

**Literature review relating to the current context and discourse on
Indigenous cultural awareness in the teaching space: Critical
pedagogies and improving Indigenous learning outcomes through
cultural responsiveness.**

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Australian Council *for* Educational Research



November 2015

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Executive Summary

In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students continue to be behind their non-Indigenous peers in the educational space despite ongoing policy attempts to rectify this matter. This “gap” in educational attainment is apparent in all levels of schooling, from early childhood education, to school, to VET and tertiary education. Arguably, this gap in educational attainment between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians stems, in no small measure, from Australia's colonised history. This chapter in Australia's history saw Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being displaced, dispossessed of their land, racially vilified and the victims of countless horrific acts of violence.

Before colonisation, Aboriginal children in Australia were provided with an education grounded in culture that taught children about practical every day necessities. This education saw Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children learning through existential means about survival, the use of land, caring for the earth and other cultural lessons deemed necessary by Elders. Indigenous education in the pre-colonial era was practical and hands on. Yet, this approach that does not always fit with the current education system in Australia.

Australia's current education system underpinned by Western values. This is a consequence of the education system's beginnings during colonisation. It is often highlighted in the literature that a cultural mismatch between the home and school environments exists for Indigenous students. Indeed, the environmental mismatch between home and school that many Indigenous students experience stems from colonisation. Culturally responsive teaching is often regarded as the means by which teachers - and the education system at large - can alleviate the discomfort experienced by Indigenous students who have to 'reside within two worlds', those being school and home respectively.

An increasingly important issue within the education sphere is the acknowledgement of the role that culture plays in improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students. It is now recognised that culturally responsive teaching practices can improve academic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. There are a variety of methods that educators can use in order to be culturally responsive when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, such as under talking instead of over talking, scaffolding learning content, and building mutually respectful, trusting relationships with Indigenous students and their families. However, understandings of what is considered to be best practice in culturally responsive teaching are varied. This is due to the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are a heterogeneous group, with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and ways of operating within the classroom. For example, one approach to culturally responsive teaching

that works with one Aboriginal student may not necessarily work with another. Consequently, any framework for culturally responsive teaching with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students needs to take into account the individuality that rests within all students.

Furthermore, it is imperative that all approaches to ensuring cultural responsiveness with Indigenous Australian students incorporate Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and worldviews. A collaborative approach to culturally responsive teaching in Australian education, undertaken in partnership with the local Aboriginal community and the relevant education institution, is the most effective means of ensuring positive outcomes are achieved through improved cultural responsiveness, awareness and competency.

Introduction

This literature review seeks to provide an overview of current understandings and discourse about culturally responsive teaching and cultural awareness in education in Australia. Although some of the literature considered within this review is from an international perspective, the purpose of this review is to provide background information regarding culturally responsive teaching with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. This literature review was completed in a short time frame and is by no means exhaustive on the topic of culturally responsive teaching and cultural awareness with Indigenous students. It was completed as part of a contract with the VET Development Centre in East Melbourne to complete an evaluation of their Indigenous Cultural Awareness Programs.

This literature review systematically reviews the following topics:

- The importance of cultural awareness for Indigenous students;
- Cultural responsiveness in the teaching space;
- The benefits of culturally responsive teaching for students;
- Examples of effective culturally responsive practices in education; and,
- Cultural awareness for the next generation.

One complexity noted in the literature is that terminology used to refer to cultural responsiveness varies greatly within, between and across disciplines and countries (Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2009). The term 'culturally responsive' is used interchangeably in the literature with cultural competence, cultural awareness, culturally sensitive and cultural safety. Dunbar and Scrimgeour (2009) noted that within the education sector, reference is often made to 'culturally responsive schooling' and 'culturally relevant teaching'. This review noted a preference for the terms 'culturally responsive' and 'cultural competence' in the contemporary education literature. Throughout this review, in order to reflect the diversity of preferences evident in the literature, the terms 'culturally responsive', 'culturally competent', 'culturally aware', 'culturally safe', 'culturally sensitive' and 'culturally relevant' will be used interchangeably. However, preference is given to the term 'culturally responsive' in this review in order to reflect its dominance in the education literature.

