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Compare

Pre-service teachers' pedagogical relationships and experiences of embedding Indigenous Australian knowledge in teaching practicum

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Pre-service teachers' pedagogical relationships and experiences of embedding Indigenous Australian knowledge in teaching practicum

This paper argues from the standpoint that embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in Australian curricula occurs within a space of tension, 'the cultural interface' (Nakata, 2002), in negotiation and contestation with other dominant knowledge systems. In this interface, Indigenous knowledge (IK) is in a state of constancy and flux, invisible and simultaneously pronounced depending on the teaching and learning contexts. More often than not, IK competes for validity and is vexed by questions of racial and cultural authenticity, and therefore struggles to be located centrally in educational systems, curricula and pedagogies. Interrogating normative western notions of what constitutes authentic or legitimate knowledge is critical to teaching Indigenous studies and embedding IK. The inclusion (and exclusion) of IK at the interface is central to developing curriculum that allows teachers to test and prod, create new knowledge and teaching approaches. From this perspective, we explore Indigenous Australian pre-service teachers' experiences of pedagogical relationships within the teaching habitus of Australian classrooms. Our study is engaged with the strategic transgressions of praxis. We contend that tensions that participant Indigenous Australian pre-service teachers experience mirror the broader (and unresolved) political status of Indigenous people and thus where and why IK is strategically deployed as 'new' or 'old knowledge within Australian liberal democratic systems of curriculum and schooling. It is significant to discuss the formation and transformation of the pedagogical cultural identity of the teaching profession within which Indigenous and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers are employed.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous perspectives, pre-service teachers, cultural interface.

Introduction

Schools are places where there is constant tension between the visible and invisible spaces that teaching and learning activities occupy. There are concerns about what is taught and what is not taught, and who is and who is not empowered to deal with the ‘three message systems’ of schooling – curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation (Bernstein 1975). These three systems of schooling work according to the cultural capital (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) of learners and teachers, arguably, cultural capital has a significant role in these three message systems (Delpit 1988; McLaren 2007). It is important to understand how Indigenous pre-service teachers experience the three systems that are founded and maintained on the basis of western knowledge and discourse.

In Australia, school cultures are predominantly representative of Eurocentric values, beliefs and practices. They (re)produce hegemony whilst effectively creating ‘Otherness’ within non-European cultures, thus schools are locations of hidden curriculum (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Social justice agenda in formal education must be committed to removing any inequalities and injustices with the responsibility of producing citizens who can realise their social and human capital. This idealistic agenda enters into conflict with conditions prevalent within the Australian society and its formal education with overt and covert marginalised attitude towards Indigenous Australian peoples and the white, European supremacy (Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist 2003, 64). The conflict is visible through teaching and practising Eurocentric curriculum with English as the language of instruction. This challenges social justice and equality agendas in that Australian Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, not to speak of many Indigenous languages, lie suppressed and ‘othered’. The dilemma is the educational rhetoric of pluralist education *vis a vis* an assimilationist curriculum (Hickling-Hudson and Ahlquist 2003).

Through the Embedding Indigenous Perspectives Statement (Dreise and QSA 2007) or Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives (EATSIPS) curriculum (ISSU 2011), Queensland schools in Australia are required to reform their curricula and teaching practices to acknowledge, respect and incorporate Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous perspectives. Given that schools are sites that have long-established non-Indigenous hegemonic methods of curricular decision making, Indigenous knowledge has been excluded in most ways possible. But yet, Indigenous pre-service teachers are to respond to the mandate to embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledge in their future professional work.

As academic advisors at the Indigenous student support centre at our university, we have witnessed tensions and anxieties experienced by Indigenous pre-service teachers as a consequence of the teaching practicum. A mixture of successful and not so successful outcomes from professional experiences over the years by these pre-service teachers has initiated our conversations with various faculties and particularly the Education Faculty. These conversations often occurred after pre-service teachers have failed or withdrawn from their teaching practicum, resulting in two scenarios. First, is to repeat of field experience thus extending their course duration or second, graduate with a Bachelor of General Studies which is below the requirements of a qualified teacher. Such consequences reinforce the current situation in which many Indigenous staff in schools are relegated to the roles of assistant teachers (teacher aides).

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We have discussed our university's aspiration in embedding Indigenous knowledge in the university curricula elsewhere (McLaughlin and Whatman 2011). Our university is committed to embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in all its disciplines through its Reconciliation Statement. In 2001, the Faculty of Education, through a Teaching and Learning grant, re-conceptualised the Bachelor of Education program and commissioned an Indigenous Studies subject as part of its foundation units offered to all pre-service teachers. An Indigenous academic was appointed to conceptualise and design the unit of study. This subject became compulsory for every pre-service teacher from 2003, with consistent staff development programs designed for its teaching staff (McLaughlin and Whatman 2011; Phillips, Whatman, Hart and Winslett 2005).

