Whose story is it anyway? : An explanation of how `academic literacy' was constructed in a university transition course for Indigenous Australians during a period of organisational change.

Gregory J. Stratton
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Whose story is it anyway? : An explanation of how ‘academic literacy’ was constructed in a university transition course for Indigenous Australians during a period of organisational change.

Greg Stratton
2006

Master of Education

Faculty of Communication Services, Education and Social Sciences
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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how a group of lecturers who taught in a university preparation course designed for Indigenous Australians thought about what ‘academic literacy’ meant. Lecturers were asked to consider the relationships between the meanings of ‘academic literacy’, curriculum, and the considerable problems the Course was facing in order to remain viable. My research goal was to better understand what alignment of people, ideas, and other important entities would be required to develop a sustainable program for Indigenous people seeking an alternative pathway into university degrees.

This qualitative research project analysed lecturers’ oral responses to six research questions in both on-stage group interviews and off-stage individual interviews (Goffman cited in MacLachlan & Reid, 1994). These oral responses were transcribed and treated as narrative texts, and analysed using narrative techniques devised by Hoey (2001) and theories of change originated by Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974).

Using a combination of these analytical methods it was possible to see where participants’ organisational narratives showed evidence of second-order change potential. These change potentials pointed to a way out of the intractable problems that hindered the Course’s potential to be a quality teaching program. Many of the second–order change potentials that emerged in participants’ data pointed to the solution of closing the Course down. However, the data also pointed to where some surprising and productive second–order opportunities existed.

Rhizome theory and Actor Network Theory provided a means to see how particular actors, human and non-human, worked for and against various configurations of meanings. ‘Academic literacy’ can be understood in this interpretive frame as a technology and as a non-human actor. For a university preparation Course to be successful there has to be alignment amongst the various entities that perform it into
being. The problem for the Course was that important entities that had maintained a level of Course integrity had fallen out of alignment. These entities included the government body that funded the Course, it included lecturers who had different ideas about what they should be doing as educators, and it included the actor at the centre of this study, ‘academic literacy’, who took on particular roles in different circumstances and with different consequences.

Analysis of participants’ narrative data revealed that one strategy that could be deployed to improve student outcomes was, ironically, to give up on any attempt to come to a consensus position about teaching and learning. The research of Breen and Kumaravadivelu, for example, which investigated the practices of second language teachers, suggested the importance of understanding that educators work from a position of ‘principled pragmatism’, and that it was beneficial for students’ learning to organisationally recognise educators’ competence, and, in Actor Network Theory terms, attempt to bring educators into productive alignments, rather than, pressure educators toward consensus positions. Kumaravadivelu labelled this position that educators found themselves working from as the ‘postmethod condition’.

A research finding of this investigation, that recognition of a ‘postmethod condition’ was a potentially valuable organisational strategy, one that could improve course outcomes, had important implications for the ways that educators might work together to develop a professional learning community. While it is not always possible bring network entities into alignment, Actor Network Theory in combination with narrative analysis techniques and theories of change, such as those used in this thesis, can point to where opportunities lie to bring about productive reconfigurations in organisational meaning making. In professional learning communities that aim to be rhizomic and ontological rather than being coercive towards particular knowledge positions, it becomes possible to form linkages that were previously not considered. Where once there may have been a chasm between fine points of difference there could be possibilities for connection.
‘Academic literacy’ understood in this ontological frame is productive because it is broadly networked with the people who teach. It also encourages other Course stakeholders to enter into more meaningful and transparent relationships.
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

Incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

Contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text;

Or

Contain any defamatory material

Signed ………………….. Date……………..

Greg Stratton
Acknowledgement

First I would like to thank my colleagues who gave me their time and provided me with an opportunity to learn. They are a wonderful group of people and I am very grateful for the experiences that I have shared with them. Second I would like to thank my best friend Rebecca for her constant love and support and my children Patricia, Lucy and Jack who give me great cheer in spite of my absences. Thanks also to my parents, Shirley and Les Stratton, for their optimism. And finally I want to show deep gratitude to Colin Kenworthy who has been a wonderful person and an inspired mentor.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This study focused on the contested curriculum site of a course designed to orient adult Indigenous Australian Students to the discourses and ‘academic literacies’ of university. The study observed and investigated a process of curriculum change as the beliefs, knowledges, and livelihoods of those teaching the bridging Course came under challenge by administrative concerns about the scope, objectives, structure and content of the program.

This research is located in an Indigenous School which is itself located within a university. The phenomenon of Indigenous centres of higher learning within the university system has been a relatively recent consequence of the social justice and political demands of Indigenous people to advance their aspirations for self-determination.

The Indigenous School where the research is located came into existence in 1993 after a university restructure. The restructure resulted in the University’s Indigenous programs effectively splitting off from their initial formation as a part of an Indigenous and Intercultural Studies School (Reynolds et al., 1999). When this separation occurred, the newly formed School of Intercultural Studies offered a range of degree and postgraduate programs, whereas the Indigenous Studies School, from the outset, was much more problematically constituted in terms of its educational offerings. The Indigenous School concentrated the bulk of its resources to offer pre-tertiary bridging education to Indigenous students who did not qualify for standard university entry.

Since the late 1990’s the role of the Indigenous School and its key program, a
Indigenous pre-tertiary bridging course, had come under increasing levels of attention from a number of stakeholders. This attention was generated because the bridging Course had had too many enrolments but not enough students who were completing the Course. DEETYA who provided the Course funding intervened to apply new measures of Course success. Pressures were also applied to force intake quotas on the bridging Course. It was at this conjunction of events that the School, in order to remain viable, was permitted by the University to develop a degree program in its own right for the first time. The School’s identity was beginning to change, an identity more in line with the status of a university School, rather than the status of a university support unit that had, up until that time, largely defined the School.

While the bridging Course had already undergone significant change in anticipation of a changing funding environment (Course A to Course B), and then again in response to the actual policy and funding changes that DEETYA introduced, institutional indecision about their ongoing commitment to the program was, at the time of this study in 2002, testing the bridging Course again.

Lecturers having previously undergone processes to improve Course outcomes were being pressured to change the Course again. The value and meaning of what lecturers considered important in the bridging Course was in dispute. The bridging Course lecturers lacked a collective clarity about what the Course’s problems actually were and how to deal with them.

For the Course to survive, new assemblages of understandings, interactions and processes would be required. Just what this set of relations would be, and how this would translate into curriculum, had yet to be determined. Most lecturers were unsure about how they might go about another change process, one that could deliver a sustainable level of student enrolments and would improve Course completion outcomes. For some lecturers the two aspirations appeared to be oppositional.

I believed that lecturers would have a diversity of stories to tell about how this
conjunction of events had occurred and that their stories would be deserving of explication. An early motivation for this research focus was a belief that an analysis of lecturers’ understandings and practices concerning ‘academic literacy’ and its role in the Course, might give some ‘steer’ (Strathern 1999 cited in Claxton, 1990) to the creation of a sustainable teaching and learning program. Lecturers perceived that the Course was under threat and I believed that to investigate the site’s organizational meaning-making processes might reveal areas of opportunity that were overlooked. This is the context in which this study begins.

The position, however, from which the research process was concluded, was a position that while being highly correlated to the original research interest, did nevertheless, reconfigure much of what you are about to read. The interpretive interest that shaped the final processes of the research could be summarised with the question:

‘What alignment of interests would be required to develop a sustainable university transition program for Indigenous Australians?’

This question was generated from the research process itself. It was as much my question as it was a question of my colleagues who where the participants in this case study.

I chose to side step the ‘truths’ of classical or positivist logic in this research in order to see ‘truth’ as something that is more dispersed and relational. I recognised from the outset of this research that knowledge building would need to address issues that were a consequence of clashes between different kinds of interpretive logic and power (Baudrillard, 1993; Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 1991; Freire & Gadotti, 1995; MacLachlan & Reid, 1994).

Gilmore and Smith argued that one of the assumptions of ‘positivism that characterizes Western institutions is the need to separate facts from values or feelings
and to make decisions on the basis of facts alone … The very bedrock of scientific inquiry is the ability to separate the investigator from the object of study – the need for objectification taken as unproblematic – and to eschew any emotional involvement’ (Gilmore & Smith, 2002, p. 125). Gilmore and Smith claim that such an epistemology clashes with the epistemology of Indigenous people because issues of identity and ideology were put to the side in favour of rationalist and technical interpretations. As this research incorporated the narratives of Indigenous people it was important that I be very cognisant of different ways of valuing and aligning meanings.

Popkewitz claimed that a critical framing of ‘academic literacy' in any curriculum site, should acknowledge the impossibility, impracticability, and irrelevance of many positivist definitions, that more often than not, do not take account of complexity and change (Popkewitz, 1995). Taylor argued that it is important to frame understandings of what ‘academic literacy’ can mean and the powers that ‘academic literacy’ can have, in ways that do not seek out any “unifying logic” nor attempt to silence the voices of Indigenous people whose conceptions can fit outside those of the “legitimate” dominant culture and its traditions (Anthea Taylor, 1995, p. 18). The writing of an explanation about how meanings were made in this site, as I interpreted them, necessitated that I use a descriptive account, an account made up of fragments of what was going on rather than a positivist set of proofs (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002; Lather, 1994; Latour, 1986).

Law and Urry argued that in the framing of methodologies and questions to get to any sense of ‘truth’, it is necessary for the research processes to accommodate any evolving conditions under which ‘truths’ could emerge. Change was definitely on the agenda at the site of this research project and had to be accounted for. Additionally, Law and Urry contend that any research process needs to be reflective about what is going to be brought into existence as a result of applying particular investigative tools. They argued that researchers’ methods are themselves, actors in the encoding, reproduction and erosion of existing realities (Law & Urry, 2002).
It was difficult for me as a novice researcher to account for and anticipate the likely consequences of my research actions. I understood that research ‘intervenes’, that research can have impacts on the politics of meaning-making (Derrida cited in Bibby, 1997). Research that involves colleagues and the entity that economically sustains the person doing the research is obviously potentially dangerous terrain.

The method that I used to address this research tension, was to regard the responses that my colleagues gave to the questions I asked, as narrative structures that maintained and restrained discourses. The study would investigate the roles lecturers’ narratives played in the maintenance and evolution of Course problems and solutions as my colleagues understood them and as I interpreted them as a researcher (Eron & Lund, 1993; Hoey, 2001; Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974).

In the writing of a thesis, there is a responsibility to interpret and translate the research participants’ narratives ethically. Fish argued that in a demonstration model of meaning-making the task has to be

adequate to the description of objects that exist independently of our activities; we may fail or we may succeed, but what ever we do, the objects of our attention will retain their ontological separateness and still be what they were before we approached them.

[On the other hand Fish argued that with a model of persuasion] our activities are directly constitutive of those objects, and of the terms in which they can be described, and of the standards by which they can be evaluated. The responsibilities of the critic under this method are very great indeed, for rather than being a mere player in the game, he is a maker and unmaker of its rules (Fish, 1980, p.367).

This research takes the latter view. The responsibility in the telling of this story is therefore great indeed. While the thesis concerns itself with the discourse of the participants, my telling of their story becomes as much my story as it is theirs.
1.2 Significance of Study

This study examined a specifically located semiotic artefact, ‘academic literacy’, through the process of tracing and mapping the collective narrative performances of an academic teaching and curriculum team’s responses to a set of six questions. These six questions provided a framework to gather data in order to explore the lecturers’ understandings and beliefs about ‘academic literacy’ in a university course designed for Indigenous students.

This study built on an assumption that what the research participants had to say in response to research questions was networked with pre-existing institutional, curriculum, and cultural narratives, both in the production of those narratives and in any reshaping of those narratives to address changing circumstances.

I believed that if I could assemble a conceptual framework and a methodology for the task of hearing what my colleagues had to say, and for interpreting what was said, then some surprising and useful knowledge would be produced. I did not want to process what lecturers had to say through any pre-packaged filtering and interpretive machine. I believed that new tools could produce new insights.

Research into the “stories” told by lecturers about curriculum dilemmas in the context of a proposed Course change, would provide a perspective on the complex ideological and pedagogical project of providing “successful” higher education pathways to Indigenous Australians.

Hodge argued that with the cultural and critical shift from structuralism to post-structuralism, came a corresponding move from the analysis of structure to an analysis and concern with processes (Hodge 1990). Hodge claimed that “this kind of approach is labelled variously 'post-structuralism', 'discourse analysis', 'sociology of language', or 'ethnomethodology'. Each of these practices [Hodge claimed] has a relativistic form, but all of them describe phenomena that are concerned with power
and its maintenance or negotiation, concepts which pass beyond the boundaries laid down by linguistic specificity” (Hodge 1990).

The research questions that I posed to my colleagues were designed to gather data, that I believed when mapped as narrative systems, would assist in the description and analysis of the social and organisational meanings associated with what was for me the Course’s key actor-entity, ‘academic literacy’ (Hoey, 2001; Latour, 1986). To devise an account of how this meaning dynamic operated is what this thesis is fundamentally about.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The echo of decade old pedagogical and ideological debates about the forces that shape Indigenous university-based bridging programs (Keeffe, 1990; Singh, 1990) can be heard in lecturers’ contemporary negotiations of what to count as important. University pre-tertiary Indigenous bridging courses have long struggled to find legitimacy within the higher education sector amongst the competing interests of economic rationalism and enfranchisement, globalism/federalism and localism, efficiency and access, and most importantly, colonizer and colonized (MCEETYA, 2001, p. 34). Page, Farrington and DiGregorio argued that ‘to improve the rates of participation and success of Indigenous students in higher education there is a need to investigate the factors which challenge or enhance their academic success’ (Page, Farrington, & Di Gregorio, 1999, p. 1).

To grasp the various threads of how lecturers believed the bridging Course contributed to the process of supporting students’ higher education aspirations, I had to develop a means to appreciate how my participant colleagues used narrative as a tool to articulate their conceptual frameworks for both posing problems and dilemmas of organisational meaning and for resolving impasses of meaning.
Law and Urry, and Gergen have argued that the meaning and value of what people do and say is a relational effect (Gergen, 1997a; Law & Urry, 2002). In the ‘narrativization’ of experience, the themes and storylines of participants’ narratives, can be interpreted as a form of organizational and local truth (Cortazzi, 1993). ‘Academic literacy’ was assumed from the very beginnings of this research to be a key ‘generating principle’ for what the Course meant (Riffaterre, 1978). It was through the negotiation of what ‘academic literacy’ signified that I believed, that the Course and student learning were given form. From the outset of the research I believed that everything about the Course networked around the negotiation of ‘academic literacy’.

As a researcher I wanted to investigate the relationship between the way the Course was conceived and practised, and lecturers’ beliefs about the difficulties the Course was facing. By describing how responsibility for the Course’s problems was attributed and distributed from lecturers’ perspectives, this research aimed to develop understandings that might point to new opportunities.

As a researcher, I wanted to test the hypothesis, that by tracing, ordering and reflecting on the participants’ responses as narrative networks, and thus by attending to the entity ‘academic literacy’ through those networks, it would be possible to build an understanding of how the meanings of ‘academic literacy’ were determined.

The focus on ‘academic literacy’ began with the premise that the purpose of the university transition Course was designed to orient Indigenous Australian students to the ‘academic literacies’ of the university. Following this premise it was likely that the concepts, beliefs and practices that surrounded and attached to the artefact ‘academic literacy’ would reveal insights that could go some way to understanding what lecturers were collectively saying and doing as literacy educators. While I was interested in the processes by which network actor-entities attached or aligned to enable particular constructions of ‘academic literacy’, I was also interested in the ways that ‘academic literacy’ passed through lecturer networks and shaped
This thesis is the story of a brief period in time in which Course and curriculum understandings were negotiated amongst a particular group of colleagues. It is the story of a set of meanings that had different durations, different velocities and impacts (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002). It was a story that spoke to a historical and discursive change process. The research aimed to interpret the meanings and implications of one pedagogical idea, ‘academic literacy’, by following this entity in lecturers’ narrative and discursive networks.

This research is composed of many stories and many inter-related stories. Readers will find themselves moving back and forth between the networked stories, as this is part of the texture of this reading experience. Lather and Smithies characterised this type of reading experience as a ‘reading workout’, a ‘troubling exercise of reading’ and as an ‘unsettling experience’ (Lather & Smithies, 1997p, 220).

1.4 Research Questions

The primary data for this research came from the responses my colleagues gave to a series of questions designed to prompt an explication of their understandings about what ‘academic literacy’ meant and the implications of these meanings for the Course and for students’ learning. The questions also prompted lecturers to explore their understandings about the relationship between ‘academic literacy’, pedagogy and the bridging Course more generally.

Listed below are the data-gathering questions put to the research participants.

1. What information, anecdotes, or stories can you share about the way that ‘academic literacy’ is constructed in the bridging program both from your
own practice and your understanding of how it is more generally enacted through staff practice?

2. What personal beliefs and values underpin your practice and perceptions of how ‘academic literacy’ is constructed on both a personal and collective level?

3. What understandings do you have of the problems the program is encountering and how do you rationalise those understandings?

4. Do you see any relationship between the curriculum goals and practices of the bridging Course and the program’s problems?

5. What are the critical aspects of the problems you have outlined?

6. Can you propose any solutions to the issues facing the program?

The same six research questions were presented to participants in both a group (on-stage) setting and in an individual (off-stage) setting. The research used Goffman’s theatrical metaphors of ‘on-stage’ and ‘off-stage’ performance to elicit two broad perspectives of information from participants (MacLachlan & Reid, 1994). ‘On stage’ refers to the performance that people give when having to consider the consequences of their roles in any public situation. Goffman claimed that people use ‘“face work” to maintain their own and others’ self-images’ (Fayard, 2002, p. 7-9). During an ‘on-stage’ public performance, people have to attend to their personal, social and institutional roles in quite different ways to when people performed ‘off-stage’ roles.

When assuming an ‘off-stage’ role, there is an assumption that people relax more and ‘drop [their] front’ to some degree (Ibid, p. 7). People do not maintain “face” in the ways they do when assuming more public roles.
1.5 Definition of Terms

**Actors-actants-artefacts-entities:** These terms are largely interchangeable and can be considered as nodes in a network of relations that can be both human and non-human. Most people are comfortable with the notion of people having agency (actors) but this notion is extended to technologies such as computers and door closers, to institutions such as hospitals and universities, and the ‘natural’ world such as insects and the properties of minerals. “Entities, whether people or technologies, are not fixed and do not have significance in and of themselves. Instead, they achieve significance through relations with other entities, and ‘if differences exist it is because they are generated in the relations that produce them’” (Williams-Jones & Graham, 2003, p. 272).

**Actor Network Theory (ANT):** Actor Network Theory attempts to explain the “shifting systems of alliances ‘performed’ into existence by the actors involved, and necessarily include human and non-human elements” (Williams-Jones & Graham, 2003, p. 273).

**Block Study Mode:** Block mode refers to a study program devised for external students. Students are required to attend two weeklong on-campus learning intensives per semester.

**Border Pedagogy:** In the context of the university Indigenous bridging Course a ‘border pedagogy’ can be interpreted as a means of supporting students becoming competent in ‘assimilating the “expert” genres that make up the …content of [university] Course[s] … [and acquiring the capacity] to find an appropriate discursive voice, one fashioned by an understanding of the textual structures, discursive processes, and institutional practices of their new writing [and reading] context’ (Clerehan & Walker, 2003, p.38 citing Candlin & Plum, 1999; Gee, 1996). The notion of ‘border pedagogy / border crossing’ also foregrounds a political and cultural commitment to strengthen students’ connections to the Indigenous domains.
of knowledge and culture that had sustained them before coming to university and to which students remained connected and committed (Abdullah & Stringer, 1999; Cousins, 2003; Freire & Gadotti, 1995; Giroux, 1991; Nakata, 2001).

**Course Review**: The following definition of the Course Review is a modified quote taken from the introduction of the final draft report of the Course Review itself (Reynolds et al., 1999). In mid 1997 staff of the School of Indigenous Australian Studies became concerned that its pre-tertiary bridging courses, particularly the external course units, were in need of urgent review and redevelopment. The then Head of School authorised resources (both human and material) for a Course Review.

The purpose of the Course Review was to investigate the School's bridging Course’s educational objectives and the Course’s (Course A) support systems so that it could better meet the needs of students, and, in so doing, improve retention rates and student outcomes.

The overall intention of the Review was to work towards the production of a curriculum framework from which a new course was to be developed. The Review process was planned as a collaborative endeavour involving as many of the School’s staff as possible.

**DEETYA**: The Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs

**First–Order and Second–Order Change**: In a first–order narrative system any inherent problems that cannot be solved by common sense, for example turning a tap off to stop a house from flooding, can sometimes be seen as having ‘errors in logical typing and a Game Without End [is] established’. In this situation issues or problems cannot resolve because they are trapped within the logic of the narrative field. On the other hand, a second-order change in a narrative field means that the system of networked meanings in that field can systemically change through feedback.
Essentially a narrative system can change by the process of reframing. When a situation can be reframed the issues and concerns that had formerly existed can reconfigure in ways that are no longer a problem (Watzlawick et al., 1974, p. 95).

**MCEETYA**: Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.01 Introduction

Problems arise for the design of learning when the interests of students and the institutional interests of a university fail to align. While lecturers work to ‘illuminate’ the paths that they believe lead to university success, many students fail to complete the journey (Lander, 2000). The non-completion statistics of Australian universities are testament that many students find ‘higher learning’ difficult to negotiate (MCEETYA, 2001).

The focus on ‘academic literacy’ in this research was chosen because it has long been considered an important factor in Indigenous Australians’ pursuit of social, economic and cultural justice. Any change to the chances of Indigenous Australians entry into university challenges their access to the social goods and opportunities that many Australians take for granted. The School’s management’s suggestions that the bridging Course would have to change meant that what counted as ‘academic literacy’ would likely be contested and would have consequences for curriculum and students’ learning. What counted as ‘academic literacy’ therefore had consequences for students’ opportunities to enter higher education and for their ability to experience success.

The possibility that the bridging Course would have to change was compelling lecturers to confront anew, what they were doing as literacy educators. This potential change in the Course’s circumstance coincided with the activity of recording the research participants’ responses to the data-gathering questions. The research aimed to engage with the lecturers’ narrative ‘tellings’ of the relationships they identified between the curriculum that they were involved with and the organisational
directives that the Course had to change (Hoey, 2001).

In order to unravel the ‘truths’ in these ‘tellings’; to locate and evaluate the meanings they held for the research participants; to frame them within the institution of the university and in the processes of organizational change; to problematize them and to explicate them, I reviewed a wide range of research literature. I began with the limited research literature on ‘academic literacy’ in tertiary contexts for Indigenous students seeking higher education. Because I believed that more complex understandings of the issues around ‘academic literacy’ and the participation and success of Indigenous people in higher education could be found by using qualitative rather than quantitative analyses, I explored the literature on paradigm shifts and the effects on knowledge production of textual framing and the nexus between textual framing and interpretive communities.

Because I had a hunch that the stories the lecturers told me about ‘academic literacy’ would lead to useful insights, I explored the research literature on narrative research and discourse analysis. Because I saw Indigenous students seeking access to university education as ‘border crossers’, people whose identities and cultures were having to resist, make alliances and accommodations with the dominant Australian cultural systems, I believed that reading the research on border pedagogies would provide insights into the use and function of the term, ‘academic literacy’ (Giroux, 1991).

In order to better understand my colleagues’ stories about ‘academic literacy’ within their particular professional and institutional context, I explored the work of Henderson and Hawthorn, and Kohn on professional learning communities and considered the contribution that action research theorists and critical pragmatists might a make to our understanding of educational change (Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995; Kohn, 2001; Popkewitz, 1995). The literature on framing and interpretive communities and on narrative mapping led me to see how the data I had collected could support a networked and rhizomic ontology rather than a hierarchical and
The reading I did across this wide range of research literature supported my original sense that positivist explanations about the problem of knowledge production no longer provided adequate solutions. The strong synergies I found between the work of French theorists like Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, Bourdieu, Baudrillard and Lyotard, and the work of researchers utilising Actor Network Theory (Clarke, 2002; Latour, 1986), itself French in origin, and also organisational change theory, led me to see that their various ontological frameworks could provide a key to unlock the meanings in the data I had collected. In order to carry out this task I reviewed the methodological approaches outlined below in 2.15.

2.02 Academic literacy, Indigenous people, and the consequences of assigning meaning

Nakata claimed that understandings and practices related to language and literacy learning required teachers and researchers to go back to the drawing board. He argued that Australian educators needed to give Indigenous people ‘the codes to break into the bank… Look at the learner as a process of change… Build a curriculum around the notion of change’ (Nakata, 2001). Nakata argued that the balance of emphasis in framing and researching learning for Indigenous people should be in the measure of the acquisition of power. Nakata suggested that the test of any learning and research activity related to ‘academic literacy’ should be in the way it contributed to the sense of wellbeing, opportunity and power for Indigenous Australians.

MacGregor argued that ‘academic literacy’ needed to be framed in terms of culture and power. In the endeavour to improve student agency, access to ‘academic literacy’ needed to be understood in terms of the factors that restricted and maintained access differentials (MacGregor, 1996).
A possible way forward to re-conceptualise curriculum and discursive understandings about ‘academic literacy’ for the bridging Course was to go back, as Nakata argued, ‘to the drawing board’ to explore as a point of departure, the stated understandings of those who had experience in teaching ‘academic literacy’ to Indigenous students. To do this required a means to sample and analyse the local understandings of those working daily with the complexity of Course meanings.

This research developed six research questions to collect data and framed that data as narrative. Bohm, De Cock, Land and Srinivas have argued that paying attention to the literariness of our organisational texts, texts such as the participant narratives of this research, ‘helps us to explore the settings or categories of habitual ways of thinking; shows us how to think something that our language had not previously anticipated … ; forces us to attend to the categories through which we unthinkingly view the world’ (Bohm, De Cock, Land, & Srinivas, 2003, p. 3).

Analysis of participants’ narratives provided the potential to provide different understandings of systemic organisational meanings and dynamics. The narrative slice through a month long discursive period is constructed as representative of the debates and struggles of meaning around what Indigenous bridging courses should be delivering to its students.

2.03 ‘Academic literacy’: a project of attention

This research could be characterised as having an interest in a project of attention. What would lecturers choose to attend to in their discursive negotiations about ‘academic literacy’ and the roles it played in curriculum, teaching practice and the Indigenous School more generally? The research was also interested in delineating those ideas and processes within the lecturers’ discursive systems that dispersed or pushed particular entities into the background where they effectively became
invisible. The research was equally interested in the processes that made some entities emerge from an unremarkable background to become significant (Lloyd, Mayes, Manstead, Meudell, & Wagner, 1986, p.135-196; Shotter, 1997; Sonesson, 1998).

This research had an interest in creating the conditions that would see more powerful deployments of ‘academic literacy’ emerge. Critical theorists and socio linguists argued that all stories about the world both challenge and maintain sets of interests (Fairclough, 1994; Gee, 1996; Giroux, 1991). When curriculum stories are told they do not ‘unfold in a vacuum of power and conflict’ (Koepnick, 1996, p. 381). A price is paid socially, culturally and economically for the acceptance and resistance for any propositional ‘truth’. There is power for those who describe the world, just as there is power attached to the descriptions made.

For Beaugrande the responsibility for researchers was ‘greatest when the object of investigation happens to be discourse, the main human channel for organizing life and deciding who knows or does what’. This responsibility increased, Beaugrande argued, ‘as we get a steadily clearer and larger picture of how some people are much better than others at using discourse to reach their goals’ (Beaugrande, 1997, p. 43).

Martin Nakata argued that educators and researchers should be concerned with the ways that Aboriginal people are positioned in debates about literacy and empowerment (Nakata, 2001). Nakata claimed that educators needed to move away from the language of ‘difference’, of ‘oppressed’, of ‘other’ in seeking new understandings of how to better engage Indigenous Australians with the processes of academic learning.

A research problem to be considered was how the artefact, ‘academic literacy’, could be framed in a meaning ecology. The research required a methodology to describe and understand the Course’s meaning-making dynamics. Lemke’s work on eco-social dynamics and MacLachlan and Reid’s work on framing and interpretation
were useful starting points because they pointed to the ways that meaning-making was caught up in systems of relations and interpretation (Lemke, 1995a; MacLachlan & Reid, 1994).

The research process had to consider what knowledge would be of the most worth and what research process would allow the research to make such a claim? In other words, what might legitimate any claims that were made? Many cultural analysts claim that in Postmodern times, knowledge has become a commodity, a multiplicity that it is produced in order to be sold or put to work in the interests of capital (Appelbaum, 2002; Best & Kellner, 1991; Hall, 1996; Trifonas, 2004). Lyotard’s notion of ‘performativity’ for example, suggests that the technological criterion of the ratio between inputs and outputs, has become the major social and scientific criteria for any knowledge’s value (Lyotard, 1984).

Should this research then serve the criteria of efficiency? Should the efficient application of existing knowledge be more important than the creation of new formulations? Part of the original motivation for this research was to contribute to a more sustainable configuration of Course and curriculum ideas. Should this research attempt to identify and integrate the best knowledges in order to minimise organisational inputs and to maximise the outputs (Ibid). What inputs and what outputs might these entities be? Should, for example, this research design its meaning attributions in ways that would speculate on the conditions that more see more Indigenous students graduating? Lyotard identified problems with the logic of ‘performativity’ where some determined or presumed market determines the value of research and knowledge production. For Lyotard, performativity or scientific efficiency, does not accurately reflect what scientific research actually does. Scientific knowledge, Lyotard argues, develops in discontinuous ways by replacing old paradigms of knowing with new ones.

Lyotard claimed that knowledge produced in the service of grand narratives such as freedom, emancipation, Humanism, eventually lead to both small and large terrors,
or what Deleuze and Guattari would call Fasisms (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002). Lyotard argued that the tendency toward consensus in the building of knowledge in both communities and societies was unhealthy; rather he argued, dissensus, small stories, and the diversity of opinion is far more likely to find a response to old problems. Lyotard argued that knowledge as critique, especially critique in the service of Grand Narratives, is laughable. To read the world, or a situation, in terms of Marx, for example, is just ‘an interpretation of a text’. Lyotard claimed “we … laugh at critique, since it is to maintain oneself in the field of the criticized thing and in the dogmatic, indeed paranoiac, relation of knowledge…A Marxist political practice is an interpretation of a text, just as a social or Christian spiritual practice is the interpretation of a text. So much so that practices are themselves texts, insofar as they are interpretations… We no longer want to correct Marx, to reread him…[or] to interpret [Capital] according to ‘its truth’…We will rather treat him as a ‘work of art’” (Lyotard, 1993, p. 95-96).

Jones claims that Lyotard turned the ‘logic of performativity back onto itself’ by asking, “ ‘What is your “what is it worth” worth?’” (Lyotard cited in Jones, 2003, p. 512). Lyotard argued that ‘the transmission of knowledge is no longer designed to train an elite capable of guiding a nation toward its emancipation, but to supply the system with players capable of acceptably fulfilling their roles at the pragmatic posts required by its institutions’ (Lyotard cited in Jones, 2003, p. 512).

For Lyotard, ‘the search for instabilities’, or the seeking of the ‘unknown’ should remain important features of inquiry (Lyotard cited in Jones, 2003, p. 512). Jones claimed that Lyotard’s process was “akin to what Foucault has called ‘problematisation’, in which the goal of criticism is not new consensus but is one of ‘making facile gesture difficult’” (Foucault cited in Jones, 2003, p. 512).

Giroux in a similar vein argued that research into language and literacy practices, rather that looking for some ‘truth’, must instead consider the ways that language and literacy are disciplined by examining ‘“the ways in which discourse is controlled
and delimited: [through]…systems of exclusions, the principles of classification, ordering and distribution, and the rules determining the conditions under which, and by whom, discourse could be deployed” ’ (Giroux, 1995, p.34 citing Crowley 1989).

The teaching of literacy is always caught up in the limitations of modernism’s ‘truth’ and ‘value’. Trifonas argued that to teach anything ‘one must have some degree of certainty regarding the truth of the content. Otherwise the educational act would be both arbitrary and disingenuous…This is the major problem of a post-modern view of education: reconciling the precarious degree of certainty relating to truth with the necessity of curricular and pedagogical outcomes’ (Trifonas p, 151).

In acknowledging the concerns of Lyotard and Giroux, the research deployed a process of discourse analysis suggested by Foucault and Latour that could be described as having a concern with the examination of the “patterns or ‘rules of distribution’” that are functioning ‘within a given universe – a corpus – of statements’ (Ifversen 2003, p64). Ifversen argued that for Foucault, the most important work to do on a text was to ‘identify how a discourse turns something into an object that can be classified, explained, acted upon, [or] institutionalised’ (Ifversen, 2003). Foucault claimed that

if I don’t ever say what must be done, it isn’t because I believe that there’s nothing to be done; on the contrary, it is because I think that there are a thousand things to do, to invent, to forge, on the part of those who, recognizing the relations of power in which they’re implicated, have decided to resist or escape them. From this point of view all of my investigations rest on the postulate of absolute optimism. I do not conduct my analyses in order to say: this is how things are, look how trapped you are. I say certain things only to the extent to which I see them as capable of permitting the transformation of reality (Foucault, 1991, p. 174).

Deploying this type of methodological optimism, ‘academic literacy’ could be explained in the ways it was constituted in participants’ narrative responses to the research questions. The constitution of ‘academic literacy’ as a central actor in
participants’ narratives would have implications for the ways that other actants – entities were mobilised in ‘an alignment of interests among normally unaligned actants’ (Edwards, 2003).

For Latour, an actant is something that has the potential to act, or to which the potential to act has been attributed by others. Actor-actants in Latour’s ontology, are not limited to humans. He argued that actor-actants should not be restricted by the anthrocentric biases of what normally constituted action. An actant-actor can be anything as long as it is granted agency (Latour, 1997a).

The first rule of research method for Latour, is to ‘enter facts and machines while they are in the making… watch the closure of black boxes and be careful to distinguish between two contradictory explanations of this closure, one uttered when it is finished, the other while it is being attempted’ (Stern, 1998). Questions of method, Latour argued, are often confused and conflated with devices of rhetoric, in that, the rhetorical devices of academia, are already ‘ready-made’ black boxes (Stern, 1998).

Following the actor ‘academic literacy’ in this research meant not only following the construction of meaning in lecturer / participants’ narratives but also following the process of recruiting voices and entities for the translation of lecturers’ narratives into signifying texts. In other words, the activity of recruiting theory and theorists into the interpretive process had also to be noted and commented upon. The networked and distributed meaning-making processes of the research activity itself required explanation in the ways that these entities were mobilised in the making of the account.

As a researcher, I attempted to move tactically between and beyond the various territories staked out by colleagues, institutions, theorists and pedagogues (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; Lankshear & Knobel, 2002). I aligned myself most closely with those theorists who were interested in folding complexity and the translation of
multiplicity into their transactions with their readers. Focusing on ‘academic literacy’ provided a means of explicating the narrative and actor networks through which it moved. This research aimed to be an account of how meanings circulated, changed and aligned amongst a team of lecturer colleagues. I was both a part of the dynamic that lecturers spoke about, and as the researcher, I was taking responsibility for what lecturers had to say. As far as putting an account in my favour, that will be for others to judge.

2.04 Paradigms

Thomas Kuhn argued that in reaching understandings researchers were guided by a set of practices that he called a paradigm (Pollack, 1995, p. 149). The theory and practices of a paradigm foreground some phenomena while diminishing the relevance of others and provide techniques that help focus and consolidate problems or entities under investigation.

MacLachlan and Reid argued that the hermeneutic tradition of interpretation that looked for meaning within the confines of the text or artefact declined with the rise of semiotics. With the decline of reading texts as self-contained entities, also went the “principle that the ‘intention’ of the text’s producer is what a ‘valid’ interpretation must discover” (MacLachlan & Reid, 1994, p.12).

Lemke, Latour and others have argued that we need to research in ways that break down the divisions between the mental and the physical, between people and things interacting semiotically (Clarke, 2002; Latour, 1997; Lemke, 1997). Fairclough (Fairclough, 1989, 1994), Lemke (Lemke, 1995a, 2003), and Kress (Kress, 1996, 2000) have argued the usefulness of analysing literate practices through the frame of social semiotics. The theory behind social semiotics is that meanings are made by deliberate framings. Every component entity that we accept to be a sign we make meaningful by considering its tangible and prospective contexts (Lemke, 1995a).
Law and Urry supported the position that research constructs realities rather than reflects them (Law & Urry, 2002). They argued that this is a shift from ‘epistemology (where what is known depends on perspective) to ontology (what is known is also being made differently). It is a shift that moves us from a single world to the idea that the world is multiply produced in diverse and contested social relations’. Frow unified these positions somewhat by concluding that both objects and processes ‘will tend to be defined by a particular configuration of framings’ (Frow cited in MacLachlan & Reid, 1994, p. 13).

Foucault opened up the space of these differences and convergences when he contrasted the ‘phenomenologist’ conception of the world with the Nietzschian view of experience. For Foucault the phenomenologist ‘tries to grasp the significance of daily experience in order to reaffirm the fundamental character of the subject, of the self’. The Nietzschian view of experience attempted ‘to reach that point of life which lies as close as possible to the impossibility of living, which lies at the limit or extreme…and has the task of “tearing” the subject from itself in such a way that it is no longer the subject as such, or that it is completely “other” than itself so that it may arrive at its annihilation, its dissociation’ (Foucault, 1991, p 31). The Nietzschian principle in learning and research terms could be portrayed as being about radical learning, learning not to be the same, not to see or be the same, to see all meanings and explanations as contingencies (Borges, 1981, p.282-283; Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 6-7). Such a notion has much in common with the themes of Cyborg identity, where identities and realities are always networked and distributed (Luke & Freebody, 1997).

A research activity built upon the Nietzschian principle of contingency and change implies that knowledge building has everything to do with location and agency, that is, the ability to expand network of associations, to move out of one discursive frame and into more encompassing and potentially transformative frames. It is a framing of knowledge building that is philosophical, psychological and socio-cultural. Research
and learning generated from this principle is always questioning the machinery of power, including the technologies of self, by dismantling the machinery that imposes subjectivity.

For Deleuze, in order to see new things, we are required to believe new things. Deleuze proposed that in drawing our own maps we liberate ourselves from ‘the injustice of imposed subjectivity’ (Livingston, 2002, p. 50). To locate research outside the frame of orthodoxy, to make our own maps of the knowledge terrain, required the deployment of what Lankshear and Knobel call a ‘game of tactics’ (Lankshear & Knobel, 2002).

The sites of both education and research are highly disciplined spaces. Lankshear and Knobel suggested that like both the learners and lecturers who occupy the ‘surveilled’ spaces of the education process, researchers ‘too have to find ways to smooth out the habitat with respect to how the disciplinary order imposes itself on them’ (Lankshear & Knobel, 2002). Lankshear and Knobel argued that ‘tactics’ were deployed as means of occupying a space patrolled and ‘surveilled’ by powerful others. To remap, re-image or re-imagine a discursive space in Lankshear and Knobel’s terms, could be considered a tactic. When maps were considered as an assemblage, as an artefact or instrument that facilitated agency-action, and when subjectivity was understood as the way that people were constructed through their discursive locations (Hall, 1996), a metaphoric relationship between the making of maps and ‘subjectivity’ can be made, a relationship that can be useful to research activity.

2.05 The significance of stories

O’Riley argued that we can frame issues of curriculum, in this case a curriculum story featuring ‘academic literacy’, as a form of ‘collective’ [and] ‘selective storytelling’ that can, upon analysis, raise issues about the both the ‘adequacy’ of the
narratives chosen to represent the field of study, and the ‘relevancy’ of the narratives chosen to meet the demands of students and the worlds in which they will find themselves (O’Riley, 1996). By collapsing the genre and discursive differences between forms of narrative, forms such as literary narratives, conversational narratives, and academic narratives, the meanings of lecturer/research participants’ narrative ‘tellings’ about ‘academic literacy’, can open the discursive field to new meaning-making processes.

Bohm, De Cock, Land and Srinivas claimed that interpreting participants’ narratives through a frame that was more in keeping with literary theory than with a frame that aimed for naturalistic representation, sensitised readers to ‘the perforative dimension of language (an active, world-making use of language, organizing the world rather than representing what is)’ (Bohm et al., 2003, p. 15). Zizek claimed that ‘every activity is situated in some horizon of meaning which alone renders it possible, so that by “pronouncing the right word” which introduces a break in this symbolic background, one cannot continue to act in the same way as before’ (Zizek cited in Bohm et al., 2003, p. 15).

A critical goal of this research was to create spaces where new potentials for dialogue and critique became possible about the ways that the meanings of ‘academic literacy’ are made (Lankshear & Knobel, 2002). Such understandings are highly relevant to the process of curriculum change and are particularly pertinent in this study because Indigenous concerns form a significant part of the dynamic. Hodge stressed the importance of understanding ‘truths’ as a ‘social construct, as an effect of discourse’ (Hodge, 1990). The stories lecturers told about the Course and ‘academic literacy’ would not reveal “the truth” about the kind of ‘academic literacy’ program that should be made, but the stories told, could be regarded as objects of contemplation that revealed how those in a contested curriculum site, and challenged by curriculum change, responded to and constructed new meanings for themselves and others.

Bohm et al. argued that interpretation was a world building activity that could break
and disfigure history and symbolic orders and bring into being new histories and new chains of equivalence. They argued, citing Paul de Man, that reading and the act of interpretation “should disfigure the ‘original’ text beyond recognition, that is, it should do something to the text – this [was, they argued] the performative approach” (Bohm et al., 2003, p. 15).

The research recognised two key types of world building. The first could be called Foucauldian in the ways the research worked to build an understanding how lecturers’ responses suggested what could and could not be said within the discursive and narrative logic of the narrative networks.

The second but related type of world building has been called by Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), and Boje (Boje, 2001), as the building of ante-narrative. The idea of ante-narrative rests on the concept of the Rhizome. A Rhizome can be understood as ‘a burrow with multiple entrances and exits with no beginning and end as well as lacking any kind of hierarchical order’ (Seijo, n.d., p. 6). A rhizomic world building is a process that produced linkages, stems or filaments between all manners of matter. A rhizome deterritorialised strata and broke down hierarchies.

In this research process, the rhizome could be understood as not only the links that made connections between the participants’ texts, but also out into the spaces that extended beyond the participants texts to other texts, entities, interpreters, cultures and histories. Deleuze and Guattari argued that a ‘rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains…a rhizome or multiplicity never allows itself to be overcoded…a rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002, p. 7-9).

The practical dilemma for the bridging Course was how might it survive in uncertain times and continue to support students attempting to make the transition to university. Any functional intent that I hold for this research to re-shape
understandings that could contribute to building a more sustainable Course, should
be seen in this rhizomic, ironic and provisional frame. Seijo claimed that when
deploying the rhizomic inspired Actor Network Theory to the ways that we make
meaning, that we can only approach meaning as fragmentary ‘loosely coupled
segments forming an assemblage through connectors’. Making meaning is not
understood as just a ‘linguistic problem of contested meanings’ but is rather about
‘an entire ontology of entities that has to be conjugated territorialising and
deterritorialising beings’ (Seijo, n.d.’ p. 6-7).

For Deleuze and Guattari, a rhizomic knowledge was the opposite of the arborescent
or tree-like knowledge with its hierarchical systems of understandings and where
everybody and everything had its place in an economy of power and totalising theory
(Alan Taylor, 2002). An ante-narrative could be considered as the trace of an actant /
entity through a rhizome.

Recruiting the rhizomic metaphor of Delueze and Guattari, allowed me to project this
research as a performance and an experiment ‘in contact with the real’ experience of
lecturers (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 1987; Livingston, 2002). My thesis aimed to
offer an explanation that described and reflected the ‘networky’ or rhizomic nature
how meanings were negotiated, how meanings changed and often, effectively
remained the same. The thesis became an interpretation, an explanation (Latour,
1986) of how ‘academic literacy’ was constructed in the narrative accounts of
lecturers. Through mapping lecturers’ narrative accounts, it became possible to see
the preoccupations and associations that lecturers attached to or aligned with what
‘academic literacy’ could mean, and further, for what the Course could mean.

While this research did not aim to propose the solution to the “problem” of the
bridging Course’s sustainability, the research nevertheless claims to have value
through a capacity to disrupt the organisational status quo. This disruption can ‘lead
This research can be understood therefore as having an interest in improving the
Course and therefore the capacity of Indigenous tertiary bridging students to learn and to make a “successful” transition into degree programs.

This research aimed to make the stories and “truths” of the participants available to a larger academic community, and to other research communities, who would normally not easily access this type of information, nor the kind of analysis undertaken. Other educational and research communities may also find this research of value as an example of how organizational meanings were constructed, negotiated, resisted and represented.

2.06 Working out of critical traditions and researching communities of practice

Indigenous university bridging programs have long been seen as unstable systems that are perpetually under threat (Keeffe, 1990; Singh, 1990). This research has a stake; the research has an interest in the Course’s sustainability. There are significant differences with research interested in making a contribution to the sustainability of a system, and the more normative concept of making progress by solving problems.

Reinbold argued that having an interest in the narratives of a site as the site potentially goes through a change process, does not have to mean trying to control the uncertainty of that change. Nor does it mean that a research process is an attempt to divest the ‘present and immediate future of their unpredictability’ in order to orient actions ‘toward a [particular] future’ (Reinbold, 2003, p. 5). Reinbold claimed that the unpredictability and uncertainty of any social dynamic should be considered to be an irresolvable constant. Once there was recognition that change was constant, and that the significance of change could vary, then an account of what was going on in a system can make a contribution to the sustainability of a system due to the fact that it provides another viewpoint on that system.

Yeatman claimed that Foucault ‘rejected the historicist doctrine of progress… as
antipathetic to … action’ (Yeatman, 1997). Yeatman claimed that the ‘doctrine of
depoliticized domain of metaphysics, not to the repoliticizing
gesture of critique.’ Part of the process of giving up on the notion of research for
control, was an acceptance of the idea that in order to understand how ideas were
taken up and remade, in this case ‘academic literacy’, the research activity had to
recognise the ‘distributed actions’ of those who participated in constructing meaning.
Law argued that coming to a better understanding of the meaning dynamics of any
artefact ‘requires room for [lecturers] methods and insights’ (Law, 2000).

Popkewitz argued that postmodern theory ruptured the notion of positivist progress
in at least three ways (Popkewitz, 1995, p. xiii-xv). The first rupture came with the
de-centering of the subject. Change was understood as a change in the discursive
conditions that structured relations, rather than locating change in the people who
make, followed or broke the rules. Research incorporating this frame would examine
how actor-subjects, are constructed in ‘power relations and institutional formations’.

The second rupture to the understanding of progress began, Popkewitz argued, with a
more fluid notion of power. The understanding of power changed from modes of
domination and hierarchical forces, to conceptions where flows and deployments of
power worked dynamically through society and people’s lives, producing new types
of social practices, identities and identity positions (Popkewitz, 1995, Hall 1996).

The third rupture for Popkewitz, understood power as working toward ‘global and
redemptive change’. Popkewitz argued that for many post-modern writers, the
inscription of agency, such as the capacity to strive for a better world, was enacted
through the pragmatic negotiation of solutions to problems ‘in which norms of a just
society are conditionally accepted and revised through the ongoing constructions of
social practices’. The dilemma between the notion of progress and sustainability is
held somewhat in abeyance here. Progress is always understood as provisional.

As part of this tradition but running tangential to it at the same time, was the position
of the critical pragmatists. Popkewitz argued that the critical pragmatist position recognized that there was always ‘“contiguent foundations” toward normative goals when seeking change’ and that goals and problems are worked through politically. Popkewitz claimed that for Critical Pragmatists, change, at the end of the day, was only a change in the configuration of problems.

For Popkewitz, the construction, variety and proliferation of people’s ‘interpretive patterns’ (Popkewitz, 1995) can be understood as arrangements (also see Deleuze 1983) that have developed in relation to transformations in society, culture and economics. To change the dynamics of power, ‘require[d] different sets of problems and epistemologies’ (Popkewitz, 1995, p xix).

Burke argued that analysis from critical traditions ‘provides answers’ according ‘to questions posed by the situation in which they arose. They are not merely answers, they are [always] strategic answers, stylized answers’ (Burke cited in Ochs, 1997, p. 118). Critical theorists would respond by claiming that the maintenance or transformation of most social phenomena is always inherently ideological. Change for those working out of critical traditions is related to what social goods were being distributed and how they were being distributed.

2.07 Action research and critical pragmatists

Cherryholmes argued that critical pragmatists were ‘driven to separate truths from fantasies … because they are interested in results. If one is interested in outcomes, it is important to decide which meanings are reasonable to believe and which are not. Because meanings and truths are constructed, they are artistic creations and subject to aesthetic as well as to scientific criticism – What meanings will we allow into our discourses? Which meanings will we systematically investigate?’ (Demetrion, 2001).

Lomax argued that different ways of representation allow for different ways of
knowing which can support educators ‘descriptions and explanations as a living educational theory’ (Lomax, 1994). In action-oriented research, acts of critical reflection and collaboration replace expert knowledge and process. Using action-oriented methodologies means that participants are valued as having ‘expertise’ or something of value to offer. Every perspective can shed light on the collective understandings, cultural values and aspirations. This research, from its inception, was interested in the local ways that meanings were shaped and exchanged. My experience had taught me that there is often a distrust of expert opinion, particularly in organisations working with Indigenous people, and it is important to work with the meaning systems at hand.

Henderson and Hawthorne argued that a ‘curriculum for being’ orientation of curriculum inquiry could break Fordist ‘means-end reasoning’, the technocratic orientation of top down, ‘expert driven’ types of curricula activity. With this orientation, those working and thinking through aspects of the curriculum can be framed as both having valuable knowledge and skills but also, as participants in a community of learners.

Henderson and Hawthorne claimed that an appropriate approach to educational research is an eclectic approach and one that comes from the position that there is no definitive way of doing analysis of curriculum related activity. Henderson and Hawthorne’s approach to course and curriculum reflection promotes critical and even conflicting dialogues to surround the process of curriculum actions. Their discursive approach to curriculum actions is framed as a hermeneutic, fluid and shifting analysis of a dynamic culture.

