury homes from which they came. The second rate education offered to indigenous people was delivered through the establishment of schools aimed at civilising and Christianising Aboriginal children, this was seen as a world-wide phenomenon and innovative for the times. In Canada, the Federal Government entered into partnerships with major churches to provide education to aboriginal students. Generally, these were residential schools with the major goal of assimilating aboriginal students into western culture. (Australia, DEST 2006).

Fletcher's (1989) research found that the education provisions supplied by unqualified teaching staff meant that the subjects taught, including spelling, writing, reading and arithmetic, were limited to third or fourth grade. The curriculum had an emphasis on Christianity with the expectation that Aboriginal children would learn English in order to read the Bible. Practical and trade skills were also limited due to the fact that Aboriginal children were regraded as incapable of learning such skills (Fletcher 1989). Partington (1998) argues that while some Aboriginal children became literate, many failed to make progress in such schools, reinforcing western beliefs that Aboriginal children were lazy and lacking in intelligence (p34).

Both in Australia and in Canada these schools lasted until the 1960s and left a legacy of profound mistrust among many aboriginal people and a culture of mistrust became embedded with successive generations of aboriginal parents. Chicka Dixon, an
Aboriginal man described his experiences in a school administered by the NSW Aborigines Protection Board in the following excerpt:

… “as far as schooling was concerned, in my estimation, it was non existent. In those days they advertised for a manager. At that time the shit carter in Bega applied for the job. Automatically his wife became the school teacher. I recall that she was illiterate, always had a headache ... fortunately or unfortunately ... I spent most of my teens in jail. No matter what jail you mention I’ve been in it. I was lucky enough to gain some education in them. It says something about Australian society when a Blackman has got to go to jail to get a formal education. When I left that stinken mission I couldn’t write my name” (Tatz & McConnochie 1975, p32, cited in Hollingsworth 1998, p114).

As a consequence Aboriginal parents limited their own children’s participation in schooling, viewing schools and teachers as markers of colonial oppression (Fletcher 1989). Research from What Work Indigenous Education; International Perspectives argues that… “across the world people concerned with the education of indigenous peoples are grappling with the same fundamental issues and against similar backgrounds of dispossession and poverty “(p 19).

According to Fletcher (1989), by the mid 1850s in NSW little was being done in terms of educating Aboriginal children. However, in 1880 the Public Instruction Act was introduced stating that all children, regardless of race or creed, were legally required to attend school if they lived within a two-mile radius of a school (p57). The NSW Government education system response was to allow Aboriginal children to
attend school if they were ‘clean, clad and courteous’, the underlying value judgement inherent in the policy reinforced deficit views of Aboriginal children and their families (Beresford & Partington 2003).

Fletcher (1989) found that anti-Aboriginal lobby groups rigorously opposed the 1884 NSW Education Department’s Clean Clad and Courteous Policy, and by 1902 the Exclusion on Demand Policy was enforced. This policy stated that Aboriginal children could not attend school if an objection was received from just one non-Aboriginal parent, and were deemed unclean (p8). Certain individuals and groups within settler society, who held racially-prejudiced attitudes, ensured Aboriginal children were denied adequate levels of education based on the justification of such policies. Foley (2007) notes that the Exclusion on Demand Policy was not removed from the New South Wales Teacher’s Handbook until 1972, highlighting the alarming history of racial discrimination in this country (p108).

Hollingsworth (1998) claims that the protection policies, like most legislation designed to assist or protect a marginalised or disadvantaged group, served more to institutionalise their oppression rather than to encourage their liberation (p113). Beresford & Partington (2003) found that the limited curriculum offered resulted in generations of unskilled and uneducated Aboriginal people (p50). In 2011 this was most evident across all social indicators where Aboriginal Australians are positioned at the negative spectrum of education, employment, health, housing, and criminal justice outcomes and indicators (Australia, Parliament 2011, Overcoming Disadvantage Report).
**Assimilation**

From 1890 to 1911 all Australian states passed Acts providing for Aboriginal welfare, as there was growing concern about the visible effects of disease, malnutrition, alcoholism and violence amongst Aboriginal people and their communities. Commonwealth and State government authorities began strategic discussions on how governments could merge the growing number of mixed-race Aboriginal children into the wider society, and by the mid-1930s the official policy of assimilation was devised (Hollingsworth 1998; Foley 2007; Broome 2010). According to Fletcher (1989) the solution put forward by commonwealth and state government authorities was to absorb Aboriginal children into colonial society. This offer of assimilation was widely believed to be humane and progressive, and it was expected that Aboriginal people would want to live by western standards.

One strategy of the assimilation policy included the removal of mixed-race Aboriginal children from their families and cultural influence. Beresford and Partington (2003) noted:

... “Tens of thousands of children were removed by authorities up until the 1970s because parents were judged to have failed to bring up their children according to white standards” (p53).

Once removed, Aboriginal children were institutionalised, mostly discouraged from contacting their families, and were taught that Aboriginality was disgraceful, with many children being told that their families had rejected them, were unable to care for them or were dead. Generally these children were moved into government or church-

Aboriginal children removed under the policy of assimilation would become known as the stolen generations. The stolen generations received an apology from the former Labor Prime Minister, Mr Kevin Rudd on 13th February 2008. The Prime Minister acknowledged the profound wrong done to Aboriginal children, families and communities on the basis of race, through oppressive and paternalistic government policy and legislation

... “We apologise for the laws and policies of successive parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians” (News 2008).

The ‘Bringing Them Home’ report by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC, 1997) found that the assimilation policy had adverse effects on the stolen generation members’ children, both as individuals and as future parents. As adults, stolen generation members lacked the skills and knowledge that ultimately would enable their children to take advantage of learning opportunities, with many Aboriginal parents having great difficulty in sending their children to school (Australia, Parliament 1999, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report 1999).

During the period of the assimilation polices, 1940s-1960s, schools once again failed in their efforts to westernise Aboriginal Australia, and Aboriginal people continued to lobby for control of their own affairs. By 1967, Aboriginal political activists had
achieved for Aboriginal people the right to vote and be counted on the census, and by 1969 the Policy of Assimilation was abandoned and replaced in 1972 with the Policy of Self Determination.

**Self Determination**

The self determination movement established the first Ministry for Aboriginal Affairs, and the provision of money for Aboriginal advancement projects were now being made available by government (Attwood & Marcus, 1999). Self determination for Aboriginal people meant that local communities had more agency and power to control their own affairs and governments implemented affirmative action strategies in order to ensure Aboriginal people were employed in governments and schools to determine their futures (Attwood & Marcus 1999).

After the 1967 referendum the Commonwealth government were now able to make laws in regards to the education and welfare of Aboriginal Australians and have a greater role in allocating funds and developing policies in relation the Aboriginal Education (DEST 2001;8). A National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC) was established to provide advice to the Commonwealth Minister for Education, and by the late 1970s achieving equity for Aboriginal students in the education system became a national priority (Beresford 2003). Meanwhile, state Aboriginal education consultative committees were established in Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales (Tripcony 2002).

Tripcony (2002) research highlights that between 1976 and 1985, the NAEC held annual conferences providing a forum for people to plan directions for Aboriginal
education programs (p19). Tripcony (2002) proposed throughout this time that Aboriginal education had been recognised as a ‘priority teaching and learning area for teacher education programs’, thus reinforcing a longstanding need for preservice teachers to formally obtain knowledge, skills and understanding pertaining to Aboriginal cultures and students (p4). In 1982 New South Wales became the first state to develop a comprehensive Aboriginal Education Policy (AEP) in consultation with the NSW AECG (Australian Council for Educational Research 2005).

The ACER (2005) reported that the AEP was not mandated until 1987, and that its focus included the participation of Aboriginal students and communities in education, enhancing Aboriginal students’ self-esteem and cultural identity, and teaching all students about Aboriginal societies, past and present. Despite the fact that the formation of the AEP was a significant step forward in the history of Aboriginal education, it did not realize its intended goal, which was to achieve educational equity between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Furthermore, ACER (2005) research confirmed that teachers regarded the AEP as irrelevant in schools with small or no Aboriginal student enrolments.

Tripcony’s (2002) research highlighted that with support and encouragement from a range of NSW Departmental staff the 1982 AEP was reviewed, with Aboriginal parents and community members significantly contributing to the landmark 1996 Aboriginal Education Policy, the central focus areas of this policy included:

- Aboriginal students’ curriculum, teaching and assessment programs will be challenging and culturally appropriate;
- Schools will have a supportive learning environment;
• Aboriginal communities and the department of education will become partners in the whole education process; and

• All staff, all students and all schools will have knowledge and understanding of and respect for Aboriginal Australia.

(Tripcony 2002, p7).

Craven (1999) suggests that the major difference between the 1982 Australian Educational Policy (AEP) and the 1996 AEP was that Aboriginal people finally gained a more inclusive role in the teaching and balanced representation of their histories, societies and cultures. The 1996 AEP aimed to promote educational achievement by Aboriginal students in the context of educating all students and all staff about Aboriginal Australia’s cultures and history. This policy provided a comprehensive set of outcomes, as well as performance strategies to guide all Department of School Education staff, schools, students and their communities in achieving the overall goals for Aboriginal education.

To ensure successful implementation of this policy, schools were required to report annually on the progress made towards achieving the three focus areas. The 1996 AEP was supplemented with other documents and programs such as the Aboriginal Education Training and Development Resource, which provided in-service training and development for teachers on Aboriginal history, teaching Aboriginal students, and working with Aboriginal communities (NSW DET, 1996).

ACER (2005) and Foley (2007) concluded that the 1996 AEP had a significant impact on the teaching of Aboriginal studies and perspectives across the NSW Key Learning Areas and specifically within Human Society and its Environment (HSIE). However when schools and state office directorates were required to report progress in
implementing the 1996 AEP, it was found that the policy had not achieved sufficient educational outcomes for Aboriginal students (Brennan 1998). As a direct result of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody the Labor government enacted the Policy of Reconciliation (Australia, Parliament 1997, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Report 1997).

**Reconciliation**

The Reconciliation Policy was formally established and the Australian Council on Reconciliation had the task of forging innovative partnership to achieve social, educational and economic equity for Indigenous Australians (Burridge 2009). Through improving relationship between Aboriginal Australians and the wider public through building understandings, respect and recognition would facilitate more equitable social outcomes for Aboriginal Australians. Acknowledging the past, while building a framework for a shared future, underpinned the ideology of reconciliation.

The Reconciliation Policy focused on schools across Australia, especially in relation to how Aboriginal people were represented throughout the curricula. For example an emerging genre of children’s literature not only recounted Aboriginal people’s life experiences on missions and reserves but also provided students with a broader realistic account and portrayal of contemporary Aboriginal cultures (The NSW Whole School Anti-Racism Project 1995).

The NSW Anti-Racism Project (1995) reported that Aboriginal authors such as Queensland author Boori Monti Pryor produced texts such as My Girragungi (1998), The Binna Binna Man (1999), Fly Trap (2002) and Nyjunul the Sun (2002) that
explored contemporary diversity and vibrancy of contemporary Aboriginal cultures. Through the curriculum all teachers were encouraged to foster a critical dialogue and to challenge a range of stereotypes and attempt to address the nature of dispossession, colonialism and other contemporary issues. Another popular text used by some teachers at the time in the classrooms was The Rabbits (1998) from non-Indigenous author John Marsden. This story involved the history of contact since 1788, and focused on the violence of dispossession, the environmental impact of European settlement and the destruction of Aboriginal family life (The NSW Whole School Anti-Racism Project 1995).

According to Burbridge (2009) the reconciliation policy came to mean different things to different people and raised complex discussion and debate between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, on how people interpret, accept, and acknowledge Australia’s history since colonisation. While the Federal Government’s reconciliation process reached its climax on May 26th 2000 when more than 250,000 people marched across the Sydney Harbour Bridge in support of greater understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians (Reconciliation Australia 2000). The NSW Whole School Anti-Racism Project 1995) found that despite the effort of curriculum improvement and more positive and balanced representations of Aboriginality it was still reported that many Aboriginal students were subject to overt racism in the schools they attended and the Senate Legal and Constitutional Reference Committee found that the reconciliation process was slow in dealing with Indigenous disadvantage, and that there was an ongoing reluctance to accept the truth about Australia’s history of discriminatory policies and practices (Gray & Beresford, 2008).
Following the reconciliation process the NSW Government introduced its Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003-2012, which included The Two Ways Together Policy, a 10-year plan that incorporates a forty-million dollar package, under which the Department of Aboriginal Affairs is working across government agencies to ensure that the living standards of Aboriginal people improve (NSW Parliament 2012, *Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003-2012*).

**The Two Ways Together**

The Two Ways Together – Partnership: A new way of doing business with Aboriginal people, the 2003-2012 Aboriginal Affairs Plan and programs are spread across NSW Government departments and implemented in communities with high Aboriginal populations including those at Mt Druitt, Ballina, Dubbo and Walgett.

The Two Ways Together policy targets five areas for action including: reducing incarceration and family violence; improving the literacy and numeracy rates of Aboriginal students in Years 3 and 5 and improving school retention rates; reducing otitis media infection; increasing Aboriginal employment; and improving living conditions (NSW Parliament 2012, *Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003-2012*). For example, the Kids Excel and Youth Excel programs provided continuous support for Aboriginal school students, parents, principals and teachers, including practical help such as meals and transport. Additionally, the programs link students to other services that support their attendance and achievement at school (NSW Parliament 2012, *Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003-2012*).
In October 2003, under the Two Ways Together Policy, the NSW Government called for a review of the effectiveness of the 1996 Aboriginal Education Policy for Aboriginal students in New South Wales (NSW, Parliament 2004, *Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education 2004*). The AER (2004) found that in NSW primary schools Aboriginal students’ literacy and numeracy results in Years 3 and 5 were approximately 19 months behind their non-Aboriginal peers and by the time Aboriginal children reached high school their literacy and numeracy results were showing that they were on average 58-60 months behind non-Aboriginal students, and that the gaps were not closing nearly as rapidly as contemplated or required by governments (p.23).

Four years later the 2008 National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy review revealed that Aboriginal student education outcomes tended to widen on most measures, and increased with the age of the student (Australia, Parliament 2008, *National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy Report 2008*). The Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs was established in August 2011 to advise the NSW Government on actions to re-focus efforts to close the gap and increase opportunities for Aboriginal people in NSW. In December 2011 the NSW Ministerial taskforce on Aboriginal affairs reported that there had been a degree of progress in improving retention and achievement levels of Aboriginal students, however it acknowledged that this progress had been slow and inconsistent across all areas of the education system (NSW, Parliament 2011, *Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs Report 2011*).
Despite the NSW government promise to meet performance targets under the Two Ways Together Policy (2003-2012), the audit office reported on the policy’s five highest priority areas and found that: incarceration rates had worsened significantly in NSW; literacy and numeracy rates remained poor; retention rates had improved slightly; hospitalisation for conducive hearing loss had reduced slightly; the Aboriginal unemployment rate had grown and more Aboriginal students were enrolling in management and governance courses at TAFE; and living conditions (such as environmental health) had shown little improvement and even some deterioration. The audit noted that the forty-million-dollar package of funded initiatives and allocated funds had been significantly underspent (Johnstone 2011). As a consequence, the current federal government and state government policy initiative is Close the Gap (2011), aimed at bridging the divide between black and white Australia.

**Close the Gap**

While the Australian preservice teacher population becomes more homogenous, the Aboriginal school student population grows more socially, culturally and geographically diverse. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006), in the period 1991-2006 the Aboriginal population grew at more than twice the rate of the total Australian population. The current estimates places the number of Indigenous Australians at 517,000, with this number projected to increase to 721,000 by 2021.

Australia’s Indigenous population is relatively young, with half of all Indigenous Australians being under the age of 21, in contrast to half of all non-Indigenous Australians being aged 37 or younger. Children aged less than 15 years comprised 38 percent of the Indigenous population, compared with 19 per cent in the non-
Indigenous population. Almost one-third of the Indigenous population live in major cities, 43 per cent of Indigenous Australians live in regional areas and some 25 per cent in remote Australia. In contrast, 69 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians live in major cities and less than 2 per cent in remote and very remote Australia, while over half of Indigenous people live in either New South Wales or Queensland (Australia, Parliament 2011, *Closing the Gap Prime Minister’s Report 2011, pp10-11*).

Gray and Beresford (2008) note that while there is evidence of a growing middle class among urban Aboriginal people, socio-economic disadvantage continues largely to define the major percentage of the population. Socio-economic factors include areas of education, employment, income, housing, racism and incarceration. Importantly, research consistently recognises that enhancing Aboriginal children’s educational outcomes is fundamental to ‘breaking the cycles’ of substantial socio-economic disadvantage across all areas. Gray and Beresford (2008) report that, by comparison to Indigenous people in the USA, Canada and New Zealand, Australia’s Indigenous population has the worst overall rates of socio-economic disadvantage.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011) found that life expectancy in the Indigenous population is 17.2 years less than the total Australian population. The proportion of Indigenous people living in homes that someone in their household owned or was purchasing was 27 per cent compared to 74 per cent for non-Indigenous people. Suicide rates are much higher for Indigenous people, and the average gross income per week for Aboriginal households was $460.00, whereas for non-Aboriginal households it was $740.00. This disparity is further intensified by the fact that Aboriginal households are generally larger than non-Aboriginal households, and
overcrowding has been associated with poorer physical and mental health and increased rates of smoking, drinking and exposure to violence. In 2008, 25% of Aboriginal Australians were living in overcrowded houses compared to only 4% of non-Aboriginal Australians.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011) reports that overcrowding is partly due to a shortage of housing, but is also influenced by the reality that Aboriginal families include members of the extended family, a fact which housing models have not accounted for. In addition to an overall shortage of housing and an overwhelming amount of substandard housing, inadequate housing has been shown to contribute to the over-representation of Aboriginal youths in custody. Children with a parental history of imprisonment and children who have been removed from their families face a greater risk of entering the juvenile justice system. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2011) research revealed that in New South Wales over 20% of Aboriginal children had experienced parental incarceration compared to only 4.3% of all children, and that 77% of Indigenous carers of children aged 0-14 years had not completed Year 12, while 29% of carers had completed Year 9 or below.

The Australian government, together with the states and territories, through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has set specific and ambitious targets to end Indigenous disadvantage. The Close the Gap Targets include:

- to close the life expectancy gap within a generation;
- to halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade;
• to ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities within five years;
• to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for children within a decade;
• to halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent by 2020; and
• to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

These targets are underpinned by seven building blocks and priority areas in which action is required:

• Early Childhood
• Schooling
• Healthy Homes
• Safe Communities
• Health
• Economic Participation
• Governance and Leadership

These building blocks are interconnected, and improvements in one area will affect outcomes in other areas; the federal government recommends that all governments at all levels must take action to improve education levels of Aboriginal people. The NSW Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy 2009-2012 and the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Plan 2010-2014 prioritise the following targets:
• The participation of Aboriginal children in before-school and early-childhood learning programs;
• Aboriginal student school engagement, school attendance, retention and completion rates;
• Aboriginal student literacy and numeracy outcomes;
• Transition to further education and training for Aboriginal people; and
• Aboriginal young people’s opportunities to secure meaningful and economically rewarding employment.

An accountability framework is included with agreed outcomes, targets and performance indicators built into the action plan. Annual reporting against the actions and accountability framework, along with ongoing evaluation built into the action plan, will enable governments, Aboriginal communities, schools and others to assess progress. It is estimated that closing the gap in education would result in a saving of $262 million dollars (Johnstone 2011). A recent Australian Government Close the Gap report released statistics in 2011 that show the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act to seize land, assets and authority has destroyed the trust in government of many communities, and many well-run programs and the majority of the $1.5 billion funding has been spent on government bureaucrats and contractors across a range of sectors (Australia, Parliament 2011 Close the Gap Report 2011). In his response to the Standing Committee on Social Issues: Inquiry into issues related to Redfern/Waterloo, NSW Government, Dr Colin Gellatly (2004) reiterates that there is no quick fix to the long-term issues being faced … the problems are entrenched, complex and multifaceted. Whilst many well-intentioned people have put forward solutions … experience has shown that ad hoc and poorly-designed solutions only

**Implementing Socially Just Public Education Policy**

Colonialism is tied to the belief that it offers Aboriginal people better prospects for economic and social mobility and an improved quality of life. The principal of socially just educational policies were reflected in numerous national and state-wide policy agendas. Craven et al. (2005) argue that the implications of socially-just policy initiatives rest on institutions, educationalists and teacher educators to integrate the principles of such policies into their schools, classrooms and education settings through their curriculum and pedagogical choices.

The National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (2002), in agreement with the state and federal ministers for education, states that every child leaving primary school should be numerate and able to read write and spell at an appropriate level (Australia, Parliament Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations 2002).

The National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century the ‘Adelaide Declaration’, releases in 1999 reflects the agreement of all Australian governments, that schooling should be socially just and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students should have equitable access and opportunities in schooling, to match those of other students, as reflected in Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs Report (MCEETYA 2001, p28).
The New South Wales Department of Education and Training Policy guidelines state that it is:

“... committed to increasing knowledge and understanding of the histories, cultures and experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia and is committed to improving the educational outcomes and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students so that they excel and achieve in every aspect of their education and training”

In Queensland the government consistently refers its departmental staff to recognise and accommodate the diversity of the student population, to be inclusive in its approach and proactively foster social harmony with state education policies reiterating:

“… schools must work directly with diversity and complexity to make sure all students have a successful experience of school ... and that schools must be flexible enough to accommodate the individual learning needs of different students, and the curriculum must be sufficiently forward-looking to anticipate their future life pathways and needs” (Queensland, Parliament State Education 2010 Report, p9)

Despite decades of socially-just Aboriginal education policy, in his National Report, the former Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, Brendan Nelson (2002) admitted “… accelerating Indigenous educational outcomes is proving elusive”
and noted, “overall, we are slowly moving forward but at a pace that means that educational equality is some way off for Indigenous Australians …” (Australia, Parliament Indigenous Education and Training Report 2002 piii).

Unfortunately, educationalists may either deny the role that policy directives play in their classrooms or they are unaware of its importance. O’Shane and Bickford (1991) note that many non-Aboriginal teachers fail to engage with the spirit of such policy requirements and consign aspects of Aboriginal education to Aboriginal education professionals to fulfil, which leads to the over-taxing of Aboriginal people within a system that is already understaffed and poorly resourced (p63). In 2012 these issues are consistently reported in the literature as ongoing barriers for Aboriginal students learning outcomes.

Sarra (2009) argues governments can produce as many policies as they like, but if a policy is not implemented effectively it is wasted; policies are only as good as those who implement them and putting money behind policy, does not automatically ensure the success of the policy. Sarra adds that if policy is blocked or ignored at the level of practice, the intent of policy becomes illusory and deteriorates into rhetoric. McConaghy (2000) highlights that just because something is enshrined into policy, it does not necessarily mean that it is implemented or acted upon, and that often there is a shadow between the rhetoric and the reality of the situation.

Howard (2010) suggests schools, researchers, policy makers and educationalists need to move away from the dichotomy of ‘black and white’ in its analysis of closing the achievement gap, as consciously and subconsciously, such terminology creates the
notion that “white” performance and achievement are positioned as the desired norm and standards against which all groups are measured. Furthermore, Howard argues such rhetoric excludes the achievements level, educational history, experiences and challenges of non-white students.

**Cultural Discontinuity**

International research from the United States consistently reports that low school performance of children of colour, including African American students is significantly linked to a lack of socio-cultural congruence between the cultures of student families and communities and the cultural norms embedded into the expectations, policies, procedures and practices of schools and teachers (Howard 2010; Cummins 1986; Delpit 1995). It seems reasonable to suggest that these same trends are evident in the Australian context with Aboriginal people.

The lack of socio-cultural congruence is compounded further, as research predicted that by 2010, 95% of Australian K-12 classroom teachers would be Anglo-Australian, middle-class females with limited cross-cultural interaction (Haberman 1991). The work of Richardson and Watt (2006) validates the earlier predictions of Haberman (1991), confirming that preservice teachers in Australia are typically female, young, and born of Australian parents, with the majority having attended middle-class, Anglo-Australian schools in their primary and secondary years (p325). Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist’s (2003) research from the United States reveals similar findings in that the teaching population is predominantly female and middle-class, with 90% of primary and secondary teachers being Caucasian (p3).
While the Australian preservice teacher population is by and large homogenous, it is not surprising that research confirms the majority of teacher education programs, both nationally and internationally, cater for their learning needs of this mainstream student cohort, who are then successfully able to teach those who are of a similar socio-cultural background. Long, Cavanagh and Labone (2009) note that many Aboriginal children’s feelings of low self esteem within the school setting are most often known as shame which is influenced through intergenerational schooling experiences (p52). Christie (1993) highlights that in an educational context some Aboriginal students may be shy to speak out and be seen to be acting smart or above the others. Munns (1998) describes shame as a student’s loss of face in front of the others. Many Aboriginal children hear and observe stories about their parents’ own schooling. These stories are often negative and capture unfair treatment and misunderstanding. Children’s responses to the stories may be enacted in the classroom through a range of behaviours including non-compliance, calling out, disrupting the work of others and withdrawal (Harrison 2010, p101).

Lampert and Phillips (2005) and others suggest that teachers control and monopolise academic interaction and decide who will participate in what, when, where and how (Hatton 1996; Sleeter 2001; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist 2003). According to some researchers (Hatton 1996; Sleeter 2001; Hickling-Hudson & Ahlquist 2003) the cultural hegemony in schools and schooling acts as an agency of the dominant culture in society and is strongly assimilationist, where ethnocentric approaches to curriculum and pedagogy only serve the status quo.
Osborne (2001) refers to dominant and ethnocentric approaches to education as curriculum imperialism, through which dominant groups use their power to ensure the curriculum and pedagogy expresses their experiences, values, desires and achievements, consequently silencing the accounts of marginalised groups while at the same time perpetuating stereotypes and further marginalising Aboriginal students as deviant, inferior or negative (p229).

