



Ideals and Retention

***Perspectives of students in a BEd(AREP)
course***

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Retention

- Goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP)
- Goal 12: *To achieve the participation of Aboriginal people inhigher education at rates commensurate with those of all Australians in those sectors.*
- [National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training, 2006. (p182)]





Rationale for the study



- Solid numbers of students enter the BEd AREP course at UWS
- Numbers dwindle over time
- Years 2/3 seem to be largest dropouts
- Proportionally higher dropout rate than for non-Indigenous students
- What drives those who persevere?
- What type of support aids continuation?



Literature: *Participation, Culture and Language*



- Learning Preferences [Barnes, 2000]
- Culturalism, politics of knowing [McConaghy, 2000]
- Writing in academic genres [Ober, 2001]
- Language differences, dialect, register, coming to terms with University expectations in this regard [Malcolm, 2007]
- Effective program design for Indigenous Uni students [Pearce, 2008]
- Hidden support by Indigenous academics [Page & Asmar, 2008]
- Uni Reviews of factors correlating retention and support [Gunstone, 2008]



Literature (cont).



- Bradley Review, (2008) Aim for Retention of 90% of rate for NI
- Melbourne declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians, (2008), and MCEETYA four-year plan 2009-2012
- Australian governments must support all young Australians to achieve not only equality of opportunity but also more equitable outcomes. [Melbourne Declaration, 2008]
- Agreed action: Providing support and incentives to increase Indigenous participation in the education workforce [MCEETYA, 2008].
- A four year action plan for Indigenous education [MCEETYA, 2008].



Background: Bachelor of Education (AREP)



- The University of Western Sydney has offered primary teacher education programs specifically targeted for Aboriginal students since 1983.
- Initially they were for rural students but now cater for a younger and broader demographic.
- A Diploma of Teaching was first offered followed by a Bachelor of Teaching and currently a Bachelor of Education.





Background/2



- The course is a four year undergraduate equivalent run over five years.
- There has always been an early exit point with a Diploma at eighty credit points which has earned favour from the Communities involved
- The delivery has been via residential school blocks of lectures, workshops, tutorials and research, with distance education models employed during the remainder of the semester.
- There is an ongoing concern to improve retention rates in the course.



Tensions



- Over the last ten years, the rigour of selection for the course and within the entire course has been increased.
- Literacy and Numeracy standards are tested prior to entry into the course and these must meet the requirements set by the NSW Teacher's Institute and DET.
- The interview procedure at entry was strengthened and an emphasis placed on a stronger focus on personal outcomes, Community outcomes and the support that they may require.



Alternative Entry of Indigenous students to AREP Ed & Welfare



A recent comparison of student success 2004-2008 found:

[Gruppetta, M.(2009). *Student Access and learning Support*. Unpublished report]

- Entry level scores or interview rating was not reflected in success or retention except that -
- Mark of 60% or higher on the maths test - more successful in course
- High scores in the problem solving section - most successful
- Students who utilised an ITAS tutor in their first year more successful



UWS retention and success

(Report to Academic Senate, UWS 2008)



UWS Undergraduate Student

Retention Trends

Course start	02-03	03-04	04-05	05-06	06-07	07-08
Commencing	81.9%	79.6%	75.1%	76.9 %	79 %	77.9%
Continuing	82.3%	76.9%	76.9%	81.1%	80.3%	79.7%
Total UWS	82.2%	78 %	76.3%	79.3%	79.8%	79 %
Sector	81.4%	81.9%	82.1%	82.2%	82.6%	n/a



Reasons for leaving



- Following drops in retention in all students across the University in 2003/4, initiatives were put in place and monitored in 2006/7
- – Work commitments
- – Course not what was expected
- – Family or financial difficulties
- – Perceived Course/tutor inadequacies
- – Mature aged at most risk of dropping out



Indigenous Success and Retention: State by State Comparison



DEEWR National Higher Education Statistics Collection 2001-2006

Success Retention

STATE	2001	2006	2001	2005
NSW	0.82	0.85	0.83	0.85
VIC	0.84	0.77	0.86	0.88
QU	0.77	0.81	0.83	0.85
WA	0.61	0.73	0.62	0.66
TAS	0.87	0.87	0.76	0.87
SA	0.75	0.87	0.82	0.88
NT	0.56	0.55	0.77	0.82



Rate of 1.0 would show equity with non- Indigenous students

Indigenous Students at University of Western Sydney



Success

Retention

2001	2006	2001	2005
0.84	0.90	0.83	0.93

While success and retention are not far behind non-Indigenous students overall, the actual retention rate in the BEd course for Indigenous students is around 60%, although a few students exit after 2 years with a diploma.

