Chapter 8
Perspectives on Enabling Education for Indigenous Students at Three Comprehensive Universities in Regional Australia

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Introduction

In Australia, Indigenous students, particularly those from regional and remote areas, are under-represented in both higher education and vocational education (Behrendt et al. 2012). Enabling programs, which assist Indigenous students to enter and succeed in tertiary education, are vital (Behrendt et al. 2012; Fredericks et al. 2015). Enabling programs support Indigenous students to access education and, through education, attain better economic and socio-cultural futures for themselves and their communities. However, to date, there has been scant information regarding the experiences of Indigenous students within enabling courses and for examining the key ingredients for success (Oliver et al. 2013a, b; Kinnane et al. 2014).

This chapter describes a research project about enabling programs, aimed at informing equity policy design, implementation and institutional practice to improve higher education participation and success for marginalised and disadvantaged people in Australia.[1] A key focus of the project was to explore interpretations of 'success' from different perspectives, including the perspectives of students and teaching staff, the community, the institution and the government. The research also aimed to understand better how Indigenous learning journeys can respect and grow cultural identities while simultaneously developing study skills. As part of this, the research sought to understand how enabling programs can support Indigenous students to navigate the contemporary tertiary education landscape, while continuing to value and build on their Indigenous cultures.

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This chapter presents key findings from the perspectives of students and teaching staff, as a subset of the overall research project. The case studies used in this work centre on three Australian universities, each of which operates on a regional basis and offer educational programs in both higher education and vocational education (referred to as 'comprehensive' or 'dual-sector' institutions).

Enabling Education

Enabling programs – also known as bridging or access education – are courses that provide a pathway for people wishing to gain entry to higher education or vocational education, by focussing on foundation and/or preparatory skills. The importance of enabling programs has been acknowledged in a range of literature including Fredericks et al. (2015); Oliver et al. (2013a, b) and Kinnane et al. (2014). Behrendt et al. (2012) noted that in 2010, over half the Indigenous students entering university did so by this route, compared with only 17% of non-Indigenous students.

Indigenous students face formidable barriers in pursuing post-secondary education, including high levels of socio-economic disadvantage, rurality and limited exposure to the benefits of higher education (including limited exposure to the benefits that higher education offers to individuals, families and communities) (Pechenkina and Anderson 2011; Kinnane et al. 2014). Institutions offering enabling programs must be cognisant of these complexities and work to provide a teaching, learning and pastoral care model that responds to this environment as well as to the Indigenous individuals within it.

Research on enabling education is still in its infancy, with little evidence to guide the development of effective programs (Lum et al. 2011; Nakata et al. 2008), and very little evidence that is specific to Indigenous Australian students (Fredericks et al. 2015; Oliver et al. 2013a, b; Kinnane et al. 2014). Most existing research on enabling programs is limited to course-evaluation-style approaches, which are largely focussed on students' perceptions and/or experience rather than on attainment or broader capacity-building outcomes.

Education's Key Role in Addressing Indigenous Disadvantage

Gaining post-secondary education confers a range of benefits in economic and social domains, which can be identified in both private and public terms (Deloitte Access Economics 2011). Social equity in relation to higher education has been part of national policy discourse in Australia since 1990 (Cuthill and Jansen 2013). The last two decades, in particular, have witnessed increased global interest and awareness of the importance and need for Indigenous participation in higher education. Despite this, participation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in higher education settings are below those of the broader Australian population

(ABS 2015). In fact, recent statistics for Indigenous education outcomes led Pechenkina and Anderson (2011) to declare a state of 'crisis'.

Turnbull (2014) noted that in the context of developing teaching and learning programs for Indigenous students (and specifically enabling programs), it is important to adopt (and adapt) appropriate teaching styles and learning environments. Learning and teaching environments that are positive, self-affirming and reflective of Indigenous realities and aspirations assist Indigenous peoples to see relevance in the value of education (Turnbull 2014; Kinnane et al. 2014). Moreover, these kinds of learning environments build on Indigenous perspectives. They recognise that there are Indigenous paradigms that consist of ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies and axiologies that operate as supporting platforms, thus offering strength and vitality for Indigenous people. By drawing on this, rather than dismissing it, universities can offer Indigenous Australians an ability to increase their choices and decision-making capacities. Incorporating appropriate pedagogies, methods and processes within enabling programs would be powerful for these students, who may be additionally marginalised because they are enrolled in an enabling program and not in other award programs offered by the institution.

