Journeys through a research landscape:
Lessons in multi-partner research

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Abstract
Linking Worlds is a three year project funded by the Australian Research Council and awarded in 2005. The project brings together the concerns for enhancing Indigenous educational leadership and the research interests of Australian Catholic University, and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, as research partners, and the collaborating organisations of the Australian Principals’ Associations Professional Development Council, Catholic Education Darwin, and the Northern Territory Department of Employment and Education and Training.

Through the stories of project participants, this paper documents and describes the complexity of doing multi-partner research. Added to this complexity in Linking Worlds is the difficulty of working with partners over vast geographical distances. These stories deal with the new problems, new roles and new strategies that emerged from the research landscape and as such address the issues of project governance, management and administration. What emerges from these stories is the imperative for multi-partner research to be based on openness and flexibility, especially in relation to issues of power and control. The stories in this presentation will provide some suggestions in addressing the challenge of organising for creativity and flexibility in multi-partner research.

Introduction
The framework for this meta-narrative is a result of discussions held between a group of researchers. The research project, Linking Worlds: Strengthening the leadership capacity of Indigenous educational leaders in remote education settings, investigates the work of Indigenous educational leaders in remote community schools. Linking Worlds has been funded by the Australian Research Council (ARC) with support and assistance from the collaborating organisations of Catholic Education Northern Territory (CENT); the Northern Territory Department of Education, Employment and Training (NTDEET); and, the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC). The researchers’ institutions are the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) and the Flagship for Creative and Authentic Leadership at the Australian Catholic University (ACU National). Linking Worlds commenced in September 2005 and will conclude in August 2009.
Rather than approaching the reporting of the project in a piecemeal way, the project is viewed as one continuous journey with a definite beginning and a definite end. Hence, moving between these positions becomes one journey and in this journey moments arise at which reporting can take place. In most cases these moments take the form of conferences but it also extends to major reporting dates set down by the ARC and other reporting requirements including Faculty, School and Departmental reporting. Within this journey, issues arise that can be documented and reflected on using an experiential learning framework (Kolb, 1984). This framework consists of four stages: concrete experience, reflection, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Concrete experience is about direct practical experience gained through participation in the Linking Worlds project. Reflection occurs usually on a personal basis and focuses on the issues that have come about during the concrete experience stage, although as the project develops it is planned to make journal writing a regular event through an on-line repository. This will allow for, and encourage, a dynamic exchange between participants. Abstract conceptualisation, involves thinking about and elaborating on the issues raised during reflection while active experimentation, attempts to modify, or to implement, the new ways of knowing that have emerged from the process.

From the telling of stories, which are essentially reflective, emerge issues that are further explored. These issues then become the seeds for further writing that are contained within a storehouse. As reporting moments arise, for example the collaborative writing of a conference paper, the storehouse can be raided to gather the seeds of ideas. Several ‘seeds’ are contained in the following journeys of Tony and Lyn who are the Project’s Chief Investigators, and Jack, who is the Project’s Australian Postdoctoral Fellow – Industry (APDI).

**Journeys: Tony**

*In 2001, the Flagship for Catholic Educational Leadership was established at ACU National. Members of the Flagship were also active members of the School of Educational Leadership and in addition to the research opportunities provided by membership of the Flagship, were engaged in teaching in the Master of Educational Leadership course and EdD program, as well as supervising PhD and EdD research theses in the field of educational leadership.*

The general focus of the research and publications of the Flagship had treated educational leadership in the Catholic context as a single generic issue, but as time went on, it became obvious that there was a specific case to be made for a separate study of educational leadership in the Catholic and Indigenous contexts, and that it should be explored.

*In July 2001, the University funded, and the Flagship convened and sponsored, a national symposium to consider the issue of the role of the Indigenous peoples of Australia in Catholic Educational leadership. With the theme ‘Listening with new ears, Seeing with new eyes’, representatives from all Diocesan Catholic Education and Schools Offices as well as State and National Catholic Education Commissions and other interested parties were invited to attend. Overall, the delegates represented a cross section of persons with special concerns for Leadership in Catholic education – teachers, administrators, academics, support staff, benefactors and friends – from the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities from all States and Territories.*
The symposium held over two days, set out to explore the expectations for Catholic Educational leadership from Indigenous and University perspectives and to identify and clarify common ground between these two points of view. It was expected that the Symposium would raise awareness of the contributions to be made by Indigenous peoples within the Australian Catholic education system and that this would lead to the identification of opportunities and support structures to foster the development of future Catholic Indigenous educational leaders and so lead to the creation of an action plan for the future. The convening of the Symposium was quite a challenge, but I was of a view that if ACU National and the Flagship were to be true to their Charter to be of service for all Australians, then Indigenous communities must be included, and we should use our skills, talents, expertise and resources to address their leadership issues.

