

Speaking back to the deficit discourses: a theoretical and methodological approach

Melitta Hogarth^{1,2}

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Abstract The educational attainment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is often presented within a deficit view. The need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to challenge the societal norms is necessary to contribute to the struggle for self-determination. This paper presents a theoretical and methodological approach that has enabled one researcher to speak back to the deficit discourses. Exemplification of how Indigenous Critical Discourse Analysis (in: Hogarth, Addressing the rights of Indigenous peoples' in education: A critical analysis of Indigenous education policy, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, 2016) identifies the power of language to maintain the inequitable positioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within Australian society is provided. Particular focus is placed on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (in: MCEECDYA, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan (2010–2014), 2011) and how policy discourses ignore the historical, political, cultural and social factors that influence the engagement and participation of Indigenous peoples in education today. The paper argues for the need to personalise methodological approaches to present the standpoint of the researcher and, in turn, deepens their advocacy for addressing the phenomenon. In turn, the paper presents the need to build on existing Indigenous research frameworks to continue advocating for the position of Indigenous research methodologies within the Western institution.

✉ Melitta Hogarth
m.hogarth@qut.edu.au

¹ Faculty of Education, School of Curriculum, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

² School of Curriculum, Queensland University of Technology, Victoria Park Road, Kelvin Grove, Brisbane, QLD 4059, Australia

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Indigenous Critical Discourse Analysis: a vignette

...the researcher you are is the person you are. By reflecting on what guides your actions it is possible to determine what methodology will likely guide your research activity” (Gale 1998, p. 3; as cited in Henry et al. 2004, p. 2)

As a neophyte researcher who has recently completed a Masters of Education (Research) and who swiftly moved into the position of a Ph.D. candidature, one of the challenges ever present was the selection and application of the theoretical and methodological frameworks. As a classroom teacher of almost 20 years’ experience working within all three sectors of the Queensland education system, my phenomenon chose me—Indigenous education policy. In particular, analysis of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011) and, more recently, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015 (Education Council 2015) and how policy discourses position Indigenous peoples became focal texts to investigate (see Hogarth 2015). The dilemma in undertaking such a task was determining a theoretical framework and methodological approach that allowed for Indigenous voice while being answerable to the institutionalised parameters of thesis as a genre. What follows is articulation and exemplification of the methodological approach used by myself, which may encourage other emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers to build upon the foundations of the existing Indigenous methodologies, personalising the approach to assist in your own research.

Extending Indigenous research methodologies

Personalisation of methodologies is not new. Primarily drawing from Feminist theories, Indigenous academics have challenged Western research through the development of Indigenous research methodologies, enabling the ontological position of the Indigenous researcher to be articulated. Smith (1999, p. 6) asserts the need to decolonise the research of Indigenous peoples “within a framework that privileges the Indigenous presence”. Battiste (2000) sought to provide a means to heal the effects of colonisation on Indigenous peoples. In doing so, the contributors to her book, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, encouraged researchers to reconcile and unite Indigenous and Eurocentric knowledges. Rigney (1999, p. 110) espouses the need for research to contribute to the struggle for self-determination, to shift the research paradigm from “racist oppression [...] to a more empowering and self-determining outcome”. Nakata (2007b) questioned how Indigenous researchers can negotiate the contested spaces within the cultural interface whereby Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges meet. Henry et al. (2004) recognise the differing

ontological viewpoints of individuals and, therefore, acknowledge the need for personalisation of methodologies to enable researchers to promote their own positioning within their research.

As an Aboriginal researcher, there was an identified need to draw on Indigenous research methodologies. However, as the study was analysing Indigenous education policy, there was also need to draw on Western methodologies as a means to gain understanding of not just the context of Indigenous education, but also the power of language to establish a position of authority and control. By gaining an understanding of how discourses are used, I was, as Nakata (2007b, p. 215) asserts,

theorising knowledge from a particular and interested position—not to produce the ‘truth’ of the Indigenous position but to better reveal the workings of knowledge and how understanding of Indigenous people is caught up and implicated in its work.