Henderson and Hawthorne’s method of inquiry developed from a constructivist approach to the building of knowledge. This constructivist approach framed curriculum inquiry as a process that valued the lived experiences of educators and made the participant’s actions and reflections the central concerns for research.
This framing of educational research was particularly attractive to me as a researcher because, as a pragmatist, I see the value in trying to understand how realities are created and negotiated locally. Simply put, I want to better understand what is going on around me so that I might contribute better. Claxton argued ‘that at the heart of education, and of our attempts to improve it, must lie an accurate understanding of the process of learning’ (Claxton, 1990).

There are many kinds of learning. If my colleagues and research participants can be framed as a community of learners, then research into the ways that we make decisions about students’ learning, both intentionally and unintentionally, I believe, could provide interesting insights. Claxton argued that the decisions we take about learning, and here I suggest that it doesn’t matter whether we are lecturers or students, the decisions taken are a ‘reflection of [our] own learning habits, [our] current learning needs or interests, and also, the level of the threat, real and apparent, [we] perceive to be present’ (Claxton, 1990).

2.08 Professional learning communities

Working from a Habermasian communicative ethic, Kohn, citing Apple (1993), argued that the development of sustainable educational programs, where open and critically reflective discourse took place, only becomes possible when the question of ‘what counts as official knowledge’ is open to interrogation by ‘students, teachers and others’ (Kohn, 2001, p. 121).

Kohn claimed that educational research supports the idea that successful ‘restructured’ educational environments demonstrate two key attributes. The first of these attributes is demonstrated by ‘intentional efforts to strengthen student learning’ through the process of developing students’ capacities to be independent learners and their ‘ability to learn how to learn’. The second attribute that Kohn noted was the establishment of a ‘school-wide professional community of … staff.’ Kohn cites
Westheimer’s (1999) proposal that the five ‘common characteristics of communities’ provide useful categories for the analysis of effective professional communities (Ibid, p. 121). The characteristics of ‘shared beliefs, interaction and participation, interdependence, concern for individual and minority views, and meaningful relationships’ are the continua upon which Kohn argued that the ‘strength’ of communities can be measured.

A professional learning community for Kohn is a dynamic system where reflective practice and dialogue between colleagues was ‘folded into the broader categories of professional inquiry and opportunities for the staff to influence activities and policies, while shared norms and values have been subsumed into a shared purpose for student learning’. Kohn observed that the strength of a community could become fragmentary and dysfunctional should its professional collaborative inquiry dissipate (Ibid, p. 127-128).

For Kohn, an ‘ideal speech situation [amongst educators] would fuel the system; since no power or coercion would be present’ and as all staff negotiations would be conducted in an atmosphere of trust and collaboration, the outcomes for students would be at their system optimum. Kohn argued that such a dynamic rarely, if ever, exists because everyday politics and ideology erode this potential. However, Kohn argued that deploying a discourse ethics around such an ideal learning community could provide an analytical tool for exploring what happens when processes go wrong.

For Kohn, the capacity of an educational site to allow a professional community to emerge and grow was an indicator of the strength of that learning environment. When educators engaged in collaborative activities to build a learning community, Kohn argued that the capacity of members of that community to build a constructive and worthy identity is enhanced, even in those circumstances where the ‘ideal speech’ community was far from perfect.
While critical ethnographers such as Kohn believe that there is value in creating understandings about educational sites by deploying a Habermasian ‘communicative ethic’, there are counter considerations from cultural critics such as Baudrillard (Baudrillard, 1993) and Lyotard (Fuery & Mansfield, 1997; Jones, 2003; Lyotard, 1984) who argue that people work against processes and systems which attempt to author their experiences and dispositions towards things, even when consensus was sought.

Baudrillard claimed that relations between people did not happen in the mode of communication (Baudrillard, 1993). Rather, he argued, communication framed things that are already in contact with each other and then searched for equilibrium. Baudrillard proposed that a more exciting mode for making meaning was investigating the means by which new possibilities could emerge. For Baudrillard, there is little point looking for ‘truth’ in the location where he argued that most people were essentially looking for it, which was in morality (Ibid).

In this research I was concerned to discover what lecturers working in the field of ‘academic literacy’ would attend to, what they would regard as obvious about ‘academic literacy’, what they would consider in Practical Theory terms (Shotter, 1997) as being ‘in plain view’. Practical Theory is based on Wittgenstein’s idea that we should not be so much concerned with ‘hunt[ing] out new facts’ but rather with ‘understand[ing] something that is already in plain view’ (Ibid). Shotter claimed that “Practical Theory leads to the foregrounding of what is usually ignored in the background to all our daily affairs; it draws attention to what we all ‘see’ but usually do not ‘notice’ as being of significance” (Ibid).

Whether what was in ‘plain view’ was also the location of lecturers’ morality is not the interest of this study. If however, the participants’ sense of the ‘truth’ is connected to the entities that determined lecturers’ morality, my interest in those entities was no different than in any other entity connected to ‘academic literacy’.
2.09 Textual carnival

Issues of authority and irony were obvious issues that needed to be addressed in the reading of participants’ narratives; issues such as devices of persuasion, and inter-textuality. New imaginings were required to tell different stories.

Bakhtin’s notion of carnivalesque recognised that ‘transgressions’ of any system of order ‘function[s] as a condition of the [system’s ongoing] stability’ (Zizek, 1994, p. 55). Zizek argued that what follows from the social function of transgressions was the notion that what holds a community together is “not so much identification with the Law that regulate[s] the community’s ‘normal’ everyday circuit, but rather identification with a specific form of transgression of the Law [such as desires, pleasures, enjoyments], of the Law’s suspension” (Ibid, p. 55). ‘Law’ can be understood here as the set of rules and behaviours that a community “agrees” to abide by.

2.10 Discourse and narrative: How to frame the discourse of participants as narrative

Ryan claimed that narrativity was ‘not an intrinsic property of events…but a semantic network built around events by a reflecting consciousness’ (Ryan cited in Fludernik, 1996, p. 326). It was the ‘narrativizing actions’ of the writer/speaker and the reader/interpreter in the ‘production and reception of texts’ that made narratives. For Sturgess, a text’s narrativity was explained by the way a narrative extends itself, how tensions in discourse are built and resolved in the ‘furtherance’ of the text (Sturgess cited in Fludernik, 1996, p. 328).

Ochs observed that the relationship between time, character and change is one of the defining aspects of the narrative (Ochs, 1997). Ochs claimed that ‘many narratives appear to be motivated by narrators’ current dissatisfaction with how they or some
other protagonist handled a situation, … indeed one motivation for narrators to initiate stories [is] to work through with other interlocutors how they feel or should feel about some element of a past situation’ (Ibid, p. 198). For the research participants, the process of change, the move toward different conceptions of how the curriculum-world should be, with the inevitable compatibilities, conflicts and assumptions, were the traditional material of narrative. From a narrative perspective, participants’ responses can be understood as the journey to a new equilibrium following a disturbance in the narrative field. Critical Pragmatists might argue that research about a situation’s change in circumstance is the story of the journey to a new set of problems (Popkewitz, 1995).

The ability to understand what people were saying in this research depended on the ability to trap the discourse; to make a new kind of text out of it. Gergen’s proposition that meaning is made relationally suggested the beginnings of a strategy for analysing the co-narrated texts of the research participants (Gergen, 1997b).

This research was more interested in what claims were made by the research participants, how those claims were made and the implications of those claims, than it was in the status of any truth claims. This point has implications for the issue of research validity, issues that are taken up throughout this document by the theoretical frameworks of Lather (Lather, 1994), Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983), Latour (Kendall & Wickham, 1999; Latour, 1997), Applebaum (Appelbaum, 2002) and Livingston (Livingston, 2002).

2.11 Texts and contexts

To focus attention on the entity-artefact under investigation, Ifvensen proposed some important questions that a researcher should ask of their research activity. These questions included:
How does our constructivism relate to language?
What kind of language theory do we subscribe to?
What do we mean by a text?
How do we account for a text as a meaningful entity?
At what linguistic level do we want to work? Textual or supra-textual?
How do we describe supra-textual units? (discourses, semantic fields, ideologies)
How do we understand the relation between text and context?
How do language practices affect social practices?
How does the context determine what can be said? (Ifversen, 2003, p.61)

A way then to make sense of participants’ stories, the incidents they describe and their representations as texts, was to view them, as Ifversen argued, as being bound in a triangular relationship with Supra-text (discourse, genre) and context (situation, institution) (Ibid, p. 64). Ifversen claimed that texts also made choices about their Supra-text and context. If this were not the case, Ifversen claimed, all we would be left with was the world of ‘pure contextualism’ where texts were simply ‘products of the[ir] context’ (Ibid, p. 63). Fish playfully argued that both texts and their interpreters can be considered as two forms of ‘acontextual entities’ and that with this framing, the making of meaning can only ever ‘be [a question] of control: will texts be able to constrain their own interpretation or will irresponsible interpreters be allowed to obscure and over-whelm texts…? ’ (Fish, 1980, p. 336).

The entity-actant ‘academic literacy’ would remain the focus of research attention in participants’ narrative texts; that is, the ways that ‘academic literacy’ appeared, its significance, its various constructions, framings and agency as it variously manifested, or even disappeared in deference to other textual, supra-textual and network entities would remain the focus the research activity.

Ifvensen argued that in a narrative analysis of a text ‘the focus is directed at the
relation between the different roles (actants) have in making something happen in the text (the plot)’ (Ifversen, 2003, p.61). The concept of change, and the ways that actants / entities play a role in the process of change were key notions in narrative analysis.

2.12 Framing and interpretive communities

Derrida argued that the interpretation of any object first required the concept of the frame. Derrida claimed that “No 'theory', no 'practice', no 'theoretical practice' can be effective here if it does not rest on the frame, the invisible limit of (between) the interiority of meaning (protected by the entire hermeneutic, semiotic, phenomenological, and formalist tradition) and (of) all the extrinsic empiricals which, blind and illiterate, dodge the question . . . Every analytic of aesthetic judgment presupposes that we can rigorously distinguish between the intrinsic and the extrinsic” (Derrida cited in Gunew, 1994, n.p.).

What was included and what was excluded in the anticipation and formation of any meaning is obviously a complex struggle. Hoey and Gergen suggest that meaning-making can be seen as a process of anticipations based in the oscillation between individual and social interpretive frames (Gergen, 1997a; Hoey, 2001). For Fish, people interpret an utterance, a word, a concept within a context, within a community of practice, and by hearing such an utterance, ‘a knowledge of its purposes and concerns, and that to so hear it is already to have assigned it a shape and given it a meaning’ (Fish, 1980, p. 310). Fish claimed that any issue around the assigning of meaning was only a ‘problem if there [was] a point at which its determination has not been made, and [Fish claimed] that there [was] no such point’ (Ibid, p. 310).

Fish argued that people’s shared understanding is the ‘basis of the confidence with which they speak and reason’ but the categories through which people speak and reason was ‘only their own in the sense that as actors within an institution they
automatically fall heir to the institution’s way of making sense, its systems of intelligibility’ (Ibid, p. 320).

Fish offered an explanation for how the play of meaning deferral and interpretation slows, coalesces and stabilises, a process that related to the notion of frame (Ibid). For Fish, with the idea of ‘interpretive communities’, the agreement between readers / interpreters

more or less explained itself: members of the same community will necessarily agree because they will see (and by seeing, make) everything in relation to that community’s assumed purposes and goals; and conversely, members of different communities will disagree because from each of their respective positions the other “simply” cannot see what is obviously and inescapably there: This then, is the explanation for the stability of interpretation among different readers (they belong to the same community). This also explains how there can be different interpretations and how they can be negotiated ‘in a principled way: not because of a stability in the makeup in texts, but because of a stability in the makeup of interpretive communities and therefore in the opposing positions they make possible (Fish, 1980).

Fish claimed that ‘interpretive communities are made up of those who share strategies not for reading but for writing texts, for constituting their properties’. Fish claimed these textual ‘strategies exist prior to the act of reading and therefore determine the shape of what is read’. This suggested that we read is what we have been culturally and discursively prepared for.

Ochs, like Ifversen, also argued, that while texts are seemingly delimited by topographical properties that to some extent give the impression of containing meaning, texts in fact participate in ongoing interactions with other texts which in turn circulate and impact on their own meaning (Ochs, 1997, p. 188). This attribution of agency was another way of saying that texts participated in choosing their context, their Supra-text (genre and discourse) and their processes of interpretation.
2.13 Narrative mapping

Gee claimed that the ways that people act out a social performance, or the ways of doing an identity, are always aspects of what Gee called Discourses. No one, Gee claimed, can speak, write or act meaningfully outside of Discourse (Gee, 1996). For Gee language poses a problem in pluralistic situations because language is never neutral or innocent. In settings such as educational institutions, Gee argued that the problem for people is often, not ‘what to talk about’ but ‘how to talk about’ things (Gee, 1993, 1996). A solution to the problem of how to talk about things, is usually found by reverting to organizational scripts, patterns of saying and doing things that conform to the discursive norms of those participating (Cortazzi, 1993; Gee, 1996).

Gee argued that speakers often have to speak authoritatively without having had the time to pre-plan their statements, or the time to think through what those listening will make of their pronouncements once the detail is out (Gee, 1985, 1996). Many writers have claimed that people take up identity positions in relation to the subjectivities made available to them, identities which are recruited differently according to the situation (Bush Jr, 1995; Gee, 1993, 1996; Hall, 1996; Lemke, 1995a; Luke & Freebody, 1997; Goffman cited in MacLachlan & Reid, 1994). To enact these identities, people perform almost as if they were in a play, a role from which there is often no immediate existential exit (Kaufmann, 1965).

Hoey claimed that when people are engaged with negotiating a discourse, their task of interpretation is made simpler by the ‘iterative’ principle and the question “What happened next?” (Hoey, 2001, p. 25) Hoey argued that one of the attractions of narrative discourse, is the ‘reduced’ amount of ‘advance planning’ that interpreters are required to do following an unfolding story, or indeed, for creating a story. Winter identified ‘two kinds of relation between clauses or sentences: Sequence relations and Matching relations’ which are deployed to support a coherent narrative (Winter cited in Hoey, 2001, p. 30-31).
Sequence relations, Hoey argued, answer questions ‘which involve putting propositions in some order of priority in time, space or logic…Typical sequence relations are time sequence, cause-consequence, means-purpose, and premise-deduction’. Matching relations on the other hand bring statements together ‘with a view to seeing the light they shed on each other’ (Ibid, p. 30-31). These relations include ‘contrast, similarity, exemplification, preview-detail, and exception’.

Hoey also made a point on the reading/interpreting of text or discourse that links in interesting ways to what Fish claimed about the way people read or interpret text. Hoey claimed, like Fish, that the way people read is directly related to the ways that they understand a text should be written/performed (Fish, 1980; Hoey, 2001, p. 31).

The reader/interpreter through the process of interacting with a text forms hypotheses about how that text will unfold, and this process facilitates the process of understanding. This interpretive process is no less relevant for the writer/speaker in the process of textual creation, than it is for others in the interpretive process.

Hoey argued that the writer/speaker has to be able to consider and ‘anticipate’ the interpreter’s ‘needs both locally and globally’ and that the issues or cognitive concerns of their ‘global’ textual organization are more difficult to control than those at the ‘local’ level (Hoey, 2001, p. 52-53). Addressing the demands of the ‘immediate context’ is always the pressing concern; and both the writer and speaker, Hoey claimed, often lose the grand architecture of their text, either because the construction is still in the process of its very making or simply because what has already been said is already forgotten.

Similar observations likely contributed to Frisch’s observation that speakers returned to their own themes, their own stories, regardless of the question that they were responding to (Frisch cited in Patai, 1994). Hoey claimed that attending to both the immediate and global aspects of a discourse creates problems for the native speaker or writer, or by extension, a member of a discourse community; but the difficulties for ‘non-natives’, were magnified (Hoey, 2001, p. 53). The research technique of
mapping the participants’ narratives would, I believed, make it possible to reveal the decisions that were taken in the shaping of the collective discourse. What the participants chose to talk about would be determined by the ways the discursive frame was controlled, where participants considered that they had something to contribute to the unfolding narrative, and what they believed was related and relevant.

### 2.140 Literature toward a conceptual framework

Livingston claimed that what is ‘Real’ may not be known beyond how it is configured (Livingston, 2002). Drawing on Lajoie (1996), and Foucault (1980), Livingston claimed that ‘the role of reality’ is in fact to protect us from the ‘Real’ (Ibid, p. 47). Reality, Livingston argued, is more a set of complex forms of social habit ‘masquerading’ as the ‘Real’. Stuart Hall claimed, “what is ‘out there’ is, in part, constituted by how it is represented” (Weiner, 2002). Citing Deleuze, Livingston argued against the ‘imperialism of language’ arguing that

> language produces an abstract machine, which, in turn, produces an illusion that it exceeds everything, even though it belongs to a determinate and distinctive stratum called language… language is not pre-ontological, it is just one strata of many that have been constructed on what Deleuze calls the plane of consistency: the subatomic, primordial foundations of materiality. [It is on this] plane of consistency…the irreducible stratum of materiality [that Livingston concludes] all writing begins (Deleuze, 1987 cited in Livingston, 2002, p.46-47).

This research began with an assumption. As an educator working in the teaching and learning context of a university preparation course designed for Indigenous students, I understood ‘academic literacy’ to be a dynamic set of capacities that facilitated Indigenous students’ transition into standard entry university degree programs. I held the belief, that to become ‘academically literate’, was to be able to move in and out of the domains of symbolic exchange privileged by the university, and by extension, privileged by Western society (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 21; Giroux, 1991).
Having access to ‘linguistic and literate markets’ is tantamount to possessing a society’s encryption keys. Martin Nakata suggested that some keys will get you in to those markets, others were needed to make things happen once there (Nakata, 2001). Luke and Freebody argued that while ‘certified, visibly displayed levels of literate practice’ might not guarantee entry into ‘institutional and public life…not having access to such practices can systematically lock one out’ (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p. 9).

Taylor however pointed to a dilemma in how “truths” are made and taken up in contexts such as this research site. Taylor claimed that a single ‘truth’ or ‘unifying logic’ should be abandoned altogether in the formation of social artefacts such as ‘academic literacy’. Writing on the impacts of a national framework for developing, measuring and reporting the language and literacy competence of Australians, and the particular impacts of the framework for Indigenous Australians, Taylor argued that unless there is

an explicit acknowledgement and taking account of different ways of seeing and doing[,] a dominant view of reality is projected as the only legitimate and the only commonsense construction of reality…The power of hegemony in this context is that many learners come to see, accept and endorse the dominant and powerful elite’s construction of a particular reality and its construction of themselves. (Anthea Taylor, 1995, p. 17)

A critical framing of ‘academic literacy’ in any particular curriculum site, had to acknowledge the impossibility, impracticability, and irrelevance of many positivist definitions that more often than not did not take account of complexity and change, particularly as it related to Indigenous people (Popkewitz, 1995). Taylor argued that it is important to frame understandings of what ‘academic literacy’ can mean and the powers that ‘academic literacy’ can have in ways that do not silence the voices of those whose conceptions fit outside the “legitimate” dominant culture and traditions (Anthea Taylor, 1995, p. 18).
In working through conceptual issues in the making of this curriculum story, it was important to consider, as Giroux pointed out, that the ways that language gets deployed in research should be judged according the ‘viability of the theoretical framework the new language is attempting to constitute and promote’ (Giroux, 1995). Just as Taylor warned that literacy initiatives can alienate those whose ideas sit outside dominant traditions, Giroux argued that the language / or the conception of the research framework examining issues, should not result in further exclusions. But neither, Giroux claimed, should the frameworks researchers use tend toward an oversimplification of complex dynamics.

Giroux recognised that the ‘tactical’ value of writing in a clear and straightforward manner is the preferred approach of most readers. Giroux claimed however that such preferences often ignore the ‘question of who speaks, for whom, and under what conditions, [and that] the advocates of clarity have shifted their focus to the issue of who listens’. Giroux argues that to tailor language to who is listening … not only ignores how multiple audiences read differently, it also subverts the very problem it claims to be addressing. It restricts the possibility for expanding public cultures of resistance by refusing to address the importance of developing multiple literacies that allow people to speak across and within cultural differences. Clarity in this case [Giroux argued] seems … to do more to create intolerance than advance a receptivity to different discourses, languages and theories’ (Giroux, 1995, p. 29).

Giroux is claiming that writers should not be afraid to make connections, to follow leads and intuition when confronting complexity. Nor should thinkers be overly constrained by its notion of audience or particular communities expectations. Writing is a chance to think ideas through.

Stepping outside the square of positivist research poses the problem of truth claims. Lather argued that in pursuing understandings that take us beyond a form of repatriation of deviant or naive thinking (see discussion elsewhere of the shortcomings of action research), validity in research needed to be positioned as a
“space of constructed visibility” and “a space of the incitement to see” (Lather, 1994). In this thesis I framed myself as a writer-story-teller; and as a cartographer of networks connected to the ‘real’ world of the lecturers and their work. I assumed and framed this role in ways that I determined would ethically and intellectually make a contribution to a new understanding of the research site and its relevant phenomena.

Bateson argued that we should compare the way that frames change the meaning of that which it “encloses to those segments of equations or ‘messages’ which mathematicians put in brackets. The tenor of these ‘messages’ can be altered by the addition of an operator outside the brackets” (Bateson cited in MacLachlan & Reid, 1994, p. 45). This operator can ‘operate’ at the level of the discourse as a participant in an exchange, or at the meta-level of the researcher.

MacLachlan and Reid point out, that for Bateson, all psychological and conceptual / perceptual frames are ‘dynamic’ and ‘vulnerable’ to change; and it is often the operator’s function to ‘manipulate’ and ‘reframe’ material. All experience, past and present, is “subject to (re)organization or (re)framing according to different interests and points of view, and this makes possible various disturbances to our perception of ‘what is it is that’s going on’” (Ibid, p. 47). Research is generally undertaken to bring new insights to what is “going on”, and while research may not offer any definitive solution to a problem, it can point to conditions under which desirable changes can occur.

Moutzelis argued that the major task of a researcher’s theories is ‘to clarify conceptual tools and to construct new ones by following criteria of utility rather than truth’ (Wodak, 2000). For Wodak, questions of ‘theory formation and conceptualization [should] closely [relate] to the specific problems that are to be investigated…[The question to ask of a researcher’s conceptual tools, is, are they] relevant for this or that problem and for this or that context?’ (Ibid). In this research, the predominant conceptual tool/metaphor/device, besides that of the rhizome, but nevertheless highly conceptually related to the rhizome, was that of ‘mapping’
(Beaugrande, 1997; Deleuze & Guattari, 2002, p. 21).

In order to approach facts, there is value in knowing the position from which you are becoming conscious of phenomena. Beaugrande describes the human sciences has having two broad categories of map, what he calls Outside Maps and Inside Maps. Outside maps attempt to describe what people are observed doing, such as their roles in social spaces. Inside maps aim to understand the motivations and beliefs that inform people’s actions (Beaugrande, 1997, p. 36). Maps imply ‘gaze’, a positionality or orientation toward the information or object that is represented. Foucault claimed that this gaze ‘cannot move outside of relations of power’, and that there is never an actual ‘external vantage point’. All mappings, Foucault claimed, are implicated in relations of power (Foucault cited in Butin, 2001, p. 164).

When there is a situation that could be described as a form of intractable problem, the “common sense” perspectives or the perspectives emanating from dominant paradigms may offer little beyond perpetuating the problems. What is required is a new story that draws on both the Outside and Inside maps so that new connections and locations are recognised, and where new potentialities become possible.

The maps drawn in any research, Beaugrande claimed, reflect ‘the vision of their makers and the intentions of their users, [and put some] features or places … into sharp perspective whilst ignoring others’ (Beaugrande, 1997). Instruments, in the form of the theories inform the production of the maps (Beaugrande, 1997; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Hoey, 2001; Latour, 1986).

The first purpose for using the conceptual tool of “tracing-mapping” related to the fact that, as the primary data of the research were the responses of lecturers, I required a means to represent those stories as systems or networks of meaning (Hoey, 2001). This first tracing or mapping was a narrative mapping. Whorf demonstrated in the 1950’s that the linguistic meanings that people attach to a situation affects their behaviour toward that situation and the ways that they rationalise those situations
ANT, however, goes much further in acknowledging the roles of other actors in the meaning network. The rationale for focusing on and following the entity-actant-actor, ‘academic literacy’, through the lecturers’ narrative networks, was that I wanted to understand the way that network actors/entities aligned to build objects and ‘truths’ by displacing or suppressing what Clarke called “dissenting voices, or those ‘facts unfit to fit’” (Clarke, 2002, p. 109). In other words, a goal of this research was to better understand both curricula and practice as they related to ‘academic literacy’ and the Course’s trajectory, as the ‘effects of power [and discourse] circulating in networks of human and non-human entities.’ This research aimed to examine the ways that ‘academic literacy’ was constructed by lecturers at a local level ‘as a material and symbolic means of ordering and classifying knowledge and social interaction’ (Ibid, p. 107-108).

The other key purpose for mapping narratives was to examine systemically, where opportunities presented amongst the group narratives for second-order narrative change. According to Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch, second-order change in a narrative field signalled the means by which a system of networked meanings could fundamentally change through the mechanism of a systemic feedback loop. If a narrative system can be changed by a process of reframing, that is, if what had been set up at the outset of an narrative can be reframed in ways that ‘fits the “facts” of the … situation equally well or even better… [then] the meaning attributed to the [initial] situation, and therefore its consequences’ has changed (Watzlawick et al., 1974, p. 95). Second-order narrative change processes are contrasted to those networked meanings that circulate within a first-order narrative system, particularly those meanings that circulate as a problem dynamic where nothing fundamentally changes.

This conception of change is important because one of the issues of organisational meaning making and system dynamics is that some narratives and narrative systems remain problematically intractable; that is, narratives and problems circulate but can’t resolve. The low rate of Indigenous pre-tertiary students making a successful transition into university degree courses has been portrayed as an example of an
intractable problem (Keeffe, 1990). A second-order change signalled a discursive break with what had existed. Weick and Quinn described a second-order change as an episodic change where there is a significant ‘divergence from equilibrium’. This type of change is of a different order to the notion of continuous change whose pattern of change is more in the mould of ‘endless modification’ (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 366). Watzlawick et al make the distinction between the ‘adequate functioning’ of a system that can ‘generate change by itself’ and dysfunction when a system ‘is caught in a Game Without End’ (Watzlawick et al., 1974, p. 86).

Examining lecturers’ narratives for second-order change points was a means of identifying potential discursive breaks in participants’ collective narrative. While the key focus in mapping lecturers’ narratives aimed to identify these potential second-order narrative breaks, it was anticipated that systemic evidence of the productive processes of continuous modification, whereby a system changes constructively in response to its environment, and its opposite, the unproductive processes that circulate organisational problems and their associated meanings, would also become apparent. These systems of change would exist in tension with each other (Weick & Quinn, 1999).

The narrative mapping of lecturers’ responses to the six research questions would be a process of distillation, a means of representing the many voices and narrative pathways of the participants’ eco-social meanings (Lemke, 1995a). The analysis of the conversational narratives that constituted the data of this research required finding ways of ‘entertaining [what Law calls] split vision [in order to] privilege…partial perspectives’ (Law, 2003) and the rhizomic nature of social phenomena (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002; Lather, 1994; Lather & Smithies, 1997; Livingston, 2002; Seijo, n.d.). The methodologies and descriptive processes used in the research, set up a possibility to appreciate the complex and shifting meanings constructed for ‘academic literacy’ by those who negotiated and delivered these meanings.
In mapping participants’ understandings as narrative enactments (Cortazzi & Jin, 2002; Hoey, 2001; Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974), the research aimed to connect participants’ agency to the agency of the entity-actor ‘academic literacy’ in an actor network. To do this, the research deployed the tool of Actor Network Theory (ANT) (Latour, 1986). While the research aimed to show how participants’ narratives indicated something of the ways that their own agency was negotiated and co-created, it was expected that participants’ narratives would also suggest how the agency of the actor ‘academic literacy’ was enrolled and distributed in participants’ narrative networks. From the intellectual position of Actor Network Theory, people, concepts, machines and things in the natural world, are all an effect of the networks in which these actor-entities are constituted and through which they move, maintain and lose alignment with other network entities (Law, 2003).

Clark argued that the ‘materialism of this position is in the idea that even abstract entities like power, literacy, love or the global economy are materially embodied in social, conceptual, technical or textual forms, and these can be observed empirically as network effects’ (Clarke, 2002, p. 112). ANT, I believed, provided a means to ‘speak [in new ways] across and within cultural [and discursive] differences’ (Giroux, 1995, p. 29). Understanding ‘academic literacy’ as an actor, in terms of how it is constituted and performs in narrative networks and the processes of organisational meaning making, is an attempt to understand Course and curriculum issues in a different way.

Lather would characterise the ‘truth’ of what this research was trying to achieve, as having an ‘ironic validity’ (Lather, 1994). The work of Delueze and Guattari suggests that the type of research activity proposed here might also be called developing an anti-memory, or short-term memory (Delueze and Guattari, 2002, p. 21). As an anti-memory or short term memory, the mapping of the conceptual and narrative artefact ‘academic literacy’ aims to disrupt the past and future understandings of what ‘academic literacy’ has meant and might mean, and rather, to see it in terms of rhizomic relationships of becomings and of instances of a changing
and local present.

Short-term memory for Delueze and Guattari ‘is in no way subject to the law of contiguity or immediacy to its object’, and it ‘always acts under conditions of discontinuity, rupture, and multiplicity’. Delueze and Guattari argued that short-term memory includes ‘forgetting as a process; it merges not with the instant but instead with the nervous, temporal, and collective rhizome’ (Delueze and Guattari, 2002, p. 16). Once we make a meaning, or a short-term memory, Delueze and Guattari argue that we can open up new ground, create new connections, infiltrate places we don’t normally go, use and resist, in order to keep the conditions for learning and change productively possible.

2.150 Literature on methodology

This section introduces the data set that was to form the basis of the narrative analysis, and it introduces the reader to ideas recruited to map the forces shaping organizational meanings.

2.151 The data

The narratives that constituted the primary data of this research are artefacts that in Shotter’s terms might be considered as being ‘in plain view’. The difference here was that the lecturers/participants knew they were being recorded and that what they had to say would form the corpus of the research data set. Some might argue that the introduction of a recording and interpretive technology changes everything that people say. However, there are others who claim that people will always return to their own themes regardless of the instruments of extraction (Patai, 1994). Participants in either event narrated their understandings and the relationships between their understandings in what Goffman called public ‘on-stage’ group
narrative performances and ‘off-stage’ individual narrative performances (Goffman in MacLachlan & Reid, 1994).

Cortazzi argued that the oral narratives of educators’ experiences can ‘illustrate core concepts of culture and that narratives are sources of insight into those concepts’ (Polanyi cited in Cortazzi, 1993, p. 58). Cortazzi claimed that when educators narrated their experience their point must be ‘culturally salient’ and be able to find acceptance amongst the ‘members of the producer’s culture’ (Polanyi cited in Cortazzi, 1993, p. 58). The narratives produced, Cortazzi argued, should be appreciated as ‘cultural texts available for analysis’.

As a researcher I believed that lecturers would talk about ideas in their responses to my research questions in ways that adhered to the normal principles of human conversation. These principles have been described by Grice as follows: people do not say things that they believe to be untrue; they say what is relevant for the purposes of the exchange; they don’t provide more information than they believe is necessary; and they try to avoid ambiguity (Hoey, 2001, p. 33).

I recognised however that people in any organization have a range of political and discursive alliances that impact on the ways they respond to questions. All research participants’ responses were therefore understood to be mediated by power relations that were socially and historically located but which were also mediated by the various discourses through which participants spoke (Fairclough, 1994; Gee, 1996; Lemke, 1995a; Locke, 2004, p.25; van Dijk, 1998). What was therefore, in Shotter’s terms, ‘in plain view’ for one participant, could be something quite different for another.

While the ritual of the research itself and the frame of the research questions were an intervention in the ‘normal’ discourse amongst lecturers, every attempt was made to keep the interviews informal and as ‘conversation-like’ as possible. All the research questions were drafted in an open-ended way that gave participants a multitude of
ways to frame a response.

2.152 Deluezian maps

The research thesis was conceived as a type of Deleuzian detective story in which observations of ‘real world’ phenomena are made, descriptions are created, patterns perceived, and an object of rhizomic ‘truth’ is revealed. ‘Truth’, here, is always qualified as a performance of meaning-making rather than an act of competence. Following the object-actant-actor ‘academic literacy’ is a performance of interpreting and negotiating networked meanings.

Delueze and Guattari’s concept of a ‘Line of Flight’ was useful for understanding what this mapping activity was attempting to achieve. A line of flight can ‘blow apart strata, cut roots, and make new connections’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002, p. 15). A line of flight can be a link to a new configuration. Lines of flight can ‘detrerritorialize’ existing formations and facilitate relationships that have never been considered, they can point to new ways of seeing and locate potentialities. The idea of a ‘line of flight’ can be seen as a tactic to address the micro-fascisms in our own and other’s behaviors including those created through our participation in organizations. If this bridging Course was struggling to escape a dynamic of intractable meanings then the lines of flight that emerged in the mapping process might point to the ways out of this circulation.

Delueze and Guattari argued that the difference between a map and a tracing is that a map must be ‘produced, constructed, … is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. It is tracings that must be put on the map, not the opposite’ (Ibid, p. 21). A map is engaged in play with the real. The map has to do with performance and experimentation, whereas a tracing suggested a proposed competence.
The research then becomes the narrative map of all the networks with which it is engaged. ‘Academic literacy’ will be defined like any actor with qualities, that will, as Latour describes, be ‘exhibited’ and ‘bestowed’, with roles that it is permitted to play, both within the frames and through networks in which it moves, along with the all tests of the meanings it negotiates, the connections it makes with other actor-actants, and with all the limitations and caveats placed upon it (Latour 1997 b). Latour argued that all these aspects define an actor, whose ‘persistence in time and space’ then becomes the trace of ‘decisions taken through the narrative programs and the narrative paths.’

2.153 The Problem of method in the sea of actants

There is always a problem of method in the surveilled space of research. Research from a critical frame has shown that just as ‘artefacts’ are not naturally ‘given’, so too, knowledge is ‘a construction’. The strategies by which social practices get authorised, both in research and in everyday practices, have the effect of creating ‘dispositions toward the things in the world and the “self” as a productive element in that world’ (Popkewitz, 1995, ppxi-xii). The local meanings and dispositions toward things, such as the research artefact ‘academic literacy’, and any implications for practice associated with it, depended, as Lemke argued, both on the local situation and on meanings constructed in other times and in other spaces (Lemke, 1995a, 2003). Meanings are always distributed among networks temporally and spatially.

Many writers including Deleuze, Law and Urry, Applebaum, and Livingston have argued that research is a performance rather than a competence, and the act of conducting research constructs realities rather than reflects them (Appelbaum, 2002; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983; Law & Urry, 2002; Livingston, 2002). Where a researcher stands in relation to these two conceptions, performance and competence, is sometimes fraught, sometimes seemingly contradictory and always caught up in a problematic of reading or interpretation, both as a self-reader and as writer in the
anticipation of an audience. Hoenish (1998) argued that research couldn’t escape a certain amount of “methodological determinism”. Regardless of the methods chosen, Hoenish claimed ‘the questions we ask produce the answers we seek. The findings are radically determined by the perspective’ (Hoenish, 2004).

Frohman claimed that Actor Network Theory provided a useful resource for ‘charting the agonistic processes that result in tentative and uneasy stabilizations of conflicts between social groups, interests, discourses, and even scientific and technological artefacts’ (Frohmann, 1995). Law argued that ‘the stability and form of artefacts should be seen as a function of the interaction of heterogeneous elements as these are shaped and assimilated into a network’ (Law 1990, cited in Frohman 1995). Law added further that “elements in the network prove difficult to tame or difficult to hold in place. Vigilance and surveillance have to be maintained, or else the elements will fall out of line and the network will start to crumble … there is almost always some degree of divergence between what the elements of a network would do if left to their own devices and what they are obliged, encouraged, or forced to do when they are enrolled within the network” (Law 1990, cited in Frohman 1995).

Frohman argued that an ‘explanatory closure’ for artefacts was not possible because of the dynamic inter-relationships between what is natural, what is social, and what is discursive (Frohmann, 1995). Making sense of this approach, Stern argued that if we approach knowledge building as the ‘recruitment of allies’ rather that the ‘setting out of theory’ makes Actor Network Theory’s ‘narrative and argument… much clearer’ (Stern, 1998).

For Actor Network Theory (ANT), nature, society and discourse are themselves ‘part of what is distributed [and] not part of what makes the distribution’ among the networks. Latour complicated the issue further by arguing that the “ ‘making’, ‘creating’ or ‘constructing’ by the researcher barely begins to shine, when the maker, the creator, the constructor have to share their agency with a sea of actants over
which they have neither control nor mastery” (Latour, 2002). Actants-actors, according to Latour, can be theories, methods, participants, human and non-human, animals, bacteria, disciplines, ethics committees, statistical criteria, standards, genres, funding agencies, all of whom influence the direction of the research story.

Latour argued that ANT made use of the metaphor of a net both in the word’s more usual ‘properties’ and then added the concept of an actor that did particular things to the shape the properties of the network (Latour, 1997a). Latour claimed that the difference between an actant and an actor was the entity’s location on a continuum from an abstract to concrete entity. For Latour, every entity, relation or action, could be understood as the decision taken in constructing ‘finer and finer embranchments going from abstract structure, actants, to concrete ones, actors’ (Latour, 1997a).

Latour claimed that when considering meaning making through the semiotic tool of ANT, a world building became possible that viewed artefacts as actors-actants, as participants in that world building. With this research, an interpretation and translation activity conducted through the frame of ANT, the process aimed to trace the recruitment of the multiple actants-actors in the co-construction of the entity-artefact-actant ‘academic literacy’ in participants’ organizational narratives (Latour, 1986, 1997).

In understanding the non-local and scale-breaking aspect of semiotic artefacts, Latour invites us to move away from the ‘tyranny’ of the geographer’s conception of networks of place that define relationships in terms of ‘surfaces and territories’ to one of filaments or what Deleuze and Guattari called ‘rhizomes’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 2002). Network building is a change in the topography of understanding, where instead of the surfaces where concepts are built in two or three dimensions, we have instead, a relationship between nodes ‘that have as many dimensions as they have connections’ (Latour, 1997a).

Latour argued that considering phenomena through the frame of ANT, allows us to
see meaning-making as a form of radical semiosis among states of equivalency, with
the tracing activity being a descriptive process in the construction of narrative
networks. Latour claimed that ANT is indifferent to ‘providing a model of human
competence’, because theories of the self and the social actor of conventional social
theory are not ANT’s concern (Latour 1997a). This consideration of phenomena
through ANT takes our process of narrative tracing into new territory, because what
the research can be concerned with in considering these states of equivalency, is that
which has become attached to and in turn shaped by ‘academic literacy’. The
research is not therefore limited to either people or prejudged semantic categories.

Citing Callon (1986) and Latour (1996) Robichaud argued that the formation of
narrative networks

  encompasses both the idea that organizational action entails the creation of a
  network of actants through the mobilization of human and non-human
  actor[s] in an organizing process…and the notion that for an organization to
  emerge and gain a systemic duration in time and space, the network and its
  course of action must be mapped in a meaningful form’, that is ‘narrative’
  (Robichaud, n.d.).

The idea of ANT is to build networks between entities in order to develop what
Latour calls an ‘infralanguage’ which provides a means of moving between differing
frames of reference to describe an account of actors–actants and the ways they
negotiate their process of world building. The aim of the whole network building
exercise is, Latour claimed, the construction of an ‘overarching explanation’ (Latour,
1997b).

Latour claimed that the highest order of scientific writing is the ‘reflexive account’
(Latour, 1986). A reflexive text takes into account the mechanisms of its own
becoming. Dismantling the distinction between science and fiction, Latour believed
that readers should think an account of something to be ‘scrupulously true’, and
though while not believing it to be ‘exact’, it should still be ‘interesting’.
Latour developed the concept of meta-reflexivity, arguing that it is based as a form of insurance against the worst effects of texts, that is, in a text’s ability to present itself as something to be believed, as if a text were ‘in some way relat[ed] to a referent out there’. Latour asserted that reflexivity in contrast to meta-reflexivity, tried to counter this same effect, by making ‘unreadable’ texts. This ‘reflexivity’, Latour claimed, assumed that readers are naïve, that they read in the same way and that they are easily taken in. Latour argued that readers are, on the contrary, skilful deconstructors and do not readily believe what they are told. The more likely scenario, Latour argued, was that texts have to work hard to be believed, and what is probably more important, is to engage the reader’s interest.

The difficulty in understanding the project of ANT, Latour claimed, has been the task of blending ANT’s three strands of preoccupation. These strands are: ‘a semiotic definition of entity building’; ‘a methodological framework to record the heterogeneity of such a building’; and “an ontological claim on the 'networky' character of actants themselves”. Latour claimed that the ‘limits’ of these preoccupations can be resolved when they are integrated.

In summing up, it is important to acknowledge all of the writers whose ideas I have outlined above contributed to my thinking about ‘academic literacy’, the issues of its definition and description, and its circulation and use in lecturers’ narrative discourse. The decision to abandon positivist / Fordist / notions of ‘truth’ and their accompanying solutions, led me to seek alternative ways of understanding the data of this research. MacLachlan and Reid, Hoey, Fludernik and Cortazzi contributed a method of reading and analyzing lecturers’ oral texts as narratives. Watzlawick et al., Weick and Quinn, and Ford (discussed in Method section) contributed to my understanding how it was possible to recognize first and second–order change points in participants’ narratives, those that both maintained prevailing systems of meaning and those that lead to possible processes of change.

Deleuze and Guattari, Latour and various researchers deploying ANT, contributed to
a way of seeing the world, its actors, and their actions as networked processes of translation. But, as the reader will find in the next chapter, it was the synergy between Actor Network Theory and the organizational change theories inspired by Watzlawick, that I found held the most explanatory power for representing the dynamic meaning making processes of the research site.

When the research project began I knew that I would be examining the narrative discourse of my fellow lecturers in order to analyse the relationships between the local meanings assigned to the concept of ‘academic literacy’ and the implications of these meanings for teaching and learning and for developing a sustainable course. This investigation began as a Topical curriculum inquiry (Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995) that aimed to describe what was going on in the research site, attempted to understand the beliefs that informed what was going on, and critically reflected on the practices and beliefs described at the research site. This intent can be seen in the way the research questions were framed. However, as a researcher, what I did not anticipate was the way the research participants responded to the research questions.

A considerable proportion of both the group and individual responses to the research questions was dedicated to what participants believed were the systemic organisational impediments to resolving problems and impasses in organisational meaning. This data set then led to a series of processes for both making sense of the data and for representing that data. The initial model of inquiry, Topical curriculum inquiry, which had informed the research questions, while continuing to be important, also seemed inadequate for the task. I felt the processes of topical curriculum inquiry would lead the research process to make judgments and claims based on predetermined categories of knowledge and competence. Therefore it became important to develop the means to see patterns in the data without predetermining the value of participants’ thematic and semantic categories.

I believed that it was important to take this position to better understand the network of beliefs and forces that conditioned the understandings that participants worked
with. This is where the work of Deleuze and Guattari gave the research a means to frame the collective and individual nature of meaning making as rhizomic, which led further to the work of Latour and ANT, otherwise known as the sociology of translation.

The combination of these two ideas, the rhizome and ANT, provided me with a conceptual framework that enabled me to then make use of the Hoey’s analytical tools to interrogate the participants’ data, to problematize the issue of organisational change, and to build an explanation about the participants’ understandings about ‘academic literacy’, of the curriculum goals and practices of the bridging Course, and of the problems and solutions that circulated within the organizational narratives. By investigating ‘academic literacy’ as a networked actor-entity, I believed it would be possible to see something of lecturers’ processes of world building, and the rhizomic nature of the knowledges and processes that shaped ‘academic literacy’, and that were in turn, shaped by it.
CHAPTER THREE
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.0

This thesis is a case study that investigated how a university-based pre-tertiary bridging course designed for Indigenous students was developed and how it was potentially changing. The study examined lecturers’ collective and individual narrative accounts to understand something of the complexities of the research site’s organisational meaning-making. The research did not interpret the narratives of participants as ‘truth’, but rather as a series of inter-related performances ‘in which events are retold in a particular order and for particular effect … When handling narrative data [Wagner, Galliers and Scott argue that] it is important to recognize that narratives move on and interviewees reframe stories in subsequent accounts, black boxing issues that used to be open controversies, repositioning themselves, redefining priorities’ (Wagner, Galliers, & Scott, n.d., p. 435).

This study described, analysed and reflected on the ways that ‘academic literacy’ was translated into meaning. The research aimed to approach both knowledge building and the narrative data of the research participants with a sense of play and discovery. As a researcher, I wanted to make new knowledge precisely in those spaces that Deleuze argued were ‘at the border which separate[d] our knowledge from our ignorance and transform[ed] one into the other’ (Lambert, 2003, p. 121).

This study proposed that the ways that ‘academic literacy’ was translated into meaning would be indicative of lecturers’ value systems and highly suggestive of the sociological and semiotic networks of which lecturers constituted a significant part. In addition, it was proposed that the ways in which lecturers’ values and meanings aligned in a meaning network would be highly correlated with the success of that network.
Weick and Quinn argued that the ‘basic tension that underlies many discussions of organisational change is that [change] would not be necessary if people had done their jobs right in the first place. Planned change [they claimed] is usually triggered by the failure of people to create continuously adaptive organizations…[and that] organizational change routinely occurs in the context of failure of some sort’ (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 362). Further, they add drawing on Czarniawska and Joerges (1996), that a ‘typical’ organisational ‘story-line is “First there were losses, then there was a plan of change, and then there was an implementation, which led to unexpected results” ’ (Czarniawska & Joerges 1996 cited in Weick & Quinn, 1999).

The research utilised the actor-network theory (ANT) concepts of translation and inscription to articulate key organisational meaning processes negotiated by Course lecturers and the institution more broadly. ANT offered an innovative explanatory potential for how Course meanings formed, transformed, digressed and stabilized. The concepts of translation and inscription were felt to be useful notions for understanding how change happens (Dobers & Soderholm, 2003, p. 11). Drawing on the work of Latour (1996), Dobers and Sodenholm argued that the ‘links between actors’, in most cases human actors, but also technical and non-human actors, ‘however fragile and subtle, determine projects, just as links between projects determine socio-technical networks of another magnitude’ (Ibid, p. 2).

By using ANT in tandem with theories of change, this study aimed to build an explanation about why the bridging Course was changing. (Kendall & Wickham, 1999; Latour, 1986). I had been working with various theories to try and understand how participants’ narrative conceptions of course problems sometimes found second-order narrative resolution. Weick and Quinn claim that the ‘distinction between incremental and radical change [as] first articulated by Watzlawick et al. (1974) and Bateson (1972) as the distinction between first- and second-order change continue to guide theory construction and data collection’ in studies of organisational meaning-making and change (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p.363). This observation was important because I had been intuitively drawn to the work of Watzlawick, Weakland and Fisch
for some years and was interested in finding a use for their theory of change in conjunction with theories for analysing narrative, and for network tracing-mapping (Cortazzi, 1993; Deleuze & Guattari, 2002; Fludernik, 1996; Hoey, 2001; Ifversen, 2003; Watzlawick et al., 1974).

Drawing on the perspectives and insights of organisational development theory, Weick and Quinn claimed that it is not possible to understand a system until you attempt to alter it, and that any appreciation of a system or organization is unlikely until its situation was fundamentally changed (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 363). The narrative data that related to the organisational systems of this research site indicated that there was likely to be an imposed Course change. The vantage point from which the narrative data was examined had seen two years lapse and two further major reconfigurations of the Course’s curriculum. As a researcher, I was, in Weick and Quinn’s terms, in a unique position to describe and interpret how the system and organisational meanings associated with the bridging Course were framed and understood.

With ANT, particular attention is paid to networks, links and alignments as opposed to a focus on individuals as heroes or villains. The nodes in these networks, human and non-human, are understood to work to maintain the network. The problem for any network, if it is to be successful, is that the actors / actants, which can be understood as being nodal points in these networks, are themselves located in other networks. In ANT terms actors / actants, human and non-human, can have very different values, histories and trajectories. This is where, in ANT, that translation comes in. Translation must take place between these actors / actants in order for a network to be maintained. The role of translation processes is to bring social and technical actors / actants / nodes into alignment.

Dobers and Sodenholm argued that a ‘lack of clarity’, not only at the beginning of projects but also throughout projects, is not an untypical situation in a change or meaning-making process. They also argue that examining projects with traditional
project phases such as ‘initiation, conceptualisation, implementation and closure’ is inadequate when the boundaries of projects overlap (Dobers & Soderholm, 2003, p.2).

Dobers and Sodenholm claimed that the task of change processes is to build a common language for change. They call it ‘a shared linguistic platform for action’ (Ibid, p. 2). Dobers and Sodenholm argued that the use of ‘two theoretical concepts; the translation of political and strategic ideas at the beginning of a project, when the work is open for influences, and the inscription of ideas into [texts of various kinds, actions and new ideas at the end of a project, as the work is focusing on stabilizing its ventures and bracketing it from influences’ can focus attention on the ways that organizations shape and mobilize meanings and determine strategic directions (Ibid, p. 3).

Two models of change can be contrasted to help articulate the related notions of translation and inscription in the ways that innovation and change spread. Dobers and Sodenholm call these models ‘the diffusion model and the translation model’. In the diffusion model, Dobers and Sodenholm claim that a powerful idea takes hold and, although it might be challenged, the idea or innovation survives (Ibid).

