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Pathways for Indigenous Education in the Australian Curriculum Framework

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This article reflects on pathways for Indigenous education in the developing agenda of the Australian Curriculum, the cross-curriculum priorities, the general capability area of intercultural understanding, and the positioning of Indigenous learners within the diversity of learners with English as an additional language or dialect (EALD).

■ **Keywords:** Indigenous, Australian Curriculum, education, learners, pathways

Teachers today are bombarded with changing policy and positions and over time grow quite exhausted from working through what various adjustments mean. I welcome change and approach it always with a view to work out what opportunities exist to manoeuvre and reposition approaches to Indigenous education. I feel, therefore, quite positive about the Australian Curriculum. It is commendable that there is reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with regard to English as an additional language or dialect (EALD), and with regard to undertaking the same curriculum to the same standards, while making strong statements that adjustments may have to be made to support the path to reaching those goals. There are also strong statements about intercultural understanding as a general capability for all students and the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a cross-curriculum priority. This priority helps intercultural understanding through the inclusion of Indigenous content in all areas of the Australian Curriculum. It also potentially benefits Indigenous students.

I am aware that the EALD document is still in production, or at least it is not accessible on-line as yet. I am also aware that the conceptual framework that relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities is also still in production. I have not seen these documents and have little information about how they are trending. I am also aware that the disciplines areas of the curriculum were developed minus the Aboriginal and Torres Strait content that would constitute the very cross-curriculum priority being espoused. Thus the usual double message prevails: there is a priority, but it just is not a priority when the main priority is to shape up a national curriculum that will be accepted by all the stakeholders with an interest in it.

The EALD and the Conceptual Framework for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-curriculum priority, of course, are the two documents that will layer in another level of information for teachers to work with. So my positive feelings about the Australian Curriculum are somewhat reserved for the moment. There is in the available documentation a gap between the big statements and the more detailed guidance teachers and schools might require and no certainty about what sort of assistance the intermediate documentation will provide.

So in going through the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) documents, I was reminded that the process of constructing documents that are as broad as these Australian Curriculum documents have to be, means that Indigenous issues are domesticated into the larger framework and the details then left as additional elements that have to be worked on. And, even if the Conceptual Framework and the EALD documents work through and give some order to the details, teachers tend to be the ones left to work out

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how Indigenous issues are to be worked into classroom practice. They are the ones left to ask, but what does it mean for the work that I already do? And what do I have to change with regard to what I already do now? And by the way, can you tell me if this will work any better in my classroom or for my Indigenous kids, because the challenges seem to remain the same whatever we do?

I was kindly given a list of possible questions that concern teachers and schools to answer in this article. These questions reminded me that teachers can only begin from the premises they currently work from and teachers already know that the gaps in these documents are the very challenges they already confront:

- What does the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives look like and how do teachers embed these meaningfully in a non-tokenistic way?
- How can non-Indigenous teachers do this when they have their biases and may already be challenged in this area?
- Does this area of work involve a two-way negotiation of teaching and learning roles between Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff?
- What place does EALD curriculum and pedagogy have in empowering Indigenous learners?

These are not new questions. These are the unanswered questions of past and current approaches. They emerge from and are contained within the current discourses around Indigenous education and in current curriculum policy and documents at the state levels. The language of bias, empowerment, two-way working, and embedding perspectives are all part of a discourse that has been developed and continually strengthened over decades. Teachers know the discourse, but they want assurances that the demands of the Australian Curriculum can actually be translated into something meaningful and something that does work in classrooms, because they have been working away at these challenges for years. If I can take liberties in my interpretation, in the subtext of these questions there is an anxiety and perhaps frustration, as well as a persistent professional intent to do things in ways that can produce meaningful change. In this article, I will attempt to relieve the situation by suggesting that teachers and schools might be assisted to move forward more confidently, if we begin from a different premise than the one that informs the current discourse in Indigenous education.