At the Symposium, I had thought we had made good progress of working together and I was surprised when at the last session, the Indigenous delegates requested a separate meeting to discuss their special concerns. This was a useful learning for me in a number of other projects when dealing with other cultures including the introduction of educational leadership courses in East Timor to non-English first language speakers. The experience also emphasised the necessity for me to move slowly and respectfully in this area and to be more aware of the background, history, cultural sensitivities and opportunities in order to engage productively in this area of study and research. This first tentative step with the Symposium, encouraged me to read more in this field and to engage with other groups involved in Indigenous education.

In 1999, the Australian College of Education (ACE) had initiated a forum to consider national issues on Indigenous education and published the processes, outcomes and commitments to improve the educational outcomes for Indigenous young people in this country (ACE 1999). I also appreciated the opportunity to meet with members of the Australian Principals’ Associations Professional Development Council (APAPDC) and become aware of the Dare to Lead Project and its publications (APAPDC 2003). This project had been operating since 2000 when representatives of the four peak principals’ associations in Australia had met and made a commitment to work to improve the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. They had agreed that the Indigenous education was the highest priority for each association and that it was the responsibility of all schools to work to improve the educational outcomes of these students.

It seemed to me that the establishment of a priority in the study and practice of educational leadership in Indigenous Australia was a natural follow-on from this commitment and this encouraged me to continue along this path of working out how to best engage.

**Journeys: Jack**

Given my experiences as a community based adult educator in a remote Indigenous community in the 1980s, I have been interested in the connection between adult education programs in the Northern Territory and the development of the Indigenous arts industry. Out of this interest came an opportunity to apply for research funding to undertake archival research at the NT DEET archives which, I found later, were
stored commercially at a large warehouse out near Palmerston, a suburb of Darwin. My research space at this warehouse consisted of a rickety chair and an old table on which were a haphazard collection of files that I had requested. I was here because my application to Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATIS) for funding was successful and ACU National, through the Head of School and the Director of Yalbalinja (ACU National’s Indigenous Education Unit) had generously agreed to allow me to spend a couple of weeks on my research. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) (Research and International) was aware of my plans and so had organised to travel to Darwin while I was conducting my research. He was keen to make contact with a number of organisations and was particularly keen to take visit to BIITE as he knew that I had several years experience working there.

On a humid tropical Darwin morning, I walked to the PVC’s motel and met him there. We were on our way to Batchelor and I suggested that he bring his togs and towel as we could possibly take a trip to Litchfield National Park after we had completed our meetings with the various BIITE staff. These meetings had been arranged by BIITE’s Head of School of Education who I had spoken to a few days earlier. The trip to Batchelor is about a hundred kilometers south of Darwin through a changing landscape – it was a trip I had done countless times before as I had worked for BIITE during the 1990s. Once we arrived at BIITE, we were caught up in a string of meetings where the PVC spoke about ACU National and the possibility of establishing partnerships. He was particularly impressed with one meeting and later suggested to me that I continue the conversation with BIITE. Later in the day, the PVC got his swim.

On my return to ACU National, Research Services staff suggested that I might be interested in formalising a partnership with BIITE through a joint research project. My thoughts returned to a conversation that the PVC and I had with a BIITE staff member around the issues of educational leadership, particularly in regard to the ways in which leadership impacted on Indigenous educators. This issue had emerged as a conversation item because of the observation I had made of an Indigenous woman who had been appointed Principal of a school I had been working at a few years ago. I often admired the way in which she moved confidently and competently between what I viewed as two worlds. I remembered one event where she met with park rangers and I observed the interactions between her and the group. She was sitting on top of a cement table, while the park rangers were sitting on the footpath looking up at her and listening attentively. I admired the way in which she communicated with this group in a very articulate and thoughtful way. They too were very much in awe of her.

This got me thinking about the challenges that face Indigenous educational leaders and how they deal with them as educational leaders and as members of their communities. To me it was a very complex role, which I believed was not thoroughly understood by the systems that educated and supported them. BIITE, as one of these systems, was also aware of these challenges, and the Indigenous staff member with whom we were meeting, also elaborated on the various challenges that BIITE’s graduates face.

