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**An Illuminative Participatory Evaluation of the Response of
Queensland Schools to Indigenous Literacy Policies**

Thesis submitted by

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For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the School of Education

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Abstract

Thesis Title: An illuminative participatory evaluation of the response of Queensland schools to Indigenous literacy policies

This study is a naturalistic inquiry into the implementation of Indigenous literacy policy in Queensland schools, written as a multi-voiced collective story. Queensland's literacy policy for Indigenous students, *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) stood in contention with national literacy policies in that it recognised the impact of second language learning status in Indigenous student literacy performance. This study charts how *Partners for Success* was read and implemented in four focus schools with large numbers of Indigenous English as a Second Language/Dialect students. The researcher's participatory role in supporting its implementation allowed opportunities to see resonance and dissonance between these four focus schools and other contexts in Queensland over a three-year period between 2001 and 2003.

Using four interpretive frames, Gewirtz's (2001) interrogative framework for socially just educational research; academic literature relating to social justice, socio-cultural theories of literacy and minority language learning and understandings and frameworks for sustainable organisational change; the fieldwork itself and notions of language (Bakhtin, 1981; Ferguson, 1959; Wardhaugh, 1998; Wells, 1990), the study reveals a complex web of inter-related oppressive relationships in the implementation of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) in

Queensland and how particular social categories of participants supported, resisted, interrupted and subverted them. It explains how the authoritative, monologic voice of assessment and accountability in the national literacy policies echoed through *Partners for Success* implementation processes, silenced and marginalised Indigenous, practitioner and research voices and perspectives and reinforced dominant social constructions of Indigenous ESL students as failing literates.

The inquiry reveals that Indigenous ESL students and their educators remain in a systemic *Terra Nullius* despite the counter-hegemonic intent of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a). However, the study also shows that, although language is a key site for the contestation of power in Queensland's State education system, it can also be a prime site for the recognition of "otherness" and reconciliation of past wrongs.

The study suggests that public dialogic spaces are a necessary element in the development and implementation processes of policy intended to address issues of equity and social justice. Besides, to avoid the replication of social order or historical injustices, consideration needs to be given to the way in which systemic data is recorded and publicly reported. Again, mandated complementary, appropriate and rigorous assessment tools should be incorporated into Education Queensland's school accountability processes that have the capacity to reflect successful *language* learning. Yet again, allocative funding models to schools should be reviewed to better resource schools with significant numbers of Indigenous ESL learners and ESL pedagogy. Finally, issues of language for Indigenous students should be a core element of pre-service teacher education programs.

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Chapter One

The focus of the research

1.1 Introduction.

The focus of this research is the processes by which State schools in Queensland are striving to improve literacy outcomes for Indigenous students who are learning their literacy in a language other than their Home Language. It examines how current contradictory national and state Indigenous literacy policies are being read and implemented in the Queensland State education system, in districts, schools and by teachers. The aims of the research are to identify the processes and barriers, which may contribute to or detract from, the improvement in literacy outcomes for this specific group of marginalised learners. My developing role which progressed from the collaborative development and trialling of a monitoring and assessment tool for Indigenous English as a Second Language or Dialect learners (ESL/ESD), the Indigenous ESL Bandscales, and subsequently to supporting the implementation across the State of the *Partners for Success: strategy for the continuous improvement of educational and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Education Queensland* (Education Queensland, 2000a) has allowed research across diverse sites and contexts over a period of three years.

There is an urgent and well-documented need for research into effective strategies for improving literacy standards for Indigenous ESL/ESD students. This study builds on existing research in social justice, literacy, educational outcomes for language minority students, policy implementation and educational change. Each of these

domains has its own extensive body of literature. There is little literature, however, relating to the specific groups of marginalised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners in this study. This inquiry charts the implementation of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy in four focus sites and other contexts across Queensland and contributes to understandings of policy implementation dynamics and the relationships between social contexts and educational outcomes for these students. The complex interaction of factors impacting upon groups showing consistently low literacy levels is not clearly understood. The aim of this research was to examine and gain a better understanding of these issues, interactions and relationships in order to develop new, theorised frameworks for understanding and guiding literacy policy implementation and effective literacy practices in classrooms.

1.2 Context of policy change and marginalisation of Indigenous ESL learners in Queensland

Schools in Queensland are experiencing a period of rapid change in curriculum and pedagogy as they strive to respond to

the challenge facing Education Queensland as we move into an era where knowledge supersedes information and technology transforms longstanding relationships of time and space . . . in which global forces favour the adaptable, and the key resources will be human and social capital rather than just physical and material resources. (Education Queensland, 2000b, p.8)

In this period of rapid, global and local change the increasing gap in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Australia is an issue that impacts upon the social, human and economic well-being of the nation. The poor

educational outcomes of Indigenous students in Australia are the subject of ongoing national and international concern.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the most disadvantaged group in the country. Whatever social indicator you use—health status, education, employment, contact with the law—we are at the bottom of the heap. How did this situation come about? And why is it proving so resistant to change?
(O'Donoghue, 1995, pp.6-7)

In 1995, I was employed at a North Queensland Secondary College as an ESL teacher. Our census data showed that more than 30 per cent of the enrolment were identified as from 'Non-English Speaking Backgrounds' (NESB) and this allowed the College to fund comfortably a full-time ESL specialist (me) and a part-time teaching assistant out of the *National Equity Program for Schools* (NEPS) General ESL support funding which was directed at both migrant and Indigenous ESL students. The students viewed as having the most significant language 'difficulties' were the Indigenous students from remote communities, the majority of whom were Torres Strait Islanders. These students comprised about 11 per cent of the school population. Almost all the Torres Strait Islander students spoke Torres Strait Creole (Yumpla Tok) as a first language and attendance at this mainland school was the first time they were exposed to a Standard Australian English (SAE)-only schooling environment. The inclusion of Indigenous students in ESL funding allocations was significant in that ESL support funding had previously been targeted only at migrant students. Historically, Indigenous ESL/ESD students had not been and, in some cases, are still not recognised as second language learners in Australia, even within their own communities. Malcolm (2001) argues

Education systems have, for the most part, implicitly denied its [Aboriginal English] existence by assuming that if Aboriginal children speak English they speak the same English as non-Aboriginal people, and should be subjected to literacy instruction and testing based on standard Australian English. When they fail to achieve comparable literacy levels in standard Australian English to those of other Australians, what is questioned is never the rightness of denying their cultural identity by ignoring their unique cultural heritage, but rather the students' ability, or their home situation, or their social disadvantage, or their lack of motivation. (p.11)

This lack of recognition of Indigenous students' language relates more to socio-historical than linguistic issues and will be explored in depth in this study.

Some Australian Indigenous second language learners have not always been recognised as ESL learners and there is still uneven understanding on the part of Education systems, schools and teachers as to their second language learning needs. For example, Torres Strait Creole, now referred to as Yumpla Tok (Corden, 1997), was only unequivocally recognised as a language in the mid 1990s (Shnukal, 1996), rather than a dialect or "Broken" English, as far as funding allocations within this school system were concerned. This recognition not only supported powerful advocacy at a school and systemic level, allowing ESL teachers to demand appropriate support and intervention for these students but also generated powerful community dialogue in the Torres Strait (Corden, 1997).

At this point in time, advocacy for my school's Torres Strait Islander students needed to remain high on the systemic ESL agenda, not only because of their newly-

acknowledged status as second language learners but also because *all* ESL student needs risked becoming subsumed in the powerful ‘literacy’ debate generated by imminent changes in national and state accountability practices and targeted funding allocations. The window of opportunity provided by the federal government’s recognition of Torres Strait Islander students’ ESL needs proved short-lived as the future of General ESL support itself came under threat. General ESL support was the only funding mechanism directly targeted at Indigenous ESL learners. ‘New to school’ Indigenous Language Speaking Students (ILSS) funding for students commencing school was introduced at this time, in 1998, but any students from Grade 2 onwards did not benefit from the initiative. ‘New Arrival’ ESL funding (and its attendant intensive specialist language tuition) had always been reserved for recent migrant students. During the short period of General ESL support funding availability for Indigenous students, we even had to defend the maintenance of ESL provision for *eligible* Indigenous students within the system in which I was working, as it became apparent that migrant and Indigenous ESL students were competing for their slice of what was an ever-decreasing Commonwealth funding pie.

By the end of 1999, despite our best efforts and quantifiable successes in improving student literacy outcomes using ESL pedagogy, previously ‘targeted’ funding became broadbanded under the aegis of the Commonwealth Literacy Policy, *Literacy for All: the challenge for Australian schools* (DEETYA, 1998). As an illustration, the total amount of ESL funding allocated to my school the following year was less than 40 per cent of the figure allocated in 1995 and would decrease in subsequent years. The discursive rationale for this cut was that ‘literacy’ funding would be redirected towards (non-specific) ‘intervention’ in the early years of schooling, thus

leaving no targeted provision in the secondary years. An instant consequence was that students coming to ‘mainland’ schools in urban areas from remote primary schools were left with no targeted intervention funding to support their ESL needs.

The redefinition of the ‘problem’ resulted in the repositioning of Indigenous second language learners as failing *literate*s. It is considerably easier (and cheaper) at a school operational level to aggregate at risk learners with widely disparate needs into single “support” classes and allocate teachers to them based largely on timetabling considerations. In this, and many other schools, the only option from 2000 became remedial-type support classes, whose programs (such as *Reading Recovery*, Clay, 1993) were designed for students with learning difficulties and impairments. Specialist ESL teaching was no longer available and was no longer considered necessary. At a meeting at the College where I was teaching in October 1999, the systemic learning support adviser stated that Indigenous ESL students were to be classified, in terms of funding support and intervention, as having a “learning difficulty” and that, with the diminution of the ESL support funding, their needs should be catered for in either “support” classes or within the general classroom program. This is exactly what occurred. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ESL students were put into special learning support classes, rather than being supported with their language learning in mainstream classes and were grouped with English first language speaking students with identified learning difficulties. My title changed from ESL teacher to a “learning support services” teacher and I found, much to my frustration, that I spent much of my time in staff meetings advocating for these students’ language support needs which had suddenly become invisible in all school programs and documentation. Teachers no longer had to either recognise or respond to language learning needs at all.

These experiences are an almost step-by-step enactment of the concerns raised by Hammond (1999a, b) in her discussions of the implications and possible impact of the *Literacy for All* policy (DEETYA, 1998). Michell (1999) highlights the apparent “withering strategy” of ESL provision by the federal government which is achieved through

a rhetorical progression from equity = literacy, disadvantage = low literacy outcomes, disadvantaged target group = students assessed as underperforming, new target group = new priority for literacy intervention. (p.14)

The invisibility of all ESL learner needs in federal policy was a topic of considerable debate at this time amongst ESL educators and language policy and diversity advocates (Lo Bianco, 1998, 1999; Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997; McKay, 1998a, b, 1999; Michell, 1999). However, a worrying aspect within this debate was that Indigenous second language learners had little prominence.

1.3 Context of policy contradiction and literacy outcomes

Although the ‘literacy’ theme was taken up in Commonwealth government policies and reviews (DEET, 1989, 1995; DEST, 2000; MCEETYA, 1995, 2000) in an attempt to address the specific needs of Indigenous students, the shift in terminology from ‘language’ to ‘literacy’ in federal policy meant that literacy took on the mantle of a catch-all term for disadvantage. A series of changes to funding eligibility criteria, Commonwealth Government policies, and targeted funding accountability frameworks, such as *Commonwealth Targeted Programs*, *Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program* (IESIP) agreements, *Strategic Results Projects*, (DEST, n.d.) gradually seemed to give a mandate to schools *not* to address the literacy issue as one of second language learning. Furthermore, the situation appeared to be compounded by the fact

that increased accountability measures in the IESIP guidelines only referred to the employment of Indigenous staff, professional development of staff in cultural issues (but not specifically language), student retention rates and literacy and numeracy. There was no indication that learning in a second language could, or *should*, be targeted. Nor was there any mechanism within this funding allocation either to focus on or be accountable for second language development. This could only reinforce the deficit view of Indigenous ESL students as poor literacy learners and deflect attention away from their second language learning needs. This ESL-as-failure positioning also strongly implies and encourages a deficit model of literacy intervention.

Where policy had briefly been the ally of ESL educators, it now became the main instrument of their demise. The final nail in the ESL coffin came with the endorsement of the revised *Common and agreed national goals for schooling in the twenty-first century* (MCEETYA, 1999a) through the *Adelaide Declaration* (MCEETYA, 1999b). These goals heralded the arrival of the national benchmark testing agenda. The inequitable and discriminatory features of these tests and the issues related to their implementation are the subject of much literature (Alloway & Gilbert, 1998; McKay, 1998a, b; Michell, 1999). The outcomes of such testing serve to “quickly render minority learners and their second language learning needs invisible to teachers, and can result in inappropriate teaching, professional development and resource allocation” (McKay, 1997, p.169). Again, this concern was mirrored in my experiences in the College where I had been teaching in Queensland.

The *National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2000-2004* (DEST, 2000) focuses on a cluster of issues, namely, attendance, health, pre-schooling

experiences, future aspirations, meaningful community partnerships, community and business leadership and the employment and retention of effective teachers. Literacy is mentioned but language background is rarely alluded to at all. The national strategy, in the area of literacy, calls for good teachers, high expectations of Indigenous students, a project to chart pre-service teachers who have undergone Indigenous studies education (but not studies of ESL). Best teaching methods are described as providing intensive individual support, that is targeting specific needs rather than broadbanning them; using scaffolding literacy practices (Rose, Gray & Cowey, 1999), a practice I would argue requires the kind of specialist linguistic knowledge which is foundational to effective ESL pedagogy (see also Hammond & Derewianka, 1999); involving external teams of specialists and Indigenous adults, using oral histories in teaching, networks and alternative educational sites. Although the policy recommends the inclusion of students' languages and culture in the curriculum, there is no specific mention of second language issues. Thus, federal policy clearly locates this group of students as failing literates precluding any systemic recognition of their (successful) second language learning status. Furthermore, the attendant funding and assessment practices legitimated this positioning, effectively denying informed educators the opportunity to

Become advocates for minority students by focusing primarily on the ways in which students' academic difficulty is a function of interactions within the school context rather than legitimising the location of the 'problem' within the students. (Cummins, 1989, p.58)

It was this shift in policy and accountability focus away from targeting specific groups and types of interventions that allowed administrators in schools such as my own to allocate resources to the most disadvantaged students in the school based simply on pragmatic rather than pedagogical considerations.

1.4 Context of Queensland's literacy policy for Indigenous learners

The concept of literacy itself is problematic and this is reviewed in the study. The State-wide review of literacy in Queensland (*Literate Futures*, Education Queensland, 2000c) defines literacy as “the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communications technologies via spoken language, print and multimedia” (p.3) and raises concern about the ongoing under-provision of effective literacy programs and practices for disadvantaged groups including Indigenous ESL learners and, in particular, the “potentially counterproductive but forceful discourse of ‘new deficits’ that runs the risk of blaming students, their families and communities for literacy problems” (p.7). Luke and Freebody (1999) propose that

It remains our position that literacy was never a matter of deficit but principally an issue of economic and social access to the cultural institutions charged with literacy education and practice . . . access to different kinds of educational experiences becomes both a symptom and a cause of literacy performance. (p.4)

Lo Bianco and Freebody (1997) argue that literacy has been defined from

Skills-based conceptions of functional literacy through to very broad and all-encompassing definitions, which integrate social and political empowerment Literacy education for Aboriginal peoples has a regrettable history of cultural bias and deficit images, of remedial and inappropriate developmental approaches and assessment models in education resulting in damaging educational and social outcomes from schooling for indigenous people. (p.62)

However, in 1999, Education Queensland conducted a *Review of Education and Employment Programs* which was published in early 2000. The *Review* (Education Queensland, 2000d), authorised by the Director-General of Education in November

1998, was prompted by “The persistence of unacceptable differences between the outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and others in Education Queensland” (p.1). One of its major recommendations was “ensuring that curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, reporting and employment policies and programs effectively meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples” (p.3). The unacceptably large gap between the literacy levels of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was considered a significant enough issue in the *Review* to merit detailed consideration (pp.28-32). In this discussion, although recognition is given to the interrelated risk factors, which contribute to poor literacy performance, the major focus is on second language pedagogy and assessment instruments. Most significantly the *Review* states that

There is little recognition in policy that students who are Aboriginal English and Torres Strait Creole speakers need different educational responses from others Commonwealth and State ESL funding processes do not adequately consider Indigenous ESL issues. The absence of recognition and direction in policy in this area has resulted in the application of a universal approach to literacy and intervention, which is educationally inappropriate for the literacy learning of non-Standard-Australian-English speakers. (p.30)

So it seemed that, although federal policy had effectively rendered these students invisible, at least at a State level, a window of opportunity to direct ‘literacy’ funding appeared. The *Review* (Education Queensland, 2000d) engendered *Partners for Success: strategy for the continuous improvement of education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Education Queensland* (Education Queensland, 2000a) which includes the Queensland State literacy policy for

Indigenous students. This policy asserts that literacy outcomes will be improved when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can be assessed as second language learners and that the use of second language learning principles and pedagogies should be promoted to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Interestingly, this policy makes no distinction between the second language learning needs of Aboriginal English speakers and Torres Strait Creole (Yumpla Tok) speakers. These students present at school with similar difficulties. However, Aboriginal English speakers had always been specifically excluded from Commonwealth funding provision for ESL learners as the State interpretation of the accompanying guidelines has regarded Aboriginal English as a dialect, not a language.

In some key respects this policy (Education Queensland, 2000a) is unique. It was the first time that 'ESLness' had been so specifically and explicitly highlighted as a major contributory factor in Indigenous literacy performance and that a flexible accountability framework had been developed which gave scope for individual communities to prioritise their own needs and guide educators towards second language learning needs. *Partners for Success* was, therefore, quite distinct from the federal policies, which continued to ignore second language learners, whether Indigenous or migrant, putting their particular needs in direct competition with mainstream literacy priorities and positioning them in a more general category of low literacy students.

So, there were different foci in the national and State policies. Direction was unclear and sometimes contradictory. *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) provoked cautious optimism on the part of Indigenous ESL educators, including myself, in that Indigenous second language learning needs were recognised and

direction provided about appropriate interventions. However, it is important to highlight that, although the policy advocates the assessment of Indigenous learners as second language learners, appropriate monitoring tools across the full age spectrum were still in development during the course of this research. All mandated measuring and monitoring tools in Education Queensland schools (Year 2 Diagnostic Net, Reading continuum (Rees, 1994), Writing continuum (Raison & Rivilland, 1994) and Grades 3, 5 and 7 State-wide tests) were directed towards English Home Language speakers. The use of these tools presupposes full age functioning at each stage of schooling and therefore reinforces the assumption that all students *should* be able to achieve the same baseline, regardless of language background. “Assessment practices influence teachers’ and administrators’ perceptions of minority language learners in schools” (McKay, 1997, p.168). Ironically, although the Queensland Indigenous literacy policy raised the ESL issue as seminal to student literacy achievement, the “significant unacceptable gap” cited between the literacy performance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in all years of schooling was the gap measured using the very instruments deemed inappropriate in the same text. This was understandable, as alternative Indigenous ESL instruments were still in development.

However, the situation left Indigenous ESL learners in a state of policy/praxis limbo, as, despite the policy focus, in practical terms there was still no imperative for teachers to envision these learners as anything other than having poor levels of literacy. In fact, even Principals and teachers who were very aware of Indigenous students’ second language needs faced an ethical dilemma in using these mandated tools. Students identified in the Year 2 Diagnostic Net, for example, attract intervention funding. Schools would have had to live with the poor ‘literacy’ label in order to have

the financial resources to meet these students' needs. Whilst this labelling and lack of targeted funding was an issue for all ESL students, in the historical context of educational access and experiences for Indigenous people, how policy-makers and educators label Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the consequences of such labelling, and the construction of their failure risks further reinforcement of their already marginalised position. Thus, understanding and challenging power structures and processes and how this group of students is positioned within them are critical in effecting fundamental change in literacy outcomes. Further testament to the effect of power and social context on the educational outcomes of minority students is reflected in the replication of the Australian pattern of poor Indigenous student educational achievement for some marginalised groups worldwide. African American students, for example, continue to lag significantly behind their white counterparts on all standard measures of achievement despite interventions, injection of funding, special programs and desegregation (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

1.5 Context of my evolving research role

When I first embarked on this study I had taken leave from the College in order to engage in full-time doctoral research. My recent experiences in a school had reinforced my interest in Indigenous ESL issues and my initial research focus was in a recently-revived project to develop and trial a second language monitoring tool for Indigenous learners, Indigenous ESL Bandscales, in which I had been involved originally in 1997. The Indigenous ESL Bandscales project had started three years prior to the commencement of this study with a small group of interested teachers across all education systems in the State, including myself in North Queensland. The group had received a small grant from one of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centres of

Education Queensland to meet and begin to adapt the *NLLIA ESL Bandscales* (McKay, Hudson & Sappupo, 1994) for Indigenous ESL learners. This tool had originally been developed to map and monitor the English language development of migrant learners and their adaptation for Indigenous ESL learners had been recognised in the original project as a key area for further research and development. I believed, in common with other group members, that this monitoring tool would help guide teachers towards more positive understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ESL learners, their needs and second language learning pathways. However, after the release of *Literacy for All* (DEETYA, 1998) the group received no further funding and the project was abandoned (although some group members continued to communicate via email and occasionally face to face over the next three years).

The publication of the *Review of Education and Employment Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (Education Queensland, 2000d) and the impending launch of the *Partners for Success* policies (Education Queensland, 2000a) revived both interest and resourcing in the Indigenous ESL Bandscales project. The *Partners for Success* literacy policy had specifically alerted teachers to the “Assessment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as English as Second Language learners” (p.21). A Senior Project Officer, who had been part of the original group, was assigned by Education Queensland to continue the development of this monitoring tool for Indigenous learners. Recognising my interest in this project and the opportunity provided by my research stipend, I was invited to contribute to the development, data collection and trial of the adapted *NLLIA ESL Bandscales* (McKay, Hudson & Sappupo, 1994) for Indigenous ESL/ESD learners. This project funded my regular travel to a number of locations across North Queensland in 2000. Thus, the project and my

research interest converged and I envisaged I would be able to research the processes and implementation of this monitoring tool in the same four schools I had selected for the Indigenous ESL Bandscales project. Therefore, my entrée into Queensland State schools was my role in collecting data for this project. For the purpose of the project data collection and trial work, I had to select four schools representing a variety of language contexts: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; urban and remote and where Indigenous students were in the majority or a significant minority. As the development of the Indigenous ESL Bandscales began with Junior Primary-age learners all the schools selected had Primary departments (one had a Secondary campus). All had significant numbers of Indigenous ESL/ESD students (35 per cent-100 per cent), had requested professional development in the use of Indigenous ESL Bandscales and had had some prior interest in their development. It was therefore reasonable to assume that all considered the ESL/ESD issue significant in their context. I visited each school twice per term for the project in 2000.

After one year, I took up a position within Education Queensland myself as a State-wide Senior Project Officer with a specific brief to support the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy strategy for Indigenous learners. This change in role provoked a shift in focus and I became increasingly participatory in the research. In my new role, presenting professional development around the State in ESL methodology and strategies for Indigenous learners, I was frequently in a position to drive some of the focus and implementation of the policy. I designed and delivered professional development modules based on teacher-identified needs and attended meetings where second language/dialect perspectives could be articulated at influential management levels.

1.6 The evolution of the study

The study began as an illuminative evaluation (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972) of the Indigenous ESL Bandscales development and implementation. In my initial role in the project, I collected significant amounts of observational and documentary data, consistent with the first stage of Parlett and Hamilton's three-stage framework. In using the Indigenous ESL Bandscales, educators were being requested to implement a fundamental change of approach in an environment of conflicting and competing policy direction in a climate of rapid, perhaps overwhelming innovations in teaching and learning. Parlett and Hamilton's framework for illuminative evaluation concentrates upon examining the innovation (in this case a policy recognising the effect of ESL status on literacy learning), an integral part of the learning milieu and the daily reality of the context, allowing progressive focusing and incorporating of unpredicted phenomena. In many schools with large proportions of Indigenous ESL/ESD learners, there can be an almost total staff and administrative turnover in one year. These factors will necessarily impact on both implementation and on teaching and learning experiences. The methodology required for this study had to be flexible enough to accommodate and incorporate all these issues.

As I had become increasingly participatory in the system and context I was researching, my new role allowed me an opportunity to broaden my focus to how the new literacy policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was being read and implemented in Queensland State schools. I envisaged that I would also be able to see resonance or dissonance in the policy implementation between the four original project sites and others around the State. In the three-year period of the study, I presented professional development both on-site in 30 schools and in

workshops/conferences to more than 5,000 educators. The broader focus gave me a much larger and more complex data set than I originally anticipated. It also meant that I had to contextualise the inquiry in a broader academic field and incorporate research relating to the dynamics of policy implementation in the Literature Review. However, I believed this increased scope presented an opportunity for the inquiry to be a collective “social memory” (Connell, 1996) of the implementation of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy within a particular time and place.

The positioning of Indigenous ESL/ESD learners as second language learners and the fundamental change of approach advocated in the *Review* (Education Queensland, 2000d) was a significant innovation to be effected in Queensland State schools. It was also an innovation in which I strongly believed. I had lived experience of the negative personal and educational impact of the withdrawal of ESL status on the students I taught. I was encouraged in the wider focus of the study by colleagues, students, elders and researchers who believed, as I did, that the language learning needs of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners needed to be advocated for, better understood, resourced and supported. This encouragement allayed some of my ethical concerns about the potentially exploitative nature of research (Spradley, 1979) particularly in Indigenous contexts. Although the study is limited in terms of the three-year fieldwork period and the four focus schools in Queensland, the broader fieldwork, enabled through my changed role, presented more opportunities to examine the commonality of experience in the policy implementation across the State. I envisaged that my participatory role in supporting the implementation of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a), the research processes which were designed to give voice to educators of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and the final thesis

written as a multi-voiced collective story, would have a number of interrelated benefits for educators of Indigenous students and for the students themselves as well as practical relevance for policy-makers, Principals, teachers and pre-service educators.

1.7 Significance of the study

Although limited in terms of practical constraints of the three-year period of the study and the four focus sites across Queensland, this inquiry is significant in a number of respects: First, it is significant in terms of its subject. *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) was the first time second language learning needs of Indigenous ESL/ESD students and their impact on (English) literacy development had been so clearly recognised through policy in Queensland. At this point in time, this recognition was particularly important as it focussed on the issue of *language* that had been silenced in the federal *Literacy for All* (DEETYA, 1998) policy and offered a window of opportunity to guide educators towards more inclusive and effective practices for this group of marginalised learners. It also offered some promise to counter the potentially detrimental effects of the federal agenda on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. It therefore contributes to the body of academic literature on minority language learners.

Second, again in contrast with the national policies, *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy and its actions focussed on “what matters” (Fullan, 2000, 2003) that is, on teaching and learning, on pedagogy and practice. This in itself is unusual, and provided an opportunity through the research process and in the writing of the thesis to document contemporary practice in a “social archive” (Connell, 1996). My recent teaching experiences gave me some personal

insight into how social and educational relationships could further marginalise already-disadvantaged students and their teachers, leaving them powerless in the face of systemic structures and processes. I reasoned that, as students experience marginalisation primarily at a face-to-face level with teachers, the study of the implementation of a literacy policy whose intent was to ‘speak’ to educators of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students would provide an opportunity for “reticulation” (Connell, 1996) of ideas and successful strategies for these learners through the research process itself and could inform current practice and pre-service teacher education programs. In working co-operatively with teachers and others, I anticipated that the research process would provide opportunities for ideas and critique to be voiced that had been silenced through official forums. As such, I hoped the study would contribute to the literature on collaborative research, provide some practical benefit to educators of Indigenous second language learners and act as a resource for policy-makers and pre-service teacher education programs.

Third, this study contributes to research in social justice and education through its findings and through the form of the thesis. The inquiry takes up Gewirtz’s (2001) invitation to critique educational policy using a framework of questions based on Young’s (1990) five “faces of oppression” and provides insights into the inter-related web of relationships of power, oppression, interruption and subversion that act as barriers to successful policy implementation. The inquiry aims to give voice to silenced and marginalised groups and records participants’ commonalities of experience, whilst still recognising the diversity of those experiences.

1.8 Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is organised into eight chapters. In this chapter, I describe the focus and aims of the inquiry and provide autobiographical details relevant to the study. In Chapter Two, I contextualise the inquiry within four main bodies of literature: current and historical notions of equity, citizenship and social justice; socio-cultural understandings of literacy; minority language learning theories; and finally, theories of policy implementation and organisational change. Chapter Three explains the methodology, research methods and writing of the thesis. I explain how “voices” relate to the subject of the research, the method of interpretation I employed, how I wrote the text and how I conceptualised the research experience overall. I explain whose voices tell the story of the study and why and the methods and strategies I used during the fieldwork.

The fieldwork is organised into three chapters. Chapter Four, examines the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy itself and how educators and Administrators responded to the construction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as second language learners. It incorporates fieldwork from the business meetings, responses of Central Office personnel to its key actions, professional development workshop evaluations and transcribed interviews with participants from the four focus sites. It also includes notes from my reflective journals. Chapter Five presents the fieldwork relating to my professional development role with the Indigenous Education and Training Alliance (IETA), the workshop development, evaluations and participant comments from the focus sites and around Queensland. Chapter Six presents the quantitative data from the Year 2 Diagnostic Net, Grades 3, 5 and 7 tests, school annual reports and operational plans interpreted through the collective voices of

Principal/Key Teacher, Indigenous teacher, non-Indigenous teacher and me as participant researcher at each separate site and incorporates transcribed interviews and entries from my reflective journals.

In Chapter Seven, I use four interpretive frames to dig deeper into the fieldwork: Gewirtz's (2001) interrogative frame for educational researchers; the literature reviewed in Chapter Two; the dialogue from the fieldwork itself and theories of literacy and language. In Chapter Eight, I present the conclusions, contributions and recommendations of the study. I reflect on how this inquiry contributes to understandings of policy implementation dynamics and the relationships between social contexts, particularly power relationships, and educational outcomes for Indigenous ESL students.

Chapter Two

Review of the literature

2.1 Introduction

The focus of this inquiry is to understand the complex interaction of factors and relationships impacting upon Indigenous ESL student achievement in (English) literacy in Queensland. Initially, when I was collecting data for the Indigenous ESL Bandscales project, I contextualised the study predominantly within academic literature relating to literacy, minority language learners and organisational change. However, with my change in focus and expanded research design, I began to draw on literature relating to equity, social justice and policy implementation dynamics both to contextualise the study and to frame the fieldwork. Thus, in this chapter, I position the study within four main bodies of academic literature: current and historical notions of equity, citizenship and social justice; socio-cultural understandings of literacy; minority language learning theories and finally, theories of policy implementation and organisational change in education. This literature is organised into sections: social justice; literacy; social constructions of failure; language; policy; and organisational change.

2.2 Social justice

2.21 Equity, citizenship and social justice in a globalising world

In an increasingly globalising world, “Expanding inequality is recognised, along with ecological risk, as the most serious problem confronting world societies” (Giddens, 1999, p.1). The interrelatedness and interdependence of nations, economies, ecologies, trade, marketing and cultures have foregrounded the development of social capital as

the bedrock of economic development. There is growing international recognition that national stability, and therefore economic competitiveness, is dependent upon developing social cohesion across different social groups with historically differing access to power. As a consequence, issues of inequity are increasingly presented on an international rather than local stage, generating a more global perspective on social justice. In this globalising climate, the nexus between education, literacy, economic competitiveness and building social capital has become a clear conflation in the Australian literacy policy literature and is particularly significant for this study which examines the structures and processes that contribute to or detract from high levels of educational achievement of Indigenous second language learners.

It is probably the case that at no previous stage in human social and economic history has the importance and complexity of literacy been greater nor at any past time has the interrelation between literacy capability and the development of Australia's full potential been closer. Mutually reinforcing changes deriving from international economic globalisation (especially in the wake of trade liberalisation), the rapid proliferation of sophisticated instantaneous communications technologies, and national and global cultural diversity have combined with the emergence of the 'information/knowledge society' as the bases for the economic advancement of nations. This conjunction of e-developments makes it necessary for there to be more intense and more complex literacy capabilities developed among Australians and elevates the importance of sophisticated universal literacy capabilities. Further, these changes entrench text-intensive and technology-intensive processes in employment, communication and civic life and identity. Literacy as a key capability for citizens to understand and influence changes within becomes a

critical feature of a robust, participatory democracy. Whereas formal citizenship simply requires legal recognition of a person's status within the country, a more substantive notion of citizenship asks us to extend the kinds of competencies needed for social and political participation more widely than at present. (Lo Bianco & Freebody, 2001, p.1)

Literacy here is described as important, complex and a “key capability”, crucial both for participation in, and the shaping of, social, economic and political structures of contemporary Australian society and fundamental to equitable access to the nation's economic and social capital. Yet there is no simple, commonly held definition of literacy. Lo Bianco and Freebody (1997) argue that literacy has been defined from “skills-based conceptions of functional literacy through to very broad and all-encompassing definitions, which integrate social and political empowerment” (p.28). If literacy is an important tool in influencing social futures, then being literate is a key social justice issue.

2.22 Literacy, social justice and active citizenship

Literacy has thus been inextricably linked to the notion of “active” citizenship, a term which is prevalent in current Australian education policy literature. Active citizenship can be defined as the acknowledgement that individuals and groups in a democracy have the right to “be able to participate in and shape community economic and political life in Queensland and the nation” (Education Queensland, 2000b, p.12). This transcends notions of citizenship as mere participation in and access to social institutions and is considered a key purpose of schooling in contemporary Queensland.

Schooling was founded on the development of students as worthwhile and contributing citizens. Producing active citizens remains a specific goal of schooling—whether the active citizens are compliant members of an assumed social order, participants within given social structures, or active agents of social change. (Education Queensland, 2000b, p.11)

Since 1993, Education Queensland has promoted an educational approach which develops active and informed citizenship in students. This approach involves students in the reinvigoration of valued social practices and civic institutions through exercising their democratic rights and responsibilities. In recent times, through the *2010: Queensland State Education strategy* (Education Queensland, 2000b) this has come to mean, at least through policy, that students are to be encouraged and educated in active agency for social change.

It can be argued, however, that current notions of active citizenship are more a response to contemporary imperatives to build social and primarily economic capital in an increasingly competitive global marketplace than a deep commitment to social justice. Australian citizens now have to be ‘productive’ in global markets and so educational policy discourses, such as the current “Queensland, the Smart State” epithet on Government publications, emphasise the need for excellence and standards, rather than the shaping and creation of social futures. In such a climate, where economic imperatives and ‘crises’ are being exported into schools (Moore, 1996) the focus of educational resourcing shifts from inputs to outputs (Welch, 1999) and attention tends to be deflected away from ‘disadvantaged’ groups towards ‘universal’ needs and overshadows espoused social justice imperatives of education. This study is

contextualised within the composite framework and the universalising discourse of the national literacy policy *Literacy for All: The challenge for Australian Schools* (DEETYA, 1998) whose focus on standards and measurement generated assessment-led reform.

2.23 Ideologies of social justice

The articulation through policy that transformative citizenship is a key purpose of education in Queensland (Education Queensland, 2000d) reveals a significant and recent shift in ideology on the part of the Queensland State education system. Over the past fifty years, major ideological shifts can be traced through federal and State policies and practices, particularly in the area of Indigenous education. In the 1950s and early 1960s Australian Indigenous people were not recognised as citizens of Australia. The colonialist ideology of that period is reflected in the ways in which governments

systematically discriminate between the conquering and subject groups, in such a way as to entrench the differences between them and to foster their economic, political and cultural inequality. This discrimination is sustained by some form of ideology which justifies the domination of the indigenous population in terms of differences of race, mentality, moral qualities, cultural advancement or religion. (Beckett, 1987, pp.12-13)

This was manifested in Australia through limited educational and employment opportunities for Indigenous peoples including the constraints of living under laws which permitted dislocation and resettlement, restricted access to education and allowed segregated schooling. Only in 1967, were Indigenous people recognised as citizens of Australia and accorded the right to participate in the system of democratic government.

The post 1970s heralded a period of ‘welfare colonialism’ (Beckett, 1987). That is,

the states’ attempt to manage the political problem posed by the presence of a depressed and disenfranchised indigenous population in an affluent, liberal, democratic society. At the practical level it meets the problem by economic expenditure well in excess of what the minority produces. At the ideological level the ‘native’ who once stood in opposition to the ‘settler’ and outside the pale of society, undergoes an apotheosis to emerge as its original citizen. (p.3)

Manifestations of welfare colonialism in Australian education include compensatory programs directed at ‘disadvantaged’ or ‘at risk’ ‘target’ groups as reflected in federal policy from the late 1970s and 1980s. A major criticism of welfare colonialism has been that its compensatory programs have not improved outcomes for Indigenous learners (Nakata, 1999) but rather have created a new, thinly-disguised form of inequity. Connell (1996) further argues that

because they are targeted, compensatory programs can produce two unintended effects: stigmatising the targeted group, which is labelled as deficient and thus may be thought undeserving; and appearing as special deals, not available to other pupils, and thus unjust. (p.6)

Even the language attached to such programs can inadvertently create new deficits (Dyson, 1994).

The outcome of the drive to transform Indigenous people into citizens has, by an irony, been the rehabilitation of the old colonial structures. Indigenous status takes on new ideological significances and the old administrative apparatus is retooled for new tasks. (Beckett, 1987, p.3)

In short, hegemonies are not challenged in these sorts of interventions despite the apparent ideological shifts. Although consultative mechanisms may exist for “disadvantaged” groups, the status quo of structures, processes and mechanisms is neither challenged nor changed in any significant way.

The ideological restraints under which colonialism now has to work oblige it to seek the consent of its clients, giving rise to the need for representation and a new kind of politics. (Beckett, 1987, pp.18-19)

In Australian education policy, this ideology was reflected in the formation and proliferation of consultative groups and committees, reference groups and discussion papers prior to policy publication or distribution of intervention funding. However, a review of targeted funding consultative papers and ensuing policy from 1975 (Harrington & McDonald, 1999) reveals that significant positions and points of view, consistently articulated in the consultation processes have been lost in the final policy documents and attest to the tokenistic nature of these mechanisms where representative bodies are located on the periphery of or outside core democratic processes.

The citizenship now accorded to its subjects requires their consent to, and participation in, the process. In Australia the doctrines of self-determination and self-management have brought into existence representative structures outside the framework of normal government. (Beckett, 1987, p.20)

2.24 The changing face of social justice

Ideological shifts over time have, in turn, generated different conceptualisations of social justice. In the 1970s and 1980s, the predominant discourse around social justice was within the distributive paradigm, focussed on the principles by which goods are allocated in society. Typical government actions in education included: formalising

equal rights and participation in schooling (procedural justice); affirmative action with resources allocated on a needs basis and a focus on “targeted” funding programs (justice as equality of outcome). Young (1990) argues that these distributive notions of social justice deflect attention away from

what people are doing, according to what institutionalised rules, how their doings and havings are structured by institutionalised relations that constitute their positions, and how the combined effect of their doings has recursive effects on their lives. (p.25)

Power, opportunity, identity are not problematised within a distributive social justice paradigm nor are the social structures and relationships that enable or inhibit individuals and groups. Lynch (1995) proposes that equality of “condition” as a social justice objective would address the relational dimension of social justice absent in the distributive paradigm. She conceptualises “equality of condition” in education as “an educational system devoted to developing equally the potential of every member of society” (p.96) and in the workplace as “having substantial equality in working conditions, job satisfaction and income across different occupations” (p.97). Ebert (1991) suggests a postmodernist notion of “mutuality” in an attempt to balance the need to recognise difference and create social cohesion. This idea, based on a politics of recognition (Taylor, 1992), is supported by Leonard (1997) who proposes a concept of social justice promoting a discourse of interdependence that

while recognizing individual difference and cultural diversity, engages in a discourse on the similarities between subjects confronting problems of health, personal identity or material survival, similarities which may be embedded in common experiences of class, gender and race. (p.165)

Gewirtz (2001) posits that, although these post-modern versions of social justice address areas neglected in the distributive paradigm, they fail to address “the injustice of exploitation which is inherent within capitalism” (p.60). She therefore proposes a notion of “relational” justice that builds upon Young’s (1990) five faces of oppression: exploitation; marginalisation; powerlessness; cultural imperialism and violence.

Gewirtz (1998) explains relational justice as

the nature of the relationships which structure society. A focus on this . . . helps us theorize about issues of power and how we treat each other, both in the sense of micro face-to-face interactions and in the sense of macro social and economic relations which are mediated by institutions such as the state and the market It is about the *nature* and *ordering* of social relations, the formal and informal rules which govern how members of society treat each other both on a macro level and at a micro interpersonal level. (p.471)

Gewirtz (2001) argues that Young’s (1990) five faces of oppression provide a useful conceptualisation of social justice to underpin contemporary political action as they focus on the multi-mediated nature of oppressive relations both at a macro, or systemic level, and well as at a micro or interpersonal level. These faces of oppression

emphasize the heterogeneity of experience and injustice—someone unjustly treated in the workplace can act oppressively in the domestic sphere and the victim of that may, in turn, resort to cultural imperialism against others.

(Harvey, 1993, p.107)

The faces of oppression are multidimensional and thereby take account of the cautions articulated by Foucault (1974) and Rabinow (1986) that universalising theories of social justice themselves risk marginalising particular groups. Ideas of identity, discourse,

power and community will be dealt with in this study via an analysis of how they are instantiated in local policy writings. Gewirtz (2001) regards Young's (1990) conceptualisation of social justice as

a rich and holistic fusion of distributional and relational approaches to social justice that is sensitive to the inextricable linkages between the two dimensions. Thus exploitation, marginalization and powerlessness are all viewed as emanating from forms of structural and institutional relationships that limit the material resources of subordinated groups and deny them concrete opportunities to develop and exercise their capacities. (p.60)

Gewirtz (2001) develops Young's (1990) five faces of oppression into a framework of questions to be addressed by education policy-makers and shapers, encouraging critique of whether policy supports or discourages processes of marginalisation. The framework interrogates the extent to which, and the reasons why, policies support, interrupt or subvert exploitative, capitalist, patriarchal, racist, heterosexual, disablist and other relationships within and beyond educational institutions. It questions whether education policy promotes relationships based on recognition, respect and care, or, conversely, produces powerlessness for educators and students, encourages violent practices within and beyond the education system and endorses practices of cultural imperialism and judgementalism. Gewirtz's framework (2001) seems congruent with contemporary notions of active citizenship articulated in Queensland education policy and with the focus of this study, providing one theoretical frame through which to examine social relations at a systemic, district, school and interpersonal level.

2.3 Literacy

2.31 Literacy, social access and social cohesion

Literacy, although its meaning is hotly debated, is an important component of social access and social cohesion. Luke (1995) proposes

Literacy education acts as an institutional gatekeeper to reading and writing practices. Schools, universities, publishers, state departments of education and other affiliated institutions influence who gets what access to kinds of reading and writing practices, and also which representations and version of the world get presented as legitimate to read and write about . . . models of reading are based on particular visions of the social order, and how the literate person should fit into that social order. Ways of reading are not neutral—they are tied up with issues of identity and power, access and capital in literate, capitalist societies. And what we need to ask is how well particular approaches to reading are fitted to the demands and visions of 21st century citizenship. (pp.168-172)

He highlights that becoming literate and ways of being literate are clearly linked with issues of power, social access and social justice and contemporary notions of citizenship.

The literacy review conducted for Education Queensland in 2000 (*Literate Futures*, Education Queensland, 2000c) which has strongly framed the teaching of literacy in Queensland, raises concern about the ongoing under-provision of effective literacy programs and practices for disadvantaged groups, particularly boys, those from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB), Indigenous, non-urban and socio-economically disadvantaged students. It specifically raises the “potentially

counterproductive but forceful discourse of ‘new deficits’ that runs the risk of blaming students, their families and communities for literacy problems” (p.7). Globalisation and technological advancement have altered the kinds of literacies the “new basics” students need to negotiate productive social futures. Therefore, it is not appropriate to define literacy as a collection of reading, writing or spelling skills. Indeed, *Literate Futures* defines literacy as “the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with the texts of traditional and new communications technologies via spoken language, print and multimedia” (p.9). This document (Education Queensland, 2000c) asserts that those already marginalised through lack of mastery of the “old basics” risk further disenfranchisement in this post-industrial age.

Those at-risk students struggling with aspects of traditional print literacy are in serious trouble, particularly in the dot.com and service-based economies. Not surprisingly, those students from both historically and newly marginalised communities are more likely to be ‘at risk’ of traditional literacy problems in schools. That is, there is already evidence that many of those groups who achieved poorly with traditional print literacy remain at the margins of new technology use. Post-industrial society is already fracturing into information/technology rich and information/technology poor socioeconomic classes. Poverty, socioeconomic exclusion and cultural marginality remain powerful forces in the shaping of who gets which kinds of literacy, and to what end these can be used. (p.8)

What constitutes literacy has been the subject of much debate over the past ten years. However, there is general agreement in the current academic literature, (Gee & Lankshear, 1995; Green, Hodgins & Luke, 1997; Luke, 1996; Luke & Freebody, 1997;

Nixon, 1997) that literacy is, or rather literacies are, inseparable both from the practices in which they are embedded and the effects of these practices. Literacy is not a simplistic toolkit of decoding and encoding skills. Literacy is a social practice. Therefore, the issue of who gets access to which literacies is not value-neutral and this raises the possibility that literacy education itself can replicate existing inequalities, depending upon which literacies are validated or rejected within current educational structures.

Lankshear (1998) proposes that the goal of literacy education for a democratic society should be

to pursue the achievement of a universally literate populace who employ literacies effectively in pursuing their various individual and shared social, cultural and economic purposes, in the interests/for the benefits of all on an equitable basis. (p.3)

This resonates both with Gewirtz's notions of relational justice (2001) and Education Queensland's (2000b) focus on active citizenship. The distinction between literacy as a social practice, rather than a defined set of skills, is significant in that it highlights a harsh contradiction between contemporary academic literature and the current federal government assessment-led agenda around literacy standards and outcomes. Western nations' perceived literacy 'crises' become part of government discourse most frequently in times of economic constraint (Comber, Green, Lingard & Luke, 1998; Green, Hodgins & Luke, 1997; Hammond & Derewianka, 1999; Kamler, 1999) and therefore appear more symptomatic of political imperatives rather than educational concerns. A particular characteristic of such discourse is the narrowing of definitions of literacy into a set of mass-measurable skills which consequently can be articulated in

nationally comparable standards and benchmarks. This political imperative is reflected in the revised national goals of schooling announced in the *Adelaide Declaration* (MCEETYA, 1999b) and the assessment agenda it generated.

2.32 Is it a problem of language or literacy?

Federal government response to the persistent gap in educational achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners as reported in a review of selected policies, commissioned reports and targeted programs over the period 1975-2000 (Harrington & McDonald, 1999) highlights literacy and numeracy as key focus areas. However, there is a significant shift in the discourse between early and later policies. Importantly for this study, the second language issues for some Indigenous students are highlighted in policies and targeted programs of the early eighties but by the mid-nineties, the issue of *language* had all but disappeared under an umbrella of *literacy*. The acknowledgement of literacy and numeracy as significant areas in policy to address the gap in educational achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners reflects their perceived importance in addressing equity through education. In 1992, *Putting literacy on the agenda: International literacy year end of year report 1990* (DEET, 1992) concluded that those most economically disadvantaged in Australian society had the lowest levels of literacy and highlighted the societal costs of inadequate literacy levels.

It is significant for this study, that by the 1990s, federal policy increasingly uses the term *literacy* to define the ‘problem’, renaming and effectively silencing the issue of *language* that had been so clearly voiced by Indigenous consultative bodies and others in policy background and discussion papers (DEET, 1994; MCEETYA, 2000). Historically, Indigenous learners’ second language learning needs had had little

recognition in Commonwealth initiatives (Derewianka & Hammond, 1991). In 1996, the *Commonwealth programs for schools quadrennial administrative guidelines, 1997-2000* (DEST, n.d.) heralded the subsuming of the general ESL support program under a new broadbanded literacy program. The ESL support program was the only ESL funding that specifically addressed the language needs of Indigenous students and was short-lived. The subsequent broadbanding of previously targeted programs had a detrimental effect on localised (school) responses to the needs of minority (particularly Indigenous) second and subsequent language learners, constructing their needs under what Lo Bianco (1999) calls a “superordinate category” of literacy. This is discussed further in section 2.4. Michell (1999) describes this process as a “withering strategy”, arguing that the expiry of the *Australia’s language: Australian language and literacy policy* (DEET, 1991) and the election of the Howard government in 1996 heralded a major ideological shift and significant change in direction in Commonwealth policy on equity and the allocation of equity-focused funding to schools.

2.33 Literacy for all (?): the challenge for Australian schools

The revised national goals for schooling in *Literacy for All: The challenge for Australian schools* (DEETYA, 1998) their endorsement through the *Adelaide Declaration* (MCEETYA, 1999b) and the address of the then federal Minister for Education, David Kemp, to the 1999 Sixth Annual Curriculum Council conference merit close scrutiny as they reflect a major shift in policy as text and policy as discourse (Ball, 1990) and because they provoked such debate in academic and educational arenas (Alloway & Gilbert, 1998; Davison & Williams, 1999; Lankshear, 1998; McKay, 1998a, b; Michell, 1999). The declaration and its effects in the focus schools is a key data set explored in Chapter Six as, with the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait*

Islander education policy (DEET, 1993), it directed school responses to the needs of Indigenous second language learners during the period of this study. Kemp's 1999 address suggests that the perceived literacy crisis in Australia will be addressed by dint of students sitting for benchmark tests, which will in turn improve standards. This corroborates Hargraves' argument (1989) that, at particular critical points in time, gaps between educational policy and the perceived needs of society are highlighted by governments and generate assessment-led reforms. Michell (1999) points out that an early casualty of the federal shift in focus was the notion of diversity as a framework for the national literacy plan and the demise of ESL support, a position that certainly correlates with my lived experience in a school during this period.

The advent of the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan raised immediate questions about the status and role of ESL. Its focus on early intervention for students entering school at the first year of primary schooling as well as the absence of oracy or any reference to ESL teaching and learning excluded any consideration of the needs of ESL learners in Australia's schools. The plan could only be interpreted either as a fundamental oversight or as foreshadowing a major redirection of effort, and eventually funding, away from the existing ESL General Support Program. (p.9)

In his address to the Curriculum Council (1999), Kemp makes a clear link between education, Australia's economic competitiveness and literacy. The focus on outcomes, goals and targets assigns responsibility for student achievement to schools and teachers and deflects attention away from systemic structures and processes and the broader social context. "The new goals for schooling are student-centred: that is, they focus on the learning outcomes rather than the strategies and processes of education

providers” (n.p.no.). Yet international literature reviewed later in this chapter relating to the poor achievement of language minority students indicates that focus *has* to be on those structures and processes if inequities are to be addressed. In the address, not only is literacy promoted as the “superordinate category” (Lo Bianco, 1999) but the narrow construction of literacy tested in this process also becomes legitimated and promoted as the only way to *be* literate. “I do not pretend that these processes will provide us with a picture of the total social, intellectual or emotional outcomes of Australia’s schools but they allow us to keep a finger on the pulse of what is essential” (Kemp, 1999, n.p.no.). Lo Bianco (1999) argues that “Literacy is being constructed as the ‘real need’ demonstrates why there is a need to be concerned about the elevation of literacy as the major (and only) educational need” (p.41), a point echoed by Hammond (1999a, b) who maintains that the conflation of equity, literacy and disadvantage is only likely to position ESL students as deficit. Michell (1999) proposes that explanatory elements of the revised goals (policy as discourse) are subsumed by action elements and effectively shift the locus of responsibility away from those creating systems and processes towards schools, rendering ESL a classroom-only issue. ESL needs are reduced to an “aspect of literacy” (DEETYA, 1998, p.31) a situation which can only be detrimental to minority language learners.

The strategies proposed in the Policy provide little opportunity to do other than locate such students in deficit terms. They also provide little opportunity to recognise the talents and the linguistic and cultural knowledge that such students bring with them to school. (Michell, 1999, p.127)

Concerns about these conflations are reflected in the proliferation of academic literature which emerged after the *Adelaide Declaration* (MCEETYA, 1999b) (Alloway

& Gilbert, 1998; McKay, 1998a, b; Michell, 1999). Although the policy is couched in a discourse of equity, “The new goals also describe a schooling which is socially just and make clear the crucial link between educational equity and the achievement of outcomes” (Kemp, 1999, n.p.no.). Equity seems to be conceptualised as all are equal because all take the (benchmark) tests “One of the great strengths of the approach to goals, targets and benchmarks in this country is that, uniquely, they are all inclusive” (n.p.no.). These goals and benchmarks are constructed as high value data, which parents can use to make choices about their children’s education. “Parents are, increasingly, using information from schools to make choices about their children’s education . . . Test results were seen as a touchstone which was used to inform parents’ judgement about the quality of education provided” (p.5).

2.4 Social constructions of failure

2.41 Standards and deviations

The rhetoric of the declaration hails the introduction of benchmark testing as an inclusive way to test (and therefore monitor) student (and therefore school and teacher) performance. As there is national agreement to the testing, it seems this particular form of assessment is being promoted as the hard currency of monitoring and accountability. Benchmarks are “nationally recognised and valued” (Kemp, 1999, n.p.no.) thus reinforcing the notion that their attainment is both reasonable and possible by all students. By implication then, failure to attain the benchmark standards focuses scrutiny on the competence of schools and teachers and away from systemic structures and processes. Parents are encouraged to compare this publicly available data and use it to “make choices” (n.p.nos) regarding their children’s education. Unfortunately, for the majority of Indigenous parents living in remote communities in Queensland, there is no

choice of schooling. So, the publication of this data is obviously much more empowering for some parents than others. The logic appears to be that these tests are inclusive by virtue of the fact that everyone is included. No one is excluded, however inequitable it may be to be included. This stance can only deflect educators' attention away from the significant impact of learning in a second (or subsequent) language on *literacy* performance, reinforce the deficit position of students who are already marginalised and effectively silence the issue of language altogether.

Assessment practices operationalise and formalise what, in Bourdieu's (1991) terms, the child *must do* for his or her schooling to be acknowledged by others. They constitute school experience in explicit terms, regulate it, and translate it in to a form that can be communicated to the rest of the school, and to parents, employers, and to outside educational and credentialling institutions. (Moore, 1996, p.191)

The lauded inclusivity of such an approach completely ignores the wide body of research, which concludes that the time required to reach academic competence in a second language is between five and seven years, even with professional/middle-class learners with a high degree of cultural correlation between home and the classroom at optimal age for second language acquisition (Collier, 1987, 1989; Collier & Thomas, 1988; de Villiers & de Villiers, 1978; McLaughlin, 1984). Most Indigenous ESL students only experience passive Standard Australian English via popular media, if accessible, and if at all, until they attend school, where their cognitive development has to take place through a new, 'foreign' language. They are consequently disadvantaged by at least five years related to their English Home Language speaking peers with a likely exacerbation of difficulty due to cultural differences, including a local emphasis on

oracy. These factors have an exponential impact if students are assessed using instruments designed or normed to first language users.

What is assessed and how it is assessed has a significant impact in schools, particularly when it is linked to specific funding or intervention models, an issue which again correlates with my personal experiences. Davison and Williams' (1999) research supports notions that system level processes frame the direction of educational interactions between teachers and students all the way down to the classroom. Both McKay (1997) and Michell (1999) argue that true multiculturalism, or the valuing of cultural diversity as a productive resource, necessarily requires differentiation in formal assessment. Therefore, standardised, common assessment tools are inappropriate, discriminatory and challenge the federal policy assumption that it is either possible or desirable to have common assessment items in a country characterised by its ethnic and linguistic diversity rather than its commonality. "The benchmarks are blunt instruments that cannot give teachers crucial information necessary for developing effective needs-based programs" (Michell, 1999, p.19). Furthermore, pedagogy under the influence of testing regimes tends to assume a certain task oriented efficiency focused on exam performance and as such tend to 'thin out' pedagogy (Lingard, Hayes & Mills, 2002, p.7). Michell (1999) brings the validity of any universal testing instrument in a linguistically and culturally diverse nation further into question

If ESL factors remain hidden within the reported data, then the literacy outcomes of systems with high proportions of ESL students may easily be misconstrued as literacy underachievement rather than viewed as a reflection of the wider cultural and linguistic diversity of the population. (p.18)

Kalantzis and Cope (1999) maintain that there can be no standard or norm in literacy.

The meaning of literacy pedagogy has changed. Local diversity and global connectedness not only mean that there can be no standard; they mean that the most important skill students need to learn is to negotiate dialect, register and semiotic differences, code switching, interlanguages and hybrid cross-cultural discourses. Indeed, this is the only hope for averting the catastrophic conflicts about identities and spaces that now seem ever ready to flare up. (p.269)

Davison and Williams (1999) question not only the equity of applying universal assessment tools to already marginalised (ESL) learners, but also suggest that federal government ways of measuring literacy achievement are not credible tools.

The benchmarks, with their assumption of continuous schooling in Australia and complete lack of any contextualisation of learning will also show remarkable progress as failure. This seriously undermines the credibility for the benchmarks as an instrument of public accountability, at least in relation to LOTE background students, and suggests that alternative approaches to benchmarking must be explored. (p.73)

The negative effect that testing and assessment can have on the learning experiences of minority language learners has been explored in both Australian and international research (Cummins, 1986, 1989; Cummins & Swain, 1986; Green, Hodgins & Luke, 1997; Lingard, Hayes & Mills, 2002; McKay 1998a, b, 1999; McNaughton, 1995; Michell, 1999). Lo Bianco (1999) highlights concerns in Australia and proposes

Since 1997 literacy has been elevated to a position of critical concern in Australian language policy . . . concern that narrow definitions of the literacy enterprise have been used to stifle curriculum choices, to introduce regimes of testing that may have the effect of constraining appropriate legitimate diversity in schooling and to overwhelm the responses of schools to the needs of minority language interests (such as ESL and bilingual education). (pp.40-41)

A particularly pernicious aspect of the *Adelaide Declaration* (MCEETYA, 1999b) is that it is couched in a discourse of social justice, presenting the argument that audited common, nationally-agreed goals will, in and of themselves, result in improved learning for all students, “our main objectives are to raise standards of learning across the curriculum, to ensure that schools and school systems can meet the needs of all students” (p.10). If parents, teachers and communities see these measures as high value data (and they are if the results of this testing are in the public domain and are used as valid measures of performance by students and schools), there may be significant resistance to alternative and more appropriate measures. Historically, alternative measures and programs have not served Indigenous people well and perhaps have deflected attention away from the very processes and structures which replicate inequality in schools. As a consequence, Indigenous people may be justifiably suspicious about yet more diagnoses of the problem.

I suspect, in fact I know, that the teaching of English is geared down, down to functional purposes, because that is all we are seen to need it for. (Nakata, 1999, p.17) It’s time we started developing a model . . . that prescribes some sort of monitoring of goals that reflects the urgency of the project. (p.19)

If the nationally defined standard is one measured in and through Standard Australian English, it necessarily positions second language learners as failing *literate*s. “Where the individual child is constantly located as the site of failure, there is little incentive to interrogate mainstream curriculum and schooling practices” (Alloway & Gilbert, 1998, p.10). The overt focus on student outcomes rather than systems or processes stands in opposition to much international research, which indicates that it is precisely systems and processes that contribute to underachievement by minority learners (Cummins 1989, 1994; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988). Yet there is a window of opportunity in that Cummins (1986) maintains “discriminatory structures are manifested in the *interactions* that minority students and communities experience with *individual* educators” (p.viii). Therefore, individual teachers can make a difference regardless of the systems and processes in place. However, the *Adelaide Declaration* (MCEETYA, 1998b) focuses predominantly on accountabilities leaving teachers little guidance as to how improvement may occur. In examining literacy policy, specifically citing *Literacy for All* (DEETYA, 1998), Lankshear (1998) proposes a framework of five components and articulates concern at the “huge priority currently being attached to the ‘lingering basics’” (p.10). He cautions:

Unless we are careful here we may unwittingly contribute to consolidating a new word order, which will mediate in powerful ways access by individuals and groups to places and rewards within the new work order, as well as evolving civic and cultural domains. (p.10)

and proposes that the mastery of encoding and decoding (solely) print texts may petrify learners within “low order conceptions and practices of literacy” (p.10).

2.42 Explanations for school failure

Bourdieu (1986, 1990, 1991) draws on a theory of “capital” to explain the differential outcomes of schooling. He posits that children bring to school their distinct, accrued cultural, social and linguistic capital acquired in daily life. The capital most likely to be valued and credentialed through schooling is that of the dominant classes who

In a number of social universes, one of the privileges of the dominant, who move in their world as fish in water, resides in the fact that they need not engage in rational computation in order to meet the goals that best suit their interests. All they have to do is follow their dispositions, which being adjusted to their positions, ‘naturally’ generate practices adjusted to the situation. (Bourdieu, 1990, p.108)

Therefore, students who bring less of the capital valued by schooling to their learning experiences are more likely to fail, and be failed by, schooling. Thomson (2002) refers to the resources children bring to school as a “virtual schoolbag”, the contents of which are rendered useful or useless for learning depending upon whether they are able to be accessed and built upon in the classroom.

Comber (1997) identifies four principal explanations in international academic literature for lower levels of achievement of “disadvantaged”, that is poor, working class and minority students. First, these students are deficit and therefore will not succeed. Second, they have different knowledge and language practices than those of the school. Third, schools as institutions replicate existing inequalities in society. Fourth, minority students actively resist white middle-class schooling. The most potentially detrimental of these explanations is the first, the deficit explanation. Taking

the specific context of this study, if teachers and Administrators believe that Indigenous second language learners are inherently deficient, the likely result is lowered expectations, alternative watered-down curriculum, inappropriate interventions and programs and ultimately even poorer educational outcomes. This is a concern echoed by Comber, Green, Lingard and Luke (1998), Freebody, Ludwig and Gunn (1995) and Freebody and Welch (1993), and Cummins (1986) who also highlight issues of access and power and the roles of schools in the replication of inequality. “The differential access of working-class, Aboriginal, and other groups of children to effective literacy programs in school has . . . reached crisis point in the context of changing economic and employment conditions (Freebody & Welch, 1993, p.210). Cummins (1986) purports “Schools historically have reflected the societal power structure by eradicating minority students’ language and identity and by attributing their social failure to inherent deficiencies” (p.viii).

Although teacher practice can be a significant determiner of success (Good, Biddle & Brophy, 1975) regardless of systemic processes, recent research (Alloway & Gilbert, 1998; Comber 1996; Freebody, Ludwig & Gunn, 1995; Gregory & Williams, 2000) suggests that teachers rarely examine either their own pedagogical practices or their impact upon individual students

Where mainstream curriculum exists as the given, teachers’ critical gaze is never reflexively turned on taken-for-granted practices. Failure elicits **more of the same**. The impetus is to offer individual remediation to assimilate, integrate, and colonise students whose interests do not reflect the interests of the school. It is never quite apparent that it may be the curriculum and teaching practices that are in need of remediation . . . Educators must surely puzzle at how a curriculum

centred on literacy learning produces such miserable results in such systematic patterns for so many. (Alloway & Gilbert, 1998, p.10, emphasis in original)

This view correlates both with Cummins' (1986) notions of marginalisation which occurs at an individual level and Good, Biddle and Brophy's (1975) studies indicating that individual teachers can, and do make a difference to student achievement.

2.5 Language

2.51 Language 'silence' and power in the construction of failure

Boomer (1992) highlights the issue of language in educational success, indicating that "learning is vitally connected with the language resources that can be brought to it" (p.8). Hymes (1996) also proposes that the language of schooling actively reproduces the social order.

