PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS THAT FACILITATE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION ACROSS DIVERSE SCHOOL CONTEXTS

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“We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians… “

“A future where we harness the determination of all Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to close the gap that lies between us in life expectancy, educational achievement and economic opportunity…

“A future based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.”

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (2008)
Apology to Australia's Indigenous peoples

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Abstract

This research focused on school principals' professional practices that facilitate Indigenous education across diverse school contexts. Research evidence indicates the impact on student learning of school principals' leadership as being significant, and more significant in less-advantaged schools.

The research was framed as qualitative research using interpretive methodologies and document analysis techniques. Data collected through evaluations of Indigenous education in 57 Australian schools in the period 2012-2014 was used for the research. The principal professional practices described within the "Australian Professional Standard for Principals", and their associated profiles describing increasing levels of proficiency, were used to guide analysis of the data (AITSL, 2014). The influence on principals' practices of school type, size, Indigenous student enrolment, location and socio-educational status was analysed.

Principals' extant practices that shape the ecology of education for the benefit of Indigenous students were identified and more proficient practices proposed. However, this research illuminated significant relational elements associated with leadership beneficent for the education of Indigenous students. A necessary component is leadership that demonstrably values the culture, agency and beliefs of Indigenous people; that places Indigenous students' physical, mental, cultural and spiritual wellbeing at the centre of the school's activities; that actively develops collaborative relationships and networks based on reciprocity, trust, cooperation and civility; that is guided and sustained by humanistic endeavour.

A theoretical framework for leadership of Indigenous education is proposed. It ascribes to the principal a role as 'protagonist', building bridging social capital around the practices that contribute holistically to the education of Indigenous students.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional owners of the lands now known as Australia. I also acknowledge the contributions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples to the education of all children and young people in schools and their communities throughout Australia. It is their work that has made this study possible.

Writing this thesis has been a particularly long journey, albeit with its challenges, opportunities and rewards. A number of people have influenced me, guided me and pushed me as many diverse challenges emerged along the way.

I express my special thanks to Professor John Halsey for his encouragement and unwavering confidence in me to complete the journey. I have been the beneficiary of John's intellect, integrity and humanism as he has freely provided feedback, advice and academic wisdom along the way. I am also grateful to Professor David Giles for introducing me to ideas about the relational nature of education and leadership. Both John and David have been pivotal in guiding me to complete this research and write this thesis.

I express my grateful thanks to the 57 school principals who sought advice about their leadership of the education of Indigenous students in their schools. I also express my sincere thanks to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, parents, educators and community members for their contributions to the reviews of practice in their schools. Their thoughtfulness and advice was foundational to this research. Throughout the many years taken to complete this research, I have continued to be grateful to my many friends and colleagues in education who have

followed this journey. They continued to reinvigorate my motivation through their ongoing interest and questioning of progress.

Finally, I dedicate this research to my wife, Bev, who has never once faltered in her support and belief that I would complete the journey. Her love, encouragement and patience have been constant throughout.

CHAPTER 1: FRAMING THE RESEARCH STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an explanation of the contextual matters that envelop school principals' leadership of the education of Indigenous students in Australia's schools. Furthermore, the chapter includes commentary about why this research is of importance, an overview of the research methodology used for the study, the sources of data that have been analysed in the research, and identification of limitations associated with the research. The chapter concludes with a description of the structure of this thesis, including a chapter by chapter summary of what is to follow.

Context of the Study

Australian school principals have leadership responsibility and are accountable for the education of students so that they can become "successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active, informed citizens" (MCEETYA, 2008, pp. 8-9). What principals know, understand and do, and how well they enact their leadership, has been described in the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals and the Leadership Profiles* (AITSL, 2014). The *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (hereafter occasionally referred to as the principal standard) describes a set of universal professional practices to be enacted by principals in all schools. Furthermore, the principal standard acknowledges the challenging and changing context in which principals work, noting that leadership must "be responsive to the diverse nature of Australia's schools" (AITSL, 2011, p. 2).

School principals are charged with the crucial role of "raising student achievement at all levels and all stages, promoting equity and excellence and creating and sustaining the conditions under which quality teaching and learning thrive" (AITSL,

2011, p. 2). Robinson's (2007) analysis of school leadership practices indicates they exert moderate to large effects on student's academic and non-academic outcomes. Other research evidence shows that "the total (direct and indirect) effects of leadership on student learning account for about a quarter of total school effects" and the "demonstrated effects of successful leadership are considerably greater in schools that are in more difficult circumstances" (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 5).

The participation and performance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander [hereafter referred to as Indigenous (Pascoe, 2008, p. 7)] students in Australia's schools is below that of other Australian students (Creative Spirits, 2016; De Bortoli & Thomson, 2009; Helme & Lamb, 2011; MCEETYA, 2008, p. 15; Price, 2012; Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, 2011). Indigenous students attend schools throughout Australia and there is significant diversity of context between schools (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). That context is variably shaped by socio-economic parameters, community demography, geo-location, level of schooling, sector and schooling system (AITSL, 2014, p. 3).

It is apparent that "leadership occurs in context and context influences leadership" (Giles, Bell, Halsey, & Palmer, 2012, p. 3). Drath, McCauley, Palus, Velsor, O'Connor and McGuire (2008, p. 638) indicate that

> [l]eaders, followers, and their common goals can be, and often are, conceived independently from any particular setting. As a result, context is broadly understood as a separated variable that has certain effects on the leaders and followers who are embedded in it.

Leadership in one context is not necessarily transferable to another because "successful leadership is very sensitive to the unique demands of specific schools and districts" (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, pp. 10-11). The

location and context of a school are evidently important influences on how leadership is enacted in a school and its community (Southworth, 2005).

The education and schooling outcomes for Indigenous students are a matter of national importance and have been subject to a number of reviews and reports, recently in the Northern Territory (Wilson B. , 2014) and nationally (Forrest, 2014; Australian Government. Department of Education and Training, 2016). With an intention to improve outcomes for Indigenous students at the local level, many school principals sought reviews of their leadership of Indigenous education in their schools through an Australian-wide program known as “Dare to Lead” (Principals Australia Institute, 2009; Price, 2012, p. 17). Following each review, the principal was provided with a report that included a ‘point-in-time’ evaluation of Indigenous education in the school and advice about future development of the principal’s leadership of the educational provision for Indigenous students. The importance of these reviews is that each was conducted cognisant of the context of the school. The reports from a selected sample form the primary data source for this study.

Motivation for the study

As exemplified in the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (AITSL, 2011), school leadership is frequently researched and written about as a universal or generic activity applied across all schools and for all students. Other than acknowledging that school leadership is contextual, there appears to be little attention given to the essence of leadership for particular cultural groups or for particular school contexts. This research is focused on developing an extended understanding of principals’ professional practices that are understood to facilitate, or have the potential to facilitate, the education of Indigenous students. It also seeks to

develop understanding of the application of those practices across a diversity of school contexts.

The study is shaped through three focusing questions:

- What current professional practices are supporting Indigenous education?
- What professional practices might school principals initiate to improve Indigenous education?
- How does school context appear to influence a principals' professional practice for the imperative of Indigenous education?

Lessons learned through this research may be of use to practitioners leading, or about to assume leadership, in schools with Indigenous students. Given the effects of school leadership practices on schooling outcomes, there is potential for impact on Indigenous students' academic and non-academic outcomes across the diversity of contexts in which these students undertake their schooling. Furthermore, there is potential for the learnings from the research to inform policy development and resource allocation for the betterment of Indigenous education in Australian schools.

Framing the research methodology

This research is framed as qualitative research using interpretive methodologies (Institute of Public & International Affairs, 2009). Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 6) identify elements of qualitative research, including the "analysis of words", "interest in meanings", "inductive", and "recognition that researchers bring their subjectivity into the research process", all of which are elements of this study. Creswell (2005, p. 43) recognises characteristics of qualitative research as the collection of data in a context or setting and "recognition that the research has a role in advocating for change", also evident in this study.

Qualitative research methodology using document analysis techniques was used to undertake this research. The research methodology involved the systematic review and interpretive analysis of the text within the reports provided to school principals following reviews of their leadership of Indigenous education in their schools.

This research is “interpretivis[t]” in that the research sought “to grasp the subjective meaning[s] of [the] social action” of school principals (Bryman, 2012, p. 30). Analysis of the documents was undertaken iteratively and hermeneutically, combining elements of content and thematic analysis. Through the content analysis information was organised into categories related to the questions being researched. Thematic analysis involved recognition of patterns within the data, across the data, and involved me in ‘reading between the lines’ for additional understandings, all leading to emergent themes for the development of shared understandings and insights about the leadership of Indigenous education across diverse school contexts (Bowen, 2009). Principals’ “areas of professional practice” as described in the theoretical framing of what principals are expected to “know, understand and do to succeed in their work” in the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* guided initial categorisation and coding of the documented data found within the review reports (AITSL, 2014).

The document analysis processes sought to identify professional practices enacted by principals in schools and those proposed to principals as being worthy of their attention. Further to identifying the professional practices, the analysis sought to understand the quality and extent, or the proficiency, of the professional practices enacted by, or proposed to, school principals. In a manner consistent with “directed content analysis” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), the “leadership profiles” accompanying the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* were used to guide initial analysis

of proficiency (AITSL, 2014). The “leadership profiles” describe professional practices “at increasing levels of proficiency” (AITSL, 2014, p. 5). Throughout the analysis, judgements about degrees of proficiency took into account the scope and scale of a practice and the effectiveness of a practice in producing an intended or expected result.

Data

With a focus on further developing their leadership of Indigenous education, principals from diverse school contexts sought comprehensive reviews of their leadership through ‘Dare to Lead’, a Commonwealth funded, national program implemented by Principals Australia Institute (Price, 2012, p. 17; Herbert, 2012, p. 44; Principals Australia Institute, 2009). Each review report provided the principal with a ‘point-in-time’ evaluation of Indigenous education in their school and a platform for future development of the principal’s leadership of the educational provision for Indigenous students. The data for this research are drawn from reports from these reviews undertaken from 2012 to 2014; in total, 57 reports constituted a complete set of data for this period. This three year period was selected as it aligns with the period of development and promulgation of the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* that identifies the professional practices enacted by school principals that are used to frame much of this study.

The reviews were conducted using a consistent model and methodology informed by the “*‘*Dare to Lead*’ Model: Principles and ways of working”* (Principals Australia Institute, 2009, p. 7) (see Figure 1). The model was based on a belief “that successful outcomes will be achieved when a school undertakes a multi-faceted and strategic approach, all the time affirming cultural identity and maintaining links with the Indigenous community” (Principals Australia Institute, 2009, p. 6). Leadership for

the development of culturally respectful relationships within the school, with families and the community is central to the model.

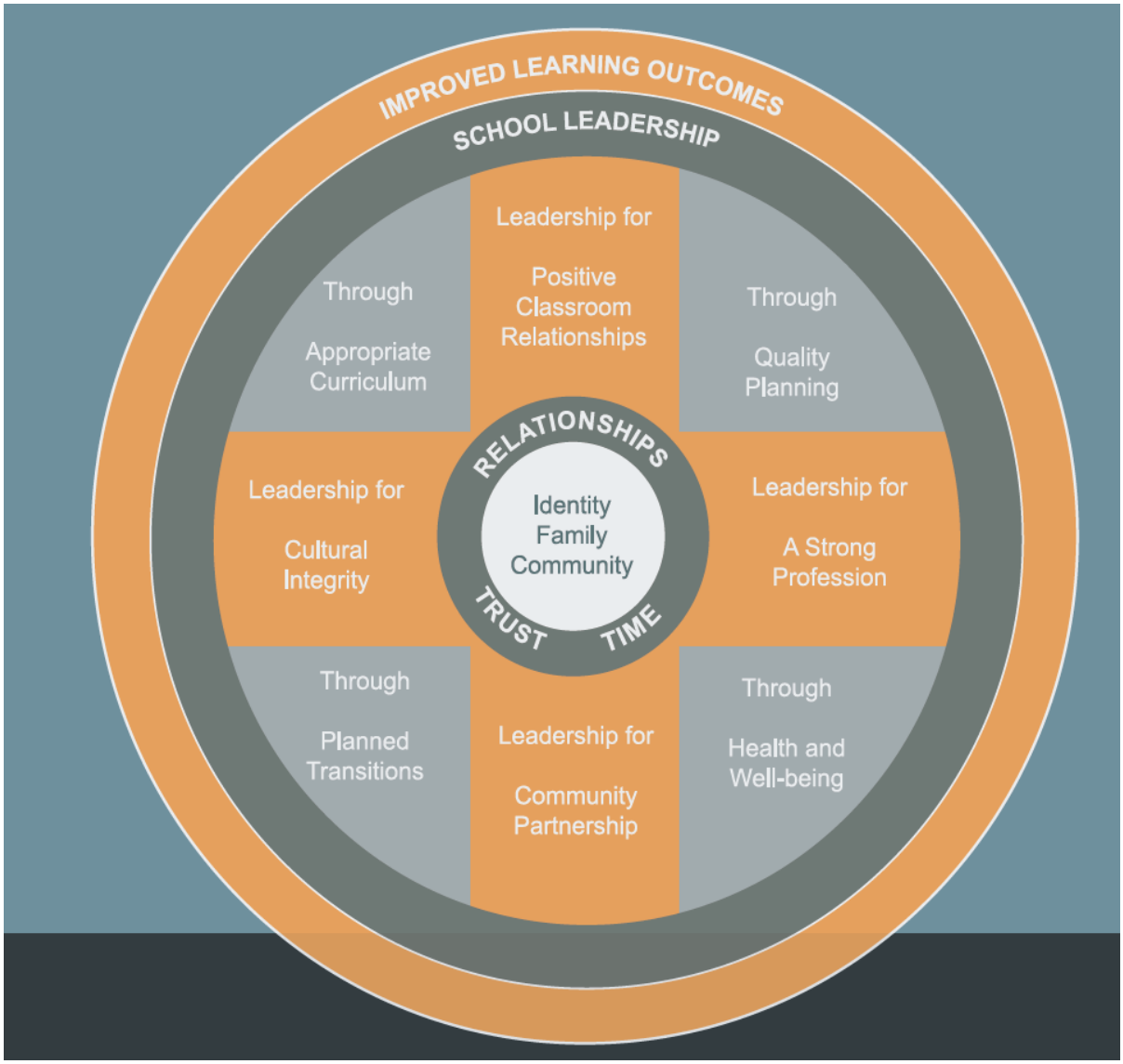

Figure 1. "'Dare to Lead' *Model: Principles and ways of working"* (Principals Australia Institute, 2009, p. 7)

The review reports were written with a consistent structure and include 'commendations' (see Appendix 6), 'recommendations' (see Appendix 7), and summaries of commentary from students, parents, staff and the principal of the school provided through the review. The primary data sources for the document analysis were the 'commendations' and 'recommendations' and school contextual

information in the reports. Other text within the reports was treated as auxiliary and accessed to supplement the study for the purposes of deepening understanding, clarifying or determining meaning and illustrating data (Altheide, 1996, pp. 3-4).

Pertinent to the research questions in this study, the commendations recognise professional practices that each school principal is already doing well to advance the education of Indigenous students in their school. On the other hand, the recommendations suggest practices that the principal might initiate, develop, or improve to enhance their leadership of Indigenous students' education. The ongoing formation of a principal's leadership of Indigenous education can be shaped by building on the strengths identified in the commendations and through the uptake of practices indicated in the recommendations.

Also included in the reports, and drawn from the *My School* website, is contextual information associated with the school and its community (see Appendices 1 & 3) (ACARA, 2014a); therein is found information about the type of school, its history, enrolment, percentage of Indigenous students in the school, and its location in metropolitan, provincial, remote or very remote Australia. The reports also include the school's attributed index of community socio-educational advantage (ICSEA), a measure that enables meaningful comparisons to be made across schools (ACARA, 2013b).

Data quality

The quality and trustworthiness of data used in research are of fundamental importance to the phenomena being investigated and to the findings of the investigation. I applied four criteria ("authenticity", "credibility", "representativeness", and "meaning") in assessing the quality of the documents used in this study

(Bryman, 2012, p. 544). The reports are authentic, coming from a known, identified origin; credibility is affirmed through the consistent methodology applied in formulating each report; all reports from the period 2012-2014 are used in the study and represent a full data set for the period; the documents are meaningful, containing clear and comprehensible evidence.

Reflexivity

Research undertaken through document analysis is guided by "the researcher's standpoint, disciplinary knowledge and epistemology" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 175), and as suggested by Hodder (2000, p. 714) this research activity is a case where "the data and the interpreter bring each other into existence in a dialectic fashion". Findings from the study will, in some way, reflect my personal "perspective, orientation and approach" (Altheide, 1996, p. 2). I have detailed awareness of, and declare "a positive disposition in the investigation" of principal professional practices (Giles, Bell, Halsey, & Palmer, 2012, p. 9) generated through my extensive career in the field. I was the Chief Executive Officer of Principals Australia Institute for the period 2012-2015 and had oversight of the 'Dare to Lead' program, albeit with no involvement in conducting school reviews or authoring the reports. I also led a state principals' professional association for 5 years; its purpose was to enhance the leadership capacities of school principals. I have a 20 year career history as a secondary and combined school principal in both non-metropolitan and metropolitan settings and in schools with Indigenous student enrolments.

Braun and Clarke (2013, p. 37) assert that "reflexivity is an essential requirement for good qualitative research". These career leadership experiences and researcher background provided me with a sound experiential foundation to assess, analyse

and critically reflect on the reports and contribute to the construction of meanings thereafter (Bowen, 2009, p. 31).

Ethics

The school principals who initiated reviews of their leadership of Indigenous education in their schools all agreed that the data within the reports could be used for research with the condition that schools and persons were not identified. I had written consent from Principals Australia Institute's Executive Consultant to access the reports for the purposes of research on condition that schools and individuals remained anonymous through the research activities and reports. I committed to adhere to these conditions and conduct the research with honesty and integrity. The Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee of Flinders University granted final ethics approval for the project (see Appendix 8).

Limitations

The "'Dare to Lead'" review reports used as the data source in this study were developed and written by reviewers who had extensive lived experience as principals of schools leading Indigenous education.

The reviews were confined to 57 schools where school principals requested a "'Dare to Lead'" review of Indigenous education at their school in the period 2012-2014.

The analysis of school context effects were confined to the contextual descriptors and ICSEA measures of the schools reviewed.

As the researcher, interpreter and analyst of the data in this study, I brought the lived experience of a non-Indigenous educator and school principal to the study.

Delimitations

The formation of the commendations and recommendations in the reports to principals was limited by the reviewer's analysis of information gained through the reviewer's interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, parents, staff and community members.

Thesis structure

The second chapter of the thesis is a review of literature of relevance to this study, including literature pertaining to leadership, school principals' leadership, the professional practices of principals, Indigenous education and how school context influences leadership. Chapter 3 includes discussion about the research methods and processes used in the study. It includes discussion about the development and application of a protocol for systematically guiding data collection from the documents being analysed. It also includes discussion about how schools' context data were processed for subsequent analysis. Chapter 4 is an analysis and discussion of each of the three questions being researched in this study leading to summarising conclusions and propositions aligned with each of the research questions being investigated. The fifth chapter is a discussion that draws on the analysis and findings in the proceeding chapter, leading to the development of a theoretical framework for the leadership of Indigenous education. A summary of the research findings, implications for praxis and Indigenous education policy, and opportunities for future research are found in chapter 6, the final chapter of my thesis.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of literature that is of relevance to the focus of my research: school principals' leadership of the education of Indigenous students. Much has been written and theorised about school principals' leadership, and their influence and impact on their students, teachers and communities (Robinson, 2007; Robinson, 2011; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Principals enact their leadership through engaging in various professional practices for the purpose of assisting the development of children and young people to become "successful learners, confident creative individuals and active informed citizens" (MCEETYA, 2008, pp. 8-9). This chapter of my thesis reports on the literature that provides insights into what is known and theorised about principals' leadership of the education of Indigenous students.

Framing the literature for analysis and theorising

The literature review is structured in four focusing sections with a concluding summary that identifies key matters that appear to be pertinent to the research undertaken in this study. The first section focuses on the ontology of leadership. The leadership attributes of school principals is considered in the second section. Principals' professional practices, or what principals 'do' as they undertake their professional activities, particularly as applied to the education of Indigenous students, is the focus of the third section. The fourth section examines the influence of school context on the enactment of principals' professional practices. I have reported on literature that relates to the education of Indigenous students in the second, third, fourth and summary sections.

Ontology of Leadership

> Specifically we are concerned with the ontology of leader and leadership (the nature and function of *being* for a leader and the *actions* of effective leadership). Who one is *being* when being a leader shapes one's perceptions, emotions, creative imagination, thinking, planning, and consequently one's actions in the exercise of leadership (Jensen, 2009, emphasis in original)

Leadership is a phenomenon located in the context of interactions between leaders and others (Northouse, 2010, p. 5). As a concept, leadership appears to be described in multiple ways, commonly with four central components identified: firstly, it being a process, secondly involving influence, thirdly occurring in groups, and fourthly involving common goals (Northouse, 2010, p. 3). Similarly, Bennis (2007, p. 3) expressed a view that leadership is "grounded in a relationship" that "in its simplest form is a tripod – a leader or leaders, followers, and the common goal they want to achieve". Northouse (2010, p. 3) summarised leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal". This attention to "process" describes the transactional and interactive nature of the relationship between leader and follower(s) whereby the leader influences and is influenced by the followers.

Jensen (2009, pp. 1-2) identified "three foundational elements of leadership" that are aligned with the relational and influential conceptions of leadership:

> Integrity: Being whole and complete – achieved by "honoring one's word"
> Authenticity: Being and acting consistent with who you hold yourself out to be for others and who you hold yourself to be for yourself.
> Being Committed to Something Bigger than Oneself: Source of the serene passion (charisma) required to lead and to develop others as leaders and the source of persistence (joy in the labor of) when the path gets tough.

Drath et al. (2008, p. 635) proposed an alternative "ontology of leadership – the theory of the entities that are thought to be most basic and essential to any

statement about leadership". Their proposal was an ontology in which the basic and essential entities were three leadership outcomes:

> (1) *direction:* widespread agreement in a collective on overall goals, aims and mission; (2) *alignment:* the organisation and coordination of knowledge and work in a collective; and (3) *commitment*: the willingness of members of a collective to subsume their own interests and benefit within the collective interest and benefit. (Drath et al., 2008, p. 636 emphasis in original).

Implicit in all three leadership outcomes in DAC is the development, growth and renewal of relationships as people work together within a group or community.

Leadership attributes

Effective school leaders possess a strong values-base, particularly about social justice and equity, and "they have an obligation to model the values and behaviours that the school asks students to adopt" (Westerberg, 2016). They are passionate, enthusiastic, optimistic, persistent, committed and reflective (Zammit, Cole, Singh, Costley, Brown a'Court & Rushton 2007). Demonstrating sensibilities such as "tact, nous, improvisation, attunement [and] moral judgement" are identified as being integral to the experience of being a leader (Giles, Bell, Halsey, & Palmer, 2012, p. 15). Similar attributes are described in the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* where behaving with integrity, underpinned by moral purpose and the promotion of democratic values, building trust, inclusion, and positive relationships across the school community are identified as essential requirements of school leaders (AITSL, 2011, pp. 6-7).

Through case studies of principals, their values and attitudes have been described as "social democratic or liberal humanist" in nature and include openness, cooperation, teamwork, compassion, integrity, decisiveness, risk-taking, and awareness of others and their situations as examples (Gold, Evans, Earley, Halpin,

& Collarbone, 2003). Hallinger (2011, pp. 137-138) listed exemplar attributes such as caring, fairness, innate goodness, honesty and consideration for others in his description of principals as “value leaders”.

The attributes, capabilities and qualities identified above are foundational to “the relational and contextual nature of leadership” and “affirm the collaborative nature of leadership” (Giles, Bell, Halsey, & Palmer, 2012, p. 14). Successful leaders appear to utilise a repertoire of attributes, capabilities and qualities as they undertake their professional practice and further develop their leadership effectiveness. Studies have been conducted on leaders’ personal characteristics across multiple occupations and endeavours leading to an understanding that many traits contribute to leadership. Consistently identified characteristics include intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability (Northouse, 2010, p. 36).

