

Exploring Queensland secondary teacher induction training undertaken prior to working with remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that are considered remote to metropolitan-dwelling, non-Indigenous Australians experience challenges attracting and retaining qualified teachers. Initial teacher education (ITE) is known to inadequately prepare teachers to engage Indigenous Australian students, however, we understand little about the induction training received by postgraduate secondary teachers prior to commencing work in remote schools with high enrolments of Indigenous students. This exploratory study investigated the relevance of the information provided in pre-service induction training and how this translated into classroom practice. Thirty-four Queensland secondary teachers with experience educating remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students responded to an online questionnaire investigating four different types of pre-service induction training: cross-cultural awareness, culturally appropriate pedagogy, classroom management, and student social and emotional wellbeing. Thematic analysis of their open-text responses identified three themes: training content, application of training and applicability to Indigenous students. Findings indicated inconsistencies in completion rates, content significance and conversion of material into effectual classroom practices. It is suggested that providing community-specific pre-service induction training for Queensland secondary teachers could support them to engage remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in learning and may reduce the high frequency of teacher transfers and increase attendance rates of students.

Keywords: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, social and emotional wellbeing, teacher training, remote education

Introduction

Education is a known social determinant of health that provides a foundation for improving the lives of all people (Mitrou et al., 2014). Classroom teachers play one of the most vital roles in the delivery of education. Therefore, the quality of teacher education impacts service delivery and thus the quality of education for their students (Hall, 2013). In an Australian context, minimal attention has been paid to the training that Queensland secondary teachers receive as postgraduates. In geographically remote regions of Queensland, many students identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (hereafter respectfully referred to as Indigenous Australians) (Commonwealth of Australia, 2020). However, due to a myriad of factors, including the ongoing impacts of colonisation (Bennet & Moriarty, 2013; Calma et al., 2017;

Jorgensen et al., 2010; Lock et al., 2012; Priest et al., 2011), mainstream measures of education (such as year 12 attainment, English literacy and numeracy) are lower for these students compared to urban populations. This suggests there are ongoing challenges with the delivery and attainment of education in remote communities (Commonwealth of Australia, 2020; Maher, 2013). Therefore, these areas experience an ongoing and urgent need for skilled teachers with specialised training and abilities to support Indigenous Australian students to thrive and attain equitable educational outcomes (Bennet & Moriarty, 2013; Craven et al., 2014; Lock et al., 2012).

Educational context in very remote Queensland

The Accessibility Remoteness Index of Australia indicates the five classes of remoteness (major cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote) derived from measures of road distance between populated localities and service areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). In the remote and very remote areas of Australia, there are recurrent challenges associated with attracting and retaining qualified teaching staff, including accommodation, personal and social isolation, lack of access to services, and minimal professional development opportunities (Benveniste, 2018; Hall, 2013; Lock et al., 2012; Maher, 2013; Sullivan & Johnson, 2012; Young et al., 2018). This is unsurprising, as, for an example, very remote Queensland schools in Cape York may be over 2,000 kilometres from the major city centre, Brisbane. Due to these challenges, high turnover rates of remote teaching staff persist in very remote Queensland communities.

Furthermore, it has been proposed that teachers enter remote communities with limited skills necessary to engage Indigenous students in learning (Labone et al., 2014; Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012), further contributing to the turnover (Jorgensen et al., 2010; Maher, 2013). Engagement in learning and attendance are indicative of positive in-class relationships (Liebenberg et al., 2015; Stronger Smarter Institute, 2017). These improve with access to qualified longstanding facilitators (Maher, 2013; Young et al., 2018); therefore, effective teachers that are consistently available over time become instrumental in enabling positive educational outcomes for students (Bishop et al., 2012; Hall, 2013; Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012).

Most educators in very remote regions are non-Indigenous university graduates from middle-class society (Young et al., 2018) who have recently completed a nationally accredited initial teacher education (ITE) degree (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011/2018). Furthermore, the classroom is often their first experience of interacting with Indigenous Australians (Craven et al., 2014; Jorgensen et al., 2010). Although ITE programs endorse educational courses specific to Indigenous students (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012), and promote remote living through placement programs (Young et al., 2018), the ongoing difficulties with teacher retention persist (Jay et al., 2009; Maher, 2013; Young, et al., 2018). Lowe et al. (2019) suggest that teachers working in these regions require more extensive assistance to develop appropriate capabilities to avoid this “revolving door” (p. 21).

