Embedding Indigenous Perspectives in University Teaching and Learning: Lessons learnt and Possibilities of reforming / decolonising curriculum

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Abstract
Embedding Indigenous knowledge in the curriculum continues to challenge traditional western perspectives on Indigenous epistemologies and cultures. This paper will initially discuss experiences of embedding Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum at an Australian university. The project was inspired by the Reconciliation Statement which ensured funding through Teaching and Learning Large Grants. Its successful outcomes included the creation of identified positions for Indigenous academics within faculties, creation of a resource hub of relevant teaching materials and consistent documentation and awareness of Indigenous perspectives through interviews and staff development workshops.

The paper concludes by critically interrogating the methodology used to conceptualise Indigenous knowledge in embedding Indigenous perspectives (EIP) in a university curriculum. This paper argues for a thorough curriculum reform if a degree of decolonisation of the western constructed Indigenous knowledge and its living systems are desired.

Introduction
We'd like to start our discussion by acknowledging the traditional owners of Northside Brisbane, the Turrbal people, upon whose land this knowledge has developed. We acknowledge the traditional owners and ancestors of Vancouver, upon whose land this knowledge is now being shared.

We both came to be working in the Oodgeroo Unit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students at QUT through different pathways, but initially, with similar social justice agendas. However, we both have become advocates for Indigenous knowledge, decolonising methodologies, and research ethics and protocols that guide research and scholarship within academia. We quickly realised the immense workload for all staff members as we juggled student support and counselling roles, teaching, academic leadership (i.e. such as embedding project advice), research and community service obligations. Beetson, Tyhuis, Willsteed, McLaughlin & Whatman, (2007) noted on the consequences for academic career progression and student support obligations.

This paper will also demonstrate that the academic leadership provided by centres such as ours to other academic sections in lobbying for, conceptualising of, finding staff, and providing the ethical platform and ongoing advice for large embedding grants is incredibly onerous and can result in few favourable outcomes. Specifically, we are concerned about the lack of publication opportunities factored into the projects for Indigenous consultative staff who donate hours of their time to making sure the projects get off the ground and are completed in an appropriate way, and the lack of participation of those, usually non-Indigenous academics, in charge of the projects in the 'cultural interface' of Indigenous knowledge production. As will be demonstrated towards the end of the paper, most of the publications associated with projects such as these do not end up in Indigenous forums where they can be discussed, contested, concurred and extended from – the contribution to Indigenous knowledge production remains mostly invisible.

Defining Indigenous Perspectives

Some of the literature is devoted to coming to some kind of agreement as to what Indigenous perspectives are. Nakata (2007) noted that within the broader discipline of Indigenous studies, rigorous debates about what counts as Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous perspectives or Indigenous studies are occurring around the world (see also for example Agrawal 1995, 1996; and Smith 1999, 2005). These kinds of debates need to happen on the ground, within institutions, and between all stakeholders in Indigenous knowledges, before any pathway to embedding can be realistically achieved. Nakata (2002, p. 285) described this meeting site as the 'cultural interface', which is:

> 'the intersection of the Western and Indigenous domains…the place where we live and learn, the place that conditions our lives, the place
> that shapes our futures and, more to the point, the place where we are active agents in our own lives – where we make our decisions - our lifeworld".

Smith (2005, p.86) noted that within the Western academy, Indigenous knowledge is conceptualised as "Other", following Fanon (1963) and Memmi (1967). In being the "Other", it constitutes Indigenous identities as 'colonised' as much as it constitutes 'Westerners' as 'the colonisers'. However, as Indigenous peoples existed long before the 'gaze' of the coloniser, Indigenous identity, and thus knowledge, exists outside of, as well as within, the coloniser/colonised cultural interface.

Highly provocative debates and insights concerning decolonising Indigenous knowledge and learning in western institutions of higher education emerged in the last half of the century championed by Indigenous scholars and intellectuals. We acknowledge all those Indigenous warriors across the globe who took up the struggle of resistance to colonialism and all its manifestations. In more recent times, the struggle of reclaiming ownership of Indigenous knowledge has picked momentum across the global Indigenous world, such prominent scholars such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith (New Zealand), Marie Battiste (Canada), Martin Nakata, Lester Rigney, Eileen Moreton-Robinson, Marcia Langton (Australia), Manulani Meyer (United States of America), just to name a few. It reflects on some recent works by Indigenous scholars and activists in the project of decolonising knowledge and systems of knowing. We acknowledge many brave Indigenous scholars and activists who consistently contested colonial forms of knowledge about Indigenous peoples and whose work made recent progress / movements possible (Hart, 2003). The paper argues that this decolonising project is both political and deeply personal, as those who take up the challenge live these contestations within the epistemological and cultural interface (Nakata, 2002).

