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Building Staff Capacity through Reflecting on Collaborative Development of Embedded Academic Literacies Curricula

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Keywords

staff capacity building, embedded academic literacies, curriculum design, inclusive education



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Introduction

We are inclined to think of reflection as something quiet and personal. My argument here is that reflection is action-orientated, social and political. Its product is praxis (informed, committed action), the most eloquent and socially significant form of human action (Kemmis 1985, p.141).

This statement could be read as a rallying call for tertiary educators to use their experiences to identify goals and actions that will improve learning outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds. This type of reflection could contribute to an appraisal of the results of the Federal Government's policy move towards widening participation, and also help dispel the political rumblings that such policies could lead to a loss of quality in higher education (Hurst & Tovey 2013, p.4). Australian higher-education policy has included a focus on equity and access since what has been described as a transformation in higher education from an elite to a mass system (Gale & Tranter 2011). This occurred in the second half of the 20th century, and was marked by a significant increase in the number of Australian higher-education institutions, student enrolment and completion of degrees (Gale & Tranter 2011). However, it was not until 1990 that the Australian Government published a national framework that addressed equity in higher education (Department of Education Employment and Training 1990). "A Fair Chance for All" aimed to increase access and participation of students from under-represented groups by setting participation targets for each of these groups (Harvey, Burnheim & Brett 2016). While this resulted in many more Australians being able to access higher education, the student population still does not reflect the composition of society as a whole (Koshy & Seymour 2014). Again, in 2009 the Australian Federal Government introduced a new education policy with the specific aim of increasing the access, participation and success of students of low-SES (socioeconomic status) backgrounds. This policy, which provided additional funding for universities, was entitled High Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP). This paper will describe how reflective evaluation of curricula, which was developed in response to this widening participation policy, led to a more collaborative, targeted and inclusive approach to supporting student learning in one Australian university.

HEPPP began in 2010, and was designed to support universities in the development of initiatives that would promote aspirations, achievement, accessibility and attainment for students from disadvantaged cohorts. There was an expectation that universities would increase enrolment of low-SES students, and build relationships with schools and other educational providers to increase educational pathways. There was also an expectation that HEPPP would focus on ensuring students' academic attainment (Australian Government 2009). As a result, HEPPP projects have provided the impetus for a review of curricula and pedagogical approaches in higher education in some Australian tertiary institutions (Daddow, Moraitis & Carr 2012; Keevers & Abuodha 2012; Goldingay et al. 2016). The second round of Government HEPPP funding omitted the partnership component, and, as recommended in the Federal Government's "Review of the Demand Driven Funding System", the specific targeted percentage of students from a low-SES background to be enrolled in tertiary education was dropped (Kemp & Norton 2014). More recently, the 2016 Federal Government budget confirmed that although HEPPP funding would be continued until 2019, the total budget for HEPPP would be reduced by \$152 million (Australian Government, Department of Education and Training 2016). This decision is one illustration of the Government's intention to reduce public funding of higher education, and also sends a signal that widening participation within Australian universities is now less valued.

As part of the agenda for widening access, HEPPP was also used for projects that focused on student "achievement", including recognition of the need to provide academic support (Keevers & Abuodha 2012). In keeping with pedagogical approaches adopted in the UK, these

projects involved a movement away from providing support through extracurricular “study skill” classes or what has been described as a “bolted on” curriculum approach to a more embedded approach (Bennett et al. 2000; Wingate 2006; Haggis 2006). From the perspective of curriculum design, this involved recognition of the fact that students need to become part of a new discourse community, and that learning the required literacies to be part of this community is best presented as a component of subject- or discipline-specific teaching (Wingate 2006; Daddow, Moraitis & Carr 2012). This approach to curriculum design of embedding academic literacies was one of the theoretical constructs underlying the Inclusive Curriculum and Capacity Building (ICCB) Project discussed in this paper.

While acknowledging the particular learning needs of students from diverse backgrounds, the rationale for the ICCB Project was based on an inclusive approach focused on the learning needs of all students. This represents a move away from a deficit or problematic view of students from low-SES backgrounds. Larkin, Nihill and Devlin (2014) argue that the “massified” Australian tertiary system translates to an increase in the diversity of students’ backgrounds and experiences, which highlights the need for greater inclusivity. They argue that “inclusive practices have the potential to enrich the curriculum and academic achievement of all students” (p.153), and that to ensure a truly inclusive approach, institutions need to review the design and practice of learning activities, subject and course curricula. It can be argued that inclusive curriculum design has benefits for students, staff and higher-education institutions because it involves a holistic approach and recognises students’ multiple identities (Morgan & Houghton 2011). Keevers and Abuodha (2012) set out a rationale for what could be described as a holistic approach that they term an alternative, ongoing, practice-based approach to social inclusion that includes “a dynamic complex of practices of respect and recognition, redistribution, representation and belonging” (p.A-44). They present a framework that depicts the interrelationship and specific components of the social, political, economic and cultural dimensions of social inclusion. In recognising the complexity of social inclusion, the challenge for higher-education institutions is how to best incorporate inclusive education into institutional policy, and ensure that it is enacted when planning course curricula. We would argue that when planning and implementing new course curricula, course team members need time to engage in collaborative reflection, and that this reflective process will contribute to staff capacity-building.