Class stratification and cultural assumptions about language converge in schooling to reproduce the social order. A latent function of the educational system is to instill linguistic insecurity, to discriminate linguistically, to channel children in ways that have an integral linguistic component, while appearing open and fair to all. (p.84)

In both the federal direction and the strong frame around mainstream literacy education in Queensland (*Literate Futures*, Education Queensland, 2000c) during the period of the study there is no focus on *language*. Yet there is a wide body of academic literature relating to the second language acquisition of minority language learners worldwide and its impact on educational outcomes (Cummins, 1981a, b, 1986, 1989, 1994; Malcolm 1995, 2001; Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988). Cummins (1986) proposes that the historical construction of language, race and power plays a significant role in the under-achievement of minority students in schools and posits that social contexts, especially

power relations across ethnic groups, are critical factors in their language learning and achievement. He identifies the following common factors as significant for those minority groups who perform most poorly in schools. They have been in a dominated relationship with the Anglo majority for centuries; denied the opportunity to assimilate; given segregated and inferior education for generations; prevented from full participation and advancement; have internalised an inferior self-image and the explanation of school failure has been attributed to inherent deficiencies in the individual which served to deflect the attention away from the educational experiences of the child. All these factors could be applied to Indigenous Australians with the added dimension that Indigenous ESL/ESD learners have not been and, in some cases, are still not recognised as second language learners, even within their own communities and may be regarded as speaking a form of degraded English. Delpit (1995), in reflecting upon African-American student achievement, proposes that there are five aspects to the culture of power existing in educational contexts.

1. Issues of power are enacted in classrooms.
2. There are codes or rules for participating in power: that is, there is a “culture of power”.
3. The rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power.
4. If you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier.
5. Those with the power are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge—its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence. (p.24)

Standard Australian English is the language of power in the context of this study.

Access to and facility in the language of power is a key issue for educational participation and success in Queensland. Language, then, is a prime site for issues of power and oppression to be played out in a school context.

2.52 Linking Gewirtz's framework of oppression and language policy and practice in Queensland

Historically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander second language learners in Queensland have been subject to oppressive relationships in all five areas identified by Young (1990). Language and literacy policy/practices reflected relationships of exploitation; marginalisation; (systemic) violence and imperialism. Exploitative (racist) relationships occurred through segregated and/or differential access to educational opportunities. Marginalisation and powerlessness were effected through culturally imperialistic and sometimes violent pedagogical and assessment practices that assumed proficiency in Standard Australian English, denied the use of Home Languages in the education environment and provided inappropriate interventions. Lo Bianco and Freebody (1997) posit

Western models of literacy and education may be out of tune with crucial aspects of Aboriginal cultures, beliefs and values. Literacy education for Aboriginal peoples has a regrettable history of cultural bias and deficit images, of remedial and inappropriate developmental approaches and assessment models in education resulting in damaging educational and social outcomes from schooling for indigenous people. (p.62)

2.53 Language as a site of oppression on the international stage

The situation described above is not unique to Australia. Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) proposes that language is a major site of oppression for minorities worldwide:

If you want to have your fair share of the power and the resources (both material and non-material) of your native country, you have to be able to take part in the

democratic processes in your country. You have to be able to negotiate, try to influence, to have a voice. The main instrument for doing that is language. You must be able to communicate with your fellow citizens, in order to be able to influence your own situation, to be a subject in your life, not an object to be handled like others. Language is the main instrument for communication. If you live in a country with speakers of many different languages, you have to share at least one language with the others, in order for a democratic process to be possible. And if the language most widely spoken by your fellow citizens (either because it is the mother tongue of the majority, or because the power elite has decided that that will be the *lingua franca*) is NOT your mother tongue, you belong to a *linguistic minority* in your country. That means *you have to become (at least) bilingual in order to participate.* (p.14)

Therefore, in the Australian context, access to and proficiency in the language of power, not just being ‘literate’ in that language, in the narrow construction of literacy considered “essential” in the national testing agenda, is critical to active citizenship. Skutnabb-Kangas (1988) proposes that it is only when individuals have power in the dominant language that they are able to participate in the democratic processes.

In a democratic country, it should be the duty of the school system to give every child, regardless of linguistic background, the same chance to participate in the democratic process. If this requires that (at least) some children (i.e., the linguistic minority children) become bilingual or multilingual, then it should be the duty of the educational system to make them bilingual/multilingual, as individuals (as opposed to the *country* being multilingual). (p.15)

Proficiency in the dominant language, from this perspective, is seminal to the notion of active citizenship espoused in *2010: Queensland State Education* (Education Queensland, 2000b) and this is a moral imperative of schooling.

2.54 Time and timing in second language learning

Research on the educational achievement of ESL learners (Collier 1987, 1989; Collier & Thomas, 1988; Rosier & Holm, 1980) strongly suggests that time is a critical factor in second language development. Collier and Thomas (1988) maintain that whereas students can achieve basic interpersonal communication skills in context-embedded, cognitively undemanding aspects of language after about two years of ‘immersion’ in English, cognitive academic language proficiency or the ability to access and achieve in an academic (school) context takes between five and seven years, even with middle/upper-class children receiving explicit ESL instruction. The majority of Indigenous ESL students in Queensland and in this study are not immersed in English, have little social context for learning English and few opportunities to use English in their daily lives. Few receive explicit English language instruction and no school during the period of the research, or subsequently, adopted bilingual instruction or instruction in the students’ Home Language in the early years of schooling. All students in this study were learning their initial literacy only in and through English. Yet,

When students are schooled in two languages, with solid cognitive academic instruction provided in both the first and second languages, both language minority and language majority students generally take from 4 to 7 years to reach national norms on standardised tests in reading, social studies, and science (measure of thinking skills), whereas their performance may reach national norms in as little as 2 years in L1 and L2 tests in mathematics and language arts (the latter testing spelling, punctuation, and simple grammar points). Social class

background does not appear to make a significant difference in academic achievement in a dual-language program. (Collier, 1989, pp. 526-527)

Rosier and Holm's (1980) six-year, longitudinal study of Navajo students concluded that the effect of learning initial literacy and numeracy in Home Language was cumulative. Although there was little difference in achievement on standardised tests *initially* between those receiving instruction in Navajo as opposed to English, by the fourth grade there were significant differences in achievement levels in English and arithmetic for those who had received their early years instruction in Navajo. These results were achieved with concentrated, planned, explicit language instruction in Navajo and English. Few Indigenous Australian second language learners access specific ESL instruction. The time required for language improvement to be apparent is generally longer than most terms of government, the period of this study and certainly longer than the period between restructuring and refocussing cycles within Education Queensland. (There were two major restructures in Education Queensland during the three-year research period.) Other studies and academic literature (Collier 1987, 1989; Collier & Thomas, 1988; Fullan, 1993, 2000, 2003) suggest that this period of time is too brief to show significant improvements in response to the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) policies.

The conclusions in Rosier and Holm's study (1980) are supported by other research on the cumulative benefit of learning through Home Language instruction with solid academic instruction in the early years (De Avila & Duncan, 1980; Diaz, 1983; Hakuta, 1986). However, in Queensland, there has been little attention or resources given to systemic bilingual programs for Indigenous students. National reading/school readiness scales, even when purportedly designed for Indigenous students (DETYA,

2001) do not focus on the *languages* children bring to the learning context. Again, to assess young children using linguistically and culturally inappropriate tools is only likely to reinforce their already-marginalised position in the schooling system. In addition, the time required even for conversational competence in a second language renders early diagnostic or standardised tests invalid for this group of students.

It may take as long as 7 to 10 years for nonnative speakers to reach the average level of native speakers on standardised tests as found in the Collier (1987) and Collier and Thomas (1988) studies. In the bilingual program evaluations, comparison groups of students being schooled exclusively in the second language typically never reach the 50th NCE.¹ (Collier, 1989, p.525)

There is considerable pressure through accountability processes within Education Queensland, for example the *School improvement and accountability framework* (Education Queensland, 2002a) to show improvement within a two-year timeframe through the mandated Grades 3, 5 and 7 tests. The Year 2 Diagnostic Net assumes English first language proficiency and is targeted towards “early intervention”. Second language acquisition research (Collier & Thomas, 1988; Cummins & Swain, 1986) points to both the time required for academic competence in a language and the optimal age at which children learn another language (from about eight years old), that is, when their first language is already sufficiently developed. Second language learning is additive. International research into second language acquisition and literacy outcomes (Cummins, 1981a, b; Cummins & Swain, 1986; Genessee, 1978) indicates that literacy in a second language is built upon literacy skills already acquired in the first language.

¹ Mean score in the national tests.

Currently in Queensland, we expect all students to learn their initial literacy in and through English. Students are also expected to learn English, about English and through English from the first contact with formal schooling, that is, at the age four or five even where their social context does not require the use of English in daily interactions and communication. The majority of teachers in this study had no formal training in second language acquisition and therefore were not appropriately skilled in using bilingual/ESL strategies in their classrooms. During the period of the fieldwork, no mainstream pre-service teacher education institutions in Queensland had English as a Second Language pedagogy as a core component of their programs. Yet there is a wealth of literature suggesting that ESL skills are critical to improving Indigenous student literacy in Australia

For effective literacy teaching for indigenous children, including urban children, there must be a clear understanding of the social and communicative functions of Aboriginal Englishes and pidgins, and their lexical and grammatical structures, in order that teachers understand that these language forms are a foundation on which to build in bridging to SAE rather than a source of interference into the learner's use of school English. Acknowledging the value of multilingualism and the many English dialects known by the children of Aboriginal communities, including recognition of Aboriginal English and Kriols as languages in their own right, is a necessary part of such an approach. (Lo Bianco & Freebody, 2001, p.39)

This research literature seems to have been ignored in federal literacy policy for Indigenous students since 1998.

2.55 Defining the “problem” as one of literacy

The definition of the problem as one of literacy has had the effect of systematically silencing the issue of language. Lo Bianco (1999) proposes

These various associations, confluences and definitions [of literacy] have the collective effect of making available within discussion of bilingual education criteria for judgement, which are principally to do with (English) literacy. The naming of the domain strategically distances an indigenous cultural, human rights or linguistic framework from consideration and marginalises these as criteria for assessing the outcomes, purposes or rationales of bilingual schooling. Literacy is not named as *English* but manifestly is only imagined to be possible in English. (p.46)

Yet a common and consistent thread through the discussion papers informing current Commonwealth policy (*National review of education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*, MCEETYA, 1994 and the *National Indigenous English literacy and numeracy strategy* 1996-2002, DEST, 2000) is the importance of language in Indigenous student achievement. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students do not speak Standard Australian English as their first language or first dialect.

Access to ESL or English language acquisition programs and teaching strategies is crucial for the development of proficiency in English Language, particularly in the early years. It is essential that providers recognise that the language Indigenous students bring to the classroom is a valid form of communication and needs to be valued linguistically as the foundation, if they are to acquire a deep knowledge and understanding of the English language in all its forms (*A national strategy for the*

education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 1996-2002, MCEETYA, 1995). In summary then, changes in funding eligibility criteria, Commonwealth policies and targeted funding accountability framework gradually seemed to give a mandate to schools not to address the literacy ‘problem’ as one related to second language learning.

2.6 Policy

2.61 A window of opportunity for Indigenous ESL learners in Queensland

In 1999, Education Queensland conducted a *Review of education and employment programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Education Queensland*, which was published in early 2000. This review (2000d), authorised by the Director General of Education in November 1998, was prompted by “The persistence of unacceptable differences between the outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and others in Education Queensland” (p.1). One of its major recommendations was “ensuring that curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, reporting and employment policies and programs effectively meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples” (p.3). The unacceptably large gap between the literacy levels of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was considered a significant enough issue to merit detailed consideration (pp.28-32). In this discussion, although recognition is given to the interrelated risk factors, which contribute to poor literacy performance, the major focus is on second language pedagogy and assessment instruments. Most significantly for this study, it states that:

There is little recognition in policy that students who are Aboriginal English and Torres Strait Creole speakers need different educational responses from others Commonwealth and State ESL funding processes do not adequately consider the Indigenous ESL issue. The absence of recognition and direction in policy in

this area has resulted in the application of a universal approach to literacy and intervention, which is educationally inappropriate for the literacy learning of non-Standard-Australian English speakers. (p.30)

So it seemed that, although federal policy was rendering these students invisible, at least at a State level, a window of opportunity to direct “literacy” funding appeared. The review (Education Queensland, 2000d) engendered *Partners for Success: strategy for improved employment and educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Education Queensland* (Education Queensland, 2000a). This includes the Queensland State literacy policy for Indigenous students. This policy posits that literacy outcomes will be improved when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can be assessed as second language learners and that the use of second language learning principles and pedagogies should be promoted to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander students. This policy makes no distinction between the second language learning needs of Aboriginal English speakers and Torres Strait Creole speakers. These students present at school with similar difficulties. However, Aboriginal English speakers have always been specifically excluded from Commonwealth funding provision for ESL learners as the State interpretation of the accompanying guidelines has regarded Aboriginal English as a dialect rather than a language.

In some key respects this policy is unique. It was the first time in Queensland that ‘ESLness’ had been so specifically and explicitly highlighted as a major contributory factor in Indigenous literacy performance and guided educators towards

these students' second language learning needs. The Key Actions enumerated in the policy are that principals and teachers:

Implement processes to track Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' literacy achievement.

Incorporate strategies in school programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including:

- Assessment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as English as Second Language learners;
- The provision of appropriate ESL support;
- The use of home language while learning English as a second language;
- Use of bilingual education strategies where this is sponsored by the community and appropriately trained teachers are available;
- The use of ESL pedagogy;

Improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by:

- Participating in the development of programs and networks committed to improving pedagogy, especially in literacy teaching for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- Accessing cross-cultural training in the complexity, diversity and distinctiveness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and societies. (Education Queensland, 2000a, pp.20-21)

So, *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) in contrast to federal policies, clearly recognised the “problem” as one of language rather than literacy and seemed to open up pedagogical and assessment pathways based on the recognition of Indigenous students' second language learning status. However, even in this policy, the terms *language* and *literacy* are not clearly defined.

2.62 Policy issues, contradictions and assessment practices

There are, therefore, competing and sometimes contradictory foci within and between federal and Queensland literacy policies as illustrated in Table 1. In summary, federal policies ignore the second language issue and concentrate upon literacy whereas State Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy highlights ESL/ESD issues as seminal to improvement in literacy outcomes. It can be seen from Table 1 that the Queensland policy emphasises ESL pedagogy. Queensland's literacy policy (Education Queensland, 2000a) also gives some guidance as to *how* higher standards and better outcomes are going to be reached through the elaboration of key actions for Principals and teachers as well as Administrators.

The *National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2000-2004* (DEST, 2000) focuses on a cluster of issues, namely, attendance, health, pre-schooling experiences, future aspirations, meaningful community partnerships, community and business leadership and the employment and retention of effective teachers. Literacy is mentioned but language background is rarely alluded to at all. The national strategy, in the area of literacy, calls for good teachers, high expectations of Indigenous students and a project to chart pre-service teachers who have undergone Indigenous studies education (but not studies of ESL). "Best" teaching methods are described as: providing intensive individual support (that is, targeting specific needs rather than broadbanding them); using scaffolding literacy practices (Rose, Gray & Cowey, 1999), a practice which requires the kind of specialist linguistic knowledge which is foundational to effective ESL pedagogy; involving external teams of specialists and Indigenous adults; using oral histories in teaching and using networks and alternative educational sites. Although the national policy recommends the inclusion of students' languages and culture in the curriculum, there is no specific mention of second language pedagogy.

Table 1.
Table of Key Focus Areas in Federal and State (Queensland) Literacy Policies

<i>National Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2000-2004</i>	<i>Adelaide Declaration</i>	<i>Partners for Success</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • literacy • health • attendance • pre-school experiences • future aspirations • meaningful community partnerships • community and business leadership • employment and retention of effective teachers • good teachers • Indigenous studies in pre-service teacher education • high expectations • intensive individual support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student-centred goals • focus on outcomes not strategies and processes • raise standards • nationally agreed benchmarks • standards in literacy and numeracy • standardised tests for all students • comparative data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment of Indigenous learners as ESL learners • tracking and monitoring • provision of ESL support • use of home language while learning English • bilingual education where sponsored by the community • use of ESL pedagogy • accessing cross-cultural training

If it is argued that individual teachers make a difference (Cummins, 1989; Good, Biddle & Brophy, 1975) it seems critical that teachers in Queensland schools be aware of and skilled in the teaching of Standard Australian English (SAE) as a second language or dialect if they are to be effective with Indigenous ESL students. However, Gray (1999) suggests that the typical teacher response to such students who are unable to do a task, is not to teach English explicitly, but rather to lower the standard or reduce classroom practice to ‘busywork’ with little cognitive demand. Second language pedagogy is a specialist skill (Hammond & Derewianka, 1999), which was not a core component of any pre-service teacher education program during the study other than, ironically, the Remote Area Teacher Education program (RATEP) at James Cook University, a pre-service program specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

teachers. This is particularly surprising considering Queensland schools are characterised more by their cultural and linguistic diversity rather than by their homogeneity. Furthermore, despite *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) the language issue was assumed rather than foregrounded in subsequent mainstream key literacy documents published in Queensland such as *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c), an oversight later acknowledged as a “significant omission” (Luke, personal communication, April, 2002).

2.7 Organisational change

2.7.1 The challenge of changing cultures

The task of improving the literacy achievement of Indigenous students does not simply reside within the domain of language. It is a complex task (Sturman, 1997) as is the change process itself (Fullan, 1993, 1995; Fullan & Steigelbauer, 1991; Hargraves, 1989) and necessarily requires significant shifts on the part of systems, individual schools and teachers. In this study, a policy, *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a), directs Principals and teachers to recognise, teach, support, monitor and assess Indigenous students as second language learners, where appropriate. The policy stands apart from both federal policies and Queensland mainstream literacy policies in its focus. Educators, therefore, do not receive a consistent message. These contradictions present significant challenges for policy implementation where teachers may wish to change their practice but have little skill or guidance about how this can be achieved.

Easton (1953) and Anderson (1979) define policy as the “authoritative allocation of values”. Prunty (1985) argues that

The authoritative allocation of values draws our attention to the centrality of power and control in the concept of policy and requires us to consider not only *whose* values are represented in policy, but also *how* these values have become institutionalised. (p.136)

In the context of this study, the national and State policies seemed to capture two different, contrapuntal sets of values or ideologies. In brief, national policies regard literacy as only possible in English (Lo Bianco, 1999), institutionalising and legitimising this way of being literate as “natural” or “common-sense” (Fairclough, 1989) whereas the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy recognises the role of language in literacy achievement for Indigenous ESL/ESD learners. The “centrality of power and control” referred to by Prunty (1985) suggests that policy production and implementation processes are sites of struggle to sustain or contest existing power relationships.

However, simply because policy makers express intent in policy, does not mean their goals will be implemented. Implementation “problems” are the subject of a wide body of literature (Berman & McLaughlin, 1978; Elmore & McLaughlin, 1981; Hall, 1995; Hall & McGinty, 1997; Weatherly & Lipsky, 1977). McDonnell and Elmore (1987) identify four strategies policy makers can use to increase the likelihood of policy being implemented “They can set rules, they can conditionally transfer money, they can invest in future capacity, and they can grant or withdraw authority to individuals and agencies” (p.140). Edwards (1980), McLaughlin, (1998) and Weatherly and Lipsky (1977) suggest four variables that influence successful policy implementation: communication; financial support; will and bureaucratic structure. Hall and McGinty (1997) propose that “the realization of [policy] intentions is shown as both constrained

and enabled by (1) organisational context and conventions (2), linkages between multiple sites and phases of the policy process, (3) the mobilization of resources, and (4) a dynamic and multifaceted conceptualization of power” (p.439). Falk (2002) proposes seven principles, or “emerging guidelines” that encourage effective policy implementation:

effective policy depends on understanding the dynamics of change at the local level; gaining benefits from policy depends on engaging the intended recipients; policy cycle effectiveness requires availability and responsiveness of an evidenciary base; continuity of resources, including structure and personnel, provides short- and long-term sustainable success; ensure market forces are supplemented by resourced capacity-building; inclusive and consultative processes are slow, but they pay off . . . in both the short and long term; and continuous and iterative evaluation underpins implementation success and sustainability of policy. (p.39)

All this literature confirms that policy implementation dynamics are complex and success cannot be achieved through a simple focus on structures.

Teachers ultimately decide the effectiveness of policy (McLaughlin, 1987). Fullan and Steigelbauer (2001) maintain “You can’t mandate what matters” (p.21) and that most educational reform fails because it fails to concentrate on what makes a difference, that is teaching and learning. “The hardest core to crack is the learning core . . . *to restructure is not to reculture*” (p.49). Berends and King (1994) agree:

The core culture of teaching and learning is extremely difficult to change, partly because the problems are intractable, and partly because most strategies fail to focus on teaching and learning Change in teaching for more effective

learning requires major transformation in the culture of the school, and in the relationship of the school to other agencies—an incredibly complex undertaking. Complex problems require creative strategies and time to be resolved. Creating new systems is a relatively simple task and fails to focus on things that will make a difference. (pp.31-32)

Thus, the literature suggests that innovations directed at more effective learning and improved educational outcomes, are highly complex undertakings and require consistency, skill, time and systemic support if they are to be successful. These concepts have significant implications for teacher education, professional development and the focus of this study.

It has long been known that skill and know-how are central to successful change, so it is surprising how little attention we pay to it beyond one-shot workshops and disconnected training. Mastery involves strong initial teacher education, and continuous staff development throughout the career, but it is more than this when we place it in the comprehensive change agency. It is a learning habit that permeates everything we do. It is not enough to be exposed to new ideas. We have to know where new ideas fit, and we have to become skilled in them, not just like them. (Fullan, 2003, p.16)

It follows that, if students experience marginalisation at an individual level (Cummins, 1986) then fundamental change has to occur at an individual as well as at a systemic level. Fullan (1993) proposes

It is only by individuals taking action to alter their own environments that there is any chance for deep change If anything, the educational system is killing

itself because it is more designed for the *status quo* while facing societal expectations of major reform. (p.40)

This notion resonates with Olneck (2000), referring to Bourdieu's work, in that teacher-student interactions "represent exchanges in which the cultural capital expended by both parties is positively or negatively sanctioned, which may or may not yield symbolic profits" (p.320). Goodlad's (1991, p.12) four capacities for change: personal vision-building; inquiry; mastery; and collaboration also point to the individual teacher as a crucial starting point. He identifies four moral imperatives of contemporary schooling: facilitating critical enunciation; providing access to knowledge; building an effective teacher student connection and practising good citizenship, "If schools are to become the responsive, renewing institutions that they must, the teachers in them must be purposefully engaged in the renewal process" (p.25). Accountability, in and of itself, cannot re-culture schools. However, it is the area that systems can most easily focus upon and measure.

2.72 Sustainable leadership

Effecting lasting change is dependent upon sustainable educational leadership, "a key force leading to meaningful, long-term change is leadership sustainability" (Hargraves & Fink, 2004, p.8). If lasting change is dependent upon sustainable leadership, the task facing those schools with the highest numbers of Indigenous ESL students in Queensland is rendered even more difficult by the continual teacher and Principal turnover. Hargraves and Fink propose that there are seven principles of sustainable leadership. First, *leadership matters*. "The prime responsibility of all education leaders is to put in place learning that engages students intellectually, socially, and emotionally. Sustainable leadership goes beyond temporary gains in

achievement scores to create lasting, meaningful improvements in learning” (p.8). An environment where the emphasis is on standardised testing scores as the only nationally comparable data source relating to student and therefore teacher, Principal and school performance, coupled with continual teacher and Principal turnover encourages a short-term focus on improvement and militates against sustainable leadership and change. Second, *sustainable leadership lasts*. "Sustainable leadership means planning and preparing for succession—not as an afterthought, but from the first day of leader’s appointment" (p.9). Succession planning becomes more complicated in remote Queensland contexts when a whole school staff can turnover in a two-year cycle.

Third, *sustainable leadership spreads*.

One way for leaders to leave a lasting legacy is to ensure that others share and help their vision. Leadership succession, therefore, means more than grooming the principal’s successor. It means distributing leadership throughout the school’s professional community so others can carry the torch after the principal has gone. (Spillane, Halverson & Drummond, 2001, p.9).

This principle resonates with the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) policies in that whole, as well as professional, community engagement in schooling is critical for initiatives to be sustainable. It also means that all staff need to be highly-skilled in appropriate pedagogies for learners in these contexts and these cannot be learnt effectively “on the job”. Fourth, *sustainable leadership is socially just* recognising that “schools affect each other in webs of mutual influence” (Hargraves & Fink, 2004, p.10). In many ways, Education Queensland initiatives during the period of the study and currently, counteract mutually supportive collegial environments. “Showcase” awards and “High-Achieving Principals” encourage and reward

individualism rather than collectivism. Also, a focus on standardised testing data and performance targets as a way of gauging school, Principal and teacher achievement encourages Executive Directors and Principals to attract the (apparently) ‘best’ teachers and leaders to the schools under their jurisdiction. Schools and districts that are less attractive to aspiring leaders, due to remoteness or harsh living conditions, generally have little choice of personnel and have difficulty retaining staff beyond the minimum two-year postings.

Sustainable leadership is thrifty without being cheap. It carefully husbands its resources in developing the talents of all its educators rather than lavishing rewards on a few proven stars. Sustainable leadership systems take care of their leaders and encourage leaders to take care of themselves. (Hargraves & Fink, 2004, p.10)

Fifth, is a focus on husbanding resources but is difficult to implement in an environment of constant reform, pedagogical change and staff turnover. Sixth, *sustainable leadership promotes diversity*, proposes that

Promoters of sustainability cultivate and re-create an environment that has the capacity to stimulate continuous improvement on a broad front. Supporters of sustainability enable people to adapt to and prosper in their increasingly complex environments by learning from one another’s diverse practices. (Capra, 1997, p.10)

Standardisation militates against sustainable leadership in that it discourages both a diversity of practices in teaching and learning and innovative approaches to school principalship. Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow and Easton (1998) identify four elements required for large-scale systemic reform: decentralisation; local capacity building; rigorous

external accountability; and stimulation of innovation. They argue that decentralisation in and of itself will not facilitate reform. Decentralisation needs to be more about making policy space for schools to focus on more appropriate strategies for local development.

However, success in a decentralised environment depends on accompanying rigorous external accountability mechanisms that focus on standards and performance. Fullan (2000) argues that these mechanisms need to be based on a philosophy of capacity building not just measurement, developing assessment for learning capacities in teachers that “generate data and procedures that make this focus more likely and more thorough” (p.584). A narrow testing and accountability agenda also actively undermines rich pedagogy (Connell, 1996). Systemic values and processes that focus on individualism and particular constructions of success stifle risk-taking and inventive responses to complex issues. Fullan (2000) after Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow and Easton (1998) also argues that local capacity building involves investment in “policies, training, professional development, ongoing support” (p.4) including the redesign of pre-service teacher education. The schools in this study, as in all Queensland State schools, had flexibility through school-based management but external mechanisms, resourcing and other issues were not necessarily supportive to local capacity building. Seventh, Hargraves and Fink’s (2004) final principle is that *sustainable leadership is activist*.

Cultures get changed in a thousand small ways, not by dramatic announcements from the boardroom. If we wait until top management gives leadership to the change we want to see, we miss the point. For us to have any hope that our own

preferred future will come to pass, we provide the leadership. (Block, 1987, pp.97-98)

This, again, is a particular challenge in schools where staff turnover is high, where personal and professional isolation is the norm, the cultural contexts unfamiliar and where Principals have little, if any, experience in leadership prior to taking up their roles.

2.8 Chapter summary

The purpose of this literature review has been to establish the context for reading the conversations in Chapters Four, Five and Six and to provide one of the frames through which the fieldwork is interpreted. I have reviewed and discussed current and historical notions of equity, citizenship and social justice, theoretical understandings about language and literacy learning, Australian language and literacy policies and theories of leadership and change that help locate and explain the participants' responses to the implementation of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) within a broader theoretical context.

Chapter Three

The collecting and telling of a collective story

3.1 Introduction

This study is a qualitative inquiry “multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.2). In this chapter, I describe how and why I chose to write this study in the way I did and how I carried out the fieldwork and collected the data. The title of the chapter indicates that telling a collective story shaped the writing of the thesis. Constantly, I was struck through the literature, strategic planning meetings and in schools by the frequency and ways in which particular voices were heard, attended to, marginalised or silenced. Hence “voices” relate to the subject of the research, the method of interpretation I employed, how I wrote the text and how I conceptualised the research experience overall. I explain whose voices tell the story and why, how I used them to shape this particular study and how an interrelated set of assumptions and beliefs about human experience and knowledge underpin this research.

My initial interest and research focus was in the development and trial of a second language monitoring tool project for Indigenous learners, the Indigenous ESL Bandscales. However, my changed role in 2001, from full-time researcher to supporting the implementation of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy, presented an opportunity to broaden the scope of study to describe and examine how the literacy policy was being read and put into practice in the four focus schools in which I had been collecting data for the Indigenous ESL Bandscales project and across

the State. The aims of this research, then, were fourfold: to identify and understand the processes and barriers to improved literacy outcomes for Indigenous second language/dialect learners; to contribute to knowledge in guiding effective literacy practices for this group of learners; to build on existing research in the areas of second language acquisition and minority learners, change and policy implementation; and to inform pre-service teacher education programs and educators. Therefore, my primary interest became to understand *how* and *why* participants responded to the literacy policy within *Partners for Success* in the ways they did, to identify which were the processes and barriers to improved literacy outcomes for Indigenous ESL learners and to suggest some responses for future directions. To this end, the research focuses on four principal questions:

1. How did Education Queensland's Central Office, schools, teachers and myself as participant/descriptive researcher respond to literacy policies in Queensland for Indigenous second language/dialect learners?
2. Why?
3. What were the processes that contributed to or detracted from improved literacy outcomes for this specific group of learners?
4. Did *Partners for Success* (Queensland 2000a) make a difference for the participants in this study? (This question arose from the school-based participants.)

Thus, my aim is both descriptive and explanatory. The contribution this study makes to the field of literacy learning for Indigenous second or subsequent language learners, social justice, policy implementation and organisational change comes from both the specificity of what happened at the four research sites themselves and from the methods and frames I use to interpret what happened.

This research is situated within the broad context of a particular time and place where international, national and state governments and education systems are trying to address complex and interconnected historical and current issues of inequity and the distribution of social, linguistic, cultural and economic capital. The inquiry took place in Queensland, Australia, a state within a country with its own particular history around the nexus between education and social access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This specific context provides a framework for understanding why many of the participants in the study held multiple and sometimes contradictory beliefs about Indigenous second language learners and the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy as well as how these values impacted upon practice in schools.

The study took place between 2001 and 2003 in four focus sites, with additional data collected from planning meetings and in excess of 30 schools and more than 5,000 educators to whom I had access as they participated in professional development workshops. The genre of the text is a doctoral thesis whose audience is primarily academic, “a particular audience who will draw on their own prior knowledge and experience” (Rein & Schon, 1977). I was a participant researcher in this inquiry and I have chosen to write the text as a multi-voiced collective story. Although I have foregrounded my authorial voice both through the methodology and the use of particular literary tropes to capture the multiple voices of the participants, I acknowledge that, “The conventions of text and rhetoric are among the ways in which reality is *constructed*” (Atkinson, 1990, p.2). Furthermore,

When we write social science, we are using our authority and privileges to tell about the people we study No matter how we stage the text . . . we—as authors—are

doing the staging. As we speak about the people we study we also speak, for them. As we inscribe their lives, we bestow meaning and promulgate values. (Richardson, 1990, p.12)

3.2 Gathering data and hunting themes

As related in Chapter One, when embarking upon this study, I was a full-time researcher. I had been approached by Education Queensland to collect data in North Queensland for the adaptation and trial of the *NLLIA Bandscales for ESL Learners* (McKay, Hudson & Sappupo, 1994) for Indigenous English Second Language/Dialect learners (Indigenous ESL Bandscales Project), an initiative to support the implementation of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy. In this role, I saw an opportunity to research how the Indigenous ESL Bandscales were being developed, read and implemented in four focus schools. I had selected four schools in different contexts to reflect the heterogeneity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' language experiences. The data collection and trialling phase of the Indigenous ESL Bandscales project required the participation of schools and teachers who already had a significant understanding of language issues and a willingness to participate in the trial.

School 1 was a medium sized district school that identified its community as racially "polarised" with approximately 35 per cent Indigenous (mostly Aboriginal) students. School 2 was a small, remote Torres Strait school where all students were Torres Strait Islanders identified as speaking Torres Strait Creole or a traditional language as a first language. School 3 was a larger school in an Aboriginal community within driving distance of a regional urban centre and had 100 per cent Indigenous students. School 4 was a relatively large school located in a low socio-economic area of

a regional urban centre. This school's population comprised approximately 70 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, 15 per cent Pacific Islander students and 15 per cent of students of other ethnic backgrounds. Academic literature suggests (Fullan, 2003) that it takes at least three years to implement successful change in schools and even then only if certain values, practices, cultures and supports are present, I reasoned that if the development, trial and implementation of the Indigenous ESL Bandscales were to be successful I needed to select schools not only where *language* was already an area of focus and priority but also where, historically, there had been more continuity of staff than was common. My final choice of schools was facilitated by the fact that I had existing professional relationships with the Principals and some key participants in all four schools. All had indicated willingness in trialling and adapting the Indigenous ESL Bandscales, an ongoing interest in second language issues and were supportive of my research focus.

I was cognisant from the outset the methodology selected for the inquiry had to be flexible enough to accommodate a range of factors likely to occur over the period of the study. I was drawn to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework for naturalistic inquiry and Parlett and Hamilton's (1972) *Illuminative Evaluation*, an adaptable and eclectic research strategy which focuses upon the learning milieu or the "network or nexus of cultural, social, institutional and psychological variables" (p.11). Naturalistic inquiries allow "an investigation of phenomena within and in relation to their naturally occurring contexts" (Guba, 1978, p.3). The primary foci of illuminative evaluations are description and interpretation rather than measurement and prediction (Shapiro & Reed, 1984; Shapiro, 1988). "The task is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex reality (or realities) surrounding the program: in short to 'illuminate'" (Parlett

& Hamilton, 1972, p.30). The research questions define the methods of data collection and different techniques can be drawn together to better understand the problem, allowing the researcher to be a “bricoleur” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

In the initial focus of the study, educators were being requested to implement a fundamental change of approach (the development and use of a second language monitoring tool) in an environment of conflicting and competing policy direction and rapid, perhaps overwhelming, innovations in teaching and learning. Parlett and Hamilton’s framework (1972) concentrates upon examining an innovation as an integral part of the learning environment and daily reality, allowing progressive focusing and the incorporation of unpredicted phenomena. In many schools with large proportions of Indigenous ESL/ESD learners, there can be an almost total teaching and administrative staff turnover in one year. This necessarily impacts upon how any innovation is implemented, on teaching and learning experiences; and on the kinds of fieldwork it is possible to conduct over time. In fact, over the three-year period of this study, only one Principal remained consistently in the role and a single key participant remained in the same position in the same school. Schools with large numbers of Indigenous students in remote contexts generally have high staff turnover rates and I could not rely on consistency of participants over the intended fieldwork period. Furthermore, the implementation of the Indigenous ESL Bandscales was a significant innovation involving substantive change in learning and teaching cultures and practices so I needed to consider the most appropriate methods to collect data that revealed changes in learning culture and practices. I also needed to incorporate both qualitative and quantitative data. Although the study was to be essentially qualitative, quantitative data needed to be included, specifically the State and nationally comparable data, as these

have significant impact on perceptions, practices and school-based responses. Initially, then, I conceptualised the participants in the research as shown in Table 2.

Table 2.

Table of Participants in the Four Schools in the Original Focus of the Study

Site 1 Remote Torres Strait school 100% Torres Strait Islander Students	Site 2 Urban school 65% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	Site 3 Aboriginal community school 100% Aboriginal students	Site 4 District school in polarised community 35% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
Key personnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • Deputy • Specialist ESL teacher 	Key personnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • Deputy • Specialist ESL teacher 	Key personnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • Head of curriculum • Specialist ESL teacher • ESL project teacher 	Key personnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal • Learning Support Teacher • Community Liaison Officer
Teachers using Bandscales 2 Torres Strait Islander teachers 2 non-Indigenous teachers 2 Torres Strait Islander teacher aides	Teachers who indicated interest 2 Torres Strait Islander teachers 2 non-Indigenous team teachers	Teachers using Bandscales 2 non-Indigenous teachers 2 Torres Strait Islander teachers	Teachers using Bandscales 2 non-Indigenous teachers 1 Torres Strait Islander teacher 1 Aboriginal teacher
New staff to the school	New staff to the school	New staff to the school	New staff to the school
Others	Others	Others	Others

3.3 Overview of methods and writing

3.31 The early phase of the fieldwork: the observation stage

My role in the Indigenous ESL Bandscales project allowed me to visit each school twice per term over the period of one year. Over this year, I collected significant amounts of observational and documentary data, consistent with the first stage of Parlett and Hamilton's (1972) three-stage framework for illuminative evaluation and Lincoln and Guba's (1985) orientation and interview phase of naturalistic inquiry. That is, I

familiarised myself with the day-to-day learning milieu in each context by visiting each school at least four times. I kept an extensive reflective journal, recorded formal and informal meeting notes and conducted unstructured interviews with a range of participants in all the sites. At this stage, I taped and transcribed 30 interviews with 50 participants across the four schools. These and other data suggested tentative perspectives and an emergent design for the inquiry that led to modified data collection strategies for more focused inquiry—the focussed exploration suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and the funnelling and flexible focus described by Agar (1996).

3.32 A change in role and an expanded research focus

One year into the research, I accepted a position with the Indigenous Education Alliance, a Staff College¹ of Education Queensland, as a Senior Project Officer with a specific responsibility to develop and deliver professional development programs and activities for educators State-wide. This work, whilst facilitating more frequent visits (at least two per term) to the original sites, also meant that I became increasingly a participant in the implementation of policy. I began designing and implementing professional development for teachers in response to my and others' perceptions of key areas of need across the State. In my work, I attended three *Partners for Success* strategic planning meetings, I was a member of Queensland State Education curriculum, literacy and ESL consultative groups, I presented feedback to Central Office on operational documents and I negotiated and made recommendations based on my work. This change in role presented the opportunity to broaden the research focus to the reading and implementation of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy in the four schools. My increasingly participatory role was an

¹ Staff Colleges were organisational units of the Learning and Development Foundation of Education Queensland whose role was to broker (and in this case, deliver) professional development support.

opportunity to see resonance or dissonance between the four focus sites from educators and others around Queensland.

As indicated previously, I presented professional development both on-site in 30 schools and in workshops/conferences to more than 5,000 educators between 2001 and 2003. Consequently, I had access to a much larger data set than I had initially anticipated and that I can include within this thesis. Whereas my work in the initial phases of the study was highly-focussed and specific in collecting data for the Indigenous Bandscales Project, my new State-wide role was much more complex and necessarily impacted upon my understandings and perspectives. My social relationships with the participants also changed significantly. New relationships were built and developed. Sometimes, my only contact with an educator was a two-day workshop. I became an active participant in the culture of the State-wide system that I was studying. This provided me with an opportunity to use the same sites for my doctoral study as those selected for the Indigenous ESL Bandscales Project as the intent of the *Partners for Success* strategy (Queensland, 2000a) was inclusivity of all Indigenous learners, regardless of context.

In my new role, I also worked in a close-knit team of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Some were teachers and all had a passionate commitment to Indigenous education. Membership of this team not only allowed me to test the tentative themes and understandings from my inquiry with a women's network outside the key participants in the study, but also pointed me in directions and gave me insights that I had not considered in the original research design. These voices have been incorporated

into the text, as have the revisions and perspectives of key participants who have read drafts of the study as it progressed and in its final form.

Thus, early in the inquiry, I altered my focus and expanded the original research focus. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose that the nature of a research focus depends on the kind of inquiry involved: research; evaluation; or policy analysis. My intent was descriptive and explanatory. I wished to understand how and why the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy implementation evolved in the way it did at a strategic level, through my support role and at the four focus schools. I envisaged my research task was to illuminate my understanding of the complexities of the program: The kind of inquiry was therefore an “evaluation”. Evaluations, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) adopt an “evaluands” mode of inquiry. “An evaluand is a thing-to-be evaluated—that is, a program, organization, performance, material, facility, or the like, the value of which is to be determined” (p.227). The evaluand in this study is the implementation of the *Partners for Success* literacy policy which recognises second language learning status as a significant factor in Indigenous student (English) literacy achievement.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe two aspects of the term “value”; merit (intrinsic value) and worth (extrinsic value). This study is about extrinsic value as the “worth” of the policy, judgements of its success or failure are determined by its contexts of use, in this case, the four focus schools and me as participant researcher in the study. Lincoln and Guba also propose that evaluations can be formative, “directed towards refinements or improvements” (p.227) or summative, “directed toward an assessment of its overall impact” (p.227). This study is intended as a descriptive and explanatory

inquiry, the how and why of the implementation of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy. Estes and Edmonds (1981) propose that “*the [implementation] process becomes the policy outcome*—that is, the outcome is generated in the process so that the policy is the process” (p.441). This inquiry in Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) terms is, therefore, an evaluation which is summative, where the experience is the policy outcome and the worth of the policy is determined by the “voices” in the conversations.

3.33 The middle phase of the fieldwork: further inquiry and focussed observation

The data collected in the early, observational phase of the study generated some tentative commonalities, recurring trends, issues and themes across the four focus sites. I drew on Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) features for designing a naturalistic inquiry. I had been struck in my Indigenous ESL Bandscales work by the frequency and ways in which particular voices were heard, attended to, marginalised or silenced in systemic processes. As an illustration, while I was collecting data for the Indigenous ESL Bandscales project, the Grade 3 tests in literacy and numeracy were trialled across sample schools in Queensland. The strength of feeling and perceived lack of “voice” in the four focus schools in this study following the trial was so strong that the Principals and teachers asked me to write a paper for presentation at a national ESL conference (Taylor, 2002a). The main focus of the paper, which is incorporated into the study in Chapter Six, was the testing process and the content of the Queensland Years 3, 5 and 7 testing guidelines and process booklet (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2000).

These test instructions, particularly the categories for exemption, provided a window into the systemic construction of deficit for Indigenous learners and silencing

of issues of language in students' (English) literacy performance. The processes of the first *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) business meeting also suggested areas for more focussed inquiry. Thus, by sifting and sorting through this observational data, reflecting and clarifying with participants and with the women's network, I identified a number of areas for more intensive exploration, which I organised as shown in Table 3.

Table 3.
Table of Themes for More Intensive Exploration

New teachers (beginning teachers)	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators	Principals and key participants	Systemic documents	<i>Partners for Success</i> business meetings
Preparation for teaching in Indigenous/ESL contexts	Preparation for teaching through English	Experience in context	Teacher preparation	Teachers
Assumptions about learners	Assumptions about learners	Assumptions about learners	Assumptions about learners	Assumptions about learners
Skill in English language, grammar	Skill in English language, grammar	Skill in curriculum, literacy/ ESL	PD in teaching and learning—What? Why?	English, literacy and ESL
Assumptions about ESL	Assumptions about ESL	Assumptions about ESL	Assumptions about Indigenous ESL learners	Assumptions about ESL
Classroom practice	Classroom practice	School structure and resource allocation	Structures, resources, accountabilities	Structures, resources, accountabilities
Data and accountabilities	Data and accountabilities	Data and accountabilities	Data and accountabilities	Data and accountabilities
Other—what does not fit?	Other—what does not fit?	Other—what does not fit?	Other—what does not fit?	Other—what does not fit?

At this point, as I related earlier, I had more opportunity to visit the focus sites, visiting each twice per term. I collected current planning documents, school operational plans

and quantitative internal and external monitoring data from the four schools. The external monitoring data included Grades 3, 5 and 7 tests and Year 2 Diagnostic Net information.

The internal data included scores on standardised reading, spelling and numeracy tests (although the instruments were not common across the four schools). I conducted additional focussed interviews with 43 school-based educators, attended three *Partners for Success* business meetings, conducted professional development workshops and participated in a range of curriculum, literacy, policy and research consultative groups. I collected focussed evaluations from all participants in all the workshops. I conducted 15 of these workshops with groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff with no non-Indigenous staff present. I used the evaluations from staff at the focus sites for further inquiry. I continued to keep a personal, reflective journal. I discovered specific themes and issues that emerged from one group of participants, non-Indigenous teachers, which were quite different from those raised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers. Accordingly, I re-grouped information into the categories shown in Table 4.

Table 4.
Table of Participant Categories in the Expanded Research Design

New teachers (to the context and/or beginning)	Non-Indigenous teachers	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators	Principals and key participants	Systemic documents	<i>Partners for Success</i> business meetings
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These categories informed the structure or collective “voices” of the thesis with one exception. Analysis of the data I collected at this mid-inquiry stage suggested that the categories I had initially used (and therefore the voices) should be slightly different,

with “Indigenous educators” and “non-Indigenous educators” rather than “new staff” being distinct voices.

3.34 The later stage: seeking to explain

The three stages of illuminative evaluation (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972) are not separate and distinct. They overlap and interrelate. In the third ‘explanatory’ stage of the framework, the researcher is seeking links, causes, effects and patterns and is placing them in a broader explanatory context. Through my journal, drafts for papers and while writing the thesis tentative explanations and links were explored and tested with participants and others. I engaged in “member checking” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to ensure trustworthiness of the fieldwork. I deliberately sought opposing viewpoints through the literature, fieldwork and significant non-participants for further exploration. In writing the thesis through the multiple voices in the story and through the theoretical frames I have employed, I have endeavoured to capture the rich data set that informed the research. I employed Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) audit trail categories and evidence framework to ensure methodological rigour and to guide fieldwork methods and these are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5.

Table of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) Audit Trail Categories and Evidence from the Inquiry

Audit trail classification	Evidence
Raw data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unstructured interviews • Transcribed interviews • School documents • Minutes of meetings • Publications and internal reports • Reflective journals • Workshop evaluations • Systemic accountability documents and processes • Systemic performance data
Data reduction and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summaries • Concepts and categories • Partial explanations • Partial rewrites of experiences
Data reconstruction and synthesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themes woven into collective voices • Collective voices “speak” themes occurring at least twice in all four sites with no disconfirming evidence • Disconfirming evidence written into individual participant voices • Authorial power fore-grounded in writing of the thesis • Publication of papers in journals/conferences, including commissioned paper (Taylor, 2002a, b) from four focus schools.
Process notes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methodological • Trustworthiness • Audit trail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflective journals, transcribed interviews (dated), school documents, minutes of meetings, workshop evaluations, systemic accountability documents and memos, systemic performance data • Indigenous women’s network (peer debriefers), partial reconstructions of experience, participant checking and narrative “repair”, prolonged (3 year) engagement and role, conference presentations and papers
Intention and disposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research proposal • Confirmation seminar • Published papers and presentations
Instrument development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafts reviewed by participants • Feedback notes from participants, Indigenous women’s network and others

3.4 Why a story?

3.41 A narrative frame

“Qualitative researchers need to be storytellers” (Wolcott, 1994, p.17).

Rein and Schon (1977), Robinson and Hawpe (1986) and Richardson (1990) discuss how stories, through concepts, abstraction, schematisation and inference are valid ways of framing or organising any cognitive act. Also,

Because we live in groups, we need ways of understanding the actions of others.

This requires a cognitive analysis of action in its social context. The categories and relations, which comprise narratives are the distillation of such an analysis and represent the properties of social action that are most useful in explaining everyday experience. (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986, p.112)

The aim of stories is not to create static, rigid, atemporal universal laws but rather verisimilitude or resonance with personal experience within a particular time and place thus making them useful in understanding the contradictions and complexities of our everyday realities. This inquiry is therefore a product of narrative cognitive mode and is encoded in the thesis text as a (collective) narrative.

3.42 What constitutes a “good” story?

“Everyday stories are not fictions, or rather, they are no more fictional than any other product of thought such as concepts, since abstraction, schematization, and inference are part of any cognitive act” (Robinson & Hawpe, 1986, pp.111-112). Stories are selective, they cannot tell the ‘whole’ story from every perspective. They are representations of a reality from a particular point of view but they do have what Robinson and Hawpe after Stein and Policastro (1984) call a “prototype” with a limited number of variants. The prototype identifies protagonists, predicaments, attempted resolution of predicaments, outcomes and reactions of protagonists to the situation and

the causal relationships between all the elements. Stories have a limited number of elements and causal relationships between them but the selection of information, categories of information and causal relationships between categories provides familiar (to the reader) criteria for wider applicability and understanding. Furthermore, the contextualised nature of stories can convey the uniqueness of a particular experience whilst generic categories and relationships convey a generality, which is the purpose of this particular study.

Robinson and Hawpe (1986) propose that there are three components of narrative thinking essential to a “good” story. The first is the story schema, or procedural plan, which designates certain categories of essential information and links them through relationships answering questions such as: What happened? To whom? Why? Narrative thinking is appropriate in the exploration of the specific research questions of this study namely: How did Central Office, schools, teachers and I, as participant researcher, respond to literacy policies in Queensland for Indigenous second language/dialect learners? What were the processes that contributed to or detracted from improved literacy outcomes for this specific group of learners?

The second is the story-maker’s knowledge, or the requirement of the author to examine, sort and sift through all the information and select relevant facts. Prior knowledge and experience to make judgements about relevance, interrelatedness and plausibility, the exploration of tentative themes, categorisation of information, checking and verifying, drawing upon previous research are all ways in which a good researcher carries out an inquiry and are reflected in the methods I employed in this study.

The third is the broad range of cognitive strategies used. Through my chosen methodology, I cognitively subjected the information to cyclical revisions, comparing, further inquiring, arranging, checking with others and filling in the gaps or modifying the narrative where required and I considered both the selection of specific information and the way the story unfolded.

Indeed, this thesis is one of several reconstructions of the research experience. One reconstruction occurred as the inquiry unfolded, through my journals and through papers and briefs I prepared for meetings and submissions. Another reconstruction occurred in the publication of papers for conferences and professional journals (Taylor, 2002a, b). These reconstructions were partial analyses of the story as it happened, tentative and incomplete explorations of particular parts of the study. This thesis is a retrospective reconstruction of the research experience. Its perspective is, therefore, significantly influenced by knowing what happened next, by my current role, which is different from that during the study, and the additional knowledge and perspectives I gained during the inquiry itself. In writing this thesis as a multi-voiced collective story, clearly located in a particular time and place, and the methods I used to select from the fieldwork and categorise the voices, I attempt to identify the commonality of the experience between the focus sites and across the State whilst still recognising the heterogeneity of participants' experiences.

3.43 Why a collective story?

“Power is, always, a sociohistorical construction. No textual staging is ever innocent. We are always inscribing values in our writing” (Richardson, 1990, p.12). In grappling with the ways in which I might tell the story, I was drawn to Richardson's

notion of the collective story. A collective story “displays an individual’s story by narrativising the experiences of the social category to which the individual belongs, rather than by telling the particular individual’s story” (p.25). Telling a collective story allows me to group particular themes and issues within the voices of distinct protagonists or social categories. A significant problem for me, in this study, was having such a large data set from which to sift and select in order to foreground particular perspectives; especially those that appeared to be silenced through policy and school practices. I was also concerned with the ethics of anonymity of participants. Nevertheless, a collective story is one that “gives voice to those who are silenced or marginalized” (p.25) and therefore seemed particularly appropriate for relating this research experience.

3.5 Theorising the voices: Who? In what body? From whose perspective? In which cultural framework?

During the period of the research and while reviewing the policy literature, I became conscious of the silenced and marginalised voices. This presented a challenge. I decided that telling a collective story allowed the marginalised and silenced voices to be heard, but whose would the voices be and how might they link and interact as a credible, plausible, cohesive story? I was drawn to Bakhtin’s notions (1981, 1984) of dialogised or dialogical rhetoric, heteroglossia, polyphony and carnivale. Bakhtin characterises a dialogic encounter as one which engages in the ongoing play of voices, voices which emerge from specific historical, political and social contexts, carrying with them traces of specific experiences. He explores heteroglossia as a kind of voiced intertextuality, with voices revealing traces, residues, echoes and resonances that constantly recreate and reconfigure the individual cultural voice of the speaking subject. In such encounters the author is in “a fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogic

position” (1984, pp.63-64) and characters are not mere subjects of authorial discourse. These notions resonated with my authorial intent to disclose my narrative power in this context, be audible in the text in a respectful, dialogic relationship with the silenced and marginalised voices, consonant with Gewirtz’s (2001) faces of oppression.

Bakhtin (1981, 1984) proposes that in a dialogic encounter, author, characters and the reader participate in the creation of truth. Through ‘carnivale’ or the parody of the genres of dominant cultures, marginalised voices can be heard. Cullingford (1994) argues that it is only when the dialogic relationship between official and marginalised discourse is foregrounded that the story can be politically transformative and the canon challenged. A particular challenge in the writing of this study was how to foreground the commonalities of experience without losing their heterogeneity. Thus, I have chosen to create collective voices that represent particular social categories: Indigenous teacher; non-Indigenous teacher: Principal/Key Teacher and me as participant researcher and narrator. In organising the fieldwork in this way, I was able to capture the commonality of experience across the four focus sites. What is voiced through these collective voices are the themes which occurred and recurred in the same categories at least twice in all four sites (and beyond) with no contradictory data. I deliberately sought contradictory evidence through the fieldwork in the focus schools and my work in other contexts. I incorporate this evidence, and the revisions and perspectives of key participants who have read drafts of the study as it was written and in its final form, by weaving into the narrative the verbatim comments from policy implementers, transcribed interviews and my reflective journals notes. This disconfirming evidence is written through the voices of individual participants and coded with letters corresponding to their social category and numbers I used in the fieldwork to identify the participants. For example, (IT9)

relates to an Indigenous Teacher who was coded as 9 for ease of identification from my fieldnotes. I have also included verbatim comments from policy implementers from transcribed interviews and my journal notes into the narrative both to contribute to the thick description and the intentions and meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) which organise and contextualise the “conversations” between the collective voices. The conversations are the collective voices’ interpretations of the experience. They reflect the commonality of the experience. Beside them I also present the voices of participants who reflect the heterogeneity of the experience.

The thesis is written as a series of conversations around particular data sets in the early, middle and later phases of the fieldwork, allowing the juxtaposition in the text of distinct (collective) voices or ‘characters’ that bring with them their specific historical, political, social, professional and personal experiences (Bakhtin, 1981). Personal character representation has little reference in this thesis. The voices are not real people and are by necessity multi-voiced themselves. What is voiced through the text is a synthesis of data collected through the fieldwork. Some verbatim data from transcribed interviews and my journals are included through the voices. The voices are written in italics in the text in consideration of the reader.

In choosing to write in this way, I was conscious that I did not attend to gender, ethnicity or language. Ninety-five per cent of the Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators were female. Where the participant was a speaker of English as a second or subsequent language, I have written the voice in Standard Australian English in consideration for the reader of the text. I have verified all accounts with the participants to ensure the meaning and perspective have been conveyed accurately. While two of the

four focus sites had female Principals, all focus sites were schools in the higher (8-10) bandings. Principals in these schools are predominantly male across the State, to the extent that this category of Principal is a specific target area for women under Education Queensland's workforce equity plan. My voice in the text is both audible and foregrounded as a woman, participant/researcher and narrator and I identify myself by my name in the conversations. As narrator and researcher I weave in and out of the story providing cohesion to the narrative schema. In foregrounding my own voice and data from my journals, and using my own name, I endeavour to make explicit the "situational limits of the knower" (Sarbin, 1986, p.4) whilst recognising "there is no principled resolution, no alternative, to the problem of speaking for others. There is no getting it right about who or what another is; there is no essence defining what 'right' is" (Roth, 1989, as cited in Richardson, 1990, p.27). Of course, since the thesis is a written text, the idea of a conversation is problematical too. Conversation is a relational act. What is said and not said is attentive to societal context and cultural frameworks.

Clearly these conversations amongst all the voices never occurred, nor do they reflect the power relationships between the different groups. They are a way of organising episodes, accounts of actions and reflections into a narrative of the research act. The interdependent nature of experience and representation is at the heart of how we make meaning. The juxtaposition of particular voices, even though they do not *hear* each other through the text, is one way of foregrounding both the tensions between the voices and my interpretations of the inquiry, a parody or "carnivale" of the conversational genre thereby giving an opportunity for the reader to experience the transformative possibilities of the collective story.

3.6 The topics of the conversations

The fieldwork is organised into the next three chapters. Chapter Four examines the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy itself and how educators and Administrators responded to the construction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as second language learners. It incorporates fieldwork from the business meetings, responses of Central Office personnel to its key actions, professional development workshop evaluations and transcribed interviews with participants from the four focus sites. It also includes notes from my reflective journals. Chapter Five presents the fieldwork relating to my professional development role with the Indigenous Education and Training Alliance (IETA), the workshop development, evaluations and participant comments from the focus sites and around Queensland. Chapter Six presents the quantitative data from the Year 2 Diagnostic Net, Grades 3, 5 and 7 tests, school annual reports and operational plans and internal standardised data such as reading/spelling age tests interpreted through the collective voices of Principal/Key Teacher, Indigenous Teacher, non-Indigenous Teacher and me as participant/researcher at each separate site. As the State testing data is quite different in each school, the collective voices in this chapter reflect the social categories at the individual schools. Chapter Six also incorporates my journal data and transcribed interviews with participants from the four research sites. The final two chapters draw these voices together and dig deeper into their stories.

E tChapter Four

***Partners for Success* Literacy Policy: a stop-start strategy**

4.1 Introduction

In this and the following two chapters, I present the fieldwork relating to the evolution of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy over the three-year period of the study (2001-2003) through the telling of a collective story. The collective story is told through the voices representing the social categories of Principals/Key Teachers, Indigenous Teachers, non-Indigenous Teachers and me as participant researcher (see Chapter Three). These collective voices incorporate official minutes, records from business meetings and other related formal processes, implementation plans where they existed and my journal notes and verbatim comments transcribed from unstructured interviews with participants from the focus sites, Responses from participants outside the focus sites including policy managers, members of the business groups, Principals and Queensland Teachers' Union members who followed the evolution of the policy or participated in professional development workshops, are interwoven into the main body of the text both to sustain the narrative and make clear how I progressively selected subsequent themes and issues for exploration and discussion. These individual participant voices present confirming and disconfirming evidence of the themes captured in the collective voices.

The focus of Chapter Four is the strategic/systemic components of the policy. The collective voices are written in italics throughout this and the next two chapters. The voices of the individual participants, who were not part of the collective voices, are

also written in italics but coded in terms of their roles and numbered for reasons of anonymity in the order in which they appeared in my transcriptions and journals. For example, Non-Indigenous Administrators are coded (A) preceding the number recorded in the fieldwork, Indigenous Administrators (IA) and Principals (P). The three chapters correspond to the data collected at three levels of the policy implementation: Central Office/strategic level; the more localised Staff College support level (including my role); and the focus schools level. In each chapter, the findings are presented chronologically in three phases: the early, middle and later phases of the fieldwork.

This chapter focuses on the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) policy itself and the business meetings where strategic implementation decisions were made. Of course, the implementation of *Partners for Success* did not occur in a policy vacuum. Over the period of the study, the Commonwealth and Queensland governments implemented a number of policies and initiatives aimed at addressing poor educational outcomes for Indigenous students. Those that focused on language and literacy, and therefore had the most relevance for and impact upon this study, were the Commonwealth's *Literacy for All: The Challenge for Australian Schools* (DEETYA, 1998) and the *Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* (MCEETYA, 1999b), which endorsed the revised goals of schooling and generated the national testing agenda and are explored in depth in Chapter Six; the *National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, 2000-2004* (DEST, 2000); Queensland's *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c); and *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001). The conversations and the narrative, therefore, include reference to these policies and initiatives and participants' perceptions of their influence on the implementation of the *Partners for Success* literacy policy. In

Queensland, all the State education policies came under the overarching strategic plan encompassed in *2010: Queensland State Education* (Education Queensland, 2000b) whose “fundamental aim [is] to increase the proportion of the Queensland population that completes Year 12 and to strengthen the coordination of school and post-school programs” (p.15).

4.2 The early phase

4.21 The early phase

In 1998, Education Queensland undertook a *Review of Education and Employment Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Education Queensland* (Education Queensland, 2000d) prompted by “Concerns about the retention, achievement and outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and employees” (p.1). A summary of the issues and recommendations regarding literacy development, which was “a significant enough issue to warrant being considered separately” (p.28) are contained in Table 5. In response to these issues, Education Queensland published its *Partners for Success: Strategy for the continuous improvement of education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Education Queensland* (2000a). The strategy contained six policies¹ relating to standards of education; the development of a charter; community partnerships; literacy; Education Queensland’s role in the whole of government service delivery; and employment and career development for Indigenous staff. The strategy was launched with both local and departmental publicity at an Aboriginal Community School in March 2000.

¹ Although referred to as policies, the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) strategy was never included in the Department of Education Manual (DOEM), where all policies relating to State Education are held.

Table 6.

Issues and Strategies and Solutions for Improvement in Literacy Identified in the Review of Education and Employment Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Education Queensland (Education Queensland, 2000d)

Issues	Strategies and solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ‘literacy’ issue was significant enough to be treated as a separate entity (p.28) heterogeneity of achievement within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student populations (p.28) lack of parent awareness of pre-literacy activities and poor relationships with school (pp.28-29) lack of awareness of linguistic differences between Aboriginal English and SAE (p.29) pedagogy predicated on (wrongly) assumed language resources (p.29) deficit perceptions of linguistic resources children bring to school (p.29) poor teacher skill and lack of awareness of student language needs (p.29) staff turnover (p.29) inappropriate tracking and assessment (p.29) inappropriate interventions (p.29) too few appropriately trained specialists (p.29) little practical support for teachers through existing structures (p.30) lack of policy recognition of second language learning status or appropriate educational responses (p.30) SAE skill for some RATEP-trained teachers (p.31) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clear, respectful information to parents about supporting literacy learning in English (p.30) classroom teachers to participate in instructional teams with ESL resource teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers (p.30) teaching resources based on ESL principles to be developed for teachers of Aboriginal English or Torres Strait Creole speakers (p.30) monitoring tools specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander second language learners (e.g., Indigenous Bandscales) be developed (p.30) Active recruitment of ESL trained early childhood teachers (p.30) Renaming and redirection of literacy intervention funding towards effective ESL pedagogical responses (p.31) Oral language focus and continuum developed (p.31) Planned strategies to continue throughout schooling (p.31) Disaggregated data collection (p.31) Changes to systemic literacy policy to include all learners (p.31) Recast concept of ‘intervention’ (p.31) Concentrated staff development (p.31) Focussed professional development in SAE for some RATEP-trained teachers (p.31) Inclusion of ESL theory and practice in pre-service teacher education programs (p.31)

The focus of this study is the literacy policy contained within *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) strategy. However, the main systemic focus at its launch, was the “quarantining” of normal human resource procedures for a number

of “trial” schools and the development, in a different group of schools, of a community “compact” or “process undertaken by a school and its community to work in partnership to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students” (Education Queensland, 2002b). Education Queensland had negotiated particular human resource arrangements with the Queensland Teachers’ Union for the trial schools that were “firewalled” from the usual recruitment and selection processes. In practice, this meant that a select group of schools had more flexible human resource provisions to attract and retain good teachers and some schools were given additional financial resources to develop compacts with their communities. There was confusion in schools from the outset as to how or why these particular schools were selected. Principals from the focus sites stated:

I have no idea (P1). Maybe it’s to do with numbers of Indigenous kids . . . but that doesn’t account for some of the urban schools (P2). It’ll be political (P3). The cynical part of me says maybe it’s where there is a chance of the compacts working . . . or are already working. (P4)

Education Queensland’s plan *Implementing Partners for Success* (2000e) states:

[Group 1]

The first group of schools involved in the trial represents the diversity of contexts in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students throughout Queensland live and are educated. School-community partnerships will be trialled in these [22] schools, but they will not be part of the trial of alternative models of recruitment and staffing.

