






Fostering partnerships with pre-service Indigenous teachers in addressing the different social capital exhibited in their respective school communities.


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Introduction

- Preparing future Indigenous teachers is about building their capacity to make a difference to their communities and influence the next generation of Indigenous students in accessing and pursuing further higher education.
- The percentage of Indigenous students accessing and succeeding at University is clearly well below equity levels compared to non-Indigenous students. Data from the *DEST National Higher Education Statistics Collection* has shown that the proportion of Indigenous higher education students participating in higher education has not increased since 2001 and there is evidence that there is a considerable widening in the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educational outcomes.
- Approximately 51.3% of Indigenous students are enrolled in Bachelor degree programs offered by Australian Universities compared to 75.1% of non-Indigenous students. Nationally, Indigenous students are under-represented within degree programs offered by disciplines such as Business, Engineering, Science, and to a lesser degree, Arts, Health and Education (*Indigenous Participation in Higher Education: Culture, Choice and Capital Theory, June 2006*).



Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education



- The Badanami Centre for Indigenous Education at the University of Western Sydney is committed to designing an undergraduate teacher education program that supports Indigenous tertiary students in gaining the necessary knowledge and skills required of them as teachers. This paper outlines the content of the Bachelor of Education (Primary) – Aboriginal Rural Education Program (AREP) offered at the University of Western Sydney and in particular one curriculum unit that examines the kinds of social capital that circulates in school and community environments and the skills needed by teachers to work productively with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities to develop social capital. Both rural and urban perspectives are illustrated and a range of strategies are suggested that may assist communities to raise social capital in school communities. It is believed that such strategies will improve the academic achievement of Indigenous students in primary and secondary schools as the Indigenous teachers trained will be encouraged to be advocates for building strong relations between schools and communities.



Bachelor of Education (Primary) -AREP



The Bachelor of Education (Primary) - AREP is a four year primary initial teacher education degree which has been specifically developed for Aboriginal people and is offered in a culturally appropriate mode. It is delivered through block release with two 2 week block residentials scheduled each semester over the 5 years of the program, totalling 40 weeks of face to face on campus contact. Between residentials, students undertake on-line tasks and discussions, and complete readings, assessment tasks and professional experience in schools.





Background



- The University of Western Sydney has offered primary teacher education programs specifically targeted for Aboriginal students since 1983.
- Initially the course was for rural students but now caters for a younger and broader demographic group of Indigenous students.
- Many graduates have forged successful careers both in education and other enterprises.
- They have strengthened Aboriginal education in schools and been seen as role models.
- A Diploma of Teaching was first offered followed by a Bachelor of Teaching and currently a Bachelor of Education.
- 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.



B.Ed (Primary) - AREP



1	900000 University Study Skills	100727 Issues in Aboriginal Education	G2007 Land & Law/Native Title in Australia	
2	100728 Introduction to Learning & Teaching	100729 Introduction to Curriculum	101306 Indigenous Cultural Texts in Education	
3	100730 Cultural Diversity, Society & Learning	101307 Numeracy for Teaching	101308 Educational Psychology for Teaching	
4	100732 Curriculum Studies 1: Language and Literacy 1	100806 Curriculum Studies 2: Early Mathematical Thinking	100733 Curriculum Studies 3: Science and Technology	100734 Curriculum Studies 6: Human Society and its Environment
5	100735 Curriculum Studies 4: PD, Health, PE	100736 Curriculum Studies 5: Creative Arts Intro	A2278 Special Study in Primary Education	
6	100738 Curriculum Studies 7: Creative Arts and PD, Health, PE	100739 Play, Development and Learning 2	100737 Curriculum Studies 8: HSIE and Science and Technology	
7	100740 Curriculum Studies 9: Language and Literacy 2	100741 Curriculum Studies 10: Developing Mathematical Thinking	100742 Inclusive Education Practices	101309 Social Capital & School-Community Relationships
8	100743- Teaching English as a Second Language in K-6 Mainstream Schools	100744 ICT and Research in Education	100745 Cultural Diversity, Society and Learning 2	
9	100746 Understanding & Teaching in Context			
10	100747 Engaging the Profession			