The positioning of this chapter draws strongly on the work of Tew man Cajete (1994), who wrote about 'pathways' in relation to Native American education in the USA. We drew inspiration from Cajete's work since it has relevance to Australia and offers another philosophical pivot for us within the Australian Indigenous context. The *path* in this context is the well thought out structure on which the curriculum is developed, and also the landscape offered by the university (or other learning institution). The *way* refers to the process for students as they navigate their educational institution in their learning journey. This may involve some transformation within the inner self (Cajete 1994). We contend that both of these elements must knit together to form a student's own learning 'path+way' in order for the student to obtain a successful enabling education experience.

Conceptual Context

The concept of conscientisation (Freire 1972), developed over time within Indigenous Australian (Purdie et al. 2011), Native American (Villegas et al. 2008), First Nations (Battiste and Henderson 2000) and Maori (Smith 2003) contexts, underpins this research. All these works have connectivity at the philosophical and conceptual level and are based on research within countries where Indigenous people have endured colonisation and oppression and are able to move towards a critical consciousness of their situation. They offer a richness in approach to conscientisation and support Indigenous people to move beyond being an object of others to a self-determining subject (Smith 2003). Conscientisation is the process of developing a critical awareness of the social reality in which individuals exist and move beyond this point to transformation. It is achieved through reflection and action, where action is fundamental to the process of changing reality (Freire

Institute 2015). Smith's (2003) extensive work focusing on conscientisation with universities and dual-sector institutions in New Zealand, the USA, Hawaii and Canada has resulted in demonstrated changes in outcomes for Indigenous peoples across those institutions and communities. Thus it is also relevant to work with Australian universities and dual-sector institutions, such as those at the focus of this research. Coupled with Smith's work is the work of Malin and Maidment (2003), who extended the work into Indigenous education, examining theories of neo-Marxism, cultural capital, resistance, post-colonialism and visible pedagogy.

In the Australian tertiary education sector, existing measures of recognising and incorporating Indigeneity are often tied to Reconciliation Statements, Action Plans, NAIDOC celebrations and policies of inclusion. Other metrics linked to Indigenous people generally include 'poor attrition and retention rates' and 'low graduation rates' of Indigenous students. Many institutions place much effort on improving the raw statistics by servicing the 'under-achievement' of Indigenous students. In contrast, little effort is directed towards recognising and maximising the inherent strengths and values that Indigenous students bring with them. These strengths and values could influence success rates and impact on each student's opportunity to be dynamic, empowered, Indigenous leaders of the future. Devlin (2013) argues that universities need to do more than just spell out expectations for non-traditional students; reform in teaching and student support are needed, with institutions operating beyond the current deficit model of support for students. Thus, this research looked to begin from a 'strengths-based' position for Indigenous learners.

Method

The project used an exploratory, qualitative approach to collect and analyse different data sets. One-on-one interviews were carried out across three comprehensive Australian universities (CQUniversity Australia, Charles Darwin University and Federation University Australia) using opportunistic and 'snowball'[2] sampling to secure twenty-five participants in total. The study aimed to develop a deep understanding of the lived realities of four groups participating in enabling programs: Group (1) *Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff* teaching into Indigenous enabling programs; Group (2) *Indigenous students who have completed* an enabling program; Group (3) *Indigenous students who had enrolled but did not complete* an enabling program and Group (4) *Indigenous students who were still journeying* through an enabling program.

Semi-structured interviews of up to one hour were used to explore participants' experiences of enabling programs, their views of success, challenges they may have experienced, their suggestions for improvement, their experience of 'best practice', and their views on educational and personal 'path' versus/+ 'way'. The qualitative

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[2] This process involves asking current participants to recommend others who may be interested in taking part.

data analysis occurred through an open-ended process of thematic coding and cross-referencing. To preserve participant anonymity, interview data from all three universities was merged for presentation in this chapter. The findings for this research, as is usual for qualitative research, are context- and situation-specific (Collis and Hussey 2009). Therefore, care is needed in transferring these results beyond the regional university settings from where the data originated.

Findings

Staff Perspectives

Staff interviews were conducted to gain an insight into common enrolment practices (e.g. eligibility criteria), the ethos of offering and any barriers to student success. The thirteen participants had varying backgrounds, including secondary school teaching, ITAS[3] tutoring and lecturing. Participants' experience in teaching enabling education ranged from eighteen months to thirty years.