And

Group 2

These [12] are selected schools in the most remote areas of the state challenged by a range of issues including staffing, attendance, literacy learning in a second

language context, curriculum, the provision of secondary education and rates of school completion, as well as issues related to health, poverty and isolation, community relationships and community infrastructure. (p.20)

These thirty-four schools were consistently referred to, through official documents, (*National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 2000-2004* performance indicators, DEST, 2000), in *Partners for Success* business meetings and by participants in the study collectively as the *identified* schools, with no distinction between the two groups.

4.22 Implementation: a discourse of difference

Thus, the discourse around *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) was established from the outset. Terms such as “firewalled”, “quarantined” and “trialled”, used consistently in reference to these schools in meetings and in official documents, focussed attention on the group of thirty-four, positioning them as both discursively and systemically different from others. From the beginning, these schools were special, identified, different, distinct, separate, even isolated or quarantined from all other State schools including others with similarly high numbers of Indigenous students. Additional funding was provided only to the sub-group of twenty-two schools in order to facilitate the community compact process. This additional funding served to reinforce further the perception that they were indeed select and privileged even within the identified schools.

4.23 Implementation processes

The State-wide implementation plan (Education Queensland, 2000e) for *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) contained general statements elaborating the roles and responsibilities of Education Queensland units and officers in

the six policy areas, referred to as a “strategic approach to implementation” (p.9) with two major foci:

policy work at the central level to create an enabling environment for schools and communities; and operational work at the school level which is highly responsive to local needs, and brings the policy and operational areas of the department into a new working relationship. (p.14)

And recognition that

Implementation of these initiatives will require sustained and coordinated effort across range [sic] of Education Queensland work units in liaison with other government departments, other education and training providers, pre-service providers, the Queensland Teachers Union, community agencies and business organizations. (p.14)

A *Partners for Success* ‘business’ group consisting of representatives from the various directorates and units identified in the implementation plan was to meet each term at different locations around the State to make key strategic decisions, develop a more detailed plan and monitor its implementation.

4.24 The topic of the conversation: The *Partners for Success* literacy policy

The objectives of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy were:

- To ensure that literacy teaching for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is built on recognition of second or third language learning;
- To monitor and report student progress in ways that enable students, teachers and parents to collaborate in strategies for improving students’ learning;
- To ensure appropriate training is available for teachers in cross-cultural pedagogy;

- To ensure high levels of language and literacy proficiency of teachers and teacher-aides with a second language background. (p.20)

In order to ensure that these objectives are met, the policy includes a table (Table 6) of key actions to be effected across different strata in Education Queensland.

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

Well, it'd be great if it really makes a difference. Finally, there is something that recognises the kids' language issues. We have been talking about this for so long. It feels like we have been trying to keep this issue alive without any support from anyone. We are doing all those key actions already, so it's good that the system is supporting that. To be quite honest, I'm getting really tired of the way "Indigenous" stuff is done in this state. It's always announced in a great fanfare, but no one actually does anything. There is always just an ad hoc way of dealing with things and, in Central Office, the right hand doesn't seem to know what the left hand is doing. Hopefully, they will have some understanding now about all those standardised tests. They'll have to get a move on with the Indigenous Bandscales so that we can use them. It would have been good if that ESL project money¹, instead of being wasted, had been put to this. The only money available is the money to the identified schools. That's pretty typical—throw more money at the problem . . . and who decided which schools were the identified ones? It seems to make no sense to me.

I wonder how they think they're going to implement this policy? I don't think there'll be any funding to help us. The irony is, we think it's important because it's in our faces all the time, and hopefully we'll make a difference but we don't get the support to help. It'll be meaningless in some schools where there aren't many Indigenous students. It won't make any difference to them. It'll just be seen as another one of those 'funny money' things for Indigenous kids.

¹ This refers to funding allocated in 2000, prior to the publication of the *Review* (Education Queensland, 2000d), to a number of schools with high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations for ESL action research projects.

Table 7.

Table of Key Actions to be Effected across Education Queensland to Implement Partners for Success (Education Queensland, 2000a) Literacy Policy (p.20)

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

I see one big issue for us is the recruitment of appropriately trained specialist teachers. We have been trying to recruit an ESL teacher with ESL project funding for over a year. They are just not available. We even advertised nationally. When we have had teachers with ESL training, it has really made a difference. They worked in planning with the teachers and in the classroom. We really saw a difference in the planning. They burnt out quickly, though, because they had so much to do, and we had a lot of teacher turnover so it was difficult to get continuity. Because they were not timetabled on class, we had to use them as classroom teachers when people were sick or had to leave. It was really difficult to dedicate particular members of staff. Some staff resented their off-class role and wanted the worst students to be withdrawn from class for intensive work, like a learning support role. Really, every teacher needs to have ESL training to work in these sorts of schools . . . and this policy says so. So that's a positive.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

You know, this is the first time people have even spoken about language as being important. I used to feel so dumb at school, not knowing why I couldn't understand what was going on. It was the same at uni too. I really used to struggle with my assignments. I would really like some training in English. The policy says we should get training. We just had to pick it up. It would be good if everyone got that training at uni. It would make a real difference to our kids. I wonder how we are going to get all the [non-Indigenous] teachers to do this stuff? Most of them don't do it now. They think they can do things same-way, same-way, but it doesn't work. And then new ones come and they do the same thing.

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

A couple of years ago, no one even spoke about language. At uni, we did a bit of stuff on cross-cultural issues but it was so little and so general that it wasn't much help when I got here. It's good that the kids' language is recognised and now people will see that all that testing is unfair. No wonder they don't do well.

We have so much staff turnover in our school. I am the ESL teacher by default at the moment because I have been there the longest, but I have had no training. I am doing

my best, implementing learning support strategies but I'd like more training. I'm not sure I'm doing the right thing. All kids need to be literate if they are going to succeed at school and get jobs. I think this policy recognises how difficult it is for us to achieve good results in those tests . . . and English is a really hard language to learn.

Pauline

I am really excited about this. This is the first time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' second language learning needs have been recognised in policy in Queensland. It would have been so good to have this when I was teaching at my last school. It might have given some weight to what I was trying to effect in school instead of having to argue for these students all the time. The key actions assign roles and responsibilities throughout the system. If it's policy, it has to happen.

4.25 Summary of the early phase

In the beginning all participants from the focus sites expressed approval that *language* was highlighted as an issue in the policy. Principals/Key Teachers expressed some frustration with systemic processes, particularly with the apparent lack of transparency in decision-making, poor cohesion between units in Central Office and wasted financial resources in Indigenous education. Attracting and retaining appropriately skilled staff is flagged as an important issue, as well as provision of appropriate pre-service and in-service education. The teachers all expressed a desire for more training in ESL pedagogy and, in common with the Principals/Key teachers, raised concerns about the fairness of the Grades 3, 5 and 7 State-wide tests for Indigenous ESL learners and the impact of teacher turnover in their contexts. These were all elements that had been raised in the *Review* (Education Queensland, 2000d).

The conversation also raised some questions for me. Did everyone have to implement this literacy policy for Indigenous students? The policies contained in the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) strategy were not included in

Education Queensland's Department of Education Manual (DOEM), so were they really policies at all? How would schools know about the language issue if they did not have an understanding already? Was it only relevant for identified schools? How would the policy impact on the testing agenda? How would teachers gain the appropriate skills? How would schools be able to attract and retain ESL-skilled staff? Furthermore, I saw lack of clarity about where the literacy policy came from and what informed it. Although clearly focussed on language, according to one participant (P/KT4) this message was not given strongly enough in *Partners for Success*. The Department had "watered down" key language messages that had been the draft of the *Review* (Education Queensland, 2000d) and that was "hugely disappointing".

4.26 The value of Home Language: a side conversation

During the early stages of the fieldwork, while I was collecting data for the Indigenous ESL Bandscales project and for this study on how different groups in the focus schools perceived the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy, an Indigenous teacher with whom I had a particularly good relationship and who appeared interested and committed to using second language pedagogy, confronted me angrily in the staffroom.

Why do you keep going on about the value of Home Language [A key principle underpinning the Indigenous Bandscales project] It's just a rubbish language. It's not useful and won't get the kids anywhere. And it has killed our traditional language. I don't think you should be going on about it. (IT1)

I was surprised and puzzled by the comments. Until this point, I had believed that placing value on Home Language was a positive thing to do. In fact, this is a focus of the *Fostering English Language in Kimberley Schools* (FELIKS) approach (Hudson, 1992) workshops, in which all teachers at the focus schools had participated. FELIKS

places great emphasis on valuing the Home Language and using it to scaffold students' English language learning. The FELIKS professional development also outlines how linguists describe and believe the evolution of Creoles and non-standard dialects occurred worldwide. This Indigenous teacher had enthusiastically embraced many of the strategies from the workshop, which made the comment even more perplexing to me. I probed further at this site and the others, focussing upon understandings and values relating to Home Language.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

The old people told us that this language that we now have was given to us purposely to keep us in our place, to stop us from learning that proper English. They said that when those white people came, they stopped us from speaking our own language and they spoke this gammon¹ English to us, talked down to us . . . not speaking proper English. So that's all we learnt . . . and they knew that that's all we'd learn and we lost our traditional language too because we weren't allowed to speak it. We were made to feel shame about our traditional language and shame about English, because we didn't speak proper English . . . only this rubbish language.

Now we [Indigenous teachers] are told our English isn't good enough but we have never been taught proper English or to teach English. Nor have the Southern² teachers been taught how to teach English properly and that means our kids aren't being taught properly. If we had been taught English properly we wouldn't have a problem. We have been asking for proper English in our schools for years and we haven't got anywhere.
(IT1)

At each site, Indigenous teachers expressed a strong belief, and some anger, that the Creoles and dialects that had evolved in their communities were a *deliberate*

¹ *Gammon*—a word used across all sites to mean 'poor quality', 'insincere', 'pretend', 'joke'.

² 'Southern' is consistently used by Indigenous teachers referring to non-Indigenous teachers possibly due to the fact that many non-Indigenous teachers in schools with high numbers of Indigenous students do come from the South-East corner of Queensland.

strategy used by colonisers, not only to destroy traditional language and culture but also to replace these with something “gammon”, with no “value”. This strategy had effectively prevented access to “proper English”, the language that would allow social mobility and participation in the systems of power and had been used “to keep us in our place”. Furthermore, the old peoples’ experiences had seemingly been replicated in the educational experiences of contemporary Indigenous teachers who had “never been taught proper English or to teach English.” They believed Indigenous students were still denied access to proficiency in Standard Australian English as a result of the perceived lack of skill of the non-Indigenous teachers working in Indigenous schools.

4.27 *Literate Futures: A literacy focus for all Queensland State schools*

Concurrent with *Review* (Education Queensland, 2000d) and *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a), a report of a literacy review for Queensland State schools, *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland 2000c), was published. It posited that national debates in education and literacy in the late 1990s along with publication of *2010: Queensland State Education* (Education Queensland, 2000b) committed Education Queensland to a futures orientation and provided a “clear ‘opening’ and imperative for the development of a new literacy strategy for Education Queensland” (*Literate Futures*, Education Queensland, 2000c, p.13).

This literacy strategy focuses on diversity as a productive resource:

The Literacy Strategy sets out to contend with the diversity of Queensland students and communities positively and to translate the varied skills, knowledges and practices that children bring to and use in their communities and homes into outcomes that will enhance their life pathways and opportunities. (Education Queensland, 2000c, p.8)

Moreover, it defines literacy as “the flexible and sustainable mastery of a repertoire of practices with texts of traditional and new communications technologies via spoken language, print and multimedia” (p.9) and articulates specific goal statements

Over 2000-05, Education Queensland will use the Literacy Strategy to focus efforts of staff in all state schools towards:

- Dealing productively with diversity in student and community characteristics; by
 - Acknowledging, valuing and building on the range of linguistic and cultural resources brought to school by students from diverse backgrounds; thereby enhancing the literacy outcomes for many students who are experiencing difficulties with learning or under-performing in assessments; by
 - Implementing systematic plans to reform and refocus relevant school practices in curriculum programs, classroom pedagogy and assessment
- (p.79)

and a clear timeframe

By the end of 2001, as part of their whole school literacy plan, schools will have identified particular at-risk groups, and have specified realistic annual and triennial ‘distance travelled’ targets for improved student outcomes, using a range of assessment data, including school and teacher-based assessments of diverse multiliteracies. (p.79)

Schools and clusters of schools who had demonstrated success and capacity in effecting literacy planning and improved outcomes were asked to nominate as Literacy Education and Practice (LEAP) sites (p.95) for up to three years, from 2001, to provide in-service training, support and mentoring in literacy and the teaching of reading to other schools and clusters. These sites were ultimately named “Learning Development Centres,

Literacy” (LDCs) and received seed funding and administrator/coordinator funding for a three year period.

So, *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) provided the basis for a strong systemic literacy framework, which recognised local contexts and needs. However, links with the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy were not made in either document. This separation was mirrored in Central Office structures where two different teams, in two different divisions within Education Queensland, were charged with operationalising the two separate and distinct initiatives both focussing on literacy pedagogy and practices in Queensland state schools. With regard to those students who do not speak English as a first language, *Literate Futures* states:

There is a general problem with both the recognition of the *distinctive needs of ESL students*, the categories for identifying such students and the adequate funding of ESL programs. (p.68)

and

oral language variation is recognised by many teachers, but schools lack the systematic diagnostic, analytic and intervention capabilities that might enable matching the pedagogy to the problem (e.g., developmental disability, second language/dialect variation, different norms and patterns of interaction). (p.68)

Neither comment refers specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. In stark contrast to the early stages of the *Partners for Success* strategy implementation, *Literate Futures* gave a clear systemic direction within the document itself that literacy was core business of every school and teacher in Queensland and a clear, State-wide, resourced implementation plan at the outset. Furthermore, the main author of this

review, Professor Allan Luke, an internationally recognised authority on literacy, was seconded to Education Queensland for nine months as Assistant Director-General to oversee the implementation of the strategy.

4.28 The *Literate Futures* conversation

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

This is pretty typical of Education Queensland. No sooner do we think we have the language issue on the table than it gets knocked off by something bigger and better. Doesn't that always happen with Indigenous education? Of course it is really important that we focus on kids' literacy but that isn't going to happen until we focus on the language first. Considering the weight and resources around Literate Futures and the profile of the author, I doubt if anyone will give a thought to Partners for Success from now on. It'll just be seen as something special for Indigenous kids so it won't get any kudos. Literate Futures doesn't talk about language at all. I don't believe that they really believe that language is an issue. It's like . . . if we just do the four resources [model], we'll all be literate. I am really disappointed that we keep calling the problem literacy . . . and then we have all kinds of literacy . . . multiliteracy, exam literacy, scientific literacy. It's never called language, so language will never be recognised. Despite Partners for Success, speakers of Aboriginal English, even when we can prove that they are not speaking English, are still not even recognised as ESL speakers. That means those kids don't get the ILSS¹ funding. It's demoralising. Two steps forward and three steps back. Where does this leave us with all the standardised testing too?

We are doing good stuff in literacy. We have really good people. We'll apply for one of those LEAP site positions. You can only influence from the inside and if we don't apply, Indigenous kids will get forgotten about completely. The District Directors have to support the applications so we'll need to get on to ours straightaway. Our District Director is good so I'm sure he'll support us. He understands the issues . . . and the choice will be political so we might get in. They wouldn't not have an Indigenous school . . . what would that say?

¹ Indigenous Language Speaking Students support funding is given to students in their first year of schooling. In Queensland, eligibility extends to students in non-English speaking contexts who speak a traditional Indigenous language. Aboriginal English speakers are specifically excluded.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

You know in the old days, we didn't have problems with literacy. We were taught properly. It was better in the old days. All the old people, they can read and write and speak English properly. These days, with all this technology and all the funding, our kids do worse. We keep on being told that our kids are the bottom of the bottom. Our kids need to be taught properly. These [non-Indigenous] teachers come and go but they can't teach the kids the way the old teachers did.

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

Now what are we meant to do? It's like the kids in our school don't exist. In Literate Futures, it talks about the four resources model for reading and critical literacy and we are struggling with teaching the kids basic reading and writing. I wonder if they have ever set foot in a school like ours. Everyone will get mixed messages about Indigenous kids now and make all kinds of assumptions about them . . . and that's what we have been trying to raise all the time . . . that you can't make assumptions. We need a lot of support with our work. It's like all our hard work and the progress we are making counts for nothing.

Pauline

I have read this review from cover to cover and I can't really find any reference to Indigenous second language learners. I think these students are invisible (again). It's just like the general ESL support funding all over again. Now you see them, now you don't. Literate Futures actually states:

From infancy and across their life pathways, children engage with spoken language, with print-saturated environments, and with visual, iconic images and texts of everyday life, mass media and consumer cultures. (p.9)

This shows no recognition of any of the language issues raised in Partners for Success. Most Indigenous communities have no print and no need for print. The spoken language is not English and the visual, iconic images are not those of 'mainstream' students. Apparently the Partners for Success team works within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit, but the Literate Futures team work on a different floor in Central Office, in a different unit. I'm told they don't have anything to do with each other. I am

confused. What is the literacy policy for students in Education Queensland schools? Is there one mainstream policy and one Indigenous policy?

The Principals/Key Teachers again expressed frustration at Education Queensland's processes and the apparent marginalisation of Indigenous issues in favour of more mainstream initiatives. *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) has the weight of an internationally recognised academic, overt systemic and financial support behind it whereas *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) seems to have been pushed out of any system-wide conversation. Elements of *Literate Futures* seemed to contradict key messages in *Partners for Success*. The Principals/Key Teachers believed "you can only influence from the inside" and stated their intent to apply to be a LEAP site. The Indigenous teachers harked back to the "old days" when they perceived that Indigenous students were taught better, which seems to contradict some of the statements made previously. They also referred to the fact that increased financial resourcing and technological advances seemed to have had a minimal or even detrimental impact on student literacy outcomes. The non-Indigenous teachers also refer to the lack of reference to Indigenous second language learners in the *Literate Futures* document and express their need for support in their work to teach "basic reading and writing" which they perceived to be both a precursor to critical literacy and a "struggle." My frustrations at the time were focussed on not only the invisibility of Indigenous second language learners in the document, but also on universalising statements about students' literacy experiences. I also focussed on the fractured nature of the systemic response to improving literacy and the lack of clarity about what Queensland's literacy policy actually was.

4.29 The National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS): the Commonwealth's perspective

From the beginning, there were concurrent and contradictory literacy policies in operation in Queensland. At a federal level, *Literacy for All: the challenge for Australian schools* (DEETYA, 1998) and *The Adelaide Declaration* (MCEETYA, 1999b), which articulated the revised national goals for schooling, are particularly significant for this study in that they legitimated the national literacy testing agenda. The national goals and the MCEETYA (2000) report on Indigenous Education also influenced the national focus on improving Indigenous literacy outcomes elaborated in the NIELNS strategy (DEST, 2000). The NIELNS strategy focuses on six key elements: attendance; hearing and health problems; pre-schooling experiences; good teachers; best teaching methods; and measuring success and accountability. My role at the Indigenous Education and Training Alliance (IETA) was funded through the NIELNS strategy (DEST, 2000) and its performance indicators were the sole monitoring tool for *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) implementation in the early stages of the fieldwork. The main objective of the NIELNS strategy was “to achieve English literacy and numeracy for Indigenous students at levels comparable to those achieved by other young Australians” (p.5) and it focussed clearly on the 1998 (DEETYA) national goals for schooling

that every child leaving primary school should be numerate, and able to read, write and spell at an appropriate level . . .[and that] every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years. (n.p.no)

The Report of the MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous education (MCEETYA, 2000) had articulated recognition of Indigenous students' possible second language learning status

1.4 Expecting all Indigenous children to be fluent in Standard Australian English and at the same time being inclusive of the student's home language. (p.18)

and had identified as a standard to

ensure that all teachers and education workers involved in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students participate in effective training in cross-cultural pedagogy and ESL. (p.19)

However, the only NIELNS (DEST, 2000) literacy accountability requirements were to be the national benchmark data. The national benchmarks are defined as the “explicit and defensible standards through which the effectiveness and equity of schooling can be measured” (Kemp, 1999, p.32). Therefore, Commonwealth reporting requirements under the NIELNS strategy required Queensland to report on the efficacy of its State programs using performance data in *literacy* from the national testing program. Thus, whereas *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) recommended the use of more appropriate measuring tools for Indigenous second language learners through the use of the Indigenous ESL Bandscales (that were not yet developed), Queensland was required to report to the Commonwealth on Indigenous student literacy achievement using the very performance measures that their own *Partners for Success* policy deemed inappropriate. This contradiction was very apparent to the Principals/Key Teachers in the focus sites and prompted one to comment at a NIELNS meeting.

I am really disappointed that this strategy doesn't acknowledge the second language learning issues many of our students have and contradicts Partners for Success. I think it is discriminatory that migrant ESL learners are included in a

state database but there is no database for Indigenous second language learners. As long as that is the case, neither the State nor the Commonwealth has to face the issue. It's a question of out of sight, out of mind. (P2)

4.210 The “business” meeting.

The first *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) “business” meeting I attended was held at the same time as, but at opposite ends of the state to, a *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) strategic implementation forum, thereby precluding the possibility of any of the participants in either initiative attending the meeting of the other, even if such invitations had been issued. In fact, an invitation to attend the *Literate Futures* meeting had been (reluctantly) issued to IETA Project Officers only after requests and some pressure from a Senior Officer. My colleague attended this meeting, whereas I attended the *Partners for Success* meeting. Units and divisions were requested to submit issues papers on specific areas of the *Partners for Success* strategy for discussion. I contributed to the paper on ESL issues, which was to be addressed by an officer based in Central Office. Neither the officer nor I were core participants in the meeting having been invited just to “provide information”. In practice this meant we were able to answer questions when invited, but not contribute to the conversations outside our designated area. One Manager counselled, *Don't worry too much about it [the papers]. No one will read any of them anyway. (A1)* When it came to tabling the paper at the meeting, another senior administrator interrupted the presentation stating:

Yes, yes, yes . . . you are not going to go through that whole paper, are you? To be quite honest, as soon as you start talking about ESL, my eyes glaze over and I lose interest. Can we move on to the others, otherwise we'll never get through them all? (A2)

There was a murmur of agreement around the room and the paper was never referred to again. This was the only meeting where issues papers were part of the process.

So, it appeared that there were existing structures and historical tensions between groups within Education Queensland that not only impeded effective communication between Central Office, districts and schools but also created two totally separate literacy ‘camps.’—those working in the *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) team and those working in the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) team. Furthermore, a key senior administrator within the *Partners for Success* group openly stated that he/she had little interest in the language issue and subverted agreed meeting processes by preventing discussion about language altogether.

4.211 Monitoring the strategy

At this early stage, one of the tasks of the business group was to develop an implementation plan and report back to the meetings on its progress. Other than this, the only quantitative implementation data collected was related to the NIELNS performance indicators in the identified schools. Queensland State schools monitor and track literacy performance data through their School Annual Report and Operation Plans (SAROP). These plans reflect systemic data requirements, performance targets and identified strategies for improvement. The District Directors (or Executive Directors as they were called from 2002) ensure schools’ compliance with state accountability processes, approve the plans and monitor schools’ performance in relation to the performance indicators within their districts. Departmental policies and state targets and performance indicators are set annually and appear in the state-wide SAROP template. Despite the six ‘policies’ within the *Partners for Success* strategy (Education Queensland, 2000a)

none was specifically included in school accountability documents at this time. In 2001, schools were required to report on literacy through State-wide testing data. In 2001, the only literacy performance data schools were required to include in their SAROP were aggregated literacy scores in the State-wide tests. Furthermore, under the NIELNS strategy, Queensland's reportable performance data was again the State-wide literacy tests in Grades 3, 5 and 7 but only in the "identified schools".

However, every school in Queensland was required to report the status of Whole School Literacy Planning (WSLP) through their District Directors to Central Office as directed through the *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) initiative. The *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy recommended the use of Indigenous ESL Bandscales to monitor student second language learning, positing mainstream assessment tools inappropriate for these learners. In 1999, Reading and Writing Bandscales for Junior Primary-age Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, adapted from the ESL Bandscales (McKay, Hudson & Sappupo, 1994) were developed and published on the Education Queensland website. By 2001, the Oral Indigenous ESL Bandscales were also published. Indigenous ESL Bandscales for students in the middle phase of learning were not published until 2002, and no formal professional development for teachers took place during the period of this study. Thus, the mandated accountabilities for the Commonwealth and State literacy policies in the early stages of the fieldwork are summarised in Table 7. The shaded areas show that accountability measures for all literacy policies other than *Literate Futures* were the national benchmarks.

Table 8.
Table of Accountabilities for State and Commonwealth Literacy Policies in 2001

Policy	Monitoring tools	Accountabilities
<i>Partners for Success</i>	Recommended Indigenous ESL Bandscales (not yet developed)	Trial schools monitored under NIELNS performance indicators (National benchmarks)
<i>Literate Futures</i>	Whole School Literacy Plans to be developed in each school	School Annual Report and Operational Plans (SAROP)
<i>Adelaide Declaration</i>	National benchmarks	Reporting against national benchmarks
<i>NIELNS</i>	National benchmarks	Reporting against national benchmarks

4.212 Summary of the beginnings

At this early stage of the policy implementation, the Principals and teachers in the focus schools were generally positive about the focus on language in *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a). There was tacit agreement that a focus on second language pedagogy would make a difference to student outcomes, although historical issues regarding English raised some suspicions from the Indigenous teachers as to the motives behind the policy focus. However, from the outset, Senior Administrator 1 actively used his/her position to subvert the implementation of the literacy policy by preventing discussion at the business meeting. The disjunctures within Central Office and the conflicting literacy policy messages sent to districts and schools meant that even the focus schools were unclear about what they were to implement and how. The systemic imperative at the launch of *Partners for Success* was on trialling flexible human resource arrangements and developing community compacts rather than on classroom literacy practice, that is, on structures not cultures. The main thrust of flexible staffing arrangements, and the human resource strategies in general, was focused upon non-Indigenous teachers working in remote Indigenous communities,

rather than upon other elements within the Employment policy which were targeted at Indigenous teachers.

4.3 The middle phase

4.31 Floundering, losing momentum and a change of players

In the middle phase of the fieldwork, there was a major restructure in Education Queensland. A new Assistant Director General was appointed, Senior Management roles changed, the *Partners for Success* Manager was seconded to another project and several senior staff in Central Office, who had been part of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland. 2000a) business meetings were either redeployed into other roles, moved into other government departments or left government employment altogether. Whereas there had been the intention to have one business meeting per term in the first year of *Partners for Success* implementation (although these did not all eventuate), in the second year there were just two as the focus of the group turned away from the State-wide strategy towards the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001) which is discussed in more depth in this chapter. There was still no clear, approved implementation plan as to how the literacy policy was to be effected either at a strategic or at a district/school level. The 2001, 2002 and 2003 School Annual Report and Operational Plan formats still did not incorporate any elements of the literacy policy. Literacy achievement in schools was measured through the performance measures below.

LE 1.1 Percentages of students not requiring additional support for each area of the Year 2 Diagnostic Net: Reading, Writing and Number

LE 1.2 Mean of students in year 5: Reading

LE 1.3 Schools have strategies to improve Year 9 student literacy levels to a standard that allows all students to make satisfactory progress at school.

Education Queensland had system-wide identified targets for LE 1.1 and 1.2 but LE 1.3 simply required schools to have (unspecified) “strategies”. IETA had a new Principal, appointed just five months into my role there. New staff joined the Department. The Central Office, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander branch, was incorporated into other work units under the rationale that “inclusive” education meant that disability, race, gender, Indigenous issues were core business for all branches and departmental structure should reflect this. A senior Indigenous Administrator at the time commented:

While I would agree that Indigenous issues should be core business for everyone, the reality is that they are not. And whenever the system, which in Indigenous education is really a group of white men, tries to embed them within bigger structures or initiatives, our voices aren't heard. This has happened before. Have you noticed that every time we get close to effecting real change, the system creates new systems and processes to make sure everything remains the same? You always know when you are really hitting the mark. That's when they 'restructure' and sideline those Indigenous people who challenge them.
(IA8)

The Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander branch was seconded out of the Department and a new Acting Director appointed. Whereas there had been one business meeting per term in the first year of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) implementation, in the second year, there were just two as the focus of the group turned away from the State-wide strategy towards the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001). There was still no clear, approved implementation plan as to how the literacy policy was to be effected. The 2001 and 2002 School Annual Report

and Operational Plan formats still did not reflect the six policies, with literacy and Indigenous student learning monitored via the national benchmark testing data. There had also been significant changes in the *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) team. A new Manager had been appointed along with a number of different Senior Project Officers whose roles were to act as links to the Learning Development Centres (Literacy) and to develop professional development support materials for *Literate Futures* implementation. This new team had a specific brief to link and network with Staff Colleges and others who were implementing the *Partners for Success* literacy policy. IETA personnel and others began to work collaboratively with this team to produce literacy professional development support materials for teachers in Queensland that were inclusive of Indigenous second language learners.

4.32 The new focus—*Cape York Justice Study*: impact and revelations

At this point in the study, issues regarding breaches of the law and the level of social problems relating to alcohol abuse in Indigenous communities on Cape York prompted the Queensland Government to commission the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001). The urgency and priority given to this study became the main focus of all the State government agencies that delivered services in the region. State-wide data showed that students on Cape York had the poorest educational outcomes, attendance levels and employment opportunities in Queensland. The research team compiling the study received written and oral submissions during four months of intense data collection on Cape York. The final report placed considerable focus on the recognition of students' second language learning status in the education section of the study.

While there are clear linkages here to issues such as hearing impairments and attendance, one of the most critical factors is teacher recognition of, and capacity to respond to, the needs of students who do not speak Standard Australian English as their first language. (p.315)

Factors related to resourcing were highlighted

Recognition of the status of Aboriginal English and Torres Strait Creole has yet to be reflected in funding for ESL specialists to work with Indigenous ESL students (in the way Commonwealth funding makes ESL support for migrant Non-English speaking background students available) or in the provision of accessible training courses for Indigenous ESL specialists. (p.315)

as well as poor teacher education

He [principal of Kowanyama] also discussed curriculum, which failed to engage students, the poor level of teacher preparation to meet the ESL needs of Aboriginal English speakers. (p.312)

All recommendations regarding “urgent attention” (p.333) in the area of literacy focussed on ESL training, pedagogy and targeted resourcing (pp.337-338). ESL training, child safety and school attendance are identified as “urgent” in the summative section of the report.

Schools should be resourced with additional staff and quality compulsory professional development in issues related to English as a Second Language for Indigenous learners, in order to implement an immediate and intensive focus on literacy. (p.403)

I anticipated that these recommendations would give added impetus to the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy in terms of both the language

focus and the ESL resourcing and support as reflected in an extract from my journal at this time indicates:

The Cape York Justice Study focuses so strongly on second language issues as seminal to Indigenous second language learners' (English) literacy development that Education Queensland will have to focus much more strongly in this area. It looks like there will be more resourcing to skill ESL teachers so that will have implications for IETA and the ESL team. I am relieved because it is exhausting trying to cover the whole state with so few officers, and they really need to be in schools to make a difference. (Reflective journal entry, November 2001)

Thus, in my view, the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001) strongly reinforced the focus of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy.

4.33 The *Partners for Success* conversation in the middle phase of the fieldwork

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

It seems that Partners for Success is old news these days. I haven't even heard anyone talk about it for a long time. We are still doing what we have always done and we are making progress. We get no recognition, though. It's like no one is really interested in what works. The powers that be are always looking for the 'shiny' stuff, the bower-bird approach. It's getting harder to get our message across. They have all this consultation around the Grade 3, 5 and 7 tests and then ignore everything we say. We send feedback every year but I don't know why we bother. They don't take any notice. It's demoralising for all of us. It's like they're searching for the quick fix for Indigenous education so they flit from one thing to another.

Pauline

One District Director [who was new to Indigenous education] made an interesting comment. Speaking of schools in his/her district, he/she said "Well, I see ESL as the marinade of how curriculum is delivered. It's no magic solution. In my district, some

schools are Partners for Success schools and some are IDEAS¹ schools. Schools are choosing what's best for them. Some prefer to be IDEAS schools because they get the support". No one is talking about language any more, only curriculum and literacy. It's like schools are being pulled in different directions as to what's best and what counts as success. In fact, the only thing that the Minister and Central Office talk about is the Grades 3, 5 and 7 tests, despite the fact that Literate Futures has quite a different emphasis on what it is to be literate. I am told that this is because the tests are a Commonwealth agenda and the states had to sign off on the performance indicators (the test scores) to get their share of federal funding.

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

We heard about Partners for Success at the RAIS² conference and we were told we'd get all this support. Once we got to school, we were so busy. We had a lot of teacher turnover in the school. We were trying to use [Indigenous ESL] Bandscales but we found them really difficult to use and no one really had training. I'd like to use them but there is so much to get through. We just don't have time to get through all the things we have to, let alone all this other stuff.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

I think the things we have been doing are very important. It has been good when you have come out and we can talk about what's working and ask you questions but you need to come more often. I'd like someone to be with me in the classroom. I have questions about English and some things I don't understand. If they were really serious about Partners for Success, they'd make sure we got proper support.

4.34 Monitoring: The unfinished business of the Indigenous ESL Bandscales

At this point in the study, a Project Officer had been employed for a year to develop a professional development package for teachers in the use of the ESL Bandscales for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The draft professional

¹ IDEAS: (Initiating; Discovering; Envisioning; Actioning; Sustaining) A framework for school reform used in Education Queensland schools in partnership with the University of Southern Queensland Leadership Research Institute.

² RAIS: Remote Area Incentive Scheme teacher induction conference

development package was trialled with a group of thirteen facilitators at the end of 2002. However, the Project Officer was redeployed back to a school at the beginning of 2003, before the final draft was submitted for publication. Also early in 2003, State government concern that a number of departments, including Education Queensland, had significantly overspent their allocated budgets, prompted rigorous review of departmental spending with the result that ‘non-critical’ programs were cut back, postponed or abandoned until the budget balanced. The Indigenous ESL Bandscales professional development package publication budget became a casualty of these cutbacks.

In addition, Education Queensland restructuring and outflow of Central Office staff meant that there was no process to either inform this decision or protect the initiative. Consequently, for the entire period of the study, although the Indigenous ESL Bandscales were available online through the department’s website, there were neither professional development materials nor trained personnel in their use. This was in contrast to the *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) project, where budget was preserved for the publication of comprehensive support materials to be completed by the end of 2003 and LDCs were financially supported for a three-year period. School accountability documents (SAROPs) still did not reflect any elements of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy and the only systemic literacy performance measures for all learners remained the State-wide Grades 3, 5 and 7 tests and the Year 2 Diagnostic Net.

4.35 The (business) meeting: arresting the sense of drift

I only attended one meeting in 2002 and, again, my role as State Program Manager (second language and literacy pedagogy) was to give information to the group

via a short presentation of the actions to date and issues. The meeting was no longer called a “business” meeting as *the business meeting role was different. We now need a different group of people, with a different structure and bring all those involved together* (A13). The stated purpose of this meeting was:

setting the direction of where we are going and the success in achieving key actions to date so that we leave with acknowledgements of successes, achievements, directions, key messages and common understandings and how we provide information translation to people in schools and communities. (A5)

I related earlier that many of the 2001 business meeting participants were no longer in their roles. Only eight of the thirty original participants remained and there were still just four Indigenous delegates. Senior Management restructures in Central Office had altered so significantly that one participant commented:

I'd just like to point out that the only roles that still exist in Education Queensland from the original Partners for Success document are Principals and teachers . . . and that makes it difficult to make anyone accountable for anything. I think we have really lost the plot. I think we need to look at where we have lost direction and develop a plan for action that is practical and that has outcomes under key action areas. (A7)

There was a sense that the strategy had stalled and that *initial enthusiasm in schools and communities had not brought people into alignment towards action* (A13).

In the opening comments, the issues were summarised as: lack of inclusive decision-making processes precluding effective engagement with the strategy; a perception that the strategy was both short-term and peripheral to Education Queensland's main business; schools were unsure of their roles and the support available in order to fulfil the objectives; the *trial* school concept had been useful in terms of flexibility in human resource practices but problematical in that it militated against the engagement of all

state schools and that the concentrated focus on the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001) had detracted attention away from Indigenous education State-wide.

As so many meeting participants were new, one outcome of this business meeting was *to get everyone on the same page* (A9) and *to get to the grass roots, identify some of the obstacles that have caused the strategy to stall and recommend some action.* (A10) A senior official summed up participants' opening comments as:

There is somehow a sense of focus having been lost, losing our way, that the intensity of the fire has diminished We need to have an answer, put it on the table and arrest the sense of drift. We must not get bogged down in drawing and reading the [implementation] map but rather focus on outcomes as the drivers to give us direction. (A11)

Consequently, three Principals (two non-Indigenous and one Indigenous) were invited to the meeting to *give a school-based perspective* (A10). Over the two days, participants were asked to reflect on twelve questions to prompt discussion. On the first day, the open forum generated 120 comments from participants, which have been grouped into topic categories in Table 8. The majority of accountability and monitoring comments related to both performance targets that were not clear, *It is a huge challenge as to how we measure moveable targets. We need a standard* (A15), and to the collection and monitoring of data. Participants showed fundamental differences in their beliefs regarding what the standards should be, which data should be collected, and how success should be measured. Whilst Indigenous participants highlighted the need for uniform standards for all students, that is, not an *us and them mentality* (IA1)

What is expected in white schools is what is expected of us. I expect my child to go through school and come out at the other end, apply for a job and I expect him to be able to compete with other students and be measured against the same benchmarks as any other child. (IA2)

Table 9.
Table of Frequency of Topic Categories Day 1

Topic	Frequency
Accountability/monitoring	32
Human resources	19
Financial resources	26
Community	14
Teaching, learning, literacy	12 (11 teaching and learning, 1 literacy)
Other	17

Non-Indigenous participants initially agreed with, then contradicted the Indigenous Administrator's view, stating:

The issues are too global. Is there such a thing as culturally appropriate evaluation for the distance we have travelled? How do we measure this? The Minister is our boss and we have to provide data to be compared. (A16)
Systemic data is not a good indicator of good or bad schools. (A22) Was there any follow-up with regard to the testing language issue? Senior Management said they were following up on this. We need something else to measure these students by. (A23)

On the topic of financial resourcing, an Indigenous participant commented:

At the moment, the only way we can address issues is with black money. If we are talking about this strategy impacting on all students then that means 100 per cent of the school population and this should be reflected in school budgets and projects. (IA17)

Much discussion centred on the issue that the high levels of financial resources allocated directly to schools had not improved Indigenous student outcomes according to any systemic data measures. Furthermore, it was suggested that the ways in which targeted, supplementary Commonwealth funding was perceived by schools as "black

money” reinforced a practice where Indigenous issues were only addressed in proportion to the supplementary funding provided. Many participants proposed that school-based management contributed to this practice.

School-based management is a disaster. The principals misspend the dollars and don't spend them on improving outcomes. We need some real accountability to have strategies working. It is the mindset of some Principals in schools that we can only use that [black] money to solve Indigenous issues. (A19)

One administrator did propose that increased accountability measures risked limiting flexibility at a school level for those who were operating successfully, whilst at the same time acknowledging that a lack of direction had caused many schools to *do their own thing* (A28).

Let's let schools off the leash to have permission to do what they are doing. There is confusion and frustration that has led people to pick up their own paddle to paddle off in their own direction. Don't let the action plan stifle the great things that are happening in our schools. (A28)

There were lengthy comments on the topic of human resource arrangements in the Department and these were focussed exclusively on the recruitment and retention of non-Indigenous teachers into remote communities. Neither the employment policy within *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) nor Education Queensland's overarching *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Strategy: Strategic Plan for the Career and Development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People 2002-2005* (Education Queensland, 2002c), both of which focussed on increased representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at all levels of employment, were discussed at all.

We want the flexible industrial practice that will make a difference to the outcomes of students. It can then have wider applicability to all students. (A19)
The recruitment strategy does not work in all centres. (A20) If every teacher in

every school used effective teaching and learning principles we wouldn't have these issues. (A23) What are we doing to attract good people to come in and work in remote communities? (A19)

With regard to the topic of community engagement, it was predominantly the Indigenous participants who contributed.

The success of this strategy will stand or fall on the extent to which it acknowledges and facilitates the rights of Indigenous people and communities to be involved in and make decisions about the education of our students. (IA2)
You won't get outcomes until you have strong relationships built on trust and honest conversations and processes. (IA4)

One Indigenous participant made the same comment a total of seven times in the conversation, *A significant part of the solution is respectful, honest relationships with the communities. (IA2)* When non-Indigenous participants spoke about community engagement, it was largely in deficit, or partially deficit terms.

Community engagement is important but sometimes it can be a distraction instead of enabler of higher standards. (A27) We need a community awareness campaign directed at the benefits of education. (A23) The roles and responsibilities of communities and parents should be built into the accountability frameworks. Schools can't do this on their own. (A24)

There were very few comments regarding teaching and learning although one participant commented that, *The most profound issue is what happens in classrooms. (A2)* The solution to the teaching and learning 'problem' was cited on four occasions (by the same participant) as *The only model is the implementation of "New Basics" across the Cape. (A2)* Three participants stated that appropriate, but undefined, *pedagogy needs to be built into pre-service training. The universities need to be doing a better job. (A2, A14, A19).*

So, despite the fact that there was little discussion about teaching and learning on Day One, the minutes indicate that one summative reflection on the day was “excitement and belief that the curriculum and the drivers for teaching and learning are back on the agenda” indicating that participants did think that this had been a central topic of the discussions. The solitary comment regarding literacy made by a senior Central Office administrator declared:

We need to finalise the Indigenous Bandscales and the Indigenous languages policy. There are issues with LOTE and what is provided and how we might link this with ESL and test-taking readiness. (A28)

On Day Two, I gave an hour presentation to the whole group about issues pertaining to language and literacy. Thirty-two points are recorded in the minutes from the presentation, all related to language, literacy and professional development. Two short presentations on other areas of the strategy preceded a think-pair-share process, designed to mobilise the group’s expertise in the identification of issues and solutions to address blockages in the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) implementation. The participants divided into six groups, each taking one policy from the strategy in turn. Each group’s contribution was recorded on butcher’s paper, then rotated to another group until all groups had contributed on all six policies. My group was the last to receive the literacy policy contributions. The only issue and action recorded from the other five groups regarding the literacy policy was a minor change in the Mother Language Other Than English (MLOTE) policy to allow more flexibility in the language programs in schools. I was stunned. After more than eighteen months of advocacy, State-wide professional development workshops, the strong messages regarding the impact of language on literacy development through the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001) and the presentation earlier in the day, no one with

any influence over strategic implementation had contributed anything to the area of literacy. Although I reiterated to my group many of the points I had made in my presentation that morning, the minutes show that the only issues to be actioned as a result of the meeting in the area of literacy were: the completion of the ESL Bandscales; amendments to Indigenous language policy (as recommended by a recent Indigenous Education Consultative Board research project); the introduction of flexibility in LOTE programs by amending MLOTE policy and finally a focus on test readiness for students completing the Grades 3, 5 and 7 State wide tests.

Education Queensland's response, *Priority Strategies for Cape York* (2002d) was released in draft two months after the business meeting. In the area of curriculum development, the main focus was to be the "Development and delivery of culturally responsive curriculum frameworks and supporting pedagogy" (p.21). The proposal announced the extension of the *New Basics*¹ trial and flexible Human Resource arrangements to all Cape York schools and "Teaching and learning practices in Indigenous English as a Second Language and cross cultural pedagogy that engages students and delivers improved outcomes" (p.21). However, there is no mention of ESL pedagogy in any of the proposal's action elements (p.22), all of which focus on the *New Basics* curriculum. Although a separate proposal entitled "Teaching and learning practices in Indigenous English as a Second Language and cross-cultural pedagogy that engages students and delivers improved outcomes" (p.26) was included in the draft plan, there was no rationale, strategy description, action elements or budget allocation to this area. The assumption appeared to be that the already under-resourced IETA, with a

¹ *New Basics*: A reconceptualised curriculum model trialled in some Education Queensland schools between 1999 and 2003.

single project officer (me) would implement this part of the response, with no additional budget.

In practice, the *New Basics*-informed curriculum project, the *Cape York Curriculum* became the only educational response to the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland Government, 2001). Additional financial and human resources were allocated and it was given strong support from local and Central Office senior officers. In contrast, no additional resources were allocated to ESL training or pedagogy and there was no integration of ESL support into any teaching and learning initiatives on Cape York. Furthermore, in the inter-agency response to the study, *Meeting Challenges Making Choices: The Queensland Government's response to the Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2002a) focuses primarily on the issues of alcohol abuse, child safety and justice. In the area of education, the document states that

Education Queensland and the Department of Employment and Training have programs and initiatives that specifically target many of the Cape York Justice Study recommendations. Education Queensland will develop and deliver a curriculum that meets the social and cultural needs of Indigenous students.
(p.16)

It seemed that all the urgent recommendations in ESL and literacy had been ignored.

4.36 Summary of the middle phase of the fieldwork

In the middle phase of the study, the changes in people and structures within Education Queensland had significantly disrupted the implementation of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a). The concept of incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues within the broader framework of 'inclusive' education had aroused suspicion from some Indigenous administrators that Indigenous education was

being subsumed to the extent that the most critical issues would not be addressed. At this stage, none of the *Partners for Success* policies was visible within school accountability documents and therefore, from a school's perspective, the entire strategy remained peripheral to the main thrust of education in Queensland. Although the umbrella of inclusion and changed structures had facilitated better relationships between those working within the *Partners for Success* literacy policy and other initiatives such as *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c), most energy and actions were diverted to Education Queensland's response to the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001). Despite the recommendations in the study with regard to ESL resourcing, training and practices underlining the action elements of the *Partners for Success* literacy policy that had caused me some optimism, strategic responses to teaching and learning issues were focussed almost exclusively on the adoption of the *New Basics* curriculum framework.

The implementation meeting in this middle phase of the fieldwork highlighted a number of issues. Discussion at this strategic level focussed primarily on accountability and resourcing issues, despite participants' summation that teaching and learning "was back on the agenda". There was almost no discussion of or contribution to the implementation of the literacy policy. Participants often held quite contradictory beliefs regarding issues, obstacles to implementation and solutions and sometimes contradicted themselves in the same discussion. Although the need to gain grass roots information was identified as a necessity to progress implementation, these relatively open meetings petered out in favour of small, closed groups who developed implementation plans and raised suspicion from some participants about lack of transparency in processes.

In schools, Principals/Key teachers continued to express frustration at the processes at work in Education Queensland and were demoralised that their voices never seemed to be heard. Teachers expressed disappointment at the lack of support provided under the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) strategy. Non-Indigenous teachers saw the literacy policy as additional to their main role “all this other stuff” and Indigenous teachers queried whether Education Queensland was “really serious about Partners for Success”. Budgetary cuts in this phase of the fieldwork had prevented the publication of the Indigenous Bandscales and, along with the lack of inclusion of any *Partners for Success* targets in school accountability documents, determined that student literacy performance continued to be measured using the state-wide testing data.

4.4 The later phase

4.41 The mainstreaming of *Partners for Success*

In the final phase of the fieldwork, in 2003, there had been yet more reorganisation within Education Queensland. Many of the executive team in Central Office had changed and a new Director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education was appointed, whose role focussed primarily on policy development. The practice of holding business meetings had been abandoned in favour of a strategic reference group, composed of Senior Central Office staff, to further the implementation of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a). Therefore, in 2003, the literacy policy and appropriate second language monitoring tools were still not incorporated into school accountability documents nor was there any indication that they should be employed. The Indigenous ESL Bandscales professional development package had still not been published despite two attempts to allocate intra-departmental funding to

complete the project. In November 2002, the Queensland Government released the white paper *Education and Training Reforms for the Future* White Paper (ETRF) (Queensland Government, 2002b) which announced nineteen actions focussed upon young people remaining at school, in full-time training programs or employment, the introduction of a preparatory year of schooling and improved learning in the middle years. The White Paper reforms were to be trialled in six geographical locations across Queensland in the second half of 2003. The ETRF agenda became the main vehicle for educational initiatives from this point.

4.42 The implementation plan: *Partners for Success Action Plan 2003-2005*

The publication of the *Partners for Success Action Plan: 2003-2005* (Education Queensland, 2003) was too late for any of the agreed performance targets or indicators to be included in the 2003 *School Annual Report and Operation Plan* (SAROP). The document states that

The *Partners for Success Action Plan 2003-2005* provides a robust vehicle that will address the whole-of-government priorities identified in the *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices* strategy (MCMC), and *Education and Training Reforms for the Future* (ETRF). It will also further address the recommendations of the *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report*. (p.4)

I related earlier that the *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices* (Queensland, 2002a) document, in terms of education and training, referred primarily to issues of attendance and promised to “develop and deliver a curriculum that meets the social and cultural needs of Indigenous students” (p.14) and did not take up any of the recommendations regarding ESL from the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001).

There was no specific reference to language, nor was there any priority given to ESL training and pedagogy. The *Partners for Success Action Plan, 2003-2005* (Education Queensland, 2002b) did refer to literacy as a target for improvement and announced the development of a mandatory school Indigenous education profile for all schools. It also heralded the introduction of a “*Partners for Success* component of SAROP” (p.5). However, although literacy attainment was highlighted as a priority action area stating “This will be achieved through increased professional development opportunities in teaching practices that promote and meet the literacy development needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students” (p.6), there was no mention of the impact of second or subsequent language learning status on student literacy performance. In fact, the plan deflected any attention away from second language learning needs by using national literacy tests as the only measure of improvement. “Existing *Destination 2010* accountability and data-gathering processes will be used to monitor and report progress in these areas. Statewide targets will ensure that Indigenous students achieve significant improvement by 2010” (p.7).

In addition, the plan explained that some targets in the priority areas of attendance and leadership in Indigenous education would not be established until Term 4, 2004. Thus, in 2003, performance across all Commonwealth and State literacy policies was monitored using a single tool—student performance in the Grade 3, 5 and 7 tests. In fact, identical performance measures were used for literacy at the end of 2003 as in 2001, the only difference being whereas Indigenous ESL Bandscales had been the recommended tool in 2001, they had disappeared from all monitoring documents by 2003 as indicated in Table 9. The plan also announced that

In Term 4 2003, Education Queensland will commence the identification of up to eight schools as Centres for Excellence in Indigenous Education. These

schools will showcase the practices that enabled them to meet or exceed the targets in the priority areas. (p.10)

thereby systemically reinforcing that success would only be measured using the tools deemed inappropriate in the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy.

Table 10.

Table of Accountabilities for State and Commonwealth Literacy Policies in 2003

Policy	Monitoring tools	Accountabilities
<i>Partners for Success</i>	National literacy testing in Grades 3, 5, 7	Trial schools monitored under <i>NIELNS</i> performance indicators (national literacy benchmarks)
<i>Literate Futures</i>	National literacy testing in Grades 3, 5, 7	School Annual Report and Operational Plans (<i>SAROP</i>)
<i>Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals of Schooling</i>	National literacy testing in Grades 3, 5, 7	Reporting against national literacy benchmarks
<i>National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy</i>	National literacy testing in Grades 3, 5, 7	Reporting against national literacy benchmarks

4.43 The conversation at the end of the study

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

I don't think anyone's interested any more. We have put so much energy into getting that language message across in our school, and I think we have been successful despite, not because of, Education Queensland. I don't think Partners for Success has helped at all, except you can refer to it, as a sort of reminder about Indigenous kids, when someone is being particularly ignorant. Working for Education Queensland is sometimes like speaking louder to a deaf person. Eventually you get hoarse. We just decided to do what we could do in our school and ignore what's going on in Central Office. I haven't seen or heard anything about Partners for Success for ages, except the announcement of those High-Achieving Principals (and how were they chosen—no process as usual). It makes you very cynical in the end.

We have wanted our staff to use the Bandscales but they are in a difficult format and we can't mandate their use. Also, if people have had no training in Bandscales, you can't expect people to use them. I think it says a lot that the professional development package was never published. The only thing that counts is the State-wide tests and our kids are still at the bottom of the pile according to those, really. We have made some significant gains in some areas but we also know that those gains vary depending on which teacher the class has had. We value the kids home language and use it as a bridge to English and we know that when the kids are taught language explicitly they succeed but we can't measure that with anything the system recognises. We have mandated using ESL methodologies though, the Walking Talking Texts¹ but we're flat out trying to get everyone using it before they move on to another school. It's difficult when teachers just don't believe these kids can achieve. You really need a critical mass of people who have the belief and skills to help the students achieve. Sometimes you only have a small group in the school and that's really hard.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

We have been using all the training we have had in our classrooms. I'd like more support, though. The Principal has asked us to lead some of the professional development at staff meetings. That was scary at first, but it helped if we did it as a team. That's been really good. The RATEP upgrade² made me think about doing more study. We've been able to do all the induction of new teachers at our school this year. We've taken on that responsibility. That's never happened before. Those Southern teachers still don't know how to teach our kids. The testing is still a problem too. Our kids are doing well. We can see it and the parents can see it. They just can't do those tests. We try not to make a big deal of them. It's still terrible on the test days, though, because you can't do any of the things you normally do, like explain. Is Partners for Success still going on? I thought it had finished ages ago.

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

I don't recall what Partners for Success is. It was on the booklet we got at RAIS³. I know language is an issue and I enjoyed the activities we did at the conference but we

¹ ESL methodology for teachers of Indigenous students, Northern Territory Board of Studies 1995.

² RATEP upgrade project (see Chapter Five).

³ RAIS: Remote Area Incentive Scheme induction program.

have not had nearly enough training. We have staff meetings and we get bits and pieces of the picture. It's confusing sometimes though, when the consultants for reading or spelling come. They tell us things that contradict what we have heard at workshops and at RAIS. It's like you get a bit of a handle on one thing and then there is something else. Sometimes the Indigenous teachers get things wrong too, about English, and then I get more confused. You can't expect the kids to learn English when their teachers get it wrong, can you? Most of the kids in my classes are at least two years behind in everything.

Pauline

I attended a high profile meeting in Brisbane where Indigenous education was said to be a priority and then we had a lecture on how everyone had to improve their Grade 3, 5, and 7 literacy scores. I raised the issue of appropriate measurement tools and it was completely glossed over. It was embarrassing almost. I don't think the Director had any idea of what I was talking about (and neither did most of the participants). I think we have reached the end of a one-way street. After all this time, we are back at the beginning. Although Partners for Success is now going to be included in school accountability documents (after four years), and that's good, literacy is still being measured using the same measures that were deemed inappropriate in the first place. I can't believe how much work has gone into things like the Indigenous Bandscales and they are still not being used. What's more, the implementation plan does not even indicate that anything other than the benchmark tests should be used.

4.44 Summary of the final stages of the fieldwork

At the end of the fieldwork, it seemed as if nothing much had changed with regard to the key actions in the literacy policy at a strategic level. Processes to track Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' literacy development in school SAROPs were to be included, eventually, in 2004, but used the same inappropriate tools that had generated the policy in the first place. In fact, the possibility that second language Indigenous students may have second language learning needs had been erased from every systemic accountability document. In the area of literacy, the only systemic

measure of success was performance in the national tests and tangible recognition and reward would only go to those schools exceeding national testing targets. At the focus school sites, Principals, teachers and I express our frustration that the very (language) issues, that were the focus of the literacy policy, had been masked by national literacy performance targets. Indigenous teachers refer to the RATEP-upgrade initiative (a locally-driven project, see Chapter Five) and seem to enjoy the new responsibilities they have assumed in the focus schools.

4.5 Chapter summary

Throughout the fieldwork, strategic focus remained almost exclusively on accountability elements of the policy implementation. The only teaching and learning-focussed decision was to implement a common curriculum framework on Cape York. No links were made with key actions of the literacy policy and no additional resources were allocated for its implementation. This was despite the clear recommendations of the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001), which reinforced the key actions in literacy in *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a). There had been no focus or planning at a strategic level of “appropriate strategies to improve literacy outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students” (Education Queensland, 2000a, p.7) nor adequate resources for ongoing systemic professional development. In addition, there was no systemic support for RATEP-trained teachers to become “highly proficient in teaching Standard Australian English” (p.7).

Chapter Five

Supporting the *Partners for Success* policy: The Indigenous Education and Training Alliance

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the data relating to my role as State Program Manager at the Indigenous Education and Training Alliance, a Staff College of Education Queensland supporting Indigenous educators, over the three-year period of the study by continuing the collective story using the same composite voices as before and incorporating the same data sources. Over the period of the study, I collected workshop evaluations and unstructured interviews from over 5,000 participants across the State as well as my own journal reflections. These data are interwoven in the main body of the text to show how and why the professional development and my role evolved in the way they did and to reflect confirming and disconfirming evidence from sources other than the collective voices at the focus schools. As such, they provide a wider context and perspective for my actions and the conversations. The conversations in this chapter focus upon my role and the Indigenous Education and Training Alliance's role in supporting key actions of the literacy policy implementation, as interpreted by participants in the focus schools.

5.2 The early phase

5.21 The role of the Indigenous Education and Training Alliance

IETA was established as a "project" funded under the Commonwealth's NIELNS strategy (DEST, 2000) to support the implementation of the policies within *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a). The organisation was classified as

one of a network of Staff Colleges, “to develop, broker and present learning and development that acknowledges that remote state schools can be unique workplaces and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities represent educational challenges” (*IETA promotional brochure*, Education Queensland, 2000e). The Staff Colleges were devised, as part of a learning and development initiative, to broker professional development activities within particular geographical areas in Queensland, under the direction of a single staff member, or Principal. IETA and the *Staff College, Inclusive Education* were the only Staff Colleges with a State-wide rather than regional focus. In view of the particular issues highlighted in *Partners for Success* and the lack of specific, systemically-sanctioned professional development packages and skilled personnel to address these needs, IETA’s role encompassed delivery as well as brokerage and presentation of professional development. Consequently, the organisation included a Principal; a number of Senior Project Officers (of whom I was one); Project Officers; and teachers who were employed at different times to address the focus areas of IETA’s activities.

The organisation’s activities concentrated on three main areas: ESL pedagogy; cross-cultural training; and the induction of new teachers to remote Indigenous schools under the *Remote Area Incentive Scheme* (RAIS). The literacy policy within *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a), focussing on the second language learning status of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, was a major area of IETA’s professional development support. Initially, three qualified Senior ESL Project Officers and three additional Indigenous officers were to be appointed (IETA Principal, personal communication, March 2001) to deliver professional development in ESL pedagogy in pairs across the State. I was appointed as one of these officers. However,

only two non-Indigenous Senior Project Officers ever took up the positions and no Indigenous officers were ever appointed. This was my first role with Education Queensland, although I had many connections to the department through previous roles in other education systems and the Indigenous ESL Bandscales project.

Thus, from the outset, the ESL team within IETA was seriously under-resourced in terms of the original intent under the strategy. One Manager cited the *significant difficulty in getting suitably qualified and experienced people in Indigenous ESL* (A30) as the principal reason for the lack of appointments. The same officer also related, later, that as far as he/she knew *there was not a single qualified Indigenous ESL teacher in Queensland, because we have looked everywhere*. The rationale behind appointing (uncredentialed) Indigenous officers to work in pairs with the credentialed officers was to develop increasing capacity across the State and to *give integrity to the initiative* (A31). A few weeks after my appointment, I queried why no Indigenous officers had been employed (Reflective Journal, May, 2001) and was told that *Central Office had not allocated any budget* (A30). By early 2002, I was the only remaining Senior ESL Project Officer at IETA and the original assigned ESL budget had been redirected to other (non-ESL) activities within the organisation. From early 2002, I was on my own.

5.22 The Senior ESL Project Officer roles

The roles were initially gazetted to broker and deliver professional development in clusters and districts in ESL pedagogy for Indigenous students, “e.g., *FELIKS* and Bandscales” (Expression of Interest advertisement, February 2001). However, we had no clear role description during the entire period of the study. I had joined IETA just a few months after its inception and the organisation did not have a detailed operational

plan at this point. In fact, the whole *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) strategy did not have a detailed implementation plan at this point as I related in Chapter Four. The only performance requirements at this stage for ESL pedagogy were targets related to the NIELNS (DEST, 2000) initiative: that is, number and percentage of staff in identified schools who accessed professional development in ESL pedagogy and the common quarterly reporting data outlining numbers, types of professional development delivery and roles of participants that all Staff Colleges were required to submit by Education Queensland. In Chapter Four, I related that the identified schools were those under the negotiated flexible human resource agreement with the Queensland Teachers' Union and those trialling community compacts. Both the NIELNS performance requirements and the Staff College data collection requirements focussed on participation in learning and development opportunities.

In the early phases of the study, there was no systemic plan of what State-wide professional development in ESL pedagogy should be offered, nor any guidance as to how it should occur. Therefore, in May 2001, my Senior ESL Project Officer colleague and I gathered together a number of Principals, teachers and Administrators as an ESL reference group (including members from the four focus schools) to brainstorm the kinds of existing professional development programs which might contribute to a useful pedagogical toolkit for teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ESL/ESD students and how they thought our roles might be used most effectively. The latter was of particular concern to me as I had not worked for Education Queensland before, was unsure of the processes and systems already in operation, and what had/had not worked in the past.

The group identified three existing valuable professional development programs. First, the *Teaching English as a Second Language to Indigenous Students* (Queensland Department of Education & Department of Education, South Australia, 1998) was proposed, which was a self-paced professional development package for teachers. James Cook University had recently introduced this package as a fourth year elective subject in their pre-service teacher education program. Second, the FELIKS (Hudson, 1992) approach to teaching Indigenous ESL/ESD learners was proposed. This approach focussed on developing awareness and code-switching between Creoles and Aboriginal Englishes and Standard Australian English. It also incorporated histories of how Creoles and Aboriginal Englishes evolved and the likely points of difficulty for Indigenous ESL learners learning English. Third, *Walking Talking Texts* (Northern Territory Board of Studies, 1995) was identified. This is a methodology specifically designed for non-ESL specialist teachers of Indigenous ESL students.

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

All teachers should do these professional development packages. At least it would be a start. Mind you, your roles are state-wide and with the turnover of staff we have you'll be employed forever. You know, if we were really serious about this we would be using a Reading Recovery¹-type model.

Pauline

What do you mean? (I envisaged a structured withdrawal model.)

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

I mean that kind of training methodology. Having an intensive specialised training program over a year. That would be good. A few years ago there was sponsorship to do

¹ Reading Recovery (Clay, 1993) individual reading intervention program.

the GDAIE¹ program. Some teachers did Graduate Diplomas in ESL too. They got study leave on half pay and got qualifications in ESL. That was really good. You are not going to be making much of an impact if you don't have the resources to do it properly, like Reading Recovery has. If it's important enough, it should be resourced properly. You can usually gauge an initiative's importance by the amount of dollars attached to it. Mind you, I can't imagine the Department allocating those sorts of resources to ESL. I don't think the commitment is there.

Pauline

Well I guess the Reading Recovery model comes from a very clear research-based methodology that has national and international recognition. The challenge with what we are trying to do is to make up the program as we go along. We can't just access something ready-made. We also don't have the resources to support an intensive training program like Reading Recovery. The task is HUGE and we are just two people!

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

I think it is really, really important that all teachers do FELIKS. That really helped me understand why I had so many problems at school and at Uni. If only teachers could get the kids to understand that the languages are different, they'd get on much better at school and not feel so much shame with English.

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

What are the Unis doing about this? If Partners for Success is policy, the Unis should be making sure ESL pedagogy is in all university courses in Queensland. You know we didn't do anything at Uni to do with Indigenous education, except as an elective—so only if you wanted to. I don't know enough about English and the grammar. To be honest, I find some of the stuff in FELIKS really difficult, like the differences between dialects and Creoles. I've done the workshops a couple of times now and I learn something new each time.

¹ Graduate Diploma in Aboriginal and Islander Education, taught at James Cook University until 1989 for which approximately 20 teachers were released on full pay for one year.

