'Crack in the pavement': Pedagogy as political and moral practice for educating culturally competent professionals

Juliana McLaughlin
Queensland University of Technology, Australia

This paper explores the reception of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in university curricula and educators' social responsibility to demonstrate cultural competency through their teaching and learning practices. Drawing on tenets of critical race theory, Indigenous standpoint theory and critical pedagogies, this paper argues that the existence of Indigenous knowledges in Australian university curricula and pedagogy demands personal and political activism (Dei, 2008) as it requires educators to critique both personal and discipline-based knowledge systems. The paper interrogates the experiences of non-Indigenous educators involved in this contested epistemological space (Nakata, 2002), and concludes by arguing for a political and ethical commitment by educators towards embedding Indigenous knowledges towards educating culturally competent professionals.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledges, embedding, standpoints, decolonising, pedagogy.

Universities in Australia are tasked to educate future professionals with knowledge, skills, and competencies to work in Australia and the international marketplace. Thus, internationalisation of universities' core business (teaching, research, service) is necessary in order to respond to the global economy, forces of globalisation, and the international student mobility. Australian universities compete in this marketplace amongst themselves and with established universities across the globe, motivation for such endeavour is clear. However, given the uncritical transfer of Western knowledge systems through colonising processes, a rethinking of how we educate future global culturally competent professionals is necessary. The complexities underpinning developing cultural competency within the Australian context offers an insight to understand this postcolonial project. Recent Reconciliation Movement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians continues to facilitate opportunities to decolonise knowledge and emphasise culturally competent professionals to work with Indigenous communities and agencies. Yet, the location of Indigenous knowledges in

Western academic institutions is problematic as it challenges colonial discourses that shaped the production of knowledge about Indigenous peoples, cultures and histories. Accordingly, Indigenous knowledges in the university curriculum is in a "space of constant negotiation and contestation" (Nakata, 2002, p.285) and "always competing for validity, the right to be located centrally in educational systems, curricula and pedagogies" (Hart, Whatman, McLaughlin & Sharma-Brymer, 2012, p.703).

Recent reviews commissioned by the Australian Government, for example, the reviews by Bradley, Noonan, Nugent & Scales (2008) and Behrendt (2012), have recommended Australian universities include Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in their curriculum. The emphasis is placed on universities' commitment to Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and to address the gap of educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The reviews also invite conversations around institutional, professional and social responsibility towards reconciling Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. The Behrendt Review notes that the "translation of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in university curricula can contribute to helping professionals work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities" (Behrendt, 2012, p.xiv). These recommendations correlate with the respective positions of the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), Universities Australia, and Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Committee (IHEAC) on Indigenous knowledge and cultural competency.

The Behrendt Review further commented that future professionals' knowledge of contemporary Indigenous issues be systematised through the development of Indigenous Teaching and Learning Frameworks (Behrendt, 2012, p.xiv). The definitions and the national context of developing cultural competency in university teaching and learning and graduate attributes with the intent of developing culturally competent professionals with a postcolonial orientation are extensively examined in this special issue (see Marcelle Burns; Veronica Goerke and Marion Kickett; Zane Ma Rhea).

Initiatives towards the Reconciliation commitments continue to be informed by Australia's social and political agendas, such as the Widening Participation Initiative (Bradley, et al, 2008), the Closing the Gap campaign (Council of Australian Governments) and the Reconciliation Action Plan (http://www.reconciliation.org. au/home/about-us). The way Indigenous perspectives and knowledges are included in university curricula are often determined by how professional standards and requirements are addressed. Universities Australia (2011) proposed five guiding principles for developing Indigenous cultural competency including "Indigenous involvement in university governance and management, ensuring all graduates are culturally competent, collaborative research that empowers Indigenous participants, increasing Indigenous staff, and that universities operate in partnerships with their Indigenous communities" (2011, p.8). The document provides exemplars and models for best practice in cultural competency training from range of Australian universities'

cultural competency programs.

Indigenous academics are often tasked with the leadership and implementation of cultural competency projects. Importantly, the experiences of Indigenous academics in this complex cultural interface (Nakata, 2002) of teaching and learning invite institutional commitment that determines appropriate strategies and levels of support for recruitment and retention of Indigenous scholars to lead this important work. While references to support for Indigenous academics are consistently and justly recommended, there tends to be much less discussion about non-Indigenous staff and university personnel who control the arena of teaching and learning in which cultural competency can be modelled. Little mention is made of non-Indigenous educators who consistently engage in these complex cultural spaces, and the impact of this engagement on both personal and professional practice.

