

### 3. A STUDY OF ACTION LEARNING AND ABORIGINAL CULTURAL EDUCATION

#### INTRODUCTION

A team of education researchers from the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia was commissioned to carry out a study of the Quality Teaching Indigenous Project. The schools' action learning projects aimed at providing teachers with professional learning about Aboriginal cultural knowledge and its application for culturally appropriate pedagogical practices in the classroom. The ultimate objective of the project was improvement in student engagement and learning with an emphasis on (English) literacy and numeracy. The study was therefore designed to investigate: the extent to which teachers and their teaching practices were inclusive of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and how this changed as a result of the project; the impact these inclusive practices had on teacher and student learning, and in particular on how they enhance learning for Aboriginal students; and the effectiveness of collaboration with local Aboriginal communities in teaching and learning practices in improving learning outcomes for students.

#### METHODOLOGY

The research team used a mixed method approach. Quantitative data was collected in the form of a pre and post Aboriginal cultural education survey gathering data from teachers in all project schools (see sample survey in the Appendix). Sources of qualitative data included a literature review and in seven schools, field visits, meetings, interviews and focus group discussions.

#### QUANTITATIVE METHODS

##### *Survey Data Collection*

A survey instrument developed specifically for the project was administered twice, once in at the beginning of the project and again a year later, to school staff in each of the 20 participating schools. The purpose of survey was two-fold. First, the survey acted as a map for resources to assist teachers, in their roles and responsibilities as educators, to strengthen cultural inclusiveness for Aboriginal students in their school. The questions in the survey explored responses to the conditions in schools that, from the research, best supported learning environments for Aboriginal students and

partnerships with their parents/care givers and community. Second, the survey provided a tool to gather pre and post views about the extent to which Aboriginal cultural education had become a feature of the school. Participation in the survey was voluntary. All teaching and administrative staff at each participating school was invited to complete the survey. In the first year a total of 274 participants completed the survey. A year later, the number completing the survey increased to 429 participants.

#### AN OVERVIEW OF SURVEY FINDINGS

The findings from administering the survey twice in each school were analysed and compared in terms of the following key areas:

- professional learning;
- teaching practices;
- culture of expectations;
- including Aboriginal cultural knowledge;
- assessing student learning;
- engagement with the Aboriginal community; and
- involvement with Aboriginal parents/care givers.

##### *Professional Learning*

In considering the impact of a project in New South Wales schools, it is important to note that the first Aboriginal education policy in New South Wales government schools was published in 1982, followed by a comprehensive second policy in 1996 that for the first time introduced a five year plan for teacher professional development on Aboriginal issues. This was followed by a major review of Aboriginal education in New South Wales commissioned in 2004 which resulted in an updated Aboriginal Education and Training Policy in 2008 (Department of Education and Training 2008). This means that while teachers may have been involved in professional learning, until the project started in 2006 there had been no other major cross regional teacher training initiative in Aboriginal education in New South Wales government schools since the end of 2001. The survey data showed that the funding provided by the project had made a significant impact on staff at the schools involved in the project. A high proportion of respondents, 78% in 2007 increasing to 87% in 2008, said that they had participated in professional learning about Aboriginal education. The responses showed that there had been a significant increase in targeted professional learning on Aboriginal education between the first and the second surveys.

Most reported that their experience was quite recent, taking place over the past two years for 76% in 2007 and 84% in 2008. Professional learning had occurred at least once a year over the last two years for most of the respondents (68% and 69%). Given that universities have only recently started to include Aboriginal

Studies as a mandatory part of their teacher education programs, the survey data showed that only a proportion (36% in 2007 and 38% in 2008) reported having any formal university or college based training in Aboriginal education.

#### *Literacy and Numeracy Training*

Over recent years a major effort has been made by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training to provide literacy training for teachers across K-12 years in New South Wales government schools. The *State Literacy Plan* identified *Literacy on Track* as a key professional learning course for teachers, and it was being delivered across regionally targeted schools in 2007 and 2008 (Tasik, 2007). When asked about their involvement in literacy and numeracy training over the previous two years, less than half (47%) had taken part in 2007, with a higher proportion (56%) having undertaken literacy training in 2008. The data on numeracy training over the previous two years showed that only 41% undertook any training in 2007, and the proportion dropped to 36% in 2008. In terms of the impact of literacy training on teaching practice there was a noticeable increase in the proportion who said it had made a significant impact, rising from 28% in 2007 to 43% in 2008. The proportion indicating that their numeracy training over the last two years had a significant impact on their teaching practice also increased, from 22% in 2007 to 34% in 2008. This was also reflected in a noticeable drop in those who felt the training had made either a "slight" or "no" impact on their teaching practice, from 26% to 14% for literacy and from 44% to 19% for numeracy training.