Social capital and school-community relations



- This unit is designed to build on students' sociological understandings of schooling by linking to the practical concerns of teachers and their school communities. The unit builds on experiential, theoretical and curriculum knowledge developed in the other units of the Bachelor of Education (Primary) – AREP course.
- As the unit is designed for Aboriginal Rural Education Program students it has a specific focus on the ways in which schools and communities interact to develop social capital in rural/regional and urban areas.
- Specifically, the unit engages students in an investigation and analysis of school-based and community strategies that attempt to build social capital - including bonding, bridging and linking capital - with local Indigenous and non-Indigenous school communities. In this unit, students were required to document, analyse and critique their professional experiences in ways that integrate their professional learning by reflective writing and case study.



Outcomes of the Unit



1. recognise the importance of school/community relations in the education of Indigenous and non-Indigenous children;
2. demonstrate an understanding of the kinds of social capital that circulate in school and community environments and their relationship to power,
3. know that multiple narratives exist in school and community contexts;
4. understand that visual texts constitute as well as reflect social life and are therefore connected to the distribution and articulation of social capital;
5. be alert to the spatial dimensions of school and community relations in respect to architecture and landscape;
6. critically analyse resources and representations of Indigenous Australians used in school environments;
7. critically analyse representations of school in Community environments; and
8. critically evaluate and gauge their own progress and be capable of articulating how and in what ways they have developed.

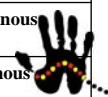


Context



Six of the eight pre-service teachers agreed to collaborate in the writing of this paper. All are fourth year students in the Bachelor of Education (Primary) – AREP program at the University of Western Sydney. In protecting the confidentiality of the schools that the pre-service teachers undertook their study, each school is designated by a letter A to F and each pre-service teacher is identified by the same letter. Four schools were from rural NSW and two from the greater Western Sydney.

Pre-service or Student Teacher	School	Description
A	A	Large Urban Primary school with 25% Indigenous population
B	B	Small Urban / Rural Primary school with 33% Indigenous population
C	C	Rural Central school with 99% Indigenous population
D	D	Rural High school with 30% Indigenous population
E	E	Small Rural Primary school with 100% Indigenous population
F	F	Large Rural Primary school with 20% Indigenous population



Reflective Tools




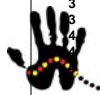
- The students were provided various reflective tools such as a newsletter template with particular headings that they addressed. Students were asked to collect images that illustrated aspects of social capital in their community. These images provided a stimulus for student reflection and were then used in a PowerPoint presentation in class. Both the newsletters and the PowerPoint presentations were the basis for writing their case study and comprised the data for comparing the different settings outlined by the 6 student teachers.
- Students were asked to provide some background information about their school and its community; discuss the type of social capital evident and link to why social capital is important; summarise key activities related to Indigenous education that is offered in the school and community; discuss future plans or initiatives offered by the school and community; and outline how the students themselves will bridge the gap between the different forms of social capital exhibited by the school and the community.






Scaffold for Newsletter to accompany PowerPoint presentation of Assignment 1

<p>NAME OF SCHOOL NEWSLETTER</p>  <p><i>Vol 1, Issue 1</i></p>	<p>School Logo</p>  <p>University of Western Sydney Bringing knowledge to life</p> <p>Address _____ Phone: _____ Fax: _____</p>
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This 4-page newsletter is one of many ways you could use to highlight the key elements of your presentation. In some ways the newsletter is another way to communicate your research and thoughts about the kinds of social capital that circulates in school and community environments. Text can be presented in 2 or 3 columns with accompanying images – no need to highlight the borders. You can change the headings to suit your context

