



Learning Communities

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LEARNING IN SOCIAL CONTEXTS
SPECIAL ISSUE: NEW CONNECTIONS IN EDUCATION RESEARCH

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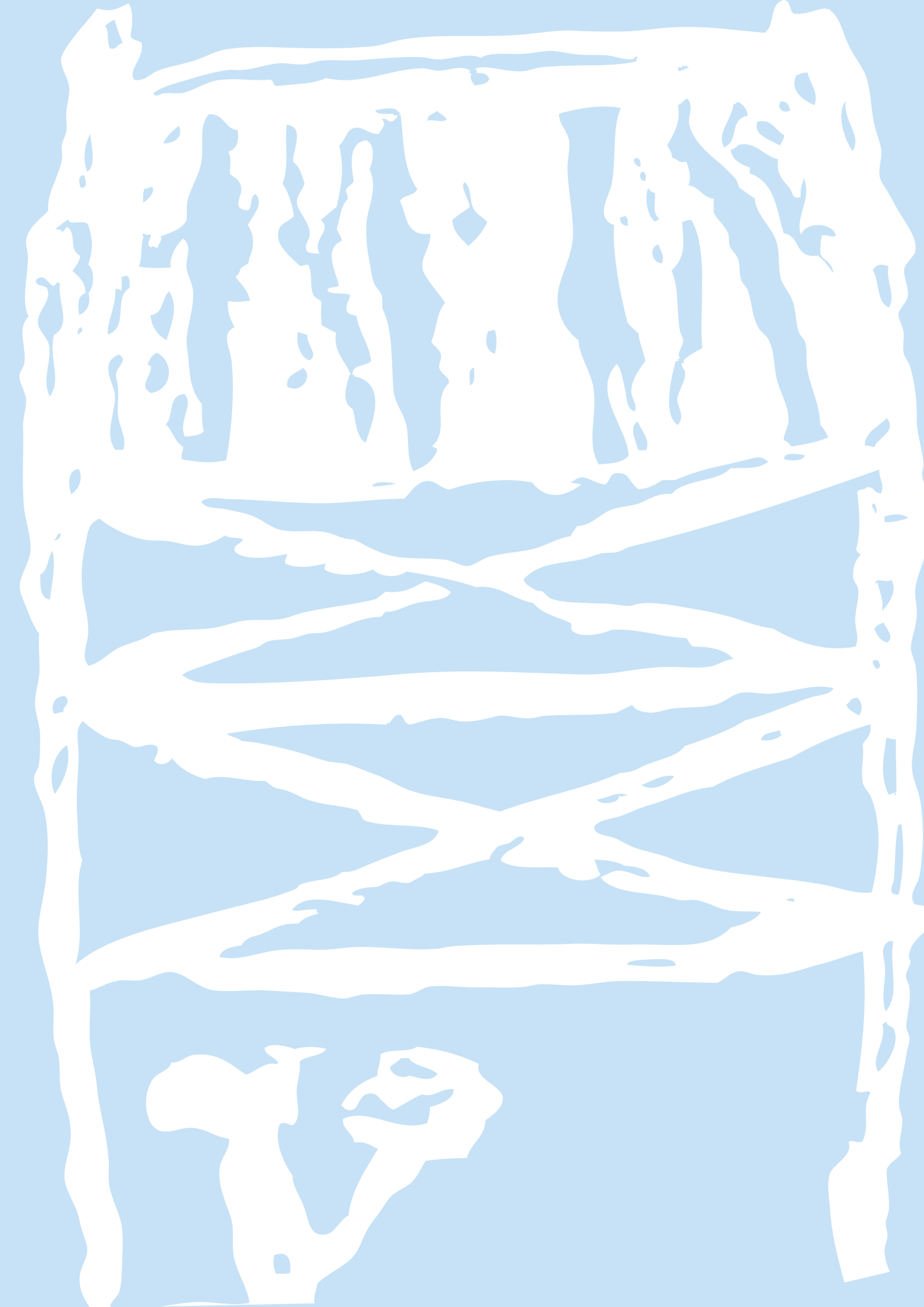
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Editorial

Dr Sue Erica Smith

Charles Darwin University, Australia

This *special edition* of Learning Communities is unabashedly north Australian centric, but because of this locality that has inspired new ways of connecting with the practices of education and education research.

In Place, Workplace, and Mindful Movement, Smith and Mason connect with a Feldenkrais health professional Broome, and Barnes, a Higher Degree by Research candidate, to explore lived and embodied experience, located in place and exploring the intrapersonal dimension of wellbeing and mindfulness practices.

This paper explores how mindfulness exercises and body awareness can support teacher well-being. Combining narrative inquiry and participatory action research this paper documents perspectives of participants and researchers involved in trialling *mindfulness in movement* practices and embodied awareness teacher resilience for teachers in the Northern Territory in Australia. The auto-ethnographic accounts that intersperse this paper offer insight into the visceral tensions embodied in re-location, location, and the complex (and at times) alarming challenges faced by a beginning teacher in a middle school.

Bow uses authentic language resources to incorporate Indigenous knowledges across the Australian Curriculum, bringing resources that might have otherwise sat mouldering in storerooms and library shelves scattered across remote locations, these resources have been allowed a new life. The promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a cross-curriculum priority in the new Australian Curriculum provides both a challenge and an opportunity for teachers and teacher educators. The Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages contains authentic language materials which can assist in resourcing and *supporting teachers to meet this challenge across all areas of the curriculum, and to encourage connections with Indigenous cultural authorities*.

In an exemplar of 'both ways learning', Reedy and Gulwa draw on data obtained through the conversational method of 'yarning' with five Indigenous teacher education students about their experiences in online learning at CDU. Analysis of the data revealed their experiences were impacted by issues related to access and mode of study, and the advantages of online learning were offset by a sense of isolation when studying fully online.

Yarning with Indigenous teacher education students and drawing on their experiences of online learning, as well as making sense of this data through collaborative yarning in a cross-cultural environment is critical to achieving that end.

As researchers continue their gaze into the online Higher Education learning environment, Billany et al needle the teacher educators. The researchers here become the researched. In a rapidly changing environment where graduate teachers are expected to have 21st century skills and knowledge, it is critical teacher educators keep up with their own professional development. One way to do this is through engagement with professional development activities provided centrally by academic development units within universities where the teacher educators work.

Throughout this edition there is a common theme of the commitment by the contributing authors to equity and inclusion. Phommachanh and Willsher explore beginning teacher experiences in Lao PDR with the end view to make a positive impact through their research to develop an ongoing professional development program.

Researchers also make new connections through their methodologies. Strangeways offers the research story of her artistic and analytic practices in a remote Indigenous teacher education setting in Central Australia. In this hybrid arts-based research, she uses portrait painting, narrative and analysis to explore her encounters, as both teacher educator and visual artist, with the people of the school, to examine the impact of shifting between these identities on her pedagogical practices as a teacher educator.

Through experiential artistic encounters Cooper and Ryan present a shared aesthetic - a shared little aesthetic generated from children's artworks and communications. As educators we perceive a strong relationality between teaching and learning and teachers and learners and in this way we afford self-efficacy to the creators of the multimodal texts discussed in this paper. These voices together create '*little public spheres*' that talk their positions within civic, social, cultural and political everyday lives. Little publics, it is argued, are as valid as the public worlds adults inhabit and occupy, and need to be taken as seriously. Aligned with the growing field of public pedagogy, little publics emphasise the transformative power of pedagogical interactions within shared spaces.

In its non-traditional presentation, the paper takes its lead from the poetry and vitality of the children's words and pictures in the project it describes. Three schools, two Eritrean refugee schools in eastern Sudan, Africa and Flemington Primary School in Melbourne, Australia

Much of the research presented in this special edition is reflective, personal and gives voice to otherwise unheard participant cohorts and artefacts. However the push for these researches is to be pragmatic – to make a difference.

This Special Edition of Learning Communities concludes with a review of a very pragmatic book *Leading and Managing Indigenous Education in the Postcolonial World*. Zane Ma Rhea.

In this book, Ma Rhea calls for profound rethinking of the leadership and management of Indigenous education. The legacy of a colonial education system needs to be disrupted "*through both revolutionary and evolutionary processes, involving multiple sites of strategically coordinated action*" if the glaring disparities in education achievements between Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Australia are to be comprehensively redressed. This book however is not a manifesto, but rather, a practical blueprint for change carefully crafted from the experience of a skilled academic and an education practitioner who has 'walked the walk' at all levels of Indigenous education in Australia. Ma Rhea also draws from her expertise as a dynamic systems analyst and change manager to systematically prosecute her case, simultaneously dissecting why initiatives fail, how initiatives can afford success, and how the pitfalls of reactive decisions and 'fixes' can be avoided. Children are at her heart but the responsibility is squarely placed at leadership at all levels: federal, state and territory, education departments, curriculum bodies, and in schools and universities.

Place, Workplace, and Mindful Movement

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Keywords: mindfulness, embodiment, well-being, teaching, intrapersonal, Feldenkrais, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Abstract

This paper explores how mindfulness exercises and body awareness can support teacher well-being. Combining narrative inquiry and participatory action research this paper documents perspectives of participants and researchers involved in trialling *mindfulness in movement* practices for teachers in the Northern Territory in Australia. These practices were introduced as part of a pilot study focused on teacher well-being and in response to what we perceived to be the lack of attention given to intrapersonal development in well-being matrices. Through these cycles of workshops and inquiries, we came to learn embodied awareness practice that is situated within a sense of place became an important support for teacher resilience. Although nearly one hundred teachers have participated in these programs, we draw upon the narratives told by one early career teacher as an exemplar of how these practices might play out in the workplace. The auto-ethnographic accounts that intersperse this paper offer insight into the visceral tensions embodied in re-location, location, and the complex (and at times) alarming challenges faced by a beginning teacher in a middle school. Here knowledge, skills and embodied learning must be marshalled and enacted amid the dynamics of what is self-described here as the *contact zone* of the classroom. These personal narratives of lived experience provide insights into how this form of intrapersonal learning can have benefit for teacher well-being. The paper concludes by raising questions that might direct the profession to formally pursue applications of mindfulness in school well-being agendas.

Introduction

Teachers are busy people in what has long been known to be a stressful profession (Kyriacou & Sutcliffe, 1978; Borg & Riding, 1991) and it is a profession that is also prey to the more serious condition of burnout (Hakanen, et al., 2006; Farber, 1984, 1991, 2000; Maslach, et al., 1996; Shaufeli & Bunk, 2003; Schaufeli, et al., 2002). Yet paradoxically, at a time when student well-being has come to the fore with Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) embedded into the *General Capabilities* of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2013), and the prevalence of ancillary well-being packages (such as *KidsMatter*, *MindMatters*, *beyondblue* and *Response Ability*), professional development that supports teachers' well-being and resilience (and their

facility to bring these qualities into their teaching) is adopted ad hoc in schools, and within these the emphases are primarily on interpersonal communications. Intrapersonal learning is overlooked, often considered to be 'private'. We argue here that intrapersonal awareness is pivotal to both the successes of these student well-being programs and directives, and is intrinsic to teachers' well-being. Mindfulness exercises have provided a technology to bring this domain of learning to the fore with increasing uptake in the secular domains of work (Dane & Brummel, 2013; Aikens et al., 2014; Van Gordon et al., 2014), psychotherapy (Surrey, 2005; Shapiro & Carlson, 2009; Germer et al., 2013), and self-development (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Segall, 2005; Rasmussen & Pidgeon, 2011). This paper reports on activities that were part of a broader research project in which we sought to explore how these intrapersonal exercises might be employed with teachers to support their well-being and resilience.

Broadening applications of Mindful Inquiry

As indicated there is a significant and growing body of literature either associated directly with mindfulness training or relevant to it. A plethora of books and journal articles situated within the fields of education, management, neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, and the health sciences broadly speaking (Ager et al., 2014; Burrows, 2013; Clark et al., 2015; Frank et al., 2013; Hassed & Chambers, 2014; Jennings, 2015; Kabat-Zinn, 2005; Macdonald & Shirley, 2009; Russell & Tatton-Ramos, 2014; Shoval, 2011; Webster-Wright, 2013). It is pertinent here that much of this literature is having an impact within the schooling sector and mindfulness training is gaining legitimacy as a practice for both teachers and students (Ager et al., 2014; Hassed & Chambers, 2014; Jennings, 2015).

Recent research focused on mind-body disorders (Clark, et al., 2015) provides evidence suggesting there is *"an important axis of variation for well-being, in which skillful cognitive control covaries with a capacity for skilful movement"* (p. 1). In elaborating on this claim, evidence is presented both from mind-body disorder as well as optimized mind-body functioning that can be facilitated by physically-grounded mind training through Feldenkrais techniques (Feldenkrais, 1964; 1981; 1984). The process of exploring experience of movement using a Feldenkrais approach, provides a basis for mindful attention and also facilitates improvement in mind-body functioning.

The value of Feldenkrais *Awareness through Movement* has been investigated in other domains including leadership and management. In these movement explorations, the student learns how to find ease in moving in many different ways and in this process learns multiple things simultaneously. At a level of tacit learning, s/he recognises the value in generating situations that foster discovery, rather than seeking the "correct" answer, creating a possibility for new learning or a felt understanding to emerge (Goldman-Schuyler, 2010).

The four authors in this paper bring together various perspectives; those of teacher educators, a physiotherapist and Feldenkrais specialist, and an early career teacher. For the academics and the health professional, there is a shared background in meditative practice that spans many decades. During this time, we have watched with interest how *mindfulness* training we learned and experienced through an interest in Buddhism has entered, it seems, the public imaginary. At times, however, this mainstreaming has also been the cause of some consternation because over exposure and misplaced hype has somehow dislocated the term. The origins of mindfulness are attributed to the Buddha in the *Satipatthana Sutta*. Traditionally it is taught systematically: mindfulness of body, of feelings, of thoughts and of mind. Mindful awareness becomes the foundation for the cultivation of wisdom, and hence, as affect and effect draws sharpened attention, so too do the ethical implications of body/mind activity draw increasing awareness. Secular and beginning mindfulness practices cultivate calmness, focused attention

and present awareness that disrupt propensities for (negative) judgmental thoughts. These are healthy outcomes, and needed too. Yet from our perspectives, the scope was potentially diminished without grounding in a yoga (body/mind) tradition and an ethical framework that requires critical engagement and mindful activity based on interconnections, interdependence, and where loving kindness to self and to others is both natural and logical. Nevertheless, while secular mindfulness training does not directly embrace ethical frameworks as Siegel (2007) has reminded us, there is evidence to suggest this type of intrapersonal engagement supports changes in the brain that facilitate improvement in quality of interpersonal engagement.

Over the past three years the two of us engaged in teacher education have pursued a research agenda that connects mindfulness, well-being, and teachers' professional learning. These can be fuzzy constructs but for the purposes of this paper well-being is defined as "*when individuals have the psychological, social and physical resources they need to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge. When individuals have more challenges than resources, the see-saw dips, along with their wellbeing, and vice-versa*" (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230). This dynamic construct is akin to resilience. Mindfulness definitions, too, have many permutations but in essence these exercises engage purposeful non-judgmental, present attention (Kabat-Zinn, 2009). As we explain later in this paper, attention to teachers' well-being, and the use of mindfulness exercises, have a legitimate place in teacher professional development programs.

In cycles of teacher professional development, and reflective participatory action research, we have sought to adapt our programs to the stated needs of our participants. From data gathered from our initial workshop it was clear locality, our remote tropical Australian locality in particular, provided both positive and negative impacts on teacher well-being, and the construct of 'place' was incorporated into our programs. As our programs evolved, the time-poor participant teachers requested mindfulness techniques that could be employed amid the dynamics of teaching a lesson. Our inquiry moved to include embodied mindfulness that drew upon the nuanced body learning in Feldenkrais lessons. An early career art teacher, with mythopoetic flourish, adds her auto-ethnographic account to the processes and discussions within this paper.

Participatory action research

Prior to the commencement of the project, we were granted university ethics approval to pursue the teacher well-being study with teachers in the Northern Territory, Australia. Permission was also granted by the Department of Education to conduct focus groups with teachers and to advertise a weekend symposium through their communications networks. This work aligned with a national focus on the competency and professional learning as determined by the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* (AITSL, 2012). Among others these standards outline teachers are required to *Engage in professional learning to improve practice* (Standard 6.2) and *Engage with colleagues to improve practice* (Standard 6.3) to which we have argued that interpersonal and intrapersonal well-being and resilience (aligning with the SEL domains) can be linked to professional development and programs that service this agenda. A senior education department official conceded that providing for teacher well-being falls within the ambit of duty of care.

The teacher focus group interviews that were conducted in three schools, indicated an urgent need to build well-being into professional learning. In response, we hosted 70 participants to a *Personal Resilience and Positive Connections* weekend seminar and workshop at our university in Darwin. The teachers were animated by the opportunity to connect with each other and share strategies and grumbles. Intrapersonal well-being was introduced through

mindfulness exercises focused on maintaining attention and presence: non-judgmental awareness of breath, of body, of walking, and when eating. For most of the attendees, mindful walking provided the readiest entry into the practice. Teachers explained in their professional lives, movement was part of their job, and the shift to silence and the seemingly oft-times lack of proficiency that mindfulness invites was disconcerting for some. Thus, while the cultivation of stillness is commonly associated with meditation practice, focusing upon mindfulness in movement appeared to align better with teacher daily routines.

Mindfulness is a meditation technique, and while there are countless meditation techniques that explore the intrapersonal domain, they can generally be classified into three kinds of mental exercise or discipline: mindfulness using attention; imagery using intention; and, reflective contemplation using inquiry (Gawler & Bedson, 2011). Such a classification does not preclude a combination of techniques and contemporary interventions in educational settings. Hassed & Chambers (2014), for example, demonstrate the benefits to learning and performance through combining *mindful inquiry* and attention training through a wide variety of techniques. Mindfulness practices taught to teachers and students include mindfulness of the body through cultivating stillness and mindfulness using simple movements or yoga postures (Meiklejohn et al., 2012). A well-recognised mindful movement practice in a Buddhist framework is walking meditation (Hanh, 1985; Prakhinkit et al., 2014), a practice used for development of concentration that also helps to bring mindfulness practice into daily, embodied activity.

Research studies have shown that heightened awareness of body states enhances both intrapersonal and interpersonal *attunement* (Siegal, 2007; 2008; 2009; Teper, et al., 2013), which in turn can impact on well-being. An individual's awareness of another person's state of mind depends on how well one knows one's own state. In the brain, messages from systems below the cortex such as heart rate, breathing and muscle tension, the limbic system's colouring of emotion, are sent to inform the cortex of the state of mind. This is the reason, from a brain perspective, that people who are more aware of their bodies are also more empathic. When one can sense his/her own internal state, a pathway opens to resonate with others. Mirror neurones in the brain provide the facility to sense behavioural intentions and emotions of others. The better one can sense one's own bodily sensations, the better the ability to resonate with another yet remain differentiated; important for maintaining a sense of objectivity (Siegel, 2009).

As our participants repeatedly indicated, finding time within the daily routine at school to pause, consider, and perhaps nurture one's own well-being can be challenging and just an added stressor in the workplace. It is also the case that for us – as researchers and practitioners navigating various pathways in our respective careers – making the time for such activity is not easy as it often demands effort and discipline. Creating the conditions for reflection upon one's well-being in the workplace can almost seem counter-intuitive – occupying one's mind with yet another mind-based activity does not seem like 'time out'. Rather, the teachers we engaged with were interested in techniques that could be employed on the move, in the classroom, and in response we looked to kinesthetic approaches.

Following the initial weekend seminar and workshop we offered a *Mindful Movement* workshop that combined Feldenkrais body awareness exercises and mindfulness practice. The outwardly imperceptible, nuanced movements and curious attention towards these that this method affords, posed a viable route to bring mindful attention into the embodied workplace. Over the next year, we delivered afterschool mindfulness and movement workshops to teachers at two schools, and to some 100 teachers in total. Teachers were keen to introduce mindfulness practices into their classes, but as Jennings (2015) and Hassed & Chambers (2014) have cautioned, and we too from our personal experiences concur, teachers themselves need to

personally gain experience in the practice to ably guide their students. At one school, a core group of teachers who completed an eight-week cycle of workshops began to introduce 'mindfulness moments' into their classes.

In this paper the voice of one early career teacher / higher degree candidate who elected to embark on this mindfulness journey provided prose that attempts to both capture the situated and nuanced intrapersonal and embodied focus of our study as (mythopoetically diarised) lived experience in place and body. Throughout our conversations with many teachers the impacts on our well-being by virtue of our remote – and very remote – location in the Northern Territory of Australia became apparent. For, as Power & Bennet (2015) had reminded us, the idea of place has an established significance in Australian social research.

The narrative prose included below hearkens to Mobeley (2011) who iterates the central role of reflection, enhanced through mindfulness in-service learning – a potent antidote to mindless pre/judgments – and is heartened by Shann (2015, p.128) who positions mythopoetic story writing as means for affective engagement with research.

Our bid for affective reader engagement within this research is a bid to engage further with a beginning teacher's experience and how embodied mindfulness becomes a means for reinhabiting self by returning to senses and a sense of being alive (Gruenwald, 2006). The opening narrative borrows from Sommerville's (2012) framework of place: where stories create relational bonds to place, where the body is central to the experience of place, and crucial to the narrative to follow, where the learning site becomes a 'contact zone' of contested stories. The raw, reflexive and mindful narrative gives play to how too the natural environment directly influences the deep natural world of the psyche within (Tacey, 1995). The time of teaching is also a time of personal learning that is invariably replete with rapid bodily sensations and cat's cradles of thoughts that moved Ellsworth (2005) to ask, "*What is it then, to sense one's self in the midst of learning as experience, in the moment of learning, in the presence of a coming of a knowing, in this interleaving of cognition and sensation/movement?*" (p. 136). Mindfulness becomes a technology whereby these questions of existential importance might begin to find resolution that is located in body and in place, and even in the classroom workplace.

The teacher connects

We packed up and shipped out from the south, leaving behind the weight of memory, place and obligation, to push into an unknown land. The beating aorta of this country in winter, throbbing beauty, led us northward. We relocated ourselves in this new territory, to breathe in the red dust, shake it off in hot springs, and dream in a stunning sunset sky full of possibilities. A deep sense of place overcame us.

When we arrived at the edge of the continent, we were greeted by shimmering ochre and cadmium sands. Tantalising cobalt waters beckoned to us, but we were driven back by seen and unseen predators: massive crocs, sharks, box-jellyfish, the invisible irukandji and midges. Relentless heat and humidity ripen perfect conditions for things that gnaw and bite. Conditions cultivate cold-blooded and other heartless creatures: sandflies, fish with big teeth. Other locals with teeth and determination prevail - survivors of Japanese bombardment, 1974's 'Tracy' (the devastating cyclone), corporate cowboys and middle-school students.

