An analysis of education academics' attitudes and preconceptions about Indigenous Knowledges in initial teacher education

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For more than 20 years, there has been effort made within primary and secondary classrooms and curricula to include Indigenous peoples' perspectives. This has been met with mixed reactions from classroom teachers. Initial teacher education academics and providers have also been slow to implement and transform their teaching and learning despite the shift in policy rhetoric. This paper reports on a small pilot study conducted at a Queensland university exploring how academics perceive the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges within both institutional and professional contexts and initial teacher education programs. Findings varied, however, they generally indicate a lack of institutional and individual responsibility to embed Indigenous Knowledges in initial teacher education. The paper argues for the urgency for change and the need for non-Indigenous academics and initial teacher education providers to begin critical conversations about how Indigenous Knowledges are being silenced within their current practices, and ways in which they can do better.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledges, initial teacher education, academic attitudes

Introduction

The Australian education system was never developed with the First Nations student in mind (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), 2020), and, therefore, it is not surprising that it has only been in the last 20 years that initial teacher education (ITE) has shifted its view to advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges within its teaching and learning (see, for example, Universities Australia, 2017). School curricula have also seen to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures within classroom teaching and learning, making it even more important for ITE academics to include Indigenous Knowledges to aptly prepare and guide future classroom teachers (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2015b; Ma Rhea et al., 2012). In this paper, the term of reference "Indigenous Knowledges" is used to encompass Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.

In the last decade, Australian Professional Teacher Standards have included a focus on teachers demonstrating their increasing knowledge and understanding about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures, as well as the need for classroom teachers to incorporate a reflexive practice that seeks to identify and get to know the student (AITSL, 2014). There has been the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a cross-curriculum priority within the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2015b). In other words, recent policy calls for the privileging

of Indigenous Knowledges in education and positions it as a quintessential component of the teaching profession.

Calls for the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges within the education system is not new. Indigenous-specific education policy has been calling for the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges and equitable access to education since the mid-1970s (Schools Commission, 1975). Some 50 years later, we are now starting to see the changes. But, with change, there is resistance in many forms by teachers, educators and institutions who have become comfortable in the way things have always been and, therefore, there is the need to investigate and explore the implementation of Indigenous peoples' knowledges in ITE.

This paper explores the experiences of education academics teaching into ITE within an Australian university and the assumptions and beliefs identified when embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures into curricula. The data is drawn out of a small pilot study conducted by two Indigenous academics: one in Education and one in Health. For this paper, focus is placed on the data from participants who identified themselves as education academics. The purpose of the study was to determine the approaches that were used in informing and forming knowledge and understanding about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their work.

As one of 20 Indigenous academics working in ITE and with the increasing regulations and policies within our discipline, this paper seeks to examine the increasing requirements in ITE and explore how academics and institutions are embedding or addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, or, moreover, Indigenous Knowledges, into the curriculum while supporting future classroom teachers in meeting professional requirements.

Establishing the cultural gap

Since the invasion of this land now known as Australia by the British Empire, a dominant ideology has been imposed by colonialists that First Nations peoples are inferior, lacking and uneducable. The coloniser assumed the dominant position based upon their hegemonic assumptions of intellectual superiority and, in turn, perpetuated and normalised the myth that First Nations peoples' ways of knowing, being and doing were "intellectual nullius" (Rigney, 2001). As Rigney explains, the coloniser upholds that "if one's racial superiority could be scientifically legitimated then the logical conclusion could be drawn that the scientific methods used in 'other' cultures to investigate or transmit knowledges were inferior and irrational" (2001, p. 4). European countries have held these shared beliefs of the "other" since the 1500s, as they expanded their respective empires exploiting natural resources to amplify the might of their respective mother countries (Ferreira, 2013).

The perceived inferiority of Indigenous peoples was maintained in colonial Australia, evidenced through the various policies and actions to decimate and alienate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Partington, 1998). So focused on the silencing of Indigenous peoples, it was not until the 1960s that Aboriginal school-aged children were readily "allowed" in the Westernised school classroom (Beresford, 2012). Prior to this, the role of any schooling provided to Indigenous students was primarily focused on assimilation with the premise that such actions would provide opportunity for Indigenous peoples "to attain the same manner of living as other Australians" (Hasluck, 1961, p. 1). As a result, the historical and social context within Australian society was not conducive of embracing Indigenous peoples' histories, cultures and languages, but, moreover, acted to ostracise and demean the knowledges held and maintained.

A shift in contemporary Australian education policy

Over the past two decades, there has been effort made within classrooms and early childhood centres, as well as higher education ITE curricula, to include Indigenous perspectives. This is evident within the physical environment and the teaching and learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. The policy-driven initiative has been met with mixed reactions from emerging and classroom teachers, as well as academics working within the ITE space (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011). One explanation for the resistance can be found in the *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2006) where it highlights that "most non-Indigenous educators have a limited understanding of, and qualifications in, Indigenous education" (p. 21). This lack of understanding and knowledge indicates a cultural gap.