Giroux (2001) maintains that schools operate on a hidden curriculum that centres on,

“... unstated norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in school and classroom life” (p47).

Giroux (2001) further claims that, depending upon the analytical stance one takes, the hidden curriculum can either be an acceptable and necessary aspect of institutionalised education or it can be entirely problematic. The AER (2004) claimed that teachers’ expectations of their Aboriginal students are grounded in their own ethnocentric views of what constitutes Aboriginality and those teachers who address Aboriginal education policy directives will call upon Aboriginal students to provide information on aspects of Aboriginal culture for others.

The type of information sought, particularly relating to more traditionally orientated lifestyles of ‘Hunters and Gatherers’, pre-contact languages or bush or artefact skills is unknown, especially amongst those who live in an urban environment or those struggling to reconnect with elements of their Aboriginal heritage as a consequence of being members of the stolen generations, mission influences or recent discovery of
their Aboriginality. Butler (2000) argues that this then can have the unfortunate consequence of publically labelling a student’s claim to Aboriginality as inauthentic, a damaging legacy to the students’ sense of self that must be overcome (p97).

Sarra’s (2005) research investigated the regular and dominant use of negative words used by non-Aboriginal people to describe Aboriginal people, including terms such as ‘drunks’, ‘boongs’, ‘got it good’, ‘well-kept by government’, ‘lazy’, ‘welfare dependent’, ‘aggressive’ and ‘disrespectful’. Sarra (2005) found that Aboriginal students were viewed in a similar light, for example, ‘lazy’, ‘underachievers’, ‘cheeky’ and ‘defiant’ and more often young Aboriginal children will make choices about these perceptions which often result in self-limiting behaviour and negative identity formation. As the AECG (2008) report found, teacher quality takes on a greater personal, cultural and social dimension as connecting with people who may be alienated from the education system becomes a key priority (p9). This is important both to minimise the possibilities for students to patronise or objectify persons of minority ancestry and to maximise the possibilities for them to confront contradictions within their own established beliefs.

Chavolla’s (2005) research highlights that when many students labelled ‘at risk’ come from one population, there is a tendency for teachers to feel anger and frustration toward that particular group, and when students fail to comply teachers are likely to find them problematic and difficult to honour (cited in Klump & McNair 2005, p35). Sanderson and Thompson’s (2003) research confirms that exclusions and suspensions in Australia, New Zealand and the United States have been moving steadily upwards
throughout the last two decades and that young black people are grossly over-represented in suspension and exclusion figures.

The AER (2004) found that while most educators are not blatantly racists, many are more likely to be culturally hegemonic, in that they expect students to behave according to the school cultural standards of ‘normality’. Rigney (2002) articulates his perspective of the dominant schooling system’s impact:

… “dressed in her uniform and with a beautiful smile, it was to be her first day at a white-controlled school. As a family we have equipped her with a Narungga education since birth. This education develops qualities and values such as respect for Elders, care for country, love and compassion for others and all things, and a strong sense of pride and respect for Narungga community, culture and family. This education involves marinating the child in her ancient Narungga language, customs and culture, which brings cultural responsibility and obligation. It is equally important for her to develop the skills of dominant education to understand the technical complexities of a globalised world in which we as Narungga now live. However, the tendency in dominant white schooling is to educate Narungga children out of a Narungga education (p73).

The AER (2004) reported that Aboriginal students and their families were often frustrated by their teachers’ lack of awareness of and sensitivity to Aboriginal histories, cultures and socio-economic realities, which ultimately contributes towards their feelings of alienation within the educational environment (p114). Rigney (2002) argues that unless conscious efforts are made to incorporate knowledge of diverse
groups into teacher education curricula, Aboriginal students will continue to be forced to trade their heritage for educational success.

**Cross-cultural Teacher Education: Research - Theory - Practice**

Research highlights that there are limited programs addressing preservice teacher training in Aboriginal education. In 1999 the National Survey of Australian Schools reported that 13.7% of Australian teachers had any training in Aboriginal studies or education. Only 5.6% reported they had preservice training and 8.1% reported in-service training and only 1.9% reported having had both preservice and inservice training in Aboriginal education (Department of Education, Science and Training 1999). The Katu Kalpa report (2000) on the enquiry into the effectiveness of education and training programs for teaching Indigenous Australians concluded that preservice teacher education for working in Aboriginal communities, was demonstrably inadequate (p8).

A study conducted by Tripcony (2002) examined hundreds of subjects in Aboriginal education on offer within teacher education courses, and whether they included an Australian Indigenous perspective, across eight Queensland universities, as well as on-going professional development in twenty-three state, catholic and independent schools. The study found that sixty subjects included specific Indigenous content, while only one subject at the Australian Catholic University offered Aboriginal studies as a core unit.
Tripcony’s (2002) research concluded that current preservice teacher education programs in Queensland failed to equip prospective teachers with skills and knowledge appropriate for teaching in Aboriginal education settings, and those teachers in Queensland are beginning their careers with limited knowledge about the history and culture of Indigenous Australia. A similar study in NSW has yet to be completed.

Shaw (2009) shared that she lasted only seven school terms (less than two full academic years) and describes her experiences of trying to fit into an unfamiliar culture as challenging. Shaw, a non-Aboriginal teacher, says having spent most of her life in urban centres she was seriously under-prepared for living and teaching in a remote Aboriginal school and community. Galloway (2002) notes that most teacher education courses included few units (sometimes referred to as courses or subjects) to assist teachers working with students whose cultural backgrounds were different from their own. Further findings revealed that even if teachers were aware of the differences, it is likely they had not received sufficient support to know how to incorporate different ways of interacting into their classrooms, while also trying to meet the systematic and policy requirements in relation to educational outcomes (Galloway 2002).

Tripcony’s (2002) found while preservice teachers’ attitudes will vary, many hold unfavourable stereotypes, resulting in lower teacher expectations for Aboriginal students’ learning outcomes. Pohan’s (1996) research reports that preservice teachers who bring strong biases and negative stereotypes about socially and culturally diverse groups are less likely to develop the types of professional beliefs and behaviours most
consistent with effective cross-cultural curriculum and pedagogy. Price and Hughes (2010) and Sarra (2008) argue that lower expectations by non-Aboriginal teachers are a principal cause of persistent educational failure of Aboriginal students; as lower expectations reinforce attitudes and beliefs that Aboriginal students are not capable of the same level of achievement as non-Aboriginal students.

Allard and Santoro’s (2006) research revealed that the majority of teacher education students at many Australian universities have attended Anglo-Australian schools for their primary and secondary education, limiting their opportunities to engage with people from different cultural, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, prospective teachers who have left high school with limited exposure to social and cultural diversity have no guarantee that their omissions in their cross-cultural understanding will be adequately addressed in their teacher education courses. Their review of the literature suggests that the homogeneity of experience among the teacher education student population continues, due to the lack of cultural and linguistic diversity amongst the selected cohort.

Further, Allard and Santoro (2006) report that, in their practicum, teacher education students often but not always, are placed in schools not very different from their personal schooling experiences (p116). Research suggests that the majority of non-Aboriginal teachers and educationalists have never met an Aboriginal person and are therefore are often ill-equipped to either address or even understand the social and cultural contexts of Aboriginal children. It has been argued that this is one of the most complex and critical social justice issues of our time (Craven et al. 2005), between 2005 and 2008 the Australian Education Union surveyed beginning teachers. Key
findings revealed that of the 1,545 respondents a large majority of beginning teachers reported feeling ill-prepared for teaching Aboriginal students or delivering Aboriginal studies content (Long, Cavanagh & Labone 2009, p8). Later research by Price and Hughes (2009) confirms that non Aboriginal teachers lack of formal and informal educational experiences with Aboriginal people is compounded by teacher education program that fail to and are often insensitive to the need to prepare preservice teachers for diversity, and simply exclude such concerns from their curriculum,. Even when issues of diversity are addressed, it seems possible that the curriculum for preservice teachers may be inappropriate through both content and delivery.

Craven (2005) argues that teacher training Australia-wide does not specifically address Aboriginal education for teachers of Aboriginal students. Long, Cavanagh and Labone’s (2009) research suggests there has been an ad hoc approach to Aboriginal educational preservice training, with the majority of graduate teachers still receiving little if any specialised training. The Australian commonwealth government commissioned theoretical models for designing core Indigenous Australian Studies teacher education courses, a model teacher education subject, and example teacher-orientated resources. The study was known as the Teaching the Teachers: Indigenous Australian Studies Project of National Significance (Craven 1996). According to Countering Racism (2000) the Teaching the Teachers: Indigenous Australian Studies Project resulted in an historic shift in teacher education, whereby 50% of primary teacher education courses offered a core Indigenous Studies course, which challenged and questioned the dominant discourses operating in schools. Voices that were once silenced and marginalised were rightfully taking their place in our education settings.
Later research undertaken by Craven, Marsh and Miller (2005) about the impact of the Teaching the Teachers: Indigenous Australian Studies Project, proposed that when preservice teachers undertook mandatory Aboriginal education, statistically they had significantly higher background knowledge in comparison to either elective or perspective courses, particularly in relation to their feeling positive about their abilities to understand Aboriginal studies content, teach Aboriginal students and consult with Aboriginal communities. Craven, Marsh and Miller’s (2003) research concluded that further studies must be conducted about what constitutes effective cross-cultural teacher preparation.

Other research by Sleeter (1995), Craven (2003) and Phillips and Lampert (2005) has found that many preservice teachers entered and exited stand-alone cultural diversity subjects too late in their courses, and as a consequence they entered and exited unchanged, often reinforcing their stereotypical perceptions of self and others in the process. Craven (2003) concludes that waiting until the fulltime teaching phase of a program is completed is too late to begin to instil culturally responsive teaching skills; rather it should be initiated in the early stages of a program and maintained throughout the undergraduate’s candidature.

The NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), together with Jennifer Gore and James Ladwig from the University of Newcastle, developed Quality Teaching, a model of pedagogy framed within three dimensions of Intellectual Quality, Quality Learning Environment and Significance (Amosa et al. 2007). The Quality Teaching Framework recognises that curriculum and pedagogy are inseparable, which means that how one teaches is inseparable from what one teaches. The dimensions and
elements of the NSW model of pedagogy within which all NSW teachers and schools operate are outlined as follows: intellectual quality; quality learning environment; and significance.

**Table 2.1 The dimensions and elements of the NSW model of pedagogy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual quality</th>
<th>Quality learning environment</th>
<th>Significance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deep knowledge</td>
<td>Explicit quality criteria</td>
<td>Background knowledge</td>
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<td>Deep understanding</td>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Cultural knowledge</td>
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<td>Problematic knowledge</td>
<td>High expectations</td>
<td>Knowledge integration</td>
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<td>Higher order thinking</td>
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<td>Metalanguage</td>
<td>Student self regulation</td>
<td>Connectedness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substantive communication</td>
<td>Student direction</td>
<td>Narrative</td>
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</table>

(From Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools, 2003)

Intellectual quality focuses on teaching that produces deep knowledge and understanding of key ideas and skills. Deep knowledge of a topic is gained by focusing on a small number of key ideas by having an understanding of the links between these ideas. Students are asked to analyse and evaluate information, being aware that there are many ways of looking at a problem and various ways of achieving a solution. Then they are asked to talk, in depth, about these ideas with their teacher and classmates (NSW, Parliament 2003, *Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools Report 2003*).
The quality learning environment refers to teachers having a level of expectations that their students will achieve high results. Teachers explain clearly to students the quality of work they are expected to produce and give students some choice of learning activities. Ideally in a classroom where a quality learning environment is supported, students and teachers treat each other with respect, and students are involved in work that interests them and are encouraged by their teacher and their classmates (NSW, Parliament 2003, *Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools Report 2003*).

The significance of teaching needs to develop and make clear to students the significance of their work, and needs to link new lessons with what they already know this may be from things they have learned previously in school or what they know from their lives outside school and in their family. Teachers include viewpoints and understanding from different cultures in their lessons. They demonstrate that different types of knowledge are valued and legitimate. They explain the purpose of learning a particular topic or skill. This is important because it makes learning relevant to students and the world in which they live. Teachers ensure all students are included, and have input into the teaching-learning process and that students are clear about why they are studying a particular topic (NSW, Parliament 2003, *Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools Report 2003*). This particular dimension of the Quality teaching framework is critical to the learning experiences of Aboriginal students as teachers can transform curriculum that is socially and culturally meaningful while also learning core academic proficiencies (Howard 2010).
The NSW Quality Teaching Framework was designed to assist the NSW Department of Education and Training in reaching the National Goals for Schooling in the twenty First Century (from the previously-discussed Adelaide declaration, 1999) and aims to support the department’s commitment to principles of social justice and equity, including its commitment to delivering equitable student outcomes (NSW, Parliament 2003, *Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools Report 2003*). While the Quality Teaching model was designed on reliable research and best practice pedagogy, it was not intended to be the final word; teachers were expected to test and engage with the dimensions and elements of pedagogy and change and progress where necessary over time. Amosa and Ladwig (2004) further point out while the *Quality teaching* framework asserts the importance of valuing non-dominant cultural knowledge’s and values in pedagogical practice, there is little empirical examination of the ways in which non-dominant cultural perspectives are integrated in students’ learning experiences and the implications for such perspectives on students’ learning outcomes (p1)

A Report into the perceptions and beliefs of Aboriginal parents, community members and teachers on what constitutes teacher quality and its significance for Aboriginal student outcomes by the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Incorporated (2008) reveals that teacher quality is about the person and their ability and willingness to develop a trust relationship with students, one that is more profound than that for other students. According to the AECG report this “leads to Aboriginal children feeling that the school is a place of belonging which is likely to be more conducive to authentic learning. The importance of the teacher having superior knowledge and understanding of the cultural, historical and socio-political issues that impact on
Aboriginal lives, both generally and locally is reinforced as being critical to the teacher’s ability to develop meaningful relationships with students and their families” (p23).

Practical approaches to cross-cultural teacher education that aim to prepare prospective teachers for diversity are varied both nationally and internationally. Hickling-Hudson (2005) research explores the impact of an elective subject called Cultural Diversity and Education undertaken by preservice teachers. The subject examines Australian society by relating its main ethno-cultural discourses to each other - white, ethnic, indigenous - and analysing life histories to illustrate how individuals experience these discourses. This reflects the Quality teaching model in that curriculum content is both reflective of students real lives while also providing opportunities for learning outside of their own socio-cultural contexts.

Kalantzis, Cope, Noble and Poynting (1990) argue that effective cross-cultural diversity is not about ticking a box and saying we have ‘done’ diversity simply because we might have acknowledged and celebrated National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) week or have dressed in traditional costumes or tried culturally-diverse foods. This approach is superficial and seen as tokenistic, and does not perpetuate diverse and complex knowledge about difference; rather it is more likely to exoticise difference.

prospective teachers to engage in issues from multiple perspectives and to embrace a
global reality as part of their professional identities (p9), while the research of Craven
et al. (2005) confirms that preservice teachers would welcome opportunities to
undertake fieldwork experiences within Aboriginal communities as part of their
undergraduate programs.

Preservice teachers who bring strong biases and negative stereotypes about socially
and culturally diverse groups will be less likely to develop the types of professional
beliefs and behaviours most consistent with effective cross-cultural curriculum and
pedagogy (Pohan’s 1996). Bergen (1989) argues that no student teacher should be
considered fully qualified for teaching until she or he has spent the equivalent of one
semester involved in an unfamiliar culture. Mio (1989) describes a program at a
Southern California university where teacher education graduate students were
matched with culturally diverse students. The student cultural exchange activities
required the students to socialize on campus, explore ethnically-diverse restaurants in
their area together, and visit one another’s homes; as part of the activity, students
were required to write a three-part reaction paper around a set framework.

Part one began with students writing a list of 10 popular stereotypes about the focal
group and indicating what prior contact they had had with the group. In part two,
students were asked to describe their emotional responses to their experiences and any
insights on why they reacted as they did. The last section required the students to
explore and discuss the implications for their teaching careers. Upon reflection,
students often realized such things as the importance of greeting students warmly,
learning to speak a few words of their diverse students’ languages as a sign of respect
and interest and, most importantly, the crucial nature of not prejudging others (Mio
1989, p78). According to Nieto (2006) the last section was particularly relevant as
prospective teachers often overlooked the implications of having opportunities to
interact with persons from so-called minorities as equals.

A past ETTP graduate articulates her ‘cultural plunge’ experience in 2007 as part of
the cross-cultural immersion program with the ACU ETTP in the following excerpt:

… “Any stereotypes about Aboriginal people are obliterated when you sit in a
tutorial with a group of trainee teachers, almost half of whom are Indigenous
and are so articulate, knowledgeable and passionate … Then you go to a
community like Moree and spend two weeks totally immersed in the
community under the guidance of my mentor, is indescribably beneficial.
Unless you have actually been in a community with the local people where you
are continually a minority for days on end, it is impossible to imagine the
experience” (Australian Catholic University, 2007)

Genuine partnerships between Aboriginal people and teachers underpin successful
Aboriginal student attendance, student engagement and learning across early
childhood, infant, primary and secondary schooling (NSW DET 2004; Foley 2007;
(2000) argue that a holistic approach to Aboriginal education that builds on teacher-
student relationships, including authentic relationships with families and
communities, is needed.
Therefore if teachers are to have the capacity to contribute practically and constructively to the achievement of Aboriginal students, they must have extensive cross-cultural interactions, knowledge of and understanding of wider socio-political cultures Malezer and Sim (2002).

Conclusion

The literature review revealed that early approaches to educating Aboriginal students were largely underpinned by deficit beliefs and attitudes enacted through government policy and legislation. The review found that there continues to be ongoing omission of Indigenous Studies throughout preservice teacher education courses which serves to compound, misrepresent and perpetuate disparities between non-Aboriginal teachers working successfully with Aboriginal students’ (Beresford 2003; Rizvi & Crowley 1993; O’Shane & Bickford 1991; Fullan 1994; Craven et al. 2005).

While the review highlighted the inconsistencies in preparing prospective non-Aboriginal teachers for working effectively with socially and culturally diverse students, it also emphasises the need for educators to have an adequate understanding of their role in implementing public education policy. The goal to address educational social justice cannot be realised as policy decisions have consistently failed to deliver on their promises. The review highlights that robust analysis and critique of educational systems, structures and jurisdiction must be interrogated for their role in inequality (Rigney 2002). This research aims to identify key aspect of the UOW ETTP to gain more critical insight into what’s working from the perspective of non Aboriginal pre-service teachers.
Chapter 3. Methodology

Overview

This chapter describes the methods employed for this study to explore the experiences of seven non-Aboriginal preservice teachers undertaking the Enhanced Teacher Training Program (ETTP) through the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong. The ETTP provided selected preservice teachers with the opportunity to undertake intensive Aboriginal Studies coursework, one-to-one mentoring and cross-cultural fieldwork experiences within the surrounding Illawarra Aboriginal community.

The stated goals of the ETTP included:

- Enhanced knowledge and skills to ensure teachers are able to support Aboriginal students achieve their potential;
- Substantial cross-cultural knowledge;
- Professional experience in schools with significant Aboriginal student enrolments;
- Mentoring by Aboriginal peers;
- Preparation for teaching and living in rural locations through engagement with the mentor’s community; and
- Ongoing university, school and community-based support upon employment as a teacher (Teach NSW 2008).
Research Questions

To enable this research the following questions were posed and a rationale for why the question was selected is outlined in the following table:

Table 3.1: Rationale for data collection methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Purpose and Data Collection Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 1</strong></td>
<td>The purpose of question 1 was to gain insight into the preservice teachers’ initial motivations for undertaking the ETTP and what they hoped to achieve both personally and professionally. Furthermore it was important for the researcher to establishing participants’ entry levels of knowledge, attitudes and values for a deeper perspective of the impact of their learning experience over the one year program. The Data collection methods included:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| *What knowledge, values and attitudes do non-Aboriginal preservice teachers bring to the ETTP?* | - Focus groups  
- Semi-structured interviews  
- Informal Conversations |
| **Question 2**    | Question 2 was posed to foreground participants’ significant experiences and insights as an impetus for improvement and modification of future ETTP at UOW. The Data collection methods included: |
| *What do non-Aboriginal preservice teachers identify as significant learning experiences within their participation in the ETTP?* | - Document Analysis  
- Email Communication  
- Focus groups  
- Informal Conversations |
| **Question 3**    | Question 3 enabled the researcher to illuminate the challenges identified by the preservice teachers while undertaking the ETTP. |
| *What are the challenges that the non-Aboriginal* | |
Preservice teachers identify within their participation in the ETTP?

The Data collection methods included:
- Document Analysis
- Email Communication
- Participant Observation
- Focus groups
- Informal Conversations

**Theoretical Underpinnings**

This study draws on the theoretical framework of the Cultural Interface (Nakata 2003) for understanding the phenomena of cross-cultural learning experiences of seven non-Aboriginal preservice teachers. The ETTP involves the participation of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people negotiating and learning within cross-cultural contexts. These contexts involve mentoring relationships and immersion within diverse, socio-cultural communities within the Illawarra, NSW. The theoretical framework of the Cultural Interface entwines both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people negotiating knowledge systems and worldviews within intercultural dialogues.

Through the cross-cultural dialogues both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are expected to misunderstand knowledge, however through the exchanges people become more informed and are better positioned to act upon meaning (Nakata 2003). Therefore the Cultural Interface framework provides a space that allows people to enter into multiple understanding, enabling individuals to enhance cross-cultural understandings or misunderstandings.
Nakata (2004) suggests that those participating in the framework of the Cultural Interface partake in a continuous dialogue that fosters negotiation of meaning and ways of knowing, and encourages engagement with variable perspectives, which are recognised, accepted, rejected and communicated. In the context of the research, non-Aboriginal preservice teachers’ significant insights will be illuminated in order to make new ‘knowledge’ and understanding on how to prepare preservice teachers for working with Aboriginal students in NSW primary schools.

The Cultural Interface enables the researcher to analyse the complex multiple realities, insights and transformations from the perspective of the participant’s involvement within teacher education settings, coursework, fieldwork and dialogues among Aboriginal mentors and non-Aboriginal preservice teachers, immersion within local Aboriginal community settings, such as the Aboriginal Homework Centre and AECG, and the internships at schools with high numbers of Aboriginal students.

The Cultural Interface is therefore a place where non-Indigenous preservice teachers are embroiled in issues about teaching and learning, as they apply to Aboriginal children. At the Cultural Interface, which is both real and symbolic, according to Nakata (2002), both parties come face-to-face with the marginal status of Aboriginal culture within educational settings, and the possibilities for change to occur (Nakata 2002) as outlined in the stated aims of the ETTP.

The Cultural Interface contextualises the participants’ significant insights and experiences within the theoretical framework of the Cultural Interface where both knowledge systems are valued and accepted even though the boundaries between
these places are blurred and involve a number of competing and conflicting interactions (Nakata 2002, p9).

The rich advantage of the Cultural Interface is that it is public and private as well as professional and personal, acknowledging where people live and learn and where people are active agents in their own lives. The Cultural Interface, as a place of learning and unlearning, represents the intersection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and importantly provides a framework where people have the opportunity to subvert dominant white power structures, and where non-Aboriginal people can begin to unlearn and critically understand their privilege (Nakata 2003).
Figure 3.1: Theoretical underpinnings for the inquiry

Figure 3.1 depicts the theoretical underpinnings for the inquiry. The cultural interface provides a lens that enables the researcher to interpret the spectrum of non-Aboriginal preservice teachers’ experiences across Aboriginal systems of social, cultural, economic and political organisation. Further, the Cultural Interface acknowledges the complexities of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people engaging within intercultural dialogues that encompass new ways of understanding each other, and ourselves thus developing confidence and competence within two-way dialogues and genuine engagement (Nakata 2007).

Research Design

A qualitative research design was selected to meet the purpose of this study. The study aimed to identify and describe significant experiences of seven non-Aboriginal preservice teachers’ by employing a range of qualitative methods.
Qualitative Paradigm

Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that enhance understandings of a social phenomenon without disrupting the natural setting (Wilding & Whiteford 2005, p98). According to Holloway (1997) the basis of qualitative research is focused on the everyday life of people in natural settings. The focus of this inquiry was to examine the experiences of those actually involved in the ETTP course, within the context of their undergraduate university studies.

Qualitative research involves rich and detailed descriptions of people in action, specific programs or social practices (Lankshear and Knobel 2004). The qualitative researcher aims to understand the complexity rather than to uncover a knowable truth; this may involve watching what people do, talking to them about it and trying to understand what is going on without any recourse to numbers or statistics Kervin et al. (2006). Lankshear and Knobel (2004) claim that the qualitative research approach is primarily about wanting to understand the world from the perspective of other people, while Merriam (1998) states that the qualitative research key concern is from the perspective of the participants, not the researchers (p6). This supports the focus on the preservice teachers in this inquiry.

Lincoln and Guba (1985), Bryman (1988) and Kumar (2005) assert that qualitative research can lie within an interpretative approach which is focused on humans and the ways they interpret and make sense of their social reality. Marton, Hounsell and Entwistle (1984) argue social scientists that focus on this model of understanding the human experiences are just as important as the ideas in the positivist paradigm, which emphasise explanation, predication and control (p1). Therefore, interpretative research
emphasis is on the values, interests and social location. For this inquiry, such an approach enables the research to demonstrate the holistic nature of the significant experiences of the seven non-Aboriginal preservice teachers undertaking the ETTP (Marton, Hounsell & Entwistle 1984, p93).