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

It'll be important that schools don't see you as Education Advisers. You'll have to be very clear that you will only work with clusters and districts not in individual schools or you'll never cover the State. The Education Adviser model doesn't work anyhow. It's just fly-in, fly-out. You'll need to use technology to support schools too, like the website. Mind you, I'd always prefer whole school in-service and face-to-face. Maybe the train-the-trainer model is best in schools, and then we can run ongoing professional development at staff meetings. We have such big staff turnover that we never seem to get ahead. It would make a huge difference if our teachers had some of this before they came, through the Unis. We can't possibly train people on the job. You know, the Department trained over thirty teachers in FELIKS about eighteen months ago. It was really expensive. I only know one person that has done any workshops with anyone since. Most of the teachers who were trained aren't in Indigenous schools any more. They are all in Brisbane. What a waste of time and money.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

I think face-to-face is best. It's hard to get access to the internet in school, except after school. Sometimes only the administration computers have internet access. The RATEP¹ students use the internet for their courses but they have a teacher there too to support them. I like to know who's teaching me and to be able to ask questions when you think of them. That's the way I learn best. It was good when we had an ESL teacher in school. You could ask them things when you needed to.

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

Most teachers just don't get time to be doing professional development using the internet. You have to be really, really motivated and have access to a computer. I think if teachers are expected to do that, they should have release time. I like getting away from school, just to concentrate on something else and meet other people that you don't usually meet, but it's hard for the relieving teacher (if you can get one) and the students if you leave your class.

¹ Remote Area Teacher Education Program

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

We've got lots of expertise in the school but we can't pay our teachers extra to do work after school or at weekends. It's not fair. And sometimes other staff resent those with the knowledge and make their lives difficult. It would be good if someone from outside the school came and did it. Sometimes it's better that way.

Several themes emerged from this conversation: the enormity of the task; paucity of resourcing; a concern about knowing enough about English; some frustration that this knowledge was not covered in pre-service teacher education; a preference for “outsider” professional development; a desire for whole school, face-to-face professional development (in contradiction to the way they saw that the Senior ESL Project Officers should be working); and general agreement that the awareness-raising about language generated by the FELIKS (Hudson, 1992) workshops was important. All participants wanted face-to-face professional development even though they acknowledged that this was not the model that could possibly be used for coverage across the State. Teachers spoke about the difficulty of access to technology and motivation for on-line professional development. Comparisons were drawn with the level of resourcing that *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 1993) required, its intensive training methodology and its International recognition and the comparative lack of support for the task facing the ESL team at IETA. Principals/Key Teachers highlighted that the importance placed on a particular initiative seemed to be in proportion to the amount of financial support it received from Central Office.

It was decided at the meeting that, as a starting point IETA, through the Senior ESL Project Officers, would begin by offering a cyclical suite of two-day professional development workshops at key locations across Queensland focussing firstly on awareness-raising through the *TESLIS* (Education Department of South Australian

Queensland Department of Education, 1998), secondly on language difference through FELIKS workshops and thirdly on strategies, through the *Walking Talking Texts* methodology (Northern Territory Board of Studies, 1995).

Pauline—a caveat

I can see a couple of potential issues with this way of going about things. Firstly, when I was lecturing in TESLIS [at James Cook University¹], one recurring problem was that students kept saying they didn't have enough knowledge about English grammar. I saw a lot of evidence of that through their assignments. I know it is not fashionable to talk about grammar but there seems little point in delivering FELIKS workshops or encouraging teachers to use Walking Talking Texts if they don't know enough about the areas of difficulty² for Indigenous students or can't fill out the language grid for Walking Talking Texts³. You can only teach what you know. Students and teachers keep telling us they don't know about English grammar. I think the FELIKS and Walking Talking Texts workshops would be much more effective if we could offer a pre-workshop course in the basics of English grammar.

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

I think that's a good idea. You'd have to write that course from scratch, though, to fit it to the FELIKS and Walking Talking Texts. It's not like you can just pull out an appropriate program. That's the kind of thing a team of people should be off-line for a term to do.

However, dedicated time was never allocated to produce appropriate foundation courses for the professional development programs.

¹ The TESLIS professional development package was used as a resource in both RATEP (core) and mainstream pre-service courses (elective).

² Main areas of language difficulty for Indigenous ESL students in the FELIKS approach.

³ The language grid is used to analyse a chosen text for its language features and appropriateness for a particular class of students.

5.23 Literacy, language and further resistance to ESL

Instead, we started making links with schools and districts, attending district and cluster meetings, networking with the schools and promoting the kind of support we were intending to give across the state. Initially, I addressed various Principals' meetings and workshops talking about IETA's professional development focus on ESL pedagogy and language. A recurrent theme in these meetings was the conflation of the terms "literacy" and "language". They seemed to be used interchangeably by teachers, Principals and Administrators. My journal entry (June, 2001) reflected on this after a Principals' meeting:

I spoke about language and why it was an issue and why we were trying to address it through professional development. I realised for the first time that the whole ESL focus of Partners for Success is within a "literacy" policy, so these terms are even being used interchangeably within the policy itself and I think that's a problem. I alluded to a number of issues [in the meeting]: pre-service teacher education; awareness and beliefs about language within and beyond communities, and historical factors. None of the Principals seemed aware that there are two separate factions appearing in the Department—literacy educators and language educators (including the migrant ESL educators). The "literacy" experts in Brisbane currently have no contact with either the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unit or the migrant ESL staff and apparently there is even open hostility amongst some parties. It seems crazy and unworkable. The two groups are somehow going to have to find some common ground, otherwise there is going to be nothing but confusion in the schools. In fact, I think there is huge confusion now. People think language and literacy are the same thing.

As I attended these meetings and workshops between April and September 2001 in the early stages of the fieldwork, I again became conscious of tension and resistance to the notion of English as a Second Language from Senior Indigenous and non-Indigenous (non-school) Administrators, echoing comments made in the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) business meetings reported in Chapter Four.

Although *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) clearly focuses on second language learning status as a key factor in literacy achievement for many Indigenous students, four district and school Administrators openly expressed their scepticism and challenged the principles underpinning the literacy policy itself. Their initial comments are underlined below and I was prompted to probe these statements further in individual conversations with the participants after the meetings, again recording their comments in my reflective journal.

We should not be lumped together with migrants (IA31).

When I went to [secondary] school, there were Indigenous kids, Italian kids, New Guinean kids, many nationalities there. We didn't do LOTE. We had to do ESL classes. It was mostly the Indigenous kids with a few New Guinean kids in those classes. The Italian kids learnt Italian as a LOTE, so it was really all the black kids together doing ESL. This teacher came from a Language Centre to teach us for those lessons. It was boring and all we did was how to ask for things in shops. We needed help with writing our assignments not how to go shopping. We used to get angry because we were treated the same as the New Guinean kids.

Teaching decontextualised skills, skills and drills using tapes and textbooks doesn't address the future literacies required by students (A33).

We did hundreds of classroom observations as part of a research project. We used to see classes of ESL students using pullout language programs, repeating after tapes and using language workbooks, bus timetables and restaurant menus. It was generally very repetitive—a skills and drills approach. It was an empty vessel model. Teachers seemed to have little knowledge of these kids' diverse language and literacy backgrounds, so they could not access the students' (considerable) resources.

We have had ESL teaching before and that hasn't worked. I don't believe in it to tell you the truth. We just need good literacy teachers and there aren't enough of those around (A2).

We have specialised ESL teachers in the District and they are always being asked by schools to include the Indigenous students. Indigenous students aren't funded, so this can't really happen and, on the few occasions they have taken Indigenous students, it hasn't worked. The students play up and seem unmotivated. People keep telling me that language is important but they lose me after two minutes with all their arguments. I think it is simply a question of having the right curriculum rather than everyone doing their own thing and government agencies working together better. No, I'm pretty convinced that ESL pedagogy is not the answer and I just find the focus on it annoying. Most of you ESL people are pretty fanatical too.

We are being treated as migrants in our own country. Second language is second rate (IA34).

As long as we're treated as second rate, we'll be second rate. I went away to boarding school in Brisbane. No one treated me differently. I was the only Indigenous student in my grade. No one gave me special ESL support. I'd have been insulted if they had. No, I was treated just the same as everyone else, my teachers believed and I believed that I could do well and I did really well. No one expected me not to do well. If we keep talking about language as the reason for failure, we'll never address any of the issues. Talking about second language is condescending and paternalistic . . . the worst kind of liberal colonialism.

Our kids need powerful English, not this second language stuff and they need good teachers (A5).

My son went away to school down South. When he got there, he was given ESL support and he did special classes. The teacher was ok and he quite liked the classes but in Year 9, they streamed the English classes and he was put into one of the lower ability classes with the slow kids, because he had had ESL support in Grade 8. He wasn't slow. He just needed a bit of help. The program wasn't the same as in the other classes. By the time he got to Grade 10, he was really turned off English. So he chose vocational education and did carpentry. I was disappointed because he is smart and could have gone to Uni. He wanted to be a teacher when he left primary school. A carpenter is ok but he would

have been a great teacher. I think he might have done an OP¹ if he hadn't been in those classes in junior High School.

Two Administrators expressed the need for “good teachers”, but not necessarily ESL-skilled teachers. Prior to the study, I had never considered that second language teaching might be construed as deficit, or second class, pedagogy. In fact, in common with the Principals in the four focus schools and the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) key actions, I strongly believed that an explicit focus on second language pedagogy was an effective pathway to teaching “powerful” English. The non-Indigenous Administrator (A33) believed that the kind of ESL practice he/she had witnessed did not adequately prepare students for the kinds of literacies required for successful participation in a contemporary world. The Indigenous Administrators (IA31, IA34) related personal experiences that caused them to be suspicious of the effects of the ESL label and ESL programs. The non-Indigenous district and school Administrators “did not believe in it” in common with the senior Administrators in Chapter Four. An extract from my reflective journal (July, 2001) highlights my perceptions at the time:

(A2) believed that what was needed was “good literacy teachers”, “a better curriculum” and that the focus on language by “fanatical” ESL teachers (including myself) was “annoying”. If there is all this negativity around ESL (and the fanatical, annoying nature of its proponents) there will be active resistance from those Senior Managers with the power to make it happen. If this is compounded by considerable systemic support for literacy, all our work will be an uphill struggle. We are going to have to be very careful how we pitch the professional development we are offering. If we call it second language pedagogy, we not only risk alienating the very people we need on side but we look like we are operating outside of the systemic focus and people won't want to do it. They'll spend their professional development funds on what the

¹ OP refers to the Overall Position score required for entry into university in Queensland. To be OP eligible, students have to follow courses in at least 5 Queensland Studies Authority registered academic subjects. To receive an OP score, students also have to sit a Queensland Core Skills test.

system regards as important—and at this time it is literacy. If we call it literacy, we take the focus away from second language learning and muddy the waters even more. We need some way to alert teachers to the second language learning needs of students whilst showing them how this links to systemic imperatives. Partners for Success doesn't seem to be part of the main game of education or link to any mainstream initiatives so how are we going to make an impact?

After much consultation with colleagues at IETA and acknowledging, albeit reluctantly, that the terms literacy and language were being used as alternate ways of saying the same thing in both the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy and the NIELNS strategy (DEST, 2000), we decided to call our professional development initiatives “second language and literacy professional development”. This was to appease some of the Senior Administrators’ antagonisms and minimise the negative perceptions of ESL pedagogy as second-class. Consequently, through using and the same language as the policy documents we also made a discursive link between second language learning and literacy.

Even so, I felt very uncomfortable with this terminology. It felt like a betrayal of the principles underpinning second language learning and I knew that, in calling our work “second language and literacy pedagogy”, we would be contributing to the existing confusion. Furthermore, none of the academic literature or the personal professional knowledge I drew upon, supported this conflation of terms. In common with the Principals in the four focus schools, when they applied to be Learning Development Centres, Literacy (see Chapter Four), I found myself living with an uncomfortable compromise in the interests of pragmatism.

5.24 Issues of quality and credentialing: is ESL pedagogy a ‘specialist’ skill?

I began reflecting upon ways in which teachers might be motivated to be engaged with professional development in second language pedagogy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, particularly since many senior district staff had openly expressed their resistance to ESL pedagogy. It seemed unlikely that Indigenous ESL pedagogy would be given the same status as other interventions and training packages within Education Queensland so, I reasoned, we would need to create some perceived value for teachers to engage in the professional development. I was also concerned about quality. How would we ensure that our programs were quality programs and that teachers (and others) would see them as such? I felt that credentialing might have a role to play. After all, credentialed programs such as *Reading Recovery* (Clay, 1993) were consistently oversubscribed:

I wonder about motivation and worry about quality, especially as few people see that ESL pedagogy requires particular skills and knowledges. Why would teachers engage in this sort of professional development? What incentives are there? Teachers, especially in remote contexts are struggling to keep their heads above water anyway. We’re talking about a lot of professional development here. Thinking about what we have been saying about what has worked in the past, I wonder whether we couldn’t offer credentialing of these workshops through the Universities . . . at different levels so that all staff would get some external recognition for participation. Despite the Partners for Success policy, the system does not recognise skills in ESL pedagogy in any way. (Reflective journal entry, September 2001)

Therefore, I approached colleagues at James Cook University to explore how this might be possible and we developed a credentialing framework, which mapped the professional development programs into Graduate and Masters’ programs through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) arrangements. I then used this as a basis for successful negotiation around credentialing with other universities in Queensland. The

issue of quality was raised in negotiations with all the universities. Their concerns were not simply about the number of equivalent hours and types of assessment to comply with university regulations and RPL requirements but also about the level of qualification and calibre of the non-university-based trainers delivering the program. This was a significant dilemma for the ESL programs that IETA planned to offer, in that only “trained” trainers could deliver the FELIKS workshops and there were none in the universities. Furthermore, the universities required assessors with particular kinds of qualifications in order to trust the academic rigour of the assessment item. The levels of acceptable assessor credentialing varied from university to university. Eventually, again in the interests of pragmatism, I agreed to be the assessor for all these programs and to further negotiate with universities should other assessors be needed. I was conscious that this situation left the credentialing framework vulnerable in terms of sustainability but I did not believe that we would have large numbers of people wishing to use the credentialing option. Rather, I saw it as an incentive for participation. In fact, over the period of the study, only one non-Indigenous teacher took up this option. However, the framework was very significant in the RATEP upgrade program as will be shown later in this chapter.

5.25 The establishment of Learning Development Centres–Literacy

As I was negotiating the credentialing framework with universities, we continued to have regular ESL reference group meetings. Towards the end of the early phase of the fieldwork, in late 2001, the sites for the Learning Development Centres, Literacy (hereafter LDCs) were announced across Queensland. Recall that these were identified centres of existing good practice that were to

Provide localised and sustainable professional learning opportunities for teachers through the delivery of programs that are destined to meet the needs of the teachers. Instead of a ‘one size fits all’ approach, the Centres are able to provide professional learning activities for teachers that are planned and implemented to meeting their diverse needs. (Education Queensland, 2000c, p.1)

Also, Education Queensland expected all schools to have completed a Whole School Literacy Plan in accordance with the *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) priorities by the end of 2002. The LDCs were to

- Provide training for school curriculum leaders in whole-school literacy planning
- Advise, assist and support schools so that they undertake whole-school literacy planning effectively
- Assist schools to address the learning and development needs of staff in literacy, particularly with respect to reading. (Education Queensland, 2000c)

Some participants in the ESL reference group were also members of a newly-established LDC. I tabled the credentialing framework at a meeting in December 2001, just after the LDC Administrators had returned from a meeting in Brisbane where they had received training in “marketing” their Learning Development Centres.

Education Queensland’s expectation was that after a three-year period, during which co-ordination funds (equivalent to one full-time teacher) were allocated as seed funding to each LDC, the centres would be self-sustaining. I enthusiastically presented the credentialing framework to the ESL reference group.

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

I don’t think anyone would give credentialing a minute’s consideration. I don’t think you understand that teachers just don’t care about extra credentialing. After all, the system does not recognise this through increased pay or better conditions.

Pauline

What about Indigenous teachers?

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

Particularly Indigenous teachers. I just don't think they are interested. I think you are being really naïve to think that credentialing would act as a motivator for anyone in the real world. You might value qualifications but you are the only person I know who does. We all know that it is practice, not qualification that counts at a school level and this credibility has nothing to do with qualifications. In fact, in schools, credibility is particularly unrelated to qualifications. We have people in our school who have more knowledge in their little fingers than some of the qualified ESL teachers I have seen.

Pauline

It was not my intention to try and privilege credentialing over practice but rather open up a credentialing opportunity for teachers who wanted it—as a motivator because Education Queensland is not assigning any value to teachers engaging in this sort of professional development. It was also an issue of quality for me. How can we ensure that we are delivering quality and that there is some external validation of that quality? I would also struggle with the concept that we would be delivering professional development in ESL pedagogy without ensuring a reasonable knowledge base by trainers and credentialing is one way of doing this. Formal ESL qualifications were one of the essential criteria for the Senior ESL Project Officer positions, so they must count for something. I don't think we can deliver any quality program without a reasonably sophisticated knowledge of and about English. Remember, that's why we agreed to have a foundational grammar workshop for teachers in the first place. Trainers in these programs have to have the knowledge and credibility to do this. We are working with people's values here. I think it is really important to have quite sophisticated knowledge levels to have credibility in public arenas, if we are to have any chance of success with our programs.

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

Well, my main concern is that we are doing all these programs successfully in school and that will be our marketing focus for the LDC, and now you have this credentialing framework. We will essentially be competing for the same business. Part of the LDC

model is that it becomes (financially) self-sustaining. (That came as a shock to us—that we were meant to charge people for coming to our schools). Our teachers won't be able to be assessors in your framework. You have got a better deal for teachers and yet professional development is meant to be our role. It's what we are mandated to do under the LDC agreement. What's more, you have funding to support schools under the NIELNS agreement and a travel budget but we are meant to charge people. It's a stupid system anyway. How can we be expecting people to pay for professional development when it's all Education Queensland money in the first place. It all comes out of the same bucket. How can we cater for the needs of remote schools when there are the huge travel budgets involved? We can't go to them like you can because we have no travel allocation. They have to come to us and then there are all the issues about finding relief teachers in the schools, which they can't do. I think this goes against the values of public education. It is our mandate to deliver professional development, not yours. We got up as an LDC because our 'niche' is in ESL pedagogy for Indigenous students and we can do it better because teachers can see it happening in the schools.

Pauline

Actually it is our mandate to deliver professional development in ESL pedagogy for Indigenous students [referring to both the promotional brochure and the NIELNS targets]. I think we need to try and put some boundaries around what we do, to make sure that we are not disadvantaging each other. After all, we are all trying to work towards improving outcomes for Indigenous students.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

I would really like the opportunity to get some qualifications in ESL. This would let us take on some of those roles in schools. It's always the white teachers who take on those jobs. If we had the qualifications, they wouldn't be able to put white people ahead of us for those positions.

Eventually, after long (and sometimes tense) discussion, we managed to negotiate a compromise in that IETA would provide the 'out of school' concentrated professional development opportunities, with the opportunity for credentialing, and the

LDCs would provide practicum-type in-school experiences of the programs. I assured the LDC staff that we would promote the school-practicum idea to workshop participants. Furthermore, although IETA staff had received training in supporting schools with Whole School Literacy Planning, we would direct all enquiries to the LDC as this was a clearly-identified area of core activity for them.

I found this meeting both frustrating and enlightening. It foregrounded an apparent binary between practice and qualifications. On the one hand Principals/Key Teachers disparaged the idea of credentialing, particularly when referring to Indigenous teachers in their schools, while on the other claiming that IETA had “a better deal” for teachers for professional development (and therefore marketing advantage) over the LDCs. The fact that the IETA programs were fully-funded for schools using “black money” (see Chapter Four) compounded that advantage. Principals/Key teachers also expressed that the idea of paying for services from within the system was “stupid” because it simply shifted resources from one Education Queensland institution to another. It also seemed to contradict their perception of the underpinning values of State education, which were not elaborated. In contrast to Principal/Key Teacher beliefs about the “real world” of schools, Indigenous teachers were attracted to the idea of credentialing because they saw qualifications as a way to challenge existing practices of allocating ESL support roles automatically to white teachers in schools. The marketing discourse introduced into the development, structures and practices of the LDCs had the effect of provoking contention between organisations within Education Queensland as they competed for their market share. Certainly, in this context, despite the positive nature of existing relationships between IETA and the schools designated as LDCs, the climate of competition risked creating division and barriers to collaborations between

internal organisations for the “business” of improving outcomes for Indigenous students. Fortunately, in this case, the reservoir of goodwill was sufficient to allow us to reach a workable solution. I felt, again, that the focus of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy strategy, through Education Queensland’s structures and processes, had been subsumed under a broader State-wide literacy agenda leaving the work of the ESL team at IETA marginalised in mainstream literacy initiatives.

5.26 The first Professional Development workshop: knowledge and skills in English

Late in 2001, we held our first professional development workshop in English grammar entitled “How English Works”. We devised the content with linguists and academic staff from James Cook University and deliberately targeted experienced, effective teachers who we knew would be interested and already had some considerable expertise in literacy teaching. This was so we could gauge the level and appropriateness of the workshop content and outcomes prior to running the professional development State-wide. Twenty-five teachers participated in the workshop, including twelve teachers from the focus schools. All participants were considered literacy leaders in their schools.

The anticipated workshop outcomes were: increased awareness of the issues of second language learning in literacy development; increased teacher knowledge of the grammar of English and its implications for learning and teaching; and application of knowledge about English to teaching situations. We concentrated on basic grammatical structures involved in simple, compound and complex sentences (including relative and subordinate clauses), verb forms, referents and nominal groups. We devised a number

of activities and contexts, related to common classroom materials and practices, and suggested simple strategies for teachers to use to teach these elements within a balanced literacy program. The national benchmarks (Curriculum Corporation, 2000) suggest that all these language features (we included appropriate vocabulary in the nominal group component) are requirements to meet the national benchmark in literacy (writing) at Grade 5 level.

- simple sentences, and longer sentences using joining words like *but, when, after, so*
- words like *this, those, there* effectively to link ideas introduced in the writing
- words appropriate to the topic, including descriptive and subject-specific words
- appropriate verb tense (e.g., simple present tense in an information report) and correct
- verb form in past tense (e.g., *caught* instead of *catched*) most of the time
- agreement between subject and verb (e.g., *she is/they are, he was/we were*) most of the time capital letters, full stops, commas and question marks. (Curriculum Corporation, 2000, p.2)

We asked the teachers at the end of the workshop to determine whether they felt they had sufficient understanding of each component to teach it at Grade 5 level. We collected quantitative data at the end of the workshop related to the separate components. These data are presented in Table 10. Oral and written evaluation feedback from participants suggested that participants were developing an understanding of many of the components but, in three areas, no participants felt they had sufficient knowledge yet to teach the component to the Grade 5 national literacy benchmark level despite their reputations as literacy leaders in their schools and “good” teachers.

Table 11.

Table of Participant (self-identified) Understanding of Professional Development Workshop Components

Grammatical component					
	Simple, compound and complex sentences	Verb forms	Referents	Nominal groups	Relative and subordinate clauses
n/25 with (self-identified) sufficient understanding to teach at Grade 5 level	0/25	0/25	4/25	20/25	0/25

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

I think this is a key issue, you know, where you start with the training. There is no baseline of knowledge. We try and in-service our staff when they come to us but where do we start? They just about get the hang of things and then move on to another school. It is really difficult when teachers can't get their heads around the language issue and they can't if they don't know even the basics of English. I am not surprised by the workshop, but if that's our best teachers, what hope have we got for the others?

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

I have done the FELIKS and Walking Talking Texts in-service a couple of times and now I think I haven't even begun to get to grips with language. I just couldn't understand the verb forms. I can do them but I don't have enough knowledge to be able to teach them. I need so much more. I have done functional grammar workshops and all the Department's literacy in-services. We need a follow-up to this workshop to go over a lot of the material . . . and really we didn't do anything beyond where we expect Grade 4 or 5 students to be.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

It would have been easier if we could have had our language structures on one side and all these things you taught on the other. Then I would have understood better. This is

definitely the way we need to teach our children, you know, show them the rules, of our language and your language. I realise now that I have made up my own rules about English because no one taught me the proper rules. They seem to work too, most of the time. But it took me ages to work them out and even now, if I have to write something for school, or a report or submission, I really struggle to get it right. I feel angry that we should know all this grammar and we have never been taught it. It stops us from taking on roles in school. The white teachers always have the advantage.

Pauline

I am stunned. We covered so little over the two days. These teachers are good teachers. They are really committed and they are leaders in their schools but they were struggling with the most basic grammatical concepts. I really don't know where we are going to start. I think intensive training is the only way, and we can't do that because we don't have the resources. Three participants in this workshop were qualified ESL teachers and four had Masters' degrees in language and literacy. If we were hoping to train trainers in schools, these teachers would have been the first on the list.

This workshop highlighted a number of issues related to the implementation of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy. The Principals/Key Teachers acknowledged that baseline levels of knowledge about English were important, contradicting their earlier comments regarding practice having more credibility than systemic knowledge. Participants all indicated that they needed more knowledge about English and that they had not acquired this through Education Queensland's professional development programs or through experience. They signalled that they were having considerable difficulty with some grammatical components of English. Qualifications, in and of themselves, were no indicator of skill in English. Indigenous teachers indicated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students needed this level of explicit teaching to be successful in English and suggested

that relating English structures specifically to Home Language structures (a key component of the FELIKS approach) would make the structure of English easier to understand. The Indigenous teachers also stated that they had made up their own rules for English to survive as students and teachers and suggested that their lack of knowledge about English automatically privileged white teachers, who assumed leadership roles simply because they were English speakers.

5.27 A language aside: a State-wide ESL Conference

At a specially convened State-wide ESL conference in Brisbane (December, 2001) where, for the first time, migrant and Indigenous ESL teachers had a joint conference at the instigation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit, a senior Education Queensland official in his/her address on the topic of assessment stated:

I am hearing that it might be a good idea to try and assess these kids in their own language [murmur of agreement in audience] . . . but that's probably too hard. After all, we need to test how well they do in English. That's the language of education. I think we must really teach them how to do these tests . . . spend a good deal of time on how to do tests, so that they get the best chance of doing well [strong disagreement from audience].

This comment prompted a senior District official, with recent experience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities to comment: *You mean like talking louder to a deaf person?* My journal from the conference (December 2001) notes:

This speaker is probably one of the most highly-regarded officers in Education Queensland. Yet, within a discourse of equity (related to assessment) and innovative assessment practices, this officer clearly sees English as the only practical medium through which it is possible to assess student knowledge and achievement and doesn't see any contradiction in the comments about literacy testing. It seems that anything else is "too hard" and a simple solution to the problem is to teach test-taking behaviour.

Thus, the most influential decision-maker in the area of assessment in Education Queensland reinforced the primacy given to the national literacy testing process even though this conflicted with the State's more innovative assessment practices.

5.28 Summary of the early phase

At the end of the early phase, it was clear that the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy was significantly under-resourced and that key Administrators both within the implementation team and in Central Office were dubious about the worth of supporting ESL pedagogies, not committed, or even aware of some of its key actions. Whilst Principals/Key Teachers had common ideas about which methodologies were important, there was little agreement about the best way to support professional development in schools. Even the *good* literacy teachers had little skill or knowledge in language to the extent that none identified that they had sufficient knowledge to teach the necessary grammatical components of the Grade 5 tests. There was little alignment in the structures and processes at work within Education Queensland which risked fracturing responses to the issues of Indigenous students' literacy performance. The Principals/Key Teachers believed that the buying of professional development was a competition between Education Queensland organisations and was "against the values of public education."

5.3 The middle phase

5.31 The middle phase of the fieldwork

In the middle phase of the fieldwork (2001-2002), we delivered professional development to teachers across the state in over thirty different locations. As the main focus of our activities was schools with high numbers of Indigenous students in remote contexts, where it was almost impossible to access relief teachers and prohibitively

expensive for teachers to travel to more central locations, we conducted the majority of the workshops in these remote areas after school or over weekends. In practical terms, this meant that I was away from base for all but three weekends per Semester. Principals generally negotiated with staff and communities to close schools early on a Friday and work through Saturday. However, this relied on the goodwill of staff to attend, as no time in lieu could be allocated, even under the specially negotiated flexible arrangements in the identified schools. Participation in this professional development, according to Education Queensland's human resource regulations was deemed voluntary. During that year, we also discovered that, as far as the ESL project officers' terms of employment were concerned, our work was also deemed "voluntary" as we were generally working outside the designated hours for teachers. Our roles were classified as teachers rather than public servants. Despite the voluntary nature of teacher participation, attendance data exceeded performance targets by a factor of ten.

5.32 What counts as performance: Professional Development

The ESL team's performance targets for this period, under the NIELNS initiative (DEET, 2000) were to deliver professional development in ESL pedagogy in the identified schools to a number of teachers (300), also expressed as a percentage (undetermined) of staff. Internal Education Queensland data was collected and measured using a quarterly Staff College activity template, again recording all professional development brokered through IETA. This template recorded activity details (date, type, funding initiative), breakdown of stakeholder involvement in event (name, role, dollar value), and participants (number, percentage of whole staff and role). It also recorded networks and partnership activity within and across agencies and required a minimum of two success stories per reporting quarter. There was no

requirement either from Education Queensland or from the Commonwealth to collect data relating to the impact of the professional development.

There were two main problems with using these sorts of data as indicators of performance. First, due to teacher turnover rates in most remote Indigenous schools, 100 per cent staff participation data in Term one in any given school could mean, in Term two, that the entire staff had changed (and this did happen in two schools). Second, these data indicators appear to assume that participation *automatically* results in changes in practice or improvement in student outcomes. At the end of the middle phase of the fieldwork, over three thousand educators had received various kinds of professional development in ESL pedagogy through IETA. From a systemic perspective, this strand of IETA's activity consistently had the highest performance data of any Staff College in the State yet there was no requirement to provide any data to indicate whether all, or any, of the "activity" was making any difference to student outcomes. For the entire period of the study, schools only had to report on number and percentage of staff receiving (unspecified) professional development and on student literacy achievement using the Year 2 Net and the Grades 3, 5 and 7 data.

5.33 What counts as performance: Whole School Literacy Plans and curriculum frameworks

I related in Chapter Four that one of the roles of the newly-established LDCs was to support schools in the development of Whole School Literacy Plans. In the middle phase of the fieldwork, there was considerable systemic focus on the development of these plans. Executive Directors across the State were to "sign off" on the completion of all Whole School Literacy Plans in their districts by specified dates within the school year. The four focus schools in this study were unusual in that they

had been focusing on literacy planning for a number of years. In one district of predominantly remote, Indigenous schools, 80 per cent of schools identified that they had made “no appreciable start” in Whole School Literacy planning just one month before the due date. The Whole School Literacy Plan guidelines (Education Queensland, 2001, p.17) were based on effective teaching elements described by Crevola and Hill (1998) and required at least eight key aspects: a community profile; shared vision; standards and targets; assessment and monitoring; classroom organisation and pedagogy; intervention and special needs support; leadership, coordination and professional learning; and strategic community partnerships. The community profile was described as “an informed assessment of the cultural background knowledges and linguistic resources, community needs and educational aspirations, changing workforce patterns and life pathways of the diversity of students and the community groups to which they belong” (Education Queensland, 2001, p.17). The intent of these plans was clearly to recognise the linguistic resources that students bring to school and regard these as productive assets in literacy development. A key issue addressed in the *Review* (Education Queensland, 2000d) was the recognition that many Indigenous students are second language learners. However, the systemic requisites focussed simply on compliance documentation within non-negotiable timeframes.

Some schools were trialling the *New Basics* curriculum during the period of the study. As I visited schools across the State, a constant theme in schools trialling this curriculum framework was that literacy would be improved for Indigenous students simply by dint of completing the *Rich Tasks*¹. When members of one remote community asked a Senior Education Queensland executive, how this “new” curriculum

¹ *Rich Tasks*: Rich Tasks are the assessable and reportable outcomes of a three-year New Basics curriculum plan.

would make a difference, the response was, *You will see a marked improvement in the Grades 3, 5 and 7 [literacy and numeracy] test scores (E1), thereby promoting literacy score gains on standardised tests as performance indicators of curriculum success.*

Pauline

I keep on getting feedback from workshops that ESL pedagogy is an ‘additional’ thing teachers should be doing and that they are already struggling with their loads, particularly those in the New Basics trial schools. They are just not seeing the links. They seem to think that either ‘literacy’ is the stuff you do in the morning across the whole school—a set of decontextualised skills—or that students will ‘catch’ Standard Australian English by dint of doing Rich Tasks. They don’t see the links between literacy, language and curriculum.

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

We have found it easy to have a focus on second language pedagogy while developing our curriculum plans because we have had a focus on it for a long time and we haven’t lost sight of it, despite any new Departmental initiative that has come along. It’s a shame we can’t mandate things like Walking Talking Texts and Indigenous Bandscales because we get into trouble with the Union. It is not a State-wide mandate. If it were, we’d be obliged to provide time for professional development. I see that as a fundamental problem. You can’t mandate things, even when you know they work. There is really no imperative to improve outcomes for Indigenous students, despite the rhetoric, and then no recognition if you do. The only thing that counts is results on the Grades 3, 5 and 7 tests and we are never likely to show much improvement if these are the only tool that is used. Our solution has been to say that ESL pedagogies and methodologies, like FELIKS and Walking Talking Texts, are our preferred practices and we would expect teachers’ chosen practices to reflect the results we have already demonstrated from using it. We can just never get a critical mass of teachers proficient in ESL pedagogies with the turnover of staff.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

We know these strategies are very important for our kids because they work and we see that they work. I get wild when I see those Southern teachers, who are new to teaching most of the time, telling us what's best for our kids and really not wanting to follow the programs we have been working on. Some teachers cause trouble but they shouldn't be here. We have been talking in our families and in the community about language. It is sometimes really painful for people but that means we are the best people to talk about it. I need more help with English, though. We don't really have enough people we can ask questions to.

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

I am really struggling with all the things we are meant to do. We have to track the students on First Steps¹, do the Grade 2 net, take running records, do guided reading and then all the curriculum stuff. There's just no time to fit everything in. It seems like every week there is something else we have to do.

I was cognisant through my work that teachers did not see the links between the flood of directives from Central Office. They still saw literacy, for the most part, as a set of decontextualised skills or an additional burden to the main business of curriculum delivery. The focus schools stated that they did not lose focus on what they thought was important “despite any new departmental initiative.” However, they indicated that where the department did not mandate particular initiatives, there were issues with implementation as teachers could and would resist innovations where there was no clear support for their implementation. The Indigenous teachers said that ESL strategies did work and that they supported them in their schools and communities, despite their wish for more support. They felt they were the most appropriate people to be talking about language as “it is sometimes really painful for people.” The non-Indigenous teachers

¹ First Steps reading and writing continua are tools developed by Raison & Rivalland (1994) and Rees (1994).

stated that there was something new to implement “every week.” At the end of the middle phase of the study, one Principal from a focus school stated:

You realise that once these Whole School Literacy Plans are done (and many schools have simply copied the models we gave them to the last word) no one is going to care about literacy any more. It's a compliance thing. All the boxes are ticked so we can forget about literacy now and concentrate on something new. That's the way the Department operates

This summarised how system-wide initiatives were regarded in schools.

5.34 RATEP upgrade

During this middle stage of the fieldwork, the Board of Teacher Registration (BTR) now required all teachers to be four-year trained or to upgrade their qualifications to four-year registration. A cohort of forty-four Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) graduates, all Indigenous teachers (twelve from the focus sites), had completed a three-year pre-service program and were therefore required to upgrade their teaching qualifications. Although *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) had made specific reference to RATEP graduate skills, particularly in the area of proficiency in Standard Australian English (p.11), there was no systemic response to the needs of this group. An IETA Senior Project Officer initiated a successful NIELNS (DEST, 2000) funding application to support this group by following a negotiated credentialed program based on teacher-identified needs. The cohort of forty-four teachers all expressed an interest in a professional development program focussing on second language pedagogy and action research relating to second language pedagogy *because we want to take those roles in school* (IT4).

In an arrangement with James Cook University (based on the accreditation framework initiated in the early phase of the study) a special program was developed

for this group of teachers. I was one of the lecturers for this program and consequently led 'closed' workshops for this group as well as continuing our cyclical professional development initiative. So, whilst the systemic focus had turned away from *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) to the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001), individuals at IETA continued to work in the targeted areas. I strongly believed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, with longevity in the schools in their communities, were a key to improving student outcomes. I had also witnessed, through the professional development workshops across the State, continual preference towards inexperienced, uncredentialed (but English first language) teachers taking on ESL/literacy leadership roles in schools as noted in my reflective journal (December, 2001).

[N] spoke to me today about making a submission for funding under NIELNS for a RATEP upgrade project. We worked on it all day. I keep seeing unqualified (in ESL) teachers assuming leadership roles in ESL yet the Indigenous teachers have direct experience of the effects of learning in and about English They also speak the students' language so they have a heightened awareness of the issues and difficulties.

My colleague at IETA put it more strongly:

How long will it be before our people's skills will be recognised? For me it's an issue of discrimination. White people come into our communities, get all the professional development on offer—because they are white, speak English and are usually the Principals' wives—and then take all that knowledge that they have acquired away with them, literally at the expense of our students, and use it to further their own careers. It makes a mockery of the idea of partnerships between schools and communities. (IA39)

In 2002, the RATEP upgrade program was opened with an orientation conference organised and led by Indigenous staff from IETA. The group came together

in Cairns from all over the State. It was the first time this group had come together as Indigenous teachers since they had completed their RATEP course. I was the only non-Indigenous participant and my role was to walk the group through the elements of the program and take note of the issues and concerns the group expressed so that they could be addressed. A senior Indigenous colleague commented: *I have goosebumps. This is what we have dreamed of . . . the power of our people. This is exactly what Partners for Success was meant to be about (IA9).*

5.35 Professional Development workshops

In the middle phase of the study, we conducted workshops across the State in over thirty locations, including the four focus sites with, in excess, of two thousand participants. I collected oral and written feedback from these workshops in addition to the participation data required by Education Queensland. I was particularly interested in how teachers reacted to the notion of Indigenous students as second language learners and which components of the workshops teachers found easiest and most difficult to understand. In the middle phase of the study, I grouped 400 teacher evaluation comments from the *How English Works* workshops across the (not including the RATEP upgrade evaluations) into three categories: overtly negative comments about the students' language; acknowledgement of language as an issue but attribution of responsibility for teaching away from the teacher; and positive comments about the students' language and teacher acceptance of responsibility. These data are presented in Table 12. I used the *Walking Talking Texts* (NTBS, 1994) language analysis grid from 1,022 participants in the *Walking Talking Texts* workshops we conducted across the state to evaluate where teachers were finding the most difficulty in understanding the grammatical components of English. The text chosen for analysis was typical of a

Grade 3 classroom. No participant in the study completed this grid accurately even though they included credentialed, specialist ESL teachers.

Table 12.

Table of Teachers' Responses from Workshop Evaluations Categorised into Attitudes to the Second Language Learning Status of Indigenous Students

Negative → Positive		
Overtly negative comments about the students' language	Acknowledgement of language as an issue but attribution of responsibility for teaching away from the teacher	Positive comments about the students' language and teacher acceptance of responsibility
<i>Yes but what about when the home language is deficient How can you use that as a bridge to English?</i> <i>I was never trained in language teaching and I don't think it's my role. Everyone knows kids succeed in school when the parents are supportive. How are we expected to teach them when they just don't value books or school?</i>	<i>I have been an ESL teacher for years and I can see that they have difficulties with English but I just can't get through to these kids. I don't think they really want to learn. They don't value schooling.</i>	<i>I have worked in this area for 20 years and I grew up here and it never once occurred to me that language was a factor in kids' learning. I feel terrible that it never occurred to me. I am going to go back now and make sure that everyone else knows.</i>
22%	60%	18%

5.4 The later phase

5.41 The later phase of the study

In the later phase of the study (2002-2003) we continued to deliver professional development workshops cyclically across Queensland. Recall that in the middle phase of the fieldwork, there had been negotiation between IETA and the local LDC, as both organisations had specific mandates to deliver professional development in effective literacy practices. The agreement had been that, whereas IETA had carriage of the

professional development workshops in ESL pedagogy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners across the state, the LDC would offer school-based practica so that teachers could see effective methodologies in practice. In 2002, we had submitted two joint proposals under the Commonwealth NIELNS and IESIP initiatives to add financial support to our partnership, facilitate better cohesion between the different providers; allow staff from the LDC to travel to remote locations around the State and fund the support of Literacy Enhancement and Practice (LEAP) sites in key locations around the State where there were significant numbers of Indigenous students. The focus of both proposals was to identify key, long-term personnel at strategic sites to receive intensive training and ongoing professional development to support educators in their locations. The key objectives of the proposals were to

- coordinate curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation in providing an effective service to schools and teachers;
- provide an environment for building teacher professional expertise and judgement;
- provide opportunities for teachers to develop their knowledge and skills in implementing inclusive literacy curriculum programs for Indigenous students at educational risk;
- achieve greater coherence in the delivery of educational services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, their families and communities. (NIELNS project submission, 2002)

The additional resourcing provided through these projects and formalised agreements allowed us to work more collaboratively and effectively.

5.42 A focus on longevity and sustainability

We wrote a specific performance criterion into both projects that focussed upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators. Recollect that the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy strategy included specific key actions relating

to Indigenous educators. However, throughout the period of the fieldwork, there was no cohesive strategy to support this particular group of teachers. We wished to maintain the positive momentum from the RATEP upgrade project and collectively believed that sustained support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to assume leadership roles in language and literacy education was critical to sustaining improved outcomes for students from year to year since Indigenous teachers are generally far less transient than other teachers. An Indigenous colleague commented:

It's about the whole integrity of Partners for Success. We can't pretend to be making a difference if we sit back and don't challenge the practices out there. We often get sucked into the simple solutions because we are not prepared to plan longer term. It's easier not to think longer term. We don't have ESL qualified Indigenous staff, so we go with equally unqualified, but English-speaking non-Indigenous staff because it seems like a better solution at the time. We all need to model respectful partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators and we actively need to challenge the practice of ignoring Indigenous teachers in favour of less experienced non-Indigenous educators, just because they speak English as their first language. If we don't do it ourselves, how can we expect others to? (IA3)

We included a performance indicator in all our projects and initiatives that related to the number of Indigenous teachers who received professional development as *trainers*, not just participants. We embarked on a deliberate strategy through applying specific, non-negotiable criteria, of offering Indigenous-only train the trainer opportunities in ESL approaches and opportunities. We reasoned that the cohort of RATEP upgrade teachers provided an ideal pool of possible key teachers in LEAP sites and as leaders in ESL pedagogy. Furthermore, wherever possible, when IETA offered professional development workshops across the state, we insisted that the local Indigenous staff, who had received training either through the RATEP upgrade program or through the trainer workshops, were included in the team of presenters at that site.

When calling for expressions of interest for these training opportunities, we were clear about the rationale underpinning the Indigenous-only training and cited key Education Queensland documents that supported our strategy. Places in workshops were limited and we applied the criteria ruthlessly. Nevertheless, on two occasions, Principals openly attempted to undermine the process by contacting our superiors to make exceptions for non-Indigenous staff to attend these training opportunities. In the early stages, we received twenty-two separate direct contacts querying whether non-Indigenous teachers could attend and disputing the criteria. Comments included:

They are not confident enough. (P3)

How can you get people who don't speak English properly to give in-service about language. It's an issue of credibility. (P4)

They always attend professional development but never want to present to other staff, so I'd prefer if a non-Indigenous teacher went. (P7)

There was an assumption from all of these Principals that simply *because* the non-Indigenous teachers spoke English as a first language that *automatically* overrode any other expertise an Indigenous teacher had. We ensured that, in the weeks following the training workshops, we supported the newly-trained Indigenous teachers by delivering the whole staff/cluster workshops with them in teams. One Indigenous teacher commented:

I was really afraid to give a workshop to our staff because I knew that the Principal and the other staff didn't really think we had the knowledge to be able to do it. That's happened in the past. We have done professional development, and then, before we have really had a chance to use it and practise it ourselves, we have been asked to stand up in front of the whole staff and give the same workshop all over again. It's really scary to do that, especially if you don't feel confident in English. It's like we were set up to fail. [N] came and supported us in delivering the FELIKS workshop and she has a lot of credibility with the Principal. It sent a message that we were valued, and this time the Principal

acknowledged (begrudgingly) that it was good professional development and the evaluations by staff were all positive. I am not sure whether we'll be allowed to do this again on our own, though. I am not sure how convinced the Principal was that we are capable of doing it on our own. (IT12)

This comment highlighted that Indigenous teachers in some schools had had poor experiences in taking leadership in their schools. They were set up to fail. However, support from people with systemic credibility and working in teams with them sent a message that they were valued. Even when workshop evaluation data was positive and they felt more confident and familiar with the workshop material, they believed that the Principal would not believe that they were capable of doing it on their own.

5.43 System targets and measures of success: Indigenous employment

Recall that, Education Queensland and the Commonwealth measured the success of learning and development initiatives in terms of percentages and participation numbers. As far as Indigenous employment was concerned, the Department required schools to report on the numbers of Indigenous people employed in schools. The major State-wide performance indicator for Indigenous employment in schools was 12 per cent. Of course, in the majority of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities, schools greatly exceed this performance indicator. Most remote Indigenous schools are in receipt of significant IESIP supplementary budgets. Indigenous employment is a key target area under this initiative. Over the period of the study, it became apparent that large numbers of Indigenous people in remote contexts were employed under this funding, primarily in casual teacher aide roles. However, fluctuations in annual IESIP funding levels to schools meant that this group was particularly vulnerable to reductions in hours or termination. This situation contributed

to a continual turnover in the teacher aide workforce in Indigenous community schools. Few teacher aides in remote schools had received any professional development and, as a casualised workforce group, had no career pathway in education. RATEP remained the only option, and then only if numbers in particular communities were high enough to attract a RATEP centre. One benefit of conducting IETA's professional development workshops in remote locations was that this cohort of casual teachers' aides received the same professional development opportunities as permanent staff. One Principal stated in relation to reductions in his/her school's IESIP funding: *How are we expected to improve student outcomes when we keep getting our funding cut? We have no option but to cut our Indigenous staff. Our teachers can't cope without them.* (P27)

However, an Executive Director commented:

Schools with large numbers of Indigenous students get enormous supplementary budgets. If you look at student outcomes over the last ten years, they have actually got worse as the funding has increased I get very angry when I hear how hard it is for Principals to manage on decreased budgets when they are funded above the allocative model and cannot show how the additional funding has made any difference whatsoever to student. There has been a pattern of Principals bringing in expensive consultants, sometimes almost on a weekly basis, to do what I believe to be core business of any Principal or teacher and accountabilities for student outcomes have been virtually non-existent. They can do this because their budgets are large. School-based management only works in clear accountability frameworks with experienced and informed leaders. Indigenous education has been a cash cow for the most unscrupulous operators within and beyond the Department. (EDS1)

Pauline

It seems ridiculous that the government funds the employment of Indigenous staff but there is no obligation to ensure professional development and training and credentialing into "real" jobs. Employment, or keeping busy, is seen as an end in itself

rather than using resourcing for sustainable career development or improving student outcomes. Non-Indigenous teachers sometimes complain about the reliability of teacher aides employed under supplementary budget funding and say they are not committed. Where is the commitment to the aides? What does this say to young people in communities about education and employment?

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

We have focussed all of our supplementary funding including “leadership” funding on developing our Indigenous staff and, where we have had funding for extra staff, we have tried to make sure it is our Indigenous staff who take on those support roles. That has really changed things. They often weren’t very confident before but taking on trainer roles has boosted them. Some schools ring us directly and request our Indigenous teachers to run professional development in other schools, rather than ringing IETA. We have made a really conscious effort to change the way we use our supplementary funding. Where possible, we have used it to take our Indigenous staff off class and put them in leadership roles, as learning support or ESL teachers in the school. This has allowed some work shadowing and mentoring into Head of Department or Deputy Principal roles too when opportunities have arisen. Where we have had teacher aides with us for a while, it is a non-negotiable that they will be kept on, even if IESIP reduces. In as many cases as possible, we have put them on as permanent so that they are not susceptible to the vagaries of funding. They attend all professional development in school and we have sent them to outside professional development too. They are critical for supporting the students. What we have done hasn’t always been popular with our non-Indigenous staff or our superiors because it creates human resourcing hassles.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

Our Principals believe in us. They have given us roles, trusted us. They think we should take more leadership in this area especially because it’s important to bring our communities along with us. People get upset when we talk about language so it’s better we [Indigenous teachers] talk about it. We do all the new staff induction and some of us have been filmed for the Literate Futures resource and for other things like Indigenous Bandscales. We have begun to take on more roles in the school and others see that. They see the possibilities for them too. I started as a teacher aide, then did RATEP like

the other Indigenous teachers here. We have been supported and valued and others see that so they see there is a place and a future for them in the school.

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

I simply could not do without my Indigenous teacher aide. I can't tell you how often I have put my foot in it or was about to and they have saved me. They act as interpreters often when I don't understand and they tell us when there are tensions in the community, so we don't make things worse. When I first came here, I had no idea how to work with any aide. I was a new, young teacher and there were these older community people in the school. We did nothing about that at uni. I was scared really. The other teachers and the Indigenous teachers helped, though. We were buddied with an Indigenous teacher when we came, as part of the induction. That was good because we could ask questions and get to know how things were here.

In the four focus schools, there had been a deliberate effort, where possible, to avoid the *ad hoc* use of supplementary funding. The Principals had tried to ensure that black money was used strategically and for sustainability in contrast to many other schools around the state. In three of the four focus schools, Indigenous teachers had assumed ESL and staff orientation roles. In School Four, the two Indigenous teachers were trained in Reading Recovery and became key contacts for State-wide testing feedback. Although three Principals changed in the period of the study, the schools did not alter their focus on sustainability and upon the value of their Indigenous staff. The Indigenous teachers recognised that the roles they had assumed showed what was possible for others in the school community. The non-Indigenous teachers appreciated being buddied with a community teacher but expressed their fear at having to work with (older) aides having had no preparation for this in their pre-service program. In my view, Education Queensland had again set performance indicators that were more focussed on participation without any requirement for outcomes that translated into real employment and sustainable improvement.

5.44 The formalised agreement: the sum is greater than the parts

Although the Principals had changed in three of the four focus schools in the later phases of the study, there was consistency in the key teacher roles and with Indigenous community staff. The formalised partnership arrangement between the LDC and IETA, which included financially-supported links between the four focus schools also strengthened the existing non-formal relationships between the schools.

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

This is working really well, despite all the constraints from Education Queensland. It has been great to see how many teachers have visited our school under this arrangement. It has validated those really good operators we have and we have had our Indigenous teachers taking the lead in the programs. We know these things work and now other people can see them work and that is encouraging for our teachers. Visiting teachers have commented about our expectations. Many have been surprised by the level the students can work at, when the language is scaffolded.

Pauline

The linkages have allowed teachers to see the links between professional development and practice. They see real people working successfully with Indigenous children and having high expectations of them. The professional development and practicum components complement each other. I still think we have a long way to go in supporting ongoing professional development back at the school level, but it is a much better model than the once-off workshop.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

We have been running some of the programs for the visiting teachers. We got ideas from the professional development workshops. It was really good to have our own program with the RATEP upgrade. We felt more confident then. That was one of the best things about our pre-service training, you know, supporting each other—all Indigenous teachers together. I think we learn better that way. We have been waiting to

do this for a long time and now we have the opportunity. Before, there were no formal workshops, no “program” but now there is and we have been some of the first people trained. It hasn’t happened that way in the past. At first, we weren’t very confident, but our Principals were good. They believed in us and kept pushing us more and more. Now other teachers in the school see what’s possible and they are coming out of their shells too.

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

It has been uplifting having people from other schools come and visit. It’s hard work here but we have a clear program we can follow. Many of us only stay in remote schools for a couple of years so it’s good to see how the program has developed and that will make it easier for new teachers coming here. There are schools in Brisbane who ask for teachers from here because they are good teachers and the strategies that work in these contexts work really well in some of the poorer areas of Brisbane. Most of us come to schools like this as new teachers and I think we have learnt a lot and have a lot to offer any school.

The Commonwealth-funded initiatives cemented and strengthened existing partnerships between IETA, the LDC and the focus schools and allowed them to share their knowledge with others. Indigenous teachers, in particular, increasingly assumed leadership roles in ESL support and induction programs. They mentioned they learnt better as a group and that the RATEP upgrade program had given them confidence to take on roles and the Principals of the schools kept “pushing” them.

5.45 Do you need specialist teachers and does credentialing matter?

Earlier, I reported that Principals/Key Teachers in the focus schools were initially unsupportive of credentialing believing that the only credibility came from practice not qualification. However, they changed their views.

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

The train the trainer program has really made a difference to our Indigenous staff. They are much more confident and have taken on curriculum planning and leadership roles in language. They have been crucial in carrying key messages into the community about literacy and language and why we do the things we do. Some want to do Masters' courses in language now or research into community languages. They have become the experts in our school and some have been working with linguists trying to map our community languages. We have seen a huge leap in confidence in them and in others on staff.

Pauline

I think the train the trainer courses have given the Indigenous teachers a credibility they didn't have before. In many schools, they are now the only staff members who have received the training so they can lead the language professional development in their schools. This isn't true everywhere, though. In schools where the Principals do not believe in their Indigenous staff, despite their rhetoric, the Indigenous teachers have not been given opportunities to lead except in highly "controlled" situations. In the focus schools, all the Principals, even the new ones, believe in their competence and ability. Some teachers now see the possibility of further study as feasible and see themselves as academics.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

I was really happy with my university assignments. I got really high marks. We didn't really like the assessment where we had to present our work in front of our peers. Pauline made us do it and said it was an essential criterion to pass. I am glad she did that now. It gave us practice because she would have known that we had to do that in school. We have been filmed in our classrooms now a few times too. We are trainers in FELIKS and Walking Talking Texts and we use these methodologies all the time, so we can talk about them with more confidence.

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

It has been good that there has been so much professional development. We now have a trainer on staff, which makes things easier. You can just go and ask someone if you get

stuck. In our school we have an ESL morning tea each week where we share things that have worked well in our classrooms. It has broken down a lot of barriers.

In the focus schools, the train-the-trainer focus on Indigenous staff was regarded as having a number of positive benefits. Some Indigenous teachers wanted to undertake further study. Principals/Key Teachers noted a huge leap in confidence and community dialogue as a result of the training and non-Indigenous teachers stated it had “broken down a lot of barriers”. I noticed a large difference between the roles and responsibilities Indigenous staff held and assumed in the focus schools and other schools around the state where the Principals had not allowed their Indigenous staff to take leadership in ESL methodology.

5.46 Community profiles and Whole School Literacy planning

As predicted by the Principal/Key Teachers, by the end phase of the study there no longer seemed to be a focus on Whole School Literacy Planning. Education Queensland was producing a resource for professional development in Reading following the Four Resources model (as part of a literacy package). A key focus of the resource was the notion of productive diversity. Video materials of effective practices by teachers from some of the focus schools were included in the resource. As indicated previously, the intent of the Whole School Literacy Plan was to develop a community profile so that the language and literacy resources that children brought to school could be a productive resource for teachers. The focus schools continued to evaluate and amend their community profile, largely through research by the Indigenous teachers who had now taken on leadership roles in this area.

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

We have been working really hard on our community profile. We are finding out new things all the time. It has really helped us with our reporting because parents are asking

for information about how the students are progressing in English, not just the results of the Grade 3, 5 and 7 tests. The community trusts the Indigenous teachers and they are invaluable because parents know what is going on in the school and they can see their views reflected in our school planning. Information and opinions have been sought out by the Indigenous teachers and now parents can see that we are listening. We have noticed parents asking many more questions on community information nights and not just accepting what we say.

Pauline

It is my experience that very few schools completed even the first Whole School Literacy Plan properly. It was never a working document for most schools and did not in any way reflect the practices that were occurring in the school nor linked to community expectations. In fact, two schools had simply copied the LDC's plan and had left the LDC's name on it.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

It has been interesting working on the community profile and continuing to do research. Some parents have been asking why we don't use the students' home language in pre-school or why we don't have bi-lingual education like they have in the Northern Territory. Some of the community leaders have been very strong in advocating for extra funding for the school and asking why our schools are not funded like migrant ESL schools. So they've become quite political.

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

The Indigenous teachers have given us a lot of information we didn't know—not just about the language but also about parent perceptions and wants. We would never have known that information before. It has made us more sensitive around some of the issues and we have noticed that parents now ask more questions. They seem really happy with what we are doing most of the time and we have noticed many more parents coming along to information nights than before.

The four focus schools continued to work on their Whole School Literacy Plan and community profile, long after the compliance mandate. They used the profile as a

working document and as a tool of ongoing dialogic inquiry as was the intent of *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c).

5.47 Stemming the flow and dealing with the inundation

The IETA professional development workshop data over this final phase indicated very similar results to the data collected in the middle phase of the study.

These results are presented in Table 13.

Table 13.

Table of Participant (self-identified) Understanding of Professional Development Workshop Components, Later Phase of Study

Grammatical component					
	Simple, compound and complex sentences	Verb forms	Referents	Nominal groups	Relative and subordinate clauses
n/1027 with (self-identified) sufficient understanding to teach at Grade 5 level	0/1027	0/1027	256/1027	752/1027	0/1027

Most (1025/1027) teachers still stated that they had had little, if any, pre-service preparation in either working in Indigenous contexts or ESL pedagogy. Staff turnover, even in the focus schools, indicated that at least 75 per cent of teachers who had received training in previous years were no longer in the same school the following year. Principal turnover data was similar, particularly in the smaller remote schools. IETA's participation data in ESL professional development was again the highest in Education Queensland.

Pauline

You know, we are three years into this program and it feels like the great flood—trying to stem the flow while dealing with the inundation. It is ironic, that we get consistent validation for producing the best performance data in Education Queensland, yet the staff turnover and poor preparation of new teachers means that it is different people each time and no one measures that. I have pointed this out a couple of times in Central Office only to be told to keep quiet. The performance plan with the performance targets is all that counts. The only light at the end of the tunnel that I see is the leadership from Indigenous teachers generated initially through the RATEP upgrade program and that is not systemically supported in any tangible way. Also, it is happening in so few places, only the focus schools really and there is simply not a critical mass to effect any system-wide change. The systemic practices reinforce this too. Principals get a big tick for Indigenous employment but there is no accountability for ensuring that jobs are real, lasting, sustainable and effective jobs or whether student outcomes are improving.

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

The issue of staff turnover is critical and human resource flexibility has never really occurred. We have schools in Brisbane actively requesting teachers from our schools because they have been so happy with staff here from the past. So we are like a nursery for good teachers. That's great but we would prefer to have some flow the other way, to take the pressure off us. It's annoying when we see other schools where we know they are not doing the right thing getting awards and accolades for simply ticking the boxes. It's not fair and our communities see that it is not fair.

Indigenous Teacher collective voice

I think if Education Queensland was really serious about making a difference, they would stop and look and listen to what's going on. We don't want new teacher after new teacher coming here. It's bad for our kids and we have to do the same thing over and over. We see schools getting awards when we know they are not doing half of the things we are. It's a question of who you know not what you do.

Non-Indigenous Teacher collective voice

I wish we had had some of this methodology in our pre-service education programs. I know we are lucky here, because there is a clear plan and everyone knows what it is. My friends in other Indigenous schools don't have that, so they are lost and don't enjoy their work. We were paired with other teachers so we teach in groups. I didn't like that at first but I realise now that it was a real help. I'm not sure I'd have survived without all the structure around the programs and around me!

5.5 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I related that supporting the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy was “like stemming the flow and dealing with the inundation.” This statement was a reflection of how overwhelmed I felt in my own role in supporting the policy implementation across the State but it also captured what participants at the four focus sites viewed about the levels of support and professional development they needed in schools. Teachers had little pre-service preparation. Schools had to try and train staff in core skills and knowledges in situ only to lose them in continuous staff turnover. Even experienced teachers struggled with fundamental aspects of English. At one stage, the structures and processes in Education Queensland seemed to be pitching different support structures against each other in their struggle for a share of the professional development ‘market’. Yet, where networks and relationships were mutually supportive, such as the (eventual) relationship between IETA and the LDC, these made a difference to teachers in the focus schools and beyond.

Chapter Six

Meeting the mark: the national testing agenda—standards and deviations

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the context of the national and Queensland testing program in literacy and numeracy generated by the *Literacy for All: the challenge for Australian schools* (DEETYA, 1998) and the *Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals of Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* (MCEETYA, 1999b) and present the literacy performance data from the four focus schools and fieldwork that relate to its effects. I describe how these schools responded to the mandated Grade 2 Diagnostic Net and the Grades 3, 5 and 7 testing regime, using the quantitative systemic literacy data collected from each school.

The data are presented through graphs of school testing data sourced from the Queensland State Schools Corporate Data Warehouse and the fieldwork through the collective voices as before, but this time the voices are composite voices from each focus school. All four focus schools used a variety of standardised instruments to track student progress in various aspects of English literacy. However, the State-wide testing results were the only common standardised data across all schools. As three of the four focus schools were primary only, the Grade 7 testing data has not been included. The results of the Grade 7 State-wide testing program are not received by schools until the final weeks of the school year when there is little opportunity to provide effective

responses for Grade 7 students. Consequently, the focus in all four schools was on the earlier Grades.

6.2 testing programs and the social construction of failure

6.21 Historical context of the national testing program

In 1998, Australia's *Common and Agreed Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century: Review of the 1989 Common and Agreed Goals for Schooling in Australia, Discussion Paper* (MCEETYA, 1998) outlined a draft set of revised national goals for schooling for public discussion and extensive consultation. These revised goals differed significantly from the original 1989 *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia* (Australian Education Council). A number of emerging curriculum priority areas had not been included in the 1989 goals, namely: information technology; vocational education; literacy and numeracy; and civics and citizenship. The 1998 revised goals recognise the particular needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as part of the reconciliation process and, significantly for this study, articulate "a sharper focus on students and their learning outcomes, thereby lending themselves to improved outcomes reporting and the development of standards and benchmarks where appropriate" (MCEETYA, 1998, p.7).

The brief of the MCEETYA Taskforces, Working Groups or reports up until this point had focussed upon policy but not on the identification of goals and targets. This new focus on outcomes is described in the Discussion Paper (1998) as "an integral part of Australia's landscape" (p.7). The paper also acknowledges:

The Council's interest in targets and their relevance to goals for schooling may well be a reflection of much broader trends in government management reform

worldwide, as governments shift from input-based planning and budgeting to planning based on outputs/outcomes. (p.8)

In April 1999, State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education met as the tenth MCEETYA Council. The Council reached agreement to improve Australian schooling within a framework of national collaboration and, as a result, endorsed the revised goals in the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* (MCEETYA, 1999b). The preamble to the declaration states that the major purpose of the collaborative framework is to increase “public confidence in school education through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students’ levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated” (n.p.nos) The declaration itself and the then Federal Minister for Education David Kemp’s address to the Curriculum Corporation’s sixth annual conference (May, 1999) provoked a significant backlash from academics and practitioners in the fields of literacy and English as a Second Language (Alloway & Gilbert, 1998; Davison & Williams, 1999; Lankshear, 1998; McKay, 1998a, b; Michell, 1999). The declaration relegated English as a Second Language learning to an “aspect of literacy” (p.31). Michell (1999) posits that this is not surprising since the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan (DEETYA, 1998)

raised immediate questions about the status and role of ESL. Its focus on early intervention for students entering school at the first year of primary schooling as well as the absence of oracy or any reference to ESL teaching and learning excluded any consideration of the needs of ESL learners in Australia’s schools. The plan could only be interpreted either as a fundamental oversight or as

foreshadowing a major redirection of effort, and eventually funding, away from the existing ESL General Support Program. (p.9)

In regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who do not speak English as a first language, the Declaration seemed to contradict or ignore key elements of the *National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 1996-2002* (MCEETYA, 1995).

It is essential that providers recognize that the language Indigenous students bring to the classroom is a valid form of communication and needs to be valued linguistically as the foundation, if they are to acquire a deep knowledge and understanding of the English language in all its forms. (p.51)

Thus it legitimised the standards and outcomes focus of the goals for schooling (MCEETYA, 1999b) within a framework that discriminated against this group of learners.