This paper introduces Indigenous Critical Discourse Analysis (Hogarth 2016) which articulates Rigney’s Indigenist Research Principles (1999), Nakata’s Indigenous Standpoint Theory (2007b) and Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis (1989) as a means to challenge the rhetoric within policy that implicitly maintains a deficit view of the potential of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Exemplification of how the methodological approach identifies and confronts the deficit discourses is provided through the analysis of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014* (MCEECDYA 2011).

Indigenous education policy

Indigenous education policy is a relatively new phenomenon in the education paradigm. It was not until the late 1960s, and in some states the mid-1970s, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and children were allowed in the Eurocentric classroom (see, for example, Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist 2003; Partington 1998). After the Referendum, the election of the then Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, and his actions to review educational ‘disadvantage’ through the formation of the Schools Commission ensured the stark disparities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their non-Indigenous counterparts could no longer be ignored (Aboriginal Consultative Group 1975a, b; Karmel 1973; Schools Commission 1975). In particular, the Schools Commission encouraged the formation of an Aboriginal Consultative Group to specifically present the educational ‘disadvantage’ experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Since 1972, the number of policy, reports, reviews and evaluations to address the inequities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia has increased dramatically. Despite the attention afforded to Indigenous education “and a raft of other initiatives in [...] Indigenous affairs more broadly, over the past decade and more, performance data across the range of sources point to little gain” (Dreise and Thomson 2014, p. 2). In 2008, the endorsement of the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement* (Council of Australian Governments 2008) saw the bipartisanship

commitment of governments to close the gap on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, education and employment. Following its implementation, the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014* (MCEECDYA 2011, p. 4) sought to “introduce substantial structural and innovative reforms in early childhood and schooling”. In doing so, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 was, up until mid-2015, the guiding document for schools, systems and government to address the disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students’ educational attainment. It has since been superseded by the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015* (Education Council 2015) which has become the focus of my Ph.D. study and whereby the articulation of Indigenous Critical Discourse Analysis (Hogarth 2016) has been developed into a framework to inform and guide the deconstruction and reconstruction of policy to determine how social conditions influence the production and interpretation of texts.

Indigenous Critical Discourse Analysis

A synopsis of the theoretical frameworks that inform Indigenous Critical Discourse Analysis (Fig. 1) is provided to deconstruct the conceptual overview before exemplification of how it is used as a methodological approach is presented—a kind of reconstruction of the conceptual overview that involves the deconstruction of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011).

Indigenist Research Principles

Rigney (1999) provides a foundation of research principles that Indigenous researchers can build. He provides three research principles that enable “Indigenous peoples [to] be involved in defining, controlling and owning epistemologies and ontologies that value and legitimate the Indigenous experience” (Rigney 1999, p. 114). They are: (1) Resistance as an emancipatory imperative, (2) Political integrity and (3) Privileging Indigenous voice. These principles are illustrated in Fig. 1 by the bands placed at the macro- and meso-levels and inform the analysis of the social conditions in which policy is produced and interpreted as well as the processes of production and interpretation of the text. The Indigenist Research Principles are not present at a micro-level as the textual features and language in which the text is produced is dictated by the language of the coloniser.

Resistance as an emancipatory imperative

The struggle for self-determination and challenging the oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is central to this principle. Rigney (1999, p. 117) argues that this principle “engages with the story of the survival and the resistance of Indigenous Australians to racist oppression”. The notion of resistance encourages