Teaching this Indigenous Studies subject as a foundation subject to all pre-service teachers has revealed positive, yet contradictory and challenging student outcomes. Some students embrace the opportunity to understand Indigenous perspectives and knowledges. They question the lack and absence of such knowledge in school curriculum and begin to develop a critical approach to learning and teaching. Upon completion of this foundation unit, some pre-service teachers elect to undertake Indigenous Studies minor (Hart and Moore 2005). The knowledge they gain, the critical pedagogies and perspectives they develop, we argue, will influence the way they approach teaching whilst on professional experience. These 'critical moments' within field experience, successful or otherwise, need to be analysed and addressed within teacher education programs for embedding Indigenous knowledge in Australian school curriculum.

Despite the depth of resistance to Indigenous knowledge and perspectives exhibited by non-Indigenous students in the above subject, they continue to engage since this unit is a core requisite for a teaching qualification (Winslett and Phillips 2005). A comprehensive investigation into this resistance has been documented by Phillips (2011). She mapped out disruptions of colonial knowledge of Australian Indigeneity and demonstrated how this disruption unpacked while simultaneously generated resistance to knowledge that challenged colonial ways of knowing and being.

Hence, this paper discusses some initial findings of an Australian Teaching and Learning Council (ALTC) grant project for supporting future curriculum leaders to embed Indigenous knowledge in teaching practicum, where pre-service teachers are identified as future curriculum leaders. The project is investigating how role modelling occurs in the pedagogic relationship between pre-service teachers (future leaders) and their supervising teachers (current leaders) during the teaching practicum. The paper then begins with a discussion of Indigenous knowledge and its location in curriculum in the Australian and international contexts. The cultural interface (Nakata 2002; 2007; 2011) is discussed as it has informed our conceptualisation of Indigenous Studies at our university.

The place of Indigenous knowledge in the Curriculum: an international debate

Decolonising Indigenous knowledge and learning has inspired provocative debates in the latter part of the last century, championed by Indigenous scholars and intellectuals and non-Indigenous colleagues across the globe (Battiste, Bell and Findlay, 2002; Meyer 2001; Smith 1999). While the project of reclaiming Indigenous knowledge is a universal struggle, the context and specificities of colonial history impact on the way

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this debate is conceptualised, how it is delivered and understood by its targeted audience. Debating what is Indigenous knowledge occurs in a field of scholarship that is in constant tension and negotiation with western knowledge systems (Nakata 2002; 2011). The literature reviewed in this section attempts to draw out a comparative perspective on the scholarship of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, and highlights the complexities of embedding this knowledge into a western system of education evident in Australia.

Indeed, decolonising knowledge through embedding Indigenous perspectives in school and university curriculum is a global movement (see Agrawal 1995; Dei 2008; Heber 2008). Yet, it remains a highly questioned discipline in relation to what counts as Indigenous knowledge and its compatibility with western formal knowledge and hegemonic systems that validate the essence of body of knowledge. From an African perspective, Owuor (2007, 23) argued that Indigenous knowledge “belongs to peoples from specific places with common cultural and social ties. Thus, Indigenous knowledge is a process of learning and sharing social life, histories, identities, economic, and political practices unique to each cultural group”. Teachers and teacher educators should adopt practices that embrace both western and Indigenous knowledge to defy dichotomous presentation, fostering relevance and inculcating a sense of self-worth (Owuor 2007, 33).

Observing the effects of economic and educational globalisation, Semali (1999) argued that the dilemma over whether to follow Eurocentric curricula or Indigenous perspectives undermines efforts to integrate Indigenous education in the formal school curriculum in Africa. Semali (1999) called upon curriculum designers to develop curricula that will enable students to be exposed to different African cultural perspectives, with emphasis on community consultation, involvement and participation at all levels of curriculum design. In New Zealand, resistance to the colonially imposed system of education *for* Indigenous students has been demonstrated through the *Kaupapa Māori* schooling system *for* Māori by Māori educators. Bishop (1999; 2003) echoed how Indigenous educational policies and debates are often entrenched from a ‘cultural deficiency’ approach similar to the Australian context (Mellor and Corrigan 2004). Indigenous students’ poor academic performance or non-participation in school is often explained from the deficit framework, without interrogation of the schooling context, curriculum and pedagogies. Importantly, Bishop (2003) noted the power relations underpinning these educational provisions for Indigenous students have to be interrogated if quality of the students’ educational experience is to be achieved.