The Cultural Interface

For a long time now I have worked on developing the space between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as a 'cultural interface' to take understandings beyond their simplistic white/black dimensions (see Nakata, 2007a, 2007b). In brief, the cultural interface refers to the contested space between Indigenous people, non-Indigenous people, and that body of knowledge on Australia's Indigenous people that establishes the order of things to the ways we can and cannot understand each other. The omnipresent tensions that result from these contestations go on to inform as well as delimit what can be said in this space between us. As a priori conditions, they situate a particular 'locale' for the ways Indigenous learners, non-Indigenous learners and teachers should or should not engage. Indigenous people have long experience of being located in this space of contested positions. In this locale, Indigenous students are discursively constituted as subjects vis-a-vis that 'matrix of abstracted discourses that constructs a consciousness of ourselves which is outside of the local, outside of how life is experienced' (following Smith, 1987, 1990, 1999). And it is via understanding what constitutes, and is constitutive, of Indigenous experience in this locale that teachers need to re-think their position on Indigenous students as prospective learners.

For me there are a number of critical re-orientations that need to occur to think about how we approach Indigenous issues in education today. We need to re-think how we understand Indigenous students and what they contend with in classroom learning. We need to think differently about how all students, including Indigenous students are to engage with Indigenous knowledge and content and what we really expect of all students. And we need to think about how we conceptualise the learning space as an intercultural space, especially where the Indigenous and non-Indigenous intersection sits in relation to the general capability of intercultural understanding. I think the obvious general implications fall, if we understand the issues at the cultural interface, around the following five points:

1. that Indigenous students require enriched, deeper learning opportunities to be able to understand and make sense of the world they live in
2. that they need higher order language and thinking skills to navigate through the complex spaces in which the contemporary Indigenous knowledge, cultures and everyday world of practice now sits. (Perhaps somewhat counter-intuitively for many, the more remote or traditional their backgrounds, the higher order their language, thinking and analytical skills need to be.)
3. that the classroom and school is already an intercultural space for many Indigenous students but to develop intercultural understanding we must be focused on the sorts and the quality of engagement of all students that occur in that space. (Indigenous students must be engaged in how others think and construct the world as much as all students must be engaged in how Indigenous people think about and construct their worlds.)
4. none of this can be done without the regular appearance of Indigenous content in the curriculum and

without Indigenous students engaging in the same curriculum as other students to comparable standards

5. and finally, I would suggest that the careful and thoughtful selection of Indigenous content to inform the sequential development of the cross-curriculum priority is fundamental to achieving all of the above. That is, before the design of units of work to achieve particular learning objectives, we must have a better sense of what knowledge content is available to be drawn in and built on in the various content areas.

Indigenous Learners: Enriched Learning and Higher Order Skills for Navigating the Cultural Interface

I think the cultural interface premise puts Indigenous students and their needs in a better light. Firstly, Indigenous students are an increasingly diverse cohort demographically and educationally speaking. They are not a homogenous lump of humanity over on one side of the classroom. It is important we do not assume who they are as learners without knowing them as individuals in this space. In classrooms, teachers have to get to know their Indigenous learners as individuals and assess their learning needs accordingly.

But I hope you see that the conceptualisation of these learners at the cultural interface fits well with the Australian Curriculum, if that curriculum is populated with Indigenous content. Indigenous kids need to be equipped with knowledge, skills and language to navigate their very complex worlds of meaning. But further to this, in their future lives we need them to do more than survive the classroom experience. We want them to prosper, wherever they choose to live and work. As members of their various Indigenous communities, we want them to be creative, to be able to problem-solve by innovating knowledge and practice. They need metaknowledge and metalanguage to do that. They need to be able talk about knowledge and where it comes from and belongs. They need to be able to talk about language and how it represents and circulates ideas and meanings based on different sets of assumptions. They have to be able to analyse critically the convergences of different knowledge systems and languages, and reflect on the limits of knowledge and language in both domains to give full expression the world they experience. They have to be able to draw conclusions, make decisions, act and explain themselves. If you think this is too much, walk into the Indigenous community or workplace or even an extended family for a week or so and experience the tensions and contradictions in Indigenous worlds.