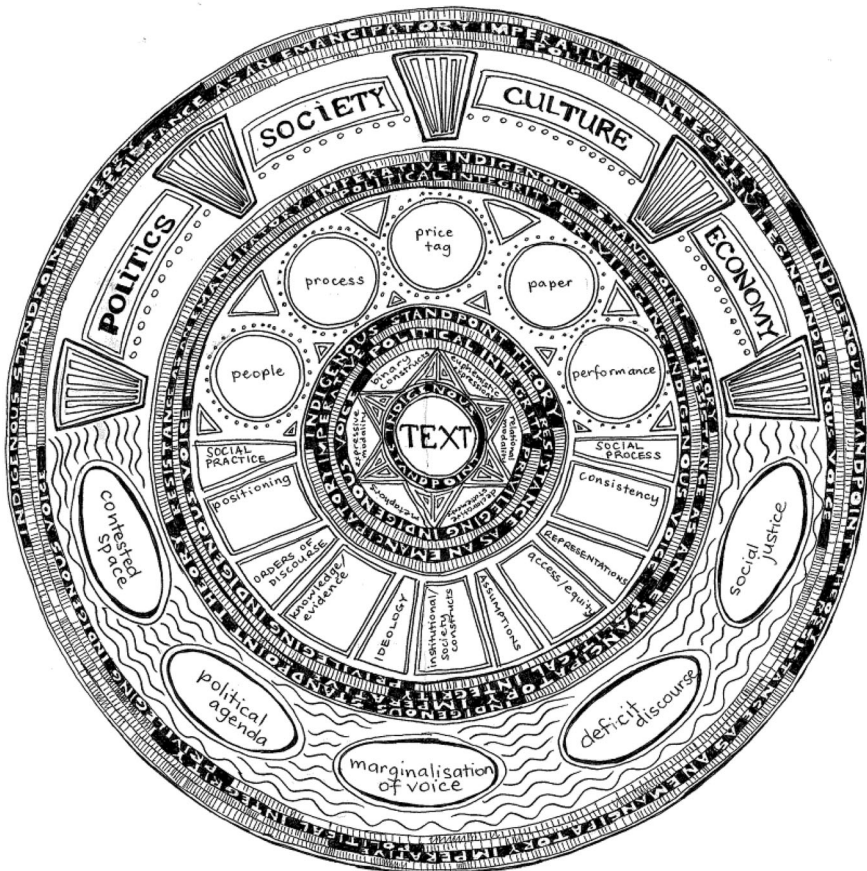


Fig. 1 A conceptual overview of Indigenous Critical Discourse Analysis (Hogarth 2016). *Source*© Melitta Hogarth (2016)

the critical analysis of policy, advocating for the researcher to understand the effects and influence of the historical, political, cultural and social contextual factors on the production and interpretation of Indigenous education policy. The framework enables researchers to identify the deficit discourses in texts and, in turn, challenge how language has been used to maintain the accepted social ‘norm’ whereby “disparity in the educational outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is ‘normal’ and that incremental gains are acceptable” (MCEETYA 2006, p. 4). In doing so, the approach rejects the notion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as victims of oppression in need of charity but, moreover, contests the power of the coloniser over the Indigenous populations (Foley 2003).

Political Integrity

The principle Political Integrity acknowledges the research of non-Indigenous academics who have contributed to the Indigenous struggle for self-determination

(Foley 2003). However, Rigney (1999) contends that research about Indigenous affairs cannot be presented from a non-Indigenous perspective solely and that indeed Indigenous researchers must contribute to the struggle for self-determination. Rigney (2006, p. 41) states “central to Indigenist Research is that Indigenous Australians’ ideals, values and philosophies are core to the research agenda”. Therefore, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander academics are able to employ lived experience further inciting reform within Indigenous affairs.

Privileging Indigenous voice

Research conducted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics on Indigenous issues provides a means to privilege Indigenous voice. Further to this, the use of an Indigenous research methodology promotes the use of research conducted by other Indigenous researchers and allows for circumstances whereby the “dominance of Western-oriented discourse” (Rigney 2006, p. 45) is challenged. In doing so, the research focuses on the historical, political, cultural and social factors that have influenced and impacted the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Indigenous Standpoint Theory

Complementary to the principles advocated by Rigney (1999), Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Nakata 2007b) provides a means to speak back to the contested space at the cultural interface whereby Indigenous and Western knowledges interact. In Fig. 1, Indigenous Standpoint Theory is also located at the macro- and meso-levels but is also evident at the micro-level of analysis. Unlike the Indigenist Research Principles, Indigenous Standpoint Theory is evident at the micro-level of textual analysis as the interpretation of the text is done from an Indigenous standpoint.

Nakata (2007b, p. 214) states that Indigenous Standpoint Theory “is a distinct form of analysis, and is itself both a discursive construction and an intellectual device to persuade others and elevate what might not have been a focus of attention by others”. Here, Nakata illustrates that Indigenous Standpoint Theory encourages researchers to draw on their socio-cognitive understandings of the world, identifying the beliefs and taken-for-granted assumptions held within wider society. To do this, he provides what I see as three stages that assist the researcher in developing and informing their standpoint: (1) Recognition of the cultural interface as a contested knowledge space; (2) Recognition of the continuities and discontinuities of Indigenous agency and (3) Recognition of the continual tension that informs and limits what can and cannot be said in the everyday.