All participants agreed that enabling programs for Indigenous students effectively prepared students for further study and that *'bridging programmes were [an] imperative to Close the Gap'.*[4] One participant reflected on the *'underlying layer'* of skills that were imparted for lifelong learning:

> … the current programme prepares the students more effectively than any [other]… bridging programme that I have worked in before … rather than focus solely on academic skills, [the programme] has … an underlying layer if you like of skills that actually help build students in terms of their lifelong learning … things like resilience, being creative, having good strategic awareness, asking, being able to ask questions and make meaning out of what's been said in a paragraph. … We focus on ensuring that we have a 'both-ways' philosophy in it so we don't talk just about … and read about Western type things, we actually get them to bring out what they know in terms of the 'both-ways'.

In terms of student success, staff generally felt that success 'depends on … where students are in their life … for some … it's just not the right time or place for them at this stage of their lives.' One participant remarked:

> … there are other successes … [such as] self-esteem, growing, being strong in your identity, understanding what the Western educational system is, gaining other sorts of employment or opportunities for employment … it broadens students' ideas for career pathways, it helps students find their voice, it helps them be able to write.

Staff felt 'more time', having 'pastoral care' available and using some of 'our methodologies, like the lifelong learning programs … and the format cycle where you arrange classes according to … students' [preferred learning style]' would

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[3] Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme.

[4] 'Closing the Gap' is broadly recognised within Australia as reference to addressing Indigenous disadvantage, such as socio-economic, health and other outcomes for Indigenous peoples, which do not currently match those of non-Indigenous Australians.

improve enabling programs. One participant explained that as 'enabling programs sit outside the higher education division … there is a chance that [they] could be undervalued or overlooked … [Enabling program] graduates are very valuable to the university … so that's a dilemma.'

One participant explained that an essential inclusion for best practice would be 'a fundamental understanding of cultural differences.' Most participants felt 'there needs to be more face-to-face teaching', while another thought:

> Best practice would be … to incorporate Indigenous culture [in coursework] and use Indigenous examples and cater to Indigenous ways of learning through story-telling … all Indigenous students aren't always the same…I think it's best practice for all learning, in particular Indigenous [learning] is just recognising that everyone is different, everyone has got a cultural background.

Staff were asked to outline their views on the balance for Indigenous students in terms of their educational journey and their personal journey ('path' versus/+ 'way'). While some participants felt that it was difficult to respond because *'it's something determined by the individual'* and *'everyone has a different journey',* the following response was revealing in terms of the analogy of 'path' versus/+ 'way':

> [It's about] how people match together their personal journey with their educational journey. … I just think they are so intertwined that if you try to divide those two that you are on a path to failure. … We have to consider an individual's place where they are in life, what they've fought, where they're going and [what they're] hoping to get out of the education and find the way, the educational way that will suit them. … So we have to marry together our acknowledgement that every person will bring a different experience and so they can't just be stuck on a pathway that is already established … if we use that analogy, if we step off the path and we fall … we fall off the edge of the cliff … That's what we do in education … we make people get on this little narrow path, they fall off the cliff and that's the last we see of them, as they disappear down there. Whereas a 'way' suggests a more flexible approach.

Student Perspectives

The research questions used in the Indigenous students' interviews aimed to understand their needs and experiences, including factors that contribute to their completion or non-completion A total of thirteen students were interviewed: three who had successfully completed an enabling program, one who had exited without completing,[5] and nine who were still journeying through their enabling program.

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[5] It is important to note that only one interview could be secured with a student who had prematurely exited an enabling program, due to a lack of response to the recruitment call.

Completed Students

The three participants who had successfully completed an enabling program had all undertaken other study (at TAFE) prior to enrolment. All three also went on to further study, having completed the enabling program. In relation to navigating tertiary education (described as the 'path'), participants explained that 'being organised' helped with study and the fact that lecturers 'didn't expect people to have prior experience … they knew what we needed', assisted them to complete the enabling program.

In terms of how the completed students felt about learning (described as 'way'), participants said 'it makes you feel worthwhile … that you can learn', and that the programs 'enabled [learning] … and success' and helped 'build … communication skills'. Enabling education helped prepare the students for future study by encouraging them to 'ask for help'. It taught them 'how to write [and] … how to study', and imparted 'organisational skills' as well as identifying 'what type of learner I am'.