A persistent theme in most policy documents is the 'disadvantaged position' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (see for example Nakata, 2002; Mellor and Corrigan, 2004). I argue that in order to shift the discussion from the 'disadvantaged position' / deficit discourse, Indigenous knowledges and perspectives have to be naturally included at various level of the education system, translated into its curricula and pedagogical processes. Given their mission of inculcating critical minds and generation of new knowledge, universities are ideally situated to progress anti-colonial forms of education through critiquing knowledge of and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A starting point would require a decolonising process that empowers both educators and learners to recognise Western hegemonic forms of knowledge dominant in the Australian institutions and university curriculum (Ma Rhea & Russell, 2012).

This paper explores the reception of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in university curriculum, and the role of disciplinary experts (university educators) to demonstrate cultural competency through their teaching and learning practices. These discussions aim to contribute to ongoing decolonising conversations (see for example Ma Rhea and Russell, 2012; Nakata, 2011; Phillips & Lampert, 2012) by interrogating of the nature of partnerships and pedagogies for embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in university teaching and learning. Drawing on tenets of critical race theory, Indigenous standpoints and critical pedagogies, this paper asserts that IK in university curricula and pedagogy "cannot subscribe to the luxury of independence of scholarship from politics and activism" (Dei, 2008, p.10), but invites educators to accept social and ethical responsibility to critique existing knowledge of Indigenous Australia. The paper concludes by proposing an ethical epistemological process in which Indigenous knowledges in teaching and learning can become praxis.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES IN UNIVERSITY CURRICULA: PROGRESS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

An appreciation of the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation in Australian higher education system is crucial to any attempt in embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in university curricula (Bin-Sallik, 2003). The restriction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation in higher education was influenced by the colonial experiences of settlement (see Universities Australia, 2011) and the ideologies that motivated and validated the global colonial movement. Consequently, knowledge and representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were constructed from the viewpoint of the 'Other' (Smith, 1999), through the perspectives of the 'Western' knowledge frameworks (Ma Rhea & Russell, 2012). Colonial discourses continue to shape and inform initiatives for Indigenous education, often constructed through principles of compensatory or deficit models of education (Whatman & Duncan, 2012).

Decolonising curricula and pedagogy in Western institutions of higher education occurs in tension with Western constructions of Indigenous knowledges and cultures. Movements to reclaim ownership of Indigenous knowledges within university curricula has occurred across the global Indigenous world (see for example Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Battiste & Youngblood Henderson, 2000; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; Walker, 2003). Indigenous Australian scholars have led the discussions on the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and knowledges in teaching and research (see for example, Nakata, 2002; Rigney, 1997; Moreton-Robinson, 2005; Langton, 1993; Martin, 2003; Phillips, 2011; and, Hart, 2003, among many others). The work by other postcolonial contemporaries such as Agrawal (1995), Sefa Dei (2008), Thaman (2005), and Semali & Kincheloe (1999) provide comparative / global perspectives to the field. This endeavour reflects ongoing theoretical contestations by Indigenous scholars and activists in the project of decolonising systems of knowing. As such, the decolonising project is both political and personal as it occurs in highly challenging and contesting spaces (Nakata, 2007). However, operating under this tension becomes the necessary platform for interrogating and transforming personal and professional practice, regardless of how uncomfortable, power-shifting (Phillips, 2005; Dreise, 2007) or messy it can be.

The recognition of the complexities and tensions at the cross-cultural interface and the need for negotiation between Indigenous knowledges and perspectives and Western disciplinary knowledge systems is pre-requisite to the process (Nakata, 2002, p.14). Similarly, Indigenous Education and Indigenous Studies need to be understood given their multi and inter-disciplinary orientations and their location in the academy (Ma Rhea & Russell, 2012)

Universities continue to observe their commitment to reconciliation through initiatives such as the Embedding of Indigenous Perspectives (EIP) in teaching and learning projects, the Indigenous Employment Strategy, and the Reconciliation Action

Plan (http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/reconciliation-action-plans). These experiences suggest that universities can make a major contribution to the spirit of reconciliation between Indigenous and non- Indigenous peoples to enhance race relations in Australia. However, the success and sustainability of these initiatives depend on deeper appreciation of Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in all disciplines and the preparedness of non-Indigenous academics to engage with the processes of embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into the content, teaching methodologies and assessment (Nakata, 2007). Such a process requires non-Indigenous educators, who control learning and teaching spaces, to recognise and ensure Indigenous perspectives and knowledges are 'embedded' in their curriculum and pedagogical practice.