Why do we even think that teachers can educate Indigenous students without a serious curriculum plan that will develop their capacity to think and navigate in these complex spaces? What is being expected of Indigenous kids in classrooms? Think of a student, from a remote area, in a boarding school, grappling with the English language, in a classroom where English is fast-paced, where the context of knowledge is assumed, where his or her own language and knowledge is unrecognised or does not translate across into the classroom context of learning. We are expecting them to make sense and learn, but we can barely reflect on the sort of mental processing we require them to do in this space. These kids are navigating a complex puzzle board, in which half the pieces are missing. Those missing pieces have to be brought into their learning space and organised in a way that allow them to complete the picture.

We can see that successful management of the language issues is critical to all Indigenous students' success wherever they are socially or educationally located. So the question is not whether the EALD will empower Indigenous students. Empowerment is the wrong language to use. The word we need to use is 'educate'. English language skills are fundamental to the education of Indigenous students, we should say.

In terms of understanding what we expect of Indigenous learners and what they need to be able to do, functional literacy approaches can be seen as insufficient. From a functional or basic literacy perspective, some students will need very little language intervention and others very intensive language intervention in the traditional sense of developing competent English literacy skills. But all Indigenous students need higher order skills because the language they require to give full expression to the contradictions, confusions, tugs and pulls between different systems of knowledge and cultural practice is still to emerge, and indeed is part of our problem. So if we are educating Indigenous students to work and live in this space, they need more language for expressing the conditions of this space and their experiences of it.

However, while the implication is that deficit or remedial approaches are the wrong way to go, there is plenty of room for intensive skills approaches, especially if they are efficient. It just needs to be recognised that these are insufficient and should never stand on their own. One of the most critically important areas of classroom work is in developing Indigenous students' capacity for meaning-making and constructive analysis and this means always providing students with the wider context of any text or piece of content. Basic literacy skills are implicated in meaning-making of course but the presence or absence of prior or wider knowledge is also implicated in students' ability to access the context of curriculum and the deeper more extended meanings that are assumed from knowing that context. Where that context is not revealed or understood by Indigenous students it has to be supplied to them before they can engage and build on meaning.

It is not difficult to think of examples to illustrate this. We might teach a beginning reader to decode text, and sound out the word 'sofa', for example, but if a child has

no idea what a sofa is then the full meaning of the text is not engaged. Well, yes it is guessed at. This is an important part of the learning-to-read process. But this is where we must understand Indigenous students as additional language learners. If students are reading about a familiar context, or the syntax and surrounding words are familiar, or the general meaning of the text is being followed, they can have a good stab at filling in the meaning. Where those prompts cannot be engaged, students get no hooks and have no contextual prompts to draw on. This is why language immersion is not sufficient either. In this simple example, we learn something about many Indigenous learners at all levels of schooling. Their prior knowledge and the way they navigate through different but connected sets of knowledge and skills cannot be assumed. This means teachers have to make explicit what is generally assumed. Indigenous students need more talk around the content of their learning than many other students. Rather than the de-contextualisation that often occurs in intensive skills-based approaches, they need more contextualisation. While they need language immersion, they need the conventions of language and context of content to be made explicit. So an enriched approach to learning would always be thinking about the importance of hooks and connection and context and the relation to basic skills and contextual and conceptual understanding. While teachers need to do a lot of talking to their Indigenous students, Indigenous students need to be encouraged to do a lot of focused and on-task talking. Learning a language takes practice, it takes listening and talking with others. It takes others to listen and to reflect that back to Indigenous learners. Teachers' relationships with Indigenous students are therefore a critical element of successful teaching.

As another example, let's think of students being introduced to astronomy for the first time. Aha, you say, this is a good one for Indigenous knowledge. Let's include Indigenous knowledge and use of astronomy. Yes, great, I agree. But there is still wider context in the sciences that can enrich Indigenous students' understanding when beginning the study of something. Where does the topic area of astronomy fit in the sciences. What makes it science? Why do astronomers study it? How does it fit with the other sciences and so on? Can you have a career in it? Why is Indigenous astronomy not recognised as a science? Do Indigenous groups all over the globe have knowledge of astronomy? How do Indigenous people transmit their knowledge of astronomy to their children? Is it still relevant to Indigenous life? And can science learn anything from it?

