

June 2016

Hand in hand we learn together: Service-learning changing pre-service teachers' perceptions of Aboriginal people and culture.

Glenda B. Cain

*University of Notre Dame Australia*, [glenda.cain@nd.edu.au](mailto:glenda.cain@nd.edu.au)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/ecea>

Part of the [Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Cain, Glenda B. (2016) "Hand in hand we learn together: Service-learning changing pre-service teachers' perceptions of Aboriginal people and culture.," *eJournal of Catholic Education in Australasia*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/ecea/vol3/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in eJournal of Catholic Education in Australasia by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact [researchonline@nd.edu.au](mailto:researchonline@nd.edu.au).

## Introduction

The University of Notre Dame Australia has a specific Object that focuses on the "provision of university education within the context of Catholic faith and values". One way this Object is enacted is through the embracing of service-learning across the various schools within the University. The School of Education has developed a number of service-learning programs within the Bachelor of Education degree and of specific interest to this paper is the unit of study conducted at Clontarf Aboriginal College. Through participation in this service-learning unit, pre-service teachers are able to work hand in hand with Aboriginal students and develop competence in addressing key areas within the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). These standards have a significant and key role to play in university course accreditation and require that graduate teachers develop competence in Aboriginal education. Current policies related to Aboriginal education also highlight the urgent need for strategies to improve the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students and stress the importance of competence in Aboriginal education both for a graduate teachers and the tertiary course providers. The service-learning unit of study that is conducted at Clontarf Aboriginal College, a Catholic School in metropolitan Perth, Western Australia may provide evidence to support the attainment of the *Graduate Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). This experience formed the basis of a phenomenological research study that explored the impact of the service-learning experience on the pre-service teachers who were participants in this research. The story of the impact of this experience is shared in this paper.

## Context

In 2009 the Dean of the School of Education was approached to assist Indigenous secondary students at Clontarf Aboriginal College identified at risk in their literacy

competencies. In response a sustained partnership in the guise of a formal service-learning unit commenced in 2010. The unit, termed *Diagnostic Literacy Clinic within a Service-learning context*, is now embedded into the curriculum and course of study at both UNDA and Clontarf Aboriginal College. This unique and innovative program enables pre-service teachers to work hand-in-hand with Year 10 students at Clontarf for 2 hours per week for the semester (July to October) on a collaborative integrated cultural sharing project. The centrepiece of the project is the creation of a book termed "My Story". Through this project Aboriginal students work with their pre-service teachers to plan, draft, edit and compile a book about topics that relate to the interests, lives, family and culture of the Aboriginal students. These "My Story" books are published commercially and then presented to the Aboriginal students at an official book launch. Each student retains a personal copy of his/her book, and another copy becomes part of the Clontarf Aboriginal College library collection. During the 6 years of the partnership over 100 books have been published and these have provided a valuable resource for literacy teaching during subsequent years, for both the Clontarf Aboriginal College students and UNDA pre-service teachers.

After each literacy teaching session, pre-service teachers participated in a service-learning tutorial for one hour with university staff. During the tutorial session, the university staff facilitated a debriefing of the experience with the pre-service teachers, incorporating structured opportunities for planning and reflection. Prior to participating in the tutoring sessions, the pre-service teachers attended an induction and orientation of the service-learning experience where staff from both the university and Clontarf Aboriginal College provided background information related to the experience. The structure of the service-learning experience, aspects of cultural awareness, ideas for literacy intervention, and Aboriginal education were discussed at this initial induction.

In observing the service-learning experience in 2010, it became apparent to the university staff facilitating the program that it would be very useful to ascertain the impact of this unit of study on the preservice teachers. The university staff were cognisant of the need for graduate teacher to develop competence in addressing the *Graduate Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011). Because the researcher wished to establish and maintain distance between the pre-service teachers as participants and her role as a university staff member, a phenomenological study was undertaken. The focus of the phenomenology research was on the pre-service teachers' personal and professional growth throughout the service-learning experience. The theoretical perspective of the study is outlined below with details relevant to a phenomenological research.

