Chapter 8
Preparing Teachers to Work with and for Remote Indigenous Communities: Unsettling Institutional Practices

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Abstract This chapter reports on data from two separate Australian Government-funded projects related to the development of a remote professional experience. The first project, PREEpared (https://www.preepared.com) was interested in finding ways to better prepare pre-service teachers and teacher educators to counter oppressive curriculum and pedagogy and work with and for Australian remote communities in the context of Initial Teacher Education (ITE). The second involved planning, implementing and evaluating two remote placement experiences to understand the experiences of all relevant stakeholders. The question of how can ITE best serve remote communities was posed and a themed analysis conducted from a range of interview responses. Findings suggest those in initial teacher education need to unsettle some of the taken-for-granted professional education practices and documents the essential elements of a curriculum necessary to prepare pre-service teachers to work and learn in ethical, respectful and reciprocal ways. Analysis suggests that a specialised initial teacher education curriculum and professional experience that acknowledges and respects local needs and contexts is needed to adequately prepare teachers to work in and for remote communities where it is difficult to both attract and retain teachers.

Keywords Professional experience · Remote placement
Initial teacher education · Indigenous education · Pre-service teachers

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Introduction

Just over one quarter of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia reside in remote or very remote locations (ABS, 2011) with the majority of schools in remote areas having Indigenous enrolments greater than 90%. Whilst the definition of 'remoteness' can be subjective, generally, 'remote' is classified with regard to ease of distance and access to a variety of amenities of comfort, as well as distance to major towns and cities; Whilst 'very remote' would constitute a larger degree of hardship in accessing these amenities, as well as living extraordinarily far from major cities and towns (Wakerman, 2004). These geographically isolated but culturally rich communities often face teacher shortages, creating further a level of uncertainty for ensuring access to educational opportunity for those who live and work in these places.

This chapter discusses how initial teacher education providers might best address the current remote staffing issues Whilst also meeting the challenge set for universities by the Indigenous Cultural Competency Reform in Australian universities report to ensure all graduates are well equipped to work in culturally competent ways with Indigenous communities (DEEWR, 2011, p. 9). The authors, as a team of Indigenous and non-Indigenous teacher education researchers, explored this policy imperative and staffing concern, from the perspective of initial teacher education and the preparation of graduates to work with and for Indigenous remote contexts, as just one example of turning policy into practice. A particular focus on curriculum design and developing a culturally responsive remote professional experience were explored as a way to interrogate initial teacher education institutional practices that would best serve remote communities. What this work to date has uncovered is the fraught and uncertain nature of policy reform and enactment and the importance of building strong partnerships between Indigenous communities and initial teacher education that reflect the learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students first.

Exploring Higher Education Policy and Practice

Higher education is awash with important policy imperatives ranging from those designed to improve access and opportunity for all students, to government-imposed initial teacher education standards and accreditation. As raised earlier, one of the driving overarching recommendations of the Indigenous Cultural Competency Reform in Australian universities (2011) project has aimed for all university graduates to 'have the knowledge and skills necessary to interact in a culturally competent way with Indigenous communities' (DEEWR, 2011, p. 9). Where this knowledge base is embedded into initial teacher education curriculum becomes the next challenge.

Likewise, the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) names specific standards for teachers to meet as they relate to Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander students and culture. Specifically the 1.4 and 2.4 standards state that all graduate teachers should be able to 'Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds', and 'Demonstrate broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages' (AITSL, 2017). These standards have challenged universities and schools alike in terms of how to build teacher cultural awareness and understanding of the standards and initial teacher education providers' response to the accreditation documentation.

Further to these policy directions is the need for all ITE providers to demonstrate mandated partnerships as part of new accreditation requirements. This policy direction is complicated by schools who are increasingly finding it difficult to accommodate pre-service teachers due to their own increasing accountability and testing requirements. In response, many universities are looking at alternative and international professional experiences (where pre-service teachers often subsidise their own travel) to ensure all pre-service teachers are placed. Remote placements, as a result, are often advertised alongside international professional experience as an 'alternative' placement. Building professional experience programmes with remote schools has therefore been an area of expansion to meet the standards, and there has now begun some research into the challenges and opportunities in doing so. However, the majority of research as reported (Baills, Bell, Greensill, & Wilcox, 2002) focuses on the logistics of setting up professional experiences, and there are similarities here in findings from rural professional experiences studies (Kline, White, & Lock, 2013). Such studies highlight interrelating issues such as placement planning and coordinating, financial expense, geographical isolation and challenges of finding suitable accommodation for pre-service teachers (Sharplin, 2002; Yarrow, Ballantyne, Hansford, Herschell, & Millwater, 1999).