<p>ALL ABOUT THE SCHOOL – Name of School Provide some background information about the school and its community - demographic information, nature of school and its community</p>													
<p>SOCIAL CAPITAL LINK TO EDUCATION General Introduction Link to why social capital is important - refer to readings - use quotes e.g. interaction enables people to build communities, to commit themselves to each other, and to knit the social fabric (Smith, 2007) - connect to school events/happenings and how it celebrates school-community links</p>	<p>Inside this Issue:</p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 80%;">All about the School</td> <td style="width: 20%; text-align: right;">1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social Capital link to Education</td> <td style="text-align: right;">1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>etc.</td> <td style="text-align: right;">2</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">2</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">3</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: right;">4</td> </tr> </table> 	All about the School	1	Social Capital link to Education	1	etc.	2		2		3		4
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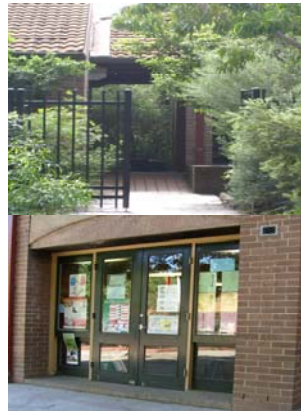
<p>MOVING FORWARD</p> <p>A brief summary of future plans or initiatives of how the school and community will bring people together and recognise the achievements of people within the school and community</p>	
<p>A PORTRAIT OF SELF Provide a brief snapshot of yourself as an Indigenous person and outline how you will bridge the gap between school and community</p>	
<p>Acknowledgement/ References</p> <p>A big thank you to Leonie McIntosh (Year 5 AREP student – 2009) for the use of some text and images from her assignment for Social Capital and School-Community Relation (2008).</p>	
	



School A



- School A is a large urban school in NSW with 25% Aboriginal population and displays various aspects of social capital. Bonding capital stems from families/parents working together to improve the school, forming networks and sharing common bonds between various parties that make up the school community. The school has a variety of network ties that community can access. These services help to support both the community and the school with a diverse range of services available.




School A




- There are also outside agencies that the school utilise to help support bridging and linking capital within the school. A case worker based at the school supports families in the community in a variety of ways, such as; financial advice, scholarships and reading support programs. There are also a number of volunteer parent helpers within the school.







School A




University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life


- In contrast to school C there are no provisions of cultural classes within the school learning time to accommodate the number of Indigenous students, which is one of the largest urban populations in the state. Except where the Aboriginal Perspective is implemented within the Connected Outcome Units (COGs).









School A



University of
Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life

- Bonding, bridging and linking capital provide a framework for assessing our current work and making changes to our approach. We need to be increasingly looking to see how we can create more bridges and links for individuals, families and communities.
- Our aim in achieving this will be to open the school up more, give the community more information so they can make informed decisions about their child's education.





Aboriginal Education needs to be more visible, valued and relevant.



School B



- School B is a small school in urban/rural NSW with 33% Aboriginal population and displays various aspects of social capital.
- The school serves a diverse socio-economic community and is supported by funding through the Priority Schools Funding Program.
- The school community is committed to creating a safe, tolerant and supportive learning environment.



School B



- The school community is made up of individuals and groups who have an interest in the school and together they form a large network within the school community.
- By working collaboratively and responsibly these groups ensure that students and the school community as a whole have a strong chance of reaching their full potential.





School B



- The school offers a lot of Indigenous educational programs to support the teaching staff and the many Aboriginal families in the community.
- The school celebrates NAIDOC week where parents and the whole school participate in Aboriginal traditional games, food, art, and storytelling by parents.
- The school employs two Aboriginal teachers' aides and has 1 full time Aboriginal Education Officer.



School B



- The school has made a commitment not only to the immediate school community, but also to the wider community.
- The school aims to fulfil this commitment
- by expanding the resources and services provided
 - by gauging the needs of the community through informal chats and formal meetings,
 - increasing staff and parents awareness of Aboriginal perspectives and
 - providing more opportunities for interaction with Indigenous people e.g. Elders Storytelling, Artists, Dance groups, etc.