In this paper, the "cultural gap" is the silenced deficit whereby knowledge and understanding in/on/about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges, histories, cultures and languages is ignored (Hogarth, 2020). The cultural gap enables the perpetuation and maintenance of stereotypes, assumptions and dominant norms. The failure to acknowledge and address this gap permits teachers to maintain a deficit lens on the educational potential and futures of Indigenous peoples.

Perpetuating the cultural gap within the Australian teaching workforce and ITE

Despite the shift in policy, the shift in practice within teaching and learning has been slow. The fact that the predominant Australian teaching workforce is made up of non-Indigenous Australians provides opportunity to perpetuate the cultural gap (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017). The same can be said for the teaching workforce in university ITE spaces and the future teaching workforce (Universities Australia, 2017). That is, there are currently less than 20 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander academics working within ITE programs nationwide (Australian Council of Deans, 2017). As a result, there is a risk that when educators seek to embed Indigenous peoples' perspectives within their teaching and learning Western ideologies about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are perpetuated and supported, maintaining the cultural gap. That is, Indigenous peoples' knowledges may be translated within the dominant Westernised frameworks founded within normalised assumptions and ideologies, further perpetuating deficit discourses, stereotypes and so forth (Williamson & Dalal, 2007).

Evidence of how the cultural gap is ignored

Research suggests that non-Indigenous teachers are fearful of embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures into their teaching and learning out of fear of making mistakes, fear of perceived tokenism and/or fear of causing offence (Booth, 2014; Hogarth, 2018; Shipp, 2013). There is little to no research on how ITE contributes to the fear and inactivity. The excuses and inaction in schools and ITE permits the persistent silencing of Indigenous Knowledges in the education system, providing opportunity for non-Indigenous educators to "continue to teach the Anglo-Australian content with which they are most comfortable and continue to exclude Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives" (Shipp, 2013, p. 26). The assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures is not a mandatory component of the Australian Curriculum ensures that omission is valid and acceptable. It is because of this inaction found in the literature that my lens in this paper moves to what is happening (if anything) in ITE to address the cultural gap.

Despite the fact that academics teaching into ITE courses have responsibility to prepare future classroom teachers to meet the Graduate Teacher Australian Professional Standards (AITSL, 2011) inclusive of the Indigenous specific Focus Areas of 1.4 and 2.4, Indigenous Knowledges continues to be excluded or, at the very least, presented from a non-Indigenous viewpoint. As McLaughlin and Whatman (2007) state:

> The challenge for the recognition of Indigenous knowledge in university teaching and learning is that non-Indigenous academics, who often control the parameters of the embedding processes, cannot "see" Indigenous knowledge outside of the coloniser interface. Most universities accept that Indigenous knowledge is "out there", but have no idea how it articulates with Western knowledge systems. (p. 3)

While academics are aware of the standards, they fail to acknowledge their own privilege and, instead, seek ways for Indigenous Knowledges to "fit" in their regular teaching content or practices, rather than seeing Indigenous Knowledges as essential to their own discipline areas and a key component of their role and responsibility.

The urgency to address the cultural gap becomes more apparent when looking within governmental reports and reviews on the current context in ITE. The Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group states that one of the key directions within ITE accreditation must be the provision of "robust evidence of successful graduate outcomes against the Professional Standards" (2014, p. vii). The words "against the Professional Standards" are key here—Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4 are inclusive in these Professional Standards and need to be evident.

The Network of Academic Directors of Professional Experience followed this in a 2017 report for the Australian Council of Deans, asserting that ITE providers were not acknowledging the importance of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific standards (Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4) within the Professional Standards (Australian Council of Deans, 2017). The importance of ITE providers to take professional responsibility to centre Indigenous Knowledges within their own courses and programs is evident here. After all, if we are training future classroom teachers, are we not to also be role models of what education *should* or *could* look like, rather than the perpetuation of the norm? Are we not the individuals or part of the collective responsible for providing this robust evidence? Of acknowledging the importance of Indigenous Knowledges in the Australian education system and curriculum?

The impact of silencing of Indigenous Knowledges on the schooling context

As shared, Indigenous Knowledges within teaching and learning is a relatively new focus in education. The silencing of Indigenous Knowledges in the schooling context has been identified within reports since the early 2000s. In the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs paper *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* (MCEETYA, 2006), the working party criticised how the embedding of Indigenous Knowledges within school curriculum "has been 'bolted on' rather than 'built in' to mainstream effort" (p. 16). This is still relevant today. That is, despite the inclusion of Indigenous-specific curriculum and standards for teachers, there is the assumption that this work is in addition to the disciplines, rather than a core component of the disciplines. It is important for teachers and educators to recognise that the shifting of the dominant/norm mindset cannot occur without recognition of the shared histories and addressing the cultural gap.