Bennis (2007, p. 5) identified six competencies that were exhibited by all exemplary leaders: “they create a sense of mission, they motivate others to join them on that mission, they create an adaptive social architecture for their followers, they generate trust and optimism, they develop other leaders, and they get results”. Similarly, Kouzes and Posner cited in Northouse (2010, p. 184) identified five fundamental competencies of exemplary leaders: they “model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart”.

Professional practices

Principals enact their leadership through engaging in various practices for the purpose of assisting the development of children and young people to become “successful learners, confident creative individuals and active informed citizens” (MCEETYA, 2008, pp. 8-9). Five leadership practices of school principals are described in the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (AITSL, 2011);

“leading teaching and learning”; “developing self and others”; “leading improvement, innovation and change”; “leading the management of the school”; and “engaging and working with community” (AITSL, 2011, p. 4).

There is an alignment of the professional practices of principals with the exemplary leadership competencies identified by Bennis (2007, p. 5) and the fundamental practices of exemplary leaders found in Kouzes’ and Posner’s model (Northouse, 2010, p. 184) (see Table 1).

Table 1: Leadership of professional practices

Leadership Competencies (Bennis)[1]	**Leadership practices (Kouzes & Posner)[2]**	**Principal professional practices (AITSL)[3]**
Get results	Challenge the process	Leading teaching & learning
Motivate others to join them Develop other leaders	Model the way Encourage the heart	Developing self and others
Create a sense of mission Generate trust & optimism	Inspire a shared vision	Leading improvement, innovation and change
Create an adaptive social architecture for followers	Challenge the process	Leading the management of the school
Create an adaptive social architecture for followers	Enable others to act Encourage the heart	Engaging and working with community

Cranston (2013) was critical of recent developments of sets of standards describing practices of school leaders and argued that such developments “have led to an orthodoxy that needs to be challenged and tested” (2013, p. 130). He argued for principals accepting professional responsibility by adopting leadership practices that are aligned with the moral purposes of schooling, rather than being driven by the regulatory frameworks and orthodox accountability mechanisms that currently shape principals’ practices.

[1] (Bennis, 2007)
[2] (Northouse, 2010)
[3] (AITSL, 2011)

An alternative understanding of leadership practices was posited by Drath et al (2008, p. 645). They regarded any leadership practice as “a pattern of behaviour of a collective” and their DAC framework as “relational”, whereby “the behaviour and action of an individual member of a collective is always interpreted in light of its place and significance within the larger web of leadership beliefs and practices” (Drath et al., 2008, p. 645). Principals’ development of, and engagement with, collaborating teams and professional learning communities would be considered to be leadership practices in this framework.

Leading teaching and learning

Leithwood et al.’s (2004) analysis of a large number of studies of school leadership concluded that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on student learning. Leadership of quality teaching to influence student learning outcomes is at the core of what principals do (Cranston, Mulford, Keating, & Reid, 2010). Their influence also occurs through monitoring activities such as analysing and acting on data about students’ learning, and through creating opportunities for teachers to engage in dialogue about learning and teaching (Southworth, 2005, pp. 77-82).

Effective principals are observed to mentor and sustain high quality instructional practices, generating high level learning (Elmore, 2006). Similarly, meta-analysis of research on effective leaders found that effective principals set high, concrete goals and expectations for all students (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, pp. 41-64).

In the context of meeting the educational needs of socio-economically disadvantaged young people in the UK, Sharples, Slavin, Chambers & Sharp (2011) argued that pedagogy matters most. Leadership practices that attend to the quality of teaching of socio-economically disadvantaged students through improving

instructional processes and methods appear to deliver the greatest improvements in learning outcomes. Breaking cycles of low aspiration and disenfranchisement with education is seen as a key strategy for closing attainment gaps (Sharples et al. 2011, p. 18). Guenther (2013, p. 15) suggested a “language of aspiration and success [that] encompass[es] a broad range of imagined futures,” beyond limited measures such as standards based national tests. Similarly, Kickettt-Tucker & Coffin (2011) argued that negative feedback and tacit or explicit low expectations of Indigenous students contribute to a cycle in which low self-esteem, coupled with confusion about their racial identity, leads to poor educational achievement. Given the evidence that individual teachers have the most significant impact upon student learning, especially for students from minority backgrounds, Niesche & Jorgensen (2010, pp. 114-115) concluded that there is a serious need for schools to enact leadership practices that are focused on enhancing Indigenous students’ social and academic learning, otherwise they are contributing to the perpetuation of practices that are disadvantaging Indigenous students.

A recommended priority for all Australian schools when implementing the Australian curriculum is the inclusion of Indigenous histories and cultures (ACARA, 2013a). Ma Rhea (Ma Rhea, 2015, p. 62) acknowledged the clear role that education has to play “in the preservation and maintenance of Indigenous perspectives”, albeit with the problem of designing “a curriculum that achieves an appropriate balance between two knowledge traditions”. Dodson (2010) emphasised the importance of affirming and validating Aboriginal identity and proposed that:

> schooling must start through building an understanding and connection with the social and cultural context into which Indigenous children are born. It must have meaning in terms of their experience, creating a confluence between their culture and experience, validating identity, building self-confidence and expanding expectations (p. 8).

Aligned with Dodson's proposal is that of grounding Indigenous students in the "Red Dirt" curriculum to build their knowledge of community, country, language, culture, and law (Lester, Minutjukur, Osborne, & Tjitayi, 2013). The "Red Dirt" curriculum is proposed as a means for attending to what matters for young people in remote Indigenous communities and for managing an increasing pressure to focus on "educational achievement in western terms" (p. 2).

Indigenous children attending mainstream schools can be at risk of experiencing confusion about their racial identity. Curricula and classroom settings do not always adequately acknowledge Aboriginal students' identity and this in turn may lead to behavioural problems, risk taking and low grades. Negative thinking of this kind can establish a culture of failure in which the social and cultural circumstances of the students and parental and community attitudes are blamed (Kickett-Tucker & Coffin, 2011). In such a culture, poor academic achievement can become a self-fulfilling prophecy (Sarra, 2009, p. 6). Similar views were suggested by Goodwin (2010) about low performing American schools and the existence of 'demoralised cultures' in which 'learned helplessness' develops; by contrast, he attests that teachers in high-performing schools believe that success is possible and they believe as individuals and as a group that they are capable of improving student achievement (Goodwin, 2010, p. 7). He emphasised the value of a culture of high expectations for student performance and behaviour, where there is a vision of success and a clear focus for students' improvement efforts.

Developing self and others

Robinson's (2011) research and analysis of school leadership found the most significant practices for building a school's capacity for improvement were leading teacher learning and development, and ensuring quality teaching. Strengthening the

linkages between the learning of principals, teachers and students and conceptualising the school as being a community of learners engaging in collaborative inquiry appears essential (Hallinger, 2011; The Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 12). The leaders' influence can be direct, indirect, or reciprocal and occur through modelling processes such as risk-taking, learning from mistakes, and critical reflection about their own practice as a leader and lifelong learner (Southworth, 2005, pp. 77-82).

Sharing leadership and empowering others through distributed leadership in flatter, team based structures is regarded as a powerful tool for expanding a school's capacity to achieve its vision and desired future (Timperley, 2008; Hallinger, 2011, pp. 137-8). It is argued that traditional hierarchical leadership models fail to address the development of people and communities of practice that facilitate organizational improvement (Crossley & Corbyn, 2007, p. 61; Harris, 2013).

Principals and teachers who work in remote Indigenous communities are frequently new to the role or, in the case of teachers, are recent graduates. "Teacher quality is not the main issue for remote schools, but ensuring teachers have the right qualities is fundamentally important" (NintiOne, 2016, p. 1). It is recognised that their effectiveness as educators requires both psychological and social resilience and they commonly have little intercultural experience (Brasche & Harrington, 2012, p. 119).Development of cultural competencies of principals and teachers enabling them to make intercultural connections with Indigenous students, also appears to be important (Buckskin, 2012; D'Arbon et al., 2011; Hughes, Matthews, & Khan, 2007). Kamara (2007) highlighted the existence of a cultural gap between contemporary western educational leadership and Indigenous leadership practices.

Schools need to be sensitive to their cultural contexts, to reflect local culture so that students feel that their culture, background and experience are respected (Wilson B. , 2014, p. 85). Commonly, Indigenous communities expect their educational leaders to be strong advocates for the children and the community in terms of education and at the same time be a key source of support to community members with other issues and challenges (D'Arbon, Fasoli, Frawley, & Ober, 2011, p. 3). Indigenous women leaders face even more demanding circumstances enacting their leadership in minority settings according to their gender, their ethnicity and as a woman of colour (Fitzgerald, 2006, pp. 207-208).

Culturally competent school leaders are described by Indigenous leaders as those that personally value and acknowledge Indigenous culture, act upon Indigenous community input and keep up with current Indigenous education trends, issues and plans (Hughes, Khan, & Matthews, 2008, pp. 41-42). Gorringe and Spillman (2008, p. 14) emphasised the importance of dialogue and shared leadership with community for the development of culturally competent leadership.

Rose (2012, pp. 69-70) described the problems associated with Indigenous education as residing in “an abyss” – a vicious cycle that is perpetuated in the nation’s education supply chains, in which “educators emerge from universities having had very little exposure to Indigenous insights and then they inadvertently replicate this ignorance in their everyday teaching practice”. The *Indigenous Education Action Plan 2010-2014* (Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA), 2010) reported that 30%-40% of teachers felt their pre-service education was of no help in preparing them to teach students from Indigenous backgrounds.

Price (2012, p. 17) asserted that “[t]eachers are the key: teachers who are aware of the cultural and language backgrounds of their students and who value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives”. However, accessing appropriate and timely cultural competency professional development opportunities appears to be a challenge facing today’s school leaders. Buckskin (2012, pp. 166-169) pointed out that across the nation “there has been minimal resourcing of relevant and on-going professional development towards building cultural competency amongst teachers and education workers”. The *National Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies Network Position Paper* recommended that the Australian teaching workforce “be required to undertake robust cultural competency training and professional development on an ongoing basis throughout their career” (National Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies (IECB) Network, 2012, pp. 4-6)

Leading improvement, innovation and change

Creating a clear vision for the school, a shared sense of purpose and direction that embodies the best thinking about teaching and learning, and establishing conditions for others to be effective, are regarded to be essential principal practices (Mulford, 2003, pp. 74-79; Goodwin, 2010, p. 48).

Goodwin (2010, p. 48) refers to Marzano et al.’s (2005, pp. 41-64) meta-analysis of research on effective leaders that points to the importance of building a ‘can do’ school culture. Most notably, among 21 responsibilities of school leaders linked to higher levels of student achievement, they found that effective principals set high, concrete goals and expectations for all students; they develop a clear vision for the school and promote a sense of staff cooperation and cohesion, involving teachers in decision-making and leadership; and teachers’ accomplishments are systematically celebrated.

Schools are commonly regarded as being at the centre of their communities. Schools have been referred to as “sentinel site(s) for change”, enacting and demonstrating leadership in promoting community development and the value of collaboration and solid partnerships to create change and empower communities (Burchill, Higgins, Ramsamy, & Taylor, 2006, p. 53). They stress however, that a positive Indigenous community development model must incorporate “yarning up, not down” (Burchill et al. p. 52); yarning for outcomes rather than speaking down to Indigenous people. They conclude that successful leadership of partnership development is built on trusting relationships, building on and adding value to existing networks, utilising Indigenous leadership, and focusing on building sustainability through whole community involvement (Burchill et al. 2006, pp. 58-59). Principals who lead by example and with strength and conviction are essential (Blackley, 2012). Muller (2012) suggested “that the decisive factor in whether a school has the foundational conviction, on which a culture conducive to effective partnerships can develop, is the attitude of the principal, and that principal’s capacity to lead” (p. 15). Fogarty (2012) argued that there is nothing in the research base to suggest that a pathway to improvement is to be found in advocating for Aboriginal people to jettison cultural practice, nor is it productive to blame communities and parents.

In his analysis of cultural diversity and education in America, Howard (2007) asserted that racial, cultural and economic differences are real and must be acknowledged, but at the same time there needs to be a paradigm shift in which schools acknowledge white privilege and power, and confront inequities.

Leading management of the school

School leaders often experience a tension between their educational leadership roles and their management role (Boris-Schacter, 2007, p. 25). Their leadership is associated with developing a shared vision, inspiring others and creating commitment whilst embracing risk and innovation, whereas management focuses on development of systems that limit uncertainty and improve consistency and predictability in the delivery of educational programs and services. Drath et al. (2008, p. 642) suggested that "[p]ractices are [individual and collective] beliefs put into action".

Work load and a lack of preparation for becoming an educational leader are often cited as adding stress to school leadership (Lyons & Janca, 2012, p. 14). Teacher turnover and retention is reported to be high in remote schools, potentially resulting in an impact on the quality of teaching, pedagogy, curriculum continuity, and community relationships that are now widely acknowledged as being critical to improving attendance and outcomes (Brasche & Harrington, 2012, p. 111; O'Keefe, Olney, & Angus, 2012, p. 43). Contrary data is however reported for remote and very remote schools in the Northern Territory where teachers' "median tenure is between two and three years" (Wilson B. , 2014, p. 191). The limited duration of principals' tenures in schools also appears to be a "systemic impediment to sustainable reform and improved student outcomes" (Luke et al., 2013, p. 242). Building a well-qualified Indigenous educator workforce has been identified as "a key factor in fostering student engagement and improving educational outcomes" and "potentially reducing the impact of high teacher turnover in school communities" with significant indigenous populations (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, 2011, p. 22).

Engaging and working with community

School communities encompass students, teachers, parents and agencies in the wider community. Engagement with the school community needs to be through "strong active inclusive leadership" (Ma Rhea, 2015, p. 89) or shared leadership approach, establishing a genuine partnership through a systemic, integrated and sustained approach (Gorringe & Spillman, 2008, p. 2). Engagement implies "extending the boundaries of participation in leadership and decision-making" (Harris & Chapman, 2002, p. 2) and sharing power and authority amongst educators, parents and community for mutual benefit (Pushor & Ruitenberg, 2005, pp. 12-13). And, "when done well, benefits parents as much as or more, than it does schools" (Guenther, 2016, p. 118). Realising these aspirations is essentially about imparting power and the authority, responsibility and accountability that accompanies genuine partnerships. Ma Rhea (2015, p. 62) indicated that "[T]here has been little investment in 'both ways' cross-cultural educational administration, governance, leadership or management capacity building within Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous administrative communities in the education sphere".

Expertise in raising pupil aspirations, using engagement programs, engaging parents and raising parental aspirations are identified as being influential elements of school leadership practice (Sharples et al. 2011, p. 14). Effective and enabling leaders who develop relationships and build relational trust within the school community are understood to be essential to engendering life-centric and achievement-oriented teaching and learning experiences (Blackley, 2012, pp. 7-8; Crossley & Corbyn, 2007; D'Arbon et al., pp.2-3; Giles, 2011; Robinson, 2011, pp. 21-45; The Wallace Foundation, 2013). Establishment of engaging, inspiring and productive learning

environments for students is linked with the development of mutually supportive relationships within the school community (Duignan, 2010, pp. 7-8).

Engaging and working with community is commonly recommended as effective principal practice. Otero (2012, p. 10) described the practice as one of building "social capital" as the "combined strength and power of community members". Putnam and Feldstein (2003, pp. 2-3) indicated that social capital refers to "social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance and trustworthiness" and distinguished between inward looking networks that link similar people (bonding social capital) and outward looking networks that embrace difference (bridging social capital). Putnam (2000) described the impact on child development through building social capital.

> Child development is powerfully shaped by social capital. A considerable body of research dating back at least fifty years has demonstrated that trust, networks, and norms of reciprocity within a child's family, school, peer group, and larger community have wide-ranging effects on the child's opportunities, and choices and, hence, on his [her] behavior and development (p. 296).

Yosso (2005, p. 69) argued for a move away from a commonly held deficit view associated with "communities of colour" to a focusing lens on "an array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contracts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged". With this lens in mind, she identified several forms of capital that could be nurtured by Indigenous communities, thereby contributing to social capital, including "aspirational capital…the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future"; "familial capital…cultural knowledges nurtured among *familia* (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition"; and resistant capital…knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality (pp. 79-80).

Community partnerships have been proposed through Indigenous education programs such as ‘Dare to Lead’, Parental and Community Engagement Program (PaCE) and ‘Stronger Smarter Learning Communities’ (SSLC) (Principals Australia Institute, 2009; Price, 2012; Sarra, 2009). ‘Dare to Lead’ facilitated partnerships of school leaders learning together, of school leaders working with community and of school leaders working with organisations (Principals Australia Institute, 2009). PaCE was a community-driven program for parents and carers of Indigenous students that aims to enhance the capacity of Indigenous families and communities to:

- engage with schools and education providers in order to support improved educational outcomes for their children;
- build strong leadership that supports high expectations of Indigenous students' educational outcomes;
- support the establishment, implementation and/or ongoing progress of community-school partnerships; and,
- support and reinforce children's learning at home (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2013).

Similarly, the SSLC project involved networks of schools based on communities of practice with a shared philosophy of high-expectations and relational approaches to Indigenous education (Sarra, 2009). An evaluation of the SSLC project (Luke et al., 2013, p. iv & 241) indicated that school leaders and teachers reported progress in changing school ethos around issues of recognition of Indigenous identity, Indigenous leadership and innovative approaches to staffing and models of schooling, Indigenous community engagement and high expectations leadership. However, no school-level evidence of any systematic effects of the project on pedagogy and curriculum, or on student achievement was found.

Improvement in student engagement and educational outcomes could be expected if Indigenous people were better engaged in governance and leadership and the

development of reforms that impact on them (Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, 2011, p. 22). Development of partnership agreements or protocols has been suggested as a means of formalising school-community partnerships (Ma Rhea, 2015, pp. 101-102). An evaluation of community development projects in Aboriginal communities concluded that a reliance on local Indigenous leadership was strongly linked to the key success factors of engendering trust, flexibility, a sense of ownership, the leveraging of further community involvement and investment, and the sustainability of the reform (Burchill et al. 2006).

Dodson (2010, p. 9) stressed the imperative of recognising parents' educative role:

> The school house must be repositioned to place it at the centre of Indigenous communities, inviting participation on a basis of encouragement and trust. Parents are the first teachers of their children. Their role must be recognised, respected and incorporated in the governance of schools and the delivery of education.

He expanded this proposition to include the establishment of school and community partnerships and activities to build connection and capacity through incorporating family and community perspectives into their curriculum and pedagogy (Dodson, 2010). "It appears that the expansion of networks, trust, shared norms and reciprocity are worthwhile outcomes in themselves" (Guenther, 2014, p. 18) Formalisation of such partnerships through promulgation of "Reconciliation Action Plans" where schools develop "practical plans of action built on relationships, respect and opportunities" as a means of "realis[ing] their vision for reconciliation" is recommended (Reconciliation Australia, 2016a).

However, Sims (2003, p. 87) pointed out that a number of conflicting perceptions and expectations may be present among Indigenous families as they attempt to establish a relationship with their children's school. A desire for their children's successes may

be tempered by apprehension, generated from a history of oppression and parents' own negative schooling experiences. Another study concluded that most Aboriginal parents view teachers as hostile and schools as threatening environments and, as such, "many Indigenous people passively resist the education system, by apparent silent tolerance of the status quo, while in fact steadfastly and impassively refusing to be a part of it" (Bond, 2004, p. 29).

School context

"Each school context is different, and skills, knowledge and operational models need to respond to these differing social and cultural dynamics" (D'Arbon et al., 2011, p. 2). The context of Australian schools is delineated through the "Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA)" (ACARA, 2013b). The index is based on the following formula: "ICSEA (student) = student socio-educational advantage (SEA) + student Indigenous status + SEA (school cohort) + Percent Indigenous student enrolment + Remoteness. This approach produces an ICSEA for each student, and then the ICSEA for a school is calculated as the mean of all individual student-level ICSEA values" (ACARA, 2013b, p. 10). It purports to measure key factors that correlate with educational outcomes.

It is generally recognised that a school's context has an impact on a principal's leadership (Hallinger, 2011). Giles et al. (2012, p. 14) make the observation that "[l]eadership is a relational endeavour that is experienced locally, in situ, and in the complex and dynamic demands of *context*. Situational demands influence, enable, limit, and constrain a leader's practice" (emphasis in original). A school's context is shaped by a range of interacting variables that extend beyond the measures indicated in the ICSEA. In remote contexts school principals are challenged by distance, inaccessibility and communication difficulties, and access to face-to-face

professional development is likely to be difficult. Working with Indigenous families' health, nutrition and perceived social disadvantage might also be challenging. Some communities have high levels of substance abuse, violence and other forms of social dysfunction, and language and cultural differences can pose challenges (Brasche & Harrington, 2012; Lyons & Janca, 2012; Niesche & Jorgensen, 2010).

Indigenous people's connection to their land and location is also identified as a contextual factor influencing school leadership (Gray & Beresford, 2008, p. 218). D'Arbon et al. (2011, p. 3) claim that "[c]ultural views around the meanings and purposes of the country, land and education are frequently at odds with each other". Development of mutual understandings between the principal and the community appears essential.

Most often, the manner in which students' learning material is organised and presented is western and written in English, and it may not be easily understood by an Indigenous child whose language, culture and life experience may be very different (Anderson, 2011, p. 96). Dodson (2010, p. 3) suggested that Indigenous students' education "must connect with their real-life experience, the social context and cultural values of their family and community".

Summary

The challenge for educational leadership in improving Indigenous education remains a fertile and potentially rich field for further research. There is an emerging consensus from researchers and commentators about what is socially just, culturally desirable and contextual, and some agreement about approaches and strategies that look promising. It is also apparent that there is no 'one size fits all' solution.

A number of key matters emerged through reviewing the literature that were informing and formative for my research, namely:

- Strong, visionary and committed school principals that are welcoming, visible, available, respectful, accountable and pro-active appear to be the cornerstone for improving Indigenous student outcomes. This is leadership driven by “a demonstrable moral imperative and belief that the school must ensure the success of Indigenous students as its highest priority” (Blackley, 2012, p. 7).

- When focusing on universally applied measures, the participation and performance of Indigenous students in Australia’s schools is below that of non-Indigenous students. This focus may deflect attention from qualitative indicators such as engagement and may perpetuate ‘deficit’ thinking and negative cultural stereotypes appropriated to Indigenous students. Such a focus also fails to acknowledge a range of contextual factors and differences between Indigenous people and their communities.

- A holistic approach where there are opportunities for authentic participation and contribution, caring relationships and high but achievable expectations appears necessary for developing all Indigenous students’ engagement with schooling, i.e. change the discourse “around Indigenous education from one of failure to one of success” (Herbert, 2012, pp. 40-41).

- It appears important that the cultural identity of Indigenous families and students is validated, their self-confidence built, and their educational aspirations raised. This requires curricula that are culturally inclusive and responsive; pedagogy that incorporates localised approaches to teaching and learning, including literacy and numeracy skills; and visible recognition and celebration of Indigenous culture and language within the school.

- Engagement means that communities, families, parents and students will all be actively involved in a school's educational agenda and feel a sense of ownership and cultural connection with it. "To work with these children, their families and communities, educational leaders need to recognise as fundamental to their work a sincere acknowledgement and respect for people, elders, country, language and intercultural systems" (D'Arbon et al., 2011, p. 46) Development of meaningful family-school-community partnerships is essential.

- Family-school-community partnerships begin with the school making the first move and building trust and positive relationships with Indigenous parents. Educational reforms must be embedded in community development and capacity-building.

- Knowledge of the diversity of Indigenous culture and histories should be part of every leader's and every teacher's professional expertise.

Dodson (2010) proposed that we need to see Indigenous education more broadly in terms of a human rights framework.

> It takes us down to the community level where the real work of improving the education of our children must take place. It insists on respect for the human rights and the humanity, the cultures and values, the historical and contemporary experiences of the parents and children that must be at the heart of improvements in Indigenous education. It takes us to the human scale and reminds us that we must always start with the engagement of young children, born into the residue of the past, but with full creative capacity to transcend it and to excel. Our greatest opportunity lies in those young children, in their energy and their aspirations. Our greatest challenge is not to fail another generation of Indigenous children (pp. 10-11).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCESSES

This chapter explains the research methods and processes used in this study. Three strands of inquiry are used to provide the structure to the chapter:

- Strand 1: Investigation of current professional practices that are supporting Indigenous education.
- Strand 2: Investigation of professional practices that school principals might initiate to improve Indigenous education.
- Strand 3: Investigation of how school context appears to influence principals' professional practices for the imperative of Indigenous education.