The cultural interface as a contested space

The intersection of Indigenous and non-Indigenous research spaces where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and affairs are the subject is prevalent

with tensions and complexities (Nakata 2007b). There is, therefore, a need for Indigenous researchers to identify how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are positioned in the literature. This particular stage aligns with Resistance as an emancipatory imperative (Rigney 1999) as it seeks to challenge the representations of Indigenous peoples.

The continuities and discontinuities of Indigenous agency

Nakata (2007b) illustrates the tensions and complexities of the cultural interface like that of a tug-of-war. He states that it is like “a push–pull between Indigenous and not Indigenous positions” (Nakata 2007b, p. 216). These tensions are further exacerbated when the position of the Indigenous researcher is a woman whose positioning is constrained within hierarchical paternalistic structures (Moreton-Robinson 2013). In relation to this paper, the social conditions and processes of production and interpretation of policy discourses is analysed from the position of a female Aboriginal researcher and educator countering the dominant White male voices in this space. Therefore, this particular stage has distinct connections with the Political Integrity principle (Rigney 1999).

The continual tensions that inform and limit what can/cannot be said in the everyday

Here, the researcher is instructed to go beyond a descriptive analysis of social structures and power, to acknowledge that interaction is controlled. In other words, “the constant ‘tensions’ that this tug of war creates are physically real, and both informs as well as limits what can be said and what is left to be unsaid in the everyday” (Nakata 2007a, p. 12). Like the other stages, the continual tensions that inform and limit what can/cannot be said in the everyday align with Rigney’s Privileging Indigenous Voice (1999).

Critical Discourse Theory

Dominant within both Indigenist Research Principles (Rigney 1999) and Indigenous Standpoint Theory (Nakata 2007b) are discourses and the way language is used to position individuals and groups, in this instance, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Critical Discourse Theory (Fairclough 1989) is a useful lens through which to view the power of language. It is presented within Fig. 1, at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels. It is defined within the social conditions that inform the production and interpretation of the texts. Further to this, at the meso-level, it looks at the processes of production and interpretation. More specifically, in Fig. 1, the policy cycle is presented at the top half of the meso-level and the contextual factors that influence the individual interpretation of the text including the social positioning of the reader, the understanding of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students learning styles and so forth.

Fairclough (1989, p. 26) states that in using Critical Discourse Analysis, one is committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationships, texts, processes and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the remote conditions of institutional and social structures. Therefore, the articulation of Indigenist Research Principles and Indigenous Standpoint Theory aligns with the principles of Critical Discourse Theory rather than conflicts, enabling a fine-grained analysis of policy discourses. Nakata (2007b) stressed the importance of the researcher to establish their position and go beyond a descriptive analysis as stated previously. Critical Discourse Theory emulates the stages of Indigenous Standpoint Theory.

Discourse as a social practice and process

Discourse is a social practice that is used to maintain power. This interpretation of discourse, as Luke (2002, p. 99) states, provides “an understanding of the centrality of language, text and discourse in the constitution of not just human subjectivity and social relations, but also social control and surveillance”. Van Dijk (1993) states that a researcher who uses Critical Discourse Analysis selects a critical social issue to analyse to better understand the context. Once again, there is an alignment with Nakata’s Indigenous Standpoint Theory (2007b) where the researcher is to recognise their position within the social structures and discursive constructs, and in turn this allows them to assert and defend their position, if need be.

Exemplification of Indigenous Critical Discourse Analysis—how it works

As previously alluded to, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011) was critically analysed to demonstrate how Indigenous Critical Discourse Analysis (Hogarth 2016) is actioned. Analysis at a descriptive level is initially provided. Further explication of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 at an Interpretation and Explanation level of analysis is then provided.