Salomonson, citing Czarniaska and Sevon, argued that any original plan for change, even in the diffusion model, ‘never succeeds in full’ because individuals always work on each other’s understandings and beliefs. While the original idea or concept might retain a high degree of integrity in the diffusion model, any change in the original idea can be ‘attributed to friction and resistance (for example, lack of communication, ill will, opposition of interest groups, indifference)’ (Salomonson, n.d., p. 118). In contrast, the translation model has a very different dynamic and the spread of an idea is generated from a different process. Dobers and Sodenholm, citing Latour (1996), claim that in a translation process the
original idea is rather weak, not clearly formulated and is hardly structured at all. Since it lacks its own force, the idea is dependent on others and is spreading only because others are interested in it and formulate alliances with it. Each time someone has an interest in the idea, it changes character. Such ideas can only spread if they are changed and individuals can translate the ideas into a language that frames and interprets them in accordance with their own dictionaries which exist in particular organizational fields. The idea eventually results in a fantastic project and ends where the diffusion model begins; with a stable idea that can be implemented. (Dobers & Soderholm, 2003, p. 3-4)

Weick and Quinn argued that the key image here is the notion of the way that ideas travel and are converted into new ideas and actions (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 376). Projects, ideas, concepts only exist and endure to the extent that ‘spokespersons can perform relevant translations’ that maintain the viability and integrity ‘by which networks of socio-technical actants are assembled as a whole (Dobers & Soderholm, 2003, p. 4). Using this framing, the Course development process that had aimed to build a curriculum around what a group of lecturers believed was the most appropriate means to develop students’ ‘academic literacy’, including the definition/s and sets of behaviours that aligned with what ‘academic literacy’ might mean, could retrospectively be understood as the building of a network in which ‘coalitions’ of people, ideas and socio-technical actants,

‘[came] together in an ongoing chain of translations and inscriptions…[The change process / ] project … [could be understood as] the effects of heterogeneous interests, emotions, consensus, as well as carelessness, conflict and clashing intentions…The nature of [the] project change[d] whenever a new actor [joined] … the project or whenever an old member [left] the project. The idea or the project change[d] for every agreement or disagreement. To be precise, [the] project [was] the effect of ongoing negotiations where [the] project [was] never real, but [was] gaining or loosing in degrees of reality’ (Dobers & Soderholm, 2003, p. 4).

Weick and Quinn argued that the impetus for any change does not come from any prime mover or innovator but rather, the ‘impetus comes from imitators and from their conception of the situation, their self-identity and others’ identity, and their
analogical reasoning’ (Sevon 1996 cited in Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 376). Citing Czarniawska and Sevon, Salomonson claimed that we should frame translation ‘as a concept, rich in meaning, that gives associations both to movement and transformation, and that embrace both linguistic and material objects. Change [can be]… seen as a result of a mix of intentions, random events and institutional norms, as opposed to the idea of change as a result of strategic choice or environmental influence’ (Salomonson, n.d., p. 118).

James Gee has argued that the meaning given to objects, things, ideas, phenomena, is a consequence of the ways these objects-things exist in a network of associated, situated meanings. Hoey has argued that the way we know things is related to the ways that we anticipate them, and that this anticipation usually happens in the context of narrative. In coming to some appreciation of the network of associations that came to participate in the ways that ‘academic literacy’ was understood by lecturers and how those meanings also participated in the framing of the university transition course more generally, this research focused on the ways that lecturers signalled how particular ideas had both formerly participated and were currently participating in the Course’s translation and inscription processes.

When framing what lecturers / participants had to say about ‘academic literacy’ and curriculum change in translation terms, I was guided by Weick and Quinn’s contention that the ‘match between a purpose and an idea does not depend on inherent properties of the idea’. Further, citing Czarniawska and Joerges (1996), Weick and Quinn claim that ‘it is assumed that “most ideas can be proven to fit most problems, assuming good will, creativity, and a tendency to consensus”…[t]hus, the act of translation creates the match’(Czarniawska & Joerges cited in Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 376).

Dobers and Sodenholm (citing Abrahamson 1996; Rovik, 1996) argue that through a process of ‘selective perception, which adjusts to the social environment and copes with what is in fashion and what is out of fashion, certain ideas are chosen to be part
of the translation process’ (Dobers & Soderholm, 2003, p. 4). Once an idea materialises as a word, the materialized idea might lead to different changes, in itself through yet another translation, and it eventually becomes institutionalized as it takes on a concrete form...The argument can be summarized in...term[s] of inscription; an idea is inscribed into an object (text, book, prototype of any kind), which is itself translated into actions that are repeated over and over again, that eventually are institutionalised by even more chains of translations and inscriptions (Dobers & Soderholm, 2003, p. 4-5).

When framing lecturers’ discussions about the Course and about ‘academic literacy’ more specifically, as a set of inter-related collective and individual narratives and sub-narratives, it became possible to map and isolate those features of lecturers’ narratives which demonstrated where and how they believed that an organisational change potential existed amongst the meanings that circulated (Hoey, 2001; Watzlawick et al., 1974, see also Appendices 4, 5, 7 & 8). This analysis importantly signalled something of the ways that the translations among the meaning systems were operating to bring the network’s technical and social aspects into alignment. It also became possible to recognise how the existing Course’s key processes of translation and inscription had impacted on Course meanings, including those that contributed to its dilemmas (see Chapter 5 and Appendix 6).

ANT also provides an opportunity to demonstrate the importance of not reducing complex sets of relationships to simple explanations, and to recognise that ‘literacy as social practice, rather than a set of technical and transferable skills’ (Clarke, 2002, p. 108). Clark has argued that investigating ‘adult literacy’ with the tools of Actor Network Theory, in this case a variant of literacy, ‘academic literacy’, provides an opportunity to explore how both the subjects and objects of knowledge can be observed empirically as entities circulating in networks...[Clarke claimed] that the value of this framework is that it invites adult educators to question the hierarchical ordering of knowledge, skills, learners, teachers, technologies and spaces that characterise our working life. When we start to look at how this ordering and
classification is produced, [Clarke claims that] we can begin to think about how things could be different’ (Ibid, p.107-108).

ANT offers a means to interpret how actors, ideas, power, institutions and networks are mobilised to reinforce particular configurations of what and how ‘academic literacy’ can mean. Clarke argued that this type of investigation ‘enhances our understanding of literacy as a material and symbolic means of ordering and classifying knowledge and social interaction. But [importantly, Clarke argues,] it should alert us to the need to reflect on the pre-understandings of literacy that we bring to ethnographic studies of local literacy events’ (Ibid, p108). Latour (1987) argued that for ANT, ‘what is called knowledge cannot be defined without understanding what gaining knowledge means’ (Latour cited in Clarke, 2002, p.110).

One of the key questions put to lecturer participants asked them how they understood ‘academic literacy’ to be constructed in the Course. This question points not only to an actual meaning or definition, but also to a process or dynamic of meaning-making within the local context. Clarke, drawing on Law (1992), argues that the Actor Network Theory ‘ethnographer’ begins ‘from the assumption that the local [reality] is all there is’ (Clarke, 2002p. 111). Law argued that ‘Napoleons are no longer different in kind to small-time hustlers…And if they are larger, then we should be studying how this comes about – how, in other words, size, power, or organization are generated’ (Law 1992 cited in Clarke, 2002, p.111). One of the complexities of this research was that one of the Course’s initial processes of translation and inscription, the Course Review process (see Appendix 6), had inscribed a particular complex or network of meaning for what ‘academic literacy’ should signify. The Course Review had proposed that ‘academic literacy’ be constructed utilising the frame of Giroux’s ‘border pedagogy’ (Giroux, 1991) and that the course design should employ the insights of the New Literacy Studies. This suggested a pedagogy specifically aimed at enabling Indigenous students to critically negotiate the discursive spaces and textual politics of the university as Indigenous Australians (Barton, 1994; Bourdieu, 1991; Bruffee, 1993; Butin, 2001; Claxton, 1990; Cope &

The sets of assumptions that might ordinarily be brought to the meaning-making process, particularly as they might pertain to both traditional and contemporary understandings of what ‘academic literacy’ meant, which in this case included the principles and recommendations of the Course Review / platform statement, itself informed by the New Literacy Studies debates amongst others, can Clarke argues, make the task of explaining what is going on more difficult. Clarke argued that ANT becomes useful in identifying how ‘academic literacy’ is conditionally understood and how it ‘acquires attributes that set it above other forms of cognition, expression and communication’, because, Clarke argues, ANT is concerned with relationships at the local level, rather than with being concerned with what is ‘out there’ (Clarke, 2002, p. 111). What might be ‘out there’ Clark claims can only be understood locally, and ‘is produced in the patterning of relations between actors or entities in a network’ (Ibid, p. 112).

An important idea in ANT is the notion of symmetry between entities in all of life’s networks. Clarke argued that in ANT ‘entities have no inherent qualities but take their form and acquire their attributes through relationships in networks with other entities’. ANT is used as a tool in this research for understanding how ‘academic literacy’ emerges locally as an idea and gets adopted? Salomonson argued that in considering such an emergence it is useful to talk about the processes by which actors-entities-objects get attention. He argues that actors, such as my research participants, might describe other actors-objects-entities, such as ‘academic literacy’, in ‘the form of a myth, a tale about how it all started. Other actors [Salomonson adds, might] mention other events or deny the impact of this or that event’. These ‘reconstructions can act as a support for narratives’ (Salomonson, n.d., p. 119). Weick and Quinn argue that in interpreting the actions of actors it is important not to see behaviours as deviant, or technically incompetent, but as ‘behaviours that are
consistent with a particular cultural purpose, meaning, and history’ (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 374).

Wagner, Galliers and Scott argue that combining ANT with narrative approaches to analyse the meaning-making systems of organisations ‘creates a theoretical context in which to question how some stories become more accepted than others. Why [for example] do particular actors, issues, or events fade away, no longer making significant appearances in the narrative data gathered, while others continue to dominate?’(Wagner et al., n.d., p. 437). What makes some ideas a ‘“matter of fact…indisputable and obvious” ’? (Latour 1999 cited in Wagner et al., n.d.). ANT in combination with narrative analysis provides opportunities to understand ‘what it means to be connected or disconnected from a socio-technical ensemble. The successive inscription of interests into material form provides us with a partial history of what circulated within an ontological network’ (Wagner et al., n.d., p. 437). Analysing participants’ narratives allow us to see where and how agency is constituted because participants’ accounts of what has happened and what is unfolding is interpreted as representative of a network of interests.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHOD

4.1 Introduction

Latour claims that the ways that the networks are traced using Actor Network Theory has changed as a result of researchers posing different questions. Researchers’ deployment of ANT has moved from concerns over whether or not networks are representations of social or natural things, to concerns over what moves in networks and how this movement was is noted. Latour maintains that ANT is interested in tracing networks before distinctions are made between the movement of actants-entities in networks and what it is that circulates and constrains actants-entities on particular paths (Latour, 1997b).

Law and Urry argued that ‘[f]ollowing a deterministic set of rules, unpredictable yet patterned results can be generated’ (Law & Urry, 2002). The narrative tracing that was deployed in the first stage of this research process (Hoey, 2001; Watzlawick et al., 1974) gave the research an initial capacity to represent lecturers’ narrative structures topographically without predetermining the entities that would most concern lecturers. The narrative tracing would represent the paths of participants’ collective concerns and interests.

Law and Urry claimed that change in systems did not necessarily follow predictable paths. Small changes in a system could have ‘large effects and vice versa’. They argued further that the ‘relationship between variables’ in a network “can be non-linear with abrupt switches, so the same ‘cause’ can produce qualitatively different kinds of effects in specific circumstances” (Law & Urry, 2002). Thus space and time were understood to be a significant part of the dynamic equation of relations and not something external to systems or networks (Law & Urry, 2002).
The initial “rules” that were applied to map lecturers’ narratives were a hybridised set of rules fashioned from a combination of a mixing of the ‘culturally popular patterns’ of narrative organization described by Hoey (Hoey, 2001, p. 123), with the change theory outlined by Watzlawick et al. (Watzlawick et al., 1974) and the framing metaphor described by MacLachlan and Reid (MacLachlan & Reid, 1994).

The narrative tracings that were drawn allowed for a topographical investigation of where narratives signalled incremental or first–order explanations for change, a situation that usually signalled circulating but un-resolving problems. The maps also signalled second-order change potentials for radical or episodic shifts in lecturers’ organisational narratives (Watzlawick et al., 1974; Weick & Quinn, 1999).

Lecturers’ narrative responses to six data-collection questions provided narratives of lecturers’ meaning-making processes and demonstrated the types of priorities and connections around which their narratives were coordinated. Wagner, Galliers and Scott argued that

tracing the path of these connections, insights emerge as the constitution of issues and processes of negotiation…The process is rarely neat, since participants often interweave their personal narratives with references to collective, institutional, international, or cultural issues….Through attention to language, the strength of ties within and between networks becomes apparent. Narrative is particularly helpful for studying the constitution of agency and the production of networks because individual stories of negotiation speak on behalf of a network of interests. An individual’s account of change when viewed from an actor-network perspective is interpreted as a delegate or spokesperson for a particular set of interests (Wagner et al., n.d., p.436).

The mapping process identified the lecturers’ concerns and understandings and demonstrated where they believed that significant organisational narrative change was likely or possible.
Lecturers’ narrative responses were collected in two categories using Goffman’s dramaturgical metaphor of on-stage and off-stage performance. Participants’ Group responses were considered to be ‘on-stage’ performances visible to the ‘mold of expectations’ generated by the discursive space of their colleagues (Chen & Boothroyd, 2005). Participants’ individual narrative responses to the same data gathering questions were considered ‘off-stage’ performances. An ‘off-stage’ response meant that the individual participant was able to make different decisions about the terms of their narrative response in ways that might not have been possible in the Group ‘on-stage’ responses.

It was around the system-breaking second-order narrative change points in lecturers’ Group responses that data from lecturers’ off-stage Individual responses to the same research questions was fed back, as relevant material to amplify and illustrate the second-order change points in the Group responses / narratives. (See how Group responses were mapped as narratives in Appendix 4, 5, 7 & 8 demonstrating topographical Second–Order Change Points)

4.2 Data collection procedures

The primary data for this research project were the stories that lecturers involved in a university transition course told about the way that they conceptualised or constructed ‘academic literacy’ in the teaching program. Lecturers were asked to speak collectively and individually about the beliefs that underpinned their understandings. Lecturers were also asked to provide information about their understandings and rationalizations about the ‘problems’ the Course was encountering; including perceptions of any relationship between curriculum and Course problems, and any proposed solutions the lecturers might suggest to address any perceived problems.

I have deliberately not provided profiles of my research participants for one key
reason. I wanted participants to remain as anonymous as their individual voices would render them. This was a decision I made at the beginning of the research and this decision was given as an assurance to my research participants. However, in the ways that my research evolved, in retrospect I would have preferred that I had asked permission to include a profile of participants’ work experiences and professional qualifications. This information could have fed into discussions about the resources that participants drew upon in their decision-making and interpretive processes. In a more thorough ANT analysis this would be advisable. Some profile information is offered in any event in participants’ discourse.

In this instance, as the research data was limited largely to participants’ responses, there existed a danger that if I had constructed participant profiles, the ideas that participants discussed, may have be reduced to being a bad fit between their profile characteristics and some “professional ideal”. Therefore, even though it would have been my preference to include a profile, on balance it was important not to include anything that substituted for these profiles.

This research began with the understanding that it was searching for meanings in both the individual and collective narratives of the lecturers who had taught the bridging Course (Course B) or who had been involved in its development. At the time of the collection of the data, the way into the data set was broadly understood to be a discourse analysis of the oral narratives of the research participants. At the time of the interviews Topical Curriculum Inquiry principles (Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995) informed the proposed discourse analysis, although the process was particularly nebulous. There was however always the intent to analyse the participants’ responses through the interpretive lens of narrative and story.

Research participants, whether in a group interview or an individual interview, were asked to respond to the same set of six questions. During the data collection process, an attempt was made not to intervene in the spoken responses of the research participants beyond maintaining the communication channel and minimally
responding to issues of question clarification. The participants could answer the
questions put to them, in any way that they understood was appropriate or relevant.

This non-interventionist interview strategy was taken from insights offered by Frisch
(Frisch cited in Patai, 1994). Michael Frisch, an oral historian, argued that in spite of
researcher interventions, research participants always returned in their discourse to
talk about what was important for them. Daphne Patai summarised how Frisch’s
came to his view on the task of collecting oral data:

Listening to his own tapes, he said, had made him aware how often, despite all
the road blocks he inadvertently created, speakers returned to their own themes.
They seem determined to tell him what was important to them, even in the face
of his interference. Typically. Frisch stated, they would answer politely when
he derailed them, and then after a while get back to what was really on their
minds. We should not, in other words, anguish quite so much over our own
roles (Patai, 1994).

This research set out to let its participants respond to questions in their own terms
and from their own perspectives. Making-meaning, even making meaning out of my
research questions, was understood to be an active and participatory process, and an
activity that was always achieved in the presence of interpretive frameworks
(MacLachlan & Reid, 1994). As a researcher I recognised that I would always have
an impact collecting this data even though I did my best to minimise any impacts. I
believed that my most significant interventions and impacts as a researcher would be
in the initial development of the questions and in the process of mapping and
describing lecturers’ narratives. In the process of collecting participants’ narrative
responses, I worked from the position that there would be an abundance of
opportunity to engage with this dataset at a later date.

Wainwright (1997) argued that the aim of qualitative research was ‘not to produce a
representative and unbiased measurement of the views of a population, but to deepen
[the] understanding of a social phenomenon by conducting an in-depth and sensitive
analysis of the articulated consciousness of actors involved in that phenomenon.’ He
argued that ‘interview transcripts’ are used by the researcher ‘for the same purpose

that academic texts are also considered, that is, in the hope of finding fresh insights and new ways of understanding a particular phenomenon’ (Wainwright, 1997). Following Wainwright’s position, this research approached social phenomena with an interpretive frame that aimed to create some “fresh insights” on a situation whose problems sometimes appeared to be intractable.

4.3 Deploying Hoey’s narrative tracing

The narrative analysis uses a variety of the Evaluation model first developed by Labov (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 43-59) but significantly re-developed by Hoey (Hoey, 2001). In Labov’s model, analysis was based on investigating recurrent patterns in people’s narratives, particularly the ways that narrators evaluate the events of their narrative. The way that people evaluate events in Labov’s framework was, Cortazzi argued, ‘to communicate to the audience the meaning of the narrative by establishing some point of personal involvement’ (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 44). For Cortazzi, without this evaluative function there was nothing to signal what made events reportable, and without the feature of reportability we have no way of making sense of what has been narrated.

Cortazzi argued that there were a number of reasons why the Evaluation model was a useful tool in analysing educators’ narratives. The first reason was that the model allows the researcher to ask questions that would both involve participants emotionally and intellectually. Secondly, the model permits the structure of the participants’ oral narratives to be mapped. An examination of the narrative tracings provides a focus for the key points of any narrative. Thirdly, because the tellers of any narrative largely provide their own interpretation, the narratives demonstrate the teller’s ‘attitude towards, what is being told’ (Cortazzi, 1993, p. 54-55).

To come to any semblance of a shared understanding of a discourse, a reader or listener requires the cognitive and linguistic components necessary for making
meaning of the unfolding discourse. Hoey claimed that this understanding would either be met or frustrated ‘on a sentence by sentence basis’. If the writer/speaker is not firmly located in the speech or discourse community of their audience, the problems of ‘encoding’ and ‘decoding’ can overwhelm their performance and their ‘ability to keep the whole picture in view’ can be lost.

The text the writer/speaker creates has to be organized globally by the hierarchical arrangement of larger sections or ‘chunks’ of the text’ (Hoey, 2001, p. 55). Readers or listeners, Hoey claimed, have to interpret the relationship between the larger sections or chunks of text, and the smaller sections of a text in a sentence-by-sentence process. The way that a reader or listener interprets patterns or configurations in a text is determined by the hierarchies they find. However, what interpreters of texts find, is also co-created by the person doing the interpretation. Interpretation is never, just a process of observing what’s there. Citing the way that the short story writer Borges played with readers’ expectations, Hoey demonstrated how writers could trap and exploit the anticipations of readers.

Acknowledging the work of Pike, Hoey argued that it is useful to find a method to describe ‘the structure of a happening separately from its telling’ so that ‘we might have a way of comparing the kinds of telling that people could use to report the happening’ (Hoey, 2001, p. 93). A happening for Pike could be something that is ‘general or particular, large or small. It only exists because someone thinks it is tellable and the particularity of the events are likewise dependent upon this ‘tellability’; its structure is the product of selections made by the potential teller’ (Ibid, p. 99).

Hoey claimed that that if we can develop a matrix of a telling, an analysis of that telling allows people to conceive of the idea that there could have been alternative tellings. A matrix or mapping of a narrative ‘assumes that a telling always precedes and produces our sense of something being a happening’ (Ibid, p. 99). Hoey claimed that ‘[f]rom the telling we may derive a matrix that represents the assumed
happening that the telling reports, and this matrix can then be used to generate other
tellings that take different routes through the matrix from that taken in the original

This matrix building provides the interpretive key for the analysis of the research
participant’s narratives. Hoey’s strategy provides a mechanism to map the narrative
tellings that participants offered, including those tellings that suggested themselves
as possible but as yet unresolved narrative resolutions of those narrative tellings.
Hoey’s mapping strategy also allowed for a consideration of those tellings that were
not offered. There is the possibility when comparing alternative tellings, or aspects of
those tellings, to examine what concepts were and were not used across the tellings.

Hoey argued that there are ‘culturally popular’ ways of organizing texts. He argued
that there are three main ways that writers (and speakers) try to make the process of
interpretation easier (Ibid, p. 119).

1 The first strategy applied by the writer/speaker is to anticipate what
questions the audience is likely requiring answers to and the best way of
revealing that information.

2 The second strategy is to explicitly restate the question in the
discourse before going on to answer it.

3 The final strategy is to supply the reader / interpreter with a ‘template
of questions that both writer [/speaker] and reader [/listener] can refer to’
(Ibid, p. 119).

Hoey claimed that this linguistic traffic of supply and demand between writer /
speaker and reader/audience/interpreter has been described by researchers ‘in terms
of schemata and scripts in the reader’s [/interpreter’s] (and writer’s) [/speaker’s]
minds’. Hoey argued that, in crude terms ‘a schema is a static representation of
knowledge, whereas a script is a narrative representation of knowledge. A schema
represents the (non-narrative) connections between facts; a script represents the
sequence in which likely events will occur’ (Ibid, p. 121). Hoey claimed that schema
theorists have shown that knowledge can be seen as ‘organised in terms of schema or scripts’, and that when a part of that knowledge structure is stimulated, the remainder of that schemata/script ‘is brought to bear on the task of interpreting the text that provided the activation.’ While there are literally thousands upon thousands of these scripts and schemata, and many that can be triggered by a single word, Hoey claimed that there are generalisable features of these schemata or scripts that readers/speakers share with those interpreting them, and that this must be so in order for people to be able to maintain a meaning-making dynamic. Hoey called these common patterns ‘culturally popular patterns of organization’ (Ibid, p.123).

What follows is an overview of Hoey’s culturally popular patterns of organization.

1. The Problem-Solution pattern, Hoey argued, is the most popular pattern of all.

(a) We can look at this pattern as the writer/speaker responding to a ‘series of questions’, and the order of answers can vary.

(b) The use of the pattern is signalled to the reader/listener lexically, as either a solution to a problem or as an evaluation.

(c) The pattern is set up by a contextualizing ‘situation’ that is understood as such ‘retrospectively’.

(d) After the problem is posed, the writer/speaker may expand on a ‘Plan’ or proposal that will contribute to the response.

(e) ‘A Negative Result or Negative Evaluation of the response usually prompts a recycling of the pattern, and the pattern continues to recycle until such time as a Positive Result or Evaluation is reached. A Positive Result or Evaluation can always be overridden by an immediately following Negative
Result or Evaluation. The exception to this is when a Negative Result is felt to be so severe as not to admit further Response’.

(f) The patterns found in the text are ‘attributed’ to both the writer/speaker and the reader/listener.

(g) ‘Participant attribution permits the recognition of the interweaving of several and co-existing patterns’. (Ibid, p. 140)

2 The Goal-Achievement Pattern.

Hoey identified the following parts of a Goal-Achievement Pattern: ‘Situation, Goal, Method of Achievement and Evaluation and/or Result. The difference between the Goal Achievement Pattern and the more common Problem-Solution Pattern is that “Goal is defined as ‘an intended change in Situation’ ” (Ibid, p. 146).

3 The Opportunity-Taking pattern.

Hoey argued that the Opportunity-Taking Pattern is often signalled by ‘an implicit offer [to] which a participant reacts’. Hoey claimed that although the Opportunity-Taking pattern shares many characteristics of Goal-Achievement and Problem-Solution patterns, the key difference is ‘signalled in narrative by an encounter with an object of unambiguous function’ and these usually ‘include an explicit sensory encounter’ (Ibid, p. 150-154).

4 The Desire Arousal-Fulfilment pattern.

Hoey argued that a Desire Arousal-Fulfilment narrative pattern usually begins with a positive evaluation which becomes the ‘defining element of a pattern in much the same way that the Problem, Goal and Opportunity serve as defining elements for their patterns’ (Ibid, p. 156-157). Hoey claimed that the ‘questions being answered in
texts of this kind are the following:

- What is the situation?
- Who or what within this situation was particularly attractive?
- What effect did a situation have on an actor?
- What did the actor do about it?
- What was the result?

Hoey pointed out that a positive evaluation in any of these narrative patterns does not necessarily bring the pattern to an end because, if the ‘Positive Evaluation is followed by a Negative Evaluation, the latter overrides the former… [Hoey additionally argued that] what distinguishes the two kinds of Negative Evaluation / Result is the irretrievability or otherwise of the Result. If the Negative Result is beyond retrieval, [that is there is no additional Positive Evaluation, the Negative Evaluation] functions exactly like a Positive Evaluation for the purposes of pattern completion’ (Hoey, 2001, pp. 131-132).

I believed that topographically mapping the lecturers’ group responses in terms of these ‘culturally popular patterns’ would demonstrate how the narratives were structured as dynamic eco-social narrative meaning systems.

4.4 System change

The research participants’ narrative ‘tellings’ (Hoey, 2001), which Ford calls conversations, construct a reality and these narratives are ‘also the product of that construction: [the lecturers’ narratives ] … become the reality’ (Berquist, 1993, cited in Ford, 1999, p. 485). Ford argued that the reality of interwoven narratives is further inter-networked with other ‘linguistic products…words, phrases, …descriptions, reports, explanations, understandings…[so that] when we describe, we create what is being described in the description. Whether the characterization is taken for granted
or is the basis for argument, we have nevertheless created the objects and their
properties in our conversations [or narratives]’ (Winograd and Flores, 1987 cited in

Ford would argue that when people offer historical explanations for a change
process, such as how the bridging Course had historically changed or was changing
again, or how the meaning of ‘academic literacy’ changed and was changing again,
their tellings can be seen as stories of multiplicities. He has argued that in cases like
these, that narratives ‘offer a net presentation…in which both first–and second–order
realities are collapsed into a single, thematic narrative. Until these realities are
distinguished and “pulled apart”, people relate to the narrative as a first–order reality,
thereby confusing events with their interpretations and explanations for those
events…It is for this reason that one can find different accounts for the same event’

Ford argued that no definitive change is ever produced from a networked
conversational narrated frame. Instead, Ford claimed, ‘change is an unfolding of
conversations [or narratives] into already existing conversations [or narratives] and
how “change” occurs to participants will depend on the second–order, represented
realities within which they can engage the unfolding dynamic. These realities, in
turn, specify what can and cannot be done, what will and will not be done, who
should or should not do what, etc. and thereby set [up] the conversational [narrative]
dynamics of change’ (Ford, 1999, p. 487).

Ford argued that there is ‘no “true” second-order reality’ that everyone one has to
acknowledge or accept. Evidence that a second–order change has taken place is
found, Ford claimed, ‘in a first–order reality. First–order realities provide a basis for
determining if something is happening independent of opinions and judgements
about what is happening and why (i.e. second—order realities)’ (Ford, 1999, p. 487).
Changes happen when there is a network of narratives capable of producing the
change. The problem is, Ford argued, that it is not possible to know beforehand
which narratives are going to be capable of actualising the desired change. ‘Producing change’, Ford claimed, is like ‘experimental theatre or improvisational jazz where the script (music) is being written while it is being performed (Boje, 1995, Czarniawska, 1997 cited in Ford, 1999, p. 487).

Williams-Jones and Graham argued that if we are concerned with ‘what drives a network or brings it into being, then we need to consider all the components that collaborate, co-operate, complete, and lead to proliferation, persistence, or perishing of that network’ (Williams-Jones & Graham, 2003). I believed that ANT in combination with processes of narrative analysis could point to those processes, entities and networks in the discourse of the participants that, while being ‘in plain view’, may not have been ‘readily apparent’ (Strathern, 1999 cited in Williams-Jones & Graham, 2003). While using ANT as an important tool in this research process, it is important to acknowledge the limitations to the way that ANT is being deployed. A credo of ANT is ‘follow the actors’, see what work they do in maintaining or diminishing the integrity of a network. This means that research utilising ANT would normally not limit the data collected for the research to a set of responses to research questions. In this sense many ‘components’ that contributed the status of the actor network are absent from this study. For example, an analysis of what participants actually did, in addition to what they had to say about what they and others did, would have generated significantly more data about the networks under investigation. A more thorough ANT analysis would not limit itself to a particular cohort of informers, but as Wagner et al., (n.d.) suggests, the research participants were interpreted as spokespeople for local network interests. The deployment of ANT therefore remains, I believe, remains a valuable ally to this study, and the findings of this research remain highly indicative of the prevailing actor-network. There is acknowledgement that the research points to many other actors that need to be examined in the building of a more thorough explanation of why the Course is struggling to produce more university transitions.
4.5 Analysis procedure

Outlined below is the data-analysis process I followed through deploying ANT in combination with a narrative technique inspired by Hoey and Watzlawick et al. (Hoey, 2001; Watzlawick et al., 1974)

**Phase 1: Narrative tracing**

The group and individual responses to each question was recorded and transcribed, and each sentence was numbered and coded. The coding indicated if it was a Group (on-stage) response or and individual (off-stage) response. An off-stage response was coded with the participants’ name (eg. Bob 74). An on-stage group response was always coded as Group (eg. Group 305), although, it was always made clear who in the Group response, was speaking.

The participants’ Group response to Question One, was traced as a thematic matrix and the Group response could be seen to follow a Goal-Achievement pattern. (See Appendix 2 & 3) This type of mapping was applied to the first question only to get an understanding of the shape of the narrative and the themes used in its structure.

**Text Boxes**

The off-stage responses to Question One only were used to generate off-stage text-box asides throughout Chapter 5, to provide a parallel take on the central text, often as a point of ironic juxtaposition, as suggested by Lather and Smithies (Lather & Smithies, 1997) and Goffman (MacLachlan & Reid, 1994). The text-boxes feature off-stage ‘asides’ related to the construction of ‘academic literacy’. The purpose informing the positioning and the choice of these text-box ‘asides’ was to both demonstrate something of the similarities and differences that existed between participants’ understandings, but also to suggest where an individuals’ own positions on an issue might not always totally cohere. Any inconsistencies in the appearances
of participants’ positions should be read ironically as a manifestation of the shifts that individuals make in taking up different discursive positions in actor networks.

The text-boxes also serve the purpose of troubling the linearity of the reading process, to encourage the reader slow down to listen to the language and engage with the discursive spaces created through the participants’ voices (Lather, 1994; Lather & Smithies, 1997).

- Q.1 What information, anecdotes, or stories can you share about the way that academic literacy is constructed in the bridging program both from your own practice and your understanding of how it is more generally enacted through staff practice?

The Group (on-stage) and Individual (off-stage) responses to the remaining Questions Two through to Six were organised as narrative systems according to Hoey’s ‘culturally popular patterns of organization’ (Hoey, 2001).

- Q.2 What personal beliefs and values underpin your practice and perceptions of how academic literacy’ is constructed on both a personal and collective level?
- Q.3 What understandings do you have of the problems the program is encountering and how do you rationalise those understandings?
- Q.4 Do you see any relationship between the curriculum goals and practices of the bridging Course and the program’s problems?
- Q.5 What are the critical aspects of the problems you have outlined?
- Q.6 Can you propose any solutions to the issues facing the program?

These questions (i.e. 2-6) were not traced thematically in this initial recording but temporally as narrative systems following Hoey’s classifications of ‘culturally popular patterns of organization’. The Group responses to these questions were traced as narrative systems (See Appendices 4, 5, & 7 as examples). This gave the capacity to see topographically where the narratives demonstrated the potential for
second-order narrative change (Ford, 1999; Watzlawick et al., 1974; Weick & Quinn, 1999). As stated in the introduction to the method section, the narrative mapping that was deployed in this stage of the interpretive process provided a capacity to trace lecturers’ narratives without predetermining the entities that would most interest lecturers or predetermine the ways that they would generate the paths of their collective concerns and interests. Law and Urry have claimed that ‘[f]ollowing a deterministic set of rules, unpredictable yet patterned results can be generated’ (Law & Urry, 2002).

**Phase 2: Narrative Mapping**

The narrative second-order change points were interpreted as significant markers in the group-collective (on-stage) narrative, and it was around these change points that a process of narrative mapping occurred which then integrated related themes in participants’ individual (off-stage) performances (See Appendices 8 and 9). This mapping effectively rebuilt an integrated narrative from both the group and individual narrative responses for each of questions two to six, a narrative that was built around the group narrative change points.

**Phase 3: The Course as an ongoing translation**

The next stage in the process was to integrate material from the six questions by applying the Actor Network Theory concept of translation and inscription. To understand processes of change, Dobers and Soderholm argued that it is important to examine the ‘interface between projects [and sub-projects] … since the ontology and direction of each project are decided at these links’. To understand the dynamics of the latest proposed Course change, that is, to get an insight into how the Course had arrived at its current status and position, I decided to divide the trajectory of the Course’s change history into what I believed would be five significant processes / or projects of translation and inscription in the Course’s narrative arc.
1 The first of these processes related to the initial translation of the bridging Course’s curriculum Review project and the inscription at the end of that process into a Review document (See Appendix 6. Due to the size of these translation accounts only the first of these translation document was included in this thesis document. The translation stories relating to the stages 2-5 outlined below, were folded back into Chapter 5 and 6).

2 The second process related to the way the Review document / curriculum platform statement was translated and then inscribed as Course and unit documents.

3 The third process involved the means by which the Course curriculum documents were translated and inscribed into practice.

4 A fourth process related to the way Course lecturers believed that a new translation process had begun which potentially signalled the failure and the end of the existing Course.

5 Connecting all these processes, was the fifth process which involved how the artefact / actor, ‘academic literacy’, was translated into meaning in lecturers’ narratives. ‘Academic literacy’ was the issue at the core of this study and of particular importance to me as a researcher. It was the actor-entity around and through which course activities and understandings were assumed to be organised.

To understand the existing Course’s discursive location and its change process, it became important, in ANT terms, to understand from where the Course had come. The narrative mapping that had been done of participants’ narrative second-order change points was now remapped in terms four distinct chronological change phases and one thematic category.
The reader will find a sketch for the first chronological change phases as Appendix 6. The reader if they choose to read this narrative of translation will see how fragile and unstable the process of consensus curriculum building was from the very beginning of the change process (i.e. the Course Review) The appendices includes only the first of these translation phase sketches because the sketches were too large as documents to include.

In any event the material from the translation processes (i.e. the translation phases 1-5) were retranslated and mapped back against the initial second-order breakout points in the Group Narratives 2-6. This provided a means to pare back the narrative material in symmetry with the Collective Group Narrative. Having worked the participants’ narrative material though these various translation processes enriched the material which then facilitated a far more complex interpretation.

The reader will find two interlinked analytical descriptions of this re-translation process in the findings sections (Chapter 5). The first description deals primarily with the first two data gathering questions:

- **Q.1** What information, anecdotes, or stories can you share about the way that academic literacy is constructed in the bridging program both from your own practice and your understanding of how it is more generally enacted through staff practice?
- **Q.2** What personal beliefs and values underpin your practice and perceptions of how academic literacy’ is constructed on both a personal and collective level?

The second section of the findings chapter deals with the next three data gathering questions:

- **Q.3** What understandings do you have of the problems the program is encountering and how do you rationalise those understandings?
Q.4 Do you see any relationship between the curriculum goals and practices of the bridging Course and the program’s problems?

Q.5 What are the critical aspects of the problems you have outlined?

Following these two sections is a third section (Chapter Six) that does two things. First it addresses the sixth data-gathering question:

Q.6 Can you propose any solutions to the issues facing the program?

Secondly, it retranslates this sixth question in the terms of the key research question that emerged and that was developed during the process of conducting the research itself:

‘What alignment of interests would be required to develop a sustainable university transition program for Indigenous Australians?’

A critical reflection on the entire corpus of research data is interpreted through this last key question. The investigation is briefly concluded here.
CHAPTER FIVE

RESULTS: SPACES OF CONSTRUCTED VISIBILITY

5.1 Stories about ‘academic literacy’

“… one of the key things, the key beliefs or, things that underpins my practice is that my Grandmother believes in a very Western academic literacy context. That she’s stupid and she’ll say it, she’ll repeat it all the time and she continues to say that. And she, she uses that to describe the fact that she didn’t have a terribly … long formal education but she’s far from stupid. But she has this very, she has this ingrained belief that doesn’t just come from her, it obviously comes from the socialization she’s been treated to about how much education she’s had compared to other people around her. But she has a very strong understanding and sees herself as a stupid person. Which is completely irrelevant in the whole context of how much education she’s had. … I don’t think, has anything to do with…. she’s not stupid to start with. But her level of education didn’t stop her from being very clever. Her lack of education didn’t stop her from being very clever and actually turn out to be a very articulate person and having written quite a lot. And being quite a critical thinker when it comes down to it. But I think it’s…. that’s some of the stuff I suppose that I bring back to my practice, as far as, trying to step outside the Western concept of academic literacies within our program, and within any other program for that matter.” (Damien’s transcript: location sentence 53-64)
An introduction to the Actor Network.

This research set out to understand how the entity ‘actor-literacy’ was constructed in a university preparation course designed to bridge Indigenous adults into university degree programs. The research deployed a number of techniques designed to identify and follow key indicators of action, particularly indicators of second-order change in participants’ responses to a series of research questions.

The motivation in following this action and change, and the related actors indicated in participants’ responses, was to appreciate how ‘academic literacy’ as an actor, was recruited into the story of the bridging Course. The aim in following this recruitment or enrolment process was to begin to understand the actor-networks that constituted the bridging Course. As I have indicated elsewhere, Actor Network Theory was itself enrolled into this research process as a tool that I believed would offer some explanatory power to articulate the networky structure that ‘academic literacy’ turned out to have.

In the spirit of ANT confession, that is, catching researchers processes of action before they have been completely ‘black-boxed’, Actor Network Theory was itself a late recruit in the process of framing the meaning making processes in the lecturer-participants’ discourse. ANT had not originally been an actor in the analysis and interpretation of my research participants’ responses.

The rationale behind ANT’s recruitment came as a result of the initial phases of the discourse analysis that had first translated participant’s responses as narratives (See Appendices 4,5,7 &8). As a researcher I was faced with an unexpected dilemma. The type of responses that I had anticipated as a researcher, were not the responses I received. I had expected answers that more directly addressed what I believed to be the ‘point’ of the question. Instead, the responses often took a seemingly arbitrary and circuitous route to an answer a question.
As a researcher I was led to ANT through the social semiotic and discourse analysis work of Gee (Gee, 1996) and Lemke (Lemke, 1995a), and the rhizomic philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 2002). ANT has been described as a form of radical semiosis and for this research it suggested the means to understand the meaning of my participants ideas as collectively and individually networked entities (Latour, 1997a).

‘Academic literacy’ in its most pre-packaged, ‘black-boxed’ form, can be understood as a technology of meaning making, as an intellectual technology that people generally begin to acquire and learn from childhood (Gee, 1996; Kendall & Wickham, 1999). ‘Academic literacy’ can be seen as a form of evolving meaning machine (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002). It is also generally understood that that people learn and acquire an increasingly sophisticated and nuanced configuration of ‘academic literacy’, depending, most usually, upon the level of formal education that people have.

When something is considered to be black-boxed (Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 73) it suggests that the technical sophistication of a machine, or in this case a meaning machine, is boxed or bracketed off from close inspection. Machines that have become black-boxed have usually become a unitary organ, complete in themselves, simplified, because ironically, of their enormous complexity. Something which has become black-boxed has become a closed and simplified system because it works, it has become reliable and predictable. In circuit diagrams we can see the inputs into these black-boxes and we can see the out-puts, but the work that goes on inside the black box largely takes place without too much reflection.

Most people these days are familiar with idea of black-boxes in cars. When something goes wrong with one of these black-boxes, an expert in changing black-boxes, rather than an expert in fixing black-boxes, simply plugs in a replacement black-box for the deficient one and all is well again.
When the bridging Course lecturers were asked specifically to talk about ‘academic literacy’ and its relationship to the Course, to the curriculum, and to any perceived Course problems, they responded in numerous ways. Some lecturers endeavoured to unpack some of these ‘academic literacy’ black-boxes in order to explain something of their functioning and their role in the broader circuit of the Course. Sometimes lecturers explained their understandings about ‘academic literacy’ by contextualising their understandings amongst the dynamics of the overall bridging Course, and by enrolling other black-boxes into their explanations, and often in ways that suggested that the meaning and the functioning of the Actor Network’s other components were already beyond dispute.

Kendall and Wickham argued that the most successful technologies were those assembled by interlocking more and more black boxes (Ibid, p. 76). Black-boxing allows actors, machines, technologies, people, society, to get on with the business of doing things. It is possible to see in this research how various research participants attempted to black-box ‘academic literacy’ in different ways and at different stages of the Course and curriculum story. In the first Translation story (see Appendix 6), it is possible to understand that the black-boxed meanings that had prevailed for many years with the former bridging Course (Course A) had begun to come under scrutiny and challenge as newer and more dynamic framings of ‘academic literacy’ began to be recruited. It was suggested by lecturers that the activity of recruiting these new ‘academic literacy’ actors was a difficult process. The recruiting of these new ‘academic literacy’ actors required working though issues with lecturers who had alliances with former network actors or with other actor networks.

The way that these existing alliances were displaced in order to build relationships with new ‘academic literacy’ actors, was by inventing a scenario that the old ‘academic literacy’ actors were no longer robust enough to endure in the eco-system that was emerging. Lecturers were led to believe that Indigenous students required a more comprehensive set of discursive practices for making meaning.
A Course Review process was established with the goal that the subsequent bridging Course re-development process (Course B) would be about collectively creating the optimum means to equip Indigenous students with the ‘academic literacies’ necessary to make a successful transition into university. From this new beginning, ‘academic literacy’ was being recruited as a discursive tool to negotiate the differences that stood between higher education and the students’ existing discursive location. The Course Review was also a means to reposition the bridging Course away from being a basic adult literacy program to being a course that specifically oriented students toward higher education.

For the bridging Course to survive economically many lecturers had begun to believe that the Course had to achieve higher rates of students making the transition into university degrees. In this respect the interests of many in the Indigenous community who would formerly have been eligible for Course enrolment, were now displaced by an economic imperative to graduate Indigenous students. ‘Academic literacy’ had been re-translated as a valuable commodity and the access to the ‘academic literacies’ required for higher education became correspondingly restricted.

The recruitment of the new actor ‘academic literacy’ aimed to give those Indigenous students who had an appropriate base level of academic skills, the best possible learning experience, one that would enable them to make the transition into a university degree.

The Course Review’s own construction processes were often conflicted and the document was rushed prematurely into existence. The draft Course Review, then too, became somewhat of a black-box. However, as there was considerable effort put into developing the Review by a broad range of lecturers, the Review did endue as a rallying point for those who had contributed to its construction. For others whose engagement in the Review’s construction was minimal, or for those who joined the Course too late or after the Review process was completed, the Review document was largely seen as an irrelevance for Course development or teaching.
While the following account is partial in that it does not examine actant-actors such as the Course Review document, curriculum documents, the accounts of managers, policy documents, funding contracts, or students, it does nevertheless focus attention of the research participants and the actors that participants allude to in their responses. This account therefore is only be suggestive of the actor-network that shaped ‘academic literacy’. This account can act as a starting point for a far more thorough analysis of the relationships between ‘academic literacy’, Indigenous bridging courses and the difficulties of achieving high rates of university transitions. Importantly, I believe, the lecturers’ narratives indicate aspects of the ways that ‘academic literacy’ was performed into being and how it was differently recruited.

Kendall and Wickham argue that actors in a network try to stabilise the identity of other actors in a network by strengthening their own linkages with the actors that they consider to be desirable in the network, and by weakening the connections that those desirable actors have with others entities in other networks (Ibid, p. 104). This process has been called interessement.

For example, if the recruitment of ‘academic literacy’ by Course lecturers from the Course Review had been successful, that is, if interessement had been successful, Kendall and Wickham claim that there would be evidence of the processes of assuming the problematising done by those who constructed the Review document, were indeed correct.

However, as Kendall and Wickham point out, interessement does not always go to plan. Actors such as ‘academic literacy’ ‘do not always accept the roles that have been constructed for them. When they do, we can say that they have been enrolled’ successfully into a network (Ibid, p. 105). In this research, through an analysis of the following stages of the translation of ‘academic literacy’ into an actor-network

- at the beginnings of the first change process: From the former Bridging Course (Course A) to the existing Course (Course B) (See Appendix 6)
• when the Course Review document / curriculum platform statement was translated and then inscribed as Course and unit documents

• when the Course curriculum documents were translated and inscribed into practice.

• when lecturers believed that a new translation process had begun which potentially signalled the failure and the end of the existing course

it was possible to understand that while there were partial and problematic enrolments of the Review related ‘academic literacy’ actor into the course’s actor network, the actor-role described in the course Review was likely too unwieldy a role to be collectively grasped.

While this problematic actor role was dynamic and sometimes intellectually attractive for those lecturers who were spokespersons for it, including myself, for others, the Course Review and what it offered for the development of students’ learning, was barely alluded to as a point of reference in participants’ responses.

Citing Bourdieu, Brown outlined a weakness in the logic of Action Research, a key actor in the development of the Review initially. According to Bourdieu organisational processes should never attempt to subsume the ‘unique practitioner’ into larger structures of reason. This is why, Brown claims, that ‘action research’ can be so destructive of localised practices. ‘Action research understands the moment of practice as a “project” by its projecting of scholastic values into an understanding of situated practice…It privileges an imported “truth” over the willy-nilly reasoning within transactions themselves. Action research is distracted by ends and committed to “correcting” the beliefs of those involved. Its blend of political reform erases the complex reality of existing transactions’ (Brown, 2000, p. 3-4).

The Course Review was clearly enrolled in some Participants’ discourse as a platform from which to make claims (see the sections of Chapter 5 that refer to the Course Review and Appendix 6). Some research participants were spokespersons for
the Review, while others made no claims on behalf of it, nor even against it. However, for those who did act as spokespersons for the Review, there was often a suggestion of what might have been, had others joined the project of reform. While the original motive for the Course Review might have been to align the interests of colleagues, Brown argues however, that a subtext of many ‘action research’ motives, is to “correct” the beliefs of errant or recalcitrant individuals. This subtext, Brown claims, is never overtly revealed, although it might be something that is intuitively understood.

It might be accurate to claim that the actor network for the existing Course (Course B) was not strong from the outset and that it was not well defined and its links were tenuous. While all lecturers, it could be argued, worked to strengthen those components of the network that they believed contributed to a better learning experience for students, for many lecturers ‘academic-literacy’ was recruited into the actor network as a personal and pragmatic construct.

Lecturers suggested that ‘academic literacy’ was recruited in different ways and according to the immediate roles it had to play. In one example, ‘academic literacy’ was spoken of as a measure of linguistic and discursive competence, a measure that was deployed to help make judgements about whether or not a Course applicant should get offered a place in the Course. For some lecturers there was a belief that there was a clear correlation between the ‘academic literacy’ that an applicant could demonstrate in a pre-course test, and that person’s likely academic capacity to succeed in the Course. Other lecturers, it was claimed, refused to accept such a correlation existed and would not let ‘academic literacy’ competence stand in the way of an individual’s opportunity.

In this case competence with English language, as determined by the State Education Student Outcome Statements, stood in for ‘academic literacy’. One measure of a person’s English Language competence with texts and discourse had been translated
into a shorthand measure of a Course applicant’s ‘academic literacy’ and their capacity to learn particular types of things.

The logic of the translation was that the English Outcome Statements were a measure of dominant society’s key discourse of power, language and literacy. The bridging Course was about bridging students into those discourses of power. However, as mentioned, there was the suggestion that some lecturers believed that not being able to demonstrate significant control of a powerful discourse, should not prohibit that person from having the opportunity to gain it. Lecturers claimed that they sometimes had to work with students whose competence and confidence was so lacking that both the student and the teacher struggled to find solutions to learning issues. An irony of these two dispositions is that they both in effect accepted the logic of the construction of ‘academic literacy’. The English Outcome Statements were given the status of being a spokesperson for ‘academic literacy’. The English Outcome Statements, being the authorised measure of ‘academic literacy’ had displaced, but not replaced, the criteria in individuals’ heads.

‘Academic literacy’ was also recruited in very different ways into the teaching and learning process. For some lecturers, ‘academic literacy’ was potentially a spokesperson for the forces of trauma and alienation, as much as it could be a spokesperson for the forces of transformation and opportunity. ‘Academic literacy’ was therefore enrolled into the actor network in ways that gave it a role in the translation of other actor-entities such as assimilation, power, social justice, freedom and self-actualisation.

Lecturers claimed that ‘Academic literacy’ was often recruited into the learning processes in ways that aimed to reveal the hidden curriculum of the university and to educate students about the ‘secret history’ of Australia and the dispossession of Indigenous people. Many of these knowledges or processes were themselves black-boxed and presented as being beyond question or analysis. Becoming academically literate for some lecturers meant being able to interpret the social indicators that
helped explain Indigenous people and their social, economic, cultural and psychological locations, to themselves. ‘Academic literacy’ was firmly linked in most lecturers’ responses to notions of personal and community transformation.

As discussed elsewhere, Actor Network Theory does not limit itself, as this research largely does, to the spoken accounts of actors in particular situations. ANT is not only interested in what people say they do, but the artefacts of their actions. In other words, there is recognition that there are often disparities between what people talk about and what they actually do that is worth investigating. Evidence of these actions can be found in participants’ practices and texts. In the following extract Joyce signals something of the dissipation or misrecognition, at least from her perspective, of the important critical literacy role that ‘academic literacy’ had been enrolled to play in the bridging Course. The extract signals a gap between what people say is important and what might have been happening in practice.

