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**Linking Worlds:
A Project to Research Indigenous Educators as Leaders
in Remote Community School Settings**

by
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Case

Anna has been the Principal of Jakurli Community Education Centre (CEC)¹ since 2002. Prior to this she was a Senior Executive Teacher in the same school and she also taught senior girl classes. Anna speaks her own language as well as English and her people are from a remote community in northern Australia, 400 km south of Darwin. She completed her Bachelor of Education in 1995 and more recently completed a Graduate Diploma in Educational Administration. She is also an accredited translator and interpreter. Anna is currently a member of the Department's Indigenous Education Steering Committee and also a member of the Principals' Association. She is also actively involved with the Jakurli Community Resource Centre committee as well as the Jakurli Agencies Leaders committee.

Remoteness

It is worthwhile exploring what constitutes Anna's school, *Jakurli*, as an Indigenous school in a remote context. Historically, the concept of 'remoteness' has been difficult to classify because of its subjective nature. It is perhaps worthwhile at this point to paint a picture of the nature of this subjectivity through a question. Do the tradition-oriented *Anmatyerr* people of the north-eastern Central Australian desert who live on traditional homelands that have been handed down to generations of their ancestors since the period of creation, perceive their locality as being remote? For the *Anmatyerr* whose homelands are central to conceptualising their universe, the answer is probably 'no', but for many others, the region would indeed be considered extremely remote for a variety of euro-centric reasons. The region is situated three hours drive away from Alice Springs. The main access road is little more than a dirt track that is graded only twice a year and is impassable when wet. There is no public transport to, or within the region. There is no secondary school, there is no hospital, there is no bank, there is no hotel, no police station, no nursing home, few recreational facilities and only one general store to service a population of approximately 1000 people. Of this total population there are less than 50 non-Indigenous residents.

Whilst for the *Anmatyerr* the region has always been their home and has always provided sustenance for life, for others it may be considered isolated and very remote. For *Anmatyerr* a city like Adelaide may be considered remote for the reason that they simply have little connection with it. Such is the subjective nature of remoteness. Perceptions of remoteness vary considerably depending on the points of reference that are used. As alluded to above, ontological orientation largely determines an individual's perception of remoteness.

The bureaucracy has also had difficulty with defining remoteness. The Australian Statistician at the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) offered the following:

¹ Jakurli and Anna are both fictitious.

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Many users of statistics and administrative data have expressed a need for a standard classification which defines metropolitan/ regional/ remote or urban/ regional/ remote or a variety of other terms which in general refer to the urban/remote dichotomy. Unfortunately these terms often mean very different things to different people and are either undefined or have conflicting meanings in different applications. (Trewin, 2000, p. 1)

In the quest to construct a mechanism to classify the Australian population according to remoteness, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care commissioned a project in 1997 that led to the development of the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA). This index classifies remoteness in terms of accessibility to the full range of services that would be available in any large city. Subsequently, the ABS used the ARIA to construct a classificatory tool known as the 'Remoteness Structure' that contains categories that provide a measurement of whether geographic distances impose restrictions on the availability of goods, services and opportunities for social interaction. The five divisions in this classificatory mechanism included: Major Cities, Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote.

When applied to the 1996 census data, a map of remote and very remote Australia emerges that includes most of Northern Australia west of the Great Dividing Range. Towns such as Alice Springs and Katherine (Northern Territory), Cobar (NSW), Cooktown and Mt Isa (Queensland), and Kalgoorlie and Broome (Western Australia) are considered remote. The far west parts of New South Wales and Queensland, northern South Australia and Western Australia and most of the Northern Territory are classified as very remote. Indigenous school communities that are located within these remote and very remote classificatory regions of Australia will be the subjects of study in this paper.

Case

Jakurli is not unlike the many other remote Aboriginal communities scattered throughout northern Australia. The community has access to essential services such as power and water, however, when a problem occurs, especially of a highly technical nature, essential services staff must be flown in from Darwin to fix it. This is complicated by the remote location of Jakurli and the problems that the weather can bring. Also, the current approach to community funding means that several government departments and other organisations have direct business with the community, which can often result in complex relationships. For example, as the school principal Anna often has to deal with the Department of Education Employment and Training, Centrelink, the Department of Health and Community Services, the Office of Youth Affairs and Family Community Services. As a member of the Jakurli Agencies Leaders committee she is often called on to attend meetings with the Office of Aboriginal Development, the Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority, the Housing Authority, Transport and Works, and the Department of Health. All of these departments and organisations have a variety of funding guidelines and reporting requirements.