This literature review was completed by one member of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) Indigenous Education Team, Indigenous Graduate Research Fellow, Jacynta Krakouer.

Methodology

Using ACER Cunningham Library's extensive educational database, the literature search for this review yielded 40 results, with 3 articles from international sources and the remaining 37 from Australian sources. Two separate searches were undertaken to locate all relevant literature. Search terms used for the first literature scan included: "cultural awareness", "culturally responsive", "culturally responsive teaching" AND "Indigenous", "Aboriginal", "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" AND "education", "VET", "school". The second literature scan used the following search terms: "VET" AND "cultural awareness", "culturally responsive", "culturally responsive teaching" AND "Indigenous", "Aboriginal", "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander".

Upon review of literature abstracts and key findings, 15 articles and/or book chapters were excluded from inclusion in the review due to lack of relevance to the subject content. Consequently, a total of 24 articles, reports, books and/or book chapters were reviewed as part of this literature review. All literature reviewed was highly specific and relevant to culturally responsive teaching, with most literature being specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the Australian context.

Literature Review

The importance of cultural awareness for Indigenous students

Largely based on Social Darwinism ideology, the history of Indigenous education in Australia has been one of discrimination, marginalisation and limited access (Universities Australia, 2011, p.9). In the past, since colonisation, Aboriginal children experienced an education that reinforced the idea that Aboriginal beliefs and values were inferior to Western values (Universities Australia, 2011). While it is now recognised that children come to school with a predetermined set of beliefs, experiences and values based on their culture (Lewthwaite, Owen, Doiron, Renaud & McMillan, 2014), Aboriginal Australian children were taught – up until the 1970s – to disregard their Aboriginal culture in exchange for a Western education (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997).

Aboriginal people were denied access to the same educational opportunities afforded to non-Indigenous Australians prior to the 1960s (BurrIDGE, Whalan & Vaughan, 2012). This was a period when institutional racism was rife as a result of the Aborigines Protection Acts that operated throughout Australian states and territories (Universities Australia, 2011). The 1967 referendum saw restrictions on Aboriginal education loosened, with increases in university enrolments by Aboriginal people evident post 1967 (Universities Australia, 2011). However, the discrimination and racism endured by many Aboriginal people in the education system up until the 1960s has seen a lasting legacy of distrust of the education system by Aboriginal people. As a result of past educational practices, many Aboriginal people today have a negative association with the Western schooling system. For Indigenous children who participate in the dominant education system, it is particularly important for educational practices to be responsive to Indigenous knowledge, practices and culture so that the best academic outcomes can be achieved (Lewthwaite et al, 2014).

In contemporary cultural awareness discourse, it is recognised that educational experiences for Aboriginal children should reinforce their culture and language (Lewthwaite et al, 2014), rather than diminish Aboriginal culture as was the practice during the Stolen Generations. However, in order to be culturally responsive in the teaching space, practitioners must also recognise the existing institutional racism that is embedded in dominant Western teaching spaces, such as schools, Vocational and Education Training (VET) institutions and universities (Quinn, Duff, Brodie, Darzanos, Smith, Carmody, Makepeace & Dansie, 2011). Leigh (2002, cited in Quinn et al, 2011) argues that racism is embedded in the institutional practices of education systems, for example, through the promotion of Western educational values above all others. Rahman (2013) also argues that that the learning 'rules' or 'hidden curriculum' evident in Australian

schools are based on the values, practices and worldviews of the white dominant culture, thus disadvantaging Indigenous students who have not had exposure to the norms of Western culture. Rahman (2013, p. 666) also states that "the domination of Western culture in Australian education has largely shaped Indigenous people's expectations and schooling outcomes, [leading to] many Aboriginal children [having] to relinquish their distinct ways of learning and abandon their cultural heritage in order to receive a formal education". If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are to overcome the disadvantage stemming from cultural bias found in Australian schools, it is paramount that educators challenge 'white privilege' so that cultural responsiveness with children who are not of the dominant culture can be ensured (Leigh, 2002, cited in Quinn et al, 2011).