Initial teacher education

Socioeconomic background and family history unavoidably construct the experiences that students bring to the school environment; however, complex factors are largely beyond the capacity of the educational system to address. Therefore, preparedness of the teacher is a classroom factor more easily altered (Bishop et al., 2012). Teachers that are inadequately trained to respond to the needs of diverse students inhibit effective learning (Hall, 2013). Conversely, appropriate training allows teachers to become agents of change by drawing on alternate explanations and solutions, rather than participating in systematic

marginalisation (Bishop et al., 2012). However, research indicates that ITE courses regarding Indigenous Australians are inconsistently endorsed electives that severely lack uniformity of what constitutes successful teaching practice (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012). Teachers are prepared to deliver a largely Anglo-centric curriculum (Hall, 2013; Sarra et al., 2018) and are not adequately prepared to educate minority populations (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012), revealing why many graduates are unlikely to practice appropriate pedagogies for students from diverse backgrounds (Hall, 2013).

Teacher professional standards

As a means of measuring teacher learning and practice, standards have been developed by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), with two domains relating to Indigenous Australian students. Focus Area 1.4 relates to strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and Focus Area 2.4 encompasses the promotion of reconciliation (AITSL, 2011/2018). Concentrating on Focus Area 1.4 specifically, graduate teachers must demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of how Indigenous students' identity, language and culture impacts their education (AITSL, 2011/2018). The integration of Indigenous Australians and their culture within educational standards has improved upon previous practice, however outcomes remain altered, and teachers report that ITE inadequately prepared them to competently handle challenging and complex classrooms (Hall, 2013; Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012).

Postgraduate teacher education

Continued training is essential to develop the cultural competence of teachers that fosters the establishment of meaningful relationships (Bennet & Moriarty, 2013; Bishop et al., 2012). A postgraduate teacher educational setting introduces frameworks, such as the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework (Department of Education, 2018) and Stronger Smarter Approach (Stronger Smarter Institute, 2017), to guide schools and teachers on how to best support Indigenous students and connect with communities. Teachers require continual support to effectually implement these frameworks (Bishop et al., 2012) because sociohistorical conditioning strongly maintains the existence of racial discrimination, which (even if unintentional) has detrimental effects on student engagement and educational outcomes (Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2013).

Induction and on-the-job training

The Queensland Department of Education (2020) endorses working remotely with Indigenous students and promotes a "comprehensive induction" process to educate teachers prior to relocation. Training programs include cross-cultural awareness (CCA), culturally appropriate pedagogy (CAP) and classroom management (CM) (Department of Education, 2020). However, because of insufficient evaluation of those programs, the effectiveness of this training remains unknown. Additionally, other training, such as student social and emotional wellbeing (SSEW) appears to be absent from the induction process. SSEW is a fundamental aspect of Indigenous mental health and programs have produced encouraging results when implemented (Heyeres et al., 2018). Each type of training is explored in the following sections in relation to how it supports teachers to work more effectively and meet the cultural and wellbeing needs of Indigenous students.

Cross-cultural awareness

Awareness and sensitivity create culturally competent teachers who build relationships based on systems of trust and respect (Cain, 2014). Cross-cultural awareness (CCA) training enhances knowledge and

understanding of the history and culture of Indigenous Australians (Fredericks, 2015), while dispelling misapprehensions shaped through public discourse (Cain, 2014; Llewellyn et al., 2018; Morgan & Golding, 2010). However, meta-analysis reviews have found that such training rarely translates into behavioural changes (Shepherd, 2019). Fredericks (2015) believes that effective CCA education must be ongoing to adequately modify ingrained prejudices. Continuous learning of cultural protocols is important in the development of cross-cultural relationships that are based on respect (Bennet & Moriarty, 2013). It is also important that CCA training recognises community differences in language, culture and history to avoid generalisation of content (Bennet & Moriarty, 2013). When investigating remote Western Australian schools in relation to attracting and retaining teachers, Lock et al. (2012) discovered that teachers requested additional community-specific CCA training.

Culturally appropriate pedagogy

Pedagogy refers to the strategies that teachers employ to convey the curriculum, and when practiced with Indigenous Australians these techniques are based on Indigenous systems of knowledge (Woodroffe, 2020). Culturally appropriate pedagogy (CAP) training informs teachers how to build on Indigenous students' existing knowledge and experiences by integrating backgrounds, cultural norms, values and language into the curricula (Craven et al., 2014; Lewthwaite et al., 2015). CAP allows students to form connections between learning, community and family to provide an inclusive educational experience (Lewthwaite et al., 2015; Woodroffe, 2020). Many Indigenous students are recognised as speaking English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD), therefore the presence of Indigenous language within CAP acknowledges the importance of maintaining students' first language to achieve success in a second (Oliver et al., 2011).