The place of Indigenous knowledge in western academic institutions requires Indigenous intellectuals to constantly critique (Ka'ia, 2005) their cultural and intellectual positionings (Hart, 2003, Settee, 2007). This critique does not merely privilege Indigenous intellectuals, but places a responsibility on these academics to champion the struggle against colonial forms of domination within academic institutions. Embedded in this struggle is a commitment to reclaim Indigenous knowledge, values and systems of knowing, a struggle and search for cultural continuity (McLaughlin, Ah Sam and Whatman, 2006).

Decolonising knowledge in universities therefore involves a deep sense of recognition of and challenge to colonial forms of knowledge, pedagogical strategies and research methodologies. Hart and Whatman (1998, p.1) reminded us that:

it is important that teachers, students and researchers within Indigenous studies remind themselves that much of the literature on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders can be ideologically traced back to the emergence of 'knowledge' about native peoples in the context of European imperialism and expansion from the fifteenth century. Care must therefore be taken in not conveying 'scientific' rational knowledge as perhaps the hidden agenda or notion of assumptions of European 'superiority' and non-European inferiority.

Embedding Indigenous perspectives in a variety of disciples in one university location cannot ignore the struggles that exist within Australian universities attempting to decolonise knowledge. A commitment to decolonising processes evolved as a way of redressing colonial processes of knowledge generation and its implications of imperialism and knowledge/power relations. Decolonising curriculum at the universities requires recognition of colonial hegemony and forms of domination within academic institutions (Ka'ia, 2005).

The challenge for the recognition of Indigenous knowledge in university teaching and learning is that non-Indigenous academics, who often control the parameters of the embedding processes, cannot 'see' Indigenous knowledge outside of the coloniser interface. Most universities accept that Indigenous knowledge is 'out there', but have no idea how it articulates with Western knowledge systems. As Hart (2003) notes, the academy can only recognise and reward what it knows (p.12), making the task of embedding Indigenous knowledge into the university teaching and learning highly problematic and deeply personal.

Nakata (2004) argues that what is required is recognition of the complexities and tensions at the cross-cultural interfaces and the need for negotiation between Indigenous knowledge, standpoints or perspectives and western disciplinary knowledge systems so that meanings are reframed or reinterpreted (p.14). As Williamson and Dalal (2007) later noted, attending to these cross-cultural negotiations and the pedagogical practices they imply are profoundly challenging for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators. This statement illustrates the experiences of embedding Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum at our university.

Embedding Indigenous Perspectives – the story at QUT
The mainstream Reconciliation Movement in Australia was launched as a consequence of the 1990 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Johnstone, 1991), in which the 339th recommendation was:

> That all political leaders and their parties recognise that Reconciliation between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Australia must be achieved if community division, discord and injustice to Aboriginal people are to be avoided. To this end, the Commission recommends that political leaders use their best endeavours to ensure bipartisan public support for the process of Reconciliation and that the agency and necessity of the process be acknowledged.

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was created as the body responsible for promoting and reporting against the strategies to facilitate Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and its 10 year term concluded in May 2001. One of the intentions of the Council was that individuals, organisations and communities would work together to align their own personal and professional practices within the spirit of Reconciliation.

In May 2001, the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) officially launched its Reconciliation Statement. By endorsing the statement, QUT committed itself to sustainable reconciliation between Indigenous (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) and non-Indigenous Australian people (QUT, 2001). The statement recognises the particular responsibility of educational institutions to redress disadvantage and to overcome prejudice (QUT, 2001).

The QUT Reconciliation Statement recognises that Indigenous Australian people are the custodians of the land, in accordance with their laws and customs. It also recognises the importance of Indigenous cultures to Australia's heritage and the dynamic contribution made by Indigenous Australian people to the community and to the University.

The responsibilities which come with this recognition include sustainable approaches to be embedded within teaching and learning, research, community service, employment and organisational culture and environment. This reconciliation statement has provided a necessary platform from which teaching and learning and research activities in Indigenous education at QUT should be conceptualised and engaged (QUT, 2001).