'White privilege' is also evident in a recent paper written by Klenowski (2009) who argues that assessment practices in Australia perpetuate inequity for Indigenous students by favouring western knowledge over other kinds of cultural knowledge. She (2009) argues that students of the dominant culture in Australia are advantaged in Australian assessment regimes due to the cultural capital they already hold, that is, the skills and knowledge they have been able to develop due to their background and/or ethnicity (Klenowski, 2009). Klenowski (2009, p. 77) asserts that "teachers need to adopt culturally responsive pedagogy to open up the curriculum and assessment practice to allow for different ways of knowing and being". Indeed, there is a pressing need to address "issues in language, cultural content, development sequence, framing, content and interpretation" in school-based assessments in Australia in order to ensure equity for Indigenous Australians in testing regimes (Klenowski, 2009, p. 85).

In today's era of national teaching standards, assessment benchmarks and rigorous national and international assessment procedures, the importance of ensuring equity for Aboriginal students via culturally responsive teaching practices is exceptionally clear. Indeed, culturally responsive teaching practices provide educators with the means to challenge institutional racism, 'white privilege' and the positioning of 'other' cultural knowledge as inferior to Western values. However, looking forward to the future, it is also highly likely that globalisation will influence Indigenous educational outcomes in many years to come. In approximately 2017, it is estimated that the Indigenous population of Australia will reach 800,000 people. This is a clear increase from the 2006 Census record of 500,000 Indigenous people in Australia. Continued growth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Australia is expected, with projected figures expected to grow to over one million Indigenous people in Australia by 2031. Indeed, the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices with Indigenous people cannot be underestimated in the current and future eras of globalisation and Indigenous population expansion in Australia.

Cultural responsiveness in the teaching space

Cultural competence is best understood as a process that exists on a continuum, with cultural destructiveness existing at one end and cultural proficiency situated at the other end (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 2011). The National Health and Medical Research Council (cited in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, 2011, p. 150) defines cultural competence as "a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals and enable that system, agency or those professions to work effectively in cross-cultural situations".

In the teaching space, Perso and Hayward (2015, p. 1) define cultural competency "as the capacity or ability to understand, interact and communicate effectively, with sensitivity, with people from different cultural backgrounds". Cultural responsiveness is defined by Perso and Hayward (2015, p. 1) as "enacted cultural competence". However, it is noted in the literature that the terms 'cultural responsiveness', 'cultural competence', 'cultural awareness', 'cultural relevance', 'cultural safety' and 'cultural security' are used interchangeably in the Australian context as "part of a suite of concepts or frameworks proposed as interventions aimed at improving the health, social and educational outcomes for minority group members including ... Indigenous peoples" (Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2009, p. 3). In the teaching context, the literature shows a preference for the terms culturally responsive and culturally relevant. This is most likely a result of the desire for teachers to *take action* to ensure that their teaching adequately demonstrates cultural awareness or cultural competence. That is, in the teaching sphere, cultural responsiveness is displayed via the use of pedagogical approaches that demonstrate an understanding of diversity as well as a teacher's ability to meet the needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Culturally responsive teaching is particularly effective with students who are not of the majority culture. It involves being aware of a student's culture and using their prior cultural knowledge, experiences and values to make learning more meaningful and relevant (Lewthwaite et al, 2014, p. 3). The Australian Education Union (2004, pp. 5-6) defines skilled educators of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as those who possess:

1. "*Cultural and cross-cultural understandings*" (including the ability to analyse one's own ethnocentrism, white privilege and ability to work within a cross-cultural setting);

2. *"High level communication skills"* (including the ability to communicate with a variety of groups, including students, parents, Aboriginal community members, Elders, and stakeholders);
3. *"The ability to work in and within a community"* (taking into account both physical locality and social conditions of Aboriginal community life);
4. *"The ability to work as a member of a team and a broader collegial network"* (including the ability to work collaboratively with Aboriginal students, their families and community members);
5. *"A high level of professionalism and integrity"* (including a commitment to ongoing professional development activities); and,
6. *"A high level of self and professional awareness"* (including the ability to critically reflect on one's performance in and outside of the classroom).