### **Research Epistemology**

Qualitative research was undertaken for this project as it was anticipated that this approach would reveal a holistic perspective appropriate for addressing the research question. Through interacting with the participants in the lived experience, the researcher looked at the "complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings" (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). The aim of the research was to make sense of the service-learning experience through the interpretations of those participating directly within the Aboriginal educational setting.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical approach was qualitative, with a social constructivist view, through a phenomenological study. A useful framework for interpreting the pre-service teachers' development of self-awareness and self-efficacy through the service-learning experience can be found using Bandura's (2002) social cognitive theory of learning. Social cognitive theory is congruent with the concept that "behaviour, the person and the environment all interact to affect one another" (cited in White, Hayes, Livesey, 2010, p. 238). It was through

exploring each of these components; the participant, the experience and the context that the researcher confirmed the decision to conduct a phenomenological study.

### **Phenomenological research**

The researcher used a phenomenological research strategy, whereby the essence of the experiences were identified and described. Phenomenologists seek to identify, understand and interpret some of the perceptions that "human beings have in how they interpret similar experiences" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 437). By adopting a phenomenological research methodology, the researcher sought to find the common "essential characteristics" of the service-learning experience. Service-learning is outlined below to ensure clarity of definition and to describe the key components of such an educational methodology.

### **Service-learning defined**

Service-learning can be understood as practical education where students address real-life community needs through structured activities designed to promote student learning (Lavery, Cain, & Hampton, 2014). The definition by Jacoby (1996) encapsulates the key components and defines service-learning as:

Experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning (p. 5).

It is important to note the use of the hyphen in the terminology *service-learning* as it acknowledges the relationship between service and learning in a symbolic way (Jacoby, 1996). Thus the sense of an equal partnership between those involved in the serving and service is crucial. In negotiating the service-learning experience it was important for both the university staff and Clontarf Aboriginal College staff to be collaborative in the planning

and implementation using a service-learning model. Service-learning enables all concerned to learn from each other, and the more willing and open are the teachers and students to new perspectives, the richer the experience will be (Ross & Thomas, 2003; Chambers & Lavery, 2012). As a result of this partnership between the staff of the university and Clontarf Aboriginal College an elective unit was designed and implemented modelled on service-learning methodology and pedagogy.

### **Purpose and Research Question**

The purpose of the phenomenological research was to explore the impact of the service-learning experience on the pre-service teachers' personal and professional development. The pre-service teachers' attitude, knowledge and pedagogy of Aboriginal education prior to, during and at the completion of the teaching experience at Clontarf Aboriginal College, were gleaned to provide insight into service-learning as a way of addressing the learning needs of pre-service teachers in teaching Aboriginal students. The research question that framed the study was: How does participation in a service-learning experience in an Aboriginal educational setting impact on the pre-service teachers' personal and professional development?

### **Significance**

In Australia the accreditation of teacher education courses require universities to provide evidence of the extent to which the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* are met (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2011). A review of the many government policies related to Aboriginal education highlights the urgent need for strategies to improve the educational outcomes for Aboriginal students. The *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) has a significant and key role to play in stressing the importance of competence in Aboriginal education both for a graduate

teachers and the tertiary course providers. Accordingly, this research study into service-learning as a way of developing pre-service teachers' knowledge, perceptions and cultural awareness of Aboriginal education explored the impact of such an experience on the pre-service teacher participants. Progress towards the achievement of the *Graduate Teacher Standards*, a part of the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011) may be demonstrated through such participation.

In exploring the personal and professional development of the pre-service teachers through this phenomenological study, the value of service-learning as a way of demonstrating the Catholicity of the University of Notre Dame Australia Objects, may be evidenced. Indeed the research study may strengthen the resolve of the University to extend the support and encourage future endeavours through a service-learning model of learning. It may also be useful to conduct a longitudinal study of participants who have undertaken service-learning experiences and to document their learning opportunities.