EIP: Teaching and Learning Initiatives
Honouring its commitment to the spirit of Reconciliation, QUT provided grants to enable faculties to embed Indigenous Perspectives into existing units of teaching and to investigate further options for embedding such as creating new units, developing an Indigenous Studies major and broader policy and curricula reform. From 2001 to 2004, faculties at QUT applied for Large Teaching and Learning Grants to embed Indigenous perspectives into their faculties' organisational culture and teaching and learning activities.

In committing over half a million dollars to embedding Indigenous perspectives, QUT recognised that the Oodgeroo Unit, the centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student support, teaching, research and community engagement, should be the first point of contact for conceptualising each study. As such, the Manager wrote "Best Practice Guidelines" for incorporating Indigenous perspectives that every project applicant was required to embrace, and was also on each project's reference committee (Hart, 2001).

What follows is a series of critiques, specifically to interrogate the methodology used to conceptualise Indigenous knowledge in each project. It does not intend to provide a holistic analysis of each project, but this concise synopsis captures the EIP experiences from epistemological and pedagogical foundations.

Project 1: QUT Carseldine (School of Humanities and Human Services) and Creative Industries
In 2002, the School of Humanities and Human Services in association with the Creative Industries Faculty acquired a Teaching and Learning Large Grant to embed Indigenous perspectives in its curricula (Williamson, 2002). The project activities included a comprehensive audit of Indigenous perspectives in existing content, staff development program that enhanced staff understanding and commitment to curriculum redevelopment process, a creation an appropriate curriculum model and production of a web-based resource kit. A set of curriculum principles, graduate capabilities and associated standards guided the initial curriculum redesign from its existing form. Introductory units and Indigenous pathway units were identified and targeted for the embedding process (Williamson & Dalal, 2007). As part of the staff

development process, a two-day conference / workshop was held, and attracted more than 100 attendees from the School of Humanities and Human Services, Creative Industries, other QUT faculties and external tertiary institutions (Williamson and Towers, 2006).

Consistent with the university requirements, the initial curriculum framework was informed by a systematic outcomes-based approach. This was the base line model for curriculum development, but further on, this model was inspired by the Alaska Native Knowledge Network (Williamson & Dalal, 2007).   The model was further enhanced by significant literature in best practice particularly those by Hart (2003), Kumashiro (2000), Lampert (2003), Nakata (2002, 2004) and Phillips (2003).

However, redesigning the curriculum involved a number of challenges. Williamson and Dalal (2006) concurred that at one level, engaging in the kinds of cross-cultural negotiations that enable the rethinking of knowledge and skills is profoundly challenging (Nakata, 2004). Yet, on the other level, staff proved reluctant or resistant to engaging the issues in anything other than the superficial and stereotypical ways (Dreise, 2003).

In the original application, the project team declared the following standpoint on what embedding Indigenous perspectives into respective faculties:

> It can involve the development of units which focus specifically on Indigenous issues (Indigenous Studies units) and it can also imply the incorporation of Indigenous perspectives into a range of discipline-based and professionally oriented units. Importantly, the adoption of Indigenous perspectives should not be seen merely in terms of the incorporation of Indigenous content but must address the broader curriculum design issues of pedagogical approaches (including assessment strategies), values orientation and skills development (Williamson & Towers, 2002, p.1).

Thus, from the outset, this project articulated a view that Indigenous knowledge would not be "tacked on" to existing units that did not undergo any substantive reform or reconceptualisation. The project team insisted that the embedding task would be more successful because of the multi-faculty approach, but also stated that "the appointment of a Project Leader will also be central to the co-ordination, maintenance and success of the project" (Williamson and Towers, 2002, p.2). We can assume two things from this statement – one, that the project team recognised that the expertise to successfully embed Indigenous perspectives resided outside of the two faculties, and two, that *not* hiring "the right" project leader would equate with a lack of success, devolving ultimate responsibility for the success of the project to an unknown party.

Further clues as to the project team's view on where expertise may lay either inside or outside of QUT could be interpreted from their explanation of the links to existing work in embedding. Firstly, there was an absence of literature in Embedding Indigenous Perspectives, which was puzzling given that it was the project team's opportunity to theorise their vision for the project against excising research work. Secondly, the project team argued that Indigenous knowledge delivered via units that the Oodgeroo Unit developed and taught in their faculty did not articulate well with other units (not taught by the Oodgeroo Unit, thus out of their control).