Other examples of culturally responsive teaching methods, include:

- Teachers under talking rather than over talking;
- Giving students time to reflect;
- Making learning meaningful and learning goals clear;
- Direct and clear instruction;
- Provision of feedback;
- Scaffolding learning content;
- Adapting teaching style and encouraging group work;
- Using visual and experiential learning tasks;
- Having high expectations and belief in students;
- Changing the language of instruction;
- Encouraging pride in Aboriginality;
- Promoting Aboriginal culture and systems as important;
- Developing strong relationships that enable teachers to know the student's family and community; and,
- Building strong student-teacher relationships, that include teachers knowing their student, their prior knowledge and their learning style (Harrison, 2011; Lewthwaite et al, 2015; Perso & Hayward, 2015).

Culturally responsive teaching provides teachers with the means to adapt the curriculum and their pedagogical approach when working with Indigenous children (Lewthwaite et al, 2014). In their article exploring culturally responsive teaching for Canadian Aboriginal First Nations

children, Lewthwaite et al (2014, p. 2) state that “culture provides a foundation for learning and growth” and that culturally responsive teaching should “create, preserve, promote and enhance [Aboriginal] culture”. However, while culturally responsive teaching ideally promotes and strengthens Aboriginal perspectives and Aboriginal knowledge as part of the curriculum, Harrison and Greenfield (2011) found that teachers frequently misunderstand the difference between Aboriginal perspectives and Aboriginal knowledge, thereby using each concept interchangeably to teach syllabus content. Harrison and Greenfield (2011, p. 65) note that “teachers often lament that they know little about Aboriginal people, while questioning how they can be expected to include Aboriginal perspectives in their programs”. Undoubtedly, this lack of knowledge concerning Aboriginal people, perspectives and knowledge can lead to stereotypical representations of Aboriginal people, culture and worldviews being taught in the schooling system (Harrison & Greenfield, 2011).

Perso and Hayward (2015) state that stereotypical representations of Aboriginal people can be avoided in the classroom if teachers take the time to know their student, their family, community and culture. Culturally responsive practice includes teachers taking the time to talk to their Aboriginal students and asking them directly about their mob, family, country and culture, instead of relying on information about Aboriginal people from other sources, such as the media (Perso & Hayward, 2015). Perso and Hayward (2015, p. 31) state that avoiding stereotypes and knowing individual students is particularly important considering that Aboriginal Australia consists of a large number of diverse cultural groups, each with different languages and cultural customs. An adequate understanding and knowledge of the history of Aboriginal Australia and Aboriginal people's historical relationship with the education system can assist also teachers to avoid stereotyping Aboriginal people and culture (Harrison 2011; Universities Australia, 2011). Certainly, it is imperative that educators learn about Aboriginal perspectives and knowledge from Aboriginal people in order to avoid the perpetuation of misinformation.