When pedagogy is adopted and scaffolded by teachers with high expectations, Indigenous students have shown significant improvements in learning, achievement and wellbeing (Craven et al., 2014; Jackson-Barrett, 2018; Jorgensen et al., 2010; Sarra et al., 2018). Unfortunately, the empirical data proving the benefits associated with the integration of CAP are inconclusive (Lewthwaite et al., 2015). A possible explanation is a lack of appropriate tools that develop confidence in pedagogical practice being provided in training (Lock et al., 2012). In a study conducted by Jorgensen et al. (2010), teachers acknowledged some approaches were difficult to apply due to limited knowledge and experience, and further resources were requested.

Classroom management

Classroom management (CM) training educates teachers to focus on a classroom environment holistically encompassing student behaviour and teaching strategies (Jackson et al., 2013). However, these skills require refinement when implemented with Indigenous students, as Indigenous customs translate differently in the classroom (Llewellyn et al., 2018). Negative behaviour displayed by Indigenous students within the classroom can reflect an intergenerational disconnect from schooling, and resistance to curriculum that is not culturally relevant (Lowe et al., 2019). This behaviour is maintained through a lack of evidence suggesting what strategies best support Indigenous students (Llewellyn et al., 2018). ITE concerning CM primarily concentrates on knowledge rather than strategies, making CM the most cited reason for teacher burnout and exodus from the profession (Jackson et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 2014; O'Neill & Stephenson, 2011). Postgraduate programs such as Essential Skills in Classroom Management are recognised as better equipping Queensland teachers to practically manage the classroom (Jackson et al., 2013); however, they contain minimal information specifically pertaining to Indigenous students (Llewellyn et al., 2018).

Student social and emotional wellbeing

International evidence supports the effectiveness of social and emotional intervention for improving health and wellbeing (Barry et al., 2017; Rabba, 2010). For many Indigenous Australians, the concept of mental health adopts a holistic approach that translates as social and emotional wellbeing, which incorporates connection to land, family, spirituality, ancestry, culture and community (Calma et al., 2017; Jackson-Barrett, 2018; Priest et al., 2011). SSEW training provides teachers with skills to enable them to educate students on building relationships, decision-making, setting and obtaining goals, and regulation of emotions (Heyeres et al., 2018).

Long-term school-based programs positively impact on health, behaviour and education, with some training recognising the relationship between intergenerational trauma and low levels of SSEW (Franck et al., 2020). Traumatized students tend to externalise their behaviour within the classroom through acts (e.g., aggression) that can result in lower engagement with teachers (Barry et al., 2017). Teachers with social and emotional wellbeing knowledge have been shown to reduce behavioural issues and suicidal ideation (Barry et al., 2017), while improving resilience, self-esteem (Franck et al., 2020) and attitudes towards depression (McCalman et al., 2016). As teachers frequently struggle to meet the complex behavioural and emotional needs of Indigenous students (Heyeres et al., 2018), this project includes SSEW training to explore the perceptions of teachers who have completed induction SSEW training.

Research aims

This research project explores the types of induction training undertaken by practicing Queensland teachers, prior to commencing work in secondary schools with high enrolments (i.e., over 40%) of remote Indigenous students. Induction training is investigated to address the following research questions:

1. What did Queensland secondary teachers identify as adequate/inadequate in their induction training?
2. Did cross-cultural awareness, culturally appropriate pedagogy, classroom management, and student social and emotional wellbeing induction programs effectively improve Queensland secondary teachers' knowledge and understanding of remote Indigenous students?
3. Are these induction programs providing effective strategies for working with remote Indigenous students in the classroom?

For the purpose of this study "induction training" is conceptualised as professional development programs undertaken by postgraduate teachers, prior to working in a school with high enrolments of remote Indigenous students. "Postgraduate" refers to teachers that have completed their university degree and are now practicing or are eligible to practice within the classroom. These findings could inform induction and ongoing training practices by providing evidence of the ability of current training to improve engagement with remote Indigenous students and communities.

Methods

Ethics and researcher positioning

CQUniversity Human Research Ethics Committee approved the study and ensured values and ethics surrounding research on or with Indigenous Australians were met (approval number 2020-038).