There continues to be a high demand for graduates



Support Procedures



- In response to reviews of retention and support structures Badanami has set goals and currently monitors its:
- Entry, Orientation programs, ITAS support, internal support lines, course rigour, follow-up of dropouts.



Challenges for AREP Education at UWS



- The need for significant support and flexibility to facilitate the demands of family, particularly in childbearing years, and community obligations.
- The requirement to meet the Institute of Teachers requirements
- The requirement of extra days of professional experience is a further strain on the time constraints of students



Review



- New support roles have been instituted in response and the staff have taken the opportunity to review the program, take into consideration the students perceptions, begin a process of developing “proofs” of success and what works and why/how it works.
- In order to tease out perspectives/goals/drivers related to studying and retention we set current AREP Education students open-ended questions. The answers to those questions form the basis of this pilot study



Outline of the Research

- We set 7 open-ended written questions for all of the students in the current AREP Education course as a self reflection activity.
- We looked for themes within each year group's statements, and did a count of the times each occurred.
- We compared the themes across year groups and then compiled the counts to assess importance.



1. Why do you want to become a teacher?

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Role model (15) Good career choice (7) Change agent/leader in Aboriginal education (5) Shortage of male Indigenous teachers (4) Enjoy working with children (4) Make a difference for Indigenous students (1) Add an Aboriginal perspective (1) Already do most of what teacher does (1) Own children (1) Change career path due to having own children (1) Had bad teachers in the past and want to fix it (2) Lifestyle (1) Education key to success (1)	Make a difference for Indigenous students (3) Enjoy working with children (3) Already do most of what teacher does (2) Enjoyed past experience in a school (2) Shortage of Indigenous teachers in her rural area (1) Own children (1) Already work in a school, next step (1) Change career path due to having own children (1) More money (1) Knowledge about how teachers think (1) Add an Aboriginal perspective (1) Had bad teachers in the past and want to fix it (1)	Make a difference for Indigenous students (3) Enjoy working with children (1) Lifestyle (2) Already do most of what teacher does (3) Own children (1) Change career path due to having own children (2) Had bad teachers in the past and want to fix it (1) Because it is a social, well respected position in society (1) Education key to success (1)	Help educate (Indigenous) children (4) Role model (3) Enjoy working with children (2) Change agent/leader in Aboriginal education (2) Good career choice (1) Input to own children (1)



Quotes Qu 1: Why do you want to become a teacher?



- *There is plenty of opportunities for Indigenous males to act as role models in Aboriginal communities* **First Year**
I believe that it would make a huge difference to Koori students if they had more male role models **First Year**
- *I envisage my classroom to be inviting and full of laughter and creativity. I want to inspire children to follow their dreams and to help them understand themselves. Along with academic skills, I want to help kids to be proud of who they are and confident in their own identities* **First Year**
- *There is a shortage of Indigenous teachers in my rural community.* **S2091**
- *I have had experience working with children and really enjoyed it.* **S2098**
- *To make a difference in my community, by being a positive role model and bring about change for ATSI students* **S3092**
- *I want to become a teacher to lead the way for Indigenous children of the future. I also want to have an input into my children's lives* **S4094**



6. For some students, life circumstances and study become too difficult. What encourages/drives you to continue on to complete your study?



1 st Years	2 nd Years	3 rd Years	4 th Years
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wish to teach Indigenous children (4) Job/career/support family financially(3) Family support system (3) -sister is teacher Friends from Uni (3) Support from colleagues (2) For family, own children (1) Role model (1) To prove others wrong (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends from Uni (2) Family support system (2) -sister in AREP Role model for Indigenous people (2), for family (1) Getting a degree (1) Knowing there are schools wanting to employ me (1) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends from Uni (3) Family support system (1) Role model for Indigenous people (2), for family (3) Getting a degree (2) Better future (2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Priority to Uni/Study (3) HECS debt-don't want to pay for something not completed (1) Scholarship - don't want to have to repay it (1) Former schooling (3)- commitment to self to be a good teacher for other students Family/community (2) to not be seen as a failure & to be first in family to complete a degree To help own children (1)



Quotes Q 6: What drives you to continue?