Processes and protocols for guiding analysis of the data for each of the strands of inquiry are described and justified.

Research Method

This research was qualitative and undertaken using document analysis methodology which is referred to as an "integrated and conceptually informed method, procedure, and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving, and analysing documents for their relevance, significance, and meaning" (Altheide, 1996, p. 2). This research sought to develop understanding of school principals' professional practices that support Indigenous education across a diversity of school contexts.

Strand 1: Investigation of current professional practices that are supporting Indigenous education.

The investigation was conducted in three stages consistent with the document analysis methodology suggested by Altheide (1996, pp. 23-44).

Stage 1: Identifying the document source(s)

The primary data for this strand of the investigation were the 'commendations' section in each *'Dare to Lead'* review report (see Appendix 6: Sample Commendations). Other elements of the reports such as paraphrased commentary from members of the school community were also used as auxiliary data to supplement, amplify and to help clarify understandings.

Stage 2: Protocol development

This stage involved developing a protocol for systematically guiding data collection from the documents (Bowen, 2009). An analytical technique known as directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1281), also described as theoretical thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013, pp. 174-5), where analysis is guided by existing theoretical concepts, was used in the initial stages. The existing theoretical concepts used in this study were described as "professional practices" in the theoretical framing of what principals are expected to "know, understand and do to succeed in their work" in the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (AITSL, 2011, p. 2). Five domains of professional practice, as described in the standard, were used to guide and systematically structure the investigation:

- "Leading teaching and learning"
- "Developing self and others"
- "Leading improvement, innovation and change"
- "Leading management of the school"
- "Engaging and working with the community" (AITSL, 2011, pp. 5-11)

This strand of the investigation focused on professional practices that *support* Indigenous education. A means of understanding the scope, scale and effectiveness

of a practice was necessary. As the researcher and interpreter of the data in this study I adopted a standpoint whereby a professional practice *supporting* Indigenous education was one having constructive influence or impact on the education of Indigenous students. The protocol therefore included a guiding framework to enable development of understanding about the scope, scale and degree of effectiveness of a principal's practice within each of the five domains of professional practice.

I developed the framework through adopting and adapting the "profiles" used to describe levels of proficiency for each of the five professional practice domains described in the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (AITSL, 2014, p. 14). Each of the five professional practice domains was ascribed with four levels of increasing proficiency as indicators of effectiveness. Descriptors for each proficiency level for all five professional practice domains were developed. The scope and scale of a practice, and the effectiveness of a practice in producing an intended or expected result, were considered when formulating the proficiency descriptors. The descriptors are indicated in Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

These descriptors were used to guide and facilitate judgements about proficiency of principal's commended practices found in each of the 57 "Dare to Lead" reports.

Table 2: Proficiency descriptors: Leading teaching & learning

Professional practice domain	Proficiency level 1 descriptors	Proficiency level 2 descriptors	Proficiency level 3 descriptors	Proficiency level 4 descriptors
Leading teaching and learning	Support high quality inclusive practice. Focus on improvement of student learning. Develop pedagogy & student engagement. Planning and leading for quality teaching / learning.	Prioritising student-centred learning environment. Teaching practice aligned with research evidence and emerging technologies. Robust review cycle of curriculum and pedagogy. Feedback & coaching amongst students and teachers.	Focus on personalised and individual achievement. Feedback & peer review; focus on improving teaching standards. Systematically monitor student & teacher progress. Interventions to reduce gaps. High expectations. Celebrate success and challenge underperformance.	Inspire high aspirations in staff, students and parents. Collect and analyse evidence of high quality teaching. Share strategies in school community. Staff involved in networks, supporting colleagues. Collaborative leadership across systems.

(Adapted from AITSL, 2014, p. 14)

Table 3: Proficiency descriptors: Developing self & others

Professional practice domain	Proficiency level 1 descriptors	Proficiency level 2 descriptors	Proficiency level 3 descriptors	Proficiency level 4 descriptors
Developing self and others	Promote professional learning. Link professional learning to better student outcomes. Work with staff to prioritise staff learning areas. Model personal and professional learning.	Identify potential leadership capacity in others. Nurture leadership potential. Apply consistent performance and development processes. Success celebrated. Underperformance challenged & addressed. Regular & effective feedback.	Create culture of empowerment, responsibility. Development of professional learning community. Modify leadership behaviour in response to learning. Monitor impact of professional learning.	Create challenging roles & responsibilities for senior leaders. Leverage others' talents. Coaching & mentoring other school leaders & principals. Contribute to external networks.

(Adapted from AITSL, 2014, p. 14)

Table 4: Proficiency descriptors: Leading improvement, innovation and change

Professional practice domain	Proficiency level 1 descriptors	Proficiency level 2 descriptors	Proficiency level 3 descriptors	Proficiency level 4 descriptors
Leading improvement, innovation and change	Identify need for innovation & improvement. Communicate need for change to wider school community. Develop knowledge re change and strategy. Engage and inspire staff to commit to evidence based change with impact on learning.	Develop process for change. Evaluate outcomes and refine actions. Attend to social, political, local circumstances. Consider impact of change on others. Provide regular feedback to school community, building ownership. Distribute leadership of change.	Operate within sound values base. Focus on ongoing improvement. Build culture of trust and collaboration. Innovation based on research evidence. Embed collaborative and creative practices, allowing everyone to contribute to planning & improvement.	Embed culture of continuous improvement. Ensure creativity, innovation, research are core characteristics. Lead networks of innovation across system. Evaluate personal effects of change. Gather feedback. Evidence of impact on student learning.

(Adapted from AITSL, 2014, p. 14)

Table 5: Proficiency descriptors: Leading management of the school

Professional practice domain	Proficiency level 1 descriptors	Proficiency level 2 descriptors	Proficiency level 3 descriptors	Proficiency level 4 descriptors
Leading management of the school	Align management with educational goals and vision and values of school. Employment practices consistent with legislation. Allocate resources effectively.	Embed effective decision making. Build cohesive leadership team. Analyse data to support student learning outcomes. Best use of technology to share and monitor progress. Promote ethical standards.	Engender collective responsibility for smooth running of schooling. Best practice HR management to attract & retain staff. Review and improve plans with governance body. Consultative approach to strategic planning.	Identify trends and influences shaping future of school. Review data for school improvement. Apply resources to other schools in system, network. Embed culture of shared accountability.

(Adapted from AITSL, 2014, p. 14)

Table 6: Proficiency descriptors: Engaging and working with the community

Professional practice domain	Proficiency level 1 descriptors	Proficiency level 2 descriptors	Proficiency level 3 descriptors	Proficiency level 4 descriptors
Engaging and working with the community	Promote parent & caregiver engagement. Promote representative governance. Promote Indigenous histories / cultures. Build partnerships with local community and external stakeholders.	Use expertise of other agencies. Strengthen community engagement in school programs. Community use of school facilities. Promote high expectations & close achievement gaps.	Work with other agencies, supporting health & wellbeing of students / families. Strategies for reaching all families. Innovate & use technology to gather community feedback & advice for school improvement.	Lead inclusive, outward facing organisation. System orientation, supporting other schools. Culture of inclusion tackling effects of disadvantage on learning. Mutually supportive, trusting relationships.

(Adapted from AITSL, 2014, p. 14)

Stage 3: Analysing and coding primary source data

This stage of the process involved repeatedly and thoroughly revisiting the primary data sources (‘commendations’ in 57 school reports) seeking to conceptually refine understandings and meanings to identify emergent categories of practice associated with each professional practice domain. Categories were identified and coded within each of the professional practice domains as analysis of the ‘commendations’ within the reports progressed (see Table 7: Professional Practices: Category Identification and Codes).

All ‘commendations’ within the 57 reports were analysed for professional practice domain and category identification and accordingly coded and ascribed with a proficiency level. The coding activity was recorded on a pro-forma for each report (see Appendix 1: Sample Domain and Category Report: Commendations coding).

Each school's report was attributed a number for identification purposes and the professional practice domain and category data across all 57 reports were aggregated and tabulated. Illustrative paraphrased and abbreviated extracts from the 'commendations' sections of the reports were included to illustrate and supplement the tabulated data (see Appendix 2, Tables 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12).

Table 7: Professional Practice Domains: Category Identification and Codes

Professional practice domain	Category	Category indicators (exemplars)	Code
Leading teaching and learning	Interventions & engagement strategies	Homework centres Learning support strategies Extra curricula initiatives	in
	Personalised approach	Personal learning plans Individual monitoring Mentoring individuals	pa
	Teaching & learning methodology	Explicit teaching methods Clear, high targets and expectations Student / teacher relationships	tl
	Curriculum initiative	Integrated Indigenous perspectives, themes and texts Curriculum planning	ci
Developing self and others	Cultural awareness & relationships	Staff engagement with learning about Indigenous culture	ca
	Professional learning community	Professional collaboration amongst staff and community	plc
	Leadership capacity development	Informal leadership focusing on Indigenous education Succession	le
Leading improvement, innovation and change	Motivate & inspire staff & community	Positivity amongst staff Principal's enthusiasm	ms
	Planning & strategy development	Published Indigenous education policies	pl
	Distributed leadership	Formal leader appointments focused on Indigenous students Role clarity	dl
Leading management of school	School culture & positive relationships	Relationship between staff, students & families Absence of racism	cu
	Behaviour management and attendance	Attendance data & reward strategies Student attitude Suspension data	be
	Resources	Fee relief, scholarships Physical environment	res
	Student wellbeing	Health and nutrition initiatives Student leadership programs and initiatives Cultural identity	wb
Engaging & working with community	Collaborative relationships with parents and community	Reconciliation action plans Aboriginal community support and engagement Links with other agencies	ch
	Culture of support and safety	School & community alignment	sc
	Aboriginal employees and volunteers	Trusting relationships Role models	ae
	Iconography & cultural events	NAIDOC week Acknowledgement of country Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander flags, art, symbols	ic

Strand 2: Investigation of professional practices that school principals might initiate to improve Indigenous education.

Consistent with the investigation of strand 1 of this research, strand 2 was conducted in the three stages of document analysis suggested by Altheide (1996, pp. 23-44).

Stage 1: Identifying the document source(s)

The primary data for this phase of the investigation were the 'recommendations' section in each *'Dare to Lead'* review report (see Appendix 7: Sample Recommendations). Other elements of the reports such as paraphrased commentary from members of the school community were also used as auxiliary data to supplement, amplify and to help clarify understandings.

Stage 2: Protocol development

This stage of the research was conducted using the same protocol that was developed for strand 1. The same professional practice domains were used to guide investigation of the primary data sources: the 'recommendations' documented in the reports. Furthermore, the same guiding descriptors were used to facilitate judgements about the degree of proficiency required for each recommended professional practice (see Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6).

Stage 3 Analysing and coding primary source data

This stage of the process involved repeatedly and thoroughly revisiting the primary data sources ('recommendations' in 57 school reports) seeking to conceptually refine understandings and meanings to identify categories of practices that principals might initiate to improve Indigenous education. All 'recommendations' within the 57 reports were analysed for professional practice domain identification and category coding, with each code ascribed with a proficiency level. The coding activity was recorded on a pro-forma for each school report (see Appendix 3: Sample Domain and Category

Report: Recommendations coding). Each school's report was attributed a number for identification purposes and the theme data across all 57 reports were aggregated and tabulated. Illustrative paraphrased and abbreviated extracts from the 'recommendations' sections of the reports were included to illustrate and supplement the data (see Appendix 4, Tables; 13, 14, 15, 16, 17).

Strand 3: Investigation of how school context appears to influence principals' professional practices for the imperative of Indigenous education.

This strand of investigation involved analysis of the coded data from strands 1 and 2 (see Appendices 2 & 4) to identify patterns of commended or recommended professional practices associated with identifiable school context descriptors for schools in the study.

There are 183,000 Indigenous students in Australia's 9,400 primary, combined and secondary schools (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013). Indigenous students are most often a minority cultural group within their school's student population, irrespective of the size of the school and its location. Indigenous students are recognised as being educationally disadvantaged (ACARA, 2013b). It is evident "that geographic, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics matter when explaining Indigenous education participation and achievement" (Biddle & Cameron, 2012, p. 31). Approximately 60% of Indigenous students complete 12 years of schooling compared with 84% of all students, regardless of Indigenous status (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The following contextual variables were therefore identified as being highly relevant to this study:

- Type of school: 3 school types were identified, i.e. primary, secondary or combined (ACARA, 2016).
- Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) (ACARA, 2013b)

- Indigenous students: Indigenous students' enrolment as a percentage of total school enrolment.
- Total enrolments: Number of students enrolled in the school.
- Location: Four possible locations were indicated i.e. metropolitan, provincial, remote, and very remote as determined according to the Schools Geographic Location Classification Scheme (ACARA, 2016).

Each of the review reports included contextual information that broadly described the context in which the school operates. This contextual information was accessed from *My School* (ACARA, 2014a) by the reviewers and included in the 'Dare to Lead' report for each school. The contextual information for these variables for each school was recorded prior to the de-identification of the school and the subsequent attribution of a report identifier number to each report. Exemplar contextual data sets are included in the de-identified sample reports (see Appendices 2 and 4).

School type

The 57 school reports comprised 27 primary schools, 15 combined schools and 15 secondary schools. The coded data of professional practice domains and categories from the commendations and recommendations in the reports from the three school types was tabulated to display distributions of practices across the school types (see Appendix 5: School context data, Tables 18 & 19). The tables were used to identify similarities and differences between the school types, leading to investigation and analysis of how school type appears to influence principals' professional practices for the imperative of Indigenous education.

Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)

An ICSEA of 1000 is the mean score of ICSEA values for all schools in Australia; higher index scores indicate increasing socio-educational advantage (ACARA, 2013b). ICSEA, as a contextual factor influencing principals' professional practices, was investigated through comparative analysis of the reports from two groups of schools, the most advantaged and the least advantaged. The 12 most advantaged schools of the 57 schools in this study, all with ICSEA scores higher than 1050 formed a group, as did the least advantaged group of 12 schools with ICSEA scores less than 900.

For the schools in the two groups, the coded data of professional practice domains and categories (see Appendix 2, Tables 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12; Appendix 4, Tables 13, 14, 15, 16 & 17) were aggregated and tabulated to display distributions of all commendations and recommendations (see Appendix 5: School context data, Table 20). The tabulated data were used to identify patterns, similarities and differences in the practices between the least advantaged schools and the most advantaged schools. The primary data sources were then revisited to refine understandings and identify patterns of practice in the two groups of schools.

Indigenous student enrolment

The percentage of Indigenous student enrolment in the school as a contextual factor influencing principals' professional practices was investigated through analysis of the reports from two groups of schools. A group of seven schools in the study had Indigenous student enrolments that were more than half of the school's total enrolment. A second group of twenty two schools had Indigenous student enrolments that were between zero and 5% of the school's total enrolment. The coded data from the commendations and recommendations in the reports from both

groups were reviewed and analysed. The primary data sources were also revisited to refine understandings and identify patterns of practice in the two groups of schools.

School size

For the purposes of investigating school size as a contextual factor influencing principals' professional practices I developed three categories of schools from the 57 schools in the study. Small schools were defined as schools with enrolments less than 150. Middle sized schools were defined as schools with enrolments between 600 and 749 students, and large schools as having enrolments greater than 1200 (see Appendix 5: School context data, Table 21). An enrolment differential of about 600 students exists between small schools and middle schools and between middle schools and large schools, providing opportunity for analysis of differences in principals' practice attributed to school size. Three schools in the middle of each enrolment band were selected for analysis:

Small schools: School identifiers, 13-02 (e[4]=55); 12-05 (e=64); 14-06 (e=102)

Middle schools: School identifiers, 12-25 (e=664); 12-01 (e=714); 14-07 (e=722)

Large schools: School identifiers, 13-22 (e=1294); 13-23 (e=1304); 13-06 (e=1338)

The coded data from the commendations and recommendations in the reports from these schools were reviewed and analysed. The primary data sources were also revisited to refine understandings and identify patterns of practice in the two groups of schools.

[4] e = enrolment

Location

The location of the schools in this study was identified from the “My School” website prior to attributing an identifier to each of the schools. Four possible locations were indicated i.e. metropolitan, provincial, remote, and very remote as determined according to the Schools Geographic Location Classification Scheme (ACARA, 2016) (see Appendix 5: School context data, Table 22).

The coded data from the commendations and recommendations in the reports from all remote and very remote schools in the study were reviewed and analysed. Data from four randomly selected metropolitan schools (12-09; 12-19; 13-10; 14-01) and four randomly selected provincial schools (12-01; 12-11; 13-03; 13-21) were also analysed. The primary data sources were revisited to refine understandings and identify patterns of practice in the four groups of schools.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In a manner consistent with the organisation of the previous chapter, three strands of investigation, aligned with the three focusing research questions for this study, provide the framework for this chapter.

Strand 1 outlines the analysis, findings and conclusions that respond to the question: What current professional practices are supporting Indigenous education?

Strand 2 outlines the analysis, findings and propositions from the study that respond to the question: What professional practices might school principals initiate to improve Indigenous education?

Strand 3 outlines the analysis, findings and conclusions from the study that respond to the question: How does school context appear to influence principals' professional practice for the imperative of Indigenous education?

Strand 1: Investigation of current professional practices that are supporting Indigenous education.

In seeking to understand the professional practices that are supporting Indigenous education I analysed the 'commendations' sections of the 57 review report documents. The 'commendations' identify valued practices supporting the education of Indigenous students in the schools. Categories of practices within five professional practice domains were classified and patterns identified across the 57 schools in the study (see Appendix 2, Tables 8, 9, 10, 11 & 12). I organised my reflective analysis of the data and findings stemming from the analysis by using the five professional practice domains as headings. Conclusions arising from the investigation of what current professional practices are supporting Indigenous education complete this section of the chapter.

Analysis: Leading teaching and learning

Principals' leadership of teaching and learning in their schools is primarily focused on the importance of Indigenous students' engagement and participation in the life and activities of the school. The practices enacted by principals appear to be multi-layered with attention given to the school as a whole, to Indigenous students as a group and to them as individuals.

Leading the school as a whole

Principals have been commended for development of the school's curriculum that includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. This is a practice that is identified as being aligned with the cross-curriculum priorities of the Australian curriculum (ACARA, 2013a). In a number of schools its implementation appears to be partial where only some classes actively consider Indigenous perspectives in some learning areas. However, there are indications that principals are engaged in planning for a whole-of-school approach, whereby inclusion of Indigenous perspectives exists in all learning areas, for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, and for all grade levels. In one school, the practice of allocating one focusing text with an Indigenous theme each term and for each year level was established. The apparent intention is for Indigenous students to perceive the curriculum as having beneficial social connections, thereby engendering engagement with the school and its opportunities for learning.

Principals' leadership of fostering productive relationships between teachers and students is frequently recognised in commendations across the spectrum of schools in the study. The relationships appear to be built around establishment of high expectations for Indigenous students, teacher encouragement, approachability,

caring and an appreciation that teachers intervene and take assertive action to ensure Indigenous students receive every opportunity to be successful learners. Highly proficient practice exists in some schools where the quality and extent of the relationships have extended into the wider school community. Included in the reports from these schools was feedback from parents indicating that they felt *"that the teachers were extremely approachable, taught their children well and dealt with their concerns effectively"* (13-07).

Leading Indigenous students as a group

Practices that specifically focus on the engagement of the school's Indigenous students as a group are also prevalent. Commonly, these are described as extra-curricular activities that bring experiences into the lives of students that they would otherwise be denied. Examples include activities such as breakfast programs, garden programs, Indigenous students' choirs and sports groups. Principals are also leading specific interventions for Indigenous student groups in their schools through establishing support and extension mechanisms such as homework centres, learning support units and tutoring programs.

Parents' regard for, and endorsement of, the quality of relationships between teachers, students and parents appears to generate confidence about the potential learning achievements of students. That confidence is reinforced through communicating the school's Indigenous students' learning data to parents. One report commented on how the school's *"Closing-the-Gap data demonstrated a consistent improvement over time"* (13-10); another noted the impressive achievements of Indigenous students in national testing, such as NAPLAN (ACARA,

2014b), indicating that they *"were very strong in relation to all students in the school"* (12-25).

Leading Indigenous students as individuals

There is also evidence of principals focusing on the learning needs and aspirations of individual students, such as through the development of personal learning plans and reward systems for each student. It is through these plans that each student's background and learning goals and needs are well known and understood by both classroom teachers and school leaders. Each personal learning plan also provides a valuable form of communication between the principal, teachers, parents and the student.

Findings: Leading teaching and learning

Principals' leadership of teaching and learning is primarily focused on developing and enhancing each student's engagement with the school and with the learning opportunities afforded through the school's teaching program. Fostering collaborative relationships between students, parents and families, and school personnel is of pivotal importance to this endeavour; furthermore, each student's personal aspirations and schooling are the focus around which these relationships are built.

Inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the core curriculum for all students is common practice in schools, albeit with variable degrees of proficiency. Indigenous students are afforded an opportunity to identify and engage with their cultural heritage as their learning progresses. For them, the curriculum is authentic and meaningful, therein enhancing the student's affiliation with 'what' is learned. Furthermore, relationships amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous students are

enhanced through mutual development of knowledge and understanding about Indigenous cultures.

Schools are engaging in practices that are aimed at personalising the schooling experience through development of a personal learning plan for each student. These plans variously focus on ‘what’ is to be learned (curriculum scope), ‘when’ it’s to be a focus (curriculum sequence), ‘how’ and ‘where’ will the school and its teachers plan and foster learning (teaching), and ‘how’ will the quality and extent of each student’s learning be understood and communicated (assessment and reporting).

Across the broad range of schools in this study, principals are engaged with extending developmental opportunities for Indigenous students within and beyond the classroom. Extra-curricular activities and learning support programs dedicated to Indigenous students are commonplace and exist to further Indigenous students’ engagement with the school. All of these programs and activities enhance students’ engagement with schooling and further development of their relationships with the people involved.

Analysis: Developing self and others

Through my analysis of the commended practices in the reports, I noted recurring reference to teachers’ feelings of inadequacy or uncertainty about their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture and a lack of confidence in their ability to teach Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum. I interpreted this as emanating from non-Indigenous teachers’ desire to ensure that their understandings and teaching of cultural matters were informed, appropriate and sensitive to local customs and understandings. Principals’ leadership of professional learning associated with cultural awareness and relationships is evident as a valued practice

commonly found in the schools in the study. Professional learning of this ilk empowers teachers to work with Indigenous students with appreciation of their familial and cultural identity and their strengths. Principals who involved local Indigenous community members in the professional learning activities were reported to have engaged in a powerful strategy that had impact, presumably through subsequent teachers' work with Indigenous students in classrooms.

A principal's facilitation of collaboration and interactivity across the entire staff group in a school is recognised as a supportive practice, resulting in the emergence of a professional learning community; therein is found the development of the school's capacity to enhance the teaching and learning of all Indigenous students in the school. Although indicated only in a limited number of schools, principals have engaged other staff in formal and informal leadership of the Indigenous education professional learning agenda in the school, thus developing the school's capacity to improve teaching of Indigenous students.

Findings: Developing self and others

Improvement in Indigenous education is possible through extending professional learning programs for all teaching and non-teaching staff. A "*systematic and ongoing learning program to familiarise all staff with local community structures, traditions and cultures"* (13-07) is required. Consultation with local Elders and community leaders in its development, and involvement of the local Indigenous community and supporting agencies in delivering the program, add value and authenticity. Principals' leadership of practice with this degree of collaboration between the school and the Indigenous community generates mutually appreciative relationships and confidence about the school's commitment to the education of Indigenous children. Staff systematically develop contemporary understandings of local community structures,

traditions and cultures and appreciate the familial connections of their Indigenous students within the community.

Analysis: Leading improvement, innovation and change

Principals' leadership of change for the betterment of education for Indigenous students appears to involve three significant facilitative processes. Firstly, they recognise the need for change and communicate their intent to lead in that direction. Secondly, they engage in the development of plans and strategies to identify what has to be done to resource and manage the change. Thirdly, they engage others in the initiation and management of the activities associated with the intended change and improvement. One report noted the '…role of the principal in driving Aboriginal education is strongly commended" (12-21).