There remains a paucity of the impact and consequences of remote professional experiences from the various stakeholders working in and with remote communities. Policy tends to focus on mandated 'partnerships' (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, 2014) but it is unclear what such partnerships look like 'in' and 'for' remote communities. Herbert (2007) cautions that relationship work is foundational to developing partnerships with Indigenous communities. Relationship work requires honesty and involves making an unwritten agreement 'to listen', and 'to reflect' on what is said 'within the framework of your own understandings' (p. 47).

Many universities (mostly based in urban settings) have attempted to develop 'remote' professional experiences to allow pre-service teachers the opportunity to experience and learn more about remote schools and communities in the hope that this experience will instil a remote-teaching mindset and increase the likelihood of a remote-teaching career. Whilst at first glance this type of initiative appears positive, there is the real danger that if not carefully co-developed with local community and schools leading the initiative, the experience can end up being a type of 'edutourism' (Hickling-Hudson & Alquist, 2003) which can in turn lead to unintended negative consequences for Indigenous learners. More recently, the work of establishing remote professional experiences has been named as 'dangerous practices' by

Auld, Dyer, and Charles (2016). They explain that by dangerous they mean 'those practices at risk of being counterproductive to the empowering and transformative practices of student learning and the ethical responsibilities associated with teaching' (p. 165). The question of how to best prepare teachers to work in remote contexts further challenges institutions to think differently about how they build professional experiences and cultural responsiveness for pre-service teachers *without* unwittingly causing a negative impact for Indigenous communities.

The Study: Drawing on Two Remote Professional Experience Projects

It is within this vexed policy and practice backdrop that this chapter reports findings drawn from a dataset across two Australian Government-funded projects aimed to investigate the development of remote placement experiences. The first project, an Office of Learning and Teaching seed project now known as Partnering for Remote Education Experience or PREEpared (https://www.preepared.com), was interested in finding ways to better prepare pre-service teachers and teacher educators to counter oppressive curriculum and pedagogy and work with and for remote communities in the context of ITE from the perspective of teacher educators. The second project funded by Federal Government Indigenous Advancement Strategy involved planning, implementing and evaluating two remote placement experiences to understand them from the perspectives of the communities and schools. Together these projects offer new ways of understanding how universities can do this work so they might reduce the level of uncertainty and risk for remote communities and schools. To begin to address some of these uncertainties, the research teams posed the question from both projects—how can universities reconceptualise culturally responsive institutional practices around the development and implementation of remote placements?

Each project was theoretically firmly underpinned by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (United Nations, 2008), of which Australia is a signatory. This document provides a framework to address the collective and individual rights of First Nations peoples to education along with other key areas of need. This informs the practices of rights-based education and pedagogy for First Nations peoples. This approach is guided by 'a different set of questions' (Smith, 1999, p. 94) that prioritise and frame Indigenous approaches to education and pedagogy as self-determining and rights-based.

Secondly, the projects were informed by the International Labour Organisation's Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO 169), which, in the context of education and rights-based pedagogy, speaks to Indigenous peoples' right to education in terms of contribution to society and self-determination (Ma Rhea & Anderson, 2011). The aims of Indigenous rights-based education are expressed in rights-based pedagogy through the creation of curriculum and pedagogic approaches that advocate for 'education for consciousness-raising' (Falcon & Jacob, 2011, p. 26). These

approaches have underpinned the project's recommendations for the collaborative facilitation of remote-teaching placements. The qualitative research methodology was explicitly underscored by Indigenous and Indigenist research methodologies that 'privileged the Indigenous voice' (Hogarth, 2017, p. 24). Data arising from the interviews were analysed using the process of identifying and coding characteristic patterns or themes emerging (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2009).