Further to this, the working party noted that any success in maintaining the implementation of Indigenous peoples' knowledges was the result of the efforts of motivated individuals within schools

and *not* the system (MCEETYA, 2006). Research indicates that the centring of Indigenous Knowledges needs to be not only bottom-up led, but also top-down, to ensure that human resources, funding and time are afforded to ensure this work can be done (Henry et al., 2013; Hogarth, 2018). In other words, systems and institutions, inclusive of universities, need to include Indigenous Knowledges within their strategic and operational plans—to centre Indigenous Knowledges as a core priority within their daily practices.

In more recent years, the discourse within education policy is shifting from a "deficit view", where the perceived poor educational attainment of Indigenous students was placed on the student themselves, to accountability being shared by all stakeholders in the education of Indigenous students (MCEETYA, 2006). The MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education asserts that "the education of Indigenous students is core business" (2000, p. 25); never is such a statement so pertinent than at this time of change and agency for improving the potential futures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. That is, education is everybody's business and, in particular, it is everybody's business to educate *all* students about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures and knowledges (see, for example, Education Council, 2019).

Policy is now advocating for ITE programs and schools to embed Indigenous peoples' knowledges and perspectives within the standards, skills and knowledge required of graduate teachers. There is need within the curriculum to encourage non-Indigenous Australians "to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world's oldest continuous living cultures" (ACARA, 2015a, para. 2). However, this is not readily identified within ITE programs. There is need to ascertain, investigate and build academics' understanding to assist in building the wider Australian society's understanding of Indigenous peoples' histories, cultures and languages.

Reasons for inaction: Fear of tokenism, fear of making mistakes and other influencing factors

There are numerous factors within the literature explaining (read as excusing) the silencing of Indigenous Knowledges in curricula and educational spaces. In this paper, four influential factors are foregrounded to illustrate the identified barriers and challenges faced by academics when embedding Indigenous Knowledges within university curricula. They are (1) resistance to decolonising curriculum, (2) the attitudes observed within academics, (3) white privilege and assimilation, and (4) the use of reflective practice.

Within ITE, the inclusion of Indigenous-specific units and/or modules within coursework is recognised, however, the overarching statements of institutional and governmental policy and intent is not enough. Prior studies have indicated that academics are challenged and, at times, resistant to embedding Indigenous Knowledges (see Harrison & Greenfield, 2011; Shipp, 2013; Williamson & Dalal, 2007). Williamson and Dalal (2007) suggest that such resistance is because "for non-Indigenous educators, it requires the sort of critical self-reflection that is ongoing and extraordinarily discomforting" (p. 57). The discomfort of non-Indigenous peoples as they become aware of their privilege and their lack of knowledge about Indigenous Knowledges is perplexing given the history of education provision in Australia. That is, why would it be surprising that people are lacking knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Knowledges when it has not been until recent decades that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures has become a key focus in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2015a)?

Whiteness and white privilege further identify the reasoning for resistance and/or ignorance. Whiteness also runs the risk of recolonising the space, despite good intent. As Townsend-Cross (2018) asserts, "white privilege pedagogy presents acute risks, most notably the risk of re-centring, reinscribing and reproducing whiteness" (pp. 69–70). That is, the cultural gap and the normalisation of the "other" (read as the coloniser) maintains the binary. As McLaughlin and Whatman's (2007) earlier quote illustrated, the perceived superiority, power and privilege consistently held by the coloniser, through the emphasis on Western knowledges and histories, acts to silence Indigenous Knowledges and excellence.

The literature highlights that to address the quandary of the cultural gap, academics working in ITE, teachers, educators and principals need to critically reflect on their practice. Finlay (2008) highlights how definition of reflective practice is contentious, and there are multiple understandings, as it involves practices that may make the individual feel discomfort. What is unsaid in this statement is the uncomfortableness experienced by non-Indigenous educators as they become aware of their privilege and potential fragility when challenged. So fragile are the colonisers that, she suggests, "in some professions it has become one of the defining features of competence … to rationalise existing practice" (Finlay, 2008, p. 1). As ITE academics, the use of reflective practice "involves looking for unarticulated assumptions and seeing from new perspectives" (Adler, 1991, p. 142). That is, as ITE academics, we must be aware of how the socio-cultural context and our lived experiences inform our position and, therefore, our actions as social actors within any given social context (Fairclough, 2001). We must consider how (or if) we privilege Indigenous Knowledges within our teaching and learning. We must consider how we are guiding future classroom teachers on how to know the content and know the learner, rather than consistently teaching to the norm (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010). Reflective practice is indeed something that academics must and should do, regardless of discomfort.