Recognising a need for change

Principals' recognition of a need for change and communicating the essence of the new, intended direction to staff and the wider school community, appear to be essential for their leadership of Indigenous education. It is through the communication that others become involved, enthusiastic and motivated. I particularly noted statements about staff having an affirming disposition about the integrity and intent of the principal's leadership of change and the intended directions of change. Teachers commented on the *"role of the principal in driving Indigenous education"* (12-21) and were *"very positive about directions and the integrity of its intent"* (14-04). They valued and supported what was regarded as assertive, public and values driven leadership by principals involved in initiating change and improvement.

Planning for change

Planning for change and improvement in Indigenous education is apparent across schools in this study. Commended practice was found where *"the school has a published Indigenous education policy and substantial supplementary material and ideas to assist the implementation"* (13-08). Evident in reports was practice that integrated planning for change initiatives for Indigenous education into whole school strategic plans; sometimes the plans are informed by, and are subsidiary to, a school jurisdiction's overarching Indigenous education policy that is providing the school with direction in relation to Indigenous education.

Leadership of change

In my analysis of the documents I developed an understanding that there were primarily two forms of leadership of change for improvement of Indigenous education. One was where the principal's personal leadership of a change agenda appears to be central to its ultimate success. In one case this was described as *"hands-on nature of leadership"* where the *"executive staff walks the walk as well as the talk"* (12-22). The other was where the principals appointed individuals or a team of people to implement and manage change through a more distributed model of leadership.

Findings: Leading improvement, innovation and change

Improvement, innovation and change for furtherance of the school's Indigenous education program are significantly enhanced through overt leadership from the school principal. An ability to foresee the need for change, to communicate a vision for improvement and to engage others are essential capabilities for principals. Of specific importance when leading change that has impact on Indigenous students is

the need for principals to collaborate with community leaders and families. Generating clarity and awareness through communication about future directions and plans that may impact on students is an essential component of the practice.

Analysis: Leading management of the school

It is common practice for principals to engage in a range of activities to support the development of a constructive school culture. Frequently found in the reports' commendations are affirming comments that variously describe schools as having *"generally harmonious relationships; student-student and teacher-student"* (12-20) and as welcoming, supportive, a good place to be, happy and safe. These descriptors are regularly connected with commentary about students' willingness and enjoyment of attending school and engaging with its activities.

Anti-racism

Commentary about school culture in the reports is regularly associated with discussion about relational issues and particularly ensuring an absence of racism. Some schools were identified as places where there was no evidence of racism. Significant in these schools and those where racist behaviours are rarely experienced, is confidence amongst the students and parents that if racist incidences or behaviours *"were to occur, [they] would be dealt decisively by the teaching staff"* (13-11); furthermore, it is apparent that these schools have an alert mindset about racism and a proactive approach whereby staff educate and quickly challenge students when racist remarks or stereotyping are noticed.

Attendance

There is evidence that principals are engaged in developing strategies and programs that generate a cohesive and collaborative school culture. Particularly noteworthy

are programs and strategies to improve attendance rates of Indigenous students. In some cases there is a focus on monitoring and intervening at an individual student level; in others there is a programmatic approach where rewards systems are in place for all students. It appears that successful outcomes are being achieved in both circumstances.

Behaviour

Principals are also leading implementation of behaviour management programs where there appears to be clarity amongst students, parents and staff about the intended expectations and approaches of the program. Whilst not commonly found, there is an indication that schools are implementing programs that intentionally and actively develop valued behaviours and characteristics amongst Indigenous students, such as students' leadership capabilities and capacities.

Resource allocation

The practices involved in allocating and deploying a school's resources are ostensibly significant elements of principals' leadership of the management of their schools. There are indications in the reports that attention to the aesthetics of a school's physical environment is significant in terms of supporting a sense of belonging and pride in the school, thereby contributing to a positive school culture amongst its community.

Findings: Leading management of the school

Principals are focused on engendering an harmonious school culture and environment where Indigenous students feel welcome, safe and secure and where their parents and families are similarly confident in the cultural environment of the school. A range of policies, programs and activities are utilised and implemented to

support this endeavour. Programs that encourage attendance and support the physical wellbeing of students are commonly found, e.g. breakfast, sport, dance. Implementation of behaviour management programs that are communicated to parents, staff and students are foundational to the establishment of meaningful relationships and the desired school culture. Of particular importance for an Indigenous student is the inclusion of anti-racism programs in schools' teaching programs, and the active intervention of staff should incidences of racism occur.

Analysis: Engaging & working with the community

Principals are actively promoting and building engagement between their school and its community. Parents and caregivers are the main focus of attention. Two principals were active in extending attention to the wider school community – their *"strategic interaction with local community and health organisations [was seen to be] very positive"* (14-01). Engagement between school and community takes many forms, with the prevailing purpose of creating a culture of confidence, safety, respect and positivity in the school, by its community.

Collaboration and communication

My analysis frequently revealed how principals' practices influence the development of productive relationships between students, parents and teachers. Principals promote and build these relationships through engaging in multiple and diverse activities such as collaboratively developing personal learning plans for students, establishing parent drop-in centres in the school and making home visits. Communicating the work of the school to the community appears to be a significant activity and commonly attended to through media such as newsletters and school based information sessions for parents. Promoting the human face of the school through conducting school activities in and amongst the community, and by finding

ways and means of bringing parents into the day to day life of the school and its classrooms, appears to be appreciated by Indigenous communities. About half of the reports included commentary, attributed to parents, indicating their appreciation of transparent, open and honest engagement with the school; e.g. *"…yes, this is a good school…they listen to what you have to say…they try hard to help solve your problem"* (12-25). The outcome from principals' sustained activity in these practices is the development of mutually beneficial and trusting relationships that reinforce the standing of the school within and amongst its community.

Indigenous community involvement

Principals are engaged in formalising the school's relationship with its community. Some schools develop a formal document that describes operational protocols for the school and community partnership. Similarly, principals have involved parents and community leaders in developing a reconciliation plan for the school and its community. Principals are also actively engaging with formally established Indigenous education coordinating groups or reference groups of Indigenous people as established elements of the school's governance structures and processes; e.g. *"…strategic interaction with local community and health organisations is very positive, as is its emerging Reference Group"* (14-01).

In a few instances, the engagement of community has been facilitated by making the school's resources available to the wider school community. Establishment of a central homework centre in collaboration with other neighbouring schools is one example. Other practices, such as making space available as a parent drop-in centre and bringing into the school operational local health organisations and sporting clubs, strengthens the role and standing of the school within the community.

Indigenous employment

There is considerable evidence that engagement with community is enhanced when Indigenous people are employed in leadership roles and in roles that encompass programs and activities for all people in the school, regardless of Indigenous status. It was common to find in the reports reference to Indigenous staff members being role models for students, and being highly regarded by students, e.g. *"[t]he commitment and strengths of Aboriginal staff are a credit to the school community* (13-04).

Cultural acknowledgement

Most principals promote the school as being culturally inclusive and welcoming of Indigenous people. Principals attend to this variously by displaying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, acknowledging country at events and in publications, displaying cultural artworks and murals, and engaging in practices that affirm and honour local Indigenous culture and heritage.

Findings: Engaging & working with the community

Principals are intent on establishing and sustaining mutually respectful associations and relationships between the school, its Indigenous and non-Indigenous parents and families and its wider community. They are communicating the work of the school throughout the community and, through invitation and encouragement, bringing the community into the school's physical environment. They are including local Indigenous iconography in the school's physical environment as a means of demonstrating cultural respect for the local Indigenous community. A small number of schools are providing Indigenous people access to the school's buildings and environment, thereby furthering the school's role as integral to community cohesiveness.

Conclusions: Current professional practices that are supporting Indigenous education.

1. Principals' leadership of teaching and learning for Indigenous students is shaped by practices that prioritise students' engagement with schooling. Most evident are practices that engender fruitful relationships between students, teachers and the school, practices that develop a culturally inclusive curriculum and practices that personally support individual students.
2. Principals are initiating systematic and ongoing professional learning for all staff, focusing on knowledge and understanding of Indigenous culture(s), commonly involving Indigenous leaders and community, thereby enhancing relationships within the wider school community and teachers' relationships with Indigenous students.
3. Principals' assertive and engaging public activism within the school and the wider community is essential for successful achievement of change that engenders improved outcomes for Indigenous students.
4. Principals are proactively attending to Indigenous students' physical, social and emotional safety and wellbeing through implementation of school-wide programs and strategies that focus on attendance, behaviour and anti-racism.
5. Principals are engaging in practices that build collaborative relationships with parents and the local community. They do this to demonstrate the school's sustained commitment to furthering the education and development of Indigenous students and to engender confidence amongst the wider community in the school's ability to attend to the educational attainment and cultural wellbeing of students.

Strand 2: Investigation of professional practices that school principals might initiate to improve Indigenous education.

In seeking to understand the professional practices that school principals might initiate to improve Indigenous education I analysed the 'recommendations' sections of the 57 review report documents. The 'recommendations' suggest practices that have the potential to improve the education of Indigenous students. Categories of practices within five professional practice domains were classified and patterns identified across the 57 schools in the study (see Appendix 4, Tables 13, 14, 15, 16 & 17). In a manner consistent with the previous strand of investigation in this chapter, I have organised my reflective analysis of that data, and findings stemming from the analysis, by using the five professional practice domains as headings. The findings are best understood as professional practices that have been proposed to principals to improve their leadership of Indigenous education. I have therefore used the term 'propositions' for this strand of the investigation. Propositions arising from the analysis of strand 2 complete this section of the chapter.

Analysis: Leading teaching and learning

Engagement strategies

In overall terms the recommendations made to principals in this professional practice domain focus on initiating activities and strategies to better engage Indigenous students in schooling. Creating physical spaces within the school as culturally sensitive and safe environments where students feel that they belong and are comfortable is suggested, sometimes as spaces reserved for meetings amongst Indigenous students. Principals are encouraged to develop and implement programs that facilitate and support transition of students through stages of schooling with an intention of minimising disruption to their engagement with the schooling process.

Existing transition programs could be improved through inclusion of Indigenous people as mentors throughout the transition journey. Engagement of volunteer Indigenous adults and Elders, and peer support programs, are recommended.

Leading Indigenous students as individuals

The development of a personal learning plan for all Indigenous students is a frequently found suggestion. As indicated in the previous section of this chapter, there is evidence that many schools are already engaged with this process; however more proficient practices are suggested. A more active and collaborative engagement amongst students, parents and teachers in the development and subsequent monitoring of the plan is suggested as a powerful means of enhancing the relationships and communication between parents, teachers and students. Such a process *"ensures that all PLP's are proactive, aspirational, involving direct communication between teacher, parents and students…the process is more important than the product"* (12-07). The practice of developing and documenting personal learning plans and monitoring and reporting progress for each Indigenous student as they transition through the stages of schooling is suggested as advanced practice.

Leading curriculum

Principals are urged to conduct an audit of the school's curriculum with a view to establishing *"a scope and sequence with a term matrix developed to monitor [and] ensur[e] that Indigenous perspectives are not tokenistic or duplicated"* (13-07). The intention here is implementation of systematic teaching of traditional and contemporary Indigenous cultures and histories, thereby enhancing the cultural understandings of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Findings: Leading teaching and learning

Principals are advised to strengthen their leadership of teaching and learning in schools by focusing on the processes involved in establishing personal learning plans for all students. Highly proficient practice is identified as involving high levels of collaboration and communication between students, parents and teachers in establishment of the plan whereby *"trusting and honest relationships with parents, caregiver, extended family and student"* (12-05) are established. Processes for monitoring each student's progress against collaboratively established goals and learning objectives, collecting and analysing the student's learning achievement data, and revisiting and revising the plan through stages of transition through schooling are suggested processes. Principals are advised to ensure all Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students experience a curriculum that systematically provides learning opportunities that enhance understandings about Indigenous cultures and histories.

Analysis: Developing self and others

Cultural awareness professional learning

As found in strand 1 of this investigation, principals' leadership of staff professional learning to gain deeper understandings and awareness of Indigenous cultures and histories is recognised as important practice. At a fundamental level, it is suggested that staff be provided opportunity to reflect on their existing ideas and predispositions about Australia's Indigenous cultures and to develop a sound base-line awareness of their school's local cultural environment. More proficient practice is suggested, advising principals to implement…

> *"[s]ystematic and ongoing learning program[s] to familiarise all staff with local community structures, traditions and cultures…local Aboriginal community, health services, regional Aboriginal education team should be consulted and*

involved…local Elders should be consulted to assist with development and to support the school to better engage the Aboriginal community in the process" (13-07)

Albeit somewhat implicit whilst analysing the recommendations about professional learning, I developed awareness about the importance of principals leading this professional practice in a highly collaborative and interactive environment. Their intent needs to be on building the school's overall capacity to improve Indigenous education with all staff contributing to that endeavour, not just those directly responsible for teaching Indigenous students. Principals are encouraged to purposefully utilise existing strengths amongst the staff of the school to support others. This approach appears to be of particular importance in schools that have Indigenous people on staff where their cultural strengths can be of benefit to others as well as to themselves. I particularly noted the importance of principals being explicit about the responsibility that all staff members have for enhancing Indigenous education, and that deferring this responsibility to Indigenous staff should be avoided. There needs to be clarity and transparency about the role of all members of the staff.

Findings: Developing self and others

Principals are advised to prioritise involvement of local Indigenous people to engage all staff in systematic immersion in local culture, community structures and traditions. Principals are advised to build capacity amongst staff to *"move this knowledge into classroom space i.e. the effective use of [cultural] awareness knowledge in pedagogical change, leadership actions, curriculum, relationships building and community engagement"* (12-21). Professional development of staff to support their teaching of anti-racism programs is recommended as an essential component of these programs.

Analysis: Leading improvement, innovation and change

Principals are encouraged to engage in highly collaborative and inclusive processes to establish widespread involvement and understanding of the school's strategic directions and plans for the improvement of Indigenous education. Practice that involves staff, parents, community leaders and students in developing and implementing plans is recommended, therein generating transparency, clarity, awareness and mutual understandings throughout the wider school community about the plans and directions.

The recommendations pertaining to principals' leadership of change and improvement suggest approaches that have the potential to generate mutual endeavour amongst the wider school community. There is a recognition that distributing leadership responsibilities amongst staff, coupled with clarity about roles and responsibilities, contributes to motivating and inspiring people to actively pursue change and improvement. Principals are encouraged to personally engage with parents and the community in settings beyond the school's boundaries – *"[p]rincipal, make yourself available without formal invitations in community space on a regular basis. The engagement of community has to start with you, outside the school, without an agenda and a request hanging off every meeting"* (13-21). Development of widespread understandings about the school's activities and directions, and particularly its achievements, is intended.

Findings: Leading improvement, innovation and change

Principals are advised to adopt practices whereby *'the school's leadership team works with community to develop a philosophical approach, ethos and direction for (Indigenous education) in the school"* (12-01). Principals' sustained promulgation,

amongst the wider school community, of the imperative for continuous improvement in all that the school does is suggested.

Analysis: Leading management of the school

As is similarly the case in strand 1, a recommended focus for principals is the development of a positive, welcoming, safe and secure school environment and culture for all students and families. The school's activities to support students' wellbeing are central to the imperative of generating and sustaining a culture conducive to engagement and learning within the school.

Attendance and Engagement

Similar to the findings in strand 1, a number of strategies and activities are suggested to address attendance, engagement and wellbeing of Indigenous students. Addressing nutrition and hunger issues are common suggestions, as are other interventions such as before school sport programs tailored for Indigenous students. More far reaching suggestions involve leadership development programs and programs that engage Indigenous community members with activities to assist students further their understandings about their identity, heritage, family links, language and spirituality.

Resource allocation

Principals have responsibility to manage the effective and efficient use of the school's financial, physical and human resources. Recommendations associated with resource management primarily focus on physical resources, with suggestions that principals undertake audits and subsequent acquisition of teaching and learning resources that affirm students' cultural identity. Principals are also advised to ensure

that an appropriate representation of historical and contemporary Indigenous Australia is found in the school's teaching and learning resources.

Findings: Leading management of the school

First and foremost amongst the recommendations in this domain are practices that attend to the wellbeing of students. The practices range from attending to basic nutritional needs of students to advanced practices that proactively engage students in various personal development programs. Principals are urged to ensure students have the opportunity to understand and relate to their personal cultural heritage.

Analysis: Engaging & working with the community

Cultural acknowledgement

The recommendations about establishing the school's physical environment as a place where Indigenous people are welcome and respected and where Indigenous cultural heritage is honoured bear similarity to the cultural acknowledgement practices identified in strand 1 of this analysis. Strategies such as displaying Indigenous art and other icons such as totems and murals to the public outside of the school's boundaries, and also for the people who are present on a daily basis, are recommended.

Indigenous community involvement

Principals are encouraged to adopt more advanced practices to establish the school as a culturally enriched and welcoming environment through involving Indigenous people to a greater extent in the activities of the school. Suggested processes include individually inviting parents and local Elders to the school's important events and providing space for community meetings. Development and formalisation of a school and community partnership agreement is suggested.

Recommendations about establishing collaborative and productive relationships and partnerships with parents and community are omnipresent in the analysed documents and many demand highly proficient activity and practice by the principal. Principals are urged to establish the school as a central focal point for the community where the school facilitates the engagement of education, health and community development agencies, for the benefit of students and families. Also suggested is development of a resource talent register of local Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and agencies that could enrich the learning opportunities for students. The register could be made available to other local schools.

Indigenous employment

Employment of Indigenous people in schools is also recommended as benefiting students through the role modelling provided by these employees. Clarity and understanding of each Indigenous employee's role is emphasised, to ensure that all staff are accountable for the education of Indigenous students and that responsibilities are not deferred to Indigenous staff because of their race and cultural affiliations. Other practices are suggested to increase the numbers and frequency of Indigenous peoples' presence in the school, including visiting artists, performing troupes, sports coaches and successful Indigenous ex-students.

Findings: Engaging & working with the community

Principals are advised to involve parents and families in the life of the school and to extend the school's interactions and involvement with other agencies providing services to Indigenous people and their communities. Practices that lead to the evolution of the school as a multi-service centre for Indigenous communities are recommended as being worthy pursuits that have the potential to further the education of Indigenous students.

Propositions: Professional practices that school principals might initiate to improve Indigenous education.

1. Principals should initiate processes and practices that personalise the learning opportunities and experiences for each Indigenous student through collaborative planning processes amongst students, parents, caregivers and teachers whereby a personal learning plan is established for each student. Thereafter, teaching and learning should be aligned with the personal learning plan, with each student's progress monitored, recorded, and reported. The plan should be iteratively revisited and revised and accompany students as they undergo transitions through schooling.
2. Principals should develop and implement a school-wide curriculum that embeds Indigenous perspectives in a planned scope and sequence to *"ensure systematic teaching of Aboriginal cultures and histories, both traditional and contemporary, across all learning areas and all stages"* (14-03). Engaging local Indigenous people in curriculum planning is strongly advised.
3. Principals should engage in practices to foster the development of a professional learning community involving the entire staff of the school with the local Indigenous community to enhance the school's knowledge and understandings of Indigenous cultures, thereby enriching its capability and capacity to engage Indigenous students in productive learning.
4. Principals should involve the community, staff and students in the development of a whole school strategic approach for Indigenous education. A resultant Indigenous education plan for the school should be actively promulgated and disseminated by the principal, throughout the school community.

5. Principals should engage in practices that foster Indigenous students' physical, cultural and psychological wellbeing.
6. Principals should engage in practices that increase the permeability of the physical and virtual boundaries of the school so that Indigenous students are afforded opportunity to engage in learning opportunities in local significant sites and with Indigenous people in their classrooms and in the community.
7. Principals should lead development of relationships between the school community and other agencies to provide a range of services to Indigenous students and families.

Strand 3: Investigation of how school context appears to influence principals' professional practice for the imperative of Indigenous education.

In seeking to understand how school context appears to influence principals' professional practice for the imperative of Indigenous education, I analysed the review report documents through the lens of the school context variables identified for the schools in this study. The investigations focused on the type of school, its measure of socio-educational advantage (ICSEA), the percentage of Indigenous student enrolments in the school, its size and location (see Appendix 5: School Context data, Tables 18, 19, 20, 21 & 22). I have organised my reflective analysis of that data and the findings stemming from the investigation by using the school context variables as headings. Conclusions arising from this strand of investigation complete this section of the chapter.

Analysis: Type of school

My analysis of how the type of school influences principals' practice stemmed from the distributions of commendations and recommendations attributed to each of the school types, i.e. primary, combined and secondary (see Tables 18 & 19). The analysis therefore took into account principals' current practices and those suggested as being worthy of implementation in their type of school.

Leadership of teaching and learning is routine practice, or recommended practice, in primary, combined and secondary schools. As in strands 1 and 2, the practices include the provision of interventions and engagement strategies, development of personal learning plans and, to varying degrees, inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum. In one location, cooperation between types of schools was evident. The schools jointly established a homework tutoring centre for all students in the town, irrespective of their age or level of schooling.

Recommendations suggesting forms of collaboration between types of schools were found in several reports.

Principals' leadership of pedagogical practice and the development of quality relationships between teachers and students appears to receive more attention in primary and combined schools than in secondary schools. Explicit teaching and establishment of high expectations for all students is evident and principals are involved in monitoring students' learning outcomes data.

Establishment of a scope and sequence for including Indigenous perspectives across all curriculum areas either exists or is recommended practice in primary and combined schools. Principals in these schools are also engaged in auditing the learning resources in their schools with the intent of being more inclusive of Indigenous culture and heritage. There is minimal evidence of these practices in secondary schools.

Principals in all schools are leading staff development of cultural understandings pertaining to their school's local Indigenous community. A deeper layer of cultural awareness training is suggested for primary and secondary schools with enrolled Indigenous students whose traditional home is remote from the school. Most often, these students are boarding in the school's boarding facilities. Teachers in these schools benefit from development of cultural understandings associated with Indigenous students and their familial group, beyond the school's local Indigenous community.

Practices that focus on development of appropriate student behaviour, wellbeing and attendance are a more significant focus for primary school principals than their counterparts in secondary and combined schools.

Principals in primary and combined schools are actively engaging with the school's community and particularly with parents and caregivers. Generation of positive and trusting relationships between the school and its Indigenous community is evident, and in some cases nurtured and consolidated through establishment of formal structures such as advisory committees or Indigenous Education Coordinating Groups. Extending the interactions between school and community through involving other Indigenous agencies (e.g. health and social service) are also evident in some schools.

Leadership of the development of a school environment that respectfully acknowledges local Indigenous culture is evident across all three school types. Principals in all schools are also active in inviting local Indigenous people, especially Elders, into schools to provide opportunity for students to work with them in class and on cultural activities.

Findings: Type of school

Type of school is found to influence principals' professional practices. Principals in primary and combined schools are more directly engaged in curriculum planning, particularly in relation to a systematic inclusion of the teaching of Indigenous perspectives across all year levels in the school. These principals are also supporting teaching of Indigenous perspectives through acquisition of culturally appropriate learning resources aligned with the curriculum scope and sequence. Attention to these practices by primary and combined school principals is allied with the interdisciplinary curriculum design commonly found in these schools. Presumably secondary school principals defer leadership of the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives to learning area or subject leaders.

Primary and combined school principals are more actively developing collaborative relationships with Indigenous parents and communities, commonly formalising arrangements through establishment of agreements or protocols. Primary school principals are also implementing practices that improve attendance and whole school approaches that encourage appropriate and productive student behaviour, thereby strengthening relationships between students and teachers.

Analysis: Measure of socio-educational advantage (ICSEA)

My analysis of the influence of a school's socio-educational status as a contextual factor influencing principals' professional practices was conducted through comparative analysis of the reports from two groups of schools, the most advantaged and the least advantaged. Data pertaining to each group were used to identify patterns, similarities and differences in practices (see Appendix 5: School context data, Table 20).

In the least advantaged schools, principals' leadership of development of personal learning plans for Indigenous students is a prioritized practice. The importance of the personal learning plan being a positive, strength based and aspirational statement of intent that also acts as point of referral for monitoring students' achievements and development is emphasised with all stakeholders. Principals in these schools develop and maintain comprehensive sets of data for Indigenous students' academic achievement, behaviour, attendance, retention, post-school destination and mobility.

More so than in the most advantaged schools, principals in the least advantaged schools appear to be engaged in leadership of teaching approaches that engage effectively with Indigenous students. School-wide pedagogy that provides students with outdoor learning activities and experiential opportunities that utilise the cultural,

academic, social, recreational and sporting strengths of the community is commonly found in the least advantaged schools.