The project followed the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidelines *Keeping Research on Track II* (NHMRC, 2018a). Specifically, to ensure the project was both meaningful and beneficial to Indigenous Australians, the researchers collaborated with a local educational professional (a Kaanju woman), who has extensive experience working in remote secondary schools. The first author is non-Indigenous, with experience relevant to the project as a long-term resident of a remote Cape York community, with the entirety of their primary and secondary education being completed remotely. They also worked closely with remote Indigenous students, teachers and leaders for a period of four years as a teacher aide in a remote secondary school. The second author is also non-Indigenous, with 10 years of experience researching and working with a range of Indigenous communities and schools that have high proportions of Indigenous students. Despite this, these authors recognise the inherent bias that comes with their worldviews; therefore, the third author is a Gunggari woman and national research leader in Indigenous health. They provided guidance to ensure that the intended benefits of the research, as well as the collection, analysis and dissemination of results, adhered to Indigenous values of respect, reciprocity, responsibility, cultural continuity and equity, and that spirit and integrity were maintained throughout the project (NHMRC, 2018a). While the project did not engage directly with Indigenous community members, we understand the implications of the research and the discussions provided in this article may still impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. As the NHMRC (2018) states in the value of respect:

Awareness and understanding that research has consequences for all those involved in the process. These consequences might be intended or unintended, short-term or long-term, positive or negative. Consideration of such consequences should be anticipated at the developmental stage of the research and taken into account throughout all stages of the research process. (p. 8)

Study design

This project employed a qualitative research design; however, due to geographical and resource limitations, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, data were collected through an online questionnaire developed on the Qualtrics survey platform (version XM, 2019) between June and August 2020.

Survey tool

While there were no validated survey tools to draw on (that we were aware of), the survey was designed based on questions similar to those of Moreton-Robinson et al. (2012). However, relevant additional and contextual information was included in our survey tool, which was developed into a 34-item questionnaire, taking approximately 20 minutes to complete. Demographic and relevant professional background information, such as years of teaching, Indigenous university courses and remote teaching placements undertaken, was collected. Additionally, teachers were asked to self-assess their understanding of Indigenous students prior to working with them, in accordance with AITSL professional standards (AITSL, 2011/2018). The survey then requested participants to select which induction training (cross-cultural awareness, culturally appropriate pedagogy, classroom management, and student social and emotional wellbeing) had been undertaken. If no induction training was completed, participants were invited to identify any in-service training they received. For each type of training that had been undertaken, a further prompt requested participants to provide open-text responses regarding the extent of their induction training (in hours) and perceptions of how effective the training was in relation to knowledge and teaching practice. As ITE is recognised as mostly information driven (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012), a further question asked if the induction training was centred on

information, strategies or a combination of both. Finally, teachers were prompted to consider what types of induction training they wished they had received further education in.

Participants

For Queensland secondary teachers to be eligible to participate, they must be currently working in or have previously worked in a school within a remote community that had high enrolments of remote Indigenous students (over 40%). A total of 117 teachers undertook the survey, with a completion rate of 35%, resulting in 41 participants providing valid responses. Although they did not meet the criteria, 17 primary school teachers and seven interstate teachers also attempted the questionnaire, suggesting interest in the topic from other sectors and states. For questions relating to initial teacher education, all 41 valid responses have been included in the analysis of the data; however, thematic analysis of data relating to open-ended questions was only applied to the 34 participants. Four participants identified as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or both, which is representative of Australian demographics whereby Indigenous Australians constitute 2% of the population (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018).

Procedure

Participants were recruited through the social media platform Facebook, with permission being sought and obtained to post the survey information and link on the QLD Teachers and Queensland Relief Teachers group pages. Due to online facilitation, participants were provided with a comprehensive information sheet and upon clicking the link were advised that selecting the “next” button constituted as electronic consent to participate.

Data analysis

The purpose of data collection was to ascertain the prevalence of induction training that Queensland secondary teachers received before they were expected to engage with Indigenous students from possibly vastly different backgrounds to their own. Analysed survey data was considered valid when the questionnaire was fully completed and met the criteria of working in secondary schools in remote/very remote regions of Queensland with high Indigenous student populations. Unanalysed data included that of primary school teachers and interstate teachers which did not meet the set criteria. The analysis of data was conducted in two phases. First, SPSS software provided frequency statistics relating to the amount of training undertaken, length of service, undergraduate education, the main content of training and requests for additional types of training. Second, thematic analysis was applied to open-ended responses and a semantic approach identified explicit meanings from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Patterns were identified relating to the teachers’ perceptions of induction training, their experiences within remote communities and classrooms, and their ability to understand and connect with Indigenous Australians and culture. The coding of data was reviewed, and theme consensus was achieved with all three authors. Participants were randomised and allocated de-identified participant numbers to represent in the dissemination of results. Quotes are presented as per survey responses, other than where grammatical errors were removed.