Lewthwaite, Osborne, Lloyd, Boon, Llewellyn, Webber, Laffin, Harrison, Day, Kemp and Wills (2015) investigated the teaching practices that Aboriginal students and parents in North Queensland feel influence educational outcomes and engagement with the education system. They found that Aboriginal students and parents valued different aspects of teaching practices more so than others, with parents emphasising the importance of teachers knowing and understanding pre and post-colonial Aboriginal history. They found that parents believed the following issues influenced Aboriginal student learning: the complex historical relationship between Aboriginal people and the education system, which has resulted in mistrust of the education system by Aboriginal children and their families; the cultural mismatch between

home and school environments for Aboriginal children; the lack of control Aboriginal feel when accessing the mainstream education system; having a positive view of Aboriginal students and their community, which includes teachers having high expectations for their Aboriginal students; and, a holistic approach to Aboriginal education that focuses on more than academia (Lewthwaite et al, 2015). By contrast, Lewthwaite et al (2015) found that Aboriginal students believed that the following practices impacted on their education: positive relationships with teachers; using culture to bridge learning and lesson the mismatch between home and school environments; tailored support to negotiate the literacy demands of schooling; specific and clear learning goals; individualised teaching that accommodates diversity; teachers having high expectations for their students; and, appropriate support for student behavioural issues.

Indeed, there are a variety of measures that can be used to ensure cultural responsiveness with Indigenous students in the teaching space. Ultimately however, the test of cultural safety within an institution or organisation is measured "by the people who use the service, who are in the less powerful position, [and] who are from a different cultural background" (Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2009, p. 1). Consequently, cultural responsiveness for Indigenous people in the teaching space should always be defined by Indigenous people from Indigenous worldviews and perspectives. However, Aboriginal Australians are often marginalised and disempowered in Australian society, meaning that Indigenous perspectives concerning culturally responsive teaching are not always available. Therefore, as argued by Lewthwaite et al (2014), the socio-political context must be considered alongside the implementation of culturally responsive teaching measures for Indigenous Australians.

Culturally responsive teaching and the benefits for students

The failures of Australian Indigenous education system to provide equitable outcomes for all students are "evidenced via the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children lag behind their non-Indigenous peers across their educational trajectory, from early childhood education to post-school education" (Craven, Yeung & Han, 2014, p. 86). One method designed to alleviate the educational disadvantage faced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is the adoption of culturally relevant teaching practices that incorporate Indigenous pedagogies, knowledge and ways of being (Craven, Yeung & Han, 2014).

Gay (2000, cited in Dunbar & Scrimgeour, 2009, p. 2) states that "culturally responsive teaching is positioned as fundamental to improving the academic outcomes for students commonly referred to as members of marginalised, diverse or minority groups worldwide". This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who are members of a marginalised, minority

group in Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are able to benefit from culturally responsive teaching practices because they enable teachers to “develop the full educational potential of each student through the heightened awareness of how they can work congruently with each student” (Lewthwaite et al, 2014, p. 4). Culturally responsive teaching methods ensure that teachers are able to teach to the strengths of their students (Lewthwaite et al, 2014). One Aboriginal teacher who participated in the study by Munns, Martin and Craven (2006) spoke about clear instruction, using Aboriginal English to communicate concepts in class, and scaffolding content in a supportive manner in order to improve student's understanding of the curriculum:

"My class is very open and receptive to giving [my students] an instruction and they can follow it. I spend a lot of time sitting next to my Koori kids and guiding them through the process that we need to go through. There are other kids in the class that I do need to do that with too, but mainly my Koori kids. Sometimes, I slip into teacher mode without even realising it because I'm catering to - when I'm in AERT I'm just with the Koori kids and we just yarn and I'll use Aboriginal English often and the kids will know what I'm talking about, but when I'm in the classroom I do slip into the out the front teacher mode and sometimes I need to go back and revisit and sit down next time and say - look you just do it like this and break down in a way that they can totally understand. I find my kids need to see the end product before we get there".

The above quote demonstrates the ability of the teacher to teach to the strengths of her students (i.e. using Aboriginal English) and adapt her teaching style to suit Indigenous learners (i.e. sitting next to students to guide them through tasks, scaffolding content, giving clear instructions) through the adoption of culturally responsive teaching methods. Additionally, the teacher's use of Aboriginal English to communicate with Aboriginal children also demonstrates the power of culturally responsive teaching methods to improve academic outcomes for children who are not of the dominant culture by ensuring a better 'fit' between home and school environments (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Certainly, one of the main benefits of culturally responsive teaching is improved academic outcomes for Indigenous students who may be able to better understand academic content when it is taught in a culturally responsive manner.