The revised goals in the *Adelaide Declaration* (MCEETYA, 1999b) are grouped under three broad categories of students, curriculum and social justice. Under the curriculum category goals, it states that students should have: “Attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy; in particular, every child leaving primary school should be numerate, able to read, write and spell and communicate at an appropriate level” (n.p.nos) The social justice category includes the goals that schooling should ensure:

Outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students improve and match more closely those of other students; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access, participation and outcomes; All students have the knowledge, cultural understandings and skills, which respect individuals’

freedom to celebrate languages and cultures within a socially cohesive framework. (n.p.no.)

Each agreed goal was linked to national targets. The agreed national targets for the goals of most relevance to this study are presented in Table 14.

Table 14.

Table of Nationally Agreed Common Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century and Agreed National Targets Relevant to this Study

Goals	Agreed National Targets
Students leaving school should have attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy; in particular, every child leaving primary school should be numerate, able to read, write and spell and communicate at an appropriate level.	That every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standards within four years. (MCEETYA, 1998)
Outcomes for educationally disadvantaged students improve and match more closely those of other students.	Increased proficiency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Standard Australian English and numeracy.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access, participation and outcomes.	By the Year 2002, education and training systems/providers demonstrate significant increase in the proficiency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Standard Australian English to levels comparable to mainstream Australian children.
	By the Year 2002, education and training systems/providers demonstrate significant increase in the proficiency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in numeracy to levels comparable to mainstream Australian children.

These goals, in turn, paved the way for a national testing program and the introduction of benchmarks, or nationally-agreed minimum standards, for literacy and numeracy in Grades 3, 5 and 7. The results of these tests have been reported annually within the *National Report of Schooling in Australia* (MCEETYA, 1999c). The testing program was introduced in Queensland State schools from 2000.

6.22 History of performance in standardised tests of Australian Indigenous students

The history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student performance using standardised instruments has not been positive. The *National School English Literacy Survey* (DEET, 1997) reported that 73 per cent of Grade 3 students in Australia achieved the identified performance standards in reading and writing. However, only 19 per cent of Indigenous students in this group met the reading standard and just 29 per cent met the writing standard. Only 23 per cent of Grade 5 Indigenous students met the national standard in reading and 24 per cent in writing. Successive Commonwealth government and independent reports (DEST, 2000; Marks & Ainley, 1997) indicate that although there was a marginal overall improvement in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student reading performance up to 2000, Indigenous student performance in all states was significantly lower than non-Indigenous students, including migrant and non-English Speaking Background children.

6.23 The Queensland context and the construction of deficit

In Queensland, aggregated performance data in literacy using standardised instruments, reflect a persistent pattern of poor achievement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Education Queensland, Corporate Data Warehouse, accessed 18/11/04). Although data relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in urban areas (more than 10,000 residents) show some improvement between 1998 and 2003, Indigenous students in rural areas (fewer than 10,000 residents) remain overrepresented in the proportions of Grade 3, 5 and 7 students identified in the bottom 15 per cent in literacy in Queensland. This persistent gap in achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students has been accepted by many educators as inevitable (MCEETYA, 2000, p.13; Nakata, 2001).

Although both federal and Queensland government policies consistently identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as recipients of intervention and support in an attempt to redress the situation (Education Queensland, 2000a; MCEETYA, 2000), Connell (1996) argues that targeted, compensatory programs risk magnifying the deficit position of minority groups by marginalising interventions and impeding consideration of equity as an issue of mainstream curriculum and pedagogical reform. The notion that testing can be *standardised* assumes that people can be ranked, that what is measured is intrinsic to the individual rather than to a particular group and that what is being tested exists as a measurable entity. The standard is therefore necessarily linked to, legitimised within and reproduced by institutional and societal hegemonic beliefs, values and practices. In terms of literacy, the kinds of literacies that are upheld as *essential* in a standardised process are restricted to areas that are easily measured in mass testing programs rather than the kinds of literacies identified in the Queensland literacy review, *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c), as critical to the future needs of Australian citizens.

6.24 Year 2 Diagnostic Net history in Queensland

The Queensland government's 1994, the *Shaping the Future: Review of Queensland School Curriculum* also known as the *Wiltshire Report*, focussed on literacy and numeracy "prompted by the recent history of concerns expressed by parents, educators and employers that some students lacked the levels of literacy and numeracy skills expected of them" (p.2). The review specifically recommended

The introduction of a Year 2 early-age Net whereby diagnosis (suggested by the running records) of the literacy and numeracy levels of all students after 18 months in the compulsory school system will be made. For those students who

have inadequate levels of literacy and numeracy, intervention in the form of intensive remediation [is] to be introduced. (p.46)

This recommendation suggests that failure to reach a particular standard within a specific timeframe constitutes a need to normalise students to mainstream standards and encourages discriminatory practices. English as a second language learning pathways and needs are not recognised, and hence do not need to be remediated. This issue is specifically referred to in the *Review of Education and Employment Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Education Queensland* (Education Queensland, 2000d). In response to the recommendations of the *Wiltshire Report* (1994) a Year 2 Diagnostic Net was mandated in Queensland State schools using the *First Steps* Reading and Writing materials (Education Department of West Australia, 1995a, b) and the *Number Developmental Continuum* (Education Department of Queensland, 1997).

The Year 2 Net process occurs within a one month teaching and validation period in the second Term of Grade 2. Grade 2 teachers collect samples of student work from specified tasks, which are then moderated at special teacher meetings in districts across the state. The Grade 2 Diagnostic Net process differs from the Grades 3, 5 and 7 testing process in that the Grades 3, 5 and 7 tests are predominantly computer-marked multiple choice tests (Reading, Viewing, Spelling and all Numeracy strands) and used for nationally comparable data. The Writing test requires a response in a particular genre. All Grades 3, 5 and 7 testing occurs on the same days in August (Term 3) across Queensland. The development of the State-wide tests is outsourced to private providers outside Queensland. Feedback on proposed test items is sought each year from a teacher

advisory panel. Queensland State schools are required to include the results of both the Grades 3, 5 and 7 tests and the Year 2 Diagnostic Net in their School Annual Report.

6.25 The construction of deficit within the Queensland administration materials

In 2000, the Grade 3 tests in literacy and numeracy were trialled across sample schools in Queensland. The strength of feeling in the four focus schools in this study following the 2000 trial was so strong that the principals and teachers asked me to write a paper for presentation at a national ESL conference (Taylor, 2002a). The main focus of the paper was the testing process and the content of the Queensland Years 3, 5 and 7 testing guidelines and process booklet (Queensland School Curriculum Council, 2001).

In 2001, the booklet stated that the purpose of the testing program was “to account for, and contribute to the improvement of, students’ learning in aspects of literacy and numeracy” (p.7). Although there is a statement within a paragraph entitled “inclusivity” which maintains that “The tests aim to be inclusive of all student groups” (p.7), there is little elaboration as to how this is to be implemented. In the conference paper (Taylor, 2002) I presented a series of dilemmas that teachers faced in the administration of the tests. These included: not being allowed to scaffold student understanding of the tasks through paraphrasing or other supportive strategies; the removal of charts and posters for the period of the test; and having to “allay any concerns of students and parents/caregivers, where appropriate, by reminding them that the 2000 testing Program will reflect everyday classroom work” (Queensland Schools Curriculum Council, 2001, p.15) even when it was clearly contrary to such practice. Translations of the brochure for parents and caregivers were provided in a number of

community languages but not in any Indigenous languages, despite the fact that one entire education district in Queensland has 99 per cent of students who speak Torres Strait Creole as a first language. Teachers were alerted to the “ test Exemptions” section of the booklet (p.44) and reassured that:

The principles of equity, social justice and inclusivity underpin the Queensland curriculum. Consequently, the 2000 Queensland testing Program is structured to be inclusive, within budgetary and administrative limitation. Undertaking the tests should not be a traumatic experience for students, and should provide additional useful information to improve student learning outcomes. (p.53)

test exemption categories are listed as:

Aboriginal background; Autistic spectrum disorder; English as a Second Language; Hearing impairment; Intellectual impairment; learning difficulties; physical impairment; speech-language impairment; Torres Strait Islander background and vision impairment [Teachers are advised that] no other category of student with *disabilities or with learning difficulties* [italics added] may be automatically exempted from the tests, but, they, or their parents/caregivers on their behalf, may apply for Special Considerations. (p.44)

These test instructions, particularly the categories for exemption, provide a window into the systemic construction of deficit for Indigenous learners. There is no guidance for teachers towards the possibility that Indigenous students may also be ESL learners. Also, Indigeneity in and of itself is discursively constructed as a “disability” or “learning difficulty”. Davison and Williams (1999) contend that “The benchmarks are blunt instruments that cannot give teachers crucial information necessary for developing effective needs-based programs” (p.19). Michell (1999) also argues:

The presence of large numbers of ESL learners in Australian schools poses a major challenge to the validity and credibility of the whole literacy benchmarking enterprise. The nature and size of the ESL student population (estimated at as much as 16 per cent of the assessed student cohort) mean that fundamental differences between ESL learners and the general student population cannot be discounted. (p.17)

In Queensland State schools, Indigenous second language learners have never been included in the ESL student database, so the total percentage of second language learners in the state is likely to be considerably higher than the cited national figure of 16 per cent.

6.26 The Queensland testing process

Each year, the Queensland testing officers consulted, via teleconference, with a small Teacher Advisory Panel for the Grade 3, 5 and 7 tests. The panel comprised representatives for different groups of children or schools, such as rural, remote, Indigenous, urban, and gave feedback to the testing officers on proposed test items. Expressions of interest for membership of the Teacher Advisory Panel were accepted from teachers who had some experience in their context and who had taught the particular Grade in the twelve months prior to the year of the test. The Queensland testing program was administered through the Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC).

In Queensland State schools, all systemic data is accessed through the Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW), an electronic database accessible to schools, nominated district officers and Central Office via the system intranet. Schools receive the State-

wide testing data in both tabular and graphical formats. Inclusion of these testing data is required in the School Annual Report. All State schools receive raw and comparative data. Schools are assigned a “Like School” category which relates generally to the size and urban, rural or remote location of the school. Lower and upper raw scores and mean scores for each strand of the tests are shown for the individual school, the State and Like Schools. The mean State score is the State benchmark. The mean Like School score is the Like School benchmark. A “Comparison Flag” category indicates whether a school is significantly above or below the State or Like School benchmark. Schools also receive data related to percentages of students in each phase of the Grade 2 Net process with State and Like School comparative percentages, percentages of students in the school identified in the bottom 15 per cent of their Grade cohort across the State, and State Overall comparisons for each component of the literacy test in addition to individual student performance data across the strands. Individual student information is conveyed to parents but in a simpler format, which records the child’s performance in the different strands of literacy and numeracy and comparisons with State benchmarks in each strand.

6.3 The test data and participants’ responses in the four focus schools

6.31 The presentation of the fieldwork and testing data

The data and the fieldwork relating to the *Adelaide Declaration* (MCEETYA, 1999b) and the Queensland testing are presented in three phases in each school. The early phase relates to the 2001 data and fieldwork, with the middle and later phases relating to 2002 and 2003 respectively. Again, for the sake of anonymity, I have not coded individual participants separately at each school but here, I have grouped them into composite voices at each separate site, rather than collective voices across the sites.

These voices are italicised as before. A change from one individual voice to another within each participant category is signalled by asterisks. Thus different perspectives and dissenting voices are incorporated into the composite voices. As in previous Chapters, the fieldwork and data are presented chronologically, that is in the early, middle and later stages of the study.

6.32 School 1

The early phase

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

I think in our context, the whole testing agenda is a counterproductive discourse, as is the Literate Futures (Education Queensland, 2000b) discourse. The school is reframing its discourse from a deficit to an enabling frame with a clear focus on the school's place in building the capacity of the local community to meet the demands of an uncertain future. Our learning community is mindful that effecting real and meaningful change involves critique, developing and implementing programs which challenge attitudes and structures that historically have disempowered Aboriginal and other minority communities and students (Cummins, 1989). It is also mindful that schools are "active and influential producers of education outcomes" (Connell, Ashenden, Kessler & Dowsett, 1982, p.187) and that authentic change involves recognising and exposing those structures and practices, which militate against academic success for many students. This is a particular challenge in such a culturally polarised community as ours. Improvement in (English) literacy levels for all students is seminal to the reconciliation of these fractured, disparate groups. School success in this endeavour offers potential for the social outcome of real "community" to evolve. The research tells us (Sparkes, 1990; Fullan, 1993) that fundamental change involves focusing on underlying values and beliefs and on the "cultures" of teaching. In our 'double the power, twice as strong' philosophy, the school has been consciously developing a rich, balanced, sustainable approach to literacy, which is already paying dividends. For most of our Aboriginal students a double negotiation of cultures/languages has to occur; that is between home language/culture and school, and within and between the polarised cultures present in the classroom. Part of our initial focus, therefore, has

been on all the affective domains and complex interrelationships with impact on literacy. There is compelling evidence that this approach works. In this context school/community partnerships have been developed to provide practical support to families and children so the students are 'learning ready' rather than their learning being affected by the lack of the basic requirements for healthy life. We actually use our Annual Operation Plan in this school.

School 1 is a district school. Approximately 35 per cent of the students are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The remainder of students are predominantly from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Figure 1 shows that the Like School benchmark and State benchmark are very similar which indicates that there is little recognition in the State Like School categories of the presence of significant numbers of Indigenous ESL learners at the school. The Year 2 results are generally better than the Grade 3 and 5 scores. The Reading and Writing scores for the Grades 3 and 5 students are better than the Spelling results, which is unusual. Spelling results across the State are generally higher than Reading and Writing results.

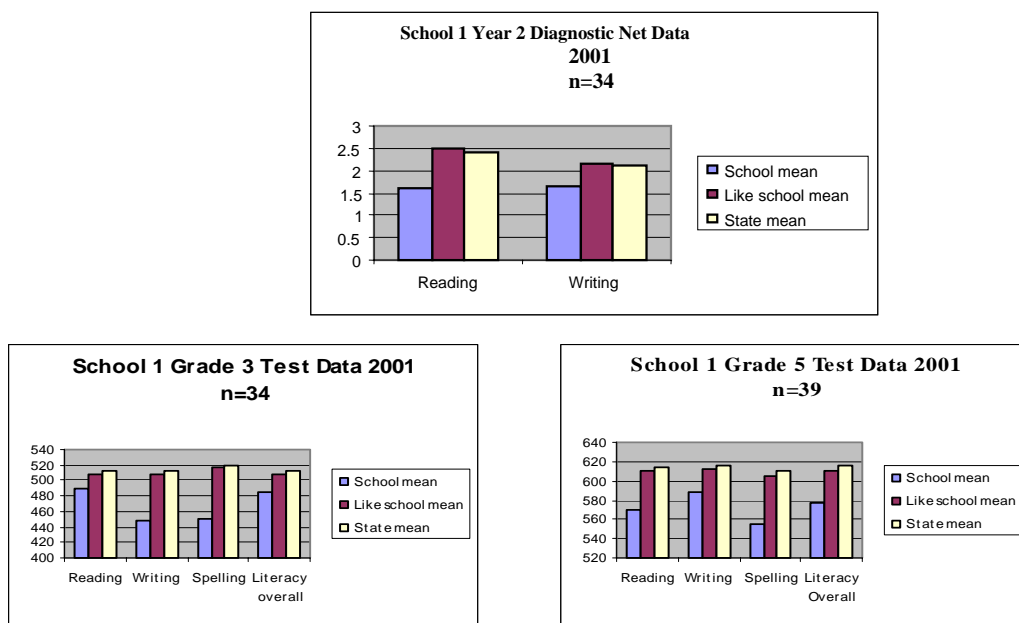


Figure 1. School 1 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data, Grade 3 and Grade 5 test data 2001.

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

As I said before, all these systemic issues are counterproductive discourses for what we are trying to achieve in our school and community. These systemic literacy tests have not taken into consideration the role that access to mainstream cultural capital plays in determining outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students nor the differences in literacy development between speakers of standard and non-standard English. The tests are highly inappropriate for second language learners and can only position them as deficit. We had one of our Indigenous teachers on the panel for testing this year. She asked many hard questions but it seems that no one pays any attention to the issues. I feel particularly angry about the Like School category. There is little systemic recognition of the issues in our context. We are a racially polarised community where there is overrepresentation of lower socio-economic groups and significant cohorts of people living alternative lifestyles. Yet, there are also wealthy professionals who commute (with their children) to [the nearest big town] so that they never actually engage with the wider community at all. I do not know of another school in Queensland that is remotely “like” ours. Data from Like Schools are useful only when sound comparisons can be made. Schools where there are large numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students should only be grouped with schools with similar numbers in similar kinds of locations.

We are enhancing literacy through a full service mode; through a holistic response (Sturman, 1997). We have reconfigured our teacher aide deployment and employment and have prioritised certain areas. Most of our aides are Indigenous. I have put our Indigenous community liaison officer on the Administrative team. We recognised the need to skill and multi-skill our teacher aides whilst not abdicating our responsibility to teach the Indigenous students. So, the aides are under the direction of the teacher and we have been insistent that the aides work with all students at different times for different purposes, not just with the Indigenous students. I was determined to increase the Indigenous presence in the school and have been insistent on the iconography in classrooms reflecting our community so that all students see their values and cultures reflected in the school. There was a huge amount of dissonance in this school when I came and I was determined to change it.

* * *

When I came, there was no work program, no curriculum plan, nothing really so we have had to start the plans from scratch. As we are not considered an “Indigenous” school we don’t get the levels of supplementary funding other schools have. I get really angry when I see how little is done in some schools that receive enormous amounts of “Indigenous” money. There is something very wrong with the way that “black” money is allocated and accounted for in this State. We have literally had to go around with our begging bowls to try and get our initiatives up and running.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

I taught at this school for twenty years and it was only when [the current Principal] came that it clicked that language was an issue and I needed to do things differently. The scary thing is I thought, and other people thought, that I was being successful with the Indigenous kids and I was to a certain extent but now I feel as if I am much better at my job. The kids are much, much more successful and they are enjoying learning. We have strategies that work, we know they work and I am sharing them with other teachers in my work.

Indigenous Teacher composite voice

I was on the panel giving feedback on the testing items this year. The problem seems to be that the testing authority thinks that consultation with and about Indigenous issues is simply a question of asking any Indigenous person, regardless of their role and experience. They wouldn’t ask a non-Indigenous administrator in Central Office about the Grade 3 tests if they had never set foot in a Grade 3 classroom, but that’s what they do with Indigenous consultation. It is a token gesture like so much of Indigenous education. I asked some hard questions but I don’t think they will take any of the issues on board. It is in the “too hard” basket.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

Our results don’t look very good but it is really unhelpful the way they are recorded. We have had some spectacular success stories but they get lost in aggregated data. We are working so hard on changing the affective factors within our school community too but it takes time for these to take effect. We get these results at the end of the school year when we are all really tired anyway so they feel like a slap in the face. We really need

the capacity to have a curriculum or literacy person focusing on supporting our less experienced teachers but our school does not merit a role like this because of its size.

School 1 saw the testing program as a “counterproductive discourse” to their holistic response to literacy. Furthermore, the way the test data was reported masked considerable success. Participants complained that black money allocations to schools disadvantaged them not only because they did not meet the systemic criteria to be identified as an Indigenous school, but also because staffing models to support their initiatives were vulnerable to changes in supplementary funding. Indigenous teachers regarded consultation processes around the testing program as tokenistic. The language issue for Indigenous ESL students had “clicked” for some teachers and they reported that ESL strategies were impacting positively on student outcomes.

The middle phase

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

We have been working really hard at ensuring our students are learning-ready. I knew we needed to have someone really focussing on curriculum and literacy in the school and, after badgering and badgering, we managed to get someone on a Workplace Reform¹, by the skin of our teeth because we lost our Deputy Principal position due to falling numbers. The curriculum role is very vulnerable and we have to reapply for it every year. The curriculum leader role has made a huge difference because it has taken the pressure off our more experienced staff to focus on their own areas. We have a number of new and inexperienced teachers and this role has supported them. The major effort has been put into really clear expectations and organisation around learning. We have introduced focussed literacy and numeracy time each morning and this has been an excellent organisational tool. We have focussed all our support into this time and because it is across the whole school, we have been able to work flexibly. I have changed our staff meeting structure to allow teaching teams to plan together, to really focus on the teaching and learning. Not all teams are using that time effectively and I

¹ The Workplace Reform program allowed schools to apply to use their workforce allocations more flexibly in response to local needs.

have come down hard on those that are not, which has made me unpopular with some people.

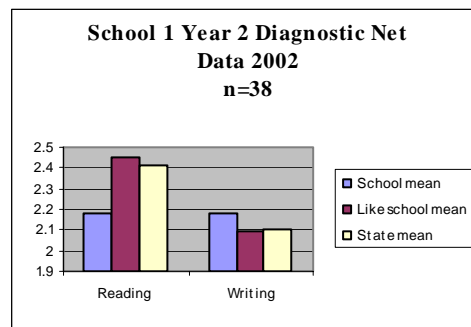


Figure 2. School 1 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data in Reading and Writing 2002.

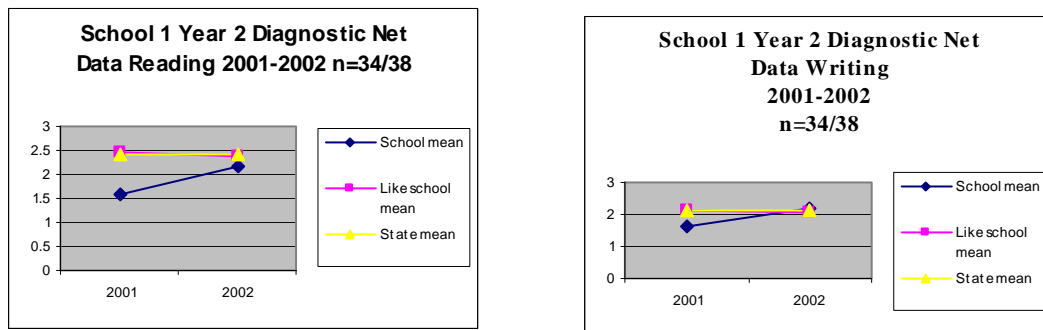


Figure 3. School 1 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data changes 2001-2002.

Figures 2 and 3 show that the Like School1 benchmark and the State benchmark have remained constant in Reading and Writing between 2001 and 2002. The actual numbers in the Year 2 cohort have increased and there has been an improvement on the Diagnostic Net in 2002 and these students meet both the State and Like School benchmarks.

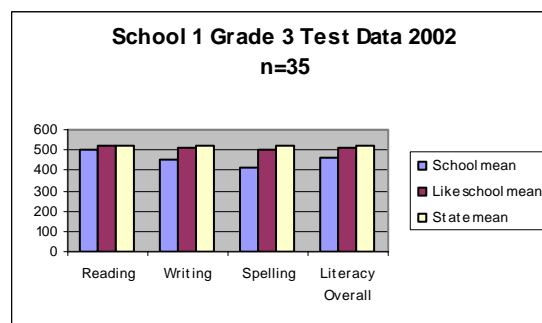


Figure 4. School 1 Grade 3 test data 2002.

Figure 4 shows that the school mean in Grade 3 in Reading is almost at the Like School and State benchmarks. Spelling is the lowest of all the scores and this is unusual.

In most schools, improvement is seen first in Spelling. If the Year 2 Diagnostic Net scores for 2001 are considered (in 2002 these would be Grade 3 students) there has been a significant improvement in Reading within a one year period in School 1, Like Schools and across the State. There has, however, been a significant dip in Grade 3 Writing scores in comparison with the Year 2 Diagnostic Net scores in 2001 and the Like School and State benchmarks.

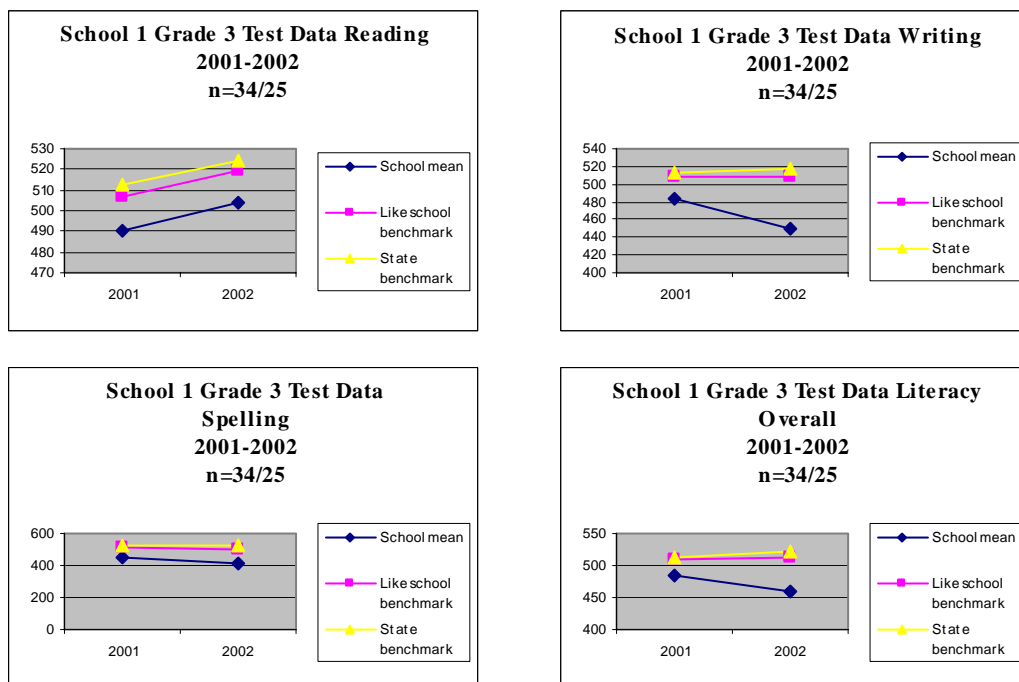


Figure 5. School 1 Grade 3 test data changes 2001-2002.

Figure 5 shows that the numbers of students in this Grade have dropped by almost 30 per cent in 2002. Grade 3 Spelling is still below the Like School and State benchmarks. The Spelling and Writing scores have lowered the Literacy Overall scores and this masks the significant gains in Reading. Figure 6 shows Grade 5 Reading scores have improved. The Reading scores are considerably higher than both the Like School and State benchmarks. Although Writing and Spelling are still below Like School and State benchmarks, the Literacy Overall scores are still comparatively high.

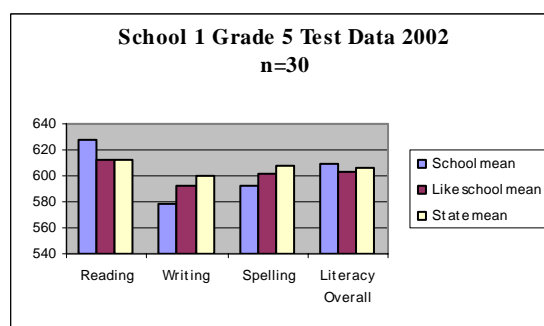


Figure 6. School 1 Grade 5 test data 2002.

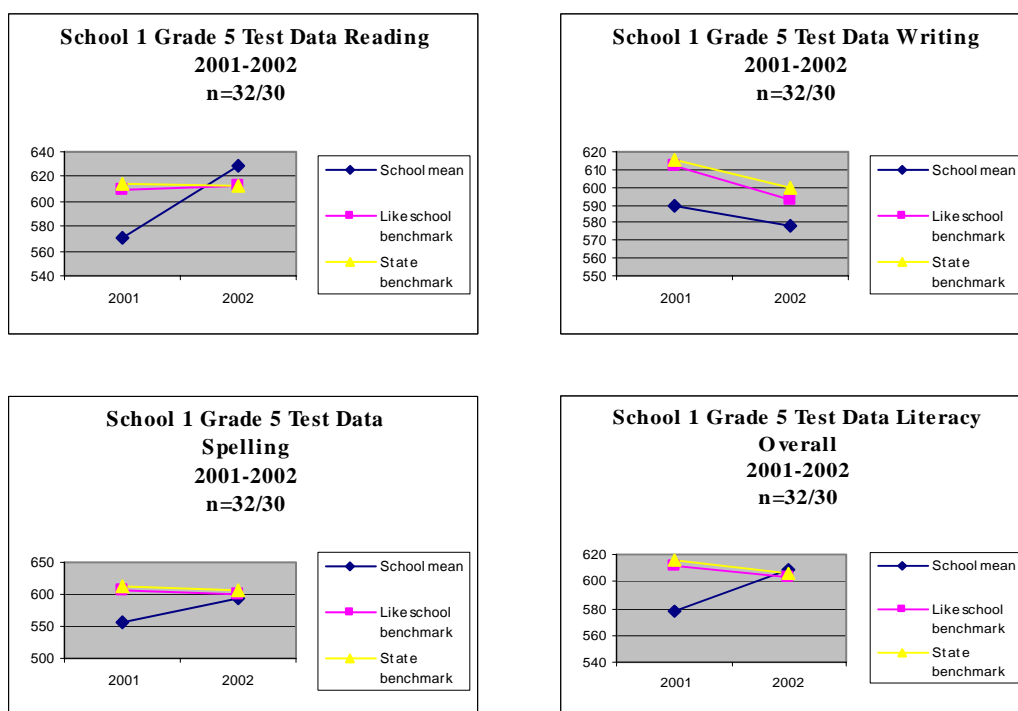


Figure 7. School 1 Grade 5 test data changes 2001-2002.

As shown in Figure 7, when the Grade 5 data is disaggregated into the different literacy strands, they show that School 1 has made significant improvements in all areas except Writing. Although scores have fallen in Writing at School 1, so have the Writing scores in Like Schools and across the State and the gap between School 1 and the Like School and State benchmarks has narrowed. The Like School and State school benchmarks have remained consistent in both Reading and Writing between 2001 and 2002. The numbers of students in School 1's Year 5 cohort have increased and Reading scores are above the Like School and State school benchmarks.

Principals/Key Teacher composite voice

I don't know a lot about language. I wish I knew more but I know it is the issue with these kids and I absolutely believe it is our responsibility to teach them better. We went through all the same things this year regarding the testing as last year. Despite this, our results are considerably better, even using these inappropriate instruments. We are much better organised for learning and our framework for learning readiness is paying dividends. We have also had fewer major behavioural incidents in school this year. Indigenous parents are using our community room too and seem to be comfortable being around the school. That's a big change from before. I think that IETA should be having a pivotal role in advocacy on behalf of Indigenous students, so we, in schools, are not simply a collection of individual lone voices in the desert. The way the consultation around the tests is set up makes that really difficult. I have taught Maths to a group of upper Grade Indigenous students this year. I thought I would have more chance of teachers taking on board what I have been pushing if I put my money where my mouth is and I needed to "feel" what's going on as well as see what's going on. I have really enjoyed teaching them. I have managed to develop a teacher relationship with them rather than a principal relationship with them. I think they, and their parents, and some teachers, were really shocked that I was teaching students, especially these particular students. I planned the units with really clear outcomes and incremental steps and spoke to the kids about them. I used Maths in our school context to frame the unit.

Pauline (from a transcribed unstructured interview with the Principals/Key Teachers in School 1 December, 2002)

I agree with the issue around the consultation. The paper I wrote for the conference (Taylor, 2002) must have had some impact as the testing project officers did approach IETA this year and that's why we brought them to talk to you [at a meeting at School 1] directly. One issue for them is that the testing agenda is a given. The federal government has given no room for manoeuvre or for any flexibility around the testing program. Also, the Project Officers make no apology for the tests being of and in Standard Australian English. If you recall, they said "English is the only thing to measure. It's the only thing that counts". They are on a very limited budget for consultation and for the whole program. IETA has offered to fund any further

consultation at any point in time but they have not taken up that offer. I think the testing itself is of very poor quality and very culturally biased, not just against Indigenous second language learners but also against anyone living outside Brisbane.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

[The principal] taught those grade 7 kids maths. [The principal] got a lot of respect for that.

* * *

I trained as Reading Recovery teacher this year. I really learnt about reading for the first time (and I've been teaching for over fifteen years). Now I feel really confident about teaching reading. It doesn't work so well with the Indigenous kids though. You have to follow the rules about who accesses Reading Recovery and how it is done. Sometimes the Indigenous kids don't attend school so they miss their session.

* * *

The numeracy tests are as much about literacy as they are about numeracy concepts. Often the students know the concept but the language of the tests makes it impossible for them to work out what is being asked of them. I have noticed that often, there is no equivalent language or language frame for a concept in the students' Home Language and that makes mathematical concept teaching through English even more difficult. I have a linguistics background and I am always discovering new things about just how complex the transparency issue around language is for our Indigenous children. I was completely baffled by some of the Grade 3 tests this year. From a linguistic point of view, the question structure was all over the place and extremely confusing even for a very competent English speaker. When I mentioned it to the testing officers, they seemed to have no idea what I was talking about.

* * *

We are following the Walking Talking Texts methodology in the early years and I really enjoy it. I wish we had been shown some of these things at university. I really floundered in my first year here but since we have had focussed literacy time and have introduced the Walking Talking Texts it is much easier. Before, I knew that I needed to do explicit teaching of and about English but I didn't know how. I don't speak English as a first language myself, so I know how it feels.

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

I only came to the school at the beginning of the year from a quite different environment and I was, still am, a bit confused by the language issue here. I am finding out and keeping my “antenna” up and have consulted with people who know much more about it than me. One thing that struck me straightaway, though, is that you have to be really, really organised for the teaching of literacy in any school. We have a number of teachers just out of university and I noticed that, although they were very willing, they had no idea how to organise for the teaching of reading. I have spent much of my time supporting them but also being really pedantic about levelling reading books and monitoring what is going on in focussed literacy time. That has really made a difference. The improvement in our results in the State-wide tests has been significant, even though we acknowledge all the faults in the testing process.

In the middle phase of the fieldwork, participants in School 1 related that they had focussed on school organisation to support teaching and learning. There had been improvements in many areas of the testing data. Staff believed they were much better organised for learning in 2002 than they had been the previous year. The Principal had taught a class which won respect from other staff. The State-wide testing officers had visited the school to hear firsthand about the issues but the visit had had little impact.

The later phase

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

Our data on these tests has got better again this year in the lower Grades. We have really worked hard in Grades 1, 2 and 3 to give the students a good start. The Grade 5 data is worrying. There is an assumption that students can read to learn in the upper Grades but many are still learning to read and still learning English. It is difficult for some of our upper school teachers to get their heads around this and it shows in the data. We have continued with our focussed literacy time and we now have an organisational structure around learning and teaching that is really clear. Teachers are still planning together. We managed to keep our curriculum leader for another year and I am sure this has made an immense difference in the school. The position is still very vulnerable. I had to draw on supplementary funding to keep it for this year. We had a

teacher-linguist with experience in Indigenous education teaching in Grade 2 this year and only two students in that class were identified in the Year 2 Net process. They were really poor attenders. That teacher has made some interesting discoveries about the Indigenous student Maths learning, how some concepts in Maths don't have any equivalent in the students' home language so, even knowing the students' home language isn't enough to teach them the concept. This has huge implications when you consider most of our teachers struggle with teaching English explicitly anyway. Something we noticed last year, and again this year is that when you look at individual class results you see a different picture again. Although our school results have improved considerably, the stand-out results are from classes where the teacher has a really good grasp on the language issues facing not only our Indigenous students but also of all our student population and the teacher really teaches these things explicitly. We still have problems with the teacher advisory panel because the people who have the most expertise to be on the panel generally don't meet the criteria. They want teachers who have taught a particular Grade in the year prior to the test but we have put the teacher with the most expertise in this area in a curriculum support role so teachers who have the most to offer are excluded from the process. I think it is highly unlikely that any classroom teacher in a school with large numbers of Indigenous students will have the necessary experience or knowledge to contribute effectively to the panel.

* * *

I have continued to support the teachers this year in a curriculum leadership role. It has taken us ages but we have levelled all our reading books across the school and in focussed literacy time all the students have their own individual reading box with appropriate readers according to their level and to their interest. Our focussed literacy time across the school is highly structured and we do guided reading¹ three times a week. Some of the teachers, even those with very high levels of knowledge about language, were rather cynical about the guided reading program but we worked collaboratively and now we all believe that it is really important to do this so that students are exposed to a large number of texts and see themselves as readers. We are still using the Walking Talking Texts and that is difficult to keep going because teachers don't have the foundational knowledge about English themselves to teach explicitly. Also, in the upper grades, the teachers don't really seem to want to acknowledge that it

¹ Guided reading is an instructional reading strategy using focussed reading groups.

is part of their role to teach language and reading. We use more experienced and skilled staff to run English language sessions in staff meetings, but it's not ideal and those staff members get drained and sometimes ostracised by others who do not know about English.

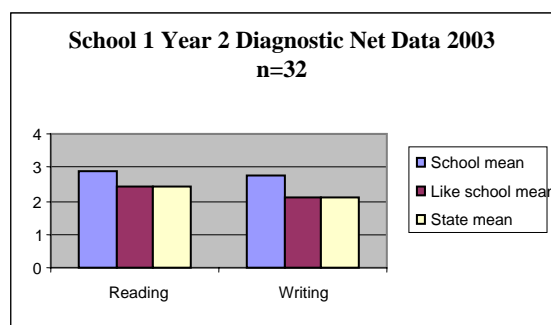


Figure 8. School 1 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data 2003.

As in 2002, Figure 8 shows that the Year 2 Diagnostic Net data has improved in both Reading and Writing exceeding Like School and State benchmarks.

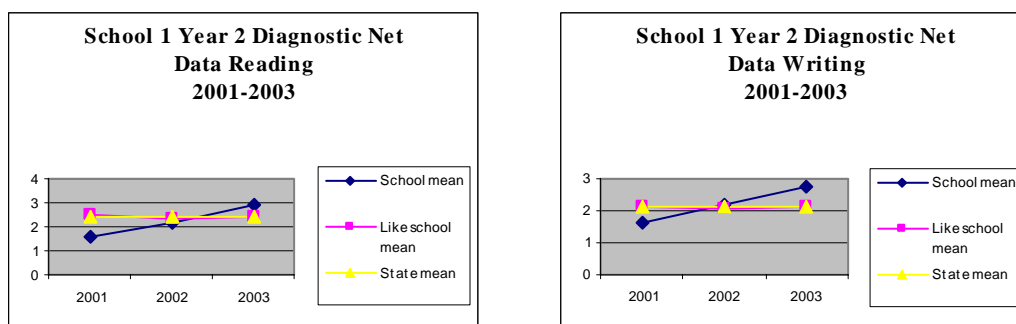


Figure 9. School 1 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data changes 2001-2003.

There has been a steady improvement in Year 2 Reading and Writing scores between 2001 and 2003 with School 1 exceeding Like School and State benchmarks in Reading and Writing as shown in Figure 9. Figure 10 indicates Grade 3 Writing has exceeded the Like School and State school benchmarks for the first time in the period of the study at School 1. The large improvement in Writing has impacted on the Literacy Overall scores which match the State benchmark and exceed the Like School benchmark. In 2003, as shown in Figure 11, School 1 exceeded Grade 3 Like School

and State School benchmarks in Writing and Literacy Overall. There have been significant gains in Reading scores which, although still under the Like School and State benchmarks, are approaching these levels.

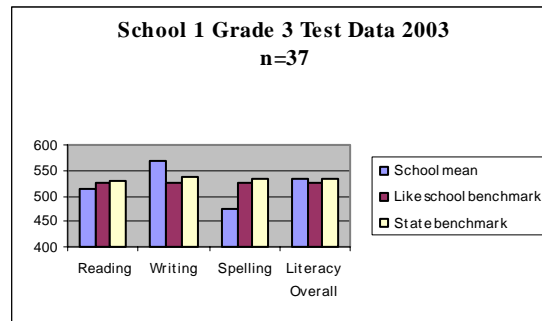


Figure 10. School 1 Grade 3 test data 2003.

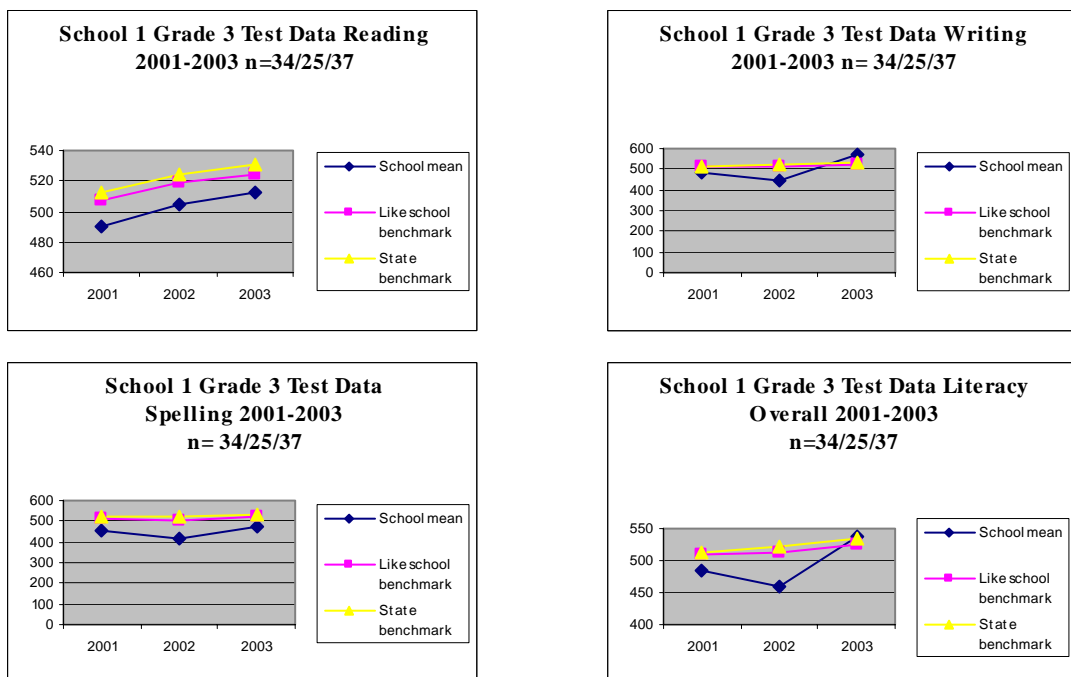


Figure 11. School 1 Grade 3 test data changes 2001-2003.

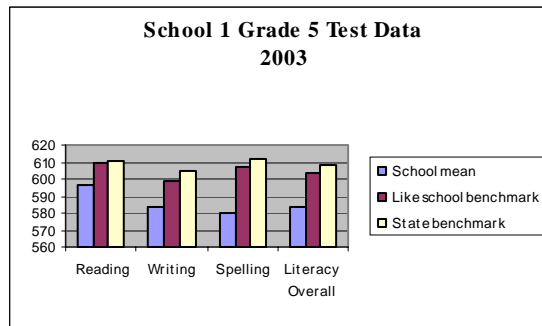


Figure 12. School 1 Grade 5 test data 2003.

Figure 12 shows significant gaps in all strands of the Grade 5 test data between School 1 and Like School and State benchmarks. Grade 5 test Data show improvement in all literacy strands in actual and comparative scores between 2001 and 2003, as shown in Figure 13, and the gap between School 1 Like School and State school benchmarks has narrowed in all strands except Writing. However, improved scores in 2002 across the strands have not been sustained for the 2003 cohort while numbers of students in cohorts remain similar.

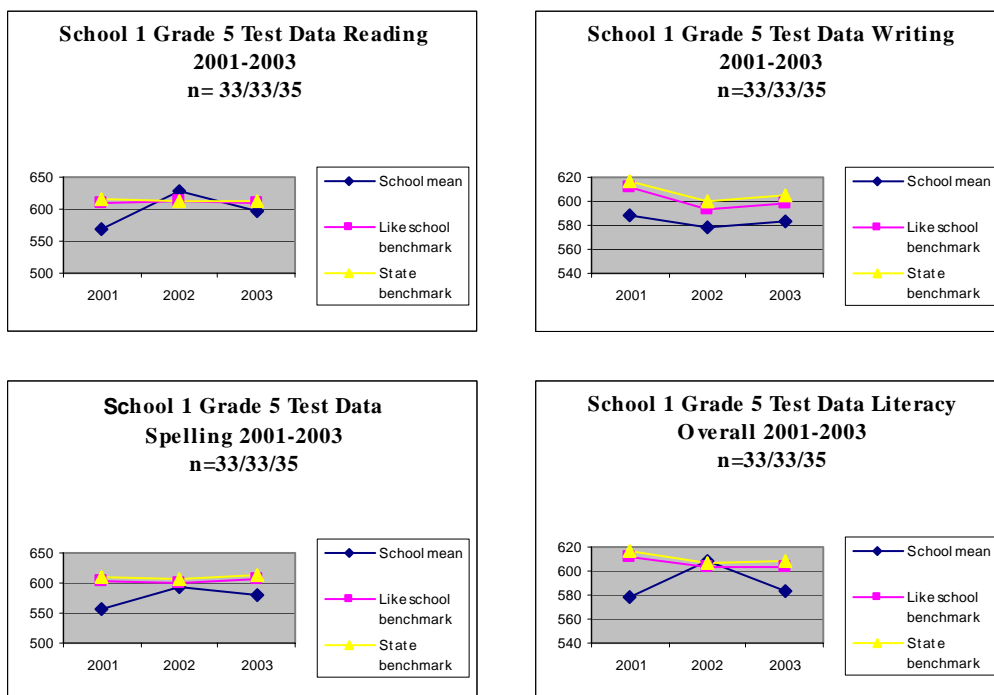


Figure 13. School 1 Grade 5 test data changes 2001-2003.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

We used a Walking Talking Text to contextualise the field of knowledge before the Net validation process this year so the students were quite confident. Of course, there is no opportunity to do this in the Grade 3, 5 and 7 tests so our students are hugely disadvantaged by that process. I really wanted to work directly with students and I asked to have a Grade 2 class. The Principal wanted me to team teach with another teacher who needed lots of support and I said I wouldn't. I contribute at staff meetings to professional development but you just can't work at the level you need to with the students and carry another staff member. The knowledge and skills you need can't just be caught from someone else. You need some existing hooks for that knowledge and teachers just out of university just don't seem to have them.

Indigenous Teacher composite voice

I have been using Walking Talking Texts this year. I team teach with another teacher and we plan across the early years together. The focussed literacy time has taken the pressure off many of us because we can work in a more supported way for part of the day. I get a sense of where we are going and what we need to do to get there. I have noticed an improvement in attendance over the past year too compared with previously.

Summary School 1

School 1, from the outset, articulated a strong theoretical frame that underpinned its “double the power, twice as strong” philosophy. Throughout the study, the Principals/Key Teachers regarded the State-wide testing program as a “counterproductive discourse” in the context of the school’s reframing or re-visioning from a “deficit to an enabling frame.” From the beginning, their focus was upon capacity building. Meaningful change was effected through changing the culture of teaching and “developing and implementing programs which challenge attitudes and structures that historically disempowered Aboriginal and other minority students.” Initially, the school concentrated on three areas: social support; Indigenous presence; and highly organised and structured teaching and learning experiences. They mobilised

social support from within the school and community to support the learning readiness of all students even if it meant going round with a “begging bowl”.

Indigenous presence was increased within the school at all levels within the structure through the deployment and employment of Indigenous teacher aides, the appointment of an Indigenous liaison officer to the school’s Administration team, the creation of a community room within the school and an insistence that iconography in classrooms and in communications to parents included Indigenous values and beliefs. The school also focussed its resources on teaching and learning at all levels. Staff developed a strong organisational framework around teaching and learning that included timetabling (and insistence upon) team curriculum planning time. Daily focussed literacy blocks across the school and highly-organised and structured methodologies combined mainstream reading strategies, specific ESL programs such as *Walking Talking Texts* (NTBS, 1995) and explicit language teaching. There was intensive planning around and focus upon the teaching of reading. The combination of foci produced significant gains in reading scores in the standardised tests over the period of the study, despite their stated inappropriateness. The strong organisational framework gave staff “a sense of where we are going and what we need to do to get there”.

Staff identified a number of obstacles to achieving their vision over the period of the study. The systemic allocative model for supplementary funding, or black money, disadvantaged the school because it was not seen as an Indigenous school. Positions seminal to the curriculum organisation and focus were vulnerable because the school did not hold permanent positions through the mainstream allocative model. Neither did

the school receive the level of supplementary black money dispersed to more recognised Indigenous schools. Core positions focussed on teaching and learning were susceptible to loss as a consequence. Administrative staff expressed frustration with systemic inflexibility in financial and human resource practices and the difficulty of advocating for Indigenous students as a collective voice. The Teacher Advisory Panel processes for the State-wide testing program were regarded as tokenistic by Indigenous teachers and inappropriate by the Administrative staff, as they were unlikely to include teachers with sufficient expertise to contribute effectively to the discussion.

The way the testing data was reported was a source of concern, particularly the Like School category. Teachers and administrative staff expressed frustration with pre-service teacher preparation courses in that they lacked both strategies for the teaching of reading and for teaching English to ESL learners. Even where there was expertise in these areas in the school, the teachers were often overstretched in trying to share their knowledge or, in some cases, resented by others for having it.

At the beginning of the study the school had no curriculum plan, literacy plan or programs, a situation, which “wouldn’t happen in a white, middle-class school. The parents would be up in arms” and was regarded as a reflection of the “culture of inevitable failure” that had developed. The Principals/Key teachers’ insistence upon planning and changing the culture within the school had met with some resistance. The teacher linguist referred to the complexity of the language issue for the Indigenous students at the school. Yet, standardised results did improve where the teacher had explicit knowledge about language and the aggregated school data masked “spectacular” improvement in some classes. Although the testing imperative did not

drive the combinations of enabling structures, ESL and mainstream methodologies, Indigenous presence or focussed and improved teaching and learning in School 1, they did yield improved scores in the testing in all Grades over the period of the study.

6.33 School 2

School 2 is a remote, 100 per cent Indigenous school, where all students are ESL learners.

The early phase

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

We are a strong community here. We have issues of non-Indigenous teacher turnover but we have some community teachers who have been here for years and our administration has been stable too. We have been collecting standardised reading and spelling data for over ten years now. When we looked back, we noticed spikes in the data for particular groups of students that continued all the way through their schooling. We investigated this further and the only thing we could find in common between the groups was that the students had Indigenous teachers and non-Indigenous teacher aides in the early grades. Each time that happened, the group's performance was significantly higher throughout their primary school years. We know this correlates with international research for second language learners. Now, we always put our Indigenous teachers in the early grades. Before, we thought, because of the issue of English, that we needed to put our English-speaking teachers in the early grades. So, we strongly believe in collecting data over time to inform our planning and performance. However, these state tests don't give us information like this. We were a Grade 3 test trial school in 2000. It was interesting because we decided to re test our students six weeks after the trial tests, as an internal exercise. The teachers read the questions to the students and clarified and paraphrased instructions. The results improved dramatically on the second testing. These tests are unfair for our students. They go against everything we believe in as teachers. We could not decide on correct answers in the reading multiple-choice Grade 3 tests ourselves. Some of the visual material was meaningless for our students and seemed only to be appropriate to

students living in cities like Brisbane. We have focused on using the Indigenous Bandscales because we hope that they will show a different picture of our students. We want some evidence to support our arguments about these tests. Our data on the continua¹ would look considerably different if we used Indigenous Bandscales as monitoring tools.

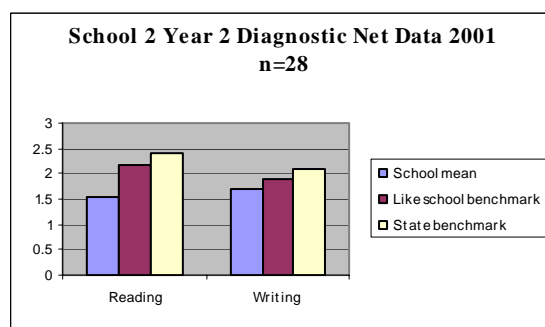


Figure 14. School 2 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data 2001.

The Year 2 Diagnostic Net results shown in Figure 14 are below Like School and State school benchmarks in both Reading and writing. Figure 15 shows that all literacy strands except Spelling are below Like School and State benchmarks in Grade 3. However, there are just 8 students in Grade 3. test data in all strands are below Like School and State benchmarks in Grade 5.

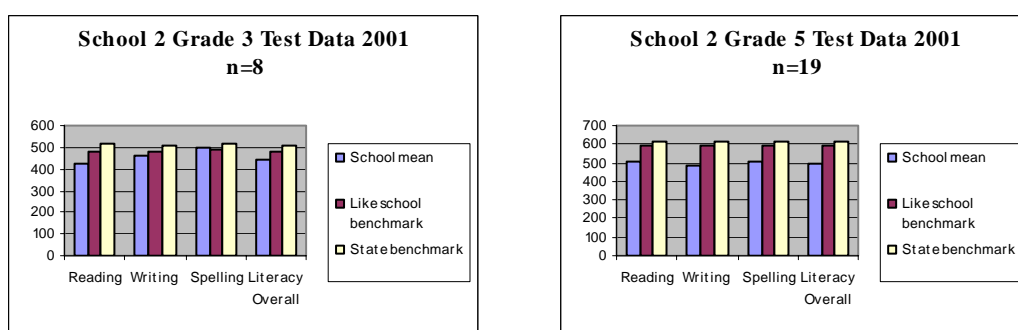


Figure 15. School 2 Grade 3 and Grade 5 test data 2001.

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

I am unhappy with our results. They are not surprising considering all our students are ESL learners. However, I am glad Kemp has eventually identified the standard our

¹ First Steps monitoring tools mandated in all Queensland State schools from Grades 1-3

students are meant to be achieving at. It doesn't matter how inappropriate the standards are. At least someone has come up with a standard, you know, set the goal posts for everyone—not one set for Indigenous students and one set for everyone else. I believe our children are as good as children anywhere but there has been a long history of two different standards and two different sets of expectations.

Indigenous Teacher composite voice

I went to an International Indigenous Conference in Education a couple of years ago and I realised that many people across the world have similar issues to us. Parents have been asking questions and are pushing for Creole in the early years of schooling. Some parents feel shame when their children are writing in Creole. Parents want children to learn in Creole to re-establish respect in the community. They say the kids don't listen to them so maybe if they learn in Creole it will make them respect their parents more. Some of the community want to bring the old language back and they want that to be taught and used in school too. It's hard because there are three languages that people talk about: English, Torres Strait Creole and Kala Kawa Ya and really, the kids need to know them all.

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

I have been at the school for over ten years. I always used to work in the lower grades because we thought that the students would do better with an English speaking teacher. I really worked hard but our internal data tells us that this was not the best thing to do. It has been really useful to have that because it is informing our practices. We have very strong support from our community because they trust key people in the school. Our School Opinion Surveys are really good but we have tried to get our parents and community to question us more, rather than just trust us to do the right thing. There will come a stage when the people they trust won't be in the school any more so they should question and find out what's going on. Many people in our community went to an International Indigenous Education conference two years ago. It was really good because they realised that many of the challenges we face here are worldwide issues for Indigenous people and that we are really doing a good job here. I noticed that those teachers and community members that attended the conference are asking more questions now. We have community meetings and the language issue is becoming a theme in most of the meetings. We have already made the decision that the language of

the pre-school should be Torres Strait Creole. We have had discussions about the time it takes to learn another language and parents are asking for Kindy, pre-school and maybe longer time in the early years of schooling. When we have had an ESL qualified teacher in the school, it has helped our staff in planning and asking questions about language. We have one at the moment but they are on class all the time so there is less opportunity to support staff.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

I have taught in Indigenous schools for much of my career. I was down South, in a mainstream school, before I came to this school. It really struck me that these students have much, much more about them than the students I taught down South. We have worked really hard all year and I know these students have produced good work. The results on these tests in no way reflect just how capable they are. There is no recognition of their ESL status. I am an ESL teacher so I have planned really explicit teaching for my class. There seems to be great variability between the levels of instruction in the different classes here and the data masks the real progress many children are making.

The middle phase

Principal/Key teacher collective voice

We are still using a range of internal data collection mechanisms. I keep a close eye on these and on teachers' planning. If I notice a particular area of concern in a class, I have a talk about the data with the teacher and use the discussion to plan personal and school professional development. I get a consultant in every year to support staff with the teaching of reading. We need to do this because we have many new teachers who come here and they don't seem to know much about the teaching of reading at all. Apparently they don't do anything like guided reading in University so we have to support them here and that is expensive and difficult. We have very open meetings with our parents and community. We have spoken about the State testing data and what it means and we share our strategies at those meetings and through the School Annual Report and planning cycles. I think that's a big strength here. I, my staff and our community don't want to be compared with Like Schools. That is having two standards; one for mainstream schools and one for Indigenous schools. I believe we have to keep

an eye on the standard for all students otherwise we'll accept that it's good enough for our children to be measured against an inferior standard.

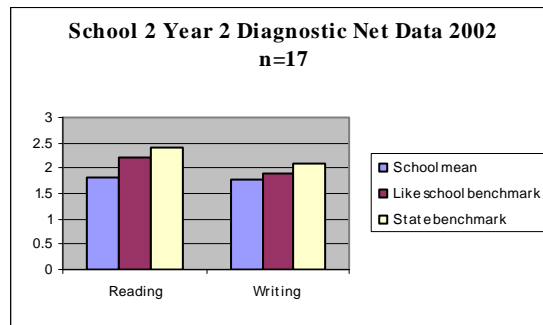


Figure 16. School 2 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data 2002.

Year 2 Diagnostic Net Data in 2002 shown in Figure 16 are below Like School and State benchmarks in both Reading and Writing.

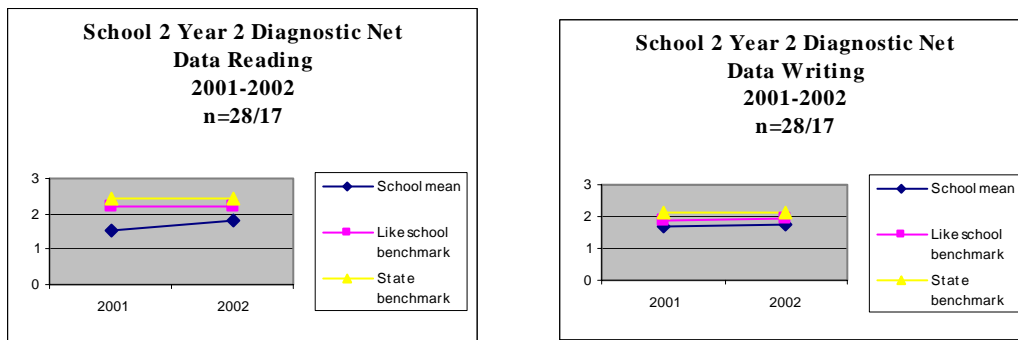


Figure 17. School 2 Year 2 Diagnostic Net Data changes in Reading and Writing 2001-2002.

Figure 17 shows that Year 2 students have made both comparative and actual gains in Reading and Writing from 2001.

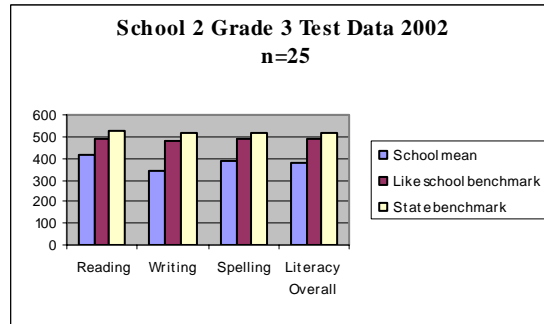


Figure 18. School 2 Grade 3 test data 2002.

The Grade 3 cohort, as shown in Figure 18, is much bigger in 2002 than 2001 in School 2. Figure 19 shows that scores in all literacy strands are significantly below Like School and State benchmarks. Grade 3 scores fell in all literacy strands between 2001 and 2002.

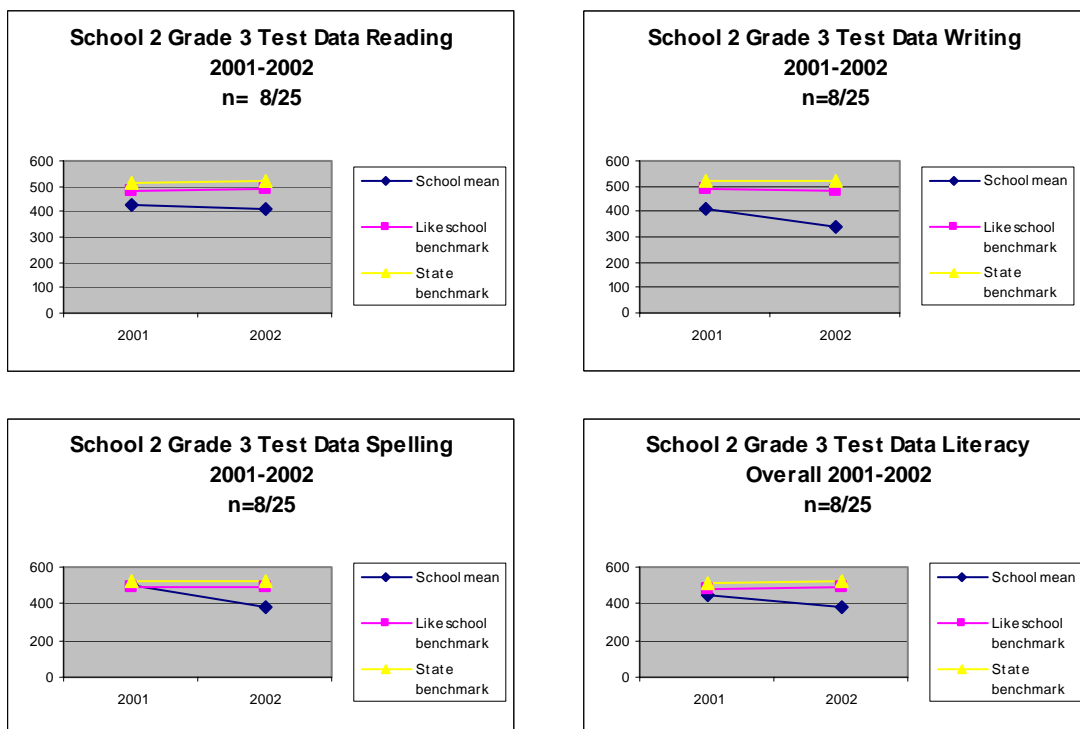


Figure 19. School 2 Grade 3 test data changes 2001-2002.

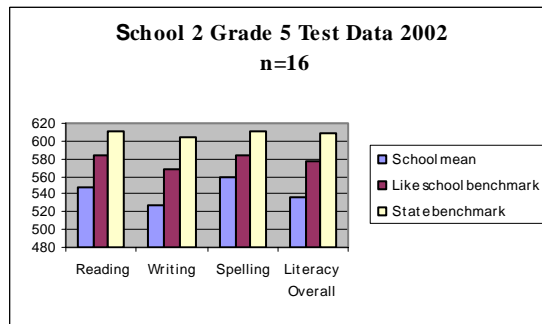


Figure 20. School 2 Grade 5 test data 2002.

Figure 20 shows that Grade 5 student scores in 2002 were significantly below the Like School and State benchmarks, especially in Writing. When School 2 Grade 5 Data 2002 is disaggregated into the separate strands they show actual gains in all strands in comparison with 2001 as shown in Figure 21.



Figure 21. School 2 Grade 5 test data changes 2001-2002.

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

We decided to test the system this year. There has been strong political advocacy across this district to resource our schools like designated migrant ESL schools elsewhere in the state. We have been using the Bandscales and we decided with the full support of our community, that we would make a point by exempting all our Grade 3s under Level

5 in the Reading and Writing Bandscales from the state-wide testing. We found that, as far as the system is concerned, if you exempt students based on their second language learning levels, they automatically get recorded as having failed to reach the benchmark. The system actually does not recognise a second language learning category. It would be interesting to see how our students perform against “like” students, not other Indigenous students, but other second language learners in remote contexts. That would be useful data. We were not game to do this with the Grade 5 students as intervention funding is available for them if they do not reach the benchmark and we did not wish to jeopardise that. We contacted the testing authority a few times this year as the rules and conditions were very confusing. They sounded embarrassed when we pointed out the issue about how valid exemptions were recorded as failures. That issue applies to this whole district.