Both studies used interviews as the primary means of data collection to try and understand the experiences of various stakeholders within the space of 'remote placement'. Ethics was gained by Monash University for both projects. Data were collected in 2016. As part of the Office of Learning and Teaching funded project (Project 1), seven interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous teacher educators and education experts with substantial experience in facilitating remote-teaching placements were conducted over a period of six months to gain a sense of their experiences of doing this work (Project 1). In the same year, fifteen interviews were conducted with Principals, Indigenous and Non-Indigenous teachers and pre-service teachers about their experiences of developing, experiencing and sustaining remote placement experiences (Project 2). The data presented is identified according to the role and which project it was sourced. Utilising data from both projects has enabled the collective research team to present a balanced view of the experiences of all those involved in this important work.

Transcripts from each of the groups interviewed were analysed using an inductive process, based on assumptions of interpretive qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Common themes were identified about what each group thought was important for the planning and implementation of this work. Constant and comparative analysis of the data developed a set of inductive categories that emerged by sorting the data into key themes. The following presents a discussion of these findings.

Discussion

The combined study revealed that there were a number of important considerations in relation to establishing the remote experience; the curriculum that prepares pre-service teachers for the experience before, during and after the placement and what relationship building might mean within this context for the remote professional experience. Whilst these are key aspects to focus on in creating a remote placement, what also emerged from the study was that particular institutional practices governing professional experience need to be interrogated and adjusted. At the heart of this work is the importance of building relationships and partnerships with the local community first, and the recognition that Indigenous learners need to come before the desires of pre-service teachers to experience a remote-teaching placement. A closer look at the emerging themes is now discussed.

Building Trust and Partnership: Getting It 'Rights-Based'

Building trust and a partnership that values Indigenous learners and learning emerged as a key theme. Data revealed different approaches to establishing remote placement opportunities. Despite these differences, all of the participants talked about the ongoing issues associated with finding the 'right' place for teacher education students. These included establishing partnerships with education departments and schools in other jurisdictions, accessibility, accommodation, financial considerations, the experience of mentor teachers, pastoral care for pre-service teachers and timing of the placement. In particular, universities wanted to partner with schools where the students were well supported, safe and had opportunities for rich learning experiences.

Whilst there was an emphasis on finding the 'right' place for students from the university perspective, all community stakeholders, Principals, teachers and schools talked about the importance of the 'right' student. Both school Principals and most of the teachers from Project 2 expressed a level of uncertainty around whether they would be sent the 'right' student to their school and community. By right, they meant culturally responsive. They frequently used words and phrases such as 'knowing their stuff', being 'culturally aware', the ability to 'build relationships with students, parents and community', 'resilient', 'resourcefulness' and being 'healthy' emotionally.

All of the teachers and Principals emphasised the importance of sending pre-service teachers who were well prepared, culturally aware and had a level of resilience and resourcefulness. The importance of this is echoed in research (Warren & Quine, 2013). This is important as these communities are challenging places in which to work. Teachers have to cope with cultural, professional and geographical isolation, language and cultural barriers, and limited resources (Lock, Budgen, Lunay, & Oakley, 2012). Those interviewed were clear that not having the 'right' student can be a challenge for these schools, as the following data from an interview with a Principal about a recent placement experience show,

> I found these students seemed really prepared, open minded or able to roll with it. We do have students who come up here and it's not very successful. It's clunky and these guys haven't been like that at all they've been really open minded and they've also been pretty proactive. (Principal, Project 2)

These sentiments were also echoed by three of the teacher educators interviewed. One remarked how sending a pre-service teacher who is not the right fit can negatively affect both the community and the school.