Resilience and cunning are pre-requisites to defy and outlast this place and its ecologies: the weather is its own prevailing intransigent and untamed wild-thing entity; time itself seems to have sung a dreaming lullaby that causes curious slippages here – an ancient traction pervades. Modernity as a frontier sits uncomfortably and belligerently in this landscape.

This defiant, porous frontier presents intriguing daily contradictions and border collisions of place, people and purpose. Cultures and mindsets clash: the ancient and original inhabitants; the well-established south east Asian influence; brash bogan bureaucrats; transient intelligentsia; fickle Fly-In-Fly-Outers; and remnants of the hippy generation who were lured here decades ago and have become the 'keepers of the last of the wild things'... Not to forget the mocking local newspaper, representing the last bastion of the sheer bloody-minded and 'gone-troppo' Aussie yarn-spinner before they step off the shore into the Arafura, slipping into the warming currents to Bali and beyond.

This somewhat motley civilisation is built on the back of a floating economy: exchange is made for precious resources being shipped offshore by foreign barons. There are many uncomfortable costs to determined western presence in this Asia-fringed region. The US military base and annual international 'war-games' attempt to fill the skies and seas to conjure mirages of ironic 'stability'. In a strange twist of symmetry, I was to have my own 'stability' and sense of place challenged, physically, professionally and personally.

The teacher educators reflect

Place, Body-Consciousness and Stress Reduction

We also considered how the 'place' of online connectivity might help in developing an ongoing conversation about managing stress through mindfulness. But in our early attempts at doing this we discovered very quickly that time-poor teachers did not wish to engage this way when exploring strategies that might nurture their well-being and preferred an actual time-out option of a physically located workshop or class; engaging online somehow represented continuity of workplace and its associated stressors rather than a retreat from it.

In addressing the problem of managing stress arising from a contemporary culture that chronically fragments our attention through overstimulation, Shusterman (2008) presents "body consciousness" as a "philosophy of mindfulness and somaesthetics" that provides a proven pathway to stress reduction, improved performance, and personal insight (pp. x-xii). For Shusterman, somatic philosophy and the body-mind disciplines such as the Alexander Technique and Feldenkrais provide ways in which to observe and break habits that might be detrimental to well-being.

While not focused on the somatic connection, the literature on mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) likewise reports mindfulness training can be a successful intervention in ameliorating the effects of anxiety, depression, and stress in the workplace (Flook et al., 2013; Gold et al., 2010).

The Feldenkrais practitioner explains

Moshe Feldenkrais, an engineer and physicist, whose keen interest in martial arts and sports underpinned his passion for understanding human movement and learning, The Feldenkrais Method that he developed drew from all of these experiences. His interest heightened following his experience of personal injury. Through a commitment to initially finding a way to improve his movability, and subsequently the ability of others, he developed an intrapersonal inquiry-based approach to learning and improving performance. He worked extensively with adults and children with neurological and developmental disabilities, and those with complex and chronic problems. Neuropsychiatrist Norman Doidge considered Feldenkrais to be one of the first neuroplasticians (Doidge, 2015) by his use of attention and non-habitual movement patterns to engage the brain's innate capacity to change habitual patterns and initiate more efficient movement that is attuned to the situated environment. Feldenkrais lessons facilitate change in neuro-muscular organisation; movement becomes more evenly distributed throughout the body so no one part of the system is over-burdened and from this change a feeling of ease can develop.

A number of movement traditions also engage attention and awareness in meditative movements, such as T'ai Chi and yoga. What distinguishes the Feldenkrais Method from other movement paradigms is that it is designed to interrupt movement habits and facilitate the discovery of new ways of carrying out various functions. It does not involve learning a specific sequence or moving to achieve a particular goal, rather the intention is to evoke new learning through attending to the process, moving slowly, doing less and thereby increasing sensitivity and ability to make finer distinctions, with resultant improved ability to sense details of the self and one's surroundings. The person becomes more aware of what they are doing, not what they think they are doing (Beringer, 2010). That, as such, is mindful activity.

He saw the mind and body as a unified functional and biological system, a system that has four aspects: thinking, feeling, sensing and moving.

... [and] that the unity of mind and body is an objective reality. They are not just parts related to each other, but an inseparable whole while functioning. A brain without a body could not think... the muscles themselves are part and parcel of our higher functions. (Feldenkrais, 1964, p. xi)

And

We have no sensation of the inner workings of the central nervous system. We can feel their manifestations only as far as the eye, the vocal apparatus, the facial mobilisation, and the rest of the body provoke our awareness. This is the state of consciousness! (p. 29)

The teacher embarks on embodied mindfulness training

Feldenkrais – Training, Placefulness

This challenge to stability has a prequel. I found myself within a week connecting in a different way to place through Feldenkrais training. It became a serendipitous re-positioning, offering embodied mindfulness practice that not only connected me with place but became a crucial resource to draw on during the classroom territory I was to step into. Taking part in a one-day workshop on short mindfulness

meditations and gentle movement, I found myself lying prone, feeling the ground beneath me, asking: how was my body connecting to this place? What was my mind/body aware of? My lungs filling up like billows, the ribcage expands to embrace the breath and expel tension. Attention to the breath, attention to posture and position and presence, these were the things that echoed back to me often while anticipating the classroom.

The linking of mindfulness to Feldenkrais body learning provided a vehicle for the awareness in action that the teachers in this study were seeking. It served to bridge what can become overly cognitive experiences in mindfulness to grounding in body and place. Because, for any moment in time, two relationships are always present in experience – connection with air through breathing, and relationship to gravity, our base of support. These both provide reference points that can be brought to awareness to help re-connection to the present moment and experience the interdependence of body and mind.

Breathing is a movement of the body, of the diaphragm, chest and abdomen, and varies in response to demands of position, task, degree of effort and emotional state. It is directly affected by the withdrawal response, a primitive protective reflex of survival in response to negative events that might threaten. These may lie anywhere on a scale from vague apprehensions, gnawing anxieties to overt dangers. The withdrawal response is a neuromuscular response to stress expressed in tightening of muscles around the eyes and forehead, neck, shoulders and the abdomen. It also effects breathing, either as shallow breathing or held breath (Hanna, 1988).

These patterns can all become unconscious habits over time, as reflected in the body pattern of anxiety. Developing awareness of the breath enables recognition of anxiety responses and provides scope to change this expression of anxiety in the body and breath, with the potential to also change the quality of emotional affect (Kerr et al., 2002; Payne, & Crane-Godreau, 2015).

Similarly, developing awareness of relationship to the ground when moving, through sensing skeletal support can enable intentional connection to the ground. The process reduces tension and can provide more ease and clarity in movement and greater flexibility in how the individual responds to the environment (Feldenkrais, 1964).

...the point of my work is to lead to awareness in action. Or the ability to make contact with one's own skeleton and muscles and with the environment practically simultaneously... (Feldenkrais, 1964, cited in Beringer, 2010, pp. 36-37)

This training, conducted during the term break, and practiced by our participant prior to school commencing appears to have provided some intrapersonal strategies that put her in good stead. As is the case for many beginning teachers she was, like Chang (2009) had warned, typically underprepared for the “the dramatic range of intense emotions they will experience so they may enter the profession” (p. 212).

The teacher and personal identity explored

Place – Classroom Contact Zone, Focus on Mindful Breathing

Then Term Four arrived – I did not anticipate that the classroom would evoke the Contact Zone I experienced as a junior army cadet; I did not anticipate the similarities between the classroom and my cadet experience.

It's a preparation moment prior to engagement in the Contact Zone. The strategy is reviewed, supplies are distributed, stations are readied. Contact! The class swarms in, fast and furious, and another 'typical' live-action sequence plays out. Mid-skirmish, at about half past Year 8, I start to feel the onslaught of an internal conflict: the anxiety attack. As I start to be taken up in a wave of panic, everything around me seems to click over into slow-motion. The whirl of the kids and my presence in the classroom dissipates. I focus on my breath. Slow, deep breaths, in order not to fuel the rising tide of that overwhelming wave. I focus on my breath. I tell myself: this will pass. I focus on the breath. I say: this is not a heart attack. I focus on the breath. I think about asking a trustworthy student to go into the next classroom to request a brief visit from the teacher: just in case I pass out and the students jam 2B pencils and pieces of broken eraser up my nose while I'm unconscious. I focus on the breath, and as I am mindfully breathing, the dizzying heart-rate is slowing, I find myself re-surfacing into the rowdy classroom. The anxiety attack is over. Now to engage again back in the Zone...

Feldenkrais – Reprieve, Reflect, Re-pattern

During term time, I was offered respite from the Contact Zone, a place for awareness. These were mind and movement sessions in a neutral space, that became tactical exercises. The training sessions helped me connect slowly again with the ground beneath me, aware of feet, placement and breathing. It helped me reflect and devise new tactics. The new tactic was a disruption that attempted a re-patterning, whilst anticipating the classroom. The disruption was a trigger for me, and the trigger was drinking water. It reminded me to focus on the breath and bring my awareness back to my body. While I drank water, this trigger helped me ask, what was I embodying? How was my body positioned? What was I mindfully or absent-mindedly playing out in classroom contact?

Placeless – Disconnection, Fracture, Re-connect

While on-leave, in a non-place, I lost my footing. On a steep and slippery slope, in gripless shoes, with hands full, mind elsewhere, body disengaged and placeless, the full impact of the fall was taken by the fibula. Fractured leg and ankle. A trauma surgeon intervenes. Hardware holding me together – internally and parasitically. I am now part-machine, after a life free from broken bones, I cracked and have a steel plate, a dozen screws and large nail as structural truss. Hyper full-of-mind now, every small step is pre-meditated, minutely assessed and over-anticipated. I learn to walk again slowly, into uncertain months and rocky terrain. Feldenkrais and physio try to revive and re-connect patterns between brain, breath and body. With shifting ground beneath me, I return to Darwin... and gradually into the classroom.

Placefulness – Re-adjust, Re-pattern

As I initially return into the classroom, I am aware of how vulnerable I still am. I realise that the physical and psychological rough and tumble of the middle school is too confronting at this time. I seek other opportunities outside the teaching profession. I contact recruiters, submit applications, attend interviews. But I know

that even though I can entertain this reality, a change of profession, I have invested much in re-training and creative energy in the education space. I seek wise counsel from seasoned education mentors and professionals, and continue to pursue connections with holistic education philosophies and practice. It is hard to deny that as a teacher, if I am to prevail in uncertain conditions and shifting times, I need to align myself with supportive, placeful, holistic realities in education. If I need to cultivate resilience through connection to place, mind and body awareness and health, what do students need to cultivate in their own virtual, dis-embodied and digitally-obsessed worlds? And how will teachers do this? Intrapersonal learning that develops holistic connections and supports teacher well-being and professional longevity, should be acknowledged within the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2012). I am hopeful that embodied mindfulness and thoughtfully constructive professional ways of well-being can address holistic connection to place, healthy mind-body, and learning.

Discussion

Within the broader literature we also find that di Nucci (2013) offers a playful antidote to the sometimes over exposed or over appropriated usage of the term mindfulness by considering a close antonym – mindlessness:

Thinking is overrated: golfers perform best when distracted and under pressure; firefighters make the right calls without a clue as to why; and you are yourself ill advised to look at your steps as you go down the stairs, or to try and remember your pin number before typing it in. Just do it, mindlessly. ...our mindless self is our true self because it is not mediated by thought. Being mindless is, in short, a good thing. Let us not be ashamed of it; let us cultivate it.
(di Nucci, 2013, p. 10)

Such a position opens a whole other facet to this discussion and is introduced principally because it actually misses the point of mindfulness training. The core concept within di Nucci's notion of mindlessness is really automaticity, an essential transition in learning that frees an activity from conscious control. The brain, particularly in the pre-motor cortex, forms what are called functional body maps, linkages of groups of neurons related to a particular function, e.g., walking, reaching, driving a car etc. As a baby learns through transitions to the upright and mobile state, change in the brain takes place. This creates freedom to either simply be present in the moment, with whatever sensations and thoughts arise, or to allow the conscious mind to engage in other "pastimes". Mindful movement, however, is to do with attunement of mind and body, and places emphasis upon the physicality of mindfulness training.

Teachers too need this type of embodied capacity to move and to act with common sense. It is also informed by efforts at cross-disciplinary thinking. Thus:

At first glance, contemplative mindfulness and critical inquiry seem at opposite poles of a reflective spectrum, yet Eastern and Western philosophers have described a dual dimension to reflective thought that incorporates both. 'Mindful inquiry' offers an holistic re-conceptualisation of reflective thinking, which holds mindfulness and inquiry in a dialectic inter-relationship
(Webster-Wright, 2013, p. 557).

Similarly, mindfulness training and mindful inquiry open ethical imperatives. As seen throughout the narrative, calm and focused non-judgemental attention provides pause for active choice rather than reactive response, highlighting that behavior is closely linked with optimized intrapersonal functioning. Ethical practice in teaching, however, is currently only conceived in terms of professional responsibility (AITSL, 2012).

Both the mindful inquiry and embodied learning that have been introduced here to teachers represent ways of learning where tools to develop awareness of the unity of body and mind are learned and practised, and in some cases, such as in the prose presented here, a deeper sense of learning is experienced. Many teachers are stressed, burning out and vulnerable, and this can be especially so for teachers beginning their careers – yet, how are the relevant authorities dealing with this? Initially we took a liberal interpretation of the current professional standards by seeking to address teacher well-being, and the intrapersonal, as an ever-present domain that has an impact upon performance. Arguably, it is through a critical reading of the professional standards that neglect of the intrapersonal can be seen as an abrogation of professional responsibility.

Each participant in our study has his or her own personal narrative and unique situated experience, but as the beginning teacher featured in this paper concluded in an interview following the workshop, *“The supports and technologies that were made available presented a different way of learning and filled a need for deeper fulfillment, beyond Professional Standards, towards authentic being”*. Such a comment alludes to bigger issues concerning the scope and outcomes of teacher professional development because the current (2012) version of the AITSL *Professional Standards for Teachers* is framed around competencies rather than capacity and performance. Thus, while effective teaching and learning performance is explicit in the standards, the intrapersonal domain of teachers is not flagged as a topic of professional learning.

Addressing the intrapersonal is perhaps an ambitious form of learning in a time-strapped, outcome-and-performance-based environment and while there has been a meteoric rise in secular mindfulness training the wider and longer term implications of body, emotion, ethics and regular practice might mean we are seeing an exotic shower before the burn. Indications from our research, however, are otherwise and point to the need for sustained advocacy to establish teacher well-being professional development programs that include intrapersonal learning is warranted and legitimate facet of professional as well as personal wellbeing.

The existing problems for teachers, and in turn students, represent what Feldenkrais described as a vast field in mind-body relationship yet to be explored. As he explained:

There can be no improvement without change. Though help can be given when things go wrong, we cannot relax our effort before teachers throughout the world will learn to develop in their students awareness of the unity of body and mind so that higher achievements than merely correcting faults can be arrived at. Training a body to perfect all the possible forms and configurations of its members changes not only the strength and flexibility of the skeleton and muscles, but also makes a profound and beneficial change in the self-image and the quality of direction of the self (Feldenkrais, 1964, cited in Beringer, 2010, pp. 43 - 44).

This approach is a potentially rich field for further inquiry, and a useful start to changing behaviour. The voices in this paper all tell stories while combining to present a common and coherent picture that has identified needs and links to strategies to meet them.

It is also relevant that within the growing discourse on 21st century skills (or competencies), given the range of conceptualisations, there is arguably a natural fit for mindfulness training. Thus, educational theorists such as Gardner (2011), has identified the “disciplined mind” and the “ethical mind” as two of “five minds for the future” needing attention and development within educational settings. Mindfulness practice serves both of these directions.

Questions Arising and Conclusion

As we bring this discussion to a close, we find a number of questions emerge from these interrelated narratives that will be important for us to probe deeper as we continue to scope the implications of our research agenda connecting mindfulness training with teacher professional learning. Indeed, it has been our purpose to identify such questions rather than to reach ‘conclusions’ that bring closure to the issues raised. Thus, the following questions point to the need for continued investigation into the issues addressed in this paper:

1. What are the relevant authorities doing to address issues of teacher well-being and teacher burnout?
2. Does mindfulness training and intrapersonal development properly sit within teacher professional learning requirements? If so, then how can it best be situated and promoted?
3. What movement-based awareness practices might be most suited to adoption in schools?
4. In what ways might ‘place’ and ‘placelessness’ be further explored as considerations for intrapersonal well-being?
5. In what ways could policy development concerned with teacher professional practice bring into better alignment the well-being, learning, performance, and competencies of teachers?

In conclusion, a number of key issues remain prominent for educational authorities to consider. Well-being is a rich and complex topic to explore given that it is experiential, highly nuanced, and sometimes a personal and private matter. By illustrating this through an auto-ethnography of a pre-service teacher, we have come to the view that further research into *teacher well-being* is both warranted and timely. Secondly, we think a critical reading of the professional standards for teachers reveals neglect of the intrapersonal domain. As such, this omission can be interpreted as an abrogation of professional responsibility.

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Using authentic language resources to incorporate Indigenous knowledges across the Australian Curriculum

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Abstract

The promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a cross-curriculum priority in the new Australian Curriculum provides both a challenge and an opportunity for teachers and teacher educators. The Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages contains authentic language materials which can assist in resourcing and supporting teachers to meet this challenge across all areas of the curriculum, and to encourage connections with Indigenous cultural authorities.

Introduction

The promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a cross-curriculum priority in the new Australian curriculum, alongside the other cross-curricular priorities ('Sustainability' and 'Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia'), aims to *"provide national, regional and global dimensions which will enrich the curriculum through development of considered and focused content that fits naturally within learning areas"* (ACARA, 2015). These priorities are required to be embedded in all learning areas, and the ACARA website gives the 'key concepts' and 'organising ideas', allowing teachers great scope to apply them in their own specific context.

Teachers and teacher educators are constantly challenged to adapt to new initiatives in the curriculum space, and many may struggle to include new priorities and content within a program already considered "crowded" (Department of Education, 2014). While it could be seen as an additional burden for teachers to bear, a more positive angle sees it as a new opportunity for professional development, by widening and deepening understanding of these important topics. Research indicates targeted training in Indigenous studies has benefits for teachers engaging in a space that can often be contested and challenging (Craven, et al., 2003; Craven, et al., 2014; Mooney, et al., 2003), and non-Indigenous educators may require support to enable them to incorporate Indigenous knowledge respectfully and appropriately in the classroom. Responses and opportunities may vary between urban, rural and remote schools, depending on existing connections to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures. Rather than just an add-on, the histories and cultures of Indigenous people can be integrated into each learning area to bring new perspectives to existing knowledge and practice, and to encourage interesting and innovative ways to incorporate this knowledge.

An open access online resource available to all teachers and students, the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages¹ contains thousands of authentic texts which can support the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges across the curriculum. The archive allows teachers and students around Australia to easily access a vast range of literature, art and language, leading them to think about different ways to consider Indigenous knowledge in their own contexts, including exploring opportunities for connection with local authorities, research into culture and language of the area, and even to investigate opportunities to support language revitalisation. Schools and teachers with limited or no connection to Indigenous peoples can easily access materials that can be readily used in the classroom, and those who have connections can also use these resources to support or develop relationships and incorporate knowledge directly from Indigenous authorities.

Aboriginal Language Resources

One of the legacies of the bilingual era in the Northern Territory (1974 – 2000s) is the large number of resources developed for classroom and community use, which are finding new life online in the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages (Bow, et al., 2014). Thousands of items in around fifty languages of the Northern Territory are made available under a Creative Commons license which allows users to share and distribute the materials with attribution of credit to the creators and source, for no commercial benefit to the user and with no right to share derivatives of the material (Creative Commons, n.d.). The original authors, illustrators and other creators (or their descendants) have given permission for their materials to be made available in this way, and many are interested in collaborative work with interested users. The archive was created in line with the protocols set out by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Information and Resource Network (ATSILIRN, 2012), and users agree to use the materials respectfully, in accordance with Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property rights, as described for example in the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) Information Sheet (Arts Law Council of Australia, n.d.) and according to the website's User License Agreement (Living Archive, 2014).

The materials in the archive include traditional and modern children's stories, transcribed recordings of old people telling stories of local cultural significance, creation stories, histories, natural science, instructional materials, ethno-botany, cautionary tales, and many other genres. In addition, there are teaching materials, literacy primers, and translations or adaptations of stories from other languages. Many (though not all) include English translations, and some also include word-lists or glossaries. They represent both traditional and Western knowledge presented for an Indigenous audience in remote Northern Territory communities. The Living Archive itself builds on decades of collaborative research with Indigenous knowledge authorities, including discussion of the role of digital technologies in both developing and storing knowledge work (Christie, et al., 2014; Christie & Verran, 2013; Verran & Christie, 2014).

Using the Materials

While considerable effort has gone into making these materials accessible through the Living Archive website, the existence of such a resource is not in itself sufficient. To ensure that it is a 'living archive' requires engagement at different levels, from the Indigenous communities of origin to the wider educational landscape in Australia and beyond. Assistance is required to

1. Available at www.cdu.edu.au/laal. This project is supported under the Australian Research Council's *Linkage, Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities* funding scheme (LE120100016 and LE140100063) as a partnership between Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory Department of Education, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Northern Territory Library, Northern Territory Catholic Education Office and Australian National University

guide teachers, students, researchers and other users through the rich set of data available, with guidance in how it may be used in the classroom and in different pedagogical contexts and at different levels. Some teachers may feel intimidated by the ‘foreignness’ of the materials in different languages, particularly those without an English translation, which can be filtered out using search or browse functions.

All the languages are written in a Latin (Roman) alphabet, though the words are not pronounced like English – a useful guide to pronunciation of most Indigenous languages can be found on the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages website which also includes a useful ‘talking head’ demonstration of the different sounds (VACL, n.d.). Some materials in the Living Archive include audio recordings, as it is not recommended that teachers or students with no knowledge of the languages attempt to pronounce the words. The search function works by word or phrase in English or language, and searches not only the metadata but full texts, and returns results in order, so materials with the search item most prominently or commonly included will be shown at the top of the results page. Search results can be further filtered, and advanced search options are also available.²

An earlier paper (Devlin, et al., 2014) introduced the Living Archive in a curriculum context, and suggested ways in which the materials could invigorate connections between and within schools, researchers, and the traditional owners of Indigenous languages and cultures. The paper demonstrated examples of usage in the classroom and in the wider community, including theme-based work such as: exploring the uses and significance of honey in Indigenous culture; digital knowledge work through development of multimedia skills through the creation of related items such as talking books based on materials in the archive; as a bridge to English language learning; and for the professionalisation of Indigenous educators. The paper also addressed the draft framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2013), and how materials in the Living Archive can serve all three pathways identified there – for First Language Learners, Second Language Learners and Language Revival Learners – specifically focusing on schools with Indigenous learners. The present paper seeks to expand on some of the issues presented there, by identifying specific resources within the Living Archive which can be used in each of the learning areas in the Australian curriculum.