The practice I have described requires a pedagogical shift, only possible when educators recognise and respect Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. We have argued elsewhere that a starting point for this transformation would require non-Indigenous academics to interrogate their own cultural positionings utilising critical race theory as a possible epistemological framework (McLaughlin & Whatman, 2011, also see Williamson & Dallal, 2007). To ethically include other knowledge systems in the academy, conversations that address restoring knowledges silenced by colonising processes need to occur (Dumbrill & Green, 2008, p.499). It requires a pedagogy that goes beyond critique of Eurocentrism while addressing restorative pedagogical justice (McLaughlin, Whatman, & Sharmer-Brymer, 2012) because simply critiquing dominant ways of knowing invites feelings of guilt and hopelessness (Dumbrill & Green, 2008) and resistance (Phillips, 2011). Further, simplistic interpretations, appropriation, and tokenistic approaches can undermine a sophisticated project of decolonising and indigenising curricula.

A decolonising framework and Indigenous standpoint pedagogy (Nakata, 2007) offers an approach that reverts the gaze back onto colonial institutions and systems of knowing. The project of decolonising curricula is indeed political and a deeply personal commitment for educators who embrace the challenge to embark on a transformational personal and professional journey. My experiences of working on decolonising curricula projects through embedding Indigenous perspective over the years provide me substance to argue that this work is ambivalent, and often generated by self-serving agendas (Ma Rhea, in this issue). Institutional policies and funding tend to motivate academe to recognise Indigenous knowledges, however what seemed to be inspirational intentions often return to the status quo once funding is exhausted and closures of relevant faculties with the departure of specialised and committed educators. Thus, factors underpinning the problematic sustainability of these projects need to be deeply interrogated.

INDIGENOUS STUDIES AS A POLITICAL AND ETHICAL PRACTICE: SOME POSSIBLE FRAMEWORKS

My experiences of working in the Indigenous higher education sector and involvement in embedding Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum projects have challenged me to deeply rethink my understandings of teaching Indigenous Studies. Teaching and learning Indigenous knowledges is complex since it occurs in a space of two competing knowledge systems, what Nakata (2002) calls the 'cultural interface'. Nakata (2002, p.285) defines the cultural interface as the place of tension, negotiation, rejection, resistance, ambivalence, accommodation, and agency. In this space, Indigenous knowledge is in constant negotiation, competes for validity and the right to be located in educational systems (see Hart, et al., 2012). The act of teaching and learning within the cultural interface warrants further exploration.

Indigenous pedagogies, to an extent, offer a possible framework for teaching and learning in the field of Indigenous Studies (see for example Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). The complexities of cultural interface generate much uncertainty for non-Indigenous educators; this uncertainty is often based on the dichotomy between the two knowledge systems. Drawing from feminist standpoint theory, Nakata (2007) proposes an Indigenous standpoint theory as a tool for analysis through the social position of the knower and knowledge generated through struggles of understanding their experiences of the social order (Pohlhaus, 2002, p.285). According to Nakata (2007, p.216-7), three key principles of Indigenous standpoint theory include the presence or social positioning of Indigenous staff and students in this contested knowledge spaces, the recognition of Indigenous agency, and the acknowledgement of tensions and ambiguities that exist in the cultural interface. These principles provide conditions in which possible engagement with Indigenous knowledge can occur through pedagogical practice.

Decolonising curricula and centring Indigenous knowledge in university curricula draws us to philosophical understandings of coloniser – colonised relationships. Epistemological and pedagogical critique of Indigenous disadvantage often point to powerful connections, colonial representation and race and racism (Dei, 2008, p.9). Understanding the underlying currents of race and racism then is crucial to inform the basis of educating culturally competent future professionals. The discussion now turns to insights from critical race theory and its potential for assisting non-Indigenous academe to educate culturally competent future professionals.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY: CAN WE ALTER OUR OWN SYSTEM OF PRIVILEGE?

