

It's As Much about *How* We Teach as It Is about *What* We Teach

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Reconciliation between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians is of deep concern if Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are to have a prosperous future. Education has been identified as a top priority for achieving reconciliation, and has gained increasing attention over the last decade from Australian higher education institutions (Carey & Prince, 2015; Hill & Mills, 2013; Rigby, et al., 2011). The approach in education is two-fold. First, educational outcomes for Indigenous Australian students must be improved (Carey & Prince, 2015). Second, it must address the need for non-Indigenous graduates to be culturally competent, professionally and personally, as they engage with Indigenous Australians, as well as other cultures (Nakata et al., 2012). Hargreaves (2005, p.2) eloquently articulates why education is paramount:

Education is the greatest gate keeper of opportunity and a powerful distributor of life chances. In a socially divided and culturally diverse society, what education is and how it is defined will always tend to favour some groups and interests over others. So attempts to change education.... are attempts to redistribute power and opportunity within the wider culture.... it is a moral and political struggle.

Charles Sturt University (CSU) is a regional university focused on students from regional, international, and Indigenous Australian backgrounds (CSU, 2015). Considering this, CSU aims to provide quality learning and teaching practices to better cater for increasing diversity in an age of technological and pedagogical innovation. CSU expects students of all disciplines to graduate with Indigenous cultural competence (CSU, n.d.).

The importance of embedding Indigenous Australian perspectives for reconciliation, and CSU's potential impact in relation to this, can be demonstrated by examining the education of pre-service teachers. Graduate teachers from CSU teach in a range of contexts and cultures to educate and shape the lives of young people. Modelling a culturally safe environment at university is important for pre-service teachers who will need to promote culturally safe environments in their own classrooms, post-graduation. Class environments at university provide an excellent opportunity for pre-service teachers to understand the perspective of a student in culturally safe classrooms. With appropriate knowledge, graduate teachers model the foundations of cultural competency for their students and are instrumental in assisting young Indigenous Australians to reach their educational goals (Hargreaves, 2005; Mackinlay & Barney, 2014).

Embedding Indigenous Australian perspectives is more than content, it's how we teach (Carey & Prince, 2015; Carnes, 2015; Nakata, 2007; Phillips & Whatman, 2007). Research by McGloin (2009), Taylor (2014), and Yunkaporta and McGinty (2009) support the implementation of key pedagogies to embed Indigenous Australian perspectives and create a cultural interface. In a successful cultural interface Western ways of knowing, being, and doing *overlap* with Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing; students use critical inquiry and reflexivity to understand their own standpoint, and the perspectives of others; and learning is transformative. This cultural interface decolonialises the curriculum, not by learning *about* Indigenous Australian cultures, but by addressing inherent assumptions and disrupting the status quo, as explained by Hargreaves (2005) (Nakata, 2007; Phillips & Whatman, 2007; Yunkaporta, 2009).

There is discomfort in addressing ingrained ideas and cultural traditions of meaning-making for individuals from a dominant Western culture group (Nakata, 2007; Phillips & Whatman, 2007). This is as important for university staff to acknowledge as it is for students (Maher, 2012). It is essential to reframe and reinterpret both knowledge systems, recognising our own standpoints for cross-cultural learning to occur. Simply "Indigenising" the curriculum can lead to poor versions of Indigenous pedagogy and poor understandings of Indigenous Australian perspectives (Nakata, 2004). As non-Indigenous academics become increasingly involved in the teaching of Indigenous Australian studies, it is vital that the processes, pedagogies, and content for creating a culturally competent and safe learning space do not become colonised themselves (Carnes, 2015).

With increased understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, lecturers are able to foster and work within a cultural interface in a tertiary environment (Maher, 2012). The cultural interface is not a negotiation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous; nor is it a static place that is fixed. The cultural interface is dynamic, and in constant flux, as students develop deeper understandings of their identities, of other worldviews, the connections between these, and how meaning and knowledge may be created (Carey & Prince, 2015, Nakata, 2007; Phillips & Whatman, 2007; Yunkaporta, 2009).

As a regional University focused on access and equity, CSU is well placed to develop cultural competency skills in staff, students, and from an institutional vantage point, through critical inquiry into standpoint and ongoing evaluation of current practice.

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