



The Australian Journal of **INDIGENOUS EDUCATION**

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EDITORIAL



Some of the eight papers in this issue of *AJIE* explore new directions and innovations in the context of Indigenous Australian education while others provide a fresh perspective on themes which have remained relevant for Indigenous Australian peoples and issues of education over the past three decades.

The first paper by Nakata speaks to the many different directions, agendas, and tensions within the developing field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research from the perspective of Indigenous researchers. Nakata points to the successes but equally speaks of the professional, intellectual and personal challenges Indigenous researchers encounter when they make the journey into the mainstream. His words remind us of the ongoing need for both non-Indigenous and Indigenous academics to be vigilant in working towards an academic environment which is supportive, but not patronising, where constructive critique is valued, and Indigenous researchers are encouraged to develop their own research agenda, projects and goals on their own terms. The paper which follows by Harrison similarly addresses the need for educational settings to validate, promote and support Indigenous Australian ways of learning and communicating by focusing on language usage. Harrison uses his experience as an educator to explore the legitimacy of Aboriginal English in the classroom. He considers how this process of legitimisation positions both students and teachers in a powerful place to resist the historical relations that have traditionally disempowered Indigenous students in the classroom through the use of a different "speaking style" and provides useful suggestions for positive ways to incorporate Aboriginal English into the classroom.

The next two papers also draw our attention to specific classroom contexts, but this time the focus is on the teaching and learning methods, specifically simulated case study and problem-based learning approaches, used to educate diverse groups of students about complex issues within the multidisciplinary field of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Norman's paper centres on the benefits of using simulated case studies, in this instance the Hindmarsh Island Bridge Affair, to provide students with a pathway to question, research and reflect upon the economic, legal, ethical, racial, political and cultural issues and thus place themselves in a position to develop key critical thinking skills. Mackinlay, Thatcher and Seldon likewise explore the positive teaching and learning outcomes which arise when applying a

problem-based learning approach to social and legal justice issues for Indigenous Australian women. Their paper asks questions about how we can effectively teach and learn about social and legal justice issues in the context of Australian higher education.

The papers in this volume then shift to discuss effective ways of teaching numeracy to Indigenous students in two contexts. The paper by Bin-Sallik, Adams and Vemuri focuses on the urgent need to improve Indigenous financial literacy in Australia by providing better money management education. Warren, Cooper and Baturo then turn our attention to the role of teacher aides in mathematics classrooms in rural and remote Indigenous communities. They focus on teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of teacher aides in enhancing Indigenous student learning of mathematics and suggest that more work needs to be done to encourage healthy teacher and teacher aide relationships.

The final two papers take us into the fields of audiology and occupational therapy. Massie, Theodoros, McPherson and Smaldino discuss the positive effects of using sound-field amplification intervention in the classrooms of Indigenous children. Their findings suggest that sound-field amplification can significantly improve communication between teachers and students, leading ultimately to improved classroom performance for Indigenous students. The paper by Allison and Nelson then asks why occupational therapy is relevant to Indigenous children by presenting the findings of a study evaluating a visiting occupational therapy service which was trialled in several Brisbane schools. Their work explores the impact of the occupational therapy service in supporting Indigenous children, their parents and teachers.

Collectively, the eight papers in this volume provide us with insight into what is happening on the ground in a diverse range of educational settings to improve the educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians and to better relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples through education. Amidst much political adversity, they provide us with a sense of hope that at grass roots level, Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, teachers and students are working persistently, strongly and creatively towards a positive educational future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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Editors