Background to the project

The ICCB Project, which was funded through HEPPP, was conducted over a single year at one of the younger higher-education institutions in Victoria. This university has a student enrolment of approximately 50,000 students, and consists of four campuses, three of which are in regional areas. The overall aims of the ICCB Project were to better meet the needs of students from low-SES backgrounds through collaborative partnerships between student support and academic staff to embed essential academic and digital literacies and career development into the undergraduate curricula, and to help teaching teams gain a better understanding of inclusive education. One outcome included in the project outline was a “program of contextualized academic staff capacity building” (Deakin University 2014a). The project was managed by the University’s Equity and Diversity unit through a project manager, and project partners included Language and Learning Advisers (LLAs), Liaison Librarians (LLs), Careers Advisers, an inclusive curriculum design practitioner and co-opted members of academic teaching teams.

The project brought together partners from earlier HEPPP projects and built on these projects’ recommendations. While the professional staff who had coordinated earlier HEPPP projects saw this as a continuation of their previous projects, there was a need to initiate ways of engaging academic teaching teams, most, if not all, of whom were new to the project. One of

the starting points for one of the previous projects had been a collaboration between teaching teams and LLAs to identify and map the academic literacies students needed for assessment tasks in different courses' core units. In turn, this mapping exercise informed the development of embedded academic-literacies curricula and learning resources. Similarly, library staff had worked with teaching teams to embed library services and resources through the learning-management system or online sites for specific subjects with a high percentage enrolment of students from a low-SES background (Horn, Maddox, Hagel, Currie & Owen 2013). While these projects had multi-faceted outcomes, including enhancing student learning (Horn et al. 2013; Thies, Wallis, Turner & Wishart 2014; Goldingay et al. 2016), this paper will present a specific review and evaluation of the ICCB Project's impact on staff capacity-building. It will focus specifically on staff's perception of the project's contribution to their understanding of discipline-specific academic literacies, and their capacity to participate in a collaborative approach to curriculum development.

Theoretical underpinnings of the project

Collaboration – inclusive education

Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education has been defined as

...the ways in which pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all. It embraces a view of the individual and individual difference as the source of diversity that can enrich the lives and learning of others (Hockings 2010, introduction).

Inclusive education is aligned with good teaching practice, and different sets of principles for teaching and learning in higher education can inform this practice. Gale (2010) suggests that while principles can vary, three common elements are consistent across all sets:

1. Taking into account the diversity of learners and ways of learning when designing learning activities;
2. Actively engaging learners in learning activities; and
3. Planning assessment that makes a positive contribution to students' learning (p. 6).

While this paper will discuss staff capacity-building around the collaborative development of embedded academic-literacies curricula, it should be acknowledged that the overarching rationale for the ICCB Project was inclusive education. One of the aims of the project was to facilitate a process in which teaching staff reflected on principles of inclusive education or universal design for learning (UDL), and related these to their teaching (National Center on Universal Design for Learning 2014). UDL is curriculum design that incorporates multiple means of representation, expression and action and student engagement (Morgan & Houghton 2011). The key principles of UDL support the inclusion of opportunities for different approaches to learning as an important part of curricula, including teaching and learning practice and assessment (Appendix 1).

Clarke and Nelson (2014) suggest that inclusive teaching represents a way to embrace the multiple forms of diversity in student cohorts at Australian universities; specifically, their different motivations, preparedness, expectations and patterns of participation. However, a study by Hitch, Macfarlane and Nihill (2015) found that only a minority of Australian universities have any policy statements referring to inclusive teaching or UDL. They also found that professional development consisted of one-off workshops focusing on the needs of a specific group of students, an approach that could be seen as problematising student diversity. One of the aims of the ICCB Project was to provide more formal professional-

development opportunities for all project partners that focused on inclusive education; this approach was supported by the Equity and Diversity unit. It should be recognised that most staff had no previous knowledge or experience of inclusive education. Thus, the initial challenge was to ensure that the project partners had a shared understanding of what was meant by inclusive pedagogy, and how it might be relevant to curriculum development.

At the commencement of the project the teaching-team members, most commonly the subjects' unit chairs, were asked to either attend professional development sessions or meet with the inclusive-design practitioner to consider these principles of inclusion, and to reflect on alternative approaches to facilitating students' learning. Professional-development opportunities that focused on UDL were offered to all project partners. The teaching teams were given examples of how these principles could be incorporated into curriculum design, and challenged to develop their own inclusive teaching plan. The unit chairs could then follow up individually with the inclusive-design practitioner by requesting an audit of their unit curriculum, although there was no evaluation or review that focused specifically on this aspect of curriculum change.