… when we had that meeting last week and people were calling out all these things, I thought, there’s something wrong about this here, because people aren’t grasping, what is kind of underpinning where I think we should be coming from, which is those critical skills, about those, you know, the power to negotiate, or the power to, be able to look at things and make judgements about stuff and kind of say, ‘well hey, come on, that’s not exactly right’, or you know, ‘there’s something wrong about that and we need to change that’ or whatever, and, they said, ‘oh no, we’re not tapping into that type of stuff.’ (Joyce 94)

Damien also signalled that there were a number of different ways that ‘academic literacy’ was enrolled into the Actor Network that suggested that tensions existed between these deployments and that translation processes along the network linkages held the loose and dynamic assemblages together.

I don’t think there is a general collective understanding or a general collective agreement on what [‘academic literacy’] is. I think that everyone approaches it from different levels, with different levels of understanding of the issues. I don’t think the ‘academic literacies’ are constructed at a collective level. … I
mean ... collectively we come to them through a negotiation process and through the … Course development process, but I don’t necessarily think that they reflect, a collective view. I think they reflect a range of views…I would doubt that there would be any staff member who would agree with everything single belief that underpins what we’re doing. There’s a, there’s a lot of give and take with what we end up with. So yeh … I don’t think there is a collective construction of the ‘academic literacy’, I think it’s more a negotiated truce of what we’re doing. (Damien 80-88)

Many research participants signalled the enrolment of ‘academic literacy’ into the Actor Network for economic agendas. Joyce argued, for example, that there had been negotiations to merge the Indigenous bridging program with the mainstream university preparation course. This would require a reconfiguration of how ‘academic literacy’ was to be enrolled. The aim of this proposed merger was to help secure the financial future of the School by attracting a significant non-Indigenous cohort who required academic skills training.

Joyce: … the agenda was, that they wanted Amy and I there for a particular reason, and that reason was to form a working party, to rewrite, a merged curriculum with the [university’s mainstream bridging Course] and our Course. (Group 378-379)

Joyce also made the claim that some lecturer-actors and not others were to be part of the change process. This was a signal to Joyce that a new Actor Network was to be established that would include a different ordering and recruitment of network actors.

What follows in Chapters 5 and 6 is the outcome of the narrative mapping of the research participants’ responses. The chapters are in Lather’s terms a Space of Constructed Visibility (Lather, 1994). The chapters provide an opportunity to walk around in the discursive space of the lecturers and to get a sense of the ways in which network actors were enrolled in the Actor Network.

The lecturers’ responses suggest the types of understandings that lecturers agree and disagree about, at least in principle. How these understandings manifest in practice
might be a different matter, but having knowledge about the concepts and beliefs that lecturers work with provides an insight about processes that are rarely just beginning but are rather, usually in the middle of a trajectory.

5.101 The Course that had emerged in broad terms – an evolving translation

Lecturers in the Group narrative argued that the goal of the Course was to provide an educational vehicle to facilitate Indigenous students’ personal growth and life opportunities. This goal according to the Group narrative was to be accomplished by strengthening students’ awareness of how language, communication and writing skills could increase students’ power and broaden and deepen students’ sense of their identity (Group transcript s152).

The method used to achieve this goal, Bob argued, was part of a process that aimed to develop students’ critical language and discourse analysis capacities. Damien supported Bob’s portrayal that the ‘skills’ the Course developed entailed ‘a much broader definition of what skills [generally] mean[t]’ in the community (Group 154). Developing students’ critical language awareness meant developing students’ ability to use and interrogate the language and discourse, including the ability to interpret power relations inherent in discourse.

5.102 How the Course added value

The correlation between levels of educational achievement and socio-economic indicators is well documented (Beresford & Partington, 2003). The stakes are high for Indigenous Australians. ‘Academic literacy’ has been shown to play a significant role in the creation, maintenance and disruption of the worlds we inhabit. As a set of socio-cultural knowledges and practices, Luke and Freebody citing Bourdieu (1991), claimed that ‘curriculum and instruction’ was part of the machinery of ‘linguistic and
literate “markets”…, fields of power where particular statements and practices, texts, and discourses have local and contingent exchange value’ (Luke & Freebody, 1997, p.5-6).

Damien argued that while some students began the bridging Course demonstrating competent levels of critical analysis and essay writing, they might at the same time have a limited capacity to cope with the many other discursive aspects of the mainstream institution. It was through developing students’ competence in discourse awareness and social practices, in addition to developing the more ‘conventional’ aspects of what ‘academic literacy’ meant, that Damien claimed, the bridging Course added value.

Bob used the metaphor of ‘a pathway to knowledge’ to help him locate what he believed ‘academic literacy’ meant in the bridging Course. For Bob, ‘academic literacy’ was a path that took a person up to and into systems of knowledge. Being ‘academically literate’ was, for Bob, the ability of a person to find information and to be able to exploit that information.

My [own] education [research] theme, was originally on the sociology of knowledge and curriculum development, so I’ve been sort of trained to think about how knowledge becomes a commodity in society, and how it is sold, and how it is packaged, and how it is either put into, school curricula, a university curricula, or is kept out of university curricula, and why is it kept out, and so on and so forth. So, I think, we’ve got to look at, knowledge, and to me, ‘academic literacy’ is a pathway to knowledge, … and so it’s linked with, it is actually a commodity which is not freely available … [it is about] a growth of freedom and liberty and access to good thinking and things. (Bob’s transcript: location sentence 90-92)

This path finding or path making, this capacity to orient one’s self in terms of knowledge is an applied knowledge. With this metaphor, Bob constructed ‘academic literacy’ as set of social knowledges, knowledges that were given a high social value.

Bob’s construction of ‘academic literacy’ had a distinctly emancipatory meaning.
Bob however, pointed to an irony in this construction. Benefits, both material and social, flowed from having ‘academic literacy’, however being a valuable commodity, ‘academic literacy’ was not easily attainable. Being ‘academically literate’ and all that flowed from one’s accumulation and deployment of these ‘academic literacies’, were capacities whose distribution and access were largely managed, Bob claimed, by those who already had them. ‘Academic literacy’ was an entity that existed in a market place. There was a materiality about ‘academic literacy’. ‘Academic literacy’ was not just an abstraction. For Bob, ‘academic literacy’ was a privileged and restricted knowledge. It was an entity that permitted people to buy into democracy. ‘Democracy’ was an ideal and an aspiration that Bob believed should be pursued through education.

David claimed that providing access to literacy education was a fundamental condition for supporting people’s aspirations to pursue freedom and a better standard of life. David claimed that he helped students to frame their opportunity at university as a human right. David argued that ‘academic literacy’ was both a valuable commodity but also a critical capacity to engage with the systems of power.

A lot of the messages I send out to students is that you’re to consider yourself as a customer in “Retra-Vision” with a hundred dollars in your hand and you have a right to be here, and it’s not that you’re privileged to be here, and it’s not up to us that you’re here, you have a right to be here, and you have a right to engage in the system and you have a right to complain if the system doesn’t work. Whereas I think that there’s been a legacy with Indigenous people, where they don’t feel that they have any power or any power base to engage, and so when things don’t go their way, as with many of our students, they disappear, we don’t hear from them again, they don’t feel they have the right to engage, to appeal, and to give it a go because perhaps of past experiences and past failings of the education system. (David’s transcript location 54-55)

In bringing these critical and discursive concepts to the attention of students, David believed he was developing students’ critical language to negotiate obstacles in their learning process and to be able challenge university transactions that they were unhappy with. This for David was part of being ‘academically literate’. Being a
student in a university was an interactive process, there were rules and obligations, many of which were negotiable. But unless students knew how to engage with the system they were at risk of becoming trapped behind seemingly impenetrable obstacles. A university initiated students into systems for learning, but learning in these systems was a specialised discursive game; the students who succeeded were the students who learnt to play. This is precisely the point that Damien argued when he claimed that students were required to become ‘bi-cultural’ to succeed at university.

5.103 Resistance and critical / bi-cultural literacy

Bob argued that it is the role of universities to forward a social justice agenda by providing educational opportunities for socially and economically marginalised peoples. Bob felt that universities had become too economically self-serving and lacked the ethical responsibility to provide appropriate opportunities for Indigenous people. For Bob, being educated in the Western education system was about gaining access to the places where the ‘real’ power of the world resided. Gaining this access for Bob also meant being assimilated into a broader configuration of meaning making capacities. Bob argued that it has always in the interests of the dominant culture to assimilate those outside its systems into itself.

The dilemma for Damien as an educator was not whether to resign himself to what he understood as society’s assimilationist project but, rather, how he might work constructively and ironically to prepare students for academic learning and for life beyond the university. Lankshear and Knobel described the endeavour of cultivating such an attitude of mind as a ‘pedagogy of tactics’. Lankshear and Knobel drawing on the work of de Certeau, claimed that people and communities need to develop and deploy ‘tactics’ in order to live creatively, productively and with integrity, under the gaze of increasing levels of discipline and surveillance (Lankshear & Knobel, 2002).
Damien’s interpretation of the Course goal was not dissimilar to Bob’s view that the Course was ‘enabling’. Damien claimed that the Course’s goal was to develop students ‘bi-cultural’ capacities. Both claimed that the goal of students’ learning was to both understand and to be able to use the Discourses of Power (Group 165). Both argued that the Course was engaged in the task of developing students’ systems for living, a claim which meant developing students’ capacity to negotiate complex discourses and developing resilience in the face of complex and competing forces.

Damien acknowledged that while the border pedagogy (Giroux, 1991) and critical literacy foundation principles of the bridging Course (Freire & Gadotti, 1995; Luke & Freebody, 1997) were not incongruent with his own ‘bi-cultural’ pedagogical framings, he claimed that supporting students to acquire the powerful literacies and discourses of Western Culture was to also participate in a process of cultural assimilation.

… even though the program is based within all these, bi-cultural and boundary crossing processes, that we’re trying to instil into our students, ultimately when they leave our doors and go out into the mainstream university here or anywhere else, they’re going into a very mono-cultural environment. And … ultimately … probably some of the better outcomes we will get for our students, once they become undergraduate students, are because of some of the assimilationist approach that we have, … or because students themselves have a very high level of bi-culturalism to start with. I think … that’s really where the outcomes lie. (Damien 226-228)

Damien recognized that the educational journey was likely to be easier for those students who were already successful ‘border crossers’ when they enrolled in the bridging Course. That is, students, who were already familiar and competent with the foundation elements of the discourses privileged by the university, were also more likely to experience success.

Damien believed that Management pressure could be brought to bear to change the Course entry requirements, the length of the Course, and the delivery of the Course. If these changes happened, Damien claimed, it could make it even more difficult for
Indigenous students to get an educational opportunity. Damien lamented the price that many students would have to pay for their educational success. Damien claimed that universities were less accepting of Indigenous people’s cultural and social differences than was the broader society.

You know as much as I would like … there to be more students getting through our program into undergraduate studies and graduating into universities, I think that that’s a high, a high price to pay on the way through… I mean, that again comes back to my practice model, that my Grandmother and my Father, because of the prices they had to pay to get through the education process. The social and cultural prices that they pay and the personal prices, and that was just really unfair I think and an enormous thing to ask someone to do to get by in a society that in some respects outside of the university environment is a lot less conservative and much more accepting of cultural inclusiveness, than the university sector is. So to get through and out into the society where you’ll be more valued, you’ve almost got to give up some of the stuff that you want to be valued for once you get out there. (Damien 229-232)

Bob argued that Indigenous education needed both critical and pragmatic underpinnings. Bob believed that the way to frame a critical literacy for the bridging Course required an ongoing examination of the interdependencies between the concepts of assimilation, resistance and change. He argued that assimilation should be reframed as the adaptation to the processes of change. A curriculum built around critical literacies gave students, Bob claimed, a capacity to resist being assimilated into behaviours and desires that were largely corporate driven and consumer oriented.

We don’t want the argument for more White education locked up in an assimilationist package, all the time. I think one, we’ve got to break this down, and sort of say, we’re all being assimilated, and we’re all being assimilated by American and other multi-national companies, by technology. … The only way we can stop the flow, is to develop a critical stance, so that we don’t have to always follow, the line of technology, which is damaging the environment in many cases, type of thing, although it makes for a more comfortable life for some, if not many. We’ve got to start to see, that all cultures are changing, and there’s nothing wrong with assimilation, you are
being assimilated if you drive a motor car, you are being assimilated if you travel in a jumbo jet, ... There are constraints on the expression of your culture, by technological imperatives ... No matter who you are, you’ll get electrocuted if you poke your finger into an electrical [socket], so we’ve got to appreciate that, and I think Aboriginal people need to be a little bit more open to the fact that there [are] a lot of opportunities being made available to them, and they need to make better use of [them]. (Bob 113-118)

O’Riley, Luke and Freebody, Livingston and others have talked variously about the ‘technological imperative of change’ (Livingston, 2002; Luke & Freebody, 1997; O’Riley, 1996). Bob argued that quality of life issues were intertwined with people’s ability to integrate or resist technologies, including the technologies of self (Foucault, 1991).

Bob’s analysis of the processes of assimilation and adaptation was a call for Indigenous people to position technologies of meaning-making, such as ‘academic literacy’, as both the means to personal and community advancement and as a technology for political and cultural resistance. Bob’s argument recognised the modernist and positivist terrains of progress and capital, and also recognised the possibilities for post-structural and deconstructive counter tactics to design spaces for living amongst the competing demands and complexities of contemporary experience.

5.104 Academic Literacy as transformation

Learning is a transformative process. Learning changes people. To learn is to write ourselves into the narratives that dynamically surround us. Learning is about how to live in a world that both increasingly monitors and constrains us and which also affords an increasing multiplicity of opportunities and lifestyles (Foucault, 1991; Lankshear & Knobel, 2002). The MCEETYA taskforce on Indigenous education reported that ‘[n]umerous reviews, inquiries and consultations in recent years have all demonstrated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people place a high
priority on education. They want for themselves and their children no less by way of educational opportunity than is afforded to other Australians. They expect that educational processes should lead them to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to realise their individual potential, lead satisfying lives, and contribute actively to society’ (MCEETYA, 2001, p.10).

Amy argued that education should be a transformative process and she claimed that the bridging Course should provide opportunities for students to ‘self-actualise’. Education facilitated people’s ability to powerfully take up a broader range of discursive positions and identities. For Amy, education was a means to design one’s own experience of becoming. Writing and reading were the tools of this design capacity.

I believe that [bridging] education has a role, an important role, [it is] a medium for people, for Indigenous people to overcome … the whole range of social disadvantage, to self-actualise themselves into where they want to go. That might be for a degree, it might just to come back and complete university, it might just be to come to back and be with other Aboriginal students here. (Amy 7-8)

For Amy, education was a door opening on to adventures in selfhood, a space where possibilities and identities proliferated. Education gave people choices. For students to grasp this opportunity, Amy believed that students in the bridging Course needed to feel culturally safe (Amy 9). In making this observation, Amy was drawing attention to the historical reality that Indigenous people’s experience of formal learning institutions has been a damaging experience.

The site of the students’ learning, the School, was for Amy a site of Reconciliation, a place where Indigenous and non-Indigenous people came together as people who cared about and wanted to learn more about supporting Indigenous people’s capacities to learn and to live valuable lives. For Amy, it was lecturers’ social justice values that were the common denominator for their teaching practices. Amy argued that pedagogically, the common motivation of all lecturers working in the bridging
Course was to apply the very best of teaching and learning practices to develop students’ ‘academic literacy’ (Amy 10-12).

David claimed that it was the ‘small things’ he did as an educator that helped build students’ sense of themselves as University students. Students who are experiencing success, David claimed, could begin to feel safe. Students who were experiencing success could begin to feel as though lecturers had an interest in their potential as learners and as people.

Most of our students are extremely shy to come into the university. We had a woman who after four years only just came in this year, because she was scared, she said that she made up excuses why she couldn’t come before, and I told her that you’re my hero at the moment, because she’d … developed confidences after failing for so long in our Course, that she must have been receiving some signals along the way that what she was doing was OK, and perhaps she’d become more familiar with the staff and maybe it was a relationship thing, or maybe she’d experienced enough success to think that ‘hey, I can actually go to university and I can, I can engage with this monolith that is [the University] and I can do it on equal terms’. (David 52-53)

Students who began to achieve success, even in small ways, David argued, could begin to see a future for them selves through the process of higher learning.

5.105 Academic Literacy as a key to embodied history and community mobility

We live in a time and in places where our learning has to involve much more than developing a repertoire of skills. Critical theorists claim that many of the decisions taken by educators about student learning, are in fact, uncritical translations or ventriloquisms of society’s dominant values and aspirations (Pearce, 2001). Livingston argued that curriculum can play a key role in resisting new capitalism’s ‘desire to install a new dominant paradigm of identity intended to efficiently control thoughts in, and out, of bodies’ (Livingston 2002, p39). Some educators attempt to make a virtue out of this political and sociological complexity; making of this
Glenys argued that a worthy Indigenous bridging course provided students with an opportunity to interrogate Australian history and the impacts of colonization on Indigenous people. Glenys asserted that critiquing the contemporary issues of most relevance to Indigenous Australians and tracing the historical and discursive roots of those issues was what students should be learning in an Indigenous university bridging course.

Glenys linked Course curricular issues with providing students with the tools to deal with internalised oppression.

… We could do it better. We could do it better because, if you want to give people tools, to start chipping away, that unconsciously begins to start chipping away at their own internalised oppression, you’ve got to, people must have the tools. (Glenys 306-308)

Glenys argued that giving students knowledge of Australian history and the critical capacity to see the consequences of that history in contemporary Indigenous experience was the best way to engage students learning and prepare them for tertiary education. Glenys argued that the key components of an Indigenous bridging course should focus on the mechanisms that drive contemporary problematics for Indigenous Australians.

If a student can walk away from the bridging Course, for example, and say, OK, I understand, how … each contemporary issue impacts on, you know, that’s critical analysis straight out, straight away. I understand all that, you know. And, I understand, and I can put it into a context, History, you know. And I understand that, that Aboriginal people have only had, one generation, that’s basically my generation, free from government policies. So our children’s generation, second generation, only two generations free, from government policy. I can understand all that, I can contextualise that, … I can contextualise that, I can analyse that, I can argue that, you know. And that to me, those [concepts], they’re powerful tools… And straight away, all those
social indicators, right, that person is in that, you know. That person is, is in all of that. (Glenys 319-327)

In learning how to critically deconstruct historical precursors of the key contemporary issues facing Indigenous people, Glenys claimed that students would develop the critical literacies that they required as tertiary students. Glenys argued that investigating issues related to Indigenous people’s embodied history, of the disciplined spaces in and outside the body that Indigenous Australians have to reshape and learn to live with, were the best means to engage and empower students’ learning.

5.106 Critical literacy and border pedagogy

Bourdieu disparagingly argued that many educators fetishized society’s dominant discourses as they went about unproblematically and uncritically initiating students into codes of power (Bourdieu, 1991). Foucault proposed that, as eco-technical embodied subjects, we learn ‘through drills and training of the body, through the standardization of actions over time, and through the control of space’ (Foucault 1984, cited in O’Riley, 1996). With changes in what counted as being a legitimate learner, bridging course students would increasingly have their work cut out to reconcile their self-concepts as learners with what was projected at them as an ‘academically literate’ student.

Greville, exploring the issue of what constituted ‘transforming literacies’ for adult Indigenous students, gave the following personal reflection to exemplify the disciplining effects of discursive power.

I remember one student in particular and the physical struggle that writing was for him, hunched over the page, concealing it from anyone walking near his desk. He had learned to write like this because (he told me) it was important to conceal his writing from teachers and their criticism, and further, the hunched, protective posture minimised the pain of likely blows. His education was ‘written on his body’ and the process of writing for him was an
awkward physical and emotional return to the memory of abuse and failure in the classroom. His studies were interrupted by many family crises and competing priorities and finally, he withdrew from the Course. (Greville, 2000)

Foucault claimed that learners learn by inhabiting spaces where knowledge and power combine to discipline them as ‘technosubjects’ (O'Riley, 1996).

Joyce and Damien claimed that some of their colleagues seemed comfortable shaping their curriculum understandings in ways that overly focused on essayist notions of ‘academic literacy’. Joyce argued that there was declining interest amongst lecturers in the critical literacy and border pedagogy principles that had informed the Course’s development (Reynolds et al., 1999) and which continued to inform her own subsequent understanding of curriculum and teaching.

For Joyce, the key ingredient of students’ learning processes was good curricula. Joyce used the example of a couple of Course units that she had been involved in teaching to explain something of what she understood to be a good curriculum. She claimed that divisions were opening up between herself and some of her colleagues over pedagogical and curricular differences.

I really enjoy teaching something like ‘Journeys’. ‘Journeys’ is really good … because, you can pitch those critical practices, I suppose, those analytical skills without, by still validating, particularly if you’re looking at Indigenous literature for example, which reveals a lot about history and so on, it does complement a whole range of skills and knowledges, I think, really well. Yeh, its quite a nice unit I think. That’s where I hate stuff like, I hate teaching Learning Pathways because, it’s really boring. (Joyce 90-93)

Joyce considered ‘Journeys’ to be an example of a good curriculum because it developed students’ critical language practices and used appropriate and engaging content. For Joyce, developing students’ critical skills had to be done in ways that engaged and validated students’ experiences and histories. Joyce claimed that in contrast, a bridging Course unit, Learning Pathways, was ‘boring’ and was based on
a too conservative and ineffective notion of what curriculum that claimed to be developing Indigenous students’ ‘academic literacies’ should have delivered.

And that’s the unit, … that when we had that meeting last week and people were calling out all these things, I thought, there’s something wrong about this here, because people aren’t grasping, what is kind of underpinning where I think we should be coming from, which is those critical skills about those, you know, the power to negotiate, or the power to, be able to look at things and make judgements about stuff and kind of say, ‘well hey, come on, that’s not exactly right’, or you know, ‘there’s something wrong about that and we need to change that’ or whatever, and, they said, ‘oh no, we’re not tapping into that type of stuff.’ (Joyce 94)

Joyce’s understanding of appropriate critical pedagogy did not align with the feedback she was getting from her colleagues. Disappointed with and sceptical about where she thought the Course and its ‘academic literacies’ were heading, Joyce claimed that the Course was losing its potential to engage students in learning.

In that way, a bridging program won’t make a huge deal of difference I don’t think to, kind of, really getting people to engage with, and get excited by and motivated by, what they’re learning. I know in some of my classes it gets boring for me to teach and … so obviously think that I should tap into that [critical literacy] stuff. Because if its boring for me, then obviously, there’s something about it that isn’t going to engage people anyway. I think we all need to be looking at [our] practices … (Joyce 95-98)

Joyce claimed that the entire teaching and curricular team needed to be reflecting more critically on the pedagogy of the program. A construction of ‘academic literacy’ that was boring and disengaging for students, was Joyce believed, becoming the acceptable norm.
5.107 Should lecturers be bringing their ideas into alignment?

A key tension for the ways that bridging Course and ‘academic literacy’ could be understood, circulated around the detail of what should be taught and how these important ‘things’ should be taught. Kohn claimed that issues of consensus were important concerns for an organization to negotiate and that the community characteristics of ‘shared beliefs, interaction and participation, interdependence, concern for individual and minority views, and meaningful relationships’ are the continua upon which that the ‘strength’ of communities can be measured (Kohn, 2001, p. 121). The issues of consensus were important considerations for lecturers involved with the bridging Course. An important issue for the Course lecturers was whether they should aspire to consensus or whether more productive achievements could be gained though creatively working with dissensus (Baudrillard, 1993; Jones, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Trifonas, 2004; Zizek, 1994).

Damien claimed that, even though the bridging Course had constructively attempted to broaden the definition of what ‘academic literacy’ could mean, it was in the final analysis, an assimilationist project.

as much as the [bridging] program is based around a lot of bi-cultural stuff, … it is ultimately still, an assimilationist tool to get students, Indigenous students, to be able to function in the mainstream university. (Damien 73)

At the core of this tension, was the issue of power relations. Damien believed that the University was never going to significantly reconfigure itself to accommodate Indigenous desires about what Indigenous people considered to be important. Indigenous people, Damien claimed, had to adapt, as they had always had to, to the configurations of those who held power. The tension in Damien’s statement reflects a level of ambivalence, as his statements about the acquisition of society’s powerful discourses and literacies, sometimes struggle to cohere.

While Joyce accepted that lecturers’ practice was significantly motivated by social
justice values, and that many of the Course’s problems were related to broader social and economic forces, she had nevertheless major concerns that the debate amongst lecturers about how ideas might be brought more powerfully into alignment, for the good of students’ learning, was not happening.

On a collective level, … we might have some sort of collective thing about social justice, and you know, the ‘greater good’ sort of thing, but, I don’t know if our.. I mean is our collective a collective of individuals, [individual] peoples’ beliefs and practices, or is the collective what we’re all supposed to be saying that we’re on about? Because if you look at our strategic plans and all those mission statement kind of things, they all sound nice, warm and fuzzy, and stuff, but, are we actually doing anything, as a team, to really enact those sorts of things, I don’t know? And that’s why I feel quite disconnected to my colleagues, on many levels, because we’re not engaging in those types of discussions about what we’re on about as a whole. It’s very rare that we do that. … So, I guess, yeh, it really depends on the perspective of what that collective stuff is. Is it a collective of, you know, the sum of the individuals or is it something that we’re doing as a united kind of staff. (Joyce 99-105)

How ‘academic literacy’ was being constructed in lecturers’ teaching practice and curricular enactments, was not, for Joyce, being collectively addressed as well as it could be. While she had respect for different approaches, she had concern that there was limited dialogue about these differences and about their implications for the Course and for students.

Joyce argued that lecturers weren’t sharing or communicating enough about the Course. Joyce claimed that most lecturers had likely not read the Course Review on whose foundation principles the existing Course (Course B) was to have been developed. Joyce claimed ‘I don’t think that staff have a clue about the [the bridging Course] Review report that we wrote. I doubt people have read it. I use it all the time for all for all sorts of things to do with work and in my studies, so, I kind of know it quite well’ (Joyce130-132).

David also had concerns that many of the Courses’ pedagogical problems were related to the non-application of the foundation principles inscribed in the initial
Course Review.

The findings of the Review have generally been totally ignored by the broader Faculty community and to a certain extent by the [bridging Course] team itself. People take on board, their own perspectives, rather than it being underpinned by the theoretical foundation of the [bridging Course] Review. So, people, in fact I suspect, I’ve read the [Course] Review, but I don’t know how many other staff have read the Review from front to back, and so I think, the curricular goals and practices of the [Course] Review are, on the whole incongruous. Because a lot of staff don’t identify, or have a clear idea of what the [bridging Course] is about, because they choose not to, or it’s too hard or what ever. (David 98-101)

David claimed that lecturers acted out of their personal theories of what a bridging course should be about. There was, in David’s view, a mismatch between what the Course should be teaching and what was being translated as learning. David claimed, ‘I think [the Course Review] doesn’t weigh into any decisions and so that’s where the problems are, that those, theoretic foundations aren’t used to inform, the [bridging Course’s] direction’ (David 103).

For Joyce, the Course team could take considerable responsibility for the situation they found themselves in (Group Response 5.02). For her, the team did not, and could not, have the conversations it needed to move constructively forward. Joyce claimed

we don’t have these conversations, to share, our vision, anyway. Or, to see if we do, or not, anyway. So it’s really dis-empowering, in many ways, because, I don’t necessarily see the world the way my colleagues do. So, in order for me to fight the fight, I need to know that people are on board with me. But I don’t think, I don’t have, I don’t have that feeling or understanding that we are, fighting the same fight. (Group 357- 361)

Joyce claimed that administration issues, rather than pedagogical issues dominated the teaching team interactions. For Joyce, this inability to talk about key teaching and learning issues was at the heart of the Course’s problems (Group Response 5.03). Joyce argued that the ‘conversations [the team did] have [were] always bogged down in the day to day crap’ (Group 365).
I don’t think there is a collective construction of the ‘academic literacy’, I think it’s more a negotiated truce of what we’re doing. (Damien 88)

Damien claimed that he perceived differences in what ‘academic literacy’ could mean in the University and the Course, and that some meanings were likely to be considered as inadequate or irrelevant by important University stakeholders. Damien claimed that some in the University might see a solution to the Course’s ‘poor’ completion rates by raising the Course’s entry-level criterion. This gate-keeping mechanism was deployed by most university courses to determine access regimes.

Off-stage Joyce, claimed that she felt that she was increasingly falling out of step with her fellow lecturers. Instead of her work becoming easier as a result of her experience and research, it was becoming more complex, contradictory and difficult to negotiate. Joyce argued that the way that ‘academic literacy’ was constructed in any instance was contingent upon a range of factors.

… what I’ve noticed is that it’s kind of getting harder and harder, not harder and harder in the way I work but in the way I’m trying to do things is different from how I would have done them ten years ago when I first started doing this kind of work. I feel like I don’t have that sort of, same perception that my colleagues do. Not that I have, I suppose, you think that you’re thinking in the right way but it’s obvious that you can’t always be right, I don’t know. But I was thinking about, like in terms of how we actually construct literacy patterns for ourselves, and you look in your own classroom and I, and its really hard, because for me it something that is always changing. Like its really dependant on, a whole range of factors like, and the make up of your group, who’s in your classroom and stuff. Some times I take on that role of, you know, the strict teacher, or the bad cop-good cop type of scenario that you like, and that’s sometimes what I see happening with a lot of.. Aboriginal staff will be, like the comforting teacher, the supportive teacher, and, that’s often highly valued by people, there is nothing wrong with that, but sometimes I see my role as, I am white, I have been through a mainstream education and this is what I can share with you of what my experiences are, have been, as a university student and teacher. (Joyce 29-35)

Joyce suggested that lecturers’ roles and responsibilities were partially constructed in racial or ethnic bound scripts. Joyce suggested there appeared to be an uneven distribution of responsibility in raising the challenge and the expectations for students’ learning. Joyce argued that she believed the dynamics of the learning site discursively allocated the less pleasant and discipline related roles associated with students’ leaning primarily to the non-Indigenous educators. The Indigenous lecturers and student support team were the ‘good cops’ and the non-Indigenous lecturers were the ‘bad cops’. There is some evidence for Indigenous lecturers making the issue of cultural safety uppermost in their practice (Wepa, 2005).
Damien claimed that to take the action of raising the entry level bar would signal an understanding of ‘academic literacy’ as something very delineated and disconnected from the learning processes that he believed many Indigenous students had to go through before entering university. Damien’s position on this subject indicated a second-order change potential for the Course. The concept of raising entry standards also signalled a possible parallel change in Course design, one that possibly reflected the objectives and processes of mainstream university preparation courses.

Joyce claimed that the School’s management had indicated that there was an agenda to reconfigure the Course to make it more viable. The management strategy, Joyce claimed, was to re-design the Course in such a way that it would be able to attract both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students seeking an alternative pathway into university. Joyce claimed that the management had suggested to her that this proposed University preparation Course would turn the fortunes of the bridging Course around.

For Joyce the potential departures from the School’s traditional curricular mission towards pragmatic survival solutions such as taking over the University’s mainstream university preparation Course, or merging the Indigenous bridging Course with the mainstream bridging Course, were indications of how desperate the School’s position had become.

… you know, conversations of having, of saying that we’re going to, teach non-Indigenous students [in] the bridging Course, well that’s, to me that’s completely nuts. Because that’s not what I thought this School was on about. When you’ve got people thinking like that, then, nothing fits, the puzzle, doesn’t fit … for me. (369-370)

For Joyce, the important ideological and pedagogical differences that remained to be worked through in terms of the Indigenous bridging Course were now possibly going to be subsumed into new sets of problems and dilemmas. The Course’s changing economic environment and the solutions that were being proposed to address its
change in circumstance where clear drivers of second-order change. Economic survival had become the name of the School’s game.

Part of the disagreement about the Course’s pedagogical goals lay in the different perspectives taken by staff and which have been outlined above. A key narrative that was however reiterated many times as if to underline its importance, was concerned with the relationship between education and assimilation.

Damien claimed that the notion of ‘assimilation’ was a serious concern for some Indigenous people and that many people in the Indigenous community believed that to engage with higher learning was to give up something personal and cultural that was even more important. Reconfiguring the bridging Course in ways that ignored this concern had the potential to reinforce their anxiety about assimilation.

Damien claimed that there could be negative consequences for those attempting to become ‘academically literate’.

I mean the only way that Indigenous students will be able to achieve, a high degree of … efficiency within those very Western concepts of ‘academic literacy’, is either by becoming … incredibly bi-cultural, or to assimilate, to a high degree. And that’s not, I mean the assimilation model isn’t … necessarily where we want to end up. But the bi-cultural model is much, much better. (Damien 68-70)

Damien claimed that the existing Course’s foundation principles (Course B) were configured to achieve aspects of this bi-cultural / border-crossing objective.

… I suppose I see, I see within the [bridging] program (Course B), that’s certainly where we’re headed. I don’t think that we’re actually at that point, but it’s certainly much more based on a bi-cultural model and a valuing of that non-Indigenous stuff. (Damien 71-72)

Damien claimed however, within this ‘bi-cultural model’ there remained an imbalance in the way the existing Course focused on the production and
interpretation of dominant cultural discourses and textual meanings.

... because of what we’re trying to achieve, there’s still that very strong focus on the non-Indigenous, ‘academic literacies’, the Western understandings, the Western ways of reading, writing and thinking ultimately, and putting and keeping things together on paper,... that aren’t the only ways to go about it, but within the context, and which is the constraints of the organization we work in, and the system we work in, are the only ways that are going to be allowed to happen at this point. (Damien 72b)

Damien concluded that ‘academic literacy’ was a pedagogically complex artefact, and one that was politically and culturally constrained. Damien believed there was little agreement on what ‘academic literacy’ meant amongst lecturers. In the following statement Damien deploys the metaphor of war and peace to describe and locate how he understood that ‘academic literacy’ moved and transformed in the field of lecturers’ discourse.

I don’t think there is a general collective understanding or a general collective agreement on what ['academic literacy'] is. I think that everyone approaches it from different levels, with different levels of understanding of the issues. I don’t think the ‘academic literacies’ are constructed at a collective level. ... I mean ... collectively we come to them through a negotiation process and through the … Course development process, but I don’t necessarily think that they reflect, a collective view. I think they reflect a range of views...I would doubt that there would be any staff member who would agree with everything single belief that underpins what we’re doing. There’s a, there’s a lot of give and take with what we end up with. So yeh ... I don’t think there is a collective construction of the ‘academic literacy’, I think it’s more a negotiated truce of what we’re doing. (Damien 80-88)

A ‘negotiated truce’ conventionally meant that a will prevailed to negotiate a way to move forward, a suspension of hostilities. As with all negotiated truces however, there remained the possibility that hostilities could resume.
5.109 ‘Academic literacy’ as the measure of competence

A consideration of the way the School selected students for the bridging Course is important in understanding how ‘academic literacy’ was constructed. Unlike the vast majority of other University programs, both lecturers and non-academic staff who worked in the Indigenous School participated in the student selection processes. This level of staff involvement was usually reserved for learning domains such as the performing arts, and in some ways it reflected the performance aspect of the student selection process. The notion of performance is relevant here because judgements were made on a more intimate level. Course applicants had to demonstrate that they really wanted to be a student.

What ‘academic literacy’ meant for any group of lecturers could partially be determined by what those lecturers considered that ‘academic literacy’ wasn’t. Mary, for example, argued that students starting the bridging Course should demonstrate the indicators of ‘academic literacy’ necessary to suggest a probability of success. Students’ Course admittance assessment was judged against State Education Department, criterion referenced English language student outcome statements.

Having a base level of ‘academic literacy’ meant that students should not lack the indicators that would ‘ordinarily’ exclude an applicants’ Course admittance.

Mary: Our students should be beyond [having too low a level of ‘academic literacy’ standard] by the fact that, the [entrance test], we’re supposed to be, at the point where we’re taking students who already have sentence structure skills and whatever. (Group 128)

For Mary, the School administered pre-Course assessment determined if students had enough of the right ‘academic literacy’, ‘sentence structure skills and whatever’. For Joyce however, something was happening in the translation of the ‘academic literacy’ indicators against which Course entry was determined. Joyce claimed that some students who had achieved Course entry lacked in her opinion the pre-requisite academic literacies to cope with the learning processes of the Course.
Joyce claimed that she made her own assessment of students’ starting points and capacities in the first week of students’ study. Joyce argued that those students who demonstrated more features of the meaning-making discourses valued by the University, as she understood them, were more likely in her view to succeed ‘academically’.

Joyce: I do this diagnostic kind of thing, … get them to write something in the first week, and the range of skills ability, just from that piece, is amazing, and scary. And, you know, I’m going to go back and have a look at what I did this year, and see if my, predictions came true, and I think they did. (Group 132-133)

Mary: You predicted in advance who would [succeed and fail]? (Group 134)

Joyce: Who was capable of fast tracking, who I thought might finish. There were no big surprises, for me. (Group 135-136)

Joyce argued that her own assessment of students’ ‘academic literacy’ in the students’ first week of study was a more accurate predictor of Course success than the School’s formal assessment process. From Joyce’s perspective, students’ entry into the Course was not being appropriately assessed or monitored, and politics were being played over gate keeping issues.

The School’s Course entry assessment process aimed to make judgements about Course applicants’ academic capacity based on the same principle of discursive proximity used by Joyce. The Course entry assessment measured potential students’ essayist type literacies in ways that were indicative of applicants’ capacity to frame and respond to linguistic problems suggestive of their ‘academic literacy’. Students had to be within a reasonable range of what was considered to be an appropriate university entry-level competence to get offered a place in the bridging Course.
5.110 Literacy standards, gate keeping and Course success

Joyce argued that the economic pressure and politics of maintaining high levels of student enrolments had meant that Course coordinators had limited voice to tighten Course entry criteria (Joyce 227-228). Joyce signalled that she perceived a correlation between the competence levels students required to gain a place in the program, and criticisms directed at the Course that not enough students were completing. Joyce also signalled that the broader interests of the School were being served by having a combined testing and interview process that was not necessarily in the best interests of bridging Course students. She claimed that the bridging Course team should be able to test exclusively for its own program to avoid any conflict of interest.

Joyce argued that issues surrounding student selection were the cause of many of the Course’s problems. She believed that students were getting into the Course with too low an entry level of ‘academic literacy’. Some lecturers, Joyce claimed, did not have the competence to make accurate assessments, or in some cases simply resented being put in the role of gatekeeper, preferring instead to give as many people as possible an opportunity. This point raises an interesting question however. When is an opportunity, really an opportunity?

With the former version of the bridging Course (Course A), if an applicant could write their name and a few sentences explaining why they wanted to study, they were given a place in the Course. This was acceptable because the former Course was both a basic adult literacy program and a university transition program. In the present student selection process (Course B) Joyce claimed that some lecturers had had their decision not to offer an applicant a place in the Course over-ridden by administrative staff who had authority to do so.
We haven’t worked out that clear divide between, how we give people entry to this program, like, you know, what is the purpose of the interview, where we have staff that will look at a mark, and the mark might say maybe, ‘this person is not ready for university’, but other people will make a decision that says ‘well we’ll give them a go’ kind of stuff. So I’ve been uncomfortable with that whole [entry testing] process. Then I feel like, as a teacher, I’m left to pick up a lot of the pieces. So right from the start, for a lot of the students, I feel I’m working at a disadvantage because, there’s this expectation that you can do stuff with students, that’s going to make them get entry to University in twelve months time or whatever. I feel incredible pressure placed on me as an academic, to do stuff that I’m not equipped to do ... (Joyce145-149)

The concept that there was an entry-level academic literacy standard set for the bridging Course, an objective standard that was within a reasonable range of the students’ target exit goal (university entrance), was an idea that Joyce disputed. In Joyce’s view, the ideological pressure of access and of maintaining enrolment numbers was too much for those making decisions about Course entry.

Joyce provided an insight into the complexities of dealing with the diversity of students who gained entry to the bridging Course and the concerns she carried about the potential of her own negative judgments for the learning experience of students.

You know, I can predict stuff at the start of the year, and I’m really starting to look at, how ‘what the teacher expects…’, see if it affects how my predictions are coming true. I want to look at my own practices to see, am I supporting and reinforcing those students that I identified at the beginning of the semester [that I thought were competent], and I think I [did], and, what have I done to those students that I could tell, upfront, that I didn’t think should be there. You know, what kind of, you know, signals have I been giving them. That’s something I’d like to look at a bit more closely. Because my predictions have come true. I want to have a look at, I’m thinking, that these people are demonstrating those skills that I would think, what is valued by the University in a first year degree program? So things like, you know, [student] can engage in classroom discussions with a confident person, their literacy in terms of their writing skills, you know, [if] they had the basic functional literacy for a start, as well as, being able to get under that surface stuff and really engage in things. Like, I think I told you, in that first week, when we go around the classroom and say ‘hello, I’m so and so, and I’m here because’, and then you go around the classroom and some people went ‘I don’t know why I’m here’ and shrugged their shoulders and kind of don’t look very excited, you know, [and I think] ‘I don’t know why you’re here either’, kind of stuff.
So, I’m obviously making connections with those students that are hyped up by it all, or excited by the prospects …, and express you know, that they’re frightened by it, but they’re willing to give it a go, kind of stuff. That’s where I kind of channel my energy by making friendships or relationships with those students. And then, have I been disadvantageous to those other students in the class because, I haven’t made a connection to where they’re coming from. It’s superficial stuff but you make those decisions and I think within that first week, you know, one piece of writing, their performance in the classroom, within the first week, you know. And, I don’t think that I’m, I mean you can’t cater for everybody. Maybe there’s other ways and different things I could have done to somehow tap into where those people were coming from, what their strengths might have been. And, you know, I think teachers have a big influence over a student. We always talk about our primary school teachers and the memories we have of them, and I think we do have lots of impact, a big impact on the students we have contact with. That’s just why I’m starting to think about, have I had a negative impact upon people, and have I destroyed anybody along the way ... (Joyce150-166)

The issues around Course access raise important questions for Joyce about gatekeeping, student performance, and lecturers’ self-fulfilling prophecies. Joyce claimed that the apparent diversity of capacity and motivation amongst the students created significant challenges for her as an educator. The negotiation of these challenges was further complicated, Joyce claimed, when her capacities as a lecturer were de-valued and her attempts at pedagogical innovation to deal with the realities before her were unsupported.

5.111 The Course was moving away from access and equity principles

It was a complex set of negotiations that defined this learning domain and what ‘academic literacy’ could mean. Lecturers had been working towards building a curriculum that would be attractive to students, one that would facilitate students’ successful transition into university, and importantly allow the Course to remain economically sustainable. A variety of tensions over Course meanings, tensions that can be traced to the very origins of the existing Course (Course B), were elevating and expanding the lecturers’ points of difference about what was valid and how the Course should proceed.
Historically the worldwide growth of mass education and mass ‘academic literacy’ could be framed, according to Bob, as something flowing from the democratisation of education. The development of educational programs such as Indigenous bridging courses, Bob argued, could be seen as an extension of this democratisation process. This democratisation was, Bob claimed, always ironically conditional and was traditionally controlled by university gatekeepers, who worked to maintain ‘an elitist model which, [he had] been very much against in [his] life… [Bob didn’t] think that in a democratic society it help[ed] to, have [elites]’ (Bob 84). Bob was dismissive of the rhetoric surrounding the maintenance of university standards, particularly as it might be invoked to restrict people’s access to learning.

We’re going to have elites in sport or music, or something like that, because it reflects people’s concentration and effort, but we shouldn’t hedge elitism around with too many barriers, so I’m in favour of opening education up, and that we would all benefit by as much education as possible, and as much ‘academic literacy’. So the sort of beliefs and values that I hold are really democratic ones, of trying to cut For Damien universities could not assume that Indigenous students had the literacies or discourse practices to function effectively in the environment of a university. It was the role of courses such as the bridging program Damien believed to make explicit the assumptions that university courses and lecturers made about the skills and knowledges students were expected to know.

I suppose literacy, or my understanding of literacy, in an educational sense, is about, basic literacy, it’s about reading, writing, researching, analysing texts, critical analysis, all those types of things that its essential that the student can do to get by in an undergraduate course. I think that, as a preparation for non-Indigenous students, or for students coming from a mainstream environment, as students, to be part of the mainstream society, there’s an enormous amount of assumption that’s made about what learning and what understandings those students bring to their first year of university, whether or not they come through one of the other bridging programs or one of the other entry programs, or whether they just come straight from school, I think that there’s an enormous amount that’s taken for granted that those student’s know, that’s not articulated very clearly by the university. …I think those are the things that within our School and within our bridging program, we need to be very clear about. Identifying and articulating that our students don’t bring, and, but that they need to have [these knowledges], to be able to function effectively in the university system. (Damien 18-21)
through the hypocritical nonsense that is often associated with a lot of academic talk about standards and things of this nature, and rather look at it as, maintaining standards, but having an awareness that, often all sorts of people will rise to an opportunity that’s given to them. (Bob 84b-85)

Bob argued that for Indigenous students to learn about and acquire the ‘academic literacies’ necessary for university success, it was important that the Course grounded students’ learning in the socio-cultural and socio-linguistic realities of students’ lives. Bob argued that students’ learning had to be authentic in the ways that it related to the knowledges and skills required of students to be a tertiary student. Bob claimed that it was also very important that bridging Course students perceived that the opportunity of progressing to degree studies was a real opportunity, rather than the appearance of an opportunity. Learning the literacies of academia was most authentic, Bob claimed, when students’ learning took place at a university.

If you have a football team and they only practise their skills on Tuesday and Thursday night, but they never get a chance to play the game on Saturday, there’s going to be a lack of interest in the skills. Skills have to be, even Paulo Freire in Brazil [recognised] that… in order to get the uneducated masses involved, you’ve got to link [people’s learning] to their political demands. So you start to politicise, you’ve got to show that, being literate will enable you to, to advance your political cause more effectively. (Bob 109-111)

Becoming academically literate was not an accumulation of capacities that could be developed in a space devoid of culture, politics and personal aspirations. Bob linked the teaching and the substance of ‘academic literacy’ with the goals of critical pedagogy (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Delpit, 1986; Fairclough, 1994; Freire, 1975; Freire & Gadotti, 1995; Gee, 1993; Gruenewald, 2003; Kamler, 1995; Lankshear, 1994). Bob claimed that students’ learning always happened amongst discourses of power. The tensions amongst these discourses was what shaped ‘academic literacy’ at any time.
Joyce claimed that significant pedagogical and ideological differences had opened up between lecturers teaching the Course.

I think, that up until fairly recently we saw the curricular goals as trying to do two different things. Up until last year probably, the [bridging Course], is not only about getting people into university but, it performs all these other functions. You know, it might lead to employment or might mean grandma can help grandkids with their maths and all that kind of stuff, and we’d kind of say ‘aren’t we wonderful’ and give ourselves a pat on the back. And, because of those, differing perspectives, and now that sort of economic pressure I suppose we’re under, and not being able to use those arguments any longer, to justify the existence of the Course or the continuation of the Course, then, the thing, though that we’d like to say, that that’s a good thing, because it is a good thing, there’s nothing wrong with all these sort of side benefits [that] the Course happens to do, it’s just that they’re no longer valid for keeping the Course alive I suppose. So, if people have different perspectives, perceptions of what the goals are in terms of what we’re trying to do with our program, then obviously, that will reflect in people’s practices’ (Joyce 167-171)

For Amy, improving the curriculum was a question of balance. It meant getting a better grasp on where students were coming from and what students brought with them to the learning process. Improving the curriculum also meant clarifying where the Course wanted to take students educationally, and improving the ways to do it (Amy 30-32). Amy argued that she did not believe that the Course and the students should be penalised because of differentials in academic achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Indigenous people, Amy claimed, had a different measure of success from the one she believed was being forced upon the Course and its students. What should be important, Amy stressed, was that Indigenous people be given an opportunity to learn in an environment that could fill many of the learning gaps left by the compulsory years of formal primary and secondary education.

Glenys claimed that even with the best bridging Course in the world, and with the brightest students, there were numerous other factors in an Indigenous student’s life that had the potential to derail a student’s academic journey. Glenys claimed that ‘at
the end of the day, with our target group, you can never back a winner’ (Glenys 330).
For Glenys, the simple fact of being an Indigenous person in Australian society made
the statistical likelihood of successful academic progression more conflicted.

You can never, never, never back a winner because, because, our group, our
target group, still, I mean, you could be the winner, you could be the winner
that walks in, but at the end of the day, it’s like, it depends on, it depends on
so much, because, you could take, it depends on, what’s the stability in your
life, are you somebody that, you’re a winner, yeh, academically you’re a
winner, but at the same time, you might, that person, maybe the role model
for their family, that person might be the one that’s got, severe
dysfunctionalism around them, whereas the person who comes along who’s
very average academically, but has got, dysfunctionalism to, now and then,
maybe, you know, this is the person that’s going to get through, not the
“winner”… I mean, and at the end of the day, it doesn’t matter too, you’re
talking black or white. Because, the person with, with, the dramas in their
lives, can be brilliant, can be brilliant academically, but they won’t, they
won’t get there. (Glenys 331-334)

For the School and University the problem of having too many ‘unsuccessful’
students and therefore, an ‘unsuccessful’ course, a course that had become ‘too hard’
to manage, would be solved by closing it down. Management from the School
reminded lecturers of this potential future if Course outcomes did not improve.
Lecturers were led to believe that success lay completely in their hands. However
most lecturers felt their hands were tied.

Damien concluded that there was ‘too much… grey area’ in the School. The School
was simply unclear about what its vision was, and as a consequence it couldn’t
translate any vision to improve any aspect of its teaching program. For Damien, the
ultimate responsibility for changing the School’s situation did lie in its own hands
and its own capacities.

… [not having that vision] will get in the way, until we can have that. That
really, clear, understanding principle for the School, and each of the
programs, and each of the staff positions, all of those things, I think are
essential and are very hard, but essential for the School becoming a strong
unit within the University’ (Damien 321-322)
5.2 The story of the bridging Course and the curricula

5.201 Imposed change

The organisational narrative that circulated amongst lecturers was that there was to be a new Course goal that would drive their future activities; the existing Course was to be replaced by a new Course and curriculum. Lecturers believed that the organisational narrative promulgated by School management was that the existing Course (Course B) was failing and that it had to be replaced. The narrative implication being that the Course was being averted from failure by a course re-configuration.