Results and discussion

Teacher responses revealed that most secondary teachers were no longer working in a remote Queensland school, corroborating with research indicating high transition rates of teachers within these locations (Jorgensen et al., 2010; Lowe et al., 2019; Maher, 2013). Table 1 outlines the valid responses from

Queensland secondary teachers that worked in remote regions regarding their experiences of induction training in the domains of CCA, CAP, CM or SSEW.

Table 1: Breakdown of teacher responses to questionnaire

	No training undertaken (n)	In-service training (n)	Induction training (n)	Total (n)
Valid teacher respondents	2	3	34	41

Access to induction training

Table 2 outlines the prevalence of culturally specific induction training undertaken by Queensland secondary teachers working in remote locations. Given the relative recency of the development of SSEW programs (Franck et al., 2020), a lack of participation in induction training was predicted, however, an unexpected finding was the minimal CCA and CAP education received. Insufficient knowledge of Indigenous Australians' histories, cultural norms and values would make implementing these factors effectively into the curricula extremely difficult (Labone et al., 2014; Lock et al., 2012).

Course length also varied significantly (see table 1). Overall, secondary teachers undertook induction training for a reported average of 18.45 hours. Yoon and colleagues (2007) found that delivering between 5 and 14 hours of professional development training has ineffectual results on student achievement. As professional development length and intensity are important in teaching outcomes (Craven et al., 2014), the average duration of the types of induction training explored was considered to provide satisfactory instruction to teachers. Importantly, the enormous range of hours, with some teachers having only 1 to 3 hours of training, and others up to 80 hours of training, indicates the large variation and how inconsistently induction training is being delivered. Further studies should investigate this in more detail, as this may also be indicative of the year, location or sector in which teachers underwent their induction training.

Table 2: Induction training completion and duration

Type of training	Participant completion rate (n)	Range (hours)	Mean (hours)
Cross-cultural awareness	19	3–80	19.5
Culturally appropriate pedagogy	15	1–80	19.0
Classroom management	25	2–50	15.2
Student social and emotional wellbeing	15	2–80	20.1

Teacher perceptions of induction training

Induction training content

Overall perceptions

Participant open-ended responses were coded as positive, neutral or negative perceptions of the training content. The findings outlined in Table 3 indicate that feedback for each type of induction training varied, but was predominantly negative. CCA induction training was perceived most positively by teachers, emphasising that improving cultural competence can assist in understanding community and classroom differences (Llewellyn et al., 2018). SSEW induction training was mostly negatively received, with comments relating to how the “real world was a lot different” (Participant 30). Conversely, an extremely positive response was also associated to SSEW induction training: “I believe this training had the greatest impact in my choosing to engage in a remote education opportunity. It provided me with a foundation to work with young people in community” (Participant 11).

This statement offers encouraging evidence that effective SSEW programs exist, and why improving opportunities for teachers to build skills that better support the wellbeing of Indigenous students is beneficial (Heyeres et al., 2018). However, further investigation into why there were so many negative perceptions of SSEW training is required. Perceptions of CM induction training were balanced, however, it was often reported to be “generic to all students” (Participant 12), with “no specific First Nations appropriate classroom management” (Participant 32). CAP induction training was mostly negative, with a consensus was that it did not provide “tangible or realistic skills to apply in the setting” (Participant 31). This is an early indication that induction training, like other forms of teacher education (e.g., ITE), are inadequate for the real-world remote context due to irrelevant content (Franck et al., 2020; Llewellyn et al., 2018; Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012).