> But, it can all go downhill very, very fast and while a lot of people see the difficulty and the destabilisation that occurs with a teacher who might go in and not be able to cope, often the effect on the community, of teacher upon teacher upon teacher can be huge. (Teacher Educator, Project 1)

Whilst it is not uncommon for pre-service teachers in any given professional experience to have issues in schools they are placed, it was clear from the data that this presented particular unwanted challenges for remote schools and communities. The tyranny of distance also means that it is much more difficult for universities to

intervene and solve issues that might arise. Universities that had remote placement as a regular offering in remote schools talked about the importance of placing pre-service teachers as a team and the need for students to go through a selection process to try and ensure they sent the 'right' students. This included students submitting a written application that addressed a set of criteria followed by an interview process. Whilst this was not reported as being 'fool proof', feedback from both schools involved said that students from universities which 'selected students' were often easier to work with. Universities then would need to allow time for a selection process that allows them to ensure that they are sending the 'right' students to these community schools which as detailed earlier are often 'high needs schools' with a number of challenges of their own (Price, 2016). This practice requires that universities work differently from the taken-for-granted practices of placing individual students with a mentor in a school. It requires pedagogical work of building a relationship with a remote school community and then a process of selection of pre-service teachers rather than 'all pre-service teachers are placed and given permission to go'. It is acknowledged that the vetting of pre-service teachers (especially those who are prepared to subsidise their own experience) can cause issues for placement officers. Traditionally, placement officers prioritise placing all pre-service teachers and vetting changes their work to one where they are not only required to adopt a cohort model of placement but also to value the right of the school to select rather than the right of the student to be placed.

Building the Knowledge Base First: The Importance of Curriculum Before Practice

Moreton-Robinson et al. (2012) identified the paucity of Indigenous content in Australian ITE programmes; this was further echoed in practice by Ma Rhea, Anderson, and Atkinson (2012) who found that the majority of teachers in Australia were not confident to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content with any depth or rigour. Thus, perpetuating the stereotypical learned curriculum taught in ITE programmes. All of the teacher educators and pre-service teachers talked about the importance of specific units within education courses that addressed historical and contemporary issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and effective pedagogies for working with Indigenous students and about the importance of developing culturally competent students. Further, all stakeholders interviewed discussed the need for induction programmes both before and during the placement.

University teacher educators discussed offering several units within their courses that explored various issues around Indigenous education both within the Faculty of Education and other faculties. These units aimed to develop a broad knowledge, understanding and respect for Indigenous peoples, histories, culture and languages, explore a range of Indigenous perspectives on teaching and learning and develop the skills and insights to engage learners from Indigenous and traditional communities

and create partnerships to improve learning outcomes. However, how and when these units were offered varied greatly. In some institutions, they were compulsory units as part of an Education degree whereas in other institutions, students elected to take the units. Further, there was no consistency in the years in which they occurred during the degree.

Unanimously, all teacher educators that were interviewed highlighted the importance of all students undertaking a unit that developed their cultural competence and explored issues around Indigenous perspectives on teaching and learning whether or not they wanted to explore a remote placement. Further, they felt it was important to challenge and unsettle their assumptions about Indigenous culture and knowledge more generally. One teacher educator commented,

> Personally I start with who they are, and where they form their values from where they get their stereo-types from, where they get their values of who they are, why they wanted to become a teacher in the first place and their interest being wanting to go to a rural remote or an Aboriginal community or work with indigenous students. (Teacher educator, Project 1)

Some also suggested that one unit does not go far enough and that university courses should give much more emphasis to a curriculum that firmly embeds Indigenous perspectives on teaching and learning across all unit offerings. One participant suggested that we should start early in the course so that students can start thinking about whether they might like to pursue options for placement in remote Indigenous contexts early in their degree as the following data show,

> I am wondering whether rural and remote and embedding of Indigenous perspectives, should be clearly outlined in their first year so that the student can start mapping, 'If I want to do this, should I look at taking up an Indigenous studies minor so I can get my head around the kids of knowledges I need to know before I get into a setting like this. Should I get myself into these sorts of units?' (Teacher educator, Project 1)

These sentiments were also echoed from pre-service teachers (Project 2). An Indigenous pre-service teacher made the following comments in a conversation where she was asked how prepared she felt to do this work. She commented,

> I am not the slightest bit concerned. I think having grown up in an Indigenous background it is an advantage in knowing what to expect. In terms of my degree I don't think my university has prepared me adequately I think it was somewhat helpful in relation to why we need to integrate Indigenous perspectives into planning etc. But none of my other units have really done anything … I am still in classes with people who have racist or prejudice or really oblivious views. I think university education needs to challenge that from the get go. I don't know how to fix it but we need to challenge those perspectives. (Pre-service teacher, Project 2)

Further responses seemed to suggest that the greatest priority was related to prospective students having an understanding of 'their community' rather than more general issues that were covered in the units offered by universities. There was a real sense that an induction process that was specific to their schools and their community was considered important.