## **Methodology**

### Participants

Twenty-four pre-service teachers were recruited as participants in the research study. The pre-service teachers were in the third year of study in either a primary or early childhood Bachelor of Education degree. These pre-service teachers were viewed as competent in essential literacy teaching pedagogy having completed three literacy units of study with at least twenty weeks of classroom practicum experience. Although the service-learning experience was based in a secondary Aboriginal college, the early childhood and primary pre-service teachers were viewed as appropriate tutors for the secondary students who had low literacy levels. The elective unit was also a part of the primary and early

childhood course; however, it was not available for secondary students due to other course commitments.

Twenty-three female pre-service teachers and one male pre-service teacher were participants in the study. The imbalance of the genders is typical of the student cohort studying to be early childhood and primary teachers at UNDA. Also of interest to the study was the mix of ages of the pre-service teachers; the majority of pre-service teachers were aged in their early twenties, with three mature-aged females about forty years of age. All pre-service teachers were of Anglo-Saxon background and had varied experiences with Aboriginal people. Of the twenty-four participants, thirteen of the pre-service teachers had never spoken with an Aboriginal person. The other eleven pre-service teachers had differing degrees of contact with Aboriginal people determined by their living locality, school experiences, family and friends. Of these, six pre-service teachers had extensive experience, having lived or had practicum placements in a remote Aboriginal community or school.

Twenty-four students from the Clontarf Aboriginal College were selected to participate in the service-learning experience by the Literacy Coordinator at the site. These students were from Year 9 to Year 12, with twenty-two males and two females in the program. They were selected by the Literacy Coordinator as students who had low literacy skills and were deemed to benefit from the one-to-one experience of working with the pre-service teachers. Students' reading ages prior to the service-learning experience ranged from five to ten years of age, however chronologically these students were aged from 14 to 17 years. Students came from communities across Western Australia, including Derby, Looma, Fitzroy Crossing, Balgo Hills, Kununurra, One-Arm Point and Halls Creek, and some from metropolitan areas of Perth. Most of the students in the service-learning program



were attending Clontarf Aboriginal College as boarders with only a few day students. Many of the students spoke English as a second language, being fluent in their native language.

**Data Collection**

A number of different forms of data collection were used that included observations and field notes, and semi-structured interviews prior to, and at the conclusion of the study. Throughout the study pseudonyms were used to protect the confidentiality of participants. The initial interview consisted of eight questions, designed to elicit the pre-experience conceptions of the twenty-four participants. Reflective journals were maintained during the ten-week experience and recorded the thoughts and emotions of each participant. The pre-service teachers also maintained a Learning log where they recorded the lessons they were teaching during the tutoring sessions. These Learning logs provided information on the literacy instruction that was planned and delivered. At the conclusion of the experience, a semi-structured interview with each participant followed up on the responses to the initial interview questions. A schedule was planned prior to the commencement of the study to facilitate systematic and comprehensive compilation of the data collected. It also ensured participants were fully informed of their commitment in being a part of the research study.

Table 1. Overview of data collection strategies

Strategy \ Group	Reflective Journal	Learning Logs	Interviews	Field Notes and Research journal	Additional data
UNDA pre-service teachers	√	√	√		
Aboriginal College students					√ Indirectly through a questionnaire
Aboriginal College staff			√		
Researcher				√	

## **Data Analysis**

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as the basis of the data analysis. The aim of the research from an IPA perspective was to understand the experience from the point of view of those directly involved (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Thus the research into service-learning sought to elicit the pre-service teachers' experience and understanding of the phenomena. As is the practice of qualitative data analysis, there was an ongoing process of data collection, coding and analysis that eventually revealed the essence or themes of the research study. This process is described as "a series of spirals as we loop back and forth through various phases within the broader progress of the analysis" (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 252). The researcher made connections between the data, categorises, linked concepts, and re-read initial information to confirm the themes emerging from the research experience. The participant's awareness of social issues is also discussed in much of the literature as an outcome of service-learning. As stated in Cipolle (2010), "Students see the contradictions between what they (and society) say they value and believe in and the injustices they see others experiencing" (p. 42). Indeed, by interacting with people from different ethnic or racial backgrounds one comes to see people as individuals with their own stories, and world perspectives as opposed to the stereotypical images that are often portrayed in society (Cipolle, 2010).