Table 3: Induction training comments by type

Training type	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Cross-cultural awareness	49%	15%	36%
Culturally appropriate pedagogy	32%	24%	44%
Classroom management	38%	15%	47%
Student social and emotional wellbeing	26%	22%	52%

Information and strategies

Responses regarding the information and strategies provided in induction training were also mixed. Some induction training (such as CCA) was effective at increasing awareness and establishing “different approaches and expectations” (Participant 3). Other participants considered it “a very general introduction” (Participant 17) with “little to no connection between what was taught and what was required” (Participant 29). CAP induction training “provided background and knowledge” (Participant 27) and “changed my perspective on appropriate strategies for teaching” (Participant 20); however, it inadequately allowed some educators “to build my capacity to truly be an effective teacher” (Participant 14). Additionally, teachers implied dissatisfaction with the insufficient length of CAP induction training. SSEW induction training was able to provide some sufficient knowledge, with Participant 10 stating, “This training had units specific to cultural diversity and practicing culturally sensitive relational

strategies.” Others, however, felt SSEW contained inappropriate information and lacked focus on the predominant issues that impact Indigenous students (e.g., suicide and unmanaged anxiety). The perception of an Indigenous Australian participant was that there was “not enough depth to even match the ingrained knowledge of being an Indigenous person” (Participant 5).

These findings indicate that secondary teachers favour information and strategies that broaden their perspectives of Indigenous students. Those that received only general introductions reported being unable to build effectual capabilities. Participants felt they required more extensive induction training, reflecting the results of the study by Lock et al. (2012) regarding teacher professional development. When teachers are provided with ineffectual information, it unconsciously strengthens the paradigm of the dominant culture, which can further alienate Indigenous students from the teacher (Labone et al., 2014). Thus, current program content requires a comprehensive review to determine the relevance and effectiveness in context to location and population.

Teacher experiences in remote classrooms

The ineffectiveness of surface-level induction teacher training was evident in the experiences of teachers in the classroom. For some, skills could only be effectively learnt in the context of the job, as training alone was “not enough to fully understand the complexities that present in a classroom” (Participant 17). CAP induction training, in particular, was unable to be satisfactorily applied within classroom practice, as highlighted by Participant 16: “I felt very underprepared for this, but as I commenced teaching at the school, I identified that the curriculum actually didn’t promote or allow for this to occur other than as a gesture of tokenism.”

Further statements echoed school restrictions on the implementation of CAP within the curriculum, with Participant 19 observing, “I could not implement it in [name of region] as they had strict use of C2C [Curriculum into the Classroom] resources.”

Lewthwaite et al. (2015) recognise that tokenistic attempts of including culture in the curriculum limits the teacher’s ability to build relationships and improve education outcomes for Indigenous students. This lack of CAP within the classroom could be creating a barrier for student engagement, as Indigenous students choose not to interact with practices that are culturally irrelevant or cause embarrassment (Bishop et al., 2012). As there are inconclusive findings regarding the ability of CAP to improve Indigenous student achievement (Lewthwaite et al., 2015), further research is recommended to ascertain whether a contributing factor is school approval and promotion of CAP within mainstream classrooms.

CM training was the most successful in equipping participants with strategies that were effective in practice, with teachers stating that skills “were transferable across many areas” (Participant 28). However, others found CM induction training “generic to all students” (Participant 12), and not “culturally inclusive” (Participant 34). Participant 30 further stated that “behaviour management strategies were completely useless in those remote classes”. Some secondary teachers recognised no change to their knowledge or practice despite the training, and that Indigenous students “needed more intense support” (Participant 9). Additionally, some specific strategies for working with Indigenous students were considered unrealistic to apply within the classroom setting, with Participant 31 commenting on the impracticality of one training suggestion that “Indigenous kids need to move around more so do more of that”. These results indicate that current CM practices within Australian education remain mostly generic and “lack any consideration of students’ cultural context” (Llewellyn et al., 2018,

p. 18). This highlights the need for relevant and effective CM practices to remove student behaviour as a potential barrier to learning (Buckskin, 2012).

While participants acknowledged they had established successful and meaningful relationships with Indigenous students, and that “forming relationships with individual students helps immeasurably” (Participant 15), some considered building effective relationships dependent on respect and prior experience, and there was scepticism whether any training has the capacity to assist in this regard. CM induction training was considered beneficial in assisting to build relationships, as it “improved my ability to interact with Indigenous students in a positive manner” (Participant 8). This provides evidence that holding high expectations of Indigenous students through a “firm but fair” approach can sustain positive relationships (Sara et al., 2018). Overall, these findings align with Bishop et al. (2012), who found that teachers are only able to create quality in-class relationships when they can interact with Indigenous students in a culturally appropriate manner.

Teacher ability to understand and connect with Indigenous Australians and their culture

Generally, teachers were provided with an ability to “understand differences between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders” (Participant 14), including the “impacts of colonisation” (Participant 21). Participant 14 expressed that CAP training “was both culturally and contextually relevant to the specific students I would teach”. CM induction training allowed teachers to understand Indigenous concepts such as shame and the importance of “using less words, more non-verbal cues, and short, sharp routine instruction” (Participant 5). Others required more knowledge on certain Indigenous customs, such as Participant 10 who stated, “There was a lack of cultural understanding of things such as body language that can assist a teacher to ‘read’ a situation or understand how to best manage a situation.”