ACU National’s Internal Research Incentive Scheme (IRIS) aims to provide seed funding for researchers to initiate collaborative links with industry and community
partners and to support high quality research projects that require a pilot or exploratory study. Given this, Research Services suggested a meeting with ACU National’s Flagship for Creative and Authentic Leadership to explore the idea of developing an IRIS grant. One of the Flagship’s main aims is to promote and support a research agenda developed in partnership with key stakeholders in leadership at all levels. At a meeting with the Deputy Director, it was agreed to submit an application for an IRIS grant to enable further discussions with BIITE as a research partner and with the potential collaborating organisations of CENT, NTDEET and APAPDC. The IRIS application went through several drafts before it was submitted to Research Services. Within a short period of time, we were notified that we were successful, and so began the next phase of our journey: the development of an application for an Australian Research Council Linkage Project.

**Journeys: Lyn**

My journey with Linking Worlds commenced and coincided with my move to BIITE, after having worked in early childhood education at Charles Darwin University (CDU) for over 15 years. This appointment was part of a management strategy aimed to build the capacity of the institute to undertake research, and for me the focus was research mentoring for the early childhood staff. The BIITE Chief Investigator for the Linking Worlds project left the institution almost as soon as I arrived. I was asked to take his place. I found the project brief very appealing, especially as the key issues and ideas for investigation which were similar to ones I’d been exploring in previous projects, but I remember thinking at that time, am I the right person to lead a project on Indigenous educational leadership? Someone from BIITE had to take up this role, or risk losing the project and participating, particularly in a co-leadership role was certainly part of the broader vision within which my research role at BIITE had been conceptualised. I agreed with some trepidation and, admittedly, some exhilaration as well, knowing full well that this role was both a privilege and opportunity.

The trepidation was not only related to my academic suitability for this role. While I contemplated this decision, some staff within the BIITE community were actively resisting the new management agenda. One of the first actions stemming from this agenda was for BIITE to seek partnerships in what turned out to be three successful ARC projects. There had been much fanfare about BIITE’s success but the positive attitudes of staff soon changed when it became apparent that ARC grants attracted minimal actual income and entailed significant financial contribution from the Institute either through cash or in kind input. Coupled with this issue was a perception amongst teaching (and management) staff that my role should, as soon as possible, be entirely self-funded through research grants. That there was no salary component for Chief Investigators on ARC projects was also an unwelcome surprise to many. As a new and relatively unknown staff member, my situation was awkward and certainly influenced how the project unfolded.

The ACU National project team scheduled a visit to BIITE after hearing we had won the ARC grant for this project. Unfortunately, I was away from campus and missed this opportunity to meet them, introduce myself, and, most importantly, find out what the project was all about. It is one thing to read a project proposal submitted to a funding organisation, and another to talk about it face to face with those who had conceptualised it. It was a long time before we all engaged with each other properly and began to align our ideas and expectations about the project.
The first face-to-face meeting finally occurred in November 2005 when Jack and Tony came to Darwin for a meeting that included the collaborating organisations and some remote area Indigenous teachers who would be involved in the trial of the methodology. The meeting was held on the top floor of a government office building in downtown Darwin. Blindingly beautiful sea views were framed by every one of the large windows in the room. The project team and partner organisations sat waiting around a huge conference table. The wait was extended by the need for someone to come and fix the power point projector. Jack was about to take the whole group through a power-point presentation explaining the project. Four Indigenous women from the Tiwi Islands arrived and stood closely together looking out the windows at the views. Finally someone found a spare projector and everyone sat down so we could start. This was the first time all of us had come together in the same place although Jack and Tony had met everyone individually. I was introduced as one of the Chief Investigators but knew about as much (or as little) as the group we were presenting to. I listened closely and said very little. I had many questions and some concerns about the research methodology and searched for the right moment and the best way to bring these up. After all, we had only just met. It was hard to talk frankly and easily.