Incorporation of Indigenous knowledges in the curriculum will look different in different contexts. Remote schools in northern Australia can draw on local knowledge authorities across all areas of the curriculum, by inviting elders into the classroom to share their knowledge. In more urban communities, there are often local Indigenous authorities willing to visit schools to share knowledge. These can be found, for example through language centres, a list of which is available online (RNLD, n.d.). Teachers in communities which have difficulty identifying Indigenous people who can speak for the local area and their own knowledge traditions may require additional resources, such as those available in the Living Archive. These resources may be used in isolation, or as part of a suite of materials from various sources. In recent years there has been a significant increase in the availability of online materials relating to Indigenous knowledges and cultures, often produced by and with Indigenous people, and many of which have teaching resources linked to specific curriculum areas, for example *Scootle* (Education Services Australia, 2016) and *Sharing Stories* (Sharing Stories, 2014). In Australia’s multicultural classrooms, introducing such perspectives can also encourage vibrant discussion with students from other ethnic backgrounds, creating an even richer conversation.

2. <http://laal.cdu.edu.au/search/advanced/> with tips for searching available at <http://laal.cdu.edu.au/site/search-help/>

The remainder of this paper will address each learning area included in the Australian Curriculum (some of which were still subject to final endorsement at the time of writing this paper) and, using the content descriptions that support the knowledge, understanding and skills of the cross-curriculum priorities (presented in ACARA, 2015), identify examples of how materials contained within the Living Archive can be used to incorporate such knowledge in the various areas of the curriculum. Educators are invited to contribute ideas to share with others to encourage more innovative ways to work with these knowledge systems.

Key Ideas

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures priority



Source: ACARA, 2015

At the risk of oversimplifying an extraordinarily complex web of overlapping concepts which make up just a portion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life and culture, the conceptual framework for this cross-curricular priority is stated in the Australian Curriculum as follows:

...the underlying elements of Identity and Living Communities and the key concepts of Country/Place, Culture and People. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identities are represented as central to the priority and are approached through knowledge and understanding of the interconnected elements of Country/Place, Culture and People. The development of knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' law, languages, dialects and literacies is approached through the exploration of Cultures. These relationships are linked to the deep knowledge traditions and holistic world views of Aboriginal communities and/or Torres Strait Islander communities. Students will understand that Identities and Cultures have been, and are, a source of strength and resilience for Aboriginal Peoples and Torres Strait Islander Peoples against the historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation. (ACARA, 2015)

This is a useful entry point to a set of histories, cultures and knowledge practices that can then be teased out across different areas of the curriculum. The Australian Curriculum includes a set of 'Organising Ideas' for each cross-curriculum priority to reflect the essential knowledge, understandings and skills associated with that priority. Among the organising ideas, which reflect the essential knowledge, understandings and skills for the priority, number four states *"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies have many Language Groups"* (ACARA, 2015), a fact which is immediately apparent from the map which welcomes users to the Living Archive site at <http://www.cdu.edu.au/laal/>. On this map, each language is marked in a distinct colour, and hovering over a region on the map identifies the name of the associated language. Language labels can also be toggled on or off, as can place names. The 'Browse' button opens a list of languages which have materials included in the Archive, and the number of items associated with each language. This is a simple yet effective way to introduce students to the sheer number of distinct languages in the Northern Territory, and their links to place. This notion can be further explored on a national level by investigation of the AIATSIS language map (Horton, 1996). Other useful references include the Gambay map (First Languages Australia, 2015) which contains additional information about specific languages and allows users to add content, the Australian Indigenous Languages Database known as AUSTLANG (AIATSIS, n.d.), and the AIATSIS Language and Peoples Thesaurus (AIATSIS, 2007). Students can explore the languages of their region, and investigate the vitality of those languages. Many studies of Indigenous people include information about the strong connections between land and language, and at least one story in the Living Archive (*Ganbulapula*, Yunupingu, n.d.) describes the story of an ancestor using language to sing the land into being.

English

The overview of this learning area also refers to the number of different languages and dialects spoken in Australia, including Aboriginal English and Yumplatok, and that *"these languages may have different writing systems and oral traditions ... These languages can be used to enhance enquiry and understanding of English literacy"* (ACARA, 2015). While Yumplatok is spoken in the Torres Strait Islands and therefore outside the geographic boundaries of the Living Archive, the Kriol language is strongly represented in this resource. An understanding of the existence and significance of Kriol will inform any readings of Kriol texts within the archive (see for example Hammarstrom, et al., n.d.). Kriol is distinct from Aboriginal English (Eades, n.d.), and has a significant body of literature, mostly created through the bilingual program at Barunga School. Since Kriol uses much English vocabulary, is one of the more accessible Indigenous languages. Teachers can use Kriol resources to investigate the differences between written and spoken English, since Kriol uses a more phonetic spelling of largely English words (e.g. 'woda' for 'water,' 'lilgel' for 'little girl', etc.). Some of the Kriol 'instant readers' or 'experience readers' are accessible to teachers and students interested in investigating the nature of Kriol, with more complex texts also available.

Further exploration of the Living Archive can point to the storytelling traditions (oral narrative, song, art, dance) as well as contemporary literature of Indigenous peoples. Reading through English translations of many of the stories gives a flavour of many of the storytelling techniques, and affords interesting opportunities for exploring different writing genres. The preface to a story from northeast Arnhem Land states *"Narratives from this region ... are typically characterised by dramatic turns of phrase, attention to vivid or memorable detail and a sense that the truth is recreated each time the story is told"* (Devlin, in Yunupingu, 1981). Since many features of oral storytelling can be lost in the reduction to writing, some stories in the archive include representations of prosodic information – for example, Mununggurr (1982) includes instances of *"Wä-a-a-y"* (where *"Wäy"* means something like *"Hey!"*) and *"marrtjinana-a-a-a"* (where *"marrtjina"* means *"walk"*) to indicate intonation on the word.

Maths

The overview of this learning area refers to sophisticated applications of mathematical concepts in Indigenous societies, and encourages students to investigate *“time, place, relationships and measurement concepts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts”* (ACARA, 2015). A useful starting point is the book *Garma Maths: We’ve heard that you teach maths through kinship* (Watson-Verran, 1992), which comes from an Indigenous maths curriculum created in Arnhem Land in the 1980s. Written in English, it gives an overview of the program for non-Aboriginal educators, and stating in the introduction that

...it is not only Aboriginal children who can benefit from learning about maths as something which is based in, and shaped by, human concerns. Our course of study grows from our life as a particular group of people and reflects the concerns of our community. Developing as an expression of Yolngu life, it cannot be used as such in other places, by other communities. But we expect that the ways that we have worked to develop this course of study will be useful to other communities, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. (Watson-Verran, 1992)

Teachers addressing mathematical issues with respect to Indigenous people may come across the myth that the smaller sets of number terms implies a dearth of intelligence – a concept that can be meaningfully discussed in a mathematics classroom, including reference to newspaper articles such as Cooper (2015) and Mundine (2014) which discuss different aspects of Indigenous mathematical systems. There are also a number of programs designed specifically to teach mathematical concepts to Indigenous students, such as ‘Make it Count’ (AAMT, 2011) and ‘Talking Namba’ (DEEWR, 2015) which both include useful teaching resources and numerous references.

Science

The overview of this learning area refers to the longstanding scientific knowledge traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and their *“particular ways of knowing the world and continue to be innovative in providing significant contributions to development in science”* and *“traditional knowledge and western scientific knowledge can be complementary”* (ACARA, 2015). This learning area is an ideal space to invite Indigenous authorities to share their own knowledge with students, for example about bush food or medicine. Without access to an Indigenous authority, scientific concepts can be presented using resources in the Living Archive, for example, a large number of books describe the collection and use of bush medicine. These include Mirwuma & Garidjalalug (1981), which describes a range of different plants, how they are prepared and what ailments they treat, and Beasley (1998), which describes the use of a specific plant used for treating sores.

Other books describe the life cycle of particular animals, such as books by Marguerita Kerinaiaua on the crocodile (1990) and the butterfly (1997). Some give illustrations and names of local species – often in both the Indigenous language and English, sometimes also in Latin – such as Nangan:golod (n.d.) on the birds of the Bamyili (Barunga) region, and Granites Nakamara (2008) on trees from the Yuendumu area. An example of a class activity would be a field trip to explore trees or birds in the local area, and identify any parallels with local trees presented in books in the Living Archive. In discussing the classification of plants and animals in western contexts, it is interesting to compare this to ways in which Indigenous people classify fauna, for example a pair of books from Maningrida called *Minyjak an-gubay / Minyjak gala an-gubay* (“Animals we eat” and “Animals we don’t eat”) (2005). Another useful class activity is to compare the seasons in different parts of Australia. A series from Arnhem Land (Ganambarr &

Davis, 1982; Wunungmurra, 2007) gives detailed information about their seasons, and CSIRO Darwin (n.d.) has produced a series of calendars which also include resources for teachers. A number of other sites also deal with Indigenous scientific knowledge in great detail, such as ANU's *Living Knowledge* project (2008), NSW's *Aboriginal Perspectives in Science 7-12* (NSW Department of Education and Communities, n.d.) and Western Australia's GECKOS program (Catholic Education Office of WA, 2012).

History

The overview of this learning area invites students to “*examine historical perspectives from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewpoint*” (ACARA, 2015). Specific concepts that are identified refer to Indigenous peoples prior to colonisation by the British, which can be explored through stories in the Living Archive such as Gun-guarr, in which an old man recalls history from the first people who arrived in Australia: “*Their skin was black. We now call them Aborigines from Australia. We were here yesterday, today and will be here forever*” (Pascoe, 1995), and traditional practices which pre-date western colonisation. Another comprehensive history is *Nayi Baljāna Mawurrku* (Marika, 1989), a transcription of a song detailing the creation story of the Yirrkala area, and Djäwa (1979) on the lands around Milingimbi. Such stories invite students to compare historical traditions from Western and Indigenous perspectives, giving an alternative voice to that which often dominates the text books.

The specific Year 9 content descriptions invite students to investigate “*the extension of settlement, including the effects of contact (intended and unintended) between European settlers in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*” (ACARA, 2015), which can be explored through early mission interactions at Haasts Bluff (Ferguson, 1987), the impact of the British on the Tiwi Islands (*Wayā Awarra Naki Awujunguwaparrami*, 1985), and working on cattle stations (Campion, 1994). A series in Warlpiri entitled *Nyurruwiyi manu Jalangu-jalangu* (“Then and now stories”) includes comparisons of traditional and modern life in areas such as hunting and funerals. Stories of massacres told from Indigenous perspectives, such as *A True Bad Story* (Yunupingu, 1981), and the story of the Coniston massacre (Japangardi, 1978), are also available. Stories familiar to non-Indigenous teachers and students can be read from an Indigenous perspective, such as the story of Lasseter’s Reef (Stevens, 1982, see also Ross, 1999 for a different version), and Indigenous experiences of World War II, for example the rescue of an American pilot (Wandjuk, n.d.), and the bombing of the Tiwi Islands (Kerinaia, 1986b) and Milingimbi (Djoma, 1974). The latter book describes the Yolngu response when they heard the Japanese were attacking: “*they collected their spears---shovel spears, stone knives and cane spears---for we really didn’t understand; we thought it would be like when Aborigines fight*” and names those killed and injured. Such stories add an interesting dimension to general teaching about issues such as exploration, colonisation and conflict.

Geography

The overview of this learning area focuses on “*the relationships people have with place and their interconnection with the environments in which they live*”, Indigenous knowledge and practices related to the connection to land, water and sky, and “*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ use of the land, governed by a holistic, spiritually-based connection to Country and Place*”. These issues can be explored in various ways through the Living Archive, for example stories of fire management in the desert (Allen, 2005) and the top end (Tipungwuti, 1990); further exploration of the seasons in Kriol (Wesan, 1985), and Warlpiri country (Spencer, 2005).

To bring a different cultural perspective to geographic and environmental knowledge, students can explore traditional stories about how landforms were created by ancestor spirits such as the Djan'kawu in the Yolngu area (Bäriya, 1974) or the rainbow serpent, represented in both the desert region (Inkamala, 1988) and the top end (Kerinaia, 1986a).

This area is another ideal opportunity to invite Indigenous local authorities to share about the local area, for example in Darwin a local school has developed a website including local Larrakia perspectives on Rapid Creek (Millner Primary School, 2005). The ABC TV documentary on Kakadu (ABC Television, 2013) is just one of many resources available to explore Indigenous understandings of and relationships to land, many of which also include materials specifically designed for teachers.

Economics and Business

The content descriptor for this learning area in Year 8 encourages exploration of *“the traditional markets of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their participation in contemporary markets”* (ACARA, 2015). The archive contains stories of interactions with Macassan traders (e.g. Bopani 1988, plus a number of texts with no English translation), which pre-date colonisation. Another story in the archive describes different working arrangements for Indigenous people in the Katherine area, where some worked for white people on banana and peanut farms, and later cattle stations, firstly for rations and later for money: *“They didn't know much about money and they didn't even know how to spend their money. So when they got their pay they used to save it in a money box made from tin”* (Bennett, et al., 1994). Other stories describe sharing practices, or cautionary tales about the consequences of not sharing, such as Yambal (1974), and Marika (2011), and even advice about buying a car (Martin, et al., 1985). Such stories can be combined with other contemporary stories of Indigenous work practices to flesh out a more complex picture of Indigenous participation in contemporary markets.

Civics and Citizenship

The overview of this learning area invites students to explore Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customary law. This is demonstrated in books on customary marriage laws (e.g. Nakamarra, 1990), family obligations (e.g. Kerinaia, 1990), appropriate behaviour (e.g. Kantilla, 1996), initiation (e.g. Egan, 1987) and various ceremonies (e.g. Granites Napanangka, 2008; Marika, n.d.). The opening statement in a book on funeral ceremonies, *Mala-mala-kurlu* (Ross, 2000) states its specific purpose:

*We are going to put into a book for you children so that you can keep it in your head.
When we elders pass away you can keep your own Warlpiri knowledge strong here
at Yuendumu forever. Do not throw it away.*

There are also warnings against excessive drinking (Mununggurr, n.d.; Kerinaia, 1989) or eating the wrong thing (Djawa, 1983). These cautionary tales often have dire consequences for the participants and are used as powerful teaching tools, particularly for children. For example, the people who were killed for staring at the moon (Djawa, 1975) or for building a fire on a sacred place (Cooper, 2001).

A fascinating example demonstrating contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' experiences of Australia's legal system include a text in Warlpiri and English entitled *“Milyapungkalu Kardiyakurlangu Jukurrpa”* or *“Know the European Law”* which

...arose from the expressed need of Warlpiri people for information about the European legal system for their young people. Warlpiri people are keenly interested in the issue of European recognition of Aboriginal customary law and an equitable resolution of conflict between European and Warlpiri law” (Wayne & Sherman, 1981).

It explains the different levels of government in Australia, the rights of people who have been arrested, rules for police, and explanations of what may happen at the police station, with legal aid, at a court hearing, the appeals process, and other situations.

The Arts

The overview of this learning area invites students to explore the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art practices can involve combining art forms for both practical and cultural reasons, and how their oral histories and belief systems are contained in and communicated through cultural expression in story, movement, song, and visual traditions (ACARA, 2015). Each of the arts forms (dance, drama, media arts, music, and visual arts) can be linked with materials in the Living Archive.

Dance often appears in books which focus on ceremonial actions, but also in unexpected contexts (for a Western audience). For example, at the end of a hunting story when a man kills a shark, *“the man danced the shark dance on the beach just like many Tiwi dance shark today”* (Babui, 1991). Such a sentence can elicit further questioning and research can uncover demonstrations such as those at the 2016 Sydney Festival, where the Strong Women’s Group from the Tiwi Islands gave lessons in traditional Tiwi song and dance, including dances for shark, crocodile, turtle and rainbow (Sydney Festival, 2016).

In the area of Drama, a number of books in the collection present as ideal subjects for dramatic interpretation, whether simple early childhood stories which children can dress as animals and act out, or older children could dramatically represent some short texts which display facets of Indigenous community life, such as sharing with strangers (James, 2006), or stories of early contact such as Marparri (1981) about relations with the earliest missionaries.

The Media Arts curriculum encourages students from Foundation to Year 2 to explore ideas, characters and settings in the community through stories in images, sounds and text, and in higher levels to compare media artworks from different social, cultural and historical contexts. In addition to the multiple opportunities to explore and compare, there are opportunities to create multimedia versions of stories in the archive with permission from the story owners. The Living Archive project site gives instructions and examples of how to do this, including suggestions for contacting story owners (Living Archive, 2015a), which could begin valuable collaborative work between schools and remote communities.

For the Music curriculum, the Living Archive features a selection of song books and books based on songs, which can be identified using the category filter ‘Song.’ Some include translations of English songs, so the tunes would be familiar to many, such as the song book *Burarra Manakay* (2009) which includes versions of ‘12345 Once I caught a fish alive’, ‘Incy wincy spider’, and ‘The wheels on the bus’ mixed with local songs. Others include chords and sometimes recorded audio versions of the songs, such as the Kaytetye song *Wampere wampere* which students can learn to sing along to (Turpin, 2005).

A number of units in the Visual Arts curriculum invite students to engage with works by Indigenous artists. Materials in the Living Archive include a wide variety of artistic styles, from simple line drawings, to watercolour paintings, to detailed digital creations, plus more

traditional art forms such as bark paintings (Yunupingu, n.d.), and body paintings (Yawarrkarkurlu, n.d.). There are also stories of children learning how to paint their dreamings (Granites, 2006) and stories of artists traveling internationally for exhibitions (Gallagher, 2007). A visit to a local exhibition of Indigenous artworks would be a useful accompaniment to this learning area, or an invitation to a local Indigenous artist to talk about or demonstrate their own work to the class.

Technologies

The overview of this learning area invites students to *“identify, explore, understand and analyse the interconnectedness between technologies and Identity, People, Culture and Country/ Place. They explore how this intrinsic link guides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in sustaining environments, histories, cultures and identities”* (ACARA, 2015). The Living Archive provides an opportunity for students to view how Indigenous people in the Northern Territory have incorporated technologies into their knowledge transmission, in the creation of hundreds of books in language during the era of bilingual education (Bow, Christie & Devlin, 2016). Dating back to the 1970s, when the printing process was comparatively basic, there is a huge range of technologies represented, from simple offset printing of line drawings and hand-written text, to typed text and two-colour printing, through to interesting and creative presentations done with desktop publishing software and equipment. Some stories can be tracked across the different eras, such as the story of *The Little Frog*, which appears in several different versions in a number of different languages (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Different versions of ‘The Little Frog’ from the Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages.



Source: Living Archive of Aboriginal Languages, <http://laal.cdu.edu.au/>

The Digital Technologies curriculum is an ideal place to encourage interaction and collaboration with Indigenous communities across the country. As in the Media Arts curriculum, there is space to create multimedia versions of the materials in the archive, with the permission and collaboration of the story owners. Numerous software packages allow creative combinations of text, image and audio files, and guidelines for a digital story competition promoted by the Living Archive project team in 2015 give step-by-step instructions on how to take a story from the archive and bring it to life, and seeking permission from the story owner to make such a

derivative and upload it back to the archive (Living Archive, 2015b).

Other aspects of design technology that can be identified in the archive include instructional materials on design and traditional technologies, such as how to make a bark armband (Munkara, 1991), a ceremonial hat (Egan & Gallagher, 2008) or other ceremonial items (Gallagher, 2009). Indigenous design technologies such as boomerangs, yidaki, woomera, etc., appear in many of the items in the collection, and can be explored for aspects of their design and purpose. More contemporary explorations of Indigenous engagement with technology can be found through projects such as Indigenous Digital Excellence (National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, n.d.).

Health and Physical Education

The overview of this learning area invites students *“to explore the importance of family and kinship structures for maintaining and promoting health, safety and wellbeing within their community and the wider community”* (ACARA, 2015). Besides some game stories in the Living Archive (such as books on building toy cars (Wilton, 2005) and playing marbles (Rice, 1994b)), there are also a number of books relating to sports, such as football (Kámbaladda, 1984; Kintharri, 1980), and basketball (Rice, 1994a). Researching a topic such as the role of football and other sports in Indigenous communities would make an interesting classroom project.

Family and kinship structures are a common theme in the archive materials, and their connection to health, safety and well-being are exemplified in books such as Mununggurr (n.d.) which describes the dangers of drinking and its effect on family and culture.

A useful activity would be to explore different perspectives on some of the health issues affecting Indigenous communities around Australia, and see how these are presented from the perspective of the Indigenous people themselves, including discussion of how sickness is caused. The archive contains books which discuss common diseases such as trachoma (Boulden, et al., 1989), scabies (Gununwanga & Miwulga, n.d.), the health of eyes (Patrick & Jagamara, 1978) and ears (Rrikawuku, 1993), and books including simple instructions for children to stay healthy, based on initiatives such as Breathe, Blow, Cough (Kurdu-kurdu Nyinanjaku Pirjirdi, 2005; see also Fatnowna, 2008). There are books about the danger of things such as flies (Gununwanga, 1993) and general books about food and health such as Garidjalalug & Zampech (1977) which describes good foods to eat (both bush foods and western-style foods) and warn against too much fat and sugar in the diet.

Languages

The overview of this learning area invites students to make *“interlinguistic and intercultural comparisons across languages, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, to develop understanding of concepts related to the linguistic landscape of Australia and to the concepts of language and culture in general”* (ACARA, 2015). As discussed earlier in this paper, an overview of the range of languages in the Living Archive demonstrates the vast range and complexity of languages spoken in the Northern Territory (and by extension around Australia).

In a Languages Other Than English (LOTE) context, it is possible to research connections between the target language speakers and Indigenous people, for example, an Italian teacher might refer to one of the earliest documentations of a Top End language which was made by an Italian missionary, Angelo Confalonieri (1847). A French teacher might find useful references in a site dedicated to French anthropologists researching Australian Aboriginal groups at

AusAnthrop (Dousset, 2003). As noted previously, there are a number of references to the Japanese interactions with northern Australia during WWII, and an Indonesian class may find it interesting to note words borrowed from the Macassan traders, such as *djorra* and *rupiya*. Other books speak of the importance of language to the identify of Indigenous Australians, such as Marika (1991) on clan classifications, and Morrison (n.d.) who describes language shift in Warumungu over the last few decades.