**Locus of the Study**

**Participants**

The demographics of the participants were representative of a general cohort of preservice teachers in Australia who are typically female, young and born of non-Aboriginal Australian parents (Haberman 1991; Richardson & Watt 2006). All seven participants matched this profile description and were in the early-to-mid 20s age group and female.

Maxwell (2005) identifies that in qualitative research the typical way of selecting participants is through purposeful selection which involves deliberately selecting participants in order to provide information that cannot be retrieved as well from other choices. Many participants involved in qualitative research enquiries are purposefully selected because they are experts in an area or were privileged to witness an event and their ability to explain, understand and provide information about the research focus (Weiss 1994, Kervin et al. 2006). The participants who were purposefully selected for this study were awarded the ETTP scholarships through the formal NSW DET processes (represented in Figure 3.1).
The seven successful scholarship recipients at the University of Wollongong were invited to an initial information session and consequently agreed to participate. Each participant was provided with information about the purpose and procedures of the inquiry, and all gave informed, written consent to participate.

An overview of the participants is presented in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Previous experiences</th>
<th>Overview of data collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Stacey    | Undertaken Course work in Aboriginal Education  
• Issues in Aboriginal Education  
• Aboriginal Pedagogy | Semi Structured Interview  
Informal interview  
Focus Group  
Email  
Course work |
| Alicia    | Undertaken Course work in Aboriginal Education  
• Issues in Aboriginal Education  
• Aboriginal Pedagogy | Semi Structured Interview  
Informal interview  
Focus Group  
Email  
Course work |
Bessie | Undertaken Course work in Aboriginal Education  
- Introduction to Aboriginal Australia | Semi Structured Interview  
Informal interview  
Focus Group  
Email  
Course work

Tennille | Undertaken Course work in Aboriginal Education  
- Issues in Aboriginal Education  
- Aboriginal Pedagogy  
Had lived in a predominantly rural town with a high Aboriginal population | Semi Structured Interview  
Informal interview  
Focus Group  
Email  
Course work

Sally | Undertaken Course work in Aboriginal Education  
- Issues in Aboriginal Education  
- Aboriginal Pedagogy  
Had lived in a predominantly rural town with a high Aboriginal population | Semi Structured Interview  
Informal interview  
Focus Group  
Email  
Course work

Tracey | Undertaken Course work in Aboriginal Education  
- Introduction to Aboriginal Australia | Semi Structured Interview  
Informal interview  
Focus Group  
Email  
Course work

Katie | Undertaken Course work in Aboriginal Education  
- Issues in Aboriginal Education  
- Aboriginal Pedagogy | Semi Structured Interview  
Informal interview  
Focus Group  
Email  
Course work

**Ethics Procedures**

Kumar (1996) highlights that before undertaking research one must be prepared to be governed by a code of ethics that accommodate the changing ethos, values, needs and expectations of those with a stake in the research inquiry (p191). Therefore obtaining ethical approval from the organisation body that has jurisdiction over the particular research project was a critical first stage of this research process.
The University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee granted ethical approval for the commencement of this inquiry (HE08/014). Procedures throughout the inquiry have been guided by associated protocols. Participants were informed of the research by the researcher in an initial meeting at the end of 2007. In this meeting, the researcher briefly outlined the research inquiry to ensure that potential participants thinking about applying for the 2008 ETTP were informed of the intended study. Being open and transparent about the research process from the very beginning stages was critical (See appendix G for relevant ethics documents, Participant Information Sheet and Participant Consent Form).

All participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary, information shared was confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any time, free from penalty or prejudice. All participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity, whilst names of schools, students and other identifying information was omitted to ensure confidentiality.

Electronically-generated data such as interview transcripts were stored in a password-protected computer belonging to the University of Wollongong, and print-based data was stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Faculty of Education.

Initially the researcher was concerned about the small number of participants from whom to draw data, and whether seven participants warranted a rigorous PhD inquiry. Mertens (2005) asserts that the optimum sample size in qualitative research inquiry is directly related to the type of research being undertaken (p327). Furthermore, it is difficult to predict what the sample size will be; instead the focus should be on
whether the researcher is satisfied that the data is rich and covers enough of the dimensions of the study, as these aspects provide the information needed in order to respond to the research questions.

While the researcher did not set out to ‘teach’ the participants, it became clear that within focus groups, semi-structured interviews and interactions with the participants created opportunities for exchanges, feedback, cross-cultural guidance and clarification. Furthermore the researcher posed key discussion questions or topics relevant to the inquiry to further explore the perceptions, experiences and understanding of the preservice teachers. As a participant observer, the researcher was able to build more intimate and informal relationships with the preservice teachers over the year-long inquiry challenging the power dynamic between the participants and the researcher (Liamputtong & Ezzy 2006).

**Researcher Background**

The researcher’s socio-cultural status and lived experiences influenced her research interest. Through attending NSW primary and secondary schools within rural NSW, the researcher had first-hand experience of being an Aboriginal student, and at times of the lower expectations placed on her by misinformed teachers throughout her schooling. Reading over old high school reports, the researcher identified comments by teachers referring to her as not being a very bright student, and being channelled and directed by the teachers into sporting pursuits.
On further reflections the researcher remembered being envious of the school captains who every year throughout primary and high school were non-Aboriginal students who came from middle-class families, lived in picture-perfect homes and had parents who had professional jobs or whose mother was a stay-at-home mum. This contrasted with the researcher’s own social and cultural position, where she was raised by a non-Aboriginal single mother, who worked in a lower-class factory job and raised three children, financial stress and with no support from the children’s father who was Aboriginal. Given the researcher’s limited interaction with her father and extended family connections, the only place that became a reference point to her Aboriginality was the school curriculum. It was not until Year 9 that she undertook a serious unit of work in Aboriginal history.

The researcher vividly recalls her Year 9 history teacher announcing that they would be doing an Aboriginal studies unit, and the reaction of her non-Aboriginal peers’ resistance to the announcement made her feel intimidated and uncomfortable. These anxieties were heightened by the fact that she herself had been raised by a non-Aboriginal mother, with limited contact with Aboriginal people, and was therefore not very secure and confident with her identity. However through completing the unit of work the researcher was given an important opportunity to learn and critically question the stereotypes and labels prescribed on Aboriginal people. Having completed the unit of work, the researcher wrote to the New South Wales Department of Education requesting that Aboriginal studies be made compulsory in schools due to it significantly increasing the student’s knowledge of Aboriginal history. Furthermore this learning opportunity inspired the researcher to trace her father, and led her to learn more about her Aboriginal heritage.
With the support of the local Aboriginal Land Council, the researcher initiated contact with her Father in 1991 and moved to South Australia, where she spent ten years working, studying and getting to know her extended family and community. It was during this time that the researcher undertook her own cross-cultural learning journey through undertaking formal academic studies through the University of South Australia, as well as interacting with the local Aboriginal community and her extended family. After graduating, the researcher spent time teaching in metropolitan schools with significant Aboriginal populations as well as undertaking employment in various Aboriginal community development roles. In 2001 the researcher returned to NSW with her three children and secured an ongoing lecturer position with the University of Wollongong in 2003.

A further ethical consideration was negotiating the relationships between participants and the researcher, as all preservice teachers were aware that the researcher was a lecturer in Aboriginal Studies and four of the seven preservice teachers had undertaken the subjects Aboriginal Pedagogy and Issues in Aboriginal Education with the researcher in previous years.

In her role as an academic with the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre, the researcher was appointed subject coordinator of Aboriginal Pedagogy and Issues in Aboriginal Education, where she was presented with a diverse mix of students and gained valuable insight into the myriad of issues that impinge on preservice teachers undertaking formal Aboriginal education subjects. The researcher was aware that
popular stereotypes, lower expectations and misconceptions about Aboriginality still prevailed amongst the majority of the cohort of student teachers.

Through teaching across these settings the researcher was in the position to inspire and challenge student teachers to think outside of western epistemologies and to broaden their knowledge and skills for teaching across socio-culturally diverse student populations. The researcher’s approach to cross-cultural education included building relationships where students felt safe to share personal experiences and enter into rigorous cross-cultural dialogue that was both stimulating and challenging. This often involved identifying commonalities that exist in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal histories, cultures and social experiences, while empowering the preservice teachers’ knowledge and skills to recognise and inclusively respond to diversity.

In 2007, through the University of Wollongong’s (UOW) Faculty of Education, the researcher piloted the ETTP. The researcher was delegated the role of coordinator and was required to develop cross-cultural immersion experiences within local Aboriginal community settings. Through this role the researcher’s observations led her to question the impact that the cross-cultural immersion experiences had on transforming the preservice teachers’ knowledge and understanding. It seemed critical to the researcher to gain a more informed understanding from the preservice teachers’ points of view, on how the unique aspects of the ETTP better prepared them for working with Aboriginal students.

Throughout the year-long pilot program the researcher regularly met with the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Wollongong to share teaching
and learning observations. These meetings provided the opportunity to refine a research topic and formulate a proposal for a formal doctoral study that aims to illuminate the significant experiences of seven non-Aboriginal preservice teachers undertaking a year-long scholarship program.

Research Setting

According to Maxwell (2005) the decisions about where to conduct the research inquiry is a critical component of the initial methodological decisions, therefore careful consideration about the research setting was undertaken. Given that all seven preservice teachers were enrolled as full-time students in an undergraduate Bachelor of Education Degree at the University of Wollongong, and the researcher’s employment was also located on this campus, it seemed appropriate to base the inquiry at the university. The researcher’s employment also provided access to a dedicated meeting space on campus (in the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre). This was where all interviews and focus group meetings were conducted.

The four principal components of the UOW ETTP were: cross-cultural community immersion experiences; mentoring by Aboriginal mentors; a six-week internship at a rural or remote NSW school with significant Aboriginal enrolments; and two core units in Aboriginal education undertaken cross-institutionally through the Strathfield campus of the ACU.

There were a number of considerations when undertaking a qualitative inquiry concerning seven preservice teachers to enable a careful focus of their experiences
within the ETTP. In qualitative research Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (1997) argue for relationships that are complex, fluid and reciprocal, and that are shaped by both researcher and participant to reflect a more responsible ethical stance. Rules for considerate interaction applied, as ultimately the inquiry project could be seen as an intrusion into the preservice teachers’ lives. A number of strategies establishing a productive interpersonal climate between researcher and participants were activated, including maintaining a high level of confidentiality and trust through spending many hours both individually and collectively listening to each participant’s reflections, thoughts, feelings and experiences. Sensitive issues continued to arise during the course of the year, as, for example, when participants disclosed information that they later chose not to include within the research. In such cases, the information was left as a confidential part of their learning experience, and not part of the data set for the inquiry, as the researcher was vigilant and respectful of the participant’s wishes.

It became evident at the beginning of the study that participants required the researcher to respond and interact not only as a researcher but also as a mentor, confidant and Aboriginal education resource support teacher. Therefore the researcher had to negotiate these complex boundaries. It was decided that the following conditions would apply:

- The researcher would provide feedback or referral to information to the student teachers if they requested or needed specific resources relating to their teaching and learning in Aboriginal education;
- If the student teachers seemed at risk or were unclear about cultural or community customs or protocols, and sought reassurance, then it was decided the researcher would provide culturally appropriate mentoring.
Procedures for Data Collection

Data were collected from each of the seven participants throughout the course of the inquiry. Specific data collection procedures (represented in figure 3.2) are now explored in connection with the aims and purpose of the inquiry.

Figure 3.2: Data collection schedule and procedures

Document Analysis

Mertens (2005) reminds researchers they cannot be in all places at all times, and in the context of this study, analysing the content within the participants’ written assessment tasks for the subjects Inquiry Project EDUT432 and Reflective Practice EDUT422, enabled the researcher to understand other experiences the participants were having in an indirect way (Fraenkel & Wallen 2000). Through the UOW Ethics Approval
Committee the researcher gained access to the assessment task for both EDUT422 and EDUT432 subjects. Both of these subjects had been adapted specifically for the ETTP participants to include an Aboriginal education focus. A number of academic members of the faculty taught these subjects. As the inquiry evolved, these assessment tasks were collected for analysis and provided a rich source of information that informed the research questions.

All the tasks in the subject *EDUT432 Inquiry Project* were directly linked to an Aboriginal perspective, and included a response to a scenario about teaching in a remote community school with a high Indigenous population (Task 1), reflection on the students' work at an Aboriginal Homework Centre (Task 2), reflection on their internship at a school with significant Aboriginal student enrolments (Task 3) and Task 4 - two postcards from the location of their professional experience. The full description of the tasks can be found in appendix D.

The subject EDUT422 was designed to encourage reflective practice in the range of professional contexts within which the fourth-year students were working. The assessment tasks weren’t different between the mainstream and ETTP cohort. Instead, the ETTP students were encouraged to draw upon Aboriginal perspectives as they responded to the tasks. Readings, accessed digitally, were compiled to support the subject and the lecturers endeavoured to tailor this list to respond to the diversity within the cohort. There were three assessment tasks set for the subject, *EDUT422 Reflective Practice*. They included Task 1 - Planning for Reflective Teaching, Task 2 - Collaborative Research Project, and Task 3 - Blog and Synthesis (see appendix D).
Documents are defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as written or recorded material prepared in response to a request by a researcher, but for a specific personal or professional purpose (Burns 1995), for example, lesson plans, teaching programs and classroom artefacts or work samples (Mertens 2006). Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) state that document analysis can fill in some of the missing data pieces or it can raise a host of new questions regarding the accuracy of observations and interpretations (p82). According to Punch (1998) documents provide a rich source of data in order to gain more holistic understanding of participants. Hodder (2000, p703) observes that any type of text collected as data needs to be analysed in the ‘contexts of their conditions of production and reading’ and it is within the context of understandings reached through analysis of interviews, observations and field notes that relevant documents were analysed.

**Email Communication**

All of the participants identified email as a preferred means of communication with the researcher due to the demands of their cross-cultural immersion experiences, attending classes and working part-time. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2000) estimated that 75% of young adults have access to the Internet, with the most popular use of the Internet being e-mail and online chat. Email communication provided a medium that was efficient, accessible, flexible, and convenient for both the participants and the researcher. The participants shared their insights and perspectives throughout the year-long program through randomly emailing the researcher to share insight on a particular experience that was significant to them.

Furthermore, email communication provided the researcher with an effective way to stay abreast of relevant meetings, organise interviews, and focus groups and to
follow-up on participant’s responses to their cross-cultural fieldwork experiences and internships. Member checking via email was also utilised, especially whilst participants were completing their internships.

There were advantages and disadvantages to using email as a data collection tool. A disadvantage of using email communication was the fact that the researcher did not have access to the rich context which the face-to-face interviews allowed, for example when conducting semi-structured interviews or informal conversations, the participants’ body language, tone and delivery of speech often alerted the researcher to deeper meanings and understandings in relation to participants’ stories (Shepherd 2003). The advantages of email communication meant the participants could forward their course work assessment tasks for analysis to the researcher at times most suited to their busy schedules. Furthermore, when the participants were completing their six-week internships in a rural or remote NSW school, email became a flexible communication tool between the researcher and participant.

Focus Groups

Khan and Manderson (1992) explain that the primary aim of a focus group is to gain an understanding of the perceptions, interpretations and beliefs of a select group who come from similar social or cultural backgrounds or who have similar issues and concerns (p57). The emphasis is on the interaction between the participants as much as possible and are intended to encourage participants to feel free from the constraints of typical structured one-to-one interviews, and to express their views honestly and spontaneously (Khan & Manderson (1992, p57) cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy (2005, p76).
Over the first session of the ETTP, ten focus group meetings were conducted with participants at the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre for approximately one hour per week. The focus groups provided participants with a forum to discuss Aboriginal perspectives within their coursework assessment tasks and enter into rigorous cross-cultural dialogue with their mentors. The themes of the focus group were left open, and participants would often come to the group with questions and clarification of key issues. Further, the Aboriginal mentors offered the participants significant life stories about their lived realities and experiences in their communities, which enriched cross-cultural understandings.

The researcher designed an observation criterion to guide the researchers’ attention to specific details. Following on from the focus groups the researcher would immediately record observations and was vigilant in regards to observer bias, as inferences and interpretations drawn from subjective observation sometimes varied from that of the participant-significant cross-cultural experiences.

**Participant Observation**

Kellehear (1993) describes observation as an unobtrusive research tool that can be done just about anywhere and enables the researcher to remain close to the immediacy of what was seen and heard (Kellehear (1993) cited in Liamputtong & Ezzy 2006, p111). Through the ethics approval process the researcher was restricted to conduct participant observation within the vicinity of the UOW campus only. Participant observation throughout the year-long ETTP became a systematic data collection opportunity and was mostly utilised throughout the focus group meetings (Kumar
According to Burgess (1984) the observer gathers data by participating in the interactions of the group, by watching the people they are studying and how they behave. Lincoln and Guba (1981) outline the following purposes for using participant observation as data collection method: to maximise the researcher’s ability to grasp the participant’s motives, beliefs, concerns and interests, and to gain access to the introspective emotional reactions of participants (Lincoln & Guba 1981, p193, cited in Lincoln & Guba 1985, p273).

**Semi-structured Interviews**

The researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews to obtain information about the participants’ significant cross-cultural experiences of the ETTP.

Elliott (1991, p80) observes that interviews are a ‘good way of finding out what the situation looks like from other points of view’ and that semi-structured interviews are particularly useful as they allow both interviewer and participant the opportunity to follow an interesting lead that arises spontaneously within the interview. Further to understanding the viewpoints of others, Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe interviews as powerful in capturing the constructions, reconstructions and projections related to a participant’s experiences and beliefs. Within this inquiry, each of these was a significant viewpoint; experienced teachers discussed their current beliefs emerging from reconstructions of events and their projections about the future, whilst the early career teachers demonstrated a greater focus on projection, on the type of teacher they were striving to be.
Interviewing is recognised as integral to qualitative research designs because of its capacity to provide rich accounts of the contexts within which the participant operates. Taking into account the nature of these methodological approaches, Fontana and Frey (2000, p664) suggest that an interview within this paradigm is a ‘practical production’, where together, the interviewer and participant move beyond the ‘whats’ of the interview to the ‘hows’. This is particularly fitting for this inquiry as it seeks to understand the ETTP experience from these preservice teacher participants.

Arksey and Knight (1999) describe the semi-structured interview as a “data gathering technique, designed to obtain information about people’s views, opinions, ideas and experiences” (p96). Semi-structured interviews are a commonly-used data collection method in qualitative research designs and are focused around a set of pre-defined questions designed to stimulate discussion between the researcher and interviewee (Hinds 2000, p46). Therefore designing an effective set of guiding questions to stimulate discussion and conversation flow is both a challenging and technical activity for the researcher (Hinds 2000, p46). When designing guiding questions the researcher ensured that there were open questions to allow the respondents to share their insights and experiences honestly. Throughout the design stage the researcher took the opportunity to pilot the questionnaire with colleagues at the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre. The pilot interviews enabled the researcher to reveal any problematic language and to receive constructive feedback so that the researcher could evaluate the effectiveness of both the open and the closed questions.

Kervin et al. (2006) highlight that interviews can be influenced by a variety of factors (including social and cultural variables), therefore it is important that the researcher
ensures participants are relaxed and comfortable, and that any perceived position of power between the interviewer and the interviewee is neutralized as much as possible (p88). In this inquiry, the researcher observed that participants were keen to engage in a dialogue with the researcher as a way of clarifying their learning and understanding in Aboriginal education. The semi-structured interview facilitated the unfolding of the pre-service teachers’ insights of the ETTP, enabling the researcher to enter their world to evoke description and clarification of the participants’ experiences.

Interviews were conducted at mutually convenient times and places for both the teacher and researcher. Although it was important to anticipate the length of the interview and conduct it in a space where there was minimal interruption and privacy, the researcher ensured that the length of time and depth of responses revealed in the semi-structured interviews were decided on by the participant being interviewed. While some semi-structured interviews went for 30 minutes or more, others went for only 10 minutes. Semi-structured interviews were audio taped and transcribed for analysis.

**Informal Conversations**

Throughout the first round of semi-structured interviews the researcher observed and became aware that after the semi-structured interview had taken place and the tape recording device was switched off, participants would relax and initiate a deeper discussion of their cross-cultural insights and learning goals. The researcher allowed the informal conversations to emerge and wrote down notes immediately after the conversation. The researcher observed that participants seemed less intimidated, and more easily identified what was personally worthwhile and meaningful in terms of
their experiences throughout the ETTP. Miles and Huberman (1984) highlight the importance of building respectful relationships and trust between researcher and participant, and stress that these cannot be underestimated. Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis (2005, cited in Maxwell et al. 2005, p84), report that the continual creation and renegotiation of trust, intimacy and reciprocity are likely to yield deeper data and better social science. Furthermore informal conversations were conducted at times that were most suited to the participants and that took place intermittently throughout the year with individual and/or groups of pre-service teachers. Kumar (2005) suggests that allows the researcher the freedom to formulate questions when they come to mind and follow-up on specific issues, insights or understandings that the participants were identifying (p123), while Hinds (2000) purports that through this process the researcher has more autonomy to follow-up on emerging themes (p47).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data in a systematic way that gives meaning to first impressions and the final compilation of data (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p154). Creswell (1994) describes data analysis as messy, ambiguous, time consuming, creative and fascinating and that it does not proceed in a linear fashion nor is it neat (p139).

In this inquiry, the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss 1967) was used for data analysis. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define the constant comparison method as an inductive process, appropriate for interpreting data from multiple sources because it offers a way for systemic analysis. Two activities, fragmenting and
connecting, guide analysis using the constant comparison method (Dey 1993, cited in Boeije 2002) and each complements the other. Fragmenting the data allows each piece to be removed from its context and considered in isolation, while connecting ensures that the piece is then replaced and analysed within the complexity and richness of the data as a whole (Boeije 2002).

Using the constant comparative method, the researcher begins analysis when the first data are collected. Early analysis allows the researcher to return to the field with purpose and direction about what data is sought. This process continues with an aim to achieve “theoretical completeness, when the theory is able to explain the data fully and satisfactorily” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2007, p494). Through this process the researcher was able to reformulate or adapt any subsequent data collection and analysis and be open to new concepts arising, which may develop, challenge or modify existing findings. Data were categorised into focus group data, email communication, assessments tasks, interviews, key documents, participant observation notes and the researcher’s journal. Guided by the questions posed, the researcher identified key themes, which was successfully achieved through intimate knowledge of the data; there was no substitute for reading and re-reading data. This enabled the researcher to synthesize the data and to reduce the amount of data so that findings could be subsumed in order for the reader to digest information more clearly (Wilkinson 2000, p79).

The constant comparative method is characterised by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as consisting of stages. These stages are well supported in research methodology literature:
• Comparing incidents and data that are applicable to each category

• Incidents are coded first in isolation (fragmented), then compared (connected) with other data from the same participant and also with other data within the same code from other participants (Boeije 2002; Cohen et al. 2007)

• Integrating these categories and their properties

• A shift occurs during this stage through further coding, as the incidents within a code are no longer compared with other incidents, but with the properties of a category (Cohen et al. 2007). The researcher explores the relationships among the themes identified within the data (Ryan & Bernard 2000)

• Bounding the theory

• Theoretical completeness occurs at this stage as the data can be explained satisfactorily and a core variable is identified (Cohen et al. 2007). A model or criteria or set of principles demonstrates and explains the relationships between and among the themes of the inquiry (Ryan & Bernard 2000)

• Setting out the theory

• The theory is explicated to culminate the process; ‘the researcher has gathered and generated coded data, memos and a theory, and this is then written in full’ (Cohen et al. 2007, p494)

Wilding and Whiteford (2005) point out that the words of the participants must be ‘treated with integrity’ providing the best possible basis for new understandings and themes to emerge; simultaneously particular attention must be given to the ongoing changing nature of the individuals’ experiences (p100). Furthermore, thick descriptions enabled the researcher to access ample detail and background information so that participants’ interpretations could be understood in the context of
the experiences and patterns of meaning that influence them (Liamputtong & Ezzy 2006, p336).

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006) supported the constant comparative method as individual data sources and patterns between and among these were investigated. For example, themes emerging within students' semi-structured interview and focus group data, as well as observation field notes and informal conversations were identified and compared and contrasted. Braun and Clarke (2006) point out that thematic analysis is a widely used method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within the data, and produces insightful analysis when driven by the research questions and the broader theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke 2006). Conducting thematic analysis across the data involved several phases; the researcher began the process of thematic analysis by searching through the data looking for patterns and meanings and issues that were guided by the research questions and theoretical framework (Ryan and Bernard 2000, p78, cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun & Clarke (2006) step-by-step guide to conducting thematic analysis was adapted for this study (p87). This is represented in table 3.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Description of Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiarize yourself with your data</td>
<td>Transcribe data, read and re-read the data noting initial ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generate initial codes</td>
<td>Code interesting ideas in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search for themes</td>
<td>Collate codes into potential themes gathering all data relevant to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review the themes</td>
<td>Generate a thematic map for analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define and name the themes</td>
<td>Continue ongoing analysis; ensure that the data is telling the overall story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce the report</td>
<td>Relate the themes and selected extracts back to the research questions and literature in order to produce a scholarly report of the analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) warn that the interpretative nature of qualitative research is an ongoing threat to an inquiry’s reliability and validity. These issues of credibility are explored now in connection with this inquiry.

**Building Credibility**

The inquiry aimed to demonstrate its validity and trustworthiness in three ways: data collection from multiple sources, triangulation of these and member checking.