* * *

It is becoming increasingly difficult to get teachers to keep Bandscale data. New teachers in the school have no idea about even the mandated tracking tools like the continua and there is no systemic professional development for them. I do all the standardised reading testing to get some consistency. We have been unable to get and retain specialist ESL teachers, despite advertising nationally at one point. It is too great a task for schools to do all this professional development on their own. We notice that those students who have ESL skilled teachers do perform better in school-based tasks and slightly better on the state-wide testing. The more I look at the Bandscale data we have kept in school, the more I am beginning to think that it is almost impossible for our students to reach beyond Bandscale Level 5 in oral, reading or writing if they remain in our community. They never need to use English here and if they go to the mainland, it is generally just for a few days at a time. We notice a difference in students’ language if they go away to boarding school or spend longer periods on the mainland. At one community meeting parents asked whether we could provide reports about students’ English learning as well as literacy learning. That shows the level of knowledge our community has about the language issue. We have decided to put oral Bandscale information on our report cards.

I have noticed too that our Year 2 Diagnostic Net data is relatively good, but by the time those children are in Grade 3 the gap between them and the rest of the State has widened. I am sure the testing has something to do with that.

Pauline

On that point, we carried out an interesting exercise this year at the Year 2 Diagnostic Net moderation process in one district. We spent one day looking at samples of Year 2 students' work through Net "glasses" and then spent the next day looking at the same reading and writing work through the Indigenous Reading and Writing Bandscale glasses. In every case, where the student had not been identified in the Net process as needing support, the highest Bandscale level was Level 3, that is, well below the level at which students have enough English to be able to engage with the academic curriculum. This surprised the teachers. There are two issues here. First, the Year 2 Net process is highly contextualised, unlike the Grades 3, 5 and 7 tests, so ESL learners have more opportunity to gain familiarity with the field of knowledge and the language of the tasks prior to the validation tasks and will probably do better as a consequence. Second, there is a real danger at a school level of believing that if these ESL learners have not been identified in the Year 2 Net that they don't continue to need explicit teaching, highly-contextualised tasks, scaffolding and resources in subsequent Grades. Teachers often wonder why it is that students who did so well in Grade 2 appear to do so badly by the Grade 3 tests.

Indigenous Teacher composite voice

We got some training in ESL through the RATEP upgrade program this year. That was excellent because we can now run some of the ESL training here. It is very difficult and expensive to get professional development support out here. I still need someone I can ask about English. All teachers should have that training at University, before they get here. When we had an ESL teacher here, you could just ask when you thought about something. [N] is an ESL teacher but is on full-time class. That's not the same as having someone here to support all the time.

* * *

I was surprised when you [Pauline] were doing that filming of the children in Grade 1 that they actually could speak quite good English. The trouble is they know we speak Creole so they speak Creole. One thing I have tried in my class is to have "English time." We arrange the desks like a boat and we are all on the boat. If they speak Creole they fall in the water where there are sharks! It is hard to get the children to speak

English here, especially the little ones because they really have never heard it, except on TV and never have to use it.

* * *

Those State tests are really unfair. Our kids can read and they can retell what they have read, although sometimes they do that in Creole but the tests are all multiple choice in English and they are about things that our kids have never seen or heard before.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

The gap between students here and on the mainland is closing in reading and writing on the Year 2 Net. We have been using Walking Talking Texts to contextualise the Net so the students are really confident with the language by the time they have to do their validation tasks.

* * *

Our Grade 3 test results have gone down. It is difficult to see why that is. Some children have done really well but the school data doesn't show that. One problem might be that we have really small numbers in Grade 3 and you only need a couple of kids to not do well and the whole group looks as if it has done badly. This group of students didn't do very well in the Year 2 Net last year either. I hated the test time because you have to make the children do all these things that you wouldn't normally do. Some of the children got angry at me for not doing all the strategies we tell them to use in the classroom normally and that impacts on relationships for quite some time.

* * *

Our Grade 5s have done better in everything this year. Apparently many of these kids have done well all throughout school. Considering the format of the test, I am surprised how well they did. We were told at a professional development workshop that if you keep teaching the students explicitly, they'll start to catch up by Grade 5. I don't know whether that's true.

The later phase

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

We have been trying to use the Indigenous Bandscales to track our students' English development but it has been very difficult this year. A couple of teachers got sick and had to leave, which meant that our support teachers had to take on more classroom-

based work. You really can't do this sort of monitoring without the resources. We have always focussed on the Oral Bandscales, especially in the early years because often teachers don't realise how important oral language development in English is. Although we have an Indigenous Bandscales trainer in the school, with the staffing issues, we just haven't been able to keep a handle on it. I mean, you just can't record any old thing as evidence. The Oral Bandscales require transcription of recorded student talk and this takes a huge amount of time. We had a go at putting the Indigenous Bandscales in a more user-friendly format, on an A3 sheet with summary information on it, a bit like the continua, which was a bit easier for teachers to use. It still comes down to the same thing though. We are mandated to do certain things and the Bandscales are seen as extra. Our teachers are working incredibly hard and with the staffing issues we have had this year, we can't ask them to keep on taking on extra. It's not fair.

* * *

We have tried to use Walking Talking Texts especially in the early years. We have sent people to training but they can't really train others in it until they are confident in using it themselves. We'd like to have someone come here and support them in the classroom, like our reading consultant does. Teachers really like that. Often, the problem is seeing the links between the new professional development and what the teachers already do. That is the hardest thing.

Our Year 2 data has improved consistently over the last three years and I think we are rigorous in our application of the criteria as to whether students are identified or not. I also think we are seeing the benefit of many of our students having attended pre-school. Our parents want Kindy and pre-school. We have been really lucky in that each year our pre-school program has got better and better. We have managed to attract really good teachers and we have excellent community staff there too.

* * *

I am not happy with our Grade 3 data. It may be, as you said, that the test is so decontextualised that it is difficult for ESL learners to do well, compared with the Year 2 Diagnostic Net because our internal data shows that, on the whole they are doing well. Also, we can see correlations between the data and individual teachers and factors like attendance, which is very good in this school. When you have small numbers, one or two children can make a big difference to the data. We also get some children who

have been to school on the mainland and they do better than others. You can't see these things if you just look at the aggregated data. Our Grade 5 data has been pretty consistent and mirrors the state-wide data and we have to remember that "mainstream" kids don't stand still. They make improvements too and that makes it difficult to close the gap.

* * *

I have noticed one thing that really bothers me and I wonder if it has happened in any other school. I'll ask at our next [Principals'] meeting. We have small groups of students who have intensive learning support. They do the standardised tests as there is really no point exempting them as we discovered when we tried. It's awful watching them struggle through the process, though. What I noticed was that these students just colour in any answer randomly on the answer sheet because they can't read and understand the question paper. On a number of occasions, our best students, our best readers according to our internal data, who pore over the questions trying to work out the best answer have come out below the benchmark. Not only that, learning support students have come out over the benchmark by a fluke. This is a real issue for us when we talk to parents. How do you tell a parent that the best reader in the school is entitled to learning intervention funding? And how do you tell parents of a struggling reader that, sorry, they will no longer get learning support because, apparently they are up there with the best in the state? This data has more clout than our internal data because it is the only data we get measured by, have to include in our SAROP and have to report to parents. It makes us look incompetent or ridiculous. We try and work round this at a school level but there are equity issues here for individual students.

Figure 22 shows that Grade 2 students in 2003 are below Like School and State benchmarks in Reading, but Writing scores are very close to State benchmarks. The Year 2 Diagnostic Net data in Figure 23 indicates gradual improvement in Reading and Writing scores and gradual improvement in both actual and comparative scores between 2001 and 2003.

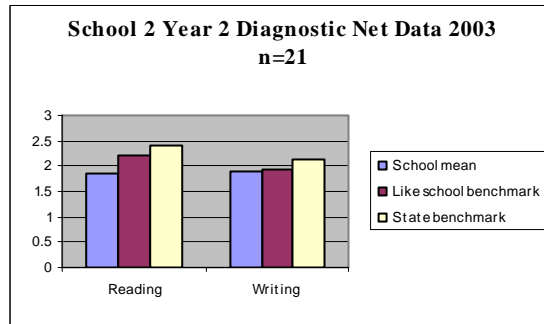


Figure 22. School 2 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data 2003.

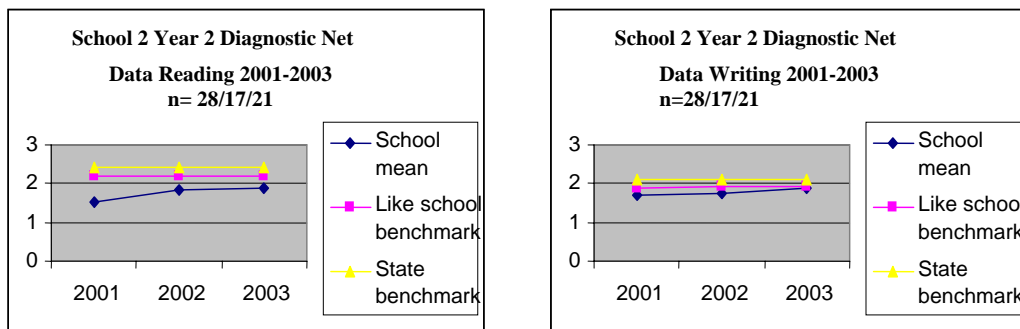


Figure 23. School 2 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data changes 2001-2003.

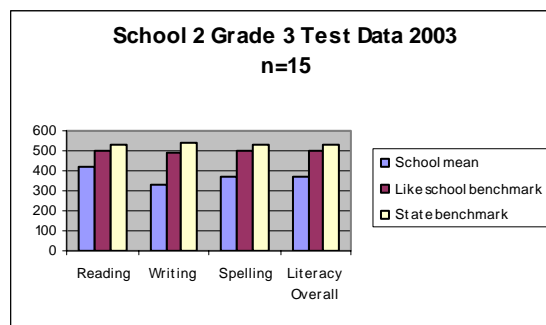


Figure 24. School 2 Grade 3 test data 2003.

Grade 3 test data scores for School 2 show students below Like School and State benchmarks in all strands of literacy in 2003. Scores in Reading are higher than other strands as shown in Figure 24. School 2 Grade 3 test scores have fallen in actual and comparative terms between 2001 and 2003, as shown in Figure 25. The Grade 3 cohort has varied in number over the three years.

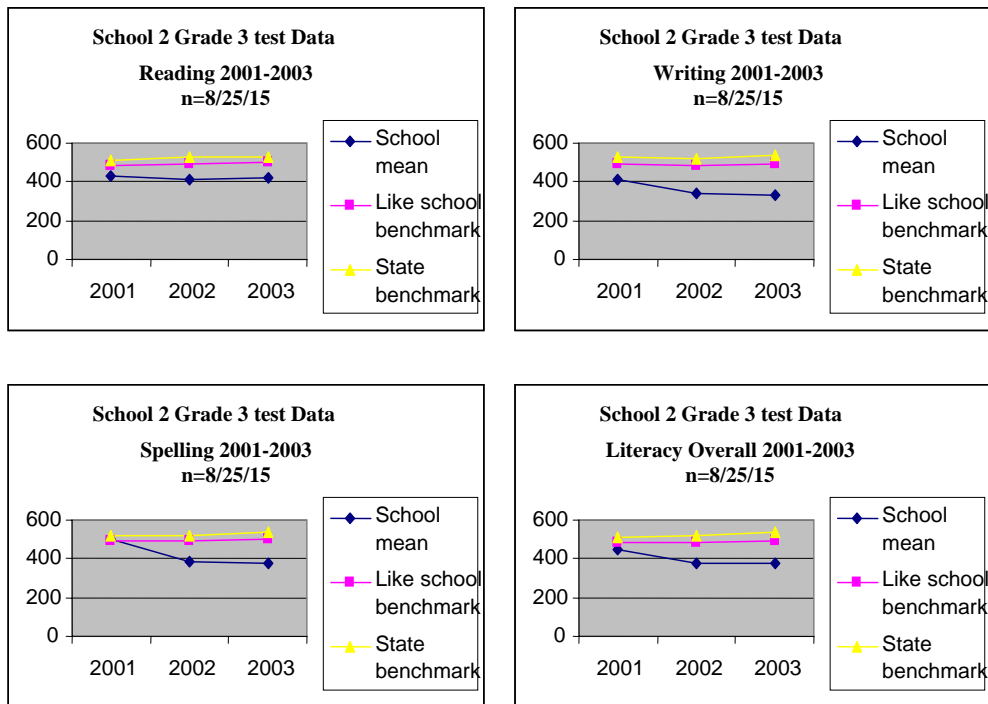


Figure 25. School 2 Grade 3 test data changes 2001-2003.

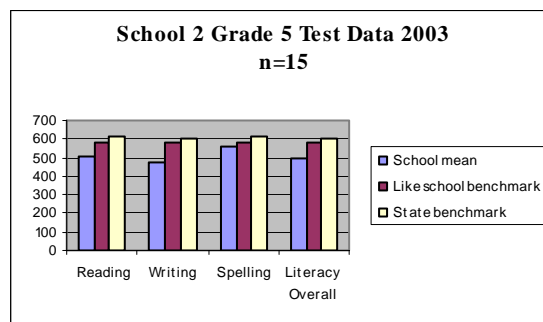


Figure 26. School 2 Grade 5 test data 2003.

Figure 26 shows that the Grade 5 student scores are below Like School and State benchmarks in all strands of literacy. Spelling scores are higher than other strands. Figure 27 shows that in the Grade 5 test data for School 2 there were improvements across all strands between 2001 and 2002 but dips in Reading Writing and Literacy Overall in 2003. Spelling scores rose between 2001 and 2002 and remained similar in 2003.

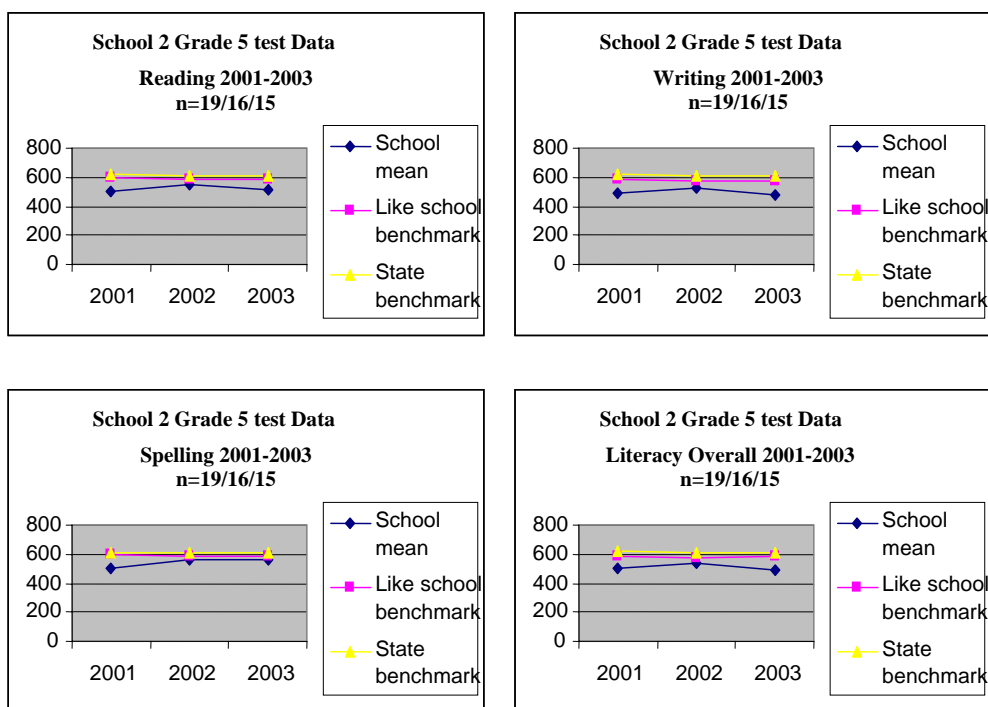


Figure 27. School 2 Grade 5 test data changes 2001-2003.

Indigenous Teacher composite voice

Our community trusts what is going on in the school. I don't think many of our parents make too much fuss about these results because there has been a lot of explanation at community meetings. We have received a number of awards this year for our community-based work and people are proud of that. It worries me, though, that we have to send our kids away to secondary school and too many of them are coming back after a few weeks and never going to school again because it is too hard for them on the mainland for lots of reasons. Some boarding schools have started to test the kids before they let them in and will only take those who are the best. I've heard they only test the Indigenous kids. That's discrimination but our parents are sometimes not willing to speak out because they are worried that if they do, they won't get their kids into any other school [on the mainland].

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

It is demoralising when you see how hard we all work and how difficult it has been this year because of the staffing that the results in the tests haven't been better. When I looked at the tests I couldn't answer some of the questions. They were really difficult. Many of us never had any ESL strategies in our pre-service programs and we have had

to learn all of this new stuff as well as try and keep our heads above water. Many of the results don't match with the internal data we keep. I heard of one school where they made a mistake in their data entry and recorded all their Year 2 kids as not needing intervention this year rather than needing intervention. It is easy to do because they ask for the number of students "not requiring intervention" rather than "requiring intervention". They realised they had made a mistake when the data came through, but they wouldn't change it at the Corporate Data Warehouse so all those kids were wrongly recorded. They didn't receive any intervention funding but their school looked like the top school in the State!

Summary School 2

School 2 is a remote, 100 percent Indigenous school. Standardised reading and spelling data had been kept for over ten years. The Principals/Key Teachers analysed the data and used it to deploy staff in particular combinations, where possible, that had proven to have the greatest impact on student performance. Although staff thought the state-wide testing process was unfair and that the use of more appropriate tools, such as the Indigenous Bandscales, would and did show a much more positive picture of student achievement, the Principals/Key teachers also expressed some relief that the federal government had identified a single, uniform standard for all students.

The Principals/Key Teachers rationalised this apparently contradictory position by reflecting on "a long history of two different standards and two different sets of expectations" between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. They felt similarly about the Like School data category, stating "we have to keep an eye on the standard for all students, otherwise we'll accept that it's good enough for our children to be measured against an inferior standard". Nevertheless, the teachers disliked the tests as they felt they damaged relationships with students and were contrary to the practices they would normally use in the classroom. An issue of significant concern was that the State-wide

testing data seemed to be unreliable, positioning poor readers as meeting the State benchmark, despite their obvious learning needs, and good readers as failures. “How do you tell a parent that the best reader in the school is entitled to learning intervention funding? It makes us look incompetent or ridiculous”. The school’s internal data collection measures seemed more accurate but had little “clout” compared with the State-wide testing data as the State-wide data was the only measure that had to be reported in official documents and to parents. Internal data was used to monitor individual and whole school professional development as well as student progress.

Attendance at an international conference in education had given both Indigenous teachers and community members some reassurance that the challenges they faced in their context were not unique. The school had regular community meetings and there had been discussion about the language of instruction in the school, particularly in the early years, not only to improve long-term educational outcomes but also “to bring back respect in the community.” The strong school-community relationship had engendered trust from parents that the school was working well regardless of the standardised data. However, the Principals/Key teachers expressed some concern that the community needed to “question us more” in anticipation of the time when trusted staff would no longer be in the school. Staff decided, with community support, to “make a point by exempting all our Grade 3s under Level 5 in the Reading and Writing Bandscales from the state-wide testing” only to discover that exemptions under the ESL category were automatically recorded as failures to reach the state benchmark. Parents were interested in the English language development of students at the school and Oral Bandscales information was included on students’ report cards. However, staff resourcing and skilling issues made it more and more difficult to collect Bandscale data,

particularly Oral Bandscales data. The school had considerable difficulty attracting appropriately qualified ESL staff to support teachers in the explicit teaching of English. The Principals/Key Teachers wondered whether it was possible for students to progress to fluency in English if they remained in the community since “they never need to use English here and if they go to the mainland, it is generally just for a few days at a time.” An early grade teacher observed how difficult it was to create artificial contexts for students to speak English.

There was a whole school focus on the teaching of reading supported by regular visits from a reading consultant because “Apparently, they don’t do anything like guided reading in university” and used ESL methodologies, especially Walking Talking Texts (NTBS, 1994) although this was difficult to maintain as they had “sent people to training but they can’t really train others in it until they are confident in using it themselves.” When the school had access to skilled ESL teachers it seemed to “make a difference” but only when they were in a support role for teachers.

6.34 School 3

School 3 has a Primary and Secondary campus and has the highest number of Indigenous students in any school in Queensland. Its size means it is a high banded school and so the Like School category is likely to compare it with other large schools which do not necessarily have high numbers of Indigenous students.

The early phase

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

The students at our school are as gifted and talented as any students anywhere. I truly believe that the issue is getting our teachers and sometimes the students themselves to

believe it. I have a real concern with this standardised testing. It makes a nonsense of recognition of diversity. We took part in the Grade 3 test trials. Fights broke out in the playground between those students who attempted the tests and students who could not. The teachers were upset and angry. We have spent a lot of effort getting our teachers to see beyond the values and perceptions they often bring here, to see the students' talents. Now that we have this testing, and the tests themselves were inaccessible to most students outside of a metropolitan area, it gives the message to teachers, students and the community that we are failures.

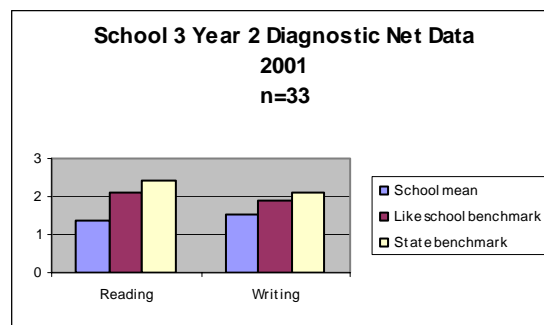


Figure 28. School 3 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data 2001.

Figure 28 shows the Year 2 Diagnostic Net data in School 3 are below Like School and State benchmarks in Reading and Writing.

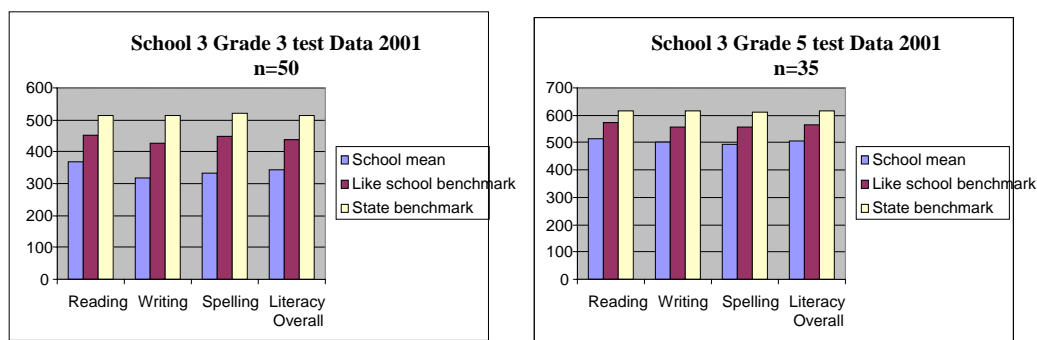


Figure 29. School 3 Grade 3 and Grade 5 test data 2001.

Figure 29 shows Grade 3 and Grade 5 test data are below Like School and State benchmarks in all strands of literacy in 2001. The Grade 3 cohort in 2001 was large (50 students).

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

We were so appalled by the kinds of test items that were on the literacy tests this year, they were so biased towards urban, white children, that we sent a letter from the whole community to the testing authority. We never received a response. Our results were terrible, which is what we expected given the nature of the tests but it didn't make us feel any better. When we looked at the tests, the kids with the best attendance had the best results, which is not surprising really and this does endorse the work we are doing—not that anyone sees that in District or Central Office. The school results are not fine enough to show it. I was interested in the spelling results. They were poor and really they shouldn't be that bad even considering all our students are ESL learners. Spelling is the easiest area in which to show improvement but we won't be concentrating on it at the expense of explicit language instruction. I looked very carefully at which errors our students were making and have shared that with all teachers. We are now putting a focus on some of the areas in the programs in earlier years.

Indigenous Teacher composite voice

You have to wonder what those people in Brisbane¹ know about the children in this State. That test was so inappropriate for all of our children. The worse thing for me was the friction between different kids—those who had a go and those who were angry that they couldn't. What possible benefit would our school get from this sort of test? It's really bad for our community. Already there is this poor perception out there. They used to use relocation to our community as a threat for teachers and principals who didn't do the right thing or upset the Directors. These tests just paint a really bad picture of what our kids can do and what they are like.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

I only came to the school this year from down South. These results in no way reflect how well the kids can do here. When I first went into my class, I wanted the students to study a text but they wouldn't read it. They'd put their heads on the desk and refused to do it. It would have been easy just to assume that they couldn't read but I didn't really believe that. I had had a good induction at the school. I was told this might happen. I

¹ Actually from interstate.

just cajoled and encouraged and, after a couple of weeks, those kids were reading and discussing the text better than the kids I taught down South. It would have been easy to give up on them and just assume that they couldn't do things. That's what these tests do—measure things they won't know in ways they can't do. Then a judgement is made about the students based on the tests and then both the teachers and the students believe they can't do things. It's a vicious circle.

* * *

The ESL teacher here told us that we had to have a real focus on oral language but I wonder whether that is the best thing to do. All the tests are about reading and writing. It's like that all the way through schooling. If you want to get into university or do Senior School, it's all about reading and writing. I wonder whether we are doing the wrong thing focussing on oral English.

In the early phase, in School 3, there was a feeling of anger regarding the State-wide testing. Teachers reported that students fought in the playground after the tests and were concerned about how the testing positioned the school, teachers and students as failures. Students with the best attendance achieved the highest scores. The Principals/Key Teachers reported that the test results were not fine enough to show this. However, analysis of the test data showed that some poor results could not be attributable to students' ESL status. Some teachers queried whether a focus on oral language in the school was affecting students' achievement in the tests and future educational prospects.

The middle phase

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

We have really worked hard to focus on those areas we know are not related to students' ESL status, like spelling. We have used Walking Talking Texts and have paired Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers in teaching teams. We have been lucky to get a teacher from the Northern Territory who had some experience in Walking Talking Texts and ESL teaching and that has made a big difference in the lower Grades.

Our teachers have planning days to plan in teams with our teacher-librarian. The RATEP upgrade initiative has led a number of our Indigenous teachers to assume more leadership in the area of new staff induction and ESL support.

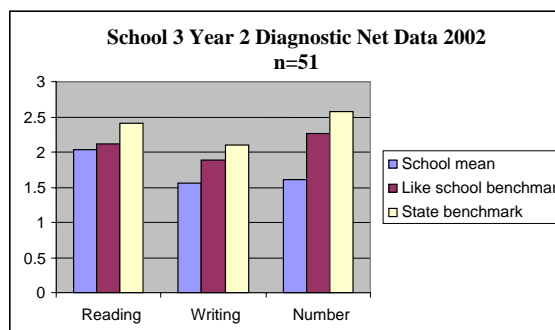


Figure 30. School 3 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data 2002.

The Year 2 Diagnostic Net Data presented in Figure 30 show that in 2002 in School 3 Reading scores were almost at the Like School benchmark. The number of students in this Year 2 cohort was high (51 students).

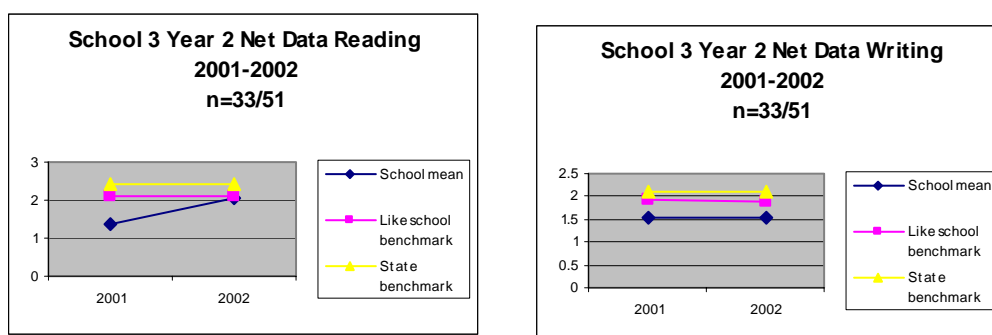


Figure 31. School 3 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data changes in Reading and Writing 2001-2002.

The changes between 2001 and 2002 shown in Figure 31 reflect a significant improvement in Reading data and, in Writing, the gap between the school performance and Like School and State benchmarks has been maintained. There has been a significant improvement in Reading in 2002 with scores closer to the Like School benchmark than in 2001. Writing scores have remained constant mirroring Like School and State-wide patterns.

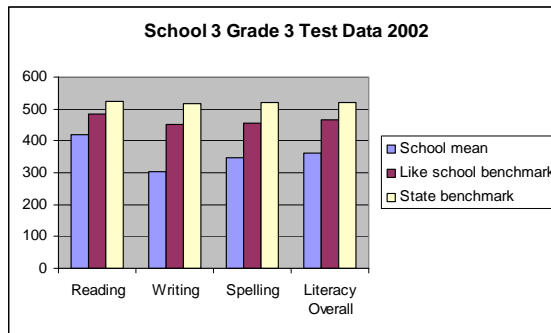


Figure 32. School 3 Grade 3 test data 2002.

Grade 3 test data presented in Figure 32 show that students are below Like School and State school benchmarks in all strands of literacy in 2002. Reading scores are the highest and Writing the lowest.

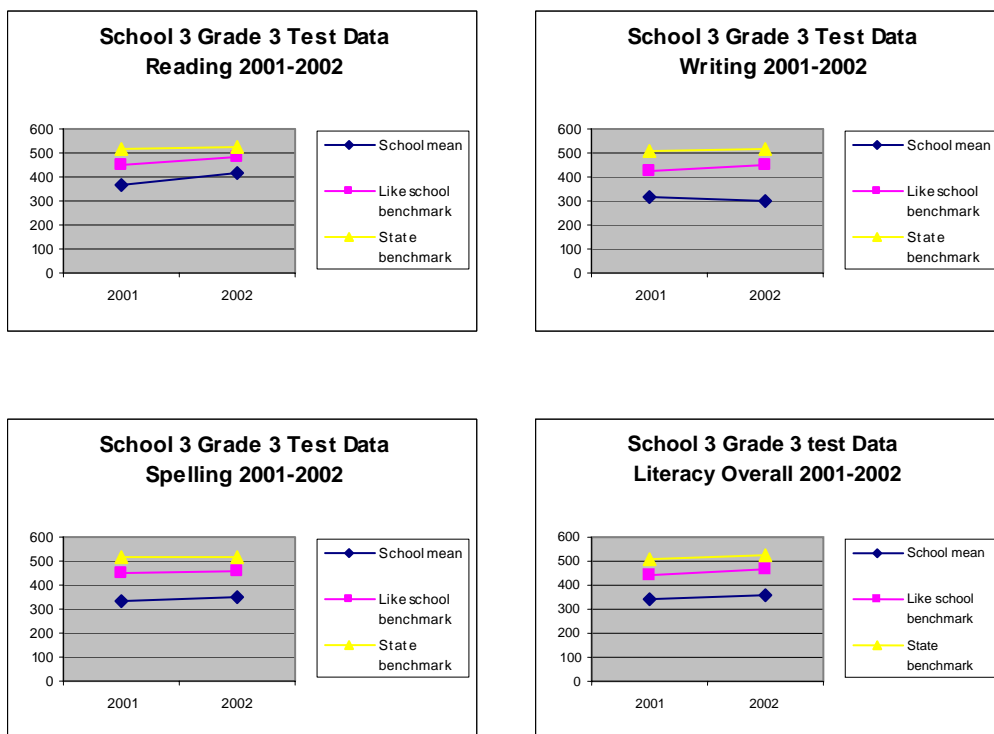


Figure 33. School 3 Grade 3 test data changes 2001-2002.

Although Figure 33 shows that School 3 Grade 3 test data in Writing showed a slight regression in 2002, actual and comparative scores in Reading, Spelling and Literacy Overall improved between 2001 and 2002.

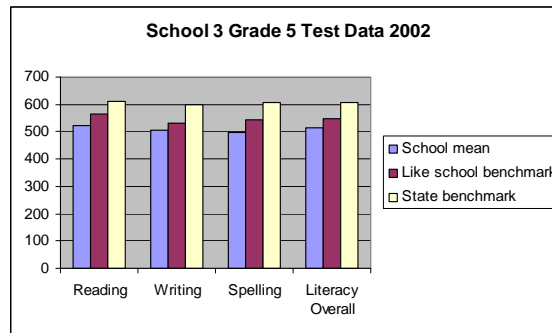


Figure 34. School 3 Grade 5 test data 2002.

Figure 34 shows Grade 5 test data in all strands is below Like School and State school benchmarks. Data comparisons between 2001 and 2002, presented in Figure 35, show Grade 5 scores improved in all areas, particularly reading but do not reach State benchmark or Like School benchmark.

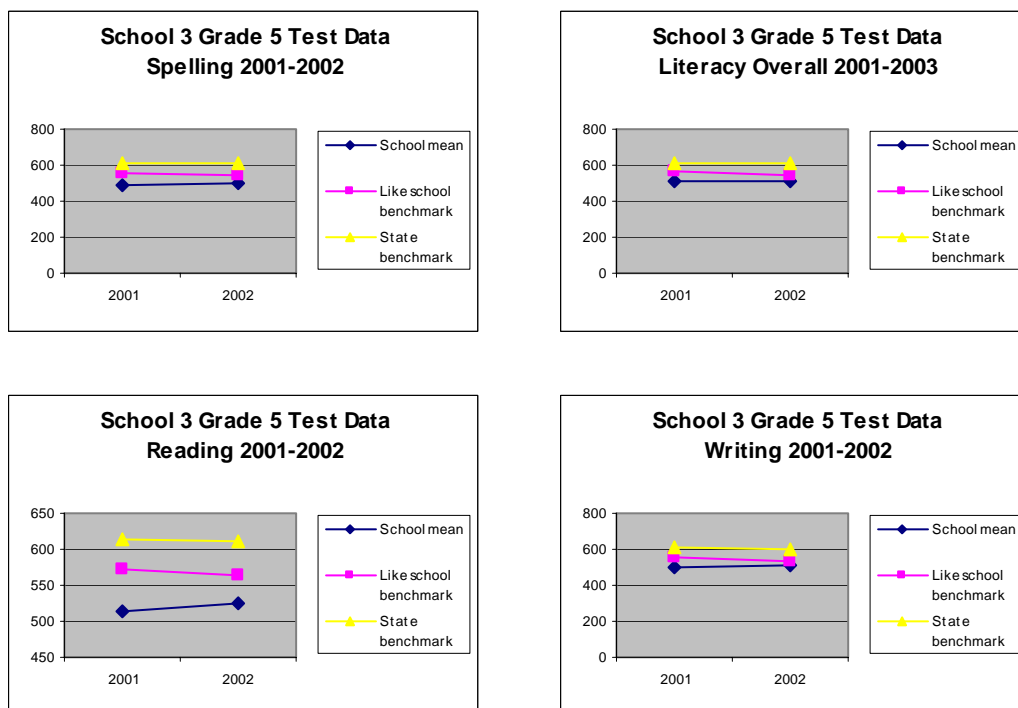


Figure 35. School 3 Grade 5 test data changes 2001-2002.

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

It is really clear when we look at individual class data that when the students have teachers who are skilled in ESL they do better. Even if the teachers are not particularly skilled in ESL but use Walking Talking Texts as base the students do better. We have

said that teachers should use Walking Talking Texts and if they don't they need to show us they are using a methodology that gives the same outcomes. We can't mandate it because there are Union issues. We have also noticed that when a class does really well one year, if they do not continue to get the explicit teaching the next year they really slip back. We can map student progress to individual teachers in many cases.

* * *

We have been trying to use the Indigenous Bandscales but our teachers feel as if they are in addition to everything else they have to do and I would agree. If we are serious that the continua, for example, are inappropriate for second language learners why is it that they are mandated across the board?

* * *

Another thing we noticed is that it was almost impossible to plot our emergent readers and writers on the Indigenous Bandscales. Students in our school do not write in Home Language when they are experimenting with writing. This may be due to the level of explicit teaching and scaffolding they get through Walking Talking Texts. Their ESLness is evident sometimes when they are reading their texts back to the teachers but often isn't really apparent until Grade 3 or later. This has implications if teachers can't see the students' ESL needs straightaway. They may be lulled into a false sense of the students' proficiency. This can be deceptive and detrimental to the learner.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

I was really surprised this year at our district Year 2 Net moderation meeting. There was a huge variety of standards in the samples of student work brought to the meeting. I felt in many cases, there was not nearly enough evidence to make a judgement on student performance. It seemed like teachers were plucking judgements out of thin air. Some teacher suggested that they were under pressure to ensure that students were not identified in the Net process because percentages of students not requiring support are a performance indicator for the school and Principal. A small amount of funding is given to students who are identified in the Net process. So teachers are caught between a rock and a hard place. They are judged and pressurised if the students don't reach the required standard because it looks bad for the Principal and they have to manage with fewer resources if they are not identified, which is an equity issue for the child. One teacher told me in her school the Grade 2 teacher does nothing but Year 2 Net related tasks until validation! All students would do well if you taught nothing but the test.

There is a huge variation from school to school about what actually happens and that makes people lose confidence in the process.

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

To try and make more linkages for teachers, we have put a Bandscales and ESL focus on the annotation sheets we attach to student work to plot them on the continua. I am quite strict about those annotation sheets. It is the accountability for the continua but it's also a way of highlighting the students' second language learning needs. As the continua are mandated, we can use continua tools to drive home the language message. We have set minimum requirements for student folios. You can't enforce them though.

Indigenous Teacher composite voice

We have been taking on more leadership roles in ESL support and staff induction since we completed the RATEP upgrade. That has worked really well and we have discussed the school data with parents and the community so that, now, people have a better understanding of the tests. Many of our community leaders have sent their children out of the community for secondary school and the main reason is to improve their children's English. We don't want to send our children away but they have no reason to use English here so I think they can probably only go so far in English if they stay at school here.

* * *

We all work in teaching teams in the school and have planning days with the teacher-librarian and other specialists. Many of the non-Indigenous teachers who come here are inexperienced and they have had no preparation for a context like ours. They get paired in teaching teams with us, more experienced teachers. Sometimes it works really well and sometimes it is really hard because you are working with people with completely different values. You work with people like that and they say the right things but they don't do the right things. They don't really believe, deep down, that our kids can and should succeed. We don't want teachers like that in our school. All teachers should have to go through cross-cultural training as part of their teacher preparation to weed out those who have low expectations of our students. Some teachers dig their heels in and won't engage with the methodologies we use. They cause trouble and use the Union to stir things. What they don't understand is that our kids' education is not about what is easier for them, it is about what our kids actually need.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

I got the opportunity to train in Reading Recovery this year. It was fantastic. I understand about the teaching of reading now. I really enjoyed my training. It was so structured. I know exactly what has to be done in the sessions and how to track the students. I am not trained in ESL and I don't really know how Reading Recovery and Walking Talking Texts fit together. Reading Recovery is all over Queensland, and internationally and is supported by the Department so I know it's a really good program. We have had a few curriculum meetings about language issues and we now have some ESL things on the annotation sheets we use to plot students on the reading and writing continua.

* * *

I had some experience using Walking Talking Texts before. I have been team teaching with a new teacher. It has worked well. Our students did really well on the Year 2 Net this year. We have had a constant stream of teachers from other schools coming to see what we do in class here. I don't mind that so much. I don't want to go and give presentations at other schools, though, because it means leaving the class and it is disruptive to the learning. I have had plenty of support and affirmation from the Administration team here and they nominated me for a teaching award. There has been a real downside to this affirmation and attention though. Some of the other staff have been really resentful. I have been happy to share what we do with other teachers here but I have told the Principal that I don't want to do that at staff meetings any more. I am still happy to help people who ask me but I don't want to be in the position where I am being spotlighted in any way.

In the middle phase in School 3 Principals/Key Teachers reported that there was a clear correlation between good results on the State-wide testing and particular teachers who had ESL skills. These skilled teachers were sometimes resented by other staff members. Although the school had been trying to use the Indigenous Bandscales, teachers saw them as an additional tool and as additional work. Some teachers could not see the link between different mainstream and ESL methodologies. Indigenous teachers related that they had begun taking on more leadership roles in ESL and staff induction

and that they did not want non-Indigenous teachers in the school who did not have high expectations of students.

The later phase

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

I think our data has been very variable and we can trace that variability to individual teachers. We can see really clearly which classes are achieving and which are not. The standardised data in this respect simply confirms what our internal data tells us. You don't see that in the aggregated school data. One class with poor teaching brings the whole school data down. We have been focusing on having a high level of curriculum planning incorporating Walking Talking Texts. We have also been focusing on Information Technology skills because the students here are really engaged with technology and it gives a good purpose and context for language and literacy learning. The tests measure such a narrow slice of literacies which really don't fit with the "Literate Futures" (Education Queensland, 2000c) focus of our pedagogy. How particular students perform depends on what you test. It is a pity the State-wide tests didn't measure students' technological skills. Our students in Grade 1 can do animation and our upper Grades have built websites and virtual trails through the community. If the tests measured multiliteracies our students would be amongst the best in the State. I strongly believe that if we give these tests more attention than they merit, we will seriously disadvantage our students in learning. If you had ever seen what the kids actually do on those test days, you would never give the test results one second's consideration. We try and tell them that it is important that they read the questions and make their best effort but many students simply randomly colour in the multiple choice answer circles. This sort of data cannot possibly give us good information.

Year 2 Diagnostic Net data in 2003, as shown in Figure 36 indicate, Reading and Writing scores below Like School and State benchmarks.

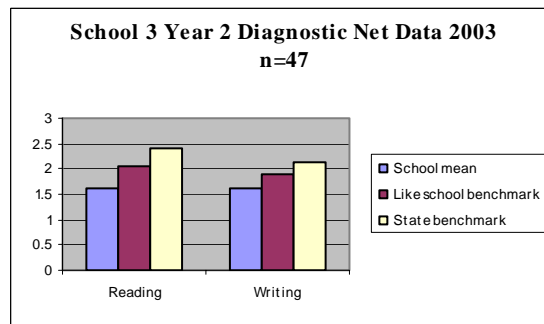


Figure 36. School 3 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data 2003.

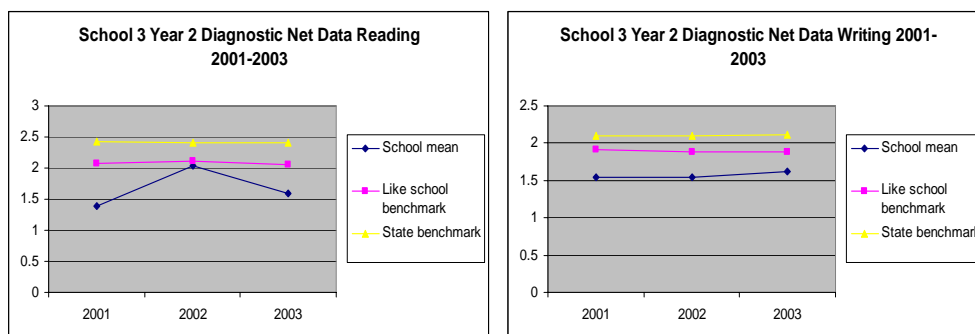


Figure 37. School 3 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data changes 2001-2003.

When comparing the Year 2 Diagnostic Net data between 2001 and 2003, as shown in Figure 37, the significant improvement in Reading scores in 2002 was not sustained in 2003. Nevertheless, there was an improvement in both Reading and Writing between 2001 and 2003 in actual and comparative terms. School 3 Grade 3 test data in 2003, as shown in Figure 38, show student scores below Like School and State benchmarks in all strands of literacy.

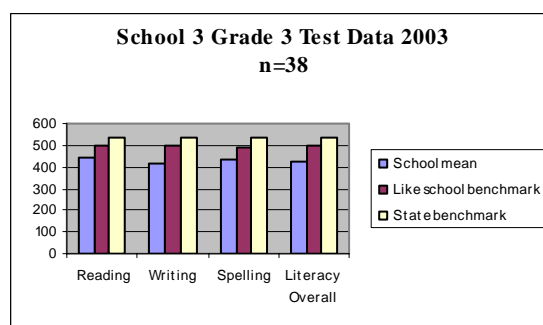


Figure 38. School 3 Grade 3 test data 2003.

Figure 39 shows actual and comparative improvement in all literacy strands in the Grade 3 test data in School 3 between 2001 and 2003 with the most significant improvement overall between 2002 and 2003. The gap has closed on both benchmarks.

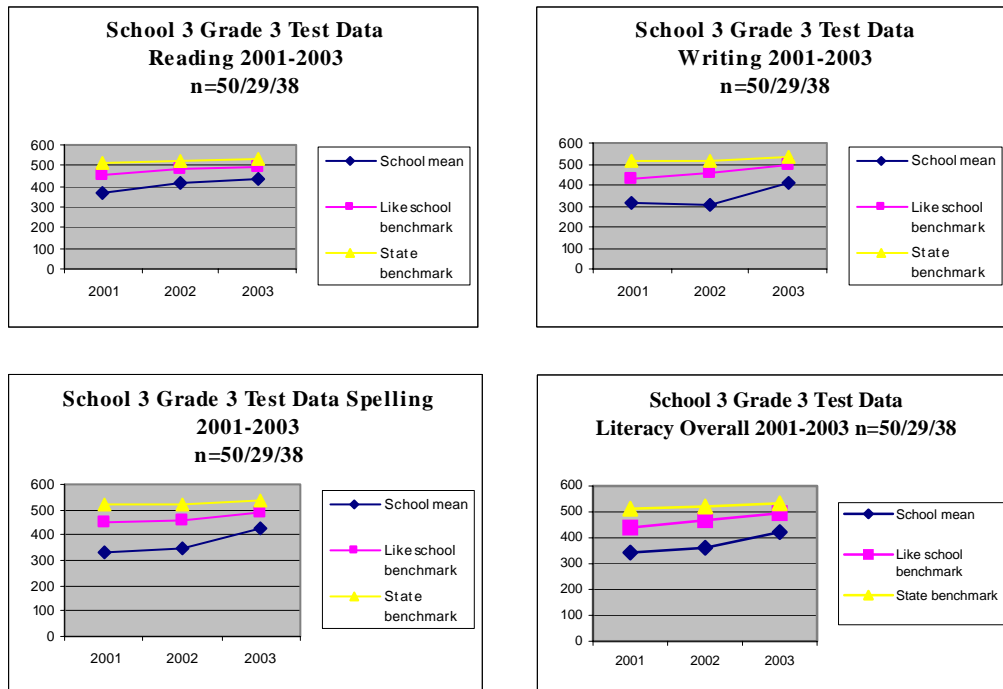


Figure 39. School 3 Grade 3 test data changes 2001-2003.

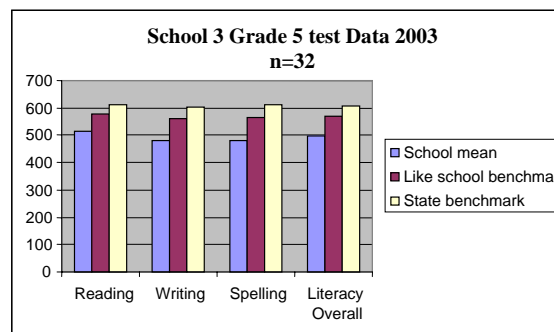


Figure 40. School 3 Grade 5 test data 2003.

In Figure 40 the Grade 5 test data show student scores below Like School and State benchmarks in all strands of literacy. In Figure 41, School 3 Grade 5 test data shows a general pattern of decline in scores between 2001 and 2003 with the gap between school mean and Like School and State benchmarks greater in 2003 than in 2001.

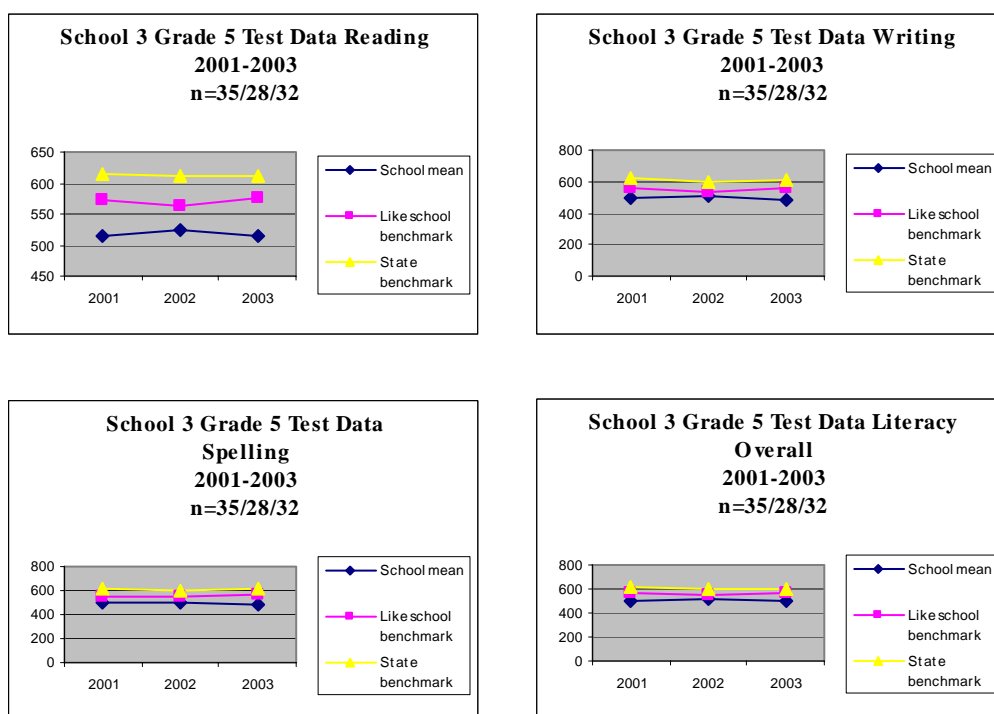


Figure 41. School 3 Grade 5 test data changes 2001-2003.

Principal/Key teacher composite voice

We send our letter of complaint every year about the tests to no avail. We try and inform the testing through the Teacher Advisory Panel, again largely to no avail. Our community are happy with what we are doing and some schools down South actively recruit teachers from here for transfer because they are highly skilled. The issue for us is that we pour all this energy and effort into support and professional development and never seem to get a critical mass of already-skilled people so that it isn't a continual uphill struggle.

* * *

In terms of new teachers, I am happy to accept teachers with an S2¹ rating. Our experience is, in this context, the S rating is almost irrelevant. The most important attributes are a belief that our students can do well and a willingness to listen and learn. Sometimes the S1 graduates come to us knowing it all and they can be very difficult to work with and find the cultural differences too challenging.

¹ Suitability ratings given to new teachers by Education Queensland. S1 is the highest rating, S4 the lowest.

Indigenous Teacher composite voice

It is good to see some of our kids do so well on those tests. It means they are “up there” with other kids in the State. We have had people from Central Office and researchers come to the school and say that what our kids are doing is the same as or better than most places in the State. The results don’t really reflect that. If you look at the data, we have generally mirrored or done better than other Like Schools around the State. Mainstream kids don’t stand still in their learning though so we still get high percentages of our students in the bottom 15 per cent category. We are not really interested in how we do in comparison with Like Schools. That’s the deficit Indigenous model coming out again.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

The Administration in this school share the data with us when it comes through and they talk to us individually about our class data. They don’t make a big deal of it except to make us aware of how it looks and where our strengths and weaknesses are as a school or maybe in particular classes. You can see where the teachers are working well or not with students. I find one of the most disappointing things is that kids who are doing really well one year in this class, if they don’t get a good teacher, just go backwards. I don’t think that happens so much with mainstream kids probably because they don’t need all the scaffolding. We work really hard here and it’s not right that the only thing the system recognises as success is the testing data.

Summary School 3

In School 3, the Principals/Key Teachers, Indigenous teachers and non-Indigenous teachers expressed concern that the State-wide testing “gave the message to teachers, students and the community that we are failures” and detracted from their focus of raising the expectations. Historically, staff had been relocated to the school when they “didn’t do the right thing or upset the Directors.” Staff believed that the tests were unfair and that the poor perception the wider community had had of the school, which was now beginning to change, was being reinforced through the State-wide

testing program. Furthermore, the test items themselves were strongly biased towards students in metropolitan locations. Tension between students who could and could not attempt the test had caused a number of angry incidents in the school. The school had written a number of times to the testing authority expressing their concerns but had received no response. The students that seemed to achieve the best were the best attenders but the aggregated test data masked the excellent performance of these groups of students. The teachers disliked Like School category in the data reporting as it still seemed to position students as failures whereas Central Office visits to the school had endorsed teacher practice and student achievement as “up there” with the rest of the State. The Principals/Key Teachers stated that State-wide testing should not be given more attention than it merited. They analysed the data for general strengths and weaknesses but did not “make a big deal of it.” They considered that the tests measured a narrow construction of literacy which conflicted with Queensland’s multiliteracies focus.

Also, the school had focussed on Information Technology as it engaged students and provided a meaningful context for language and literacy learning. The Principals/Key Teachers were confident that students would be among the best in the State if there was a digital literacies benchmark. The quality of the State-wide test data itself was questioned in light of staff observations of the way “students randomly colour in the multiple choice answer circles. This sort of data cannot possibly give use good information” and led them to conclude: “It’s not right that the only thing the system recognises as success is the testing data.”

Despite the inappropriateness of the tests, the Principals/Key Teachers could identify areas for improvement from the results, where poor performance in particular strands could not be attributed to ESL learning. Spelling was targeted for improvement but “not at the expense of explicit language instruction.” The school had placed a particular emphasis on oral language which, along with the introduction of the *Walking Talking Texts* (NTBS, 1994), was proving successful in the early Grades. However, the State-wide test results caused some teachers to question the value of oral language in literacy development stating: “If you want to get into university or do senior school, it’s all about reading and writing. I wonder whether we are doing the right thing focussing on oral English.” Close analysis of the school test data showed that, where students had teachers with skills in ESL teaching the students did better: “We can map student progress to individual teachers in many cases.” However, sustaining student progress was dependent on consistent explicit teaching, teacher skill and attitudes. The school had to skill new teachers in situ as few teachers came ready-skilled in ESL teaching or with cross-cultural experiences. “The issue for us is that we pour all this energy and effort into support and professional development and never seem to get a critical mass of already-skilled people so that it isn’t a continual uphill struggle.” Brisbane schools were beginning to recruit staff from School 3 because teachers had developed good practices whilst there. The Principals/Key Teachers referred to the suitability rating of new graduates and their perception that the highest rated (S1) graduates were not necessarily those who worked best in their context. The Indigenous teachers expressed frustration at teachers who came to the school with little cross-cultural knowledge, skill in ESL teaching and values and attitudes which militated against improved outcomes for students.

The *Walking Talking Texts* (NBTS, 1995) methodology had been introduced into the school to guide explicit ESL teaching but could not be mandated “because there are Union issues.” Staff expressed concern not only about the effects of the Grades 3, 5 and 7 testing program but also about the Year 2 Diagnostic Net processes, citing incidences at local moderation meetings where teachers at some schools had been pressurised by their Principals not to identify students because “percentages of students not requiring support are a performance indicator for the school and Principal.”

In addition to particular methodologies, the school identified a number of successful strategies they were using to improve outcomes. The Principals/Key Teachers tried to make more linkages for teachers and adapted mandated monitoring processes to ensure that ESL learning needs could be addressed. Some Indigenous teachers had participated in the RATEP upgrade program and were taking on more leadership roles in ESL support and staff induction and were talking in the community about the State-wide data so that parents had a better understanding about the tests. Staff were deployed in particular combinations and specific planning times were timetabled for teaching teams with the teacher-librarian and other specialists. The school identified a number of ongoing challenges to improving outcomes principally the lack of mandated appropriate monitoring tools for Indigenous ESL learners, the supply of appropriately skilled teachers in ESL methodologies, reading, cross-cultural pedagogy and sometimes expectations. Where teachers had the skill in the school, they were vulnerable to negative responses from others.

6.35 School 4

School 4 is an urban school and has the largest number of students of the four focus schools in the study, although not all students are Indigenous ESL learners. Approximately 70 per cent of students are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

The early phase

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

I am really disappointed that Indigenous students are still not included on the state ESL database. You do not really have to recognise the language issue as long as you never know what the real picture is. It's clever really. They [the State and Federal governments] are not quantifying the issue because that would mean they would have to deal with it. Our teachers feel really disempowered by this testing process. It is like we have no voice and there has been no forum to express our concerns. We have always had a real focus on oral English in the early years because of our numbers of Indigenous ESL students but it looks like we need to focus on writing and reading, teaching to the test, to make sure that we and our community do not see us as a bad school. Our data is bound to look bad. It's a real dilemma. If these tests are the only yardstick against which students and teachers are measured we will be in trouble. We certainly feel demoralised when our results come through.

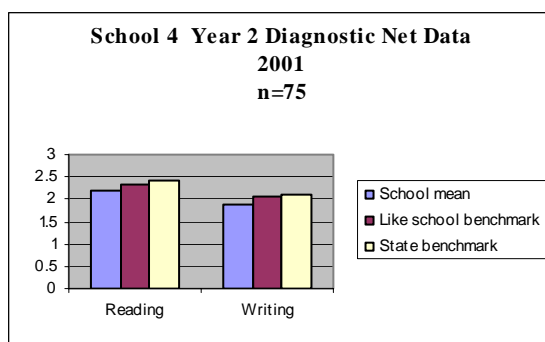


Figure 42. School 4 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data 2001.

In Year 2 2001, as shown in Figure 42, Reading and Writing scores are below Like School and State benchmarks. School 4's Like School benchmark is very close to the State benchmark.

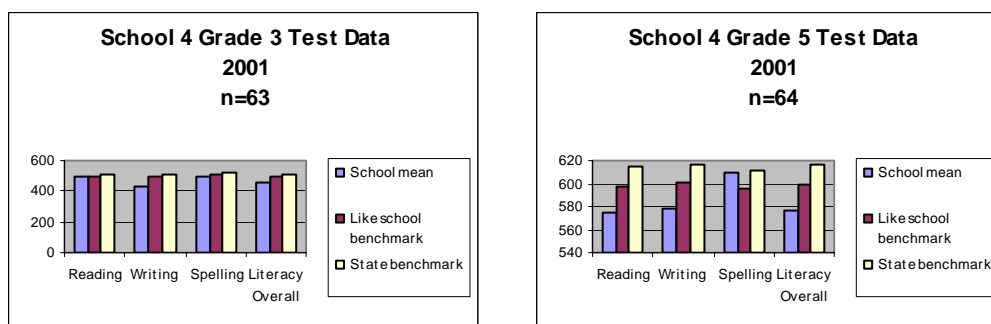


Figure 43. School 4 Grade 3 and Grade 5 test data 2001.

Figure 43 shows the Grade 3 test data in Reading and Spelling are close to the Like School and State benchmarks. However, the Grade 5 data are well below both benchmarks in all strands except Spelling. Spelling scores exceed the Like School benchmark and meet the State benchmark.

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

These results are better than I expected in Grade 3. I hate the Like School category. We are in an urban area but our community is very distinctive. Almost all our students are Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Cook Islander. There would not be many urban schools like ours in Queensland and you can see that by the fact that the Like School benchmarks are very close to the State benchmarks. Our Grade 5 results aren't very good, except spelling and that probably indicates that Spelling is all most teachers are concentrating on. It's much easier for teachers to focus on Spelling than on the complex range of skills and language required for Reading and Writing. There are many Grade 5s who are doing really well but the results don't show that. The Grade 2 and 3 results are closer to the state benchmarks than I expected. We have some really experienced teachers in the early Grades and they have been here for a long time.

* * *

I have put our most experienced and skilled ESL teacher on a Grade 1 “ESL” class for the past few years. The students with the greatest ESL needs go into her class. It has been very successful and the students get a really good start but this year I have asked her to be a support teacher to others in the school. I was concerned that we were not using her expertise in the most effective way and we need to build capacity amongst all our staff. It was a risk because the children in her class do so well and she wasn’t so keen at first. She has agreed though. She will model her good practice in other early years classes across the school. We want to embed Walking Talking Texts and FELIKS strategies into our programs and we thought she would really be able to assist with that.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

You know what’s really soul-destroying? We know we are making a difference with the students we have but when the test results come out, they come from head office and we are shown charts of how the rest of the State, you know, those schools in Brisbane who don’t have these kid are like right up here and we are right down there. I know it’s their job to talk about the results but it’s demoralising. These statistics go in our annual report and are reported back to parents and they see that their kids are right down there . . . and it doesn’t matter how much we know that they are not . . . it’s there on paper.

* * *

I would never do anything like this [the test process]. We do ask a buddy, use a wordbank, a whole range of things if students don’t know the answer to something. There was a whole section on camping in the tests using camping symbols. Our Grade 3s haven’t been on a school camp. They do lots of camping with their families but not in places where there are these sorts of signs. I don’t think most kids outside Brisbane would have seen these signs. Now I know that this stuff comes up, I’ll teach it but it doesn’t fit with our students’ experience so it’s a waste of teaching time.

* * *

Now that we’ve done all that [testing] I can now get back to the job of teaching. You know it’s funny, yesterday (the day after the test) was the first time [J] was openly defiant to me. He has recently come from another school and it has taken us so long to get him to settle and he had just started to. I feel really bad for him. It’ll take ages to rebuild that trust.

Indigenous Teacher composite voice

None of the material was appropriate for our context. The test is unfair. It really bothers me how the testing affects our kids. It takes us weeks to get over it. The kids get really angry, like we're trying to trick them. I get angry too, for them. We have all been trained in FELIKS here. When I had that training I understood why I had so many difficulties with education. I am determined that kids here will realise that the problems they have are because of language. They are not dumb but these tests make them look dumb.

In the early phase in School 4, teachers were concerned about the lack of inclusion of Indigenous ESL students in the State database and that the testing process and the way the results were reported would make the school and the teachers look bad. Teachers felt much of the test content was inappropriate for students outside of metropolitan areas and that to teach this sort of content was a waste of time because it did not fit with School 4 students' experiences. The Principals/Key Teachers reported their dilemma in how best to use ESL-skilled staff in the school.

The middle phase

Principal/Key Teacher collective voice

We have some very experienced teachers here. One, in particular, has specific expertise in Indigenous Second Language learning and she has been researching the languages that our students speak before they come to school. We don't get any ESL funding for our Indigenous students because many are Aboriginal and their language isn't recognised but the main blockage is that the rules don't allow children in urban contexts to be funded. The rationale behind this is that they are in a Standard English speaking environment automatically if they are in an urban location. This is nonsense. The main feeder suburb for this school is essentially an Indigenous Housing Commission area where English is not spoken at all. The ESL teacher has been

collecting samples of the children's oral language when they first come to school and in the community and trialling the Oral Indigenous Bandscales and her data proves that students in this school do not speak English anywhere other than in school. No one wants to look at this data though.

* * *

I have been collecting all this oral language information and I have transcribed it with Indigenous teachers who speak the children's language. The evidence is really clear. These children do not speak English in their community and do not speak English at all prior to coming to school here. These tests are unfair and the resourcing is unfair. We could do so much with additional resourcing. I know how much supplementary funding is given to remote schools. It is inequitable that our school loses out because it is supposedly in an urban area.

Pauline

I have been doing some research as to why some schools attract Indigenous ESL ILSS funding and some do not. I was puzzled because there are a number of schools in Cape York where the students clearly speak a traditional Aboriginal language, who are told they cannot access any ESL funding. It appears that the reason for all these anomalies has nothing to do with language at all. In the original Commonwealth quadrennial agreement, it was decided at a meeting where there was no one with any knowledge at all about language, that particular schools would receive this money. All Torres Strait schools received the funding because the language was recognised. Some Cape York schools had a strong advocate at the meeting so they were included because someone spoke up for them, others were not included simply because no one at the meeting was aware of any language issue or advocated on their behalf. Once the agreement was signed, it couldn't be changed so it wouldn't matter how much evidence of language background you had. If you were not on the original list of schools included, you have to wait for the next agreement and make sure that the responsible officer is aware of the issues prior. One problem with this strategy is that the responsible officers for this funding change with every restructure and realignment so it is difficult to know who you have to talk to.