Perhaps this seems so incidental as to be ridiculous, but the way the wider world of knowledge works is a mystery to many Indigenous people and teachers cannot rely on parental backfilling at home, as they can with other students. So providing as much context about the non-Indigenous world, in an incidental manner, requires and produces language building and knowledge building and it makes and builds connections between content and skills and wider knowledge. It requires explicitly drawing attention to the specialised use of language, the development of vocabulary, maybe insights into such things as scientific taxonomies. These are not all things that teachers have to teach or students have to learn and be tested in. Those elements still reside in the unchanged curriculum objectives. But these are things that teachers need to mention to assist students to make sense and to expand the number of hooks and scaffolds they have to fill in down the track.

This sort of talk around language, around texts, around knowledge, provides increasing numbers of advance organisers for students. It helps Indigenous students relate themselves to both Indigenous and scientific systems of inquiry and knowledge and assists them to think productively about those relations in terms of their own interests in their contemporary worlds. Perhaps some Indigenous students have little interest in astronomy, that is normal. But perhaps some do and begin to think not just about astronomy as science, but about the intersections between Indigenous astronomy and the science of it. I know that if there was one science I would like to have done it is astronomy. And that interest came not from school, but from the knowledge of stars that I was taught when young. I know the importance and value of reading the stars for navigation, and for seasonal knowledge and its application to gardening and marine activity. I am simply fascinated by the depth of scientific exploration on the subject. Nothing more than that shapes my interest. But my own traditional knowledge gave me the hook to deeper interest. And how good for self-esteem and belief in one's ancestors to marvel about what they worked out over thousands of years. It is that, which gives me belief in Indigenous capacity. I suggest kids do better with this sort of evidence rather than the leadership or the social work models we are currently obsessed with.

I mean there are heaps of learning implications in these intersections. My father and uncles navigated by the stars in the Torres Strait but that does not mean they did not use a compass or a sextant or that younger generations do not use global positioning systems (GPS); and GPS and spatial mapping, what an excellent hook for Indigenous students from remote areas. And spatial mapping, what an excellent example of spatial mapping is Aboriginal desert art. Do you see the curriculum work that needs to be done and the value of doing it? But these are hooks to deeper mathematical and scientific concepts. This is not part of some separate curriculum for Indigenous students and care has to be taken not to confuse science and Indigenous knowledge in students' minds. I will return to this point when I discuss intercultural understanding because we

need to sort out the different rationales for including Indigenous content into the curriculum.

Here, I want to be clear that the inclusion of Indigenous knowledge as a hook for learning standard curriculum offerings works when this is familiar knowledge for Indigenous students. Because we cannot assume that all Indigenous learners have this sort of knowledge, it reinforces the need to know your Indigenous learners. For perhaps a majority of Indigenous learners, in response to the unfamiliarity of the context of knowledge, the answers revolve more around the need to be more explicit but incidentally inserted talk around the standard curriculum content being used. However, in a similar way to skills development, at critical points, familiar knowledge content may well need to be used, depending on the particular learner. This is simply a good pedagogical principle for all students applied to Indigenous students. For example, using an easy familiar story to introduce students to such things as plot, themes, character, and so forth in the study of literature, reduces the struggle with the language or length of the book and allows students to come to grips with what is being asked of them in literature analysis and review. Difficult texts and new concepts may lead to giving up or very superficial attempts. So once again the scaffold has to be provided. Once students have the idea, then harder texts are easier to persevere with in that regard. In this case, for Indigenous students, it does not matter if the text is Indigenous or not, just that it is familiar to them.