Collaboration – curriculum development

One of the more recent developments in higher education has been a commitment to a lifelong learning agenda, which includes how students demonstrate their acquisition of certain attributes at the completion of their course. Pitman and Broomhall's (2009) analysis of this conceptual transition includes how terminology such as "generic skills" has been replaced by "graduate attributes", and how this movement places an emphasis on the end of the cycle of learning at university. They maintain that this is a shift from an economic construct that envisages skills as being employment-related to a social agenda involving graduates acquiring specific qualities or values. One suggested approach to the collaborative development of course curricula is through a focus on student development of graduate attributes, or Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs). This approach includes mapping of CLOs across the course, and the inclusion of authentic learning activities and assessment tasks that help students demonstrate their achievement of the CLOs (Oliver 2010). At this university there is an expectation that course teams document how students acquire, apply and demonstrate CLOs at the completion of their course. Much of the curriculum development achieved through the ICCB Project aimed to contribute to students' achievement of four of these CLOs (communication, digital literacy, problem-solving and self-management), with an emphasis on staged development of precursor strategies to support students' development of the CLOs.

There is considerable literature that focuses on the processes of collaborative curriculum development, as well as suggested frameworks to support team-based approaches to curriculum design. A number of studies support the premise that such collaborative curriculum design can improve the quality of curriculum outcomes and contribute to staff capacity-building (Deketelaere & Kelchtermans 1996; Healey et al. 2013). Burrell et al. (2015) identify a number of critical factors for the success of team projects, including authority of the team leader, "buy-in" from all stakeholders, clarity of goals, defined roles and responsibilities and effective communication between project partners. Using Clarke and Hollingsworth's (2002) Interconnected Model of Professional Growth (IMPG) to describe a collaborative process, they argue that a team approach can lead to sustained cultural change, a collective approach to ownership of curricula and continuous improvement. The IMPG model looks at an individual's interactions with "...their own personal domain (knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes), domain of practice (professional experimentation), domain of consequence (salient outcomes in their individual growth...) and the external domain (other team members...)" (Burrell et al. 2015, p.755). Burrell et al. extend this model to include external domains inside and outside the team, and the subject-specific pedagogical knowledge team members bring to the curriculum-design process. In any collaborative curriculum-design project, understanding the types of pedagogical knowledge needed and those that collaborators can contribute is an

important starting point in gaining a shared understanding of how the project might best be planned.

Collaboration – developing embedded academic-literacies curricula

In line with a move towards inclusive teaching, the ICCB project included the development of curricula that clearly articulated the academic literacy and research practices of the discipline, and a scaffolded or developmental approach that benefited all students. The inclusive curriculum design process included the seamless embedding of the development of academic and digital literacies within the course curricula. The term “seamless” is used to suggest that students did not view these components of their subject curricula as “bolted on” or unrelated to their discipline content. Alternatively, the use of the term “embedding” should not suggest that these literacies can somehow be set apart from content knowledge. Rather, the theory underlying the project was based on the notion that social practices, epistemologies, values and genres vary between disciplines, and that students need to begin to understand these disciplinary differences (Lea & Street 1998, 2006). Lea and Street (1998) put forward the academic-literacies model, which conceptualises academic writing as a social practice, and which acknowledges “power relations among people, institutions and social identities” in student writing (Lea & Street 2006, p.369). This model recognises that the process of meaning-making varies between culture and context. Moreover, Haggis (2006) argues that an approach that considers the cultural values and assumptions underpinning a curriculum is critical in providing support for students from diverse backgrounds.

One aim of the ICCB Project was to enhance student outcomes by developing curricula that clearly articulate what students are required to do in terms of different types of disciplinary processes. This approach to curriculum design assumes a high level of collaboration between subject lecturers, as the discipline specialists, and other project partners as outsiders who interpret the practices of the discipline (Crosling & Wilson 2005). Most commonly, this collaboration is between LLAs and discipline lecturers. Gustafsson et al. (2011) describe this curricular approach as integrating content and language, with a discipline-content focus being combined with communication dimensions or language. The collaborators in this curriculum-development process bring different pedagogical knowledge. The subject teaching staff, bring knowledge of the purposes of academic tasks, which are derived from the disciplines’ epistemology, conventions, values and assumptions. LLAs can contribute knowledge of applied linguistics, which allows them to provide a different perspective on the discourse of the subject. For teaching staff who are very familiar with the discourse of their discipline, it may be more difficult to talk about how language is being used to present points of view. Chanock et al. (2012) explains this as LLAs bringing the ability to talk *about* subject discourse in a way that illuminates its use for learners. This non-disciplinary expert’s view is an important component of the collaborative development of embedded academic-literacies curriculum.