Furthermore, the shifts in policy discourse necessitate academics in ITE and education providers address their cultural gap (see, for example, ACARA, 2015b; AITSL, 2014; Universities Australia, 2017). As a result, universities "have begun to reflect the vast contribution to Australia—both foundational and continuing—of its first peoples and cultures, and foster deeper public understanding of that contribution" (Universities Australia, 2017, p. 6). While such statements espouse the need for change and the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges within our teaching and learning, staff are struggling to develop their own knowledge and understanding and to promote reconciliation by ensuring their curriculum reflects, acknowledges, and advances Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Accountability seems absent and, yet, ignorance about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges and understandings is no longer acceptable nor excusable.

Details about the pilot study

Ethical clearance was attained from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee at the university. This pilot study provided ITE academics a time and location to reflect on their current practice, knowledge and understanding of engaging with Indigenous Knowledges within their practice. That is, academics were provided with an opportunity to critically reflect on the ways they approach Indigenous Knowledges within their own teaching and learning. Due to word limitations in this paper, focus is placed on one section of the pilot study whereby academics were asked to describe their current understanding of the relevant professional and organisational standards and the level of relevance and importance Indigenous Knowledges are to their curriculum. Opportunities for extended responses were provided to allow participants to justify their positioning on the implementation of Indigenous Knowledges in their teaching and learning.

Several limitations are prevalent within this pilot study. The first is that the study was undertaken to complete an assessment. The study needed to be completed within a very short time frame. The restriction on time led to a limitation in the methods that could be employed. Therefore, secondly, the study only relies on survey responses to gain insights into academics' attitudes and preconceptions of Indigenous Knowledges within their teaching and learning. While opportunity for extended response was provided, the nuances and opportunities to draw further information from participants about responses available in such methods as interviews was not available. Finally, the number of participants in the pilot study is minimal, as is discussed below.

The pilot study was inclusive of two schools at the university, Education and Health. Both these disciplines are colloquially known as the capstone points of entry for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in universities and, therefore, appropriate for this study. The survey was built and distributed via a Key Survey link shared through a staff group email to potential participants. It is important to note that within the Education Faculty alone the staff number is in excess of 100 academics, with the predominant teaching workforce being non-Indigenous. Nonetheless, only nine academics participated in the study total. All participants identified as non-Indigenous. Of the nine participants, four were from Education working in ITE and five from Health.

In this paper, focus is placed on the responses of the four ITE academics. The silences evident in only four respondents from a large faculty participating in the survey can be interpreted in several ways. Rather than thinking negatively and taking the position that my colleagues did not wish to engage in a project that specifically related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, I elected to give them the benefit of the doubt and sought other reasons for the disengagement.

The survey was released in the weeks leading into the beginning of a teaching semester and academics may have been preparing for semester and time poor. However, it was intentionally released at this time by the researchers with the assumption that academics would be even more time poor when semester began. Another assumption that may be made about the lack of participation by my colleagues was that they may have been on break and, therefore, not at the workplace. Of course, I cannot deny that there was also the possibility that staff members felt discomfort with the focus of the study and, therefore, elected to refrain from participating in the survey. Finally, as alluded to in the previous paragraphs, there is evidence of resistance to decolonising curriculum and, therefore, this may have been the position of the predominantly non-Indigenous staff for not engaging. Despite the few participants, respondents ranged from academics who had worked in the sector for less than three years to more experienced academics with over 10 years' experience. The range of experience is relevant to this study, as it provides insight to how key policy and strategic initiatives within the university are disseminated to staff, as opposed to the translation of professional responsibilities as a classroom teacher by early career academics who may have only recently left schooling environments.

The methodological approach to analyse the data

An innovative methodological approach, Indigenous critical discourse analysis (ICDA) (Hogarth, 2017; 2018), was used to analyse the data. ICDA is used to analyse the explicit and implicit participant responses to survey questions. The analysis of discourses, the said and unsaid in this pilot study, is important because as Fairclough (2001) asserts, analysis of the connection between language and inequitable power relations is necessary. Fairclough's intention to highlight the "influence of language" in producing, maintaining and challenging issues of power and dominance informed the formation and development of ICDA.

Building on the work of Fairclough (2001) and other critical discourse analysts, ICDA recognises that critical discourse analysis is predominantly data analysed from an outsider perspective, rather than from a lived experience (Hogarth, 2018). ICDA (Hogarth, 2018), informed and building on the work of Rigney's (1999) and Nakata's (2007) theoretical frameworks, seeks to be an emancipatory methodological approach. Drawing on Rigney's (1999) Indigenist research principles, ICDA critiques the inequity of power distribution between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous peoples. ICDA aims to nurture greater awareness of the social construction of minorities and the maintaining of social constructions that maintain "othering". It recognises that the lived experience of the researcher as an Indigenous person is invaluable, as their own realities are informed by the power of popular discourse; additionally, reciprocal relationships with other Indigenous individuals and communities engages them with the shared collective lived experience. It demonstrates how language is used to position people and how issues of power and dominance are established and maintained within discourses (Hogarth, 2017; 2018) and provides opportunity for the voice of the silenced to be heard, to emphasise and stress the power of discourses and providing opportunity for reform and change (Hogarth, 2018; 2020).