Textual description

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011) is made up of four sections, being an introduction that positions the policy as a ramification of previous policy and the processes undertaken prior to its release. The second section describes the domains, the goals and targets as well as the performance indicators and outcomes. Further to this, the incremental and intertextual properties of policy are identified. This is demonstrated by identifying that within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011, p. 3), it states “Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander students are engaged in and benefiting from schooling”. This is also stated within the outcomes of the National Education Agreement (Council of Australian Governments 2012). However, the National Education Agreement states “All children are engaged in and benefiting from schooling” (Council of Australian Governments 2012, p. 4). Here, the reference to all children replaces the more specific reference in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The third section provides the jurisdictional State priorities and acknowledges the current State approaches. Reference is made to the Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies who assist in providing community voice at a national and systemic level on Indigenous education. The final section articulates the monitoring and reporting processes required to maintain accountability and transparency.

Textual features—description

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011) addresses the six principles provided in the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Council of Australian Governments 2008) while delivering programmes and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Therefore, “in implementing the actions in this Plan, government and non-government education providers will follow the six principles for the delivery of programmes and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians agreed under the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement*” [Council of Australian Governments 2008, p. 6 (original emphasis)].

Expressive modality is identified by the modal verb *will*. That is, the government have directed education providers that they *will follow the six principles*. In other words, the modal verb *will* establishes the position of government and, in turn, the obligations of the reader.

A declarative statement is also evident. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011) articulates the processes necessary to be addressed when providing educational services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In doing so, it also highlights that the principles are already established in other policy and, therefore, are not negotiable.

The Description stage of Indigenous Critical Discourse Analysis provides an overview of the genre type. It highlights the various layout features of the genre type but also involves the identification of the textual features that become the foci of the analysis. Exemplification of how the textual features are used to extrapolate the influence of the social conditions and processes of production and interpretation of texts follows.

Interpretation and explanation: example 1

One domain within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011) is Engagement and Connections. It is described as a two-way approach. For example,

The involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at all levels of educational decision-making and the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander principals, teachers, education workers or community members in schools and classrooms provides strong role models and builds connections, contributing to a positive impact on educational outcomes. Similarly, non-Indigenous school leaders and staff must go beyond the classroom and school in seeking to engage with communities (MCEECDYA 2011, p. 12).

A paradox is identified here. While the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 advocates for Indigenous peoples to be in leadership positions, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers within the workforce is limited (MATSITI 2014). This is despite the call by Hughes and Willmot (1982) for a thousand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers by 1990. Here, we can identify that the social conditions of policy production may not have been considered when stating the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at *all levels of decision-making* (p. 12); however, further analysis of policy discourses and the social conditions at a macro-level is necessary.

Previous policy and reform implemented by past governments greatly influences the engagement and/or disengagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students within the education setting (Gray and Beresford 2008) and, therefore, further exacerbates the limited pool to draw from of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to be in the position to contribute at all levels of decision-making. The lived experiences and the resultant intergenerational trauma faced by Indigenous peoples have been contributed to Indigenous students' disengagement from education (Atkinson 2013).

The second part of the excerpt encouraged non-Indigenous school staff to engage with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. In doing so, expressive modality is also evident. This is exemplified when the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011) states *non-Indigenous school leaders and staff must go beyond the classroom and school in seeking to engage with communities* (p. 12). The use of the modal verb *must* emphasises obligation (Biber 2006), that school leaders and staff are to find ways in which to build partnerships with community.

Interpretation and explanation: example 2

The second section of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011) provides the performance indicators that are to be used as data when reporting on the implementation of the strategies to address the domains. The Engagement and Connections domain has again been used for Example 2 to provide continuity and to demonstrate the intertextuality within policy. The performance indicators for Engagement and Connections seek quantitative data to be collated. They are as follows:

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with personalised learning strategies in place. Proportion of focus schools with a school–community partnership agreement in place (MCEECDYA 2011, p. 13).

Despite the *two-way approach* (MCEECDYA 2011, p. 12) advocated for within Example 1 and the necessity for authentic engagement with community, the performance indicators stated are to assess the strategies implemented at a local level, that is schools, and do not make systems or governments accountable.

However, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011) is presented as a collaborative effort whereby all stakeholders are expected to work collaboratively with other agencies including community to address the educational attainment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (MCEECDYA 2011). The focus on schools' accountability and transparency rather than at all three levels demonstrates the shift in discourses prevalent in education. Lowe (2011, p. 14) highlights this when he states "Governments have responded by seeking to shift the blame away from their policy failures by suggesting that schools are almost solely accountable for systemic underachievement". The performance indicators further demonstrate the growing responsibilities of schools to address the educational disparities evident between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Interpretation and explanation: example 3

The final example provided continues to look at the Engagement and Connections domain and looks specifically at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents' and families' engagement in education. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011, p. 14) states:

The Australian Government and education providers will work together to promote the cross-cultural value of formal education in contemporary Australia to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and families. This will help to create partnerships with families to build from and strengthen their capacity to be involved in their children's education.

While the Engagement and Connections domain advocates for the development of authentic and meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, within this excerpt, a paradox is identified. Here, Australian Government in collaboration with education providers is to *promote the cross-cultural value of formal education in contemporary Australia to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and families* (p. 14). That is, they are to actively advocate the coloniser's values about the worth of formal, Westernised education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There are parallels here to the sentiments shared within the policy of assimilation whereby "all Aborigines and part-Aborigines are expected to eventually attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians" (Hasluck 1961, p. 1).

Here, the use of the term *value* (MCEECDYA 2011, p. 14) demonstrates that internal colonialism is still implied within policy discourses (Welch 1988). That is, the ideological stance of the Australian Government and education providers on the

worth of Eurocentric learning is valid and should influence Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in engaging and participating in education.

Furthermore, as indicated previously the use of the preposition *to*, within this excerpt, is interesting to note. That is, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014 (MCEECDYA 2011) advocates for a *two-way approach* that seeks to engage in and to foster authentic partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, rather than engaging **with** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and families, by using *to*, their approach is more from a position of power and indicating inequities in social positioning.

Further contradiction is identified in the statement that *this will help to create partnerships* (MCEECDYA 2011, p. 14). The assumption taken by Government that this action *will* provide opportunity to collaborate with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ignores the positioning of Indigenous peoples within the discourses. That is, the inequitable social positioning contradicts the Government's objectives of authentic and meaningful partnerships.

The use of euphemistic expression is also identified. The term of reference, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*, is used rather than the generic term, Indigenous which fails to recognise the two distinct groups. However, it is also important to note that the term has also negative connotations within this statement as no quantifier has been used. Therefore, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have been placed within a homogenous grouping whereby the statement eludes that, as a collective group, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples do not understand the necessity to gain an education to participate in wider Australian society. This is because the statement lacks reference to 'some', 'most' or 'a few' (Hogarth 2015). There is an assumption made that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders lack the education to contribute to their child's learning.

Concluding statements

The benefits of Indigenous Critical Discourse Analysis (Hogarth 2016) when analysing policy texts enable researchers to go beyond a descriptive analysis of policy. It provides the researcher a means to investigate and explicate the historical, political, cultural and social conditions that influence Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ways of living in contemporary Australia. The aspects of positioning, marginalisation of voice and deficit discourses can all be addressed using this methodology.

By personalising the methodology, the research itself becomes a reflection of the researcher, illustrating their position and world view on the phenomenon. In turn, as an Aboriginal researcher, Indigenous Critical Discourse Analysis (Hogarth 2016) becomes an extension of self. It enables me to speak back to the deficit discourses, both implicit and explicit, within policy discourses. It provides a means to present an Indigenous standpoint on how policy positions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' educational attainment.

I recently heard at a seminar that as an Aboriginal Ph.D. candidate, we are the second generation of Indigenous academics. By drawing on both Indigenous and Western methodologies, theorising and articulating Indigenous and non-Indigenous

theories further develops understanding of how research itself can be used proactively to speak back to the deficit discourses, to challenge the societal norms and to contribute to the struggle for self-determination. The research from an Indigenous standpoint is necessary to ensure that the voices of those whose lived experiences have for so long been the subject of observation by the coloniser are heard. To do this, we need to continue challenging the taken-for-granted assumptions, to demonstrate how discourses maintain the deficit view prevalent in Australian society.

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Melitta Hogarth is a Kamilaroi woman who was recently appointed to the position of an Associate Lecturer at the Queensland University of Technology within the Faculty of Education/School of Curriculum. Prior to taking this position, she taught for almost 20 years in all three sectors of the Queensland education system specifically in Secondary education. Her interests are in education, equity and social justice. She is a Ph.D. candidate and her research seeks to analyse how policy discourse positions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.