A number of different programs that aim to embed academic literacies in subject or course curricula have been shown to foster students’ academic achievement (Chanock et al., 2012; McWilliams & Allan, 2014; Thies, et al., 2014). Chanock et al. (2012) have broadly defined academic literacies as “encompassing oral, social and electronic ways of dealing with knowledge as well as print literacies” (p.1). It is assumed that these literacies will be developed throughout the students’ course of study, and that they will contribute to students’ acquisition of CLOs. McWilliams and Allan (2014) identify key academic literacies as including “critical thinking, database searching, familiarity with academic conventions such as referencing, use of formal register and ability to manipulate a range of genres...” (para. 1). Harper’s (2011) Academic Literacy Development Framework documents eight facets of academic literacies (reading, recording, reviewing, responding, researching, relating, reporting and referencing), and five developmental levels that describe increasing competence in a specific literacy. This framework informed a simplified diagram of the facets of academic

literacies, which was used in the ICCB Project to identify the academic literacies students needed to successfully complete their assessment tasks (Appendix 2). In putting forward a proposed model for embedding academic-literacy skills, McWilliams and Allan (2014) also use the assignment task as the starting point for a literacy intervention. Their model describes a process that includes:

- analysis of the assignment task, learning outcomes and marking criteria by the subject lecturer (SL) and the learning adviser (LA)
- assessment of learner needs and devising intervention
- team teaching by LA and SL
- LA and SL debriefing
- revision of assessment and intervention by LA and SL.

In putting forward this model, McWilliam and Allan acknowledge that it needs to be adapted to suit the unique demand of the discourse community within which it is being implemented. While the ICCB Project drew on all processes outlined in this model, it also incorporated various interventions and debriefings involving different project partners.

Reflective practice

There was an assumption that the curriculum-design process for this project would be informed by the project partners' reflective evaluation as part of an action-research cycle, including planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Zuber-Skerritt 1992). Morgan and Houghton (2011) define this as considering the impact of learning by "gathering, reflecting and acting upon informal and formal feedback from students and colleagues as a continuous process" (p.14). While the ICCB Project partners were aware that they would be interviewed as part of the project evaluation, the project plan did not include a structured reflection process. The value of a more structured self-reflection is that it encourages change and improved teaching practice, as well as increasing the likelihood of sustained change (Reason & Bradbury 2001; Sellheim & Weddle 2015). Sellheim and Weddle (2015) describe a course reflection process that takes place at different times and involves several steps: the completion of a reflective questionnaire by members of the teaching team, individual meetings to discuss the reflections with course/subject coordinators, further written comments on the reflections and team meetings to review suggested curriculum changes. While these suggested steps were not enacted as part of the ICCB Project, the project partners appeared to acknowledge the importance of engaging in self-reflection, and the notes from project meetings provide an informal record of reflections. Also, some teaching teams chose to engage in reflection as a way of creating a resource and/or to explore their experiences of being a project partner. For one teaching team this involved preparing and discussing responses to set questions, and then coming together as a project team to record the responses.

Project evaluation

Measuring the success of the development of embedded academic-literacies curricula presents a number of challenges, especially when curriculum development requires collaboration across different schools and campuses (Thies et al. 2014). The evaluation for this project attempted to gain insights into project partners' increasing understanding of the theoretical constructs underpinning the project, and their capacity to engage in either action research or reflective practice as a way of developing curricula. The evaluation presented here is based on three different sets of data. First, the Equity and Diversity unit at this university attempted to streamline evaluation of all HEP projects by engaging a small group of researchers within the university to evaluate all projects, with a methodology that was modified only slightly for each project. This team's evaluation of the ICCB Project included semi-structured interviews

with the project partners. The 13 participants consisted of subject coordinators (n = 3), library staff (n = 4), language and learning advisers (n = 3), careers staff (n = 2) and Institute of Koorie Education staff (n = 1). The semi-structured interview, consisting of 30 open-ended questions, covered four broad areas:

- general information about the program
- benefits of the program
- challenges and barriers to program implementation
- practical applications of the program.

A qualitative analysis of the interview transcripts identified 22 main themes, which were then clustered into six main categories (Appendix 3). The findings discussed here relate only to the category entitled “Staff benefits”, including two themes: professional development and capacity-building (Creating Impact Through Evaluation [CITE] Research Group 2014).

Data from semi-structured interviews with two different teaching teams, LLAs and LLs is presented with a focus on two themes: collaboration and curriculum development. Ethics approval was obtained for these studies. Finally, the project involved project partners coming together to participate in a more open group reflection on the curriculum-development process. These reflections were recorded as video clips for use as staff-enhancement resources. Some reference will be made to these reflections, specifically those referring to the curriculum development in two management units (Appendix 4).

Evaluation findings: collaboration

While some interviewees acknowledged the complexity of collaborating across a number of campuses, many confirmed their belief in the value of collaboration, and the contribution this can make to student learning. A member of the teaching team for the management units, when reflecting on cross-university collaboration, commented:

I really think that this is a model for the way that we should be working It is, in this day and age, ridiculous to expect unit chairs to be everything to everybody, to provide the support to the tutors, whatever it might be. As a university, we need to be drawing on the strengths and abilities of – we're all there to help students and we need to be coordinating the support that we give students and building it, I think, into the curriculum, not just make it part of the add-on extras. (CITE Research Group 2014)

Interviewees also acknowledged the contribution of the project in developing networks. One interviewee explained that the project had increased their understanding of the roles and possible contribution of LLs and LLAs to curriculum development:

I've also learned a lot from being involved with the other partners, like the library and academic advisors, about how they work within curricula, and what skills they develop and how that all can work. (CITE Research Group 2014)

A number of comments also illustrated project participants' increased understanding of discipline-specific literacies, and the value of increasing tutors' understanding:

I wasn't really thinking about it that much at all probably. So it was about getting the tutors to understand a bit more about academic literacies....To have the dialogue with someone else who's the devil's advocate around

language and help with the rubric, getting that clear and then the additional resources around how to write....” (CITE Research Group 2014)

However, there were some comments from the interviewees that revealed some level of frustration in attempting to work collaboratively with such a large number of stakeholders. Lack of time and workload were identified as major constraints to working collaboratively. Some project partners felt that there was a need for the project to include structures, which would encourage greater collaboration. The following comment also reflects a lack of clarity regarding the rationale for the project.

“I don't think all the partners who were involved really had an opportunity to find out about what the others were doing. There was the – ‘Well, Library, you're doing your stuff.’ And, ‘Language and learning, you're just doing your stuff.’ But what's the current focus? How do we envisage the work that we would be doing with the units? ... We needed to have a better understanding of where we each were coming from as partners to really be able then to work together in the units” (CITE Research Group 2014).

Evaluation findings: staff capacity-building

Staff development was one of the most frequently mentioned themes, with over 30 references to professional development throughout the interviews. Some of these comments also supported and illustrated broader aspects of staff capacity-building (Appendix 5). A number of interviewees commented on student learning and improved teaching practice. One interviewee commented on the value of embedding academic literacies in the curriculum, rather than offering “add-on” classes, while another confirmed the need for scaffolding the development of academic literacies across a course

...this is a model for the way that we should be working at Deakin... we're all there to help students and we need to be coordinating the support that we give students and building it, I think, into the curriculum, not just mak[ing] it part of the add-on extras. If we want the outcomes, then the outcomes are only going to be achieved if it is planned, organised, built into the curriculum....”

“It's still emergent...mapping those particular skills to very explicit connections into... graduate outcomes of the particular academic program...and then connecting them into national regulatory curricula frameworks and then to graduate teacher professional standards. (CITE Research Group 2014)

Interviewees also acknowledged that additional resources and clarity of language contributed to student learning.

You focus on the reality of the language and everybody benefits from clearer description of what you've got to do.... Everyone benefits when the grading rubric is made clearer.

...then the additional resources around how to write well, I mean that's helpful for any unit, and we can point students to it....” (CITE Research Group 2014)

One interviewee described the need to make the discipline's cultural practices more explicit, and explained this further as the realisation of the “need to put yourself more in their [the students'] shoes”.

What I realised is just how much we have to make sure we're explaining some of the finer points of our own discipline areas...how we go about getting information from academic material; how we are likely to make assumptions because we've all been doing it for so long about how to look at a paper and decide if it's actually useful and take information from it...try and put yourself in their shoes and then try and find out ways to support them.

It should be noted that “inclusive education” was not identified as one of the overall themes in this data, although the list of comments on the value of professional development opportunities included gaining “an understanding of the importance of UDL” (CITE Research Group 2014).

Collaborating to achieve project outcomes

Collaboration is one of the principles seen as central to an inclusive curriculum design process. It assumes the building of partnerships through the active involvement of all participants who will potentially benefit from the enriched curriculum (Daddow, Moraitis & Carr 2012; Larkin, Nihill & Devlin 2014). The networks established as part of this curriculum-design process were many and varied, although some project partners had worked together in the past. Sometimes there was sufficient time for team members to start to develop a shared understanding of the project objectives, while in other instances there was little lead-in time. For example, the subject coordinators of two management units volunteered to participate in the project a few weeks before the commencement of teaching; this necessitated a short but intense planning period. The complexity of the project was increased by the number of project partners, the likelihood of short planning periods due to the HEPPP funding cycle and the extent of the curriculum initiatives being trialed across three or four campuses. While the success of the project relied heavily on project partners' capacity to collaborate, it was assumed that this would occur with a minimum of structures to support this collaboration.

In the first instance, the team members used a constructive-alignment approach focusing on designing learning activities that support students' achievement of learning outcomes, scaffold successful completion of assessment tasks and provide meaningful feedback (Biggs 1996). Specifically in the management units, the team reviewed the subject material, assessment tasks and marking criteria to ensure accessibility and clarity, and scaffolded assessment tasks through the creation of a range of customisable online learning resources, which included models of writing as well as teaching resources for lectures and tutorials. Each subject had an online site that integrated academic support, with a specific focus on the stages or facets of assignment writing. Academic-discipline specialists, LLAs and LLs presented jointly in lectures and tutorials. In addition, LLAs offered individual assistance with academic writing in student “drop in with a draft” sessions, and LLAs and LLs participated in online discussion forums. Additional online classes on analysing the assignment question and structuring the assignment were offered to off-campus students using Blackboard Collaborate. This enhanced curricula was delivered across three different campuses and two other Learning Centre sites, and to students studying totally online. These additions to the curricula reflected “First Year Curriculum Principals” (Kift 2009), such as scaffolding student learning and the integration of academic literacies. However, as these curricular changes were being introduced across units in two years of the course, there was a need to consider students' ongoing development of academic literacies over the two-year period, as well as the sequencing of the resources being provided. Thus, the ICCB Project highlighted how mapping student achievement of the CLOs across two years of a course could facilitate a staged or developmental approach to students' achievement of precursor capabilities.