The level of socio-educational advantage appears to have little or no influence on principals' practices associated with their leadership of curriculum development in their schools. Across the range of schools proficient practice is indicated as taking a whole school approach to the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum. However, teaching Indigenous languages, most often through a passive methodology such as using and displaying classroom labels and school signage in local community language, is a common practice in the least advantaged schools.

Principals in both the least advantaged and more advantaged schools are providing opportunity for teachers and support staff to collaborate and share practice associated with Indigenous education in their schools. However, principals' leadership of professional learning to assist staff to develop deep understanding of local Indigenous culture is more commonly found in the least advantaged schools.

Adopting a positive behaviours curriculum framework and a consistent, school-wide approach aimed at improving student wellbeing, attendance and developing student behaviours is evident or suggested for the least advantaged schools. Creation of a school environment free of racism by implementing a school-wide approach that actively, consistently and promptly attends to instances of racism, should they occur, is evident or suggested.

Principals in both groups of schools appear to be implementing practices that exhibit the school as being culturally respectful. However, principals in the least advantaged schools are more engaged in a range of practices that establish and build positive and collaborative relationships between the school, its staff and parents and

caregivers than principals leading the most advantaged schools. Establishment of school and community partnership agreements and protocols to guide interactions between the school and its community are commonly found practices.

Employment of Indigenous persons and engagement of Indigenous volunteers and past students in the least advantaged schools is widely recognised as assisting the development of relationships between the school and community. Notwithstanding the considerable expertise that these people bring to the schools, these practices generate a sense of normality about Indigenous people and their culture in the life of schools.

Findings: Measure of socio-educational advantage (ICSEA)

The socio-educational status of a school does influence principals' practice. Principals in the least advantaged schools are prioritising practices that focus on establishing and sustaining quality relationships between the school and its community, particularly with parents and families of Indigenous students. Engagement with Indigenous parents, families and community assets is apparent through practices that attend to personal learning plans for Indigenous students, attendance and student wellbeing, behaviour, anti-racism, curriculum development and pedagogical practice.

Principals in the least advantaged schools prioritise the development of staff understanding of local Indigenous culture and heritage and they actively seek involvement of Indigenous people in the daily operations of the school.

Practices that include Indigenous perspectives across all curriculum areas and year levels are found or recommended as priority for implementation in all schools, irrespective of level of socio-educational advantage. All principals strive to ensure that their schools are culturally respectful and welcoming.

Analysis: Indigenous student enrolment

My analysis of how Indigenous student enrolment influences principals' practice was framed through analysis of the primary data (commendations and recommendations) in two groups of schools in the study, i.e. a group of schools with less than 5% Indigenous enrolment (22 schools) and a group of schools with more than 50% Indigenous enrolment (7 schools).

Schools with less than 5% Indigenous enrolment

Principals in these schools appear to be focusing their attention on provision of learning support programs and mechanisms that support students with their learning and development, e.g. mentoring, homework centres and leadership development. The importance of supporting all Indigenous students, irrespective of ability, and through personal learning plans is emphasised in the report recommendations.

Inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum, across subject areas and all year levels, for all Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, is commonly found or recommended in these schools, being seen as contributing to cultural understandings and cohesive relationships amongst students. Practices and programs that promote an anti-racism ethos are found in these schools.

A commonly found recommendation for principals in this group of schools was their leadership of professional learning, with support from Indigenous people, for all staff to enhance their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures and histories, thereby building capacity and confidence to appropriately and sensitively engage in teaching Indigenous perspectives in all areas of the curriculum.

Although Indigenous students form a relatively small group in these schools, principals are engaging in strategic planning activities with most staff that focus on

the ongoing development of Indigenous education in the school. It appears to be often the case that these planning activities are generative of strategies that jointly attend to the learning needs of both Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students. This is particularly evident with planning activities that are designed to assist Indigenous students with gaining a deeper understanding of their cultural identity and coincidentally assist non-Indigenous students to develop their awareness and understanding of Indigenous cultures.

Schools with more than 50% Indigenous enrolment

As was found in the analysis of schools with least socio-education status, principals in schools with high Indigenous student enrolment are prioritising implementation of consistent, school-wide approaches for improving student wellbeing and attendance. Development of student behaviours and school environments free of racism are prioritised. An appreciation that the students were cared for, happy, confident and respectful, with quality relationships between staff and students, was commonly reported for these schools.

Principals in these schools were commended for their attention to the personal learning needs of each student and on engaging and working productively with the school's community and, in particular, with parents and caregivers.

The principals in these schools engage in practices that generate understandings and beliefs that the schools are inclusive of local Indigenous culture and are culturally welcoming environments, providing students with a sense of identity and pride in their school. Principals are prioritising practices that build and sustain positive, collaborative and productive relationships with the local Indigenous community. Establishment of school and community partnership agreements and

protocols to provide communities with an effective, meaningful and collaborative voice, thereby formalising commitments between schools and their local Indigenous communities, is recommended. Developing schools as full service community centres, bringing together all of the Indigenous service agencies to provide targeted and coordinated assistance to Indigenous students and their families, is recommended.

Findings: Indigenous student enrolment

In schools where Indigenous students make up the majority of the enrolment, principals are prioritising practices that focus on engaging and working with their school's community. Principals are attending to the development of mutually respectful and collaborative relationships between the school and the community with the intent of fostering appropriate student behaviours, their wellbeing and school attendance. Establishment of formal protocols or agreements that substantiate the essence of the relationship between the school and community is recognised as highly effective practice.

In schools where the Indigenous student enrolment is in a minority (less than 5% of the total enrolment) principals are leading practices that are more focused on individual students, rather than practices that are implemented across the entire school. Provision of learning support programs and personal learning planning for Indigenous students is common.

Analysis: School size

My investigation of how school size influences principals' practice was framed through analysis of the primary data (commendations and recommendations) from three sample schools in each of three identified groups of schools, i.e. small schools with enrolments less than 150; middle sized schools with enrolments between 600

and 749 students; large schools with enrolments more than 1200 students (see Appendix 5, Table 21).

Small schools (enrolment < 150)

Principals in small schools have a significant focus on engaging and working with the school's community and primarily with parents and caregivers of students. The review reports recognise the schools as '*warm and welcoming'* (13-02), the principal as having a *'positive operating style'* (13-02), and staff as approachable and having *'great relationships with the whole school community'* (12-05). The schools all have extensive iconography that acknowledges local Indigenous people, their culture and heritage. Principals are encouraged to build on these foundations to deeply engage members of the community in activities and initiatives within the schools and classrooms.

To a variable extent and manner, these schools have established the school as a community centre that brings together a range of Indigenous service agencies that provide targeted assistance to Indigenous students and their families. Attending to students' physical and mental health wellbeing through various programs is common.

Principals are encouraged to initiate and further develop interventions such as learning support opportunities, tutoring and Indigenous language programs to support Indigenous students' wellbeing and their engagement with their education. Programs that support students' transition between schools and levels of schooling, and career awareness programs, are encouraged.

The recommendations in the review reports for small schools encourage principals in these schools to further engage in practices that lead development of teaching and

learning in their schools. Principals are encouraged to develop a comprehensive set of aggregated data for Indigenous students to enable regular monitoring of their academic achievement, behaviour, attendance, retention and mobility; therein providing the principal and staff the opportunity to respond to the personal learning needs of each Indigenous student.

Middle schools (enrolment 600 – 749)

Middle sized school principals are leading Indigenous education in *'a strong, supportive and collaborative fashion with a high priority given to improving life-long outcomes'* for Indigenous students (12-01). A common finding across middle sized schools is that the inclusion of Indigenous content into classroom learning areas is inconsistent, as is the existence of a clear, whole-school picture of its Indigenous education focus. Principals are advised to consider the question of what all students should know and understand about Indigenous Australia. Development of a curriculum map is commonly recommended.

Programs and practices to engage and extend Indigenous students' education exist in these schools. These programs appear to be locally developed and nuanced to attend to student's interests; examples such as garden clubs, goal cards, boys club and visits to Indigenous students in neighbouring schools are found.

The middle sized schools are endeavouring to develop and embed personal learning plans for all Indigenous students and to disseminate the plans to all teachers within the school. Indigenous students' transition to other schools is supported through sharing the plans and a *'wealth of information with the destination schools to ensure that individuals' positive journeys continue'* (12-25).

Engagement with local community and parents is formalised in these schools through an Indigenous Education Committee or through externally funded programs that provide resources to activate engagement with the community. Principals are encouraged to focus attention on the sustainability of the connections with community, particularly with the externally funded programs, given the often intermittent funding of the programs.

Staff in these schools are engaged in professional learning to enhance their understanding of Indigenous history and cultures. Principals of middle sized schools are acknowledging local Indigenous cultures and demonstrating respect for the local community through practices such as flying Indigenous flags and displaying local Indigenous art and artefacts in the school's precinct.

Large schools (enrolment > 1200)

Indigenous students and parents perceive the school *'as a very good place to be in terms of the support and encouragement they receive from their classroom teachers. They are confident that teachers encourage them to do their best'* (13-23). This climate is also, in part, enhanced through the employment of Indigenous people in some schools: '*There is a high degree of confidence from students, parents and staff in their work'* (13-23).

As was the case in schools with small Indigenous student enrolments, principals in the large schools are advised to develop a whole school approach to the systematic inclusion of Indigenous content in the curriculum. Whilst implementation of personalised learning plans for Indigenous students is evident, a more comprehensive engagement with students and parents in the formulation of personal learning plans is suggested. Intervention programs to support individual students

exist, commonly in the form of learning support facilities, weekly pastoral care group for Indigenous students, and visitation programs to other schools with small Indigenous enrolments.

The large schools appear to have a relatively limited approach to cultural acknowledgement and celebration. A more proactive approach to emphasise the importance for all students of learning about Indigenous Australia is recommended. Principals are advised to extend engagement of Indigenous people, possibly through employment, to bring their rich cultural intelligence to the fore in shaping directions and assisting staff with their understanding of Indigenous cultures.

Findings: School size

In both small and middle sized schools principals have a more visible presence in the wider school community than in the larger schools and, because of the size of a school's community, are able to readily establish personal relationships within the community, and especially with parents. Descriptors such as open, collaborative and supportive describe the leadership of principals in small and medium sized schools. They prioritise practices that establish the school as a culturally welcoming environment and connect the activities of the school with the local community.

Analysis: School location

My investigation of how school location influences principals' practice was framed through analysis of the primary data (commendations and recommendations) from four identified locations of schools, i.e. metropolitan, provincial, remote, and very remote small schools. Primary data from all remote and very remote schools were analysed. Data from four randomly selected provincial and four randomly selected metropolitan schools were also analysed (see Appendix 5, Table 22).

Very remote schools

Similar to small schools, a feature of the very remote schools is the strength of the relationships within the schools and with the wider school communities. Parents, staff and students of the schools express confidence in the leadership of the principal, describe the school as a happy place to be and express confidence in the education that the children are receiving. Teachers are regarded as approachable, committed and supportive, and parents believe that their concerns are dealt with appropriately and in a timely manner.

Principals were advised to build on the strengths of these relationships to engage parents and community members more in initiatives within the school. Formalising engagement through a school and community partnership agreement, thereby generating a deeper level of engagement of parents and community, was suggested.

The principals of these schools communicate with parents about the learning achievements of students, and about the school as a whole, particularly about literacy and numeracy; therein creating an affirming view of the schools' effectiveness by parents and the wider community. Further development of personal learning plans that emphasise student aspirations and identify the support required for each student to be successful was identified as an area for improvement.

Principals' leadership of professional learning for staff is evident in these schools, particularly for the purpose of developing staff understanding of local Indigenous culture. Involvement of local Indigenous people in these processes is evident and beneficial to the school's relationship with its community. Employment of Indigenous people is also commonplace in these schools and is perceived as an indicator of the school's commitment to improving learning outcomes for Indigenous students.

Indigenous employees were commonly described as being caring, committed, supportive and significant assets for the schools.

Remote schools

The remote schools exhibit clear similarities to the very remote schools. The strength of the relationships within the schools and with their communities is evident. There appears to be scope for development of personal learning plans for all Indigenous students; thereby furthering relationships between Indigenous students, teachers and parents through sharing understandings about each student's status of learning and their aspirations.

Principals are leading comprehensive professional learning programs for staff focusing on cultural awareness and understandings of local Indigenous heritage. Conducting an audit, and development of a database of community resources of Indigenous expertise including information regarding local cultural sites, was suggested as a means of enhancing engagement with the community, supporting the aforementioned professional learning activities and the teaching of Indigenous perspectives to all students.

The work of the Indigenous education workers in the schools is commended by students, staff and parents. These workers were described as being caring, committed, supportive and *"a credit to the whole school community"* (13-12). Extending Indigenous workers' roles to assist students to further develop their understanding about their cultural identity was identified as worthy practice.

Provincial Schools

Principals in these schools are advised to further develop their leadership of Indigenous education by collaborating with the wider community, students and staff

to develop a commonly understood and publicly disseminated approach, ethos and direction for Indigenous education for their school. Principals are advised to elevate the promotion of Indigenous education in the wider community. Formation of Indigenous education advisory groups and parent groups is recommended as a means of ensuring sustained engagement.

The provincial schools have variously implemented tailored programs, commonly coordinated by Indigenous staff, to enhance engagement and wellbeing of Indigenous students, e.g. leadership development, tutoring, local Indigenous language classes and sport. An area noted for attention is development of students' understanding of their cultural identity through facilitating time for students to work with a variety of Elders and those from the community who have Indigenous knowledge.

Occasional incidences of racism and race-based language, impacting on the daily life of Indigenous students, were reported in these schools. Principals were advised to develop and implement an anti-racism strategy into the school's curriculum, accompanied with a whole school approach to deal with incidents in a timely manner when they occur.

Staff in provincial schools are engaged in ongoing professional learning to improve their knowledge and understandings of local community structures, traditions and cultures of Indigenous people. Elements of cultural acknowledgement and celebration, albeit limited, are evident in the life of these schools.

Metropolitan schools

Principals of metropolitan schools are publicly promoting Indigenous education in their communities, and schools' leadership teams are observed to be committed to

enabling their schools' Indigenous education plan. The schools are regarded as welcoming and positive places and parents indicate that their students are positively supported. Racist behaviours towards Indigenous students appear to be minimal and infrequent.

The schools have developed protocols and structures such as Indigenous education reference groups, often involving local community and health organisations, to enhance parent and community engagement with the schools. Opportunities for Indigenous students to interact with Indigenous students from other schools are provided, and elements of cultural acknowledgement involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous students are evident in the life of the schools.

There is a positive outlook amongst staff in these schools about embracing professional learning with Indigenous parents and community members to build their own understandings and to support Indigenous students. Consideration of Indigenous perspectives is apparent in some classrooms but commonly limited to subject disciplines of Religion, History and English.

Personal learning plans for Indigenous students exist in these schools, albeit with some opportunities to further develop the relationships associated with the ongoing development of the plans. The plans are providing school leaders of Indigenous education with a *"very good knowledge of individual Indigenous students"* (14-01), thereby providing a *"powerful model for others [staff]"* (14-01) as the school supports Indigenous students in these complex metropolitan schools.

Findings: School location

School location has significant influence on the principals' profile and visibility as the leader of Indigenous education in the community. Principals in remote and very remote schools are well known, have significant presence and visibility in the wider school community, whereas principals' influence in metropolitan and provincial locations tends to be more remote and contained within the school.

In remote and very remote locations, the relationships between the schools and the community are consistently regarded as being constructive and mutually appreciative. Principals are engaging in communication practices that are acknowledged as being interactive and generative of high levels of trust between the school and parents, families and community. In these locations the school is integral to the community and is understood to enact whole-school practices for the betterment of Indigenous education in the school.

Principals in provincial and metropolitan schools prioritise identification, development and implementation of practices that are tailored more to the individual needs of Indigenous students. Personal learning plans for each student, and practices that involve monitoring and supporting individual students on a needs basis, are common.

Conclusions: How school context appears to influence principals' professional practice for the imperative of Indigenous education.

My analysis and associated findings about how school context influences principals' professional practice indicates 'tendencies' of influence, rather than definitive or absolute descriptions of the influence of any of the context variables investigated in this research. The following trends were identified:

1. Principals of primary and combined schools give priority attention to the establishment of collaborative relationships with Indigenous parents and the wider school community compared with their counterparts in secondary schools. They particularly encourage and engage in shared communication with parents about students' wellbeing and understandings about the school's culturally inclusive curriculum.
2. Principals of low socio-educational advantaged schools and schools with high enrolments of Indigenous students give priority attention to forming constructive relationships within the school, and with parents and the school community. They also prioritise development of staff capacity to appreciate and understand local Indigenous culture and heritage, and practices that attend to the wellbeing of students.
3. In small and medium sized schools principals' are prioritising practices that are focused on generating a harmonious school culture, where quality relationships within the school are nurtured and supported with programs and processes that generate a school community free of racism. Practices that engender student wellbeing are commonplace in these schools. Principals in larger schools utilise greater resource capacity to engage more Indigenous people in school activities.

4. In schools where Indigenous students are a significant minority within the student cohort, and in provincial and metropolitan schools, principals focus on developing personal learning plans for each Indigenous student and establish practices and programs to support student success.
5. In remote and very remote schools principals exhibit visible and high profile leadership of Indigenous education, whereas in provincial and metropolitan schools principals are more likely to distribute leadership of Indigenous education amongst other leaders in the school.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and interrogate the research findings documented in chapter 4, with the intention of identifying emergent themes and thereby developing a theoretical framework about leadership of Indigenous education in Australia's schools. The chapter commences with an explanation of four lenses used to identify themes and frame the development of theory. Each of the five professional practice domains used throughout this study were then interrogated through these lenses. Emerging themes were identified, leading to the development and documentation of my theory about leadership of Indigenous education.

Framing theory development

The primary data sources for this study are the commendations and recommendations found in the "Dare to Lead" reports. The commendations recognise professional practices that each school principal is already doing well to advance the education of Indigenous students in their school. The commendations describe "the leader's way of being in practice" (Giles et al., 2012, p. 12). On the other hand, the recommendations suggest practices that the principal might initiate, develop, or improve to enhance their leadership of Indigenous students' education. The recommendations indicate ways and means of "becoming" or "re-forming a leader's way of being" (Giles et al., p. 12). The ongoing formation of a principal's leadership for the purpose of improving Indigenous education might be shaped by building on the strengths identified in the commendations and through the uptake of practices indicated in the recommendations; that is, through both "being and becoming" (Giles et al., 2012, p. 12).

The commendations and recommendations from the 57 schools in the study were analysed, with findings and conclusions documented in the previous chapter in this

thesis. In summary, the documentation in chapter 4 provides an overarching view of principals' current practices *supporting* Indigenous education, and practices that might *improve* Indigenous education. Chapter 4 also provides an indication of how school context might influence principals' practice as they lead Indigenous education in schools. This study therefore provides an opportunity to further develop understanding about the professional practices of school principals that are most likely to lead to improvement of Indigenous education in schools throughout Australia. With this intent in mind, the analyses, findings, propositions and conclusions in chapter 4 were interrogated to support the development of a theoretical framework about school based leadership of Indigenous education. Four potentially overlapping lenses were used to guide and shape the interrogation.

Leader-follower lens

The first lens used was the conceptual framing of leadership as being "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2010, p. 3). "In its simplest form [leadership] is a tripod – a leader or leaders, followers and a common goal that they want to achieve" (Bennis, 2007, pp. 3-4). Through this lens the school principal is cast as the leader, and staff, students, parents and wider school community as followers. This conception of leadership is exemplified in the *Australian Professional Standard for Principals* (AITSL, 2011), used in this study to describe five domains of school principals' professional practice.

A version of the leader-follower ontology, referred to as "authentic leadership" also guided analysis using this lens (Northouse, 2010, pp. 205-240). Authentic leadership is where leaders' intentions are aligned with a higher purpose or conviction and where their actions are commonly based on their values.

> [A]uthentic leadership [is] a pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development. (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008, p. 94)

DAC ontology lens

The second lens is described as "a more integrative ontology of leadership" (Drath et al., 2008, p. 635). Drath et al. (2008) suggested an alternative to describing leadership as leaders and followers pursuing common goals by proposing a theoretical framework shaped around "direction, alignment and commitment" that they refer to as the "DAC ontology" (p. 636). They argued that the leader and followers theoretical model of leadership was limited in its ability to understand leadership in "increasingly peer-like and collaborative" contexts.

> [They] propose[d] an ontology in which the essential entities are three *leadership outcomes:* (1) *direction*: widespread agreement in a collective on overall goals, aims and mission; (2) *alignment*: the organisation and coordination of knowledge and work in a collective; and (3) *commitment*: the willingness of members of a collective to subsume their own interests and benefit within the collective interest and benefit. (Drath et al., p. 636, emphasis in original)

The DAC ontology opens consideration of how leadership is formed in a school community. Leadership is recognised as a shared endeavour where, through ongoing interaction, individuals and networks can develop collective beliefs about how to achieve shared outcomes. "Such individual and collective beliefs are called *leadership beliefs.* Leadership beliefs are assumed to be the major determinant and justification for practices: Practices are the beliefs put into action." (Drath et al., 2008, p. 642, emphasis in original). Leadership is conceptualised as iterative, developing and being re-created through the shared activity amongst individuals and groups.

Social capital lens

The third lens was found through consideration of the nature and essence of the schools in this study, all being derivations of western models of schooling adopted in Australia, with principals and teaching staff predominantly drawn from non-Indigenous communities. Much of the discourse in the reports forming the data used in this study is about school leaders' development of relationships with Indigenous people and furthering the school community's understanding of Indigenous culture(s). Such a discourse potentially sets up an adversarial dichotomy that is "built in large part around the idea of informing and sensitizing" non-Indigenous staff and community members about Indigenous students' culture and heritage (Wilson, 2014, p. 5). Relationships can also be fostered by informing and sensitizing Indigenous people about western schooling, its curriculum, pedagogy and its operational and social context. Therefore, the fourth lens drew on theoretical understandings about "social capital" that "refers to social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance and trustworthiness" (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003, p. 2).

"The central premise of social capital is that social networks have value" (The Saguaro Seminar: Civic Engagement in America, 2000). This research focused on the activities of principals that build social capital, "the factor that integrates the various influences on the success and life chances of [Indigenous] children and young people" (West-Burnham, Farrar, & Otero, 2007, p. 31). Ideas about partnerships, reciprocity and collaboration were considered, given "Indigenous communities are asserting the right to negotiated agreements that are accountable 'both ways'" (Ma Rhea, 2015, p. 45). Putnam and Feldstein's (2003) seminal work

about “bridging social capital” through “networks that embrace difference” (pp. 2-3) was considered, as was discourse about cultural hegemony, the concept where one culture, either intentionally or otherwise, exerts inordinate influence on how another cultural group should conduct themselves (Duncombe, 2012). The characteristics of leadership supporting the development of social capital from a school principal’s perspective further informed the interrogation of the data through this lens (West-Burnham, Farrar, & Otero, 2007, pp. 121-136) .

Lived experience lens

The fourth lens used to further interrogate the data was phenomenological, utilising my lived experiences as a school principal in three distinctly different school contexts. I have first-hand experience of being a principal in non-metropolitan and metropolitan schools, in leading schools with primary and secondary student enrolments, and of leading Indigenous education in these schools. My first appointment as a principal, with tenure of 4 years, was to a provincial secondary school having an enrolment of around 750 students with about 10% of the enrolment being Indigenous students. For the following 7 years, I was principal of a metropolitan, combined school with around 1400 primary and secondary students. Indigenous student enrolment in this school was less than 5% of total enrolment throughout my tenure. My third school leadership role was as founding principal of a senior secondary school enrolling students in their final 3 years of secondary education. As principal of this school for its inaugural 7 years, I was charged with the responsibility of leading development, implementation and evaluation of innovative curriculum and pedagogical practices in science and mathematics education for the purpose of informing improved practice across the school system. Indigenous

student enrolments in this school varied from year to year, without exceeding 5% of total school enrolment.