Indigenous community

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Like the issue of defining remoteness, the bureaucracy has also had problems with classifying Indigenous communities.

Indigenous communities are notoriously difficult to define especially as they were invariably established in the process of colonisation. Today, communities may be geographic, social, cultural or administrative units, or combinations thereof. The standard view is that a community encompasses a group of people who reside in one locality is problematic when applied to Indigenous people because they are highly regionally mobile and frequently have multiple residential rights and social obligations. (Altman 1990, p. 48)

That being said, the Northern Territory Government Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment have classified communities within its jurisdiction according to the dimensions of Indigenous self-identification and overall population. On a map of the Northern Territory, locations of Indigenous communities are numbered for identification according to the size of the population. They include communities that are 'Major' with over 100 residents, minor communities that consist of between 20 to 100 people, family outstations with less than 20 people and town camps with varying concentrations of people that are situated in urban areas. In other parts of remote Australia there are similar arrangements of Indigenous people.

Case

It is Monday, and after arriving at Jakurli CEC at 7.00 am to open the classrooms, Anna is in the school canteen supervising breakfast preparations as part of a Family and Community Services program. The school bus, funded through the Federal Government's Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme, starts to drop off kids and the teachers begin to arrive. The school bus driver, employed through the Community Development Employment Program, points out to Anna the need for urgent repairs to the bus, and she says that she will raise this with the Department of Education. If the bus has to go in for repairs, Anna will need to ensure that there is a replacement. One of the teachers has reported in sick, so Anna negotiates with another teacher to combine the classes for the day. Anna has said that she will take the class in the afternoon. At 8.30 am her phone starts ringing. It the Chair of the Indigenous Education Steering Committee to remind her of the monthly meeting to be held on Thursday and Friday of that week in Darwin. Anna makes a mental note to remind her staff of her forthcoming absence and to make the necessary travel arrangements, which she will need to fax to Head Office. She will also need to ensure that a relief teacher is available.

Indigenous school

What is an Indigenous school? Whilst the characteristics of individual Indigenous schools in remote Australia vary a great deal, a common feature is that they have student populations that are mostly Indigenous. Schools that are geographically located in remote Indigenous communities are invariably Indigenous schools. For many years in the Northern Territory such schools were officially designated 'Aboriginal Schools' and there were regional superintendents assigned by the bureaucracy to oversee their operations. Whilst many of these schools in remote communities were established during the 'welfare era', the government has, in the past, provided schools for Indigenous students residing in largely urban contexts such

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Alice Springs. In recent times and over the last decade, there has been a move by government to integrate Indigenous students into mainstream schools in urban contexts. In addition to state education, church organisations and independent Indigenous organisations have also established schools for Indigenous students.

The structure of Indigenous schools in remote Australia and the nature of the education programs that are implemented in them vary enormously. Many factors contribute to the complexion of individual Indigenous schools. The range of tiers of education that are available to students is largely dictated by the size of the population of the community that the school is located within.

In large Indigenous communities such as Yuendumu and Maningrida in the Northern Territory, Community Education Centres (CECs) were initially established to deliver formal early childhood, primary, secondary and adult education programs. Additionally, the CECs were also designed to deliver programs that developed vernacular literacy. Whilst some Indigenous schools in remote contexts deliver formal bilingual programs, others deliver only English only programs. In contrast, within the same state education department, very small Indigenous homeland communities in decentralised remote contexts such as Utopia, Elcho Island, Maningrida and Yirrkala are serviced by Homeland Learning Centres (HLCs). Students attending HLCs range from four to fifteen years of age. Although the models differ, the programs on offer in HLCs are typically pitched at a primary level and the hours of face to face instruction that students receive from both Indigenous assistant teachers and visiting teachers is less than that delivered in other educational contexts. Although there are many Indigenous schools located throughout remote Australia, there are very few, if any, with an entirely Indigenous teaching staff. There are however a number of schools that have an Indigenous principal in the senior leadership position.