#### *Teaching Practices*

In relation to Aboriginal education, teachers did feel they needed to improve their teaching practices, and the survey data showed that the project assisted teachers to adjust their teaching strategies to better meet the needs of their students. Almost all the respondents in both surveys (93% in 2007 and 93% in 2008) felt that there were areas of their teaching practice in Aboriginal education that needed to be improved. However no follow up question was asked in order to explore which particular aspects of their practice were of major concern. When asked specifically about how often they adjusted their teaching strategies to better meet the needs of Aboriginal students, the proportion who said they did so "frequently" increased from 37% in 2007 to 50% in 2008. The proportion who said they did so "occasionally" had decreased from 48% to 42%, leaving only a small proportion, 17% in 2007 and 8% in 2008, who "rarely" or "never" adjusted their teaching practices. The impact on teaching practices of teacher engagement with their local Aboriginal community was assessed as "substantial" by 27% in 2007, increasing to 36% of respondents in 2008. On the other hand there was a similar proportion, 27% in 2007, dropping to 14% in 2008, who said the engagement had "very little" or "no" impact at all on their teaching.

Significantly, about half, 47% in 2007 and 50% in 2008, said that engagement impacted only "somewhat" on their teaching.

When asked about the resources teachers used to inform their own understanding of Aboriginal education a majority reported that they used:

- resource guides about Aboriginal education (64% in 2007 and 60% in 2008);
- information from their local Aboriginal community (62% and 72%);
- Aboriginal education policy documents (61% and 68%);
- relevant reports and reviews (57% and 50%) and
- information from specific Stages or Years (53% and 57%).

The least used resources were those obtained through Internet access (42% and 48%). The kinds of resources teachers said they used "usually" and "always" to inform the teaching of Aboriginal cultural knowledge were generally traditional text based and media forms. They ranged from curriculum resources materials (53% in 2007 and 56% in 2008) and textbooks about Aboriginal culture (51% and 50%) to audiovisual resources (27% and 37%) and journals and magazines (27% and 17%). Also used were Aboriginal guest speakers, which increased from 19% in 2007 to 32% in 2008, as did computer assisted programs incorporating Aboriginal culture, which increased from 13% in 2007 to 21% in 2008. Although field trips to local Aboriginal communities were the least used kind of resources, the proportion saying they "usually" and "always" used a field trip, grew from 9% in 2007 to 13% in 2008.

#### *Culture of Expectations*

Given that developing a culture of high expectations for students has been recognised as an important factor in improving Aboriginal school student outcomes (Sarra 2003; Rowe 2003), a significant proportion, 41% in 2007 increasing to 49% in 2008, said that their school "substantially" had a culture of high expectations for the achievement of Aboriginal children. This meant that only a small proportion (11% and 6%) said that the school had "very little" or "not at all" this kind of culture of high expectations, while 49% and 45% rated the culture of expectations as "somewhat".

#### *Including Aboriginal Cultural Knowledge*

Another important area was the inclusion of Aboriginal cultural knowledge in teaching. A majority of respondents, 56% in 2007 and 59% in 2008, said that their teaching strategies were "somewhat" inclusive of Aboriginal cultural knowledge. The proportion who said their practices were "substantially" inclusive increased from 18% to 27%. This was accompanied by a drop in the proportion from 27% to 15% who said they did "very little" to be inclusive of Aboriginal cultural knowledge, or answered "not at all" to this question.

Including the discussion of contemporary Aboriginal issues in class was not a feature of most classroom teaching. When asked about it only a small proportion, 13% in 2007 and 16% in 2008, said they did so "often". On the other hand there

was a noticeable increase in those who said they did so "occasionally" increasing from 35% to 50%. And there was a drop in the proportion who said they did so "rarely" or "never", falling from 51% to 35%.