In a manner consistent with the framing of previous chapters, this section of the study uses the same five domains of professional practice as headings. I used the four lenses to interrogate each of the five domains of professional practice. The interrogation focused on "how", "in what way or manner" or "by what means" should the practices, and categories of practices therein, be led and enacted for the benefit of Indigenous students (Macquarie University, 1981, p. 861). Fontana and Frey (2005, p. 698) define *how* as "the constructive work involved in producing order in everyday life". My focus was therefore on a search for the way, manner or means through which the practices that are constructive (helpful, beneficial, fruitful, useful) for the education of Indigenous students are led. Emergent themes were identified and documented for each of the five professional practice domains.

Leading teaching and learning

The most significant findings, conclusions and propositions from analysis of the data about principals' leadership of teaching and learning were: firstly about development and implementation of personal learning plans for each Indigenous student; secondly about inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the school's curriculum; and thirdly about provision of extra-curricular activities for Indigenous students.

Personal learning plans: Product and process

A personal learning plan is a document outlining future educational aspirations, goals and activities for a student. The development and implementation of the plan "is more important than the paper product" (12-05), being a conduit for "*establish[ing] trusting & honest relationships with parents, caregiver, extended family & student*"

(12-05). Putnam (2000, p. 362) identified characteristics of “familiarity, tolerance, solidarity, trust, habits of cooperation, and mutual respect – across the racial divide” as contributing to leadership for the generation of ‘bridging’ social capital. Similarly, an interpersonal perspective is evident through the authentic leadership lens whereby “[a]uthenticity emerges from the interactions between leaders and followers” and leadership “does not result from the leader’s efforts alone, but from the response of followers” (Northouse, 2010, p. 207).

Inherent in the processing of the plan is the establishment of a discourse between each student, their teachers, and their parents and caregivers; therein is developed an understanding for all about “how people share work in collectives” (Drath et al., 2008, p. 636), and about their common interest and commitment to a student’s future direction and their education. Each student is supported by a collective, a group of people, or a network that is unique to that student.

From the perspective of the DAC leadership ontology, the personal learning plan provides carriage for finding direction and alignment amongst the collective on the goals, aspirations and aims of a student. A vision of success and a culture of high expectations are thus created (Goodwin, 2010, p. 7). Implementation of the plan is found through the student, school staff and parents designing, organising and participating in learning opportunities aligned with the plan. I am of the view that ongoing monitoring and review of the activation of the plan, and the student’s learning progress, is of significant importance. It is through the monitoring and reporting activities that relationships within this collective (student, parents and teachers) are further developed. “[M]eaning is *generated and sustained* in the context of ongoing relationships (not just *communicated* in relationships) and is negotiated across time” (Drath et al., 2008, p. 640), thus creating social capital.

Indigenous perspectives

The promulgation of the "Australian Curriculum" (ACARA, 2013a) for all Australian schools prioritised the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures) in a school's curriculum. ACARA states,

> The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures priority provides the opportunity for all young Australians to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, deep knowledge traditions and holistic world views…[It] has been developed around the three key concepts…The first key concept highlights the special connection to Country/Place by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and celebrates the unique belief systems that connect people physically and spiritually to Country/Place. The second key concept examines the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' culture through language, ways of life and experiences as expressed through historical, social and political lenses...The third key concept addresses the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies. (ACARA, 2013a, p. 1)

Leadership for the inclusion and implementation of Indigenous perspectives across all learning areas and engaging all year levels was identified as a priority for many schools in this study. All Indigenous and non-Indigenous students should be afforded opportunities "to gain a deeper understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing" (ACARA, 2013a, p. 1). I noted that some reports in this study included commentary about assisting Indigenous students' development of their knowledge and understanding of their cultural heritage. Inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum can provide an Indigenous voice and a presence, albeit under-represented, in what is essentially a curriculum "discussed within the context of western knowledge systems" (Ma Rhea, 2015, p. 9) and derived from western education precedents. However, it does provide opportunity for Indigenous students to see themselves within the curriculum (Letts, 2016, p. 196).

I formed a view that the focus of this curriculum discourse is mainly about the "idea of informing and sensitizing [non-Indigenous] people" about Indigenous peoples' histories and cultures (Johnson & Wilson, 2014, p. 3). The same intent was observed in all school types, although variations in executing inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum existed across school types. These variations were generated by the differences in the structural organisation of the curriculum and teacher deployment found in the different school types. School type and leadership of curriculum development via inclusion of Indigenous perspectives are "mutually interacting interdependent elements" where the context element, school type, appears to "play a constitutive or generative role in leadership" (Drath et al., 2008, p. 646). A comprehensive inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in a school's curriculum does contribute to bridging social capital through developing cultural understanding with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

Extra-curricular activities

Many schools in the study either provided or were encouraged to provide extra-curricular activities and programs, most often exclusively for Indigenous students, to respond to issues associated with school attendance and engagement. Indigenous people are regularly involved in shaping and delivering the programs and activities, thereby creating opportunities for Indigenous students to interact within their own cultural group, with Indigenous role models, and engage in activities that connect with local cultural sites. I believe these programs can contribute to overcoming Indigenous students' feelings of alienation associated with "the deeply embedded Eurocentricity at the educational cultural interface" of schools (Purdie, Milgate, & Bell, 2012, p. 154).

Emerging themes

Three themes arising from the discussion of the findings about principals' leadership of teaching and learning were identified:

- Developing and nurturing collaborative relationships throughout the school community is central to leadership of teaching and learning.
- Each Indigenous student's learning goals, aspirations and cognitive development provide essential guidance for the leadership of teaching and learning.
- Leadership that facilitates curriculum and learning experiences that acknowledge and are aligned with local Indigenous beliefs and cultural heritage supports the cultural and spiritual wellbeing of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, thereby building bridging social capital.

Developing self and others

The findings, conclusions and propositions from the analysis of the professional practice domain associated with principals' development of self and others were mainly about advancing staff knowledge and understandings about Indigenous cultures and histories and often with an emphasis on the local Indigenous community. Extensive and sustained interaction between local Indigenous people and the staff of the school for this purpose was indicated.

Drawing on my personal experience as a school principal I am of the view that developing the expertise of staff is profoundly important for building a school's capacity for improvement and is consistent with research about effective school leadership (Robinson, 2007). Firstly, the focus on advancing the professional expertise of teachers is essential to a school's ability to attend to the contemporary

educational needs and opportunities of its community. Secondly, it enhances teachers' confidence to teach students with reliability and integrity, not only in relation to the content of an area of learning, but also through having cognisance of the personal learning needs of each student. Thirdly, it demonstrates the school's commitment to its priorities, in this case Indigenous education. It is consistent with the core concept of authentic leadership whereby leaders "work with followers, fostering positive self-development" Walumbwa et al. (2008, p. 94). "In general, all research suggest[s] that building teacher confidence in Indigenous matters [is] more effective where the Principal was highly sympathetic" (Ma Rhea, 2015, p. 124).

The data also refer to school staff engaging with each other as a collective, or as a learning community to build a school's capacity, capability and mutual understandings about future directions for Indigenous education. Collaboration of this ilk leads to coherence of action throughout the staff, with their work with Indigenous students, their parents and the wider school community. This collaborative and coherent activity appears to be significant in the synthesis of the form of leadership proposed in the DAC ontology within which there is "an opportunity for learning in the collective and for possible changes in beliefs and practices", that results in "the organization and coordination of knowledge and work" (Drath et al., 2008, p. 647).

Indigenous involvement

Consultation with, and involvement of local Indigenous Elders and other community members and agencies supporting Indigenous people is recognised as being essential to the richness of professional learning programs for school staff. This involvement of Indigenous people affords the staff of the school an introduction to and connection with the community and, as such, establishes a vicarious relationship

and future means of communication and interaction with the community. The Elders and community leaders act as respected and trusted facilitators generating growth in confidence in the school's ability to appropriately and beneficially educate their children. Elders and community leaders form networks within schools alongside pre-existing and interrelated networks within the community. Indigenous leaders act as couriers of cultural consciousness through the school gate, facilitating staff understanding of Indigenous culture, in both an aesthetic and anthropological sense. "Culture, in this sense, is what allows [teachers] to navigate [their] world, guiding [their] ideas of right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, just and unjust, possible and impossible" (Duncombe, 2012, p. 1). Elders and community leaders can revisit their community based networks with enhanced understandings of a school's endeavours with and for Indigenous students. It is the reciprocity found in this exchange that generates leadership that creates social capital through securing high levels of "civic engagement" (West-Burnham et al. 2007, p. 131). From the perspective of Indigenous parents, caregivers and community members a mediated, trusting relationship is formed, based on a belief that their children and their culture are understood and respected.

Emerging theme

The following theme arising from the discussion of the findings about principals' leadership of development of self and others was identified:

- Leadership of Indigenous education is founded on building cultural consciousness throughout the school community.

Leading improvement, innovation and change

The findings, conclusions and propositions from the analysis of this professional practice domain are significantly aligned with the leader-follower leadership ontology. Practices that position the principal as a central figure in communicating and advocating for change within the school and with the school community are found throughout the data for this study and particularly in the reports for remote and very remote schools. The practice of developing and widely promulgating an Indigenous education plan for the school is regularly suggested as a means of fostering mutual understanding about directions and goals.

Principal….leader of change

School principals are often directed to initiate and lead change for improvement of school outcomes that are pre-described through various performance measures and accountability constructs explicitly assigned in their employment contracts. Principals generally attend to these expectations and directives from employers and school governing authorities through variations of a change management methodology known as organisation development, i.e. “a planned organization-wide effort, managed from the top, to increase organization effectiveness and health through planned interventions…” (Hornstein, Bunker, Burke, Gindes, & Lewicki, 1971, p. 346). The data and findings in this study are consistent with this model where the principal is invariably cast as the leader of change. However, I do make the observation that the primary data sources used in this study were formed at the request of each principal seeking advice about ways and means of improving their leadership of Indigenous education in their school. That advice, in the form of the commendations and recommendations in the reports, does speak directly to the principal as the leader.

Notwithstanding this construction of principals as leaders of change, the data in this study do provide some insights into how principals should conduct themselves in the activities associated with initiating and managing change and improvement in their schools. The necessity for principals to communicate, collaborate, and network within the school and in the wider school community, is regularly found in the commendations and recommendations. Principals are advised to lead with openness and candour, to make themselves "*available without formal invitations in the community space on a regular basis. The engagement of community has to start with [them], outside the school, without an agenda and a request hanging off every meeting*" (13-21). Fostering "organic, participative, open, iterative and evolving" (Sterling, 2001, p. 80) processes leading to sustainable change and improvement for Indigenous education is intended.

In summary, the data analysed in this study indicate that principals have a vested and pivotal role as leaders of change for the improvement of Indigenous education. Principals have responsibility and authority to lead change, that authority being "a function of knowledge and competence as well as role" (Hornstein et al., 1971, p. 349). It appears essential for principals to possess capabilities to generate "open, sophisticated networks engaging in rich conversations and dialogue [that] are elemental to securing understanding and commitment" in the wider school community (West-Burnham et al., 2007, p. 165).

Emerging theme

The following theme arising from the discussion of the findings about principals' leadership of improvement, innovation and change was identified:

- Principals play a significant role in promulgating change in their school. They do this through effectively communicating and by facilitating collaborating networks where information exchanges are prevalent.

Leading management of the school

The findings, conclusions and propositions from the analysis of this professional practice domain were mainly about attending to systems and processes that establish efficiency and effectiveness around matters such as student attendance, management of student and teacher behaviour, along with the physical, cultural and psychological wellbeing of students.

Principal….leader and manager

Throughout my time as a school principal I consistently found there to be blurred edges between what I considered to be leadership, and what I did that was regarded as management. This quandary became more prominent with the emergence of a mantra that promoted the principal's role as primarily one of instructional leadership, with management activities being deferred or delegated to other personnel in the school. Northouse (2010, pp. 10-11) indicates that management "produces order and consistency" and leadership "produces change and movement" with a recognition that the two constructs overlap, albeit that "[b]oth processes involve influencing a group of individuals toward goal attainment".

The data used in this study provide evidence of order and consistency in relation to the culture found in the schools, e.g. "*satisfactory relationships; student-student and teacher-student*" (12-20). Schools have in place, or are advised to adopt, strategies and processes to attend to racism should it occur, whereby "*teachers are quick to pick up and appropriately challenge any occasional [unspoken or spoken] remark by*

students that could be regarded as stereotyping or indeed racism" (14-05). Practices and routines exist in these schools to monitor and optimise student attendance and behaviour, again with a view to producing order and consistency and providing structure for the running of the school. I also make the observation that these practices are implicitly about leadership that builds relationships and establishes a cohesive culture within the school, akin to the concept of alignment described within the DAC ontology. These practices and routines support establishment of "broad agreement" and "shared understanding" whereby "the work of individuals and groups [in the school] is generally coherent with the work of other individuals and groups" (Drath et al., 2008, p. 647). Fostering a cohesive school culture is also about establishment of reliability and trustworthiness within the social networks and relationships that exist between students and students, and students and staff. The ethos and culture within a school is somewhat intangible; however, it is emergent, shaped by the interactions amongst the people, groups, relationships and networks found within the school. The interactions shape what becomes understood as the acceptable norms and mores of the school community. Social capital is generated and contributes to the heritage and identity of the institution over time.

Emergent theme

The following theme arising from the discussion of the findings about principals' leadership of management of the school was identified:

- Prioritising Indigenous students' physical, mental, cultural and spiritual wellbeing is essential for the establishment of a school ethos and culture that is fully inclusive of Indigenous students.

Engaging and working with community

Findings, conclusions and propositions from this professional practice domain were about the development of collaborative and mutually respectful relationships between the school and its Indigenous community and the agencies that are integrally involved with Indigenous people and families.

Cultural inclusivity

Principals of schools in this study demonstrate an awareness of the westernised cultural hegemony that is a dominant feature of their schools. The schools are founded on curriculum, pedagogy, language, architecture and systems, all derivations of western culture that form a dominant schooling ideology and ecosystem. Principals are observed wanting to modify elements of the school ecosystem to attend to local needs. The inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum is an example of a modification discussed elsewhere in this chapter. The inclusion of local Indigenous culture in the school is typically attended to through the incorporation of a range of Indigenous artefacts and iconography (Indigenous flags, art, murals, and gardens) into the school's physical environment. Principals are creating a visual environment that seeks to demonstrate respectfulness and sensitivity about Indigenous culture and heritage, and a school that is welcoming of Indigenous students and their parents. Schools are further shaping their school ecosystem by increasing the presence of Indigenous employees in the school, or through volunteers or visitors assisting with teaching or supporting Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. A broader understanding about Indigenous culture and heritage emanates from these practices within the school, leading to growth in social capital supporting the education of Indigenous students.

The discussion in the preceding paragraph is about generating social capital within a school's boundaries. Principals are also involving themselves on a broader scale through engaging in processes and practices beyond the physical boundaries of the school that seek to further generate social capital for the betterment of the education of Indigenous students. Practices such as making home visits, conducting meetings in community settings, and engaging the school in significant community-based cultural events and activities, are all connective, relationship building strategies and activities. These activities establish and build networks that "increase the density of contact and support" whereby "community building benefits from a sense on the part of participants that they are part of something important and growing" (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003, p. 277). It is through these network building activities that "bridging social capital" is initiated, grown and sustained and is regarded as being "especially important for reconciling democracy and diversity" (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003, p. 279). Authentic participative inclusion of Indigenous communities in the education of their children is thus found.

Leadership for the generation of social capital through various means is found across the schools in this study. Building social capital appears a more significant focus of leadership in the least advantaged schools, smaller schools, rural and remote schools, and in the schools where Indigenous students form the majority of the enrolment. These schools tend to have more defined and identifiable communities with existing and interrelated networks where principals and staff can engage in more personalised "[g]rass-roots, bottom up approaches that knit together local knowledge within a national framework" (Reconciliation Australia, 2016b, p. 5).

Emergent themes

Three themes arising from the discussion of the findings about principals' leadership of teaching and learning were identified:

- A form of intercultural leadership is evident (D'Arbon et al., 2011). It is leadership that establishes the school as a community beacon, emphasising the value, agency and culture of Indigenous people.
- Relationships founded on reciprocity, trust, cooperation and civility provide opportunity to connect and engage Indigenous families and communities with their children's schooling experiences.
- Social capital is higher in settings where the Indigenous community is more identifiable and interconnected.

Theory: Leadership of Indigenous Education…. no boundaries to learning

My interrogation of 'how' principals and others led implementation of professional practices resulted in the identification of a number of emerging themes that are documented in the preceding sections of this chapter. Four significant characteristics of leadership of Indigenous education stemmed from the emerging themes:

- Leadership that demonstrably values the culture, agency and beliefs of Indigenous people.
- Leadership that actively develops collaborative relationships and networks based on reciprocity, trust, cooperation and civility.
- Leadership that places Indigenous students' physical, mental, cultural and spiritual wellbeing at the centre of the school's activities.
- Leadership that is sustained and guided by humanistic endeavour and attends to professional educational leadership practices in a holistic manner.

These four characteristics informed the development of a theoretical framework for future leadership of Indigenous education which has the following elements: principles, vision, context, role of principal, professional practice networks and leadership.

Principles

The principles that provide the foundations for the theoretical framework have been developed following the analysis of the data in this study, development of findings, conclusions and propositions from that analysis, and the emergent themes emanating from the interrogation of 'how' professional practices are constructed. The principles outlined in the *National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy* (Education Council, 2015) and the *National Framework for Rural and Remote Education* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2001) were referred to and adopted in part.

I identified four principles. Firstly, leadership that establishes high expectations for, and with, each Indigenous student, in each school setting, is essential. Secondly, leadership that is grounded through respectful acknowledgement and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and heritage is foundational to the generation of relationships that benefit Indigenous children and young people. Thirdly, educational outcomes for Indigenous children and young people are enhanced through engagement and collaboration between schools and local Indigenous communities. Fourthly, education of Indigenous students can be enhanced by school leadership that counters schools' westernised cultural hegemony and produces bridging social capital in the school and in its community.

Vision

I have adopted the vision endorsed by Australia's Education Council and found within its strategy for the education of Indigenous children and young people (Education Council, 2015). The *vision* for my theoretical framework for future leadership of Indigenous education is:

School leadership that ensures "[a]ll Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people achieve their full learning potential, are empowered to shape their own futures, and are supported to embrace their culture and identity as Australia's First Nations peoples" (Education Council, 2016, p. 2).

Context

My theorising for the development of the framework was cognisant of four significant contextual matters. Firstly, Indigenous students are enrolled in all school types and locations and are mostly represented as a minority cultural group in their school. Secondly, Australia's schools are modelled on western education constructs with nearly all educators having a non-Indigenous cultural background (Howard, 2007; Anderson, 2011). Thirdly, through schooling, Indigenous children and young people are located "betwixt and between" the Indigenous culture of their community and the culture of their school, i.e. "simultaneously belonging to two or more social or cultural groups" (La Shure, 2005). Fourthly, Indigenous students' participation and achievements in school education are generally lower than those of non-Indigenous students.

Role of Principal

Principals possess authority vested through their appointment to the position, and as such are the leading figures in their schools and communities. For the benefit of the education of Indigenous students, that authority is best utilised as "protagonists" who

“understand and emphasise the centrality of relationships and interpersonal connections” (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003, p. 269). Protagonists act with authenticity, consistently displaying their humanism, passion and compassion, a strong sense of purpose, and sustained commitment to establishing relationships that assist others in pursuit of common goals associated with the education of Indigenous students. These attributes, capabilities and qualities are similar to those attributed to “value leaders” by Hallinger (2011, pp. 137-138) and are foundational to “the relational and contextual nature of leadership” whereby “[L]eaders should be living and working *with* people rather than seeking to own or control them” (Giles et al., 2012, pp. 13-14, emphasis in original). Principals as *protagonists* are at the centre of this theoretical framing of leadership of Indigenous education (see Figure 1). They are principals that lead by example and with strength and conviction (Blackley, 2012).

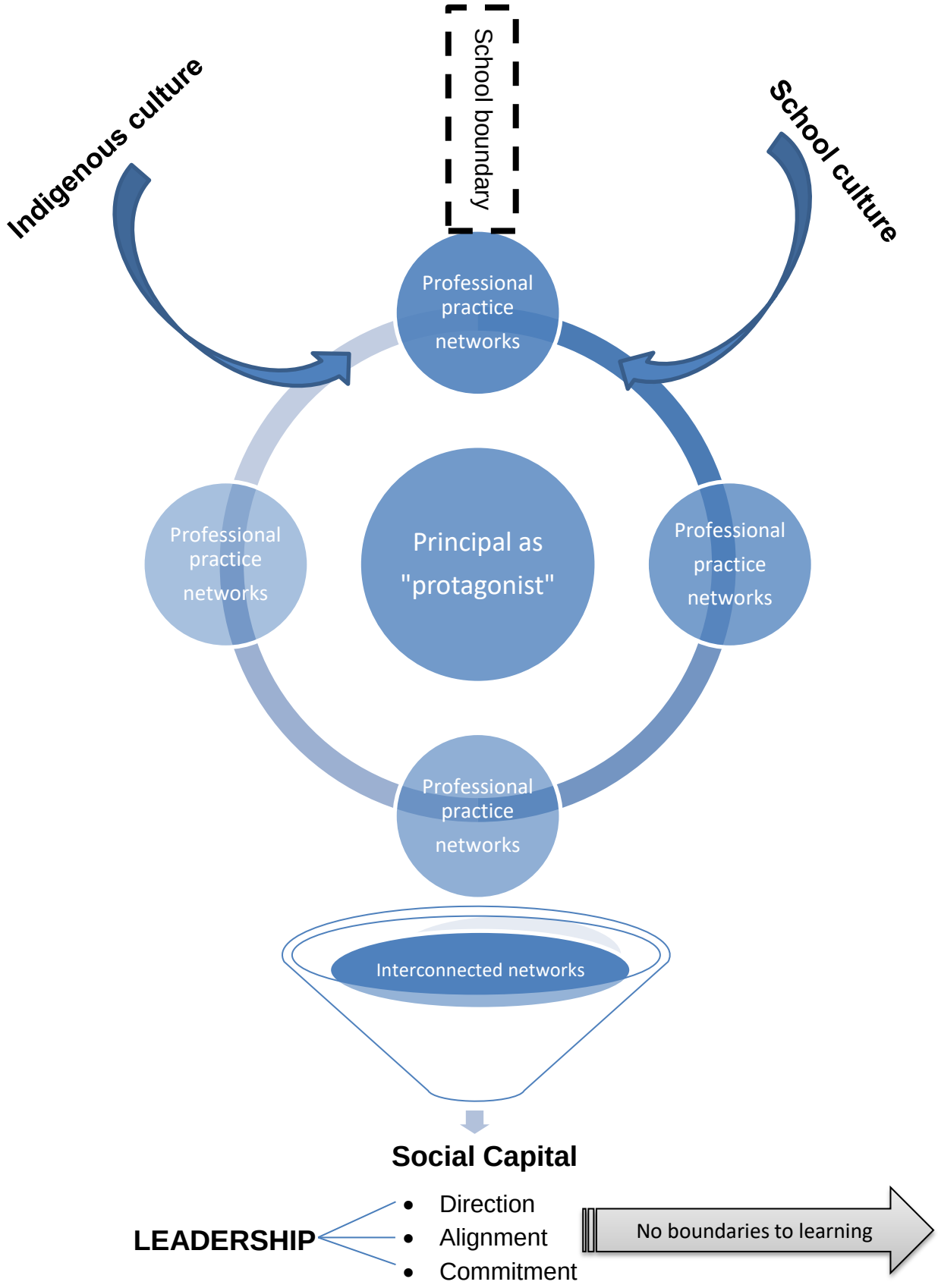

Figure 2. Leadership of Indigenous Education….no boundaries to learning

Professional practice networks

The actions of those in leadership in this theoretical framework "are understood as *collective enactments* such as patterns of conversation or organizational routines that include and transcend individual behaviour" (Drath et al., 2008, p. 645, emphasis in original). The technical, professional practices (e.g. curriculum design, pedagogical practice, personal learning plans) that shape the educational ecosystem of schools are often, but not always, catalysed by the principal acting as a protagonist.

Practices identified in this study that provide beneficence to Indigenous education were categorised within the five professional practice domains described in the principal standard (AITSL, 2011). All practices involve the engagement of networks, each contributing to bridging social capital through facilitating exchange within the school and between school and community, between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures, and between educators, students and parents. The relationships formed in these networks "must not only recognise but *privilege* Aboriginal ways of being and knowing, be culturally based, and be collaborative in both purpose and practice" (Lowe, 2012, p. 23, emphasis in original). Networks are interrelated and interconnected and, as such, create permeability across the cultural and physical boundaries that can be found between schools and their Indigenous communities. Indigenous culture permeates school and school culture permeates Indigenous culture (see Figure 2).