**Multiple Sources of Data**

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) argue that a researcher can draw confidence about the credibility of a qualitative inquiry when evidence is gathered and analysed from multiple sources of data. Burns (1995, p273) supports this, indicating that credibility is achieved in two ways, first, by examining the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods and second, by checking interpretations from the same data collection procedure across a number of participants. The use of multiple sources of data collection in qualitative research is
traditionally defined as triangulation (Burns 1995; Cohen et al. 2007; Denzin & Lincoln 1998; Lincoln & Guba 1985). Bogdan and Biklen (1998, p104), however, argue that the broadened meaning of the term has rendered it imprecise and abstract; that it confuses more than clarifies, intimidates more than enlightens and recommend that a researcher should simply describe the rigorous process engaged with rather than attempting to attach a label. This theme is further explored as Janesick (2000 p392) proposes the term crystallisation as a preferable analytic lens as it recognises the many facets of any given approach to the social world as a fact of life.

Regardless of the term applied, the intent is consistent: to develop confidence in the findings of qualitative research through multiple data sources which are analysed and interpreted through careful comparison between and among them.

**Triangulation of Data Sources**

The researcher cross-checked the accuracy of the multiple data sources through the use of triangulation to increase the validity and interpretation of data and to demonstrate commonality of assertions (Stake 1995, p112). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the main criteria of triangulation are credibility, dependability and conformability. Stake (1995) further indicates that triangulation is an effort to see if what we are observing and reporting carries the same meaning under sources in order to shed light on a theme or insight.

**Member Checking**
Member checks and peer debriefing continued to inform and guide the inquiry throughout data collection and analysis. Merriam (1998, p202) argues that checking the interpretations made by the researcher with the participant from whom the data were collected protects the researcher from bias, from finding out what he or she expects to find. Member checking should be both informal, (‘playing back’ the data as the beginning of analysis) and formal, in which participants confirm that the interpretations made by the researcher are plausible and realistic (Lincoln & Guba 1985, p314). Throughout this inquiry, interpretations were regularly checked with each participant as a deeper understanding was reached about their beliefs about teaching.

This study utilised the practice of member checking regularly in an attempt to ensure that interview transcripts and observation field notes taken within focus group meetings and UOW settings were consistent with those intended by the participants. Member checking or respondent validation is the process of returning data collected to informants for their confirmation of accuracy (Angen 2000, p383). According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) member checking is one of the primary strategies used to validate the accuracy of the researcher’s findings (p514).

Member checking also reduced researcher bias over data interpretation and increased the likelihood that such interpretation would be reflective of the participant insights and perspectives. In order to ensure this process the researcher put herself in the position of the participant and regularly asked “how I would feel if someone did to me what I was asking of the participant?” Part of this reflective practice and critical
questioning was about keeping in mind that consideration and thought from the participants’ perspectives is of paramount importance (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

Member checking involved taking the data, interpretations and conclusions back to the participants in order for them to judge the accuracy and credibility of their accounts. Participants were asked also to provide alternative language or interpretations if necessary (Stake 1995). Furthermore, returned interview transcripts and observation field notes doubled as signposts, providing participants with reflections and insight into their learning experiences over the year-long program.

**Peer Debriefing**

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p308) describe peer debriefing as useful in establishing credibility in an inquiry because, as Merriam (1998, p202) previously observed it prevents the researcher from finding out what he or she expects to find, it provides opportunity for emerging hypotheses to be tested, unanswered questions can be identified for further exploration and the researcher is able to clear her mind to focus on the salient information (Lincoln & Guba 1985). In this inquiry, the three mentors had extensive research and teaching experience in Aboriginal education at a tertiary level, enabling the researcher to enter into detailed discussion with them about the collected data and the subsequent analysis (Kervin et al. 2006).

**Conclusion**

A qualitative research methods paradigm was selected for this inquiry because it supported the researcher in her quest to attain rigorous and significant description of the experiences of the seven non-Aboriginal preservice teachers over a one-year
period (Polio 1997, cited in Barnacle 2001, p2). Data were gathered using multiple sources and constant comparative analysis was employed to enable the participants' stories to be heard and understood. Member checking and triangulation were implemented as strategies to analyses to ensure their credibility and trustworthiness for this study. The findings and discussion are presented in the following chapters addressing each of the three research questions respectively.
Chapter 4. Knowledge, Values and Attitudes that Participants bring to the ETTP: Question 1

Results and Discussion

Introduction

To investigate the significant insights of the participants within their participation in the ETTP it was important to understand the initial ideas, beliefs and understandings with which the participants entered the program. This chapter addresses research question 1: *What knowledge, values and attitudes do non-Aboriginal preservice teachers bring to the ETTP?*

Through thematic analysis of the data collected for this question the themes that emerged from the investigation were as follows:

- Gaps in Knowledge and Limited Confidence
- Deficit discourses
- Motivation and Commitment: I genuinely want to make a difference
- Values: Quality Teaching for Aboriginal Students

Due to the confines of this thesis, lengthy narratives have been adapted from the participants’ semi-structured interview transcripts and are presented in italics, interweaving the researcher’s observations and revealing a unique window into the participants’ knowledge, values and attitudes at the beginning of the ETTP.
Pseudonyms identify each of the seven participants and the researcher contextualises their descriptions and experiences for deeper understanding and awareness for the reader.

The data collection sources drawn upon to respond to this question included semi-structured interviews (SSI - guided questions for interview can be found in appendix B); focus groups (FG - sample field notes can be found in Appendix E); email correspondence (EM); participant observations (PO - an observation sample can be found in Appendix H); and informal conversations (IC).

On 15th February 2008 the participants attended a compulsory ETTP orientation-planning day hosted by the NSW DET in their main office in Sydney. The following day, 16th February 2008, a meeting with the preservice teachers was conducted. The researcher was invited to observe the meeting and to introduce the study. This meeting entailed key administrative tasks, as the participants signed cross-institutional enrolment forms for the two specialised Aboriginal education subjects they were required to undertake through ACU, and participants were briefed about the course details and expectations. Throughout this initial meeting the researcher recorded the participants’ conversations in relation to Aboriginal education.

**Socio-cultural Awareness, Gaps in Knowledge and Limited Confidence**

The researcher's initial observations and recordings revealed the participants' awareness of social justice issues. Within these, the participants expressed a mixture of reactions and feelings as they entered into the initial session of the ETTP. As
example, Bessie recognised the mortality rates and the over-representation of Aboriginal people in incarceration stating:

\[
\text{… it was not fair life expectancy is 17 years less for some Aboriginal people, and that over-representation of Aboriginal people in the prison system is unacceptably high (IC 16/2/08).}
\]

The participants discussed the links between Aboriginal students’ inadequate engagement within the schooling systems, which later would lead to greater risk of socio-economic marginalisation, shorter life expectancy and higher incarceration rates for Aboriginal Australians. These issues were of concern to the prospective teachers who disclosed that Aboriginal students who were engaged in school were less likely to be at risk of detrimental social determinates.

Tennille disclosed that her experiences of going to school with Aboriginal peers raised questions for her about language difference and inclusivity. Tennille sensitively recognised the important link between Aboriginal English and identity and how as a teacher she could respond and be inclusive of diverse language:

\[
\text{… I went to school with Aboriginal friends and I remember that I wondered why they would use different language for some English words. I have read that it’s hard on people’s identity if you are constantly correcting the way they talk and it’s something I want to get a handle on so I am not doing that in classrooms (IC 16/2/08)}
\]

According to Eades (2004) Aboriginal English is the first language for most Aboriginal people in Australia. There are many varieties of Aboriginal English
spoken throughout NSW each with its own vocabulary, grammar and meanings. The researcher sensed that participants were aware that Aboriginal English was a highly politicised area, in which unequal power existed and played out in the classroom settings between Standard English and Aboriginal English (Harrison 2010; Eades 2004).

As the participants continued to talk with each other, Alicia and Katie both expressed the significance of having an opportunity to gain a more informed understanding of Aboriginal English through their participation in the ETTP. Alicia described:

... I have definitely identified Aboriginal English as an area we want to learn more about and approach better as we don’t feel confident as to where it comes into play within education ... we know we have to teach standard English because that’s what you need to communicate in jobs, but also we were talking about it in a different subject we learnt that Aboriginal English is another dialect and some students will come to school speaking Aboriginal English. I am unsure on how to incorporate Aboriginal English, so that’s something I am not confident with, and hope to develop (IC 16/2/08).

Katie added that she was … keen to develop [her] understanding of Aboriginal English and its place in literacy (IC 16/2/08).

Participants expressed their desires to acquire more strategies on how they might genuinely recognise and incorporate the use of Aboriginal English in their classrooms. Each of the participants expressed that they wanted to be confident and clear on how
to be inclusive of Aboriginal English as it related to a positive self-identity for Aboriginal students.

Following-on from this initial meeting, the researcher conducted individual semi-structured interviews with each of the participants. The first questions posed included: *what do you think the purpose of the ETTP is?* This question was posed to explore the prospective teacher’s understanding and role in the NSW DET ETTP policy of improving outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Tennille suggested that preservice teachers with a real interest in learning Aboriginal education were targeted by the NSW DET … *we need to get preservice teachers trained in Aboriginal education who want to be in that area and to give them extra support* (SSI 9/4/08). Sally’s comments revealed some understanding and appreciation that the ETTP was aimed at teachers who were genuinely interested in working with Aboriginal students. She said:

> NSW DET policies are trying to target non-Aboriginal teachers that are interested and want to learn the skills to work effectively with Aboriginal students rather than just do-gooders who may be untrained or lack specialised skills (SSI 2/4/08).

The participants continued to acknowledge that the NSW DET was making intensive efforts toward educating preservice teachers to work effectively with Aboriginal students and that unless this happened, little would change for Aboriginal students within the school system. Sally shared:
… The NSW DET has identified Indigenous student outcomes as an area of crisis … those outcomes will not change unless you have people trained in the forefront who are working toward new ideas (SSI 9/4/08).

Bessie acknowledged that preservice teachers had limited training within their preservice teaching courses and the ETTP targeted those who were interested and open to learning in Aboriginal education. She stated:

… a lot of teachers are coming through the system without having much training … having worked with Indigenous families and students so to target some people who are enthusiastic and want to get into it and get their hands dirty and really learn and go out into school and spread that energy to teachers who are already out there (SSI 2/4/08).

Participants' insights into the purpose of the NSW DET ETTP were clearly articulated suggesting that the participants were aware of the NSW policies’ broader intended outcomes for Aboriginal students across NSW schools.

While these prospective teachers demonstrated an understanding of the NSW DET policy requirements, they also indicated to the researcher that they had limited prior knowledge or experience with teaching or working with Aboriginal students, and reported feeling a lack of confidence about entering into unfamiliar cross-cultural settings and were unsure of who to contact and even where to start when it came to the local Aboriginal community. As previously discussed the literature consistently reports that teacher education programs did not adequately prepare preservice teachers
to successfully deal with the challenges of teaching and working within socio-
culturally diverse communities (Allard & Santoro 2006; Partington 2000; NSW DET
2004; Herbert 2002).

To further address the first research question, the researcher aimed to capture how
each of the participants felt as they embarked upon the ETTP. Participants were asked
by the researcher to rate their confidence on a scale with each participant confirming
that they had very little confidence. Bessie shared:

\[\text{... I feel anxious going into unknown environments and not sure whether I will}
be accepted as a non-Aboriginal person; you really just got to try and be open}
and confident even though inside you’re just screaming out to be accepted (FG}
16/4/08).\]

Stacey demonstrated sensitivity and pointed out that she was not sure how to behave
within a cross-cultural environment, as she did not want to offend Aboriginal people:

\[\text{... I am unsure of even where to start with the cross-cultural immersion}
activities. I don’t want to feel like I’m intruding and taking something for}
nothing from Aboriginal people, they have been studied enough over the years.}
I want to come across as genuine and wanting to learn (FG 16/4/08). Bessie
acknowledged that she … hasn’t known too many Aboriginal people before
and I feel like you should take individuals as they come, just like you would a}
non-Aboriginal person (SSI Bessie 2/4/08).\]

Although Stacey admitted to feeling nervous about starting the ETTP, she asked for
the researcher's advice during her interview:
I am feeling a little nervous. I guess I was hoping you may have some extra tips or information to help me. I'm spending the next couple of days researching; there is so much information! Do you have any insight into what I should really be focusing on at this stage of the program? (SSI 26/3/08).

The prospective teachers' lack of experience with Aboriginal people are important findings, and are consistent with the literature that states that many preservice teachers have limited opportunity to engage with diversity in their preservice teacher courses, contributing to their feelings of anxiety. Furthermore, it was interesting that each of the participants revealed that they had little confidence commencing the ETTP; this cultural self awareness is an essential competency as it takes courage to acknowledge one’s limitations. This also indicates those prospective teachers are aware they need to seek and examine the world from the vantage points of their Aboriginal students’ worldviews which may differ from their own.

**Deficit Discourses**

When participants were asked to share their understandings about any social or cultural issues impacting on Aboriginal students’ learning outcomes, in early observations and recording, their discourses about Aboriginality appeared at times to be deficient. According to Harrison (2010) deficit discourses can indicate that non-Aboriginal performance and achievement is positioned as the desired norm or standards against which all groups are measured. Further, Howard (2010) suggests that a standard of excellence should be established based on an informed criterion, with particular attention to the knowledge, skills and cultural codes that students are expected to master (p6).
According to Harrison (2010) perceptions of deficit and disadvantage have characterised and constrained the historical and contemporary relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. This position is supported by other researchers such as Sarra (2009), Hollingsworth (1998) and Fletcher (1989). Harrison (2010) argues that most of the current discourse in Aboriginal education falls within a deficit model which has the power to position people in a negative place (p9). Further, current government policies of Closing the Gap on Aboriginal Disadvantage (MCEETYA 2010; Australia, Parliament 2009) send key messages that have become ingrained, that Aboriginal students need to be bought up to a non-Aboriginal standard to be equal.

During the discussion at the ETTP orientation-planning day (16/02/08), Bessie acknowledged, “often social and cultural issues are intertwined and that frequently Aboriginality is associated with disadvantage …”. Tracey asserted that the ETTP would “test my capabilities when teaching Indigenous students”. Bessie expected the ETTP would develop her “… understandings of social and cultural issues and seeing the disadvantage will be important to my professional development” while Stacey demonstrated a similar perception to Bessie, commenting: “I hope I get placed in a school where there are students with disadvantaged backgrounds … that’s where I want to be …”. Tracey suggested that she was “… keen to improve attendance levels” and Sally identified that “… if you have Aboriginal students whose home lives are really bad … then you can counteract that with bringing in role models who can provide them with a different perspective.” Alicia acknowledged the diversity that existed amongst the socio-economic circumstances of Aboriginal Australians: “I
know some of them are from disadvantaged backgrounds whereas some are from quite wealthy families.”

Howard (2010) suggests that researchers, policy makers and educationalists need to shift away from the dichotomy of black and white in its analysis of closing the achievement gap, as such discourse perpetuates negativity and misrepresents countless numbers of Aboriginal students who may be classified as low achievers by traditional standards, and who are in fact often some of the most talented, intellectually gifted and creative students who happen also to have overcome barriers of historical marginalisation and systematic exclusion from educational opportunities (Closing the Gap on Aboriginal Disadvantage, MCEETYA 2010).

**Motivation and Commitment; I Genuinely Want to Make a Difference**

Throughout the initial meeting on the 16/2/08 the researcher observed participants’ genuine commitment and motivation to improve the learning outcomes of Aboriginal students in NSW primary schools. In order to further investigate the participants’ commitment to making a difference in Aboriginal education the researcher followed up with semi-structured interviews to gain a deeper insight into the prospective teacher’s motivation for working with Aboriginal students.

Katie disclosed to the researcher that she had already been selected and targeted as a third-year graduate for a permanent teaching placement by the NSW DET and had declined this offer; she explained that the ETTP was important as her “… goal is to
work with Aboriginal students” (SSI 27/2/08). Some of the participants identified that learning to model effective anti-racism education within NSW DET schools was critical to their participation in the ETTP. Alicia shared that she wanted to develop leadership skills and inspire others in anti-racism education:

… we can then show and role-model to others in the teaching profession how to be effective in Aboriginal education (SSI 2/4/08).

Katie identified that the limited training in Aboriginal education so far within the teacher education program motivated her to undertake the ETTP scholarship:

I don’t know enough yet about Aboriginal education and this program will help me to become more of a specialist and work in the area that I am passionate about (SSI 27/2/08).

Alicia revealed that throughout the ETTP it was important that she remain “open minded to help bridge her learning gap” (FG 19/3/08). Tracey asserted a similar ideal in that she wanted to be “... warm, friendly, open ... approachable and want to genuinely help and genuinely want to be there” (FG 19/3/08). While Bessie claimed that teaching Aboriginal students was more than just a profession to her: “I’m not just doing this for a job to get paid; you have to be and show genuine interest” (FG 19/3/08).

Tracey shared that she was inspired to continue her learning journey in Aboriginal education because of an elective subject she had completed in the first year of her degree called ‘Introduction to Aboriginal Australia’:
I was inspired by an earlier Aboriginal studies subject I had taken as part of my undergraduate award which motivated me to go into this area (SSI 9/4/08).

Bessie explained why she believed she was selected to undertake the ETTP:

... the NSW DET Policy directives, were a driving force behind selection as they wanted teachers who have a particular set of attitudes and motivation for teaching Aboriginal students (SSI 9/4/08).

Stacey claimed that social justice was critical to her own teaching philosophy and felt more motivated and inspired to work with students who were vulnerable within the schooling system:

... I am more passionate about working with Aboriginal kids who are marginalised and disadvantaged (SSI 9/4/08).

Tennille described that for her and Sally, growing up in a South Coast community where there was a significant Aboriginal population, provided them with cross-cultural experiences that motivated them to apply to work with Aboriginal students:

... We grew up adjacent to a large Aboriginal community along the South Coast so we actually felt comfortable entering into schools with Aboriginal kids (SSI 27/2/08).

Each of the participants convincingly expressed a genuine commitment and awareness of socially-just educational outcomes. Participants also demonstrated that they personally took responsibility, along with the NSW DET, to address equitable...
educational outcomes. This finding was consistent with the literature, suggesting that educators who were open to re-think their own priorities, personal value systems and way of seeing the world in order to make a difference for Aboriginal student outcomes possessed the more important characteristics (Sarra 2009, 1998; Lingard 2006).

The initial interviews highlighted that an individual’s choice to undertake an intensive Aboriginal education training program was a significant personal characteristic suggesting that participants valued and wanted to facilitate change through gaining skills, knowledge, and socially-just education practices. Furthermore, the data not only revealed their desire to learn themselves, but also to model and inspire their peers in effective cross-cultural education.

**Value Quality Teaching for Aboriginal Students**

Throughout the semi-structured interviews the researcher asked the participants to share what they valued as educationalists and how this might have impacted on Aboriginal student learning in their classrooms. While their insights varied, each of the participants referred to the NSW Quality Teaching Framework as a key resource, integral to their educational values, skills and knowledge. Alicia shared:

*Aboriginal education has not been compulsory, until this year at UOW. Good teaching also requires the learning in the classroom to be relevant. This is reflected within the quality teaching discussion paper which advocates for learning to take place there must be intellectual quality, significance and quality within the learning environment. Without having an understanding of the history and diversity of Aboriginal cultures it makes it difficult for teachers*
to be able to make learning significant. High expectations are also essential for students to stay motivated and achieve at the highest possible level (SSI 12/5/08).

Sally suggested that reflective practice, engagement and feeling positive were the areas which she valued:

… Quality teaching is a rewarding feeling and having students engaged in my activities which comes from reflection and evaluation on my previous (hideous) lessons (SSI 12/5/08).

Bessie acknowledged a number of key components including:

… communication, explicitness, originality, being authentic and learning about Indigenous students’ home lives their culture and language and to incorporate that background information into your teaching program … you can look at the different events like NAIDOC week and Cultural week and bring those into the classroom; don’t close them out (FG 12/5/08).

Stacey disclosed that becoming an expert in Aboriginal education was not the point of the ETTP. She commented: “I don't want to assume that just because I’ve done this scholarship that I know everything because I won’t know everything as teaching is life-long learning” (SSI 12/5/08).

Feeling like a competent practitioner who is inclusive of Aboriginal students’ learning needs was identified by Tracey as the most significant value:
… I will be able to develop my skills that I already have within the classroom so that I can cater for Aboriginal students and to do it well so that they feel valued and supported and inspired to want to learn ... you will never really master everything in teaching, there will always be room to learn (SSI 12/5/08).

Tennille highlighted that attendance levels was an indicator of quality teaching “ … a good teacher is someone who can improve attendance levels of Aboriginal kids” (SSI 12/5/08). Katie and Stacey valued engaging Aboriginal students in learning, respecting and being sensitive toward the students’ cultural backgrounds.

Katie shared that she valued interpersonal skills, while also having high expectations of Aboriginal students in her description of the teacher she aimed to be:

... someone who is warm, friendly, open and who is not going to stand out the front and profess to know everything. Someone who is approachable and doesn’t single students out for not knowing and who wants to genuinely help and genuinely wants to be there ... having high expectations of the kids but at the same time have an approachable nature so that the kids know that they can achieve what you expect from them (SSI 12/5/08).

While the participants’ values varied, each referred to the NSW Quality Teaching Framework as an integral educational framework for teaching Aboriginal students. Participants identified key elements of intellectual quality, quality learning environment and the significance and relevance to the learner's experiences as core principles and practices that are important for effective cross-cultural education.
Hargreaves (1989) suggests the teacher's role is to help re-define what is to count as cultural capital, which recognises and rewards practical, aesthetic and personal and social achievements, as well as intellectual and academic ones, and which combines rigour and relevance in the curriculum for all pupils, instead of offering rigour to some and relevance to others (Hargreaves 1989, cited in Aveling & Hatchel 2007, p3).

**Conclusion**

The data analysis in response to research question 1 revealed the complexity of the participants’ initial knowledge, values and attitudes in relation to Aboriginal education as they embarked on their 2008 ETTP experience.

The participants in this study were a selected group of preservice non-Aboriginal students who indicated their interest in and dedication to Aboriginal education. From the beginning of the study, the participants expressed their understanding of the sensitivity of the matter, their strong awareness of the issues of social justice and their passionate feelings about equality in Aboriginal education.

While the participants demonstrated their understanding of the issues and the NSW DET (2004) policy requirements, and were aware of the NSW policies’ broader intended outcomes for Aboriginal students across NSW schools, they also indicated that they had limited prior knowledge or experience of teaching Aboriginal students and even less so in working with Aboriginal communities. As a result, they described lack of confidence when entering cross-cultural settings and approaching local Aboriginal communities throughout the ETTP experience. Their lack of specific
knowledge and prior experiences contributed to their feelings of anxiety. This important finding was supported by literature, which suggested that teacher education programs still did not adequately prepare preservice teachers to working within socially and culturally diverse populations of Aboriginal learners in their classrooms.

All the participants displayed genuine commitment and motivation to improving the learning outcomes of Aboriginal students in NSW primary schools. They expressed their desires to learn specific strategies of ‘making a difference’ in their classrooms. For example, they were interested in learning more practical strategies on how they might be inclusive of Aboriginal English as it related to a positive self-identity for Aboriginal students.

An interesting finding was that in spite of he participants’ genuine commitment to making a difference in Aboriginal education, in early observations and recording, they displayed some deficit discourses about Aboriginality. While some students acknowledged the diversity that exists amongst the socio-economic backgrounds of Aboriginal people, others perceived an Aboriginal background as that of disadvantage and misfortune. The theoretical framework of this study, the Cultural Interface (Nakata 2003) allows to be seen the phenomena of cross-cultural learning experiences as both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people negotiating and learning within cross-cultural contexts.

As the participants embarked on their ETTP journey with various understandings, feelings and attitudes, the aim of the next chapter is to follow the most valuable insights and experiences that they encountered in their undertaking of the program.
Chapter 5. Most Significant Learning Experiences in the ETTP: Research Question 2
Findings and Discussion

Introduction
To investigate the most valuable insights of seven non-Aboriginal preservice teachers undertaking the Enhanced Teacher Training Program (ETTP), this chapter addresses research question 2: *What learning experiences do non-Aboriginal preservice teachers identify as most significant while participating in the ETTP?*

Thematic analysis of the data collected for this question allowed the researcher to identify the most significant experiences identified by the participants related to major components of the ETTP:

- Cross-Cultural Mentoring
- Cross-Cultural Immersion
- Supportive Networks
- Reflective Practice
- Internship
- Peer Support
The data collection sources drawn upon to respond to this question included semi-structured interviews (SSI), focus groups (FG); email correspondence (EM); documents analysis such as assignment samples and blog entries (DA - samples of the tasks and assessment criteria can be found in Appendices D and F); participant observations (PO); and informal conversations (IC).

Similar to the previous chapter, lengthy narratives have been adapted from the participants’ individual transcripts and are presented in italics, inter-woven with the researcher’s observations and revealing insights into non-Aboriginal preservice teachers’ significant learning experiences within their participation in the ETTP. The participant’s descriptions and experiences of the ETTP were synthesised into key themes and are discussed in-depth. Pseudonyms identify each of the seven participants and the researcher contextualises their significant learning experiences for deeper understanding and awareness for the reader.