When asked about who was responsible for Aboriginal cultural knowledge being shared at the schools, most strongly agreed that it was a whole school responsibility, with 55% in 2007 and 61% in 2008. Other key players were identified, and ranked in descending order. Thirty percent (2007) rising to 33% in 2008 considered that the local Aboriginal community were responsible. Significantly, only a small proportion, 14% in 2007 and 13% in 2008, believed that the teacher was responsible for sharing Aboriginal cultural knowledge. At the same time Aboriginal staff in the school was also not seen as having responsibility, with only 9% and 13% agreeing that Aboriginal staff had a key responsibility.

#### *Assessing Student Learning*

Another aspect of teachers' classroom practices surveyed was how their students' understanding of Aboriginal cultural knowledge was assessed. Generally there was little change in teacher assessment methods over the two surveys. The most frequently used methods were through:

- artwork (76% in both 2007 and 2008);
- story telling (68% and 67%); and
- oral assessments (63% and 66%).

Other methods mentioned were anecdotal records (55% and 62%); presentations (51% and 56%); music and/or dance (51% and 52%) and extended open response items (45% and 49%). Notable among the least frequently used methods were written assignments (37% and 41%) and objective tests (23% and 33%). The use of both of these forms of assessment had increased noticeably over the survey period. These statistics are reported without qualified comment as to the effectiveness of these assessment items in terms of student learning because the effectiveness of assessment was outside the scope of this evaluation.

#### *Engaging with the Aboriginal Community*

Two aspects of schools and their staff being able to engage more effectively with the local Aboriginal community were having a culture of respect for Aboriginal families and being able to understand the educational issues facing a school's educational community. Most respondents, 62% in 2007 increasing to 67% in 2008, felt there was a culture of respect for Aboriginal families at the school, with only a very small number, 4% and 3% saying their school had "very little" respect.

Most felt that they understood the educational issues facing their school's educational community "somewhat", with 54% in 2007 and 56% in 2008. Notably an increased proportion, rising from 24% in 2007 to 31% in 2008, said that they "substantially" understood the issues, with a noticeable drop in the proportion, from 23% to 13%, who said they understood the issues "very little" or "not at all".

A very high proportion of respondents, 84% in 2007 increasing to 92% in 2008, said that their professional learning activities did involve engagement with Aboriginal people. However, it appeared that despite having this high level of engagement in and focus for professional development, this did not necessarily translate into further ongoing involvement with the local Aboriginal community. If engagement is seen as more than just making contact during their professional development – and is seen in terms of discussions and exchange of information about education – an important survey finding was that the proportion who reported "occasionally" engaging with the local Aboriginal community to discuss their views about education increased from 24% in 2007 to 34% in 2008. The proportion who "never or rarely" engaged in community discussion fell slightly from 69% and 56%. There was a quite small proportion, 8% in 2007, increasing to 10% in 2008, who did engage in community discussion "frequently". This small gain points to the fact that despite the project, a majority of respondents continued to be uninvolved in any discussions or exchanges with the local Aboriginal community on education issues.

#### *Involvement with Aboriginal Parents*

Another aspect of engagement with the Aboriginal community was involvement with Aboriginal parents. The only question that explored this relationship asked about having the opportunity to discuss contemporary Aboriginal issues with Aboriginal parents. The proportion doing so "frequently", although quite small, increased from 8% in 2007 to 12% in 2008. At the same time there was a drop in the sizeable majority who reported that they "never or rarely" had the opportunity to discuss contemporary Aboriginal issues with Aboriginal parents, falling from 69% in 2007 to 57% in 2008. And the proportion doing so "occasionally" also dropped from 43% to 32%.

Overall, the survey findings illustrated that the project had made a significant difference in the level of professional learning in Aboriginal education, involving a high proportion of school staff and assisting a proportion of teachers to substantially adjust their teaching practices to better meet the needs of their students. At the same time, teachers indicated that their increased involvement in professional learning in literacy and numeracy had also made a significant impact on their teaching practices.

The survey findings indicated that teachers' participation in professional learning that focused explicitly on integrating Aboriginal cultural knowledge and histories in the curriculum increased their confidence to do so while also raising expectations for their Aboriginal students' achievement in literacy and numeracy. The findings also point to the growth in school cultures that were inclusive of Aboriginal cultural knowledge signifying respect for and understanding about Aboriginal families, their educational issues and local histories. There was a reported increase in the proportion of teachers who sought and made contact with Aboriginal community members with the purpose of raising their knowledge and understanding of local Aboriginal practices, cultures and traditions.