Broader and sophisticated frameworks are needed for a complex decolonising project with the aim of developing future culturally competent professionals from an Indigenous knowledge standpoint. Social justice tends to be the starting point for non-Indigenous engagement with Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. Thus, with its commitment

to social justice, critical race theory offers an appropriate framework and situates race at the centre of critical analysis (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Roithmayer, 1999; Taylor, Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2009). Central tenets of critical race theory include the normalisation of race and racism and how race and racism is endemic, pervasive, and ingrained in society's social and institutional constructs (Milner, 2007). This normalisation extends to education and permeates through the curriculum. Another useful tenet of critical race theory relevant to the issues of decolonising pedagogy is interest convergence which claims that often "people in power accommodate the interests of people of colour only when these interests converge with their own, and does not impact on their own systems of privilege" (Milner, 2007, p.391).

From a critical race perspective, both the achievement gaps and educational disadvantage often associated with Indigenous education are not new problems; these are often outcomes of intentional policies and practices (Taylor, 2009, p.7). This understanding informs how 'deficit' models and approaches continue to inform Indigenous education programs. Critical race scholarship values the importance of narrative and reality from the experiences of people of colour (Taylor, et al., 2009; Milner, 2007); however, these narratives can trigger powerful emotions, ranging from denial to shock, anger and defensiveness (Taylor, 2009, p.8). These emotions then trigger resistance to engage, as evident in Indigenous Studies classes (see, for example, Phillips, 2011).

It is often stated that university education should empower students to question / critique existing knowledge. From a critical race perspective, it is not sufficient to simply produce knowledge but dedicate the search for knowledge to the struggle for social justice, by interrogating ideologies, institutions and societal structures, thus allowing educators with the basis for praxis, critically informed action in service of social justice (Zamudio, Russell, Rios, & Bridgeman, 2011, p.7). Such understandings are crucial for educators challenged to address oppression and disempowerment through the colonial processes. The demonstration of praxis, of deliberate efforts to include Indigenous knowledges in teaching and learning activities, models cultural competency and professional responsibility.

Critical race theory offers a framework for engagement by interrogating personal standpoints, in a process that returns the gaze to the self and not the problematic colonised other. Decolonising university curricula need to be framed through recognition of Indigenous knowledge, anti – colonial struggles and aspirations. Within this approach, the gaze (or point of analysis) is not at the 'Other', but on the self as a reference point for research, curricula, teaching and learning (Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Milner, 2007; Taylor, 2009). However, questions arise as non-Indigenous educators embark on a process that has to acknowledge a system of White privilege (Moreton-Robinson, 2005) as they endeavour to embed Indigenous perspectives into their professional work. Several key questions occur in these spaces. What informs their understandings of Indigenous knowledge? How do non-Indigenous scholars operate in this cultural interface? How do we practice embedding Indigenous knowledges in our daily work as educators (McLaughlin & Whatman, 2011)? Responses to the above

questions invite further explorations, not just of adding content through the process of embedding, but through deeply interrogating pedagogical processes.

CRITICAL PEDAGOGY: IN SERVICE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND RESPONSIBILITY

The act of teaching and learning Indigenous knowledges by non-Indigenous academics and students invite complex pedagogical theories as these classroom contexts are characterised by tensions based on the contestations of two knowledge systems. Proponents of critical pedagogy understand that "every dimension of schooling and every form of educational practice are politically contested spaces" (Kincheloe, 2005, p.2). Critical pedagogy demands teachers and students to interrogate their assumptions and beliefs of historical facts and to ask questions in relation to the beneficiaries of this knowledge construction (Monchinski, 2011). A central tenet of critical pedagogy is the belief that education is inherently political (Kincheloe, 2005), and to claim that one is 'neutral' and 'keeping politics out of teaching and learning spaces' retains the dominant politics or status quo. Interrogating historical or taken for granted assumptions is a relevant approach for Indigenous Studies given the Australian historical *terra nullius* assumptions (Phillips, 2005).

Social change and cultivating the intellect is a key characteristic of critical pedagogy relevant to teaching Indigenous studies. Teachers cannot attempt to cultivate the intellect without changing the social context in which these minds operate (Kincheloe, 2005). We are however, cautioned that maintaining the balance between social change and cultivating the intellect occurs through a rigorous, hostile educational environments (Phillips, Whatman, Hart, & Winslett, 2005).