The Year 2 Diagnostic Net data presented in Figure 44 indicates that student scores in School 4 are below both Like School and State benchmarks in 2002.

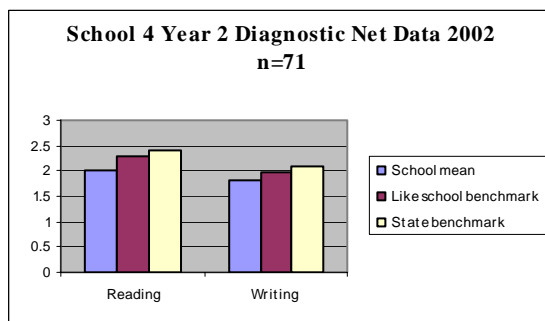


Figure 44. School 4 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data 2002.

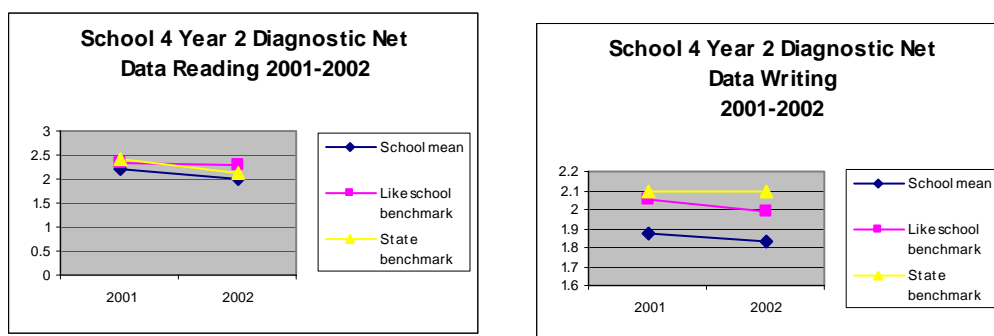


Figure 45. School 4 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data changes 2001-2002.

As shown in Figure 45, the Year 2 Diagnostic Net scores have fallen between 2001 and 2002 but this mirrors Like School and State performance.

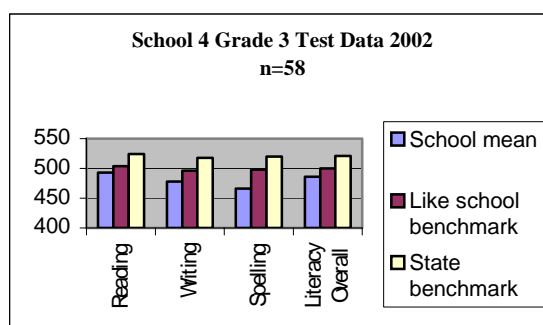


Figure 46. School 4 Grade 3 test data 2002.

Figure 46, shows that School 4 Grade 3 test data are below Like School and State benchmarks in all literacy strands. Although School 4's actual and comparative scores fell in Spelling and Reading between 2001 and 2002, as shown in Figure 47, scores increased in Writing. The improvement in Writing has influenced the Literacy Overall scores, showing a general comparative improvement in Literacy.

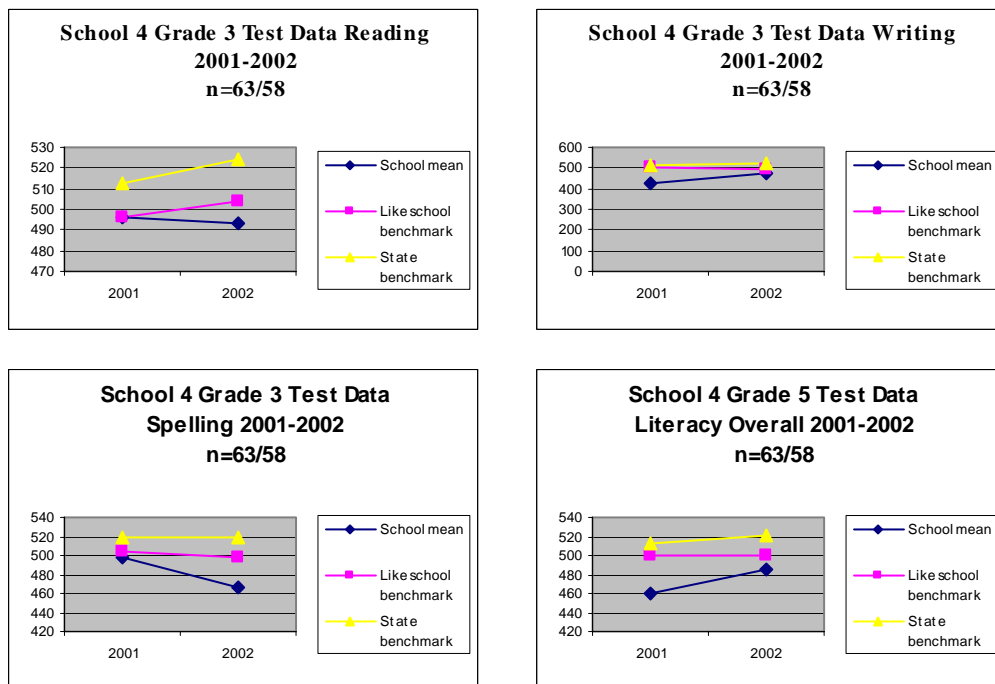


Figure 47. School 4 Grade 3 test data changes 2001-2002.

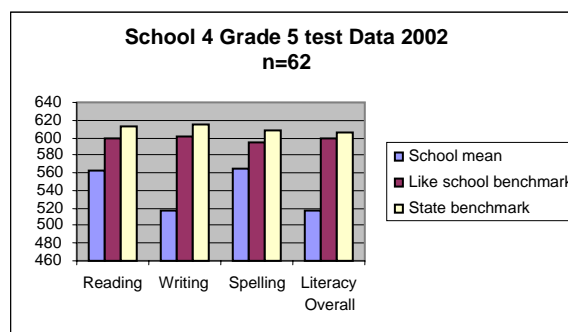


Figure 48. School 4 Grade 5 test data 2002.

The Grade 5 test data as shown in Figure 48, for School 4 in 2002, show that scores are below Like School and State benchmarks in all areas of literacy. Reading and

Spelling are better than Writing, which is significantly lower than Like School and State benchmarks. In Figure 49, School 4 Grade 5 test data between 2001 and 2002 show a significant fall in actual and comparative scores between 2001 and 2002. Student numbers remained similar in 2001 and 2002.

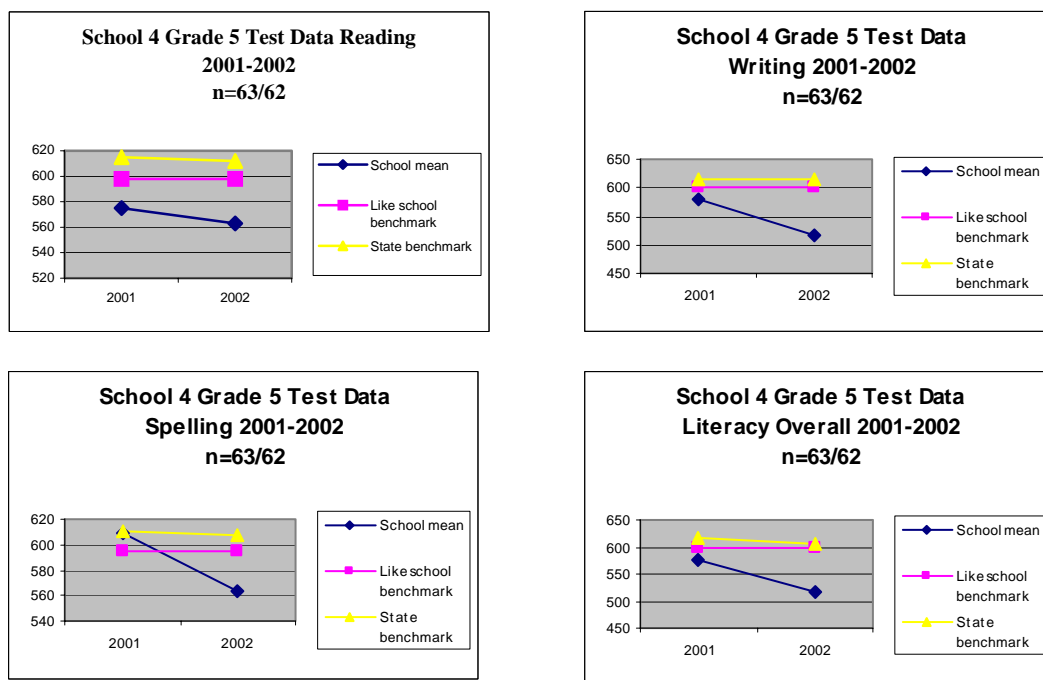


Figure 49. School 4 Grade 5 test data changes 2001-2002.

Principals/Key Teacher composite voice

It is really difficult to draw conclusions from this data if you just look at the aggregated data. We are quite a big school and many of our teachers are experienced. We have been concentrating really hard on a new curriculum and this has been very tiring for many teachers. In some cases I think the teachers have taken their eye off the literacy ball because they have been working so hard in other areas. Having said that, we can see that some classes and some students are doing much, much better than others. Generally, the experienced teachers and those skilled in ESL have much better results. That's one of the reasons I wanted to bring some of the experienced teachers out of the classroom to support other staff. Often they don't want to do that because they enjoy their classroom work. It is a real challenge, trying to skill staff when they are in your school. We have concentrated on the FELIKS approach and Walking Talking Texts as whole school approaches but teachers often struggle to make the links between the

curriculum and these methodologies. We could really use ESL ILSS funding. The way these supplementary resources are allocated is really unfair.

Indigenous Teacher composite voice

Some of us have done the RATEP upgrade program this year and we are trained trainers in FELIKS and we got proper professional development in Walking Talking Texts. That has been really good because, before, none of the Indigenous teachers had trainer training. The “experts” were always the non-Indigenous teachers. We are using those methodologies and they are working. One thing that reassured me was that sometimes I would be working really hard, using FELIKS strategies all year and it was sometimes months before I could see any evidence of all this teaching in student work. Now that I have done the training, I know that this is normal for second language learners. The State-wide tests are unfair for Indigenous students because they don’t recognise that different kids learn language in different ways and for some it takes longer than others.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

The results of the tests were good in my class this year. They usually are good but I don’t think there is anything magical about what I am doing. I am teaching like I have always taught. I have gone to all the professional development about language and curriculum. I’m still not sure I am “doing” ESL with my students. Sometimes, at staff meetings we talk about ESL as if it is this wonderful thing that, if we could all use, we would make a difference. I have been teaching for over thirty years, mostly in this school. The kinds of children at the school have changed over the years but I am not sure my teaching has. With the Indigenous kids, I get them into print straightaway. I don’t like making them different. Am I doing ESL? I don’t really know about this ESL stuff. I can’t put a name to what I’m doing but I am sure of one thing, it’s a teacher’s responsibility to teach reading. What do they do at teachers’ college these days? I don’t like team teaching and I’ve told them [Administration] I won’t do it. I believe teachers must take the responsibility themselves, individually. I am happy to share what I do at staff meetings.

* * *

I came here as a second year teacher and at first I was a bit scared because the children were so different from my last school. When I first came here, we had some professional development in guided reading and that worked very well. Then we had professional development in Walking Talking Texts and I couldn't see where the fit was with everything else we were doing. Then I got an ESL teacher as my teaching partner and she was able to help me see how it all went together. When I looked at the State testing, I could see just how unfair it was.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

One student in our class got so worked up in the first test that he didn't come to school after that day. He stayed away for two weeks. When he eventually came back, every time there was the slightest amount of pressure on him, he went to the office and said he was sick. I really feel for him. We work very hard to support the students here socially and the testing goes against everything we work towards for the rest of the year.

In the middle phase in School 4, the Principals/Key Teachers complained that the way the system recognised Indigenous ESL learners, prevented urban students from accessing funding, even though they had researched their context and had information which challenged the systemic position. Indigenous teachers had received training in ESL methodologies for the first time. Successful, experienced non-Indigenous teachers related that they were not sure that they were “doing” ESL but thought that teachers had to take individual responsibility for teaching rather than expecting children to “catch” learning.

The later phase

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

We have continued with our curriculum focus and we have been involved in moderation of tasks across the State. We were reasonably happy with our students' performance in the moderation. However, one task in Grade 3 requires the students to negotiate the

format of a presentation. Our students decided they would do their presentation to parents at an open day at school. The moderators decided that our student performance was adequate, in fact better than adequate, but the standard they showed us for a “top” performance was a group of Grade 3 students who presented their task like the television program “Sixty Minutes” a kind of popular documentary format. I have a couple of issues with that. First, I think it is most unlikely that Grade 3s anywhere would negotiate this sort of format unprompted by their teachers and second, if that kind of format is privileged in the moderation process, our students don’t have a chance. I am pretty certain most of our Grade 3s would not have seen that sort of program. That is just another example of how mainstream students’ experiences are systemically valued over any other kinds of experiences. I know that was not the intent of the new curriculum framework. The problem seems to be that the implementation team have little, if any, experience or knowledge of the skills and knowledges our students bring with them to school so they are not recognised. It seems very unfair that our children get disadvantaged in the State-wide literacy and numeracy tests and in the curriculum moderation. We make sure we have someone on the Teacher Advisory Panel each year but it is a waste of time because they never seem to consider the feedback we provide.

The School 4 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data in 2003, presented in Figure 50, shows Reading and Writing scores below Like School and State benchmarks.

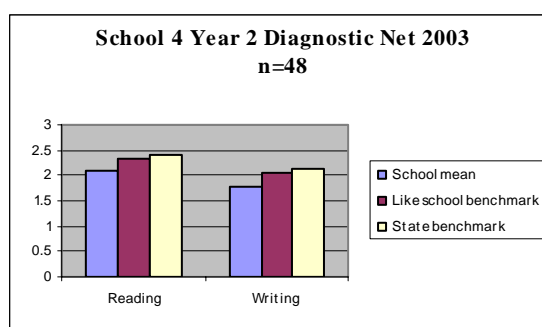


Figure 50. School 4 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data 2003.

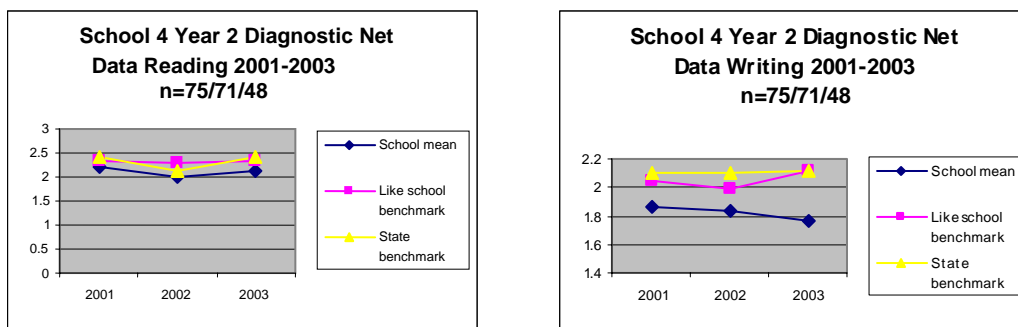


Figure 51. School 4 Year 2 Diagnostic Net data changes 2001-2003.

Figure 51 shows that the Year 2 Diagnostic Net data in Reading between 2001 and 2003 has mirrored closely Like School and State benchmarks. The fall in actual student numbers in 2003 has not affected Reading score patterns. Writing scores have declined over this period in both actual and comparative terms.

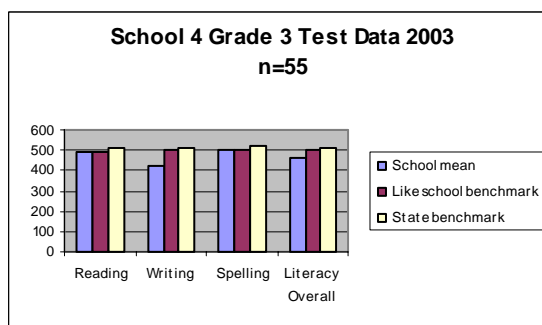


Figure 52. School 4 Grade 3 test data 2003.

The Grade 3 test data in 2003, presented in Figure 52 show that School 4 scores meet the Like School benchmark in Reading and Spelling and are just below the State benchmark in these strands. Figure 53 shows that School 4 Grade 3 Reading and Spelling scores have fallen in actual and comparative terms between 2001 and 2003. Writing scores, however, have improved and are at Like School and State benchmark levels. The gap in Literacy Overall scores has narrowed between 2001 and 2003 but this masks the fall in Reading and Spelling scores.

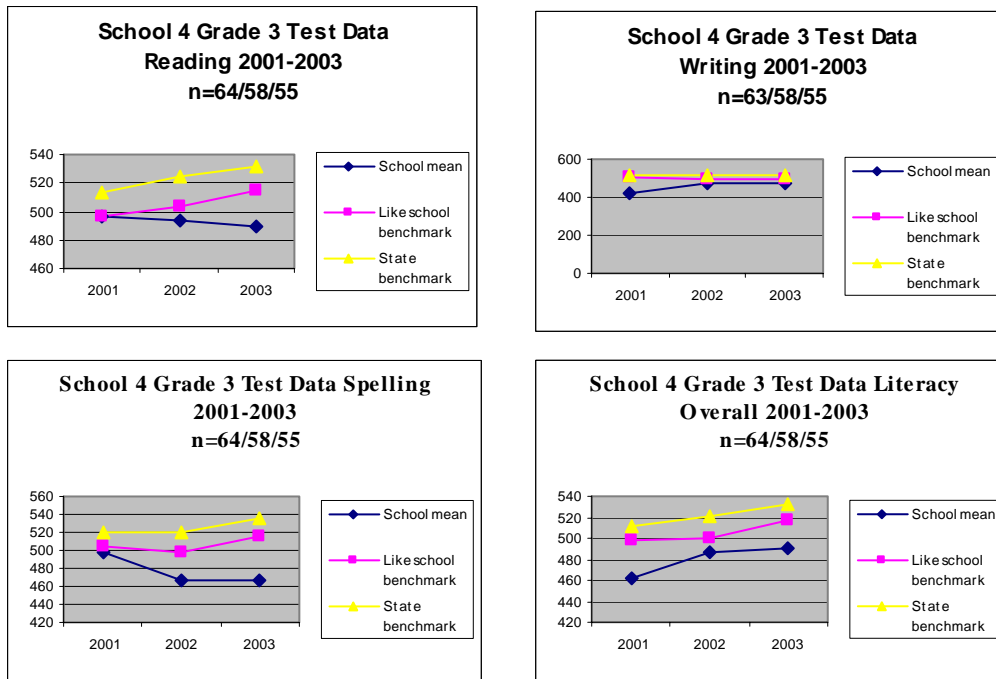


Figure 53. School 4 Grade 3 test data changes 2001-2003.

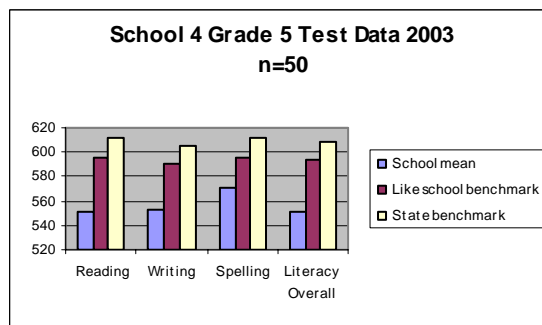


Figure 54. School 4 Grade 5 test data 2003.

School 4 grade 5 test data presented in Figure 54 in 2003 shows scores significantly below Like School and State benchmarks in all strands of Literacy. Figure 55 shows there has been a steady decline in Grade 5 Reading scores between 2001 and 2003. In 2002, there was a significant fall in scores across all strands. However, in 2003 there was improvement in all strands except Reading.

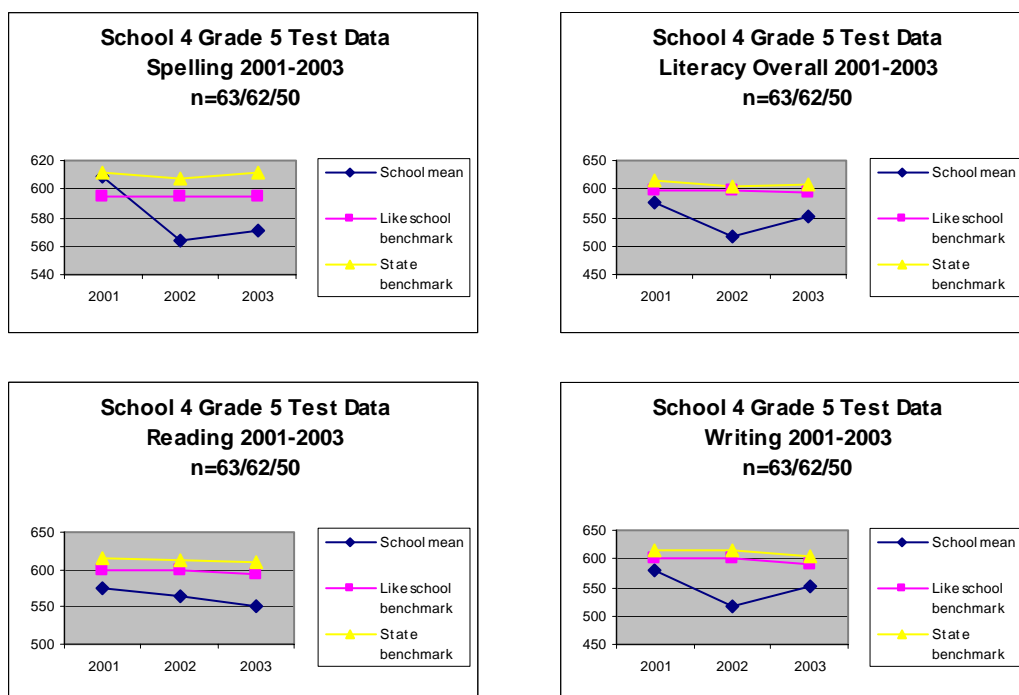


Figure 55. School 4 Grade 5 test data changes 2001-2003.

Principal/Key Teacher composite voice

The deployment of our experienced ESL teacher in the early grades has been quite successful, although this is not really reflected in the State testing data. More teachers have more understanding of the methodologies but I am going to have to put her back on class because of resourcing issues.

* * *

We can still trace success in the school to individual teachers and that gets lost in the aggregated data. If we could just clone the good teachers we would be all right! We have some young teachers who have really come on board with what we are trying to do and, increasingly, we are getting pre-service teachers who want to do their professional experience here. We don't have a huge teacher turnover and it really helps that there is so much experience that stays here.

* * *

It is very difficult for us to do whole school professional development. This year we tried to release half the staff at a time to do the Walking Talking Texts professional development because we really want that embedded in practice, especially in the upper school. It is difficult and expensive to get supply teachers in any numbers and, the children don't take very well to the disruption so I don't think we'll be able to do it

again in a hurry. Just how do you do whole school professional development in a school like ours? It would be so beneficial if the University did this for our new teachers at least. If Education Queensland is serious about Partners for Success it should be putting pressure on the Universities, especially locally, to have the skills and knowledges required in our contexts as compulsory in all programs. The system can't expect us to produce improvements unless they support us in this way.

* * *

We have always focussed on oral language in this school but we need to focus on reading and writing if we want to improve our test data. The monitoring of oral language is really difficult because it is time consuming and you need to transcribe it and analyse it. Early childhood teachers are often more aware about the importance of oral language than teachers in the upper school. Teachers don't want to do this because it takes too long and they are not always sure how to use the information they collect. We have so many mandated things that take time, oral language is often a casualty.

Non-Indigenous Teacher composite voice

We have been working on our curriculum framework and that has meant there has been less emphasis on the State-wide testing and more on the moderation of our curriculum tasks. I have enjoyed being part of a whole State initiative and we have had professional development support from the team in Brisbane. We are so tired as a staff, though. When we saw the results of the literacy and numeracy tests this year, some of us just felt like giving up. We are working harder and harder and it seems like we are getting nowhere.

* * *

I think I have been able to really implement the ESL methodologies this year. My teaching partner is an ESL teacher and I have learnt so much from her. We work really well as a team. Our class had good results in the testing. Our school's overall results weren't so good and that gives the impression that the school is not a "good" school. I think it is a good school and we do a really good job generally, especially considering the level of social support many of our children need. That never gets tested and measured State-wide.

* * *

I get really frustrated with the system. I teach children to read. I don't expect them to catch it like the measles. The students in my class had the best results in the Grade this year again. Whatever happened to the Inspectorate? It shouldn't be possible for children not to be taught properly. I think this State-wide testing is ridiculous because there is no accountability around teaching. It's no wonder the results are so bad for some children. They are not taught.

Indigenous Teacher composite voice

I came to the school this year from a remote context and I have put my own children into this school. I have done work around the State and this is the only school I have been in where I can see that my children, their culture and their language are valued. When you walk into the office, there is someone who speaks their language and helps parents with enrolment. There is a big language tree in the office with all the staff on it, showing which languages they speak. Every time you go into the office reception area you see children pointing to it and talking about it. The State tests are not the only measure of success of a school or even the most important measure as far as I am concerned. The School Opinion Surveys for this school are good, despite the State-wide results. As a parent, I am happy with the education provided here. I know the results will never be the same as in a more mainstream school and it is unfair to make that comparison because mainstream children are going to improve in their literacy and numeracy too. Our children will not catch up, at least not in Primary School if they don't speak English as a first language.

* * *

We have been using Walking Talking Texts and FELIKS in our class and our children did not do too badly on the tests. Some [non-Indigenous] teachers don't want to use these things but their results are worse than ours. I think they should be made to use those programs because we know they work. The teachers in the upper school don't really want to do it. If they don't use them, they should go to another school or leave teaching. Our kids should not be with teachers like that. Their education is too important. If Education Queensland was really serious about improving Indigenous student outcomes, they'd say these are the things you have to do if you are teaching Indigenous students. The Unis should say that too.

Summary School 4

School 4 is a big school with a large percentage of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander and Cook Islander students in an urban context. The Principals/Key Teachers expressed disappointment that Indigenous students were not included in the State ESL database and regarded this as a political ploy: “It’s clever really. They [the State and federal governments] are not quantifying the issue because that would mean they would have to deal with it.” Advocates for Indigenous ESL students had no voice or forum to share their concerns and were not heeded on teacher advisory panels for the testing. Staff disliked the Like School category because the particular context of the school was unlike most urban schools and the Like School benchmark for them was very close to the State benchmark.

All staff thought the tests were unfair and demoralising and did not reflect student knowledge or the progress many children had made. Indigenous teachers stated that the tests “don’t recognise that different kids learn language in different ways and for some it takes longer than others” and that students “are not dumb but these tests make them look dumb.” Teachers believed that continual comparisons with mainstream students in the State-wide data were inequitable because closing the gap between the two groups would mean that mainstream students would have to remain static in their literacy and numeracy performance. Teachers expressed concern about how the testing impacted on relationships with students, citing behavioural social problems that were provoked by the testing. School curriculum tasks had been graded in a State-wide moderation process but, again, teachers regarded this as “just another example of how mainstream students’ experiences are systemically valued over any other kinds of experiences.”

ESL methodologies had been implemented and the school had a focus on oral language. Principals/Key Teachers identified a number of challenges related to these foci. There were few skilled ESL teachers in the school and data showed that students who had ESL skilled teachers generally performed better in both the State-wide testing and in curriculum tasks: “It is a real challenge trying to skill staff when they are in your school.” Skilled staff were deployed to support others in ESL methodologies but this support was vulnerable to changes in resourcing. Some Indigenous teachers had received training as *FELIKS* or *Walking Talking Texts* trainers in the RATEP upgrade program. Previously, “the ‘experts’ were always the non-Indigenous teachers.” Staff expressed that if Education Queensland were serious about improving Indigenous student outcomes, pressure would be put on the universities to include ESL methodologies in their programs. The difficulties of providing whole school professional development for staff during regular working hours were foregrounded by the Principals/Key Teachers.

The school had been focussing on a new curriculum framework over the period of the study. The Principals/Key Teachers recognised that this had, not only “been very tiring for many teachers. In some cases I think the teachers have taken their eye off the literacy ball because they have been working so hard in other areas” but also presented some difficulties for teachers in making links between the curriculum tasks and the ESL methodologies. The emphasis on oral language in the school caused the Principals/Key Teachers to question their focus and wonder whether they should be concentrating more on the reading and writing skills measured in the State testing program. Furthermore, it was recognised that collection of oral language data was time consuming,

supplementary to mandated systemic data collection and difficult for teachers to analyse.

Indigenous teachers believed that there should be some mandated practices in the teaching of Indigenous ESL learners. An experienced non-Indigenous teacher, who consistently had good results in all tests, emphasised it was the responsibility of the teacher to *teach* and queried why schools were no longer inspected for quality of teaching. The teacher also pointed out that State-wide testing data provided no accountability for the quality of teaching of students.

Principals/Key Teachers saw significant inequity in the allocation of supplementary resources to schools with large numbers of Indigenous students. School 4 had collected data which proved that the majority of Indigenous students were not English-speaking in the community, despite the school's urban location. Nevertheless, the system did not recognise these students as second language learners and there was no forum to present that information or advocate on the students' behalf. I provided further information regarding the apparent ad hoc allocation of the ESL ILSS funding which confirmed this perception.

The school had generally positive School Opinion Surveys and an Indigenous teacher, who was also a parent in the school, commended the way the school demonstrably valued Indigenous culture and language and recognised that "The State tests are not the only measure of success of a school or even the most important measure as far as I am concerned."

6.4 Summary of fieldwork across the four focus schools

All four schools regarded the State-wide testing program as “unfair” and a “counterproductive discourse”. Yet, all schools could see general linkages between good teaching and better student performance on the tests. All schools used internal monitoring mechanisms to inform resource allocation and professional development priorities. The schools did not see the State-wide tests as either essential or diagnostic, preferring to use internal longitudinal data. In all schools the testing process itself was seen to be counterproductive to positive relationships with students, parents and communities and there had been focussed efforts to counteract the negative impact of the testing program. Schools queried the validity of the data by citing the way students completed the questions, pressures on teachers in State moderation processes, anomalies in reporting the results and contradictions in the system processes. All schools found the Like School category in the data reports unsatisfactory and frustrating both because it generated unhelpful comparisons and because it risked setting two different sets of standards and expectations for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Aggregated school data often masked excellent progress by students. The persistence of large numbers of Indigenous students “down there” in the bottom 15 per cent in literacy across the State risked reinforcing their already deficit position. Although all schools recognised the importance of oral language in the development of student literacy in English they were swayed in their commitment by the test emphasis on reading and writing as the only systemic criteria for success and the difficulty in collecting oral language data in addition to mandated mainstream data related to reading and writing.

At three sites, the allocative model for supplementary funding to schools with significant numbers of students was criticised as core positions focussed on teaching

and learning were left vulnerable to the vagaries of supplementary budget allocations. At the fourth site, the allocative model advantaged the school, but the school had difficulty in employing and retaining appropriately skilled staff to support teachers.

In all schools, good student performance on the State-wide tests could be traced to staff with specific expertise in ESL teaching and the teaching of reading but student gains in the tests were not maintained when the level of skill of a student's subsequent teacher was lower or when teachers did not focus on explicit teaching of language and reading. Principals/Key Teachers in all expressed the challenge in trying to in-service teachers "on the job" and expressed frustration that pre-service teacher education programs failed to provide essential skills in their core programs. Where teachers already had ESL or reading skills, they frequently were overstretched in terms of their workload and sometimes resented by colleagues for their knowledge.

The preferred methodologies that worked in all schools were *FELIKS* (Hudson, 1992) and *Walking Talking Texts* (NTBS, 1994) and all sites focussed on resourcing and organising for optimum teaching and learning experiences using school-based data to inform particular teaching and support combinations that had proven effective over time. Teachers who had participated in the RATEP upgrade program began to assume ESL support roles and were vocal in their support for effective ESL methodologies. Some teachers struggled with teaching of reading and English and with making the links between ESL methodologies and the curriculum. Indigenous teachers and some non-Indigenous teachers stated the need for systemic standards around *teaching*.

hiChapter 7

The point to the story: a polyphonic interpretation of experience

Because every narrative . . . is open to interpretation, we are speaking here of efforts to establish a dialogue of interpretations of narratives where recognition of the diversity of subjects is established as a priority. (Leonard, 1997, p.164)

7.1 Introduction

This study, told as a multi-voiced collective story, describes and explains “the complex reality (or realities)” (Parlett & Hamilton, 1972, p.30) of the implementation processes of Indigenous literacy policies in Queensland and whether the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy made a difference to the participants in the inquiry. In this chapter, I move beyond the inductive themes presented through participants’ collective and individual voices in Chapters Four, Five and Six. In consideration for the reader, the key elements are summarised in Tables 12, 13 and 14. The story we narrate provides polyphonic interpretations of how and why the policy implementation evolved in the way it did and the structures and processes that facilitated or impeded improved literacy outcomes for Indigenous second language learners.

Table 15.

Table of Intended Key Actions of the Partners for Success Literacy Policy and Their Effects on Participants from Chapter Four

Intended Key Actions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide cohesive response • Develop processes to track literacy development • Incorporation of strategies for Indigenous students in mainstream initiatives • Assessment of Indigenous students as ESL learners • Provision of ESL support • Use of Home Language to support learning of English • Use of bilingual education where supported by communities • Use of ESL pedagogy • PD support • High levels of proficiency in English 	
Effects on focus schools	<p>Fragmented response: <i>an ad hoc way of dealing with things</i> [p.101]</p> <p>Systemic restructuring and abolition of roles: <i>We have really lost the plot</i> [p.126]</p> <p>Systemic decision-making not seen as transparent or misunderstood [p.139]</p> <p>Lack of availability of appropriately-trained teachers [p.103]</p> <p>Indigenous ESL Bandscales not mandated and Professional Development package not funded [p.124]</p> <p>Students only assessed through mainstream tools [p.118]</p> <p>Schools applied to be LDCs to influence <i>from the inside</i> [p.110] to counter marginalisation</p> <p>Black money criteria excluded some schools [p.110]</p> <p>Initiatives vulnerable to variations in supplementary funding [p.129]</p> <p>Availability of appropriately-skilled teachers [p.139]</p> <p>Schools unable to adequately resource support [p.139]</p> <p>ESL subjugated to <i>bigger and better</i> [p.110] mainstream literacy initiatives</p> <p><i>You can only influence from the inside</i> [p.110]</p> <p>ESL seen as <i>marinade</i> [p.123] or deficit [p.106]</p>
Effects on teachers	<p>No pre-service preparation <i>the universities need to be doing a better job</i> [p.130]</p> <p>Additional nature of ESL pedagogy and assessment: <i>We just don't have time to get through all the things we have to, let alone all this other stuff.</i> [p.140]</p> <p>Lack of systemic preparation and support: <i>We need a lot of support in our work the progress we are making counts for nothing</i> [p.126]</p> <p>Agenda dominated by <i>literacy</i> [p.110]</p> <p>Perceived lack of systemic commitment [p.154]</p>
Effects on Indigenous Teachers	<p>Aboriginal Englishes and Creoles were a deliberate strategy to: <i>keep us in our place</i> [p.106]</p> <p>Aboriginal languages and Creoles are <i>rubbish languages</i> [p.106]</p> <p>No targeted professional development: <i>we are told our English isn't good enough but we haven't been taught proper English</i> [p.106]</p>
Effects on students, parents, communities	<p>Students are invisible [p.125] and not counted in State-wide database</p> <p>Community consultations ignored [p.137]</p> <p>Community role seen as impediment to improved outcomes: <i>Community engagement . . . can be a distraction</i> [p.130]</p>

Table 16.

Table of Inductive Themes from Professional Development Strategies to support the Partners for Success Literacy Policy from Chapter Five

Themes	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No existing Professional Development program • Under-resourcing and marginalisation of the initiative • Lack of pre-service preparation • Motivation to engage with professional development • High turnover of staff • Professional Development needs/models • Competing for the business of professional development • (Mis)understandings of literacy and language • Lack of linkage between literacy and language initiatives 	
Effects on focus schools	<p>Subjugation of ESL by mainstream initiatives. Senior officers seeing the issue as literacy rather than language [p.154]</p> <p>Difficulty of training staff in situ: <i>We have such big staff turnover that we never seem to get ahead</i> [p.148]</p> <p>Lack of time and resources to skill teachers in schools [p.149]</p> <p>Universities should provide better pre-service programs [p.150]</p> <p>Allocative funding models militate against improved outcomes [p.181]</p> <p>Marketisation of internal professional development: <i>I think this goes against the values of public education</i> [p.160]</p> <p>Wanted face-to-face professional development from <i>outsiders</i> [p.149]</p> <p>Initially resisted credentialing of professional development [p.158]</p> <p>Strategies and partnerships working despite Central Office [p.184]</p> <p><i>It has been uplifting having people from other schools visit us</i> [p.185]</p>
Effects on teachers	<p>Difficulty of engaging in professional development in situ: <i>We can't possibly train on the job</i> [p.148]</p> <p>Lack of understanding of difference and linkages between language and literacy [p.171]</p> <p>Where to start with the training: <i>There is no baseline of knowledge</i> [p.164]</p> <p>ESL pedagogy as <i>additional</i> to core business [p.170]</p> <p>Expectation that Professional Development would occur in teachers' own time [p.167]</p>
Effects on Indigenous Teachers	<p>Wanted someone on staff who was accessible all the time [p.148]</p> <p>Wanted credentialing of professional development: <i>I would really like the opportunity to get some qualifications in ESL . . . if we had the qualifications, they wouldn't be able to put white people ahead of us for those positions</i> [p.160]</p> <p>ESL as deficit: <i>Second language is second rate</i> [p.153]</p> <p>RATEP upgrade program focussed on Indigenous staff: <i>This is exactly what Partners for Success was meant to be about</i> [p.175]</p> <p>Some non-Indigenous teachers' and Principals' attitudes: <i>I was really afraid to give a workshop to our staff because I knew that the Principal and the other staff didn't really think we had the knowledge to be able to do it</i> [p.180] but they did it and did it well</p>
Effects on students, parents, communities	<p>Indigenous teachers <i>have been crucial in carrying key messages into the community about literacy and language and why we do the things we do</i> [p.188]</p> <p><i>The community trusts the Indigenous teachers</i> [p.188]</p> <p><i>We have noticed parents asking many more questions</i> [p.190]</p>

Table 17.

Table of Intended Benefits of the National Testing Program in Literacy and Effects on the Four Focus Schools, Students, Parents and Communities from Chapter Six

<p>Intended benefits of National testing program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationally comparable reporting and accountability • Focus on outcomes rather than the strategies and processes of education providers • National benchmark standards in minimum “essential” literacy • Provide a means for parents and community to monitor school and teacher performance 	
Effects on Queensland	<p>Initially positioned ESL as a disability [p.201]</p> <p>Primacy of national data over local responses [p.253]</p> <p>Deflected attention away from more appropriate assessment and monitoring practices [p.224]</p> <p>Definitions of literacy conflicted with mainstream and Indigenous literacy policy [p.251]</p>
Effects on schools and teachers	<p>One standard for all identified [p.227] which was seen as positive [p.227] and negative [p.232]</p> <p>Clear focus on literacy [p.210]</p> <p>Supplementary funding allocative model unfair [p.208; p.248]</p> <p>Positioned schools and teachers as failing or inadequate [p.235]</p> <p>Damaged relationships with students: <i>demoralising</i> [p.259]</p> <p>Teachers: <i>felt like giving up</i> [p.271]</p> <p>Did not provide useful data [p.233]</p> <p>Marginalised teacher concerns [p.208]</p> <p>Test items biased towards urban English-speaking students [p.214]</p> <p>Way testing data recorded and reported reinforced perception of failure [p.231]</p> <p>Left educators in a policy/praxis limbo [p.246]</p> <p>Schools and teachers judged against standards could not meet [p.231]</p> <p>Highlighted lack of pre-service teacher preparation in the teaching of reading [p.215]</p>
Effects on students	<p>Provoked angry responses [p.240]</p> <p>Students: <i>colour in any answer randomly</i> [p.233] on test items</p> <p>Positioned students as failures [p.240]</p> <p>No recognition of ESL status [p.226]</p>
Effects on parents and communities	<p>Positioned schools and teachers as failures: <i>They can see their kids are right down there</i> [p.259]</p> <p>No choice in the educational market [p.206]</p>

I now seek deeper meanings and explicate the major findings of the inquiry, addressing the *why* of the research experience from multiple perspectives using four interpretive frames. These frames uncover a complex web of relationships and connections “which works with and through difference, which is able to build those forms of solidarity and identification which make common struggle and resistance possible but without suppressing the real heterogeneity of interests and identities” (Hall, 1995, p.28). In so doing, I endeavour to situate participants’ accounts, including my own, “within a larger historical, political, economic and symbolic context” (van Maanen, 1995, p. 9) and reveal the social relationships which determine the actions, and voices, of the actors (Angus, 1986).

Thus, I draw on Gewirtz’s (1998) notion of relational justice to explain how and which participant voices were heard, silenced or marginalised in the study and to “theorize about issues of power and how we treat each other, both in the sense of micro face-to-face interactions and in the sense of macro social and economic relations which are mediated by institutions such as the state and the market” (p. 471). I use Gewirtz’s (2001) framework of questions for a social justice agenda for education policy sociology. I take up her invitation to explore whether this framework asks the “right questions in the right way” (p.63). Throughout the chapter, I draw on the academic literature reviewed in Chapter Two to explore resonance and dissonance with other contexts and theories and I also refer to the dialogue generated by the fieldwork itself to explain the relationships, connections and themes revealed through this process. Finally, I theorise these interactions using notions of literacy (Education Queensland, 2000b; Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996; Green, Hodgins &

Luke, 1997; Lankshear, 1998; Lankshear et al., 1997; Lo Bianco & Freebody, 1997; Luke, 1995) and language (Bakhtin, 1981; Ferguson, 1959; Wardhaugh, 1998; Wells, 1999).

7.2 Gewirtz's (2001) framework for educational researchers

Introduction

I begin by employing Gewirtz's (1998) notion of relational justice and framework of questions for educational policy researchers as lenses through which I seek to explain the "nature and ordering" (p.471) of social relationships in the study; the *how* and *why* of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy implementation processes and their effects on the participants in the study. Gewirtz (2001) defines social justice as "freedom from oppressive relations" (p.59) and uses five "faces of oppression" (exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence) to invite educational researchers to examine

How, to what extent and why do education policies support, interrupt or subvert:

1. exploitative relationships [including racism] . . . within and beyond educational institutions?
2. processes of marginalization and inclusion within and beyond the education system?
3. the promotion of relationships based on recognition, respect, care and mutuality or produce powerlessness (for education workers and students)?
4. violent practices within and beyond the education system?
5. practices of cultural imperialism within and beyond the education system? (p.63)

As these faces of oppression are themselves multidimensional, some of the relationships in this study permeate multiple areas of oppression. Nevertheless, I take up

each of the questions in Gewirtz's framework in turn, to examine how, to what extent and why did Indigenous literacy policies, particularly the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy and its implementation processes, support, interrupt or subvert oppressive relationships at macro (systemic) and micro (school, interpersonal and individual) level in this inquiry.

7.21 Exploitative relationships

Exploitative and dominant oppressive relationships were apparent in the study at a macro level, mediated through institutions such as the federal and state governments, at an administrative level through the structures and implementation processes of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) and at a micro level within schools, between teachers, students, parents and communities. The inquiry also reveals subversions and interruptions of these relationships reflecting "the multimediated relations which constitute society" (Harvey, 1993, p.106).

Young (1990) defines exploitation as oppression that occurs "through a steady process of the transfer of the results of labor of one social group to benefit another" (p.28) as distinct from domination which "consists in persons having to perform actions whose rules and goals they have not participated in determining, under institutionalized conditions they have no had a part in deciding" (p.49). She proposes that domination becomes exploitation when people are required to perform actions, in which they have had no part in deciding, that "systematically benefit another without reciprocation" (p.218). I now draw

upon Young's (1990) notions of exploitation, domination and particularly reciprocation and apply them to the various contexts of this inquiry. The first is the national context.

The national context

Literacy for All: the challenge for Australian schools (DEETYA, 1998) and the *Adelaide Declaration* (MCEETYA, 1999b) supported exploitative and dominant relationships both at a macro, or strategic, level and at a micro level in schools, classrooms, between Principals and teachers, between teachers and teachers and between teachers and students. I related in the Literature Review, in Chapter Two, that these policies were born primarily out of perceived crises about literacy standards (Comber, Green, Lingard, & Luke, 1998; Hammond, 1999a, b) and contemporary imperatives to build social and economic capital in an increasingly competitive global marketplace rather than out of an overt commitment to a social justice agenda. Literacy "crises" provided a discursive and ideological rationale for the federal government to control and remediate the situation, thereby privileging the distinct priorities in the national agenda whilst simultaneously shifting the balance of power away from the states. The national literacy education policy priorities signalled in *Literacy for All* and the *Adelaide Declaration* are clearly linked to Australia's competitiveness in a global economy as indicated in Minister Kemp's address:

The Government's main objectives for schooling derive firstly from our desire to see a strengthening of the educational foundations of our democratic society, and secondly from our belief that the quality of our education is the surest guarantee that Australia will meet the challenges of competition in the global economy and provide our citizens with jobs and opportunities in the years ahead. (MCEETYA, 1999a)

Thus, literacy is seen as a means of gaining a competitive edge in a global market.

Markets operate within arenas of social power. This power has to be exercised to sustain the market and the commodity (in this case education) itself. Market advantage is maintained through the institutionalisation of those structures and processes which define the advantage. Connell (1996) cautions that “the commodification of education does not eliminate the social hierarchies that created the problem of social justice in education. Rather, commodification changes the way inequalities are expressed, and eliminates some of the most important strategies for challenging them” (p.8). The role of the MCEETYA taskforces and working parties, until the publication of the review of the 1989 national goals for schooling (MCEETYA, 1998), had been *consultation* around policy, not the identification of goals and targets as it has now become. Hammond (2001) argues, echoing Connell’s (1996) concerns, that this changed role reflects significant shifts in the federal government’s “patterns and mechanisms for consultation” (Hammond, 2001, p.169). The consultation in this instance was, in effect, persuasive endorsement of the national goals and benchmark testing agenda and federal funding to the states was contingent on this endorsement. The states were left with little independence or authority under the new arrangements.

Hence the states were coerced into the national benchmarking enterprise and pressured to take on the sayings, doings and believings (Gee, 1996) of the national priorities. It appeared that regimes of truth, regarding the federal government’s purposes of schooling, constructions of literacy and constructions of what constituted success or failure, were not available for critique or debate within their own processes. None of the concerns

about the importance of language in Indigenous student literacy performance articulated in the consultation processes was evident in the final policies (*Australia's Language: Australian Languages and Literacy Policy*, DEET, 1991; *National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy 1996-2002*, DEST, 2000; *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*, DEET, 1994). Herbert (1995) posits “if groups are deliberately or unconsciously left out, for example, overlooking the specific needs of indigenous students in developing curriculum [in this case, policy] it is racism by omission” (p.7).

Minister Kemp's (1999) address states that the revised national goals are designed to increase “public confidence in school education through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students' levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated” (p.2). This provides further testimony to the federal government's discourse primarily around accountability and return for investment rather than equity. The assumption seemed to be that the standards themselves would result in improvement and the national testing program was designed to monitor them and the states' efficiency in reaching them. This inquiry shows that the national standards had primacy in all issues of monitoring and measurement in Queensland to the extent that they ultimately extinguished the counter-hegemonic intent of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy and endorsed the very assessment practices that it had been created to address.

Whilst approval of the national goals resulted in financial reciprocation to the states, the dominance of the federal agenda was exploitative in that the States lost their flexibility to allocate and prioritise funding to local needs and were required to work towards and comply with the national priorities *in addition to* local imperatives. In Queensland, the effects of this exploitative relationship resonated through the implementation processes of both *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) and *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) literacy policies and reached all the way to the students themselves, supporting Davison and Williams' (1999) assertion that "System level processes set the structure and direction of educational interactions between teachers and students all the way down to the classroom" (p.74).

Effects on schools

In terms of McDonnell and Elmore's (1987) four strategies for maximising policy implementation, policy makers "can set rules, they can conditionally transfer money, they can invest in future capacity, and they can grant or withdraw authority to individuals and agencies" (p.140). The federal government set rules through its revised national goals for schooling (DEETYA, 1998) and the attendant testing program. They conditionally transferred money to the states, making funding contingent upon the testing process and essentially withdrew authority away from Queensland to prioritise and resource its own needs. These strategies allowed the federal government more direct influence over literacy education in schools (Hammond, 2001).

At a State level, there was both support for and interruption of the exploitative relationships promoted through the national literacy policies and testing programs. The

State condoned exploitative relationships in that it agreed to the national goals, the attendant targets and testing program. Yet the intent of both *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) and *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) contradicted the national agenda. *Literate Futures* adopted a socio-cultural stance in relation to the literacy “problem”. All the key actions in *Partners for Success* were designed to recognise and “speak” to (and for) educators of Indigenous ESL students. The *Review* (Education Queensland, 2000d) that informed them clearly stood in opposition to universalising discourses and recognised the existing policy silences:

There is little recognition in policy that students who are Aboriginal English and Torres Strait Creole speakers need different educational responses from others Commonwealth and State ESL funding processes do not adequately consider Indigenous ESL issue. The absence of recognition and direction in policy in this area has resulted in the application of a universal approach to literacy and intervention, which is educationally inappropriate for the literacy learning of non-Standard-Australian English speakers. (p.30)

The *Partners for Success* literacy policy directed educators towards ESL pedagogy and more appropriate assessment practices and use of funding allocations. However, it still named the domain as literacy and this nomenclature facilitated the dominance of the national and State mainstream priorities over the needs of Indigenous ESL students.

The lack of linkage between *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) and the Queensland mainstream literacy policy, *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) further undermined the State’s potential to resist some of the exploitative effects of the national agenda. This left teachers of Indigenous ESL students and the *Partners for*

Success literacy policy vulnerable on two fronts: as subservient and running counter to both the national agenda *and* Queensland's mainstream literacy agenda. This vulnerability played out in the under-resourcing and marginalisation of *Partners for Success* initiatives; the lack of allocated budget for professional development in the Indigenous ESL Bandscales; and the ultimate measurement of all its key actions using the very tools that had initially been deemed inappropriate in the policy itself.

The *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) business meetings, and the processes sanctioned and replicated through them, further encouraged and legitimated, albeit unwittingly, exploitative and dominant relationships, mirroring those between the federal and state governments. Exploitative and dominant relationships were reflected in the more powerful participants' refusal to allow the issue of language to be tabled at the first business meeting in 2001; the elimination of ESL issues and any reference to the literacy policy in Education Queensland's response to the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001). This was achieved under the guise of "a robust vehicle that will address the whole-of-government priorities identified the *Meeting Challenges, Making Choices* strategy (MCMC) and *Education and Training Reforms for the Future* (ETRF)" which made no reference to language and tactics such as the closed door "consultation" around the *Partners for Success Action Plan* (Education Queensland, 2003). It was also achieved through the consistent "deafness" to those Indigenous views that conflicted with the predominantly "white men" perspectives that left some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants silenced, powerless and angry. I related in Chapter Four the frustration of one Indigenous participant at these meetings, "Have you noticed that every time we get close to effecting real change, the system creates new systems and processes to make sure

everything remains the same? You always know when you are really hitting the mark. That's when they 'restructure' and sideline those Indigenous people who challenge them" (IA8).

Effects on Educators, students, parents and communities

The ways in which Education Queensland allocated resources were indicative of the exploitative relationships between the State and educators of Indigenous ESL students. In Chapter Four, the Principal/Key Teacher collective voice related that the importance of an initiative could be gauged by the amount of dollars allocated to it. Educators of Indigenous ESL students, including my support role, were systemically under-resourced. This could be seen in the ways "black money" was allocated to and accounted for (or not) in schools, the "disaster" of school-based management (A19) and the under-resourcing of IETA's ESL support provision. It was reflected in the systemic failure to resource or address Indigenous teacher professional development or to include ESL students in the State database "so that they don't have to deal with them" and the excision of the "non-essential" budget for the development of the Indigenous ESL Bandscales professional development package. This monitoring tool had been identified as seminal to equitable assessment in the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy. The failure to mandate the use of the Indigenous ESL Bandscales or to include them in school accountability documents, coupled with the primacy given to the federal testing program data in the eventual *Partners for Success Action Plan* (Education Queensland, 2003) as the only valid measure of Indigenous student literacy achievement, effectively cemented Indigenous ESL students in the lowest levels of literacy achievement in the State. The assessment and accountability priorities of the federal and State governments revealed a failure to focus on "what matters"

(Fullan, 2000, 2003) and conflicted with the teaching and learning realities experienced by educators of Indigenous ESL students. Decision-makers showed no recognition that changing teaching for more effective learning “requires major transformation in the culture of the school, and in the relationship of the school to other agencies—an incredibly complex undertaking” (Fullan, 2000, p.49)—not a simple structural alteration like a testing program. Educators in the four focus schools in this study were required to comply with the mandated national and State priorities *and* attempt to implement the different, confusing and sometimes contradictory key actions in Queensland’s literacy policies (Education Queensland, 2000a, c) leaving them as servants to multiple masters with no reciprocation either financially or professionally in their attempts to implement all the priorities from all of the policies.

The data generated by the State-wide tests were variously described by Minister Kemp (1999) as “valid,” “essential,” “touchstones” upon which parents and communities could judge school and teacher, as well as student performance. In the four focus schools in the study, educators’ work was unreciprocated and exploited in that they were judged according to institutionalised norms and standards that could only place their efforts and performance, and those of their students, as deficient. Teachers of Indigenous ESL students thus became unwilling and sometimes subversive and resistant accomplices in processes that left them vulnerable to negative judgements from the system, parents and students. They spoke of the testing regime as “soul-destroying” and making them feel “demoralised” and “angry”. In the four focus schools, the students were unlikely ever to meet the “standard”, not through poor teaching, but as a result of the inappropriateness of the standards themselves (Alloway & Gilbert, 1998; Davison & Williams, 1999; Education

Queensland, 2000b; Lankshear, 1998; McKay, 1998a, b; Michell, 1999). The systemic importance attributed to the test data was so powerful it caused the Principals/Key Teachers in the focus schools, who had considerable knowledge and experience, to question their own (more effective, because better informed) practices.

The testing program was promoted as a “means by which the community could assess their school’s progress and against the school level targets and also against the national goal” (Kemp, 1999, p.7) normalising the standard set by those in power. I related in Chapter Six that the Principals/Key Teacher composite voice in School 2 noted: “On a number of occasions, our best students, our best readers . . . have come out below the benchmark. Not only that, learning support students have come out over the benchmark by a fluke. This is a real issue for us when we talk to parents”. Teachers in School 2 said “It [the testing] makes us look incompetent or ridiculous.” Teachers were exploited because their work was used for the benefit of national accountability systems without the reciprocal benefit of useful data for their own practice. This echoes both Davison and Williams (1999) argument that “the benchmarks are blunt instruments that cannot give teachers crucial information necessary for developing effective, needs-based programs” (p.19) and the body of literature which questions the validity of any data generated by universal testing instruments (Davison, 1999; Kalantzis & Cope, 1999; Michell, 1999).

In his 1999 address, Minister Kemp stated “Parents supported standardised testing because it provides one means of monitoring school and teacher standards” (n.p.no.). The national goals and testing process were exploitative of parents in this study. “This accountability framework also has implications for how individual schools report to

parents. It is this Government's fundamental conviction that the way to ensure the quality of schooling is not through policing by armies of inspectors but by full and proper reporting to parents" (p.7). Although parents were now endowed with the role of monitoring schools, there was no reciprocation in terms of benefit for students, or parents in this study, as a result of this apparent power of surveillance. The option of choice of schooling articulated by Minister Kemp was not available to most parents of Indigenous students in remote contexts. There was no competitive market. The Principal/Key Teacher composite voice in School 1 related that the school had no curriculum plan when they arrived and that that would not be tolerated in a mainstream school. Market choice is only available to those in a particular location, with sufficient social and financial capital to partake in that market. The federal government's assumptions that market forces and choice result in improved educational outcomes are predicated on the hypothesis that because choices exist, they are accessible to all.

The focus schools tried to minimise the negative effects of the testing program, sifting the data generated to determine strands of literacy performance that could not be attributable to the ESL nature of many students. They also actively worked with Indigenous staff and their communities regarding the testing program to the extent that some communities became quite political in relation to language issues in the schools. School 2 tried to subvert the testing process by exempting a whole cohort of Grade Three students "to make a point" only to discover that this exemption was regarded by the system as failure in any case. The same school also retested students during the Grade 3 trial period, allowing some contextualisation of the tasks, a strategy which produced significantly different results. Unfortunately, again, no systemic attention was paid to their information.

Teachers were conscripted into preparing for and conducting tests which constrained their professional practice. A constant theme in the four focus schools was relief when the testing was over so that teachers could get back to teaching. Students were exploited because only those students who could perform in particular ways were valued in their capacity to contribute to school, system and national market success. All four schools related that the way the test data was reported positioned “remarkable progress as failure” (Davison & Williams, 1999, p.73) leaving both teacher and student efforts unrecognised and their labour unrewarded. Principals/Key Teachers were particularly concerned at the “Like School” comparisons in State-wide testing data and regarded this way of reporting as exploitative of their efforts in that it provided neither recognition nor reciprocal benefit.

Teachers and Principals/Key Teachers in this study regarded the lack of cohesion in State responses to Indigenous ESL student needs and the additional, unreciprocated nature of the work relating to Indigenous students’ literacy improvement as evidence of a lack of commitment on the part of Education Queensland to support its own *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland 2000a) literacy policy. The *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) literacy initiative was much better resourced than *Partners for Success* and had omitted specific reference to Indigenous ESL learners, silencing their needs (and those of their teachers) through the dominant voice of a mainstream literacy policy. Teachers’ efforts in the four focus schools to redress historical injustices and inequities for Indigenous ESL Learners through the use of ESL methodologies and more appropriate monitoring tools, such as the Indigenous ESL Bandscales that were sanctioned through *Partners for Success*, were not supported or reciprocated by their employer. Appropriate

professional development was not adequately resourced and the only defensible standards of success throughout the study remained those set by the federal government.

Education Queensland used my labour, that of the Indigenous Education and Training Alliance staff and teachers of Indigenous ESL students via systemic under-resourcing and marginalisation of the *Partners for Success* strategy and through systemic human resource practices that relied on voluntary or exploitative labour practices. There was no systemic plan to professionally develop teacher skills in a coherent and supported way. In many schools teachers were required to carry out professional development workshops after school hours or at weekends due to the cost and inaccessibility of relief staff. I discovered that my status as a teacher rendered any work I did after designated teacher hours as voluntary. Thus, I did not receive any reciprocation in terms of hours in lieu, increased remuneration or benefits such as Work Cover insurance. There was no insistence upon pre-requisite skills and knowledge in appropriate methodologies for teachers of Indigenous ESL students. No university in Queensland included these skills as core elements in teacher preparation courses nor did the system have any planned, recognised professional development to support practising teachers. The systemic assumption was that schools would assume (unsupported) on-site professional development roles and teachers would acquire new skills, if at all, in their own (unremunerated) time.

University pre-service teacher preparation programs were exploitative of teachers. The teacher collective voices in the study related that they were poorly prepared for the contexts in which they found themselves, in the teaching of reading and in ESL pedagogy.

Thus, their efforts (and investment) in their studies were unreciprocated. A consistent theme in the fieldwork was the lack of systemic pre-service preparation which pressured schools into in-servicing new teachers in situ, only to lose them in the two-year turnover process to “down South”. As an illustration of rapid turnover, Figure 56 shows the average duration of school Principals in one remote Queensland district over a twenty-year period.

Yet, all the schools identified that, where teachers had appropriate skills, Indigenous student literacy outcomes improved, even using the blunt measurement tools deemed inappropriate. However, the critical mass of teachers without skills in ESL pedagogy encouraged the exploitation of those who had because skilled teachers had to train others in addition to their own work with little, if any, reciprocation in terms of systemic recognition, financial rewards or positive professional relationships with colleagues. Teachers in the focus schools resisted this exploitation. They related that they would not “carry” unskilled staff in addition to their own loads and Principals tried to protect them by encouraging outsiders to give professional development in their schools.

A theme across all schools in the study was the variability of the quality of teaching and its impact on student outcomes. The four focus schools could correlate good student performance (even using inappropriate measurement tools) with particular teachers. A non-Indigenous teacher in School 4 commented “I get really frustrated with the system, I *teach* children to read. I don’t expect them to catch it like the measles It shouldn’t be possible for children not to be taught properly. I think this State-wide testing is ridiculous because there is no accountability around *teaching*.”

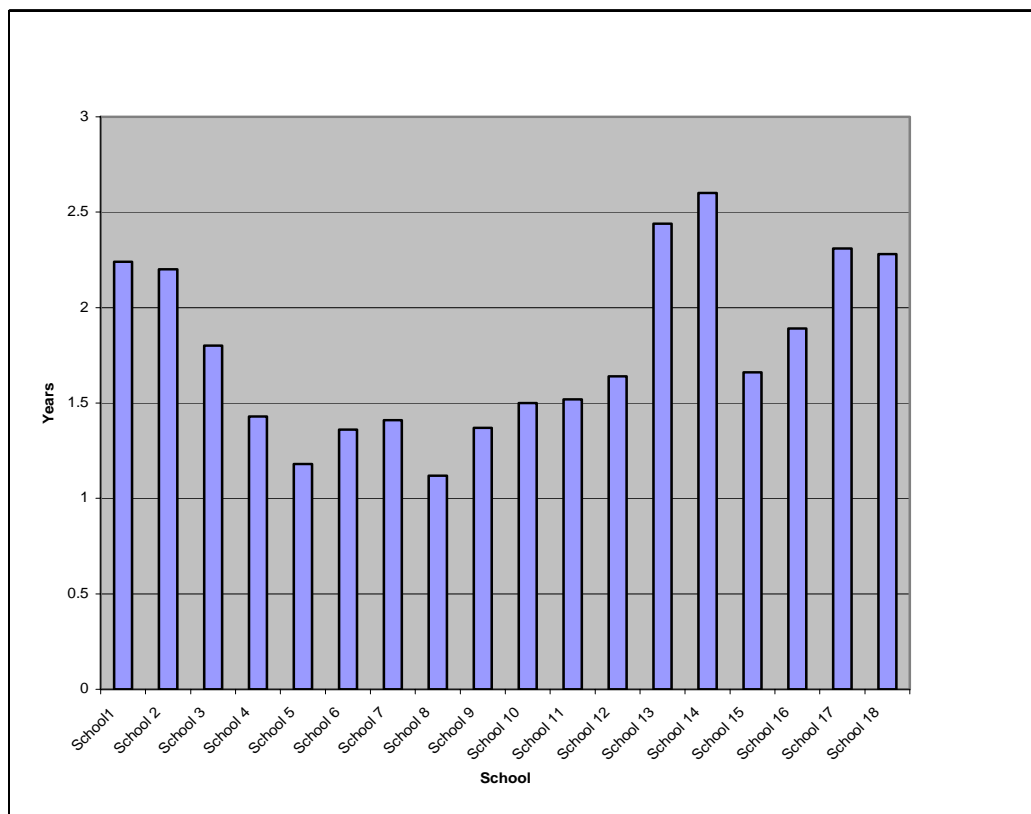


Figure 56. Average duration of Principals in one remote Education Queensland district 1983-2003.