School C

- School C is a central school in rural NSW with 99% Aboriginal population and displays various aspects of social capital. The school has representatives that are on the Community Working Party (CWP). The CWP are very supportive of the school but lacks knowledge of what is happening in the school and are not active in planning and developing school policies. The CWP rarely attend events or functions. The school encourages parents to come into the school and be active in their children's learning but there seems to be a lack of interest in the P&C.
- There is minimal contact with different agencies around the community. Agencies that should be playing key roles within the school are seldom seen. Communication breakdown seems to be the key factor for the lack of bonding capital within School C.



School C

- Bridging capital relates to the community and the school working together to bring about change. There are many areas in the school that suggest this is happening; however some have ended with disappointing results.
- While students are playing on their school playground equipment they are awaiting the shade shelter that should be covering the equipment. The school oval is maintained by the local community but the grass is often left long and barely any grass is present, most of it is all burrs and weed.
- The school is sponsored by a local agricultural company but the school's agriculture farm is barely maintained.
- School C has potential to have effective bridging capital within the school. If these partnerships were stronger or maintained, it would provide more opportunities for the students and the school to build pride in the school environment.





School C



- Indigenous Education at School C is extremely important considering 99% of the school population identify as Aboriginal. The school website states that “there is a strong emphasis on Aboriginal education, cultural awareness and community involvement”. When you look around the school environment this is not immediately obvious. Firstly, in the classroom students are taught about their culture. Each class is provided 1 period per week for Culture. Students learn the local language and about other significant cultural features around the community. However, many of the students cannot make a link with their Aboriginal identities and need more exposure within the school and classroom environment. Many students are not aware of the history of Aboriginal dislocation and dispossession. Retention rates of students at School C are low. More than 30 students started in Kindergarten to have only 3 of these students finishing Year 12 last year.



School D



- School D is in a rural farming town and this perspective is evident within the social capital of the school. The school is situated on a 12 acre block with 3.6 acres set aside for the agriculture plot. The size of the agriculture plot in relation to the school is a direct reflection of a strong social rural element within the community. 30% of the school is Aboriginal and Aboriginal perspectives are readily observable throughout the school.
- Murals, the Aboriginal flag, Aboriginal employees and the Aboriginal resource room highlight the distinct Aboriginal representation within the school. Also, the front office has pictures of all past school captains and the high number of Aboriginal students who have been school captains in the past few years is evident.



School D

- The social capital in a school is a reflection of the community and as such this bonding capital extends to employment. The town has a large Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) and previously a lot of (not all) Aboriginal students were content to leave school and take up employment at CDEP as the remainder of their family has. This is due to the fact that education is not seen as a priority. These findings suggest that there needs to be a focus on providing the adequate bridging capital framework to enhance the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students as bridging capital is “the building of connections between groups” (Schuller et al., 2000). In this case the building of connections between the Aboriginal community and the school is important. If this is not addressed then the social capital of Aboriginal students and their chance of real employment will not be realised.




School D




- Due to the consistent efforts of the Aboriginal community and School D, Aboriginal students' attendance and retention rates have soared. The results have been remarkable, especially with the retention of senior Aboriginal students. As the following data highlights, in two out of the last three years the percentage of Aboriginal people completing their HSC was higher than the overall percentage of Aboriginal students in the school; Year 12 2007 – 29 students completed their HSC with 11 being Aboriginal. This is equivalent to 37%; Year 12 2008 - 35 students completed their HSC with 8 being Aboriginal. This is equivalent to 22%; Year 12 2009 – 29 students completed their HSC with 10 being Aboriginal. This is equivalent to 34%
- It is the retention of Aboriginal students through the support of the programs that has allowed them to take advantage of the opportunities that School D has to offer. Providing these opportunities breaks down barriers and begins to build a sense of positive bonding capital amongst the Aboriginal community with regards to education. The real benefits of these programs will be seen when children of the Aboriginal students at school now begin coming through the education system.