> To date, the development of Indigenous perspectives in the University's curricula has been an ad hoc affair. Certainly, the Oodgeroo Unit developed

and taught an Indigenous Studies minor (4 units) in the former Bachelor of Arts (HU22) but resources were not available to extend these offerings or to make explicit links between these units and other discipline-based or professionally-oriented units that utilised Indigenous perspectives in the other courses in the two faculties. Work undertaken in the Oodgeroo Unit on Indigenous perspectives in the professions will prove useful to this project. (Williamson and Towers, 2002, p. 5).

Two further points are noted – that the project team had not thoroughly critiqued appropriate Australian and international research into Indigenous Knowledge, Embedding Indigenous Perspectives and Indigenous studies. Secondly, that the success of embedding Indigenous perspectives into university curricula achieved thus far at QUT was the result of 'ad hoc' Indigenous staff endeavours inside the Oodgeroo Unit. This is not intended to be seen as negative – but it is problematic, as it provides a default position for non-Indigenous staff within the faculties to claim that Indigenous knowledge and perspectives is absent because of the lack of Indigenous faculty staff (neither faculty had Indigenous academic staff at the time of the application), devolving responsibility once again.

On completion of the project, it was concluded that the project had raised awareness, developed a core of committed academics in each faculty, embedded Indigenous perspectives at unit and course levels and forged critical networks and partnerships across faculties and divisions. The outcomes of the project provided a firm foundation for future activity that will need to be incorporated into plans and activities at the faculty and university levels (Williamson & Towers, 2006). Interestingly, the School of Humanities and Human Services which house most of the Indigenous Studies units taught by staff from the Oodgeroo Unit and Indigenous major is likely to be amalgamated with other faculties (see Hart, 2007).

In summary, this project was substantially concerned with curricular development and reform, and professional development of staff predicated on a view that Indigenous perspectives were largely absent from the faculties' core business of teaching. There was no investigative aspect as to why (else) the perspectives were perceived to be absent – no theorisation of resistance to this knowledge (Phillips, 2005, p.3).

Project 2: Law and Justice Studies
From 2002 - 2003, the Faculty of Law and its School of Justice Studies, through its Teaching and Learning Large Grant, began its project on embedding Indigenous content and perspectives in the Justice Studies curriculum. It focussed primarily on the development of valid, reliable and transferable assessment methods in four areas of professional competency which were identified to be challenging. These included Indigenous content and perspectives, oral communication, ethical values and knowledge and teamwork. To achieve these goals, the project team proposed to identify relevant and appropriate Indigenous content, a process for EIP and a valid, reliable and transferable assessment method (Faculty of Law presentation at Senior Staff conference, 2002).

A cooperative integrated strategy was developed in the school to facilitate the teaching of Indigenous perspectives and content by non-Indigenous academics, in the absence of an Indigenous academic staff in the whole faculty. This was achieved by a "cooperative curriculum development with Indigenous people with experience and expertise in justice related areas" (Carpenter, Field and Barnes, 2002). The second element of the strategy was the recognition of the cultural construction of whiteness in the curriculum and teaching practices, based on insights and expertise

from the Oodgeroo Unit staff. This was particularly important for non-Indigenous academics to explore their own understandings of race and its effects (Carpenter, Field & Barnes, 2002). Explorations into whiteness and its influence in content and pedagogical were explored in a variety of staff development activities and retreats.

It can be noted the that Faculty of Law project is assessment driven, motivated by other institutional priorities such as first, the creation of the Australian Universities Quality Agency to promote national quality assurance agenda to focus on processes to monitor assessment practices. Second, was the introduction of the Laws Admissions' Consultative Committee's Competency Standards for Entry Level Lawyers for national admission to legal practice (Kift, 2002).

The Faculty of Law and School of Justice Studies anticipated generating positive outcomes for students by increasing non-Indigenous students' competency in law and justice. For Indigenous students, the EIP project would be more inclusive that aims to increase their engagement in meaningful learning environment. The project intended to employ academic staff on full-time and part-time basis, and creation of an assessment framework through appropriate content and engagement with Indigenous perspective as a model for the whole faculty.