Elements of ICDA build on CDA's understandings of discourses, such as Wodak and Meyer (2009, p. 2) who assert that the focus of CDA is not on "linguistic units per se", but rather the "social phenomena" of social positioning. CDA highlights the impacts of the natural mutualism of discourse and social settings (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000) on the maintenance and reproduction of power in our societies— a property maintained within ICDA. Paltridge (2013) states that CDA "explores issues such as gender, ethnicity, cultural difference, ideology and identity and how these are both constructed and reflected in texts" (p. 89). ICDA's focus specifically looks at Indigenous phenomena through an Indigenous lens, but is also inclusive of a female gendered viewpoint (Hogarth, 2018). Furthermore, Fairclough (2013) promotes CDA's ability to "help increase consciousness of how language contributes to the domination of some people by others, because consciousness is the first step towards emancipation" (p. 193). CDA looks at several dimensions within discourse, such as analyses of texts and conversations, the use of non-verbal texts including gesture and expressions, as well as "the properties of 'naturally occurring' language use by real language users" (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 2), as does ICDA (Hogarth, 2018).

It is important to note that the lack of participants in the pilot study brings another dimension to the findings, in that the findings cannot be seen as conclusive but, rather, a conversation starter to bring focus to this critical issue. In this instance, the primary focus of the data analysis is on the micro-level of text; what is said and unsaid. The various responses are interpreted through the lens of an Indigenous educator and academic whose lived experiences have seen the silencing of Indigenous Knowledges occur both as a student and as a classroom teacher.

The findings

The pilot study was small. It would be inane to infer that the findings discussed in this section are conclusive. Instead, using ICDA, the analysis of the responses provides opportunities to explore the individual responses at a micro- level, with some reference to the macro- and meso- levels informing and being informed by the textual choices. It is the intent of the findings to promote critical discussion around how understanding and engagement with Indigenous Knowledges is a professional attribute for not only classroom teachers, but ITE academics as well.

It is also important to highlight that the data is being analysed through an Indigenous worldview lens. Through this statement, I am not asserting that the ways in which I have interpreted the data is a shared

or common understanding. Rightly so, another Indigenous academic may interpret the data very differently to myself. I draw on my lived experiences as an Aboriginal woman, a trained educator, a classroom teacher, an education academic and as someone who has delved deeply into analysing and critically engaging with education policy. My interpretations of the data seek to look at how the participants are positioning themselves through what is said and what is unsaid, through my worldview lens.

Institutional expectations versus professional expectations of teachers

The initial questions asked participants to describe their understanding of the university's, as well as the profession's, expectations of them regarding the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in teaching and learning. Overall, there was a disconnect between the expectations of the university as an institution versus the expectations of the profession inclusive of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership's Professional Standards for Teachers (2014); the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's Australian Curriculum; and/or teacher registration agencies expectations for registration, such as the Queensland College of Teachers.

Indigenous Knowledges are essential

Evidence of these disparities were shared within participant responses. Respondent B stated that "there does not seem to be an emphasis on the inclusion of knowledges but is more based on the individual" when describing the understanding of the university's expectation of academics regarding the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in their teaching and learning. Respondent B's observations of the profession's expectations was in stark contrast, asserting that "embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait [Islander] knowledges and perspectives into the teaching and learning of the classroom is essential with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures being one of three cross-curriculum priorities in the national curriculum".

The stark contrast in emphasis becomes apparent when we consider that when identifying the institutional expectations, Respondent B shifts the focus from the institution to the individual. Here, the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures is personal choice; "there does not seem to be an emphasis" despite institutional policy rhetoric within strategic and operational planning stating otherwise. The use of the modal verb phrase "does not seem" suggests that the subject of the sentence, "inclusion of knowledges", is not anticipated, nor is there a perceived obligation to do so. The understanding of the need to embed Indigenous Knowledges within the schooling sector, yet the neutrality and lack of urgency of privileging Indigenous Knowledges within the institution, demonstrates the contestation within education. This is not perceived as resistance, but an illustration of power and the necessity for a top-down as well as bottom-up approach.

Moreover, when referring to the expectations of the professional organisation, Respondent B shifts the modality from little to definite obligation stating, "embedding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait knowledges and perspectives into the teaching and learning of the classroom is *essential* [emphasis added]". While ITE programs have a responsibility to prepare students as classroom teachers, ITE providers and academics resist or feign ignorance as to their responsibility (Ma Rhea et al., 2012). As a result, the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures may be very well silenced and/or haphazardly attended to, as alluded to in prior discussions.