Work Studies

This learning area is an optional component of the year 9 and 10 curriculum, and invites students to explore *“how social and cultural factors can influence work behaviours and the expectations and prosperity of population groups, and engaging with role models and reflecting on historical perspectives in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment”* (ACARA, 2015). Indigenous understandings of work may be very different to non-Indigenous understandings, for example family obligations are considered work, as are certain ceremonial tasks, and looking after country, which may not be remunerated in the same way as other kinds of employment.

A number of books in the Living Archive demonstrate the involvement of Indigenous people in different work practices, such as *“Local heroes”* (Kapurna nyinami nyampupiya, 2015) which documents a project by schoolchildren in Yuendumu interviewing local people about their work and life, and Bennett et al (1994) which describes old people’s memories about work experiences in the Barunga area.

Conclusion

The existence of an accessible set of authentic texts in Indigenous Australian languages creates great opportunities for the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures across the Australian Curriculum. The respectful use of these materials can allow both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators to access an insider perspective, as many of the books were written by Indigenous people for teaching the children in their own community, and thus gives a voice not often heard in the multitude of resources ‘about’ Aboriginal culture written by outsiders or specifically for non-Indigenous people. The resources in the Living Archive can be linked to existing resources, such as textbooks and other websites, to enrich and enhance the presentation of Indigenous knowledges and cultures. While there is a danger of selecting information at random without sufficient understanding to present it appropriately, the involvement of Indigenous authorities can bring significant depth to the discussion by engaging both students and teachers in a dialogue about these different perspectives. Rather than viewing the requirement to include such perspectives as a cumbersome addition to an already full curriculum, genuine respectful enquiry can bring great understanding, insight and awareness to the next generation of Australians of all backgrounds.

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Online learning and teacher education: The experiences of Indigenous teacher education students

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Abstract

Online learning is an integral component of higher education delivery at Charles Darwin University, a regional university located in the Northern Territory, Australia. This paper draws on data obtained through the conversational method of 'yarning' (Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010) with five Indigenous teacher education students about their experiences in online learning at CDU. Analysis of the data revealed their experiences were impacted by issues related to access and mode of study and the advantages of online learning were offset by a sense of isolation when studying fully online. This paper draws from data obtained from a broader Educational Design Research study that explored the experiences of Indigenous higher education students across a range of disciplines and the implications of these experiences for the design of online learning environments.

Introduction

We live in the western world but quality western education is not provided in our communities. Too many Balanda (non-Indigenous) teachers do not understand the issues, the real problems out there. This is why we need Indigenous teachers. (F40)

Access to and equity in higher education in Australia have been marked over the past decade by significant policy initiatives, reviews and recommendations aimed at increasing participation and completion of Indigenous people in higher education (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Advisory Council, 2015; Behrendt, et al., 2012; Bradley, et al., 2008). However, while there is a significant focus on and funding of programs that look towards building Indigenous peoples aspirations, participation and success in higher education (Frawley, et al., 2015) there is a long way to go towards achieving parity for Indigenous (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander) students in higher education (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011). While enrolment numbers in higher education are increasing for Indigenous students and the percentage of Indigenous students participating in higher education is increasing as a proportion of overall enrolment (Australian Department of Education and Training, 2015b), Indigenous students are still underrepresented significantly in higher education (Pechenkina & Anderson, 2011).

Parity of outcome in higher education also remains elusive. Even with increasing participation in higher education, Indigenous students' performance suggests equity for Indigenous students extends beyond the concept of access to higher education (Pechenkina & Anderson 2011). Completion of higher education courses remains significantly lower for Indigenous students than for higher education students overall (Australian Department of Education and Training, 2015c). An array of initiatives at the federal, as well as institutional levels, have been

implemented to support Indigenous students to enter into and complete their studies, for example the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (Australian Department of Education and Training, 2015a). Additionally, programs and initiatives have been established to attract Indigenous people into specific disciplinary areas, such as teacher education. These include the Growing Our Own (GOO) program and the Remote Indigenous Teacher Education (RITE) program in the Northern Territory (NT) (Nutton, et al., 2012).

The participation of Indigenous students in higher education is skewed towards the social sciences and caring professions and is predominantly clustered in the fields of society and culture, health and education. Teacher education is clearly an attractive option for Indigenous students, with 15% of all Indigenous higher education participation being in the field of education (Australian Department of Education and Training, 2015c). Increasing the number of Indigenous people who enrol in teacher education programs and go on to become qualified teachers is strategically important, as having Indigenous teachers in the classroom improves outcomes for Indigenous students. Additionally, Indigenous teachers in mentoring roles provide non-Indigenous teachers with guidance on teaching Indigenous students. This has an impact on the education of Indigenous students, as non-Indigenous teachers in the main *“simply do not know enough about how to teach Indigenous children”* (Santoro, et al., 2011).

Research Approach

This paper draws on data obtained from in-depth yarning sessions with five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher education students aged 28 to 41 years old about their experiences in online higher education at Charles Darwin University (CDU). Yarning is a culturally appropriate conversational method for working with Indigenous people in the conduct of research (Bessarab, 2012; Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010; Kickett, 2011). It provides a respectful frame and pace in which to engage with and listen to stories, with a focus on allowing a narrative to evolve and emerge in its own way and in its own time. These yarning sessions took place between mid 2014 and the end of 2015 in person or by telephone. The students were located in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Victoria.

The data used in this paper was drawn from a larger study that investigated the experience of online learning of Indigenous higher education students from across a range of disciplines at CDU. The study was situated within an Educational Design Research (EDR) framework (Reeves et al., 2005; Reeves & McKenney, 2012), which provided an approach to addressing practical problems located in the educational setting of CDU. The study involved iterative cycles of investigation and analysis of the online learning environment at CDU, which has the Blackboard Learning Management System (LMS) at its core. The purpose of the study was to develop design principles to guide the creation of online learning environments that support the success of Indigenous students in higher education.

The yarning sessions were transcribed verbatim and were sent back to the participants for confirmation. The transcripts were then thematically coded using the software analysis tool NVivo. For the purposes of this paper, the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous author engaged in the process of *“collaborative yarning”* (Bessarab & Ng’andu, 2010) to deepen the analysis of the experiences of the teacher education students who contributed to the study. The concept of collaborative yarning has resonance with Nakata’s conceptualisation of the contested space of the *“Cultural Interface”* (Nakata, 2007a; 2007b). In this study, the authors engaged at the cultural interface through deep listening and reflection to work through contested interpretations of the data and to connect with and to develop a shared understanding of the participants stories and the emergent themes.

Access and participation: unequal progress

Charles Darwin University has a strong focus on online learning as a means of educational delivery, with more than 60% of students enrolled externally. Although the NT has a small population base, CDU's online delivery strategy enables it to attract students from across Australia and is also geared to attract a significant international cohort. With an Indigenous population of over 30% in the NT, CDU also has a strong focus on attracting local Indigenous people into higher education. Given the online focus of CDU, external online study is a viable means of accessing and participating in studies towards a higher education qualification.

While CDU has a high Indigenous student participation rate of 5.5% (Charles Darwin University, 2015) relative to 1% in the higher education sector (Australian Department of Education and Training, 2015d), the success rate for Indigenous students is 20% below that of all higher education students (Charles Darwin University, 2015). So while there is significant work being done nationally as well as locally at CDU to build aspiration for higher education study (Frawley et al., 2015), there is arguably a greater need to examine and address the issues around the attrition of Indigenous students from their academic studies. In particular, there is a gap in the literature around the experience of Indigenous teacher education students (Bat & Shore, 2014; Moreton-Robinson, et al., 2012), and of the experiences of Indigenous higher education students in online learning. This paper contributes to filling this gap through exploration of the experiences of five teacher education students of online learning. The implications of their experiences in terms of the design of online learning environments is part of the broader study and is only touched on in this paper.

Pathways into Higher Education

Indigenous students are more likely than non-Indigenous students to enter into higher education via non-traditional pathways due to lower rates of high school completion and lower achievement of the requirements for direct entry into university from school (Behrendt et al., 2012). Of the five teacher education students in this study, none gained direct entry into university on the basis of their year 12 marks, although two had completed high school. All came into teacher education programs as mature age students via a Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathway or through one of the two tertiary preparation programs offered at CDU, the Indigenous tertiary enabling program Preparation for Tertiary Success (PTS) or the Tertiary Enabling Program (TEP).

I wanted to go to uni when I was in year 12 but then I didn't finish year 12. (F30)

I didn't get my NTCE¹ because I lost out on two marks I think in my art. And obviously I was out of school for, what was it, seven years. So seven or eight years. So I had to do some sort of course to figure out my score. (F28B)

At the age of thirty I enrolled at Batchelor Institute and began the journey of formal western education. In 2009 I graduated from Batchelor with the Certificates II and III in Spoken and Written English. I then went into the Preparation for Tertiary Studies program (PTS) because my aim was to find out more. My goal was to learn and get further into study, to answer my questions about English and education. (F40)

1. Northern Territory Certificate of Education

The alternative entry pathways were critical in providing the Indigenous teacher education students in this study with a way into higher education. Without such pathways none of them would have started their teacher education studies.

Ways of doing teacher education: study modes

In the School of Education at CDU there are multiple study mode options that provide a level of choice and flexibility for Indigenous students entering into teacher education. It is of note, however, that in 2014 87% of all students in the School of Education were enrolled as external students, studying fully online. While external study is the predominant mode of course enrolment, Indigenous students undertaking undergraduate teacher education have three study mode options. As well as external and internal study modes, which are both online reliant and open to all students, Indigenous students can also opt to enrol in Batchelor mode. Batchelor mode is a mixed-mode approach that combines an intensive workshop of one to two weeks per semester with external online study. This option was provided through the Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Education (ACIKE), a partnership arrangement between CDU and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. The workshops were held mainly at Batchelor campus, south of Darwin or at the Desert People's Centre in Alice Springs.

Additionally, in some remote and very remote Indigenous communities in the NT, community work-based teacher training initiatives provide Indigenous people with a way of accessing teacher education programs within their communities. Programs such as Catholic Education's *Growing Our Own* (GOO) and the now defunct NT Department of Education's *Remote Indigenous Teacher Education* (RITE) are two such programs that were set up in remote community schools to provide opportunities for Indigenous people to gain teaching qualifications within their communities and while working concurrently in the local school with a mentor teacher (Nutton et al., 2012; Reedy, et al., 2011). This apprenticeship model was established to benefit the individuals, the schools and the communities they serve through the development of an educated and skilled teaching workforce in remote and very remote areas².

Work-based teacher education programs such as GOO and RITE have significant delivery costs and by their nature have low numbers of students (Nutton et al., 2012). They provide a fast paced work-integrated approach to teacher education with course delivery in condensed timeframes. In the now discontinued RITE program, higher education studies took place two days of the week with the student teachers working in the classroom the other three days. The RITE program had two cohorts of students; the first cohort of seven students ran in 2010-2012, however, the program was defunded prior to any of the second cohort of students completing the course.

Choosing modes

As indicated in the previous section, Indigenous teacher education students at CDU have three modes in which they can enrol in teacher education studies, as well as the work-based teacher education programs offered in selected communities. In this study, all students had clear preferences for their mode of study. For one student, the teacher education training became a possibility when the RITE program was offered in her community. The four other students chose to study in Batchelor mode. The extracts below demonstrate the importance of delivery mode in the students' decisions to commence their teacher education training.

2. Remoteness is classified by geographical location and access to services.

I didn't want to do the first year in mainstream. I don't know if that's the right terminology. I apologise if that's incorrect terminology. But I didn't want to do it through the mainstream programming. I wanted to stay with ACIKE; I just like the format of what ACIKE delivers. (F31)

The Learning on Country program in Maningrida needed an Indigenous person to pilot the program with the rangers and the school. So I took up that position. It was while I was working with the school on this program that I was approached by the headmaster and offered an assistant teacher position at the school. I was also offered a position in the Remote Indigenous Teacher Education (RITE) community based teacher education program because the principal and the school could see the potential in me. They could see what I could deliver, that I could give my skills, and they knew I would gain skills with a quality education and a teaching degree. The RITE program became available to me, it was offered in the community, and it was the right place and the right time for me to question myself and to take up the opportunity because I knew I wasn't going to stop with my education. I wanted to become a teacher to share the knowledge I have gained in this past journey of my life. (F40)

While all study modes offered by CDU require students to engage with CDU's online learning environment, external online study with no face-to-face contact at all with the lecturer or other students was not the preferred mode of enrolment for any of the students. Regardless of this, four of the five teacher education students had enrolled in some of their units in external mode at the time the yarnning sessions took place. One other student expected to enrol in online units in order to complete course requirements. The multiple options of study modality appear at one level to provide choice and flexibility to students; however, the full range of study modes is not always available in all units. Indeed, studying units in external mode was a choice made out of necessity rather than preference for all students in this study.

I've been lucky so far and all of mine are workshop mode. I haven't had to pick an external one yet, but I know that option is available if the workshop ones aren't of interest I can choose the other mode. That's my first preference and like I said, that's the reason why I chose to do the higher education in teaching, is because I liked the set up of the ACIKE workshop mode. (F31)

One of the teacher education students in this study commenced in the *Remote Indigenous Teacher Education* (RITE) program and continued as an external student studying fully online when that program was defunded. Her 'choice' of study modes was restricted to external study.

But then the NT government scrapped the [RITE] program within two years. We managed to continue. So the first group completed. I was in the second group and we were left hanging. So I asked 'Where to next? What does the future hold for my education? Where and how can I complete it?' The big step was to complete the teacher education program remotely and online. So I transitioned into an online student to complete the degree. (F40)

All teacher education students at CDU experience the online learning environment through the Learning Management System (LMS) known as Learnline. Course materials, activities and assessment are located in the LMS regardless of the mode of a student's enrolment. Yet

accessing readings or submitting an assessment through an online portal while engaging in face-to-face study through the ACIKE model or in the RITE program was a very different experience to studying a unit fully online and one that most wanted to avoid if possible.

Internet access: online learning where access is limited

While all of the students in the sample indicated they were proficient users of computer technology and all owned their own laptops, they embraced online study with different attitudes and approaches.

I love technology. Like I said I got a new phone today because my screen was cracked. And so I've got the latest gadgets, you know? I've got the iPad. I've got the Samsung note. You know, I love technology. I just think there's a place and time for it. I think as educators we're relying too much on... technology for higher education. (F30)

In some instances, internet access was a factor limiting participation in external online study. This aligns with research that shows home internet access is lower for Indigenous people than other Australians and there are uneven patterns of internet access in remote Indigenous communities (Rennie et al 2015). This uneven pattern is linked to availability of mobile broadband services. Where internet is not available or reliable this results in “digital exclusion” (Rennie et al., p. 3) for the people of those communities. Problematic access to the internet caused intense frustration and anxiety in a number of the students in this study.

The weaknesses of studying online were that the weather would close down the internet access. Rats, ants and fires would close down the internet. Burning off would damage the cables. Internet access was shut down on a daily basis in the dry season and wet season. (F40)

Thursday Island is kind of a main island of the Strait, so their signal can be very good but ours can be dropping and now that we've got lots of trawlers and ships come in like to the island, they do prawning and stuff around here. They've got this boost. When they turn it on it just cuts our signal. Yeah. Just, that's why it's so frustrating. [...] whenever there's ships going in, going by, it just affects the signal. Not only computer signal. Phone signal. Yeah we can't really do anything. It's like going back to the past. (F41)

I can read something on Learnline and then it will freeze. And it can freeze for a couple of hours and then come back, or it can freeze and stay like that, down for like two days, and then if I have stuff to post online, I can't do it there and then. (F41)

While access to the internet is a prerequisite for online study, the student experience of the online environment was far more complex than just about gaining access to this environment and having the necessary technology skills to engage within it. Even those students located in very remote communities in the Torres Strait and in the Northern Territory were able to get online although not necessarily in time frames that matched the task or assessment requirements of their units. Furthermore, the cost of access was an impediment for some students going online.

Financially I'm struggling... We're living in a very high cost of living. Internet cost is very high. (F41)

Thus, learning design considerations have important ramifications for the engagement of students with limited or intermittent internet access and for students for whom internet access may be prohibitively expensive. For example, students noted particular difficulties with activities that required synchronous involvement or online collaboration. In one instance, a student noted the length of time it took for a task to be completed due to students living in remote areas having to find windows of opportunity to go online and pass their part of the assignment on to others. In another instance the same student noted feeling excluded from an online group task due to her inability to communicate within prescribed time frames.

So, I find myself I drifted a couple of days behind but I told it up there (on the online discussion board) because I've already done the readings and research and stuff (F41)

The issue of uneven and intermittent internet access is beyond the sphere of influence of the academic staff working with Indigenous students in remote communities in the cases cited. However, the design of the learning environment is within the control of academic staff and impacts significantly on the experience of students studying online.

[Learnline] is really bad. I can't find the wording for what I'm trying to say. I don't think it's utilised, like from the lecturer's point of view in setting it up and stuff like that. I don't think that the tools that should be there are utilised as well as what they should be and set out as well as what they should be. (F30)

Learning design considerations such as providing options for how students can engage in activities and providing resources that can be easily downloaded and accessed offline can make a difference to student engagement and progression. Additionally, flexible or negotiated timeframes for task completion would assist students who had limited or unreliable access to the internet.

The benefits of online learning

The students in the study had varied and at times contradictory experiences in the online environment. Although external online study was not the first choice of any of the students, they were all able to appreciate the benefits of the online environment at different times and for particular purposes. These benefits included being able to stay at home and study, as well as to communicate and share ideas with a range of people in the online environment.

I didn't find it hard to work online, like on Learnline. I've enjoyed it. I loved to do it that way because of still staying with the family and you know, studied from home, online. But it's the signal. We can't work or do things online because of where we are, very remote, very isolated. (F41)

[I like] the posting stuff. You're exchanging ideas. Like you're reading what other people, other students, are saying and you're answering to it like you're giving your, what you're thinking, what your ideas about it. Like you're thinking something different and you're actually reading there and then what other people are posting. I do like that because you're exchanging and you're giving at the same time. (F41)

For the student enrolled in the RITE program, the transition into external study provided some unexpected benefits. The change in study mode allowed the student to become more autonomous and take more control over her study. This was a distinct change from the highly charged and intensive nature of the RITE program.

After that year I was on my own. As an adult I faced the challenge of having to understand what learning looks like and sounds like without having a lecturer or a tutor right there to support me and I learned how to become an independent learner online. (F40)

Online, even though I had deadlines I could ask if I could have a week more to complete it. I felt like I was at ease, more in control of my studies and I could get online and talk to someone if I wanted. That's one thing I noticed that was easier for me when I didn't have a lecturer down my throat. The strength of studying online was knowing that the resources were available for learning on the computer and internet. (F40)

Concerns about online learning

Studying externally online requires students to be autonomous learners and to have a strong understanding of academic expectations. Without a knowledge of the higher education environment some students felt very unsure of themselves and of what they were expected to do and consequently floundered. Some students were confused about where to start in the online environment and felt the online environment was alien to them. The lack of clarity of expectations was compounded for students with language backgrounds other than English who struggled to interpret written statements without redress to verbal clarification.

[When] a lecturer puts up a post and then I read it, I, like I said before, English is my second language, so I probably look at it differently, you know what I mean? Like I'm not sure about where it's going and about [what] he or she is really asking, what the question is really focusing on. (F41)

It was all face-to-face until the last three units online. I didn't have that online experience before and I'm, honestly, I don't know where to start when I was online, what to do. (F41)

The timeframes and nature of synchronous online sessions were also an issue for students, particularly where the student was located in a different time zone to the lecturer. Faulty cameras and lack of engagement led one student to express that synchronous online interaction “just feels a little bit robotic”. (F31)

Overwhelmingly the students expressed a preference for learning in a social context in a face-to-face environment.

One of my units this semester was only offered externally so I had to do it externally. Mostly I try and get into Batchelor workshop mode because it's very difficult externally. I'm not one to sit in front of a computer for ten hours a day, for ten hours each unit. And that's basically what they expect you to do with Learnline. (F28B)

It's much better in the workshop mode. It's better in a classroom setting because you get that student interaction and that teacher interaction. We can get feedback then and there where as with Learnline we have to sit on it for days till someone gets back to you. (F28B)

The thing I love about ACIKE and being able to go to Batchelor and have these internal units is because I get that face-to-face with my peers. And I get to know them really well and I get to learn off them. You know the discussion board is not the same. (F30)

The irony of the online environment is while it has the technological affordances that invite networking and interaction, in the main the students in the sample found online interaction to be isolating.

It's just I just feel like I'm left out. I don't know why but it's just I feel like I'm in the corner. It's different. I guess I'm so used to being in a group face-to-face with my lecturer and other students and I feel isolated because I don't know who I'm talking to and, you know, I don't know where they are. (F41)

The issue of isolation in the learning environment was exacerbated when students were located in geographically remote or very remote areas and were also experiencing isolation due to their physical location. In particular, students were isolated from services and supports that enable the use of digital technologies.

I'm in the Torres Strait, a little island. It just looks like, yeah, it don't have big shops that I can walk in with my laptop and get it fixed and you know, it's just one little shop and that's it, one little council building. (F41)

I've got a printer at home but it's run out of ink. Its money, and you can't get ink on the island. So you have to contact family in Cairns or Thursday Island (to see) if they can; send them the money; they get it. It's a very long process. (F41)

Online learning and connection

In comparison to the online learning environment, the teacher education students in the sample found their identities as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples was acknowledged in the workshop and in the community teacher education program. Their shared experience of being Indigenous helped to forge deeper connections.

There's a level of trust and kind of connectivity. I guess maybe your culture and stuff kind of gives you that common ground. (F31)

In the RITE program, students already knew each other and the shared struggles as well as triumphs experienced during the program strengthened these bonds.

It was very intense. I devoted me, and the other girls we all devoted our life to it. I was always doing it. If I'd go out, I'd get so stressed, and would be tired, withdrawn and in tears. A whole lot of us would just be in tears and the stress wasn't healthy. We'd all go over together to see the doctor to monitor our health. We'd go as a

team, as a family little group. Even though we were all family we come as a little teacher group, a group of Indigenous teachers. We all supported each other and we looked after each other. (F40)

Similarly students studying in the workshop mode found they developed strong bonds through the intensity of their contact. Their friendships with other students enrolled in teacher education, as well as with students in other disciplines, developed and continued through social media outside of the workshop weeks.