Within the cultural pedagogical space, one's scholarship cannot be disconnected from one's identity. Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in academia means expressing knowledge aspirations and demands that others will perceive as radical, negative, political, or aggressive, without acknowledging that White knowledge aspirations and systems are already political and aggressive (McLaughlin & Whatman, 2010). In embedding Indigenous knowledge in university curricula, the identity of non-Indigenous people in White knowledge systems is just as important as the identity of Indigenous people. Thus, a decolonising approach recognises the active obscuring of White identity and cultures from White systems of knowledge reproduction as it attempts to acknowledge the imperativeness of Indigenous identity and cultures in embedding Indigenous knowledge into those same systems. A decolonising approach recognises how 'messy' and 'strained' this work can become (McLaughlin & Whatman, 2011), but acknowledges the tension as a compulsory component of the interface.

UNPACKING THE SILENCES AT THE INTERFACE

The leadership demonstrated by Indigenous academics has been fundamental in accommodating Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in the university curriculum.

The Faculty of Education at one Australian university endorsed a critical Indigenous studies subject as mandatory for all students of their Bachelor of Education program. Under the tutelage of an Indigenous educator, this subject remains compulsory for most pre-service teacher courses since 2003. Its sustainability has been attributed to ongoing staff development of the teaching staff (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) at identified intervals throughout the semester. The experiences of teaching this subject reveal the impact of Indigenous perspectives in the way some students embraced the opportunity to learn and those who resisted the content and Indigenous standpoints. A thorough investigation and analysis from an Indigenous knowledge perspective of this critical Indigenous studies subject has been carried out by Phillips (2011). The discussion that follows explores pedagogical approaches employed by non-Indigenous educators as they adopt a blend of critical race theory, Indigenous standpoints, and critical pedagogies in their Indigenous Studies classrooms.

Teaching critical Indigenous Studies, from an Indigenous standpoint theory can unsettle existing knowledge and values systems that can in turn trigger deep resistance from non-Indigenous students. Innovative pedagogical practices are then employed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators to facilitate students' critique of their ways of knowing. To set the scene for the discussion on complexities of engaging in Indigenous Studies, a note on the opening lecture of the above compulsory subject is necessary. The introductory lecture began with an opening slide that rolled across the screen and read: *If you can read this, you are on Aboriginal land* (Indigenous Australian bumper sticker).

> There were the first words presented in class to 400 pre-service education students at an Australian university...The usual noise and rustling of students getting settled…shifted to a trickle of giggles as '*If you can read this...*' rolled out on the powerpoint slide…as this phrase came to a standstill, *'you are on Aboriginal land'* snapped sharply into focus. The chuckles instantly turned to an uncomfortable silence. The lecturer did not directly refer to the message of the first slide, instead left it to speak for itself. The scene was set for the first for many dialogues...with mostly non-Indigenous students about the deeper nature of the relationships established between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples through Australia's colonial history. There was an immediate conflict between what they thought they would be learning (Phillips, Whatman, Hart, & Winslett, 2005, p.1).

In this instance, without further definitions or explanations, Indigenous perspectives claimed space in the teaching and learning context. Students' expectations of learning of Indigenous culture as exotica was interrupted, the concept of land as a symbol of source and site of knowledge (Dei, 2007) provoked students to question their own assumptions of Australia's history and race relations. While this tension is necessary for critique and development of new understandings, its effectiveness depends on the ability of educators to justify its presence and work through its impact.

Within this classroom context, feelings of guilt and resistance do not necessarily reflect collective ignorance; equally possible, being made aware of colonial history

unsettles individual ways of knowing and cultural identities. However, colonial discourses of terra nullius triggers powerful emotions while simultaneously creating a space for intellectual debates in which interrogation of race, assumptions and beliefs of historical facts based on colonial construction is possible. Cultivating the intellect requires challenging the unjust social context, and challenges educators to facilitate the transformation of students' feelings of 'guilt and resistance' into a critique of existing knowledge towards developing competencies for social justice and responsibility.

Maintaining a balance between cultivating the intellect and social change (Kincheloe, 2005) on which graduate capabilities and professional standards are based can occur in rigorous and hostile environments (Phillips, 2005). Content which invites individual critical reflections and analysis of the collective history and race relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians provokes resistance from students. Phillips (2011) cogently mapped out this resistance to critical Indigenous Studies, juxtaposing how resistance to critical Indigenous studies is informed by contradictions reflective of the colonial assumptions of the Indigenous other. Given the mandatory nature of the subject and the depth of critical reflections required by students, the professional support provided to teaching staff is equally rigorous and consistent. For the non-Indigenous teaching staff, Indigenous Studies facilitates a transformative pedagogical experience.