Aside from the government sector, Indigenous schools have also been established by church organisations such as the Catholic schools in Santa Teresa, Bathurst Island and Daly River in the Northern Territory. Some existing government schools were first established by church organisations as mission schools, whilst conversely, some present church schools such as Yirara College in Alice Springs began life under the government's umbrella. The Strelley schools in Western Australia and Yipirinya School in Alice Springs are examples of Indigenous schools that are governed by Indigenous communities that are independent of the government or church management.

Case

Anna checks her diary and notices that she is expecting two visitors from Centrelink who are visiting communities to explain the recent changes made to Abstudy. They are arriving at 10.00 am. She makes a mental note to remind the school bus driver to collect them. The phone rings. It is the president of the Department's Principal's Association who discusses with her the forthcoming conference at which she has agreed to present a paper. The phone rings again. It is the local policeman who has been contacting various Jakurli Agencies Leaders committee members to alert them to an ongoing community problem. Some of the other members have suggested a community meeting to discuss the issue and he wants to know if she could bring the school to the park at midday. It is an important issue and she feels that the kids need to be aware of it and that they should have some input, so she agrees. She checks her

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diary again, and reminds herself of the meeting with Centrelink, which she hopes won't last too long. It is 9.00 am. It starts to rain. The power goes off.

Educational Leadership

The story of Anna provides a good background against which to study the educational leadership issues exposed in this case of a remote indigenous community school setting. The study also allows us to tease out some of the special features of this leadership and consider ways and expectations in which these features may be carried over into the community.

The reporting and evaluating of the deeds of leaders is as old as the written word, or even earlier in the oral traditions of peoples, but the study, research and the development of theories and concepts of leadership, are only a relatively recent activities.

The initial considerations leading to the construction of theories about leadership enshrined in the works of Weber (1947) and his studies of bureaucracies were followed through by later writers until fairly recent times in their studies of organisations, and in the main, focused on the actions and personal style of the person at the top of the organisation – the leader. The role of the leader and their impact on the organisation is seen through the lens a ‘top down’ approach. More recently, writers have begun to broaden their horizons, to develop new concepts and construct new paradigms saying that, rather than leadership being the function of the highest ranking person in the organisation, leadership is for all and that leadership is everyone’s business (Kouzes & Posner, 2003).

Over time, theories have been developed based on the study of the physical and other attributes of leaders, leading to the identification and focus on desirable *traits* in leaders, while other studies have considered the ability of the leader to *transform* the quality of life of the members of the organisation and of the operation of the organisation itself. The literature abounds with theories about *situational leadership*, *effective leadership*, *heroic leadership*, and like terms

From the 1970s, the focus of the studies began to shift to the study of the person of the leaders so that concepts such as *servant leadership* (Greenleaf, 1976) and *authentic leadership* (Duignan, 2002) emerged.

More recently, there has been a new emphasis on the nature of leadership in an organisation with writers such as Elliott (2002, p. 123) identifying leadership as ‘key *influencing skill* that is capable of being accessed by *all* members of the organisation, regardless of the positions they hold’.

In many ways, the story of Anna is an example of the expectation that the leader does it all, and when considering her situation, there is a wealth of leadership literature against which her role and responses to the many and varied situations with which she is faced on a daily basis, might be considered. The fact that her actions take place in an Australian context, it should be asked whether there are special influences derived from the national character that influence her actions and responses.

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Emerging from these considerations about leadership, the question arises: is there something special about leadership in the Australian context? As Australians, we would like to believe that we have some unique national characteristics and a special point of view that we can contribute to the debate. Elliott (2002) sets out to identify the spirit of Australian leadership and begins by describing the special characteristics of the Australian culture including our capacity to tolerate and generally embrace differences of character, ethnicity, race and religious belief (p.23). McRae-McMahon (2001) surmises that the view of Australians about leadership is quite ambiguous, even in a society in which the people see themselves as egalitarian.

Anna exercises her leadership in this environment and with the added complexity of dealing with a community with little experience of these concepts and theories but with a good understanding of the traditional roles of these leaders. Hence this study is a mix of the academic study of leadership and the study of traditional roles and expectations of Indigenous Australians with an attempt to find common ground for the future.

The study also draws upon the work of government and non-government agencies that have carried out research in this area. Research into Indigenous educational outcomes is extensive and the review by Mellor & Corrigan (2004) notes the lack of Indigenous voices in research and highlights the need for non-Indigenous persons to be trained and available to become involved in the new research agenda. The review outlines five key principles of effective educational provision and includes: the importance of health and nutrition in early years; managing educational transitions; good teachers and effective learning; broader relationships of the school with its community; and the impact of regular attendance.

