Australian Curriculum Studies Association Conference – Darwin 2013

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Establishing a need

Concerns:

- ‘The Aboriginal perspective’ conundrum
  - Authenticity
  - Legitimacy
- Acknowledging a ‘lived context’
- Inclusive curriculum and Aboriginal achievement
A critical analysis of curriculum construction

Establishing a clear focus for the development of a 21st Century curriculum for Australia through:

- Providing clear guidance and support for teachers to address with all students the histories, cultures, languages and place of Indigenous people in Australia.

Through:

Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content has pedagogical and content legitimacy

- While building a coherent, sequenced narrative that underpins deep learning
Our story within the Australian Curriculum

Assessing the efficacy of an Aboriginal presence – five epistemological questions for the Australian curriculum:

1. How is the ‘Aboriginal person’, constituted within the curriculum?
2. How are the notions such as - Country, place, sovereignty, Indigenous identity and culture and agency to be understood?
3. Is there an ‘underpinning’ Australian ‘national narrative’ within the Australian curriculum? If so, how does it view the place and aspirations of Indigenous people within it?
4. How are the historical and contemporary interactions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people characterised within the curriculum?
5. How does the curriculum assist students to construct a future between Aboriginal people and other Australians?
Developing an understanding of these questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'Knowing Us'</th>
<th>Key curriculum constructs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. How is the ‘Aboriginal person’, constituted within the curriculum?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Search terms - Aboriginal:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Kin/kinship/families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Aboriginal people and the law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ‘Acknowledgement of Country’ – what &amp; who is being recognised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What does this mean?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowing:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who we are – from our position.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How and what is known; what is it that we see, and know the lore.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How we connect and belong to Country and kin, and our past and future.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How our being is based on our lived realities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Elements of an Indigenous Cultural matrix: 1

Defined by:
Land – landscape, nature, natural phenomena
Language – traditional and contemporary communication
Cultures – tangible and intangible aspects of lived realities, ways of being, knowing and thinking
Time – temporal realities, cause and effect relationships
Place – narrative, ritual and cultural meanings enfolded in space and landscape
Relationships – interactions between all other elements and connections within human, spiritual and ecological systems (Grant, 1998)
Mapping Indigenous cultural knowledge 2:

- **Ways of being – axiology and ontology**
  - Identified as Values and Protocols
- **Ways of knowing – epistemology**
  - Identified as Systems
- **Ways of thinking – methodology**
  - Identified as cognition and practical methodology (Yunkaporta, 2008)
A: Cultural mapping of content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Axiology/ontology</th>
<th>epistemology</th>
<th>methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Protocol</td>
<td>System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

66 items selected – 65% in methodological processes – many items factual and not primarily focusing on ‘ways of thinking.’
### B: Cognitive mapping of content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>K-2</th>
<th>3-4</th>
<th>5-6</th>
<th>7-8</th>
<th>9-10</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Remembering</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applying</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

75% of content situated here

60% content K-6
6% in higher order content

40% of Yr. 7-10 content
## C: Socio-political mapping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issues</th>
<th>Location of content</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship rights</td>
<td>Yr.6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mabo</td>
<td>Yr.3; Yr.10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciliation</td>
<td>Yr.3; Yr.10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Rights</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social justice</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Yr.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal rights</td>
<td>Yr.6; Yr.10 (4)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil Rights</td>
<td>Yr.10(4)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Determination</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stolen Generation</td>
<td>Yr.6; Yr.9; Yr.10(2)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaths in Custody</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal activism</td>
<td>Yr.6; Yr.10(3)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

60% social justice content reside in a single Year 10 History study to carry most of the
So where are we?

Engaging content

Improvements on earlier versions:

- Geography –
  - Higher order learning engages cultural concepts of Dreaming with the spiritual and physical worlds of Country
- Looking to understand Aboriginal people desire to connect to Country

- English –
  - acknowledge the effect of low SES on the lived experiences of people
  - The representation of Aboriginal people within ‘canonical’ Australian texts

Needs further work

Needs improvement:

- Lower-order cognitive engagement of content
- Little content engagement with content that allows for deep learning and understanding of Aboriginal culture.
- Broad range of issues about Aboriginal people not addressed
  - Contemporary manifestation of Indigenous knowledge
  - Knowledge, Place, culture and sovereign presence
  - Racism as a policy construct as a state tool of power and control.
- Place of Aboriginal content in curriculum achievement standards
Teachers – developing culturally affirming pedagogy.