## **Results**

Results are presented from the data collected at the three stages of the phenomenological study: pre-experience conceptions; during the experience; and at the conclusion of the service-learning experience. The results were obtained from detailed analysis of the participant interviews, reflective journals, learning logs and post interviews. These results have been synthesised and summarised according to the research question

related to the pre-service teachers' personal and professional growth throughout the service-learning experience. The results are presented with the discussion below under the themed headings.

## **Discussion**

In endeavouring to answer the research question relating to how participation in a service-learning experience impacts on pre-service teachers' personal and professional development, five key findings emerged from the data. These were themed as follows:

1. change of perceptions;
2. building positive relationships;
3. self-awareness and confidence;
4. awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal people and culture; and
5. goals and aspirations.

These themes will now be presented with anecdotal evidence supplied by the research participants that elaborate on each of the findings.

### **Theme 1: Change of perceptions**

In addressing the impact of the service-learning experience on the pre-service teachers, one needs to consider the reasons why 13 of the pre-service teachers participated in the program. Over half of the participants had never worked with an Aboriginal person before or indeed, spoken to one. For these pre-service teachers, the experience of interacting one-to-one with an Aboriginal student had a significant effect on them both personally and professionally. Such a finding is consistent with that of Coffey and Lavery (2015), who found that the service-learning experience can have a profound influence on those involved. Many of the pre-service teachers expressed the view that Aboriginal people

were frequently portrayed in a negative way. Indeed the emotions of the pre-service teachers in beginning the service-learning experience were those of being nervous, scared, terrified, anxious, fearful and overwhelmed.

In contrast, the emotions described by the pre-service teachers at the conclusion of the study were those of utter joy, enthusiasm, passion for Aboriginal people and delight at the experience undertaken. Some pre-service teachers shared how the experience was the best they had ever, that it was "mind boggling", how they just loved it and would never forget the lessons learnt. As stated by pre-service teacher, Hannah: "I loved it. I was really anxious at the start, but I loved working with the student. It was a big eye-opener. I am just so glad I did it as it was a very good experience". The extent of the learning and depth of the experience was also captured in the words of another pre-service teacher, Gayle: "It really was the best opportunity and the best experience that I have honestly had, like learning all about Len, my student, and even learning more about myself as a teacher. I can't believe how much you learn, not just as the teacher but personally".

It is important outcome of the study in terms of developing competence in the *Graduate Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2011), that a number of the participants' perceptions of Aboriginal people completely changed through the face-to-face interactions with the Aboriginal students. For many of the pre-service teachers, they had only encountered negative, denigrating and racist comments about Aboriginal people and their culture. Such views were expressed by some of the pre-service teachers' family members, peers and the media. It is inferred then by the researcher that the stereotypical perceptions of Aboriginal people were challenged by the pre-service teachers throughout the experience of working directly with the Aboriginal students. Many of the pre-service

teachers also commented as to how respectful, well-mannered, polite and eager to learn were the students in the tutoring program. Consequently, the pre-service teachers now became advocates for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture. A number of the pre-service teachers shared how they would become angry and emotional if conversations centred on the negative stigmas of Aboriginal people. Indeed they found it difficult not to speak out and defend Aboriginal people.

According to 13 of the pre-service teachers, the service-learning experience of working directly with the Aboriginal students had a positive, deep influence on their perceptions of Aboriginal people. There was a heightened self-awareness and awareness of others through the direct contact and experience during the ten-week service-learning program. All participants were overwhelmingly positive about their experience and that they had a deeper understanding and respect for the Aboriginal students and their culture. Indeed, the participants also described the unit as a life-changing experience and one they would not forget.