Joyce argued that the existing Course (Course B) could be discarded in favour of what for her would be a less desirable model. For Joyce there appeared to be a fundamental mismatch between what the Course had been attempting to offer and what the School leadership was prepared to support as an appropriate ‘academic literacy’ program. Joyce suggested that Course change would likely result from a pressure to change the configuration of what ‘academic literacy’ meant.

Joyce: I think what we’ve done, like I believe, [the existing Course – Course B] is a really good product, and I think what we’ve done is largely going to be thrown out the window because, it’s, the message I get from listening to conversations from Management, is that, they see literacy in a way that I don’t see it. … you know, talk of seeing very much, a skills based program, the idea of skills is, teach them how to write essays, teach them how to spell and do tutes and stuff, which is, I think going back, to the 80’s kind of model of, you know, basic reading and writing strategies, that lots of people think are easy to measure, … and easy to deliver, but it doesn’t work. (Group 112-113)

Lecturers claimed that the agenda for Course and curriculum change was only minimally concerned with pedagogy or with what was best for students’ learning (Group 235-237). Lecturers believed that a change was to be imposed on the Course because the School and the Course were experiencing financial problems.
Mary, for example, claimed ‘… I don’t think that the success or failure of the Course, as it is now, has had any bearing on the decisions they’re making right now’ (Group267). Mary supported her claim by arguing that the Course had to be changing for non-curricular reasons because the Course had not been given the appropriate time to fully implement or improve its current innovations.

While they believed that there were problems with the Course, the curriculum and teaching practices, lecturers were generally not prepared to concede that these problems had anything to do with the decisions that were being taken to change the Course. David claimed that ‘it sounds like bad advice to me, and it seems like perhaps it’s not the first time that bad advice has caused a dilemma within the School’ (David 109).

Damien was convinced that the core of the Course’s problems was not the result of curriculum, but was rather, the Course’s poor outcomes as defined by DEETYA. Damien argued that from DEETYA’s perspective

… they see [the bridging Course] as, as a very expensive exercise for the amount of students that are graduating from the Course. I don’t really see any problems, any connections between the curriculum goals and how they’re played out in the program and the real problems that the program has. I think the curriculum goals are quite, I mean I don’t think the curriculum goals are perfect, but I think they’re very, very, good, and I don’t think that any deficiencies, certainly from my perspective, that the curriculum goals might … relate in any way to the problems that are being played out in the program at the moment. (Damien 152-156)

Damien claimed that the low level of Course completions and student transitions into University was the reason there would likely be an imposed Course change. For Damien a whole range of other Course problems were generated out of this central issue. The lack of DEETYA approved outcomes had created a downturn in Course funding.
…most of the problems, … the perceived issues over staffing, … the perception that we’re not necessarily teaching the right stuff, because we’re not getting students through, all of those things I think, come back to reactions to the funding argument. Because if the funding argument wasn’t there, nobody would be questioning anything else about the program … we’re just looking at, how do we make it cheap to run, and more effective at the same time. When the effectiveness is not there. I think it really comes back to the money issue. (Damien 142-150).

For Damien, it was not curriculum problems but rather issues of efficiency that were challenging the viability of the Course. Damien claimed that influential others were claiming that the Course had curriculum problems in order to facilitate other agendas.

I think the connection is being made by other people, as part of a solution to provide better financial outcomes for the program. … part of finding a financial solution, is to change the entire program, therefore the curriculum, comes under question and needs to be changed to only allow higher level students in, so therefore it increases their chances of getting out. And I think that’s the only way the curriculum goals are actually being questioned. (Damien 157-159).

For Damien, the solution to the Course’s ongoing development and sustainability issues was about finding a way for the Course to become less expensive to run and to make it more effective in achieving Course completions and university transitions. What counted as success in the bridging Course had changed because DEETYA had changed what they were prepared to pay for.

5.202 A problem of perception

Bob claimed that there was a serious problem of perception by the University and by DEETYA, which funded the Course, over just what the [bridging Course] offered students. For Bob, the meaning of the Course was too unstable for people to get a grasp on the contributions it was making to the community. Bob argued that good teaching and good curriculum always begin with students’ learning needs, rather than
working from the institution’s preferred state of student competence.

The problem of perception that bridging Course was facing was, for Bob, a problem related to University expectations and to the growth of mass education. Bob argued that Indigenous people were getting caught up in bureaucratic categories of competence and funding. Basic literacy was not something students were supposed to be studying at university but basics literacies did have to be dealt with at the same time as developing students’ higher-level academic capacities. Bob argued that

| **… any good teacher must start where the students were at. And so, if they don’t have [a base level of ‘academic literacy’], it’s no good saying, they should have these skills, from somewhere, and build on, but you’ve got to sort of say, I’ve done a diagnosis, and this is where we start from… That’s the tragedy in a way, with most professionals, you do a diagnosis and you work out what the client or patient needs, and then you, develop your response to that.** |
| **Off-stage David explained the interpretation and application of the concept ‘academic literacy’ was something that was negotiated and had significant consequences for lecturers and well as students.** |

| **… once again I’m in that situation where I’m, I sort of get the idea that I’m an outsider, even though I’m inside the course, but my own, my own personal construction of ‘academic literacy’, in this context? What I see and what happens are two different things, or how I feel and what happens are two different things, because it’s political literacies, as well, and often it’s friendship literacies, and it’s personalities, it’s not necessarily what you see, and often the, the credit or the worthiness of how you see things and how you construct things, isn’t necessarily debated, in an objective way. It’s debated in a subjective way. It’s got biases, whether they are political, whether they are racial, whether they are economic and so you can’t necessarily, go far with what you see, unless other people see it as well, … because you need to be aware that there are friendship groups, and there are political constraints that … mean that you want to … be there for the long haul, so that, much the same as with me with my teaching, you might have ideas about practice, [but lecturers] need to make sure that they are going to be there for the duration. So if their idea seems radical or unpopular, then their, their situation becomes reduced and they, they either lose the confidence of their peers, or move out of the profession.** |
| **(Group 119-121)** |

Students who had gained a place in the Course but were in the situation of having poor ‘basic literacy’ were required to develop their higher order critical literacies while still building lower level skills. Lecturers had to accommodate these realities into their teaching processes. The bridging Course curriculum had to be written in such a
way as to accommodate the spectrum of student abilities.

To rally support for what the Course (Course B) was attempting to achieve, Bob argued that it was necessary to be able to demonstrate where and how students developed the prescribed ‘academic literacies’, the discourses and genres of academia. Where for instance, Bob argued, did students develop the ability to critically frame and interpret academic arguments, or where in the Course did students learn how to position themselves in academic debates? For Bob, it was of paramount importance to continue to make Course literacies explicit, and to demonstrate where the teaching of these literacies had been systematically built into the Course structure.

Where in the Course can you argue, [can] you see, multiple literacies? Do you provide, examples where [students] practice, multiple literacies, or [demonstrate that students are] exposed to multiple literacies. You know, whether it’s … interpretation, or whatever it is that you’re looking at, … so, the answer to this question must be in the examination of the materials that you have developed … To show that, you’re providing the student with opportunities to come to an understanding of multiple literacies, and where some form of writing or speaking is more appropriate [than another]. (Group 137-139)

For Bob, performance was the key to curriculum meaning. Did the curriculum perform ‘academic literacies’ into being? Did the Course provide the means to transform students into being ‘academically literate’?

5.203 A lack of understanding by School and University management

Mary and Bob agreed that the constant pressure to change was part of the problem of the Course not being able to work through its issues.

Mary: … our goal posts, are constantly being changed. (Group 86)  
Bob: Shifted, yes that’s right. (Group 87)
Bob suggested that the assimilatory processes of academia were forcing standardized models of education that had the potential to marginalise Indigenous concerns in the process. The University’s expectations for improved Course outcomes were rising, and success was to be measured in the numbers of Indigenous students making the transition into university.

Bob: … where, you’re expected to increase the transfer rate, from the bridging [Course], then the weight of the university’s expectations, become more so, than having it as a Course that’s an end in itself. (Group 30)

The former version of the School’s bridging Course (Course A) had multiple Course outcomes, for it was not only a university transition program, it was also a basic adult literacy program. The bridging Course had been deliberately repositioned for a different target market with the introduction of the existing Course (Course B). The market for the existing Course (Course B) had become those Indigenous adults who wanted to go to university and had the prerequisite competence to achieve such an outcome within a year long, two-semester Course. The School and the Course were no longer in the business of providing basic adult literacy.

Off-stage Joyce argued that the proposed change to make the course one semester long made no pedagogical sense.

So, as [the course] is changing, it’s becoming, I guess becoming closer to, not a mainstream model but a model that, like, especially if it is coming down to a six months course, so that we have limited time to do stuff with people, to work with people, then, I’m always questioning what I’m doing and, looking at, well, how is what I’m doing going to help anybody anyway, and is it helping anybody anyway? (Joyce 36)

Joyce was beginning to question the future value of the course as it potentially moved further away from the pedagogical underpinnings that she had participated in developing and had provisionally endorsed.

Lecturers argued that those in the University who were forcing the latest Course change were showing no consideration of lecturers’ experience of and aspirations for the Course, or any appreciation for the changes that had already taken place. For Bob, the proposed Course change suggested ‘a lack of understanding of, how much
time it took to develop anything’ of value in a bridging course context (Group 236). Bob and Mary claimed that the Course change would disrupt the potential the existing Course may have held to improve the educational experience and outcomes for Indigenous students (Group Response 3.01). The proposed change was seen by lecturers as a move by ‘others’, by ‘outsiders’, who were stepping in and over-riding the expertise of Course lecturers. Bob claimed

it [is] a question of not, allowing, the staff to actually, implement their ideas, and to evaluate them themselves, without having, some other group outside coming in and, making judgments, often, on some peculiar grounds that are not .., [they] might just be economic grounds, which are, maybe influencing the rest of the University, but [are] influencing courses that have been there for generations. (Group243)

The bridging Course had essentially been, for its existence, the School’s reason for being. For many Course lecturers it appeared that a lot of tradition, experience and struggle associated with the Course, and the attempts to improve it, were in the process of being made irrelevant.

David claimed that lecturers having anticipated changes in the Federal education policy a few years earlier had repositioned the Course to better articulate with the emerging environment (changing the program from Course A to Course B). Lecturers now felt demoralized and de-motivated by the proposal to significantly reconfigure the Course. In David’s view, the Course lecturers had over the previous years brought about considerable innovation in spite of the lack of financial and administrative control at the Course level. David claimed that in the four years that he had been with the School

… [the Course had] gone from 17 units [in the former Course A] to … a six unit Course [Course B], and next year perhaps a three unit Course. That’s in a four year period, where you’d think normally in a four year period, things would be known at the beginning and you would head in that direction for the four, for the five, for the six year period, which would constantly be reviewed naturally, but these changes … would occur as a result of planning, not as a
result of a behest from the Head of School or from the Dean or whatever. (David 88-89)

5.204 The pressure to change

Lecturers interpreted a gap between the rhetoric of the University about quality processes and the methods it actually supported directly and indirectly (Group Responses 4.09 to 4.12). Whilst acknowledging that there were some problems with the existing curriculum, Bob claimed that no one would ever know for sure what the major problems were for the Course. Lecturers had numerous opinions on this subject. However, for Bob, the central issue that restricted this critical reflection was management itself. Management, Bob claimed, had not permitted the accepted processes of quality course review. From Course lecturer’s point of view, decisions about Course change had been decided on non-curricular grounds and without the involvement of the Course lecturers (Group Response 4.01). If the Course were expected to change without allowing the Course

Off-stage Joyce spoke about her understanding of the nature of the collective agreement lecturers held about what ‘academic literacy’ meant.

… I say we do it badly because, everybody is coming from their own experiences of education to inform them, what they’ve seen and witnessed, and I just propose that mine might just be a different experience from what other people have had, and I guess that part of that for me is that I’m always changing my mind anyway. I always change my mind about what [academic literacy is] supposed to mean, and sure, I would have come in at some point thinking that the student has to do this and has to do that in this course, but as things get harder and harder, I am changing my opinion that the course is changing its focus. Like making that really bold statement that we did last year that this course is about getting people into university, for me that was a transformation in itself, I sort of thought that my colleagues would be with me on that one. (Joyce 15-17)

The bridging course had previously (Course A) accepted a myriad of course outcomes besides supporting students to make the transition to university. Joyce suggested that the shift to focus on university transitions (Course B) was not totally accepted by her colleagues. This ambiguity amongst lecturers was likely grounded in the reality that the majority of students given a place in the course were starting the course below the ‘ideal’ level of literacy competence. (Joyce 167-171)
team to critically reflect, then any existing flaws would necessarily migrate to subsequent Course variations.

Bob was very critical of the management pressure that required the Course to be in a constant state of change. This pressure, Bob claimed, inhibited the Course team’s processes of critical reflection and review. Bob argued that

… we’ve got to see this, in the sense that, you can have, new, goals and practices, but if you don’t, if you have a revolution or even an evolutionary step, and you don’t allocate resources, to enable the new goals and practices to be put in place, then, it does become the old writ large, as it were… even against the best wishes of anyone who’s leading the change, as it were. (Bob 191)

The end result of this constant top down interference in the lecturers’ processes was in Bob’s view, the ‘old writ large’. The forces of uncritical reflection meant that the status quo prevailed. Real change was never systemic.

… we are trying to introduce fast tracking, we are trying to introduce, the block release [program] – the on-campus teaching, to overcome external problems and so on, so there’s plenty of evidence of the staff, wanting to move into new directions to meet some of the criticisms of the old, but we feel that the legacy of history, inside the Faculty and University generally, is not appreciative of those efforts, and staff morale is being affected by this constant criticism and negativity, as we see it, by people who … do not answer the question, ‘Do you really want [this University] to have an [Indigenous University Bridging] program?’, and ‘are you prepared to support it while it is developing its new programs?’ And then, after it’s done that, allowing it to try itself out, and then you might want to ask some hard questions about it then, but not while the experimentation is still under way. (Bob 194-195)

5.205 An impossible position

Bob claimed that the arbitrary way that university managers could undermine curriculum change processes underlined lecturers’ lack professional status (Group Response 5.09).
David claimed that the Course academics often did not perform professionally and that there was little organisational encouragement to do so. From David’s perspective the professional conversations amongst the teaching team had largely finished.

I think the problem is there’s no forum, where people can discuss academic issues, or that people aren’t informed about academic pre-tertiary Indigenous issues, to want to have a forum. For a while there, in 2000, we were having meetings where people were talking about curriculum development, and access and equity, and what is success, and those sorts of things, but now, that doesn’t happen anymore, … whether it’s an economic constraint or the fact that people have become unmotivated and don’t want to engage in that. (David 115b)

David located part of the explanation for the lack of professional discussion amongst lecturers in the overlapping domains of increasing economic pressure and diminishing lecturer motivation.

Off-stage Joyce argued that divisions between School staff were beginning to impact on students. Joyce believed that confusion was beginning to reign.

We don’t support each other, we don’t collaborate enough, we send out different messages to students, so no wonder they’re confused, half the time, we’re confused too. (Joyce 43)

Joyce believed that there was opportunity in this difference.

But that can be a positive thing. Like, we should be working with all that confusion. (Joyce 44-45)

Joyce claimed that unfortunately these opportunities were not being exploited.

But we don’t do that. And, because we’re always working to tight deadlines, we’re always behind, there is always some sort of pressure or dramas that we’re dealing with as a School, we’re not having, the sorts of discussions we should be about teaching and what we’re doing with our teaching. If I’m doing something wrong, or I want to share some ideas, or ask for people’s ideas about, how maybe, I might go about teaching something in the classroom, or how we might conduct ourselves in blocks or stuff like that, I don’t feel there is an adequate forum for doing those sorts of things. (Joyce 46-48)

For Joyce, course lecturers had no professional space where they could collectively negotiate problems.
5.206 School identity

Damien claimed that the bridging Course’s problems were connected to the School’s identity problems. Damien identified power relations both within the School and in the School’s relationship to the University as the keys to understanding how the School made sense of itself and how decisions were made.

I’m not sure that I have any (solutions to the bridging Course’s present problems), any that I, would strongly back that would work, but I could, and I think, in a broader context where it’s simply a, I can frame [the problem as related to being part] of a very conservative institution, I think we as an Indigenous School are a… very conservative Indigenous School from my experience within the broader Australian context. I think we haven’t dealt with, as a School, either inside or our relationships to the rest of the University, I don’t think we’ve dealt with, the issue of power relationships, of how we negotiate our way through those, at all well. I don’t think we’ve gone down that path yet. I think it’s something that the School is yet to do. I’m sure it will do it. But I think … part of the problem, … part of the difficulty that the School faces, is about, how the School views itself. And how the School behaves, by itself. I think, and I’m not sure how that will change, but change needs to happen with this School, for it to be a more pro-active, organization, or organizational unit within the institution. I think that, that’s a really hard thing to do. (Damien 214-222)

Change was needed, Damien claimed, before the School could become a more dynamic and strategically effective organization. There were complex relationships within the School that needed to be better understood and better negotiated, as well as the networks that the School had to better understand between itself and the University. For Joyce the possibility of a strong and independent School within the structure of a mainstream university was not an impossible scenario (Group Response 2.06). There were, Joyce argued, examples of such scenarios in other universities she was familiar with.

Joyce recalled the very real pressure that the School had faced only a few years earlier to move outside of a faculty structure. In a former University restructuring
process, every model proposed by the University management for that restructure had positioned the Indigenous School outside the faculty structure as a support unit. The School had fought a successful campaign to remain within a Faculty structure. The decision to remain within a Faculty structure gave the School the potential to develop degree and post-graduate programs.

The School has subsequently developed its own degree and post-graduate programs. This capacity to develop programs would have been less likely under the proposal to make the School a support unit. The School, in other words, had cast itself as a mainstream entity by rejecting the proposal to move outside a Faculty structure. To have done otherwise was to have possibly restricted the School’s academic activities to teaching the bridging Course and a single shared degree.

The lecturers’ narrative about the School’s identity was a first–order narrative about what could have been (See Appendix 7). It offered no solutions beyond speculations about the past. What lecturers’ narrative indicated however was a story about the history of possible threats to the nature of the School’s existence and the tenacity of the School’s staff to self-determine their future. Some of the lecturers who had fought hardest to support the School to remain in a Faculty structure were now facing the likelihood of an imposed change for the bridging Course.

Bob claimed that the core issues that perpetuated the Course’s problems were problems of identity and leadership.

I think what we’ve got to see here is, really a, a lack of understanding of the difference of what a School is and what a support unit is. And that’s part of [this School’s] history, that it emerged from the Justice X’s restructuring, back in 1992 as a support unit. And the academic teaching that it used to have was transferred to another department, and the recommendations were that the two should stand closely together, but they drifted a long way apart, and so, you then have an attempt to, reintroduce if you like, an academic teaching program within a support unit, and the introduction of the title of a School, without checking to see the leadership of the School, and even the leadership of the Faculty, is really understanding of what the difference between a
School and a support program is, and therefore, I think, the critical aspect is one of leadership, and we have to look at the situation of making sure that the leaders in the University, in the Faculty, and the School, are aware of what [the Indigenous School] exists for, and the potential good that can come out of an Indigenous School, that is really honouring the title of the School, as it were, and not a support unit, and dealing with its program development in [the bridging Course] and also the [degree programs]. (Bob 197-199)

Bob believed that leaders in both the University and the School had a considerable way to go to exploit the potential of the School as being more than an Indigenous support unit. This issue, Bob claimed, was a substantial component of the identity problems the School faced. For Bob it was essential to get understanding and ‘support [for] what’s happening’ in the Course from ‘the people who make the decisions’ (Bob 200).

Bob argued that given its unique position and issues, the School was given neither the resources nor the professional respect it required to run effectively within the University. Bob argued that the School’s management had to resist the manipulations of the University hierarchy.

… the managers of the university like Indigenous people they can manipulate, and put a closure on any sort of controversial issues, rather than, at times, be confronting. I think, occasionally, not all the time, you don’t want somebody who’s completely negative, and confrontationist all the time, but you want somebody, on a real matter of resource allocation, … those people need to speak out, and of course they need to speak out on the basis of some facts. (Bob 226-227)

Bob claimed that the historical lack of transparent information about the amount of money generated by the bridging Course, and how that money was used across the School and University had created enormous difficulties in strategically organising School activities to ensure that the bridging Course remained in a sustainable position. Bob claimed ‘… this is where I think, one of the solutions is, greater transparency of the finances of the Faculty and the School and the University in relation to the bridging Course’ (Bob 228).
The lecturers debated the proposition that while the senior management at some other universities was highly supportive of their Indigenous programs, the senior management of the Course’s own university was not. This proposition created the narrative potential for a second–order change. If the proposition were true, the non-engagement with Indigenous programs by senior management would have dire consequences for the School and the program. In difficult economic times not to have the support of the University’s senior hierarchy would possibly undermine the School’s programs to such an extent that they could completely fail. While the belief that the University’s most senior management were un-supportive was part of the lecturers’ narrative, the proposition was speculation.

An interpretation of the lecturers’ frustration lay in their claims that the University’s support was ideologically too conservative and rigid for the pedagogical and management tasks to develop a quality and sustainable bridging program. Mainstream educational systems that were too rigid or uncompromising had a history of failure for Indigenous people. Lecturers cited the dismal failure of primary and secondary schools to prepare Indigenous students for higher education as evidence of their claim. Lecturers argued that the failure of primary and high schools for the Indigenous community was the reason bridging courses were established in the first place.

Bob argued that the university needed to maintain a long-term view and commitment to building the ‘academic literacies’ of the Indigenous community.

The problem of the institution as I’ve mentioned, I feel unfortunately, you know, that we’ve still got university managers at all levels, who don’t really have much understanding of the developmental nature of a lot of Aboriginal education and … they’re looking at it purely in terms of costs and saving costs or expenditure of money, or they’re looking at it from the point of view of an over all wealthy society, where people need to have to pay for the educational services. They’re ignoring the fact that in the Aboriginal area, we’re dealing with an impoverished minority group, … who are, not really, going to be able to participate in … the sort of cost systems that the
University Vice Chancellor might. So, I’d have to say here, collectively, we are damaged, when we have Vice Chancellors and Deans and other people, who only think in terms of saving money, type of thing. And we’ve got to recognize, that, we talk about service as being one of the mission statements of [this University] that, what do me mean by service? Service is not service, if your only concern is making a profit, type of thing. There’s got to be, some means by which, something is provided for people who need certain things, and it maybe a cost that has to be generalized, across the whole community, because we’ll all benefit from living in a much more democratically educated community, rather than have one where you have warring elite groups, who are all fighting one another, type of thing. Now that’s collective at the broadest level. (Bob 119-125)

The lecturers variously claimed that the University as an institution needed to do more to support Indigenous education. How this intervention might effectively and productively happen was a different question.

5.207 There was something in the Course for the University

Lecturers believed that University stakeholders recognised that the Indigenous bridging Course, if viable, did play a significant role in helping meet its own enrolment and equity targets for Indigenous degree students. There were funding, status and social justice implications for supporting the School’s attempts to develop a successful Course. In recognising these opportunities, Course lecturers signalled that the university was likely to play a role in a second–order change intervention to maximise what it considered to be the most sustainable Course in the prevailing conditions.

Lecturers remained doubtful, nevertheless, about the University’s commitment to the Course. Lecturers claimed that the Course and how it was run were just too different from what happened elsewhere in the university and that the university’s commitment to the Course was highly articulated to the Course’s diminishing financial viability. There was ample evidence to suggest that the university would not allow the bridging Course to continue should it became financially unviable for any
protracted period. The financial processes across the university had become increasing transparent in more recent times and courses were no longer able to cross subsidise as they had done in the past.

Lecturers argued that the School and what it ambiguously stood for had important value within the University, and that the School should develop its strategic arguments in support of the bridging Course in recognition of this value.

5.2.08 Lecturers felt devalued

Joyce claimed that lecturers had made commitments to former Course change processes (Course A to Course B) in the expectation that a commitment would be shown by the organization to follow those processes through. For Joyce, the Course lecturers’ morale and their self-belief as educational innovators was damaged when School management withdrew their support before lecturers’ innovations had been fully implemented and evaluated (Group Response 4.02). Joyce claimed ‘it’s so disheartening now, not knowing, what the hell’s going on next year, …, we think we’ve got some good stuff there, let’s work on it and make it even better, but, why bother now’ (Group271b).

Bob and Mary claimed that managements’ case for making Course changes had not been made or even put to them. They claimed that the decision to change the Course without lecturer agreement devalued their collective efforts.

Bob: … there’s, a lack of appreciation for development and growth. (Group244)

Mary: And not allowing us to prove the program as well. (Group245)

Bob and Mary’s negative evaluation of this change decision signalled a second-order narrative change point in the group’s narrative. The rationale for this interpretation as a scale-breaking second-order change was that the Course would likely
systemically change, because the change was understood to be an imposed change. The existing Course (Course B) would not be able to incrementally develop and change as part of lecturers’ normal Course review and evaluation cycles.

Joyce and Mary indicated considerable disappointment in what was transpiring. They indicated that lecturers believed that the key actor in the Course change process was management, and the agency of both the lecturers and the existing Course had been diminished. (Group Response 4.03)

Joyce: It’s like you’re being, silenced.. (Group 272)

Mary: Undermined (Group 273)

Joyce: And undermined, and cut off from being able do anything creative, or interesting, or, like learning anything from the experience, this is only the second year of [the bridging Course]. (Group 274)

Joyce: And, some of it’s working, I think. But we can make it even better. (Group 275-276)

Joyce and Mary had maintained a positive belief in the value of Course they were trying to develop, but they felt their contributions were marginalised and devalued by School and University administrators. A second–order change was understood as being inevitable because the agenda had been set by management to replace the existing Course (Course B).

Joyce claimed that a significant reason why the Course had arrived at its present circumstance was due to lecturers being unable to own what the Course was about and not having the right people to do the job. For Joyce the

lack of central ownership, lack of cohesiveness amongst the key players [could be looked at] as a sort of University level, School level, and a broader kind of level, a more focused level, but, there are all sorts of things, like now, these imposed changes in [the bridging Course] …, contracts [and lack of tenure] and all those kinds of thing doesn’t make you feel valued … as a staff member … But, you know, not having enough, I don’t think we’ve got the
right people for the job, I don’t think that people have adequate skills or training necessarily. (Joyce124-126)

For Joyce the bridging Course lecturers had become marginalized in the Course’s own processes and from meaningful participation in Course change. Joyce claimed that lecturers were under-qualified to perform their roles adequately and she did not exclude herself from that assessment. Joyce claimed that she required more training to help her do her job effectively.

Glenys too argued that the effectiveness of the Course was diminished because the ‘way people [were] employed, in the University, [which meant that the Course was] … always going to have a fairly high turnover of staff’ (Glenys67-68). Glenys claimed that the School should do more to support lecturers getting tenure and developing lecturers’ capacity to do their jobs better.

5.209 A lack of power, a lack of commitment and respect, and a lack of commitment to change

Joyce claimed that the future of the Course was tenuous. A significant aspect of that uncertainty, Joyce claimed, was that lecturers had no real power, a situation that she claimed needed to be changed if the Course was to ever succeed (Joyce 210-211). Joyce argued that Course coordinators had no real decision-making power in many important aspects of their role. Their role in Joyce’s view was largely constrained to meet basic university administrative tasks. Joyce claimed that

…having a coordinator, is sometimes just like a figurehead really. Not a figurehead, but. Things like, I know Amy doesn’t have it, and you didn’t have it, but having [no] control over the budget and stuff like that. … I find that really insulting.’ (Joyce 212-215)

For David, the solution to the Course’s problems was highly related to the financial management of the School and the Course. David believed the Course needed to be
able to set a clear strategic and curriculum path and given the means and opportunity to see that process through. David claimed that finding this solution required

… effective recruitment, autonomy of funding for the Course. … I appreciate that the Course would not get all the funds that it attracts, but perhaps there would be funds put in a basket, so that at least the [bridging Course] coordination team would know how much money they had and where the money was going. Because, we hear figures, seven thousand dollars per student etcetera, but then I just can’t see where it goes. The centralization of funds, so that the Course can have money and can be guaranteed money for a certain period of time, for three to five year plans, so that we can continue with the program, and for our programs not to be, our policies not to be cut and changed mid way through. (David 122-124)

Bob also argued that having no control at the Course level to expend monies was a significant problem. All decisions about how resources were allocated were a decision for the Head of School and the University. The problem, Bob argued, was that the School’s management did not fully understand how the finances were calculated which had left both the School and the bridging Course vulnerable.

… there needs to be greater clarity of where the money is coming from and where the money is going to, so that, when you stand up and argue a case, then you are arguing a case based on facts. If you have any errors, then the managers will quickly detect these and dismiss your whole argument. We’ve got to demand, a greater transparency of financing, for of the School, and if we are confronting a problem, then we need to identify which of the programs dependent upon those funds, which ought to be looked at, as distinct from saying, all the money’s going everywhere across the board and we don’t have any staff. So we’ve got to recognize, the core business of the School is teaching, and researching, and the funds for those, are coming from the University, and should never be confused with the support monies, which do reflect a government policy and also university experience in terms of numbers and so on and so forth. (Bob 229-233)

David claimed that whatever actions were taken to change the Course, a management commitment was needed to support the change process through. Reflecting on the existing Course (Course B), David claimed

… at present, we have two new policies, to help address the formal success rates of students. Mid way through the first semester of implementation we’re
told that the Course will now be cut in half. There’s been no time, to review what we’re doing and see if it’s making a difference, and I suspect it is. … with my success rates, they seem to be doubling or perhaps trebling. But there’s been… That data is not informing what happens or will happen, because the power of where the Course is going, does not sit with the Course itself. (David125-130)

David argued that the locus of Course control was outside those who teach or coordinate the bridging Course. The outcomes of the existing Course curriculum and policy innovations did not, David believed, appear to figure in decisions that were being made about the future of the Course. David claimed that one couldn’t plan for success when there was no meaningful delegated authority at the Course level to make and manage key strategic decisions.

Bob argued that those who had begun an innovation should be able to carry their ideas through. The experts about any course, Bob claimed, should be the people who designed and delivered it. If they were not expert, Bob argued, then you had to ask the question

why were this team of lecturers employed to design and teach it?’ It is a mark of respect and confidence to allow those involved in the design and delivery of a program to have the opportunity to critically review their endeavours. The recipients of the educational journey, the students, were also an integral part of that process of review. (Group Response 4.08)

David argued that ‘the [bridging Course] team does not have control over the Course and … that is essentially the problem’ (David 133). For David, when there was no local locus of control, there was a tendency for lecturers to invest less of themselves in Course processes. David claimed that

the [bridging Course] team does not have control over the Course, and perhaps we need to look more closely at our recruitment, and have long term contracts so that people after a certain probation period, know they’re going to be here for the long haul, and they want to put something in, rather than think, well I’ve got a year to run and I’m going to be looking around and doing other bits and pieces in my own time. So it’s a commitment thing. I feel that it has to work both ways. The management and the academics on the ground, need to feel obliged and want to engage in the Course, rather than, perhaps treat it as a nine to five job. (David 134-137b)
Joyce too claimed that there was minimal management commitment to Course level initiatives. Joyce claimed ‘… as a team we might make some decisions, but they can be overturned at the drop of a hat, which is … the position that we’re in now’ (Joyce 216). Joyce argued that there was a significant lack of confidence demonstrated toward the lecturers by management, and there was not any serious attention given to staff needs to perform optimally. Joyce claimed ‘I don’t think we’re taken seriously. You kind of get the feeling that you’re just tolerated sometimes’ (Joyce 217-218).

Joyce argued that management’s decision-making processes were counter-productive to those that were required to improve the program.

We need staff that will devote a lot of their energies just to the program itself, but I know it’s not going to happen for next year because I know [there is a plan to have] staff … working across programs. That’s one of [the proposed] solutions, to some of the problems that we’re having at the moment. But, yeh, staffing is, if we obviously had more staffing, better training, better support, yeh, real decision-making powers. (Joyce 219-221)

5.210 School and Course management

Joyce claimed that the profile and status of the School within the University ultimately diminished the capacity of lecturers to work effectively. Joyce argued,

I don’t think that the School is taken seriously in the University. … I don’t think the School’s taken seriously and that kind of filters down to us as individual lecturers. (Joyce 223-226)

Joyce claimed that there was a lack of understanding and support by the School’s management for the goals and aspirations of the Course.

... I just feel that management has no connection with what we’re doing and doesn’t have, a sense of what we’re trying to do. They come and say to me, ohh you’re a great team member and you’re a really good staff member, how does they know that? What do they know what I do anyway? Because you
know, I could be surfing on the internet all day for all he knows. (Joyce 200-204)

Joyce claimed that if management had a better appreciation of what lecturers had been attempting to achieve then there might have been some acknowledgement of that in negotiations about the proposed Course changes.

Glenys argued that the demands put on bridging Course lecturers overwhelmed their capacity to do the job effectively. Glenys advocated a means to narrow lecturers’ focus and attention so that useful Course improvements could be made. As things were, Glenys claimed that lecturers’ attention was dissipated by having to attend to too many competing demands.

You don’t get to stay focused. And you … build up all these things, like yeh ‘I know, … I want to do that, I want to do that’, and then before you know it, you’ve got to give your marks, … and the dead-line’s gone for minor [unit] rewrites. And that’s what happened to me. … Meetings have always been a time killer. It’s always been. (Glenys 229-232)

Glenys claimed that the lecturers’ work loads were unsustainable and that lecturers were facing the possibility of burning out. Glenys argued that administrative tasks were getting in the way of both supporting students to an acceptable standard and were also getting in the way of more meaningful collaborations with her colleagues. Glenys looked forward with some trepidation to the extra demands caused by possibly having to design a new Course. Glenys claimed that the demands of work were such that they were also impacting on her ability to forward her own higher education and career aspirations. Glenys felt that something would have to give in the system because the pressures were too great to be maintained.

David claimed that everything about the Course had become uncertain; control had been taken out of the lecturers’ hands and job security was more tenuous than it had ever been. David argued that all Course autonomy had been eroded. Control over important aspects of lecturers’ work, work that David believed should have been the
province of lecturers, was also being decided elsewhere. David claimed that

the Course direction … occurs through external factors, not necessarily what
the academics in charge of the Course see as important or significant. But it’s
the political and economic environment has dragged the Course where it …
wants to take it, rather than being based on any educational underpinnings.
(David 95-96)

David claimed that lecturers were giving up on any pedagogical aspirations that had
existed. Lecturers were finding it difficult to do more than meet the functional
demands required to maintain Course systems and students’ basic learning needs.
David argued that it had become

difficult for [lecturers] to maintain motivation and [he’d] noticed in the past
six months …, with increasing workloads and with the feeling that the staff
[had] no control, that people [were] very reluctant to do anything beyond
their basic work, because they [felt] disempowered again. (David91)

5.211 The politics of decision-making in the Course

For Joyce, the Course’s problems had become extremely difficult to negotiate. Joyce
argued that with every change in personnel, or with every change in the participation
of lecturers working on particular Course issues, there was only conditional
acceptance of past Course decisions. This situation, in Joyce’s view, had created a
considerable impediment to building any collective sense of a united pedagogical and
curriculum position.

How do we actually create those beliefs and practices to be a shared
thing?…It’s easier, I suppose, to think in terms of, what’s actually happened
and stuff…If some of the staff that we have now, weren’t at meetings, or
weren’t part of … discussions …then what’s happened is, some people …
come in … and are saying ‘hang on a minute, that’s not quite right and I
wasn’t part of that’, but that’s their own fault, so there’s no sense of
ownership of a lot of stuff, people come in and do things really differently
because they think, well, I don’t have that sense of ownership because I
didn’t contribute anything to the construction of those policies, then I’m going to apply it this way, and, people use different, values, different reasons to justify how they can enact stuff in the Course. (Joyce 114-117)

Joyce’s frustration stemmed from the politics of decision-making. For Joyce, a lack of consistency in the understandings that lecturers worked with and the inability to carry decisions forward contributed to a breakdown in confidence in the Course and its associated systems. Joyce claimed that there was no management support for the work that lecturers had done to improve the Course and that this attitude had filtered down to lecturers. The value of the curriculum or any curriculum innovation was determined Joyce claimed, by the political, ideological, and pedagogical alignments of both School management and the lecturers concerned at any decision point.

5.212 A more targeted and cheaper Course or a more viable Course

Damien argued that while there were numerous avenues that could and probably should be explored in the process of bridging Course curriculum development, a pragmatic strategy to ensure the survival of the Course was needed. He claimed that all the system signals were there to change the curriculum in the short term to something that was more narrowly focused.

For Joyce, the ‘skills based’ program that was being proposed was a return to an outmoded set of constructs that didn’t work for Indigenous bridging students. For Joyce, the proposed direction for

Off-stage Joyce argued that too many things were getting in the way of professional conversations. Joyce claimed that lecturers were not appropriately sharing and debating ideas.

I don’t know why we don’t do it. (Joyce 49)

Joyce was pessimistic about the course’s situation. Joyce claimed that there appeared to be a collective denial by lecturers that there were serious issues to be addressed to resolve the course’s problems.

I think its maybe a survival thing. Let’s just get through it. Lets just work with these … materials and try and sort of fob off that we know what we’re doing here. But I don’t think we do. (Joyce 50-53)
change was a deferral of the difficult work that remained to be done.

Mary also had concerns for the direction of the Course.

We’ve been told it’s not going to … be a basic literacy program. It has to be doing more than that. But there is a dilemma, as to whether it is, basic, … and skills based, or whether it takes it beyond that. (Group 114-117)

Damien believed there were two ways of looking at curriculum change.

One is what, what we could be doing to address the issue, but won’t, won’t be doing, and the other is what we can do within the framework that’s existing. At an idealistic level I think its, there’s, there are untold ways to try and address this issue. There’s so many things that haven’t been tried, that might or might not be, cheaper than, or more expansive than, or, more effective at what they’re trying to do, than what we’re currently trying to do. And what other [Indigenous Schools] are trying to do within university programs….exactly what those models are I, I don’t think we’ve necessarily been asked effectively, and I don’t think, we’ve been given the space to, to even propose. I think it’s all about this system we work within. Let’s be pragmatic and just get on with this. I mean I, I think we need to find some, some middle ground between the pragmatic approach, because we do need, in the short term, we need to continue to have a program, so we need to play the game as it turns out at the moment, and still be there so we can challenge and develop other models down the track. I think, it might address more idealistic approaches to what we can do. (Damien 193-202)

Lecturers interpreted the proposed Course change as a pragmatic shift by management in line with two key targets. The first shift was about reducing costs. Their belief was that if the University management were to continue to provisionally support the bridging Course then it would have to be cheaper to run. The second shift was that Course success rates, measured as unit and Course completions, and as student transition rates into university, had to improve. Course funding, lecturers were told, was to be increasingly tied to these success indicators. This “new” focus, one that would graduate more students at a cheaper cost, was already an objective of the existing bridging Course (Course B).

David found the rationale for changing the Course mysterious. He suggested that
lecturers were being forced to cut to some mythological curriculum chase. How to change the frame of what the Course should offer was the new challenge and the new dilemma. For David the future for the Course was looking increasingly precarious.

... what is used to inform the [bridging Course] direction is, oh God knows, at the moment, I’ve got no idea why the program’s going the way it is. To me it makes no sense at all. Either financially, or educationally. (David 104-106).

David had difficulty trying to understand the economic rationale behind running a shorter Course.

Joyce claimed that management had a vision for where the Course would be directed in order to make it more viable. This new vision, Joyce claimed, was that the Course would be designed in such a way that it would be shorter one-semester Course, and it would be redesigned so as to attract both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students seeking an alternative pathway into University. Joyce suggested that the School’s management hoped that a new merged University preparation Course could become an important revenue stream for the School (Group Response 6.11).

Joyce: ... [I was] told ... at least three times that [the bridging Course], if it stays next year, it will definitely be three units. (Group 498)

Damien: If it stays? (Group 499)

Joyce: ... and ... [management said], if it doesn’t merge with the [University’s mainstream preparation Course]... what ever happens, it will, be three units. (Group 500-501)

Mary claimed that she had received less definitive messages about the direction of Course change.

... and yet at the staff meeting last week, at the profiles meeting, management said we’ve got a review, to find out. It’s supposed to start next week. (Group 502-503)
Bob: we’re supposed to have a review of all the courses’. (Group 504)

Lecturers claimed that they had been given access to different degrees of information about the nature of the proposed direction of Course change and the management of that change (Group Response 5.05).

Mary: we’re all running on rumour. No one’s actually saying what is. Or what will be. (Group 371-373)

Joyce: well, I went to a, what is! This is, what is. And then it changed. (Group 374-376)

Mary: I know, but why hasn’t anyone else been told that? (Group 377)

Joyce: because ... Well … the agenda was, that they wanted Amy and I there for a particular reason, and that reason was to form a working party, to rewrite, a merged curriculum with the [university’s mainstream bridging Course] and our Course. (Group 378-379)

The situation had become a divisive, not the least because some lecturers had been included in the School management’s vision for change, and others weren’t.

Lecturing staff claimed that they had resisted management pressure to reduce the bridging Course to a one-semester program. A review was proposed by management to explore the possibility of a shortened Course. Mary claimed

… but I think the fact that we, that we didn’t roll over and say, “yes, we will follow your six months, three units [proposal]”, and … I think, that maybe, this review has come about because management realises that the bluff didn’t work. (Group 460)

Joyce: but if they keep talking to the right, enough people, that think like them, they’ll get what they want. (Group 462)

Mary: … without doubt. (Group 463)
Joyce: And that’s what I can see happening now. (Group 464)

Joyce and Mary were pessimistic about the School’s management apparent unwillingness to listen to the concerns put to them. Joyce and Mary claimed that the School’s management would work to recruit lecturers to their strategic point of view. Lecturers perceived that their resistance to management’s agenda to shorten the bridging Course and to merge the Course with mainstream University bridging Course, was a symbolic gesture and was likely to be unsuccessful (Group Response 6.07).

The logical extension of the proposition made by School management to reduce the Course to a one-semester program, was that the students entering that program would need to be one semester away from having an appropriate base level academic competence. To bring students into the Course with less competence was to set those students up to fail.

If there was correlation between the Course and the ‘academic literacy’ level required of students to cope with the learning demands of the Course, then the maintenance of too low an entry-level ‘academic literacy’ competence, could adversely affect the dynamics of the Course’s learning systems. Research has shown that the closer the proximity a person has to of the discourses and genres which are an objective of that student’s learning, the more likely it is that a person will succeed in appropriating those discourses and genres (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Gee, 1996).

A consequence of an ongoing mismatch would be failure for many students and ongoing negative impacts for Course outcomes. This would mean a continuation of existing first-order system dynamics. The flow on consequences of the mismatches between student competence, Course difficulty and time constraints, could ultimately lead to a second-order change process, because the bridging Course would either
have to systemically change again, or it would be closed down as an under-
performing program.

Whilst it remained conjecture that the objectives and processes of any new bridging
Course would change in a ‘mainstream’ direction, any raising of the Course’s entry
‘academic literacy’ competence could make the Course economically unviable.
Historical trends had indicated that there would not be enough students to qualify for
Course entry to conduct even a modest program. As it was, the bridging Course
competed for students with the School’s own degree program, which was itself
struggling to remain viable.

An important rationale behind the existing curriculum (Course B) was that it was
designed to address the many assumptions that the University made about students’
skills and knowledges, assumptions that bridging Course lecturers claimed should
not be made about Indigenous students. Lecturers were concerned that a shorter
Course would have decreasing opportunities to adequately address these cultural and
discursive assumptions.

David claimed that increasingly lecturers

… were having to work within this model of getting students through rather
than giving students a go. And, I suppose, if you spin that around, the
problems with the Course I see now, is that, students who are suspected to fail
on application or entry to the Course aren’t given a go’ (David 69-70).

Lecturers claimed that the more time intensive the learning environment became, the
more the Course would have to sacrifice those aspects of the curriculum that had
attempted to engage pedagogically and culturally with students’ discursive
differences.

Lecturers argued that the acceptance by the School and the University of a success
model that carried a deep cultural bias could do nothing but disadvantage the
Indigenous community. Some lecturers argued that ideologically built into the structure of DEETYA’s outcomes funding model was the notion that the bridging Course would soon not be required at all.

The possible end game, lecturers claimed, was that the Indigenous students, who qualified for a ‘second chance’ university pathway, would be directed to the University’s mainstream preparation Course. The discussions that had already taken place at a management level to possibly merge the Indigenous bridging Course with the University’s mainstream preparation Course was cited as evidence of management’s acquiescence to assimilatory processes.

5.213 The value of representative bodies

Lecturers argued that for all the rhetoric about Indigenous self-determination and quality processes, the influence of University and Federal policy bearing down on the School and the program was what really shaped the Course change process.

Bob identified the absence of Indigenous community members prepared to argue for the Course as a major shortcoming.

… we’ve got to have leadership. … you’ve got to have people who are prepared to argue for the program and of its nature, you have got to have a lot of Indigenous people who are prepared to support the program and argue with the rest of the rest of the University. I don’t think a lot of Indigenous people, appreciate, the power they can have, in terms, I would say that I think most vice-chancellors, would be terrified to have, a lobby group … from the Indigenous staff turning up on their doors asking questions … (Bob 223-225)

Lectures claimed that the industrial climate of the University left academics with little more than oppositional gestures when due processes about Course change and review were not observed (Group Response 6.02). Bob argued that lecturers could
take out a grievance

over processes or something of that nature, that haven’t been adhered to. …
that’s a way by which you bring this out into the open. You can sort of say,
well we tried to institute, [the] Participation Policy, we’ve only had one
semester at it, most, theories would suggest that, you know, these things have
to be done, they have to be reviewed, they have to be, implemented again and
then reviewed, and you’re not being given the opportunity to do that. (Group
428-430)

To use a grievance process would not, Bob claimed, solve any problems, but rather, a
grievance process was a mechanism to bring dysfunctional dynamics out into the
open.

Damien argued that lecturers had very little power in influencing decisions about
what needed to happen to improve the Course. He claimed that the lecturing team
needed to be more tactical to out manoeuvre the top down decision-making processes
of the School and University management (Group Response 6.05).

I mean, one of the things that the, where, I mean, we obviously, we don’t
exert enough power within the system, to be able to, challenge management,
over these issues, but, there are other places where that power is vested, I
mean, it’s back in community, in the student body, are the two places …
(Group 440).

Damien claimed that the School’s consultative committee was supposed to represent
the Course on behalf of the Indigenous community and that for various reasons it
could not be effective (Group Response 6.03). Lecturers were of the view that the
Indigenous consultative group was ineffectual because they had not been vested with
any real decision-making capacity (Group Response 6.04).

Lecturers commented that there was also no representative student body to speak of,
even though the Course Review had recommended that such a representative group
be formed (Group 443). Damien claimed that having representative community and
student bodies

goes to places where, where if we wanted to exert pressure back at management, we could get other people to exert it, of our concerns about the bridging Course. Because [management are] obviously not listening to us. (Group 444-445)

The lecturers agreed that recruiting students and Indigenous community representatives into the bridging Course’s decision-making dynamics to help counter the bad decision making by the School and University management, was in fact a tactic that was in complete alignment with University policy (Group Response 6.06).

There was nothing there, that wouldn’t be [there] under normal quality assurance… That is, you get to your stakeholders, you get to your clients, you get to your students… Because what the VC’s trumpeting all the time, the three parts of the mission statement, is service, and professionalism, and enterprise … And the service one, where is it, … if we’re not servicing the needs of the students. The students should then be complaining. (Group 448-454)

The Course had no reference group. Students were disconnected from Course’s quality review and development processes. For lecturers, the most alarming feature of this recognition was that it was a situation completely of their own making. The establishment of a Course representative body was an entity that had been completely within lecturers’ capacities and was something that should have been done.

Lecturers’ recognised a major contradiction that had arisen for their Course. While the students’ education had ideologically and pedagogically been about student empowerment, there had been no endeavour to have students’ input into how the Course might have been improved. The Course had not tapped the contribution that a student and community advisory group could have made to the sustainability of Course initiatives.

With this recognition, lecturers’ had identified one of the few organisational
narratives that offered a second–order change potential over which they could exercise some influence. By identifying this second–order change potential it amplified how important it was to have better dialogue amongst the lecturers themselves, but to also involve the Indigenous community in ongoing strategies to develop and sustain the Course. Establishing a consultative committee was not to be seen as a token effort in remaining open to the community, but rather, if it was established correctly, a consultative committee could become a major asset in supporting the Course politically.

By identifying the value of a consultative committee in the ways that it could advocate for the Course, lecturers had also signalled how much more work had to be done to improve the capacity for cooperative relationships between the Course and the School’s management. This was a two-way responsibility and Course could no longer afford for the School’s management to be out of alignment with the goals of the Course, any more than lecturers could afford to leave managers out of the loop.

5.214 The University was the local force setting the parameters for what was possible

Damien argued that the University was confused and faced a dilemma about how to delegate control to the Indigenous School. While the University may have wanted to delegate control, it continued, Damien argued, to intervene.

… universities are, are trying to do two things. They’re trying … to lead by strong executive control, as well as have a grass roots consultative model. They’re two things that don’t … match up, terribly well, and the universities don’t do either of them well at all. Now I think that’s being played out next year. Irrespective of it being a [School] issue or an [bridging Course] issue, it’s a University issue. (Group 347-350)

Damien argued that the University didn’t ‘know how they wanted to go about doing what they wanted to do. They want to be seen to, you know, they want to keep us happy by saying ‘we’re giving you control’, and yet the decision
making, is largely made outside of [the School and the Course’s] locus of control’ (Group 352-353).

Damien’s narrative signalled a second-order change potential for the Course, because Damien argued, that even though he believed the University was confused, or had a dilemma about how to delegate control, it would continue to intervene strongly in the School’s affairs. For Damien, the University was the entity that set the terms for what was possible for the School and the Course.

Damien believed that the journey ahead for the School was a difficult and complex one. He argued that for the School to successfully emerge from its difficulties relied on the School taking an assertive and principled position on issues of importance and having the strength to articulate and negotiate relational issues that lay just beneath the surface tensions.