**Cross-cultural Mentoring**

The UOW ETTP coordinator invited four mentors to work face-to-face with the prospective teachers throughout their first session of the program. The mentors selected were tertiary-qualified and had extensive experience in Aboriginal education. Further, two of these mentors were highly respected custodians with wide kinship ties and lived experiences within the Illawarra and South Coast communities. The three mentors who were also employees of the University of Wollongong were available to meet with the preservice teachers on a weekly basis at the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre during the participants' first semester of study.
Weekly mentoring meetings were scheduled, and progressively these provided a safe place for participants and their mentors to discuss a range of sensitive issues in-depth. The NSW Board of Studies (BOS) (2003) recognised that social and political issues such as Aboriginal deaths in custody, the stolen generations, native title, racism and social dislocation can be difficult and particularly sensitive issues to speak about. However, in this inquiry the researcher observed that as the relationships and trust developed, the participating preservice teachers were more comfortable and confident to pose questions to gain a deeper understanding of complex and sensitive issues. Further, the participants seemed relieved that they were not targeted as racist or even as ignorant.

Through their mentors, the participants were introduced to wider networks and were provided with multiple entry points into the local Aboriginal community that otherwise may have been inaccessible for the non-Aboriginal participants.

Katie was introduced by her mentor to a wider network of Aboriginal people, and described:

… my mentor was open in introducing me to other members of the Aboriginal community. Doing this let me personally see the dynamics of the community and to start to build links within that community. A number of the people I was introduced to provided great insight for me into the education for Aboriginal students (SSI 6/6/08)

Tennille recollects that the mentoring experience instilled in her the confidence to initiate cross-cultural relationships more easily:
… sitting down with, and listening and sharing stories, with our mentors meant that the transition was easier when building up relationships with local Aboriginal people and services. Also genuine relationships will mean you gain more cooperation and support which is critical for our teaching in schools with high Aboriginal populations (DA, EDUT422 blog entry).

Through their mentors, the participants gained a broader range of diverse histories and cultures, allowing them opportunities to experience a range of Aboriginal people’s lived experiences. Sally acknowledged the value of having access to a variety of points of view:

… one of the key factors in the success of our mentoring relationship was the mentors’ openness to discuss any issue and often did so, including their personal experiences. By working with the three mentors it gave me a variety of perspectives on the issues facing Aboriginal people and students (DA, EDUT422 blog entry).

Alicia suggests regular meetings between mentors and prospective teachers were practical, given the constraints of full-time studying and work commitments:

… it’s quite difficult to find opportunities for face-to-face contact throughout the university semester as we are all busy, including the mentors. It was much easier to meet our mentors on campus at scheduled times. I’m grateful due to our busy schedules this made the relationship building process easier (DA, EDUT422 blog entry).
Furthermore Stacey observed that having opportunities outside of formal learning processes significantly impacted on her cross-cultural knowledge and understanding:

... during our weekly mentoring group meeting I was exposed to so much insider information that you could never learn in a lecture theatre or from reading a text, all of which enhances my knowledge as a teacher of Aboriginal students (DA, EDUT422 blog entry).

The ETTP involved the participation of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people negotiating and learning within cross-cultural contexts. These contexts involved mentoring relationships and immersion within diverse socio-cultural communities within the Illawarra, NSW. The theoretical framework of the Cultural Interface entwined both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people negotiating knowledge systems and worldviews within intercultural dialogues. Through the cross-cultural dialogues, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people were expected to negotiate knowledge, and through these exchanges people become more informed and are better positioned to act upon cross-cultural meaning (Nakata 2003).

The Cultural Interface framework provided a space that allowed people to enter into multiple understandings, enabling individuals to identify, and deal with, subtle cross-cultural barriers. Through the mentoring relationships participants appeared to become more aware of how to recognise cultural custodians and prominent families, and address key elders. In a focus group meeting Sally asked her mentor “… is it a sign of respect to say ‘aunty’ and ‘uncle’ when referring to Aboriginal elders?”
Seeking clarification about protocols from their mentors was a significant finding as appropriate ways of behaving and showing respect involved participants developing their understanding of the standing and status of certain Aboriginal people (BOS 2003).

Tennille explored the significant difference between a Welcome to Country and an Acknowledgement of Country with her mentors:

... I asked my mentors to share the difference between a Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country and what the meaning behind this custom was. I learnt that non-Aboriginal people should not conduct a Welcome to Country, but it is respectful to acknowledge the land and the custodians when in certain settings so I can make sure I get this right in the school assemblies. (FG 30/4/08).

Alicia acknowledged the importance of observing protocols:

... protocols within Aboriginal communities are another aspect you must be aware of – this ranges from knowing procedures for a welcome or acknowledgement of country (EDUT422 blog entry).

Katie makes the link of how kinship obligations impact on Aboriginal student attendance at school:

... cultural protocols can even extend to you having an understanding that Aboriginal students sometimes have obligations to family that may override their commitment to coming to school. As a teacher you need to be aware of these issues and liaise with the community to keep informed. For example, if
children have a significant period of absenteeism it may be for a legitimate reason. This could be in the event of a death in which the family may have to travel long distances to attend funerals. I also became aware that in some communities it is inappropriate to mention the name of the deceased or show a photograph. (EDUT422 blog entry)

Sally highlights that to better cater for Aboriginal students within the classroom teachers must consistently demonstrate respect for local Aboriginal cultural values “...protocols need to be considered as well which may involve being introduced to the elders by someone you know” (DA EDUT422). Participants’ understandings and sensitivity towards such customs were reinforced through meeting a diverse range of Aboriginal people and communities throughout the ETTP.

The mentors reinforced that genuine engagement with Aboriginal community members in the early stages is more about listening than about talking; this was reiterated by Tracey in an interview when she stated:

… the mentors talked about the importance of building the trust and respect of Aboriginal communities wherever you go and teach. It is critical that you take time to build your relationships, and this may take many years in some communities and building relationships with your students’ parents and caregivers must be a priority. (SSI 26/3/08).

Through her mentors, Bessie identified key skills she needed in order to build effective relationships “ … the mentors stressed the importance of reciprocity, respect
and being genuine in our involvement with Indigenous people and communities” (FG 26/3/08).

One of the mentors on the 2008 ETTP was a classroom teacher who had full-time teaching commitments in a school. This meant that she was unable to attend the weekly meetings held at the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre during session one of the ETTP. It was therefore her mentee's (Alicia) responsibility to visit the mentor at agreed times, highlighting the importance of this mentoring relationship:

… I was fortunate enough to meet a very inspirational Aboriginal woman who has agreed to take on the role of being my mentor for the year. We would meet when we could to keep up-to-date with what is happening in the community and plan and discuss immersion experiences. Above everything else she has provided me with a vital link to the community – which happens to be where I am currently working. She has created many opportunities for me to get involved in the community and has been there to answer my endless amount of questions. Through meeting with her I have gained a better understanding of the significance of transition phases in schooling for Aboriginal students, the challenges of getting parent involvement and politics within Aboriginal communities. Together we have attended events such as the Aboriginal Education Conference, parents’ advisory committee and AECG meetings (DA EDUT 422).

Mentors shared first-hand accounts of their own personal lives and cultural insights with the preservice teachers, thus providing participants with a context of modern day Aboriginal life. Mentors shared their childhood experiences growing up as older
children in larger families and the responsibilities they had in providing childcare for younger siblings, and how this is still strongly valued in larger Aboriginal families.

The dialogue also explored the issue of Aboriginal students being gifted and talented, with one of the mentors sharing the story about being awarded a prestigious scholarship in an elite private school, as he was recognised as academically gifted and talented. As a result of this opportunity he was able to pursue a commerce degree and secure employment at the University and with the NSW DET.

The opportunity to have access to, and build, genuine relationships with Aboriginal mentors provided significant leaning experiences, both personally and professionally for the participants. The aim of the cross-cultural immersion experience was: to broaden the participants’ knowledge of the socio-cultural context of Aboriginal communities as well as their expectation of teachers; to further their understanding of the role of Aboriginal organisations in the area and the central role they play in the context of cultural maintenance; to develop their skills for engaging in meaningful consultation and partnerships with Aboriginal people and their potential impact on learning; and lastly, to provide opportunities to reflect on their own personal socialisation in regard to Aboriginal people and cultures and confront attitudes that act as barriers to effective cross-cultural engagement.

Throughout cross-cultural dialogue participants and mentors were able to explore their socio-cultural lens and understand how to suspend their own views in order to make a valid space available for a diversity of lived experiences and viewpoints. Importantly, participants also became aware that Aboriginal students were socio-
cultural agents who brought to the classroom a set of values, behaviours and attitudes that governed their interactions and learning expectations, including what they might be interested in learning.

The cross-cultural mentoring component of the ETTP was identified by the participants as critical to developing and inspiring their competence and confidence. Progressively, the dialogue between the mentors and prospective teachers proved to be a meaningful reciprocal relationship, and such intimate dialogue might not have occurred in larger classroom settings, as emphasis on genuine and open communication seemed to facilitate the relationships.

Subtle cultural protocols can be difficult to contextualise for participants who have had limited cross-cultural engagement. However participants gained an appreciation of these behaviours through first-hand experiences. Participants’ understandings and sensitivity towards such customs were reinforced through meeting with and exposure to a diverse range of Aboriginal people and communities. Furthermore, mentors encouraged the participants in establishing genuine relationships with the local Illawarra Aboriginal community, as they provided time and knowledge-sharing.

For example Kennedy, Hoynes and Pratt (2010) in their work “A Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country Ceremony” outline the respect for the ongoing relationship that Aboriginal people have with their lands and highlight the significance of Country, Culture, Journey and Connectedness from an Aboriginal worldview. Kennedy et al. (2010) advocate that non-Aboriginal people need a richer and more contextualised meaning of the Welcome to and Acknowledgement of
Country customs and the key concepts that enable people to better understand the meaning of these customs and protocols.

According to Kennedy et al. (2010), Country refers to one's attachment to the natural physical surroundings, while kinship is a system that allows individuals and groups to define how they relate to each other. Culture for Aboriginal people in the Illawarra is represented through art, song, dance, communal life, language, storytelling history, laughter, humour and survival. Connectedness is what binds Aboriginal people to their country and ancestral lands (Kennedy et al. 2010, p22). Kennedy was also a mentor on the 2008 ETTP and reinforced to the mentees that genuine engagement in the early stages with Aboriginal community members is more about listening than it is about talking.

Further, the evaluation of the Enhanced Teacher Training Program by Long, Cavanagh and Labone (2009) identified that being Aboriginal does not necessarily provide any individual with the understanding or skills to guide others and recommended that specific mentor training between mentors and mentees is crucial in developing a constructive relationship. Findings from this report also suggest that a lengthy period of mentoring over the full academic year, and even extending into the first year of teaching, would allow for a meaningful, working relationship to develop (p38).

According to the ETTP coordinator a crucial aspect to the 2008 ETTP was carefully selecting mentors with the knowledge, skills and community networks to maximise participants’ cross-cultural learning experiences. The four mentors selected had
tertiary qualifications, extensive experience in Aboriginal education, and were highly respected within the wider kinship circles and Illawarra and South Coast communities.

The research of Partington et al. (2000) highlights that non-Indigenous teachers need to attain the kinds of understanding necessary to implement appropriate schooling, and that this requires more than just teaching strategies; non-Aboriginal teachers need to have developed an intimate awareness of the influence of history, culture, family, oppression, poverty and powerlessness that have shaped the lives of Aboriginal people over the past two centuries.

**Cross-cultural Immersion**

The participants’ cross-cultural immersion experiences were conducted within the Illawarra and South Coast Aboriginal communities, and were closely guided and introduced by the ETTP mentors. The Wodi Wodi are the language group custodians occupying the Illawarra region of the Dharawal nation, along with Aboriginal people from outside this language group who participate across all sectors of the Illawarra and assert their political, spiritual and cultural identities, through connection to the land, stories, ceremony, hunting and gathering, while also participating in every aspect of Australian society, working in the service industry, sports, arts, education, employment, health and justice.

Participants were expected to practise skills in establishing meaningful two-way relationships. Local field trips were organised by the mentors, including visits to the
local Aboriginal Land Council and the Sandon Point Tent Embassy site, as well as the Aboriginal children’s early childhood centre, Ngoogaleek, the Aboriginal Cultural Keeping Place, the Illawarra Aboriginal Medical Centre and the Wollongong Aboriginal Cultures Gallery. In addition, it was arranged for them to attend local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group meetings. Outside of these organised field trips, prospective teachers initiated further contact with Aboriginal communities throughout the year-long program, where possible. Participants were also required to attend the Aboriginal Homework Centre one afternoon a week to tutor primary and secondary school students.

Initially, as the participants commenced their cross-cultural immersion, the researcher observed and recorded their feelings of anxiety, which included a lack of confidence at entering unknown territory, however it seemed that through their experiences with their mentors and immersion experiences, participants gained more understanding about their fears and recognised the skills needed to overcome them.

Bessie shared:

… some times I can proactively immerse myself into specific settings while at other times I feel it’s important to wait and listen. Through working with our mentors and listening to some of my peers’ experiences, I learnt it’s important to be patient and respectful in cross-cultural contexts as you are learning and no-one likes meeting a know-it-all (DA, EDUT 422 blog entry).

Furthermore, Bessie revealed that being non-Aboriginal amongst the larger cultural group provided her with experience of being in a minority status:
… I don’t like the thought of offending people so through the ETTP program I have gained a greater understanding of the cultural protocols that build better relationships with Aboriginal people. As a result I am more confident to approach and get to know people; also being the only white person amongst a majority of Aboriginal people sort of puts the shoe on the other foot and you begin to feel how isolating that can be (DA, EDUT422).

**Field Trips**

The mentors arranged a field trip for the participants to the Sandon Point Tent Embassy to meet with local custodians and activists. Alicia described her experience:

… our scholarship group was taken to the Sandon Point Tent Embassy where I learnt a great deal about land rights, amongst other things. The Tent Embassy is an Aboriginal burial site. The hospitality of the three men that were at the site was amazing. They gave us a detailed history of the area and its significance. I was amazed how hard men and women have fought for entitlement, protection and preservation of their sites (DA, EDUT422 blog entry).

The prospective teachers’ insights revealed increased awareness of the political and cultural significance of country. The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group’s (2008) research project into the perception and beliefs of Aboriginal parents, community members and teachers on what constitutes teacher quality and its significance for Aboriginal student outcomes, highlights that community members’ cultural and real-life knowledge cannot be under-estimated in terms of the potential it has to make a difference for teachers and schools (p21). Katie’s comments described
her surprise regarding the barriers that local custodians must overcome to protect heritage sites against property developers and local councils:

… the visit to Sandon Point has made me aware of just how difficult the fight for land can be and how it impacts on whole communities. In this visit I learnt a lot about Aboriginal spirituality in terms of totems and sacred fire. I left this significant site with a better understanding of how issues such as land rights impact on Aboriginal people today. Also I gained more insight into the other side of the whole Sandon Point controversy that has been portrayed by our local media (EM 30/4/08).

Tracey expressed a reaction similar to Katie’s as she described:

… I had no idea that Aboriginal land councils worked in partnership with developers, local/state governments and the national parks and wildlife service to negotiate development applications and site protection. Land councils have significant power to lobby on behalf of local native title and land rights (IC 30/4/08).

The field trip appeared to enable Sally to better understand the cultural significance of an earlier experience she had had. She recounted:

… a few years back down at Red Rock near Currarong, about 25mins out of Nowra, an older Indigenous woman was trying to reclaim Aboriginal land and make a point to rangers (I'm not exactly sure why but I'll try and find out). Anyway she had a set-up a bit like Sandon Point (FG 30/4/08).
Other participants learnt about the significance of middens. Middens are classified as an occupation site where Aboriginal people’s remains of meals were left. Middens thus represent a blueprint for sustainable harvesting of coastal resources, but also are an archaeological treasure trove. Oyster and cockle shells, as well as animal bones are most commonly found in middens within the Illawarra. Some of these middens contain artefacts and tools made from stone, bone or shell (Korff n.d.).

... the insights I gained from the visit to the tent embassy was profound. I learnt there were several large middens that were signs of ancient camping grounds. All bricks contained on the site are collected as they contain pieces of heritage from middens (FG 30/4/08).

Bessie identified a poignant learning experience that enabled her to gain a local custodian’s world view of native title. She described:

... the political history of Sandon Point, including the support given by local non-Aboriginal community members to have the sacred land protected from million-dollar housing estates and the developers, has been such a worthwhile learning experience. Even being on site and hearing about the land claims was something I will never forget and has given me a whole new perspective on Aboriginal people protecting their sacred sites (EM 30/4/08).

Tennille’s awareness of the timeline of Aboriginal history was captured in the statement “... the elder shared how old Aboriginal sites were in Australia yet they were not given the recognition or protection that they deserve” (EM 30/4/08).
Through visiting the tent embassy site and hearing first-hand custodians’ perspectives of contemporary struggles, participants gained meaningful experiences and understanding of aspects and significance of country from an Aboriginal world view.

Through their field trips, participants overcame cross-cultural barriers and fears and developed confidence to enter diverse community settings where their exposure to Aboriginal social cultural and political world views deepened their understanding of Aboriginal children’s lives outside the classroom setting. The field trips enriched, challenged and made accessible opportunities that may not have been possible without the introductions and networks of the mentors.

**Attending NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) Inc. meetings**

One of the ETTP mentors held the position of chairperson of the local Wollongong AECG. The NSW AECG is an Aboriginal community-controlled, independent, not-for-profit advocacy group which promotes respect, empowerment and self-determination. The AECG’s underpinning goal is the process of collaborative consultation, and believes it is integral to achieving equity in education. The AECG advocates cultural affirmation, integrity and the pursuit of equality to ensure that the unique and diverse identity of Aboriginal people and students is recognised and valued in schools of the NSW DET (AECG 2004).
Participants were invited to attend the local AECG meetings. The following insights highlighted the significance of attending this meeting by some of the participants: “… the AECG included discussions on issues such as attendance, Aboriginal student health, and strategies for building relationships between Aboriginal communities and school” (DA EDUT432).

Tracey identified the AECG as a key resource to support their teaching as she explained:

when I begin teaching next year the AECG will be one of my first points of contact. There were a number of people at the meeting with expertise in Aboriginal education and seemed to be happy to provide guidance (DA EDUT432).

Alicia gained information about funding for specific programs and described:

I saw the benefit of working with the local AECG to implement initiatives to improve the education of Aboriginal students’ learning outcomes. The AEA explained the time factor involved with making an application and the difficulty in the evaluation of the programs for funding opportunities (DA EDUT432).

Bessie observed:

AECG, the peak consultative body, will be willing to work in partnership with the teacher who must realise that especially in a remote area your job as a teacher does not end at the classroom door (DA EDUT432).
Sally gained insights and was able to make links with the experiences of the other educators in attendance at the meeting, drawing comparisons on Aboriginal students’ preferred learning styles:

… when I attended the AECG meeting, a discussion took place about keeping lessons relevant and engaging for Aboriginal students, so they want to go to school. I was able to link this to the four Aboriginal students in my internship school as I had noticed how they were mostly engaged in their learning, when activities were hands-on or group-based (DA EDUT432).

Tennille observed and acknowledged that it was best to remain neutral and to avoid factionalism:

… AECG meetings can be very political. In any future dealings with the AECG I will always look to avoid engaging in conflict and remain focused on my reasons for being at the meeting (DA EDUT422).

Generally the preservice teachers identified key resources and peak bodies such as the AECG as important in providing them with increased awareness, support and guidance for working in Aboriginal education.

**Homework Centre**

The homework centres facilitated Aboriginal students’ socialising within a cultural space that is different from the structured western schooling systems. The UOW’s Dean of Education, Professor Paul Chandler, explained that the ‘Homework centre is a model for best practice in engaging young people in a love of learning beyond the classroom. School students come from schools around the Illawarra, with some
travelling for more than an hour to the weekly gathering. Here they are matched with mentors who are studying at university in a related area to their homework” (UOW 2011).

As part of EDUT432 assessment task 2 the preservice teachers were required to prepare a reflection paper capturing their time and experience tutoring at the Aboriginal homework centre. Alicia shared that the homework centre provided her with time to analyse the experience. She identified:

… a good strategy would be to separate the primary students from the high school students, as the older students get somewhat irritated by the younger ones and the children in infants do not bring enough, if any, homework. The younger children could be engaged in structured activities, appropriate to their age, in the front room while the senior students could work in another room with the computers (DA EDUT432).

The unstructured environment at the homework centre proved to be a challenge for Stacey who explained:

… the homework centre was informal, which meant that the students could relax a little; many of the kids just wanted to play on the internet as many did not have access to the internet at home, so the computer time really engaged the kids rather than their actual homework (DA EDUT432).

Tennille agreed with Stacey's comment and suggested:

… defined roles for the tutors would have made the homework section run a lot more effectively. We could have been assigned a small group of students to
work with each week. This would have benefited the children, as they would have been able to develop better relationships with their tutor, rather than having seven of us asking them the same questions (DA EDUT432).

Herbert’s (1999) research highlights that Aboriginal kids have tremendous skills, many are bi- and tri-lingual and have terrific empathy, are great carers in terms of their family obligations and have extensive networks of people that they can tap into. The participants observed the homework centre as a critical space where Aboriginal students felt a sense of belonging and which gave them opportunities to express their unique cultural identity. Sally recognised the significance of the homework centre as a space for minority students to come together and be a majority and have access and exposure to positive Aboriginal role models. She explained:

… the homework centre experience gave me an appreciation of seeing how important it is for Aboriginal students to have an opportunity to come together and build cultural pride. The homework centre served as a place for Aboriginal students to learn a version of the Dhurawal language and engage in hip-hop and creative workshops with local Aboriginal artists (DA EDUT432).

Sally described:

… while tutoring at the homework centre and in getting to know the kids I learnt first-hand about their ties to extended family; many explained to me their family backgrounds and I learnt how extensive this is compared to non-Aboriginal family structures (DA EDUT432).
The homework centre and the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group meetings provided a Cultural Interface for participants to become immersed in issues about teaching and learning as they applied to Aboriginal children. Within both these settings, the parties came face-to-face with an Aboriginal cultural educational setting, and the non-Aboriginal teacher began to identify possibilities for change to occur (Nakata, 2002).

Generally the participants identified that the Aboriginal homework centre was an important community-controlled resource that provided Aboriginal students with academic and cultural support. Delpit (1995) suggests that educators can empower learners to develop ways of finding out more about the culture they are learning by analysing their experiences and developing their awareness (p7). According to Luke, Luke and Mayer (2000) this would enable teachers and students to engage in issues from multiple perspectives and embrace a global reality as part of their identities (p9). The findings also indicated that participants gained insight into the importance that one’s cultural values and beliefs vary progressively from person to person and from group to group, and that there are barriers in being able to transmit something so complex and dynamic in a classroom.

**Support Networks**

Throughout the ETTP experience the participants were encouraged to connect with a range of support networks, both community- and school-based. Aboriginal education officers (AEOs) are employed by the NSW DET to work in schools with significant
numbers of Aboriginal students. Their role is to work closely with teachers to support and guide them to develop culturally appropriate resources and programs. AEOs promote Aboriginal education within their school community, and encourage students and support parents to engage in all areas of school life through assisting Aboriginal students and keeping the Aboriginal community informed of students' progress and achievements, and of things like parent meetings, school activities, new programs and other changes. AEOs provide role models for Aboriginal students and have a positive impact on helping them achieve their potential (DET NSW, 2004).

Throughout the cross-cultural immersion experiences, participants revealed the positive impacts of widening their support network in Aboriginal education. Tracey revealed:

… interviewing a wide range of Aboriginal people for our assignments and having the meetings with our mentors has, like, developed my awareness of how Aboriginal people are uniquely individual (FG 23/4/08).

Bessie further acknowledge the similarities and differences she shared with Aboriginal people: “… What I really learnt from being involved in the cross-cultural immersion experiences was the fact that we share much in common, and this broke down barriers for me …”, while Sally explained the difference between culture and socio-economic disadvantage: “… I think Aboriginal people’s cultural beliefs and world views gets mixed up with socio-economic disadvantage a lot” (FG 23/4/08).

Purdie et al. (2000) highlight that a holistic approach to Aboriginal education is needed that builds on teacher-student relationships, including authentic relationships with families and communities. Katie revealed that the relationships that developed
throughout the ETTP were fundamental in allowing her to see the importance they had in relation to school success for Aboriginal students. She said:

... building authentic and legitimate relationships with parents and community members is an important factor that has underpinned all of my immersion experiences and a vital element in providing students with the best chance at success in school (DA EDUT432).

The ETTP provided prospective teachers with first-hand experiences in building cross-cultural relationships. The literature consistently reported that genuine partnerships between Aboriginal people and teachers underpinned successful Aboriginal student attendance, student engagement and learning across early childhood, infant and primary schooling (NSW DET 2004; Foley 2007; Partington 1998, 1999; Harrison 2008; Eckerman 1994; Mellor & Corrigan 2004; Malin 1990, 2002).

On 23rd April 2008 a former ETTP graduate was invited to meet with the participants and share teaching and learning strategies for working with Aboriginal students from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. Throughout the meeting the researcher observed that the participants were eager to clarify a number of issues. The researcher recorded the participants following questions regarding the former ETTP graduate's experiences in the 2007 ETTP:

Why did you choose to do the ETTP? When did you find out where to go for the cross-cultural immersion experience? Were you easily able to engage with the Aboriginal community? What were your most challenging experiences? What teaching autonomy were you allowed on the internship? How did you
negotiate the teaching program with the supervising teacher? Were you placed with another ETTP student in the same community? Where did you stay? How did you find accommodation? Were you given much notification by the NSW DET for your permanent placement? How did you find out you were placed at Barrack Heights? Do you get much support from the head teachers or principal? What type of Aboriginal education programs are implemented? How did you build networks with the Aboriginal community? What are your experiences so far with Aboriginal students? (FG 23/4/08).

