

Engaging Remote and Very Remote Indigenous Students

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Project Title	Engaging Remote and Very Remote Indigenous Students with Education using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
Project Team	Ms Ruth Wallace, Associate Professor Michael Christie (SiMERR Northern Territory), Mark Manado (Kimberley College of TAFE) John Guenther (Kat Conapus Consulting), Bryce Ambins-King, John Greateorex (Charles Darwin University)
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Organisational Base	SiMERR NT

Description

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The objective of this project is to demonstrate, via an action research methodology, effective strategies and practices using ICT and innovative online learning materials to engage remote and very remote Indigenous students with learning for improved educational outcomes. The project developed a set of principles and strategies that can be used by educators to engage Indigenous students with learning through the use of ICTs in remote and very remote areas.

Twelve remote schools across the country were involved in developing case studies that form the main part of the project. The purpose of the case studies is to support, sustain and share effective use of ICT and participatory processes that involve and benefit local educators and students. Each of the sites represents a cluster that deals with issues around educational disadvantage, literacy and numeracy. The schools in the sites are to represent a wide range of approaches to achieving success with students and integration of ICT into the pedagogy and curricula used. The case studies also assisted local staff to engage in the implementation of action learning groups throughout and beyond the Project.

Resources were developed for use by schools and government departments. These take the form of a 'how to' guide for the use of ICTs and online learning materials with the target group or case studies ('digistories').

Project champions travelled to Darwin for a workshop with the resource developers and were able to direct the development of an effective resource for teachers, teacher's assistants and students in remote and very remote schools. Their input was invaluable to improving the useability and innovation in the resource.

The SiMERR funds supported the involvement of Indigenous researchers in the development, analysis and resource development. The funds have provided additional support for community based programmes that have re-engaged Indigenous children in learning and the use of ICT.

Participants

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The project participants are Indigenous assistant teachers in outstations in East Arnhemland. They have developed and directed many aspects of their projects to benefit the education of Indigenous children in remote areas and are sharing this with others through the project.

Kathy Guthadjaka (or Gotha) is the Champion for this project at Gawa and a grandparent concerned for the education of Gawa children. After working as a teacher for close to forty years, Gotha retired from teaching over four years ago. She is an outstanding role model, extremely motivated and interested in the welfare and education of the young people in her family, but still maintains an active interest in the school.

Jackie Duluwidi is the champion for this project at Mäpuru, and the Assistant Teacher in Charge of the Mäpuru Homeland Learning Centre. Like the vast majority of Assistant Teachers working these schools, Jackie has a life commitment to the Mäpuru Community and the children's education. Jackie has worked at the school for 25 years.

Wulumdhuna is the champion for this project at Djurranalpi and is the assistant teacher who has developed innovative ways of supporting students' learning through the use of ICT. Wulumdhuna uses iMovie, iPhotos and other simple organising programmes to integrate ICT into cultural and other curriculum studies, to take photos of activities and work with them in the classroom. She's been making resources by collecting bits together for the kids that come to the school. These diagrams and collections reflect the ways she wants kids to think about places and their connections in Elcho.

Findings

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Outcomes

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The project has resulted in:

- A DVD resource outlining the case studies and key principles in using ICT to engage Indigenous students from remote and very remote communities in schooling; and
- A report to DEEWR on the projects outcomes.

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The resource will be used to support remote teachers' develop and implement innovative approaches to using ICT to engage students in schooling and work with local Indigenous people to improve schooling engagement and outcomes.

At each site people have been able to further establish and deepen their practice and to develop the work in their schools. There has been a high level of student engagement with improved numeracy and literacy outcomes through the use of the ICT products. At a school level the project has been very empowering.

In addition, project participants have been able to maintain an ongoing use of ICT. The project has enabled people to access broadband and wireless internet and resources that can be used in ICT.

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