The Australian Government has had a long interest in the quality of indigenous education and has instituted a number of programs to improve the quality of education and increase the retention rate of Indigenous students. So far, few programs have focused on the educational leadership in Indigenous communities.

There have also been a number of interesting projects including *Dare to Lead*, initiated by the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC) in 1999, which was an attempt to design and Indigenous education professional development strategy and for the associations represented by APAPDC, to take a leadership role in achieving educational equality for Indigenous Australians.

In 2001, Australian Catholic University (ACU) held a two-day symposium for administrators and indigenous educational leaders across the 22 Catholic Dioceses in Australia to explore the role of indigenous peoples of Australia in Catholic Educational Leadership. The theme of the symposium was *Listening with new ears: Seeing with new eyes* and its purpose was to seek to identify and clarify the common ground between Indigenous expectations of educational leadership and those of the University and from these considerations, to identify the opportunities and support structures available and to foster the development of future Catholic indigenous educational leaders. This conversation is ongoing.

The question remains as to how the outcomes of effective leadership can be applied and measured in Indigenous community schools. Sergiovanni (2001; 2000; 1994) a

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leading writer on the school as a community, promotes the idea that new leaders must master the new basics of leadership which he describes as managing complexity, leading with ideas, and developing what social scientists call social capital and then having the skills to engage productively with their social and educational contexts.

These leadership issues inform the wish to research Anna's situation.

Linking Worlds

As key stakeholders in the preparation of Indigenous educators, both ACU and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) have produced graduates such as Anna who have assumed leadership positions in schools in remote Indigenous communities during the course of their careers.

Over the years, there have been few studies that have specifically targeted educational leadership in such contexts. The dearth of literature on this subject is at odds with the present political climate that has increasingly focussed on educational outcomes for Indigenous students across all tiers of education. The *Learning Lessons* review of Indigenous education in the Northern Territory (Collins, 1999) is a recent example of a wide-reaching study that examined most issues relating to Indigenous education with the exception of Indigenous educational leadership with which it paid scant regard. Whilst the *Learning Lessons* review has led to a renewed focus by the bureaucracy on improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students in this jurisdiction, the issue of Indigenous educational leadership in remote communities was not addressed by either the review or subsequently in the Northern Territory Government's reform agenda.

In response to this situation, discussions between the School of Education at BIITE and the Flagship for Creative and Authentic Leadership at ACU have conceptualised a proposed project that aims to comprehensively explore the nature of Indigenous educational leadership in remote community schools and its relationship to student learning outcomes. The project will involve key Industry Partners of APAPDC, Catholic Education Office, Darwin (CEOD) and the Northern Territory Department of Employment Education and Training (NT DEET).

A principal aim of this research project is to redefine educational leadership as applied to remote Indigenous communities through the process of identifying and analysing the various dimensions that relate to it. It is intended that implementing this project will directly enhance the skills and professional development capabilities of Research and Industry Partner staff in the sphere of educational leadership when working with remote Indigenous communities.

The study also aims to establish the role and relationship of the educational leader with respect to constructing Indigenous cultural identity and social well-being. The study will address the issue of whether or not Indigenous community leaders have an expectation that schools should be sites for cultural maintenance and if so, the nature of relationship they would want to establish with the educational leaders of these remote schools and with the education bureaucracies that support them.

For both BIITE and the ACU, a major purpose of this proposed research project will be to help inform the review and further development of courses and professional

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development that specifically relate to Indigenous leadership in remote educational contexts.

It is anticipated that the project will lead to an improved understanding of the relationship between schools and remote Indigenous communities. This will be achieved as a product of the research process through identifying and analysing common principles that shape effective Indigenous educational leadership.

This research project will assist both organisations in developing and refining programs to train graduates to act as educational and community leaders in remote contexts. These programs will enable Indigenous educational leaders to work more effectively in both state and independent school systems and to better manage the competing demands of educational bureaucracies and remote communities. Additionally, it is an expectation that the research capabilities and capacities of the Research and Industry Partners will be significantly strengthened.