While improved academic outcomes for Aboriginal students are a very clear benefit for associated with culturally responsive teaching with Aboriginal students, research also indicates that culturally responsive teaching can improve other facets of a student's educational experiences, such as student wellbeing. Munns, Martin and Craven (2006) found that culturally

responsive teaching has the potential improve Indigenous student's self concept and via extension, their motivation and engagement with education. The authors (Munns, Martin and Craven, 2006) note that the relationship that Indigenous students have with education can be positively improved through the adoption of culturally responsive teaching methods. Arguably, when a student views their education in a positive manner, this can also lead towards improved academic outcomes as well. In fact, Craven and Parbury (2013, cited in Craven, Yeung and Han, 2014) and Craven (2005) found that culturally responsive teaching methods empower Indigenous students, thus enabling Indigenous students to realise their full educational potential and achieve positive educational outcomes. Rahman (2010, p. 66) also notes that adapting the curriculum and ensuring that school and home cultures are made more culturally compatible can result in improved academic and psycho-social outcomes for students, including "better school engagement, improved self-confidence and higher cognitive skills".

Evidently, research indicates that culturally responsive teaching can improve a student's perception of their schooling, their ability to achieve, and subsequently, actual academic outcomes. Therefore, while improved academic outcomes are the ultimate benefit for Indigenous students being taught in a culturally responsive manner, research indicates that there are other psycho-social benefits associated with culturally responsive learning environments, namely improved self-concept (Munns, Martin and Craven, 2006), self-confidence (Rahman, 2010), motivation (Munns, Martin and Craven, 2006), engagement with schooling (Rahman, 2010; Munns, Martin and Craven, 2006), and feelings of empowerment (Craven, Yeung & Han, 2014; Craven, 2005).

Effective culturally responsive practices in education: Examples of 'best practice' with Indigenous peoples

There are a range of cultural competence programs available to teachers in Australia, with programs situated along a scale depending on resourcing, access and availability issues. At the most ambitious end of the scale is the Connected Communities strategy, which was run and began in 2013, by the New South Wales Education Department in 15 schools (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2013). It connected schools, teachers and school leadership with local Indigenous communities, community leaders and members, was grounded in country and culture, and aimed to reflect and deploy these in whole-school practice, curriculum and classroom planning (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2013). It was intended to recognise the culture and identity of students, and to embed that recognition from transition and early years programs onwards (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2013). More

familiar and more common at the other end of the scale are professional development workshops, sometimes of no more than a couple of hours' duration, and intended to do no more than introduce practitioners to the area of culturally responsive teaching practice. Indeed, there are many examples of effective culturally responsive teaching practices in Australian education, ranging from school through to tertiary education. This review is not exhaustive of all of the available cultural competence programs in Australia, but rather, aims to provide insight into cultural competence 'best practice' in the education sector via the description of selected examples.

In the tertiary education sector, Universities Australia (2011) have developed a "National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities". In this document, guiding principles for Indigenous cultural competency included ensuring that: Indigenous people were "actively involved in university governance and management"; that graduates were culturally competent; that university research empower Aboriginal communities through collaborative participation; that Indigenous people were employed in higher numbers at Australian universities; and, that universities operated in partnership with local Aboriginal communities to disseminate "culturally competent practices to the wider community" (Universities Australia, 2011, p. 8). The Universities Australia Indigenous Cultural Competency Framework acknowledges the role that universities have in promoting social change, ensuring social justice and improving educational and other socioeconomic outcomes for Aboriginal people:

"Education is ... the key which unlocks the door the meaningful and well paid employment, to better housing, health and access to society's valued resources. It is the foundation stone for the practice of self-determination and achievement of social justice and Indigenous equality". (Universities Australia, 2011, p. 17).