Project participants' comments on the collaborative process suggest that their experience varied, although there were more positive than negative comments about the value of this process. One of the critical factors for effective team projects identified by Burrell et al. (2015) is stakeholder buy-in, and this seems most relevant to the ICCB Project. One of the initial delays in starting the project and in achieving some of the project targets was obtaining buy-in from course coordinators. The process adopted included meeting with and presenting the outcomes of earlier HEPPP projects to associate deans (Teaching and Learning), and then, based on their recommendations, contacting course coordinators. This appeared to be a convoluted process, and in fact one of the most successful collaborations, that with the management teaching teams, was a result of a request from a unit chair who had worked collaboratively with project partners in the past. Bailey (2010) also raises the issue of the apparent reluctance of some academic staff to engage in teaching outside what they define as their disciplinary content knowledge. One of the project team members commented on this:

Because sometimes we have a conversation with teaching staff who are reluctant to give up time that they call "content", and we're saying if it's embedded, you're making explicit the way you think, the way you research, the way you learn in your discipline. That's the perfect way of embedding these literacies and skills. (Deakin University, Faculty of Business and Law 2015)

This comment implies that academic staff who have a better understanding of academic-literacies theory will be more likely to engage in such curriculum development. In fact, one participant commented on differing attitudes and responses to the project:

Some academics were quite protective of their curriculum.... And some did everything they could to try to accommodate me. So it was simply a matter of attitude, how on board they were with the whole idea in the first place. How important and relevant they saw it to their students and how flexible they were. (CITE Research Group 2014)

As advocated by Burrell et al. (2015), an understanding and acknowledgement of the knowledge that project partners can contribute helps facilitate project planning. One significant outcome of the ICCB Project was that partners did become more aware, and also more respectful of the various kinds of knowledge being brought to the project. One interviewee commented on the learning that occurred through the collaborative creation of online learning resources:

Because I was probably the only one with technical skills, I've made a point in upskilling other people in the unit. We had so much work to get done in such a short period of time that I simply just couldn't do all of it. So when people wanted to learn new skills or new software, we would spend time building their skills doing that. (CITE Research Group 2014)

One of the constraints around any collaborative project will be the time involved in a successful collaboration, and the need to ensure a balance between project time and other workload demands. Although varying attitudes towards collaboration could be explained as relating to teaching staff's flexibility and capacity to see the relevance of the curriculum changes, another factor frequently identified in the literature is time constraints for project partners in attempting to both engage in the project and find space in what has been described as an "overloaded curriculum" (Bailey 2010). Also, while Burrell et al. (2015) acknowledge the value of the different "knowledges" that project partners can bring to the planning and implementation process, different approaches to curriculum development can cause conflict. This implies the need to allow time not only for a shared understanding of project aims, but

also agreement on the curriculum-development process. In addition, the process requires time to listen to students or “walk in their shoes” in an attempt to understand their needs.

Another factor that affects the collaborative process is the ownership or sponsorship of the project. The access and equity focus of the ICCB Project meant that both the project manager and the project lead were from the university’s Equity and Diversity unit. This contributed to a high degree of continuity and information-sharing between different HEPPP projects, and ongoing support for project-reporting processes. However, this also made the collaborative work more complex by frequently adding an intermediary to the communication process. Studies discussing curriculum development similar to that undertaken as part of this project have frequently highlighted the value of shared ownership and institutional-wide support for curriculum change (Thies et al. 2012; Chanock 2013; Goldingay et al. 2016). Goldingay et al. (2016) suggest that a process involving three levels of support or simultaneous change is needed for sustaining changes in embedded academic-literacies curricula. They describe these changes as occurring at the micro or personal level, involving individual lecturers, their practice and beliefs and their networks of colleagues. They contend that LLAs bring a different “knowledge” to this process, and therefore have an integral role in the successful embedding of academic literacies. The second change is at the meso or cultural level, which involves a broader sharing of practices and acceptance, resourcing and funding at the university-management level. They also describe macro or structural change, which requires recognition across the tertiary sector and changes to structures to progress collaborative-curriculum initiatives. Certainly the ICCB Project contributed to changes in the roles of LLAs at this university: they have been given a faculty liaison role with more time allocated for working collaboratively with teaching teams, to integrate the development of academic language and literacies into the curricula of different courses within that faculty.