PEDAGOGY AS SOCIAL AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

For the purpose of this discussion, three non-Indigenous educators were invited to respond to questions about their motivation for engaging in Indigenous Studies (highly contested pedagogical spaces) and how they negotiate tensions around Indigenous knowledges and perspectives. Discussion in this paper now turns to their experiences.

Quality of teaching and learning in universities is often assessed at the end of the teaching period. Regardless of progress made during the semester, students' feedback reflects the resistance by negatively commenting on educators who endeavour in these contested epistemological and cultural spaces. The following student survey data typifies responses of some non-Indigenous students who have never been asked to consider their own privileged positions in Australian society.

> Opinions should be given in the tutorials without the supervising teacher putting her own two-cents in. They should be a forum for ideas where students discuss with each other their opinions, ideas and thoughts, not where what they are thinking is **wrong** (Student survey response, Nov 2009 in McLaughlin & Whatman, 2010).

Teaching Indigenous perspectives and knowledges to largely non-Indigenous students involves unsettling not just prior knowledge and assumptions, but engages in critiquing knowledge in the struggle of social and restorative justice. What kind of educator then would wish to engage in this environment since one's professional performance is not judged on academic rigour and scholarship, but cultural authenticity and praxis?

Educators in this space are constantly aware of ensuring a culturally safe learning space for all students.

A central mission of universities is to educate to develop critical minds. Developing critical minds requires critical educators, motivated by their own stance on social justice and responsibility. Non-Indigenous educators who engage in praxis (Kincheloe, 2005, p.110) posit that resistance is a consequence of powerful learning experiences.

> Most of the overt student resistance I have dealt with has been in direct response to T&L materials designed for that purpose...Archie Roach's life story beautifully informs White Australia about the Stolen Generations, and breaks an important taboo in university learning - that it is OK to "feel",... to feel shame or remorse. Often students complain about "being made to feel bad", but it is a crack in the pavement to prove to them that how they feel is unique...It shatters "we", "us" and "them", if only temporarily...I don't mind student resistance coming out in response to those experiences, as that is what needs to happen in order to break it down a little (educator # 2).

Indeed, establishing a personal connection with learning can shift existing assumptions and allows students to accept responsibilities to critically reflect on their future professional roles as teachers. Modelling a commitment to social and pedagogical justice allows educators to engage regardless of personal and professional criticism, sometimes to their own professional disadvantage. Narratives and insights exchanged in this space allows both educators and students to accept that societal change is only possible if we acknowledge what we know, what we don't know and prepare ourselves to reconcile them. A non-Indigenous educator offers the following insight:

> I advocate, I keep it central to all my work. I'm driven by the belief that...if I don't pitch in I can't pretend to be part of the solution, I'm driven by a sense of social justice but also because I have seen what happens if I opt out when my Indigenous friends and colleagues are left forever holding the ball...I think it's my obligation, and actually even though it can be hard work it's also more rewarding and feels like I may be at least helping to make a tiny bit of change (educator #1).

Engaging in Indigenous Studies from an Indigenous standpoint and critical race theories allow educators to accept personal and political activism in their professional practice. This process involves a critical understanding of Australia's colonial history and the impact of racism that prevails in contemporary society. It involves rethinking through a decolonising framework on the basis of recognising Indigenous knowledge and its role in retelling the Australian story.

> I think that the satisfaction of "making a difference" is actually not unique to teachers of Indigenous Studies...that drive most teachers. But given the socio-historical relations between Black and White Australia, actually making a difference...has a political slant to it. And valuing and including Indigenous Knowledge in your teaching (to all students) is an important part of that...Making way for Indigenous Knowledge means dismantling much of the "education" you have already received. This takes a lot of time, is not easy or comfortable, and requires conscious effort to resist the "default' position to align yourself with

the dominant White cultural group in every way. It also requires close proximity or regular engagement with the perspectives of Indigenous peoples to jar you out of your default position. Without these perspectives, "doing Indigenous Knowledge" becomes just another exercise in colonisation (taking over IK, possessing it , deciding how and when it should appear, if at all) (educator # 2).