Another example from the university sector is from the University of South Australia (UniSA) who introduced the Indigenous Content in Undergraduate Programs (ICUP) Policy in 2005. As part of the ICUP Policy, UniSA commenced offering stand-alone Indigenous courses for all of their undergraduate degrees, as well as embedding Indigenous perspectives in subjects throughout all undergraduate courses (Quinn et al, 2011). University policy at UniSA was to ensure that future professionals – across all disciplines, from teaching, arts, science to engineering and medicine – would be culturally competent practitioners upon graduation because Indigenous knowledge and perspectives would be taught, tested and prioritised across the curriculum (Quinn et al, 2011). A unique feature of UniSA's ICUP Policy is the fact that Indigenous knowledge and perspectives were embedded throughout existing undergraduate

courses, as well as new stand-alone Indigenous courses being offered to students across all disciplines (Quinn et al, 2011). In all undergraduate courses that taught Indigenous content, UniSA prioritised the importance of ensuring that students analysed their own perceptions and understandings of Aboriginal culture and white privilege as a part of "developing cultural sensitivity and awareness" (Quinn et al, 2011, p. 146). This approach ensured that increased understanding and relationship building was possible in professional practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Quinn et al, 2011).

In the school education sector, Lewthwaite et al (2015, pp. 22-23) have developed a framework for culturally responsive pedagogy which asks teachers to consider their beliefs, values and understandings of themselves and Aboriginal people and culture prior to working with Indigenous students. Lewthwaite et al (2015) suggest that teachers ensure that they build positive relationships, adapt their teaching style to accommodate diversity, and bridge cultural barriers in order to ensure improved learning outcomes for Indigenous students. Literacy teaching, explicit pedagogical instruction, support of student behaviour, health and wellbeing, and an analysis of the school context are also highlighted as important factors for teachers to consider when working with Indigenous students in the classroom (Lewthwaite et al, 2015).

Another example of an excellent cultural competence program from the school education sector is noted in Burgess and Cavanagh (2012) who described the three day New South Wales (NSW) Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) 'Aboriginal Community-Controlled Cultural Immersion Program' which was designed for teachers in NSW. This Cultural Immersion Program was specifically designed by the local Aboriginal community for local teachers who would be teaching Aboriginal students from the community (Burgess & Cavanagh, 2012). Burgess and Cavanagh (2012) found that teachers often struggle to develop strong, meaningful relationships with Aboriginal students, their families and their communities, despite their best intentions to do so. Research attributes this difficulty to the lack of knowledge teachers possess regarding the "complexities of contemporary Aboriginal societies and cultures" (Burgess & Cavanagh, 2012, p. 2). Furthermore, this deficit in teacher's knowledge was clear to the local Aboriginal community who took ownership of the AECG Cultural Immersion Program. Therefore, the AECG Cultural Immersion Program aimed to increase teacher's understanding of contemporary Aboriginal society, specific to the context in which they were working (Burgess & Cavanagh, 2012). Burgess and Cavanagh (2012) found that the intensive three-day AECG Cultural Immersion Program had immediate positive impacts on the participating teachers' attitudes towards Aboriginal people, improved participants ability to confidently engage with the community, and increased participating teachers' motivation to incorporate "appropriate curriculum, pedagogy and classroom management" approaches to their teaching with local

Aboriginal students. While an intensive cultural immersion program is not necessarily possible for all teachers working with Aboriginal students, the findings in Burgess and Cavanagh (2012) reiterate the importance of teachers' understanding the local context within which they are working and taking the time and effort to truly build strong, meaningful relationships with Aboriginal students, families and communities.