- *Knowing I'll be a good positive role model for Indigenous children in the near future. **First year***
- *Financial stability is a big driving force. **First year***
- *When I finish I can provide for my own future and [my] families [sic] future. **First year***
- *My people (being Aboriginal). My culture is very important to me and our position in this country. When I complete my study I may inspire/encourage further Indigenous people to undertake uni studies. **S2092***
- *The realisation of a better future for myself and my children. It's a struggle just to get here every semester but I try my hardest for a rewarding career to better my family **S30925***
- *I never let quitting become an issue because teaching is No 1 in my life. **S4091***
- *I am driven to complete this degree as I do not want people (mostly family and community members) to think I have failed. **S4095***



7. What tips could you give another student about studying a Teacher Education course?

1 st Years	2 nd Years	3 rd Years	4 th Years
<p>Work hard (2)</p> <p>Support each other (2), get support(4),</p> <p>Get support from family/friends (1)</p> <p>Make sure it's what you want to do (2)</p> <p>How to prepare for uni (2), demands of uni (1)</p> <p>Be: Dedicated</p> <p>-Organised</p> <p>- Focussed (2)</p> <p>Prepared to make sacrifices (2)</p> <p>Do it for community (3)</p> <p>Do it for yourself (1)</p> <p>Keep an open mind (1)</p>	<p>Work hard (2)</p> <p>Support each other (2)</p> <p>Get support from family/friends (2)</p> <p>Ask questions (2)</p> <p>Be committed to uni (1)</p> <p>Keep an open mind (1)</p> <p>Start assessment early (1)</p> <p>Be prepared for more learning (1)</p> <p>Never give up (1)</p>	<p>Work hard (2)</p> <p>Support each other (2)</p> <p>Get support from family/friends (4)</p> <p>Need a routine and self management strategies (2)</p> <p>Stay positive (1)</p> <p>Reward yourself (1)</p>	<p>Be prepared for hard work (2)</p> <p>Support (3) get support, support each other</p> <p>Make sure it is what you want to do (3)</p> <p>(Be committed to teaching)</p> <p>Be organized, manage time effectively (3)</p>





Quotes Question 7: Tips



- *I'd give them tips on how to prepare for uni, the differences between uni and school* **First Year**
- *Make sure there is a strong support network around you as this will be the motivational tool that is most valuable.* **First Year**
- *Start assessments early, get as much information on a topic as possible. Interact with your lecturers and discuss any problems.* **S20911**
- *Don't just teach for the pay, holidays or because you love children. Do it because you're passionate about children's learning and lives.* **S3095**
- *Be prepared for hard study. Be open minded about study and learn to depend on those around you who support you and offer positive encouragement and stay away from negative influences.* **S4091**




Similarities: Compiled data



- Become a teacher to:**
- Be a role model (18)
- Make a difference for Indigenous students (11)
- Good career choice (8) **NB. Responses of first years are gender weighted*
- Change agent/leader in Aboriginal Education (7)
- Already do most of what a teacher does (7) **Not 4th years*
- Influenced by:**
- Parents/family (18)
- Teacher/colleague (17)
- No-one (6)
- Already AEO (4)
- Expectations:**
- Skills to teach (19)
- Become a good teacher (7)
- To graduate (7)
- Uni to be supportive (8)





Similarities: *Compiled data*

Already learnt:


- Curriculum (7)
- A lot/more knowledge (6)
- It is hard (5)
- Teaching strategies (5)

Motivation/drivers:


- Role model (9)
- Friends from Uni (8)
- For family, own children (7)
- Family support (6)


TIPS:

- Work hard (8)
- Support each other (7); Get support (8)
- Make sure its what you want to do (5)
- Be organised, time management (5)




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Cross case analysis: *Differences*

- Only **First Years** mentioned wanting to learn about their own culture
- Mostly **First Years** who said they wanted to improve academic skills
- Mostly **First Years** who wanted to become a teacher to provide for their family (more males)
- Only **Fourth Years** were driven to complete by HECs/Scholarship debt; not wanting to be seen as a failure
- Only **Fourth Years** said they had learnt research tools, theories of Education



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Conclusion

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- Students enter the course with high ideals for benefits to their family, the community and themselves - often general.
- Over the course, goals & perspectives become more focussed and sophisticated
- Survivors have learnt to prioritise in life and to make completion their priority. (Shame factor)
- To retain students we need to look at what & how to support them through the transition.
- We need to provide cultural support for students (complex family life)
- Proposed follow-up research: Q methodology across year groups/ UWS, to identify the most important factors affecting retention from a student perspective; continue to monitor and adjust the entry selection process.



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