The project of decolonising university curricula has revealed the struggles of dismantling the knowledges of the Indigenous ‘other’ that were created through colonial processes. Smith (1999), Dodson (2003) and Moreton-Robinson (2004) have argued that the focus of western knowledge has been to construct Indigenous peoples as ‘objects to be known, rather than the knowers’. This deliberate approach masks the existence and worth of Indigenous knowledge systems, rendering them artefacts of curiosity rather than systems of knowing to be valued by every learner. Based on their work on embedding Indigenous perspectives in university curricula in Canada, Battiste, Bell and Findlay (2002 , 83) argued that:

the broad and entrenched assumption of most...curricula is that Eurocentric knowledge represents the neutral and necessary story for “all” of us. This

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discourse of neutrality combines with the [educational institution's] serial obstruction or evasion of Aboriginal knowledge and its producers so as to shelter and sanitize a destructively colonial and Eurocentric legacy. Both Eurocentric discourse and anti-Aboriginal resistance attempt to impose cognitive assimilation on Aboriginal students while denying the reform required to achieve a respectful and productive liberation for Aboriginal peoples from the educational apparatuses of colonialism.

Converting the official 'story for all of us' to include Indigenous peoples' knowledge reveals the struggles over power and control, not only in educational systems, but the entire political landscape. Battiste et al (2002) argue therefore that initiatives tagged as "Aboriginal" (*for* Aboriginal students only) will continue to be a paternalistic, gendered, classed and racialised forms of knowledge production and dissemination resulting in little curricular change for the masses. A key indicator of successful reform they identified has been the formalisation of Indigenous community participation. Genuine 'engagement' occurs when the processes for that engagement have been mutually developed and agreed upon. Students and community need to feel a sense of ownership over the process and be actively involved in decision-making which leads to greater recognition when embedding of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in curriculum and when strong alliances are formed (Schwab and Sutherland 2001, 18). As Farrelly and Lumby (2009, 15) argued, attempts to implement teaching approaches derived from an expectation of a universally agreed "Indigenous cultural competencies" transplanted from elsewhere cannot work because of the inability for such a framework to be a product of deep engagement and shared ownership in that particular context.

While Battiste et al (2002) and Phillips et al (2005) have discussed the embedding of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in mainstream university curricula, others maintain that Indigenous knowledge is more effectively institutionalised through "Indigenous Studies" as its own discipline. Indigenous knowledge as a core discipline in university and school curriculum remains a highly contested issue in many colonised nations. Reilly (2011, 340) noted that Māori studies in New Zealand may comprise Indigenous knowledge or *mātauranga Māori*, but also increasingly such studies "espouse theories and methodologies that empower Māori communities and critique Eurocentric scholarship, such as *Kaupapa Māori*". The role of such knowledge "for Māori" is rarely disputed within these institutions. However, when positioned in the wider university curriculum as core studies for all students, its value is disputed (Reilly 2011, 340). Similarly in Australia, Indigenous Studies was typically framed as beneficial for Indigenous students, and for teachers who consistently work with Indigenous students only. At our own institution, a core unit in Indigenous Studies for pre-service teachers did not become mandated until 2003. This context is rapidly changing, however, as the new Australian Curriculum (national as opposed to state controlled) includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives and intercultural understanding as a curriculum priority and general capability across all disciplines (see www.acara.edu.au). It creates urgency to reform schooling and university curricula that can deliver what the Australian Curriculum promises, and poses questions as to what a curriculum with embedded Indigenous perspectives could look like.

Furthermore, unique differences exist between the ways in which different countries develop their "Indigenous Studies". Māori studies and Indigenous Studies in

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Australian universities, for example, differ significantly along the central argument that Māori studies should operate through the medium of spoken Māori language. Durie (2000, 55) noted that “a people are not a people without a language; a language is not a language unless it is spoken”. Different experiences of colonisation between Australia and New Zealand have resulted in the decimation of spoken Aboriginal languages in the former, and a renaissance of Māori as the medium of instruction in the latter. Indigenous Studies in Australia simply cannot occur primarily through the medium of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language. There are pockets of schools throughout the country that teach through the students’ first language. Nicholls’ (1999) work in this area gives valuable insights, but the reality is that such an approach in Australia is rare at university level.

From these discussions, it is apparent that Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous Studies and Indigenous perspectives have multiple definitions. There are unifying themes of political content and social action, opportunities for Indigenous language to be foregrounded, and the need for community participation in curriculum decision-making. Locating Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in the curriculum cannot occur in isolation to the broader struggle for self-determination, political and intellectual sovereignty of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (author citation suppressed; May and Aikman 2003; 2011). Critical understanding of Australia’s history of colonial settlement (Broome 2001; Perkins and Langton 2008), race relations between settlers and Indigenous peoples (Langton et al. 2006; Reynolds 1996), and the history of educational provision for Indigenous Australians (Bin Sallik 1991) are necessary to appreciate the complexities and tensions generated by creating space for Indigenous knowledge in teaching and learning. These tensions are exacerbated by contemporary provisions of ‘paternalistic and compensatory education, poor academic performance and the disadvantage’ perception of schooling for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Australian schools (Tripcony 2001). Consequently, a lack of understanding of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives reinforces the Eurocentric perception of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, issues and cultures.