## **Theme 2. Building positive relationships**

Analysis of the data from the research study identified the need recognised by the pre-service teachers to build a positive relationship with the Aboriginal students as central to the service-learning experience. All participants recognised the importance of developing a relationship and viewed it as an area that could be a potential challenge for them. However, through careful planning and lessons designed to promote authentic learning within the context of positive relationships, the pre-service teachers soon found the Aboriginal students very receptive and keen to learn. As stated by Vivian, a pre-service-teacher: "Relationships are the most important thing. The students need to get to know you on a personal level, and the teacher getting to know the student on a personal level. We just

found lots of things in common to help our relationship develop." Similar sentiments were expressed by Hattie (2009) who acknowledged that "Learning is a very personal journey for the teacher and the student ..." (p. 23). The pre-service teachers found that it was essential that appropriate strategies were executed within the context of building positive relationships. The service-learning experience enabled these relationships to develop and flourish as the pre-service teachers engaged in one-to-one tuition for two hours each week over a ten-week period. The experiential nature of service-learning facilitated the personal contact between the pre-service teachers and the Aboriginal students. The pre-service teachers promoted the building of relationships by planning lessons that included strategies that connected with the interests and needs of the Aboriginal students. Sarah, a pre-service teacher stated: "I think that you can let the stereotypes lead you and you label a whole lot of people. I think I learnt that you start really, really small and then you build on that. It doesn't matter how long it takes. The tiniest little thing is moving mountains". It was through these strong personal interactions that the pre-service teachers began to change their perceptions of Aboriginal people and their culture.

It is acknowledged that a key component of experiential learning is the opportunity for deep reflection. As noted by Dewey (1938, cited in Hackett & Lavery, 2012) learning arises when a person takes time to reflect on how the experience has impacted or engaged them. Such an approach "allows a person within the present, to evaluate what he or she learnt from the past and plan or make decisions about the future" (Hackett & Lavery, 2012, p. 14).

Reflection was a key part of the service-learning unit of study and the analysis of the pre-service teachers' weekly reflective journals was an essential and valuable component of the phenomenological study. The value of critical and deep reflection allowed for new

insights to emerge from the service-learning experience. As part of IPA methodology, the pre-service teachers' reflective journals have been read and re-read, coded and re-coded numerous times, to inform the research study. The researcher also used her research journal as a strategy to ensure *bracketing* and *epoche*, (Crotty, 2010) and the weekly service-learning reflections promoted regular and deep analysis of bias and subjectivity. The third area of the results and discussion relates to the pre-service teachers' self-awareness and self-efficacy that developed throughout the service-learning experience.

### **Theme 3: Self-awareness and confidence**

All of the pre-service teachers acknowledged the reciprocal nature of service-learning and how it had impacted on their understanding and respect for Aboriginal people and their culture. Some pre-service teachers spoke of greater patience and empathy both within the tutoring session and in life in general. Cognitive and affective learning were evident in the pre-service teachers as they became more flexible and adaptable in their approach to the lessons, and reflective in evaluating what worked and what needed changing. One pre-service teacher noted that her personal trait of a sense of humour had been important in engaging and managing her Aboriginal student and that she was becoming more confident and comfortable throughout the service-learning experience

Self-efficacy refers to "an internal belief of being capable of performing in a certain manner to attain certain goals" (Churchill et.al., 2011, p. 79). The service-learning experience impacted on the self-efficacy of the pre-service teachers, both positively and negatively, as evident in the participants' reflective journals. Many of the pre-service teachers expressed self-doubt during the phenomenon in their ability to address the complex needs of the Aboriginal students. Yet others related how they had increased in confidence through the face-to-face teaching over the ten weeks. Some pre-service teachers

shared how their lesson planning was more focused than previously. Others expressed growth and development in knowledge related to literacy pedagogy and teaching strategies.

The pre-service teachers' self-efficacy ebbed and flowed throughout the service-learning experience according to the responses of the Aboriginal students and the achievement of lesson outcomes. Through observations, feedback and reflections, the pre-service teachers developed their personal sense of identity as a teacher and enhanced their sense of self-efficacy. Such contrasting personal beliefs are consistent with social cognitive theory, whereby "self-efficacy is inherently contextual because it produces behaviours that vary across situations and its activation depends on the particular context" (White, Hayes, & Livesey, 2010, p. 239). The impact of the service-learning experience on the pre-service teachers' awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal people and their culture follows.