So the use of familiar content is also useful for engagement of students at critical points of new learning. I think for conceptual development, using familiar content or examples is critical. There are nice examples of teachers getting students to cook in earth ovens to teach concepts of heat transfer and insulation, and so on. But students must then be taken on to make the connections to the wider curriculum content. When the aim is to understand the wider world of knowledge, Indigenous students need content that builds a larger and larger context so they can understand where new knowledge fits as they keep accumulating it. But they also need to move on to delve into deeper and more abstract learning. Heat transfer and insulation on space capsules or in built environments, or in climatology are very much part of understanding the world they live in.

Too often, the problem of Indigenous students' disengagement or failure to engage in deeper learning is surmised to be that the content is the problem when it is the lack of context for engaging the content and developing enough conceptual understanding to move into the world of abstraction. It has to be kept in mind that other students are constantly ingesting new content and attempts to adjust the content for Indigenous students imply that they cannot engage unfamiliar knowledge or that it would not interest them. Indigenous students require hooks and scaffolds and then they require the spaces in between to be back-filled.

So, engaging Indigenous students so they develop skills, capacities and standards cannot rely on content. It must be supported with strategies that assist them to build the necessary contexts for understanding the content and the necessary sets of skills for accessing the meaning and developing capacities for abstracted thinking, analytical thinking and critical thinking. In this sense our Indigenous students are looking like other students but with needs that require closer attention to the students themselves. Note that while Indigenous content does seem to be relevant at critical points, engaging students does not depend on the embedding of Indigenous perspectives.

Indigenous Content, All Students, and Intercultural Understanding

The inclusion of Indigenous content into the curriculum is not difficult. It cannot be such a hard thing for curriculum developers to build a sequential program of Indigenous content across English, history, geography, art, music, social studies, science, and even in maths.

The anxiety about including Indigenous content in the curriculum is understandable in the context of current Indigenous educational discourse. In this discourse the language of 'perspectives' connotes that at every step of the way teachers must be abreast of and able to impart Indigenous points of view and this involves subscription to a particular political or ideological position.

The concept of the cultural interface, however, provides a rationale with much more room and less prescription. Firstly, it is not preoccupied with the contest over the differences of meaning in the intersections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds of knowledge and experience in the first instance. It asks that there is recognition of all the disruptions, discontinuities, continuities and convergences of knowledge in this space and appreciations of the complexities that exist there. And these conditions of this space require appreciation and acknowledgement of the presence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous standpoints. So the interface assumes complexities as a condition of the space but does not see the solution to be the endless separation of Indigenous from non-Indigenous. And this sits well with the Australian Curriculum. If the aim is to develop intercultural understanding as a general capability, then all students must engage a whole range of ways of understanding and languaging and acting in the world.

This means that Indigenous content must appear in the curriculum, and that all students must engage it. Likewise, Indigenous students must engage the content and logic of other contexts of Australian diversity and develop their own intercultural understandings alongside other students. In this sense the Australian Curriculum is asking us to normalise the presence of Indigenous content. It is not

an oddity, a novelty, a token or an add-on. The continuing Indigenous presence has expression in the national language, in the national literature, in the national art and culture, in the national geography and demography, in the national history, in Australian law, and in the national heritage and environment. Our presence cannot be denied and nor can our contribution to the fabric of Australian history, culture, and environment. We cannot simply be relegated to the history and social studies curricula as remnants of the past.

If I can return to my astronomy example and ask you to think back to the questions I suggested were useful to build context for Indigenous students, I now want to suggest that talking to those questions is useful for all students to develop the general capability of intercultural understanding. The way that I talk about continuities, discontinuities and convergences at the interface seems perhaps overly complicated for primary and secondary students and their teachers. But I suggest that it is not too complicated to provide the evidence of these.

Just by including or talking about the continuing presence of Indigenous astronomical knowledge, for example, we begin to insert into students' cognitive schemas a quite different way of understanding the contemporary Indigenous presence. It becomes not so difficult to build knowledge about Indigenous Australians as people of knowledge, with knowledge connected to place and language, with knowledge developed for practical purposes to guide environmental, economic and seasonal activity, with knowledge that parallels a topic of interest to science, with knowledge that has been disrupted for many Indigenous Australians, with knowledge that is still used by many Indigenous Australians in their daily or recreational lives, with knowledge connections into other areas of knowledge, both in Indigenous worlds and western knowledge disciplines, with knowledge connections to ancient European knowledge and to eastern knowledge and middle eastern knowledge and African knowledge and other Indigenous systems of knowledge.