It became important to investigate the existing understandings of Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and studies held by pre-service teachers and their supervisors as this project is concerned with factors impacting upon the teaching and learning moments occurring within the relationship between these two groups of stakeholders. Misunderstanding of what Indigenous knowledge includes is an often a source of conflict. Another source of potential misunderstanding arises from the assumption that such students are already presumed to have the ability to demonstrate curriculum leadership in Indigenous knowledge by virtue of their Indigeneity, rather than through consistent explicit training. Often, unrealistic expectations are placed upon these pre-service teachers on field experience to ‘know all things Indigenous’ by their supervising teachers and school administration, as has been discussed in previous research work (see Bin Sallik 1991; Herbert 2005; Nakata 2007). This project builds upon such research via the starting premise that all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, need to be provided with specific learning and teaching experiences in their formal teacher education in order to develop their expertise in embedding Indigenous knowledge. We theorise this space according to Nakata’s (2002) theory of the Cultural Interface, where the learner’s position in the interface is characterised by

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tension caused by competing knowledge systems, but agency to work within the tension. This interface is explored in detail.

Grounding Indigenous knowledge and teaching practicum in the Cultural Interface

The cultural interface framework has evolved from a critique of the western hegemonic practice of talking ‘about’ Indigenous peoples and cultures, with or without Indigenous people’s input or perspectives. Indigenous knowledge cannot be realised within the academy without disrupting this hegemony. As Phillips et al (2005, 2) argued, the discomfort with teaching ‘about’ Indigenous people maintains the status quo of privileged western knowledge through:

the un-critical consumption of ‘information’ by the [mainly] non-Indigenous students; the impossibility of representing Indigenous peoples’ cultures and histories through such a narrow, descriptive and circumscribed process; the distance that students [are] able to maintain from the consequences of knowing, from their own privileged positions.

Indigenous knowledge is all around us and is with us. It includes all knowledge that is present, held, exchanged, refined and reproduced in what Nakata calls ‘the cultural interface’ (2002; 2007; 2011). The lifeworld that Nakata (2002, 285) talks about is the everyday life where socio-cultural influences intersect at every moment. This lifeworld of teaching and learning environments at the institutional level is further complicated by hegemonic relations. Within the cultural interface is constant tension and negotiation with western knowledge systems, competing for validity, authenticity and the right to be located in this pedagogic space. The theoretical understanding of the cultural interface contextualises the struggles that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers face when negotiating pedagogical demands and expectations of the university and professional school site, which have historically privileged western knowledge (Refer to Figure One).

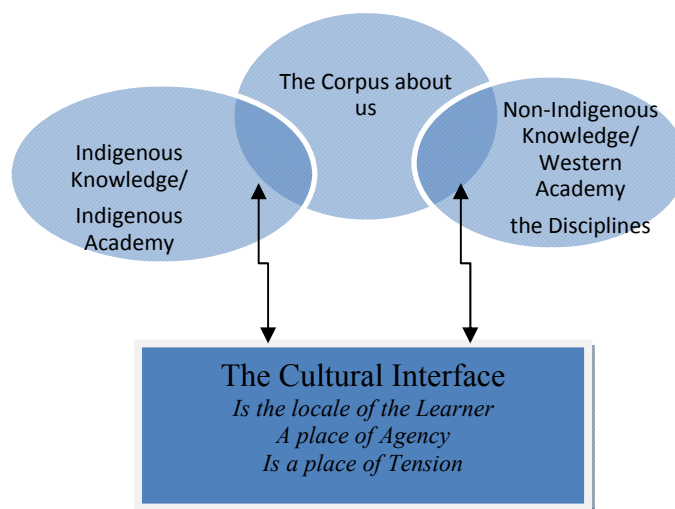


Figure One: The Cultural Interface (derived from Nakata 2002; 2011)

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As illustrated in Figure One, Nakata (2002; 2011) proposed that there are three principles that shape the interface. The locale of the learner is where the pre-service teachers are actually at in their learning journey. A pivotal question is ‘Who is in this interface with you and how do they impact on your position in the locale? This can explicate the supervising teacher and pre-service teacher relationship. Agency has to exist here. If you only depict people as victims or through a narrative of “cultural loss”, then you strip them of agency. There is always “tension” within this space. Nakata (2011) argues that some would call it choice, others call it power.