Jack began to talk through the project development phase and the ideas underpinning it. The CEO participant, Fran, sat with the Tiwi teachers. After Jack presented the information, Fran talked to them about what they thought of Jack’s presentation. They turned away from the group and formed a small enclosed group speaking softly amongst themselves. When we reconvened, the Tiwi teachers had quite a lot to say. They pointed out that one of the data collection procedures, participant observation, would not work well because it would mean a researcher from outside the community would not understand what was happening in the school by sitting and watching teachers. They suggested that someone in the school, someone they knew, would be a better choice because that person, being familiar with the community and context, would know why teachers and children did what they did. They liked the idea of the Photovoice methodology very much. Jack discussed their suggestions, clarified what they meant and accepted them. The methods were changed.

When we finished that day, I began to believe that I would be working with people who had significant research expertise and, furthermore, with people who I could trust to listen.

Journey Issues
From these journeys the following issues emerge to inform this paper. These are:
a. project management;
b. leadership theories and styles;
c. the ethics of participation; and,
d. trusting relationships and effective work.

Underlining these stories is that multi-partner research needs to be based on openness and flexibility, especially in relation to issues of power and control. The stories in this presentation, and the elaboration on the points that emerge from them, provoke some thought in addressing the challenge of organising for creativity and flexibility in
multi-partner research. The discussion of these points draws on extant leadership and management literature.

a. Project Management

*Linking Worlds* follows a typical project life cycle, which includes the four phases of conceptualising, planning, implementing, and ending (Adams & Brandt, 1983). Conceptualising is the initial phase during which a need has been recognised and endorsed by the concerned parties. During this phase, both ACU National and BIITE approached organisations that we believed had a stake and concern in educational leadership in remote Indigenous communities. When the collaborating organisations agreed to take part, discussions first focussed on some preliminary goals and the availability of resources to accomplish these goals. In terms of decisions about resources, one of the first steps was to single out the financial and human resource commitment that would need to be made for the life of the project, and to meet ARC requirements. In terms of project management, a number of questions had to be discussed (Mian & Christine, 1999): What is the problem? Will the development of this project solve that problem? What are specific goals of the project? How do these goals match the collaborating organisations’ aims and mission in regard to Indigenous educational leadership? What is the general level of resources required for the life of the project? What resources are available and what must be acquired? To set the scope of the *Linking Worlds* project, and to consider its feasibility, these questions were addressed over the several meetings in which the ARC application was developed.

On being notified that the ARC application was successful, *Linking Worlds* moved into the second phase of the project life cycle: planning. During this phase, a more detailed set of plans were established. In the *Linking Worlds* case, it was a ‘Research Mudmap’. Some of planning functions included setting up the *Linking Worlds* structure, confirming the project personnel, determining the allocation of resources, making project location decisions, and confirming the stages of the project. The roadmap is a way of visualising the *Linking Worlds* research design. The underlying theme 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).

![Fig 1: Research Mudmap](image)

The Research Mudmap (Fig 1) indicates the direction and the activities of the research project which consists of the following activities: (1) project planning and trial planning; (2) conducting the trial; (3) trial analysis, review and planning; (4) data
collection; (5) data analysis; (6) progress reporting; and, (7) product development, dissemination and report. The progress of *Linking Worlds* is best described as occurring over five phases, with each phase consisting of a number of the above activities. The timing of the activities is determined by decisions made during the planning (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Timing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Conducting trial. Trial analysis, review and planning</td>
<td>Remote Indigenous community.</td>
<td>March to December 2006.</td>
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*Table 1: Project Phases*

The first stage of Linking Worlds involved a series of Project Team meetings which included discussing and agreeing on planning and management issues, as well as considering and planning a trial data collection package.

In the second stage, the data collection package was trialled in one remote Indigenous community school. An analysis of the trial then became the focus of further Project Team meetings which resulted in an adjusted data collection plan.

The third phase of the project life cycle is where the fieldwork of the project is performed. During this phase, budget items are confirmed and resources are procured and prepared for use. At the time of writing, *Linking Worlds* is preparing to enter into stage three, the data collection activity.

The fourth phase of the project life cycle is ending the project. During this phase decisions will need to be made about project audits and evaluation, as well as final reporting. From an ethics perspective it will also include ensuring that all research data is be stored in a safe and secure location and, at the appropriate time, any research notes are shredded, and tapes erased.

**b. Leadership theories and styles**

It has stated ‘there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept’ Stogdill (1974, p. 259). When discussing leadership, most of the literature focuses either on leadership theories – how leadership works – and leadership styles – the general approaches to leadership. Generally, leadership theories are categorized as trait theories, behavioural theories or process theories. Trait theories make a number of assumptions: people are born with inherited traits of which some a particularly suited to leadership, and the people who possess these traits, or a combination, make good leaders. Behavioural theories assume that leadership capability can be learned, rather than being inherent. Process theories focus on the relationships and actions between people and how leadership
gets done within this interaction. Within each leadership theory, there are associated leadership styles.