We all dorm together, like you become that little bit closer like the friendships that you make and the bonds that you make are pretty, a lot stronger because it's amplified because you're with that person 24/7. (F31)

The experience of external study on the other hand was isolating and left students feeling that they were the only Indigenous student in the (virtual) class. The students felt they had no means of finding out if there were other Indigenous students enrolled in their units and making a connection with them.

Yet, regardless of a preference for a face-to-face learning context, external online study had been, or was anticipated to be, the reality for all of the students in the sample at some point in their teacher education course. Additionally, all were involved through the Learning Management System (LMS) in the online learning environment regardless of whether they were enrolled in a unit externally or not. Many found the LMS inherently clunky compared to their use of social media and it was not conducive to building connections with other students.

And you know you text message a person and it's an instant reply. They get an instant notification. Well not an instant reply but they get a notification that there's a text message waiting there for them. Whereas in the discussion board you have to remember to go on and check them because there's no email that says there's a notification, or that someone's replied to this post that you've replied to or whatever. (F30)

As a result of this clunkiness some students engaged in the LMS as little as possible.

One student had a high level of ambivalence towards the online environment and regretted this at the end of semester after sitting the final exam and contemplating failing the subject.

I'm kind of disappointed in myself now because I'm like I wish now I'd I used (the Learnline environment) more in case. I honestly don't even know if that information was in there. (F31)

Conclusion

Online external study is the main mode of delivery of teacher education at CDU, yet it is not the preferred mode of study for the students who participated in the research described in this paper. To a large extent, the Indigenous teacher education students appreciated the benefits of online learning when it was part of mixed-mode delivery but were increasingly forced into external study, which contributed to a sense of isolation from their peers and lecturers. Their overwhelmingly preference for mixed-mode study was due to an appreciation of the benefits of online learning while balancing this against the frustrations of online learning such as those caused by poor internet access and the confusion and isolation of studying fully online.

The students' experiences of online learning were negatively impacted when their preferred mode of study was removed. This occurred when the Batchelor mode was not offered, or the defunding of the RITE program which left one student with external study as the only realistic option to complete her course. Consideration of student preferences of study mode is therefore an important factor in terms of enhancing the experience of Indigenous teacher education students in higher education. Additionally, enhancing the design of online learning environments would improve the overall experience of Indigenous students engaged in online learning at CDU given the LMS is a ubiquitous component of learner engagement at CDU, regardless of study mode. To that end, further research is being conducted as part of the broader study described to inform an evidence-based approach to online learning design at CDU. Yarning with Indigenous teacher education students and drawing on their experiences of online learning, as well as making sense of this data through collaborative yarning in a cross-cultural environment is critical to achieving that end.

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Developing teacher educators in the era of the 'smart worker'

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Abstract

In a rapidly changing environment where graduate teachers are expected to have 21st century skills and knowledge, it is critical that teacher educators keep up with their own professional development. One way to do this is through engagement with professional development activities provided centrally by academic development units within universities where the teacher educators work. Traditionally, this has involved attending formal, stand-alone professional development sessions that reflect a learning agenda set by the central academic development unit in response to the university's strategic priorities. However, the pace of change in the 21st century, coupled with the rise of the 'smart worker' (Hart, 2015) who takes charge of their own professional learning, are challenging this model, requiring academic units to rethink their roles and activities. This paper explores the challenges, tensions and opportunities presented by this situation for one such academic unit at a northern Australia university. It argues for the need to develop a new model of academic development that nurtures opportunities for teacher educators and other academic staff to build on their professional networks and enables them to engage in professional learning in multiple ways that suit their needs at different times.

Introduction

Professional development for teacher educators is critical in a rapidly changing environment where graduate teachers are expected to have 21st century skills and knowledge. Constant changes and reforms in the profession necessitate ongoing professional development designed to enable teacher educators to maintain the currency of their pedagogical, technological and content knowledge. There is, however, little research on how teacher educators are prepared for and maintain currency in their work of teaching teachers (Grossman, 2013). This is a possible consequence of the dearth of attention that has been given to teacher educators' competencies in the past (Koster, Brekelmans, Korthagen & Wubbels, 2005; Smith, 2005). Internationally, while a few initiatives have been directly targeted at developing standards for teacher educators, information on how teacher educators will achieve them is still lacking

(Smith, 2005). It is also noticeable in the discourse surrounding the ongoing professional development of teacher educators, no mention is made of the key role played by university academic development units in providing professional development opportunities for all academic staff.

This paper explores the role of one such unit located within the Office of Learning and Teaching (OLT) at Charles Darwin University (CDU) in northern Australia. After describing the context of teacher education at CDU, the paper examines the changing nature of the work of the teacher educator and the implications this has for their professional development. It then critiques the extent to which the traditional model of academic development is responsive to these needs and argues for the development of a 21st century model centred upon flexibility, collaboration and communities of practice.

Teacher Education at CDU

CDU is a dual sector tertiary education provider with its main campus in tropical Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia. Over the last decade or so, CDU has diversified its delivery mode options so most higher education courses are now offered both internally on campus and externally online. In 2014 it offered 995 units externally (90% of total Higher Education offerings) through its Blackboard Learn learning management system (LMS) (Charles Darwin University, 2015c). The percentage of students studying externally has correspondingly grown from 35% in 2005 to 62% in 2014 on a course enrolment basis (Charles Darwin University, 2015b). Today CDU is “one of only a few Australian universities at which more than 50% of the student population is enrolled in some form of distance education” (Charles Darwin University, 2012a, p. 5). Online delivery at CDU has attracted large numbers of mature age students and students from non-traditional backgrounds from across Australia which are reflected in the higher education student profile. In the 2014 academic year, 73% of students were aged 25 years or over, 66% were female and 5.5% were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin (Charles Darwin University, 2015a, p.11).

In the School of Education, nearly all Bachelor of Education courses that lead to teacher registration are now delivered both internally and externally, which is uncommon within the Australian higher education system. This has contributed to a doubling of enrolments in these courses between 2007 and 2014, with 87% of students in 2014 enrolled externally (Charles Darwin University, 2015b).

The increase in external delivery at CDU has been achieved primarily through the development of online learning systems that have created a paradigm shift in how, where and when students can engage in learning. For a unit of study, both internal and external cohorts of students normally have access to the same electronic teaching resources in the LMS, which are available day and night for the duration of the teaching period. One perception of this blended delivery might be the internal students have gained access to resources designed for the external student in virtual teaching spaces. However, blended delivery has blurred the temporal and spatial patterning of traditional learning for the internal student. Now the teacher, peers and resources are available around the clock and the learning place is no longer confined to a university building for internal or external students.

A major project commenced at CDU in 2011 to upgrade teaching spaces for blended delivery. Standard equipment was installed to provide the requisite technology for the synchronous teaching of internal and external students. One of the specific implementations was a number of rooms which were designed to support the use of web-conferencing software through a virtual online classroom in the LMS. This technology allows for increasing engagement and collaboration between internal and external students and teachers. However, this rapid increase

in the use of learning technologies has a massive disruptive impact on teacher educators, with the use of technology often raising “fundamental questions about content and pedagogy that can overwhelm even experienced instructors” (Mishra & Koehler, 2006, p. 1030). Teacher educators need the technical expertise to utilise the equipment in the new teaching spaces as well as the pedagogical skills and knowledge to teach face to face, online, and synchronously to internal and external students. This presents challenges in ensuring their emerging professional development needs are met so they are able to cope with the technological changes and harness the potential of these developments in their teaching practice.

The changing professional development needs of teacher educators

Professional development of teacher educators is seen as being motivated by the constant changes and reforms in the profession (Ben-Peretz, et al, 2013). In Australia, the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers set by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) do not apply explicitly to teacher educators. However, the flow on is such that teacher educators need to have expertise in all aspects of teaching as referred to by the standards in order to educate teachers to achieve these standards. This includes engagement in professional learning under Standard 7 (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2014).

A useful way of thinking about the professional development needs of teacher educators is by using the Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Mishra and Koehler, 2006). This framework suggests there are three knowledge domains required for effective teaching - technological, pedagogical and content - and 21st century teaching takes place at the intersection between these domains where they are integrated and connected. Within universities, it is generally seen as the responsibility of academic staff and the schools they work in to address professional learning around content specific knowledge. However, central academic development units are often well placed to deliver professional development activities related to the other domains of technological and pedagogical knowledge, and at the intersection between the three domains.

In the technological domain, professional development needs are driven in part by the profession's recognition that digital technologies and digital literacies are essential for young people to participate fully in a knowledge based society (Ministerial Council on Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2008) and it is therefore critical for educators teaching with technology to increase their digital media literacy (Johnson, et al 2015). They are also driven by each university's teaching context, and the extent to which it delivers its courses externally through digital technologies. For teacher educators at CDU, this means they must be able to utilise digital technologies effectively in their own teaching, whether this be in a face-to-face or online environment. This can be challenging, because many are new to teaching with digital technologies in an online environment and are on a journey to develop their expertise in this continually developing medium. Beyond this, they must also maintain currency in the technological innovations and possibilities afforded by digital technologies in the classrooms their students will be entering and teaching in.

In the pedagogical domain, teacher educators generally have significant knowledge and expertise in comparison to their academic counterparts in other disciplines. However, their expertise does not necessarily extend to teaching in an online environment, particularly where the content involves teaching practical skills in disciplinary areas such as science and the performing arts. For example, teacher educators in the area of chemistry may have to grapple with teaching emergent teachers online how to teach practical laboratory skills as well as assess the practical skills of those emergent teachers from a distance. It is in this murky area

of the TPACK framework where the pedagogical, technological and content domains overlap, that university academic development units stand to assist teacher educators the most, by providing them with professional development and support to reimagine teaching in a new and changing environment.

Challenges for academic development units in meeting the professional development needs of teacher educators

Academic development involves supporting academic staff in developing and enhancing teaching and learning practices (Fraser, 2001). While the nature of the role of academic developers varies from one institution to another, Gibbs (2013) suggests it commonly involves some combination of the following categories of activity:

- developing individuals
- developing groups of teachers/teams
- developing learning environments
- developing the institution
- influencing the external environment
- identifying emergent change and spreading best practice
- developing students
- developing quality assurance systems
- undertaking educational evaluation
- undertaking educational research or educational development research and supporting the scholarship of teaching across the institution.

At CDU, academic development is based on a traditional model whereby a small team of academic developers located within a centralised office of learning and teaching undertake activities designed to enhance the quality of learning and teaching across the university. This is done in accordance with the university's strategic priorities which are identified in the university's Strategic Plan (Charles Darwin University, n.d.) and Learning and Teaching Plan (Charles Darwin University, 2012b). These strategic level documents set the direction for the work of the central academic unit and situate the context for learning and teaching support. The work of the academic developers is divided into four broad functions that encompass most of the wide scope of activities described by Gibbs:

1. Supporting curriculum design and development activities, and the attendant accreditation documentation at school and faculty level
2. Supporting the design of learning and teaching approaches, and activities for individual units
3. Building the capacity of academics to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning, including researching their teaching activities, implementing learning and teaching innovations, and applying for teaching awards and grants
4. Facilitating professional learning opportunities that build academics' knowledge and skills and enhance their capacity to carry out their teaching more efficiently and effectively, including delivering learning and teaching seminars and workshops, and coordinating or delivering both credit and not for credit courses, sometimes in partnership with the School of Education

As CDU is increasingly a predominantly online university, the discussion of technological integration pervades all four functions outlined above. For instance, at course design level, the academic development team assist in the conceptualisation of pedagogical approaches relevant to the disciplinary area and how technology will be used to mediate them. Through unit development and implementation, strategies for practical application of learning technologies are applied in the context of the teaching environment and content. Thus the function of professional development is critical and, when effective, can assist academics in making what Mishra and Koehler (2006) describe as intelligent pedagogical use of learning technologies throughout the course cycle (planning, development, delivery and review).

This whole-of-university agenda is moderated to an extent by the allocation of academic developers to work with specific schools within the higher education faculties, and consult and negotiate with them regarding their priorities. Through this process, the academic development team strives to address the specific professional development needs of teacher educators. However, the breadth of the work of the academic developers at CDU means they are often spread very thinly and find it challenging to do this successfully, which creates a degree of tension commonly experienced by staff engaged in these types of roles (Little & Green, 2012; Napoli, et al, 2010). This tension is heightened if the needs and priorities of the teacher educators are not congruent with those of the university's professional development agenda. Despite these challenges and tensions, the academic developers strive to build strong professional relationships with teacher educators and other academics as part of this work. However, such relationships give rise to a sense of obligation to cater for individual learning needs that may not align with the priorities of the university, faculty or school, and may not be feasible given the resourcing available. This gives rise to a further tension because the sheer diversity of staff learning needs across the areas of technological, pedagogical and content knowledge impedes efforts of catering for the professional learning needs of all academic staff.

Challenges for academic development in the era of the 'smart worker'

This situation is further complicated by the emergence of what Hart (2015) refers to as the 'smart worker' who takes care of their own professional learning on a continual basis in the workplace through engagement in informal learning. Hart (2015) argues many 21st century employees want to engage in professional learning but "don't have the inclination nor the time to learn in what we might call traditional ways – which take them out of the workflow – in a separate room for training or at a separate time to work on e-learning courses" (p. 2). These staff members are therefore more likely to focus on achieving solutions to just in time problems by either looking for resources, particularly those easy to access and use, or by calling on people in their social or professional networks. In addition, while these employees may be willing to engage in formal training, this needs to be flexible, for example online programs that have flexibility around attendance and time frames. Even more attractive are opportunities for learning in a social context where ideas can be shared and discussed with others.

The concept of the smart worker taking charge of their own professional learning may appear to challenge the traditional role of central academic units in setting the professional development agenda. However, to some extent it also reflects the way in which engaged teaching academics have always pursued further professional learning, perhaps in response to the perceived failure of central academic units in meeting their expectations and needs. Indeed, there is some evidence in the field of teacher education that traditional professional development models and practices are ineffective (Darling-Hammond, et al, 2009). Such assertions need to be taken seriously by central academic units. The characteristics and preferences of the

smart worker also mirror those of CDU's growing number of online students, who similarly seek learning programs that can be flexibly incorporated into their busy existing lives and include opportunities for sharing and discussing their ideas with others. The challenge facing academic developers at universities such as CDU is thus to realign their own approaches and practices with those they are helping and encouraging teaching academics to embrace.

A professional development model for the 21st century

The characteristics of the smart worker provide central academic units with challenges as well as opportunities to rethink what professional development programs might look like in the 21st century. Indeed the concept of the smart worker could be considered not just a reflection of how many academic staff want to learn, but as an ideal of the type of engaged and proactive learner that central offices want to nurture and support. To do this requires a step away from traditional models of professional development in which academic developers deliver inflexible, stand-alone professional development activities to groups of often passive teaching academics. Instead, as much as is practicable, professional development activities need to be offered as a flexible and easily accessible bank of high quality resources that academic staff can dip into as the need arises and in time frames that suit them. It also involves facilitating the development of networks and communities of practice around learning and teaching that enable teaching academics to come together to share and discuss their ideas, practices and innovations. This is consistent with research that shows the most effective professional learning for teachers is situated in practice, takes place within a community of learners, and contains opportunities for activity and reflection on practice (Meiers & Ingvarson, 2005).

Within this emergent model, teaching academics are conceptualised as active participants in the professional development process and academic developers act more often as 'guides by the side' rather than 'sages on the stage'. To legitimate and empower teaching academics to take control of their own professional learning, the model needs to be depicted as a whole-of-career framework that enables staff to map their own professional learning pathway from threshold to advanced and expert levels of learning and teaching skills, knowledge and practice. This provides academic developers with the opportunity to review the scope and coherence of their professional development programs and identify ways they might be enhanced to support the complex professional learning required by 21st century academics. While the complex professional learning needs of academics cannot be, and never have been, fulfilled solely by the programs offered by central academic support units, the model makes this explicit and in doing so dissipates some of the pressure on academic developers to be all things to all people in relation to the provision of professional development. It also provides the opportunity to improve how academics are recognised and rewarded as they achieve different levels of skills, knowledge and practice in learning and teaching, and to build in activities that support the emergence of learning and teaching leaders within each school.

For all teaching academics, this new model of professional development offers greater scope to take control of their professional learning and ensure their individual needs are met. Additionally, for teacher educators it provides the opportunity to gain greater recognition for their pedagogical skills and knowledge and correspondingly play a more active and collaborative role in contributing to the professional development program.

At CDU, the academic development team is currently engaged in reconceptualising its professional development program to accord with this new model. Work has begun on increasing the range of professional development courses and materials available online, and reconceptualising the delivery of workshops to include a greater focus on the development of learning and teaching communities of practice. In the past year the team has also co-

facilitated a learning and teaching seminar series in conjunction with academic staff including teacher educators in the School of Education. Illustrating the shift in thinking towards flexible and collaborative professional development delivery, the face-to-face seminars were streamed online using the same technologies and facilities used to stream face-to-face classes to online students. They featured academics from across the university showcasing their learning and teaching innovations, with staff from both the School of Education and the academic development team performing various support and coordination roles. However, these activities only represent a beginning, and much more work remains to be done.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the imperative for a change in the role of academic development units in relation to professional development generally and the development of teacher educators in particular. Using the experiences of the academic development team at CDU to illustrate the need for change, it argues traditional models of professional development no longer meet the needs of teaching academics, who are smart workers who want to take charge of their own professional learning. The paper argues instead for the development of a 21st century model centred upon flexibility, collaboration and communities of practice. Such a model provides support and guidance to teaching academics as they negotiate their own pathways along the continuum from threshold to expert teaching practitioners at the complex intersection of technological, pedagogical and content knowledge. The challenge for academic development units, including the team at CDU, is to turn this nascent model into a reality.

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Beginning teacher experiences in Lao PDR: From research to the development of a professional development program

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Abstract

This article describes how an ethnographic research study paved the way for the design of a Beginning Teacher Support (BTS) program. The aim of the research was to understand the world of beginning teachers in Lao PDR (Laos). Drawing on the work by Lave and Wenger (1991) of situated learning, the research documented the affordances and constraints of beginning teachers as well their social, political and cultural work contexts. As understanding developed, the Australian researcher and Lao educators agreed that the findings should be used to “identify strategic points of intervention” (Denzin, 2001, p. 2) and inform the design of a professional development program that could support beginning teachers. This collaborative work resulted in the design of a multi-dimensional support program, which aims to support teachers as they embark upon their careers.

Introduction

Learning to teach is regarded as a continuous process that extends across a teacher’s entire professional career (Bransford, Darling-Hammond & LePage, 2005; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). More recently, providing specific support for beginning teachers is acknowledged as particularly critical, especially in those countries where pre-service programs are poorly resourced (UNESCO, 2010). This support is also deemed crucial as research has highlighted how political, social and cultural factors in the workplace affect the ways beginning teachers teach (Calderhead & Shorrock, 1997; Day, 1999; Flores, 2001).

The ethnographic research which investigated the worlds of beginning teachers in Laos was initially planned as a study situated in the interpretive paradigm aimed to *understand* rather than *change* the situation. However as the research progressed, collaboration with the local Lao educators who had given the research informal support, became more formal. The subsequent discussion of the findings with local educators generated a desire for change, and as a consequence of much deliberation and planning, a Beginning Teacher Support (BTS) program developed.

Both the research and the BTS program were undertaken in Laos. At 6.2 million people, Laos has the smallest population of any country in South-East Asia, however it remains one of the poorest countries in the world. In 2011, Laos was ranked 138th out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2011). In the last ten years, the country has made significant reforms to its education system. These reforms have focused on both school and teacher education, and have received significant support from the Australian government.

The research study

The research study was undertaken to find out what beginning teachers in Laos do and think about their work. Four research questions were framed, which encapsulate the study:

1. What expectations do trainee-teachers have about the roles they will perform and the responsibilities they will have as beginning teachers?
2. What is the nature of the professional experiences beginning teachers have during their first year of teaching?
3. In what ways and to what extent do beginning teachers develop their teaching practices during their first year of teaching?
4. What are the professional development needs of beginning teachers?

While there is a wealth of studies in developed countries on teacher practices, there have been no ethnographic case studies looking into the worlds of rural teachers in Laos. It was decided that an understanding of the lives of beginning teachers in Laos could best be obtained through an eclectic approach adopting methods central to ethnography as proposed by Spindler (1982), Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1995), and Wolcott (2008), and to educational case study methodology developed by Stake (1995), Bassey (1999) and Yin (2009).

While an ethnographic case study does not aim for generalisation across wider populations, the value of the case and its presentations allow readers to compare their situation with what has been found. As Stake (2005, p. 460) argues, the value of providing case records is “... not to represent the world, but to represent the case”. It is anticipated the observed practices, the reported challenges and aspirations of the beginning teachers provided in the case study, allows Lao educators to compare and contrast their own extensive experiences in schools.

Over an 18-month period of fieldwork, observations were undertaken and interviews conducted to construct the case studies. An initial period of six months was spent at the Pakse Teachers' Training College (TTC) in Champasak Province, following a cohort of trainee-teachers over the concluding half of their one-year teacher training diploma course. Four of these trainees, now beginning teachers, participated for a further twelve months in the study. During this time, the researcher made a series of week-long visits to the four different villages where the teachers had been posted. In total, 155 lessons were formally observed during the visits, 121 semi-structured interviews conducted and extensive journal notes kept of informal observations and conversations.

Detailed case record descriptions were written for each of the four beginning teachers which helped to develop an intimate knowledge of each setting. Interview and observational data was analysed from both within as well as across cases. Within each case, comparisons were made about the teachers' attitudes, experiences and teaching practices as the year progressed. Across the cases, data was compared to find any similarities or differences between the four teachers' attitudes and experiences.

The ethnographic case study research was intent on understanding the situation, during the 18 months of field work, but as the data was being collected, an ethical dilemma emerged – *How to respond to the beginning teachers' questions about their teaching?* From discussions with the participants it was agreed that instead of providing direct feedback during the field visits, a professional activity would be planned to provide feedback about their work and to thank them for their involvement in the study.

Towards the end of the field-work stage, the researcher engaged in regular discussions with staff from the Pakse Teacher Training College about the research findings, and a formalised

support program was designed. This program commenced with an opportunity for immediate feedback and resulted in a week-long workshop, not just for the four participants of the study but for another 26 beginning teachers who were also at the end of their first year of teaching. Funding to deliver this workshop was sought from Australian People for Health Education and Development Abroad (APHEDA), an Australian Non-Government Organisation (NGO). The successful delivery of this initial workshop confirmed the commencement of a BTS.

The following section of this paper discusses the research findings and explains the dimensions of the professional development program.