#### **Theme 4: Awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal people and culture**

The pre-service teachers were eager to learn as much as they could from their Aboriginal students and in doing so increased their own knowledge of Aboriginal culture and commensurate strategies to be used in the weekly teaching sessions. All the pre-service teachers acknowledged that they had a greater respect and appreciation of Aboriginal people and their culture as a result of the service-learning experience. The personal stories of the lives of many of the Aboriginal students really inspired the pre-service teachers to work diligently to assist these students in addressing their needs. Compassion and empathy were traits that came to the forefront of the experience for many of the pre-service teachers as they connected personally with the Aboriginal students. Pre-service teacher Cade wrote:

As a multicultural society you would think that we would embrace all people but, we tend to highlight the negative aspects of Aboriginal culture. During this experience I have developed an appreciation and respect for the culture, and to not just accept



what has been laid out in front of me. More and more I have become comfortable with the culture, the people and their learning styles. This has translated into everyday living and now when I see Aboriginals in the street I want to know their stories, where they are from and actually engage with them. This service learning experience has brought Aboriginal culture and especially Aboriginal education to the forefront of my mind.

In analysing the statement written by Cade, much can be learnt as to the impact of this service-learning experience. There is a significant transformation of learning for this participant into everyday life, where he now views Aboriginal people and culture through a new lens in his thinking and actions. He has a heightened appreciation for the Aboriginal culture and has grown in respect and appreciation of these people. As a pre-service teacher he has developed skills and knowledge that will assist in his ability to demonstrate the key *Graduate Professional Standards* (AITSL, 2011) related to the teaching of Aboriginal students.

#### **Theme 5: Goals and aspirations**

As a consequence of the service-learning experience, nine of the twenty-four participating pre-service teachers expressed interest in working with Aboriginal students in rural and remote locations. It was apparent through the post-interviews that these pre-service teachers had developed a real passion, love and commitment to Aboriginal people and their culture. In following these participants after the research study, the researcher found that Elizabeth, a pre-service teacher, now qualified, accepted a teaching position in a very remote location in Western Australia. Her post-interview response affirmed her commitment to Aboriginal education:

I have seen the effect this project has had on the Aboriginal students and for all of the university students. I truly value the outcome that service-learning has had on me and hope to be able to do more in the future. It [the service-learning experience] has reinforced my love for these people and the Aboriginal culture. I have a great respect for them. I love teaching them.

The service-learning experience has had a significant impact on this participant, with her decision to seek and accept employment in a very remote community. Other participants also indicated their willingness to consider future teaching opportunities in schools and locations with a large proportion of Aboriginal students. It is a positive outcome of the service-learning experience that more graduate teacher would consider these options because of the impact of the face to face connection through the phrase "hand to hand we learn together".

### **Conclusion**

The research study aimed to explore the impact of the service-learning experience on pre-service teachers' personal and professional development as they worked with Aboriginal students in an educational setting. The structure of the service-learning experience enabled the pre-service teachers to build their understanding of the Aboriginal students as they engaged for ten weeks in a two-hour one-to-one tutoring session. Being immersed in both Aboriginal English and traditional dialects deepened the pre-service teachers' awareness and appreciation of the Aboriginal culture and its languages. The experience also developed the pre-service teachers' appreciation and respect for Aboriginal people and their culture whilst increasing their cultural competence in addressing the students' needs. As stated by Martin (2008), the emphasis for re-conceptualising Aboriginal schooling must see a "shift away from 'teaching to' to 'teaching with' Aboriginal students' (p. 6). The research study has provided evidence that service-learning makes a difference to all who participate. As such, it is reasonable that pre-service teacher education include a service-learning model of learning and pedagogy to enable an increased level of cultural competence and professional learning for pre-service teachers.

Most significant to the learning of the pre-service teachers was the building of relationships with the Aboriginal students. It was through the face-to-face experience of working together that the pre-service teachers came to appreciate how similar they were in interests, family connections, goals and aspirations, and enjoyment of daily living. The reciprocity of the service-learning experience was evident in the respectful and trusting relationships that were observed by the researcher throughout the time of the phenomenological-based study. An important outcome of the partnership between these two Catholic institutions, The University of Notre Dame Australia and the Aboriginal College has seen the ongoing delivery of this service-learning unit of study, now into the sixth year of the program, enabling both organisations to put their ethos of service to others into action. The limitations of the study are acknowledged, as the study was undertaken at a single institution with a small cohort of participants, however with continuation of the service-learning unit of study, it is recommended that longitudinal data be gathered in the future.

