

The background of the slide is an abstract artwork featuring a dense network of thin, hand-drawn lines in various shades of red, orange, and brown. These lines form a complex, web-like pattern that covers the entire surface. There are also some larger, more defined shapes, such as a central figure that resembles a stylized human or animal, and various geometric forms like circles and rectangles. The overall effect is one of organic complexity and cultural richness.

Equity in a digital world: engaging Indigenous learners

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- 100km South of Darwin
- Dual sector VET/Higher Ed
- For Indigenous students
- 30% of NT population Indigenous
- Intensive workshop delivery model
- English language and literacy

Indigenous Education

- Nationally
 - 17 year olds at school: 36% Indigenous/66% non-Indigenous
 - Non-school quals: 25% Indigenous/47% non-Indigenous
- Northern Territory
 - At CDU 30% of VET students Indigenous
 - Clustered around Cert I & II Pre-vocational courses
 - Less than 5% of Higher Education students Indigenous

My observations

- Stated desire to improve English language and literacy skills
- Variable attendance – multiple complex reasons
- Slow progression through course
- No study/homework between workshops
- Students keen to use various technologies as a part of face to face classes (co-creating learning resources - video making, animation – Marvin, audio recording, as well as word processing, internet)
- How to enhance student engagement, participation and success?

Action Research project

- Exploration of whether students' observed enthusiasm for new technologies could be harnessed to encourage participation in homework activities & thus increased opportunities to practice and develop English language and literacy skills between workshops.
- The 'joining of practical action with the pursuit of theoretical understanding' (McTaggart, 1991)
- Relevant to the field of educational research - complements and enhances planning and implementing a teaching sequence
- Ethical research- 'If you're conducting a survey of toilets, take a plumber with you to fix the broken ones' (Nganampa Health Council in Miller & Rainow 1997)

Action research cycles & data collection

- 4 action research cycles –planning, implementation, observation and reflection
- Mixed methods
 - A background survey
 - 5 reflective surveys
 - 3 focus groups
 - Review of documents created by students (homework)
 - Access and usage of Learning Management System
 - 7 semi-structured interviews

The participants & the project

- 36 Indigenous students
- 30 female, 6 male
- 34 spoke an Indigenous language as their first language
- 31 lived in remote Indigenous communities
- 13 weeks of intensive face to face delivery over 1 academic year (400 hours including 75 hours individual study).
- Attendance – 2 students attended all workshops, 58% attended less than half of the workshops.

What I found

- No students had a computer at home
- All students said they had access to a computer and the internet
- Homework participation rates between 37-47%
- Time spent on homework– 62% of incidences of computer based homework was less than 10 minutes, 8% more than 1 hour.
- Barriers to completing homework between workshops and on campus during workshops
- Making homework an assessable component of the course did not impact on homework participation rates

Access

- Lack of ownership/discretionary use of computers
- Limited access to computer and internet facilities in their communities
- Variable levels of communications service provision and infrastructure across remote communities
- Lack of technological and educational support for computer-based learning outside of the formal teaching

Lifestyle

- Juggling 'lifestyle' demands with family, work and cultural obligations
- Factors similar to those affecting course completion in the VET sector as a whole – but with additional factors of cultural demands, poor health and household overcrowding.
- Precedence over homework

Attitude

- An attempt to conceptualise and articulate differences in level of student participation in homework activities that can't be explained by access and lifestyle.
- Espoused vs enacted beliefs (Argyris & Schon, 1974) - 'Yes, I absolutely want to study between workshop and I'm ready and sure to do it' (Reflective Survey 4)
- Learner identity (Wallace 2010)
- Personal traits such as positive attitude, motivation and perseverance appeared to be enabling factors.

In conclusion

- Use of computer technology enhances opportunities for homework participation
- Opportunities mitigated by factors linked to access to computer technology, lifestyle factors, and attitudes towards learning and homework
- Research into mobile technologies?
- Funding models for remote access – not just rollout of infrastructure, hardware, software but issues of community access, ongoing support and training.