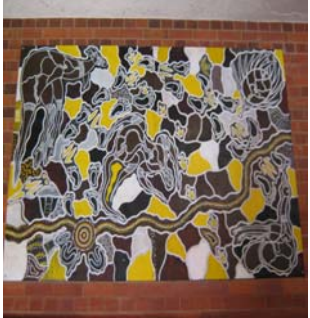



School D




The following data highlights the opportunities recently taken by Aboriginal students at School D.


- Aboriginal school captains for the past 3 years
- Aboriginal students on the School Representative Council (SRC).
- Aboriginal students in school to work programs with the ANZ bank and the local Ford dealership.
- Retention and attendance has increased significantly across all stages
- Aboriginal faces in the school as paid workers.
- Large functioning AECG (teachers, students and parents)
- Students guest speakers at regional AECG conferences
- Greater significance of Aboriginal perspectives in classrooms








School E



- School E is located in rural North Western New South Wales and originally its community was an Aboriginal Reserve and was later transferred to the Aboriginal Lands Trust where residents continue to live today. The residents are all Indigenous people, with some families who alternate between residential communities throughout the North West.
- The school population consists of 23 students which is a massive jump from only 12 the year before. There are 3 teachers in the school with one being the Principal. The aim of the school is to provide students with a relaxed environment in a school community which they feel happy secure, reaching their full potential.





School F



- The school has 470 students and 20% of the students identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders. The school is located in the north west of NSW. The school covers approximately four acres of land. The school's main priority is to educate all students. To help with social capital, the school holds special days throughout the year. Recently the school celebrated Grandparents day and there were over two hundred guests that attended the special day. Another great gathering the school holds is NAIDOC week and a reconciliation BBQ that takes place during the celebrations.



School F

- School F helps the community by educating all students as well as inviting community members into the school for a variety of reasons. An Aboriginal artist was employed on a casual basis to come into the school and paint a number of different murals with the students and teach them about Aboriginal art. Community members volunteer their time to help students learn to read and help in the school canteen.
- All staff at School F have had cultural awareness training and this helps when it comes to the education of Indigenous students and understanding their culture. All students are engaged in Aboriginal studies lessons which includes learning about traditional language, Indigenous music and well-known Indigenous people.





Recommendations



- In order for networks and relationships to be developed there needs a stronger emphasis be placed on social capital within each school. The school and community members need to be active stakeholders for developing an effective network and for students to grow in a cooperative environment that builds on a strong relationship between school and community.
- There is a need to break the cycle of poverty and low self-esteem associated within areas of socio economic disadvantage. Teachers need to observe these areas to be able to empower students to achieve success and realise that they do have some potential in life. Students need to be engaged in meaningful classroom activities that they see as relevant and achieve success at in developing their academic and cultural capital, being acknowledged at a whole school assembly not just in a segregated Indigenous assembly.



Recommendations



- Much of the success to the implication of building social capital into the school environment is that ensuring interaction between the classroom and the community.
- Students have a sense of real-life experience in their learning and that teachers have a wealth of resources on which to draw on. The involvements of parents, in particular, supports students and school facilities and have the potential to be a central focus for the community, enhancing the school to better cater for the changing needs of students.
- In providing students with these opportunities, schools are able to offer more opportunities of culture in education and all aspects of social relations for students to grow in their identity. This will then flow over to the community to help the ties of the community become tighter.





Recommendations



- Students need to be immersed into culture. Students who have been exposed to culture will help bridge the gap between rural and bigger towns thus generating a stronger community and creating a bigger cultural capital in the school.
- One way to do this is to invite local elders to talk to students and incorporate traditional Aboriginal language into lessons. In bringing the elders back to the community students will feel a sense of belonging which will help move forward their identity. This will also bring about bonding, bridging and linking possibilities in social capital for all schools.



Conclusion



- The unit will continue to be taught over the next 2 years. This will provide an opportunity to develop further the reflective tools that will assist Indigenous pre-service teachers in developing their knowledge and skills in addressing the very important issue of raising social capital in communities especially communities that have a high Indigenous population.

