

The On Country Teacher Education (OCTE) program for Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers in WA: Background, evaluation, and development

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Over the last few decades there has been a growing awareness of the value of having Aboriginal teachers in schools, and this has motivated the development of programs such as the On Country Teacher Education (OCTE) program. The presentation will introduce this pilot program offered through collaboration between the Western Australian Department of Education and the School of Education, Curtin University. It will discuss OCTE in the context of past research and programs and explain its unique features, specifically those that enable successful course delivery to students who are able to study on country and work in their (often remote) schools throughout the degree. An evaluation of the first year of the program is also outlined, including outcomes from an Orientation survey, semi-structured interviews, and general course statistics. The findings reveal that all participants valued the level of support afforded by the program and the opportunity for the students (who are all Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers) to study as part of an Aboriginal cohort. Course flexibility and face-to-face workshops were also seen to significantly contribute to the success of the program. We will explain and exemplify the benefits of the course at both personal and community levels. We will also exemplify how feedback and advice provided through this evaluation study have been carefully considered and incorporated into the ongoing planning and development of the course.