Connecting Curriculum and Remote Professional Experience

It was clear throughout the data that an induction process before pre-service teachers embark on a remote-teaching placement is necessary. Moreover, all participants talked about the importance of developing this in consultation with both school and community so that it can be tailored specifically to their needs. Again, how these induction programmes work varied across institutions regarding content and delivery. Some talked about preparing booklets, others about having formal induction face-to-face session, and others talked about a combination of ways.

> We have over the years built up, I think, quite a substantial induction program. We have a face-to-face and an online induction for the students beforehand, and we work with an Aboriginal Elder in developing them and delivering that program. The students, even though it's not compulsory, we encourage them to come and they find that very useful. So yes, we have built up a suite of activities. And also we use the RRR, the Reconciliation, Respect and Relationships website now also. (Teacher educator Project 1)

Despite this, some suggested that whilst you can go through a process of induction with students before they leave 'you can never prepare students a hundred per cent for such an experience' (Principal, Project 2). When schools were asked about induction processes they said they also liked to have students go through a process of induction when they arrive. This included things such as showing them around the community and school, going through 'don't go areas', discussing appropriate behaviour and dress, and safety issues. Further staff interviewed at the two schools who participated in this study said they often invited students to be part of other activities that would help them to better understand the cultural aspects of living and working in their community. For example, students in one school were invited to go on the 'Learning on Country' camp implemented by the Language and Culture team at the school.

It was clear throughout the data that the remote placement can be a rich learning experience. University educators and pre-service teachers alike talked about the benefits.

> Well I think the positives are, first of all, that you are providing opportunities for students that they wouldn't normally have, so that it is extending their vision and their sense of understanding about Australia in terms of seeing through the lens of Aboriginal history and Aboriginal reconciliation. I think it actually prompts and promotes that critical and often uncomfortable enquiry into our history and into our sense of reconciliation between white and black Australia. (Teacher educator, Project 1)

Similarly, both Principals talked about the benefits in relation to future recruitment of teachers and in teacher learning at their school. One commented:

> But I see it as the most important thing for us, is that yes, it's a great recruiting tool. I think it's paying back to the fact that we need to do that to build great teachers, to have good mentor teachers to work with teachers, but I also see it as our teachers having to reflect on their practice. And I think that's really important. Explain their practice, demonstrate their practice, have somebody probably give them some feedback in a roundabout way about what they did, because they're asking questions—why did you do that? And they have to explain—I did it for this reason. (Principal, Project 2)

Despite the potential for remote placements to be sites of rich learning, interviews with Principals and teachers suggest that there needs to be a level of flexibility regarding what is possible. Often universities have already prepared unit guides detailing what pre-service teachers are required to do such as addressing various teaching standards and planning and implementing a minimum number of learning experiences. These are often being driven by teacher standards and registration requirements. There is a need to negotiate and collaborate with schools regarding the learning that might be possible. So rather than taking a pre-determined set of learning requirements to the school, we should be asking what is possible within that context.

The importance of relationship building was evident throughout the various data. To set up the placement, there is a great deal of brokerage with education departments, schools and local communities.

> The difficulties of facilitating a remote area placement is if someone who hadn't done this before came in, it's about building relationships with departments, with the schools, so that's why it's a long term thing and that's why there always needs to be someone who's in the wings, who knows the program, who we've got for succession planning. So I guess what I'm saying is it's not as straightforward as a normal placement. (Teacher educator, Project 1)

Further, there was the sense that you had to have succession planning in place to ensure that the relationships were sustainable. It was also clear throughout all of the data that this 'relationship' work was somehow different and more complex than what we might be accustomed to.