These project areas were chosen because they were regarded as being representative of social, relational and cultural capabilities which were identified as either problematic in their own right (because assessment has been hampered by perceptions of subjectivity or cultural bias) *or* problematic because of difficulties experienced in formulating valid and reliable assessment tasks (particularly in large group teaching and in flexible delivery modes) (Kift, 2002, p.1). As the project was not entirely devoted to embedding Indigenous perspectives, two of their four aims are most relevant:

- To develop a transferable process for embedding Indigenous content and perspectives;
- To develop and deliver an on-going staff development program to maximise effectiveness of the assessment framework and the delivery of Indigenous content and perspectives (Kift, 2002, p.2).

The methodology section of the application did not include any mention of Indigenous research ethics or protocols. The methodology was conceptualised as a linear progression of action steps from "review and development" to "refinement", to "evaluation", then significantly, "dissemination". We have often commented on the staggering amount of publications that this entire project generated (51), but few made it into the public domain regarding their success in embedding Indigenous perspectives (see Carpenter et al, 2003; Kift, 2005).

Project 3: Faculty of Health
In 2004, the Health Faculty applied through the Teaching and Learning Grant for its project entitled *Towards cultural competence: An innovative strategy for incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives within the health professional curricula.* An audit was conducted prior to the application and it identified the scope for an explicit strategy to systematically promote students' understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and their application within health care practice settings (Nash, 2004).

The project proposed to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – Perspectives in Curricula Strategy which took a "whole of course" approach to the development of cultural competency. The strategy aimed at moving beyond "good

citizenship" model of Indigenous knowledge to one of professional competency in students. Key elements of the strategy included explicit identification of expected learning outcomes, the streamlining of content/ learning activities within selected units, the development of media-based learning research, integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander for students to reflect on their learning (Nash, 2004, p. 2).

Project 4: Faculty of Education
Embedding Indigenous perspectives in the Faculty of Education was part of larger project. In 2001, the faculty won a teaching and learning large grant with a goal to re-conceptualise the Bachelor of Education (BEd) program offered to all pre-service student teachers. Consistent with other EIP projects, this was supportive of the institutional commitment to Reconciliation launched in 2001 (McPherson et al, 2001).

Similar to the other faculty projects, an outcomes based approach was used as the curriculum model for the project. The faculty of education project also responded to graduate capabilities and professional capabilities, in the format of Teacher Practitioner Attributes (TPAs).

However, in marked contrast to other EIP projects within the university as described above, the Faculty of Education embarked on introducing a core unit as part of the foundation suite of units. An Indigenous academic from the Oodgeroo Unit (see Phillips, 2007) was seconded to the faculty to conceptualise and design the unit of study entitled *Culture Studies: Indigenous Education.* This unit became compulsory for every pre-service student teacher from 2003, with approximately 900 students per semester undertaking the unit (Phillips, 2007).

A long process of consultation and negotiation occurred with the Oodgeroo Unit in relation to Teacher Professional Attributes (TPAs) and the new Bachelor of Education structure prior to grant submission and unit development. As a result of this negotiation, the Oodgeroo Unit produced two internal monographs which have informed the B.Ed and TPAs development process. Another outcome of this project was the creation of a Learning Circles professional development program for Faculty of Education staff, convened by academic staff from the Oodgeroo Unit. We coordinated and delivered five sessions for the Faculty of Education (Phillips, Lampert & Whatman, 2002).

As a unit of study, Culture Studies: Indigenous Education was theoretically and pedagogical informed by Indigenous knowledge and experiences. An internal report in the form of a case study revealed that the unit was both challenging, informative and shifted students' thinking / positioning of themselves and Indigenous Australians (McLaughlin, 2004). These cultural shifts are important outcomes of the unit, however, the philosophical basis and the teaching and learning processes has often generated many emotional experiences for both staff and students. Deeper analysis of this experience will bring forth some interesting insights for both theory and pedagogy for embedding Indigenous knowledge in the university curriculum.

A critique of the conceptualisation of EIP and methodology: Outcomes and consequences through Teaching and Learning Projects
The discussions below concentrate on the issues which emerged through this short analysis of the EIP experience at QUT. These themes evolved from the literature as well as the various elements of these projects; from the epistemological to curriculum development and its intended outcomes. A short critique is provided of the consequences on teaching and learning, Indigenous knowledge in an Australian university curricula and its impact on Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff and students.