The cultural interface allows those who engage to assert their positions and knowledge in relation to others’ positions and knowledge systems. It theorises a platform to describe the locale, reveal the potential agency, understand and address the tensions. The tension that exists as a result of two competing systems of knowledge is manifested by rejection, resistance, ambivalence and accommodation. This place of tension requires constant negotiation (Nakata 2002, 285). These concepts and the processes contextualising the cultural interface provide important theoretical and analytical tools for understanding the factors impacting upon the supervising teacher and pre-service teacher relationships (locale, agency and tension) during teaching practicum.

Methodology

As a starting point, this project aims to capture future curriculum leaders’ stories of their experiences of teacher preparation and opportunities to embed Indigenous knowledge and perspectives while on teaching practicum. This study utilises a combination of methodological approaches including interpretive phenomenological approaches. The focus of interpretive phenomenology is to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of lived experience from their own point of view, in this case, pre-service teachers (1979; van Manen 1997; 2008). The incorporation of a phenomenological aspect to data collection is particularly suitable to explore educational experiences as it looks for meanings of what people experience rather than what they consciously know (Grumet 1992; van Manen 1990). It addresses the journey of pre-service teachers in ‘becoming’ professional educators. Their journey, “a process of becoming that is always open” (Dall’Alba 2009, 8), eventually reveals the meaning of their lived experience of engaging in the learning of their profession and becoming a teacher. As such, the researcher writing the reflection and reflecting upon “the meanings and significances of phenomena of daily life” (van Manen 1990, 4) transforms the research from purely descriptive to pedagogic research. The phenomenological process is relevant to explore how these pre-service teachers and their supervising teachers make meaning from and within their lived worlds, supervision experiences and voices of agency, dissent, acceptance and resistance, and their approaches to embedding Indigenous knowledge in teaching practicum.

Conducting research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities requires respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews, methodologies, ethics and protocols. Accordingly, this project continues with the project of decolonisation, in providing and promoting space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander future curriculum leaders to actively participate in the exploration of their experiences of becoming teachers and their experiences of teaching Indigenous knowledge in this process. This project is guided by Indigenous research ethics such as the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) of Australia’s Guidelines

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for Ethical Conduct (NHMRC 2003) and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Guide (Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2011). The project has been approved by our university's and the State Department of Education Human Research Ethics Committees. Anonymity of participants is observed throughout this article.

Data collection methods utilised in this project include pre-service teachers journaling of their lived experiences of teaching practicum, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions through planned workshops. Participants were also encouraged to collate documents such as lesson and unit plans. Workshop settings provided the context for group discussions which were more about knowledge sharing and empowering the pre-service teachers prior to their practice teaching placements. Fredericks (2007) argued that such approach represents an Indigenous approach to methodology in that it is co-creating a research pathway out of shared experiences.

As part of the 'talking up the research process' (Fredericks 2007; Moreton-Robinson 2000), our conversations with pre-service teacher participants commenced prior to their practice teaching. The project team initiated these conversations with the students as they sought assistance from the Indigenous student support centre for their forthcoming practice teaching. Semi-structured interviews, workshops and focus groups discussions with eight students then followed. Communication with pre-service teachers through emails was also collated as part of their learning experiences and how the project can further support them on teaching practicum. These preliminary findings reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers' anticipation and recollection of previous teaching practicum experiences.

Six students in the first cohort of the study represented one quarter of eligible Indigenous pre-service teacher participants (n=20) in 2012. They ranged from first to fourth year and represented a cross-section of the scope of experiences and knowledge that Indigenous pre-service teachers have gained and bring with them to the teaching practicum cultural interface. At the time of publication, these six pre-service teachers volunteered as project participants. They were invited to attend focus group interviews and an IK/EIP workshop prior to undertaking their teaching practicum. However, the pre-service teachers' practicum schools had not been determined so supervising teacher participants had not yet been recruited.

The experiences of Indigenous pre-service teachers: some preliminary findings

Collating phenomenological data is significant to this phase of the project whilst exploring ways of supporting pre-service teachers in embedding Indigenous knowledge on teaching practicum. As Downey and Hart (2005 50) assert, 'perhaps asking the question is more important than arriving at any decisive answer...to illustrate why an understanding of antiracism is an ongoing and organic process for social change'. Weaving in the lived experiences of stakeholder groups including pre-service teachers, their practicum supervisors and faculty staff is important for this project. For,

The benefits of exploring the intersubjective relationships between western knowledge systems and the knowledge of Indigenous peoples have yet to be fully realised as an integral part of how education is reconceptualised and reformed to

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better fit the social, economic and political context it is serving (Downey and Hart 2005, 57).

These lived experiences will tease out the sites within the cultural interface in which critical analysis of this corpus of knowledge occurs towards developing a model for embedding IK in the curriculum. For each of the pre-service teachers, there was much apprehension about undertaking their first practice teaching. There was the uncertainty over how much and how well the university has prepared them, with references to the disjunction between university content and the primary and secondary school subjects they would be teaching. This was reflected through the conversations with pre-service teachers prior to teaching practicum.