The Research Plan

The conceptual framework of this qualitative study includes the exploration of a range of interrelated issues in the sphere of Indigenous educational leadership in remote settings. The study will endeavour to explore how stakeholders define effective Indigenous educational leadership in remote settings. The project will investigate the expectations that education systems and remote Indigenous communities have of Indigenous educational leaders in terms of their role and responsibilities and how they determine the 'effectiveness' of incumbents in that position.

The research design for this project is informed by a number of principles articulated by the Indigenous Research Reform Agenda (IRRA) (Henry *et al*, 2004). IRRA undertook a literature review, which provided, in part, a historical background to Indigenous research issues including research ethics, management, methodologies, and dissemination. IRRA's review highlighted several points, which have been in the past, and continue to be, endorsed by key bodies such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and are evident in BIITE and ACU research ethics guidelines. AIATSIS guidelines are based on three broad principles of ethical research in Indigenous studies: consultation, negotiation and mutual understanding; respect, recognition and involvement; and, benefits, outcomes and agreement (AIATSIS, 2000). Humphrey (2000, p. 24) states that:

Researchers are faced with the imperative of examining their own suppositions, actions and motivations, and of abiding by (at least on paper) a set of detailed ethical guidelines. Most importantly of all, there is now a strengthened ethos of Indigenous self-determination with regard to research, with Indigenous people not only increasingly undertaking research themselves but also enforcing the principle of Indigenous control.

The challenge to research institutions is to apply these principles in a meaningful and tangible way. In order for this to happen, research institutions must be active in a number of ways. This includes adopting cross-disciplinary research approaches and collaborative and participatory methodologies. It requires institutes to develop research priorities that will substantially reflect the position of Indigenous community

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controlled organisations. Institutions should meet the training needs of all Indigenous participants in research activity and support community development objectives through research activity. They should support Indigenous participants in their newly defined roles as mentors, trainers and researchers in their own community development processes. Research institutions are well placed to broker research between Indigenous communities and researchers and to ensure improved processes for the transfer and dissemination of research findings (Henry *et al*, 2004, p. 53). BIITE, ACU and the Industry Partners agree that the way in which Indigenous people are centrally positioned in the research process underpins this project. In this way, direct involvement by Indigenous educational leaders as key players in the research activity will be enacted through participatory action research (Mellor & Corrigan, 2004).

Action Research (AR) has been described as a family of research methodologies (Dick, 1999) characterised by the simultaneous pursuit of action and research that occurs through a planning, acting, analysing and reflecting cycle. In AR, the researcher acts as a facilitator who works collaboratively with participants in the research process and negotiates reciprocal relationships. The aims of negotiation are to allow for participants to contribute to the research process and, importantly, into the research problem (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). One family member of research methodologies is Participatory Action Research (PAR). The core concept of PAR is that 'it changes the research process away from a process of an expert *'researching on'* to a joint process of *'researching with'* (Ramsey, 2000).

The underlying theme in the *Linking Worlds* research design is persistent critique which occurs throughout the project at most, if not all, of the cycle events. The research design, informed by the principles of ethical research in Indigenous studies, proceeds through a series of pre-determined cycles consisting of the events of planning, acting, analysing, and reflecting (Fig. 1).

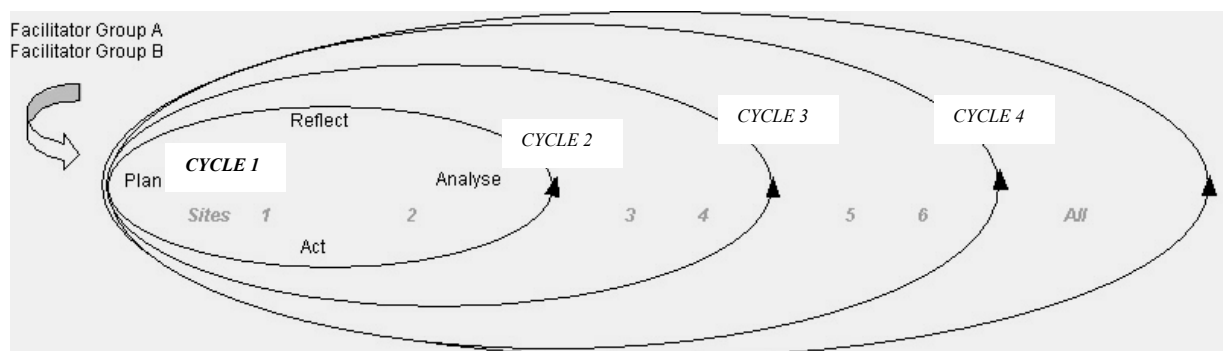


Figure 1. Research Cycles

The research project will consist of three groups each with specific roles and responsibilities:

- **Research Group** consists of Industry Partners, the Facilitator Groups, and community representatives, preferably the school principals who will have input into the research design and methodologies, and will attend the planning/review meetings.
- **Facilitator Groups** are the CIs (d'Arbon and Cook) and APDI (Frawley) who

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facilitate the data collection, data analysis and draft research report as well as providing in-field training and support for the community participants. Facilitator Group A comprises d'Arbon/Frawley (Sites 1, 3, 5) while Facilitator Group B is Cook/Frawley (Sites 2, 4, 6).

- **Community participants** are co-researchers and the major source for data collection, who will receive in-field PAR training and opportunities to gather wider data from community members, as well as having input into research design and methodologies. PAR training will be facilitated by the APDI and will take place prior to the CI visits. Community participants will be credentialed with a certificate of completion and possible enrolment in postgraduate units offered by ACU and/or BIITE.

The range of possible research sites include:

- Two nominated sites drawn from CEO's primary schools, homeland learning centres, and community education centres;
- Two nominated sites drawn from NT DEET's community education centres, homeland clusters and group schools clusters; and,
- Two nominated sites drawn from APAPDC associations outside of the Northern Territory.

Visits to these research sites will occur over four cycles.

- in Cycle One visits occur to sites 1 and 2.
- in Cycle Two sites 1 and 2 are revisited, and new visits occur to sites 3 and 4.
- in Cycle Three sites 1, 2, 3, and 4 are revisited, and new visits occur to sites 5 and 6.
- in Cycle Four, all sites are revisited by Industry Partners in order to trial their professional development and learning programs .

The research will use a range of data collection methods that are well suited to AR and PAR methodologies, namely face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions. Participant selection will be determined at initial discussions between the Industry Partners and the research institutions, which will then extend invitations to participate. In general, community school participants will be drawn from remote Aboriginal community schools and will consist of qualified Aboriginal teachers or Aboriginal teachers who are currently undertaking training. It is proposed that several participant groups will be recruited for this study and that the research cycle is conducted in such a way that for each cycle the number of participant groups will be added to. Facilitator Groups will host focus discussions for each site meeting so that over the cycles Facilitator Groups will, in most cases, meet with each site at least once, and in some cases three times. An essential role of Facilitator Groups is to establish a meaningful working relationship with each site. The purpose of the first meeting is to explain the research process, discuss the research methodology and plan, make adjustments if necessary, and facilitate focus group discussion and/or individual interviews. Subsequent meetings will review the research plan, report on the data analysis and develop further questions.

Each interview guide for site meetings will be based on a minimum of six open ended questions that have emerged from the previous meetings, or, in the case of the first cycle have been developed prior to the first meeting. It is envisaged that at each site, a minimum of two participants will be involved in the research process. Over the life of

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the project, the minimum number of interviews and/or focus group discussion, based on the minimum of two participants and six sites, will be thirty-six individual interviews or eighteen focus group discussions. Focus group discussion data will be analysed at the intervening periods of each cycle through the process of familiarisation through immersion in the data; identifying a thematic framework; indexing by applying codes; charting for each key theme; and mapping and interpreting by using the charts to define concepts, map the range and nature of phenomena, create typologies and find associations between themes with a view to providing explanations for the findings. This will require focus group data to be transcribed prior to the analyse-reflect-plan meetings.

In this project, the research cycles, their sequencing and timing constitute the research plan (Table 1). The four cycles and their research methods, activities, techniques and outcomes are informed by the three broad principles of ethical research in Indigenous studies: consultation, negotiation and mutual understanding; respect, recognition and involvement; and, benefits, outcomes and agreement.