1) University Curricula reform
Conceptualising Indigenous perspectives

The experiences of the embedding Indigenous perspectives at our university reflect the way political agendas can impact on Indigenous affairs in an Australian context. While QUT's commitment to reconciliation continues be fulfilled, the experiences of EIP strongly suggest that universities can make a major contribution to the spirit of Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, and enhance race relations in Australia. However, the success of these projects depends entirely on the recognition of Indigenous knowledge in disciplines and the preparedness of non-Indigenous academics to investigate their own subjectivities, their own cultural positioning in order to fully engage with embedding Indigenous perspectives in to the content, teaching methodologies and assessments in the cultural interface (Nakata, 2002). As Williamson and Dalal (2007) concluded:

> Such approaches recognise various levels of engagement beyond the "intellectual"; they insist on a consistent unsettling of Western authority; they acknowledge Indigenous positions / positioning; and require critical self reflections (p.51).

Indeed, upon the projects' initiation, none of them contained a literature base that defined and signified the importance of Indigenous perspectives / knowledge. The rationale for this literature on Indigenous knowledge could have informed the epistemological and curriculum development models for EIP. Further, a substantial literature review could have informed understanding of Indigenous knowledge and prepared non-Indigenous academics to negotiate the knowledge interface with Indigenous academics at the university. Similarly, the synthesis of the literature could have provided the theoretical / conceptual platform for realistic curriculum reform (see Lampert, 2005).

Reconciliation processes in Australia were an important catalyst for embedding Indigenous perspectives in the university curriculum. However, experiences of the embedding Indigenous perspectives projects at QUT reveal the other factors such as social justice, good citizenship and good pedagogy / practices should inform the implementation and project outcomes**.** It can be therefore argued that without an in-depth conceptualisation of Indigenous knowledge (Nakata, 2007), attempts at decolonising the curriculum can adopt a superficial pedagogical approach (Williamson and Dalal, 2007), rather than engaging in a critical review of the assumptions upon which existing pedagogical assumptions are constructed.

Curriculum models

What transpired from this EIP experience was the focus on outcomes both as graduate capacities and professional competencies. The political resolution to honour the Reconciliation Statement impacted on the approaches and models of teaching and learning. While it may be argued that graduate capabilities and professional competencies should be developed prior to entering the professions, the reality of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives are not linear, thus can not be achieved at the end of the experience. As Phillips (2005) argues, it is the lived experiences, the daily lives of Indigenous peoples that require recognition and acknowledgment. An outcomes-based model, we would argue, is not the appropriate curriculum model for teaching Indigenous knowledge or perspectives at the university level.

All projects but one were conceptualised by non-Indigenous academics. Indeed, the extensive consultation with Indigenous staff and community representatives

conducted prior to implementation should be acknowledged as significant to Indigenous ways of being. Thus, ownership of Indigenous knowledge needs to be recognised. The worse case scenario could be a situation which offers an "impoverished version of Aboriginal pedagogy and the promotion of corrupted understandings of Indigenous knowledge (Nakata, 2004, p. 11; see Williamson and Dalal, 2007). As Hart (2003) argues, for Aboriginal people, teaching is a professional practice and resistance to colonialism.

> The role of teaching for Aboriginal academics is not confined to being merely a professional vocation. For many, it is a cultural and traditional practice of resistance to colonialism and bourgeois ideology and practice which is performed at the same time as having to act within those paradigms. The question is how to engage this resistance in order to transform these silencing frameworks, without reinforcing them (Hart, 2003, p. 15).

On reflection, the outcomes based model for embedding Indigenous perspectives could have contributed to some members of faculties resisting to participate in the EIP projects (Lampert, 2005; Williamson and Dalal, 2007). Complex disciplines or fields of study such as Indigenous Studies should not, we argue, be relegated to simplistic curriculum development approaches. Critical approaches such as critical race theory have been suggested as offering an appropriate framework (Hart, 2003; Watson, 2005). Indeed, critical race theory may appropriately inform what Indigenous scholars (Hart, 2003; Nakata, 2004; Phillips, 2003) recommend as crucial to Indigenous studies. These include:

- the need to problematise the endeavour of embedding Indigenous perspectives;
- the requirement that students deconstruct their own cultural situatedness in order to appreciate the ways in which the "other" is framed;
- the hegemonic and appropriating capacities of "Western" disciplines and the dissonance between Indigenous and "Western" ways of knowing;
- the complexities of interactions at the cultural interface and the difficulties of achieving cross-cultural understandings and acquiring cultural competencies;
- the need to reorient curricula by engaging with alternative ways of knowing and alternative skill sets (Williamson and Dalal, 2007, p. 52).