...It was a few lectures and tutes started in week 6. I don't learn much from lectures but tutes are very very valuable... I don't know if they prepare well for my prac. ... I don't know you can't directly apply them for prac, I just think it didn't prepare me well for my prac; they could have done it better (Nellie in interview).

We have been told to prepare as much as we can. But...but the lecturer wants us to prepare with a lot of documentation, tick this check list, put everything together. They want us to do a lot like having lesson plans ready and checking many criteria, check list etc. You would think everybody's portfolio looks different. You would think you are putting things together but...Like you don't know what others' portfolios are like; I don't know what to put in the portfolio; there is no clear information given to us (Jenaya in interview).

They seemed to be of the opinion that the university curriculum did not provide adequate preparation for the practicum, to face the everyday practicalities of a classroom, nor did it indicate the required amount of work involved in meeting the Teacher Professional Standards. Within this context, a specific focus on embedding Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum appeared to be overlooked with limited time perceived to be allocated to address the national goals and priorities around Indigenous education. Despite a perception of insufficient preparation at university, the following email communication below indicated pre-service teacher willingness to embed Indigenous knowledge during teaching practicum regardless and seek advice from the project team:

Well first day is down! Been thinking about how I am going to embed Indigenous knowledge into maths. My grade 11's are working with managing money. I don't have a very detailed unit resource to even go off so if you have any ideas it would be greatly appreciated! (Simone - email communication).

The pre-service teachers demonstrated acute awareness of the power structure that exists in the teaching practicum. All pre-service teachers participating in this project expressed some anxiety and apprehension about numerous and perhaps competing expectations coming from their supervising teacher and the university. They acknowledged the importance of the relationship between the supervising teacher and the pre-service teacher. Importantly, they were cautious of a supervising teacher with authority to judge them against the Teacher Professional Standards (see these at www.qct.edu.au). They articulated knowledge and understanding of power relations

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between themselves and their supervising teachers, highlighting a concern that they were not adequately prepared to negotiate these power relations. They also indicated a reluctance to share their insecurities or to clarify expectations with the person who had the authority to make a final assessment of their teaching competence. For example, Yolande, a first year pre-service teacher about to commence her first practicum shared the following in an interview with the project team:

Y – I've heard some stories where teachers say "you've been here for a week now, I think you should be able to do a lesson plan." And I think that that's fair enough by that time to have a couple. I know in Drama and Science we are meant to have a couple of outlines so, yeah.

PT – So, if they ask you to do something in a week, is there an expectation that you are supposed to take a whole session by a certain date?

Y – Not by the university. But other students, past students, have said that sometimes they will just throw you in the deep end. Which is fine, I don't mind that kind of "sink or swim" approach. I'm just worried that if I get that, will it work. You know, I may as well start practising it now (Yolanda in interview).

The power relationships existing between pre-service teachers and their supervisors while on teaching practicum invited further exploration. Jenaya, a third year pre-service teacher, returned to the university without completing her teaching practicum. The university, on the advice of her supervising teacher and university liaison academic, terminated her teaching practicum. She was further advised to seek assistance from the field experience coordinator and to consider the possibility of enrolling in an inferior degree (Bachelor of Educational Studies) which did not qualify her for registration as a teacher in Queensland. She returned to the Indigenous student centre, and sought advice on how to negotiate these options:

I didn't like my primary prac at all. I have to do another one next semester. When I was doing that primary prac there was this guy doing his secondary prac there. I was constantly compared to him. That made things...I wish if that attitude wasn't there I would have enjoyed that prac...(Jenaya in interview).

*In my primary prac I had problems. Apparently I had the most difficult class in the whole school... And she (supervising teacher) also had this thing. She introduced me as a **practising** teacher she said I was **learning** to **become** a teacher. It changed many things. Whereas in my other prac the supervising teacher said "she is a teacher" to the class (Jenaya in interview).*

Rosie, about to embark on her final practicum, did satisfactorily complete her third teaching practicum. Her objective in taking part in this project was to explore options and support to undertake her internship (following final practicum) back in her rural home community. Her decision to return to community and undertake rural and remote field experience for her final teaching practicum was based on the availability of family support, the school's likely recognition and valuing of her Indigeneity and both the Indigenous and university knowledge she brought with her. Despite being close to finishing, Rosie still revealed her anxieties about her abilities:

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I was surprised that I passed prac, it was just hard work and stressful. I did everything the teacher asked me to do, I met all his expectations...was there on time, prepared my lessons, and remained in school after class... But he always used threatening and degrading language that I will fail...it was unprofessional. The other students on prac were having a great time, I did not feel that way, it was stressful...I hope I can do my last prac back at home...(Rosie in interview)

Yolanda had completed the compulsory Indigenous studies subject and was considering choosing the Indigenous Studies pathway for her future electives (three more subjects). She raised an interesting interpretation of what counts as ‘valid knowledge’ (Bernstein 1975) and assessment by speculating that it might be better to choose additional maths electives rather than Indigenous knowledge subjects. She perceived her own mathematical competence to be a professional weakness and that expertise in this would be more highly valued by a potential employer.