Leadership of Indigenous education in schools is best developed through a "social capital strategy" that creates interrelated networks as "virtuous circles of human connectivity that are basic to the organization's effectiveness" (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003, p. 270). Communication, collaboration, reciprocity, civility and development of

mutual trust by “yarning up, not down”, characterise these networks (Burchill et al., 2006, p. 52). In my theoretical framework, professional practice networks are created around professional practices such as those identified in this study (see Table 7). These professional practice networks build bridging social capital by “fostering social [and cultural] ties that reach across social [and cultural] divisions” (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003, p. 279).

Leadership

The four characteristics of leadership of Indigenous education identified in the introduction to this theoretical framework are vitally important to the achievement of quality educational outcomes for Indigenous students. The characteristics are founded on a set of beliefs and a moral perspective that guides leadership behaviour: “a belief is a disposition to behave; a practice [leadership activity] is the playing out of that disposition” (Drath et al., 2008, p. 644).

Leadership in this framework is organic, iterative, incremental and cumulative; therein building social capital. “[L]eadership has been enacted and exists wherever and whenever one finds a collective exhibiting direction, alignment and commitment” (Drath et al., 2008, p. 642). Direction is found throughout the generated social capital when there is a shared understanding of, and valuing of, what is aimed for. Alignment is found through coherence of the work within and across multi-stranded, interrelated and interconnected networks. Drath et al. (2008, p. 647) indicated that commitment occurs when individuals “subsume their own efforts and benefits within the collective effort and benefit”.

In this theoretical framework, commitment will also be extant through “reconciling democracy and diversity” amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous members of the school community (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003, p. 279). Beneficent leadership for

optimising the education of Indigenous students will exist when there are no boundaries to their learning. The following, and final chapter of this thesis discusses implications for principals' praxis and for Indigenous education policy emanating from my research and the development of this theoretical framework. Suggestions about future research for furthering understandings of the nature and essence of leadership for the benefit of Indigenous students' education are also included.

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH SUMMARY & IMPLICATIONS

Summarising

As I embarked on this research I intended to uncover knowledge and understandings about the professional practices enacted by school principals that support the education of Indigenous students and what might be done to improve their practices and to develop some understanding about the application and nuancing of their practices in particular school contexts.

However, my investigative journey through the data used in this study uncovered multiple, often overlapping practices that describe the complexity of the educational leadership and work of school principals. These professional practices provide a technical and educational understanding of *what* principals do, in this case with a focus on the education of Indigenous students. The conclusions and propositions found in chapter 4 indicate the professional practices of principals that are most likely to support the education of Indigenous students; furthermore, potentially beneficial enhancements to practices are indicated with insights into how principals might shape their practices in response to the context of their school.

Through further considering the conclusions and propositions about principals' practices I identified a number of emergent themes from the data that led to the development of a theoretical framework, "Leadership of Indigenous Education". Significantly, the themes and the framework provide insight into *how* principals' leadership might be constructed for optimising the education of Indigenous students.

I have identified four elements of principals' leadership of Indigenous education that are most significant and should be priorities for principals in schools with Indigenous students. Principals' leadership should be founded firstly on an unrelenting focus on nurturing collaborative relationships that respectfully engage with Indigenous parents

and communities; secondly, consciously valuing Indigenous culture and the agency of Indigenous people; thirdly, through taking affirmative action to attend individually to the personal educational priorities for each Indigenous student; fourthly by prioritising and sustaining practices that build social capital associated with Indigenous education, and especially in alignment with the context of their school.

Implications: Praxis, Policy and Further Research

Praxis

I use the word 'praxis' here as referring to the processes applied by principals as they enact, embody, or realize theories, practices, or skills in their role of leading Indigenous education in their schools. This research activity was organised and framed around five domains of professional practice and a number of categories identified therein. The conclusions drawn from Strand 1 of the research indicate that principals are variously leading Indigenous education across all five domains of practice. Praxis at higher levels of proficiency, commonly indicating furtherance of the scope and scale of practices, were identified and proposed via Strand 2 of the investigation. In summary, there is scope for improving principals' leadership of Indigenous education in each of the five domains of professional practice.

Several examples of ways to influence and elevate principals' praxis emerge from the research and from my development of a theoretical framework for leadership of Indigenous education. The framework provides opportunity for principals to move away from the traditional orthodoxy commonly ascribed to the role of the principal, towards a more holistic leadership, "grounded in notions of professional responsibility" and driven by moral purpose (Cranston, 2013, p. 129). Firstly, the practice of including Indigenous perspectives in the school's curriculum through a

planned scope and sequence, across all year levels and subject disciplines, is potentially of benefit to all Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Secondly, principals are urged to build relationships and social capital through extending their personal, and their school's, engagement and partnerships with the Indigenous people in the community; furthermore, involvement of Indigenous people in the life of the school and in classrooms is recommended as highly proficient practice. Personalising the learning program and schooling experience for bettering each Indigenous student's mental, cultural, physical and spiritual wellbeing provides a further example.

The research findings also foreshadow opportunities for principals to nuance their practices to better align with the context of the school. This research indicates that the more proficient practices associated with engaging with Indigenous communities are easier to achieve in smaller, rural and remote communities and in schools with primary school enrolments. Principals in larger, metropolitan and provincial schools with secondary school enrolments, and schools with relatively small Indigenous student enrolments, are encouraged to adopt more personalised practices focused on the networks and relationships associated with individual students.

Policy

Australia's most recent Indigenous education policy statement, *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy* was promulgated in September 2015 (Education Council, 2015). "It sets the principles and [seven] priorities that act as a framework to guide jurisdictions in developing and implementing localised policies and actions to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people" (Education Council, 2015, pp. 3-4).

Given the findings from my research and the subsequent development of a theoretical framework for leadership of Indigenous education I suggest three adjustments to the strategy endorsed by the Education Council (2015).

Firstly, the strategy 'encourages' development of partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities whereas this research indicates it is *imperative* for schools to establish partnerships with Indigenous parents and communities "based on mutual respect, mutual resolve and mutual responsibility" (Rudd, 2008).

Secondly, this research highlights the value of personalising the education program for each Indigenous student, therein providing opportunities to attend to each student's wellbeing and development. Inclusion of personalising the education program for each Indigenous student as a discrete priority in *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy* is recommended (Education Council, 2015).

Thirdly, the strategy recognises the importance of culturally competent teachers who can appropriately incorporate Indigenous perspectives into their teaching. This research indicates that cultural competency is enhanced at the local level through building social capital in the school community that facilitates mutual understandings about Indigenous culture and the 'culture' and education provision of western schools. *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy* should prioritise the *'protagonist'* role of principals for this purpose.

Further Research

Whilst undertaking this research I have frequently arrived at junctures where other 'big questions' have come to mind. I believe that two important opportunities for further research emerge as priorities.

Firstly, this study has involved an interpretive analysis of documents written by non-Indigenous people for (mostly, if not all) non-Indigenous principals[5]. The reports were written following visits to schools and interviews with principals, teachers, parents and students, many of whom identified as being Indigenous. I am a non-Indigenous person with extensive experience and expertise grounded in a western education paradigm. I have undertaken the research from these standpoints. Replication of the research by an Indigenous researcher, with some background in school leadership, might enhance analysis and interpretation of the viewpoints offered by Indigenous people as the school reviews were conducted and the reports subsequently documented.

Secondly, this study resulted in findings and development of theory that indicated *how* a school principal leads and develops leadership capacity in the school community and its Indigenous people is of utmost importance. Research that investigates the characteristics, relational attributes, values and behavioural qualities of school principals that support building of social capital for the benefit of Indigenous education is recommended. A deeper understanding of these qualities could add value to the leadership generated by principals who are currently leading Indigenous education in schools, and inform the preparation of educators about to undertake the role of principal in a school with Indigenous students.

[5] The reports used in the study do not identify principals as Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Anecdotal information indicates that there are fewer than 100 Indigenous principals in Australia's 9,250 schools.

Epilogue

> The sheer diversity of children, their families, local schools and the wider communities serving schools in myriad capacities is a positive factor in enabling opportunity for Indigenous leadership and ownership of their children's' education to emerge through a mix of empowerment and enabling activities. These activities need to be promoted through [leadership of] a rights based approach rather than situating Indigenous people as a deficit population in need of help. This latter approach has failed. (Ma Rhea, 2015, p. 98).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Sample Domain and Category Report: Commendations coding

School: 12-11[6]

Type: Primary

ICSEA: 1062

Aboriginality: 9%

Size: 634

Location:

Metropolitan	Provincial	Remote	Very remote

Commendations analysis

Proficiency / Domain	1	2	3	4
LTL Leading teaching and learning		7.01[7] in[8] 7.06 tl		
DSO Developing self and others	7.10 ca			
LIIC Leading improvement, innovation and change	7.09 ms			
LMS Leading management of school		7.05 wb		
EWC Engaging and working with the community	7.02 ae 7.07 ic 7.08 ic 7.11 ch	7.04 ch		

Commendation 7.03 not relevant

[6] School report identifier
[7] Commendation number in review report
[8] Category code (see Table 7: Professional Practice Domains: Category Identification & Codes)

Appendix 2: Commendations Distribution Data

Table 8: Strand 1. Commendations distribution: Leading teaching & learning

Category	Proficiency level 1	Proficiency level 2	Proficiency level 3	Proficiency level 4
in *Interventions & engagement strategies*	12-01;12-01;12-02; 12-08;12-08;12-16; 12-22;12-22;13-01; 13-03;13-06;13-09; 13-22;13-22;14-08 *Learning Support Unit appears to be valued and used productively(13-06)* *HW centre has great attendance (13-09)*	12-01;12-09;12-11; 12-22;13-01;13-22; 14-09 *…many extra curricula activities …have brought many experiences into the lives of students…that they would otherwise be denied (12-22)*	12-13 *..full range of student engagement and achievement evident amongst Indigenous students…students have good knowledge of current progress (12-13)*	
pa *Personalised approach*	12-02;12-04;12-09; 12-12;13-06;13-20; 14-02 *…attempts at developing PLP's (12.02)*	12-01;13-16;13-17; 13-21;13-24 *...staff have such a knowledge and affection for all students (13-21).*	12-08;12-09;12-12; 12-20;12-22 *..plans for Indigenous students are comprehensive and include a range of stakeholders in the negotiation process (12-20)*	
tl *Teaching / learning, pedagogy*	12-14;12-22;13-03; 13-05;13-08;13-11; 13-14; 13-18 *Support and encouragement to Aboriginal students…they are confident that teachers encourage them to do their best (13-03)*	12-04;12-04;12-11; 12-18;12-20;12-21; 13-21;14-08 *Every staff member was seen in action providing that extra touch that kids need (13-21)*	12-04;12-25;12-25; 13-07;13-10 *The school's Closing the Gap data demonstrates a consistent improvement over time (13-10)*	13-07;13-13 *…many comments about the high quality of the teaching staff. Students rated the teaching staff very highly. …parents felt that the teachers were extremely approachable, taught their children well and dealt with their concerns effectively (13-07)*
ci *Curriculum initiative*	12-06;12-08;12-14; 12-14;12-15;12-16; 12-16;12-17;12-18; 12-19;12-23;12-23; 12-24;12-25;13-04; 13-06;13-11;13-12; 13-14;13-15;13-19; 13-20;13-21;13-23; 14-02;14-03;14-06; 14-09 *Some classrooms actively consider Aboriginal perspectives in some learning areas (12-17)*	12-07;12-09;12-15; 13-03;13-08;13-09; 13-10;14-04 *School has a strong focus on Australian curriculum and is using opportunities to integrate Indigenous perspectives in a meaningful way (13-08)*	12-03;13-13 *…one text with an Aboriginal theme is used as a teaching focus each term at each year level (12-03)* *All students demonstrated a very strong knowledge of Aboriginal history and culture (13-13)*	

Table 9: Strand 1. Commendations distribution: Developing self & others

Category	Proficiency level 1	Proficiency level 2	Proficiency level 3	Proficiency level 4
ca Cultural awareness professional learning.	12-11;12-14;12-18; 12-19;13-15;13-16; 13-19;14-04;14-05; 14-06;14-08 *..willingness of staff to engage in dialogue…learn more about challenges facing Indigenous students….work with cultural strengths (12-12)* *..a positive outlook about embracing future professional learning to build understandings (12-18)*	12-01 *Professional learning in the area of cultural awareness has been appreciated by staff, especially the role of community members in the process (12-01)*	12-09 *There is a positive staff outlook about embracing professional learning….use of community members …a powerful strategy that had strong impact (12-09)*	
plc Professional learning community	12-04;12-06;12-07; 12-09;12-10;12-10; 12-12;12-23;12-24; 13-03;13-06;13-08; 13-17; 13-18;1323; 13-23 *All staff are very happy working at the school (12-04)* *..strong interest amongst many teaching staff to undertake appropriate and meaningful professional learning…staff feel supported by the principal (13-08)*		12-08;12-22 *Staff with particular experience and expertise in the area of Indigenous education who are willing to assist in moving the school forward (12-08)* *The professional learning opportunities made available to all staff was noted and commented on as a very supportive approach (12-23)*	
le Develop leadership capacity	12-14;13-19 *…two focus positions are making an obvious impact on the school (12-14)*	13-01 *… current Aboriginal team is capacity building for seamless succession (13-01)*		

Table 10: Strand 1. Commendations distribution: Leading improvement, innovation & change

Category	Proficiency level 1	Proficiency level 2	Proficiency level 3	Proficiency level 4
ms Motivate, inspire staff & community	12-01;12-02;12-05; 12-11;12-13;12-19; 12-21;13-02;13-02; 14-02;14-05;14-06; 14-07;14-09 *..the positive operating style of the new principal (13-02)* *…enthusiasm demonstrated by staff towards improving opportunities for Aboriginal students (12-01)*	12-21;14-04 *…role of the principal in driving Aboriginal education is strongly commended.(12-21)* *Staff very positive about directions and the integrity of its intent (14-04)*		
pl Planning & strategy development	12-06;12-06;12-07; 12-10;12-17;13-09; 13-20;14-01;14-03; 14-07 *School planning documents were logical, and thorough (12-06)* *School's strategic intent to "Close the Gap" for Aboriginal students is evident (12-07)* *…many future actions and activities…appear to be well considered and are cognisant of the need for an integrated approach(12-10)*	12-19;13-05;13-08; 13-13;13-16;13-17; 14-09 *..the school has a published Indigenous education policy and substantial supplementary material and ideas to assist the implementation (13-08)* *..school has demonstrated a strong use of data in planning (13-13)*	12-09;12-20 *The school is working in a very strategic way to implement strategies which support its long term view. Many staff…now have clearer picture (12-09)* *..the school has a strong sense of direction in relation to Indigenous education (12-20)*	
dl distributed leadership	12-02;12-07;12-14; 12-15;12-16;12-17; 12-23;13-07;13-08; 13-09;14-01 *..appointment of AP with responsibility for Aboriginal education has borne fruit (12-02)*	12-22;13-05;13-16; 13-16 *….the extremely hands-on nature of leadership…executive staff walk the walk as well as the talk (12-22)*		

Table 11: Strand 1. Commendations distribution: Leading management of the school

Category	Proficiency level 1	Proficiency level 2	Proficiency level 3	Proficiency level 4
cu School culture. Positive relationships. Safe, secure, pride.	12-04;12-04;12-07; 12-09;12-12;12-13; 12-13;12-16;12-16; 12-17;12-17;12-18; 12-18;12-19;12-20; 12-20;12-21;12-21; 12-24;12-24;12-25; 12-25;12-25;13-01; 13-02;13-02;13-02; 13-03;13-04;13-04; 13-06;13-06;13-08; 13-12;13-13;13-14; 13-14;13-15;13-16; 13-16;13-17;13-19; 13-20;13-20;13-21; 13-23;14-01;14-02; 14-03;14-05;14-08; 14-09 *..generally harmonious relationships; student-student and teacher-student (12-20))*	13-11;14-05 *No evidence of racism…and there is a confidence…that if it were to occur, it would be dealt with decisively by teaching staff (13-11)* *…teachers are quick to pick up and appropriately challenge any occasional remarks by students that could be regarded as stereotyping or indeed racist (14-05)*	12-02;12-22 *…the belief amongst staff and parents that their voice is valued in all decision making processes (12-22)*	
be behaviour management, attendance	12-03;12-06;12-20; 12-22;12-25;13-07; 13-07;13-10;13-10; 13-11;13-11;13-12; 13-13;13-14;14-08 *..general behaviour manageable and acceptable almost all of the time (12-06)* *…very positive directions in student attendance data (12-20)*	14-08;14-08 *..improving student attendance by introducing the attendance reward strategy….attendance rose to above 90% for the first time (14-08)*		
res resources	12-06;12-22;13-01; 13-05;13-07;13-11; 13-22;14-07 *..supporting Aboriginal student enrolments via scholarships is commended*	12-21 *..school grounds are an absolute credit. Creates aesthetically pleasing environment which can only enhance student learning (12-21)*		
wb Student wellbeing	12-06;12-08;12-22; 13-02;13-11 *…health and nutrition initiatives were seen as being essential to success in the classrooms (12-06)*	12-11;13-17 *…school has implemented many programs to support student leadership (12-11)*		

Table 12: Strand 1. Commendations distribution: Engaging & Working with Community

Category	Proficiency level 1	Proficiency level 2	Proficiency level 3	Proficiency level 4
ch Collaborative relationships with parents & community. High expectations	12-10;12-10;12-11; 12-17;12-22;12-24; 13-02;13-05;13-07; 13-09;13-10;13-11; 13-14;13-14;13-18; 13-18;13-19;13-19; 13-21;13-21;13-21; 13-23;14-01;14-02; 14-04; *..open and honest dialogue with parents (12-11)* *..development of the Reconciliation Plan (13-18)*	12-01;12-03;12-04; 12-05;12-08;12-11; 12-22;12-22;12-25; 13-09; *….great relationship that staff have with the whole school community (12-05)* *Aboriginal community support, evident through high involvement in PLP's (12-08)*	12-05;14-01; *Strong relationship with AECG (12-05)* *…strategic interaction with local community and health organisations is very positive as is its emerging Reference Group (14-01)*	12-01;12-24; *Making the school's space available as a 'town-wide' site for Aboriginal students to meet and work (12-24)*
sc Culture of safety and support amongst wider school community	12-04;12-05;12-06; 12-21;13-14;13-17; 13-18;13-21;13-22; 14-01;14-03;14-08; *.. consultation supported ... representation of wider community (13-14)*	12-03;12-04;12-09; 14-08; *…commitment to create a culture of safety and support, with high expectations (12-03)*		
ae Aboriginal employee Aboriginal parent / community involvement	12-01;12-04;12-11; 12-14;12-16;12-18; 12-21;12-21;12-22; 12-25;13-04;13-06; 13-11;13-12;13-14; 13-14;13-22;14-02; 14-03;14-05;14-08; *The commitment and strengths of Aboriginal staff are a credit to school community (13-04)*	12-07;12-18;12-19; 12.20;13-07;13-09; 14-04;14-09; *….makes her a role model for the students and highlights the ability of Aboriginal people more widely…strategic employment of Indigenous staff in a variety of roles (13-07)*		12-09; *…use of Indigenous parents and community members in staff activities…is a powerful strategy….had a strong impact (12-09)*
ic Iconography; symbols or images or practices recognisable as having meaning	12-01;12-01;12-02; 12-02;12-05;12-05; 12-07;12-08;12-09; 12-11;12-11;12-14; 12-15;12-15;12-15; 12-16;12-17;12-18; 12-18;12-19;12-21; 12-21;12-22;12-22; 12-23;12.24;12-25; 13-01;13-04;13-05; 13-06;13-08;13-09; 13-11;13-12;13-13; 13-14;13-14;13-15; 13-17;13-18;13-19; 13-20;13-22;13-23; 14-01;14-02;14-03; 14.05;14-05;14-06; 14-07;14-08;14-09;	13-03;14-04;14-04; *…students perceive that they build a lot of learning through such activities (visits) (13-03)* *..establishment of the building named in honour of prominent Aboriginal person, the associated themed sculpture and the large garden which is a work in progress and involves students, staff and the P&F (14-04)*		

Appendix 3: Sample Domain and Category Report: Recommendations coding:

School: 13-13[9]

Type: Combined

ICSEA: 1085

Aboriginality: 3%

Size: 1097

Location:

Metropolitan	Provincial	Remote	Very remote

Recommendations analysis

Proficiency / Domain	1	2	3	4
Leading teaching and learning	8.04[10] ci[11] 8.05 in	9.02 pa		
Developing self and others				
Leading improvement, innovation and change				
Leading management of school	8.02 res	8.01 wb		
Engaging and working with the community	8.06 sc	8.03 ch 9.01 ch 9.03 sc		

[9] School report identifier
[10] Recommendation number in review report
[11] Category code (see Table 7: Professional Practice Domains: Category Identification and Codes

Appendix 4: Recommendations distribution data

Table 13: Strand 2. Recommendations distribution: Leading teaching & learning

Category	Proficiency level 1	Proficiency level 2	Proficiency level 3	Proficiency level 4
in *Interventions & engagement strategies*	12-01;12-05;12-05; 12-06;12-07;12-10; 12-11;12-12;12-13; 12-18;12-19;12-21; 12-21;13-04;13-05; 13-07;13-12;13-13; 13-16;13-16;13-20; 14-04;14-08;14-08; 14-09 *..consider more support so that individual study time is better utilized (13-16)*	12-05;12-07;12-08; 12-10;12-11;12-11; 13-04;13-16;13-21 *…the language profile of students is carefully and sensitively canvassed…raise staff awareness about this (13-16)* *..learning from experiential input (13-21)*	12-11 *..conducts a thorough investigation of all data for Aboriginal students (12-11)*	12-5;12-11 *..develop specific strategies for transition e.g. PLP handover, meet year 7 staff ..invite Elders…primary school staff visits to high school (12-11)*
pa *Personalised approach*	12-04;12-04;12-07; 12-12;12-13;12-16; 12-22;12-23;13-04; 13-10;13-12;13-21; 13-22 *…widely distribute student's education plans to individual teachers …for teachers to know more about the student's Aboriginal cultural back ground (12-12)*	12-02;12-02;12-08; 12-09;12-20;12-21; 12-24;13-02;13-03; 13-04;13-06;13-09; 13-11;13-11;13-13; 13-15;14-02;14-09 *Involvement of students, finding out about aspirations, future directions etc….can give insights into an individual's level of cultural connection (12-09)*	12-01;12-02;12-05; 12-07;12-19;13-12; 13-14;13-17;14-08 *…ensure that all PLP's are proactive, positive, aspirational, involving direct communication between teacher, parents and students …process is more important than product (12-07)*	12-5;12-19;13-07 *… establish trusting & honest relationships with parents, caregiver, extended family & student (12-05)* *..PLP's follow student to partner high school (13-07)*
tl *Teaching / learning, pedagogy*	12-01;12-05;12-05; 12-08;12-25;13-09; 14-06 *…share student achievement data with destination school (13-09)*	12-20;13-03 *..an analysis of achievement ratings be undertaken, provides a more valuable comparative analysis (12-20)*	13-12 *…using a strengths based approach linking experiential opportunities within the community (13-12)*	
ci *Curriculum initiative*	12-01;12-02;12-02; 12-04;12-04;12-05; 12-07;12-07;12-08; 12-08;12-15;12-18; 12-21;12-21;12-22; 12-23;13-04;13-06; 13-07;13-09;13-11; 13-13;13-19;13-20; 13-21;14-01;14-01 *..introduce a language program into the school (12-01)* *..explore vocational pathways opportunities (12-04)*	12-01;12-02;12-05; 12-07;12-07;12-08; 12-09;12-12;12-13; 12-14;12-16;12-17; 12-21;12-22;12-23; 12-24;12-24;13-01; 13-02;13-03;13-05; 13-08;13-09;13-11; 13-12;13-15;13-17; 13-18;13-22;13-23; 13-23;14-02;14-03; 14-05;14-05;14-05; 14-06;14-07;14-07; 14-08 *…ascertain the extent to which Aboriginal perspectives are embedded across the curriculum (12-07)*	13-07 *Develop a scope and sequence with a term matrix developed to monitor ensuring that perspectives are not tokenistic or duplicated.(13-07)*	