> Building the relationship locks in such a western, liberal, humanistic idea of simplistic friendship, and I think building a relationship with communities is just very, very different. And, what that means, I think is that the universities have to take responsibility for building very strong community relationships, which then means they're very clear about the conditions under which their pre-service teachers go to the community. So, it's not about—on the one hand it is about friendship, but on the other it's about deep, deep political and cultural knowledge. (Teacher educator, Project 1)

It was also strongly evident that this relationship building takes a considerable amount of time and that it involves a collaborative exercise where the community and schools have a real investment in how the partnership and placement experience is developed and implemented as one teacher educator explains below.

> Aboriginal communities are very, there's a lot of fly-in, fly-out people that are continually coming through Aboriginal communities without proper negotiation with the Elders of the group, and what really works. So the two worlds aren't communicating, everyone has their job to do, so I think we need to do the consultation process better, and it should be driven from the communities, not the other way around. So the communities should have a say in what happens and what kind of preparation the student's need to have before going out to their placements, in their schools, on their community, because we don't prepare them for that (Teacher educator, Project 1).

All of the Principals and teachers interviewed also emphasised the importance of developing the relationship with both the school and the community. Further, they said that it was also important for pre-service teachers to be mindful of doing this work whilst they are in their schools. One teacher commented on the importance of relationship building with students for learning.

> It really is experience and it really is breaking down and going through the hardship and coming up because so much of the learning is relationship building. For these kids to teach literacy and numeracy a good relationship is the foundation. (Teacher, Project 2)

The data suggest a real need for universities to engender the importance of this work from the initial organisation through to the enactment of the placement experience. Further, we should ensure that teacher educators and pre-service teachers alike are involved in this work.

Implications: Creating More Certainty?

Appropriate preparation of pre-service teachers for remote professional experience and the formation and maintenance of strong, long-term relationships between universities and remote schools and communities appears to be at the heart of the sustainability of remote-teaching placements. As such we need to unsettle some of the taken-for-granted practices around the establishment, development and maintenance of the university—school partnership. In addition to having the interests of students at heart, universities also need to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the communities and schools. Partnerships need to be reciprocal. Data from the various stakeholders suggest that there is an enormous amount of work that goes into the initial stages of setting up the partnership and planning for a remote placement. Allowing enough time to develop and plan these experiences would seem paramount. Most importantly ensuring that there are processes in place to ensure that schools and communities are considered by sending the 'right' teacher education student and that students are considered by choosing the 'right' place.

To do this, there needs to be a level of 'certainty' around the processes for student selection and schools need some reassurance that these processes will be maintained. Arguably, sending 'anyone' to these communities and schools as the data clearly shows how this can be 'risky' and unsettling for communities and schools alike. Further practices need to be put in place to ensure the maintenance and further development of these relationships so the 'fly in fly out' syndrome that has plagued these schools and communities for decades can be avoided. In the development of the partnership, a great deal of flexibility is required. The taken-for-granted institutional placement practices do not work in these places. There needs to be a process of negotiation around what is possible regarding student learning. So rather than saying this is what students need to do, we need to ask what is possible?

Finally, creating more opportunities for a remote placement 'to schools with high Indigenous student populations can empower and professionally enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching to their students' (Harrington, 2013, p. 87). As evidenced by the data, it can also assist pre-service teachers in making decisions about future career possibilities in these communities and schools which can work towards addressing uncertainty around staffing. However, the issue of appropriate preparation before and during the placement remains crucial. Partington (2003) warns

that 'ignorance of Indigenous history, oppression, culture and expectations is likely to lead teachers to adopt strategies that compound the disadvantages Indigenous students experience and accelerate their departure from school' (p. 40). Thus, institutions tasked with the responsibility to prepare pre-service teachers for the remote placement 'need to expose their students to the significant, broad and complex issues relevant to rural, regional and remote education' (Trinidad et al., 2011, p. 41). All of the participants in both projects agreed that a dedicated curriculum that addressed historical and contemporary issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and effective pedagogies for working with Indigenous students and about the importance of developing culturally competent students was a necessary prerequisite for pre-service teachers wishing to embark on a remote placement. Further that a process of induction relevant to working in the community and school was necessary both before and during the placement. This again requires we unsettle the taken-for-granted practices of doing this work.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from this study have a number of implications for the implementation of various policy requirements including the development of mandated partnerships (TEMAG, 2014), ensuring that graduates have the knowledge and skills to interact with Indigenous communities in culturally competent ways (DEEWR, 2011) and that they meet standards 1.4 and 2.4 for the purpose of accreditation (AITSL, 2017). First, developing partnerships with Indigenous remote communities requires we re-examine how universities work with Indigenous communities. The traditional approach of placing a pre-service teacher with a classroom teacher does not work for remote contexts—rather the 'placement' needs to be viewed as a partnership between the university, community and school. Partnership building requires time, flexibility, trust and reciprocity.