We conducted a pre-practicum workshop and met with the cohort once more to discuss their expectations of embedding Indigenous perspectives and incorporating Indigenous knowledge, once they had their supervisors in place, their classes were known and general topics outlined. To address the issue of “what is embedding”, we also invited a State Education Advisor on the topic to share the official state position on embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. After a discussion about building relationships with community, such as waiting outside the classroom at the end of the day to catch parents, Simone, a secondary pre-service teacher asked:

That’s fine for the primary situation. But I’m going into secondary. I won’t see parents that way. Am I expected to go out into the community, not as a part of the school, but on my own? (Simone, in workshop).

The impact of colonisation continues to be experienced to the present day. The discussions about community engagements and access to Indigenous knowledge as a strategy for EIP in the curriculum provoked an emotional response from one of the pre-service teachers.

I don’t know much about my Aboriginal family – that knowledge died with certain family members. I only know some language from cousins, like binung for ears, words like that. People look at me and assume I’m Aboriginal and I am but I don’t know anything about being Aboriginal. And they expect me to know things I don’t know (Cora, in interview).

While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers undertake teaching practicum as a component of their teacher preparation program, their cultural identity places them in a precarious position. While acknowledgement of this identity is indeed respected, the expectation that an Indigenous pre-service teacher could assume the responsibilities for ‘all things Indigenous’ in the school can be overwhelming. Within a few days of practicum commencing, Cora sent the following email, confirming her fears about how non-Indigenous people assumed her cultural identity means she just “knows”:

Thought that I would touch base before I forget and become snowed under. I had my first day and enjoyed it but I have to ask for your help already. I was

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approached by the teacher within the school and the Deputy Principal if I would help them out with Indigenous ideas to celebrate Naidoc Week coming up. WOW, they didn't miss me! However, I'm actually not going to be there... I would just pre-warn you that I might need your help a little later when know a little more myself. I'll find out what they are looking for or have in mind, and I'll let you know. Apart from that my first day went well :) (Cora, by email correspondence on teaching practicum).

The cultural interface, specifically the pedagogical spaces where pre-service teachers and their supervising teachers negotiate and enact their understandings is clearly a space underwritten with tension, ambiguities and contradictions. The question then becomes: how should the university respond to this tension, and better prepare Indigenous pre-service teachers, and ultimately all pre-service teachers? To gain a clearer picture of how pre-service teachers were currently 'prepared', we examined the coursework required at this university for inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and Indigenous knowledges. The proportion of compulsory subjects including Indigenous knowledge was very low, with only one subject out of thirty-two on offer. Pre-service teachers can complete an Indigenous Studies minor with their remaining electives, completing a further three subjects, bringing the maximum studies possible to four out of thirty-two across a four year degree. We also analysed specific subjects relating to the professional experience subjects undertaken by pre-service teachers against the three educational message systems of curriculum (content), pedagogy (approaches) and assessment, paying particular attention to assessment criteria. All subjects contained a general assessment criterion relating to the ability to embed Indigenous perspectives, as required by the Queensland College of Teachers (Queensland College of Teachers 2006) and the university's general graduate capabilities. None of the subjects contained exemplars or further detail illustrating what successfully embedding Indigenous perspectives or knowledge may look like, that is, no statements describing how a pre-service teacher might demonstrate high achievement, achievement or lack of achievement in this criterion.

Discussion: Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives in Pre-Service Teacher University Curriculum

We contend that the current pre-service teacher education offers an unequal distribution of Western knowledge systems and approaches, characterised by 'learning about' Indigenous peoples and their knowledges, rather than 'learning from'. This situation forces Indigenous knowledge to compete for validity in this space and is vexed by non-Indigenous educators' questions about and perspectives of racial and cultural authenticity. Limited opportunity exists in pre-service teacher education to critically analyse this corpus of knowledge as it shapes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers' professionalisation as future curriculum leaders.

Despite our university's commitment to embed Indigenous perspectives across pre-service teacher education (QUT 2001), only four specific academic study subjects on Indigenous knowledge and perspectives are offered to those students who elect to undertake the Indigenous Studies minor pathway. While the pathway is recommended by the Faculty of Education to all students, academics from the Indigenous student centre are responsible for teaching and learning in these four subjects. This situation reflects a divergence in the institutional commitment to offer inclusive opportunities to

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explicate and assess pre-service teachers' proficiencies in embedding Indigenous knowledge. We acknowledge that *ad hoc* instances and discussions exist in the current program around embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, however, such instances are neither sustainable nor located centrally in educational systems, curricula and pedagogies.