Within the leadership theory/leadership style construction (Table 2) the *Linking Worlds* project can be best described as drawing on process/values theory - with an emphasis on transformational leadership (Burns, 1978), morals leadership, (Sergiovanni, 1992) and ethical leadership (Starratt, 2004). Although there appears to be ‘no unitary concept of transformational leadership’, there are a number of accepted generalisations and key concepts including the role of leadership in fostering ‘capacity development and higher levels of commitment’ to the project’s goals’ (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, pp. 451-479). Probably one of the biggest challenges for the *Linking Worlds* project, from a management perspective, is to ensure that the project will lead to transformed research practices within the research partner institutes and the collaborating organizations, and that the participants will emerge with strengthened capacity to undertake multi-partner research. Likewise, a further challenge will be to maintain and strengthen a moral commitment to the work we are undertaking, and to each other.

At ACU National, the *Linking Worlds* project operates out the Flagship of Creative and Authentic Leadership. The Flagship for Creative and Authentic Leadership undertakes research in leadership with a particular focus on moral and ethical leadership, leadership for social justice and social responsibility, emerging leadership paradigms, and leadership formation and effectiveness. The Flagship’s emphasis, as stated in its title is on ‘creative and authentic leadership’. Creative leadership is ‘about building - building knowledge, building products, and building institutions’ and requires analysis and artistry. It also involves crafting ‘meaningful action’ and depends on ‘collaborative inquiry’ with an emphasis on the cycles of action and reflection (Palus & Horth, 2005). Authentic leadership is ‘knowledge based, values informed, and skillfully executed’ and requires ‘professionally effective, ethically sound, and consciously reflective practices in educational administration’ (Begley 2001, p 353). Tellingly, from the *Linking Worlds* perspective, authentic leadership ‘acknowledges and accommodates in an integrative way the legitimate needs of individuals, groups, organisations, communities and cultures’ (Begley 2001, p.354). The challenge for the management and administration of the *Linking Worlds* project is to apply creative and authentic leadership in a meaningful and tangible way. Up to this point in time, and notwithstanding some challenges, we believe that it has.
## LEADERSHIP THEORIES

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<tr>
<th>TRAIT</th>
<th>BEHAVIOUR</th>
<th>SITUATIONAL</th>
<th>PROCESS</th>
<th>VALUES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Great man</td>
<td>Trait</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Path-Goal</td>
<td>Contingency</td>
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<td>Leaders are born with or have charisma or specific traits, abilities, and skills.</td>
<td>Leadership capability is learned, rather than being inherent.</td>
<td>Leadership is a matter of situational demands and the emergence of a leader is a result of time, place, and circumstance.</td>
<td>Leadership is a process of dynamic interaction among people, and is essentially dissipative.</td>
<td>Leadership has a moral dimension with a focus on, and a commitment to ethics, purpose, values and beliefs.</td>
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### Assumptions & features

| Leaders are born with innate qualities and are destined to lead. | People are born with inherited traits, some suited to leadership, and good leaders have the sufficient combination. | People form expectations about roles that they and others will play, and will act within those roles. | Successful leader shows followers the rewards available by meeting a goal and illustrates path (behaviours) by which rewards may be obtained. | The leadership style is contingent upon situational factors, people, task, organisation, and other environmental variables. | The best action of the leader depends on a range of situational factors, including motivational and capability of followers. | Importance of relationship between leader and followers is emphasised. | Leadership creates and implements the transformation of organisational performance. Leaders and followers engage in a process of raising one another to higher levels of morality and motivation. | Leaders are committed to values within organisation, and authority of felt obligations and duties derived from widely shared professional and community values, ideas and ideals. | Requires a moral commitment based on proactive responsibility; personal and professional authenticity; an affirming, critical, and enabling presence to workers and work. |