The researcher suggested to the participants that a follow-up discussion with the ETTP coordinator be organised in order to address the participant’s questions.

While completing the internship Sally identified the importance of her supervising colleagues’ constructive feedback as she described:

… before I went into the class I felt quite nervous about being in the class with the usual 5/6K teachers. However they have turned out to be a great tool for evaluation. Both teachers have been able to give me feedback and offer me advice on where I need to improve. I realise that having another teacher in the room can be a great advantage and it is another insight that I will not have again. They have been able to not only evaluate my teaching but my program as well. This process of evaluation is only going to benefit my teaching and professional development and I am grateful that I have the opportunity to engage in this. I know in my permanent position I will be evaluated through … the accreditation process but I will never have an opportunity for this much feedback again. (DA EDUT432).
Through having access to a wider network of more experienced teachers Katie described that she acquired pertinent knowledge through:

... working closely with an established, highly-skilled and organised teacher has exposed me to some excellent practices. I feel that I have benefited greatly from this experience, the good times and the bad, and believe that I still have a great deal to learn during the remainder of the internship (DA EDUT432).

Sally shared that interviewing the Aboriginal education officer at her internship school enabled her to gain a deeper insight into the AEO role and responsibilities, both within the school context and outside within the wider Aboriginal community networks:

... I talked with a local AEO on the role as an Aboriginal Education Officer in a primary setting and looked at some of the duties and responsibilities the role entails and spoke of their connection to the community and the necessity of this for an effective AEO. The ‘wisdom’ I have sought from this interview has broadened my knowledge of AEOs (DA EDUT432).

Tennille observed “... an AEO’s role is so integral to day-to-day classroom activities, sometimes acting as a mediator between the school and parents and communities, ensuring that Indigenous students’ educational experiences are supported and nurtured” (DA EDUT432).
Tracey acknowledged the importance of the AEO in facilitating relationships amongst the wider school community when she anticipated commencing her permanent position as a teacher in NSW DET schools, as she described:

... next year I will begin my teaching career in a primary school with significant Aboriginal enrolments in an area unfamiliar to me. By building up a positive relationship with the school or regional AEOs is a start towards building community connections, and increasing my understanding of the local Aboriginal area (DA EDUT432).

Further comments by participants described the benefit of networking amongst the Aboriginal staff in their internship schools. As Sally described:

… the school had six Aboriginal staff ... this group of people have provided and continue to provide on-the-ground information about the issues facing Aboriginal students at school Their perspectives are valuable because they collectively have more current experience than almost any other source that I can access for Aboriginal education (DA EDUT432).

Stacey identified that the support of the school’s information technology coordinator was essential in developing her skills and knowledge of implementing the smart-board technology. She described:

… employing the use of the smart-board technology is another area I feel I could work on and this too I feel is achievable through increased smart-board awareness and education. I am so thankful I had the support of the students and the school computer coordinator in assisting me through this challenge (DA EDUT432).
In summary participants identified feedback and support from their supervising teachers, while developing their professional practice as beginning teachers, as invaluable. Constructive feedback and opportunities to observe more experienced practitioners working effectively with Aboriginal students were inspiring, and affirmed their theoretical knowledge in ways that could be applied in the classroom. When a former ETTP graduate came in for a guest visit this stimulated and opened up a rigorous dialogue between the participants; such inquiries may have gone unnoticed if this guest had not been invited in to share her story. Furthermore the data suggests opportunities that bring past and present ETTP teachers together enriches the professional dialogue and addresses pertinent issue that were burning for the student teachers.

**Reflective Practice**

On successful completion of this subject, Reflective Practice EDUT422, students were expected to: demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the nature of reflection in their complex role as a teacher; identify, critique and articulate professional decisions, issues and challenges through personal reflections; and acknowledge the continued role of reflection in their future professional practice. Through analysis of the assessment task the researcher identified that self-reflection allowed participants to develop pertinent insight. One participant described:

… by constantly reflecting on my teaching practices and thinking about what worked and what didn’t and the reasons for this, got me thinking about how setting high expectations for yourself is important (DA EDUT422).
Sally acknowledged the importance of reflective practice and stated:

... it is a good idea to frequently reflect on areas where you need to improve in your teaching, set goals for yourself, and like the students track your progress over time. The benefits of defining your expectations and not being afraid in asking questions cannot be under-estimated (DA EDUT422).

While Stacey claimed that setting expectations too high can result in feeling frustrated and let down, she explained:

... I always set expectations for myself sometimes a little too high, because there is always something I want to achieve in order to get closer and closer to becoming the teacher that I aspire to be (DA EDUT422).

Reflective practice required the participants to critically reflect on the complexities of teaching, including becoming aware of the judgements they exercised in deciding how to act to ensure that professional practice best supports Aboriginal student learning. The preservice teachers were expected to build on the premise that reflective practice makes a powerful contribution to their learning and professional development. Martinez and Mackay (2002) argue that critical reflective practice is an integral part of personal professional development; this was consistent with what the participants identified who consistently stated reflective practice was an important tool for their learning development.

The finding indicates that reflective practice increased the preservice teacher’s management skills, self-awareness and critical thinking skills enabling them to think constructively about their work. Freire (1970) proposed that teachers who view there
work as more than just a job, but as a specialised craft are more likely to transform their own abilities to know and understand the complexities of culture, history and politics and to develop skill sets that tap into children’s socio-cultural knowledge and reject deficit views of Aboriginality. These authentic understandings are critical to preservice teachers being able to develop their reflective practice skills and diversify their curriculum and pedagogy (Howard 2010).

Through reflective practice, preservice teachers identified that Aboriginal students were more likely to be engaged in classroom learning if the curriculum had relevance to their identity and lived realities, and recognised that the ETTP had developed their confidence and challenged their earlier deficit views of Aboriginal students. The NSW Quality Teaching Framework (2003) outlines that teaching needs to develop and make clear to students the significance of their work and links new lessons with what they already know; this may be from things they have learned previously in school or what they know from their lives outside school and in their family. Further, participants had developed the knowledge and skills to identify and critically assess existing Aboriginal education programs and resources in place in their internship schools.

**Internship**

In New South Wales, internship refers to an in-school placement of a student teacher who is undergoing full-time further study in teacher education at a university; has completed content and methodology courses which meet the NSW Department of Education and Training minimum requirements for teaching; and has demonstrated successful teaching practices in developmental field experiences leading to the
internship. In acknowledgment of this status, the preservice teacher is called an “intern” but there is no salary attached to this appointment. Internships are designed to lift preservice teachers’ practical knowledge to a level beyond that of the third year professional experience. The schools that the ETTP participants were placed in were situated in a rural or remote locations within NSW with significant Aboriginal student enrolments.

In conjunction with their six-week internship, participants undertook the subject, Inquiry Project EDUT432. On successful completion of the subject EDUT432, participants were expected to: teach in a regional or remote area in a school with a significant Aboriginal population; teach continuously for six weeks; and integrate into an existing teaching staff and articulate the challenges particular to their internship school community.

Katie shared that through the internship she had been able to:

> observe many different techniques and have gained practical insight into keeping anecdotal records as part of the program. I have also seen some practical ways to ensure that the program is used as a working document, which I am eager to integrate into my program next year (DA EDUT432).

Sally acknowledged that her attitude and respect for teaching developed significantly while completing her internship, and that it was important for her to keep open to learning new ways of teaching that inspired and engaged her students. She described:

> ... I am beginning to realise how valuable release time is in assisting me in implementing more engaging and motivating lessons. When things haven’t
worked out I have diarised my actions and made changes that have led to an improved setting for myself and ultimately the students. If you have a bad day, don’t go home and dwell on it; rather reflect and pick out the positives and negatives and try and form a new approach - one that will work for your class (DA EDUT432).

Bessie reflected a similar attitude to Sally in that the internship enabled her move from theory into the realities of practice. She described:

… the internship made me more organised … rather than attempting to follow all of my supervising teacher’s routines, I was able to adapt her experience and expertise to refine my strategies as well as focus on explicit teaching. The internship taught me to sustain my motivation and remain positive despite the challenges. Work and leisure need to be balanced. Seeking support when I needed it was also necessary (DA EDUT432).

Like the other participants, Tracey described that the internship enabled her to experiment with a diverse range of pedagogical approaches, some being more successful than others. She wrote:

… my class liked a diversity of teaching and learning activities especially when it came to maths. It was been good for me to think of a range of strategies to teach the same content. One insight was that you could plan what you thought was the best lesson and during the implementation it could turn out to be the worst. A good deal of it came down to knowing the students (DA EDUT432).
Tennille recognised that putting her knowledge of pedagogy into practice was her biggest achievement. In her reflective assignment she wrote:

… the biggest lesson for me was that I could do it! I didn’t need to hesitate or second-guess myself. I believe that when I have my own class the establishment of rules and routines will be paramount to managing a classroom (DA EDUT432).

The internship provided opportunities for the preservice teachers to develop their skills to implement and adapt culturally-relevant curriculum. Participants commonly identified the importance of embedding Aboriginal world views into their lessons. Bessie acknowledged:

… having a culturally relevant curriculum was a critical factor when teaching in a predominantly Aboriginal remote school. There are likely to be many ‘western’ concepts that do not always apply in all settings. Showing students that you value their culture, and providing a legitimate place for it in the classroom, was a vital step in making them feel comfortable and safe (DA EDUT432).

The New South Wales Board of Studies Report (1997) recognised the importance of the need to make schools places that recognise and affirm identity. Tracey highlighted that Aboriginal world views that are reflective of local perspectives were a key to engaging her Aboriginal students:
... localised curriculum provided students with familiar and non-threatening content and contexts, and is more likely to keep the need to retain traditional culture while also engaging in contemporary curriculum (DA EDUT432).

Participants recognised the need for culturally appropriate pedagogy and classroom management practices through their cross-cultural community engagement experiences. For example Bessie described the steps she took in getting to know the Aboriginal community and identifies the skills she gained through the ETTP with her words:

... It was a challenge learning as much as I could about the local Aboriginal community. I was able to make contact with the local Aboriginal land council and Aboriginal education assistant ... I would not have known where to start or even have the confidence for that matter if I hadn’t undertaken the ETTP (DA EDUT432).

Alicia shared a similar insight to Bessie “ ... while completing the internship I implemented Aboriginal perspectives in lessons where appropriate ... I felt more culturally competent than I did a year ago, that’s for sure” (DA EDUT432). While Stacey disclosed that initially she was unsure of the expectations placed on her because of her enhanced training, gradually she was able to appreciate the cross-cultural understandings she had developed through the ETTP.

... I felt awkward at first being labelled as the Aboriginal education scholarship teacher but then I started feeling confident when I started to realise that I have gained many cultural insights and now know more about
Aboriginal studies resources compared to many of the teachers who have been working in the school for years (DA EDUT432).

Sally acknowledged that Aboriginal students should be treated as individuals as she explained:

… I’m committed and passionate about working with Aboriginal kids but I am aware that even though you are talking about Aboriginal students you are talking about so many different groups and individual life experiences … I just think it comes down to knowing my students individually; you can’t just put a box there and generalise with different issues, it’s like with any kids in your class … they have different backgrounds and knowing them allows me to go from there, to structure a teaching and learning program (DA EDUT432).

Stacey observed that while completing her internship at a school with significant Aboriginal student enrolments there was a large variation amongst the students and how they chose to identify as being Aboriginal, and that this was a sensitive issue. She described:

... there were 60 Aboriginal students at the school but only 30 would identify as Aboriginal and get involved in the cultural programs offered by the school and it was important to be sensitive to all of these students (DA EDUT432).

Through teaching in a school with significant Aboriginal student enrolments, Sally gained first-hand experience of the diversity of Aboriginal students:

... finding out about Aboriginal students’ interests was what really motivated me throughout my internship. It was interesting because the students I worked
with varied widely; each student was unique, and had talent, reinforcing the importance of learning about kids individually (DA EDUT432).

The preservice teachers identified that Aboriginal students were more likely to be engaged in learning if the curriculum mirrored their identity. The ETTP had developed their confidence and challenged participants’ earlier deficit views of Aboriginal students. Further participants were able to identify and critically assess Aboriginal education programs and resources implemented within their internship school. Tennille shared her observations of her internship:

... the primary school setting had a significant number of programs and targeted resources in comparison to the other schools I had worked at, including a local language program, transition to school for kindergarten and middle school, no-shame boys’ program and targeted talking and listening programs to assist students in the younger years. Resources such as transition kits and Aboriginal workers were also used at the school. Interestingly a lot of the programs targeted younger students so the aim may have been to improve outcomes for younger students to build them up for success at an early age (DA EDUT432).

Sally commented on the limited support offered to students at her internship school “... it appeared as though there were significant levels of support in primary school but as students get older the assistance seems to dwindle” (DA EDUT432).

Stacey observed that students’ access to information technology resources, traditional Aboriginal dance lessons and the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Education (AIME)
initiative were successful programs for the Aboriginal students at the school. She described:

… there were many great things happening at the school: the Aboriginal students were free to enter and use the computer lab. A form of traditional dance was being taught and a new program was being introduced which involved university students tutoring in specific subject areas at the school (DA EDUT432).

The participants identified that moving from theory into practice was a profound learning curve that improved their organisational skills and knowledge of teaching in schools with significant student enrolments. Through the internship, participants gained valuable first-hand knowledge and skills in interacting with Aboriginal students and communities in a variety of ways enabling them to develop their capacity for teaching in schools with significant Aboriginal student populations.

**Peer Support**

Over the year-long program the researcher observed that the small group of participants formed solid friendships and were very supportive of each other, suggesting that smaller group learning is a real strength of the ETTP.

Bessie identified that the support of her peers was integral to her successful completion of the enhancement program “… these girls help keep me organised and on top of all the coursework assignments, immersion, focus groups and internship activities” (FG 2/4/08). Tracey acknowledged that she had made lasting friendships “… I did not personally know some of the girls last year but now I have made lifelong
friends through the ETTP” (EM 2/4/08), while Tennille disclosed that she relied on her friendship and support from Sally “… I don’t know what I would do without Sally” (IC 2/4/08). Each of the participants expressed a variety of feelings about the significance of peers in supporting their learning journey in the ETTP.

Alicia shared the impact of the peer group experience:

… Something that has been of great value to me while working and studying in the area of Aboriginal education is the role of reflection with my peers. It helps to talk about issues and problems that arise in the course, share our experiences and learn from those of others ... you can engage in this professional dialogue with like-minded people (FG 2/4/08). Katie reiterated the importance of peer support ... It’s good that you really get to know the other preservice teachers in the ETTP; you become a really tight group and help each other through all of the challenges and you trust each other and can see that other people are struggling at times, too (FG 2/4/08).

Throughout the year the researcher observed the participants provided each other with encouragement and relied on each other in ways that enabled them to make more significant meaning from their shared experiences. For each focus group meeting, participants catered for their mentors and themselves with adequate food and drink and the meeting room served as a place where the participants could debrief about their week, discussing anything from “my dog got impounded” to “what do you think the lecturer means by this assessment task” and “how do we include an Aboriginal perspective” making the most of the support from each other and their mentors.
As part of the Collaborative Research Project Assessment Task 2 for EDUT422, participants were required to present a training and development package to their peers on a selected topic. The assessment task was adapted by the ETTP participants with the aim of increasing their peers’ understanding of otitis media and its impact on Aboriginal students’ learning. The following insights by Tennille revealed the significance of this learning opportunity, not only for themselves but also for a wider audience:

... Teachers need to be aware of illnesses such as otitis media and their symptoms, especially with Aboriginal students; health checks should be provided at least once per year in which their hearing would be looked at. Classrooms need to be set up to cater for children who are experiencing hearing loss (DA EDUT422).

Tracey highlighted that through completing the assessment task, her awareness and understanding of otitis media increased significantly, with her response:

... I would never have found out about the impact otitis media has on Aboriginal kids until I met with the otitis media health worker for the region. Through my research I came to realise the importance of Aboriginal children having access to regular check-ups and even just being able to identify the symptoms of otitis media in the classroom, and then being able to cater for that child is crucial to learning and classroom engagement. It was really good that my group delivered this training session as all teachers should be aware of this, not just those in the ETTP (DA EDUT422).
The data suggest that having access to the region’s otitis media health worker facilitated their deeper learning of this debilitating ailment.

Throughout the year-long program the participants displayed high levels of personal regard for each other, shared resources and worked closely together to attain common learning outcomes. Through creating this relational environment amongst their peer group, the preservice teachers were more able to focus on exploring the cross-cultural backgrounds of their Indigenous students including their histories, families and aspirations.

**Conclusion**

The learning experiences that the participants identified as most significant were related to the cross-cultural mentoring and Immersion components of the ETTP as these informal learning opportunities enabled the participants to confidently discuss a range of sensitive issues in-depth. The cross-cultural teaching and learning opportunities provided by the mentors were no less significant than the teaching and learning opportunities offered within formal academic studies. Through honest conversations, critical reflective practice and immersion experiences within their mentor's community, participants reported deeper knowledge and intimate awareness of the influences of history, culture, family, policy and powerlessness that have shaped the lives of Aboriginal people over the past two centuries. It is hoped that these experiences and informal knowledge and understanding will enable the participants in their future teaching to genuinely engage in pedagogical practices within diverse cultural settings and geographical locations.
These findings are consistent with the literature reviewed which confirmed that preservice teachers who have experienced education outside of the formal learning environment such as lecture theatres and seminar rooms, are more likely to adapt their teaching styles to the lives and interests of their students, and value the curriculum which is significant to them. Through visiting culturally significant sites such as the Sandon Point Tent Embassy and hearing first-hand local custodians’ perspectives of country, participants were provided with a dual cross cultural lens that enriched their understanding of Aboriginal children’s lives outside of the classroom setting.

The participants indicated that ongoing reflective practice was a significant learning process that facilitated their professional development especially in relation to student behaviour management. Opportunities to observe more experienced practitioners working in schools with high Aboriginal student population allowed participants to consolidate learnt theoretical knowledge and observe how it is applied into the classroom setting. Participants also increased their awareness of Aboriginal education programs and resources available in school and were more confident in assessing their advantages and limitation through their experiences and participation in the ETTP. High expectations of Aboriginal students and feeling confident to reach into their worlds was utilised by the participants throughout their internship allowing them to experience Aboriginal students as individuals and not just as racial group members.

The findings indicated that the smaller group learning contexts were an advantage for participant as they supported each other in meeting the academic and cross-cultural learning expectations of the program. Peer support that was characterised by
friendship and trust, was identified as a supportive aspect to the ETTP enabling participants to work collegially. Research question three highlights the challenges that the participants identify within the ETTP and outlines the strategies they employed to overcome them.
Chapter 6. The challenges in the ETTP: Question 3 Results and Discussion

Introduction

To investigate the significant insights of the seven non-Aboriginal preservice teachers undertaking a year-long scholarship within the ETTP it was important to address both the positive experience of the participants and the difficulties that they encountered while participating in the program. This chapter addresses research question 3:

What were the challenges that non-Aboriginal preservice teachers identified within their participation in the ETTP?

Following the method of presentation of the data in this thesis, narratives from the participants’ transcripts have been adapted and are presented in italics, interwoven with the researcher’s observations and revealing the participants’ significant challenges whilst undertaking the ETTP. The data collection methods drawn upon to respond to this question included: informal conversations, focus groups, email correspondence and document analysis.

The main themes that emerged from the data analysis included

- Feeling Marginalised
- Gaps in Aboriginal Education
- Travelling the Distance and Settling In
• Student Behaviour Management Overwhelming

• Anticipating the Placement

The data collection sources drawn upon to respond to this question included semi-structured interviews (SSI), focus groups (FG); email correspondence (EM); documents analysis such as assignment samples and blog entries (DA); participant observations (PO); and informal conversations (IC).

Feeling Marginalised

At different times throughout the first and second session the researcher observed and recorded participant comments about feeling marginalised from the majority of their peer group completing the mainstream Bachelor of Education degree. The participants reported comments from their peers that they were seen to be receiving special treatment, and it appeared the ETTP course was misunderstood in the wider context of the fourth-year program. It was important for the researcher to keep this dialogue and reflection open for discussion throughout focus group sessions and offer support and encouragement where necessary. The need to disseminate information widely through the faculty (to students and staff) about the program also became apparent.

Depending on the particular context, participants also expressed their concerns about the unequal power relationship and attitudes encountered by their immediate family and friends. The following perspectives were shared by the participants during focus group discussions and in one-to-one interview:
… It's hard because your friends completing the mainstream Bachelor of Ed 4th year dismiss what you are doing as they don’t really have an understanding of the issue, so you’re constantly trying to justify why you’re choosing to specialise in Aboriginal Education … you actually begin to see the attitudes and prejudices that are out there toward Aboriginal people (Alicia FG 4/4/08).

The participants reported that they were expected to justify to their peer group why they had chosen to work in the area of Aboriginal education “… since I have started this course I have had heaps of people act surprised and ask why you doing that course for?” (Katie FG 4/4/08). It seems the preservice teachers undertaking the mainstream Bachelor of Education were unclear of where the ETTP scholarship fits within this fourth-year program. Stacey described:

… The other students look at us as if to say … ”why are you are so special and why are you doing Aboriginal education”, with very little understanding and confusion about where the ETTP fitted in the fourth year B.Ed. (Stacey FG 4/4/08).

The participants’ insights reveal their frustrations at being a marginalised ‘other’ amongst the larger cohort of preservice teachers completing the mainstream fourth-year of study. It seems plausible to suggest that the preservice teachers were provided with a significant learning opportunity that developed their empathy and sensitivity towards minority group status. As Bessie described:
… I feel like the ‘other’ and this experience and isolation in a sense makes me
realise what it might be like being a minority student is you get a real sense of
being and feeling different (Bessie FG 4/4/08).

The researcher identified that contrasting views were expressed by a number of the
participants in the context of them being a minority group with the mainstream
Bachelor of Education program. While these feelings were consistently highlighted
over the year-long program the researcher also identified that outside the ETTP the
participants experienced feelings of marginalisation and at times offence. Tennille
disclosed that even within her immediate family members she felt confronted as they
expressed their stereotypical views of Aboriginal people:

… since doing the ETTP my perception of Aboriginal people has broadened
yet many of my friends and families haven’t; they’re still stuck in stereotyping
Aboriginal people into one label and I find this personally challenging
(Tennille IC).

Furthermore, Alicia was alarmed at the offensive and derogatory language that was
used by a non-Aboriginal presenter at a workshop she had attended on Aboriginal
education with her mentor; she commented:

… one of the workshops I attended with my mentor was about strategies
teachers and schools implement to work with Aboriginal students. It was
interesting because the non-Aboriginal presenter was using language such as
‘half caste’ and ‘Aborigine’ in her speech which was given to an audience of
Aboriginal people. I found this lack of consideration quite alarming. One
Aboriginal lady got quite angry at the negative way in which the speaker was portraying Aboriginal families and stated that not all Aboriginal people should be painted with the same brush. Since doing the ETTP I’m much more aware at how Aboriginal people become so frustrated by the lack of sensitivity and awareness non-Aboriginal people have toward their cultural identities (DA EDUT422).

Importantly for Alicia, she was immediately able to debrief the incident with her mentor and examine the underlying connotations of the outdated terminology that the speaker was using and the impacts of such terminology. Alicia’s comments further demonstrated that she had developed cross-cultural sensitivity and awareness of the inappropriate use of out-dated terminology and the stereotypes that are perpetuated at times unwittingly. According to Riggs (2004) effective cross-cultural competence is the capacity to be able to analyse, reflect and if necessary name mono-cultured tendencies. Further, Walker and Son (2009) argue that a duel lens is an essential component of the processes of deconstructing colonising practices that underpin cross-cultural competence and is a necessary foundation for working with Aboriginal students’ families and their communities.

It seemed there were important learning experiences and insights gained by participants in the ways in which both direct and indirect forms of racism negatively disempower particular people. The participants feelings of marginalisation were significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, the seven prospective teachers were selected as a specialised group within a larger mainstream cohort and undertook the same subjects as their peers, however they were expected, where possible, to adapt
assessment tasks to include Aboriginal perspectives. Participants identified that this was a challenging experience as they themselves were unclear on how to adapt the task inclusively, and were also concerned about their grades through the assessment of their work.

The seven prospective teachers also revealed that their experience of being marginalised from the mainstream Bachelor of Education students made them really confront their individual standpoint for undertaking the ETTP. While the participants acknowledged their isolation, there was also evidence that the smaller group experience meant they had to be supportive of each other while also gaining opportunities to demonstrate and develop leadership qualities amongst their fourth-year peers, as they were often asked by them their reasons for undertaking Aboriginal education.

**Gaps in Aboriginal Education**

As the first session of the ETTP progressed, participants expressed concern about the lack of Aboriginal perspectives and expertise available to them within the mainstream Bachelor of Education program. The data revealed that participants at times had limited guidance from their mainstream lecturers about how to focus and adjust assessment tasks to include Aboriginal perspectives.

The researcher observed discussion within the weekly focus group meetings about the lack of direction, with participants consistently reporting their frustration “… *at times we are left up to our own initiative to ensure our assessment tasks are inclusive of Indigenous perspectives and what’s more weird is some tutors are confused about...*"
where the ETTP sits and differs to the mainstream fourth-year B.Ed” (Alicia FG 12/5/08). Bessie disclosed that “… we have limited access to, and lack of specific direction from, the mainstream lecturers; it’s a constant challenge” (FG 12/5/08).

Another participant expressed concern as to the lack of specific expertise by her lecturers and how this would affect her grades “… the lecturers were unclear about how to mark, or even what to expect from our assessment; this is frustrating as we are still trying to achieve good grades along with meeting our tutor’s expectations” (Stacey FG 12/5/08). The lack of relevant and meaningful Aboriginal perspectives and content is a significant finding, highlighting that mainstream teacher educators need professional development and support to ensure their subjects can be adapted for and are inclusive of the ETTP.