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

Members of the research team visited each of the seven schools, with the first visits commencing in 2007. Schools were selected from the schools that took part over Phase One and Phase Two of the project. In Phase One, commencing in 2006, a total of eleven schools were involved and in Phase Two starting in 2008 a further nine schools were added, making a total of twenty schools. Research data were gathered from school visits to seven sites where the research team attended school planning meetings and conducted interviews and focus groups with a range of school participants. This data collection was supplemented by a series of teleconferences and email correspondence.

*Sample Group*

The participants in these processes included:

- teachers from each school's action learning team;
- classroom Aboriginal Education Officers (AEOs);
- the school principal or deputy principal;
- each school's academic partner or cultural mentor;
- members of the local Aboriginal communities; and
- local Aboriginal Elders/mentors who were specifically involved with the school.

*Data Sources*

Members of each research team were able to view and reflect on data about relevant aspects of teaching and professional learning: needs analyses; indicative records; attendance and participation in project events by school staff, students, parents and local communities; and celebrations of successes and the enhancement of professional learning. They were also able to attend a Quality Teaching Indigenous Project conference in mid 2007 to listen to key presentations and discussions about the project. Members of the team presented preliminary findings and observed presentations by school teams at the 2008 conference, also attending informal meetings with school representatives.

*Teacher reflections* A number of teachers recorded their reflections in project journals and these were collected and analysed at a number of the school sites. Teacher reflections collected by the Department's Senior Quality Teaching Indigenous Project Officer, the Manager of the Quality Teaching Indigenous Project activity, were also made available to the research team.

*Annual progress reports* All Quality Teaching Indigenous Project schools were required to prepare an annual Progress Report for the Department. These reports were initially prepared in a text based format, however a review of the reporting process led to the Manager of the Quality Teaching Indigenous Project activity providing schools with the opportunity to present their 2008 report during school visits. This enabled team members to focus on different aspects of their work with

students and to use selected audio visual and other material to illustrate elements including their approach to programming and student achievements. Presentations were video recorded and the video reports by schools were made available to the research team for their analysis.

DISCUSSION ON ACTION LEARNING

*What Did the School-based Action Learning Teams Look Like?*

In each of the 20 schools involved in the project a small team was formed comprising teachers (usually 6–8 teachers), Aboriginal Education Officers, an academic partner and community members. Over the period of the project the action learning teams engaged in cycles of planning, acting, observing, describing, recording, discussing, reflecting, evaluating and celebrating together.

1. **Teams of teachers**  
A small group of colleagues with a shared responsibility for learning, formed an action learning team to take effective action to address a real workplace learning and teaching challenge related to integrating Aboriginal cultural knowledge into teaching and learning
2. **Project-based learning**  
Their action learning project addressed learning and teaching challenges that had specific curriculum and syllabus outcomes and addressed the priorities in the school's plan for Aboriginal education.
3. **Participant direction**  
Members in the action learning team decided on the area of inquiry that informed their professional learning plans. They decided on the goals, set the pace, chose the activities, evaluated the success of the project and made decisions about future actions.
4. **Cycles of inquiry**  
Action learning involved the teachers in cycles of planning, implementing, sharing and describing the effects of their professional learning on classroom practice. They reflected on and evaluated the action and the process. What teachers and team members learned in each step of the process informed decisions and actions in subsequent steps and phases of the action learning cycles over the four years of the project.
5. **Cycles of reflection**  
Reflection on current classroom and assessment practices was a vital element of the action learning cycle. Action learning teams met frequently to discuss and reflect upon their current progress and their future directions for professional learning. Discussions with colleagues were encouraged to be honest, thoughtful and detailed personal reflections about their own learning and their students' progress.

*Learning Partnerships*

Each school-based action learning team included an academic partner who both supported the team by bringing an external "academic" perspective and took an active role as a member of the team in the action learning processes. Academic partners brought specific curriculum, cultural and or research perspectives that added to the richness of the teams but was not superior in terms of the dynamics of how the professional learning was structured, practiced and refined over the cycles of action learning.

Action learning teams were encouraged to use a variety of tools for making judgements about the effectiveness and impact of their professional learning on student learning and teaching practice through observing, describing, recording, discussing and reflecting tools, using:

- observation and reflection guides
- teaching logs/journals
- observation checklists, coding sheets, surveys and individual and focus group interviews
- student work and assessment tasks
- students' feedback through discussions, learning and teaching charts, surveys, and individual and focus group interviews
- photos and video- and audio-tapes of teaching practice
- records of classroom discourse
- records of team meeting discussions, including photos and video- and audio-tapes.