### Theorists


### Related theories and styles

| Charismatic leadership: leaders emerge due to their inherent charisma, which is personally admired by followers. Such leaders gain influence because they are seen as having special talents or gifts. (Weber, 1947; Masser, 1987; Conger & Kanungo, 1995.). | Managerial grid: focuses on a manager’s concern for employees but also for task to be done - Task vs Person preference (Blake & Mouton, 1961). | Theory X and Theory Y: leadership strategies are influenced by leader’s assumptions about human nature (McGregor, 1960). | Participative leadership: seeks to involve other people in process. How much influence others are given may vary on manager’s preferences and beliefs (Tannebaum & Schmidt, 1958). | Lewin’s leadership styles: three different styles of leadership around decision making: autocratic, democratic, laissez-faire (Lewin et al, 1939). | Likert’s leadership styles: four different styles around decision-making and degree to which people are involved in decision – exploitative authoritative, benevolent authoritative, consultative, and participative (Likert, 1967). | Situational leadership: the best action of the leader depends on a range of situational factors and variables – subordinate effort, subordinate ability and role clarity, organization of the work, cooperation and cohesiveness, resources and support, external coordination (Yukl, 1989). | Action-centred: the action-centred leader gets the task done through attention to the work team and individuals (Adair, 1973). | Normative model: decision quality is the selection of the best alternative, decision acceptance is the degree to which a follower accepts a leader’s decision. These influence decision procedures (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). | Leader-Member Exchange (LME): leaders in groups maintain their position through a series of tacit exchange agreements with their members (Dansereau, Graen and Haga (1975). | Bass’s Transformational leadership: leaders get things done by developing a vision, selling a vision, finding the way forward, and leading the charge. Transformational leadership contains four components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985; Bass, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1994). | Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI): leaders can be identified by their ability to get extraordinary things done in organisations and that certain practices are common to successful leaders. The model describes five key transformational leadership behaviours, which can be assessed by means of the LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 1988). | Servant leadership: the leader serves others, rather than others serving the leader, by helping them to achieve and improve. Principles of servant leadership include transformation, personal growth, enabling environments, service, trusting relationships, creating commitment, community building and nurturing the spirit (Greenleaf, 1977). | Authentic leadership: leadership behaviours include encouraging follower participation in goal setting, encouraging independent action and encouraging teamwork. There is a focus on the fundamental worth of the follower—that the follower has intrinsic value (Duignan, 2002). |

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<th>Related theories and styles</th>
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| Table 2: Leadership theories and leadership styles | }
c. The ethics of participation

The conduct of the research of the *Linking Worlds* project is attended to by the ethical procedures of both ACU National and BIITE, however, the ethics of project management needs different attention. ACU National and BIITE ethical procedures form the basis of a separate paper (Frawley, Fasoli, d’Arbon 2006) but, in brief, is informed by a number of principles articulated by the Indigenous Research Reform Agenda (IRRA) (Henry et al, Itals)2004). IRRA’s review highlighted several points, which have been in the past, and continue to be, endorsed by key bodies such as AIATSIS and are evident in ACU National and BIITE research ethics guidelines. The *Linking Worlds* project is based on three broad principles of ethical research in Indigenous education recommended by AIATSIS organisation of consultation, negotiation and mutual understanding; respect, recognition and involvement; and, benefits, outcomes and agreement.

Throughout the *Linking Worlds* phases, the Project Team’s planning and implementing activities have been informed by these principles. The way in which Indigenous people are centrally positioned in the research process underpins *Linking Worlds* and this calls for, direct involvement by Indigenous educational leaders as key players in the research activity. To address this important point, extensive discussions took place with BIITE prior to the development of the project to ensure Indigenous people were engaged with the project. *Linking Worlds* has implemented a number of initiatives including Indigenous representation on the Project Team, regular progress reports to Indigenous Leaders Forums and the establishment of an Indigenous Academic Reference Group. This group provides high level guidance to the Project Team on relevant community-based Indigenous issues; monitors and advises on progress reports and academic papers arising from the Project; promotes the Project at relevant academic meetings such as seminars and conferences; and, provides advice as to how best to implement any recommendations arising from Project’s findings.

In applying ethics to the management and administration of *Linking Worlds*, two approaches are considered. The first is a virtue-based approach, which focuses on how an individual should behave. The second is an act-based approach, which focuses on how acts ‘adhere to a set of underlying principles such as avoiding harm, providing benefit, truth-telling or keeping agreements’ (Gray 2005, p. 62). In projects such as *Linking Worlds* it is assumed that team members will act ethically as individual members and, in the life cycle of the project, undertake project activities in an ethical way. It is highly unlikely that prior to developing a project, and in the undertaking of the project, that team members would be expected to address ethical considerations in an explicit way. Apart from the expected ethical procedures, demonstrated in the formal ethical clearance process, most institutions undertake research without explicit consideration to the ethics involved in working together. This was the case for *Linking Worlds* as well, however, it is worth noting some of the principles that should be considered when undertaking to work together in a multi-partner research project.