Effects on Indigenous teachers

Indigenous teachers experienced exploitation in additional ways. Having suffered racism by omission in terms of the pre-service institutional failure to provide specific instruction about and in the teaching of English, they were further exploited by the lack of systemic response by Education Queensland to urgent needs that had been highlighted in the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) policy itself. The main focus of the policy's human resourcing initiative became non-Indigenous staff working in remote Indigenous schools, rather than Indigenous staff working in schools in their own communities. Indigenous teachers' second language learning status had not been recognised in their own education, "You know, this is the first time people have even spoken about language as being important. I used to feel so dumb at school, not knowing

why I couldn't understand what was going on" (IT1), nor addressed in pre-service preparation programs. Then this perceived lack was regarded, even in the *Partners for Success* literacy policy, as a contributory factor in Indigenous ESL student poor literacy performance.

7.22 Marginalisation

The national context

Gewirtz (2001) defines marginalisation as exclusion from participation in areas of social co-operation where society's most valued and productive activities occur. The national literacy policies supported processes of marginalisation of Indigenous ESL student needs within and beyond the education system. The *National Literacy and Numeracy Plan*, *Literacy for all: the challenge for Australian schools* (DEETYA, 1998) and the *Adelaide Declaration* (MCEETYA, 1999b) signalled the demise of ESL support and silenced ESL needs under the "superordinate" category of literacy (Lo Bianco, 1999). This silence was legitimised by enforcing of a national assessment of a narrow definition of being literate and ignoring the concerns of Indigenous consultative bodies in policy production. Hence, power stayed with the federal government even though consultative reports and taskforces had consistently highlighted language as a key factor in Indigenous student literacy learning as shown in Chapter Two. The identification of a standard that linguistic minority students cannot reach, certainly not within the four-year time frame identified in the national goals (Collier 1987, 1989; Collier & Thomas, 1988; Rosier & Holm, 1980), that leaves their resources and talents unrecognised, necessarily constructs language minority students as "other". This otherness permeated through Queensland policies, even when their intent was inclusion, all the way to schools. A consistent theme in the four focus

schools in this study was how the testing data did not reflect the abilities and achievements of Indigenous ESL students. However a history of marginalisation and alternative standards and processes for Indigenous students caused some Indigenous participants to express relief that at least one standard for everyone had been articulated, no matter how inappropriate this was.

Effects on schools

One intent of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) was to interrupt and subvert the historical marginalisation of Indigenous ESL students by foregrounding their needs in the literacy policy. However, the policy itself became marginalised and remained on the periphery of Education Queensland's initiatives until it was finally mainstreamed in 2003. Its key actions were never incorporated into school accountability processes in the period of the study. When the policy was eventually included, all its key actions were rendered invisible by the performance indicators (the State-wide testing scores). There was no clear implementation plan from the outset for *Partners for Success* in sharp contrast to the better-resourced *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) literacy initiative. Some Indigenous voices within the *Partners for Success* implementation processes were repeatedly ignored and community consultations were generally viewed in negative terms, with one participant going as far as to say that they were an "impediment" to improved outcomes.

Central Office restructuring in the middle phase of the study further contributed to the marginalisation of Indigenous voices. The restructure signalled the incorporation of the

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Education) branch into other work units under the discursive rationale that “inclusive” education meant needs such as disability, race, gender, Indigenous issues were core business for all sections of Education Queensland and should therefore not be separated out into distinct groups. I related in Chapter Four that a senior Indigenous Administrator at the time commented:

While I would agree that Indigenous issues should be core business for everyone, the reality is that they are not. And whenever the system, which in Indigenous education is really a group of white men, tries to embed them within bigger structures or initiatives, our voices aren’t heard. (IA8)

This participant knew how marginalisation was occurring but was powerless to resist it.

Effects on teachers and students

Principals, teachers and students in the focus schools were marginalised in various arenas. They were marginalised in terms of how the State defined “Indigenous”, “success” and “literacy”. Three of the four schools were not systemically recognised as Indigenous schools in terms of funding allocations. Success was systemically defined only in terms of the State-wide testing data. Yet, participation by the schools in the testing consultation process to advocate for more appropriate and less linguistically and culturally contingent testing items was tokenistic in that it produced no changes or accommodation of the issues teachers raised. The State testing program influenced ways in which students’ capacities and talents were recognised and shaped by schools and guided teachers towards narrow, instrumentalist pedagogical practices which, in and of themselves, marginalise students further (Connell, 1982). I related in Chapter Four that a senior assessment officer had

counselled educators of ESL students to teach to the test, a position reflective of the systemic importance placed on the State-wide data and which risked replication of the very inequalities Education Queensland's policies (2000a, b, c) had been developed to address. Teachers queried centralised decisions wondering if decision-makers had ever "set foot in schools like ours". Indigenous ESL students' needs were marginalised through the dominance of universalising constructions of literacy and the ultimate mainstreaming of the only policy that specifically recognised their needs. The non-Indigenous teachers in School 3 related that the tests measured things the students did not know in ways they could not do. Then judgements were made about the students based on the tests, leaving teachers and the students believing they could not achieve and called it a vicious circle.

In the four focus schools, however, Principals/Key Teachers worked in different, often ingenious, ways to subvert this agenda. Although they recognised that their schools were marginalised through the processes of allocation of black money and through the lack of suitably skilled teachers for their contexts, they actively worked against the marginalisation of Indigenous ESL learners and their teachers. They used ESL-focused methodologies. They talked with their communities about language and issues relating to the testing with the result that some communities became politically active around language issues and advocacy for additional school resourcing. They also used strategies to ensure inclusion in mainstream initiatives so that they could advocate from within systemic structures for their schools. For example, the four focus schools all applied to become Learning Development Centres, using systemic politics to advantage their schools, "they wouldn't *not* have an Indigenous school . . . what would that say?"

Effects on Indigenous teachers

Again, Indigenous teachers experienced additional marginalisation. Although in this study initially, Principals/Key Teachers did not recognise the symbolic and actual value in formal credentialing in ESL for Indigenous teachers, they subsequently supported them in a credentialing process and in assuming school leadership roles in this area. Indigenous teachers regarded their own lack of qualifications in ESL as another way they were marginalised from employment opportunities. Their perception was confirmed in the early phases of the study by the Principal of IETA, who related that “there was not a single qualified Indigenous ESL teacher in Queensland, because we have looked everywhere.”

The lack of accountability for, and focus on, Indigenous teachers in the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) processes contributed to their marginalisation. The systemic human resources initiatives focussed exclusively on non-Indigenous teachers. The RATEP upgrade was initiated by employees at IETA, not through any systemic commitment on Education Queensland’s part. Indigenous teachers felt marginalised through the lack of recognition of their language needs in their own education and then again through the policy focus on them as a group who needed support to contribute to better literacy outcomes for Indigenous students. In School 2, longitudinal internal data showed that perceived lack of Indigenous teacher proficiency in English was not necessarily a contributory factor in student literacy performance. Students consistently performed better in this school when they had Home Language-speaking teachers in combinations with English-speaking teacher aides. Ironically, in some schools the focus on the importance of knowing English highlighted in the policy, was used to further

marginalise Indigenous staff by the *automatic* privileging of non-Indigenous teachers into ESL roles.

7.23 Powerlessness

The national context

Gewirtz (2001) defines power as the ability of people to participate in decisions which affect the conditions of their lives. The national and State literacy policies and their implementation processes supported, interrupted and subverted relationships of powerlessness in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. Consultation processes were denied or ignored in the production of national literacy policy. The states were powerless to resist the national priorities as education funding was contingent upon agreeing with the national goals and targets and the testing processes that would monitor them. Thus, the federal government was able to remove authority from education systems and influence literacy instruction more directly in schools, whilst simultaneously transferring the onus of responsibility for achieving the targets to the states.

Effects on Education Queensland

Education Queensland did, however, have some opportunity through its own policies, systems and processes, to interrupt the more pernicious effects of the national priorities, particularly through the implementation of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) and *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) initiatives. However, this did not occur. Despite an intent of *Partners for Success* to counter historical powerlessness of Indigenous people, Education Queensland used similar methods of coercion and control as the federal government had over the states. *Partners for Success*

implementation processes mirrored the same lack of consultation, the same systemic silencing of language and the same social construction of failure and unitary measurement of success that underpinned the national policies and contributed to the powerlessness of schools to respond more appropriately to the needs of Indigenous ESL students.

The business meetings to drive the implementation of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) also silenced and marginalised the same practitioner, research and Indigenous voices as were silenced in the national agenda. I related in Chapter Four that at the first *Partners for Success* business meeting, we were invited to write papers to inform decisions about language, but these were not allowed to be tabled. The lack of cohesive systemic responses to the issue of all student literacy outcomes in Queensland reinforced the powerlessness of educators who were likely to have the most effect on student outcomes (Cummins, 1986). The final *Partners for Success Action Plan* (Education Queensland, 2003) systemically mainstreamed all Indigenous ESL student indicators of success under the federal literacy performance indicators, leaving teachers of Indigenous ESL students powerless in its wake.

Indigenous Administrators at business meetings were conscious of the power non-Indigenous Administrators were wielding over them but were powerless to resist. The subjugation of diverse needs under the banner of inclusivity, sanctioned under a systemic restructure, echoes Delpit's (1995) comments relating to the African-American context "Those with the power are frequently least aware of—or least willing to acknowledge—its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence" (p.24). Several were also wary of the whole notion of language and "ESLness" highlighted in *Partners for*

Success (Education Queensland, 2000a) and how language had been used to induce powerlessness in the past. They related recent personal experiences that revealed a fear of being duped into an unwitting sanction of being seen as “other” and into more insidious ways of rendering Indigenous students powerless through education. The Principal/Key Teacher composite voice in School 2 expressed relief that one standard for all had been openly and publicly identified, even if it was inappropriate:

I am glad Kemp has eventually identified the standard our students are meant to be achieving at. It doesn't matter how inappropriate the standards are. At least someone has come up with a standard, you know, set the goal posts for everyone—not one set for Indigenous students and one set for everyone else. I believe our children are as good as children anywhere, but there has been a long history of two different standards and two different expectations.

These same participants also vehemently advocated *against* the testing processes, recognising that language background played a key role in students (English) literacy performance.

The *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) business meetings did not allow genuine participation. An Indigenous Administrator mentioned the importance of community engagement seven times in one meeting and was never heard. The dominant group's control over the meeting processes allowed deficit assumptions about communities and students to prevail. Communities were powerless to resist Education Queensland's structures and processes as, even where community consultation had been sought, such as in the *Cape York Justice Study*, (Queensland, 2001), senior (non-Indigenous) officers eliminated community concerns from systemic responses.

Effects on schools

The Principals/Key Teachers in the focus schools were aware of their power to subvert the State and national agendas and change the power relationships within their own schools and they used it for the benefit of their schools when required. I related in Chapter Five that Principals/Key Teachers recognised that being on the inside of more powerful, “bigger and better” initiatives such as the Learning Development Centres was where the systemic support was being targeted and thus where their best chance of accessing support for their schools would lie. They also managed to subvert systemic processes stating: “We just decided to do what we could do in our school and ignore what’s going on in Central Office.”

Effects on teachers, students, parents and communities

Teachers can, and do, exert power over students (Cummins, 1986; Delpit, 1995). Principals/Key Teachers in this study related that teachers of Indigenous ESL students were rendered more powerful or powerless to influence student outcomes depending upon their level of skills and knowledges in the teaching of and about, as well as through, English. Lack of appropriate pre-service preparation for their contexts and systemic under-resourcing of teachers’ professional development needs induced powerlessness. Teachers in the focus schools complained of their powerlessness in the testing program and in their lack of skilling and preparation in key areas to make a difference. Educators were also powerless to resist or contextualise their own or their students’ positioning in the State-wide testing program, as data reporting mechanisms effectively ensured Indigenous ESL students remained in an unchallengeable position at the bottom of the literacy “pile” (O’Donoghue, 1995).

Principals and teachers were powerless in arenas where senior officers controlled structures and processes. In the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) meetings, even when senior officers' stated intention was to go to the "grass roots" of the issues, subjugated voices were not heard and a dominant discourse of measurement and accountability prevailed. In more localised contexts, such as in their schools, Principals/Key Teachers used their power to insist on ESL methodologies, although, since these were not officially sanctioned, teachers who did not want to comply could not be forced to do so. Indigenous teachers, in particular, were made powerless through their invisibility and lack of support through workforce development initiatives and perceived lack of skill in English which was used as a premise by some Principals to marginalise and exclude them from key roles. One Indigenous teacher complained:

Now we [Indigenous teachers] are told our English isn't good enough but we have never been taught proper English or to teach English. Nor have the Southern teachers been taught how to teach English properly and that means our kids aren't being taught properly. If we had been taught English properly we wouldn't have a problem. We have been asking for proper English in our schools for years and we haven't got anywhere. (IT1)

However, I and my colleagues at IETA used the power we had in our roles, citing the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) policy to plan for the RATEP upgrade program which allowed us to keep the boundaries around the initiative intact against the endeavours of non-Indigenous teachers to access training opportunities.

7.24 Violence

The historical context

Gewirtz (2001) defines violence as “the degree that institutions and social practices encourage, tolerate, or enable the perpetration of violence against members of specific groups” (p.62). In terms of this study I propose that this question be reframed to incorporate a notion of systemic violence that is, how systemic institutions, structures and practices support, interrupt or subvert those practices that encourage, tolerate or enable psychological, social or material harm towards individuals or groups. I was struck through the study, when looking at language, and at how Indigenous participants’ experiences with and through language were often related in terms of abuse or violence. In Queensland, in the living memory of many Indigenous participants, there were those who could recall physical punishment inflicted upon themselves or family members for using their Home Language and felt tangible, demonstrable pain when talking of language loss and the forced evolution of English-based creoles. In many respects, the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy revived this pain for them. I related in Chapter Four, how Indigenous teachers regarded the recognition of Creoles and Aboriginal Englishes as a strategy that had been used historically to “keep us in our place.” They also interpreted the recognition and value I, and others as well as the policy were assigning to these new, colonially forced languages as a denial or repetition of history stating: “It’s just a rubbish language. It’s not useful and won’t get the kids anywhere. And it has killed our traditional language” (IT1). Yet the same teachers valued the students’ Home Language in their practice and classrooms, used it as an effective bridge to learning English and advocated for all teachers to use methodologies that recognised Home Language. Indeed, School 2 had

kept longitudinal data for over ten years that supported the use of Home Language-speaking teachers in the early years.

The excision of language from the national agenda and from the Queensland response to the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001) seemed to be synonymous with a wiping out of history, a cultural and linguistic cleansing by those with the power to do so. The reference to language in the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy thus opened up historical wounds. Herbert (1995) in *A framework for addressing issues of gender and violence with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students* refers specifically to language and reminds us that “Teachers should reflect upon possible results when a person

loses their language

is forbidden to speak their language

is not permitted to speak their language

is not permitted to learn their own language

is forced to speak in the language of another culture even when they have never learnt that language properly

will never be able to learn their own language again because there is nobody who speaks it any more?” (p.44)

Language is a repository, a collective record of people’s historical experiences. As such, the issue of language and Indigenous people in Queensland is tied up with the denial of access to society’s material benefits and deprivation for those who do not have access to society’s powerful code. It is implicated in acts of physical violence and related to loss of family, land and culture, of experiences of dispossession, domination and assimilation that

resulted in the kinds of social dislocation that generated the need for reports such as the *Cape York Justice Study* (Queensland, 2001) in the first place.

Effects on schools, teachers, students, parents and communities

Language is the site of contestation of power in society (Foucault, 1984). It was through language that Indigenous participants and their families reported that they had historically experienced racism and discrimination at an individual level. In their view, national policies silenced their history. *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) awakened it and brought positive and negative effects for participants in this study. The negative memories it aroused for Indigenous participants were around histories of substandard educational provision; deliberate strategies on the part of colonisers to keep Indigenous peoples subservient; and the forcible loss of language inflicted primarily through the education system. The testing process, sanctioned through the implementation processes of *Partners for Success*, also had negative effects. It inflicted physical and psychological harm on those involved. The 2001 State-wide testing booklet (QSCC), positioned Indigenous ESL students as “disabled”. The effects of the testing process inflicted harm on the teachers engaged in it and made them angry, upset and undermined relationships with their students. Most significantly, schools related that the testing perpetrated actual acts of violence in the playground between children (School 3), induced illness and stress (School 4) and reinforced negative perceptions of Indigenous people.

The worse thing for me was the friction between different kids—those who had a go and those who were angry they couldn’t. What possible benefit would our school get from this sort of test? It’s really bad for our community. Already there is this poor perception out there. They used to use relocation to our community as a threat

for teachers and principals who didn't do the right thing or upset the Directors.

These tests just paint a really bad picture of what our kids can do and what they are like. (Indigenous Teacher collective voice, School 3)

The positive effect the literacy policy in *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) generated was that it legitimated efforts on the parts of schools to address language as a prime site in the reconciliation process, even in the face of more dominant discourse and systemic coercion.

Certainly, the intent of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) was to interrupt and subvert systemically violent relationships. In recognising language for the first time (contrary to the national agenda) as an arena for racism and exploitation, and the roles that education systems, schools and teachers had had in this, its key actions were focussed on language as a site of reconciliation. The Principals/Key Teachers in School 1 referred to this quite specifically:

Our learning community is mindful that effecting real and meaningful change involves critique, developing and implementing programs which challenge attitude and structures that historically have disempowered Aboriginal and other minority communities and students (Cummins, 1989) Improvement in (English) literacy levels for all students is seminal to reconciliation for these fractured, disparate groups.

Whilst the other focus schools in this study did not refer to language as a site of reconciliation for past wrongs as specifically as School 1, all promoted methodologies that explicitly taught the language of power whilst recognising and valuing students' Home

Languages. Thus, they recognised history, acknowledged the structures and processes that had caused inequity and took measures to address them. School 2 spoke of the “shame” some parents felt when their children spoke Creole but also that parents wanted “children to learn in Creole, to re-establish respect in the community.” The data in the focus schools showed a general pattern of improved outcomes when teachers had the skills and knowledges to implement ESL pedagogy. When teachers did not have this knowledge the converse occurred. In School 1 these explicit methodologies were combined with highly-organised and structured mainstream reading programs and delivered significant gains across all literacy strands in some Grades.

Effects on Indigenous teachers

The recognition of language in the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy also had a negative effect in that it reinforced systemically violent practices. Indigenous teachers from schools other than the focus schools, related that the importance given to English in *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) was used as a pretext by many Principals again to keep Indigenous teachers in their place. Hence, the policy recognised historical violence against Indigenous peoples and then, through its processes, allowed it to be used as a pretext to replicate the practice. In Chapter Five I related that an Indigenous colleague argued:

How long will it be before our people’s skills will be recognised? For me it’s an issue of discrimination. White people come into our communities, get all the professional development on offer—because they are white, speak English and are usually the Principals’ wives—and then take all that knowledge that they have acquired away with them, literally at the expense of our students and use it to

further their own careers. It makes a mockery of the idea of partnerships between schools and communities. (IA39)

Indigenous teachers related that they had never been taught English and the recognition of its role in academic performance “really helped me understand why I had so many problems at school and at Uni” and “I feel angry that we should know all this grammar and we have never been taught it. It stops us from taking on roles in school. The white teachers always have the advantage.” The importance of teaching English in the policy sanctioned the automatic privileging of monolingual (uncredentialed) speakers of English as a first language into ESL leadership roles over multilingual Indigenous teachers. In my work, I attempted to redress some of this systemic violence through the RATEP upgrade program. In so doing, I and my colleagues were subjected to some strong persuasion and, in some cases, thinly-veiled aggression and bullying to allow non-Indigenous teachers to participate in train-the-trainer sessions. Some Principals cited lack confidence and credibility (in English) as reasons for excluding Indigenous staff from the very opportunities which might redress some of the historical inequity. We supported the Indigenous teachers in their first presentations in some schools because they told us their “Principals and the other staff didn’t really think we had the knowledge to be able to do it It’s like we were set up to fail.” I also reported how they grew in confidence and led/contributed to excellent workshops.

7.25 Cultural imperialism

The national context

Gewirtz (2001) takes up Young’s (1990) definition of cultural imperialism as

How the dominant meanings of society render the particular perspective of one's own group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it out as the Other.

Cultural imperialism involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm. (pp.58-59)

The national educational priorities promoted culturally imperialistic practices. *Literacy for All: the challenge for Australian schools* (DEETYA, 1998) promoted a single way to be literate and silenced the issue of language altogether, reflecting experiences for minority learners in other countries. Ngugi (1994) posits that language and literacy are key sites of oppressive relationships, "The speakers of the dominant language decide upon literacy education and their decisions reinforce that dominance" (p.439). In this study, the silencing of language and the normalising of (one variety) of English as the only way not only to be successful, to be literate, but to *be* period, is reflective of the socio-political control of cultural imperialism and how colonisers used language "to become a territory that limits and defines, how they make it a weapon that can shame, humiliate, colonize" (hooks, 1994, p.168). This seeped into the unconsciousness of systems, administrators and some teachers in this study primarily through assessment practices. It silenced any legitimate diversity and operationalised a unitary social construction of literacy, language, success and failure that could only result in worse positioning for Indigenous ESL learners.

The 2001 Queensland testing booklet, for example, firstly did not recognise the ESL status of an entire district of ESL learners at all and then defined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student otherness as a "disability". The State-wide testing officer argued

that: “English is the only thing to measure. It’s the only thing that counts” and the senior Education Queensland assessment officer, whilst acknowledging that it might be a good idea to assess ESL students in their Home Language, decided it was “too difficult” and a more pragmatic solution might be to teach students better test-taking behaviour. A number of teachers in the study related that they had not always been aware of the issue of language in Indigenous student performance. One related: “I taught at this school for twenty years and it was only when [the current Principal] came that it ‘clicked’ that language was an issue and I needed to do things differently.” I related in Chapter Five that many educators at the professional development workshops, even after the program, referred to Indigenous students’ language in deficit ways, unable to take on other ways of seeing and positioning Indigenous students.

Effects on schools, teachers, students, parents and communities

Partners for Success (Education Queensland, 2000a) challenged cultural imperialism through an acknowledgement in its key actions of the damage that colonial practices had inflicted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland. However, participants in the study questioned Education Queensland’s commitment to the policy actions as there were no accountability or monitoring measures in place at the outset and, by the end of this inquiry, the only measure of a successful literate was through the very instruments that the *Review* (Education Queensland, 2000d) had deemed inappropriate in the first place. The practices and discourses of powerful white men at the business meetings controlled any challenges to the existing social order. Strategies, such as community consultations, that were encoded in the policy to redress culturally imperialistic practices were labelled “a distraction instead of enabler of high standards” and powerful

participants believed that “the roles and responsibilities of communities and parents should be built into the accountability frameworks.”

Financial resourcing mechanisms, the way black money was allocated to schools, reinforced the otherness of Indigenous students and legitimated the perception that “It is the mindset of some Principals in schools that we can only use that [black] money to solve Indigenous issues” (A19) and, on the other hand, when black money was cut then the issues could not be addressed. Three of the four focus schools in this study did not fit all the systemic criteria defining an “Indigenous” school and were therefore financially disadvantaged in comparison with others.

There was no coherent human resourcing strategy for Indigenous teachers. Indigenous teachers had been the most disadvantaged of all educators through their pre-service teacher education in that they were ESL learners but had never been taught English or about English. They were also the educators with the strongest vested interest in students’ futures and were more likely to stay longer in the schools than non-Indigenous teachers. Yet all systemic responses were directed at non-Indigenous teachers coming into communities. From the outset, the systemic focus was on the flexible human resource arrangements (for non-Indigenous teachers) in the trial schools. Comments at the business meetings seemed to ignore the existence of Indigenous teachers altogether, “What are we doing to attract good people to come in and work in remote communities?” (A19) In summary, participants in these forums did not see Indigenous teachers as part of the solution and regarded community engagement as an “obstacle”.

The importance attached to proficiency in English highlighted in *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) paradoxically also encouraged culturally imperialistic practices. Effective literacy teaching for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students requires knowledge of students' Home Languages in order that they might be a bridge to learning Standard Australian English (Lo Bianco, 1999). However, Principals in some schools privileged uncredentialed, generally monolingual, white teachers by giving them leadership roles in ESL simply because they were proficient in the dominant language thus replicating the very colonialist practices that created the language problem in the first place. These practices by Principals and Administrators resonate with Nakata's (2001) concerns that "education may well change somewhat to be more sensitive to Indigenous cultures, but its politics of how Indigenous people are positioned vis a vis colonial knowledges and practices remain unchallenged" (p.344).

My colleagues and I at IETA, resisted the culturally imperialistic practices we saw unfolding in schools by privileging Indigenous teachers in accessing train the trainer opportunities and supporting their tertiary study. Participants in the four focus schools also challenged and subverted cultural imperialism in a number of ways. In School 1, the Principal was insistent upon Indigenous presence in the school, not only in terms of people and their roles but also in terms of the iconography around the school. In School 2, the collection of longitudinal data guided them into putting Indigenous Home Language-speaking staff in the early years, countering discourses of universal early intervention (in English) promoted through State and national policies. They spoke openly with their community about language and incorporated reporting about the learning of English into the reports. Parents had asked for Creole to be used in the pre-school as the language of

instruction. In School 3, Indigenous teachers took leadership and training roles in their schools, ran induction programs for new staff and engaged in research with their community about language. Their recent experiences in tertiary study encouraged two to commence higher research degrees. In School 4, they mandated ESL methodologies, employed Home Language-speaking staff to enrol new students and, as with School 1, had significant iconography (a language ‘tree’ in the foyer) that reflected the languages and cultures of the children in the school. Thus, it was possible to interrupt oppressive relationships at a very localised level.

7.3 Interpretations through theories of language and literacy

7.31 A literacy frame

I now seek to offer further explanations of why relationships and the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy implementation evolved in the way they did between and within particular social groups. In so doing, I draw upon two main theories of literacy. Hammond (2001) argues the national priorities articulated in *Literacy for All: the challenge for Australian schools* (DEETYA, 1998) signalled a “recent intense intervention in school literacy education of a particular kind and at a national level” (p.168). The national policies conceptualise literacy as a unitary set of essential skills as reflected in Minister Kemp’s 1999 address “I do not pretend that these processes will provide us with a picture of the total social, intellectual or emotional outcomes of Australia’s schools but they allow us to keep a finger on the pulse of what is *essential*” [italics added] (pp.6-7). A narrow conceptualisation of literacy implies a simplistic linear relationship between the mastery of a defined set of skills and access to a wealth of social benefits. Thus, from this standpoint, literacy generates its own power in any given social

context. An assumption of this reductionist view is that mastery of specific and ideologically neutral skills is all that is required. It follows then, that these specific skills can be identified, measured and compared in mass testing programs.

Conversely, contemporary literacy researchers (Education Queensland, 2000c; Gee, Hull & Lankshear; 1996; Green, Hodgins & Luke, 1997, Lankshear et al., 1997; Luke, 1995) adopt a contradictory, socio-cultural standpoint with regard to literacy. From a socio-cultural perspective, literacy is a social practice. So, literacy is *always* employed within contexts of practice which sanction certain productions of meaning and constrain others. Literacy, or more accurately literacies, from this perspective cannot be assessed through mass testing programs. In this inquiry, tensions and contradictions between national, State and practitioner conceptions of literacy contributed to participants' confusions and interpretations of how to improve Indigenous ESL students' literacy outcomes. The dominance of the national perspective, facilitated by the primacy given to the national testing data, reinforced a reductionist notion of literacy.

The naming of the "problem" in national and State mainstream policy as one of literacy effectively excluded language from consideration within national or local debates about improving Indigenous ESL students' educational outcomes. Lo Bianco (1999) asserts "the naming of the domain [as literacy] strategically distances an indigenous cultural, human rights or linguistic framework from consideration Literacy is not named as *English* but manifestly is only imagined to be possible in English" (p.46). Thus the nomenclature helped facilitate the dominance of the federal reductionist conception of literacy all the way to teachers' practice.

My efforts to resist the dominant discourse met with minimal success. Attempts to foreground the language issue were thwarted in business meetings and, when I tried to insist, I was positioned along with other ESL teachers as “fanatical”. The naming of the issue as literacy also influenced my work in that I named the professional development and support “second language and literacy” in an uncomfortable melange of terms in order to attract systemic and teacher attention to the language issue at all. Although this at least resisted the dominant power position held by literacy, it had little influence on the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) implementation processes as powerful Administrators embraced the national notions of a literacy that could easily be measured and accounted for.

From a reductionist standpoint, if all that is required to be socially successful and economically productive is simply a set of mass-measurable identical skills, then addressing the needs of diverse learners is an uncomplicated task where the locus of responsibility for their achievement can be shifted away from the federal government to the states and directly to classroom teachers. In this context, ESL needs can be, and were subjugated, in terms of national and State recognition, resourcing and school practices. The pervasive dominant discourse of literacy subsumed the issue of language even within the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) policy whose key actions all related to the importance of language. In Chapter Six I explained that, despite the recognition of Indigenous ESL learners in the *Partners for Success* literacy policy, Education Queensland’s failed to incorporate Indigenous ESL students in the State ESL database which prompted the Principals/Key Teachers in School 4 to relate:

I am really disappointed that Indigenous students are still not included on the State ESL database. You do not really have to recognise the language issue as long as you never know what the real picture is. It's clever really. They [the State and federal governments] are not quantifying the issue because that would mean they would have to deal with it.

7. 32 A language frame

Just as reductionist and socio-cultural standpoints about literacy reflect different ideological and epistemological positions, Wells (1999) proposes that there are two different, separate languages for talking about education. These are the distinct and genetically unrelated languages used by policy makers on the one hand and researchers/practitioners on the other. These languages are shaped by two distinct world-views and encapsulate two different notions of the role of language. Wells argues that one language captures the perspectives of educational administration and its role is simply a conduit for communication. This administrative language of education focuses on accountability, measurement and outcomes and resonates with theories of empiricism and reductionist conceptualisations of literacy. It encodes concepts of levels, standards and outcomes where essential literacy can be mass-measured and accounted for. The other language is used by educators and researchers and is the language of educational practice. This language reflects a socio-cultural perspective where language captures thinking mediated by the semiotic medium in which it is realised. In this language, literacy is theoretically complex, embedded in, and a shaper of, power relationships within specific social practices. Thus, the language of educational practice incorporates the discourses of

pedagogy, equity and social justice that are discursively inaccessible or unintelligible to speakers of the first, administrative language.

In linguistic terms, the references to equity and social justice encoded in the policy language of the national policies sit in an uncomfortable epistemological and discursive relationship with the emphasis on standardisation, measurement and outcomes. Wells' (1999) notions of language provide another useful lens to explain the policy, praxis, power and oppressive relationships in this study. They provide a window into the reasons why some participants may have failed to hear particular voices speaking particular languages and why some participants could be "bi-lingual" or "multi-lingual", such as the Principals/Key Teachers in the focus schools, who used their facility in the more powerful administrative language to ensure that they manipulated the systemic processes to their advantage. This linguistic explanation would account for the contradictions and slippages within the policy and Minister Kemp's (1999) address. Kemp argues that the testing program is "inclusive" because all are included (in the measurement and accountability). He proposes that standards are equitable because they are the same "level" for everyone. In trying to "speak" the language of equity and practice, conflicting and incomplete communication occurs. It would explain why the focus in the national policy was primarily on assessment and gave no guidance to educators as to *how* improved outcomes were to occur in practice.

The development of the national policy itself allowed no interpretive space for the language spoken by either Indigenous consultative bodies, researchers or practitioners to be heard. This is evidenced in the changed nature of consultation identified by Hammond

(2001) and whose values were legitimated in the policy itself (Prunty, 1985). This lack of interpretive space allowed mutually unintelligible or confusing discourse to extend all the way to the focus schools, where teachers heard conflicting and contradictory messages (and silences) about literacy and language. The State-wide assessment and testing officers' language encoded the administrative language of assessment and measurement and therefore could not interpret or understand the practitioner voices in the consultations.

Whilst consultative and policy development processes are opportunities for speakers of the different languages to be sympathetic interlocutors, where each might be able to make meaning from the others' language, the monolingual dominance of the administrative language precluded any genuinely dialogic interaction. I related earlier, that on two occasions participants related that communication with these officers was like "speaking louder to a deaf person." This notion of two, mutually unintelligible languages also helps explain why administrators at the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) business meetings thought they were talking about (or in the language of) teaching and learning where they clearly were not. I related in Chapter Four that the stated purpose of the last *Partners for Success* meeting I attended was

Setting the direction of where we are going and the success in achieving key actions to date so that we leave with acknowledgements of successes, achievements, direction, key messages and common understandings and *how we provide information translation to people in schools and communities* [italics added]. (A3)

This reflects an epistemological standpoint where language is a conduit for information, an administrative language that sits in unconscious tension with the language of practice and consultation. It also explains how I never saw the Indigenous Administrator voices attended

to in the business meetings, despite the voice that stated on seven separate occasions “A significant part of the solution is respectful, honest relationships with the communities” (IA2).

7.33 A diglossic frame

Again drawing on linguistic terms, this study could be seen to have occurred in a diglossic situation, that is, where more than one code or language exists and where there are “clear functional differences between the codes” (Wardhaugh 1998, p.86) and these differences govern their use. Ferguson (1959, p.87) proposes “A diglossic situation exists in a society when it has two distinct codes which show clear functional separation; that is, one code is employed in one set of circumstances and the other in an entirely different set.” In diglossic language situations, codes inevitably divide themselves into high and low varieties where the high variety has the greater prestige and power.

In this study, the economic-rationalist language of policy makers had greater prestige and power than the socio-cultural language of practice and research. The power invested in the federal government and its control over resources to the states meant that this language was a more powerful variety than that of the educator or researcher. At a State level, the *literacy* language encoded in *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) did not encapsulate the *language* voice in *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a). The language of the *Partners for Success* Administrators had greater power than the community, students or educator languages. In many diglossic situations, only a minority or elite control the high language domain successfully, so those who know only the low language domain are at a disadvantage. Thus, consultative spaces where each group’s language is not just spoken, but heard, learned and interpreted are critical for

effective communication to occur. Hall and McGinty (1997) identify such communication as a key factor in successful policy implementation.

Fishman (1967) extends Ferguson's (1959) definition of diglossia suggesting it encompasses a situation where a language variety reflects functional difference. In situations where the language functionality breaks down or where one language attempts to perform the functions of the other it is referred to as diglossic leaking. This idea of diglossic leakage helps explain how the term "inclusive" in the national policy administrator language encoded notions of inclusive as being "included in the testing process" whereas in a practitioner sense it encoded the praxis and research language meaning "inclusive of student needs". It also explains the misinterpretations that occurred at the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) business meetings and how my understanding of "ESL" was quite different from that of Administrators or some Indigenous participants.

7.34 A dialogic frame

I was also drawn to Bakhtin's (1981) notions of dialogic rhetoric in the design of this study. The conversations and voices in this study that interpret the experience can be seen in terms of monologic or dialogic interactions (Bahktin, 1981, 1986). According to Bakhtin, dialogue has three elements: a speaker, listener and a relationship between the two. A dialogic relationship is where "The speaker breaks through the alien conceptual horizon of the listener, constructs his own utterance on alien territory, against his, the listener's apperceptive background" (1981, p.282). However, monologic interactions occur when one participant has authority over the other, leaving the other unable to respond to the

discourse. This concept resonates with Gewirtz's (2001) notions of cultural imperialism. Bahktin (1981) posits that discourse is only dialogic when both parties mutually respond. Monologic, single-voiced discourse is discourse that recognises only itself and its object. It does not recognise other people's words. Such discourse "is directed toward its referential object and constitutes the ultimate semantic authority within the limits of a given context" (p.189).

In this study, the ultimate semantic authority was the universalising federal policy language and the administrative language of Education Queensland's officers in the implementation processes of *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a). Inherent in monologia is a centripetal force that tries to erase differences among languages (or rhetorical modes) in order to present one unified language (in this instance that of one standard, one kind of literacy and one kind of success). Monologia is a system of norms, of one standard or official language, that everyone should speak. For Bahktin (1981) monoglossia is the highly charged medium of verbal-ideological thought. The imposition of a standard form thus carries with it the strong ideological conventions of the dominant class. A dialogic encounter, on the other hand, is orientated towards a mutual construction of truth. It embraces diversity and the interaction between the various languages of a speaker and the languages of a listener. It is where different language varieties with different perspectives emerging from specific historical, political and social contexts carry with them traces of experiences that are higher or lower varieties depending upon the level of power and prestige bestowed on a particular voice within the social context.

Bakhtin (1986) asserts that languages are internally divided incorporating historical and personal experiences that are in a permanent state of competition. This explains how it was possible for Indigenous teachers in this inquiry to value the recognition of language but be angry about the attention it received; how it was possible to be relieved that there was a “standard” whilst positing that it was unfair; and how it was possible to position ESL as deficit whilst advocating for ESL methodologies in schools. In this study, participants, including me, walked an often contradictory, bilingual, multilingual, even heteroglossic line, blending languages in uncomfortable ways in trying to win some dialogic space where our voices could be heard.

Central to the notion of a dialogic encounter, is the power relationship between speaker and listener. In the development of the national policy there was no consultation thus no dialogic space in which to have mutually intelligible, reciprocal conversations between the federal government and others. Power relationships between the federal government and the states allowed State “languages” and Indigenous consultative “languages” or voices to be silenced by the dominant discourse. I related in Chapter Five, my discomfort in calling our initiatives “second language and literacy” support. The *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy tried to make space for the language and epistemological standpoint of practitioners. It contains language and actions primarily for educators. It focused on pedagogy and had little reference to assessment other than recommendations around a more appropriate assessment and monitoring tool than the Year 2 Diagnostic Net and Grade 3, 5 and 7 tests (the Indigenous ESL Bandscales) and therefore did not “speak” to administrators. Although *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) has little ideological (and therefore linguistic)

relationship with the national policy the significant omission of Indigenous ESL issues and therefore language, from it, left *Partners for Success* in a dialogic silence within Queensland.

7.4 By way of summary

As there is no absolute meaning of the term social justice, rather notions of equity are constituted historically and politically in particular contexts, the use of Gewirtz's framework (2001) as an interpretive frame for the fieldwork of the study needs to be placed in a broader context. This study is positioned within a time and place where market forces and economic imperatives have gained prominence in national Australian education policy. In such a climate, constructions of social justice and their incorporation in policy tend towards a "pragmatic expression of what appears feasible" (Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997, p. 132). Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe (2003) propose that a global, neo-liberal ideology has emerged in recent years whose orthodoxy combines the elements of "competition, choice, devolution, managerialism and performativity" (p.30) and that neo-liberalism positions education as a constituent of economic policy. Thus, restructuring, accountability and measurement are presented as solutions to both social *and* educational problems (Boshier, 2000). Hence, from a neo-liberal perspective, equity is seen in terms of human capital and economic development, that is, away from notions of social distribution towards market- individualism and consumer choice. This notion of global economic competitiveness and consumer (in this case parent) choice framed the national literacy agenda. In neo-liberal ideologies, the assumption is that "the invisible hand of the market will inexorably lead to better schools" (Apple, 1999, p.3). However, the individualising

ideologies of marketisation and consumer choice militate strongly against relational/distributive justice. Whitty (1997) proposes:

Atomized decision-making in a highly stratified society may appear to give everyone equal opportunities, but transforming responsibility for decision-making from the public to the private sphere can actually reduce the scope of collective action to improve the quality of education for all. (p.58)

However, it is particularly difficult to resist or subvert the global policy orthodoxy generated by powerful international economic and alliances.

Positioning this study within a broader context of globalisation, suggests that neo-liberal ideologies permeated literacy policy at national and local level. Minister Kemp's address (1999) clearly locates the national literacy policy *Literacy for All: the challenge for Australian Schools* (DEETYA, 1998) within a discourse of global competitiveness and consumer choice. Similarly, in the implementation processes of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy, the dominant discourses (and only real actions) were around performativity and measurement. Connell (1994) explains this phenomenon by proposing that the metapolicy of globalisation and marketisation overrides local (even national) policy specifics. Thus, in a global context, *Literacy for All* (DEETYA, 1998) could be regarded as a common sense response to ensuring Australia's economic competitiveness in an international market.

Research suggests that market-based approaches are not effective in producing equitable outcomes (Connell, 1993; Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995; Whitty, 1997) and, conversely, that a more equitable society actually *increases* economic outcomes (Putnam,

1993). Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe's (1995) research in the United Kingdom showed that the effect of marketisation of public schools was an increase in inequality between schools, with the already-privileged benefiting most. Putnam (1993) offers quantitative evidence from studies in regional Italy that high levels of social capital correlate with increased economic benefits. Olssen (1996) argues that a particular feature of neo-liberalist states is the creation of a quasi-market where individuals are enterprising and competitive entrepreneurs whilst simultaneously malleable through controls of public and comparable performance or assessment; a proposition that has particular resonance with the national literacy agenda in this study.

Schools inevitably operate in a context of wider, more powerful discourses: in this case those of the market and global economic competitiveness. Yet, the national policy (DEETYA, 1998) and testing program cannot be seen as universally negative, even from the perspective of the four focus schools and me as participatory researcher in this study. It produced information that schools had never had before. Despite the schools' intense reaction against the testing, it did focus them. The results of the testing pinpointed and confirmed good teaching in the schools (and the reverse) for individual teachers when aggregated scores are broken down. Then the data provided ways of analysing school pedagogies and disaggregating factors that were attributable to ESL learning and those that were not. Nevertheless, the literacy testing risked encouraging a reductionist pedagogy, even amongst the four focus schools, who were tempted to focus on boosting literacy scores under the pressures on them to perform in a competitive system.

The focus schools were not passive recipients of top-down mandates. They made politically astute decisions, complying with systemic mandates where they saw advantage for their schools to secure funding, to be on the “inside” of decision-making and to advocate. They consistently campaigned against the testing program and its perceived inequities. They downplayed the status of the testing program data. They continued to make extensive use of school-based information as the basis for learning and discussion with parents and communities. Thus, there was space to dilute the effects of national and State priorities in their local contexts; to “swim against the tide” (Freire, in Bruss & Macedo, 1985) and teach “against the grain” (Cochrane-Smith, 1991) and interrupt the dominant managerialist discourse. These schools found ways to exercise “considerable discretionary autonomy to operate in ways that foreground curriculum, teaching and social justice issues even within a centrally provided education system” (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998, p. 106) and provided effective responses in their contexts, even within systemic constraints and high levels of teacher turnover. However, the space they found for resistance also provided opportunities for teachers who did not endorse or practice ESL methodologies to persist in inappropriate or ineffective pedagogies.

Thus, the schools in this study, despite the coercive nature of global, national and State ideologies were not passive recipients of directives. They developed an internally persuasive discourse (Goodman, 1994) and therefore had some resilience against the more damaging effects of mandated priorities. Rather than submitting to authoritative discourses about literacy, the schools operated within a culture which remained steadfastly committed to language as an important element in literacy performance. I related in Chapter One, that I had selected these four schools for this inquiry and the Indigenous ESL Bandscales project

because they *already* had a commitment to language and ESL methodologies and practices prior to the introduction of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) policy. Thus, they *already* had tools of resistance against dominant discourses.

In rejecting the prescriptive, coercive nature of the national priorities, the focus schools resisted the implementation of someone else's agenda. Instead, they recognised a moral and political dimension in their work which was concerned, primarily, with issues of social justice. The schools' internally persuasive discourse reached out to others despite the enormity of the task of sustaining any practices with a constantly fluctuating workforce. Some teachers became open to new ideas about Indigenous ESL students and became skilled in ESL methodologies. School 3 related that these teachers were sought out by schools down South who did not have Indigenous ESL students as their skills were effective with all students. A prevailing view in four focus the schools was that successful teaching hinged on applying knowledge about the educational issues associated with students' language backgrounds. They used and adapted mainstream tools and strategies such as Whole School Literacy Plans and reading programs to support their endeavours. Connell (1993, p. 57) states: "educational reforms eventually have to work through teachers, and worthwhile reforms have to work with them" thus policy is ultimately enacted in the context of schools which allows teachers to appropriate, resist and modify it at the micro-level of the classroom.

Luke posits that "schooling and literacy education remain one part of the complex social, cultural and economic puzzle by and through which disenfranchised classes are constructed and positioned" (n.d., n.p.no.) and proposes that literacy is a cultural capital

that works in dynamic combinations with economic and social capital. This perspective sits in opposition to reductionist notions of literacy as a set of specific, measurable skills captured in national policy. Teachers in this study received multiple competing and contradictory messages about literacy. On the one hand, they and their students were judged according to dominant national standards and norms through the testing program whilst, on the other, Education Queensland through *Literate Futures* (2000c) required recognition of literacy as a repertoire of social practices and through *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) required recognition, pedagogy and assessment of students as ESL learners. These competing and contradictory ideologies added complexity to an already-challenging area of practice and this was reflected in participants' responses in this study.

I related earlier that globally pervasive neo-liberal ideologies influenced national literacy policy and practices. *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy added to the contradictions and confusions of what constituted effective literacy practice in Queensland in that it added the issue of language to the literacy "mix". *Literate Futures* (Education Queensland, 2000c) and *Partners for Success* crossed Principals' and teachers' desks within months of each other and at the same time that mandated State-wide testing was introduced. Given the power of global neo-liberal ideology described earlier, it is not surprising that the national priorities stifled and constrained the practices advocated in both *Literate Futures* and *Partners for Success* and worked against improved educational outcomes for Indigenous ESL students. In policy hierarchy, *Partners for Success* came a very poor third.

In this Chapter, I have explicated a complex network of inter-related power relationships revealed by the inquiry by using four interpretive frames. I have proposed ways of understanding those relationships; the *why* in the research questions. Gewirtz's framework (2001) revealed complex and inter-related relationships via each of the five faces of oppression and resistance. The literature on social justice, literacy, language, policy implementation and organisation change provided another lens through which micro and macro relationships of power were exposed. Notions of organisational change and policy implementation (Elmore, 2003; Fullan, 2001) showed that key relationships between structures and systems militated against the successful implementation of the policy and reflect Hall and McGinty's (1997) proposition that policy implementation is influenced by "how the transformation of legislative intentions is affected by both power, conventions and the organizational context *and* linkages between bureaucratic and legislative sites in a dynamic and simultaneously contingent and constrained manner" (p.442) Finally, theories of literacy and language suggest that the authoritative monologic voice of the national policies resonated through the states, allowing dominant groups to silence the voices and intent of *Partner for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) and precluded its success.

Chapter Eight

A systemic *Terra Nullius*

I don't think Partners for Success has helped at all, except you can refer to it, as a sort of reminder about Indigenous kids, when someone is being particularly ignorant. Working for Education Queensland is sometimes like speaking louder to a deaf person. Eventually you get hoarse. We just decided to do what we could do in our school and ignore what's going on in Central Office. I haven't seen or heard anything about Partners for Success for ages, except the announcement of those leading Principals (and how were they chosen?—no process as usual). It makes you very cynical in the end.

(Principal/Key Teacher collective voice, Chapter Four, reflecting upon their own research question: whether *Partners for Success*, Education Queensland, 2000a, literacy policy “made a difference.”)

8.1. A systemic *Terra Nullius*

This statement from the Principal/Key Teacher collective voice summarises the value the four focus schools placed on the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy at the end of the study. The national policies *Literacy for All: the challenge for Australian schools* (DEETYA, 1998); *Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals of Schooling* (MCEETYA, 1999b); and Education Queensland's *Partners for Success* literacy policy implementation processes legitimised a systemic *Terra Nullius* for Indigenous ESL students, their educators and their advocates. The knowledge of who you are in the world, your identity, is built on historically derived social constructions and

relatedness. Identity is shaped in relatedness. You can only be “seen” in the presence of others. Thus, relatedness is at the core of social justice (Gewirtz, 2001). If experiences of relatedness reflect demeaning images or render you invisible, it is a form of oppression which denies your very existence. In other words, you reside in a social *Terra Nullius*, a no-man’s land of invisibility or misrecognition. When others see you, if they see you at all, it is through the distorted and partial reflections of a mirror crafted in the dominant paradigm or cultural framework. Culture or language, failure or success cannot be separated from the social conditions in which they are generated. Indigenous ESL students’ place in the world described in this study was built on historically derived social constructions of deficit and disadvantage that were replicated through policy implementation processes. In national policy, Indigenous students were recognised, but only in partial images, as already deficit, as in need of being “fixed up” to fit dominant ways of being successful literates and this way was only deemed possible in English. In other words, the only way to be seen in the mirror of literacy was to assimilate dominant ways of being and refract uniform, dominant (English-speaking) images of being literate.

In this study, national literacy policy could be seen to encapsulate “original imperial logics” (James, 1997, p.58). Said (1993), referring to imperialism and colonialism, asserts “both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people *require* and beseech domination, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with domination”(p.8). The federal government’s construction of a literacy “crisis” that had to be remediated through certain kinds of interventions and control, reified particular ways of being literate. The iteration of this particular “common sense” epistemology justified an authoritative linguistic cleansing that

was a stealthy replication of historical justifications of invasion, extermination and assimilation now under the guise of equity. Bourdieu (2000) asserts that symbolic struggles over producing common sense are a way for governments to preserve the social order and unify citizens in less overtly violent ways than before. Power accumulated under colonial imperialism controls the spaces where these struggles occur and whether they can occur at all. The authority vested in the monologic administrative voice of national literacy policies, and exercised through the implementation processes of, if not the intent of, *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a), was deemed unchallengeable because it reinforced and legitimated the dominant common sense. In terms of national policy development, the excision of Indigenous people's concerns and experiences from consultation processes silenced Indigenous narratives. Thus, culturally imperialist practices were coded in terms of "essential," dominant universalising knowledges of and about literacy. This silencing enabled reproductions of past inequities in more insidious ways and disguised the colonial authority at work. Whereas once the only one way to "be" in Australia was white and English speaking, now the only way to be is English speaking.

Even with good intentions, as in the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy, dominant cultural paradigms permeate the social relations of knowledge production. These behaviours have roots in a cultural colonial inheritance that confirms particular relational positions. The *Partners for Success* business meetings were sites of struggle over the production of common sense. When counter narratives dared to be voiced there was a struggle to return to the status quo. Said (1993) proposes: "Every society and official tradition defends itself against interferences with its sanctioned narratives; over time these acquire an almost theological status, with founding heroes, cherished ideas and

values, national allegories, having an inestimable effect in cultural and political life” (p.380). In this study, counter narratives about language voiced in the *Partners for Success* literacy policy introduced subjugated knowledges that merely provoked defensive reactions. ESL teachers who voiced alternative narratives were labelled as “fanatical” and were silenced through the more powerful participants’ control over the meeting processes. Challenges to the existing status quo were neutralised through systemic re-structuring when Indigenous people were getting “close to the power”.

Differences and contentions to colonial authority are controlled by systemic boundaries established to protect it. When the boundaries are deemed inadequate or breached, they are reinforced or redrawn. This happened via “restructuring” (to minimise the sustainability of the reform) and the systematic “deafness” in consultations. Sometimes, the sites for struggle were removed altogether, such as when the *Partners for Success Action Plan* (Education Queensland, 2003) was “cooked up” by “white men” behind closed doors, safe from rival Indigenous viewpoints.

Tools for learning and what gets sanctioned as learning are developed by dominant groups for dominant groups. The national and State-wide testing programs and data they generate position people in particular ways in the public domain. Indigenous ESL student “failure” is only possible in relation to the way dominant groups construct success. The national testing program legitimised taken-for-granted assumptions about literacy through its testing program. The standards, testing data and processes reticulated, and therefore reproduced, these assumptions and powerful participants in this study including those who controlled the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) implementation

processes and the State assessment and testing officers were complicit in this process. Complicity in cultural dominance occurs when taken-for-granted assumptions are made without question and allows the dominant group to distance itself from the inequities they are creating.

Relational justice includes having knowledge about the way we see others and why, rather than a definition of who “they” are. In both the national and State policy implementation processes, this incorporation of “otherness” was defined by dominant groups, who controlled access to the ways in which groups can be socially successful. I was surprised when Indigenous teachers expressed anger and frustration when I spoke about the “value” of Home Language. When they explained their anger in terms of a deliberate colonial strategy to keep Indigenous people “in their place”, I found this version of “history” confronting. It conflicted with my taken-for-granted, common sense, sanitised, linguistic explanation of the evolution of Torres Strait Creole and Aboriginal Englishes and was reflective of the “power of schemata that assured the white race its unchallenged authority” (Said, 1993, p.121).

The geopolitical constructions at work within Education Queensland, revealed through this study, that constituted ways of being ‘rural’, ‘remote’, and ‘Indigenous’ show a systemic need to develop clearer knowledges about the real contexts of teaching Indigenous ESL students. The grand narrative of Indigenous education in Queensland is related through a colonial gaze which legitimises systemic funding processes that equate Indigenousness with certain socially-constructed ways of being. In Queensland, during the period of the study, it was not possible to be an Indigenous second language learner *and*

reside in an urban area as this does not fit the dominant social construction. A speaker of what was deemed to be Aboriginal English could not be an ESL learner because Aboriginal English is only regarded as a “non-standard dialect” of the dominant code. Indigenous ESL learners could not be “real” ESL learners because they are not included in the State ESL database. Indigenous ESL learners simply did not exist in systemic terms. Their needs remained invisible to the systemic gaze, which only recognised them as failing literates.

Teaching is a deeply political act. Silences and omissions in teacher education about the impact of language on literacy learning almost pre-determine fitting students in particular slots. Presumptions of English as the only way to be literate, effectively deny (non-Indigenous) teachers the opportunity to build on students’ own cultural frameworks. Absences and silences about the language needs of Indigenous students in dominant narratives in Queensland, allowed “good” teachers in this inquiry to remain comfortably unaware of alternative narratives. However, individual teachers bring knowledge “born of their personal level of exposure, frame of reference, values, political and social inclinations” (Beverly, 2003, p.375) to the social space of a classroom and this is cause for hope. Some teachers in this study developed appropriate new understandings and practices to be successful with their students.

Nevertheless, in School 2, internal longitudinal data showed that Indigenous teachers did much better than non-Indigenous teachers in the early years of schooling. These teachers’ common sense cultural frameworks resonate with those of their students. Besides, it is possible for common sense ideologies to change. For example, in School 1, a non-Indigenous teacher related:

I have taught at this school for twenty years and it was only when [the current Principal] came that it ‘clicked’ that language was an issue and I needed to do things differently. The scary thing is I thought, and other people thought, that I was being successful with the Indigenous kids and I was to a certain extent but now I feel as if I am much better at my job.

A recognition of language is one way to facilitate that change. Recognition of language provides opportunities for a “grammar of reconciliation” (Lo Bianco, Liddicoat & Crozet, 1999) to be explored in the cultural spaces of classrooms. This is what occurred in the four focus schools in this inquiry. They placed language at the forefront of the communities’ gaze, through ESL practices and methodologies, through Indigenous “presence” in the school, in providing genuinely dialogic space for schools and communities, teachers and students to interact. In so doing, they provided opportunities for different, less distorted images to develop. However, they struggled under the power of the systemic dominant discourse, under the lack of critical mass of appropriately-trained teachers and through inequitable resourcing practices, the other crucial half of social justice as both relational and distributive (Connell, 1996; Gewirtz, 2001).

8.2 The study in summary

This inquiry exposes an inter-related web of oppressive relationships in the implementation of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy. Systemic processes ensured that this policy initially was peripheral to Education Queensland’s core business and then mainstreamed and subsumed under other initiatives. The authoritative, monologic voice of assessment and accountability in the national literacy policies echoed through *Partners for Success* implementation processes, silenced and

marginalised Indigenous, practitioner and research voices to reinforce dominant social constructions of Indigenous ESL students as failing literates.

I have made the case that Indigenous ESL students and their educators remain in a systemic *Terra Nullius* despite the counter-hegemonic intent of *Partners for Success*. However, the study also showed that, although language was a key site for the contestation of power in Queensland's State education system and processes, it was also a site for the recognition of "otherness" and reconciliation of past wrongs. The inquiry also suggests that teacher knowledge about language and skill in ESL pedagogy are key elements in Indigenous student success.

8.3 Limitations and strengths of the study

This study has all the limitations of a merely three-year inquiry in a defined context. It charts the evolution of the implementation of the *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy which was just one of six policies in the overall strategy. As such, it does not take account of the inter-relatedness and impact of other areas of the strategy. Even so, it is longitudinal; which is rare in language/literacy research.

This study is written as a multi-voiced collective story. "Voices" relate to the subject of the research, the method of interpretation I employed, how I wrote the text and how I conceptualised the research experience overall. Nash (1990, p.131) refers to four features common to all narratives which I will use to examine the strengths and limitations of this study. First, narration of any kind involves the recounting and shaping of events.

Thus the events in this study are those that I and the participants were privy to. The inquiry cannot relate the “whole” story. Despite the partial nature of any inquiry, the multi-voicedness of the collective story provides perspectives and interpretations from multiple viewpoints.

Second, narration has an essential temporal dimension. The inquiry is contextualised in a particular time and place. The study is limited by the practical constraints of time within four focus sites across Queensland. These sites were not randomly selected. I deliberately selected schools that were already committed to ESL pedagogy and had less staff turnover than in other schools in similar contexts. The impact of the policy may have been quite different in other contexts. Nevertheless, I was able to see consistencies and commonalities across these four diverse sites that were captured in the collective voices.

Third, narrative imposes structure. It connects as well as records. My participatory role in supporting the implementation of the literacy policy through the Indigenous Education and Training Alliance provided access to a much larger data set than I could include within the thesis. The inquiry is, therefore, necessarily selective. It charts the perceptions and evolution of the policy implementation principally through collective voices that expose commonalities across sites and their resonance and dissonance within broader contexts. It thus makes little reference to participants’ individual personal histories which undoubtedly impacted on their interpretations of the experience. However, dissonant voices are also woven into the text and provide insights into the heterogeneity of the experience, of differences and dissonances with the collective voices. The study is also

limited in terms of the theoretical frames I used to interpret how the policy implementation evolved. Selecting the particular frames necessarily foregrounded certain aspects of the experience over others. Nonetheless, choosing these diverse frames to dig deeper into the fieldwork provides multiple distinct lenses through which to view the experience.

Fourth, for every narrative, there is a narrator. I was a participatory researcher so that the selection of themes and categories, events and links were influenced by my personal history, understandings and perspectives. However, through the research process and the writing of the thesis, I have sought to foreground my role, participants' collective voices and incorporate dissenting voices. I have also included an audit trail and checked with participants for their endorsement of the collective voices.

My own personal commitments to language as socially constructed, relational justice and policy advocacy may have influenced my selections as narrator but the study has distinct strengths in terms of its subject, its methods and its processes, its methodology and its form. *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) was the first time second language learning needs of Indigenous ESL/ESD students and their impact on (English) literacy development had been so clearly recognised through policy in Queensland. It focussed on the issue *language* that had been silenced in the federal *Literacy for All* (DEETYA, 1998) policy and offered a window of opportunity to guide educators towards more inclusive and effective practices for this group of marginalised learners and to counter the potentially detrimental effects of the federal agenda on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Again in contrast with the national policies, *Partners for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000) literacy policy and its actions focussed on “what matters”

(Fullan, 2000, 2003) that is, on teaching and learning, on pedagogy and practice rather than on assessment. It provided an opportunity through the research process for ideas and critique to be voiced when they had been silenced through official forums.

The focus schools asked me to write about assessment during the inquiry and these ideas were shared during the period of the study. The writing of thesis allowed the documentation of contemporary practice in a “social archive” (Connell, 1996) voicing the multiple perspectives of the participants, particularly those participants whose voices were not heard systemically. There is little social memory of practice in Indigenous contexts in Queensland. The research process provided an opportunity for “reticulation” (Connell, 1996) during the study to inform current practice through the sharing of experience and had practical relevance to participants in the study. The study also has methodological rigour. Its processes captured the commonality and heterogeneity of the experience as I hunted for themes and disconfirming evidence in Chapters Four, Five and Six which, in some cases, modified them. Indeed, my participatory role presented opportunities for longitudinal fieldwork which provide thick description to support Australian and international literature on literacy (Gee & Lankshear, 1995; Green, Hodgins & Luke, 1997; Luke, 1996; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Nixon, 1997) and second language learning which is largely based on abstract analyses of policy (Cummins, 1986, 1989; Cummins & Swain, 1986; Green, Hodgins & Luke, 1997; Lingard, Hayes & Mills, 1999; Lo Bianco, 1999; McKay 1998a, b; McNaughton, 1995, 1999; Michell, 1999).

8.4 Recommendations from the study

There are four principal recommendations emanating from the inquiry. First, public dialogic spaces are a necessary element in the development and implementation processes of policy intended to address issues of equity and social justice and should be fostered to avoid the replication of social order or historical injustices. Second, current literacy data collection and reporting mechanisms contribute to and replicate existing inequities for Indigenous ESL learners. Consideration needs to be given to the way in which systemic data is collected, recorded and publicly reported. Mandated complementary, appropriate and rigorous assessment tools should be centrally (not as afterthoughts) incorporated into Education Queensland's school accountability processes that have the capacity to reflect successful *language* learning. Third, current allocative (Indigenous) funding models to schools are inequitable and militate against sustainable improvement. Allocative funding models to schools and their accountability processes should be reviewed to more equitably resource schools with significant numbers of Indigenous ESL learners. Fourth, teachers with knowledge and skills about ESL pedagogy make a difference to Indigenous ESL student literacy outcomes. ESL pedagogy and issues of language for Indigenous students should be a core element of pre-service teacher education programs.

8.5 Directions for further research

This thesis raises concerns about the processes used to implement Indigenous literacy policies in Queensland state schools, the types of data and reporting forms that measure literacy "success", current allocative resourcing models to schools and the teacher knowledge and skills that are seminal to literacy improvement for Indigenous learners. More research is needed in each of these areas. There is little literature to inform which

kinds of systemic structure and processes encourage, interrupt or subvert the development of the kinds of oppressive relationships exposed in this study. Qualitative research using methods such as in-depth interviewing and journaling, that explore the conditions in which these relationships develop, especially at a strategic level, would contribute to better understanding of how these evolve and guide education systems to more equitable practices in policy implementation for Indigenous students and communities. The inquiry reveals that there is an urgent need to research and develop more appropriate, less culturally and linguistically contingent systemic assessments of literacy and numeracy and reporting mechanisms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children which better identify their achievements. The focus schools in this study used particular strategies (combinations of ESL and mainstream literacy methodologies, teaching staff and community engagement processes) that were deemed successful by participants with some support from disaggregated data from the Grades 3, 5 and 7 State-wide tests.

More research, using a case-study approach, is needed into these practices to develop effective school leadership, community engagement and pedagogical frameworks for language and literacy learning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Finally, this study suggests that teachers with skills and knowledge in language positively affected Indigenous student literacy achievement. Little is known about which particular language knowledge and skills teachers had, and needed to have, to work successfully in these contexts. Teachers with these skills made a difference and what they do should be investigated and shared with others.

8.6 Conclusions

Will black teachers and parents continue to be silenced by the very forces that claim to ‘give voice’ to our children? Such an outcome would be tragic, for both groups truly have something to say to one another . . . both sides need to be able to listen, and I contend that it is those with the most power, those in the majority, who must take the greatest responsibility for initiating the process It is painful . . . because it means turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another’s angry gaze. (Delpit, 1995, p.46)

This inquiry tells the collective, multi-voiced story of the implementation of a literacy policy that recognised second language learning status as a significant factor in some Indigenous students’ literacy performance. The study reveals that systemic processes and oppressive power relationships militated against its successful implementation and offered little support for educators of Indigenous ESL students. The inquiry shows that dominant national priorities and constructions of literacy influenced Education Queensland’s processes to the extent that they curtailed the very responses to inequity that the *Partner for Success* (Education Queensland, 2000a) literacy policy was designed to address. It explains how the authoritative, monologic voice of assessment and accountability in the national literacy policies echoed through *Partners for Success* implementation processes, silenced and marginalised Indigenous, practitioner and research voices and perspectives and reinforced dominant social constructions of Indigenous ESL students as failing literates. The inquiry reveals that Indigenous ESL students and their educators remain in a systemic *Terra Nullius* despite the counter-hegemonic intent of

Partners for Success (Education Queensland, 2000a). However, the study also shows that, although language is a key site for the replication of the social order and contestation of power in Queensland's State education system and processes, it can also be a prime site for the recognition of "otherness" and reconciliation of past wrongs.

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