These findings reveal that secondary teachers value detailed insights into the customs, culture and protocols of Indigenous Australians. Knowledge of these systems improves communication, and is important for building trust and respect and also for motivating Indigenous students to engage in schooling (Bennet & Moriarty, 2013; Llewellyn et al., 2018).

The information received in some induction training came directly from community elders as highlighted in a response from Participant 1: “It gave regional, specific cultural awareness from elders within the community and was a critical first step in helping to build context about the environment I was about to start working in.”

Beneficial information was found to have come through “mentoring from community members and my involvement in community activities” (Participant 3). However, some teachers were given information, “relevant to a different setting than the one I eventually taught in” (Participant 27). Some displayed understanding of this issue, with Participant 18 acknowledging, “Indigenous students differ from each community. No one set of training will increase knowledge. Each community is extremely different.”

This recognition that the knowledge in Indigenous communities is situational and varies in languages, history and customs supports the need for teachers to understand local knowledge to determine appropriate forms of engagement for Indigenous students (Bennet & Moriarty, 2013). Consultation with community co-creates expectations that value cultural knowledge, and establishes trust and respect (Stronger Smarter Institute, 2017). However, the mention of this type of collaboration within responses was minimal, signifying that induction training may not always be structured in consultation with elders

from remote Queensland communities. This type of information could be beneficial for secondary teachers that are meeting Indigenous Australians for the first time, which has been reported as a daunting experience for some (Labone et al., 2014).

Participant 24 provided a different community-related perspective, stating “nothing can prepare you for the behaviour and racism felt as a white person in community”. It is suggested that experiences of discrimination could reflect Indigenous students’ frustrations regarding the continual adjustment phases required by new teachers, just for them leave after short periods of service (Lowe et al., 2019). This is theorised to be a potential cycle; complex barriers inhibit teachers building positive student–teacher relationships, causing teachers to remain for only short periods, resulting in relationship barriers persisting due to Indigenous student and community frustration.

The impacts of trauma, which has a profound influence on social and emotional wellbeing (Calma et al., 2017), was recognised as an important influence on Indigenous students within the classroom. SSEW induction training assisted teachers to “improve my understanding of the consequences of trauma”, and “deal positively with students who had experienced trauma” in practice (Participant 8). However, some SSEW induction training lacked focus on the immediate needs of Indigenous students in relation to issues such as trauma and grief, as highlighted by Participant 9 who commented: “The Indigenous students I taught had severe incapability in adjusting to common classroom routines (e.g., staying seated during the lesson) as well as unmanaged anxiety due to recent Indigenous suicides the previous year.”

Participant 30 further stated that the tools delivered in SSEW induction training were “not really what students cared about. Understanding was one thing. However, they didn’t care if you understood. There seemed to be a culture of ‘us’ and ‘them’ ... with built-in aggression”.

The aggression displayed by Indigenous students towards non-Indigenous teachers could be, once again, due to continual experiences with underprepared educators (Lowe et al., 2019) in addition to possible trauma (Chapman, 2017). These findings illustrate that secondary teachers require and value appropriate tools; however, once again, they are not consistently provided with information that increases competence of specific cultural customs and values. This is creating a barrier that hinders the successful translation of appropriate practices into the classroom (Llewellyn et al., 2018), which inhibits the ability of the teacher to build their capacity to actively engage Indigenous students in learning (Labone et al., 2014; Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012).

For those that did not undertake SSEW induction training, trauma knowledge was a noted exclusion. This is evident in Participant 22’s response that “trauma wasn’t a noticeable focus of training [CCA] but is a critical aspect of the circumstance of many students”. Given the link between trauma and classroom behaviour (Chapman, 2017), it is imperative that teachers gain cultural sensitivity and appropriate strategies prior to working with sufferers to enable teachers to form more secure relationships with Indigenous students (Franck et al., 2020).

Teachers also commented on a general lack of information regarding how to educate students with English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD). Even though, for some, CCA induction training “increased my awareness of vastly different communication” (Participant 3), for others, “EALD teaching strategies are what I needed” (Participant 12). The most disturbing comment regarding this topic was Participant 19’s response to CAP induction training: “It did not recognise Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander students as speakers of Creole English. They treated them as students of lower capability.”