Looking to the future: Cultural awareness for the next generation

Whalan and Wood (2012) suggest that transformational change in the education sector is necessary in order to work towards improved cultural competence. Unlike the University of South Australia, many pre-service teaching degrees in Australia provide little to no training regarding cultural responsiveness with Indigenous students (Craven, Yeung & Han, 2014). One way in which to rectify the lack of training Australian teachers may receive from university courses is to offer Professional Development (PD) opportunities to teachers. Craven, Yeung and Han (2014) state that PD activities can have a range of positive influences on teacher's practices, including improved ability to utilise a variety of teaching techniques, increases in teaching confidence, and shifts in teaching conceptions. Craven (2005) also found that Indigenous Studies teaching courses had positive ramifications for pre-service and postgraduate primary school teachers. Craven, Yeung and Han (2014) assert that PD opportunities are an important source of information for teachers who would like to improve their knowledge of culturally responsive teaching with Indigenous students. Burrige, Riordan, Aubusson, Evans, Vaughan, Kenney and Chodkiewicz (2009) also assert that professional learning opportunities improve teacher engagement with the Aboriginal community while simultaneously providing knowledge about Aboriginal cultures, societies and histories. Given that some teachers find themselves meeting an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person for the first time as a practicing teacher (Craven, 2005), it appears paramount that additional training is offered to teachers in order to improve their knowledge of effective, culturally relevant teaching practices with Indigenous Australians.

Research regarding the impact of PD on improving professional practice in the medical field may also offer further insight for future PD directions in the teaching space. Godfrey, Dennick and Welsh (2004) found that short term "Teaching the Teacher" courses were effective in improving teaching skills of medical consultants who participated in their study. While medical "Teaching the Teacher" courses may seem irrelevant to culturally responsive teaching for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, there is scope for culturally responsive teaching courses to be delivered to pre-service and experienced teachers in order to improve teachers'

ability to be culturally responsive. Similarly, Dunbar and Scrimgeour (2009) also suggest that developments in the Australian health sector regarding Indigenous cultural competence may offer guidance for the implementation of culturally relevant training with teachers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Campinha-Bacote's (2002) model of cultural competence in health care delivery is also a useful tool that, if applied correctly, can improve understandings of cultural competence in the education sector. This model views cultural competence as an ongoing process in which the professional strives to continuously improve their professional practice and knowledge of how best to work with ethnically diverse clients (Campinha-Bacote, 2002). Campinha-Bacote (2002) suggests that cultural competence involves being aware of the diversity that exists within cultural groups, while integrating cultural knowledge, cultural awareness and cultural skills to improve service delivery. This model demonstrates the amount of varied knowledge that is required to work effectively with culturally diverse clients, while asserting that effective culturally-responsive services are directly correlated with practitioner cultural competence levels (Campinha-Bacote, 2002). Arguably, the future of culturally responsive teaching in Australia is ideally situated as one that learns from the practices of other disciplines. This may ensure that 'best practice' knowledge is obtained and culturally relevant frameworks of a high standard are able to be implemented.

Conclusion

Indeed, the role that culture plays in improving educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students cannot be ignored. Culture is a vital aspect of identity and shapes who we are and how we see the world. It influences our understanding of the social world and helps us navigate our educational environment. Of course, depending on our cultural upbringing, the education system may or may not be align with our cultural worldview and previous experiences. Predominately, this is the case for culturally Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Culturally responsive teaching can rectify this issue and assist Indigenous students to cope with the mismatch between home and schooling environments, thereby subsequently improving educational outcomes. Of course though, there are a variety of methods that educators can use in order to be culturally responsive with Indigenous students. The difficulty is in knowing which strategies to use in which contexts, particularly in light of the fact that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are a heterogeneous group. While there are a range of cultural competency approaches used in the education space - from intensive cross-cultural awareness courses whereby teachers live with an Aboriginal community, to a 2 hour course designed to merely introduce teachers to Aboriginal cultural differences - any approach to ensuring cultural responsiveness with Indigenous Australian students needs incorporate

Indigenous perspectives, knowledge and worldviews. Ultimately, a collaborative approach towards cultural competence in Australian education, undertaken in partnership with the local Aboriginal community and the relevant education institution, is the most effective means of ensuring educational positive outcomes for Indigenous students.

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