What are we needing to do?

- Support teachers to use the curriculum to support student engagement in deep understanding about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?
- Link school developed curriculum with high quality teaching and learning practices?
- Support and culturally affirm Aboriginal students through quality curriculum and pedagogy
- Ensure that Aboriginal students are supported in their learning, and experience educational success

Authentically embedding Aboriginal perspective

- Explicit aim - to explicate deep learning with students.
- Focus - Aboriginal people’s connection is to Country and their connectedness to it.
- Interconnectedness - knowledge across the creative media.
- Teaching - positively situates Aboriginal people within their landscape – their dynamic engagement with ‘outsiders’ and their ongoing connectedness to Country.

Stage 5 English Unit – ‘Exploring visions of place and time’

Length of unit: 7 weeks

Aboriginal perspectives:
Aboriginal content in this unit provides students with a range of composing and responding opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal history and culture in Australia. In their study of *Visions of Place and Time*, students explore a range of experiences and achievements of Aboriginal people in historical and social contexts and the links between place, time, cultural expression, language and spirituality.

Many, though not all, of the texts incorporate Aboriginal perspectives of place, and there is an explicit aim in the unit to raise students’ awareness of and develop their understanding of the distinctive meaning of the term *country* as it relates to Aboriginal notions of place, identity, culture and belonging.

At the heart of the unit is a consideration of *Cross Country* (2007), a major cultural project in which 70 acclaimed Aboriginal artists were accompanied by a film crew and an oral historian on a month-long 4500 km journey along Western Australia’s Canning Stock Route. One hundred years ago, Alfred Canning surveyed the route and as drovers followed him, the fate of the Aboriginal people who were displaced has not been widely told, until now. At four camps along this journey to Country Aboriginal artists record their own histories and memories via storytelling and art. The project showcases the dynamism and breadth of Aboriginal cultures and reinforces the appropriateness of art as a powerful vehicle for expressing the connections between people, place and time.

Using curriculum content to culturally situate learning

- Situating the Aboriginal ‘perspective’ within the stimulus material, teaching and learning activities, and the embedded assessment task.
- Commissioning students with the task of both engaging in sustained writing, and an oral presentations on their understanding of the artists representation of ‘Country’.
Working the inside - centralised curriculum & pedagogic practice.

- How do we describe effective teaching in culturally diverse classrooms, or in schools that are culturally dissonant to that of the teaching staff?

- How is a high quality, culturally responsive curriculum enacted in the classroom?

- Literature on Culturally Responsive curriculum and schooling, while diverse and emanating from range of communities agrees on the following aspects:
  - Culturally situated learning
  - Demonstrate connectedness to community, their knowledge and aspirations
  - Situated within student academic success
  - Work to develop a critical consciousness and thus move beyond ‘standard’ assumptions about knowledge, capacity.
From commitment - big learning comes

- **Strong pedagogy that:**
  - Built on performance and student achievement, anchored on a firm belief in all students having capacity to being able to undertake the.
  - Clearly articulated high learning expectations – especially in student assessment.
- **Strong commitment to connectedness to ‘being their’ and ‘within’ the community**
  - Strong commitment to making connections to parents and other community members (running after school preschool music classes).
A Case Study

Context

• Experiences of a “experienced” early scheme teacher in a remote isolated school.
• One of a handful of secondary teachers - the only music teacher in school.
• Commitment to students and school to provide high-quality music experience for all students
• She and her family have sought to interact with parents and the wider community.
• Her experiences represent her ongoing efforts to reach out to students and provide a quality music education to students in her class.
Learning & Learning
Yr.8 Music - Film soundtrack

- Learning has happened in the last term
- The last 12 months has seen significant changes – established a learning relationship – built trust
- Beginning Yr.7 – high levels of disengagement, defiance, & feigned student helplessness
- Unit – teaching needs to fun, and have great learning outcomes
- Success - has been slow and uneven
- This vignette - insight into those moments of teacher despair and triumph built on a culturally responsive pedagogy model
Working at the margin – standpoint theory in practice

Supporting success:

• Student defiance – sensing student motivation
• Reaching the learning breakthrough point
• Finding the right strategy at the critical point – knowing the child
• Drawing on trust and humor to push through – sometimes at your own expense
• Having a belief in students
• Looking to find opportunities for all students to achieve
Many teachers are faced with limited understanding of cultures other than their own, and (with) the possibility that this limitation will negatively affect their students’ ability to become successful learners.

(Montgomery, 2001)