As the participants progressed through these cross-cultural experiences, they began to identify and ask questions about Aboriginal English, and the responsibility they have as educators to ensure Aboriginal English is valued and included as a first language in their classrooms. Alicia shared her concerns that Aboriginal English was often judged negatively by educators:

... as a result of the immersion experiences I am more aware of the difference between Aboriginal English and standard Australian English and that if Aboriginal English is constantly corrected or not recognised it could lead to lower self-esteem of students and decreased confidence with respect to literacy. There are many benefits to recognising different dialects, which include connections between home culture and school, retention of home
language and also the ability to be able to use Aboriginal English as a platform to learn standard Australian English (DA EDUT422).

The participants demonstrated their awareness that language differs amongst Aboriginal people “… Aboriginal English, that could be something I need to be aware of, but again I need to know my students, as Aboriginal English differs amongst Indigenous people” (DA EDUT422). Bessie identified that the lack of an Aboriginal focus within the subjects they were undertaking, left her feeling inadequate in being able to address Aboriginal English effectively within the classroom “…. It is glossed over in the subjects and no-one seems to know anything about it.” While Katie highlighted “… after doing the ETTP I have more knowledge and understanding about what Aboriginal English is” (DA EDUT422). Given that the prospective teachers had identified Aboriginal English as an area they wanted to learn more about early in the commencement of the ETTP, it is a disappointing outcome that this area has not been addressed adequately in their course work. The findings suggest that Aboriginal English needs to be formally included within future ETTP.

All of the Aboriginal mentors who attended the weekly focus group meetings were teacher-trained and had worked in the Aboriginal education tertiary sector for the majority of their careers. Sally acknowledged their experience in supporting her academic work throughout the ETTP as she stated:

…”thankfully, in our focus group meetings we can spend time talking with our mentors about how to make our assignments inclusive of Indigenous perspectives. It’s a bit tricky, as there are some overlaps with the cross-
The knowledge and skill sets that the mentors contributed to the enhancement program were an important part of the cross-cultural learning experiences, and as a result the participants relied on their mentors to provide them with guidance, insight and support regarding Aboriginal perspectives and curriculum content.

The findings suggest that professional development is required to ensure that mainstream teacher educators have access to staff development in building their confidence in introducing Indigenous perspectives within the mainstream subject area. Findings also emphasise the need for clear communication with the wider faculty about aims and missions of programs such as the ETTP. The researcher interviewed the mainstream subject coordinator of Reflective Practice, who disclosed that the seven ETTP participants were very vocal on Aboriginal education issues throughout the class and worked with her to embed these understandings within their mainstream subject. The academic staff member revealed that when challenged by participants about the role of Aboriginal education within the subject, she worked with the participants to identify a number of relevant readings that focused on Aboriginal perspectives. These were subsequently introduced into the mainstream course reading for the benefit of all students completing the subject in the bachelor of education.

While this example provides evidence of empowerment of the participants, and the openness of this staff member, this was not always the case. The participants’ concerns suggest that the UOW mainstream subject coordinators need greater
awareness of the program and support to identify their needs and requirements to undertake professional development in Aboriginal education to ensure their subjects can be adapted for, and are inclusive of, an Aboriginal education focus not only for ETTP participants but for student teachers. Craven et al. (2005) proposed that when preservice teachers undertook mandatory Aboriginal education, they had statistically significantly higher background knowledge in comparison with either elective or perspective courses, particularly in relation to them feeling positive about their abilities to understand Aboriginal studies content, teach Aboriginal students and consult with Aboriginal communities.

**Travelling the Distance and Settling In**

A key challenge identified by the participants was overwhelming feelings about distances travelled and initial observations upon arriving and settling into a regional or remote community in NSW.

Initially, participants reported being taken aback by their physical surroundings. As part of the written assessment task four, EDUT432, participants were asked to send a post card to the subject coordinator upon arriving at the township where they were assigned their six-week internship. Katie arrived in Coonamble, which she described as great, however she explained “… I am starting to really not like crickets; they are gross and hard to kill” (DA EDUT432). Sally expressed relief at arriving in the remote location of Broken Hill “… well I made the drive to Broken Hill and have survived my first day. I went to my first station. I’ve never seen so many sheep before” (DA EDUT432). Stacey’s comments revealed similar observations in regard to the
wildlife “... all ok here; found the school, and house is fine. Went for a walk in the town yesterday. So many Kookaburras!” (DA EDUT432).

Acknowledgement of distance travelled was central. Bessie acknowledged the distance she travelled “…We finally made it to Coonamble … it was a long drive” (DA EDUT432). Tennille shared “… well I made my way safely; the town is much bigger than I expected. I am a bit homesick already” (DA EDUT432). Acknowledgement of distance travelled, and settling into their new environments provided indication of feelings of isolation.

As the prospective teachers settle into their new environments and internship schools, they began to identify feelings of uncertainty in getting to know the students, school community and their colleagues. Stacey’s initial observations of the Aboriginal community and school are that the relationships were strained:

… the Aboriginal community appears shut off from aspects of the school ... they don’t appear to like interacting with teaching staff and this has made it difficult in getting to know people. I have tried to be proactive by introducing myself to the school’s Aboriginal education officer (AEO), however she is extremely busy. I am hoping I will get to build a relationship with her while we are on the Year 5/6 three-day camp to Canberra (DA EDUT422).

However, Stacey remained realistic as to the constraints of community engagement in such a short time frame, while also acknowledging that the AEO was a key person with whom she needed to work collaboratively as part of the process of building genuine relationships with key local Aboriginal community members.
Alicia described her initial feelings in the first few days of her internship as “… very difficult in terms of trying to get to know students and teachers. The teachers all seem much closed and many are reluctant to let other people into their group” (DA EDUT432). Stacey shared a similar reaction to Alicia, revealing that she “… felt way out of my comfort zone and had had no support, no guidance or feedback” (DA EDUT432). Tracey described feeling confronted and was under surveillance, adding to her insecurity about being observed by more experienced classroom practitioners “… at the beginning of the internship I found it hard to teach in front of the other teachers in the class. I found that when I was being watched I was nervous and this impacted on how successful the lessons were” (DA EDUT432). Comparing oneself to an experienced classroom practitioner was not helpful for Tracey, as the internship aimed to provide her with opportunities to learn through trial and error.

It seems there was a lack of transparent communication between the University and the school staff about the purpose and expectations of the ETTP internships. Bessie expressed her frustration about the confusion:

… most of the teachers at our internship school are confused, and we are very sick of explaining ourselves and being introduced as prac students. Apparently the teachers were expecting Aboriginal prac students, rather than qualified, non-Aboriginal teachers! Week two was a week in survival mode! I went from doing nothing to teaching full-time – except for PDHPE and creative arts – as well as planning all of the maths (DA EDUT432).
Sally’s initial experience at her internship school suggests she was completely unprepared for being delegated full-time teaching responsibilities:

… the first week of the internship was difficult as stage three students had an excursion and I was left with the students who didn’t attend. Peter (supervising teacher) supported me well during this time and allowed me to experiment with the students, however it was a difficult and a challenging time … my planning and teaching of maths so far has been a disaster (DA EDUT432).

Multi-tasking and the overwhelming sense of trying to live up to the expectations of other teachers were common pressures experienced amongst the participants. Tennille shared:

… I have found that at times I find it hard to remember to follow through with everything that I say to the students. My teacher is one of five teachers in the area who can train teachers on the program so I felt more pressure to be successful when teaching the lessons. The first few accelerated literacy lessons that I taught I felt were not as successful as Natalie’s (DA EDUT432).

Participants’ initial reactions at being thrown into the deep end in their first weeks of internship were significant findings, suggesting more transparency and preparation are required for a smoother transition from full-time studies into their six-week internship at a rural or remote school with high Aboriginal student populations.

Dellit (n.d.) argues that intercultural learning means moving well beyond a static approach to learning isolated facts about an individual culture, and involves learners
in analysing and understanding ‘the self’, communicating and understanding
communication, and developing skills for ongoing learning (p13). Somerville &
Perkins (2003) argue that taking preservice teachers out of their ‘comfort zone’
ensures that they will achieve personal and cultural transformation and that learners
need to actually engage with difference, and engaging in this way may lead to the
experience being a little unsettling. This according to Rennie (2009) is similar to those
who advocate working in the ‘contact zone’.

The contact zone is described as a space where different stories and life worlds might
meet, intersect and negotiate difference, and whilst this might be risky it also has the
potential to open up new possibilities and increased awareness. The contact zone is a
similar space to the cultural interface, where students are expected to negotiate new
ways of knowing, and genuinely engage with variable perspectives. While the
participant describe their vulnerabilities and feelings about settling into a new school
and community, it is important to note that most preservice teachers would react
similarly. It won’t be until the ETTP participants begin building relationships and
networks with Aboriginal students and community where they will begin to negotiate
the cultural interface.

**Student Behaviour Management Overwhelming**

As beginning teachers completing their six-week internship they were expected to
manage classroom behaviour and respond to the routines that were established in their
internship classroom. As part of the subject EDUT432, participants were required to
evaluate their performance and report their progress of the internship as part of their
cross cultural learning development. The researcher’s analysis of these assignments, revealed the participants overwhelming challenges of student behaviour management they faced particularly with their Aboriginal students.

Alicia’s reflection revealed that behaviour management was a key challenge for her:

... behaviour management is undoubtedly the area in which I need most development. My goal entering the internship was to not yell for the six weeks but find another means of being firm. I know, yelling doesn’t work. I feel very satisfied that as to date 30th of October, I have only yelled once and that was today. I want to work on using more positive reinforcement with the students as they have been responding to the rewards system that I have implemented (DA EDUT432).

Katie reported that through trial and error she developed more effective behaviour management strategies. She described:

... four students are pushing the boundaries. I think a big part of this is due to the fact that I may not have been strict enough to begin with. This has been in terms of back-chatting, swearing, fighting, lying and stealing. I have one student who for no justifiable reason does not finish an acceptable amount of work and another who loves to back-chat and swear at me under his breath. Although this is something I am still working on I feel as though I am growing more confident as time goes by (DA EDUT432).

Sally recognised that behaviour management is about getting to know the students more intimately and that this has taken time. She described:
I have struggled with the behaviour of some boys and their attitude at Alma, where they have shown disrespect and rudeness towards me. Due to this, I altered my behaviour management plan to better accommodate these students, which is an area that is improving. It has been a process of getting to know the students and then adapting my teaching and behaviour management techniques to best meet their needs and abilities (DA EDUT432).

While Stacey disclosed feeling overwhelmed and under-skilled for dealing appropriately with anti-social behaviour “… six boys in particular have extreme behaviour issues, including calling out, chatting back, swearing, being defiant and walking out of the room or doing a ‘runner’ are part of my daily experiences” (DA EDUT432). Bessie identified that a lack of genuine engagement with the Aboriginal staff at her internship school impacted significantly on behaviour management. She recounted:

… despite a significant number of Aboriginal students, AEOs and Aboriginal staff employed, Aboriginal content is only superficially and sporadically used, rather than embedded into behaviour management strategies and the curriculum (DA EDUT432).

According to Sanderson and Thomson (2003) research on student behaviour management with Aboriginal students, schools that are committed to making a difference for Aboriginal students had committed principals that provided professional support, specialist training and development, money and educational leadership; furthermore teachers that learn from their mistakes and avoid perfectionism were key factors in effective student behaviour management.
Observing the more experienced classroom managers enabled Tennille and Tracey to develop their own competence in behaviour management:

... managing the behaviour of the students was one of the first aspects of the internship that I found difficult. Watching how the other teachers manage the class has been beneficial for me as a beginning educator because it has allowed me to adapt specific strategies to help with managing the behaviour of the students (Tennille DA EDUT432).

... I talked with teachers from each stage about how to engage Indigenous students. They talked about group work, getting to know students, their families and local community. They also discussed attendance and being positive as students pick up and often mimic what you are feeling. I looked at reward charts and other extrinsic reward systems and discussed the need to follow through with any strategy and be explicit in what’s expected (Tracey DA EDUT432).

Stacey highlighted her disappointment at implementing a discipline technique that she opposed, but had to settle with in order for her students to cooperate “... sadly, the only thing that seems to work is lollies and this has been challenging for me to implement as philosophically I am against this as a behaviour management tool” (DA EDUT432).

Katie bravely acknowledged that she was still searching for strategies to implement change:
... the class I am teaching find it difficult to pay attention to explicit instruction for more than five minutes. They do not respond well to verbal lessons or discussion. This would not present a problem if the class were all competent readers, as I would simply provide independent written activities. With the class reading ability ranging between level 5 and level 28, the comprehension and reading skills are not sufficient for all students to be able to complete these written tasks, and it is those with the lower reading levels who do not cope with discussion. At this point, I know that changes need to be made, but am unsure about how to go about this (DA EDUT432).

Katie’s reflection highlighted concerns about the low expectation of students’ behaviour displayed by her supervising teacher:

... speaking to my supervisor teacher after the class, she explained that she could discipline, but it didn’t make a difference so why bother. This defeatist attitude was quite disturbing to me, as I could see students were only acting this way as they were aware that there would be no consequences for their actions. Working in this environment everyday would drive me insane. From this experience I have realised that even though I myself acknowledge behaviour management as an area I could improve in, I am still more capable than some teachers who are far more experienced than me. This has been good for me to realise, as I believe that sometimes I am my own worst critic (DA EDUT432).

According to Harrison (2010) and Sarra (2008) children bring old memories into classrooms and the relationship between teacher and student is often governed by
what has happened in the past, including policies of protection, exclusion, separation and assimilation. It is common for stories about school to be passed on from one generation to the next and teachers cannot demand with credibility that children care for each other in the classroom when their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents have sometimes demonstrated so little care for each other in the past (Harrison 2010). Even though teachers today have had nothing to do with these past events, they still need to deal with the memories of these events in their classrooms today (Harrison 2010).

Tripcony’s (2002) research found that while teachers’ attitudes will vary, many hold unfavourable stereotypes, resulting in lower teacher expectations for Aboriginal students’ learning outcomes. Some researchers, such as Hughes (2010), Sarra (2008) and Shaw (2009) reveal that lower expectations by non-Aboriginal teachers are a principal cause of persistent educational failure of Aboriginal students; as lower expectations reinforce attitudes and beliefs that Aboriginal students are not capable of the same level of achievement as non-Aboriginal students. Kohn (1994, 1996, 1999) argues that punishment is destructive and that the central focus should be on curriculum learning, which should be developed organically from real-life interests and concerns of the students. By doing this, real-life issues would bring a cultural context into the classroom. However moving from punishment to learning requires experience and expert support in more specialised studies exploring specific approaches that have been deemed successful working with Aboriginal students. The findings suggest that more preparation is needed within the ETTP to ensure pre-service teachers are more able to effectively manage student behaviour, and to focus on building the core academic skills that students need to achieve.
Anticipating a Placement

As the 2008 year-long program was coming to a close, the researcher recognised that three of the participants, in long-term relationships, were considering the implications their future teaching placements would have on their relationships. The researcher observed all the participants were anxious and eagerly anticipating their phone call from the NSW DET Human Resource Department to confirm their permanent teaching placements. For some, anticipating the confirmation was difficult, as they expressed that not knowing was the worst part. Alicia disclosed to the researcher that her husband “… works and studies in the Illawarra so [she] selected areas close to that base as we can’t afford to lose his job” (IC). Both Katie and Stacey were planning weddings early in 2009. Stacey shared “… we are hoping I get a placement in Sydney as my fiancé works for Qantas” (IC). Katie announced “… I’m just not going to worry about where I get my teaching placement next year as it puts too much pressure on me and on the relationship” (IC).

However, eventually as the participants received this important phone call they alerted the researcher, one by one. The preservice teachers’ anxieties and anticipation of where they were going to be offered a position were real concerns, however each expressed her relief and excitement to the researcher via phone call or email after an offer had been made to them by the NSW DET. For example Alicia phoned the researcher and was very excited and relieved to be offered a teaching position at the
school where she had already worked and this also meant she and her husband could remain in the Illawarra. She said:

… I’ve been placed as the Aboriginal Education Resource Teacher with Briar Road School in Campbelltown. I am so relieved as I have done so much work already in the school and have good relationships with the Aboriginal staff (IC 21/11/08).

Katie’s email indicated that both she and her new husband were looking forward to relocating to a rural NSW town after their honeymoon, and had already identified the community’s race-relations history. She shared:

… I’m married now and the honeymoon in Vanuatu was beautiful! I’m living in Mudgee as my placement is a school in Mudgee called Cudgegong Valley Primary. I’m settled in my new place ... but I’m being pushed to hurry up and look for a place to buy! I wouldn’t mind, but it took soooo long to unpack and I’ve only been here a week and a half. The school I am in is lovely. It’s got 570 students, only approx 20 who identify as Aboriginal ... the area has a sad history and it has only been in the last five or so years that Aboriginal families have started moving back to the area. I plan to stay here, and as this is the case I’m sure to have my work cut out for me in years to come as more families move into what was a very racist community. I do think that has changed though, from what I have seen of the town so far (EM 11/1/09).

Stacey expresses her relief in an email to the researcher “… I got a permanent position in Sydney. It works out well for both my Husband and me and It’s exactly where I want to be” (EM 11/12/08). Tracey also expressed her excitement “… I have
been in Bali and just checked my uni email! If you haven’t heard I have year one next year at Hayes Park in Dapto which I’m totally stoked about!! Nice and close so I will be coming to you for help!” (EM)

Bessie was in Peru and managed to email the researcher between flights, stating:

… I am in Peru at the moment, finishing off my overseas trip before I move to Broken Hill (same as Sally) for my new job! Your email came at a perfect time; I have lots of time at the moment waiting for my flight, so there’s a long reply email (EM).

Sally expressed relief and was optimistic despite hearing some negative rumours about the school she was placed at:

… The DET finally got in contact with me and I'm going to Broken Hill North PS!!!I am one very happy girl: They said I was the last to find out ... I rang my principal and she thinks I will have Year 5 ... Trying to get in contact with teacher housing to get some accommodation sorted out! ... If not I have plenty of friends who I can stay with. I've heard a few negative things about North - it's meant to be the roughest in the area but next year there's a good staff going through so it should be positive! Fingers crossed. Will be in touch throughout the year to keep you updated (EM).

The last person to be offered a position was Tennille who shared:

… I am placed at Bomaderry, but at this stage only for next year and it might not be for the whole year. They said that they haven't found me a position yet so I am an extra teacher there until they find me work. I spoke to my principal
yesterday and they're not really sure what I will be doing. I might be on a class or might be doing programming and doing something with anger management which would be interesting. The DET also told me that I was a targeted graduate as well so I was pretty stoked with that (EM).

The participants’ insights revealed their anticipation and relief when offered a permanent teaching placement in a NSW DET school with significant Aboriginal student enrolments. The ETTP provided participants with fresh insights and perspectives into the realities and challenges of moving to a rural or remote NSW community to take up a teaching appointment. Those who were in committed relationships realised that their partners were making a significant sacrifice as they agreed to relocate and find employment where the permanent teaching placement was going to be offered. The participants also identified that this required both partners to negotiate their futures.

**Conclusion**

The data analysis in response to Research question 3 revealed that in addition to highly valuable insights, respect and appreciation that the participants gain through the participation in the ETTP, they faced a variety of challenging and demanding experiences. The participants referred to gaps in their knowledge; lack of understanding from their peers and friends; and challenges in managing time and difficult situations.
Somerville and Perkin (2003) acknowledged by taking preservice teachers out of their ‘comfort zone’ ensures that they will achieve personal and cultural transformation. The ETTP offered many opportunities for participants to experience first hand factors that shape the lives of Aboriginal people, including history, racism, socio-economic, culture and political issues. Participants reported that these experiences raised feelings of isolation and culture shock; they also facilitated participants’ resilience and provided a realistic insight and better preparation into what they could expect if placed in a rural or remote community and school with high Aboriginal populations.

The findings indicate that there was limited information available about ETTP leaving the mainstream student cohort completing the Bachelor of Education, inquisitive and suspect of the program. Participants identified that their peers would question their motives as to why they were pursuing Aboriginal education and that this was frustrating as they were continually expected to justify their participation in the ETTP. Participants also experienced a range of contrasting attitudes and views by family members and friends that were confronting and participants were unprepared for these challenges. The need to be transparent and disseminate information widely through the faculty (to students and staff) about the program became apparent as well as the need for UOW mainstream subject coordinators to undertake professional development in Aboriginal education to ensure subjects offered in the Bachelor of Education are inclusive of an Aboriginal education focus for future ETTP participants.
Behaviour management was reported as the most challenging during their six week internship placement with participants disclosing feelings of being overwhelmed and under-skilled for dealing appropriately with anti-social behaviour. Through reflective practice, observation and trial and error participants gained experience and insights into building relationships with their students and engaging them in meaningful learning experiences. However more formal training and development to ensure preservice teacher are more equipped with skills and knowledge for dealing with students’ behaviour needs to be embedded into the ETTP.

The researcher observed the participants anticipation while awaiting a phone call from the NSW DET Human Resource Department of an offer and confirmation of a permanent teaching placements. All participants expressed concerns in relation to waiting for their confirmation, they shared that it was difficult not knowing where they were going to be teaching or living the following year was the worst feeling.

Chapter 7 builds on the answers to the research questions posed in this study. A set of conclusions and recommendations for further development of the Enhanced Teacher Education Program based in the UOW experiences are the key focus.
Chapter 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter draws upon the analysed data presented in response to the research questions in the previous three chapters and presents a set of key recommendations for future action in cross-cultural teacher education at the University of Wollongong to contribute to the broader debates in this field.

This research confirmed that preservice teacher education has not been successful in including Aboriginal education on a broad scale, and that a more concerted and systematic approach backed by rigorous research and genuine long-term commitment is essential. While research indicated that education is seen as the key for improved life chances for Aboriginal students, teacher quality was consistently cited in many commonwealth and state government policy directives as pertinent to facilitating equitable outcomes. Enacting this is a challenge, it is therefore critical that teacher education providers continue to develop and refine strategic solutions to empower graduates to respond to the social disadvantage and academic marginalisation of Aboriginal children in classrooms around NSW and indeed, the country. Moreover, as the population of young Aboriginal people under 15 is growing at twice the rate of the non-Aboriginal population, it cannot be disputed that education becomes a significant pathway to improving quality of life for Aboriginal students.

The study revealed that the lack of Aboriginal education in their teacher education programs meant that the ETTP presented a significant personal and professional
development opportunity for these participants. Each participant in this study recognised that specialised training is needed for teachers to accelerate the learning outcomes of Aboriginal students. Professor Patrick Dodson (2009) argues if we are to expect good teachers to believe in the worth of their vocation, and more importantly, believe in the potential of every child they teach, then more investment in teacher education professional development is needed (p4).

The ETTP was a new education model developed by the Australian Catholic University, the NSW DET and the NSW AECG, that draws on policy-making, partnerships between Aboriginal communities, the university sector, education departments and government agencies in working together to develop preservice teachers for working effectively with Aboriginal students in NSW primary schools. Targeted research illuminating the experiences of non-Aboriginal teachers aimed to broaden the literature and debates in this field of research.

The scope of the research questions posed for this study allowed for specific commentary to be provided.

**Knowledge, values and attitudes brought to the ETTP by non-Aboriginal preservice teachers**

McCoy (2012) argues that each of us holds stereotypes of people before we meet them and that most people carry some degree of prejudice. Such prejudices are often ingrained into the culture of our schools and organisations, and influence the ways in which we make decisions as we interact with others and evaluate performance (p217).
The non-Aboriginal participants in this study were open to and prepared to examine their own personal worldviews and biases. Brownell & Walter-Thomas (1997) highlight that effective cross-cultural education begins with an understanding that teachers themselves are cultural agents who bring their own socio-cultural influences to the classroom in how they perceive their students. Furthermore, students are cultural agents and will view teachers according to their socio-cultural lens. While the participants were open, through the ETTP process they did acknowledge some tensions within their own understandings. Recognising such barriers was an important first step to acquiring cross-cultural competence, as through this they developed a willingness to recognise and address their limitations rather than deny them. This was seen to be a progressive outcome.

The participants in this study came to the ETTP with varied formal and informal cross-cultural experiences within Aboriginal communities. These participants acknowledged that the majority of their own schooling and teacher education curriculum was derived primarily from dominant western epistemologies. While the participants disclosed that they lacked confidence in the early stages of the ETTP, they demonstrated that they were highly motivated and personally committed to working towards socially just education practices with Aboriginal students. Research confirms that teachers who demonstrate genuine care and understand how their values are likely to influence their practice with students are more likely to generate higher levels of all kinds of success, than those who do not.

The study revealed through its participants, that those preservice teachers who applied and were successful in gaining an ETTP scholarship demonstrated personal attributes
that motivated their journey through Aboriginal education. These qualities included awareness of social justice issues, awareness of the value of effective participation in school for Aboriginal children, recognition that overcoming Aboriginal disadvantage requires commitment, and acknowledgement of their own personal and professional commitment to respond to this.

**Learning experiences within the ETTP with which non-Aboriginal preservice teachers identified**

The participants in this inquiry increased their level of cross-cultural competence and became more informed in relation to Aboriginal education as they progressed through key aspects of the ETTP. Analysed data reveals that the mentoring and immersion components of the ETTP were critical to ensuring that preservice teachers had opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge.