The opportunities of inclusion (and exclusion) of embedding Indigenous knowledge is crucial in university curriculum that is 'lived', one that allows pre-service teachers to test and prod, create new knowledge and teaching approaches. Tensions arise if and when the experience of the lived curriculum is not honoured or adequately fulfilled owing to the attitude of institutional indifference or the situating of Indigenous knowledge in a state of invisibility along tokenistic 'celebration' (Downey and Hart 2005).

These are tensions that Yolanda and Cora reveal not only as Indigenous peoples possessing Indigenous knowledge but also as Indigenous pre-service teachers. They both are eager to develop further knowledge from the lived experience of embedding Indigenous knowledge in their teaching practicum, but are undermined in their preparation and inclusion during their teaching practicum. Yolanda's and Cora's lived experiences are reflective of their agency and cultural authenticity that Nakata's (2002) cultural interface framework exemplifies. Their lived experience pronounces the need for Indigenous knowledge to be strategically deployed as 'old or new' but dynamic within the Australian liberal democratic systems of curriculum and schooling.

Initial findings of this ongoing project have revealed a clear student voice, demonstrating tensions and anxieties experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-service teachers doing the teaching practicum. These experiences not only echo common tensions and anxieties uncovered in research of pre-service teachers in general (Herbert 2005; McDonald 2003; Sim 2011; Tripcony 2004), but also pinpoint the 'struggle' of decolonising projects such as embedding Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum. This additional struggle compounds the anxiety and apprehension that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students experience with the teaching practicum. The uncertainty that participant pre-service teachers have articulated whilst interpreting teacher professional standards relating to EIP is revealed in Jenaya's and Rosie's experiences. Jenaya's lived experience revealed her struggle in finding the connection between Indigenous knowledge informing pedagogic discourse in non-Indigenous knowledge specific subjects such as Standard Australian literacy for the early years. Both Jenaya and Rosie articulated their struggles in finding a mentoring pedagogical relationship in their teaching practicum that validated their Indigeneity and pedagogical identity, rather than problematising or ignoring it. The findings derived from the experiences shared by the participant pre-service teachers and our document analyses revealed minimum examples of explicit pedagogical modelling of EIP in their coursework despite state education and university policy directives and commitments.

This situation is further exacerbated by the hesitance that the pre-service teachers' have to enact their agency to negotiate not only respectful and *just* relationships with their supervising teachers, but the right to negotiate curriculum in the face of ignorance of, ambivalence and/or hostility to their Indigeneity. In the absence of explicit modelling of embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives within the university curricula, pre-service teachers are left to 'figure it out' with supervisors whose own knowledge and

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praxis in this process may vary considerably. As Rosie highlighted, unfair, 'unprofessional' or racial connotations attached to the assessment of teaching practice may have to be actively challenged, in addition to their existing obligations, with the real possibility of detrimental assessment of their teaching practicum. Realisation of this agency, and the quality and *equality* of the pedagogical relationship is critical to successful experiences and completion of the teaching practicum.

Conclusion

Our research-in-progress has revealed that Indigenous knowledge still occupies very little curriculum and pedagogic space within pre-service teacher education, from our analysis of one university. Our central standpoint that Indigenous knowledge should inform the professionalisation and pedagogic practice of future teachers, as they are expected to demonstrate on teaching practicum for professional registration, remains in constant tension and negotiation with western knowledge, competing for the right to exist at all. The fact that Indigenous knowledge is at all present is a significant stage in a long journey, which is a product of reconciliation gestures (QUT 2001) and incremental sovereign knowledge claims by Indigenous educators, academics and communities over the last decade (Downey and Hart 2005). However, the potential for Indigenous knowledge to inform the professional development of the pedagogical identity of future curriculum leaders, and change pedagogic relations within the schooling system itself remains unaddressed within the teaching habitus of the Australian education system.

The engagement of Indigenous knowledge within the curriculum evokes tensions and emotions which can be interpreted differently by Indigenous pre-service teachers from their supervisors within the cultural interface. In this space, where lifeworlds collide, Indigenous pre-service teachers live the experience of 'learning and teaching about' Indigenous peoples; and they genuinely want to bring insider perspectives into their professional practice. Yet, the tension they experience when negotiating the expectations of their supervisors can result in a perception that something is deficient in their pedagogical approach, as seen in Jenaya's cancelled practicum and Rosie's constant 'threat of failure'. The next stage of this ongoing project extends the inquiry into the lived experience of pedagogical relationships of both Indigenous pre-service teachers' and their supervising teachers in the cultural interface. We believe this a crucial step to progress the discussions on the formation and transformation of the pedagogical cultural identity of the teaching profession within which Indigenous and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers are employed.

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