Establishing collaborative learning partnerships is essential for teaching critical Indigenous Studies for non-Indigenous educators to work alongside Indigenous scholars. The ongoing engagement through these partnerships occurs within the cultural interface, allowing for convergence of two knowledge systems and profession practice. This is not always easy as tensions can push educators towards a particular default position. However, the learning opportunities this engagement offers educators and students can be both empowering and transformational. As Ma Rhea and Atkinson (2012) stated;

> ...from the outset, we wanted to model the collaborative learning approaches... we teach together and engage students in discussions from our different perspectives. They witness our discussions with one another, and our occasional disagreements (p.157).

Such collaborative learning partnership not only lessens the depth of resistance to one lone educator's professional practice, but also demonstrates a pedagogical relationship built on trust and respect for diverse knowledge systems within this pedagogical space. It creates conditions for critiquing old understandings; it inspires new conversations and generates new knowledge through pedagogical practice. A non-Indigenous educator explains her motivation in her advocacy.

> One of the main drivers for me is seeing the toll that providing IP and modelling IK for non-Indigenous educators takes on Indigenous colleagues. There is no choice for them. I have a choice... decolonisation must occur - but temporally and spatially (in my work), I have a choice to continue foregrounding the need for IK in curriculum and suggest ways it can happen...this task is for every educator. Ignorance, apathy, emotional distress or whatever excuse is offered...to avoid IK is unprofessional and inhumane. Ignoring IK is ignoring the 'humanness' of Indigenous peoples...It is terra nullius all over again... So, what drives me is a desire to be professional and wanting to continue to develop my own humane-ness! (educator # 2).

Such engagement moves beyond disciplinary expertise, and draws on Indigenous protocols of engagement. The papers in this special issue, consisting of writing teams of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors and blending of knowledge systems (Duthie, King and Mays; Goerke and Kickett; Heckenberg and Gunstone) demonstrates collegiality and collaborative scholarly engagements. For educators who endeavour to conduct culturally safe and respectful research can consult guidelines for research ethics and protocols by the National Health and Medical Research Council (http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/).

Yet, too often, the burden of indigenising the Australian university curricula often rests on the shoulder of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders educators and professional staff, with tasks ranging from student support to generating cultural awareness for non-Indigenous academics (Page and Asmar, 2008). Institutional

commitment and recognition for the Indigenous expertise is vital; the humanity of educators to engage in restorative pedagogical and social justice processes is paramount.

> I find non-Indigenous teacher / lecturer resistance more disturbing, and just as difficult to break down, because of their refusal to engage....preferring to falsely argue an already enlightened standpoint. This is why Indigenous knowledge keeps grinding to a halt in universities. The rubber band snaps back! (educator # 2).

Leadership demonstrated by the Indigenous educators and the resilience of their Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies illustrate the personal and professional commitment to decolonising required to critique colonial systems of knowing dominant in Australian university curricula. Critiquing existing knowledge through restorative pedagogical and social justice perspectives demands a transformation informed by basic human principles. It demands shifting our disciplinary knowledge against our own humanity, of being intellectually and emotionally engaged, as we work towards progressing reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. Through this uncomfortable, confronting, power-shifting pedagogy (Dreise, 2007; Phillips, 2005), transformative learning can occur. While institutional support and commitment are crucial, role modelling for future culturally competent professionals to work with local and global communities depends on educators' political and ethical responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

Indigenous knowledges and perspectives informed pedagogy for developing culturally competent professionals is inherently a political and ethical practice. Making space for Indigenous knowledges in academia should not only address a social justice or equity issue, but also as an approach to shift conversations to restorative pedagogical justice (Hart, et al., 2012). The challenge for institutional leadership and academe is to recognise Indigenous knowledges; develop sustainable capacity within the academy in supporting teaching and learning as praxis, modelling cultural competency in the process.

Educating future culturally competent professionals to work with Indigenous peoples and communities, and other traditional and former colonised peoples across the globe, places an expectation on those who educate to demonstrate what it means to be culturally competent. Indigenous knowledges and perspectives provide us with the framework of what it is to know; it is our ethical and professional responsibility to know.

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Juliana McLaughlin is an academic at the Oodgeroo Unit, Queensland University of Technology where she lectures in Indigenous Studies, Culture Studies and Education, and decolonising methodologies. Her research interests include critical race theory, Indigenous knowledge and decolonising curricula, postcolonial theory and development education. She is leading an Office of Learning and Teaching

project on supporting pre-service teachers embed Indigenous knowledge on teaching practicum. Her doctoral research focused on Australian aid to Papua New Guinea education, she is from Manus Island and currently the President of ANZCIES. j.mclaughlin@qut.edu.au