There’s [no] quick fix for how the School [improves its situation]. It’s about, taking control of the process, demanding things of the institution but from a position of strength, as against the more reactive positions that the School currently finds itself in. That’s a really hard thing to do. (Damien 233-35)

Damien associated the solutions to the complex problems facing the Course and the School with the issue of leadership, leadership both within the School and within the University. In the short term Damien claimed that the School would have a diminished speaking position and that the School would largely have to do as the University told it to do. Damien argued that much

… depends on how you go about setting those really strict guidelines, [it] has to do with,… with issues around leadership within the School, positions of cultural strength within the School, which again I think are really un-clearly articulated. Leadership, within the institution at a Faculty and Chancellery level... I think we’re not, we’re not given the amount of value that … we could have, and because of that, we then don’t exert the level of strength that … there is within the School. So, it’s a really complex issue. I don’t know that there are any simple solutions to it. (Damien 241-245)
For Damien many of the decisions the School had to make in the short term were about surviving in a funding environment that had significantly changed and for which the School had inadequately prepared. Damien claimed that the School’s strategy would be to behave in ways that the mainstream system understood, but that ultimately, the School would have to critically re-examine its vision of itself.

I see us, toeing the line and being assimilated at the School [level], to be more like the rest of the University, and our processes, and our staffing roles, and even our selection of students, to be more like [what] the rest of … the university is used to having. We might end up looking good particularly for … the University, but we’re not going to end up achieving what it is we really set out to achieve in the first place. Which is to serve, be there, … to service the vastly different needs of Indigenous students. (Damien 247-249)

Damien argued that the economic survival the School depended on adopting models that generated more secure returns.

We’re ultimately, being pushed toward a model where, we’re servicing the needs of students who happen to be Indigenous but who can function within the mainstream university. Not too far down that path, is that the School doesn’t really need to be about Indigenous students or Indigenous staff. It becomes about Indigenous knowledges, it becomes an Aboriginal Studies program, which anyone can teach. (Damien 250-252)

Damien believed that the School had to ride out the difficult times until opportunities were created to set new strategic targets.

It’s not where things have to go. … I think there is strength, and enormous resilience, and a high level of pragmatism within staff and the student body, [its] about, let’s just … sit this one out, and ride this storm through and wait and see what happens at the end of it, and still be here. I think there’s a, I think there’s a strong understanding that the only way to change this stuff is from the inside ... But I think that, as part of the, deconstructing … [of] what’s going on … as not [being] terribly effective … to be part of the re-constructing and trying something new, you have to still be there, to do that. But no, I don’t think that it’s the only way the School can end up. I think its one of the ways it can end up. (Damien 254-259)

Damien hoped that once the University gained insight into its inter-relationship with the School it might support the School to pursue fewer outcomes driven goals.
I don’t think the University will allow [the situation] to end up that way, as much as they’re the ones that are applying the pressure for it to be that way. I think that once the University, has a clearer view of where it’s pushing the School, they’ll pull back and say ‘hang on, this isn’t really what we wanted to happen’. (Damien 260-261)

Damien argued that the School and the University needed to be very clear about the role of the School before any rebuilding of the School should begin. Damien claimed that the School would likely suffer a crisis of confidence in the immediate term over the lack of clarity about its role and its future.

For Damien, the University had misunderstood what the School’s purpose was. In ANT terms, the University, the School, the bridging Course curriculum, the lecturers who taught in the bridging Course, were all increasingly falling out of network alignment. What Damien and many other lecturers were alluding to, was that the actor network that constituted the School and its programs could not perform the translations that were necessary to maintain their sense of purpose and structure (See Appendix 8).

I think [the University] continually show high levels of misunderstanding of what the School’s about, what we’re there for, who our students are, what their needs are, who our staff are, what they’re needs are, and who our community are. And they have, they continue to, misunderstand, the difference that our School has, to the rest of the University. (Damien 273-275)

Damien claimed that the dilemmas, pressures and problems of assimilation faced by Indigenous people in Australian society found a parallel in the School’s relationship and struggles within the University.

I agree that we need to be able to function more like the rest of the University but we can’t do that in the same way that the University does that. I think we’re moving that way anyway. I think we need to remain, to be allowed the scope to do, to achieve the same types of outcomes as the rest of the University [but] in a different manner. Because of the difference, because of … the difference that our staff and students and community are, to what the
Damien claimed that the University believed it had to rein in the School’s differences as if those differences were a form of excess. The University, Damien argued, found that this was easier than having a real engagement with the School as a different sort of institution. This dynamic made the University part of problem and by extension part of the solution.

Having been part of [the School’s] management, … I think you just get sick of telling the same stories over and over again. You get sick of having to justify why you do what you do and why you should be allowed to do it differently, all the time. Now, that’s not just at this University but that’s at other ones I’ve worked at. You get, you get tired of having to be, of having to respond to the same questions all the time, to the same people who you thought understood it the previous time, and obviously didn’t, because they’re still asking. I think, … that’s why … at the University, why … they’re part of the problem, is because they don’t understand, or because they’re not willing to acknowledge that they don’t understand and therefore let us, accept us, [accept that] what we want to achieve is valid, and how we want to achieve it is valid. I think … they find it very threatening that we want to step outside the standard university square and do things differently. (Damien 281-286)

Damien recognized that resolving these communication breakdowns required the School to make the translations, articulate the differences, define the visions, and strategize to make the visions both economically viable, and culturally and academically defensible.

If in a broader context [if] the University doesn’t understand us they’re not going to learn anyway, unless we teach them. It’s about how we pitch that, that’s the most important part. So yeh, I think, we need to acknowledge that we are the only ones that can resolve the issue, the situation, but, how we go about that is vitally important. How effective we are at achieving that, has to do, with, how clever we are about putting that across, pitching it, how well connected we are, how political we are about that process, and how calculating we are about it, I think. …We do need a very clear strategy and I suppose that comes back to what I was saying, about the School needs a direction, and to be fully behind it, we need to be able to clearly articulate
everything that we want to do. And that, for all of those positions to be, culturally, academically, community and whatever other ways defensible, within an Indigenous and non-Indigenous context. (Damien 287-293)

Defining a clear vision and being able to effectively translate and articulate that vision to the broader University community was not something that Damien was confident that many other Indigenous Schools across the country had yet achieved. Undertaking the endeavour to make this process happen, was for Damien paramount, if the School was ever going to resolve its identity and ongoing sustainability dilemmas.

Damien claimed the School’s strategies and tactics for its own survival were going to be a mixture of resistance and pragmatism.

There’s a whole range of strategies that would be very useful. One of them would be to play along and do what the School’s doing now. That’s to try, and befriend the rest of the University and those sorts of things, and try and cut down on the … way that we challenge, the way that we then go. Part of that is about assimilating ourselves into the process and then, arguing against that, from the inside. It’s only one of a number of strategies though ... (Damien 298-302)

In ANT terms, work needed to be done in the Course, the School and the University to help translate the different value systems that operated throughout the university network. This work was required in order to find functional compromises that allowed the necessary actor alignments to maintain the integrity of the network. The capacity of the School to stabilize the socio-technical systems required of a sustainable bridging Course meant that agreements needed to be found on what would count in the short-term as acceptable curriculum, but also as Damien pragmatically argued, always with an eye to the future. The cost to be measured was always the cost of the socio-technical compromises taken.
CHAPTER SIX
CRITICAL REFLECTION ON A PROBLEM AND A SOLUTION

‘What alignment of interests would be required to develop a sustainable university transition program for Indigenous Australians?’

6.1 Overview of the research participants’ organizational narrative derived from the second-order change potentials demonstrated in participants’ Group narratives.

Lecturers claimed that the Indigenous bridging Course in which they worked had an ideological underpinning. Lecturers used a variety of metaphors to describe the design of students’ learning and their own practice as educators. These metaphors included, empowerment and growth, transformation and bi-culturalism, discursive code-breaking and game playing.

The Course’s teaching and learning activities took place in a network of actants–actors that influenced what lecturers did as educators and influenced what students engaged with as learners (See Chapter 5 and Appendix 8). Some of the key entities-actants in this network included the belief systems and pedagogical constructs of lecturers; the network also included the attributions that lecturers ascribed to the financial resources flowing into the School and the University; and they included the actors who worked to translate meanings between entities to keep particular network configurations in place, actors such as the Review document, the English Student Outcome Statements, and Indigenous culture and politics.

When the bridging Course is framed in ANT terms, it is possible to understand how the bridging Course, understood as a network of dynamic entities, was undergoing a dramatic reconfiguration. The Course was heading for a period of uncertainty because important network entities were falling out of alignment. Major concerns for the Course’s pedagogy and sustainability as a program of study related to the ways
that the actor ‘academic literacy’ was translated within the network. Of particular note were the tensions between the more expansive and rhizomic definitions of ‘academic literacy’ and the more ‘black-boxed’ and measurable outcomes based definitions, such as those inscribed in the English Student Outcome Statements and deployed by the School for making judgements about a potential students’ entry into the Course (Group 2.02). Aspects of this tension can be seen in Damien’s quote.

… even though the program is based within all these, bi-cultural and boundary crossing processes, that we’re trying to instil into our students, ultimately when they leave our doors and go out into the mainstream university here or anywhere else, they’re going into a very mono-cultural environment. And … ultimately … probably some of the better outcomes we will get for our students, once they become undergraduate students, are because of some of the assimilationist approach that we have, … or because students themselves have a very high level of bi-culturalism to start with. I think that, that’s really where the outcomes lie. (Damien 226-228)

The network alignments that configured the Course were, at the time of this study, becoming increasingly unstable. Damien’s quote above suggests that lecturers were also faced with a particular irony. There was a recognition that power resided in the acquisition of dominant social discourses and literacies, yet lecturers felt that there was enormous value for many Indigenous students by recruiting more rhizomic ‘academic literacy’ actors. There was management pressure to reduce the duration of the Course to a one semester program and with this pressure came an assumption that students would be required to have a higher level of pre-Course ‘academic literacy’ competence. That is, students were expected to have integrated the ‘black boxed’ version of the actor ‘academic literacy’. To raise the level of this pre-Course competence meant that the pool of potential Indigenous students would logically be smaller.

The pool of Indigenous students required to conduct viable a two-semester Course had already been found to be too small. The vast majority of students’ pre-Course literacies in the existing Course (Course B) were below the ‘ideal’ level required to give students a reasonable probability of Course graduation within the designated
time frame. With Management wanting to reduce the Course to a one-semester program, lecturers were being asked to reconfigure the bridging Course to graduate students in half the time than was currently case. Given that lecturers considered that the existing two semesters was already an inadequate period for the task of getting students through the program, lecturers were concerned that a shortened Course could attract enough students to remain viable.

Joyce had identified one solution to this conundrum. She claimed that discussions had taken place at both the School and faculty level to investigate a merger between the Indigenous bridging program and the university’s mainstream preparatory program. The enrolment of a different ‘academic literacy’ actor could see this happen. While such a reconfiguration might attract students to the School, lecturers suggested that it would further decrease the access of Indigenous students.

Lecturers claimed that the University and the School had been giving mixed signals about their level of commitment for the bridging Course. Some of those signals however demonstrated recognition of the importance of the bridging Course to the University. The two factors that lecturers believed maintained a level of University support for the Course was an acknowledgement that only a handful of Indigenous students across the entire state were qualifying for university each year by the standard tertiary entry process. This meant that there were many potential high school leavers who should find the bridging course attractive. The problem for the School was how to connect with this market. The School had never significantly tapped this cohort of high school leavers.

The second factor related to the commitments the University had made to the School in reconciliation statements to support the bridging Course. Lecturers claimed that there were funding, status and social justice implications for the University to continue supporting Indigenous programs, particularly programs that fed students into undergraduate degrees.
Lecturers argued that a consequence of the increasing treats to the viability of bridging Course, was that the University would likely intervene in the School’s affairs to see what could be done to save the program. Lecturers signalled that they perceived a second–order change potential for the Course with the University’s likely interventions (Group 2.03- See Appendix 7 for demonstration of analysis application). This could mean a systemic and paradigmatic shift in what the broader system believed might improve the levels of university transitions.

While recognising that the University had an interest in seeing a sustainable bridging Course, lecturers’ also argued that the high levels of institutional intolerance for the differences that the Indigenous School represented, could result in the University working to bring the School and the bridging Course more in line with mainstream University values and thinking.

Lecturers were concerned that a more mainstream bridging program might also demand more mainstream Course entry requirements. Such a scenario, lecturers claimed, would only increase the difficulty of offering a viable pathway for Indigenous students into University. Lecturers claimed that to make the Course more mainstream would only transfer the unresolved tensions from the existing Course to the one that would replace it (Group 2.04).

Lecturers were convinced that the motivation to change the bridging Course had nothing to do with qualities of the curriculum and everything to do with economics. They agreed that the proposal to change the Course was not concerned with improving the quality of students’ learning experience except where it counted in the tally of graduations. They claimed that the actions that were being taken demonstrated a lack of understanding by University and School managers of how long it took to develop quality Indigenous programs.

The changes that were being proposed, were lecturers claimed, over-riding their own implementation and evaluative processes. Many lecturers claimed that they felt
devalued by what they perceived was going to be an imposed change and claimed that their confidence as educators had been eroded (Group 3.01).

In ANT terms lecturers suggested that the School’s management were making decisions about the Course from a different location in the actor network. Lecturers claimed that management was planning to unilaterally set the broad terms for the new Course because management had lost confidence in the existing Course and lecturers to deliver the outcomes required under the terms of DEETYA funding (Group 3.03). Lecturers claimed that their contributions had been so marginalised and devalued by the School’s management that Course change was inevitable and that Course change would be an imposed change (Group 4.03). Lecturers believed that any consultation that management would have with them would be in the context of the management decision to change the direction of the Course.

Lecturers claimed that the University did not know how to delegate control to the School and that it would continue to intervene in significant ways in the School’s affairs. In terms of network alignments, lecturers suggested that University actors outside the School set the parameters for what the School, its management, and the Course could do (Group 5.01).

Lecturers claimed that the School had lost its way and its reason for being. The School and its Courses were aligning with market forces and as a consequence the School’s traditional mission to service the Indigenous community had to be balanced with the more pragmatic concerns about the School’s survival.

The potential merger of the Indigenous bridging Course with the University’s mainstream university preparation Course was cited as an indication of how desperate the School’s situation had become. Lecturers argued that the ideological and pedagogical issues that remained to be worked through in the existing Course would be subsumed into a new set of problems and dilemmas. DEETYA’s funding and policy framework, combined with the management solutions proposed, were for
Lecturers, indicators that a second-order change was imminent (Group 5.04).

Lecturers proposed that there were four solutions to the Course’s problems. The first solution was to close the Course down (Group 2.09). This was a common second-order change potential indicated in lecturers’ Group narrative. This solution found closure to the organisational narrative because the Course would only exist as a trace in the School’s collective memory. The School would move on to new problems and new concerns given that it was able to find significant alternative sources of funding to maintain the functions of a School.

The second solution lecturers identified to address the problems of the existing Course was also the most common narrative theme in participants’ responses. This solution was that Course change was to be an imposed change. Therefore the problems of the old Course (Course B) would cease to exist because that version of the Course no longer existed.

The third and fourth solutions proposed in lecturers’ narratives were interrelated. The third solution was to build better links with the Indigenous community by having student and community representatives on a Course advisory body. Lecturers argued that having Indigenous student and community representatives on a Course advisory body offered the Course and lecturers some protection from the top down and ill informed interference of University and School managers. Most lecturers claimed that management had become disconnected from the struggles of those working in the Course and claimed that management’s interventions were more often than not counter productive. Lecturers argued that having a representative body for the Course, one that was vested with institutional decision-making power would give lecturers, through the aegis of this advisory body, the capacity to make representations to management on behalf of the Course and the Indigenous community in more constructive ways.

Lecturers argued that the bridging Course was supposed to have such an advisory...
body and agreed that they had been amiss in not having established one. The Course Review on whose principles the bridging Course was initially developed had suggested such a body. Lecturers also recognised that having such a representative body was completely in line with the University’s quality assurance policies.

The fourth solution to the Course’s problems related to curriculum development issues. Lecturers believed that new curriculum developments would also require complex negotiations and they also relied on developing better ways of raising the level of discussion, debate and collegiality amongst lecturers. As things were at the time the data were collected, many lecturers claimed that they were not talking with each other on important teaching and learning issues; some participants describing the relationships between Course lecturers as having a high degree of dysfunction. An aspect of this dysfunction was the inadequate links between the Course and management to ensure that a professional learning environment was working at its optimum level (Kohn, 2001).

The third and fourth solutions could have provided real possibilities for second–order change. A community advisory body could play a role in developing a professional learning community. Such a group can help negotiate and ameliorate the tensions that exist in the meaning networks in order to develop more productive relationships between lecturers within the Course, and between lecturers and the School’s management, and to wider University interests. While it might not be possible to change federal funding policy and measures of Course success, there was much that could be done to encourage lecturers and other important stakeholders to talk with each other.
6.2 Findings

6.21 Limitations:

The study only examined the narrative responses of lecturers directly involved in teaching or developing the bridging Course and did not seek the views of other stakeholders (See Appendices 4, 5, 7 & 8 for an example of how Group responses were initially traced/mapped as narratives). It was highly probable that people facing uncertain times would attribute blame for the Course’s problems, and this was certainly the case here. However, to understand how responsibility for ideas and problems was distributed from the point of view of those who had taught and developed the Course, and to consider the consequences of those distributions, this study had to remain open to whatever links were made. In ANT terms, Clark maintains, that local understandings and practices are all there is (Clarke, 2002).

The other significant limitation of this study was that the provision of a completely thorough ANT explanation would require the examination of many other actor-actants operating in the network. These other actor-actants would include the analysis of numerous and varied policy documents, curriculum materials, and involve the views of other significant people such as administrators and bureaucrats, all of whom participated in network acts of translation and socio-technical compromise. For a thorough ANT explanation, it is also important to map what actors do, particularly people, not just their accounts of what they and others do.

The argument of this research, however, is that lecturers’ group and individual responses, are, as Ford claims, ‘the medium and product of reality construction within which change is a process of shifting conversations in the network of conversations that constitute organizations’ (Ford, 1999, p. 480). Whatever was changing in terms of the Course, and in terms of how ‘academic literacy’ was
enrolled in actor networks, the participants’ responses to the research questions do nevertheless, demonstrate something of the futility, at least in participants’ accounts, of trying to work collectively from a consensus position. So while acknowledging the limitations of focusing on a singular type of research data, the research remains indicative of the circulating entities that reproduce ineffective action (Ibid).

6.22 Two kinds of findings

The findings of this thesis are of two kinds. The first are findings about the beliefs held by lecturers interviewed in the midst of the change crisis; the second are findings about the possibilities for curricular and pedagogical change. The examination of the narrative data has shown much about the experience of lecturers caught in a major change process.

- The bridging Course was at the intersection of many competing forces.
- Lecturers’ believed that the key driver for Course change from management’s perspective was financial; in that management’s primary concern was to remain economically viable.
- Lecturers believed that Course change should happen as part of normal quality assurance processes.
- As economic conditions tightened, staff tended to take on more of the responsibility for the failure of the Course. They began to blame themselves and each other as much as the circumstances that defined what was possible.
- Efficiency was a key actor in the bridging Course. The relationship between time, outcomes and expenditure had significant impacts on the Course meanings lecturers could negotiate with students.
- Lecturers were failing to see much how much they had in common in their collective experience of what was important for students to learn. Lecturers had not developed the language or the alliances to make this recognition. Points of difference were magnified.
• Lecturers’ time was taken up with managing the administrative demands of under-performing students rather than being involved in building a professional learning community.

• Lecturers signalled that they felt there were shortcomings in their colleagues’ capacity to do their jobs and that better staff development opportunities were required.

• Lecturers’ narratives signalled that more opportunities were required to come together as a community of educators in order to learn how to appreciate each other’s differences and to learn from one another.

• Lecturers’ recognised a need for better engagements between the tiers of management to better involve all parties in ongoing and collaborative change.

• In an outcomes-based funding model the bridging Course was potentially unviable. Lecturers were struggling to find processes for working in a context that largely made their task untenable.

• Lecturers were put in the position of having to take students into the Course whose starting level competence was below the optimum standard to best achieve DEETYA’s outcomes. At the same time lecturers were being criticised for not improving the rates of Course completions. While the stated Course objective was to increase the rates of successful transitions into University, the reality on the ground was that lecturers more often had to work with more modest goals.

• For many lecturers the bridging Course was about teaching the hidden curriculum. The Course was about making explicit all of the assumptions that universities made of students’ learning and capacities.

• Lecturers demonstrated that they did not want a curriculum that they believed tied them to a restrictive set of theory and practice and will work to undermine such limitations where they find such a circumstance.

More generally, the research has revealed the unsuitability and irrelevance of the proposed shortened bridging program. In order to succeed in that situation, students at entry would have been required to have closer alignments with the exit literacies and discourses expected by the University.

More generally still, the analysis of the data has shown:
• It is not possible to implement a curriculum agenda without commitments in place by all parties to see the implementation of initiatives through.

• Lecturers will not support a curriculum change when management’s motivations for the change of the Course have neither been properly explained to them nor willingly accepted by them. Actor Network Theory helps elucidate the different enrolments that take place into the actor network. A more thorough application of ANT would better articulate what many of these other actors were, how they were enrolled and what translation work was required to maintain a sustainable actor network.

These findings in terms of possibilities for curricular and pedagogical change are explored further in sections 6.5 and 6.6 below.

6.3 A definition of the problem

While the application of ANT in this research has been limited to lecturers’ responses, the analysis undertaken does indicate something of lecturers’ beliefs and understandings of the nexus between curriculum, pedagogy and institutional change (See Appendix 8). The narrative mapping undertaken in the research suggests that in ANT terms, the most serious problem for the bridging Course to overcome in order to become viable and sustainable, was to bring Course funding and the conditions that sustain Course funding, into a network alignment. Lecturers claimed that DEETYA, which funded the bridging Course, had signalled that as a funding body, it was not getting educational value for its investment. As a consequence DEETYA’s funding criterion had changed in ways that lecturers claimed threatened the viability of the bridging Course.

Lecturers laboured under the perception that the bridging Course had been defined first by DEETYA, and then by the University and the School itself, as a failing system. The possibility of closing the bridging Course had been discussed within the School following a considerable period of rumour and speculation that the educational gap that the Course was designed to address, was to no longer to be the concern of universities.
Lecturers feared that the bridging Course would continue be interpreted as underperforming when its prescribed goals were narrowly defined in terms of Course graduations and the transition rates of Indigenous students into degree programs. Lecturers claimed that unless DEETYA, the University, and the School, which set the preconditions for the viability of the Course, modified their interpretive frames, the future of the Course would remain bleak.

6.4 The lecturers’ account of the situation until June 2002

A significant finding of this research is that, as a group, the lecturers involved in teaching the bridging Course, perceived, constructed and explained ‘academic literacy’ as a complex artefact, whose meaning is affected by contextual factors within the classroom, the School, the University, the government, and Australian society. Lecturers’ responses indicated that they well understood the effect of the interplay between social, economic, institutional (University and Government) and community (mainstream and Aboriginal) pressures impacting on the entity ‘academic literacy’. Taken collectively, their narratives expressed their opinions that ‘academic literacy’ can be defined and enrolled into actor networks according the understandings of those who plan, teach and evaluate its deployments.

The ensemble of understandings and beliefs outlined above did not constitute a consensus among the lecturers about the actor-entity, ‘academic literacy’. They did however point to the wealth of knowledge, the range of experience, and the quality of the commitments and engagements that lecturers had with students. This finding is important because it is a validation of the efforts of those involved in teaching the Course. This finding is also important, as I shall show in section 6.6, because it points to the necessary preconditions to strategically integrate the principles of a model of teaching and learning practice that recognises the pragmatics of the situation and therefore works to the benefit of students. This model is called
‘postmethod programming’. A postmethod process acknowledges the importance of building a learning community amongst lecturers, a point made earlier by Kohn (Kohn, 2001), but goes further in the sense that it stresses the importance of validating teachers experiences and knowledges but without the coercive pressures implicit in the tendency toward consensus (Baudrillard, 1993; Breen, n.d; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Trifonas, 2004).

The analysis of the lecturers’ narratives shows that if the bridging Course was about supporting Indigenous students to become ‘academically literate’, lecturers argued that ‘academic literacy’ did not have to framed in a conventional way. Lecturers acknowledged that ‘academic literacy’ conventionally meant being able to read, write, think and research in the ways that permitted students to participate in university discourse.

In many respects lecturers did not find the concept ‘academic literacy’ particularly apt or useful for encapsulating the pedagogical project of supporting students’ learning and students’ transition into university. Lecturers’ narratives demonstrated that ‘academic literacy’ in both practice and theory was understood to be much more than a set of technical and essayist related skills. Damien, for example, claimed that if the concept ‘academic literacy’ was to be used at all, then it should understood in terms of ‘inter-cultural’ literacies. ‘Academic literacy’ was characterised by participants as a multiplicity in students’ learning process, or in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, a rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002), and that other entities had to be brought into the learning process if students were to experience success.

Lecturers argued that creating a dynamic in which a student could experience success required as much commitment, endurance and patience on the part of the University as it did on the part of the students. The evidence of the University’s commitment to the Course and to the Indigenous community, lecturers agreed, was not reassuring. However, this is exactly the type of claim that needs to be investigated in a broader
ANT analysis. Other actors and texts need to be examined in producing a more thorough account.

Lecturers argued that an Indigenous bridging Course’s curriculum strategies had to support students’ capacity to thrive emotionally and intellectually. Developing this capacity, lecturers claimed, was in addition to both building students’ capacity to deal with the hidden curriculum of university culture and the more standardized or conventional notions of what it meant to be ‘academically literate’. Here, an ANT analysis would examine the accounts of students and an examination of curriculum materials such as Unit Plans and Guides.

Lecturers suggested that teaching ‘academic literacy’ in the context of the Indigenous bridging Course required reflexivity, an emancipatory politics, a socio-cultural understanding, a willingness to learn, and an acceptance of difference in the frameworks of both lecturers and the students in the teaching and learning processes. Again a more thorough ANT analysis would investigate what this meant in practice, how it was facilitated and where and why it might have been blocked.

Lecturers claimed that a university environment was the best place for an Indigenous student to negotiate such complex knowledge systems. A university was, lecturers claimed, a place of higher learning rather that a place of instruction. Indigenous people, lecturers suggested, had had enough of institutions of instruction. Lecturers suggested that the hegemonic onus was always placed upon Indigenous Australians to make the biggest cultural adjustments and to take the biggest socio-cultural journey. Lecturers claimed that Indigenous students required as much institutional support as could be made possible to facilitate what one lecturer described as the precarious journey of higher learning.

Lecturers demonstrated that they had far more in common about their big picture aspirations for students’ learning than they had differences. Every lecturer wanted to resist what they understood to be the limiting and assimilationist forces of outcomes
based funding. Lecturers wanted to do their best to help students to achieve their learning goals. Lecturers’ narratives demonstrated however, a high level of denial about the implications of resisting DEETYA’s funding regime while continuing to frame aspects of their pedagogical project in ways similar to the former version of the Course (Course A). For example, in the former bridging Course (Course A) there was wide acceptance that because the Course was also a basic adult literacy program, that the outcomes for the Course were more partial and distributed according to the capacities of students and the realities of students’ lives. Lecturers working with the needs of students who were enrolled in the Course had to deal with the situation before them rather than focus on DEETYA’s outcomes or the inscribed objectives of the Course itself.

A disturbing and disappointing finding from the analysis of participants’ narratives was that lecturers had many profoundly interesting but productive points of difference and similarity about their particular pedagogical agendas, but their ideas were failing to find productive alignments. The more I analysed the narrative texts of my colleagues the more it was possible to recognize that lecturers were all making very powerful discursive and pedagogical contributions to the Course. Dobers and Soderholm would suggest that lecturers as spokespersons for particular ideas were not able to perform the translations that were required to maintain the integrity of the Course network as a whole (Dobers & Soderholm, 2003, p. 4). In ANT terms, the network spokespersons required to bring entities into alignment, lecturers, Course coordinators, managers, university processes, etc, were not making the necessary translations to bring the Course network together.

Weick and Quinn point out that the way actors, particularly people, perform in a network, should never be interpreted as incompetent but rather as being consistent with the trajectory of the organisational narratives that frame situations and actions (Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 374). From Weick and Quinn’s perspective, the management proposal to impose a change on the Course, which from lecturers’ point of view was an example of inept decision making, can equally be seen as a means to
bring about second–order change to the Course’s system dynamics, which from the management’s perspective, might have been considered as poorly managed at the Course level and deadlocked as a functional system. Again, ANT pointed to the limitation of restricting the investigation of performance and perception issues to an analysis of one cohort’s oral responses.

6.5 Some definition of what needed to be achieved

Many lecturers believed that DEETYA was the entity that had the biggest stake in the Course’s future. In the lecturers’ view, it was DEETYA’s interest rather than the interests of Indigenous students that had become the paramount actor in the ways the Course’s dynamic meanings and possibilities were shaped. Many lecturers claimed that the pressure generated from DEETYA’s focus on Course outcomes was significantly impacting on the ways that curriculum dilemmas were emerging and were being negotiated.

Lecturers’ narratives showed that they believed that the bridging Course had to perform in terms of measurable DEETYA outcomes. The Course was funded to prepare students for University and to increase the numbers of students making the transition into degree programs. Nothing more.

At the time that the research was undertaken, the bridging Course was not achieving the outcomes it required to escape the heightened attention it was attracting. The Faculty’s interest in the bridging Course was increasing as the financial position of the School and the Course declined. It was therefore in all stakeholders’ interests to solve the problem of the Course’s declining position.

Lecturers argued that University managers should value Course lecturers experience and aspirations for the bridging Course more highly and should be more involved in lecturers’ attempts to develop appropriate curriculum and sustainable programs for
the Indigenous community. The people representing the Course and the School should, participants claimed, advocate more forcefully so that Course lecturers could continue to develop curriculum in ways that resisted narrow economic arguments.

Lecturers’ narratives showed that they blamed the funding environment for the pressures they were experiencing in many aspects of the Course.

For the Course to move forward, lecturers had to stop blaming DEETYA for the Course’s problems. This was a first-order narrative that was organisationally restricting lecturers capacity to think more creatively.

The funding environment created by DEETYA’s was the frame within which lecturers had to work. Unless the School and the University were prepared to lobby to change DEETYA’s measures of success, then maintaining a blame scenario would only add an extra burden to the struggling Course.

Analysis of participants’ responses indicated that lecturers had work to do to change the frame of their experience. In order to move forward they needed to become totally clear about what the Course was going to teach and about the reasons for adopting particular curricular and pedagogies. The development of a sustainable university transition program for Indigenous people also required clarity about the students the Course was going to recruit and the reasons for recruiting them.

Research suggests that organizational strategies for change can achieve acceptable ongoing results provided there is agreement amongst those implementing change (Kohn, 2001; Weick & Quinn, 1999, p. 376). Successful change can only occur if all parties are committed. Only with such negotiated commitments could Course outcomes ever be achieved. In the highly charged and profoundly problematic educational site for my research, the identification of second-order change within the narratives shows that the development of a sustainable university transition course for Indigenous people requires commitments by the University, by the School and by
lecturers in order to see the effective translation of ideas into acceptable and achievable Course outcomes. The ANT research reveals that lecturers are more likely to collaborate with change processes when they believed that their efforts will lead to a concrete, positive and realistic change (Watzlawick et al., 1974, p. 110).

6.6 A research contribution to a solution to the Course’s problems

This thesis has sought to discover an alignment of interests that would support the development of sustainable university transition programs for Indigenous Australians. The analysis of the narratives has pointed to multiple factors that, at the time the data were collected, mitigated against the development of such a course. Many of those factors continue to exist. But the need to develop courses that will deliver personal, social and academic benefits associated with literacy to Indigenous people also still exists.

I believe that the research I have undertaken supports some recommendations that will enable university teachers, university administrators and government agencies to develop sustainable bridging programs with an emphasis on appropriate and relevant kinds of ‘academic literacy’. These recommendations grow out of the finding that, although the lecturers found it difficult to reach agreement on many issues, they had, as a group, the necessary expertise to define and to teach ‘academic literacy’. The recommendations are that:

1. Changes in curriculum and pedagogy should, where possible, be evolutionary and incremental rather than being a significant discursive break with what had formerly counted. The problem with making major changes in the localised discourses about what counts, regardless of the merits of any changes, are that those who are not on board with the change process may feel marginalised or resentful. Clear and open channels of communication best effect gradual and functional change.
2. Postmethod programming should be implemented in situations where consensus about curriculum and pedagogy are difficult to achieve.

These recommendations that are derived from the research I have undertaken are well supported in the research literature.

Lankshear and Knobel claim that the starting principle for developing powerful literacy practices was to remember that they are best ‘learned in the company of experts within settings that privilege authentic tasks and purposes’ (Lankshear & Knobel, 2000). In the bridging Course context it is a reasonable to ask who decides who the experts are, and how decisions are made about what constitutes powerful literacy practices? Nakata argued that when such questions have impacts for the Indigenous community, the answer to those questions should be in the measure of the acquisition of power and in the opportunity they deliver to the Indigenous Community (Nakata, 2001).

My analysis has shown that the lecturers regarded their collective production and implementation of curriculum ideas as problematic. Their narratives show the lack of a shared view of what constituted Course ‘literacies’, and a lack of capacity as a curriculum team to construct them. Most lecturers commented that there was minimal discussion about the Course’s teaching and learning enterprise and that the meanings of the Course and its ‘academic literacies’ were essentially unstable.

A hypothesis advanced by one of the research participants to explain why the bridging Course had not been able to stabilize and move forward productively is worth considering. This argument rationalised lecturers’ and other stakeholders’ acceptance and rejection of the existing bridging Course (Course B) in terms of the change metaphors, evolution and revolution. An evolutionary change it was claimed was ultimately a more successful change than a revolutionary change. An evolutionary process was understood to be a pragmatic but gradual conceding of
ground, whereas a revolutionary process replaced existing systems of meaning by establishing something completely new.

Some Course lecturers, the argument followed, understood the bridging Course (Course B) as a revolutionary departure from earlier formulations. There were others however, both within the School and the University, who interpreted the bridging Course through the frame of their preconceived expectations, rather than through the substance of the curriculum changes that had taken place. The bridging Course (Course B), it was claimed, had been battling the tensions between two contradictory and competing interpretations; the first that there had been a radical departure from past configurations of bridging courses; the second interpretation being that nothing of significance had changed.

Lecturers’ reflections on their capacity to experience and improve the efficacy and power of the literacies they taught revealed a number of issues and ironies. Analysis of the participants’ narrative data suggests the futility of persuading lecturers to reach a consensus position about how to develop curriculum and how to teach Indigenous students to become ‘academically literate’. Lecturers’ narratives demonstrate the difficulty, even impossibility of attempting to bring lecturers’ thinking into alignment. Their narratives show that the attempts to do so through the Course Review and the curriculum development processes had been only partially successful (See account of Course Review in Appendix 6). While there was considerable alignment in lecturer’s counter narratives of resistance to the mainstreaming policies of DEETYA, there appeared to be significant limitations in lecturers’ capacities to understand each other when it came to the detail of their teaching practice and pedagogy.

The participants’ narratives suggest that a more effective collective pedagogical strategy was required if the bridging Course were to have had any chance of surviving. The changes in the Course’s circumstances before and during the period of this research were forcing the Course to be much clearer about the competence of
students it should enrol and about the curriculum that lecturers should teach. The Course’s very survival suggested that a more cohesive position was required. While lecturers could not have controlled the funding policy context, they could exercise greater control over the immediate environment they worked in.

One possibility worth considering is that lecturers could abandon their aspiration for pedagogical consensus. The lack of the tendency toward consensus was often attributed as an impediment for the Course to improve its outcomes. For example, the pedagogical agenda set by the Course Review had created a discursive ordering, those who were with the program of reform, and those who weren’t. To remove the impasses created by such an ordering would be to endorse multiplicity and difference. Trifonas argued that ‘Valorising the fragmentation of subjectivity or acknowledging the openness of difference warrants an appreciation for the plurality of discourses or alternative configurations of legitimate meaning sources that embrace the contexts of society and culture’ (Trifonas, 2004, p. 154).

Acknowledging this multiplicity of experience Breen and Kumaravadivelu argue for what they call ‘principled pragmatism’ as the basis for teaching language and discourse in ways that don’t rest upon a desire for consensus (Breen, n.d; Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Breen and Kumaravadivelu’s grounded model of pedagogical practice is a practice model that acknowledges and builds upon teachers’ personal constructs. Breen observed that teachers build a theory of practice from the teaching attributes admired in others. Breen claimed that educators develop a matrix of pedagogical principles from key ‘teachers’ they have often personally known. These ‘model teachers’ can include friends, colleagues, and relatives, as much as other professional educators. The application of a teacher’s matrix of teaching and learning principles was generated through what Kumaravadivelu described as a teacher’s ‘sense of plausibility’. Teachers ask of themselves, “will this initiative work to ‘create a sense of involvement for both the teacher and student?’ ” (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 33-34)
Kumaravadivelu argued that research into language teaching had signalled a ‘shift away from the conventional concept of method towards a “postmethod condition” ’ (Kumaravadivelu cited in Breen, n.d, p. 1). Breen argued that the ‘postmethod condition’ relocates the power from those who traditionally hold it, entities such as theorists, university quality control experts, textbooks, and gives autonomy back to the teachers to negotiate their own networks of practice between theory and teaching experience. The ‘postmethod condition’ puts a name to a space that language teachers can claim for themselves. The postmethod condition recognised that educators have ‘been marching to different drums for years’ (Ibid, p. 1-2).

The work of Breen and Kumaravadivelu suggested that any attempt to either collectively build a definitive pedagogical position, or at the other end of the continuum, impose a pedagogical position, will run aground on the same rocks. No teachers will stay with a preferred program of theory or with a curriculum framework, because these can only go so far before they ‘will be interpreted through the individual teacher’s own past experiences, deduced beliefs or theories, and through immediate decisions and actions in … particular [teaching situations]’ (Ibid, p. 2).

Breen argued that when considering teaching practice, it is important to recognise that a teacher’s understandings about language, learning and teaching, is networked with their broader understandings of concepts like ‘society’ and ‘politics’. The pedagogical principles that emanate from teachers’ network of beliefs are, Breen argued, ‘typically in systematic relation to one another… with “core” or superordinate principles linked to clusters of subordinate principles. This means [Breen claimed] that any pedagogic principle is connected with and related to clusters of other principles, and it is on the basis of such a permutation that a teacher acts …’(Ibid, p.6)

Kumaravadivelu claimed that the postmethod condition recognises that teachers can
not only teach but they were always learning how to act autonomously within the constraints imposed by the systems surrounding them. Lankshear and Knobel allude to the same principle when they speak about a Pedagogy of Tactics (Lankshear & Knobel, 2002). The postmethod condition ‘promotes the ability of teachers to know how to develop a critical approach in order to self-observe, self-analyze, and self-evaluate their own teaching practice with a view to effecting desired changes’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 33).

The postmethod condition described by Breen and Kumaravadivelu had important implications for Indigenous bridging course education. A postmethod condition suggests a means to break down hierarchies of understanding, such as those that the research participants’ narratives suggest may have existed between those who had been part of the plan for earlier curriculum change (Course Review), and those who had not.

The postmethod condition suggests that lecturers might have been able to develop a more successful university preparation course for Indigenous people if they had been given institutional encouragement to develop a learning community within which they could share information, advice and support, and in which they were not pressured to accent to a particular agenda based on “expertise” or on management objectives.

The adoption of a postmethod approach suggests an attitude toward curriculum and pedagogy as being about a process of network building, one that is in a constant state of design, building and repair. Because bridging Course lecturers come from varied academic disciplines, it is not possible for individuals to aspire to the same collective pedagogical methods and discursive goals. Lecturers speak and think through their own experiential and discursive frames, but they also speak and think in anticipation of what their actions signify in wider discursive networks (Hoey, 2001). Lecturers’ actions are always striking a balance between what they believed they should be doing as educators and what they believed that others believed they should be doing.
The translations of curriculum and pedagogical ideas revealed by the analysis suggest that a viable and sustainable university preparation course might best be developed if the School and its Course systems worked to create the conditions for continual adaptation and organisational learning (Weick & Quinn, 1999). To best facilitate the learning capacities of students and thereby increase course outcomes, lecturers need to be encouraged to develop their own professional capacities, and they require a working environment that supports the exchange of ideas between colleagues.

Kohn’s cited criterion for assessing the organisational health of a learning community has considerable relevance for the bridging Course when Kohn’s Habermasian emphasis on consensus is maintained within in a totally non-coercive frame (Kohn, 2001). In such a situation, consensus is an idea that lecturers and School management can give up getting anxious about.

The characteristic of ‘shared beliefs’ in Kohn’s continua can point to the possibility of a productive dissensus. It can redress Baudrillard and Lyotard’s issue that people don’t take kindly to having their experience determined for them (Baudrillard, 1993; Jones, 2003; Lyotard, 1993). The important idea here is that lecturers have a space in which to speak and within which there exists some likelihood that they will be heard. There are always other important things going on in any discursive space that a learning and adaptive organization needs to be attentive to. These things are often as important as the official explanations offered for people’s actions (Zizek, 1994, p. 55). The other criteria for a healthy learning community that Kohn alerts us to, ‘interaction and participation, interdependence, concern for individual and minority views, and meaningful relationships’ become possible when there are no elites at the local level.

The School’s former action-research experience of the bridging Course Review (Reynolds et al., 1999), and the translations and subscriptions of the Review’s ideas
into curriculum and teaching practices, demonstrated that the seeds of a system’s own demise can be sown at the very inceptions of a change process. Stakeholders did not see the same Course related entities, nor did they see identified entities in the same way. Both lecturers and University managers did not always share the same discursive language and experience to configure the Course’s network actors in ways that would best lead to a sustainable program.

The translation of ‘academic literacy’ as an entity-actor in the network of the bridging Course meanings was not well defined. There was however considerable alignment amongst particular lecturers about what ‘academic literacy’ could be when ‘academic literacy’ was located in particular network configurations.

When lecturers talked about the importance of success to students’ learning it was possible to see considerable alignment in the ways that lecturers went about their practice as literacy educators. For many lecturers the very fact that Indigenous students were choosing to participate in a university-based education process was grounds for celebration and lecturers demonstrated a pronounced concern that whatever happened during students’ experience of the bridging Course, students should not conclude their studies feeling as if they had failed.

This aspiration was running up against the reality of DEETYA’s expectations. When the Course’s network actors began to fall out of alignment the consequences were substantial. In ANT terms as lecturers joined or left the Course, or when the conditions that had supported particular configurations of meanings began to change, extra pressure was placed on those actors who attempted to keep a particular Course configuration intact. Different actors began turning their attention to the possibilities that might emerge in a new Course configuration. The signals were there in lecturers’ narratives that the Course had to reconfigure or collapse completely. Key actors were no longer supporting the Course.

The lecturers’ narratives revealed that lecturers believed that University and School
managers had their minds focused in networks of a different order and were not attending to the Course’s needs in productive and constructive ways. Lecturers argued that management only understood Course’s problems in funding terms and that if the Course’s funding wasn’t being threatened then contests of meaning and issues of change would not be taking place. Lecturers believed that management’s key concern was to reconfigure the Course so that it would be less expensive to operate?

Lecturers believed that as a Course team they had to become more tactical to more effectively resist the top-down decision-making processes of University management (Group Response 6.05, 6.16, 6.17 – see Appendix 5). Lecturers’ narratives suggested that, in ANT terms, some network actors were working to reshape the network of Course meanings, while other network actors were losing faith in their capacity to hold a functional network together.

6.7 Conclusion

Although the situation examined in this research was fraught with difficulty for all those involved, although the narrative data assembled for this research suggest a crisis in an educational institution and in a teaching team, and although the analysis of the data point to only a few possibilities for productive second-order change, the research does provide some cause for optimism.

Lecturers’ narratives demonstrated extraordinary commitment and expertise to try and to smooth the educational pathway for Indigenous students whose pre-Course literacies were collectively quite poor and whose needs as learners put enormous stresses on the Course’s systems. Lecturers were in the proverbial cleft-stick with the pressures to get students through the Course and the desire to create learning environments that met the real needs of students.
Rhizomic theory and ANT were found to be appealing frameworks for the analysis of complex artefacts and dynamics because they see the building of knowledge not as a process of delimitation but as the ‘the recruitment of allies’. Rhizomic theory and ANT allows for a symmetry between ideas because hierarchies are not part of its agenda, preferring instead to bring an ever-increasing number of ideas into productive relationships.

Meaning-making is usually about standpoint orientation and determining what belongs inside an interpretive frame and what must remain outside it. With rhizomic theory and the rhizomic inspired ANT, there is no outside of the frame. In rhizomic terms, if we are determining a frame, it is because we have an interest in doing so. Rhizomic theory, in the context of this study has allowed me to bring narrative analysis theories and theories of change into a productive alignment, that together participated in making sense of what was already an extremely complex and rhizomic environment.

The narrative and rhizomic-ANT interpretation employed in this thesis has enabled me to show the possibility of seeing the value and the potential inherent in the broad range of participants’ ideas. ANT has made it possible to begin to understand the connections that perhaps have not been identified by earlier research methods. Analysis showed that the translation of lecturer-participants’ interests best served the interests of students when they can be brought into network alignment. To say this is to say something very different from arguing that participants should work toward a consensus of views, of interests, of objectives and of methods.

Deleuze and Guattari have called processes of mapping, such as I have attempted to achieve in this study (see Appendices and Chapter 5), as developing a short-term memory, a rhizomic representation, a diagram, a folding (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983, 2002). Using the processes of narrative analysis, change theory and ANT allowed me to bring the voices, the visions, the contradictions, the power relations, the
disappointments, the aspirations, the betrayals and the allegiances together into a rhizomic space. To do this was often a difficult process and it was a totally confronting methodology. The process taught me to frame ideas in such a way as to be forced to listen to one’s colleagues and to recognise one’s own complicities and duplicities.

For me this experience was salutary, in that it made me aware of my own practice and beliefs as a literacy practitioner and the implications of my actions in the organizational narratives of the School in which I worked. The research process therefore shone a light on my own shortcomings and it helped me reconnect with my colleagues and their struggles in ways that I had not anticipated. In this sense, this thesis was as much my story as it was my colleagues’ story. I have learnt much from the process and can say that I am wiser in hindsight.

Looking at the world in a rhizomic and ontological way, is to build stability between cultural, political and environmental systems. Such a process of world building requires people to be able to see how new links can be drawn between entities. Trifonas claims that a ‘noncoersive environvent in which to initiate genuinely intersubjective dialogues between perspectives[,] is crucial to the familiarization of differences for the enrichment of society overall’ (Trifonas, 2004, p. 155).

Regardless of how Indigenous people choose to engage with mainstream society, their acquisition of powerful literacies will have enormous implications for their lives. This thesis has shown what a complex and mercurial artefact ‘academic literacy’ is and how easily it can be made to serve different interests and interest groups. ‘Academic literacy’ as an actor in the Course’s actor network was malleable enough to adapt to a diversity of local applications ‘yet [in Star and Griesemer words] robust enough to maintain a common identity’ (Star and Griesemer cited in Kendall & Wickham, 1999, p. 111). The findings and recommendations of this thesis can, I believe, contribute to design of more relevant definitions and more effective framings of ‘academic literacy’ for Indigenous students seeking higher
education.
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Appendix 1

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM

Project Title: "Whose story is it anyway?": Negotiating understandings of academic literacy in an Indigenous pre-tertiary context.

The Research Project:

This research is interested in the stories about the Indigenous University Orientation Course as it goes through a process of change. The research aims to collect a range of curriculum related stories and analyze them in collaboration and consultation with research participants. Through the process of writing this educational narrative, the research project aims to present a constructive account from the participant’s perspective of how a sustained future might be possible for the program.

Contribution that the research hopes to make to the IUOC and to participants involved in study.

In action oriented research, acts of critical reflection and collaboration replace expert knowledge and process. Everyone is valued as having ‘expertise’ or something of value to productively offer. Every perspective sheds light on what is known. This research aims to contribute to the sustainability of quality education pathway for Indigenous Australians.

One of the goals of this research will be to try to categorize the ways that the issue of academic discourse is constructed in the school and to try to ascertain why the possibility of an Indigenous University entry level program is becoming increasingly constructed as an untenable proposition.

The research aims where possible to reframe and conceptualize assumptions and understandings about the program to contribute ideas toward building constructive solutions.

Method

- Arrange meetings with those individuals who agree to participate.

- Arrange a group session with the same participants and any other members of the IUOC team who might want to participate in the group discussions.

Have sessions with individuals and group. Participants map and share stories of curriculum developments and teaching, particularly as they relate to the construction of academic literacy within the school and program, especially
stories that are particularly meaningful or problematic. These ‘curriculum stories’ will be audio recorded. Upon completion of the research thesis these audiotapes will be destroyed.

Transcribe the recorded audiotapes and feed them back to individual staff in the form that they want. Staff may want to edit their own transcripts or allow researcher to do it following the directions of the staff member involved.

Transcribe the group discussion in the form that staff request and circulate amongst participating staff.

Analyse the transcripts using Critical Discourse Analysis categories, narrative theory analysis and thoroughly describe and rationalise the categories and analysis used.

Meet with individual participants and discuss their narratives from previous meeting and check understandings that emerged in light of researcher analysis.

In total I would expect that there would be 4 meetings of a 2 hours each with each participant. There would be 3 or 4 one-hour meetings with group. All meeting would aim to take place within a one-month period.

Seek critical input and feedback on thesis construction and analysis throughout writing process. Ideally 2-3 1-hour meetings would be a minimum here. These expectations are a minimum participation requirement. Those participants who are happy to provide higher levels of involvement are encouraged.

**Participant rights**

A participant’s current position will not be prejudiced in any way by his or her refusal to participate; participants are encouraged to change any aspect of their contribution that they are not happy with.

Participants can pull out of the research at any time.

Every step will be taken to ensure confidentiality of participant contributions and participants will have every opportunity to change any aspect of the thesis document
that they feel makes them feel uncomfortable or vulnerable. It is the researchers' responsibility to ensure that no harm comes to the position or reputation of any one who participates or may be indirectly referred to in this study.