The term “inclusive curriculum” is part of the title of the ICCB Project, and an increase in inclusive practice was listed as one of the outcomes of the project. However, while participants confirmed that they valued the experience of working collaboratively, they did not appear to acknowledge that this may have contributed to increasing their knowledge of inclusive education. This could be explained by the fact that professional-development sessions explaining inclusive education were offered at the commencement of the project. Also, as previously mentioned, no formal evaluation of these sessions was circulated or shared with the project partners. Again, project partners may not have perceived that the curriculum changes they were focusing on were examples of inclusive education. This would support the findings by Hitch, Macfarlane and Nihill (2015) that one-off professional-development sessions on inclusive education result in staff gaining only a very limited understanding of the contribution of inclusive pedagogy to curriculum development.

Achievement of outcomes for this project depended very much on the capacity of project partners to work collaboratively. As such, one of the key recommendations from the project evaluation was that any future project plan should document suggested strategies to encourage greater collaboration. These included more meetings between different areas to ensure knowledge transfer, and continuous evaluation and reflection on partnership development throughout the project. There were also some comments on the need for more-equitable funding of such projects, with more joint funding between academic and professional units in the university being the recommended model. Also while the project partners came together to record their reflections for use as video clips in professional-development resources, there was little time to explore how these might be used as part of a university-wide course-review process or to ensure the sustainability of the curriculum changes. However, although the ICCB Project is now no longer operational, much of the collaboration and network development has continued, sometimes in a more informal way and sometimes as part of a more formal change process, such as the introduction of faculty liaison roles for LLAs. One project outcome that was confirmed by the project evaluation was that the collaboration contributed to the

generation of ideas, suggesting that shared knowledge is always going to be greater than an individual's knowledge (Bell 2001).

Staff capacity-building

While the project evaluation confirmed that teaching-team members perceived that the project had contributed to improved teaching practice, this was interpreted in different ways. Some academic team members expressed views that the collaboration with LLAs and LLs had resulted in an enriched curriculum. They showed an understanding of the value to students of building the development of academic literacies into the curricula, and recognised the need for planning a developmental process of embedding these literacies across at least two years of a course.

[the projects]...have allowed us to come up with some quite innovative models thus far of introducing students to these skills and supporting their development...[of] skills that are privileged in a university setting, and making very explicit pathways or very explicit connections to future professional skills.

In the video recording, one participant from the management team discussed the project with an LLA. He commented on how he saw the collaboration contributing to professional development, describing this as “tendrils of other things” that happen:

I was really fascinated to see the way not only you and I collaborated, but the way you collaborated with your colleagues, like ___ on other campuses. We're a multi-campus university, and I don't think the work we can do can be done in isolation.... I think there was a cross-campus dialogue on the virtual level as much as there was on the face-to-face level on each campus. So that's something that was informative for me.... When you engage in the collaboration these sort of tendrils of other things happen. (Deakin University, Faculty of Business and Law 2015)

To relate this participant's experience to the Interconnected Model of Professional Growth (IMPG) (Clarke & Hollingsworth 2012), it should be noted that he joined the project with pre-existing knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning in this subject. The domain of practice for this participant included the lectures and tutorials being delivered both face-to face and online, and the curriculum as presented on the online subject/unit site; certainly, for him, the project contributed in all these aspects of teaching practice. Much of the external stimulus came from conversations, or what he described as “cross-campus dialogue on the virtual level as much as face-to-face”. The comment also suggests that this included observing what was being achieved through collaborative work being done by other colleagues. One of the salient outcomes in these two management subjects/units was students' improved results; this outcome provided support for the curriculum changes that had been made, and for further reflection. The IMPG model emphasises the importance of the reflections between these domains, and how the cycle of reflection can lead to changed knowledge, beliefs and attitudes.

The reflections on the project included a discussion of the value of the action-research process in encouraging changes to teaching practice, and how this needed to be a more sustainable and continuous process. One strategy adopted to support this continuous improvement process was the creation of staff capacity-building resources. For example, one resource, entitled “A guide to developing academic literacies in your course curriculum” (Rosario & Thies 2015), that

draws on the learning from this project could be used in a course-evaluation process, and also as a resource for staff development across the university. The visual representation of the “facets of academic literacies” included in this guide can be used to begin the conversation about mapping literacies across assessment tasks in different subjects/units and across year levels. The video clips produced by the management team have value both for the participants who engaged in the reflective process and as a resource for use in professional-development programs. One challenge is to ensure that such resources are accessible and seen as relevant after the termination of the project.

Reflection on curriculum development

Keevers and Abuodha (2012) argue that frameworks and models that support a reflective curriculum-development process can assist in reducing what they describe as the mismatch between the vision of students receiving an inclusive education and the reality of the student experience. The ICCB Project partners did participate in the formal evaluation, and also adopted their own reflective process, often influenced by their discipline. The management team wanted a concrete record of their reflection and the curriculum-change process; this supports the suggested process of documenting thoughts and curriculum-related issues as they occur as an important aid to memory (Purcell 2013). The video clip produced by the management team could be described as a reflection-on-action (Sellheim & Weddle 2015), as it was recorded immediately after the teaching period, and required participants to contemplate and formulate views about their experience of the curriculum-change process. For example, one subject coordinator expressed the view that the project had helped him become aware of how other project partners focused much more on student engagement, and that the project had made him much more conscious that his language and approach needed to be continuously improved. This teaching-team member repeated the phrase “I’m reminded”, which could be interpreted as a direct reference to what he gained from reflecting on the collaborative approach to curriculum changes in these two management units.