And can I suggest that if there was an accumulating body of curriculum content examples such as this, all students would begin to develop a much broader and deeper schema through which to apply a more productive language and logic for understanding the challenges in contemporary Indigenous Australia and the importance of valuing our continuing presence. All students, including Indigenous students would learn that there is a whole lot that they do not know but they are positioned to appreciate the complexity of it. And included in this complexity is the very Indigenous identities and Australian identities we seek to support viz., complex identities that do not fit well with the simple either or thinking of current discourse.

But of course, there is the question of the curriculum. What would teachers draw on? How much is incidental talking around Indigenous knowledge and experience all that is necessary and how much is the teaching of it important. Well, that is exactly where the work has to be done.

What teachers need, and I cannnot say I am familiar with State curriculum resources, are good resource guides for curriculum content. I hope that the conceptual framework for Indigenous education helps in this regard. However, inclusion needs to be done in a planned and sequenced way so that teachers can develop units of work with some confidence and so units of work accumulate into a body of knowledge about Indigenous worlds. The planning and staging of content is critical to avoid patronisation and the endless repetition of thematic approaches that have students doing the same projects over and over, year after year. As well, content needs to be sequenced so it builds in depth where appropriate, and does not where not appropriate, or so that Indigenous content appears in a staged and regular way throughout the schooling years and in this way maintains enough visibility to raise awareness of our continuing presence and contribution to the nations' identity, as students grow and mature.

The more that Indigenous content is accepted, the more that students are constantly reminded that modern Australia covers an ancient Indigenous Australia but has not extinguished it.

What it means to be Indigenous Australian should be able to emerge in all its complexity.

In one sense managing the classroom as an intercultural learning space is managing all the diversity in the classroom or indeed in the nation. Everybody's history should count and be appreciated. That said, Indigenous is not another migrant culture. It is and always should be acknowledged as the first culture of this land. We have paid the price and our sacrifices cannot be trivialised.

What I am talking about here is how to value and position Indigenous content in the curriculum as something that enriches the education of all students rather than something included to pacify the natives or to redress the sins of colonisers. Our ancient and continuing presence is everywhere and the curriculum goals should be thought of as opening the eyes of students to notice and recognise the Indigenous presence through a whole range of national and local landscapes and activity. And the more content there is, the more that presence is able to be recognised and accepted as part of being an Australian today.

The Place of Indigenous Perspectives in Teaching and Learning

However, in a deeper sense the task of developing intercultural understanding is more than managing diversity in an incidental way. It is about teachers managing the engagements among students. This brings us to the anxiety about Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum. Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum should not be equated to the inclusion of Indigenous content.

Indigenous perspectives across the curriculum presume Indigenous content but are about more than content. It is making sure that our perspectives are represented in the delivery of content. This is much more difficult for teachers because it presupposes that teachers know and can transmit these perspectives. I also think it particularly difficult at the schooling level because it does involve an appreciation of the partial nature of knowledge and the different investments in various positions that come out of our different histories, knowledge and experiences.

Teachers need to be thinking about when the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives is critical to the objectives of learning. In many situations they will not be critical. In many situations, it will be the accumulation of Indigenous content that will illuminate that Indigenous perspectives are different from others. In many situations Indigenous perspectives will be an issue in interpersonal interactions that may have nothing to do with a learning objective but, which will nevertheless, require management.

Teachers need to think of the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives as something that will assist them in their cross-cultural teaching work with Indigenous students. They also need to reflect that Indigenous perspectives will emerge in the intercultural space of the classroom and that they *will be contested*. Reducing opportunities for conflict will be aided by the way that content is selected, and managed in the teaching process. The current discourse has Indigenous perspectives embedded in close alignment to ideological positions. Perhaps counter-intuitively, I think that the more content is included as an accepted and therefore unremarkable part of the curriculum and the learning process, the less that ideological positions will hold sway. This is because they are insufficient for dealing with complexity. Conflict, of course, is always an opportunity for exploring complexities. But to manage it, teachers require professional development in this area.