On rethinking the EIP experience, successful attempts at embedding Indigenous knowledge of may result from critical models of curriculum development, rather than outcomes based education.

2) Indigenous staff career development
In response to the Reconciliation Statement, QUT endorsed an Indigenous an Indigenous Employment Strategy (http://www.reconciliation.qut.edu.au/). This strategy aimed at achieving a target of 2.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders at the university. An Indigenous Employment Officer position was created to implement the strategy. In 2005, 46 positions were filled (QUT, Reconciliation Statement- Implementation Strategy 2005). A professor in Indigenous Studies and research was appointed at the beginning of 2006.

EIP projects at the university created positions that were identified for both Indigenous-only and non-Indigenous applicants. The Faculty of Education created three full-time positions, which are currently ongoing. This was a result of the introduction of the core unit which the faculty insisted on it being taught by Indigenous staff. The Indigenous *Culture Studies* coordinator returned to the Oodgeroo Unit, thus academics from the Oodgeroo Unit picked up the teaching loads for *Culture Studies: Indigenous Education*. Humanities and Human Services

employed an Aboriginal person as the project officer for a fixed, two year period, but her inevitable departure made an impact on the overall implementation of the project. Humanities and Human Services, in the duration of the project, created on ongoing position, currently filled by a non-Indigenous person. Creative Industries offered a part-time academic staff position, which dissolved as the project ended. Health faculty employed a non-Indigenous project officer, who remained till the completion of the project. The position also dissolved as the project ended. Faculty of Law employed one level A academic in the School of Justice Studies in 2004, this position has been filled in twice since then.   The Faculties of Education and Law with the School of Humanities and Human Services retained their positions after the embedding of Indigenous perspectives ended. The Health faculty, which employed an Indigenous academic prior to the project, and the Creative Industries faculty did not create any new identified position.

The inspiration initiated by Indigenous staff involved in the EIP projects must be commended, thus not allowing the nature of project work / designs undermine their primary goal of resistance to colonial form of knowledge and their professional development. Two case studies illustrate this.

Case study one: Culture Studies
The leadership demonstrated by the Indigenous academic who conceptualised the Faculty of Education core unit extended to scholarship and publication on return to the Oodgeroo Unit. She directed a team of inspiring junior academic staff to publish a textbook to inform teaching of *Culture Studies: Indigenous Education* (Phillips and Lampert, 2005). Indeed, this was a major achievement, considering most academic A lecturers are consumed with student support administration.   The textbook is recommended for many units in Indigenous Studies taught at the university.

Case Study two: Indigenous Perspectives in Queensland State Schools – outcome of a former Embedding Project Officer.
The 2002 Project to Embed Indigenous perspectives in QUT Carseldine and Creative Industries (Williamson & Towers, 2002) required the employment of a project officer. An Indigenous educator undertook this role from 2002 until mid-2003, and developed her own model of community partnerships which articulated into the strategies under development for embedding Indigenous perspectives in QUT faculties (Dreise, 2007a). The interest, passion and skills that she both brought to the position, and further developed while she was engaged with embedding Indigenous perspectives at QUT, was followed by a significant position with the Queensland Studies Authority as the Principal Education Officer for Embedding Indigenous Perspectives into school curricula (http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/indigenous/index.html). At a recent schools' forum (Dreise, 2007b), she observed that the Queensland state education system may be a long way from being committed to valuing Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum. The position was an unexpected but welcome door to be opened in the struggle to decolonise school curricula.

This Indigenous educator confirms that her existing model of community partnerships was critically advanced throughout the embedding projects with the addition of the organisational focus of embedding Indigenous perspectives and the necessity of personal and professional responsibilities. We acknowledge her insights in this analysis of EIP.

3) Websites / resources for ongoing professional development
Two of the EIP projects delivered ongoing websites as one of their major outcome. In the QUT CA and Creative Industries project, this website was intended to be a

resource hub for public access, the Faculty of Health project also developed a website as an outcome of their project.