The research findings

The study mapped how four teachers adapted their teaching practices to accommodate the realities they encountered in their classrooms, schools and villages. Like many others starting out in professional life, the four young people at the centre of this study held high ideals and aspirations for themselves and their careers. While they each worked to complete the tasks of teaching they were guided primarily by the example of their senior colleagues and the principal to reproduce existing practices.

Interviews held prior to graduation with pre-service teachers revealed an optimism to try new ways of teaching which were different to how they had been taught at school. Once in their schools, however, all four teachers reported they saw their colleagues only using traditional teaching methods. When questioned about their interactions with other staff, they also commented how they were reluctant to ask too many questions of their colleagues about teaching. As one teacher explained, *“they might think that I didn’t learn anything in College”*. Another of the four teachers in the study spoke about her attempts to ask other staff for help to incorporate more modern methods of teaching. While she acknowledged they supported her emotionally, the comment below suggests a reason for the limited pedagogical support.

At first I asked questions from the other staff, but they didn’t seem to be interested in my questions and so I stopped. It took me a while to realise, but after a few months I got the feeling that they didn’t have any suggestions.

An analysis of the 155 lesson observation records conducted across the teachers’ first year of teaching, revealed traditional teaching practices dominated their classrooms. On average, only 15% of their lessons included some type of learning activity, only 20% of lessons involved using a teaching aid other than the blackboard or textbook, and only 7% of lessons involved the students working in small groups. Talk was mostly comprised of teachers asking questions which required their students to recall information from the textbook. In the majority of lessons, students were observed spending large amounts of time copying or reciting work from the blackboard.

All lessons were focused on completing the textbook lesson and so any activity which might possibly lengthen the lesson time was avoided. Similarly, talk by the students which might lengthen the lesson time would be often cut short. Teachers were reluctant to deviate from the questions set out in the textbook. Even in the lessons when teaching aids were used, they were predominantly handled by the teacher not the students. Group work often meant students simply sat in group formations rather than being given an authentic task to complete collaboratively.

While the beginning teachers reported they had been told about modern teaching practices by both lecturers and their principals, one teacher explained:

I now realize that one of the main problems is that I never actually saw the methods they talked about in the College being put into practice, neither during the course or after I started work.

She then elaborated on her emotional state:

I feel sad that I haven't taught more children to read – and feel disappointed that it's just so hard to teach my class. There's no one who is really interested in talking about teaching with me and how I can help my students learn.

It is understandable that being unconfident and without support, the beginning teachers' initial enthusiasm for at least trying out teaching strategies to encourage active learning soon stopped. The study revealed if the beginning teachers were to avoid social isolation they had to fit in. The appropriation of surrounding practices was gradual as different teachers adopted different practices at different times. By the end of the year though, three of the four beginning teachers were generally teaching like the rest of the staff in their school.

Lave and Wenger (1991) contend it is through situated learning that individuals acquire knowledge and skills as they participate alongside others in carrying out authentic tasks embedded in the workplace. The process, which they call legitimate peripheral participation, gives rise to learning which is acquired gradually and cumulatively. From this perspective the new teachers were supported by more experienced teachers to learn the expected practices of the workplace and become part of the community of practice.

The professional struggles each of the beginning teachers encountered over their first year are encapsulated in the study as five dilemmas:

1. whether or not to respond to requests from colleagues for help
2. whether to report student progress accurately or not
3. whether to seek professional help from colleagues or whether to remain silent
4. whether to employ learner-centred methods or whether to keep to traditional methods
5. whether to respond to student learning needs or just simply teach to the textbook like everyone else.

The four beginning teachers, unpaid 'volunteers' with no job security, had little resilience when faced with such choices.

Amidst these dilemmas, each of the beginning teachers did attempt to help students learn. While their strategies were lodged within their youthful enthusiasm they were constrained by the obstacles of heavy workloads, large class sizes, limited resources, and a wide range of learning abilities in each class. The eight most common strategies adopted by the new teachers and identified in the study were:

1. setting and marking homework
2. using break times to allow students to catch up
3. using non-core subject time to teach literacy and numeracy
4. setting tasks according to the abilities of the students

5. organising students to check each other's work
6. talking to students about the reasons for learning
7. talking to parents about their children and enlisting their support
8. staying in the classroom throughout the whole lesson.

Analysis of the data found the four beginning teachers experienced similar pressures from their colleagues to conform to the established patterns and behaviours in their respective schools. In effect, the school as a community of *practice*, with all its potential for nurture and guidance, operated as a community of *compliance*.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of legitimate peripheral participation, explains in the process of learning it is not only individuals who are transformed, but individuals can work to influence the established practices of the community of practice. In their words, "*participation does not take place in a static context*" (p. 116). A similar perspective is found in the work of Rogoff (2003) who argues that through the participation of individuals in socio-cultural activities, communities can also change. Examples of the transformative potential of a 'community of practice' are provided by Lee and Roth (2003), and by Cummings (2008) who describes how both the 'newcomers' as well as those with whom they interact "... *undergo degrees of change and/or transformation that impact on their communities as well as themselves*" (p. 9).

A study conducted in the USA by Borko (2004) has shown that in some cultures when new entrants to the workplace are considered to be of equal status with other members and when their viewpoints are welcomed and considered, the transformative power of the community of practice is realised. In contrast to the works cited above, this study found the beginning teachers had little choice to do anything other than contribute to the reproduction of the dominant practices if they were going to maintain social harmony and achieve their goal of permanency. The study provides a clear picture of how cultural norms and embedded power relationships within schools can conspire to limit the transformative potential of the community of practice. By the end of the year, the four young teachers in this study, had mostly adapted to the expectations of their local situations. One teacher who had stopped trying to implement the practices learnt at College explained her reasons:

*There's not much incentive to work hard – just to work like the others and to fit in.
If I did what I think I should be doing they would think I was strange.*

In the Lao villages where the four teachers lived, Theravada Buddhism was at the centre. In such communities, Buddhist values and Buddhist beliefs play a dominant role in the way people lead their lives. Society is hierarchical with social status playing an important organising role. Primary values of interest to this study are respect for elders such as parents and older relatives, and deference to authority figures such as Village Committee members, teachers and government officials. These values also extend to include the veneration of monks. Vistarini (1994) characterises Lao culture as one which "*stresses harmonious relationships, respect for age and wisdom and tolerance for other people*" (p. 294), a depiction which is supported in Kittiphanh's (2011) work, while Stuart-Fox and Mixay (2010, p.12) comment "*Buddhism permeates Lao culture through and through. It accounts not just for the rituals that Lao perform throughout the year, but also for their acceptance of life and tolerance of others*". In general terms, people are non-confrontational and deference is expected and paid to those in authority. In the context of the school, students are respectful of the authority of their teachers, and the teachers observe and maintain the social distinctions that uphold the school principal in a position of respect. In the classrooms, the message of the textbooks is one of "*obedience to superiors, patriotism, cleanliness*" (Evans, 1998, p. 166), and in this the

school serves to reproduce an idealised vision of the society and its people. The beginning teachers, having grown up under this conservative ideology, now became the purveyors and transmitters of its ‘truths’.

Upon arrival in their schools, each of the beginning teachers was located at the bottom of the hierarchical ladder of the education system, in the position of volunteer teacher. Like the older teachers before them, several of whom spoke of their own struggles to become a teacher, the four beginning teachers would also have to ‘wait their time’ until they became permanent. The reward to both them and their families for this waiting would be a regular, albeit small, monthly salary, some state-assisted medical care, and an official teaching position. However, until the beginning teachers had their applications processed and approved, they engaged with senior staff, particularly the principals, knowing they were reliant on them for providing favourable reports to the District Education Bureau officials as well as mustering support from the Village Committee in order to meet their daily needs.

The social strategy adopted by the beginning teachers of absorbing the surrounding practices and following the advice of their colleagues has been defined here as compliance and in the deferential and hierarchical society in which they lived this was the natural path to take. The dilemmas and the tensions they at first experienced were real enough, but their resolution was achieved simply by putting aside one half of the equation, and accepting and adopting the encompassing practices.

Listening to the beginning teachers talk and seeing what enthused them about their work as well as what made them despondent, provided a good point from which to start on the design of a program for teacher support. Outcomes of the study were two fold. The first was a set of recommendations for improving the quality of pre-service teacher education in Laos and the second was a set of recommendations aimed at developing a professional development support program. Both sets of recommendations were grounded in the social and cultural contexts of the schools where the beginning teachers studied and worked. It is the second set of recommendations, aimed at developing professional development program, which have been used as a foundation for local Lao educators to develop a BTS program.

Discussion: The Beginning Teacher Support Program

Sustained, ongoing collaboration between the researcher and TTC staff, resulted in the development of a support program set in the context of local need and resources. Through recognising the teaching skills these beginning teachers lacked, the ‘culture of compliance’ in which they worked and the hierarchical nature of the social, cultural and political system, a multi-dimensional support program was established. Therefore, as well as designing workshops specifically for addressing the pedagogical questions which beginning teachers asked, time was also assigned to involve those in positions of power – the principals and senior staff.

Even though the trainees had been told about a variety of new skills and modern teaching techniques in their teacher training program, once they had graduated and were in their own classrooms it became difficult to maintain the effort to implement practices that were different from their local school colleagues. Any program of support would therefore have to recognise the social and cultural contexts within which these teachers would go to work.

The teacher training college staff acknowledged the need to allocate appropriate time for principals and other senior teachers to understand the support program and to be involved. A key aspect of the successful introduction of the program revolved around developing the capacity of the senior school staff to understand the changes. As Hartwell (2008) clearly explains, the successful implementation of new programs requires leaders:

... who are well grounded in the practice ... well placed to organise political support and resources; who have the power of persuasion; who have the respect of community members and local authorities; and who have a commitment to assure children's learning (p. 158).

Linked to the critical role the principal can play was the importance of building the internal capacity of all school staff (Stoll, 1999). The staff at the Pakse TTC believed the program should help develop positive relationships between teachers, and it should help support teacher morale. A similar position is advocated by Joyce and Showers (1995) who conclude:

Perhaps no change is more needed than the development of social arrangements that enable educators to work supportively together to help one another reflect on teaching, and help one another make sensible changes (p. 164).

With these considerations in mind, the BTS program has been designed around the idea that programs for beginning teachers need to consider the culture of the whole school. It is thus comprised of five features as described below.

Intensive workshops for beginning teachers

The TTC staff agreed intensive workshops needed to be organised for all beginning teachers at the end of their first six months of teaching. These workshops needed to focus on those specific pedagogical topics identified in the research.

Staff at the College facilitated the workshops and adopted a participatory approach where a range of topics were discussed and specialist advice provided. Initially, these topics were those identified in the research and included: the use of learner-centred approaches in the classroom; how to adapt the textbook for student learning; how to teach mathematics and Lao language in the early grades; how to manage group work for student learning; how to use authentic assessment practices; and how to effectively communicate with parents.

Beginning teachers were also encouraged to discuss case studies and to share their first year teaching experiences with TTC lecturers. The workshop timetable was flexible enough to take into account individual needs and interests of the group and to allow for other topics to be addressed.

These five-day workshops, held six months after starting work, have created opportunities for beginning teachers to learn from their peers and to develop peer-support networks. They are considered a key strategy for helping beginning teachers to build resilience and to sustain their enthusiasm and commitment to teaching.

Workshops for principals and senior teachers in schools

Professional Development workshops for Principals and Senior Teachers¹ became a feature of the program after delivering the first intensive workshops for beginning teachers. The workshops are designed to help senior staff members understand and discuss the dilemmas encountered by beginning teachers and to consider strategies to support them. They are held separately from the workshops for beginning teachers in order to maintain confidentiality for beginning teachers.

1. At each primary school, one teacher, usually the most experienced, is designated the role of the academic teacher. This person is responsible for managing the teaching and learning, and supporting new staff to understand teaching responsibilities.

The development of an induction handbook for all school staff

The initial workshop for beginning teachers was followed by the development of an induction handbook, which documented ideas for addressing common problems. In the second year of the program, this booklet was disseminated to all new teachers and was then discussed during the recall workshops held six months after starting work. This handbook is annually reviewed and modified in order to respond to changing curriculum and needs.

Follow-up visits by staff from the Teacher Training College

Visits are conducted by staff from the TTC to schools where beginning teachers are employed. They encourage the building of stronger links between the pre-service program and ongoing professional development. They allow TTC staff to visit teachers in their local schools and to see for themselves problems and challenges. During these visits, staff learn about the current issues schools are encountering and consequently these experiences help to inform their teaching of pre-service teachers. More importantly, these site visits help to build trust and develop professional relationships with those teachers who are the most vulnerable.

Continuous review and ongoing development of the program

At the onset, the TTC staff members involved in the design of the program, agreed the program should be small scale and that lessons should be gathered during each new stage to inform the next.

The BTS program has continued since its inception in 2010. Initially involving just beginning teachers, it then moved to addressing their needs through involving principals and senior teachers. It has since expanded to a second TTC located in the southern province, Salavanh. A further initiative of the program involves the commencement of a telephone support-service which was planned for 2016.

While no formal evaluation has been carried out as to the program's effectiveness, anecdotal reports are positive, with teachers self-reporting on the ways the program has supported them to develop knowledge, skills and confidence. Beginning teachers have reported on the benefits of being able to meet with others who are facing similar challenges of settling into new schools. In the face of extraordinary circumstances, which include large class sizes, heavy workloads, limited resources and didactic teaching models, it is yet to be seen whether this support is having an effect on the quality of learning in the classroom. It is therefore now timely for a more formal review to take place.

Conclusion

The research and BTS support program have been forged through the collaborative efforts of an Australian researcher and Lao teacher educators working at the Pakse Teacher Training College in southern Laos. This collaboration has ensured the BTS program has developed to suit the cultural, social and political context of beginning teachers in Laos. In essence, it has helped beginning teachers develop a voice in a space where previously they were made to comply.

The BTS program initially delivered by the Pakse TTC and subsequently by the Salavanh TTC is now being discussed by other TTCs in Laos. The implication for policy and national practice in relation to professional support for the beginning teachers is continuing to evolve. With experiences in this new professional learning area now being gathered across Laos, it is hoped the program may soon become embedded in the government system and developed into a sustainable model for improving the quality of teaching in schools.

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The people of the school: Problematising remote teacher educator identity, reflexivity and place

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Abstract

This paper offers the research story of my artistic and analytic practices in a remote Indigenous teacher education setting in Central Australia. In this hybrid arts-based research text (Barone & Eisner 1997), I use portrait painting, narrative and analysis to explore my encounters, as both teacher educator and visual artist, with the people of the school, and examine the impact of shifting between these identities on my pedagogical practices as a teacher educator. I explore the ways in which operating as an artist problematised my educator identity: how it embodied my knowledge of the dynamic, social and multiple nature of identity (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011) and challenged the tacit knowledge and perspectives I brought to the remote setting and to my interactions with staff, children and families.

The three pairs of paintings and narrative fragments presented derive from a portraiture project undertaken in 2014. The pairs and commentary present a range of perspectives on the complexity of professional identity and practice, and offer insights into the experience of thinking differently through arts-based research practices. I draw out three dimensions of thinking differently – looking differently, seeing differently and being differently – and highlight the value of foregrounding such perceptual and ontological questioning practices in our work as teacher educators.

Figure 1: Canasia's Picture: Oil on Linen: 60x90cm



Narrative 1. What I thought the project was going to be about – Growing our Own room, October 2011

We're poring over a sprawling concept map that's edging off the sides of the A3 paper and snaking around its title: Communication Systems Analysis of Ltyentye Apurte Catholic Education Centre. I've taught the communication unit to urban students and wasn't prepared for the energy that's building during this task as the six Indigenous preservice teachers add more and more boxes for parents, siblings, clinic staff, new teachers; as they draw arrows between the boxes and within them too; as they discuss how to show how some people are in more than one box; as they colour code and size the arrows to show how important the communication between different groups is, and how well it's currently happening.

'Don't forget the Sports and Rec people, the pool!' Marcus says. That was his job before he started work at the school.

Kirsten finds a spot to write it in, and more connections are made. We pause and look at all the people of the school.

'That's massive,' I say.

'Of course,' they say.

Figure 2: *Anna and the Bush Medicine (Aherne Intenke): Oil on linen: 76x51cm*



Narrative 2. Anna, assistant teacher and ex-preservice teacher, 2014

We're walking around the school at recess and find a small clump of mistletoe that has some old berries still clinging in places (snotty gobbles, people call them here). Years before, Anna had her own class, Year 4s, which some of my preservice teachers were in. They told me how inspiring she was, taking them out bush to teach them about the bush tucker and bush medicine, bringing things back to the nature table, writing labels in Arrernte, learning. I want to paint that into her picture somehow.

'This is no good,' Anna said, flicking at the dusty plant.

So we drive out at lunchtime to find somewhere better, where there might be flowers as well as berries and bush medicine as well as bush food. I'm full of attention driving these unfamiliar bush tracks, not going too fast, not missing the fork Anna directs me down with a flap of her hand. I'd have no idea how to get back if I was on my own.

'Here's good.'

We pull over by a larger looking shrub. I can't see any flowers on it but there's some mistletoe with bright red berries close by.

'With these behind,' she raises her hand towards a ridge line of hills, 'They've got lots of meaning to people here.'

Figure 3: *The Conversation:* Oil on linen: 51x91cm



Narrative 3. Breakfast

I'm turning left and walking towards the canteen, a different route from the usual right turn towards the staffroom. I'm strangely nervous: it feels like my first day here. Juggling cameras (is two too many? do I have the right lenses on? should I keep it on aperture priority or play safe and just go to auto?) and sketchbook (is it too big? what other images are in it?) and phrases to introduce who I am, what I'm doing. I'm not exactly regretting starting this thing, but really want the beginning part to be over.

There are children and dogs around the picnic tables and along the canteen wall by the hatch. Inside, shadows of adults serving out mugs of milo, bowls of cereal, plates of toast. I nod as I get closer, smile.

'Werte,' I say, nodding again.

'Hello,' one of the medium-sized boys says.

'I'm Dr Al,' I say. 'I've been working with Marcus and Viv and Kuman,' I say.

They wait.

'But I'm also a painter.' There, it's done now.

Rationale for this approach

Blurring the boundaries between the arts and sciences in educational research allows for different insights and for accessibility to people beyond the traditional research audience. This fits with my aims to speak to an expanded audience of educational practitioners and participants and to try to see with eyes other than those of a researcher or teacher. Arts-Based Research in Education (ABER) offers new perspectives and generates new questions. It has its foundations in John Dewey's contention that we need to recognise the emotional and experiential basis of knowing as key for learning (Dewey, 1934) and reflects the post-modern turn in its hybridising of the arts and science genres in order to gather data and present findings in more penetrating and widely accessible ways (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008, p. 3). The aesthetic design qualities that characterise both the research process and product in ABER, foreground the embodied aspects of thought that are neglected in most traditional research processes. In tune with its post-modern context, ABER does not search for universal certainties, but *“moves to broaden and deepen ongoing conversation about educational policy and practice by calling attention to seemingly commonsensical, taken-for-granted notions”* (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 96). By looking at things differently, spaces and depths open up in which we can ask previously unasked questions and see previously unacknowledged connections.

My work on this project follows contemporary Australian artist and theorist Ross Gibson's (2010) formulation that art as research occurs when we intentionally seek a purposeful experience which results in a shift in understanding and a capacity to account for that shift. This research text uses a modified form of Eisner's educational criticism framework (Eisner, 1991) which first works to make vivid an experience, then interprets, evaluates and attempts to draw out broad themes and to locate the experience in the context of such wider concerns. While educational criticism traditionally uses narrative as the vehicle for depicting experience, my pairing of paintings with narrative fragments aims to fulfil Barone and Eisner's criteria for effective arts-based educational research: to illuminate previously unnoticed phenomena, to promote questions, to tightly focus on educationally significant issues and to be relevant to things beyond itself (Barone & Eisner, 1997).

Background and context

The forty paintings and sixteen narrative fragments of the 2014 project came from my observations of, and participation in, the complex web of identities that constitutes a school. I have been delivering undergraduate and continuing teacher education on site at Ltyentye Apurte Catholic Education Centre in remote Central Australia since 2010 as part of the Catholic Education Office-Charles Darwin University partnership offering remote Indigenous preservice teacher education, *Growing our Own* (GOO). During this time the richness and diversity of the individual and social identities of the children, staff and families were revealed through their embodiment in the day to day interactions in the school setting. I embarked on the project because I was interested in looking at the school and its people differently, through a lens other than that of the teacher educator which was my role there. I wanted to see another side of Ltyentye Apurte and its people, and to connect as a painter, as well as a teacher, with a place that had become a significant aspect of my work and commitment to Central Australia, its people and their educational opportunities. I was surprised to find that my own encounters with the contingent identities of teacher educator, and teacher and painter became central to my exploration of the people of the school: I began to see in different ways the places that I inhabited as one of 'the people of the school', and the ways in which my different identity positions affected my work as a teacher educator there.

The leadership of the school supported the project idea, so I talked to staff and families about the project, the exhibitions and the consent form they would sign if they were interested in participating. I arranged my weekly workshop timetable so that I could spend time drawing and photographing during the children's classes and other activities. I also worked with some classes on interpreting images I'd created and creating their own representations of their relationship with the school. I talked with people about their attitudes towards the school community and made notes of what they said. I held three mini-exhibitions at the school; near the start, towards the end and at the end of the project, set up to coincide with family days at the school, so as many people as possible could come. I also used these events as an opportunity to talk with families about the project and gain consent for paintings I wanted to work up from my sketches and photographs. Two further exhibitions occurred, one at the regional Araluen Arts Centre in Alice Springs and one at the Nan Geise Gallery at Charles Darwin University in Darwin.

Findings: Looking, seeing and being differently

I chose these three images from the collection because they spoke strongly to me about the relationship between my teacher educator and painter identities at different stages of the project. All have subjects in them who were preservice teachers at some point in my work at the school, and chronologically they come from the start of the project (Canasia's Picture), the middle (Anna and the Bush Medicine [Aherne Intenke]) and the end of the project (The Conversation). The narrative fragments I paired with the images have correspondences of theme and subject matter and set up a range of resonances that intend to open up and deepen the reader's interpretive response. I want to avoid positioning either the narrative or the image to operate as explication of the Other, but to offer a range of embodied ways of thinking about the content and themes presented. They are not intended to offer universal truths but offer opportunities to "*see educational phenomena in new ways, and to entertain questions about them that might otherwise have been left unasked*" (Barone and Eisner, 1997, p. 96). From my own interpretations of the pairs, the themes of looking-differently, seeing-differently and being-differently emerged as a valuable frame through which to think about the ways in which educators' professional identities impact on our professional knowledge, engagement and practice and how problematising professional identity can enhance our work.