The existence of requests for more training in this genre suggests that induction training programs lack regard for the challenges experienced by students and teachers alike when there is a requirement to learn new knowledge in a different language (Oliver et al., 2011). There is considerable research suggesting the importance of the utilisation of first language in learning (Oliver et al., 2011), and that its inclusion can de-colonise education and be important in language revival (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012).

Recommendations and future directions

Inconsistencies relating to the perceived usefulness of induction training indicate that programs require evaluation regarding comprehensiveness of content and relevance to teaching practice with remote Indigenous students (e.g., inclusion of more EALD strategies). A recommended approach is to compile a database of evidence-based strategies and information from educational professionals who successfully engage remote Indigenous students. A useful starting point for this may be the recent study by Guenther et al. (2019), which reviewed the evidence base on factors that contribute to educational outcomes for First Nations students from remote communities. However, they note there are limitations in this body of evidence, particularly in the lack of quantitative evidence available. Evaluation of successful teachers' induction and in-service training opportunities may shed further light on the most effective preparation for future professionals entering remote Indigenous communities.

Indigenous communities are extremely heterogenous (Bennet & Moriarty, 2013; Buckskin, 2012), therefore it is recommended that local leaders from individual Queensland communities are offered the opportunity to collaborate in the conception of training courses. This would enable program developers to consensually gain valuable local knowledge to incorporate throughout all forms of induction training, and provide Queensland teachers with relevant information specific to the Indigenous country on which they stand. Co-created information could assist in the development of respectful partnerships between school and community (Stronger Smarter Institute, 2017), which could also prove valuable to other organisations (e.g., health and justice services).

Teachers progress well in practice when they can gain immediate familiarisation with the community and establish strong foundations (Bennet & Moriarty, 2013). Therefore, it is recommended that qualified teachers transferring to remote Queensland schools would benefit from community-specific placement programs prior to relocation (e.g., teacher swap). This will also allow community leaders an opportunity to advise secondary teachers of appropriate ways to influence curricula and pedagogy in the context of the Indigenous students they will teach (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012). Further education in CAP and SSEW training is also recommended for secondary teachers working with high populations of Indigenous students, where possible.

Limitations of this study could be addressed in future attempts to understand induction training. For example, a number of responses were unable to be included through misinterpretation of the stage of training, with respondents referring to initial teacher education (ITE). Therefore, future survey design may consider clearer definitions of initial teacher education and induction teacher education. Furthermore, with more time and resourcing, gathering data via interviews would provide more opportunity to explore teacher perceptions of training in further detail.

Variances in classroom practice could also be attributed to a myriad of factors, such as differences in training program content, individual learning styles, and the resilience, attitude and maturity of the teacher (Armstrong et al., 2018; Hall, 2013). Further, due to the exploratory nature of this study, requesting teachers to recollect past training risked recall bias. Evaluation of training programs in real-

time or on a cyclical basis with a longitudinal study with a larger cohort may be considered in future to reduce some of these limitations.

Finally, this study was specific to the Queensland context; thus, further exploration of other states and territories in Australia regarding how they provide ITE and induction training for educators entering remote and very remote communities, or schools with high proportions of Indigenous students, could shed light on effective programs and training.

Conclusion

The educational outcomes of Indigenous students are known to improve when teachers “acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes to be effective” (Craven et al., 2014, p. 86). This statement is significant for remote Indigenous students who often receive teachers that lack experience and only remain for minimal periods (Hall, 2013). Overall, this exploratory study found that induction training inconsistencies exist in effective information and skills-based learnings, which is consistent with ITE findings (Moreton-Robinson et al., 2012). These results indicate that Queensland teachers currently working in secondary schools with high enrolments of remote Indigenous students commence their employment without receiving adequate inductions, and that the training they do received is largely standardised and not in consideration of local Indigenous cultures and values. Since important Indigenous Australian concepts, such as Voice, Treaty, Truth, are not yet finalised, this means that teacher training is still occurring within in a systemic vacuum. It is proposed that a lack of adequately prepared teachers frustrates Indigenous students and communities, contributing to low attendance and high teacher-transfer rates within remote secondary schools. Further research into the content of all induction programs is required to ensure they are conceived in collaboration with Indigenous leaders and communities, and contain strategies proven (through independent evaluation) successful in engaging remote Indigenous students. Providing multi-faceted, culturally congruent induction training will provide Queensland secondary teachers with the opportunity to establish meaningful relationships with Indigenous students from the outset.

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