Secondly, ensuring Indigenous learners are at the fore means that all pre-service teachers need to build their cultural responsive knowledge base first through a core curriculum which specifically addresses standards 1.4 and 2.4. Students who demonstrate their cultural responsiveness and awareness should then be offered a remote placement. ITE can do more to build the partnership between the curriculum and the remote professional experience, and placement officers and academic staff need to work together to build an Indigenous rights-based model.

Remote placements can indeed become a window into future opportunities to teach in remote settings for pre-service teachers, provided the collaborative induction process is thorough, and the main stakeholders are well supported and resourced. A remote professional experience, which for many students is a one-off experience (however transformative), may not be enough to entice these educators to teach in remote schools long-term and can unwittingly contribute to the staffing churn with a negative impact on student learning. This practice needs to be stopped.

As the alternative, the creation of specialist remote-teaching programmes and/or units needs to be undertaken as part of undergraduate and/or postgraduate teaching degrees. Also, the emphasis on curriculum should be broadened beyond a narrow focus on content and pedagogic knowledge, to include issues of preparation and planning before, during and post-placement, foregrounding the complex and interacting issues of the 'right' motivations to undertake the placement and relationship building with Indigenous communities. Ultimately, any improvements need to be undertaken with the explicit involvement of Indigenous remote school Principals, schools and communities. The invaluable feedback from these stakeholders, when placed at the heart of teacher education courses, pre- and post-remote placement support, could result in better outcomes for Indigenous students.

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She is a Principal Fellow with the Australian Literacy Educators Association and has been the Managing Editor of the Australian Journal of Language and Literacy since 2009.

Simone White is Professor and Assistant Dean (International and Engagement) in the Faculty of Education at Queensland University of Technology (QUT). She is also the Immediate Past President of the Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA). Her publications, research and teaching are focused on the key question of how to best prepare teachers and leaders for diverse communities (both local and global). Her current research areas focus on teacher education policy, teacher development, professional experience and building and maintaining university–school/community partnerships. She currently leads an Australian Government grant focused on improving the preparation of future teachers to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and caregivers. Through her collective work, She aims to connect research, policy and practice in ways that bring teachers and school and university-based teacher educators together and break down traditional borders between academics, policymakers, communities and practitioners.

Peter Anderson is from the Walpiri and Murinpatha, First Nations in the Northern Territory. He is also an Associate Professor at Queensland University of Technology where he is the Director of the Indigenous Research and Engagement Unit. His research theorises the understandings of the organisational value of academic freedom in Australian universities and also more broadly in the polar south. His current research is in the areas of organisational leadership, indigenous peoples' education, and teacher and academic professional development. He currently leads an Australian government Special Research Initiative grant: the National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network (NIRAKN). NIRAKN's vision is to develop a critical mass of skilled, informed and qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, who can address the urgent needs of our communities, through the delivery of culturally appropriate research. NIRAKN will endeavour to facilitate a national indigenous research agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the nation.

Anna Darling is a Ph.D. candidate at the Faculty of Education, Monash University. Her study looks at the complexity of experiences of teacher educators in the spaces of Indigenous Education and Initial Teacher Education (ITE). Her research interests focus on the notions and practices of expertise, consultation, pedagogy and emotion in the space of Indigenous Education, and how these notions and practices are affected by education policies and university culture. She has contributed to research projects that investigate the barriers to effective preparation of pre-service teachers to undertake teaching placements in remote Aboriginal schools. Currently, she is working on two research projects that respectively examine the preparation of pre-service teachers to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and caregivers, and explore the diversity and effectiveness of literacy programs in remote Aboriginal schools.