Community benefits as intended by these websites – (Health and QUTCA & CI) may not be possible due to dissemination issues. Community benefits are restricted as these websites are located within the projects themselves. These are online teaching (OLT sites), only accessed by staff and students of OUT. While it is acknowledged that there could be sensitive documents enclosed on these websites, access to them are strictly confined to the project personal or those who understand to the retrieval processes of the TALSS website (Lampert, 2005).

4) Publications – academic scrutiny in the cultural interface

Embedding of Indigenous perspectives / knowledge as experienced through the above projects challenge existing "western" systems of knowledge and relationships with Indigenous peoples. In the evaluation of one of these projects, Nakata (2005) recommended that while significant progress has been accomplished, the projects are only the stepping stone to more important work yet to be done. In his analysis, Nakata identified issues with the EIP project and proposed further academic engagement with the embedding projects.

Upon completion of the projects, several publications by non-Indigenous project partners evolved as a way continuing the conversations on the engagement with Indigenous knowledge and scholarship. This included publications on *Indigenising the curriculum or negotiating the tensions at the cultural interface? Embedding Indigenous perspectives and pedagogies in a university curriculum* (Williamson & Dalal, 2007) which further searched for appropriate methodologies; *Without a song you are nothing' Songwriter's perspectives on Indigenising tertiary music and sound curriculum* (Dillon, Chapman & James, 2005); and *Maybe we can find some common ground: Indigenous perspectives, a music teacher's story* (Dillon, 2007) which acknowledge a deeper appreciation of Indigenous knowledge through respectful consultations with Indigenous scholars and musicians. In *Embedding Indigenous content and perspectives across the Justice Studies curriculum,* Carpenter, Field and Barnes (2002) explored the methodology for implementing the EIP project within the School of Justice Studies.

Dissemination of such reflections is paramount to continuing the conversations about definitions, methodologies and taking ownership of embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars. It allows scrutiny of one's professional practices and personalising of Indigenous knowledge, its role in academia and the recognition of it in the daily lives of Indigenous peoples.

Conclusion: Possibilities for Embedding Indigenous Perspectives at QUT

The Teaching and Learning Large Grants projects offered by QUT has been a great avenue to promote Indigenous perspectives and places the issues of decolonising the curriculum in a space for contested debate. Indeed, these projects and the personnel involved need to be commended for the recognition the absence of Indigenous perspectives in the university curriculum and invested resources into generating conversations on the university landscape.

Publications are an important contribution to western understandings of Indigenous perspectives – a beginning engagement within the cultural interface. The four large projects generated over eighty publications (including conference papers and journal articles), yet not one project team co-published with Indigenous staff from the Oodgeroo Unit. Additionally, most of the publications avoided any thoughtful discussion about the complexity of embedding Indigenous perspectives, examination

of problematic power relations, nor expressed a sense of ongoing commitment to continue. It could be described as a great silence within academia. There are concerning implications for the recognition of intellectual property and Indigenous control over knowledge production about Indigenous perspectives while ever such products of academic endeavour are so prevalent in the academy.

It needs to be acknowledged that any government's initiative is closely connected to economic reasons. Thus, the nature of project timelines dictates the implementation and follow-up activities as a long term consequence at the end. It can be argued that generation and ownership of knowledge systems and university academic standards operate beyond politics and economics. What cannot be withdrawn from the experience, however, are the critical epistemological shifts that the engagement of embedding Indigenous perspectives can make on non-Indigenous scholars on negotiating the cultural interface (Nakata, 2004).

As in all projects, we argue that the EIP initiative has all but returned to the status quo. While the outcomes of the projects (assessment and graduate outcomes) in all faculties continue to remain the prerogative of unit coordinators and faculty academic boards, the engagement of Indigenous knowledge and embedding of this knowledge into to the curriculum will return to Indigenous educators.

Some outstanding questions remain. How do we take the challenge forward? Institutional policies and directives are political, but could make a difference. How do we mobilise a non- Indigenous Australian academic population who refuse to look at themselves beyond their "whiteness" and the privileges that come with it?

Notwithstanding, from this experience, a realistic attempt at embedding Indigenous perspectives in the university curriculum may ultimately rest with Indigenous educators and their supporters to decolonise colonial constructed knowledge of the "other".

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