Looking differently: 'Canasia's Picture' and 'What I thought the project was going to be about - Growing our Own room, October 2011'

'Canasia's Picture', of a former student of mine and her daughter, was one of the earliest paintings I made. Karina left the course because of family demands but still worked as an assistant teacher in the classroom next door to Canasia. I asked Karina what it was like having her youngest child next door and painted some of her words into the image. I was less confident with text in this first attempt, experimenting with size, shape and clarity, as while I was determined to inscribe her words and the feeling in them for me, I was unsure how authentic or appropriate this might be. As Barthes cautions, I wanted to avoid simply turning her subjectivity into an "object at the disposal of the Other" (2000, p. 15). I wanted her view of the school community as well as mine, so the painting would offer multiple angles on the relationship networks that made up the school. I also wanted to look differently myself, not only as Dr Al from the university who came once a week with all her papers and books to teach the teachers, but as a painter and drawer with a camera and a sketchbook. I wanted to look at the relationship between Karina and Canasia differently. Not just as something that may have led to Karina dropping out of her studies.

There's a network of gazes within 'Canasia's Picture', and between the image and the viewer. Karina is intent on Canasia, who is contemplating the viewer with a mixture of apprehension, enquiry and confidence, confident in the embrace of her mother, and firmly and evenly holding up for view her own image of a person looking out. We wonder who the person in her drawing is, how she expects us to interpret it. The image of Karina seems to be missing so many of the elements we might usually expect to convey her identity: she's turned away from us so we can't see into her eyes and much of her body is obscured by Canasia and her picture, but she is nevertheless very strongly there in her relationship with her child and her child's relationship with the viewer.

The feeling in the narrative is very different from the quietness of the painting. Here there's an energy that builds in the students creating the network that seems almost overwhelming for the narrator. The extended sentence describing the scale and complexity of the map is exhausting to read, as exhausting as the awareness of how much there is to see when you look differently. And perhaps that's one of the reasons we often don't look differently, because of the vulnerable position it puts us in, of suddenly noticing things we haven't seen before, inhabiting a perspective that shows us different things and which demand a different kind of response.

Looking differently was the start of everything. At a simple level, I found myself looking differently at the people I was talking to, even when it was not about my art project. I was mapping the contours of their face, registering a distinctive gesture or stance, noticing the colour and shape of a shadow thrown by a nose or a bottom lip. I think I started speaking a bit less too, and listening differently, listening with my eyes as it were, in these conversations. It made me think of a comment from years before with the GOO students, about how many words white people use, especially in staff meetings, and how we're not so good at paying attention to the small gestures and other communications that all the Indigenous staff would pick up on. When drawing or painting, I was noticing that I was looking. As a painter I had to choose how to look, as a primary decision. As an educator, choosing how to look seemed a secondary thing, or something I would take for granted. As a painter I was not 'looking for' something, in the way I did when working with students, when I would look to see how they were responding to a particular learning activity. By not 'looking for', I was creating space for things to draw attention to themselves, things I might not have otherwise paid attention to, things that perhaps challenged what I thought I was looking at. Edward De Bono (2015) contends to be innovative in our professional practice, whether it is problem-solving or working to add value to what we do, we first need to perceive differently. Without such a first step in the way we organise our encounter with the world, we will stay trapped in automatic ways of thinking about things, or what De Bono calls the "rock logic" of information processing as distinct from the "water logic" that is the fluidity of multiple perceptions (2015, p. 98). Working as a teacher I need to be wary of such automatic thinking, the tacit knowledge and assumed norms that are a barrier to my engaging effectively with my students, especially in a bi-cultural setting. When looking as a painter, I had intended to serve the first of bel hooks' functions of art as "aesthetic intervention" (Leavy, 2015, p. 228): I had wanted to present images of how social life was for people differently located in the social order. I had not expected this other way of looking to also serve hooks' second function: to defamiliarise and create space for alternate ways of knowing (hooks, 1995).

Seeing differently: 'Anna and the Bush Medicine (Aherne Intenke)' and 'Anna, assistant teacher and ex-preservice teacher, 2014'

Anna's words in the narrative are evaluative, and concise to the point of terseness: "no good ... here's good ... lots of meaning to people here". They contrast with the language of the narrator,

which is descriptive, working hard to evoke a picture of the scene with strings of common nouns, adjectives and metaphors, and also conditional, “*I want to paint that into her picture somehow*”, foregrounding the narrator’s unsureness, and her attentive silence in response to Anna’s statements. The narrator’s response to the unfamiliarity of the bush track can also read as a metaphor for other journeys this painting project is taking her on. Her attentive silence in response to Anna’s words keep open the interpretive spaces and depth Anna’s few words create. In the painting too, Anna’s words occupy multiple spaces concurrently: the story they tell seems first to be almost lost in the bush, whose name figures so prominently in the painting’s title. Their neutral colour tone, like that of the bush medicine, is in quiet contrast to the vibrancy of the magentas and blacks of Anna’s figure. And yet these words and the bush cover nearly two thirds of the canvas; the viewer cannot help but see them, even when looking directly at Anna, who is positioned behind, and partially obscured by them. The looseness of the painting of the foreground foliage and the ridgeline in the background contrasts with the precision of the human figure these elements envelope. As the eye moves between the three elements, the landscape, with all its spaces, seems to become more and more integral to what this image is saying.

Looking differently gave me new things to see, and often I was not sure what to ‘make of’ what I was seeing. I would shake my head and say to myself, “I really don’t see”. I knew I did not understand things in the way I usually understood things. As a teacher, I needed to feel I understood things in order to interact with them: I didn’t feel comfortable with not knowing, and would question and reformulate in order to ‘work things out’. I could empathise with my preservice teachers’ anxiety about ‘knowing enough’ in order to teach. And yet I would challenge them about ‘how much was enough?’ because teaching is so much more than being knowledgeable. Working concurrently as both a painter and a teacher made me confront the fact that I didn’t need to understand in order to ‘see’ Anna’s relationship with the land. She didn’t need me or want me to understand it in the way she understood it, knowing that was beyond my understanding because of who I was and where I came from. She just wanted me to see it. Similarly, I didn’t need to understand her story about teaching bush tucker and all the ways it connected in order for it to change what I knew, what I saw. I could encounter something that I could not make clear sense of, and instead of striving to make it fit my understanding, I could let my not understanding work to broaden my knowledge. The knowing and the not-knowing could co-exist. The Romantic poet Keats valued this state of apprehension, calling it the “negative capability”, “*when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason*” (1899, p. 277). More recently, Helen Verran describes a similar experience, as an interruption of “*disconcertment*”, of “*registering both sameness and difference, of being like and being Other ... source of both clear delight and confused misery*”, which, she contends, “*must be privileged and nurtured, valued and expanded upon ... as a sure guide in struggling through colonizing pasts and in generating possibilities for new futures*” (Verran, 2001, p. 6). We need to accept and embrace these ambiguous moments of disconcertment in our work as teacher educators: to avoid giving in to the need to explain them away and offer simple solutions, either to our students’ quandaries, or to our own. We know the complexity and conditional nature of professional practice means there are no silver bullets or effective rules-based decisions. We are in Schon’s swampy lowlands of practice, unable to see very far in any direction, as distinct from his high hard ground of theory where we can see so much more (Schon, 1987). We need to know this differently, however, to be reminded of this in an experiential and embodied way in our day to day practice in order to operate more effectively and authentically as teacher educators.

Being differently: 'The Conversation' and 'Breakfast'

It was Viv who suggested his portrait should be of Marcus and him: if the paintings are all about the school community, he said, then some of that community happens when he and Marcus meet with each other at recess or lunch for a coffee and a chat about the day. I knew then that the words of their conversation were going to be integral to the painting. So as they sat at the picnic table outside the staffroom I audio-recorded their conversation about their hopes for the school's future. I had intended to use this time to plan the composition and make some sketches and photographs, but ended up simply listening to their talk about their own plans and intentions for the following year. Both were at turning points: Viv as a newly qualified teacher, about to "step up" in his words, into a new position of responsibility in the community as well as at the school; Marcus as a recent new father, taking a break from his teaching degree, thinking about the school as a future prospective parent. As I painted, I realised I wanted their words to be distinct as voices but also to flow together in the painted text, each contributing to the others' emergence and meaning. And I needed a lot of white space, behind the words and in the under-painted shirts of both men to emphasise some sense of the openness of future possibilities in the moment of this image: the myriad of possibilities for the men, for the school, for any viewer's interpretation of this image.

There's a pause in the conversation between the two men in the painting: Marcus turns and glances out towards the viewer, friendly, mildly expectant, comfortable. Viv looks off into a private distance, clear eyed but less relaxed somehow. We wonder what he is looking towards, what he is leaving behind. Their words are suspended, quietly striping the open white spaces that surround them. No punctuation separates the words from each participant in this conversation, but a rhythm of contrasting tones and diction suggests the backwards and forwards movement of speech, shared yet separate. Is the conversation at the start of something, or the end? For one or them, for both? The cross-roads in 'Breakfast' is clearer: the physical route change, the different 'kit', the unfamiliar phrases, the feeling of being new at a school, of stepping out of a known space. The relief evident in the final few, short sentences is palpable. And yet we ask, Is it really 'done now'? The stepping away that is signified by the clear noun, 'a painter' seems qualified by the 'also' and the 'but', and is not, perhaps, as certain as it first appears.

'Being differently', operating as a painter as well as a teacher educator, positioned me to be able to look and to see differently, and made me experience in an embodied way the impact of professional identity on professional knowledge and practice, both my own and that of the preservice teachers with whom I was working. My personal experiences were replicated in terms of my social identity: all the time I was concentrating on looking and seeing differently, I was being looked at and seen differently by the people of the school: I was seen 'being' differently, operating as a painter, and as a result, being seen differently as an individual in broader terms. I was Dr Al from the university who came once a week with all her papers and books to teach the teachers and also now, Dr Al the painter and drawer and asker of questions she didn't know the answer to, the holder of a sketchbook that had images of local people in it. This state of 'being differently' when undertaking arts-based enquiry described by Christine Sinclair as "metaxis", a way of "belonging completely and simultaneously to two different autonomous worlds" (Sinclair, 2015, p. 90), also helped me grasp the complexity of professional identity - its provisional, contingent and changing nature (Akkerman & Meijer, 2011). I understood in a new way, how important it is to recognise that because "we teach who we are" (Palmer, 1997, p. 15), we also teach where we are and where we're from. I began to think about the implications of the contingent and contextual nature of professional knowledge and practice, based as it is in professional identity and our relationships with others. I thought of how often as teacher educators we offer our students academic knowledge and then ask them to apply this to their practice, and wondered how I might flip the learning, so preservice

teacher identity and context function explicitly as the foundation and organising feature of the academic learning. This change of emphasis seems particularly crucial when working in a remote Indigenous setting, when the identity shifts involved in these individuals' journey towards professional teacher identity and practice occur within the complex and significant network of their social existence in the community, and make it a challenging and often fraught process (Strangeways, 2015). Such student-centred pedagogies exist, in problem-based learning, place-based learning, case-based learning and others, but often seem tricky to integrate in a coherent way with the traditional content of the teacher education curriculum. The experience of 'being differently' as a teacher educator raised questions about the place of teacher identity development in the teacher education curriculum and has prompted me to look again at, and understand differently, my practices, my context and my professional identity, and so continue what has become for me a productive form of enquiry that involves looking, seeing and being 'differently'.

Conclusion

I started the painting project thinking it was going to be an exploration of the people of the school, with my role that of observer, interpreter and conduit through which their interpretations of the school community would flow. By the time of the final exhibitions, I realised the enquiry had become a reflexive one. Beyond simply being aware of my position as interpreter, the whole focus of the project had become centred on understanding the complexity of my personal and professional identities and the implications of this on my practice as a teacher educator. I had expected the project to operate in parallel to my work as a teacher educator and undertaker of practitioner research, but it ended up happening simultaneously with it. It was the arts-based enquiry approach that effected this unexpected shift, and this is ABER's strength: its capacity to make me question how I look and see and be, and its provocation to do these things differently.

Looking differently created spaces for new ways of perceiving or noticing what was going on around me and with me. Seeing differently prompted me to embrace uncertainty and suspend my desire to explain things away. 'Being differently' reminded me of the significance and complexity of my own and my students' professional identity and the implications of this awareness on my teaching practice. Using an arts-based enquiry approach enabled me to understand these implications in an embodied and context-specific way by accessing the *"complex network of understandings, dispositions and competencies (of teacher practice) that are not easily named or measured (but which must be) ... experienced – seen, heard and felt"* (Davis & Renert, 2013, p. 3).

This experience of embodied learning really foregrounded for me the key difference between intellectual knowing and experiential knowing, the theory-practice disjunction that is at the heart of much professional learning (Argyris & Schon, 1974), and which results in the current concerns about the 'classroom readiness' of graduate teachers that is shared by policy makers, stakeholders and graduate teachers themselves (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, 2014; McKenzie, et al, 2014). It emphasised the necessity of finding new ways to connect the rule-based and abstract kinds of knowledge with the conditional or "context-dependent knowledge" (Flyvberg, 2004, p. 421) and dispositions that teachers need to operate effectively as educators in the ill-structured domains (Spiro, et al, 1987) of our contemporary complex educational settings. I'm wondering now how I might transpose some of these recently encountered arts-based enquiry approaches into my pedagogical practices, blurring another boundary, not this time between the arts and science genres but between methods of enquiry and pedagogical approaches, inviting my preservice teachers to join me in an inquiry process that is founded on, and furthers the development of, professional teacher identity.

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Little Learning in Big Worlds

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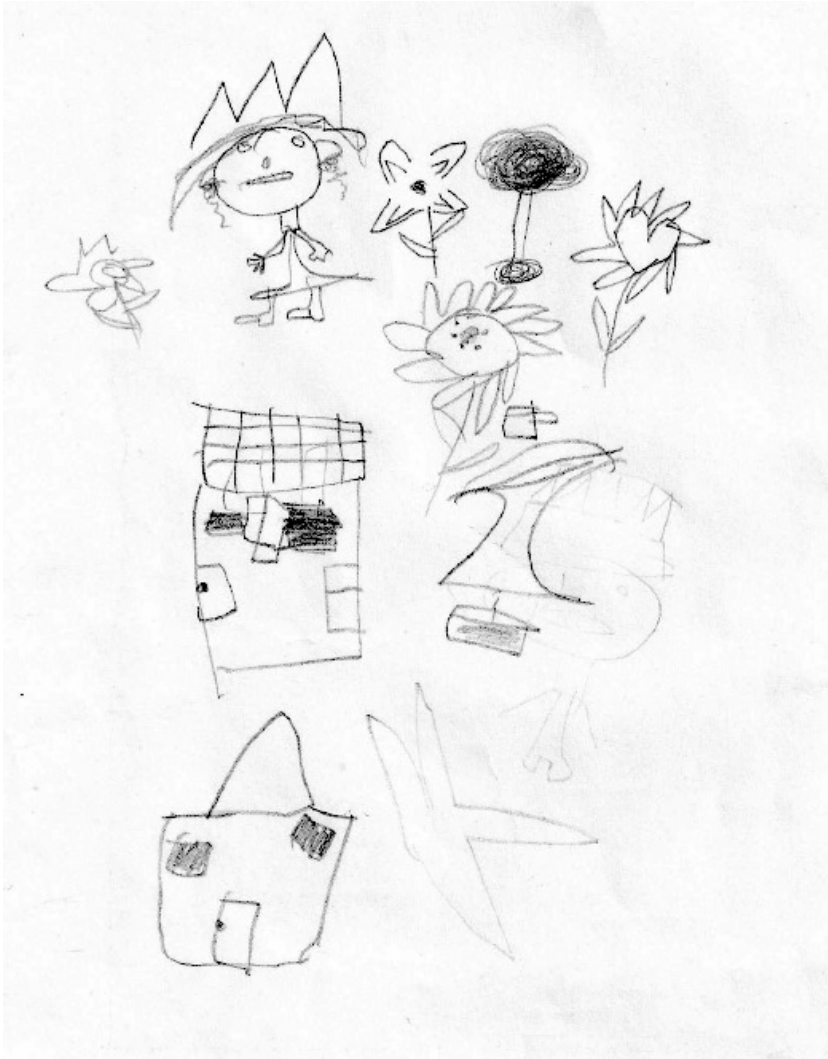
Keywords: community arts, learning communities, little aesthetics, little publics, international youth arts, public pedagogies, relationality

Abstract

Young peoples' worlds are valid and authentic spheres of knowing that communicate a range of issues. Through little aesthetics the artistic work in this project engages with what Hickey-Moody (2014) terms '*little publics spheres*' (p. 117). Artistic expression is one way for adults to engage with children's *little public spheres*. Situated within the larger field of public pedagogy little publics acknowledge the civic, social, economic, political worlds of young people. Through artistic re-presentations, we position little publics as a way to foster intercultural understanding and expression of self. The international collaboration between Gallery Sunshine Everywhere and Eritrean Australian Humanitarian Aid draws on the relational worlds of children through art. Drawings from two schools in Kassala, East Sudan were given to students at Flemington Primary School, Melbourne, who wrote evocative stories in response to the drawings. These little public expressions invite adult worlds into the intellectual presence of young people's perceptions and re-locate the roles of learner and teacher within and beyond structures of formal schooling. The concept of little publics validates children as important producers of culture, knowledge and learning contexts.

What it means to me

Figure 1: *What it means to me:* by Halima Idris and Thomas Nightingale



It looks like life the evolution of the world in small forms. It tastes like home, a sense of belonging like no other!! It feels like a new beginning of something great. It is always growing and adapting to the life of the world, giving gifts, being kind. Giving hope, life and a touch of magic. It's like a jigsaw: all the pieces make the puzzle, kindness makes an evolution. By working together you can do great things. A little help and a happy spirit and you are away. Work together, include everyone regardless of who they are. Life is a chain started by one followed by many people to make a world. Life is simple. Include. Be kind, help the world journey on. Why? Because you can make a difference. You can start or continue a chain like others have done before you. Show your emotions and be kind. That's what matters most. Bringing things together it forms happiness, all you have to do is work together and be kind. (Tartakover et al., 2015)

Drawing: Halima Idris, Nidal School, Kassala, East Sudan

Narrative: Thomas Nightingale, Flemington Primary School, Melbourne, Australia

Life is a chain started by one, followed by many people to make a world.

This sentence awakens a rich and evocative perspective that is as vivid and brilliant as the art it depicts. Life is interconnected and significant; all we have to do is “*be kind, help the world journey on*”. The sentiment communicated in the opening expresses the intertextual qualities of artistic expression and youth arts practice as democratic citizens in local and global communities. Diverse threads of communications indeterminately weave beautiful expressions of people’s realities. Knight (2013) states the drawings done by young people are “*subject to contextual influences*” in how they are created, communicated, and understood, and that they are connected to encounters and events from daily life (p. 4) the mysterious and abstract qualities of arts practice created by children sometimes means adult audiences as ‘outsider-s’ are closed to the deeper and complex encounters of meaning making across the physical and metaphysical aspects of a young person’s life (Knight, 2013, p. 8). In this project, the barriers and boundaries of knowledge diminish within an international collaboration where children’s worlds are prioritised and adult/child, north/south dichotomies are lessened. This paper highlights the ways partnerships validate youth voice by being inclusive of the published voices of children central to educational partnerships. All names, images and reference to the children artists is in relation to the publication they have been instrumental in creating. Particular permission was sought and acquired to use the children’s names included in this work; celebrating the youth worlds and the exploration of artistic processes when discussing these worlds. A creative process that has been communicated beyond boundaries, and speaks ‘*techniques of relation*’ (Massumi, 2008) that enable a blurring of boundaries to inspire collective thinking.

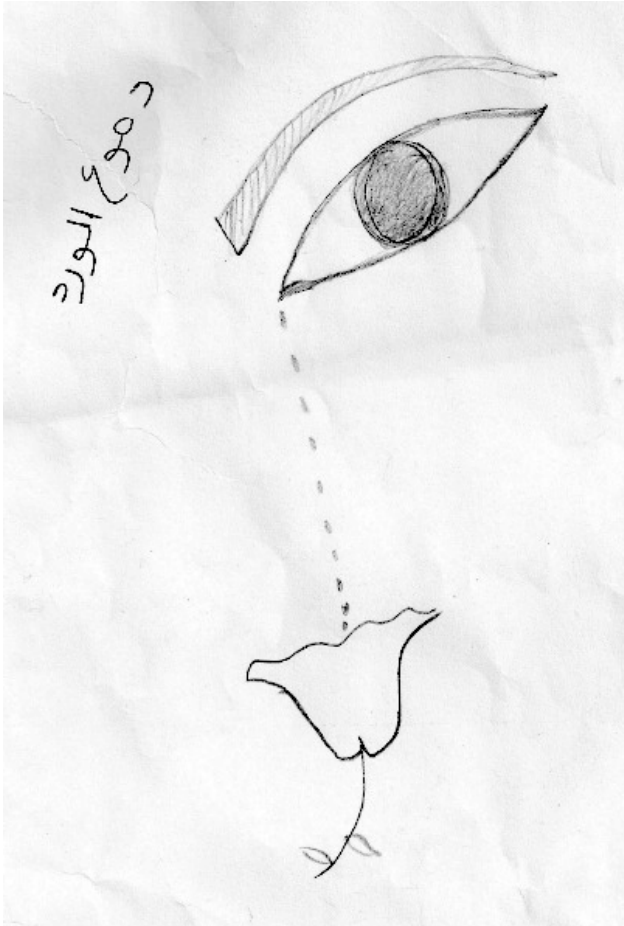
Grade 4 student Thomas Nightingale from Flemington Primary School in Melbourne, Australia wrote the opening story. Written in response to the accompanied drawing prepared by Eritrean refugee Halima Idris in first class at Nidal School, Kassala, East Sudan. In this paper we draw upon the international collaboration between these two learning environments to celebrate and acknowledge the transformative and evocative ways youth are able to communicate artistically beyond boundaries.

The drawings and stories are part of the *Words and Pictures Project* (Tartakover et al., 2015), a collaboration between Eritrean Australian Humanitarian Aid (EAHA) and Gallery Sunshine Everywhere in Melbourne, Australia. EAHA chair, Anwar Alishek, collected children’s drawings from two schools in Kassala, the capital city of the East Sudanese state of the same name. These drawings were given to children at Flemington Primary School, located in an inner city suburb of Melbourne. Children at Flemington wrote stories about and in response to the drawings. Curated by Sarah Tartakover and Maureen Ryan, a set of twenty drawings and accompanying stories were exhibited at Gallery Sunshine Everywhere in 2015. Alongside the twenty works were photographs by Anwar Alishek displaying school life in Kassala, and these images provided further context when engaging with the children’s work. Subsequently, Debbie Qadri has reproduced the exhibited works in book form (Tartakover et al., 2015), intended as a resource for children in Kassala, Flemington and the Eritrean Australian Humanitarian Aid organisation (<http://wordsandpicturesprojects.blogspot.com.au/>). The possibilities for continued collaboration are wide ranging, including exhibitions and digital collections of the complete collection of materials gathered in this initial phase, further collections and avenues for children to communicate beyond borders, translated materials, pen pal links between the children, involvement of more schools in Kassala and in Melbourne, and an extension of this approach to include and work with schools in other parts of the world.