I think teachers, especially at primary school levels, can develop awareness of the small steps that can be taken towards the goal of incorporating Indigenous perspectives, even if they are not culturally competent, to use the current discourse. Inclusion of Indigenous content will go some way to assisting in this process. So the first step is engendering all students' familiarity with and acceptance of the presence of Indigenous content. For example, a primary school teacher who includes Indigenous stories and picture books into daily story-time sessions is preparing students for the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives further up in social studies, or in science, history, or English curriculum.

A secondary teacher who uses an Indigenous narrative like *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* is including an Indigenous perspective on a particular era and event of Australian history. A teacher who uses the novel *Coonardoo* is not including an Indigenous perspective at all but a colonial one, even if it was a sympathetic colonial one for the time. However, that does not negate the use of the novel *Coonardoo,* but a teacher might understand the need to ensure that students understand that the representation of the Indigenous position would not express the experience as seen from the Indigenous perspective. Better still, a teacher might be able to push understanding of Indigenous perspectives even further by engaging students in the different positions from which both these books were written, because the events they depict are not so very far apart in time or place. That means talk around text, how texts are constructed, the production of writing and reading positions, and the multiple ways that different readers come to read the same text, and so on. All these issues, which induce anxiety, are opportunities to engage with complexity. In this way, a teacher can see the differences between content and standpoints, and students get some insights into textual representations and Indigenous perspectives.

Any curriculum development project would therefore be advised to discern these developmental pathways, and these differences between content and perspectives when selecting and recommending curriculum content. It may be that at the schooling level, that the approach to including perspectives is one that builds on the inclusion of Indigenous content and develops from there when there is opportunity, when there is relevance to the particular discipline area, when deeper study is indicated, and/or when appropriate to and cognisant of the presence of Indigenous students in classrooms.

So in this sense, the selection of content becomes the critical point. Resources for history teaching, for example, must include the Indigenous experience because to leave it out would be to deny the fuller account of Australian history. If that is denied then so is the presence of every Indigenous person who survived to tell the tale from the Indigenous side of the frontier. And so yes, there is work that has to be done in the selection and use of content. But I think we have to be realistic about what teachers can achieve and be honest about what we are doing. Honesty and clarity are much more productive than patronisation, or deluding ourselves into thinking we are doing more than we are.

Conclusion

I stated at the beginning that I choose to be positive about change. I look at the Australian Curriculum and I see a gap in it. The nice inclusionary statements are there and then nothing. But I do look forward to seeing these in some future documentation when they become available. I cannot give you platitudes or silver bullets. There is nothing ahead but the real work of curriculum development. Content needs to be selected and placed where it fits for visibility and sensible sequential development of strands. How it is taught and how it is used to develop

awareness of Indigenous experience for all students, and how it is used in the education of Indigenous students require further attention and development. That will dictate teaching strategy. But by considering the education of all students as a task at the cultural interface, we can harness Indigenous content and the knowledge, language and skills of all the discipline areas to assist in the education of all students. In relation to Indigenous education, the real work is not yet done. The big statements are easy, and teachers need much more assistance than they currently get. Clearly, teachers and schools need access to professional development. Clearly better curriculum needs to be developed. The question is, who is to do it? My conceptualisation of the cultural interface introduces a picture of complexity that suggests that the current advisory team would struggle to give advice that did not take us back to reify the simplistic differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students rather than provoke understanding and discussion of the complexities in the spaces we now all share. The task is not just to add in but to think about the selection of what we add in, the purposes for which we add in, the learning objectives that we want to achieve, the language and logic we need to develop to do what is really quite complicated knowledge work for both teachers and students. The answer to the challenges in Indigenous education will not be found until we begin to get to grips with the real work that has to be done at the interface.

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