In an academic team I can just rely on myself or my academic peers to do what we do. But in our collaboration I’m reminded – because your focus is much more on students’ understanding. My focus is on students learning or passing. Your focus is much more on students engaging with the development of the skills to get them right through university. So I’m reminded that my language and approach does need to be continuously improved. As an academic I learnt that along the way. (Deakin University, Faculty of Business and Law 2015)

As part of one of the earlier HEPPP projects, one teaching team from the social-work course adopted a more formal process by using Gibbs’s (1988) six-stage model of reflective practice: description, feeling, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action (Goldingay et al. 2016). Data was collected from two focus groups facilitated by the participants themselves and described as “reflective conversations”. Incorporating the feelings or emotional experience of the process provided an added dimension to the changing views and the affective response to the project. While some project partners acknowledged the value of reflection, a cycle of reflective practice was not incorporated into the project in a systematic way. In incorporating reflective models into project outlines, a smaller-scale reflection using a process that fits the disciplinary practice of the team or a more direct reflection process focusing on one aspect of the curriculum – for example, the development of one academic literacy across the course – could be a starting point for larger-scale curriculum renewal projects.

Conclusion

The ICCB Project provided opportunities for the partners to participate in reflection on this curriculum-development process through team meetings and the CITE evaluation interviews, and to use this reflection to move towards some consensus on how the curriculum-renewal process might best be enacted beyond the period of the project. The large number of project partners and the requirement to work across multiple campuses of the university meant that this reflective process was sometimes fragmented. Moreover, discussions in subject team meetings meant that decisions regarding curriculum changes were often not communicated to all project partners. However, over the period of the project, the partners began to acknowledge the value of collaborative reflection, and to participate in planned reflections such as the production of the video resources. This dynamic process suggested that future projects would benefit from having a more definitive framework for reflection included as part of the initial project brief. For example, as there were professional-development opportunities offered by the inclusive-curriculum design practitioner, the UDL principles could have been used as one framework to inform staff reflections.

One of the overarching aims of the ICCB was to explore models of curriculum development that included a scaffolded or developmental approach to the embedding of graduate learning outcomes in course curricula. The project outcomes support the contention that course curricula are enriched by a process of collaborative curriculum development involving partners such as the library and LLAs. However, the project did not identify a definitive model of how this is best achieved. One conclusion is that this is a dynamic process, and there are various models to draw upon depending on the situation. However, obtaining buy-in and agreement on the collaborative process is a vital starting point. Also, there is a need to ensure that resources created by such projects have relevance beyond the period of the project. While different approaches have been highlighted in the professional-development resources produced as part of this project, in future initiatives consideration would need to be given to how they could be used in different situations, taking into account departmental and institutional differences, particularly in choosing ways to encourage staff engagement. Such engagement needs to be supported by institution-wide policy so as to allow teaching staff sufficient time to participate in an action-research cycle. At this institution, the ICCB Project and previous HEPPP projects illustrate emerging good practice, such as scaffolding students' development of academic literacies throughout their course curricula. However this approach to curriculum change currently relies on individual faculties prioritising this work by encouraging and allowing staff sufficient time to engage in collaboration and reflection. While the inclusive approach to curriculum development adopted as part of this project relied on HEPPP funding, such curriculum development should be part of a mainstream university procedure that supports excellence in teaching and learning.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Universal Design for Learning (Deakin University 2014b)

Provide Multiple Means of Representation: What are they learning?	Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression: How are they learning?	Provide Multiple Means of Engagement: How are they engaging?
Perception	Physical action	Recruiting interest
Language expressions and symbols	Expression and communication	Sustaining effort and persistence
Comprehension	Executive function	Self-regulation

Appendix 2: Facets of Academic Literacy (Rosario & Thies 2015)



Appendix 3: Categories and Themes

Themes and main categories that emerged from interviews

Student Learning	Staff Benefits	University Benefits	Success/ Moderating Factors	Challenges	Barriers and Future Implementation
Low-SES students Employability Academic skills Digital literacy	Professional development Capacity-building Fulfilment from involvement	Capacity-building Teaching practice Financial gains Organisation alignment and collaboration Research output	Communication and timing Unit-chair engagement Evaluation funding Awareness/ branding of program	Collaboration Unit-chair workload ICCB team workload	Barriers Suggestions for future implementation

Appendix 4: Management Team Reflection

The following link points to the the video clip (Firefox is the preferred browser for watching the clip):

https://video.deakin.edu.au/media/t/0_k88y5vrn

Appendix 5: Findings – Staff Capacity Building

Examples of comments relating to specific areas of capacity building include:

- Greater insight into access and equity
- An understanding of the importance of UDL
- Collaboration and learning how to work in partnerships
- An understanding of the needs of other disciplines
- Adoption of a holistic approach
- Digital and graphics skills
- Building important networks, connections and relationships
- Ability to improve quality of assessment marking systems