Each cycle is based on planning, acting, analysing and reflecting activities:

- During Cycle One the Research Group meet to plan the research project, to define and describe the research question, and to develop the research instrument. The Research Group's roles and responsibilities are defined and members undertake training in PAR. Facilitator Groups then commence work in the field to explain the research process, provide training, discuss the research methodology and plan, make adjustments if necessary, and facilitate focus group discussion or individual interviews. Cycle meetings will analyse and discuss site data. The key outcomes of this meeting include reflecting on research findings to more accurately define the research problem, to review the research plan, and to make tentative assumptions. Potential or actual problems are also dealt with at this meeting.
- In Cycle Two the activities are repeated, the initial sites are revisited and the fieldwork is expanded to more sites.
- In Cycle Three sites are revisited and the fieldwork is again expanded. Cycle Three is much longer in duration as it includes finalising research conclusions which will inform the design and production of a leadership model which will inform and shape the targeted programs for Cycle Four.
- In Cycle Four the Research Group meets to plan the targeted programs to suit their specific needs. These programs are then trialled according to Research Group member plans. After evaluation, the leadership model and the associated targeted programs are finalised, and the research report completed.

Event	Cycle One: July 2005 to March, 2006	Cycle Two: April to December 2006	Cycle Three: January 2007 to June 2008	Cycle Four: July 2008 to June 2009
Plan	Research Group plans to undertake research project in order to identify and describe the	Research Group reviews and adjusts research plan, and focus group discussions. Potential or	Research Group reviews and adjusts research plan, and focus group discussions. Potential or actual problems are dealt	Industry Partners and Research Institutions use leadership model to shape targeted

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	research question. Roles and responsibilities are defined. Research Group undertakes training in PAR. Research instrument is developed.	actual problems are dealt with. New questions are planned.	with. New questions are planned	programs which may include toolkits, workshops, and briefings.
Act	Facilitator Groups work with Sites 1 and 2 to explain the research process, discuss the research methodology and plan, make adjustments if necessary, and facilitate focus group discussion or individual interviews.	Research practice is documented and analysed, and, if appropriate, modified. Facilitator Groups continue adding Sites 3 and 4.	Research practice is documented and analysed, and, if appropriate, modified. Facilitator Groups continue adding Sites 5 and 6.	Targeted programs are trialled according to Industry Partner and Research Institution plans.
Analyse	Data are transcribed and analysed.	Additional data are transcribed, compared and analysed with Cycle One data.	Further data are transcribed, compared and analysed with combined data.	Leadership model and targeted programs are evaluated.
Reflect	Research Group reflects on their findings to more accurately define the research problem, review research plan, and to make tentative hypotheses as framed through the research questions.	Research Group reflects on improved data to refine the research problem, enrich the research plan, and to further develop the hypotheses framed through the research questions.	Research Group reflects on their findings, and design and produce the leadership model.	Leadership model is finalised and research report completed.

Table 1. Research plan.

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By being included in project activities, the APAI student will gain significant training in research design and the research process and will make a significant contribution through literature search and reviews. It is expected that the APAI will participate in presentations to the Research Group, especially on educational leadership literature and comparative issues.

Research dissemination is the process through which target groups become aware of, receive, accept and utilise the findings. Research findings will be disseminated through a process of ongoing communication during the research process, and through the dissemination of Plain English and other non-academically oriented research products. Research dissemination formats in the shape of targeted programs will vary according to the research user group. For Indigenous communities, organisations and parents these may include community reporting kits, workshops, Plain English reports and summaries, reports in the vernacular, audio/video reports, and community meetings. For Industry partners, educational organisations, directors, policy makers, course developers, planners, managers, principals and teachers, these may include short Plain English report with policy implications, toolkits, briefings, seminars, curriculum for practicum and induction, and pre-service teacher education curriculum materials. For academics these may include academic journals, conferences and seminars.

Conclusion

This project has a number of attractive elements in its concept, research design and anticipated outcomes.

The story of Anna's situation as an educational leader and a leading person in her community provides a realistic context in which to study the day-to-day issues and longer term challenges that face educational leaders in remote Indigenous community settings. The concept enables the Research Group to focus on these issues and challenges and gain an understanding of the personal and social impact in the life of a leader, such as Anna, with the aim of developing the necessary skills and appropriate social and personal resources for future leaders, that will flow through to both school and community, resulting in an improved quality of life for all.

The research design and plan will involve two tertiary institutions in a partnership activity that is based on sound educational principles in which there are opportunities for skills enhancement on the part of the researchers from both bodies and skills development on the part of the young researchers involved in the project.

The anticipated outcomes include a better understanding of school/community relationships and the role leaders such as Anna, and a strengthening of the partnership relationship between ACU and BIITE, leading to further productive projects to ensure quality educational leadership in Indigenous communities.

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