The collection of drawings combined with poetic narratives merged together to create powerful visual literacies that look and feel “*like life; like the evolution of the world in small forms*”. Small forms: holistic and relational to larger forms that are again relational to even larger global forms. These *little aesthetics*¹ (TISM, 1989) are reflective mirrors of adult and youth worlds

and in the artistic work illustrated here, a powerful means of building and sharing intercultural understanding, community enrichment, and identity construction through multi-lingual forms of artistic and aesthetic knowing and communication. In this way the collection of artistic work discussed, engages with what Hickey-Moody (2014) terms “*little publics*” (p.117).

Figure 2: *The Little Girl's Flower:* by Hazir Mohamed Osman (year 7) and Issy Corcoran (Grade 4)



there was a little girl. She loved one flower. It was a majestic purple flower and she loved it very much. One day her father was digging up land and 'No Daddy, no' shouted the little girl running as fast as she could. But it was too late. He had already shovelled it into the compost heap. The little girl cried 1,000 tears. But, one tear touched the root of the purple flower. It started to grow before her eyes. Soon it was a fully grown purple flower and it survived for the rest of her life. (Tartakover et al., 2015)

Drawing: Hazir Mohamed Osman (year 7) Kassala, East Sudan

Narrative: Issy Corcoran (Grade 4) Flemington Primary School, Melbourne, Australia

1. TISM (This is Serious Mum) were an Australian band from Melbourne, Australia. Famous for their controversial songs and anonymous identities, in the early 1990's TISM released a book titled 'The TISM guide to little aesthetics: based on the works of This Is Serious Mum'. The title being a pun on an Australian physical education program called 'Little Athletics'. The book was not published for very long and was also controversial, raising legal issues with its publication. Mostly sold at TISM concerts this text is now a highly sought after piece of Australian popular culture.

Through experiential artistic encounters a shared aesthetic—a shared *little aesthetic*—generates and communicates children’s worlds, as educators we perceive a strong relationality between teaching and learning and teachers and learners and in this way we afford self-efficacy to the creators of the multimodal texts discussed in this paper. These voices together create ‘*little public spheres*’ that talk their positions within civic, social, cultural and political everyday lives. Little publics, Hickey-Moody (2014) argues, are as valid as the public worlds adults inhabit and occupy, and need to be taken as seriously. Aligned with the growing field of public pedagogy (Sandlin, Schultz, & Burdick, 2010), little publics emphasise the transformative power of pedagogical interactions within shared spaces. Due to the broad range of meanings associated with the term public pedagogy scholars in the field have considered the problems and challenges within the discipline in order to transform and cultivate the spirit of public pedagogy (Burdick, Sandlin, & O’Malley, 2014). Part of this revitalisation in theorising and enacting public performances is how the pedagogical lives and functions in the public domain. Framing the public in this way has to include the voices and civic contributions of children and adolescents, the progenitors of little publics; shaping and designing their private and public realities, worldviews, opinions, social interactions, cultural expressions and ethics.

Savage (2014) communicates his concerns about what constitutes the public, and urges public pedagogues to clearly state ‘*which public*’ and ‘*whose public*’ asking the question how is the pedagogical found within the everyday, ‘*which*’ everyday, and ‘*whose*’ everyday? The Eritrean and Australian collaboration resides in plural localities that are connected in rhizomatic and intertextual ways: following an array of possibilities and multiplicities. Savage highlights three general forms of public: *political, popular, and concrete* (p. 80). Each form of publicness is relational to its sphere of influence, scale, and context. Actions found within the concept of little publics are smaller in scale but mirror larger forms of the public to which they belong. In this way the public spheres made by young people can be political, popular, and concrete (Hickey-Moody, 2014). Savage (2014) reminds people who analyse the pedagogical in the concrete realm to be mindful of *which* and *whose* public we are referring to and ‘*the ways it ostensibly educates individuals enmeshed*’ in the creation of the pedagogical and the public (p. 88). Little public pedagogues choose how they co-create their public spheres in negotiation with adults as required, and at times can fall into contradiction and conflict with adult ideologies. Interactions that arise from young people’s expression are not always predetermined but rather can be seen to be indeterminate and deeply involved in processes that are holistically woven together, “*It’s like a jigsaw: all the pieces make the puzzle*” (Knight, 2013, p. 8).

Several theorists and researchers have located children and young people in the public pedagogies space. Pelosi (2015) writes of their active engagement with an annual arts event in a local botanical garden and draws on Ellsworth (2005) in her analysis of the *Paint the Gardens* event. As Ellsworth notes, “*a staged public event becomes pedagogical and pedagogy becomes a public event when, together, they create a space between what reforms both the self and the other, the self and its lived relations with others*” (p.48). Art provides a powerful means through which children and young people can engage in the world. Beyond sharing their ideas and their stories in public displays and developing enhanced self esteem through the complimentary responses they receive, there are opportunities for critique, explanation, responses to questions, reconsideration and future planning.

Each of these skills is apparent in the Walking Neighbourhood project (<http://thewalkingneighbourhood.com.au/>) where children are the guides for curated city tours. In their Walking Neighbourhood research, Phillips (2013) has investigated children's perceptions and interests in public spaces and have highlighted the potential that this approach has to extend understanding and practice of citizenship and democracy, core components of Giroux's (2003) definitions of public pedagogies. In their example of a walk led by one child they note his capacities for selecting a healthy burger venue as a base for the walk, negotiating two for one deals in a café and for donating to charity, and importantly for articulating the intent of his practice to his group. Another child focussed her walking tour on bookshops and public art exhibits while also sharing her own poems with her group.

These two examples of ways in which children can function in public spaces are extended further in Williams (2015) account of the Chilean student movement, utilising arts based methodologies while delivering the strongest possible messages about the role of the Chilean education system. Challenging, disrupting and making social and economic inequalities visible the student movement in Chile re-thinks how young people perceive and voice their present day and future educational, social, and political selves. The young are taking to the streets for a number of reasons and it is highly empowering interconnecting roles between learner and teacher. The blurring of teacher/learner relationships articulates diverse conceptions of public spaces and is far from being adult driven. Children teach and learn in unique and divergent ways, across political, popular and concrete public places as they walk the streets to revolutionise inequalities; to speak about their families and the important things in their lives, or to gently teach heartfelt knowledge about places that carry meaning in interactive and productive ways (Hickey & Phillips, 2013).

Giving hope, life and a touch of magic

Gallery Sunshine Everywhere (www.galleriesunshine.com) was established in 2007 and has held close to one hundred exhibitions since then of pre-primary, primary and secondary school student artwork. The curated exhibitions combine the formality of the work being framed and openings held for each exhibition with the accessibility of the exhibitions being held in a local café in Sunshine (a suburb in western Melbourne). In an exhibition last year for Neighbour Day, visitors to the café could ponder the different perceptions of kindergarten children who displayed a strong focus on family, primary school children expressing social realities and friendships, and the less joyful images of the secondary students, highlighting fears and concerns they had for their neighbourhood.

As a young person grows into their community, their worldly perceptions and thoughts change and grow, the interconnections between youth, adults and the wider community give significant insights into how young people see the world around them. In this way the little public sphere promotes pedagogical encounters offered by young people. Hickey-Moody (2015) notes these learning entanglements are dualistic and pedagogical through *"the cultural process of making a text"*, and as these cultural texts, *"disseminate the aesthetics, values, politics and narratives developed through the cultural pedagogy of group process"* (p. 79). Gallery Sunshine Everywhere has provided many opportunities to enhance the public pedagogue roles that young people can play within their communities. Often combining textual literacies such as drawing, painting and collage, children and young people can articulate the complex issues in ways that are truly arresting.

Figure 3: *One Thousand Boxes*

In another Gallery Sunshine Everywhere Project, 1,000 cardboard boxes were turned into houseboxes; colourful, imaginative, magical and lantern like, they captured hearts and imagination, highlighting love, peace, freedom, and revealing favourite poets, love of reading, preferences for rugby, bike riding and camping, for the beach, AFL teams, music, gymnastics, Little Athletics, dancing (especially rap), soccer, motorbikes, computers, scooters, guides, shopping, bikes, choir, television, tennis, films, toys, cross country, animals, maths, cricket, books, horse riding, netball, karate, pottery, swimming, gardening, badminton, basketball, ballet, Lego, car racing

Figure 4: *One Thousand Box neighbourhood*

They told us about school uniforms, friends, zodiac signs, flags, religion, food, languages, national costumes, family celebrations, festivals, recipes and being “*best at day dreaming and being silly*”. They described family backgrounds including Indigenous Australians and tales of grandparents who met on trams, went to war, travelled to Australia as refugees and from many countries: Cambodia, Chile, China, Croatia, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, England, Eritrea, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Holland, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Laos, Latvia, Lebanon, Macedonia, Malta, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Pakistan, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Samoa, Scotland, Serbia, Seychelles Islands, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Timor Leste, Turkey, Ukraine, Vietnam and more.

The boxes provided a picture of the rich diversity of Brimbank (the local council area in which Gallery Sunshine Everywhere is based). In this project, local artist Mirjana Vuk-Nikic encouraged participants to share their community lives (usually on the outside of the boxes) and their family lives (usually inside the boxes). As Mirjana explained the project:

Moving from one place to another is our past and our future. Figuratively, the family home is a big moving box. Inside this moving box is a family story and culture. Outside the moving box is a family's relation to the new community. When walking on the streets we cannot reach all these family stories and cultures behind the house walls. These stories and cultures are our treasure. Through sharing stories and cultural richness we learn about each other and how to live and grow in our communities. I chose a post box for making houseboxes because the post box symbolises sending items from one place to another. It makes connection from one city to another, from one country to another, from one culture to other, from one person to another person.

By working together you can do great things

The arts offer unique poetics of knowing, being and doing in education and community development; they are vibrant, diverse and immense, just like the communities they are connected to. They weave rich tapestries that unite people within and across places; they share what is common and what is culturally unique. Fashioning heterogeneous opportunities that can enable rich learning well situated away from hegemonic learning formulas. In counterpoint the arts provide openings for the unknown to become familiar, bubbling and slipping into the unplanned, the improvised, producing graceful and awkward connections. The arts provide a living, breathing fabric of expressions and reflections, woven by our collective hands telling ourselves and others around us how we value, know, act and are in the macrocosmic and microcosmic worlds we breathe life from. It is with these imaginative methods that communities are enriched; children become the producers of knowledge, the producers of their learning, rather than passive consumers.

The arts foster human development and are intrinsically linked to how we re-present history, the present moment, historical and contemporaneous cultural worldviews and how we perceive, imagine and process our realities. Art is a means in which we can hold a mirror to our humanity, a vehicle of communication that incites knowing and being from the aesthetic, it is a powerful way to transfer knowledge. The power of the arts is recognised as providing valuable experiences that enhance and enrich learning (Eisner, 2004). Grounded in a social constructivist Vygostkian stance, Ewing (2011) defines learning as consisting of a series of developments and growth in understanding and/or behaviour, “*facilitated by social, collaborative processes embedded in particular socio-historical-cultural contexts*” (p. 33). Qadri (2015) offers an example of such processes in *Memories in Motion*, an account of a project linking primary school children and the rich history of the railway line adjacent to their school as it underwent its latest upgrade:

The project incorporated the local history of the space between Sunshine Primary School and Sunshine station with students taking on the roles of the researchers/historians of this place. History was regarded as a fluid entity, which was continually evolving, and being made. Gathered through primary and secondary evidence it also included the recording of memories. The students documented, researched and introduced their own memories and observations to make new renderings of history. Their work was “published” as artworks in public space and also in a book, which was placed in the school and local Sunshine library. (Qadri, 2015, p. 383)

The learning that is evolving from Gallery Sunshine Everywhere’s *Words and Pictures* project - done in collaboration with the Eritrean Australian Humanitarian Aid - is a sound example of how the creative arts invoke the world of little publics, the world of children, together. Uniting people in a relational way to “*form a shared event, a connection, to reach beyond and connect with singularities rather than be directed through rationalist hegemonic templates that encourage robotic*” constructions (Knight, 2009, p. 8). Opening transformative and reciprocal arts learning for Eritrean and Australian communities allows intercultural “*understandings of ourselves, our relationships with others and with the natural world*” (Ewing, 2011, p. 33). These connections continue to develop and do great things as part of this ongoing project as young people are given creative licence over the artful encounters.

Positioning young people as the drivers of cultural expression we see it essential to allow the creators control over their creative practices and processes. In this way, the youth are the creators, the storytellers, the educative agents within civic, political, environmental, and educational commentaries and re-presentations. Adults are relational to this learning and our roles are contextual, depending on the proximity and relatedness to the artistic collective: as a parent/guardian/sibling, educator, artist, or wider audience member². Herein lie the aesthetic diamonds that illuminate the interconnectedness between young and old, creators and audiences, where cultural meanings are fluidly articulated through the production of creative texts that “*become pedagogical*” (p. 82). The concept of little publics (Hickey-Moody, 2015) validates children as important producers of culture as well as valuing the intimate expressions of “*informal, unbounded, culturally mediated and subjective learning*” that flows from their pedagogical spaces (p. 82).

In alignment with formal Australian education requirements, the young people involved in this project engaged in aesthetic reasoning and artistic expression using a range of media and skill sets that are interdisciplinary. Utilising visual and language arts, children communicated to each other about their realities in that moment in time. These artistic conversations embrace what Maoz (2006) terms a mutual gaze. In each location these artistic conversations perform a mutual gaze through an experiential moment in a young person’s life. Learning moments articulated through artistic expression. Opening possibilities for meaning making and understanding to organically grow and elicit reasoning, holistic perceptions and interactions. These move us into performative states: ‘leaning’ in towards, or away aesthetically (Pelias, 2011; 2014), embracing strong mutual gazes across continents, and across concepts of the public. The Eritrean little public, the Flemington little public, the combined international little public and the outward ripple effects of these pedagogical forces into larger publics. It is because of these creative actions that we are able to write from this adult perspective, to cast an educative lens over the actions of the little public sphere in order to celebrate the arresting qualities of young people’s minds.

2. Audience refers to members of the larger public sphere who interact with the creative work and visual storytelling of the children artists. It can also refer to any person who is not part of the youth arts collective, in Sudan, Australia and now through your eyes reading this, wherever you are globally and contextually to this large public sphere.

Life is simple. Include. Be kind, help the world journey on. Why? Because you can make a difference. You can start or continue a chain like others have done before you. Show your emotions and be kind. That's what matters most. Bringing things together it forms happiness, all you have to do is work together and be kind. (Tartakover et al., 2015)

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Book review

Leading and Managing Indigenous Education in the Postcolonial World

Ma Rhea, Z. (2015). *Leading and Managing Indigenous Education in the Postcolonial World*. Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge.

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In this book, Ma Rheas calls for profound rethinking of the leadership and management of Indigenous education. The legacy of a colonial education system needs to be disrupted “through both revolutionary and evolutionary processes, involving multiple sites of strategically coordinated action” (p.181) if the glaring disparities in education achievements between Indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Australia are to be comprehensively redressed. This book however is not a manifesto, but rather a practical blueprint for change carefully crafted from the experience of a skilled academic and an education practitioner who has ‘walked the walk’ at all levels of Indigenous education in Australia. Ma Rhea also draws from her expertise as a dynamic systems analyst and change manager to systematically prosecute her case, simultaneously dissecting why initiatives fail, how initiatives can afford success, and the pitfalls of reactive decisions and ‘fixes’ can be avoided. Children are at her heart but the responsibility is squarely placed at all levels of leadership: federal, state and territory; education departments; curriculum bodies; and in schools and universities.

She presents an Indigenist orientation including both Indigenous and non-Indigenous that is built upon recognition and commitment to Indigenous rights and perspectives whether the actor be Indigenous or not, and leadership that allows space for Indigenous peoples’ presence at all levels, local initiatives, experiments, feedback, and ongoing and robust evaluations.

To move towards this rights-based orientation, the settler population requires reflection and empathy to recognise Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are not treated equally, that injustice and privilege is not equally dispersed and crucially, that the dominant model of education in its failing to fully and unequivocally recognise the rights of Indigenous peoples to education, is simultaneously repressive of Indigenous peoples, and ergo limiting for the non-Indigenous settler population.

For educators, academics and bureaucrats involved in Indigenous education, some elements of the book will not be new. Such as the placing of Indigenous education in its historical context to explain that the knowledge of Australia’s history is imperative if replications of colonial practices are to be avoided. The most pernicious of these, she argues, is at leadership levels. Any initiatives borne of the colonial mindset that imposes itself to remedy perceived deficits in Indigenous education and Indigenous children, cannot reasonably deliver sustained improvement of education outcomes. The breadth of analysis presented throughout the book creates a holistic view of the dynamic systems at play within Indigenous education in Australia. The descriptions of how various systems and sub-systems are interrelated (positively or negatively) provide new insights to inspire and guide leaders in the field.

Ma Rhea's analysis of Indigenous education is anchored by a multiplex pyramid graphic with the community as the basis of the pyramid where argument is made for meaningful involvement of Indigenous community members within the local school – Traditional Owners, parents and caregivers of Indigenous children, and the wider community of actors and stakeholders, and a renewed call for teacher professional development as part of a system-wide workforce development program that is rights-based, Indigenist, and challenges colonial mindsets.

“Given the coercive, colonial history and evident ongoing mistrust, frustrations and misunderstandings about rights and responsibilities around the education of Indigenous children, Indigenous people are seeking more than expedient political solutions that enable short-term administrative ‘successes’ to hide enduring systemic problems” (p. 180).

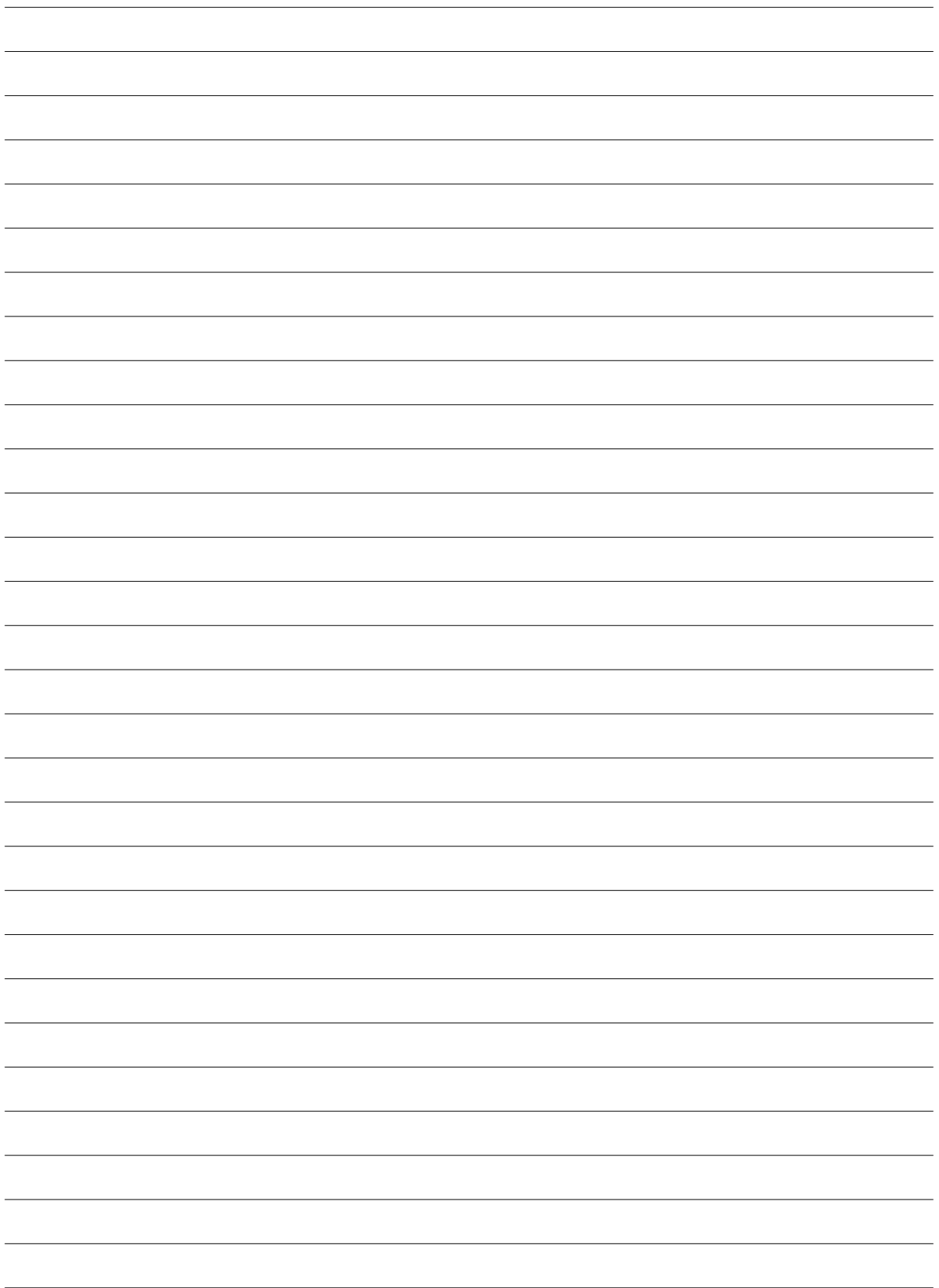
Genuine partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are requisite, but receive interrogation, for ‘partnership’ narratives are oft times used by education administrators and politicians. Partnerships enacted through a rights-based approach rather than Indigenous people as a population needing help and interventions, is a deficit approach that has failed and will continue to fail.

Schools have a vital role but their capacity to lead and manage educational change must be fully supported by collaborative engagement and alignment of Indigenous communities and government.

This book will be of value to researchers and post-graduate students engaged with Indigenous education. It will be of value to teachers, education administrators and system drivers such as bureaucrats and politicians. Ma Rhea presents a view for the future: how a post-colonial education system might be enacted. We are not there yet. At a time when education is becoming increasingly globalised, this book presents a salient reminder that the rights of Indigenous peoples and meaningful partnerships with communities must be foregrounded in all levels of delivery if globalised education is to be truly postcolonial education.

NOTES

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