Any questions concerning the project entitled "Whose story is it anyway?" Negotiating understandings of academic literacy in an Indigenous pre-tertiary context.

can be directed to Greg Stratton on (9*******) or email (g.stratton@***.edu.au)

If you have any concerns about the project or would like to talk to an independent person, you may contact the Executive Officer - Ethics - Marilyn Beresford on (9273 8170) or email (m.beresford@ecu.edu.au)
Appendix 1

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: "Whose story is it anyway?": Negotiating understandings of academic literacy in an Indigenous pre-tertiary context.

I have read the information above (or, "have been informed about all aspects of the above research project") and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this activity, realizing I may withdraw at any time.

I agree that the research data gathered for this study may be published provided I am not identifiable.

Participant: Date:
Investigator: Greg Stratton Date:
Appendix 2

Q.1 Group

What information, anecdotes, or stories can you share about the way that ‘academic literacy’ is constructed in the (COURSE B) program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal-Achievement pattern</th>
<th>Situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Mismatch of discourse frameworks, indexical</td>
<td>1. Sometimes there’s inherited stuff, I think, that’s kind of just, like, if you come in as a new lecturer, you’re just, plonked with a whole set of things, you kind of have to work your way through it, work you’re way through a set of materials that maybe you don’t kind of, match up with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Background and reason for change of program. Also amplification, chorus.</td>
<td>2. That was my experience when I came and looked at all the old (COURSE A) materials, it was like, oh where are these coming from..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mismatch of discourse frameworks and power relations</td>
<td>Academic literacy can be seen as being constructed as a discursive response to whole complex of inherited artefacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 &amp; 5 Power relations, hegemony.</td>
<td>4. To what extent, am I imposed, whatever, beliefs I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Program development and delivery is always situated, positioned in higher order structures. Power relations. Sanctions, approvals, conditional support.</td>
<td>10. Issues of definition are always constrained by higher order structures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Residual effects of past bridging programs and the expectations of lecturers in other degree programs.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

JOYCE: (1) Sometimes there’s inherited stuff, I think, that’s kind of just, like, if you come in as a new lecturer, you’re just, plonked with a whole set of things, you kind of have to work your way through it, work your way through a set of materials that maybe you don’t kind of, match up with. (2) That was my experience when I came and looked at all the old (COURSE A) materials, it was like, oh where are these coming from..

MARY: (3) And some of them were ancient

JOYCE: (4) Yeh, yeh, they’re really out dated, and I was thinking, oh, you don’t feel really comfortable about also, I guess, in some ways you don’t feel, you have the power to make changes to things either. (5) And that’s, being really unclear, I suppose, at that point it was. (6) To what extent, am I imposed, whatever, beliefs I

MARY: (7) Particularly if the person who wrote the unit is still there.

MARY: (9) The feeling of treading on someone’s toes, is always a problem.

BOB: (24) The other thing I think, to, you’re not completely independent of the course, what happens at the university, because it’s a bridging course.

BOB: (26) So it’s not only the past courses, as bridging courses, it’s also, expectations from first
face from this kind of curriculum. Having to deal with the discomfort of feeling imposed upon and lacking the power to change things.

The enormous difficulty of, and reluctance to disrupt the status quo. The ways you define also carries the history of former definitions and the meaning expectations generated by those at the borders of your self-definition.

Goal

6. Develop a new course. (ie (COURSE B))
Researcher: (10) That’s mainly to do with the old program, OK. (11) So how did it move then? (12) How did it change?

Method

7. Action Research-collaborative
JOYCE: (13) It changed through a process of negotiation, through. (14) I guess it kinds of reflects, a number of different interest areas, to some extent, you know. (15) But that, trying to work out, how we worked out how we would do it, in terms of the review, took quite a lot of time, and it was quite awkward, I think, to, try and get, because it took us ages to get that process started. (17) So, and I think you’re setting up, a way in which we can negotiate what we want to do, with people, or I found that anyway.

To collectively build a meaning from many diverse positions requires a negotiation of how people can contribute to that process.
9. Everything was up for negotiation. Even process. Parallels between contemporary notions of literacy, meaning making and the building of curriculum.

JOYCE: (19) No, and in some ways that’s good. (20) Like, just leave it, let’s just sort of start from scratch, and what do we, what do we really believe in, in terms of what we’re doing and what are we trying to do.

In order to build a meaning with the highest social value requires the premise that the generators of that meaning first examine their own theories about that meaning and the enterprise of the construction.

7. The problems of maintaining change focus when staff change.

JOYCE: (16) Like, how are we going to make this work for us, and, and with changing staff, people coming and going, it was like we had to start all over again, every time we had a kind of a new, kind of core intake of people.

Complexity is added to the enterprise when contributors join or leave.

8. System of change was not clear. No guidelines.

MARY: (18) There are no clear guidelines.

Clear guidelines don’t exist.

9. Individually, the field is philosophical, places you in the position of learner.

JOYCE: (21) But even that, like I know I change my mind all the time about what I think, is this the right thing to do in this course? (22) And also with the more, learning that I’m doing through my colleagues and research and stuff, my ideas are never fixed anyway, I have to kind of adapt to, kind of like the students who come here. (23) So like, some of the underlying philosophies of the (COURSE B) program, when you’re in front of a classroom and you’re confronted with maybe a different group of students to what you’re expecting.


MARY: (27) There’s student feedback as well. (28) You sort of change things according, to the sort of feedback you get from students.

The systems that sustain us encourage us to take note of feedback.
some of that has to be altered a little bit. A learner’s ideas / meanings are constantly adapting to the slippage between positions.

How successful was this?

15. The course focus became theoretically developing the academic literacies students required to make the transition into university. However, because (COURSE B) students are positioned socially and culturally as Indigenous then a particular discursive framework was to be applied informed by the (COURSE A) review.

Response 1.02
Researcher: (34) What position do you think collectively we’ve taken on the issue of literacy, because really, we took the position that the course is, largely about getting people into academic programs, so we’ve taken a position on what literacy should mean for our particular students, and we’ve taken a particular slant on it, because of the nature of the students that we’re working with. (35) So what is that?

The application of a mask of simplicity on a complex structure is an adaptive behaviour.

14. The (COURSE B) was realised. As there was no blueprint “guidelines” there was no precise machine. The (COURSE B) was more organic, still in the process of continual becoming. It had a set of principles, which then of course always required the use of interpretive frameworks.

Response 1.03
Researcher: (32) I guess because, we went through a process, didn’t we, and we came up with a new program.

New meanings are embryonic. They still require their creators around them.

13. Assimilatory processes of academia are forcing models of simulation. Expectations are rising for university measured outcomes i.e transitions at an appropriate level.

BOB: (30) And where, you’re expected to increase the transfer rate, from the bridging, then the weight of the university’s expectations, become more so, than having it as a course that’s an end in itself.

No sooner than a meaning has been created, than the weight of superstructures are applied to condition it.

16. A perspective on the course from a lecturer who joined the team after the (COURSE A) review and much of the curriculum design. Was involved however in jointly developing one unit. That there is no shared view of what literacies, we’re on about, or how we construct them, and how we, exactly what it is we’re delivering to students. Not much discussion about our teaching and learning enterprise. The course meaning is unstable.

There was the suggestion that this was potentially a good thing as the course objectives were malleable to the students needs, interests. This flexibility could change with a more defined curricular.

DAMIEN: (42) Hmm. (43) That’d be me. (44) Yeh look, I don’t think, coming in after the process, I mean, after the, after the development process of the (COURSE B), I never really got the feeling that there was a shared, view of what literacies, we’re on about, or how we construct them, and how we, exactly what it is is

17. A lecturer who was part of the review and curriculum development process from the beginning. A personal reflection. Literacy teaching requires an approach, a reflexivity, a politics, a socio-cultural understanding, a willingness to learn, and an acceptance of difference of frameworks brought to the teaching process.

JOYCE: (49) But how I approach it, like it changes all the time. (50) Like I’m influenced by so many things, like, I was saying, you know, by my colleagues, by reading about new ways of working and operating, and what, you know, the latest views of literacy are, you know, because we came from, Curtin which talked about empowerment all the time, that literacy for empowerment and social justice kind of, that frieze sort of stuff is, the sort of thing that was really strongly, positioned there. (51) And then, since I’ve been, like in recent years I’ve been learning more of that, you know, the socio-cultural approaches to literacy learning and all that, so my whole understanding of
in and out of that whole process,

Negative evaluation

or, you know, maybe, the course might reflect a couple of, more vocal people in the course at that time, you know.

If the process of meaning making becomes unstable, threatening the process, those who have a high investment in the meaning making enterprise, and have an opportunity to exercise some degree of control over the process will attempt to do so.

we’re delivering to students... (45) Yeh, I mean, I think that in some respects, is a good thing, I think, it’s good and bad. (46) I think it’s good because, because of the nature of the students, coming in with, I mean, it’s beneath the documents that they constructs different skills, depending on who happens to be walking through the door, then I think, their need for a particular skills changes, a lot, that’s probably going to be less important as we continue to raise the bar. (47) But yeh, I never really got the feeling, that, at least after the fact, that there was any, there was much of a discussion around what exactly it is we’re on about. (48) It was just like, here is the course materials, lets just go out there and do it.

There can be a problem in how to take up new meanings, they can be like foundlings, hungry, undisciplined, but often also highly malleable.

what literacy is, is shifting all the time. (52) And then I’m trying to match up what I’m learning, from other people and through my own reading, and with what we’re trying to put into practice as well. (53) So all of that kind of seeps into my, teaching practices, and I guess that’s kind of what’s happened, little stuff sort of filters out, outside my control, because, obviously, I’ve picked up things from people I’m closest to in the work place, and by looking at what other units are trying to do, and other lecturers are trying to do, so, you know, when I’ve, team taught with a few people before, and that’s been useful, as well. (54) But it also highlights how different we are, and that there is no, one approach to doing anything or one way of seeing anything.

The best meanings are an endless source of fascination, contemplation and negotiation.

18. Course as eco-social system. Maintaining a critical interest in exploring and understanding the whole learning site, including the ways that language is being used.

MARY: (55) Is that more relevant with internal teaching though? (56) Can it be done with external?

JOYCE: (57) On the

22. Staff who have come in late in the process, or after the process might not have a sense of ownership. As a result they may not feel any necessity to follow the principles of the course. (To share the principles, you need to share the Discourse community)

JOYCE: (74) And, so

JOYCE: (74) And, so

JOYCE: (74) And, so
| Blocks, so you can see it with the block. (58) But the externals is difficult. (59) But, no, not really, because I’ll look at materials too, I’ll look at the language, in the written material, and see, oh, hang on, I might of approached. The translation of meaning should be appropriate to its task. therefore, it might not be, like, people who have come since then might, I don’t know John, they might not feel some sort of sense of ownership of the program, or, may not feel that they have to, or you know, adhere themselves to the principles of the course even. (75) I don’t know. Nobody owns a meaning but it’s nice to hold one for a moment to get its shape and smell. | 19. Understanding the big picture. Critical praxis. MARY: (60) I mean approach them regularly? JOYCE: (61) Yeh, well, no maybe not. (62) But, just at least being aware, that this unit’s doing, talking in a different language maybe, to what I might have been talking. Meanings don’t just exist in your corner of the wood. 23. The principles of the course aren’t explicit. Counter amplification. DAMIEN: (76) If, there are any. (77) Or if there, yeh. (78) That’s the stuff that wasn’t. (79) They weren’t very explicit, I didn’t think. Does a meaning have principles if it behaves badly? | 21. It’s the process of developing awareness and confidence as a literacy practitioner. Developing the language of the Discourse. JOYCE: (67) Probably more in recent years, than when I first came in, because when I first came in, a lot of work was, (COURSE A) stage one, you know, spelling and punctuation kind of stuff, which like I said, never sits really comfortably with me anyway, but I didn’t have the language to articulate. 24. Curriculum issues and teaching pedagogy issues have taken a back seat to the more practical day to day course issues. The question would be why? MARY: (80) They were never discussed. (81) We never had staff meetings where we, look at those issues. (82) Staff meetings were more, practical. |
what was wrong with it. Or the, confidence to challenge, my predecessors, like you said, who were still there, who’d written those materials, and who were regarded as.

Working on a meaning changes it.

Meaning is lurking everywhere.

22. The Discourse Community
The importance of having ‘respected people’ who have worked in the field for a long time. Double edged sword though:

MARY: (69) Protective of it

JOYCE: (70) Well protective, no, they were, you know, they were respected people, in that field too, you know, they’d been around for a long time. (71) So you learn from other people’s experience.

There is great value in having dialogue with colleagues. This dialogue is sadly lacking at the course level. Point being, when dialogue stops, there is no ability to change, nor is there any ability to negotiate and share understandings as a learning community.

(72) But I really enjoy that constant dialogue that I have with individual people, but I think it’s sadly lacking in the course, that we don’t have, dialogues about what we’re trying to do.

There is meaning in silence.

25. Not enough time is spent discussing curriculum and teaching issues. Amplification.

DAMIEN: (83) I think we’re too busy looking at the day to day stuff that we...

Our meanings choose us.
| 29. | There is no clear image of the type of attributes we want a student to leave the course with. Staff project their own visions/personal constructs. Identity construction. JOYCE: (89) Or what we’re trying to produce by the end of the program. (90) Like I might have this image of, this you know, radical student who’s really vocal, and really strong, and able to, you know, get themselves out of a difficult situation, or know how to, use language to, you know, to strengthen their position, or whatever it is, and, but other people might not think that that’s the right way forward. (91) They think that Indigenous people, students, what sort of image of the student, they think is the right kind of image of a student, you know. (92) And like I said, I shouldn’t spend time thinking, oh, I think that, I have something to offer Aboriginal students because I have been to university, and I can show you, and tell you and teach you about the experience I had, and that was really stupid, because, no one’s experience is going to be like mine, you know, or, not many would be like mine anyway. We might have the hymnbook but we refer to our own scripts. |
| 26. | The course has an entity has never stabilised. |
| 27. | The bridging course “game” rules keep shifting. Amplification What are the rules, or is it the rules that allow us to play. |
| 28. | The (COURSE B) has been in a constant process of development and change. There has not been the opportunity for collective reflexivity. Rationale: merge of the internal and external machinations. No Discourse community has established itself. MARY: (88) So we set about starting it all off with the big review we did of (COURSE B), of (COURSE A) ready for (COURSE B), then we changed again as things changed, we’ve adapted, because of different policies that are coming in, there’s never been the time to actually, have that luxury of sitting down and reflecting on, on the basics, on the very core of, or what we believe in. There are no delinquent meanings. |
| 34. | The discourse of the classroom. Multiple literacies. Students |
Students should be gaining entrance measured against criteria referenced language statements.

MARY: (128) Our students should be beyond that by the fact that, the ASIT, we’re supposed to be, at the point where we’re taking students who already have sentence structure skills and whatever.

Whatever is a good place to start.

brought in from vice-chancellors. Implications for all.

PR: (93) I think also, the universities, became mass universities in 1988, so that, the universities themselves, are sort of in turmoil, I mean, by a stroke of the minister’s pen, he doubled the number of universities in Australia, from 1938, overnight sort of thing.

(94) And, you often had confusion, I mean none of the things in Brendon Nelson’s paper, was mentioned this morning on the news, was even the selection of the vice-chancellors, needs to be tightened up, or scrutinised, type of thing.

(95) Because, simply they were short of people, to put into those positions, and so, in a way, we’ve suffered from this restructuring mentality, of people being appointed then wanting to restructure every thing.

(96) And then, before it’s even, settled down, a new vice-chancellor comes along and then you go through another restructuring, which, has its implications all the way down through the whole university and everything the university does.

Knowledge has nothing to do with logic.

JOYCE: (140) In my class there’s lots of talk about this stuff, I suppose. (141) But historically..

MARY: (142) Only internal though?

JOYCE: (143) Yeh. (144) Yeh. (145) And even Block. (146) It was funny when you suggested that we might change stuff at Block, where there is going to be more of them talking, we’re getting sick of standing up in class and doing all the talking, we don’t get to know where they’re at or whatever, there were some students who really objected to that, ‘no way, no way’, there was a fear of changing.

Lets stick to the old meanings.

40. There is a correlation between entry level academic literacy and success rates. Entry is not being professionally monitored. Politics of gate

31. Economic factors have changed the tone of processes and programs. Amplification

MARY: (97) And

45. Maintaining face as a student or teacher. Amplification

MARY: (147) Well, that’s right. (148)
JOYCE: (129) Well, I've got evidence that contradicts that completely.

MARY: (130) I know. I know.

JOYCE: (132) I do. I do. I do this diagnostic kind of thing, is to get them to write something in the first week, and the range of skills ability, just from that piece, is amazing, and scary. And, you know, I'm going to go back and have a look at what I did this year, and see if my predictions came true, and I think they did.

Your meanings aren't my meanings.

Mary predicted in advance who would...

Meanings are offered in the market place.

Mary predicted in advance who would...

Meanings are offered in the market place.

Meanings are economic with the truth.

It’s based on economics.

It’s not a fear of changing, it’s a fear of standing up and talking in front of a group.

Once there is an audience meanings get tested.

Can teacher expectations influence the results or progress of students?

Mary predicted in advance who would...

Meanings are offered in the market place.

Staffing decisions are increasingly being made on economic criteria rather than educational criteria. Higher order paradigm impacting structurally.

You predicted in advance who would...

Meanings are offered in the market place.

Sessional teaching is the least rewarding teaching and learning experience. Lecturers have the least investment in the underpinnings of a program. Amplification example

Mary predicted in advance who would...

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Mary predicted in advance who would...

Meanings are offered in the market place.
just a handful of coordinators or somebody, who will be going into doing research, but then left to coordinate courses, and provide an environment in which the sessional staff are supposed to work. So, your concerns are going to be magnified, because sessional staff, are going to have even less opportunity.

‘First they came for the …’.
34. Reorientation: Future projections of how literacy will be constructed.

Researcher: (107) So, we’ve been through a process of change, and we tried to, I guess to move the old program to something that was more, relevant and current with modern ways of looking at the issues of literacy and education, particularly in the Indigenous context. (108) Now the process is changing again, through some of these pressures that Bob just talked about. (109) Is there any feeling about where things are going, about how literacy is going to start becoming constructed again, in this school? (110) You know, because we went through a process, trying to do the right thing.

We create meanings and hope for the best.

Situation

35. Although the (COURSE B) is a good product it may be discarded in favour of a different model. There is a fundamental mismatch between what the program offers and what the HOS understands as being an appropriate academic literacy program. Power relationships, Discourse community.

JOYCE: (111) Yeh, yeh, yeh. (112) I think what we’ve done, like I believe, (COURSE B) is a really good product, and I think what we’ve done is largely going to be thrown out the window because, it’s, the message I get from listening to conversations from the management, is that, they see literacy in a way that I don’t see it. (113) They, you know, talk of seeing very much, a skills based program, their idea of skills is,
teach them how to write essays, teach them how to spell and do
tutes and stuff, which is, I think
going back, to the 80’s kind of
model of, you know, basic
reading and writing strategies,
that lots of people think are easy
are easy to measure, and you
know, and easy to deliver, but it
doesn’t work.

The meaning of ‘Happy Days’
is another deferral.

36. The lack of description and
understanding of the aspects of a
basic literacy course, and a
course which is something
beyond that, is concerning. A
sense that the present course has
value and is still in a process of
development. Some doubt over
the nature of what the new
course might look like.

MARY:  (114) We’ve been
told it’s not going to. (115) It’s
not, it’s not going to be a basic
literacy program. (116) It has to
be doing more than that. (117)
But there is a dilemma, as to
whether it is, basic, which is
where, and skills based, or
whether it takes it beyond that.

This time we’ll test the
amniotic fluid.

37. Perception problems
over just what (COURSE
B) offers students. Good
teaching begins with
where the student is at in
relation to the preferred
state of being. The
problems of mass
education, or of university
expectations. The meaning
of the course is too
unstable.

BOB:  (118) That’s why I
think that when the, ATAS
tutoring business came up,
and the reference was, not
available to basic, literacy,
we had to make the point
that, our units were called
skills for tertiary. (119)
But also, any good teacher
must start where the
students are at. (120) And
so, if they don’t have
them, it’s no good saying,
they should have these
skills, from somewhere,
and build on, but you’ve
got to sort of say, I’ve
done a diagnosis, and this
is where we start from.
(121) That’s the tragedy in
a way, with most
professionals, you do a
diagnosis and you work
out what the client or
patient needs, and then
you, develop your
response to that.
To get at a meaning you can stigmatise the users of that meaning.

38. The ‘skills’ model proposed is considered to be an inadequate model for addressing the learning needs of students. Poses issues for the entry level literacy competence also.

JOYCE: (122) It’s very difficult to do that. (123) Within twelve months, in terms of what Jack’s kind of looking for... (124) Because I remember, when I was at Curtin, teaching a bridging course one year. (125) And by the end of the year, the person, who was teaching a unit, over at Curtin said, this girl came into the course and she couldn’t read and write, I’ve asked her to do this essay and it proves to her that she can’t read and write, fix her up, do two weeks of intensive grammar work with her, while everyone else has finished, and she had to stay behind and I had to work out some, ‘sentence writing activities’, and ‘how to start a sentence in an essay’, and that sort of thing. (126) It was horrible, for her and me, you know, to work like that. (127) I thought it was crazy.

There are limitations to the medical model of meaning.

43. The need to be able to demonstrate where in the course students develop the prescribed literacies. The discourses and genres of academia. Interpretation, positioning. This is both a view of what those literacies are and a challenge to see if they can be demonstrated to be systematically built into the program.

BOB: (137) Where in the course can you argue, you see, multiple literacies, do you provide, examples where they practice, multiple literacies, or exposed to multiple literacies. (138) You know, whether it’s, so so interpretation, or what ever it is that you’re looking at, in terms, so, the answer to this question must be in the examination of the materials that you have developed, type of thing. (139) To show that, you’re providing the student with opportunities to, come to an understanding of multiple literacies, and where some form of writing or speaking is more appropriate.

Performance is the key to meaning.
Appendix 4

Q.6 Group

Can you propose any solutions to the issues facing the program?

Goal-Achievement pattern

Situation

DAMIEN:  (421) Definitely

BOB:  (422) Well at various levels, you’ve got managerial solutions. (423) You’ve also got your, normal, academic curriculum solutions, in a way. (424) So we need to, sort of look at arguments, from two different perspectives.

Response 6.01

Goal-Achievement pattern

BOB: (425) And as far as the managerial one, there’s not much we can do, I mean the staff association really isn’t, strong enough, and it’s tied with the enterprise bargaining document.
Negative evaluation

BOB:  (426) So, the most you can do, is take out a grievance, against the management, type of thing.

DAMIEN:  (427) Over process.

Response 6.02

Goal-Achievement pattern

BOB:  (428) Over processes or something of that nature, that haven’t been adhered to. (429) But you, I mean, that’s a way by which you bring this out into the open. (430) You can sort of say, well we tried to institute, participation policy, we’ve only had one semester at it, most, theories would suggest that, you know, these things have to be done, they have to be reviewed, they have to be, implemented again and then reviewed, and you’re not being given the opportunity to do that.

Negative evaluation

(431) Something, but you can’t, you bring it out into the open but, the grievance process in the staff association, doesn’t enable you to actually solve the problem, it just, you bring it out into a more, open, arena.

Response 6.03

Opportunity-Taking pattern

JOYCE:  (432) It’s sort of sad. (433) It’s like, you know, last week we were all fired up and we wanted to see
the Aboriginal Consultative Committee and stuff, but then look what happened there.

Negative evaluation

MARY:  (434) Fizz.
JOYCE:  (435) Big fizz.

Response 6.04

Problem-Solution pattern

DAMIEN:  (436) I don’t think any power is vested in the ACC anyway.

Negative evaluation

JOYCE:  (437) No, absolutely not.
(438) I’ve got no faith in that.

BOB and MARY:  (439) No.

Response 6.05

Goal-Achievement pattern

DAMIEN:  (440) I mean, one of the things that the, where, I mean, we obviously, we don’t exert enough power within the system, to be able to, challenge management, over these issues, but, there are other places where that power is vested, I mean, it’s back in community, in the student body, are the two places that.

Negative evaluation

DAMIEN:  (441) I mean the ACC’s supposed to do that, and I suppose we
haven’t really got a very effective, student body either.

Positive evaluation

JOYCE: (443) According to the Course B’s philosophy, we would. (laughs)

Positive evaluation

DAMIEN: (444) But that goes to places where, where if we wanted to exert pressure back at, them, we could get other people to exert it, of our concerns about the course.

Negative evaluation

DAMIEN: (445) Because they’re obviously not listening to us.

Response 6.06

Goal-Achievement pattern / Opportunity-Taking pattern

BOB: (446) This came up this morning, while you were absent at the meeting, where, there was a statement, whereby we were sort of saying, this might be too dangerous, but when you read them through..

JOYCE: (447) They’re not

BOB: (448) There was nothing there, that wouldn’t be under normal quality assurance.

MARY: (449) That’s right.

BOB: (450) That is, you get to your stakeholders, you get to your clients,
you get to your students, and you get them to..

MARY: (451) Feedback

Positive evaluation

BOB: (452) Because what the VC’s trumpeting all the time, the three parts of the mission statement, is service, and professionalism, and enterprise, type of thing. (453) And the service one, where is it, type of thing, if we’re not servicing the needs of the students. (454) The students should then be complaining.

Negative evaluation

BOB: (455) And that’s what’s not happening.

Negative evaluation

BOB: (456) And, it’s unfortunate that the guild system, you see, was attacked by the..

MARY: (457) It’s so weak, yeh. (458) Non-existent.

BOB: (459) Non-existent, type of thing.

Response 6.07

Opportunity-Taking pattern / Goal-Achievement pattern

MARY: (460) But I think the fact that we, that we didn’t roll over and say, yes, we will follow your six months, three units, and as you were saying this morning, I think, that maybe, this
review has come about because they realise that their bluff didn’t work.

Positive evaluation

BOB: (461) No.

Negative evaluation

JOYCE: (462) But if they keep talking to the right, enough people, that think like them, they’ll get what they wants.

MARY: (463) And, without doubt.

JOYCE: (464) And that’s what I can see happening now.

Positive evaluation

MARY: (465) That’s, I mean, all we can do at this stage, is just to say, well no we don’t agree, and just keeping making as much noise, as we can.

BOB: (466) Yes

Response 6.08

Opportunity-Taking pattern

BOB: (467) The quality, quality assurance thing, is giving the students, and the community, because you see originally..

Negative evaluation

RESEARCHER: (468) But it’s not going to happen though, is it?
BOB: (469) No. (470) Especially not in the time, because..

MARY: (471) That’s the problem.

Response 6.09

Goal-Achievement pattern

BOB: (472) They did away, every course was meant to have a course advisory group.

DAMIEN: (473) Which is a filter. (474) We’re meant to aren’t we.

Negative evaluation

BOB: (475) I know. (476) I mean the point is, there’s been no one from the vice chancellor downwards, type of thing.

Positive evaluation

(477) But you should have that community

Negative evaluation

MARY: (478) But it’s so hard to get them together anyway, isn’t it?

Positive evaluation

BOB: (479) I know, but still, even if it’s once a year you should get them together.

Positive evaluation
JOYCE: (480) We really should have done that, for Course B.

DAMIEN: (481) Because that would have been a powerful group.

JOYCE: (482) Yeh, we really need it.

Positive evaluation

BOB: (483) You can get them to say things that you can’t, as employees, you see.

Response 6.10

Opportunity-Taking pattern

BOB: (484) The other thing, is to get the students, get the students, type of thing.

Positive evaluation

JOYCE: (485) Oh yeh. (486) I mean, I don’t know about other people, I’m certainly going around and talking to students that I’ve taught saying, hey, whisper, whisper, whisper. (487) It’s really important that your, input, you get

Negative evaluation

JOYCE: (487b) there’s no talking about it.

Negative evaluation
BOB: (488) It’s no good talking about education for empowerment, if we’re not enabling students, to be empowered.

Positive evaluation

JOYCE: (489) If we can tell them what’s going on. (490) You, know, as much as we can.

Negative evaluation

JOYCE: (491) We really don’t know what’s going on, anyway, I suppose.

MARY: (492) That’s part of the problem. (493) It’s all rumour.

BOB: (494) Yes

MARY: (495) Nothing’s been laid out on the table. (496) I mean management’s been talking to one person, or two people, and then that’s not being filtered through to everybody else. (497) And you’re being told..

Response 6.11

Gap in Knowledge-Filling pattern

JOYCE: (498) They told me at least three times that Course B, if it stays next year, it will definitely be three units.

Negative evaluation

DAMIEN: (499) If it stays.

Negative evaluation

JOYCE: (500) And yet they take it off as, if it doesn’t merge with the
university’s preparation Course. (501) What ever happens, it will, be three units.

Response 6.12

Goal-Achievement pattern

MARY: (502) And yet at the staff meeting last week, at the profiles meeting, they said we’ve got a review, to find out. (503) It’s supposed to start next week.

Negative evaluation

BOB: (504) We’re supposed to have a review of all the courses.

MARY: (505) Starting Monday.

BOB: (506) Batchelor of Social Science, the Batchelor of Arts, and the bridging Course…

Response 6.13

Gap in Knowledge-Filling pattern / Opportunity-Taking pattern

JOYCE: (507) And there was another lady sitting, in an office next door to Anne.

MARY: (508) She’s doing some work with Gary.

BOB: (509) She’s Gary’s assistant.

JOYCE: (510) Oh.

Negative evaluation
JOYCE: (511) But he’s employed somebody you mean. (512) He didn’t offer a position, to one of us who are leaving?

Positive evaluation

MARY: (513) It’s a very short term thing.

Negative evaluation

JOYCE: (514) Hmm. (515) I’m sure.

Positive evaluation

MARY: (516) Some of her field is conveyancing in the government school.

Negative evaluation

JOYCE: (517) I’m sure she’ll be here next year.

MARY: (518) Ohh. (519) There’s every chance.

Response 6.14

Opportunity-Taking pattern / Goal-Achievement pattern

RESEARCHER: (520) Oh well, that’s great, thank you.

JOYCE: (521) Are we finished?

RESEARCHER: (522) Well are there any other solutions? (523) Can you see any.
RESEARCHER: (524) From what you’ve said it doesn’t really seem as though there will be any. (525) Really.

JOYCE: (526) That’s me. (527) (Laughs)

MARY: (530) And as much as I think this new threat is going to help, by having a strongly worded

JOYCE: (531) It’s not. (532) It’s not.

MARY: (533) I mean, I don’t know that many of the students are going to be bothered and lift a finger up and make a phone call.
Response 6.16

Opportunity-Taking pattern / Goal-Achievement pattern

DAMIEN: (536) I mean, we still do have a Course, that’s still existing. (537) There’s no reason why, a, an advisory group, couldn’t be set up.

Negative evaluation

MARY: (538) Yeh. (539) At the last minute? (540) At this stage?

Positive evaluation

DAMIEN: (541) Yeh. (542) On the assumption that we’re still going to have one next year. (543) That’s one of the options that’s on the table, that we will have a course, of some description.

Positive evaluation

JOYCE: (544) I think that we should think about that.

Positive evaluation

DAMIEN: (545) Get one and sit them down, and, when the review happens, that group can already been informed of what’s going on. (546) From this perspective.

Response 6.17
RESEARCHER: (547) I don’t think that any staff would have a problem with a serious review of the program, if it was a genuine review and in terms of making the program sustainable.

Negative evaluation

RESEARCHER: (548) But it has to be a real review.

Negative evaluation

JOYCE: (549) And not on the basis that a decision’s already been made

Response 6.18

Goal-Achievement pattern

JOYCE: (550) But like you were saying, he’s already picked his staffing, or looked at his staffing profile for next year based on his vision of what courses will look like.

Negative evaluation

DAMIEN: (551) Well who’s going to be left in the Course B?

BOB: (552) Nobody.

MARY: (553) Half of me. (554) And it might not even be that.
Appendix 5

Narrative structure using Hoey’s analysis tool. Q6

Can you propose any solutions to the issues facing the program?
**Appendix 5**

**Group Narrative Set-up Q6 (Goal-Achievement pattern)**

**Situation / Goal [fa]**

Can you propose any solutions to the issues facing the program? (in the light of the narratives that have unfolded) Damien responds a level of optimism: ‘Definitely’ (421)

**Method [fb]**

Well at various levels, you’ve got managerial solutions. (423) You’ve also got your, normal, academic curriculum solutions, in a way. (424) So we need to, sort of look at arguments, from two different perspectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 6.01 [fc]</th>
<th>Response 6.01</th>
<th>Goal-Achievement Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Group Response Sentence 425-427)</td>
<td>‘As far as the managerial [solution], there’s not much we can do, I mean the staff association really isn’t, strong enough, and it’s tied with the enterprise bargaining document. So, the most you can do, is take out a grievance, against the management, type of thing’</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>‘Over process’</td>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.02 [fe]</th>
<th>Response 6.02</th>
<th>Goal-Achievement Pattern</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Group Response Sentence 428-431)</td>
<td>There was an argument that a grievance process was ‘a way by which you bring this out into the open. You can sort of say, well we tried to institute, participation policy, we’ve only had one semester at it, most, theories would suggest that, you know, these things have to be done, they have to be reviewed, they have to be, implemented again and then reviewed, and you’re not being given the opportunity to do that’</td>
<td>A grievance process it was argued would not solve the problem. A grievance process was rather, just a mechanism to bring dysfunctional dynamics out into the open.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 6.03 [fg]</th>
<th>Response 6.03</th>
<th>Goal-Achievement Pattern</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Group Response Sentence 432-435)</td>
<td>Reflecting on the merits of the advisory group: ‘it’s sort of sad. It’s like, you know, last week we were all fired up and we wanted to see the ACC and stuff, but then look what happened there’. ‘Fizz.’ ‘Big fizz.’</td>
<td>Some hope had been held by lecturers that this mechanism would support the Course against the various process failures that were restricting the capacities of the Course. This was not to be.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.04 [fi]</th>
<th>Response 6.04</th>
<th>Goal-Achievement Pattern</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Group Response Sentence 436-439)</td>
<td>There was an argument that the Indigenous consultative group were ineffectual because they had no real power.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.05 [fk]</th>
<th>Response 6.05</th>
<th>Goal-Achievement Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Group Response Sentence 440-445)</td>
<td>‘One of the things that the, where, I mean, we obviously, we don’t exert enough power within the system, to be able to, challenge management,</td>
<td>The support and advisory mechanisms that Course lecturers felt needed to be in place to both develop and</td>
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</table>
There was an argument that building a relationship with the Indigenous community and the student body was a necessary critical political step in countering the seemingly arbitrary power of management.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.06 [fp] (Group Response Sentence 446-459)</th>
<th>Response 6.06 Goal-Achievement pattern / Opportunity-Taking pattern</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers agreed that what was almost framed as a political and potentially dangerous move to counter what they perceived as bad decision making by management, that was, to recruit students and the Indigenous community into the decision-making dynamic, was in fact a tactic aligned with University quality assurance strategies.</td>
<td>“There was nothing there, that wouldn’t be [there] under normal quality assurance… That is, you get to your stakeholders, you get to your clients, you get to your students, and you get them to.. Because what the VC’s trumpeting all the time, the three parts of the mission statement, is service, and professionalism, and enterprise, type of thing. And the service one, where is it, type of thing, if we’re not servicing the needs of the students. The students should then be complaining’</td>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.07 [ft] (Group Response Sentence 460-466)</th>
<th>Response 6.07 Opportunity-Taking pattern / Goal-Achievement pattern</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The School’s management had applied pressure to reduce the bridging Course to a one-semester program, but the lecturing staff had resisted this pressure. The School’s management then proposed a course review to explore the possibility of a shortened one semester bridging course.</td>
<td>‘The fact that we, that we didn’t roll over and say, yes, we will follow your six months, three units, and … maybe, this review has come about because they realises that their bluff didn’t work.’</td>
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</table>

The lecturing staff were ultimately pessimistic that the management would listen to the concerns put by them. It was felt that the management would work to recruit lecturers to their agenda. Resistance to the management’s intentions were seen as necessary but ultimately were likely to be fruitless.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.08 [fz]</th>
<th>Response 6.08</th>
<th>Lecturers sensed that the horse had already bolted.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Group Response Sentence 467-471)</td>
<td>Opportunity-Taking pattern</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturers, in retrospect began to appreciate that having a student and community course reference group would potentially strengthen the Course’s capacity to resist what they perceived as arbitrary management demands.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.09 [gb]</th>
<th>Response 6.09</th>
<th>Lecturers could see in hindsight that the “quality initiative” of involving students and the Indigenous community could be much more than tokenistic.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Group Response Sentence 472-483)</td>
<td>Goal-Achievement pattern</td>
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<tr>
<td>In retrospect the value of such groups offered a community grounding for Course initiatives and a vehicle to channel the political concerns of lecturing staff.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.10 [gi]</th>
<th>Response 6.10</th>
<th>Lecturers were beginning to sense that a Course advisory group might have strengthened their ability to fight for improving the existing Course.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Group Response Sentence 472-483)</td>
<td>Opportunity-Taking pattern</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturing staff had belatedly tried to involve students to inform them about what was going on in the hope that students might be able to wield some influence, but the consensus amongst lecturers was that they really did not know how things were changing themselves.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.11 [go]</th>
<th>Response 6.11</th>
<th>One signal coming through to the Course lecturers from the School’s management, was that the bridging Course would be redesigned from a two-semester Course, to become a one-semester Course.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Group Response Sentence 498-501)</td>
<td>Gap in Knowledge-Filling pattern</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>There was an understanding that the School’s management had set two strategic aspirations for the way the Course was to be reconfigured.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.12 [gr]</th>
<th>Response 6.12</th>
<th>There was a tone of scepticism amongst staff about School agendas and processes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Group Response Sentence 502-506)</td>
<td>Goal-Achievement pattern</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The management met with lecturer resistance and directed that a course review</td>
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</table>

I’m certainly going around and talking to students that I’ve taught saying, hey, whisper, whisper, whisper. It’s really important that your, input, you get.’

‘It’s no good talking about education for empowerment, if we’re not enabling students, to be empowered.’

‘We really don’t know what’s going on, anyway, I suppose.’

‘That’s part of the problem. It’s all rumour.’

‘Nothing’s been laid out on the table. I mean the management is talking to one person, or two people, and then that’s not being filtered through to everybody else’.

‘Management told me at least three times that [the bridging Course], if it stays next year, … will definitely be three units.’

‘If it stays?’

‘And yet they take it off as, if it doesn’t merge with the [University’s mainstream preparation Course]. What ever happens, it will, be three units’.

‘At the staff meeting last week, at the profiles meeting, they said we’ve got a review, to find out. It’s supposed to start next week’.

‘We’re supposed to have a review of all the courses’.
take place for all School courses.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.13 [gt] (Group Response Sentence 507-518)</th>
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<tr>
<td>The lecturers lacked faith in the appearances of things. Decisions were being made about their work and their futures but outside their sphere of influence.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Response 6.13</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gap in Knowledge-Filling pattern / Opportunity-Taking pattern</td>
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| It had become clear that some lecturers were about to lose their jobs while some areas of the school appeared to be taking on new staff. |

| ‘But they’ve employed somebody you mean. He didn’t offer a position, to one of us who are leaving?’ |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.14 [--] (Group Response Sentence 520-527)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While the narrative had begun with the positive assertion that solutions could be found to the Course’s problems, lecturers had difficulty articulating what these might be. Most of the solutions discussed existed in the realm of hindsight, actions that should have happened, too late seemingly for the immediate circumstance.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Response 6.14</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity-Taking pattern / Goal-Achievement pattern</td>
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</table>

| Lecturers felt that a strongly worded letter of protest from students would not really help the situation, nor was there any sense of optimism that any student would bother to complain in any event. |

| This narrative highlights the earlier point about students not being empowered to take a more active role in supporting the Course. The whole question of student identity had been unresolved for some time. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 6.15 [gz] (Group Response Sentence 528-535)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students had been placed in an unenviable position, along with lecturers.</td>
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<th>Response 6.15</th>
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<tr>
<td>Problem-Solution pattern</td>
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| Lecturers felt that a strongly worded letter of protest from students would not really help the situation, nor was there any sense of optimism that any student would bother to complain in any event. |

| This narrative highlights the earlier point about students not being empowered to take a more active role in supporting the Course. The whole question of student identity had been unresolved for some time. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 6.16 [hf] (Group Response Sentence 536-546)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It was proposed that a Course advisory group still had a real and positive potential.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Response 6.16</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity-Taking pattern / Goal-Achievement pattern</td>
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</table>

| ‘We still do have a Course, that’s still existing. There’s no reason why, a, an advisory group, couldn’t be set up.’ |

| ‘Yeh. At the last minute? At this stage?’ |

| ‘Yeh. On the assumption that we’re still going to have one next year. That’s one of the options that’s on the table, that we will have a Course, of some description.’ |

| ‘I think that we should think about that.’ |

| ‘Get one and sit them down, and, when the review happens, that group can already been informed of what’s going on. From this perspective.’ |

| If the Course was to continue, in one shape or another, and the management had ordered a Course review, then there was nothing more appropriate lecturers argued, in both an Indigenous context, and in terms of University quality processes, to have a community and student advisory group. It would be to this advisory group that lecturers could argue their pedagogical concerns. |

| This argument was an amplification of that put forward in Group Response 6.05 and again signalled a second order change potential. |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Group 6.17 [hl] (Group Response Sentence 547-549)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers from their perspective, had recognised an opportunity where quality processes and curriculum objectives might remain</td>
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<tr>
<th>Response 6.17</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity-Taking pattern / Goal-Achievement pattern</td>
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</table>

| Lecturers from their perspective, had recognised an opportunity where quality processes and curriculum objectives might remain |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------|
| Lecturers recognised an opportunity in any review process that might take place. Lecturers could see that their inputs in line with University accepted quality processes could remain a viable part of any change process. | The support shown for arguments made in (6.16 and 6.05) was recognition that a **second order** change potential existed; a change potential that lecturers felt positive about. |        |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 6.18 [ho] (Group Response Sentence 550-554)</th>
<th>Response 6.18 Goal-Achievement pattern</th>
<th>‘He’s already picked his staffing, or looked at his staffing profile for next year based on his vision of what courses will look like.’ ‘Well who’s going to be left in [the bridging Course]?’ ‘Nobody.’ ‘Half of me. And it might not even be that.’</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The narrative ends with a degree of scepticism for what was possible.</td>
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**Appendix 5**
Appendix 6

Translation 1: (a sketch)

The first translation processes related to the initial translation of the bridging Course’s curriculum Review project and the inscription at the end of that process into a Review document.

The way that ‘academic literacy’ was constructed in participants’ initial group narrative set-up (Group 1-150) can be interpreted as being a social response to a complex array of inherited and interconnected artefacts. These artefacts, both social and material, included having to deal with historical remnants such as ‘ancient’ Course materials, and lecturers having to deal with what were felt to be imposed meanings about what ‘academic literacy’ should mean.

The narrative encompassed references to both the previous and long-standing version of the Course (Course A), and the current Course (Course B), a course that at the time of this research had itself come under pressure to transform. Those lecturers who had worked from 1997 to replace what they had considered to be an inappropriate set of pedagogical constructs and practices (Course A) had found themselves in 2002 facing the prospect of having to change the Course that they had completed to replace it (Course B) in 2001.

The lecturers’ narrative provided the reader / listener with a background rationale / catalyst for the original change process, (the move to replace Course A), which ultimately led to the development of the existing program (Course B). Lecturers signalled that there were issues of hegemony and power relations in the former Course that they were able to eventually challenge.
The Beginnings Of The First Change Process: From The Former Bridging Course (Course A) To The Existing Course (Course B)

Joyce drew on her experience of the former Indigenous bridging Course (Course A) to set up the story of change. Her experience with both the former and the existing Indigenous bridging Course (Course B) extended back six years (Group 1-9).

In the opening two sentences of the Group narrative (Group 1-2) Joyce immediately sets up a narrative in miniature. Joyce, a new lecturer, arrived in a new situation, and reluctantly felt compelled to engage but also resolve the mismatch that existed between her own understandings about what it meant to do her job as a literacy lecturer and the more dominant understandings that prevailed in her work environment. Joyce argued

The narrative proceeded to signal how the seeds of future curriculum change (Course A being replaced by Course B) grew out of lecturers’ pedagogical differences and discursive alignments.

Joyce: Sometimes there’s inherited stuff,
I think,
that’s kind of just,
like,
if you come in as a new lecturer,
you’re just plonked with a whole set of things,
you kind of have to work your way through it,
work your way through a set of materials that maybe you don’t kind of,
match up with. (Group 1)
That was my experience when I came and looked at all the old [Course A] materials,
it was like,

oh!, where are these coming from. (Group 2)
The narrative proceeded to signal how the seeds of future curriculum change grew out of different alignments of pedagogical configurations and lecturers’ discourses.

Mary: … Some of [the materials] were ancient. (Group 3)

Joyce: Yeh, yeh, they’re really out-dated, and I was thinking, oh, you don’t feel really comfortable about also, I guess, in some ways you don’t feel, you have the power to make changes to things either. (Group 4) And that’s, being really unclear, I suppose, at that point it was. (5) To what extent, am I imposed, whatever, beliefs I face from this kind of curriculum. (Group 6)

Mary: Particularly if the person who wrote the unit is still there. (Group 7)

Joyce: Yeh, so yeh. (8)

Mary: The feeling of treading on someone’s toes, is always a problem. (Group 9)

Joyce and Mary were recalling the discomfort they felt as new lecturers having to negotiate what they perceived as both out-dated curriculum materials and the power relations that worked to maintain particular configurations of meanings. They acknowledged that they lacked at the time the knowledge, confidence and authority to change the understandings they had to work with (Course A).

As if re-experiencing the dynamics of that former context, Mary, speaking in the present tense asserted, ‘particularly if the person who wrote the unit is still there… The feeling of treading on someone’s toes, is always a problem.’ There was in this utterance a suggestion that Mary was also speaking to the dynamics of her current temporal location.
The Course Review

One of the motivations that brought about the bridging Course Review process was to amplify lecturers’ critical engagement in their own practice as literacy practitioners but also to invite lecturers to take a greater interest in the pedagogical framings of their colleagues. (Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995). Some of the early framings of the Course Review were to address School concerns about the choice of outcomes that would be most relevant in any bridging Course reconfiguration. An early question that helped focus the Review was: 'What type of process will support [the School] finding the answers to these concerns and how should the School frame any claims to valid understandings that emerge… as a framework for building a new Course?' (Reynolds et al., 1999, p5) The lecturers involved in the Review process decided in June 1998 that the intention of the Review was to:

- find out what Aboriginal students in the community want;
- improve the completion and success rates of students;
- develop guidelines for a curriculum framework;
- produce flexible innovative courses; and
- improve student support materials. (Reynolds et al., 1999, p5)

The cumulative purpose of all Review activities was to produce a curriculum framework from which the new Course could be developed (Reynolds et al., 1999, p.6).

Reflecting on the method by which the Course changed from the old Course (Course A) to the new Course (Course B) Joyce claimed

It changed through a process of negotiation, through.. I guess it kinds of reflects, a number of different interest areas, to some extent, you know. But that, trying to work out, how we worked out how we would do it, in terms of the Review, took quite a lot of time, and it was quite awkward, I think, to, try and get, because it took us ages to get that process started…. So, and I think you [were] setting up, a way in which we [could] negotiate what we want to do, with people, or I found that anyway. (Group 13-17)
Joyce indicated that the Review was a slow and awkward process. The ‘you’ Joyce addressed in her narrative was myself. I was the coordinator of the Course at the time when some members of the bridging Course team, including myself, decided to investigate how we might develop a new Course that would significantly improve the transition rates of students into degree programs. The process began as what might loosely be called an action-research based Review that aimed to map out the generating principles that would inform a new Course. The method Joyce alluded to was the project to collaboratively build curriculum meanings from the collective expertise of Course lecturers utilising relevant theoretical research, and a more informed understanding of both the funding market place and the needs of the Indigenous community (Henderson & Hawthorne, 1995; Osborne & Dick, 1994).

The Course Review proceeded on the understanding that to build a course that would critically engage students’ learning necessitated that the course be designed and collectively built by the Course lecturers themselves. All Course lecturers were encouraged to participate in the Review and they were required as part of the process to examine their own theories about learning and ‘academic literacy’. The Review began as a participatory and democratic action research process, and lecturers were invited to contribute to the character of the methodology of the Review.

The curriculum building process began as a deliberate strategic move away from the type of undemocratic inertia that Joyce and Mary signalled that they felt they had inherited when they had first joined the bridging program. As it turned out, the

Off-stage David argued that there was a lot of work put in to develop a good rationale for the course (Course B).

(David 11) We reviewed the course (Course A) and looked at all sorts of factors that would effect the [proposed new] course [Course B] including economic and political and Indigenous ways of learning and studied other courses and developed quite a good rationale for where the course was going to go and what sorts of skills and literacies that students needed to have. (12) So from that we developed the skills matrix and programmed the units and set about writing those units.
Review process did not go smoothly, nor was the Review approached with anything resembling a common purpose.

Mary claimed she felt frustration with the Review process.

Mary: There [were] no clear guidelines. (Group 18)

Joyce on the other hand signalled that she had felt more comfortable approaching the Review with no fixed philosophical or pedagogical positions. For Joyce it was

Like, just leave it, let’s just sort of start from scratch, and what do we, what do we really believe in, in terms of what we’re doing and what are we trying to do? (Group 20)

Joyce offered an explanation for why the Review process sometimes proved to be so difficult and frustrating, an explanation whose related issues were to become significant complicating factors for how the new Course evolved. For Joyce the difficulty of negotiating collaborative understandings and curricular processes increased whenever the team contributing to the curriculum design changed. Joyce reflected

… how [were] we going to make this work for us? , … and with changing staff, people coming and going, it was like we had to start all over again, every time we had a kind of a new, kind of core intake of people. (Group 16)

During the period of the Course Review process there had been an unprecedented increase in student enrolments (Course A) and with this came a significant increase in the number of Course lecturers. The bridging Course had become the biggest university based Indigenous program in the country. The new lecturers that joined the Course team then participated in the Review process.
The Review and Course development process was about creating the best means to equip Indigenous students with the ‘academic literacies’ / capacities required to make a successful transition into university. As the research participants indicated, the change terrain was complex and not without contention. The Review process aimed to identify a model for curriculum building, teaching practice and student learning processes relevant to Indigenous adults. What ‘academic literacy’ could mean in this context was highly networked with how lecturers believed Indigenous students best became ‘academically literate’.