Virtue-based approaches address an individual’s commitment to behave in an ethical way throughout the life of the project. Character traits normally associated with virtue-based ethics are those necessary for right action and correct thinking and include a sense of justice, perseverance, integrity, humility, empathy, intellectual courage, confidence in reason, and autonomy. In a practical sense, it is assumed that participants in multi-partner research projects should maintain a high standard of integrity and professional conduct, accept responsibility for their actions, seek to enhance professional capabilities, practice with
fairness and honesty, and encourage other participants to act in an ethical and professional way (Gray, 2005).

In an act-based approach, professional obligations can provide the necessary ethical guidelines. These obligations could address professional behaviour, relationships with others, and relationships with the wider community. Project participants should be expected to undertake professional activities in a ‘fair, honest, accurate and unbiased’ way and that records associated with the project are appropriate, accurate and complete (Gray, 2005). In dealing with others within the partnership, members should be expected to provide the team with fair, honest, complete and accurate information, and maintain confidentiality in terms of the work done. In dealings with the wider community, which would include the research communities, project participants would be expected to honour and meet all the ethical obligations set down in the approved procedures. Further, any reporting to the wider community through various media would be expected to adhere to those principles mentioned above.

d. Trusting relationships and working effectively
Herzog (2001) states that ‘trust is the single most important ingredient in making ventures work’, and it is the foundation upon which is built successful collaboration. Herzog (2001, p. 30) also suggests that ‘sharing is the key determining factor shaping individual and group perceptions of trust and trustworthiness’ and lists several recommendations for sharing. The application of these recommendations, although not intentional, is evident in the Linking Worlds project.

At this point in the project’s life cycle a number of activities have been undertaken which parallel Herzog’s (2001) list and has shaped participants perception of trust. In terms of sharing expectations and goals of collaboration, at an organisational level, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and a Funding Agreements (FA) have been developed for discussion, negotiation and agreement. The MOU sets out a number of principles including that both institutions recognise that each brings particular strengths and expertise to the overall collaboration as equal partners. Further, that the implementation of the MOU will be based on mutual respect, cooperation, openness, good communication and cooperation rather than competition. Likewise, the FAs set out in detail the scope of the agreement, the relationships and the deliverables, and the funding – it is probably the latter which is the biggest cause of concerns in large projects and, if not properly understood, causes mistrust to occur between partners.

In terms of sharing the value of the project and team value to the project, project outcomes and roles and responsibilities have been understood and communicated usually through regular meetings, but also through allowing access to a web-based repository. Meetings provide an opportunity to discuss goals, expectations and problems, and encourage members to assign their knowledge, experience and expertise to the project. Members also have access to project files through the web-based repository. Unfortunately, the hosting of this repository has been beyond the means of both research institutions, so the project team uses a no-cost on-line repository that allows members to access and share files. It is hoped that in the near future, a purpose-specific site will be developed by ACU National.

Herzog (2001) states that successful collaborative project teams use shared processes and conditions to build trust, to enable open and honest communication, and to develop a trusting
collaborative environment. Through participating in Linking Worlds, partners will continue to build trust knowing that it is an important element in the success of the project.

**Conclusion**
Steering the Linking Worlds ARC application through the labyrinth of processes, both at institutional, partner and government levels, was a tedious and frustrating process but ultimately rewarding. The fact that we were successful is important for BIITE, ACU National and the Flagship as ARC projects are regarded as the ‘gold standard’, and do much to enhance the profile of the project and future research in this field.

Furthermore, steering the Linking Worlds project through its life cycle will also present a challenge, and so far we have learnt a number of important lessons. These lessons have related to several broad areas: project management and leadership; the ethics of project management; working effectively in multi-partner research; and, establishing trusting relationships. Perhaps one of the most critical points for successfully working in multi-partner projects has been the primacy of openness and flexibility.

As the journey proceeds, opportunities will be presented for other players to tell their stories. By telling these stories, it not only presents an occasion to reflect on experiences and learn from them, but it also adds a richness to the overall reporting of the project.

**References:**

Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council (2002). *Dare To Lead: Taking It On*. Hindmarsh, SA: APAPDC.