Indigenous Knowledges must be embedded

The participants were able to list a range of the institutional expectations regarding the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in their teaching and learning. Some of the respondents were able to draw on specific institutional policy and strategy, indicating that there were indeed instances where communication of the expectations of the institution in regard to ITE provision were shared and understood. However, it was noted that predominantly the expectations were not clear about the extent of Indigenous Knowledges being embedded within the teaching and learning. This was evidenced, for example, by Respondent A suggesting "including a Welcome/Acknowledgement of Country at the start of the semester" would suffice, or, alternatively, Respondent C simply stating "knowledges must be included/embedded". While Respondent A was able to provide a specific example, it should also be noted that the example is not an example of embedding Indigenous Knowledges in teaching and learning but, moreover, positioned as a one-off activity. In contrast, Respondent C's response is quite ambiguous in nature, with little indication as to what "knowledges" are to be included, nor examples provided.

Another consideration of Respondent A's declarative statement of "including a Welcome/ Acknowledgement of Country" fails to recognise the distinction and difference between a Welcome to Country (Welcome) and an Acknowledgement of Country (Acknowledgement). Those with a minimal understanding of Indigenous Knowledges should be able to readily report that a Welcome can only be provided by a traditional owner and, as previously indicated, all four respondents were non-Indigenous meaning they *could not* provide a Welcome. Further to this, the provision of an Acknowledgement at the beginning of a 12-week teaching semester is less than adequate if we, as ITE providers and academics, are to model the importance of Indigenous Knowledges within our teaching areas. For example, an Acknowledgement indicates the speaker's respect for Indigenous peoples and their relationship with Country and rarely includes shaping around its own history and application in a historical context. An overly generous five-minute Acknowledgement recognising the traditional owners is hardly sufficient to truly acknowledge the fact that for the following 12 weeks the academic will continue to work and live on stolen lands, nor will it instil in students an awareness that they, too, benefit from the teaching and learning occurring on the stolen lands of Indigenous peoples. It will not have students critically engage with their assumptions and biases, or provide insights to the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in education. And it will not provide future classroom teachers with the teaching and learning necessary to demonstrate graduate attributes to address Focus Areas 1.4 and 2.4 (AITSL, 2014).

Knowledge of professional expectations of ITE

Participants were readily able to refer to and cite specific discipline documents informing the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in teaching and learning produced and developed by relevant professional organisations.

Future classroom teachers must learn about Indigenous Knowledges and students

All respondents referred to the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as one of the three cross-curriculum priorities within the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2015a). Respondent A referred to the "high expectation from the education profession to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge in T&L [sic] for pre-service teachers". Respondent A continued stating, "they [pre-service teachers] must learn about the potential needs of Indigenous students, as well as the cross-curriculum content". Here, Respondent A makes reference to the expectations placed on pre-service teachers, which inevitably reflects on the need for ITE to further provide opportunities for

pre-service teachers to gain an understanding of not just Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and their application within the curriculum, but, also, to understand and have strategies to address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners' needs.

Again, the use of obligatory modal verbs are prevalent: "they *must* learn [emphasis added]". The failure to reflect on how pre-service teachers are to do this if it is not part of the ITE providers and academics teaching and learning further illustrates the irony of the situation. Future classroom teachers "*must learn* about the potential needs of Indigenous students, as well as the cross-curriculum content [emphasis added]", but the how is not considered. Instead, it is positioned as the responsibility of the future classroom teacher. The silent contract between ITE providers and academics as part of the institution, the professional organisation providing the teacher registration and the student as client and potential future classroom teacher is ignored. The silent contract being, if "they [students/future classroom teachers] must learn", then ITE academics *must teach* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures so that professional organisations can see evidence of knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures in graduate portfolios.

Respondent D counters this line of dismissal or silencing, writing, "My understanding is developing through the key curriculum documents from federal and state governments to prioritise, value, implement and support the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges in my teaching and learning, and pass on the value to pre-service teachers". Here we see that Respondent D is taking responsibility for their own professional learning, albeit through further Western education systems and the perceived ways to address the deficit from a coloniser's lens.

Respondent D identifies the drive for change in policy. However, they state that their "understanding is developing through the key curriculum documents", which hardly add to one's knowledge or understanding of/in/on/about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures and languages, or the impetus for change. Moreover, it would be the urgency to build one's knowledge through the need "to prioritise, value, implement and support the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges in my teaching and learning" that Respondent D would be referring to, but there is no reference provided to any further readings or professional development that is occurring as a result of this developing understanding. The lack of information here is without a doubt due to the limitations of the pilot study only employing a survey as a method to gain data, and the inclusion of an interview would most definitely garner further information to answer such silences prevalent. This has been duly noted for the next iteration of the study. Nonetheless, professional responsibility for increasing academic understanding and knowledge about Indigenous Knowledges is pertinent if they are to "pass on the value to pre-service teachers".