Besides the problems that ensued from curriculum contributors joining and leaving the Review process, Joyce also signalled that those who had a high investment in the curriculum building enterprise, and those who had opportunities to exercise a degree of control over the process, did influence the process where they could. Joyce argued:

…Part of the [Course], rewrite problem, was that players were changing all the time, because people were shifting in and out of that whole process, or, you know, maybe, the Course might reflect a couple of, more vocal people in the Course at that time, you know. (Group 73)

My own recollection of the Review process, was that influences, my own included, were particularly evident on the occasions where there was a perception that the Review process may have been faltering. In a process built around the principle of collaboration, the reality was that there was always more control by some, even if that control was applied to the objective of maintaining the change momentum. On the other side of the power equation, even though the process aimed to be democratic and participatory, there were silences that were a consequence of some contributors being able to articulate their understandings and movement within the emerging discursive space more than others.
Chapter eleven of the Course Review (Reynolds et al., 1999, p. 84-85) provided a summary of recommendations for developing the new Course. All recommendations referred directly or indirectly to the issue of ‘academic literacy’. Listed below are the statements / inscriptions that provided the context for the ways that the bridging Course and ‘academic literacy’ was to be understood.

1. **General policy  Chapter 1**

   It is recommended that the reconstruction of the present course be based on critical education philosophies. The context will continue to focus on those concepts and skills identified as fundamental for the successful access to, and commencement of, university first year studies. Processes will include multiple literacies, flexible delivery, the use of the latest technologies, culturally appropriate student support and inter-institutional and inter-sector links.

2. **Present strengths  Chapters 2,3 and 4**

   It is recommended that the strength of the present courses, as identified from survey data, be maintained and enhanced.

3. **Indigenous non-Indigenous context  Chapters 4,5,6 and 7**

   It is recommended that the new course use knowledge at the borders of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures as a major resource for learning and that the processes incorporate a constructivist negotiation of knowledge and processes.

4. **Indigenous context  Chapter 5**

   It is recommended that the School maintains and develops further a structure that guarantees effective Indigenous input at the policy and process levels. The new course will include the values and aspirations of Indigenous communities in relation to higher education by incorporating the guiding principles of self determination, social justice, reconciliation, equity, lifelong learning, recognition of traditional knowledge and Indigenous pedagogies.

5. **Aboriginal education policies  Chapter 5**

   It is recommended that the new course incorporate the findings from the Aboriginal Education Policy (89), the Review of AEP (95), West (98), Kemp MCEETYA, as well as the Objectives and Strategic Plan of [the] …
University and … [the] School ...

6. **Strategic planning and quality assurance** *Chapters 5 and 10*

   It is recommended that the planning, implementation and evaluation of the new course conform to the principles and policies of strategic planning and quality assurance.

7. **Financial support** *Chapter 5*

   It is recommended that sufficient financial support be identified and made available to ensure that the course will achieve its various objectives. The presentation of the course will require sufficient funding from DETYA as it is a non-HECS endeavour.

8. **Content of course** *Chapters 6, 7 and 8*

   The course will be determined from an analysis of the concepts and skills regarded as fundamental for the successful meeting of first year objectives.

9. **Flexible deliveries** *Chapters 6 and 7*

   It is recommended that the new course develop new kinds of educational experience through on-line, mixed mode, audio visual resources, summer school, modularisation, regional and satellite centres and block release. These strategies will enhance the communication between learner and learner and between learner and the University.

10. **Student - institutional context** *Chapter 10*

    It is recommended that the new course maintain multiple means of student support and introduce new support services, including more strategic use of tutors, IT support, extension of regional centres, childcare support and area coordinators.

11. **Inter-institutional and inter-sector contexts** *Chapter 10*

    It is recommended that the new course maintain and develop links with other educational providers and Indigenous community organisations and agencies, and Indigenous community members.
Appendix 7

What beliefs and values generally underpin peoples’ practice in the delivery of the bridging program? What range of beliefs do you think underpin where people are coming from?

Documents from the processes of narrative mapping.

Theme Grid Q2

The following table corresponds to the narrative maps that follow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Narrative Set-up Q2 (Goal-Achievement pattern)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridging courses had an ideological underpinning. [a]</td>
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<tr>
<td>The course’s purpose was to redress the poor performance of the formal education system in preparing Indigenous students for higher education. (Group Response Sentence 151)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Goal of the course was empowerment and growth. [b] (Group Response Sentence 152)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The methods used in the course for empowering and increasing students’ life opportunities, particularly opportunities that would be found through higher education, were bound in a process that aimed to develop students’ critical language and discourse analysis capacities. [c] (Group Response Sentence 153-156)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Group 2.01 [d] (Group Response Sentence 158-164) Differences in what seemed possible to achieve in different modes of program. | Response 2.01 Opportunity-Taking Pattern | A critical pedagogy was difficult to negotiate at a distance. There had to be better ways of achieving the existing goals. |

| Group 2.02 [g] (Group Response Sentence 165-172) Competing forces, pedagogical ideals, financial pressures, and irreconcilable dilemmas. | Response 2.02 Goal-Achievement pattern / Opportunity-Taking Pattern | Argument that students needed to learn to understand and be able to use the discourses of power. Suggestion that the course was engaged in developing students’ systems for living, that was, students’ capacity to negotiate complex discourses and a resilience in the face of it all. |

| Broader Definition of academic literacy | Argument that while some students entering the course might demonstrate a highly competent level of critical analysis and writing competence, they might at the same time have a limited capacity to cope with the structure and dynamics of the mainstream institution. It was in developing this latter competence, in addition to the more “conventional” understandings of what “academic literacy” meant, that the bridging course added value. |

<p>| Raising entry levels | An antithetical set of course principles would see the raising the entry-level ‘academic criteria’ for increasing the course’s success rates. |
| Course difficulty and starting levels | The argument that if there was an organisational recognition that a correlation existed between students coping with the pedagogical methods chosen in the course and the ‘academic literacy’ level at which students must be proficient to cope with those methods, then the maintenance of too low an entry level literacy competence, would adversely effect the whole dynamics of the learning system. A consequence of this mismatch would be an ongoing negative impact on student success. |
| Course Viability | Raising the course entry literacy levels would likely make the course economically unviable. Not enough students would qualify for entry. |
| Making the course more mainstream | This solution could be part and parcel of a construction of ‘academic literacy’ measured and articulated in very mainstream terms. It could signal a change in course design that in most respects paralleled the objectives and processes of mainstream University preparation courses. By proposing the idea that some in the University might see a solution to the poor course success rates in raising the course entry-level criteria, not an unreasonable proposition given that this type of gate keeping was the ‘normal’ process by which Universities claimed to maintain its ‘academic’ standards, such a configuration, might also signal an understanding of ‘academic literacy’ as something very delineated and disconnected from the learning processes that students might have to go through. This position indicates a second order change potential. |
| The difficulty of finding a model that made both logical sense and satisfied funding criteria. | The dilemma was that there was never a large enough pool of students at the appropriate level of literacy competence to conduct a financially viable program however small. The logical extension of the proposition put forward by the management was that now that the course was to be reduced to one semester, the students entering that program would need to be only one semester away from having an appropriate level of academic competence rather than two. The potential market of students that had previously been determined as being too small to run a viable one year program without swelling course numbers with less competent students, was now going to be even smaller. |
| Group 2.03 [I] (Group Response Sentence 173-181) Opportunities for the Course | If students were coming out of secondary school under-prepared and unable to access university, and TAFE were not meeting that niche in that learning market, the University Indigenous bridging program was ideally placed to do so. In recognising these opportunities the University was likely to play a role in second order change interventions to maximise what it considered to be the most sustainable outcomes. |
| | There were funding, status and social justice implications for the University to support the School to develop a successful program. |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Group 2.04 [n] (Group Response Sentence 182-187)</th>
<th>Response 2.04 Goal-Achievement Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The ongoing viability and rationale for the course under the university’s pressure to conform.</td>
<td>There are two second order solutions to the course’s problems with this negative evaluation of institutional pressure to change. The first was to make the course conform to something that looks more like a mainstream bridging program. Such a change while hypothetical was a real possibility, but such a change could mean dramatic changes in the profile of the students taken into the course resulting in a dramatic drop student enrolments. It could also mean that no change was made to the student entry level profile and students continued to struggle, a point already alluded to under Group Response 2.02. Such a scenario defers and transfers the issues of viability to the next version of the program. Any later version of the program then faced the prospect of being closed down for much the same reasons.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Group 2.05 [p] (Group Response Sentence 188-201)</th>
<th>Response 2.05 Opportunity-Taking Pattern</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Move outside the system (a sign of frustration)</td>
<td>The solution proposed was that a new institution, one outside existing university systems, was required that would produce better outcomes for Indigenous students. The solution, was not in this instance, a solution beyond a desire that the school and course to remain in control of their situation. It is a narrative that is indicative of a level of frustration with higher order constraints on what can and can’t be done.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Group 2.06 [u] (Group Response Sentence 202-212)</th>
<th>Response 2.06 Desire Arousal-Fulfilment Pattern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Identity Problems</td>
<td>The possibility of a strong and independent school within the structure of a mainstream University was thought not to be an impossible scenario. The School had previously fought a successful rearguard action to remain within a faculty structure.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Group 2.07 [aa] (Group Response Sentence 213-216)</th>
<th>Response 2.07 Desire Arousal-Fulfilment Pattern</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questioning the wisdom of the former fight to remain a part of a Faculty structure – protection arguments</td>
<td>The decision to remain within a Faculty structure gave the school the possibility to grow and develop new degree programs. This potential was the basis of one of the key arguments made in favour of staying part of the mainstream Faculty system. The School, in other words, cast itself when it rejected the proposed positioning, as a mainstream entity. To have done otherwise, was to possibly restrict the Schools’ function to being a student support unit, teaching the bridging course and a single shared degree.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Group 2.08 [ad] (Group Response Sentence 217-218)</th>
<th>Response 2.08 Desire Arousal-Fulfilment Pattern</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proposition: To achieve more autonomy, required better School leadership</td>
<td>In the event that there was a different leadership, there was nothing to support the proposition that key circumstances would change for the course.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 2.09 [af] (Group Response Sentence 219-231) Was the School Supported by the University leadership?</td>
<td>Response 2.09 Goal-Achievement Pattern</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>This proposition opens up the possibility for a <strong>second order change</strong>. The reasons for this are as follows. If it were true, the non-engagement with Indigenous programs by the University’s senior management would have dire consequences for the School and the course.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An interpretation of lecturer frustration with University senior management lay in a belief that the University’s support for the School was ideologically too conservative and rigid for the pedagogical tasks at hand.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Viability</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A more likely scenario informing a <strong>second order change</strong> process, was that interventions would likely be made through more localised levels of the University hierarchy to facilitate changes for alternative visions for sustainability. Intervention was far more likely to come from the Faculty or within the school itself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Narrative Map of Q2 (Responses, evaluations, and second-order narrative change)
Narrative Map of Q2 (With alphabet coding. Refer to table above)
The second question: processes of narrative mapping - Group Responses

What beliefs and values generally underpin peoples’ practice in the delivery of the bridging program? What range of beliefs do you think underpin where people are coming from?

Narrative problems have been described as having first and second order change processes (Watzlawick et al., 1974). A first order change means that the change happens within the narrative system but no opportunity is made or potential recognised for system feedback. A first order solution may feed into another sub-narrative, that might then provide a second order solution, but in itself it doesn’t leave the narrative system. A problem, when narratively resolved as part of a first order solution, remains part of the internal dynamics of the narrative system. A second order narrative change on the other hand, only becomes possible when a solution is proposed that demonstrates the means or a pathway where systemic feedback can occur to the narrative system as a whole. In leaving the narrative system, the narrative situation can change. It no longer necessarily stays the same. The world is possibly changed.

In Delueze and Guattarri’s terms this solution, leaving the first order narrative system, can be called ‘a line of flight’. A ‘narrative line of flight’ can ‘blow apart strata’, it can be an ‘escape valve’, a ‘bridge to a new formation’. A second order narrative solution means that the narrative can leave the containment of the first order system and feedback on the narrative’s initial global situation, thus allowing a potential for ‘global’ narrative change; the initial situation will no longer necessarily exist in the same form, nor will it necessarily lead to the same goal/s.
I designed this second research question to drill down through aspects of the initial narrative and to map this second collective story as a narrative network. The objective of this exercise is two-fold. The first is to further explore the lecturers’ beliefs and values that underpin their practice in delivering the bridging program. In doing so, the research will map the artefact ‘academic literacy’ as it moves through lecturers’ themes and concepts. The second but related objective is to map lecturers’ narrative/s as a system of interconnected narrative problems and the attempts to resolve those narrative problems.

I will focus initially on the second of these two objectives. The story in this second group response is set up globally as a Goal-Achievement narrative pattern, however other narrative patterns are used within the narrative in the interpretation of whether or not the goal was successfully achieved.

To recap, a Goal-Achievement narrative pattern (the narrative group response to the first research question also followed this pattern), typically shows the prevailing reality or situation, the narrative then introduces the goal of the narrative and the method chosen to achieve the goal, and finally, the narrative provides an evaluation and the results of the narrative goal.

Hoey argues that narrative patterns such as a Goal-Achievement pattern, are ‘culturally popular patterns of organisation’ and explains them by drawing a parallel with how we culturally understand scripts and schemata (Hoey, 2001, p.119-146). When we get partial information about a situation we can often culturally understand or anticipate the rest. For example, when a reader / listener, observes a character walk into a restaurant and sit down, then observes another man approach and stand by the first character’s table, the reader / listener doesn’t need to have it explained that the latter character is a waiter. This is a type of cultural script that most people who have ever gone into a restaurant or have ever watched television will recognise. When we get part of a story/script, we can draw on our resources (the thousands of other scripts we carry in our heads) to anticipate the likely paths of the narrative. Similarly but also differently, schemas are cognitive systems we all use to help organise inter-related ideas. An example of the way a schema works can be the way a single word can trigger a network of related words and associations. Both scripts and schemas demonstrate that most of the information in our minds is organised as relationships and patterns, rather than being haphazardly distributed.

Hoey however argues that there are ‘culturally popular patterns of organisation’ that give shape and meaning to the way we read narratives. These patterns are related to scripts and schema in that they are all ways of organising information. Hoey argues however, that these ‘culturally popular patterns of organisation’ are better thought of as structures than as schemas and scripts. Hoey believes that ‘schemas and scripts are not practicable analytical tools’ whereas the ‘culturally popular patterns of [narrative] organisation’ that he describes can be (Hoey, 2001, p.122).

Most of these ‘cultural popular patterns’ of narrative organization are highly related to the most common form of the patterns, the Problem-Solution pattern. Hoey observes that we see recycling process in most cases of these narrative patterns that follow ‘repeated patterns of Problems-Response-Negative Evaluation/Result, where each instance of the last element reinstates the
Hoey points out that a positive evaluation does not necessarily bring the pattern to an end because, if the ‘Positive Evaluation is followed by a Negative Evaluation, the latter overrides the former… [Hoey additionally argues that] what distinguishes the two kinds of Negative Evaluation/Result is the irretrievability or otherwise of the Result. If the Negative Result is beyond retrieval, [that is there is no additional Positive Evaluation, the Negative Evaluation] functions exactly like a Positive Evaluation for the purposes of pattern completion’ (Hoey, 2001, p.131-132).

I propose that when a group of people respond to a research question, that the initial response/s to that question sets up a global narrative pattern that primarily takes the form of one but sometimes two of these ‘culturally popular patterns’. However, within this global narrative it is likely to then find sub-narratives that utilise both the same but sometimes different ‘culturally popular’ narrative patterns. Mapping these narratives structurally and in terms of these ‘culturally popular patterns’, will allow me to see topographically how the group narratives flow and link as dynamic eco-social narrative meaning systems.

For this second objective of narrative mapping, I will not focus in detail on the whole group narrative, but will limit detailed description to those points in the narrative that lead to, and became indicative of, second order narrative change potential. Those sub-narratives that don’t offer second order change potential will be briefly summarised but not interrogated deeply due to the constraints of the thesis. (though points might be highlighted in some instances)

Bob begins by setting the stage. Bob says that the course is an ‘enabling’ course, but is quick to point out that the term ‘enabling’ is somewhat inadequate.

Bob: (151) Well it’s called an, it’s an awful word, an ‘enabling’ course..

This word “enabling” carries the history and connotations of courses set up for Indigenous people who require the opportunity of an alternative entry pathway. Indigenous enabling programs have been around for a couple of decades and their reputation and value have often been viewed with scepticism by academics and bureaucrats alike (Keeffe, 1990; Singh, 1990). While transition rates from Indigenous ‘enabling’ course into university has by many measures been poor, these courses have nonetheless, provided a necessary educational bridge for hundreds of Indigenous people across the country.

There has often been an ideological rationale for programs such as Indigenous pre-tertiary bridging courses. Bob, in his portrayal of the character of Indigenous pre-tertiary courses, adds:

Bob: (151b) but in a way, there’s also a mention about political empowerment, type of thing.

A significant reason for the establishment and ongoing support for university bridging courses for Indigenous students is the fact that the mainstream primary and secondary educational processes have been spectacularly unsuccessful in making a tertiary education possible. Only eight Indigenous students from the whole of Western Australia in 2004 (check Ref??) managed to get
direct entry into University degree programs as a result of the standard Tertiary Admissions process. Higher education has always been seen as politically and socially empowering for those who have it. Having a higher education has high status most societies.

Outlining his take on the goal of the bridging course Bob says:

Bob: (152) So, behind it all, I suppose, in more general terms, individual development, so that they are strengthened, they have an understanding of how language, and communication, and writing are, forms of empowerment, or, forms of expression, and identity and things of this nature, and so your basic, I suppose your basic value is one of, allowing for growth.

The goal according to Bob, is to provide an educational vehicle to develop personal growth. This goal is accomplished, by strengthening students’ awareness of how language, communication and writing skills can increase their power and broaden their sense of identity.

The method for achieving this goal is again outlined by Bob.

Bob: (153) Allowing for a critical awareness, of how forms of conversation or communication that we use, in various parts of society, to see that they have those skills, they are still skills, but, it’s put into a much more richer, more meaningful context.

Damien supports Bob’s interpretation of the course’s skill set going beyond the more conventional understanding of the concept “skill”.

Damien: (154) It’s a much broader definition of what skills means.

Bob agrees.

Bob: (155) That’s right. (156) Yes.

Bob is talking about critical language awareness. This means developing students’ ability to use more powerful forms of language and discourse, including the ability to interpret power relations inherent in discourse. As Damien concurs, this view of developing students’ language and discourse awareness is much more than what might be normally thought of when people talk of learning skills.

The co-narration of this Goal-Achievement pattern then seeks to test the results of this goal. A series of responses and evaluations are then made to this narrative set up that attempt to narratively resolve the success of the goal. The process of this collective story telling is broken down and mapped as follows.
Response 2.01

Here the lecturers argue that when “academic literacy” is constructed as developing students’ critical language / discourse awareness and their performance in using language and discourse, there was acknowledgement that this goal was easier to achieve with internal than with external students. The more contact there is between students and lecturer the more it was considered possible to develop these capacities. Unless innovative ways could be introduced to increase this contact between lecturers and students for students studying at a distance, it would always be a much more complex task building these capacities than for internal students.

While Response 2.01 pointed to changes that were required in the methods chosen for the delivery of a ‘critical pedagogy’, given the very different needs of internal and external cohorts, there was nothing that suggested a second order change. The solution here signalled that there had to be better ways of achieving the existing goals.

Response 2.02

Damien fine-tunes the co-ordinates of the original narrative goal by portraying the goal as being about, increasing students’ biculturalism. Damien also says that the unique discourse location of Indigenous students, creates both opportunities and dilemmas for the school in offering a bridging course. These opportunities and dilemmas are compounded by the conservative economic rationalist times.

(165) No, I mean I think, following on from what you’ve said Bob, I think one of the underpinnings, things that we’re trying to do in the [course], is to increase the level of, and it’s a horrible term, I don’t think it’s very useful, it’s not very descriptive, but it is to increase the level of biculturalism in students, so that they can cope with the, I mean, and so that they can understand the literacies and communications methods of the university system.
Combined with Opportunity-Taking pattern

(166) Most students don’t come with that, even the ones with really high [pre-course] testing, aren’t necessarily, might be quite literate, on paper, but they’re not necessarily going to know how to, how to do that in a university environment.

Negative evaluation

Damien: (167) So I don’t... (168) And I certainly don’t think that increasing the level of, of testing, or increasing the mark to get into the course, is going to be terribly effective.

Positive evaluation

Damien: (169) I mean, it will be effective in one way, students will have a better chance of getting through,

Negative evaluation

Damien: (169b) but it’s not, I mean the road’s a whole, the whole equity issue, of trying to redress, the poor performance of the school sector, for so many years. (170) I mean, it’s kind of like, we really don’t really want to do that any more. (171) What’s too hard to do that, or too expensive, or too different from what the rest of the university is doing, so we don’t want to do it any more.

Negative evaluation

Mary: (172) Or someone else’s job.

Bob and Damien both concede that the concepts chosen to best approximate what it is the course is trying to achieve, fall well short of the mark. Bob earlier uses the word “awful” to describe the inadequacy of the concept “enabling” many use to describe the course. Damien labels as “horrible” what he clearly believes is an inadequate concept to characterise the core function of the course, that is, increasing students “bicultural” capacities. Damien’s vision of the course goal is not dissimilar to Bob’s description. Both are saying that students need to become proficient in understanding and using the discourses of power. Both are interested in teaching students about systems for living, achieving success and resilience in negotiating complex discourses.

Damien is in two minds about the effectiveness of raising the entry-level academic criteria for increasing the measures of course success. His views here teases out some differences in common understandings about what ‘academic literacy’ might more commonly mean. It also indicates a second order change scenario. Damien is projecting that a possible contribution to the solution of poor success rates might be to raise the entry-level criteria. This solution could be part and parcel of a construction of academic literacy measured and articulated in very mainstream terms. It could signal a change in course design that in most respects paralleled the objectives and processes of mainstream university preparation courses. Whilst it is possible that the objectives and processes of the course could significantly change in this direction, raising the course entry literacy levels would likely make the course economically unviable. Not enough students would qualify.
Damien believes that while some students entering the course might demonstrate a highly competent level of critical analysis and writing competence, they might at the same time have a limited ability to cope with the structure and dynamics of the institution. It is in developing this latter competence, in addition to the more “conventional” understandings of what “academic literacy” means, that Damien believes that the bridging course adds value.

The two broad meanings of “academic literacy” are interconnected in Damien’s conception and he recognises this when he re-shapes his narrative opinion about starting level literacies and student success. He says that in fact there is likely to be a positive correlation of success when students enter the course with a higher level of “academic literacy”. This higher level of “academic literacy” is measured by applicant’s critical and linguistic performance in a pre-course assessment, or alternatively, with some “proof” of academic competence, such as a high school academic transcript. On reflection, Damien suggests that the more of the target literacies a student has at the beginning of a new learning process, the easier students will deal with the learning process as a whole.

As an example of a first order system dynamic, is if there is an organisational recognition that a correlation exists between students coping with the pedagogical methods chosen in the course and the literacy level at which students must be proficient to cope with those methods, then the maintenance of too low an entry level literacy competence, will adversely effect the whole dynamics of the learning system. A consequence of this mismatch will be ongoing negative impacts on student success.

Ongoing changes in teaching and learning method will be required, if a lower than ideal entry-level course competence is maintained because of economic sustainability issues or ideological arguments around access and equity. The situation will not fundamentally change for the course if the philosophy, politics and pedagogical underpinnings fundamentally remain the same. The methods for improving such a course will be a process of continual trial and error, refinement and experimentation, to make the most out of a difficult situation.

Damien alludes to the complex terrain the course has to negotiate as the broader social context moves further to an economically rationalist position. The course for Damien needs to exist because of the systemic failure of the both the primary and secondary school systems, and the society at large, to provide the conditions where Indigenous people can readily succeed in education. In an outcomes driven world, there is often an amnesia surrounding the unique circumstances of many Indigenous Australians whose history and trajectories have been for so long located at mainstream’s margins. When all expectations are increasing measured against the standard mainstream indicators (ref fed reports), the blame for not coming up to those indicators is usually put back on those not reaching those indicators. In this case both the students and those teaching the program are constructed as somehow inadequate.

The task before the course, to develop Indigenous people’s “academic literacy” to mainstream indicators of tertiary competence, was being increasingly portrayed by the university, according to Damien, as “too hard … or too expensive, or too different from
what the rest of the university is doing, so we don’t want to do it any more.” Mary adds that this perception is an abdication of responsibility by the powers that be, others who are concluding it’s “someone else’s job.”

These comments followed a considerable period of rumour and speculation in the school, that the type of educational gap that the school and bridging course were designed to address, was no longer to be the concern of university departments. These were passed on to the course team as unofficial murmurings from Canberra. Signals from Canberra supporting pre-tertiary courses for Indigenous students eventually quelled this speculation and the course was felt to have a future as long as it could remain viable, that is both economically and in terms of student graduations.

Saying it is ‘too hard’ and that pre-tertiary education should be ‘someone else’s job’ is a second order solution to the problem of conducting the course. The school simply stops running the course. The problem of having a “dubiously” successful program then evaporates. This is a real solution, a solution whose potential remains hovering in the university boardrooms.

Response 2.03

Damien, reflecting on the opportunity that exists for the school and university in running an Indigenous bridging program, says:

Opportunity-Taking pattern

Damien: (173) Yeh, (174) Well it is no one else’s job because, schools aren’t doing it, TAFE’s certainly isn’t doing it, we’re the only one left that, can be doing it.

Combined with a Goal-Achievement pattern

(175) It should be our core business I think because, no one else is going to, bust themselves to get students out of their own institutions into ours. (176) So we have to, have to be given that task, I think.

Negative evaluation

Damien: (177) But I just don’t think that the university’s, interested in us doing it because it is too different, from their other core business. (178) I think that, I mean our staffing profile, our student profile, the way we do some things, the differences we have both small and large, to the rest of the university, confuses the hell out of many, and they don’t like it.

Bob: (179) No, that’s right.

Damien: (180) They want us to be..
Damien signals some very important economic and political realities that create opportunities for the university. It was Damien’s considered opinion that the TAFE system was not interested in developing the literacies or pathways that students required to make the transition into university. So if students were coming out of secondary school under-prepared and unable to access university, and TAFE were not meeting that niche in that learning market, the university bridging program was ideally placed to do so.

Damien also makes the point that no institution will work against its own economic interests to prepare students to move to a competing institution. The university itself also recognises that the bridging course, if efficient, can play a significant role in helping meet its own enrolment and equity targets for Indigenous degree students. There are funding, status and social justice implications for supporting the school to develop a successful program. In recognising these opportunities the university is likely to play a role in second order change interventions to maximise what it considers to be the most sustainable outcomes.

Given the opportunities and goals presented in running a bridging program, Damien remains ambiguous about the university’s commitment to the program. Damien believes that the course and how it is run, is just too different to what happens elsewhere in the university.
Response 2.04

Damien questions the ongoing viability and rationale for the course and the school under the university’s pressure to conform.

Goal-Achievement pattern:

\[\text{Damien: (182) They want us to be like the rest. (183) Our staff to be like the rest of the university. (184) Which means, we’ve all got to have PhD’s and we’ve all got to, have this, that and the other. (185) I mean, and then our students all have to behave more like the rest of the university as well.} \]

Negative evaluation

\[\text{(186) They might as well close us down. (187) Because, if you move everything to that end then, you don’t need a bridging program, you don’t need an Aboriginal school.} \]

Raising the potential of institutional intolerance for difference, Damien is sounding a warning that once the mainstream totally sets the terms for what counts as important, the existence of the course becomes less necessary. In such a scenario, Indigenous students may then find that the only pathway open to them is to do the mainstream university preparation program, a situation that under the present guidelines, most Indigenous students would not meet the prerequisite requirements.

Narratively Damien finds two second order solutions to the course’s problems with his negative evaluation of institutional pressure to change. The first is to make the course conform to something that looks more like a mainstream bridging program. Such a change while hypothetical is a real possibility, but such a change could mean dramatic changes in the profile of the students taken into the course resulting in a dramatic drop student enrolments. It could also mean that no change is made to the student entry level profile and students continue to struggle, a point already alluded to under 2.02.
There also remains the possibility that many of the lecturers’ assumptions about its students could be wrong and that students would generally respond more successfully to a more mainstream program. Success it would seem depends on many factors including experimentation. The second of Damien’s second order solutions, as has already been proposed earlier in this group narrative (2.02), that is, to simply close the course. Closing the course is unlikely to be an immediate solution, but a solution that is likely to be amongst the school’s possible strategic options at a later date.

Response 2.05

The next sub-narrative follows the Opportunity-Taking pattern: it is a perfect example of a first order narrative because while it suggests a change possibility, the change proposed is not likely to impact on the problems facing the program. The solution proposed is that a new institution, one outside existing university systems, is required that will produce better outcomes for Indigenous students. Damien was attracted to a model that was having some success in Hawaii, one that required lecturers and administrators to work without pay. The solution, was not in this instance, a solution beyond a desire that the school and course to remain in control of their situation. It is a narrative that is indicative of a level of frustration with higher order constraints on what can and can’t be done. This sub-narrative is indicative of a level the of interference that some lecturers feel is applied to the course by both the institution who desire a sustainable program, and the funding bodies who are looking at value for the taxpayer’s dollar.

Response 2.06

For Joyce the possibility of a strong and independent school within the structure of a mainstream university was not an impossible scenario. There had been examples of such situations in other universities. Utilising a Desire Arousal-Fulfilment pattern, the participants debated whether or not the way an Indigenous School fits within various university structures effects the way it can do business.

Joyce recalls the very real opportunity that the school had been presented with, only a few years earlier, to move outside of a faculty structure. In this former university restructuring process, every model proposed for that restructure, positioned the school as separate entity, an entity reporting directly to a deputy vice chancellor. The school fought a successful rearguard action to remain within a faculty structure.

Response 2.07

The narrative response of the next sub-narrative followed a Goal-Achievement pattern. There was debate about whether or not the correct decision was made in remaining a part of a faculty structure. The decision to remain within a faculty structure gave
the school the possibility to grow and develop new degree programs. This potential was the basis of one of the key arguments made in favour of staying part of the mainstream faculty system.

Through this decision, the school has been able to develop its own degree programs and extend its reach by offering electives to students in other school’s degrees. This capacity would have been unlikely under the former proposed alternative. The school, in other words, cast itself when it rejected the proposed positioning, as a mainstream entity. To have done otherwise, was to possibly restrict the schools’ function to being a student support unit, teaching the bridging course and a single shared degree. While a possibility may have remained to develop free floating units available to students enrolled in other school’s courses, the capacity of the school to develop its own degrees would have remained limited.

Again this narrative was a first order narrative about what could have been. It offers no solutions beyond speculations about the past. What it does indicate, is the history, particularly in more recent times, of possible threats to the nature of the school’s existence, and the tenacity of the school to determine its self-direction.

Response 2.08

For Joyce, remaining in a faculty structure and one tightly bound by standardised university conventions, was a two edged sword. For Joyce, to achieve more autonomy, required better leadership by the School. This narrative followed a Desire Arousal-Fulfilment pattern.

This narrative is indicative of a first order change process because there was no suggestion that there was any change in the leadership of the school. It is also a narrative of speculation because even in the event that there was a different leadership, there is nothing to support the proposition that key circumstances would change for the course.

Response 2.09

Damien introduces a Goal-Achievement patterned sub-narrative about a proposed university innovation that he believed would be beneficial to the leadership of the school. The university was offering the possibility for the school to employ a professor to help build the academic and research profile of the school. This professor had to be an eminent academic in a field related to the school’s education programs. Narratively, this is considered to be a first-order change process, because even in the event that the appointment was taken up, the effects of this change would not necessarily result in more than first order changes for the course.

The narrative shifts to a consideration of the proposition that while some other university DVC’s were highly supportive of their Indigenous programs, the DVC of the course’s home university was not. This proposition opens up the possibility for a second
**order change.** The reasons for this are as follows. If it were true, the non-engagement with Indigenous programs by the DVC would have dire consequences for the school and the program. In difficult economic times, not to have the support of the university senior hierarchy could possibly undermine programs to such an extent that they might completely fail. The proposition that the DVC is un-supportive, is however, speculation.

An interpretation of lecturer frustration lies in a belief that the university’s support is ideologically too conservative and rigid for the pedagogical tasks at hand. Mainstream educational systems that are too rigid or uncompromising have a history of failure for Indigenous people. This is why bridging courses exist in the first place.

A more likely scenario informing a **second order change** process, is that interventions could likely be made through more localised levels of the university hierarchy to facilitate changes for alternative visions for sustainability. Intervention was far more likely to come from the Faculty or within the school itself. It is in no one’s interest to see courses fail. What this vision for sustainability might be and who might be involved in its making is unknown. There is little doubt that pressure is being applied to change the course. The nature of that pressure appears to be economic, informed by a motivation to make the course shorter and therefore cheaper to run.
The blaming that lecturers direct to both the DVC and the claims of poor school leadership, is symptomatic of the fact that lecturers feel that the school has attained little insulation from the pressures of the wider university to develop ideas and follow them through.
Appendix 8

Actor Network built out of Second-order Change points in lecturers’ responses to questions 2 to 6.

Williams-Jones and Graham argued that if we are concerned with ‘what drives a network or brings it into being, then we need to consider all the components that that collaborate, co-operate, complete, and lead to proliferation, persistence, or perishing of that network’ (Williams-Jones & Graham, 2003). ANT in combination with processes of narrative analysis would point to those processes, entities and networks in the discourses of the participants that while in plain view may not have been ‘readily apparent’ (Strathern, 1999 cited in Williams-Jones & Graham, 2003). While ANT might seek an account for every contributing factor in the explanation of a phenomena, limiting the explanation based upon the account of those working creating local meanings, does not have to diminish the usefulness of ANT.

The mapping of an actor-network. The Second-order change points in the Group Narratives that signalled the major links along which actors worked to maintain the integrity of the network. It was around these change points that relevant Off-stage individual responses were mapped back into the Group narrative.
1: Group Q.2

Bridging courses had an ideological underpinning

The Goal of the course was empowerment and growth

Bound in a process that aimed to develop students’ critical language and discourse analysis capacities

2: 2.02 (Change point)

Competing forces, pedagogical ideals, financial pressures, and irreconcilable dilemmas.

Making the course more mainstream

3: Related issues:

Broader Definition of academic literacy

Raising entry levels

Course difficulty and starting levels

Course Viability

The difficulty of finding a model that made both logical sense and satisfied funding criteria.

4: 2.03 (Change point)

Meeting market niche

There were funding, status and social justice implications for the University to support the School to develop a successful program.

The University was likely to play a role in second order change interventions to maximise what it considered to be the most sustainable outcomes.
5: 2.04 (Change point)

The ongoing viability and rationale for the course under the university’s pressure to conform.

Institutional intolerance of difference

Deferring and transferring the issues of course viability

6: 2.09 (Change point)

Was the School Supported by the University leadership?

Possible dire consequences for the School and the course?

University interventions for alternative visions for sustainability.

7: Q.3

Further course change being implemented, before the existing plan, has been allowed to run its full course.

Decisions were being made purely on economic grounds. And, not on, on anything about pedagogy or, what’s best for the students, or, even listening. No consultation with the staff.

A lack of understanding of, how much time it takes to develop anything.

8: 3.01 (Change point)

The course will change because it is to be an imposed change. The changes were interpreted as over-riding the implementation and evaluative processes of the lecturing staff. There was some erosion of staff confidence because there was a sense that their collective efforts have been devalued.

9: 3.03 (Change point)

To arbitrarily make decisions about staffing first, devoid of course considerations, whether that is on financial grounds or ideological, was to risk the viability and the quality of the program.

Claims that no appreciation was being show for the normal processes of course development, and where staff being denied the opportunities to make the course efficient and effective.
Lecturers felt that the existing course (course B) was not supported at management level and nor were the staff responsible for teaching it. Executive control would make course change immanent.

10: Q.4

It’s a university policy, which is, not allowing, the goals to be implemented, fully.

Half way through, your fast tracking, half way through your participation policies, you’re having decisions being made.

As if they were already failures.

11: 4.03 (Change point)

Lecturers felt their contributions were marginalised and devalued by School and University administrators.

Change was perceived as being inevitable because an agenda has been clearly set by management to replace the existing course.

12: Q.5

Fait accompli.

The only consultation we seem to get is, asking an opinion after the decision has already been made.

Consultation. Or lack of. By the decision-makers. And no consultation.

13: 5.01 (Change point)

There was an argument that the University was confused, or felt it was facing a dilemma as to how to delegate control to the School, and while the University might have wanted to delegate, it continued to intervene.

There was an argument that the University was the force really setting the parameters for what was possible for the course.

14: 5.04 (Change point)

There was an argument that the School had lost its way, its reason for being, and consequently, everything about the course was affected.

The potential departures from the School’s traditional curricular missions for what were being constructed as pragmatic survival solutions, solutions such as taking over
the University’s mainstream university preparation course, was an indication of how desperate the School’s situation had become.

The ideological and pedagogical differences that needed to be worked through in terms of the Indigenous bridging course were now possibly going to be subsumed into new sets of problems and dilemmas.

The changing economic environment and the solutions that were being looked at to address this change in circumstance where clear drivers of second order change. Economic survival was now the name of the School’s game.

**15: Q.6**

Solutions to the issues facing the program?

Well at various levels, you’ve got managerial solutions.

You’ve also got your, normal, academic curriculum solutions, in a way.

So we need to, sort of look at arguments, from two different perspectives.

**16: 6.05 (Change point)**

There was an argument that building a relationship with the Indigenous community and the student body was a necessary critical political step in countering the seemingly arbitrary power of management.

‘One of the things that the, where, I mean, we obviously, we don’t exert enough power within the system, to be able to, challenge management, over these issues, but, there are other places where that power is vested, I mean, it’s back in community, in the student body, are the two places’.

The support and advisory mechanisms that course lecturers felt needed to be in place to both develop and offer some protection to the course was a long way from the reality of what was happening.

Taking a course of action to counter the agenda of management signals a second order change potential.

**17: 6.16 (Change point)**

It was proposed that a course advisory group still had a real and positive potential.

‘Get one and sit them down, and, when the review happens, that group can already been informed of what’s going on. From this perspective.’
If the course was to continue, in one shape or another, and the management had ordered a course review, then there was nothing more appropriate lecturers argued, in both an Indigenous context, and in terms of University quality processes, to have a community and student advisory group. It would be to this advisory group that lecturers could argue their pedagogical concerns.

This argument was an amplification of that put forward in Group Response 6.05 and again signalled a second order change potential.

18: 6.17 (Change point)

Lecturers recognised an opportunity in any review process that might take place. Lecturers could see that their inputs in line with University accepted quality processes could remain a viable part of any change process.

Lecturers from their perspective, had recognised an opportunity where quality processes and curriculum objectives might remain viable.

The support shown for arguments made in (6.16 and 6.05) was recognition that a second order change potential existed; a change potential that lecturers felt positive about.
Appendix 9

Sample (Integration matrix. Bringing Off-Stage material back into On-Stage Narrative around Second-Order change points in On-Stage Responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.4</th>
<th>Group 4.03</th>
<th>Goal-Achievement pattern</th>
<th>Joyce: (272) It’s like you’re being, silenced.</th>
<th>Undermined Joyce: (273) Undermined and cut off from being able do anything creative, or interesting, or, like learning anything from the experience, this is only the second year of [the bridging course].</th>
<th>The message is unambiguous. Lecturers had belief in the course they were trying to develop but now felt their contributions were marginalised and devalued by school and university administrators. A second order change was perceived as being inevitable because an agenda has been clearly set by management to replace the existing course.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glenys’s Story</td>
<td>Glenys’s story about pitch can be used to elucidate some of the change issues before both lecturers and students. The ironic tension is that Glenys believes that half the course is too difficult, but many of the lectures believed that the course required enormous innovation to bring students into the learning process given many initial inhibiting issues.</td>
<td>Glenys was concerned that three of the units in the existing course, units designed as second semester units, were too difficult and/or poorly realised. Glenys was also concerned that students on occasion were doing the more difficult second semester units before doing the recommended first semester units.</td>
<td>Glenys feels that something is fundamentally wrong with the “pitch” of the program. The level of difficulty, Glenys believes, is just too conceptually challenging for students at the pre-tertiary level. She links this with, what is in her opinion, a wider university identity insecurity problem.</td>
<td>Glenys reflects that her own experiences prior to enrolling in the bridging program, gave her a range of capacities that contributed to her ultimate success in completing the program, She acknowledges that without those prior experiences and capacities, the course, even back when she did it, would have been too difficult. Glenys strongly endorses the idea that it is the students’ entry-level competencies, including “academic literacies”, that determine a students’ capacity to cope academically. (Glenys118) The pitch at bridging, alright, but, as I was saying, about my own experiences, that, I’m lucky that, I’m just lucky that I’m a reader. (119) OK. (120) So, I came through the bridging course being a, being someone who reads. (121) I’ve always read, you know, from, you know, primary school. (122) And, I mean, someone once told me that reading, is always, is the key, you know. (123) So, I, I mean looking back on it now, reading is something that, that put me in a far stronger position, as a mature age student, you know. (124) And it will, any student. (125) If you’ve come, with strong reading, you know, you’re just, you’re at an advantage, strait away. (126) And I also came to the bridging, I came to the bridging course with, a love of reading, I came to the bridging course with, what would it have been?, OK, at that point, eight years experience working in, Aboriginal community organizations, and also in the public service, so I came to the bridging course, and</td>
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having worked with, the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, so I got to work with a lot of those key players, you know, so, so my, I came with all that experience that, had I not come with that experience, the pitch would have been too hard.

(Glenys127) Maybe, the pitch, the pitch would have been different for me, but it was my own individual experiences, that I brought, you know. (128) I mean, at the end of the day, that’s always going to determine, what that pitch is like, you know, whether it’s going to be through the roof or manageable. (129) And because I was just fortunate to have worked with, a lot of, very generous people, and you know, really, I mean, because that really gave me, a good insight into, Aboriginal politics, if I didn’t come with that, you know, where do you recon I would have been? (130) I would have been just starting out. (131) So, you know, it’s, it’s what you bring, what the individual brings, to the table, that determines, like I said, whether the pitch is, through the roof or if its, oh yeh, I’m going to cruise here, here and here, but I’m not going to cruise here, here and here, you know.

(132) And, yeh, so, but, OK, the pitch when I did the bridging course, but at the same time, even though I brought all of those experiences, right, I did seven units, in six months, OK, so I still had to do a huge load, adjusting to everything, you know, even though, and I brought a lot of self discipline with me, I had to still go through all of that, I mean it’s a different self discipline, when you study, to when you work, because you got a boss, you know, your boss is going to give you what for if you don’t turn up for work. (133) So, its still a huge life change. (134) It’s still huge. (135) But, so, the pitch for me, was kind of up and down, depending on the unit, but, I still almost pulled the plug. (136) You know. (137) And then when I, you see, when I did the testing, they said to me, well you’re borderline, so it’s your choice. (138) You can go, you can go into a degree, if you want, or, bridging, and, I chose bridging. (139) And I also chose bridging because, I was lucky enough to pick up a, because I was public service at that time, a scholarship. (140) So that, you know, paid, I got a wage, very, very lucky. (141) You know. (142) For my circumstances, I think, it was fairly unique because, I’m pretty sure that, we would not have had very many bridging students who went through our bridging program, on a paid scholarship. (143) So, I, yeh, in some ways I’m not a good example.

(144) I mean I’m not a good person to judge everything, everything by, because I’m just someone whose been very lucky, and had a lot of good breaks. (145) You know. (146) At a young age too. (147) I think. (148) But ah, so yeh.

Glenys concedes that she might not have been a typical student, in the sense that she had lots of advantages that many other students didn’t share. She admits that even with all her good fortune, she almost pulled out of the bridging course. The reasons that she

(149) But I always remember, that I almost gave up. (150) The only time, in all my studies, that I almost gave up, is in the bridging course. (151) Not in undergrad, but it was in the bridging course. (152) And that, I wouldn’t say that was because of content. (153) I would say that was because of the lifestyle changes, that you have to make, as a mature age student. (154) So, in that respect, I am an example that you can, my example, my experience, you can generalise from, you know. (155) Because, a lot of our students are mature.
almost pulled out were the result of the lifestyle changes she had to make as a mature age student, factors that she shared with many other mature age students. The message is clear that a high proportion of students are going to be challenged, if not by the academic learning, though highly likely that they will, then by maintaining the environmental conditions that allow a student to remain focused.  

Glenys introduces a new aspect of potential conflict for the course. The course’s study modes themselves, might not suit the lives of Indigenous people.  

Glenys is a strong advocate for the block mode of study. While her comments refer to people she knows in degree programs, the point is made that perhaps the course needs to reassess the modes of how the course is delivered.  

David believes that there is a clear relationship between the curriculum goals and practices and the programs problems. For David the course problems are generated from the widespread ignorance and non-application of the course’s foundational principles.  

For a range of reasons, lecturers have not followed the guidelines, principles and recommendations of the course review. Lecturers instead, according to David, apply their own understandings of what the course should be about. There is, in David’s view, a mismatch between what the
course should be doing and what is being translated as curriculum.

David also apportions responsibility for the course’s problems with the school’s senior management and the faculty for their failure to defer in any way to the course review.

(102) And not just on the [bridging] course itself, but from the senior management of the school and the faculty.

(103) I think that [the Review] doesn’t weigh into any decisions and so that’s where the problems are, that those, theoretic foundations aren’t used to inform, the [bridging course’s] direction.

David finds the rationale to change the course somewhat of a mystery. The economic rationale to shorten the course does not, for David make any economic sense.

(104) And the, what is used to inform the [bridging course] direction is, oh God knows, at the moment, I’ve got no idea why the program’s going the way it is. (105) To me it makes no sense at all. (106) Either financially or educationally.

David bases his economic rationale that the course would need twice as many students to remain economically viable, on the presumption of maintaining the economic status quo. The course brings in a lot of money to the school and there is an assumption that this revenue stream would attempt to be preserved. Other potential economic models could envisage quite different conceptions of the course.

(107) I’ll be interested to hear, and I doubt, experience tells no doubt, that I will ever find out why, why we’re going to a three unit course, and how, you can have, students doing a six month course, how that would save you money, because surely if you have a six month course you’d need to have twice as many students in it, first semester, second semester, which means you’ve got twice as many administrative issues to deal with.

(108) So, I’m yet to be convinced that where it seems we’re going now, has any connection with anything really.

While earlier recognising that there was a relationship between course curriculum goals and practices, and the problems the course was experiencing, David was not prepared to concede that these problems had anything to do with the decisions being taken to change the course. The decision to change the course was put down to the school getting “bad advice”.

(109) It sounds like bad advice to me, and it seems like perhaps it’s not the first time that bad advice has caused a dilemma within the school. (110) So, no correlation.

Amy’s Story

Amy believes that the course units value the students’ knowledge and self-concepts, and improves their understandings of Indigenous issues. However,

(26) If I have got a comment to make on that, because like most of the [bridging course] units, the, the outcomes for each of those units, is, values the student’s knowledge, and, perceptions of who they are, and improves their knowledge of Indigenous issues. (27) So, if, if the ‘curriculum goals and practices of the
she does have some concern about the level of difficulty in some units, and believes more can be done to combine Indigenous knowledge with academic skills, so that “students can succeed at both”. Amy makes a suggestion for how the course could improve. [bridging course] and the program’s problems’ if there is a comment, there might only be the comment that the level of some of the assignments is too high, but having said that, the other thing that we probably could do, is to, because the focus is on, is on academic skills, and Indigenous knowledge, then maybe we need to look a bit more closely at how we can combine those two, so that, so that, students can succeed at both, if there was to be a comment on either one of those…

For Amy, the way to strengthen the course, and improve student outcomes, would be to do more to incorporate Indigenous knowledges more structurally through the course. (28) What I’m saying is, if we’re looking at language, if we’re looking at Indigenous knowledge, then, if, as an example, we taught Nyungah in the [bridging course], and we taught it as a language, and then you look at the skills of teaching another language to any student, if that could be, if the focus could be changed to capitalise on the student’s knowledge, and equate that with the knowledge of the discipline that they’re learning, that is, the language or the content, then I’m sure you would improve the, the outcomes or the success rates for the students. (29) But that’s language, language is just one very specific example, I mean there probably are others you could look at as well.

For Damien, the problem that the course is facing is not the result of the curriculum, but is rather, the course’s poor outcomes, as determined by DETYA. The perception according to Damien, was that the course was a problem because it had become very expensive to run, and was not providing the taxpayers value for money. (151) Not directly, but I see that the curriculum goals, no I think again the main problems for the program, are lack of outcomes measured in the terms that, that DETYA has established them. (152) And I see therefore that they see it as, as a very expensive exercise for the amount of students that are graduating from the course. (153) I don’t really see any problems, any connections between the curriculum goals and how they’re played out in the program and the real problems that the program has. (154) I think the curriculum goals are quite, I mean I don’t think the curriculum goals are perfect but I think they’re very, very, good, and I don’t think that any deficiencies, certainly from my perspective, that the curriculum goals might have relate in any way to the problems that are being played out in the program at the moment. (155) So no. (156) No I don’t see any connection.

For Damien, the program has key problems, and it has other contributory problems. The curriculum problems, (157) But I think the connection is being made by other people, as part of a solution to provide better
where they exist, do not for Damien, relate in any way to the pressure to change the course. Rather, Damien believes, that influential others, are making a link, in order to facilitate other agendas.

financial outcomes for the program. (158) It’s, let’s address the, a part of finding a financial solution, is to change the entire program, therefore the curriculum, comes under question and needs to be changed to only allow, higher level students in, so therefore it increases their chances of getting out. (159) And I think that’s the only way the curriculum goals are actually being questioned.