The use of a variety of tools enabled teachers to examine their teaching practice and quality of instruction from multiple perspectives including their own, their teaching partner, other action learning team members, their academic partner and their students. Evidence collected from both internal sources and an external evaluation of the project found that adopting a collaborative action learning approach was effective in deepening teachers' understanding of Aboriginal culture and history and was enabled by their contact with local Aboriginal communities. Not surprisingly, the extent to which the 20 school project teams achieved their goals varied across sites as contextual factors played out over the four years of participation. Below is a summary of the findings that highlight the where and how the project made a difference to teacher, student and community learning.

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

*Project Teams*

The membership and size of the project teams varied from school to school. The most effective teams had a variety of active stakeholders including members of the executive, teaching staff, Aboriginal parents and community representatives connected with key local agencies outside of the school, including local and state

government bodies and arts centres. In optimal circumstances this brought the community together and engendered a greater awareness of Aboriginal culture within that community.

*Value of Collaboration*

The importance of professional collaboration in the introduction of any new program in schools was highlighted again and again in the findings. The value of collaboration, the enabling of a mentoring process for new teachers and the creation of a forum for professional conversations were all seen as key aspects of the project. Within the professional conversations which occurred, the opportunity to expand professional awareness and to combine theory and practice through action learning and the pedagogical practices in the Quality Teaching model were highly valued. Time to reflect on practice was also appreciated. Teachers valued the opportunity and time to discuss and reflect on their teaching practice.

As a result, teachers noted a sense of renewal and revitalisation of their teaching practices across a number of key areas, including the adoption of new teaching strategies, engaging in some very innovative student based projects involving digital media, and making stronger connections with local Aboriginal communities. A large proportion of teachers noted that after they adjusted their teaching to better meet the needs of Aboriginal students, there had been a corresponding increase in student engagement. Further they noted an increase in the promotion of a culture of high expectations for Aboriginal students.

*Attitudinal Change*

Almost all teachers (over 90%) felt that there were areas of their practice in Aboriginal education that needed improvement. The findings illustrated that improvements had occurred over the life of the project. There was evidence of notable attitudinal change among many of the participants in the schools and an indication that for some participants the changes were transformational.

Teachers were more willing to engage in adopting creative practices as a result of the project. This was particularly so in the use of digital media and interactive technology. For many teachers, the ability to combine an increased awareness of Indigenous cultural knowledge with new digital media was very invigorating. This improvement in their level of skill with digital media enabled them to extend their repertoire of strategies and new knowledge to other subjects.

*Leadership*

Among the schools where the most significant positive changes occurred, the project teams were generally marked by a high level of commitment by the team leader and what the literature describes as a distributive or facilitative leadership. This enabled team members to feel encouraged and supported to make decisions

and to follow them through, resulting in the team accepting responsibility for progressing the project.

#### *Academic Partners*

The support of academic partners did make a positive contribution to the project and to the professional development of teachers. Relationships worked optimally where the correlation between the expertise of a partner and the direction of the project was high.

#### *The Project Manager*

There was agreement by school stakeholders that the New South Wales Department of Education and Training Project Manager in the Quality Teaching Indigenous Project played a key role in setting up each school project, providing teams with an orientation program, monitoring their progress, and helping to address issues as the projects evolved. As well as resourcing and supporting project teams, her responsiveness and ability to render practical assistance was exemplary. Regular site visits were made to all schools and additional visits were made to those schools seeking clarification and support in devising their own solutions to issues which had arisen in developing or implementing action learning plans. The Project Manager provided school teams with an outline of alternative non text reporting methods. This resulted in increasingly dynamic and authentic presentations by school teams that incorporated data as well as visual and personal stories of cultural change. Examples of teacher and student work were showcased more effectively in these presentations than in previous written reports. The presentations were also videotaped as a record of the school's progress. The expertise and skills of the Project Manager, together with her energy and commitment to the Quality Teaching Indigenous Project, were widely acknowledged as key elements in ensuring its success.

#### ABORIGINAL CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Most teachers agreed that the inclusion of Aboriginal cultural knowledge(s) into the curriculum was a whole school responsibility, rather than that of the individual teacher. The role of the local Aboriginal community was also considered to be important. While there was initial confusion and discussion as to what constituted Aboriginal cultural knowledge, during the project teachers did gain a greater understanding of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and improved their capacity to embed this knowledge into their teaching practices in particular subject areas.

In addition, the interpretation of what constituted Aboriginal cultural knowledge(s), protocols and traditions and who had access to that knowledge, varied among the school communities. Negotiating the parameters of these discussions sometimes required additional time and resources for the school

community to understand the nature of their local context, its history and the cultural sensitivities, which applied to allow the differing voices to be heard.

#### *School Teams Focus*

Among the projects that school teams focused on were: a creative arts project that linked the school with the local art centre; a commemorative bush garden that expanded the students understanding of bush foods and sustainable environmental practices; murals and local history projects that expanded local research and library resources and digital technology projects that helped students use technology to write or document their own life stories or those of their home communities and families.

#### *Local Aboriginal Resources*

One important issue that emerged in several communities was the availability of local Aboriginal resources, both in terms of primary and secondary source materials, to enhance teaching practices. Different communities reported different levels of access and availability to local expertise and local historical sources and materials. Often this was a function of both the local histories and the contexts in which the schools were situated.

#### *Community Engagement*

It is important to acknowledge that the nature of each of the local Aboriginal communities connected to a school varied considerably in their size, connections to the school and in its capacity to be engaged in making connections with school staff and students to share local cultural knowledge(s). It can be said that on the whole, the project did enable schools to improve their engagement with their local Aboriginal community, including to a lesser extent with parents.

#### *Aboriginal Parents*

Some schools noted that their links with Aboriginal parents and the participation of Aboriginal parents in the school had improved. In one school the project was the impetus to start up a regular Aboriginal community newsletter to inform parents about their children's learning. Highlighted examples of increased community engagement included the raising for the first time of an Aboriginal flag at one school, setting up a Koori room as a teaching and learning environment that was also a welcoming space for the community and starting up an Aboriginal dance group. In one school the process of creating a large canvas artwork through a creative arts project was a successful way of involving a number of members of the local Aboriginal community with the project.

*Respect for Aboriginal Staff*

A notable change observed among teaching staff was their new found respect for the Aboriginal staff (including support staff and teachers) at their school. A growing awareness of the cultural knowledge that they brought to the project and the help they provided in establishing or improving connections to students, parents and carers and the local Aboriginal community was observed. It was also noted that Aboriginal staff, as well as other teachers, were always under a time pressure and often had many roles to play within a school. This needed to be taken into account when planning consultations with Aboriginal communities.

*Project Sustainability*

While this project faced several challenges in achieving its outcomes, a major concern that emerged was the need to ensure the projects sustainability within the schools. Clearly, ongoing funding was one way to ensure its continuation. Teachers noted that the New South Wales Department of Education and Training's new policies on Aboriginal education and training provided support for new initiatives. The need was identified for sustained funding of the development of local resources in schools with the assistance of Aboriginal communities. In summary, the project demonstrated the benefits of a project that allowed teachers to engage in professional learning over a period of time. It demonstrated the importance of:

- providing adequate resources for teachers to be able to meet with colleagues and to consult with local stakeholders
- planning and designing innovative curriculum strategies to meet student needs;
- engaging in the process of applying these new ideas; and
- reflecting on their effectiveness as pedagogical strategies within the New South Wales Quality Teaching model.

CONCLUSION

The key objective of the project in the 20 schools was to deepen teachers' understanding and inclusiveness in their teaching of local Aboriginal cultural knowledge. Analysis of the data indicated that there was an increase in teachers' willingness to engage with local Aboriginal people and their communities and to transfer information from the local Aboriginal community, Aboriginal education policy documents, reports and reviews into their teaching practices. Teachers' deepened understanding traditional and contemporary Aboriginal culture was a key factor in greater inclusivity of appropriate resources and raised expectations for Aboriginal students' achievement. This shift was reflected in a significant proportion of teachers confirming that their school now had a culture of high expectations for Aboriginal students' literacy and numeracy achievement.

Developing deep respect for Aboriginal cultures was attributed to engaging local Aboriginal communities in teachers' formal professional learning. This in turn sent strong messages to local communities that Aboriginal people were not only

welcome to the school but also had a critical role in the education of their children. Adopting an action learning change model provided purpose and structure for teachers to find out who was their local community, and gain a better understanding of their values and knowledge that were considered to be critical for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children's learning. New ways of learning about and understanding of Aboriginal systems of kinship, cultures and protocols altered teachers' values and developed reciprocal respect. These outcomes identified from the data are further explored through the detailed school studies in the chapters that follow.

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