Table 14: Strand 2. Recommendations distribution: Developing self & others

Category	Proficiency level 1	Proficiency level 2	Proficiency level 3	Proficiency level 4
ca Cultural awareness professional learning,	12-05;12-13;12-15; 12-19;13-01;13-05; 13-11;13-12;13-15; 13-21;14-01;14-06; 14-08;14-08;14-09 *All staff need to have a sound grounding in the cultural environment in which the school operates (12-05)* *Share each issue of "The Deadly Times" with staff (12-13)*	12-08;12-14;12-19; 12-22;13-02;13-09; 13-09;13-10;13-11; 13-23;14-03;14-05 *Staff need to have opportunity to explore their own knowledge, values and beliefs about Aboriginal Australia. It is strongly recommended that the school engages in a planned, strategic program for all staff (12-14)* *The staff handbook references the Professional Standards for teachers…provide teachers opportunity to develop themselves in elements 1.4 and 2.4. (14-05)*	12-02;12-05;12-07; 12-11;12-20;13-07 *Systematic and ongoing learning program to familiarise all staff with local community structures, traditions and cultures. …local Aboriginal community, health services, regional Aboriginal education team should be consulted and involved…local Elders should be consulted to assist with development and to support the school to better engage the Aboriginal community in the process (13-07)*	12-21 *..look towards moving current impressive cultural awareness training of staff towards professional learning that will move this knowledge into classroom space i.e. the effective use of awareness knowledge in pedagogical change, leadership actions, curriculum, relationship building and community engagement (12-21)*
plc Professional learning community	12-04;12-05;12-12; 12-13;12-14; 12-16; 12-17;13-15; 13-17; 13-18;13-19; 13-22 *..there is a question re staff formation. How can the school create more opportunities for conversations with Aboriginal people and communities? (13-19)*	13-06 *.. create opportunities for professional learning…..it may be that those who are already 'committed' engage with it, leaving others with little opportunity (13-06)*	12-01;12-08 *..use staff with experience in teaching Aboriginal students…use home grown experience to run learning sessions for other staff (12-01)*	
le Develop leadership capacity	12-18;12-14 *..Clarify her role with other staff and Aboriginal students (12-18)*	12-18;12-19 *Initiatives he puts in place are apparent and widely acknowledged; consider skilling others re succession (12-18)*	12-01;12-10 *..need an Aboriginal Liaison Officer. Students and families value such a position. (12-01)*	

Table 15: Strand 2. Recommendations distribution: Leading improvement, innovation & change

Category	Proficiency level 1	Proficiency level 2	Proficiency level 3	Proficiency level 4
ms Motivate, inspire staff & community	12-05;12-05; *It is recommended that the Aboriginal staff have an opportunity scheduled into their work week to meet the principal for 30 minutes to debrief (12-05)*	13-18;13-21;13-21; *..discuss at a strategic level with staff and middle managers, particularly curriculum leaders who will be critical to the deep embedding of Aboriginal perspectives into the full range of classroom and co-curricular activity (13-18)* *The employees of the school will make their life easier if they all start to sing from the same song book (13-21)*	13-21; *Principal, make yourself available without formal invitations in community space on a regular basis. The engagement of community has to start with you, outside the school, without an agenda and a request hanging off every meeting (13-21)*	
pl Planning & strategy development	12-06; *Another area that could be addressed through the school plan is student leadership (12-06)*	12-10;12-14;12-21; 13-06;13-14;14-02; 14-08; *..process of devising a plan creates a clear understood purpose, identified targets, data tracking and evaluation processes as well as critical opportunity to engage parents in shaping the agenda (13-06)* *Develop a response to the system's Aboriginal Education Policy (13-14)*	12-01;12-01;12-07; 12-10;12-21; *…that the school's leadership team works with community to develop a philosophical approach, ethos and direction for (Indigenous education) in the school (12-05)* *…development of a core set of beliefs, values and attitudes (12-07)*	
dl distributed leadership	12-05;12-12;12-23; 13-05;13-11;13-20; 14-02;14-08;14-09; *Need a clear picture as to who is leading the Aboriginal education strategy, including building reconciliation amongst students (13-12)*	12-05;12-11;12-17; 12-22;14-04; *Review of the role and duties of the AEO needs to be undertaken; develop a clearly defined picture of the role (13-23)*		

Table 16: Strand 2. Recommendations distribution: Leading management of the school

Category	Proficiency level 1	Proficiency level 2	Proficiency level 3	Proficiency level 4
cu School culture. Positive relationships. Safe, secure, pride.	12-02;13-17;14-08; *Ensure a process is put in place to record and deal with all racist issues in the appropriate fashion (12-02)* *Develop appropriate ways and with whom to acknowledge Indigenous students' success (13-17)*	12-07;13-09; *Governance of Aboriginal Education processes at the school come under guidance of principal (12-07)* *Look to strengthening the role of academic excellence in the life of the school. Indigenous students need to see a real balance in life (13-09)*		
be behaviour management, attendance	12-08;12-08;12-08; 12-09;12-20; *A common request from secondary students is to meet/mix with Indigenous students from other schools, especially if their own school has relatively small numbers (12-09)*	12-01;12-05;12-05; 12-05;12-05;12-06; 12-11;12-12;12-21; 13-02; *Developing far closer links to community…to share responsibility (for attendance)…may make gains in this area (12-06)*		
res resources	12-04;12-07;12-08; 12-11;13-01;13-04; 13-04;13-08;13-11; 13-12;13-13;13-20; 13-22;14-08;14-08; *Develop a systematic process for the sourcing of appropriate resources that affirm a student's cultural identity (13-01)*	12-24;13-02;13-03; 13-14; *Audit the range and cultural appropriateness of classroom resources in the school e.g. availability of readers (13-03)*		
wb Student wellbeing	*12-11;13-01;13-02; 13-04;13-04;13-08; 13-11;13-15;13-20; 14-08;* *Provide teachers with appropriate details about students e.g. home community, family connections, aspirations, connection with cultural identity etc.; (13-01)*	*12-01;12-11;13-02; 13-03;13-03;13-03; 13-06;13-09;13-11; 13-12;13-13;13-14; 13-17;13-21;13-23; 14-03;14-08;* *Assist staff work out the relationships of students, families, community members. Knowing the links can help unravel issues, absences, relational matters etc.(13-12)*	12-05;12-21;12-22; 13-14; *Provide time and space for Elders and those with knowledge to work with Aboriginal students on cultural programs…could be Men's and Women's business excursions and camps etc. (12-23)*	

Table 17: Strand 2. Recommendations distribution: Engaging & Working with Community

Category	Proficiency level 1	Proficiency level 2	Proficiency level 3	Proficiency level 4
ch Collaborative relationships with parents & community. High expectations	12-01;12-01;12-01; 12-04;12-05;12-05; 12-06;12-07;12-07; 12-08;12-08;12-21; 13-04;13-05;13-07; 13-08;13-11;13-12; 13-21;13-21;13-23; 14-05;14-08; *Display more visual cultural symbols. Such symbols and iconography are considered by Aboriginal students and parents as very affirming of identity (12-05)*	12-01;12-02;12-02; 12-05;12-05;12-07; 12-07;12-08;12-17; 12-21;12-22;12-25; 13-02;13-02;13-07; 13-09;13-10;13-10; 13-11; 13-12;13-13 13-13;13-14;13-14; 13-18;14-08; *..develop Aboriginal community resource register (13-11)* *Form an Aboriginal Education Committee, comprising community, parents, teaching staff, Aboriginal staff and school executive (12-21)*	12-06;12-08;12-21; 13-02;13-07;13-09; 13-11; *..community must have effective voice…a meaningful and truly collaborative school / community partnership… (12-07)* *School leaders make time to be seen in the local community, attend community events and do positive home visits to Aboriginal families. This will build trusting relationships (12-08)*	12-05; *..school community centre building ..more accessible… develop connections with all providers in area…find service provider to run breakfast program ..community register be developed ..of local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people…could also include information regarding local Aboriginal cultural sites (12-05)*
sc Culture of safety and support amongst wider school community	12-01;12-05;13-07; 13-10;13-10;13-11; 13-13;13-20;13-21; *The school adopt a3 to 1 program where all negative contact with parents is countered with 3 positive contacts (12-05)*	13-11;13-13; *..offer parent training courses on school site…could begin with PLP sessions, meeting procedures, aspects of literacy and numeracy (13-11)*	14-08; 13-12; *..make the school a more culturally supportive environment…to indicate that the school values and respects Aboriginal people and cultures (14-08)*	13-14; *..involve parents and community to a greater extent in school activities, programs and planning …seek community advice, formation of Elders Circle (13-14)*
ae Aboriginal employee Aboriginal parent / community involvement	12-07;12-11;12-16; 13-02;13-09;13-10; 13-11;13-12;13-17; 13-18;14-02;14-08; *Develop an Aboriginal community resource register (12-11)*	12-01;12-01;12-07; 12-08;12-14;12-15; 12-22;12-22;13-07; 13-09;13-14;13-15; *..continue engaging Aboriginal people in the life of the school e.g. visiting artists, performing troupes, story tellers (12-14)*	12-01;12-02;12-10; *…facilitate further time for students to work with various Elders with knowledge from community to build their self-esteem and confidence in their culture(12-01)*	
ic Iconography; symbols or images or practices recognisable as having meaning	12-02;12-02;12-04; 12-05;12-05;12-05; 12-07;12-07;12-08; 12-08;12-09;12-11; 12-12;12-13;12-14; 12-14;12-15;12-16; 12-17;12-18;12-20; 12-21;12-22;12-22; 13-01;13-03;13-05; 13-06;13-07;13-09; 13-10;13-11;13-15; 13-17;13-18;13-20; 13-22;14-03;14-06; 14-07;	12-02;12-11;12-14; 12-14;12-14;12-15; 12-19;12-23;13-02; 13-07;13-08;13-10; 13-12;13-19;13-21; 13-23;14-02;14-02; 14-04;14-09; *..school forms a NAIDOC team made up of community, students and staff to plan activities ((12-15)*		

Appendix 5: School Context Data

Table 18: Distribution of commendations: Primary, Combined, Secondary schools.

School type[12]		P	C	S	P	C	S	P	C	S	P	C	S
Proficiency level		L 1	L 1	L 1	L 2	L 2	L 2	L 3	L 3	L 3	L 4	L 4	L 4
LTL[13]	in[14]	9	5	2	2	3	2	0	0	1	2	0	0
	pa	1	3	3	3	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	1
	tl	5	3	0	2	2	2	5	1	1	0	0	0
	ci	14	4	7	4	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
DSO	ca	3	3	5	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	plc	6	5	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
	le	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
LIIC	ms	7	2	5	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	pl	4	4	2	2	1	4	0	1	1	0	0	0
	dl	8	1	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
LMS	cu	19	14	19	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
	be	14	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	res	3	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	wb	5	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
EWC	ch	14	7	1	7	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0
	sc	7	3	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	ae	10	5	6	3	0	6	0	0	0	0	1	0
	ic	26	13	2	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

[12] School type:
- Primary (P) : 27 schools
- Combined (C): 15 schools
- Secondary (S): 15 schools

[13] Principal professional practice domains:
- Leading teaching & learning (LTL)
- Developing self & others (DSO)
- Leading improvement, innovation & change (LIIC)
- Leading management of the school (LMS)
- Engaging & working with community (EWC)

[14] Codes for categories of professional practice domains: See Table 7.

Table 19: Distribution of recommendations: Primary, Combined, Secondary schools.

School type[15]		P	C	S	P	C	S	P	C	S	P	C	S
Proficiency level		L 1	L 1	L 1	L 2	L 2	L 2	L 3	L 3	L 3	L 4	L 4	L 4
LTL[16]	in[17]	11	2	10	3	0	3	0	0	0	1	0	1
	pa	6	3	5	8	4	5	7	0	3	2	0	1
	tl	7	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
	ci	17	6	5	17	16	9	1	0	0	0	0	0
DSO	ca	8	3	4	7	0	2	3	0	3	1	0	0
	plc	1	7	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
	le	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0
LIIC	ms	2	0	0	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
	pl	1	0	0	4	2	1	2	0	1	0	0	0
	dl	4	2	3	1	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0
LMS	cu	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	be	3	0	1	8	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
	res	7	4	4	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	wb	4	3	4	10	5	3	4	0	0	0	0	0
EWC	ch	15	4	3	22	2	2	7	0	0	1	0	0
	sc	8	1	0	3	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0
	ae	16	1	5	8	2	2	3	0	0	0	1	0
	ic	16	15	10	8	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0

[15] School type:
- Primary (P) : 27 schools
- Combined (C): 15 schools
- Secondary (S): 15 schools

[16] Principal professional practice domains:
- Leading teaching & learning (LTL)
- Developing self & others (DSO)
- Leading improvement, innovation & change (LIIC)
- Leading management of the school (LMS)
- Engaging & working with community (EWC)

[17] Codes for categories of professional practice domains: see Table 7.

Table 20: Distribution of commendations and recommendations: ICSEA[18] Groups

Professional practice themes & categories		ICSEA <900[19]		ICSEA > 1050[20]	
		Comms.[21]	Recs.[22]	Comms.	Recs
Leading Teaching and Learning	in[23]	5	9	4	4
	pa	2	14	2	4
	tl	6	5	3	0
	ci	6	13	10	14
Developing Self and Others	ca	1	13	3	4
	plc	3	2	5	5
	le	0	0	2	4
Leading Improvement, Innovation and Change	ms	3	5	1	1
	pl	4	3	6	3
	dl	2	5	4	3
Leading Management of the School	cu	15	3	11	0
	be	10	6	0	0
	res	2	6	3	2
	wb	5	15	0	3
Engaging and Working with Community	ch	14	24	7	3
	sc	8	7	1	1
	ae	8	10	5	3
	ic	11	12	15	16

Table 21: Enrolment distribution (all schools)

Enrolment Bands	Category	School Enrolments	Total
< 150	Small	13, 18, 42, [55, 64, 102][24], 115, 149	8
150 – 299		150,191,201,207,209,230,237,263,270,293,293	11
300 - 449		300, 300, 339, 364, 380, 402, 402, 444	8

[18] Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ACARA, 2013b)

[19] Data from 12 least advantaged schools (school identifiers; 12-05, 12-06, 12-20, 12-22, 13-02, 13-09, 13-11, 13-12, 13-14, 13-17, 13-21,14-08)

[20] Data from 12 most advantaged schools (school identifiers; 12-10, 12-14, 12-15, 12-17, 12-18, 13-05, 13-06, 13-19, 13-20, 13-22, 13-23, 14-07)

[21] Aggregated number of commendations

[22] Aggregated number of recommendations

[23] Codes for categories of professional practice themes: see Table 7.

[24] Sample small enrolment schools

450 – 599		460, 470, 522	3
600 – 749	Medium	647, [664, 714, 722][25], 744	5
750 - 899		778, 811, 854	3
900-1049		921, 921, 961, 967, 1021, 1027, 1035, 1046	8
1050 – 1199		1112, 1119, 1133, 1174	4
> 1200	Large	1222, 1237, [1294, 1304, 1338][26], 1389, 2904	7

Table 22: School location[27]

Location	School Identifier	Total
Metropolitan	12-09*[28];12-10;12-14;12-15;12-16;12-17;12-18; 12-19*;12-23;12-25;13-01;13-05;13-06;13-08; 13-10*;13-11;13-13;13-19;13-20;13-22;13-23; 14-01*;14-02;14-03;14-08;14-09;	26
Provincial	12-01**[29];12-02;12-03;12-05;12-06;12-07;12-08; 12-11**;12-12;12-13;12-20;12-21;12-22;12-24; 13-03**;13-04;13-07;13-09;13-16;13-17;13-18; 13-21**;14-04;14-05;14-06;	25
Remote	13-02;13-12;13-15;14-07;	4
Very Remote	12-04;13-14;	2

[25] Sample middle enrolment schools
[26] Sample large enrolment schools

[27] Described in 'Schools Geographic Location Classification Scheme' (ACARA, 2016)
[28] * Randomly selected metropolitan schools
[29] ** Randomly selected provincial schools

Appendix 6: Sample Commendations

1) There is no evidence of endemic racism in the school and there is a confidence amongst the interviewees that if such were to become apparent, it would be dealt with immediately and fairly.

2) Indigenous students generally identify that the school is a 'very good place to be' for Indigenous students and all students because of its all-round support. The individual care and flexibility in adapting to identified needs is genuine.

3) The personal leadership shown by the Principal and the Leadership Team in leading Indigenous education in the school is seen by teaching staff, parents and students as being strongly positive.

4) There are many elements of cultural acknowledgement evident in the life of the school; it is noted positively that non-Indigenous students are included.

5) There is a sense that the school is moving in a positive forward direction in the way that it supports its Indigenous students.

6) There appears to be a small core of classroom and support teachers who actively consider Indigenous issues and Indigenous students' needs in their planning and classroom practices

7) [redacted] contribution to the welfare and support of the students is very highly valued by all.

8) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students generally felt that the school had a positive, supportive and caring environment.

9) The academic achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the recent NAPLAN were most impressive, equaling or bettering the state and national average in every cohort and every test area.

10) The 91+% attendance rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is most commendable especially considering the negative impact that several chronic students would have on the data.

11) All Students demonstrated a very strong knowledge of Aboriginal History and Culture that had been taught in recent years in the classroom.

12) The installation of artworks and the protocol of Acknowledgement of Country are recognized as significant aspects of the school's journey in Aboriginal Education.

13) The school has demonstrated a strong use of data in planning.

Appendix 7: Sample Recommendations

1) Parent and Community Engagement

Engaging parents and community members more in initiatives within the school was seen as an important strategy to sustaining improvement in Aboriginal student outcomes.

It is therefore recommended that the school investigate ways to involve parents and community to a greater extent in school activities, programs and planning. Ideas for increasing parent engagement might include:

- Plan to meet parents off-site for some formal and informal meetings;
- Make yourself available in the community on a regular basis “for a coffee and chat”;
- Use the Aboriginal staff network to advertise your availability to the community;
- Seek community advice and input in planning for celebrations such as NAIDOC and Sorry Day;
- Individually invite parents to all important events;
- Organise Bingo sessions for parents and community, possibly once a month in the library (approach local businesses for donations e.g. meat, fruit and vegetable vouchers);
- Invite local Elders to meet the staff and the Aboriginal student leaders;
- Invite the formation of an Elders Circle which could be consulted regarding what the school is and could be doing in Aboriginal education - this might require initial meetings off site;
- Invite the Aboriginal community to share their cultural knowledge at whole school, or class events;
- Personally invite Aboriginal parents and community members to volunteer their time to help in classrooms, the Homework Club, the Breakfast Club, the canteen, the P & F and in the playground;
- Increase publicity and exposure to the community of the achievements of the school. Celebrate the successes of students and all staff.
- Attend local AECG meetings.

2) Learning Focus

The school is encouraged to use the strengths of community, students and staff to formulate a new approach to learning. Students have many strengths – cultural, academic, social, recreational, sporting etc. and these can be included in the curriculum and pedagogies of teaching programs.

It would appear that more “outside” learning could be a link to better engagement. More cultural opportunities (Dance, Art, Didge) could provide a platform for increased student engagement and behaviour.

By using a strengths based approach, the linking of experiential opportunities within the community to Literacy and Numeracy outcomes is encouraged rather than a continual classroom based approach.

3) **Personalised Learning Plans**

It is acknowledged that the school encourages all teachers to be proactive in forming relationships and making connections with the parents of the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in their classes. The PLP process can be a great catalyst for improved parent engagement.

Personalised Learning Plans need to be based on the development of relationships between the Aboriginal student, teacher and parent. The personal conversation with the parent is essential to further the relationship and partnership with the school. The PLP must have a focus on career aspirations and document how the teacher and parent/s are going to support the student moving forward.

It is recommended that the school implements PLPs for all students and considers the following in the implementation process:

- Clearly articulates to students, staff, parents and community members the purpose of the PLP, i.e. to develop relationships and to support student learning;
- Ensures that all stakeholders are involved in a consultation process, particularly in the development of the PLP format; look to the placemat model as a starting point;
- Reinforce with students, staff and parents the positive nature of PLPs - not a deficit model;
- Clearly articulate to staff and community members the difference between a PLP and an IEP;
- Occasionally organising meeting parents off-site where Aboriginal parents may feel more comfortable and perhaps coinciding with special events when numbers of Aboriginal parents and community are likely to be gathered e.g. NAIDOC;
- Ensures that regular monitoring of the PLPs by all teachers is built into the class routine, e.g. add the discussion of PLPs to staff meeting agenda once per term; staff indicate what they are doing to support the personal goals of Aboriginal students in their classes; share support ideas with other staff members;
- Provide professional development around effective PLPs and how to best lead PLPs in the school (E.g. *Dare to Lead Workshop*); and
- Ensure that PLPs have a specific section focusing on career aspirations and pathways planning involving the teacher and role models. The PLP placemat is a good starting point.

4) Aboriginal Perspectives across the Curriculum

It is recommended the school conducts an audit of current units of work and perspectives in Aboriginal Education across all key learning areas and stages. Once this audit is completed the development of a whole school scope and sequence of Aboriginal Knowledge can be developed. It is suggested the school utilises the Western Australian Department of Education and Training Aboriginal Perspectives

resource or visit www.det.wa.edu.au/education/abled/apac/ where many professionally developed lesson formats, across all KLAs and for all Stages, can be studied and downloaded.

5) Community Register

It is recommended that a Community Resource Register be developed. This will more easily enable all staff to utilise the expertise of community members, specifically Aboriginal staff and local Aboriginal people, in the planning and delivery of educational programs. This will involve the school developing a database/register of local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people which contains their contact details, lists the area of expertise, indicates if there is a cost and what that cost would be and whether or not the person requires assistance with transport etc. The register could also include information regarding local Aboriginal cultural sites. This Community Register should be developed in consultation with all sectors of the Aboriginal Community, e.g. AECG, AMS, Lands Council etc. This is an initiative that could be conducted in conjunction with other local schools and other local agencies.

6) Aboriginal Resource Audit

It is recommended that the school conducts an audit of all of its Aboriginal education resources and ensures that all staff members are aware of the resources which are available and the location of these resources. When this audit is completed the school could plan the purchase of additional resources which will support teachers in the implementation of Aboriginal education. This process may also demonstrate the need to find more local resources to add to the library and teacher resource materials already in the school.

7) Cultural Affirmations

The following actions could assist the school demonstrate its respect for community and assist in further engagement with the local Aboriginal community:

Acknowledgement of Country at all assemblies, on signage at front of school, on school newsletters and letterheads, on website and on Annual School Report.
Welcome to Country completed at all special events.
Murals on display both inside the school quadrangle area and in view from the street.
Artwork in the front foyer/office area as well as Principal's office.
The Apology poster on display.
Dual signage around school (local Indigenous language and English).

8) Community Mapping

The school could conduct a mapping exercise to assist staff work out the relationships of students, families and community members across the community. Knowing the considerable links that students have across the school can help to unravel issues, absences, relational matters etc.

9) Post track successful students

The school could track past students to see who had gone on to Higher Education, successful working lives, etc. These ex-students could be written up as role models for all students. A wall of fame could be established and these students invited back to talk to the whole school about their journey

10) Staff Development – Cultural Awareness

The level of knowledge about the local community, its history and heritage was seen as an issue for staff. The implementation of a cultural awareness course for all staff should be investigated. This should then be included in a staff induction package across the school.

11) Parent Committee

It is recommended the school investigate the formation of an Aboriginal Parent Advisory Committee. This committee could be given a discretionary budget to spend on programs within the school. The model could see an increase in the level of involvement of Aboriginal community in the school.

12) Aspirational Education

It is recommended the school includes an aspirational approach to working with Aboriginal students. The lack of knowledge about careers and future goals was apparent in all Aboriginal students. The school could consider hosting a Careers forum for Years 3 – 6.

Appendix 8: Ethics Approval

FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Project No.:	**7190**
Project Title:	Professional practices of school principals that facilitate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education across diverse school contexts
Principal Researcher:	Mr James (Jim) Davies
Email:	jim.davies@educonau.com

Approval Date:	16 February 2016	Ethics Approval Expiry Date:	**31 December 2018**

The above proposed project has been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application, its attachments.