Participants considered that including Indigenous culture in enabling programs was beneficial because 'knowing … your non-Indigenous and Indigenous side [and] having to live and learn both sides' was seen as 'empowering'. Participants felt that enabling programs 'strengthened … Indigenous identity' and 'increased confidence'. When challenges occurred, participants explained 'support was always there', as was 'family'. One participant explained that the fact 'that people believed in me' ignited self-belief, encouraging them to believe that they 'could become a better person, a leader for my people'. By contrast, enabling programs that did not include Indigenous culture or where there 'wasn't much … cultural understanding' caused one participant to 'struggle'. All participants felt that enabling programs should be 'compulsory', while one participant felt it 'would be really nice to have an Elder … giving some history of the area that [we] are studying'.

Early Exit Student

The participant who commenced an enabling program but exited without completing was encouraged to enrol by a family member. The program assisted the participant to 'scrub … up on maths and English'. However, the program did not include Indigenous culture, and the participant said it did not help to expand or strengthen their identity, confidence and/or values as an Indigenous student or an Indigenous person. The participant left the program because it was 'just too hard for me'. The situation could have been made better through 'more support'. The advice this participant would give to new students considering enrolling in an enabling program would be to 'ask for help'. The participant suggested that staff teaching in enabling programs for Indigenous students should 'understand that not everyone is at the same level'. A course that included 'more cultural stuff would be good' and

universities offering enabling programs should 'make it easier for Aboriginal people; speak plain … don't speak academically'.

Continuing Students

Of the nine participants interviewed who were still active enabling students, six had undertaken other studies (primarily TAFE) prior to enrolling in the enabling program. Six of the students studied via distance education, while three received face-to-face learning. Before commencing, some participants had considered their 'family responsibilities', others 'learnt … the computer' while one participant 'made myself a timetable'. The decision to enrol in an enabling program was 'easy' for more than half the participants. One participant enrolled 'to become a role model to my children'. However, some participants found it a hard decision because of family responsibilities and because 'I felt like I couldn't do anything'.

In relation to navigating tertiary education (described as 'path'), more than half of the participants explained that they had only just begun their studies and were 'still learning … the procedures'. Some 'spoke to a lot of people … and learnt from Moodle'[6] or had 'help and support' to navigate through the formal settings of the university. This support helped one student to 'feel like I'm not alone'.

In terms of how the continuing students felt about learning (described as 'way'), almost half the participants said they were still finding their way. One shared:

> I've always felt a little intimidated by the thought of … university. The bridging programme has eased a lot of that anxiety … the value of what I've been learning has been monumental … and … has made me feel ten times better about myself as a learner'. Others said: '[I've] learnt about myself as a learner … I've really grown … [and] my resilience has grown', and 'as a learner I'm really proud of myself.

Participants felt the enabling program was preparing them for further study through 'understanding the processes of assessments', 'making me learn routine' and 'helping me to understand the time management aspects of study'. Participants shared that the program helped overcome fears; 'I've had to do a … bit of public speaking … through that I've … learnt not to be afraid and … I know that's going to help me in the future.' Others gained an understanding of their history: 'It has given me a greater understanding of where my Nanna and the older generation have come from and to really connect with them.' Many said the enabling program was extending their lifelong learning journey by equipping them with skills for 'everyday life' and 'study'.

Participants felt that including Indigenous culture in enabling programs was important because 'half the things I learnt about my homeland I didn't know myself; I've learnt a lot.' Participants commented, 'We were taught some of the [welcome and acknowledgement] protocols which are really, really good to know and

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[6] Moodle is an online learning platform containing course materials, assessment tasks, instructional guides and a term calendar.

understand', and 'we've had to learn about [two ways learning] and it's really helped because … there are a lot of Indigenous people who … want to do the Western way of learning.' All participants felt that enabling programs that included Indigenous culture strengthened their identity, confidence and values as an Indigenous person. One participant explained, 'Each assignment that I do, each piece of knowledge that I've learnt … builds that confidence, my identity … and my history as that Indigenous person.'

Many participants were 'not expecting the amount of help that is available' and were surprised at the 'friendly, supportive environment'. Challenges included 'miss[ing] my family and friends [when away studying]' and '[I'm challenged] every time I look at an assignment … but I'm getting more and more confident as the weeks progress.' For one participant, having 'a computer refresher course to start with' would have made the learning experience better, while for another 'being able to access lecturers … helped … meet challenges'.