Indigenous Knowledges in ITE curriculum, teaching and learning

Extending on the initial inquiry of ITE academics' understandings regarding institutional strategic and operational planning and the ITE academics' understandings of policy and professional demands and directives on Indigenous Knowledges, participants were asked to (1) respond to the growing expectation for the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges within university curriculum, and (2) determine the importance and relevance of Indigenous Knowledges in the teaching and learning of ITE. Most of the participants indicated that the growing expectation for the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in university curricula was important to the contemporary practice of the education profession. The second question saw some divergence within the participants, with Respondent D marking neutral while all

other respondents suggested it was important. Participants were then asked to provide an extended response to validate their decisions.

Indigenous Knowledges matter

Given the discrepancy to the other responses, it is important to pay attention to Respondent D's comments. Here, Respondent D states:

> The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges are compatible to modern knowledges about teaching and learning. They can be related and valued as of [sic] from most cultures. The reason I put Neutral [sic] is not to de-value but to balance.

The use of the adjective "compatible" is somewhat of an oxymoron. Within the literature and policy reviews and reports, Indigenous Knowledges have consistently been considered different and, therefore, the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures has been reported to be considered bolted on, or in addition, to Western knowledges and curricula (see, for example, MCEETYA, 2006). Further to this, policy reports and reviews since the mid-1970s have spoken to the notion of difference, and articulated the alienation of Indigenous Knowledges within the Western education system (Hogarth, 2018; Schools Commission, 1975). Such assertions would appear to contradict Respondent D's assertion of compatibility. Nonetheless, the desire to remove the privileging of Indigenous Knowledges is noted.

Respondent D's following declarative statements are more insightful of their thinking about the privileging of Indigenous Knowledges. That is, they suggest that there is an affinity between Indigenous Knowledges and "modern knowledges"; that "they can be related and valued as of [sic] from most cultures". Here, Respondent D is suggesting that Indigenous Knowledges are just as important as that of all other cultures. Such mentality of insisting to not privilege one culture above another has been evident in Australian discourses more recently with the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. Individuals fail to recognise the privileging of their own culture within the norm (read as Western Judeo-Christian knowledges). Suddenly, Western civilisation is at risk and needs to be protected.

In Respondent D's assertion, we can see that where the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledges in education is being considered, we could easily rephrase and liken it to the current arguments proffered, being "Indigenous Knowledges matter", the argument that "All knowledges matter" is Respondent D's response. Much like in the Black Lives Matter movement, the privileging of Indigenous Knowledges in education and bringing knowledges that have for so long been ignored or dismissed to the forefront is difficult to accept or allow. Respondent D refuses to see that the inclusion and importance being placed on the need for Indigenous Knowledges to be included within education is to begin addressing the cultural gap and ensure that the current disparities evident between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples can be addressed in the future.

To counter the notion of power and privilege whereby the education provided currently already privileges the coloniser's knowledges, histories and cultures and, therefore, reflects their own heritage and ways of knowing, being and doing, Respondent D includes the final phrase, "The reason I put Neutral is not to de-value but to balance". That is, Indigenous Knowledges should be seen as equal to or just as important as other cultures and knowledges. Such sentiments are evidenced in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*, with the inclusion of the statement that all students are to "have an understanding of Australia's system of government, its histories, religions and culture" (Education

Council, 2019, p. 8). Most notably, the use of the singular "culture" in this instance is referring to an undefined colonial Australian monoculture, but, nonetheless, colonial in all manners.

The privileging of Indigenous Knowledges within education is not about equality, nor about ranking knowledges, but about addressing the silence and dismissal of Indigenous Knowledges since 1788. It is about equity, and it is about ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students see themselves reflected within the teaching and learning system; that their knowledges and cultures are respected and valued within the education system. The notion "to balance" that Respondent D asserts when determining what informs the level of importance and relevance they prescribe to Indigenous Knowledges in teaching and learning would see a markedly different curriculum if it was indeed *balanced*.

Academics need to know about Indigenous Knowledges

Respondent B, on the other hand, shares that they are informed by their "consideration of a need to respect the diversity and inclusivity of students within a class; as well as inclusion of learning content relevant to all the cultures of students within a class. Also I feel a need to develop an understanding of the culture of the indigenous [sic] peoples of the country". The alignments here to the developing notion of a culturally responsive pedagogical approach whereby there is a consideration of the diversity "of students within a class" as well as the need for "inclusion of learning content relevant to all the cultures of students within a class" is evident. Respondent B acknowledges that, rather than the issue being the curriculum and teaching and learning itself, "their own cultural strengths and weaknesses come into play here too" (Hogarth, 2020, p. 6). Respondent B's focus is on the students in the class.