The building of relationships through the service-learning experience became the catalyst for change in the pre-service teachers' attitudes and perceptions of Aboriginal people. The self-efficacy and identity of the pre-service teachers as effective teachers of Aboriginal students also increased throughout the experience. It is hoped that the research will provide further insight into how service-learning can be used as a pedagogical strategy within a teaching course enabling pre-service teachers to be better prepared and culturally competent to address the needs of Aboriginal students and help to *Close the Gap* (Australian Government, 2015).

Finally, service-learning at UNDA provides a practical structure for students to enact their Catholic / Christian faith. The Gospel calls for social action and in the words of Jesus:

"...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..." (Matt.20:28). The service-learning experience at Clontarf Aboriginal College enabled the pre-service teachers to 'serve' the Aboriginal students in their care. Pre-service teacher Grace, clearly articulated her learning:

I guess that we are serving each other. We are serving the students at the college by giving them the learning hopefully that they require to bring them on in their literacy: and they're serving us by allowing us to learn about them and their culture ... and allowing us a chance to learn more about our ability to teach...hand in hand we are learning together.

## References

- Australian Government (2015). *Closing the gap Prime Minister's report 2015*. Retrieved from [www.dpmc.gov.au/pmc.../closing-gap-prime-ministers-report-2015](http://www.dpmc.gov.au/pmc.../closing-gap-prime-ministers-report-2015)
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Education.[AITSL] (2011). *National professional standards for teachers*. Retrieved from <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/national-professional-standard-for-principals-landing.html>
- Bandura, A. (2002), Social cognitive theory in cultural context. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 51(2), 269–290. doi: 10.1111/1464-0597.00092
- Chambers, D., & Lavery, S. (2012). Service-learning: A valuable component of pre-service teacher education. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 17(4), 128-137. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221.ajte.2012v37n>
- Churchill, R., Ferguson, P., Godinho, S., Johnson, N.F., Keddie, A., Letts, W., Mackay, J., McGill, M., Moss, J., Nagel, M.C., Nicholson, P., & Vick, M. (2011). *Teaching: Making a difference*. Milton, QLD: Wiley.
- Cipolle, S. (2010). *Service-learning and social justice: Engaging students in social change*. Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Inc.
- Coffey, A., & Lavery, S. (2015). Service-learning: A valuable means of preparing pre-service teachers for a teaching practicum. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(7), 86-101. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2015v40n7.7>
- Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). California: Sage Publications.
- Crotty, M. (2010). *The foundations of social research*. St Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin.
- Fraenkel, J.R., & Wallen, N.E. (2003). *How to design and evaluate research in education*. Boston: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.
- Hackett, C., & Lavery, S. (2012). Formation of pre-service teachers for religious education through experiential learning: The retreat leaders training program. *Journal of Religious Education*, 60(2), 13-23.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. New York: Routledge.
- Jacoby, B. (1996). *Service-learning in Higher Education Concepts and Practices*. San Francisco: Jossey- Bass Publishers.

- Lavery, S. D., Cain, G., & Hampton, P. (2014). A service-learning immersion in a remote Aboriginal community: Enhancing pre-service teacher education. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 10(2), 39-54.
- Martin, K. (2008). Aboriginal worldview, knowledge and relatedness: Reconceptualising Aboriginal schooling as a teaching-learning and research interface. *Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues*, 12(1), 66-78.
- Ross, C., & Thomas, A. (2003). *Writing for real*. New York: Longman.
- Smith, J.A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis. Theory, method and research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research*. California: Sage Publications.
- White, F., Hayes, B., & Livesey, D. (2010). *Developmental psychology from infancy to adulthood* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Frenchs Forest, NSW: Pearson Australia.