Participants felt that some of the best aspects of enabling programs were 'being able to really focus … on the work without distractions' and 'gaining skills to … continue tertiary study'. One participant explained that enabling programs were important because '[in] the Indigenous community … we are all trying to better ourselves. … If we just keep studying and educating ourselves, we will start to better not just ourselves but our communities and our Country.' Others said they learned 'just how important education is' and that 'I'm learning to strengthen my identity and value as an Indigenous student' and 'being myself is OK'.

While most participants said they 'couldn't think of any' courses that should be included in the programs, one participant felt it was imperative to include Indigenous culture because 'culture and learning is very important to Indigenous studies.' Reflecting on the importance of enabling programs, one participant said, 'The more we get educated … the more … Indigenous communities are going to grow and Close that Gap.' Others said it had been 'a very exciting journey' and 'I feel more confident about being able to go ahead and … do further study.'

Discussion

Staff felt that enabling programs supported students' Indigenous identity through an Indigenous curriculum and through *both-ways*[7] methodologies that create a sense of belonging, and work towards Closing the Gap within the education system. For staff, enabling programs assist in reducing the disparity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples across a range of indicators including education (as discussed in NACCHO & Oxfam 2007). Staff felt that including Indigenous culture in course content could build strength, culture and both-ways learning, and increase

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[7] 'Both-ways is a philosophy of education that brings together Indigenous Australian traditions of knowledge and Western academic disciplinary positions and cultural contexts, and embraces values of respect, tolerance and diversity' (Batchelor Institute as cited in Ober 2009, p. 34).

a sense of place and identity. Perhaps most importantly, staff argued that student success was not just identified as academic success, but also as increased self-esteem, strong identities, finding their voice and improved job opportunities. Staff recognised that for some students, study was overwhelming because of family and community commitments.

From the interviews, it was clear that enabling programs had supported *completed students* to navigate and understand the tertiary education system. The programs prepared them for tertiary education by imparting practical learning skills such as (1) organisation and communication, (2) encouraging them to ask for help and (3) identifying their learning styles. These practical learnings assisted with program completion. *Completed students* said that the support available within the programs built their confidence, engendered feelings of success and increased their perceptions of self-worth. Enabling programs that included Indigenous culture reinforced students' Indigenous qualities and strengthened students' identities.

Staff described several elements of best practice in developing enabling programs, including the need to: (1) recognise cultural differences, (2) recognise that Indigenous people are 'yarners',[8] (3) Indigenise the curriculum, (4) tell stories, (5) help students to be released from family responsibilities, (6) increase students' computer skills, (7) consider the impact of social determinants on students' learning opportunities, (8) develop students' study habits, (9) provide mentors and (10) provide face-to-face delivery of courses.

Students felt that when their learning journey was supported by the learning of culture, their cultural identity increased. While the support available through the enabling program was imperative to success, family support and knowing that others believed in their abilities were also vital in encouraging leadership qualities and expectations of success. Knowing about scholarships and other assistance prior to beginning the study was beneficial. In addition, students suggested that the programs would benefit from team-building activities, more cultural awareness and more input from Elders.

The *early exiting student* had been encouraged by family to study. While practical skills for learning were included in the student's program, this student required more support. In particular, the program did not include cultural learning. While it is difficult to draw a conclusion from the input of one participant, the voice of this individual must be respected, and it seems that the lack of cultural understanding within the program and the lack of required support impacted negatively on the individual's learning journey. This is particularly apparent when compared to the journeys of *completed students*, who used available support to build confidence, establish feelings of success and increase their perceptions of self-worth.

While the *journeying students* were still navigating their way through the tertiary education system, they recognised that they were not alone in their journey. The

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[8]Yarning is an informal, relaxed discussion that requires the building of a relationship as teacher and student (or researcher and participant) 'journey together visiting places and topics of interest' relevant to study or research; yarning provides a culturally safe conversational process for sharing stories and ideas (Bessarab and Ng'andu 2010, p. 38).

practical skills already imparted had increased their understanding, helped to develop time management skills and allowed focus on studies. These *journeying students* described a self-realisation of personal growth. The supportive environments built resilience and confidence, allayed fears and encouraged personal pride and self-acceptance. Moreover, enabling programs that included Indigenous culture and 'both-ways' learning increased students' Indigenous identity.

Synthesis: Strength, Success and Transformation

The perspectives of the staff and students involved in this research shared a number of common elements that are useful in thinking further about the design and delivery of enabling education in regional, comprehensive university settings.