They are yet to "engage with heart as well as mind" (Sims, 2011, p. 11). Although, there are hints that a shift in ways of engaging is potentially viable in Respondent B's future, as they acknowledge "a need to develop an understanding of the culture of the indigenous [sic] peoples of the country". The use of the singular noun "culture", as opposed to "cultures", would suggest that Respondent B is yet to recognise the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures and is still relatively fresh in their learnings. This is not a critique, but an acknowledgement that we are all at various levels in our understandings of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

It is important for teachers and ITE academics to model and demonstrate that learning is, indeed, lifelong and, moreover, that it is the responsibility of guests on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands to learn about our shared histories and local communities. It is our responsibility to build future Australian citizens' knowledge and understanding about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories, cultures and languages.

A caveat about culture

It is important to note that it is not the responsibility of ITE academics nor classroom teachers to teach culture. Culture is personal and distinct. Culture is embodied. This is not done in the classroom. This is not possible to be provided by a non-Indigenous person. This is done with community, parents, knowledge keepers and so forth; people who have the lived experience as an Indigenous person.

This is explicit within the ACARA elaborations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organising ideas where it suggests culture within education involves examining "the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' cultures through language, ways of life and experiences as expressed through historical, social and political lenses. It gives students opportunities to gain a deeper

understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing" (ACARA, 2015a, para. 12).

Such a definition harks back to the notions being advocated within the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* (Referendum Council, 2017). There is a need for truth telling and the examination of the shared histories through the Indigenous lens, of acknowledging the horrific past and lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, rather than a white-washed history placating the hostilities and violence of the coloniser. There is the need to recognise why the current context is as it is to advocate for change for the future.

Concluding statements

The pilot study is a conversation starter. There is need for further study and broader analysis in how ITE academics and institutions are working to include Indigenous Knowledges within teaching and learning. The limited representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics working within the ITE space is of high concern. Without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation within the teaching staff, there is the risk of the perpetuation of colonisation and the continuation of centring the non-Indigenous person as the knower. Further to this, there is the risk of the teaching and learning to privilege the non-Indigenous voice, and the observation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the "other", a research subject, rather than the gaze being on how non-Indigenous peoples maintain the status quo and the change that is needed.

However, we cannot deny the fact that the predominant teacher and academic workforce is non-Indigenous. Non-Indigenous ITE academics and providers, as well as classroom teachers inclusive of pre-service teachers, need to recognise their role in effecting change. Denial and silence are no longer acceptable. ITE providers and academics are accountable. Classroom teachers and education providers are accountable. Each and every education provider enters a silent contract with their students to prepare them for the workplace, further education and the world as it is as a global citizen. Inaction and the inability to speak to race, racism, intergenerational trauma and all the other uncomfortable discussion topics hinders progress and makes reconciliation impossible.

There is a need to continue questioning and reviewing what is happening within ITE. The self-evaluative approach to the challenges and support required to embed Indigenous peoples' knowledges and perspectives within ITE programs encourages critical dialogue between all stakeholders within institutions or universities to ensure that the policy goals are achievable and provides opportunities to collaboratively seek ways in which to address the disparities.

The assumption that policy makes—that academics are either knowledgeable and/or comfortable in embedding Indigenous peoples' knowledges and perspectives—needs to be addressed and strategies to assist and support academics collated and considered. This requires a transformation within institutions, a shift in the ways they work and engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, knowledges, histories, cultures and languages. Further research is necessary to explore the inconsistencies within the rhetoric, contradictions and assumptions in policy. More importantly, the research needs to be led and centred around Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

It is necessary to ensure that the narrative comes from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices. The research can then transition from a place of disempowerment and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples being observed as "other". The ethical considerations of such research need to be transformative

and guided by the premise that the research is seeking to address the concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

For such things to occur within the current ITE space, there needs to be a recognition of sovereign research whereby all education providers acknowledge that their work, the teaching and learning occurs on the unceded lands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. By Acknowledging Country and the relationship Indigenous peoples have with Country, ITE providers and academics are beginning the process of legitimising Indigenous Knowledges. ITE providers and academics should then look to ensure that truth telling is explicit throughout all teaching and learning. Advocacy for change is not possible without a genuine engagement with the past—acknowledgement of the detrimental effects of the atrocities that occurred in our shared histories and tackling the other forms of injustice experienced and which continues to be felt within contemporary colonial Australia, rather than remaining silent. The practice of critique and reflection of self needs to be central within ITE programs.

I must believe that change is possible and that there is opportunity for a truly inclusive and informed education system. My work here in ITE is motivated and premised on this proposition. And so, I end by asking: Can we begin those difficult conversations and begin the transformative work necessary in education and ITE provision to address the attitudes and beliefs held by ITE academics and classroom teachers? Or is it simply time and enough discussion? After all, education (read as education encompassing Indigenous Knowledges, not as two separate entities) is everybody's business, isn't it?

Acknowledgements

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Please cite this article as: