

University of Technology Sydney
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Designing higher education curriculum
in partnership with
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders:
a study in Visual Arts education

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Doctor of Education 2014

Certificate of original authorship

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text. I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

The following publications were produced over the period of this inquiry and contain reference either to the study itself or to occasions where the arts-based approach used in this study in mid 2008 was employed in other contexts. Additionally, an individual poster presentation and the group exhibitions of the visual communication produced by the researcher, the cultural mentor and study participants are noted below.

Publications

Burridge, N., Riordan, G., Aubusson, P., Evans, C., Vaughan, K., Kenney, S. & Chodkiewicz, A. (2009). *Evaluation study of professional learning on teacher awareness of Aboriginal cultural knowledge and its impact on teaching* Sydney, NSW: University of Technology Sydney & NSW Department of Education 33-40

Evans, C. (2009). *Designing Higher Education Curriculum in partnership with Aboriginal stakeholders: an action research project in Visual Arts education* (Poster presentation) NSW Institute of Educational Research Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, UTS: Lindfield, NSW

Evans, C. & Riordan, G. (2012). *Indigo Primary School*. In N. Burridge, F. Whalan & K. Vaughan (Eds.), *Indigenous Education: A learning journey for teachers, schools and communities* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense Publishers 87 - 102

Evans, C. & Skuthorpe, T. (2009). *Designing Higher Education Curriculum in partnership with Aboriginal stakeholders: an action research project in Visual Arts education*. *Journal*

of Australian Indigenous issues - special issue: WIPCE conference proceedings 12 361-373

Group exhibitions

Drawing on Research - Gawura Aboriginal Learning Centre, Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE – Northern Beaches College, Brookvale 13 -16 November, 2009

Yarning about curriculum - Launch of the Dean’s Unit, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, UTS 12 -26 October, 2010

Signature of student _____

Date _____

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands upon which this study took place, the Guringai people of the northern Sydney region and the Gadigal people of central Sydney, along with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members who supported this doctoral research. I express my sincere thanks to the members of the local Aboriginal community – in particular Aunty Lois, Aunty Julie and Jess - for their support of and engagement in the study. I acknowledge Uncle Tex Skuthorpe, the project's cultural mentor, for his guidance, support and permission to include his arts-based, community development approach within this educational research framework.

I acknowledge my friend, Lori Beckett, for setting me on the doctoral pathway and for the energy and insight she brings to her social justice work. Importantly I would like to acknowledge my supervisor, Prof. Peter Aubusson, for his patience, guidance, professionalism and innovative thinking. My co-supervisor, Dr. Gregory Martin, I thank for putting the political fire in the belly at tough times among all of the other forms of support he provided. I thank Dr. Karen Vaughan for being a culturally grounded, inspiring and gracious colleague and Sue Kenney for being a great 'study sister'. I thank Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander casual tutors of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, UTS, and my former Visual Arts education students for their engagement in the processes that inspired this study. I thank all of the participants in this project for sharing their wisdom, talents, understanding and humour.

I extend my sincere thanks to various managers of the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, including Mark Tennant, Theo van Leeuwin and Geoffrey Riordan for the various opportunities and support they provided to enable this study to progress. My former FASS colleagues I extend my thanks to - Sandy Schuck, Matthew Kearney, Kitty TeRiele, Ann Prescott, John Buchanan and others - for their generous support and professional example. I acknowledge Prof. Alison Lee for having shared her insatiable intellectual curiosity and drive with those around her. I acknowledge my current workplace supervisors for creating a supportive space in the final stages of writing. The staff of the schools where my children attend I thank for their understanding and support. Special thanks are extended to Mrs. Hope. To friends – Mary B., Merrilyn, Louise, Karin, Vick,

Row, Victoria, Mary E., Gary, Terry, Les, Sarah, Anne and Lou – I couldn't have got through this without you!

Thanks to Louise Alexander, Renee Flood, Suzy Jarratt, Nezmia Hay, Rosemary McLellan, Sibyl Fisher and Lori Beckett for editorial and formatting assistance in the final stages of production of the thesis.

Finally, I acknowledge my remarkable family for their patience and love - my children, Tristan, Dylan & Grace, for allowing Mum to 'do her homework', my parents, Margaret and Cecil, for being my 'soft place to fall' when times were tough and my centenarian Nan, Hilda, for reminding me of what's really important.

Glossary of abbreviations

ACARA	Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACDE	Association of Canadian Deans of Education
AGNSW	Art Gallery of NSW
AHO	Aboriginal Heritage Office
AIATSIS	Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
AITSL	Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
ALC	Aboriginal Land Council
ATSICQA	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Quality Assurance
BOSNSW	Board of Studies NSW
BTRQ	Board of Teacher Registration Queensland
DECS	Department for Education and Children's Services
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Work Relations
IHEAC	Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council
LAECG	Local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
MATSITI	More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative
NHMRC	National Health and Medical Research Council
NIAAA	National Indigenous Arts Advocacy Association
NITV	National Indigenous Television
NSWAECG	NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc.
NSWDEC	NSW Department of Education and Communities
NSWIT	NSW Institute of Teachers
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Union
QTIP	Quality Teaching Indigenous Project
QUT	Queensland University of Technology
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency
TSIREC	Torres Strait Islanders' Regional Education Council
UN	United Nations
UTS	University of Technology Sydney
WIPCE	World Indigenous Peoples Conference: Education

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Abstract

The consultative frameworks between higher education and Aboriginal stakeholders and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders are routinely evolving (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew & Kelly, 2012; Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council, 2008; Universities Australia, 2011). Effective consultation is necessary to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to participate not only in curriculum dialogue about what knowledge is of most worth (Apple, 2004; Pinar, 2011; Toohey, 1999; Williamson & Dalal, 2007; Young, 1998) but also in dialogue about what knowledge is most appropriate for particular audiences and how that knowledge is represented.

This study responds to the under representation of research about higher education curriculum renewal processes for incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge or ways of knowing, doing and being (Behrendt et al, 2012; IHEAC, 2008; Nakata 2007a; Williamson & Dalal, 2007). The inquiry builds on the work of Craven and others in primary education and in other higher education programs (Behrendt et al, 2012; Craven, 1996; Craven, Marsh & Mooney, 2003; Williamson & Dalal, 2007) by shifting the focus to a strand of mainstream secondary teacher education at one Aboriginal community and higher education site.

This action research study used an overarching Indigenist research methodology (Page and Asmar, 2008; Rigney, 1997) to privilege the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in mainstream teacher education curriculum renewal. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants, drawn from local community, education, Visual Arts, cultural heritage and legal sectors, provided their advice about a selection of Visual Arts secondary teacher education curriculum documents and about aspects of the research itself during focus groups or interviews. Some provided advice about Visual Arts secondary teacher education curriculum through a ‘blue skies’, arts-based process. An Aboriginal cultural mentor provided advice throughout the study and permission to use a collaborative, arts-based process (Evans & Skuthorpe, 2009).

The significant of this study resides is the way that it investigates, through the lens of an Aboriginal academic, the curriculum overlap (Figure 1) between a subject-specific strand of a mainstream teacher education course, in this case Visual Arts secondary

teacher education, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge (Behrendt et al, 2012) or ways of knowing, doing and being. Also significant is the effect of the cultural customizing of the methodology particularly that of the arts-based component (Burrige et al, 2009; Evans & Riordan, 2012; Evans & Skuthorpe, 2009).



Figure 1: Christine Evans *The curriculum space between higher education disciplinary knowledge and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge* 2013 (digital photograph)

‘How can we, as teacher educators, provide respectful consultative engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local and professional communities to enhance teacher education?’ was the overarching research question. More specifically the research asks ‘How does an experience of engaging with external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in secondary Visual Arts teacher education inform curriculum renewal?’ and ‘How might an experience of engaging with external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders in secondary Visual Arts teacher education contribute more broadly to engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to inform teacher education?’

Outcomes of this study include confirmation of and improvements to content in the selected teacher education curriculum documents, the formulation of knowledge about representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, doing and being in Visual Arts secondary teacher education curriculum generally and, importantly, the emergence of a model of consultation for the higher education site. The model of consultation articulates a flexible, authentic approach that takes into account several enabling conditions. The findings also provide new insights into research practices when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.