Across the completed and continuing students' learning journeys, the themes of belonging, strength, resilience, confidence and self-esteem produced feelings of success, allayed fears, and increased self-acceptance and feelings of self-worth. These feelings were attributed to the supportive environment of the enabling programs. Similar themes were also identified by teaching staff when they discussed positive student outcomes. Including Indigenous culture in the course content was viewed as a way to build strength and culture for students and as a way to increase students' sense of place and identity. In contrast, a lack of cultural understanding within enabling programs appears to constrain learning.

For Indigenous students in enabling programs, success was seen as a multi-layered construct impacting multiple dimensions of their lived experiences, including 'cultural identity', 'voice', self-realisation, self-acceptance and 'pride'. These inner transformations are compatible with Cajete's (1994) seminal work about 'pathways' in relation to Native American education, where curriculum and the learning space ('path'), and students' navigation of their educational institution (which may initiate some transformation of the inner self) ('way'), are integral to students' learning journeys and educational outcomes.

Smith (2003) contends that educational outcomes for Indigenous peoples can be transformed through the process of 'conscientisation'. Smith explains that where Indigenous peoples are experiencing educational crises, the following actions can assist: (1) Indigenous educators must be trained to become 'change agents' in order to transform the undesirable circumstances and (2) Indigenous educators must develop a 'radical pedagogy' – becoming a teaching agent for change that is informed by their own Indigenous cultural preferences relevant to their own critical circumstance (Smith, 2003, p. 10). We assert that this equally applies to non-Indigenous educators. While non-Indigenous educators cannot be informed by their Indigenous cultural preferences, they can reflect on their non-Indigeneity within the teaching space and offer a critical approach and a 'radical pedagogy'. As noted above, Pechenkina and Anderson (2011) have reported on the educational crisis being experienced by Indigenous Australians. There is a need for best-practice guidelines to be provided to teaching staff which are embedded with strategies and

processes for the development of a 'radical pedagogy' for Indigenous Australian circumstances as part of a best-practice framework for Indigenous enabling programs by the participating universities. This proposed 'radical pedagogy' aligns with Turnbull's (2014) observations of the importance of adopting and adapting appropriate teaching styles and learning environments when developing enabling programs for Indigenous students.

Summary

This research project found that enabling programs, from the perspective of completed and continuing students, were an 'important' and 'exciting journey' that brought about transformation of the inner self through building 'resilience', 'strength', 'confidence', 'self-esteem', 'self-worth', 'cultural understanding' and 'identity'. Success for students in enabling programs can be viewed as a multi-layered construct experienced as increased 'cultural identity' and the development of 'voice', self-realisation, self-acceptance and 'pride'. These outcomes were attributed to enabling programs with supportive environments. Strength-building strategies included discussing Indigenous culture in course content and gaining input from Elders. Strategies that constrain learning include having a lack of cultural understanding in the program. For the completed students involved in this project, enabling programs provided a stepping stone to further education.

The research revealed that staff considered the learning journey to be a holistic pathway. Apart from delivering practical skills, staff felt that enabling programs revealed an 'underlying layer' of skills such as 'resilience' and 'strategic awareness', and that including Indigenous culture in course content was imperative because it built 'strength', 'culture' and a sense of 'place and identity'. Staff felt that the curriculum needed to be delivered in plain English, in a way that recognised Indigenous people as 'yarners' and 'story tellers'. They also felt that 'both-ways' methodologies and recognition of 'cultural differences' needed to be taken into account when developing enabling programs. Staff argued that 'face-to-face' delivery of enabling programs was the most effective teaching method.

While the size of this research may be viewed as a limitation, and findings from this study are context- and situation-specific (Collis & Hussey, 2009), future research could move to extend the sample to a greater number of participants and universities. The results of this study suggest that in developing a best-practice framework for Indigenous enabling programs, considerations of pedagogy, curriculum and mode of delivery will be understood within the framework of the institutional ethos and drivers for implementation. These will, in turn, be framed by local, regional and national Indigenous perspectives and deliberated on in conjunction with the research outcomes. Support structures for staff and their professional development needs will be considered as part of the best-practice framework. Ultimately, the strengthening of enabling education for Indigenous Australians is regarded as an excellent platform for offering Indigenous students the best chance

of 'success', with 'success' having a multi-layered interpretation that includes impacts on participation (for the institution), reaffirming personal identity and confidence (for the learner) and broader community and indirect benefits.

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