Participants realised that cross-cultural learning and relationship-building takes time and does not develop without effort. The mentors played a valuable role as they shared intimate first-hand accounts of their own personal lives, and cultural insights providing participants with a context of modern day Aboriginal life. These accounts included childhood experiences, growing up as older children in larger families and the responsibilities they had in providing childcare for younger siblings, and how this is still a strong cultural value amongst Aboriginal families. The findings revealed that intimate dialogue in regard to sensitive socio-cultural matters was conducive to a respectful and safe cross-cultural learning environment.
The ETTP ensured that Aboriginal people from the local Illawarra community became more powerful players in shaping and influencing prospective teachers’ knowledge and understanding. Furthermore, the emphasis on building genuine relationships enabled participants to think critically about what it meant to care for their Aboriginal students. Through listening and being exposed to a diverse spectrum of Aboriginal role models and settings, the participants in this inquiry were challenged to think about Aboriginality as a homogeneous experience. Through doing this, they were often challenged at personal and professional levels, and were forced to acknowledge and respond to the common ground and diversity that human beings share. This required participants to explore and interrogate issues of history and contemporary understanding of social justice through their studies, mentor relationships and immersion in Aboriginal communities.

Through continual reflective practice, participants were able to both intellectually and emotionally respond to various aspects of their learning, through to analysing the complexity of teaching and understand their vulnerabilities, which led them on a pathway of personal and professional growth. The participants identified that moving from theory into practice was a profound learning experience that improved the quality of critical thinking, diversity of pedagogical approaches, and their contextual understanding of students and their communities. The opportunities to practise and observe curriculum and pedagogy, and to identify networks and increase their awareness of the resources available in schools with high Aboriginal populations was an integral part of the learning process.
The findings indicated that smaller group learning was at times isolating amongst a larger mainstream student cohort, a lack of awareness and subsequent understanding from the larger cohort (of both students and many academic staff) was challenging. However the smaller group enabled participants to function like members of an extended family, in which assisting, encouraging and supporting one another were practised. The participants valued their peer support, especially given the unfamiliar cross-cultural settings that participants needed to negotiate.

**Challenges identified by non-Aboriginal preservice teachers through their participation in the ETTP**

The findings of this research indicated that uncertainties were an inevitable part of the ETTP. What this research demonstrated was the way in which the prospective teachers dealt with the various challenges through meaningful exchanges with their mentors and the peer support they provided each other. In the areas where these participants lacked knowledge, they demonstrated their ability to seek resources to assist their learning processes. Certain levels of anxiety indicated that these participants held a high level of expectation about their educational learning and associated professional practices.

Findings of this research highlighted that some educationalists and teacher trainers failed to address Aboriginal education policy direction and consigned Aboriginal issues as outside their understanding or responsibility. In doing this, they shifted responsibility to Aboriginal education professionals to implement responses to policy initiatives. Participants identified gaps in their ETTP coursework when working with mainstream cohorts and identified that they needed more specific guidance and
assurances on how to include an Aboriginal perspective across the mainstream subjects. More professional development and support for teacher educators was needed for adapting their subjects to be inclusive of Aboriginal perspectives.

Craven’s (1998) research recommended that Aboriginal education needed to take a multifaceted approach, whereby Aboriginal education should be taught as mandatory subjects, not offered as electives, and that Aboriginal perspectives should be taught across the whole teacher education curriculum. Butler (2000) referred to this approach as the key to building in, and not bolting on, Aboriginal education.

The participants consistently reported that behaviour management was the most overwhelming challenge they faced and acknowledged that the internship in schools with significant Aboriginal student populations provided them with authentic learning experiences in managing student behaviour. Given the findings of this study more preparation for learning effective student management practices is needed to ensure that behaviour management is not a barrier for academic learning. The study highlighted the importance of preparing preservice teachers for living and working within rural and remote areas, with high populations of Aboriginal students. The broad range of learning experiences incorporated within the ETTP provided preservice teacher with opportunities to build their capacity for working in such areas,

Principles of Cross-cultural Teacher Preparation and a Recommended Model for Teacher Aboriginal Education

Research claims that continuing ‘business as usual’ in preservice teacher education will continue to widen the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and
exacerbate unequal educational outcomes. However, if adequate time and resources were given to these issues within teacher education programs, then it may be possible that the conservative influence in the demographic characteristics of beginning teachers could be overcome (Hatton 1998; Harrison 2008). However effective cross-cultural teacher education cannot be assumed, as it takes a dynamic combination of skills, creative thinking and individual commitment to bring about educational social justice.

This study revealed that principles of cross-cultural teacher preparation cannot be reduced to cultural awareness and sensitivity, a body of knowledge, or to a specific set of skills. Rather, it requires a combination of all these factors where a congruent set of pedagogical and curriculum approaches and policies work together within the educational settings to enable both the educational system and professional educators to work effectively to ensure Aboriginal students reach their full potential. Further, this study found that cross-cultural competence is having self-awareness of values and biases, while understanding students’ socio-cultural world views and responding in an appropriate manner.

Principles of cross-cultural competence indicate that prospective teachers of Aboriginal students need to learn about and critically understand how external socio-political forces influence minority groups. This includes knowledge of historical backgrounds, institutional barriers, and ethnocentric and dominant approaches to curriculum and pedagogy. Through the ETTP, preservice teachers gained a greater appreciation of what underpins these values, and were more able to understand Aboriginal students’ identities and lived socio-cultural realities in contexts of their
families and wider communities (Lampert & Phillips 2005). Dodson (2007) claims that relationships with Aboriginal communities underpin Aboriginal students’ finishing school, including intense community involvement, local decision-making, locally controlled resources and respectful support by the non-Aboriginal part of the community.

**Recommendations**

Given the number of policies and intervention programs designed to address Aboriginal educational disadvantage, very few have been evaluated by sound independent research. Leading Aboriginal Australian academics consistently call for more rigorous research into Aboriginal education especially in relation to teacher training and argue that if Indigenous peoples are to become equal citizens and able to fulfil their potential in this country more research is needed (Buckskin, Hughes, Price, Rigney, Sarra, Adams, Hayward, Teasdale, Gregory, 2009, MCEETYA 2005-2008) MaryAnn Bin-Sallik (2005) emphasises that scholarly research can make an important difference and identify much-needed fresh insights on how to better address these critical educational issues of our time. Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in its document titled ’Australian Directions in Indigenous Education’ (MCEETYA 2005-2008) recommended that more support for educating teachers about Aboriginal socio-cultural world views is needed, and recommended that teacher education and school leadership be a priority in closing the gap and ensuring Aboriginal students experience educational equality within the school sectors.
The results of the study highlighted the need to strengthen the transparency of communication. In this research, the need for clear and transparent communication between key stakeholders at the Faculty of Education UOW, policy makers in the NSW DET and participating internship schools became increasingly important. Improved communication and provision of appropriate governance structures would have greatly supported local implementation of the ETTP in this site.

In NSW, Aboriginal cultures have 35 different languages and 120 dialects each. Aboriginal students in NSW are diverse in terms of where they live, who they live with, their language and connection to culture. Aboriginal students are not homogeneous; they are diverse in the way they view and engage in the society, while different communities have different learning needs and different experiences towards learning. Preservice teachers who have experienced education outside the lecture seminar rooms are more likely to value pedagogies and adapt curriculum that is significant to the lives and interests of their students. This study recommends that NSW Primary schools with high Aboriginal populations be identified for possible internship placement. These sites should serve as key demonstration schools as they should have implemented mission statements and action plans that model theoretical principles of culturally responsive teaching into classroom practice and school culture. Teacher Education students would benefit observing how these models and policy directives translates into effectively practice.

Targeting and supporting prospective teachers in the first or second year of their teacher education studies to undertake cross-cultural coursework and teaching placements throughout their entire candidature would provide for sustained and deep
engagement with Aboriginal education. Craven’s (2003) research reported that waiting until the full-time teaching phase of a program is complete is too late to begin to instil culturally responsive teaching skills; rather, it should be initiated in the early stages of a program and maintained throughout the undergraduate’s candidature. The experiences these participants had in their final year were indeed valuable, however would have been sustained and nurtured if a longer period of engagement were possible.

This research emphasised the value of interactions with the broader Aboriginal community within the local context. Formalising cross-cultural mentoring and immersion relationships with local Aboriginal communities, organisations and key people through memoranda of understanding to facilitate cross-cultural immersion would benefit all teacher education students.

This cohort of participants formed a strong community within their local site. However, being a group of seven amongst a much larger student cohort was challenging. Providing access to an ETTP community of learners networking site to connect participants across universities with opportunities for former and current participants to interact, either physically or virtually, would be of invaluable support.

While these participants demonstrated growth in their awareness and understanding of Aboriginal pedagogies and approaches, there is need for longitudinal study of ETTP graduates. Such investigation would identify the practices that increase Aboriginal student engagement, improve learning and enhance students’ academic outcomes.
while also consolidating practices within teacher education that could best support future generations of teachers.

**Limitations of the Research**

This research inquiry was not a comprehensive study of all preservice teachers’ experiences. It is a small study involving seven preservice teachers who elected to undertake an intensive training in Aboriginal education. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to speak on behalf of or represent “all” preservice teachers’ experiences in an intensive Aboriginal education-training program, as there is no guarantee that these informants’ views are credible, trustworthy, or typical of the general preservice teacher population. Further, there was no balance of gender, as all participants were female and ranged in their early-to-late 20s and all were Anglo-Australian.

Data collection was limited to the 2008 academic year. It began almost immediately upon the commencement of the higher research degree (HDR) candidature. As such, the researcher had to simultaneously address issues emerging from program implementation, the data collection phases and review of relevant literature concurrently.

Email communication with students was sporadic, as participants did not respond consistently to the researcher’s requests or make available their completed assessment tasks consistently, and at times the researcher felt that it was inappropriate to make more demands on the prospective teachers.
Due to the constraints of both the UOW and the NSW DET ethics approval processes, ethical clearance to conduct data collection outside of the UOW setting was not available. The cross-cultural immersion experiences and the six-week internship in a rural or remote NSW school all took place outside of the University of Wollongong research site. It would have benefited the researcher’s understanding if data were collected throughout the participants’ six-week internship. This inquiry relied on the participants’ reflections on these experiences.

Two of the subjects undertaken by the participants through cross-institutional enrolment at the ACU were SDAC615 Indigenous Education in Australia and SDAB107 Contemporary Issues in Indigenous Studies. These focused Aboriginal education subjects aimed to provide preservice teachers with opportunities to develop a broad repertoire of pedagogical approaches and specific strategies for adapting curriculum, and selecting and evaluating culturally inclusive resources. It is important to declare that these activities presented possibilities for data-collection through fieldwork observation.

**Conclusion**

While this study focused on the perspectives of non-Aboriginal preservice teachers’ experiences of an intensive Aboriginal education program, it also provides insights into mainstream teacher education programs. The study found that embedding culturally responsive principal and practices within teacher education programs overall would benefit the majority of preservice teachers and facilitate their
multidimensional learning to encompass inclusive cross-cultural curriculum content, the importance of cross-cultural student and teacher relationships, classroom management and instructional techniques. These learnt cross-cultural knowledge and skills will ensure that preservice teachers are more able to transform practices of cultural hegemony and to develop their socio-cultural competence and personal self efficacy.

The study demonstrated that the NSW DET Aboriginal Education Policy direction is directly linked to the effective practices of Universities and NSW School staff. It is not enough to be culturally aware and to have good intentions, those who are involved in embedding the NSW DET policy direction and facilitating change for Aboriginal students must have explicit and contextual cross cultural knowledge, understandings and pedagogical skills in order to address inequities faced by Aboriginal student in NSW schools. Furthermore effective cross-cultural teacher education research, theory and practice are inextricably intertwined. This study illuminated the significant experiences of non-Aboriginal preservice teachers undertaking an intensive Aboriginal education program, and as such adds to the scholarly literature and debates in this field of research. This study demonstrated the importance of highlighting preservice teachers’ significant insights in their own voices as to what identified rich, diverse cross cultural learning spaces that offered those ways to be better prepared for working with Aboriginal students.


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### Appendix A: Audit Trail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data Collected</th>
<th>Assigned Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| February 2008 | Participant observations at the Orientation planning day  
Informal Conversations | PO IC         |
| March 2008    | Semi Structured interview  
Informal Conversations | SSI IC        |
| April 2008    | Informal Conversations  
Semi Structured interview  
Focus Group | IC SSI FG     |
| May 2008      | Informal Conversations  
Email  
Focus Group  
Participant observation  
Document Analysis | IC EM FG PO DA |
| June 2008     | Informal Conversations  
Email  
Focus Group  
Participant observation  
Document Analysis | IC EM FG PO DA |
| July 2008     | Email  
Document Analysis | EM DA         |
| August 2008   | Email  
Document Analysis | EM DA         |
| September 2008| Email  
Document Analysis | EM DA         |
| October 2008  | Email  
Document Analysis | EM DA         |
| November 2008 | Email  
Document Analysis | EM DA         |
| December 2008 | Email  
Document Analysis  
Informal Conversations | EM DA IC     |
| January 2009  | Email  
Document Analysis | EM DA         |

**Assigned codes:**
IC – Informal conversations  
SSI – Semi Structured interview  
FG – Focus Groups  
DA – Document analysis (Assessment tasks, blog entries)  
EM – Email  
PO – Participant observation
Appendix B: Semi-structured interview Questions

1. What do you think the purpose of the ETTP is?

2. Have you taken any university subjects in Aboriginal education; if yes, can you tell me about it?

3. Did the subjects include engagement with Aboriginal people?

4. Tell me what you know about any social and/or cultural issues impacting on the learning of Aboriginal students?

5. Are there any specific areas of your teaching practice in Aboriginal education that you are keen to develop and improve?

6. What do you value about teaching Aboriginal students?

7. Right now on this scale where would you rate your competence and/or confidence in Aboriginal education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None</th>
<th>very little</th>
<th>a lot</th>
<th>very confident</th>
</tr>
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Appendix C: Data Collection Schedules

Semi-structured Interview Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stacey</td>
<td>26/3/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>27/3/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessie</td>
<td>2/4/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>2/4/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennille</td>
<td>9/4/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>9/4/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>9/4/08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Focus Group Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Discussion themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>UOW ETTP</td>
<td>Recognise that environment and colonisation have influenced indigenous lifestyles today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/2/08</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>Three distinct groups: rural, remote and urban dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 preservice</td>
<td>Indigenous concept of identity and the complexities relating this personal issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teachers</td>
<td>To gain knowledge of discrimination and anti-racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher</td>
<td>Historical impact on Aboriginal education minded Past and present history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Debbie Wray</td>
<td>Mentoring expectations and boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3/08</td>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>Advice to engage in the mentoring process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/3/08</td>
<td>McKnight</td>
<td>Challenging and exploring stereotypes and homogeneity generalisations of Aboriginal peoples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/3/08</td>
<td>Jade Kennedy</td>
<td>To be open, ability to feel empathy and understanding a variety of beliefs, values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All participants</td>
<td>Stolen generations and how the topic can be taught across year levels in a sensitive and effective pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DET, ETTP</td>
<td>Identifying differences and similarities, to be mindful as educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers, UOW</td>
<td>How Social Justice is distributed throughout society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>Preparation for Mentor Training days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michelle Brooks</td>
<td>Social determinates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jake Trindorf</td>
<td>Relationships and genuine partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The theory, implementation and practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Indigenising curriculum and pedagogy within the mainstream KLA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What are your views on the effectiveness of Indigenous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Mentor(s)</td>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>All mentors, Dootch Kennedy</td>
<td>Cross-cultural Insights protocols, customs, expectations, politics and understandings. Native title, Tent embassy, Significance of country, Spirituality, Family and community obligations within cultural contexts, Recognising inter-generational trauma in and outside the classroom and its impacts on students in their own learning outcomes, Past and present governments; policies and their impacts; critically selecting culturally-inclusive resources, Identifying and valuing Aboriginal English, the cultural contexts of humour and teasing, Interdependence and care-giving responsibilities in Aboriginal communities, Underlying issues of school attendance and engagement; gifted and talented students; protocols and customs, including how to conduct an Acknowledgement to Country ceremony and how to identify key elders and custodians to perform a Welcome to Country ceremony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Aunty Barbara Nicholson and Dr Uncle Ernie Blackmore</td>
<td>The role of Elders and implementing local perspectives, Wider range of meaningful knowledge for educational contexts, How and when to implement Aboriginal perspectives across the KLAs, Balanced viewpoints, To know the differences between cultural knowledge and Aboriginal Studies, The politics of factions and identifying the skills needed to negotiate across these groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Lisa David</td>
<td>Adjust Pedagogy, Become flexible and open-minded, Aboriginal Perspective, What is important and appropriate to teach in Aboriginal Studies, Knowledge about specific language groups, Building confidence to teach and have a go, To have critical understanding of one’s own attitudes, ideas and prejudices and how this influences your action in the...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>Martin Nakata</td>
<td>Guest Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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**Informal Conversations Dates**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stacey</td>
<td>16/02/08*, 2/5/08, 14/7/08, 21/7/08, 22/10/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>16/02/08*, 21/4/08, 21/7/08, 22/10/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessie</td>
<td>16/02/08*, 7/7/08, 23/7/08, 29/7/08, 21/11/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>16/02/08*, 21/7/08, 29/7/08, 2/11/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennille</td>
<td>16/02/08*, 22/7/08, 15/11/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>16/02/08*, 6/6/08, 23/7/08, 15/11/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>16/02/08*, 2/5/08, 22/10/08</td>
</tr>
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</table>

16/02/08* this was recorded at a group informal conversation during the Orientation planning day

**Email Dates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stacey</td>
<td>11/9/2007 6/5/08 1/4/08 11/12/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>21/3/08 21/11/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessie</td>
<td>6/5/08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>6/5/08 11/1/09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennille</td>
<td>14/4/08 13/5/08</td>
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### Documents Collected for Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>All assignments in EDUT422 and EDUT432</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stacey</td>
<td>All assignments in EDUT422 and EDUT432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alicia</td>
<td>All assignments in EDUT422 and EDUT432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessie</td>
<td>All assignments in EDUT422 and EDUT432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>All assignments in EDUT422 and EDUT432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennille</td>
<td>All assignments in EDUT422 and EDUT432</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>All assignments in EDUT422 and EDUT432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracey</td>
<td>All assignments in EDUT422 and EDUT432</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D: Document analysis: Assessment task descriptions

Below are detailed descriptions of the objectives and assessment tasks for the subjects EDUT432 Inquiry Project, and EDUT422 Reflective Practice, which were analysed in the study.

EDUT432 Inquiry Project

This subject will require students to plan, conduct and report upon an inquiry focused upon educational aspects of a Key Learning Area or educational problem. Skills in library research, critical analysis of selected educational literature, and critical review of journal material relevant to the inquiry project. The project will consist of a collaborative or individually defined topic that is negotiated with the supervisor.

On successful completion of the subject EDUT432, participants were expected to: teach in a regional or remote area in a school with a significant Aboriginal population; teach continuously for 6 weeks; and integrate into an existing teaching staff and articulate the challenges particular to their internship school community.

Assessment 1: Preparation Essay
Due Date: 22nd August
Weighting: 30%
Length: 2000

Task:
Sam Jones was thrilled to receive her full time placement as a beginning teacher. She had been appointed to a remote community school with a high indigenous population. Sam said, “Teaching in a remote school doesn’t worry me at all because I grew up in a small country town that had many Indigenous families. I know about their culture and things like that, so I’ll be fine!”

What advice would you give to Sam?
Your response paper should have a balance between sound theoretical advice and personal insights.

Assessment 2: Homework Centre Reflection
Due Date: 22nd September
Weighting: 30%
Length: 2000
Task:
At the conclusion of school term 3 when you have completed your volunteer work at the WHC prepare a reflection paper that captures your time and experiences at the centre. The following questions may guide your thoughts:

- What is the Homework Centre’s primary function?
- Are there similar centres or programs
- Who was responsible for its opening?
- How is it maintained and resourced?
- What were your initial expectations?
- What did you hope to achieve?
- What did you achieve?

Assessment 3: Half Way Internship Reflection
Due Date: 3rd November (no extensions)
Weighting: 30%
Length: 2000

Task:
By way of daily reflection prepare a paper that illustrates your standing half-way into the internship; based on this in-depth reflection, what is your forward planning?

Guiding questions that may help you complete this task are provided below:

- What is working?
- What isn’t?
- Why/why not?
- What are you going to do differently in the second half of this internship?
- What have you learnt about assessment, implementation & evaluation?
- What have you learnt about yourself as a classroom manager?
- What areas do you feel still need the greatest improvement?

Assessment 4: Postcards from the Edge!
Due Date: 15th October & 10th November (no extensions)
Weighting: 10%
Length: 250 words

Task:
You must send two postcards from your location/region that shows 2 different aspects of where you are living and working. Ideally the postcards will demonstrate your experience of the location/region outside schools hours.
Each postcard must be different
Each postcard will arrive on or before but not after:
October 15th 2008
November 10th 2008
EDUT422 Reflective Practice

On successful completion of this subject, Reflective Practice (EDUT422) students were expected to: demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the nature of reflection in their complex role as a teacher; identify, critique and articulate professional decisions, issues and challenges through personal reflections; and acknowledge the continued role of reflection in their future professional practice.

The assessment task 2 was adapted by the ETTP participants with the aim to increase their peers’ understanding of otitis media and its impact on Aboriginal students’ learning.

**Task 1:** Planning for reflective teaching  
Due date: Week 4  
Weighting: 20%  
Length: 2000 words

**Task 2:** Collaborative gathering, evaluating and communicating evidence: present a training and development package to their peers on a selected topic.  
Due date: Week 9  
Weighting: 40%  
Length: Feature articles – approximately 1000 words each  
Reviews – 100-150 words each  
Editorial comment – 250-300 words  
FAQ – 500 words

**Task 3:** Blogs and synthesis  
Due date: Week 13 tutorial  
Weighting: 40% (10% for Part A and 30% for Part B)  
Length: Part A: Minimum of 5 blog entries on the BEST site (printed and included as an appendix to Part B)  
Part B: 2500-3000 words
Appendix E: Focus Group Field Notes (sample)

Time
11.30 - 1pm
Date
12/3/08
Place
Woolyungah Indigenous Centre
Attendance
All 8 preservice teachers, Jade, Debbie, Anthony, Julie, Michelle, Jake
Context of the event
Scheduled weekly meeting between mentors and ETTP student teachers
Setting and seating plans
The meeting took place in the foyer of the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre and although this is a high traffic area with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students walking by it is still intimate enough to hold informal meetings with beautiful glass windows and bushland scenery. [TTT] organised lunch and everyone bought a plate to share. Student sat around in a circle, lunch was placed on the table in the middle of everyone. People ate while they talked.
Content/Themes
Guest speaker Quality Teacher - Aboriginal Education consultant Michelle Brooks was invited to inform [TTT] the role she plays in the region. Through this talk ETTP preservice teachers were able to identify how the NW DET Human Resources branch administer funding for key Indigenous programs throughout the region under the direction of Aboriginal Education Policy. Michelle discussed in detail why some programs were working and others were not and an example she discussed was the In Class Tuition program and the deficit model used in Aboriginal education.
Jake Trindorf AIME Regional Coordinator briefed the [TTT] on the mentoring program that involved Indigenous secondary student considered at risk being paired with a university student over the period of 17 weeks. The [ttt] were invited to attend an up and coming training program, contact details were exchanged.
Sensitivity to the atmosphere and Interactions
Once Again all preservice teachers were enthusiastic to be meeting this week. Some of the [TTT] were looking obviously tired; however there was much more joke sharing and laughing amongst each other and with the mentors signifying that relationships were developing and indicated that barriers are breaking down and students were feeling more comfortable in the Woolyungah Indigenous Centre environment and engaging more with the relaxed blackfella humour that the mentors were trying to establish. The meeting coincides with the weekly scheduled Indigenous students BBQ lunch that is held in the adjoining court yard. There is an atmosphere of high student visibility and activity.

ETTP preservice teachers insights and experiences
[T] Were observing the personnel and friendly relationships in the centre amongst staff and Indigenous students. This was an important observation for the ETTP students and allowed them to become familiar with the informality that is so much part of Indigenous communication styles.

[T] continued sharing insights and challenges when networking amongst local Indigenous communities and organisation.

[T] Shared her frustration with contacting local schools several times and not being returned with phone calls. The key message from the mentors to was keep persisting and try other avenues including your mentor networks.

[T] Asked to be introduced to key people e.g. school principals through their mentor’s networks. Tracey then pursued her mentor for help with identifying a contact within the school.

[T] was feeling more apprehensive about contacting local community organisations and asked for more support by the mentors in identifying where to start.

[T] Displayed confidence about networking and making connection with Aboriginal people and organisations amongst the students some feeling confident about the relationships they were making while others were more apprehensive.

[T] expressed their concern about formally inviting his mentor to officially come on board the program.

[T] Was having success with Briar Road School and had identified a potential mentor that she said she found very experienced and helpful in Aboriginal Education. (Briar Road School seems to be a good connection)

[T] looked tired today and was quiet without contributing too much however she seemed attentive-listening to the speakers and conversations.

[T] Were asking questions trying to clarify with Julie Kiggins what the expectation was for the 15 day immersion task? Julie explained to the [T] that the immersion was more about seeking out authentic experiences with Aboriginal people organisations and communities, rather than completing 15 days so to speak. It could be just a visit to an organisation finding out about the role the organisations serves for the community. It could be a cuppa tea with an Elder parent or community member or a more organised activity where you negotiate a project if possible. For example one of the 2007 ETTP had the opportunity to work with a small working party committee who planned the Sorry Day activities for the Dapto Aboriginal Medical Centre.