Queensland University of Technology
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Hart, Victor G., Whatman, Susan L., Sharma-Brymer, Vinathe, McLaughlin, Juliana M., & Dreise, Mayrah
(2011)
Exploring the experiences of embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives on teaching practicum through interpretive phenomenology. In *Australian Association for Educational Research 2011*, 27 November-1 December 2011, Hobart, TAS. (Unpublished)

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Exploring the experiences of embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives on teaching practicum through interpretive phenomenology

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Paper presented at the
AARE Conference
Hobart, Tasmania, Australia
December, 2011

Abstract

In this paper, we discuss interpretive/hermeneutic phenomenology as a theoretical approach to explore the experiences of three stakeholder groups in embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives on teaching practicum, a project sponsored by ALTC. We begin by asking the phenomenological question 'what is your experience of practice teaching?' An open, explorative, phenomenological framework seeks the meanings of experiences, not truths, from the participants' words themselves. Interpretive phenomenology is particularly suitable to explore educational experiences (Grumet, 1992; M. van Manen, 1990), as it provides rich ground for listening to the stakeholders' lived experience and documenting it for interpretation. In an interpretive process, perspectives on lifeworlds, worldview and lenses get highlighted (Cunningham & Stanley, 2003). We establish how through various project stages, interpretive phenomenology gets to the essence of practice teaching experience creating a pedagogical 'understanding' of the essential nature of shared experience as lived by the participants (M van Manen, 2002). Thereby, it foregrounds voices of agency, dissent, acceptance and resistance.

We consider how our research study focuses on the pedagogic voice of Indigenous pre-service teachers and the recognition of complex pedagogic fields in Indigenous education. We explain how this study seeks insights into their evaluation of pedagogic relations with two other education stakeholders – their practicum supervising teachers at schools and university staff involved practicum experience. As such, our study aims to support and develop long term, future-oriented opportunities for Indigenous pre-service teachers to embed Indigenous knowledge in the curricula. We conclude with some projections into the discourse on how Indigenous knowledge (IK) and perspectives might be diversely exemplified in pre-service teachers' professional works (particularly E-portfolios). We speculate how this change could in turn maximise opportunities for Indigenous pre-service teachers, their supervising teachers and university staff to demonstrate leadership in their field through the creation of future tangible products such as units of work, resources, assessment and reflection tools. The processes contextualising the cultural interface of competing knowledge systems (Nakata, 2007) provide important analytical tools for understanding issues affecting student-teacher-mentor relationships occurring on practicum.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, pre-service teachers, interpretive phenomenology.

SIG: Teacher Education and Research Innovation in Australia

Introduction

We would like to acknowledge the Palawa Aboriginal peoples who are the Traditional Owners of this land, and also from the land upon which this project has begun, the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples of Brisbane. We acknowledge the contributions by Mayrah Dreise, of her scholarship and contributions into the application for this ALTC project grant.[1] Mayrah has moved on to take up a principal's position with Education Queensland.

This paper is presented in two main parts. Firstly, we discuss the background of our project that is looking at supporting future curriculum leaders in embedding Indigenous knowledge (EIK) and Indigenous perspectives (IP) in teaching practicum. And we present two pre-service teachers' stories of their feelings and thoughts related to practice teaching. The project investigates how role modelling

[1] The project "Supporting future curriculum leaders in embedding Indigenous knowledge on teaching practicum", funded by ALTC, is located at Queensland University of Technology with two external partners.

occurs in the learning and teaching relationships between pre-service teachers and their supervising teachers on practicum in Queensland schools. The emphasis is on how such relationships evolve within the cultural interface (Nakata, 2002, 2007) which is an intersection of Western and Indigenous domains. From these explorations, the project intends to contribute to knowledge and identify possibilities and understandings in how teaching and curriculum become praxis.

Secondly, this paper focuses on using an interpretive phenomenological approach to explore the lived experience of pre-service teachers doing their practice teaching as part of their Bachelor of Education studies and that of practicum supervising teachers. The paper asserts that the approach is a valuable research methodology, one that firmly grounds the study's objectives of supporting pre-service teachers in this process. The focus of interpretive/hermeneutic phenomenology is to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of lived experience – the pre-service teachers' experience of their practice teaching, from their point of view (van Manen, 1979, 1997, 2008) and the lived experience of their practicum supervising teachers. The use of interpretive phenomenology clearly addresses the journey of pre-service teachers in 'becoming' professional educators. Their journey, "a process of becoming that is always open" (Dall'Alba, 2009, p.8) eventually reveals the meaning of their lived experience of engaging in the learning of their profession and becoming a teacher. As Downey and Hart (2005, p.50) remind us *"... perhaps asking the question is more important than arriving at any decisive answer. ...to illustrate why an understanding of antiracism is an ongoing and organic process for social change".*

This paper, at this initial stage of the study, does not discuss the findings of the participants' experience. On the other hand, it arrives at the rationale of using interpretive/hermeneutic phenomenology based on informal discussions held in mid-2011 (as part of student support systems at the Oodgeroo Unit) with Indigenous pre-service teachers who were embarking on their practicum journey/ies. It justifies the stand as to why interpretive phenomenology provides a suitable approach to seek meaning from the experiences of research participants for an interpretation beyond a conscious description.

Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous perspectives and formal education: A location of tension and contradictions

Schools are places where there is constant tension between the visible and invisible spaces that teaching and learning activities occupy. There are concerns about what is taught and what is not taught, and who is and who is not empowered to deal with the 'three message systems' (Bernstein, 1975, 1990) of schooling – curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Inarguably, these three systems of schooling work accordingly with the cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) of learners and teachers, as cultural capital performs a significant role in the three message systems (Delpit, 1988; McLaren, 2007). This is relevant for our project in understanding how pre-

service teachers coming from Indigenous cultures experience the three systems that are founded and maintained on the basis of Western knowledge and discourse.

Queensland State schools are now mandated through the Embedding Indigenous Perspectives Statement (Dreise, 2006) and Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives (known as EATSIPS) curriculum (ISSU-CSQ, 2011) to reform their curricula and teaching practices to acknowledge, respect and incorporate Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous perspectives. Given that schools are sites that have long-established, non-Indigenous hegemonic methods of making curricular decisions, this project acknowledges that Indigenous students have been excluded in most ways possible, but yet, are responding to the mandate to embed Indigenous perspectives and knowledge. On the other hand, research needs to explore school teachers' experiences of their ways to naturally include Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in curricula.

Nakata (2007) reminds us that Indigenous perspectives are only possessed by Indigenous peoples, although Indigenous knowledge is negotiated and understood in partnership with Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Non-Indigenous people cannot 'know' what Indigenous perspectives to embed without curricular engagement with Indigenous people. Indigenous knowledge, on the other hand, is a contested, ever-changing corpus of knowledge which Nakata (2007) argues Indigenous and non-Indigenous people may be able to understand, as their knowledge systems interface. Given the small percentage (2.10% across all positions in DET; see the table below) of Indigenous people employed in the Queensland education system, the achievement of embedding Indigenous perspectives in all state curricula is a challenging one.

Workforce diversity - equity group representation

Equity Group	Percentage of workforce at June 30 2011
Women in non-teaching senior management positions (SES/SO)	43.27%
Women in non-teaching management positions (A07 level and above)	54.47%
Women in teaching positions a(Band 5 and above)	59.27%
Women in teaching positions (Bands 8–11)	41.44%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples	2.10%
People from non-English speaking backgrounds	9.77%
People with a disability	5.73%

Table 1:

Workforce diversity – equity group representation

(DET Annual Report Department of Education and Training, Annual Report 2010-2011. http://deta.qld.gov.au/publications/annual-reports/10-11/resources/graphs-tables.html#capability)

However, the projects in embedding Indigenous perspectives have progressed in many parts of the world. Writing on integrating African Indigenous knowledge in Kenya's formal education system

Owuor (2007, p. 23) underlines that Indigenous knowledge is "typical and belongs to peoples from specific places with common cultural and social ties. Thus, Indigenous knowledge is a process of learning and sharing social life, histories, identities, economic, and political practices unique to each cultural group." She argues that Western models of education and economy (still operating in postcolonial societies of African nations) are not able to address the socio-economic problems at the micro rural regional levels in Kenya and similar situations in other parts of Africa. She hopes that teachers and teacher educators would adopt "practices that embrace both Western and Indigenous knowledge in ways that defy dichotomous presentation, foster relevance and inculcate a sense of self-worth." (Owuor, 2007, p.33). Observing the effects of economic and educational globalisation, Semali (Semali, 1999) argues that there are dilemmas that undermine and undervalue efforts to integrate Indigenous education in the formal school curriculum in Africa. As a rationale for revaluing Indigenous literacy in African schools, he calls upon curriculum designers to develop curricula that will enable students to be exposed to different cultural perspectives of African cultures. Semali emphasises community consultation, involvement and participation at all levels of curriculum designing.

Writing on the pedagogic tradition and socialisation that supports the local, oral knowledge system of a small tribe Baiga in Central India, Sarangapani (2003) explores the disjunction between the traditional knowledge and modern, formal schooling system. Whilst observing the growing interest in incorporating Indigenous knowledge in National Curriculum Framework in India, she raises questions about the epistemological compatibility of Indigenous knowledges some of which are oral knowledges, with the modern formal schooling structures that have literate tradition. Sarangapani (2003, p.208) suggests that "the survival of Indigenous knowledge systems is probably better assured by being kept out of the purview of the formal modern educational system." This suggestion is somewhat in contrast to what Owuor (2007) suggests, that is, adopting practices that embrace both Western and Indigenous knowledge with community participation.

Reporting on their work on embedding Indigenous perspectives towards reforming university curricula in Canada, Battiste, Bell and Findlay (2002, p.83) argue that:

> the broad and entrenched assumption of most…curricula is that Eurocentric knowledge represents the neutral and necessary story for "all" of us. This discourse of neutrality combines with the [educational institution's] serial obstruction or evasion of Aboriginal knowledge and its producers so as to shelter and sanitize a destructively colonial and Eurocentric legacy. Both Eurocentric discourse and anti-Aboriginal resistance attempt to impose cognitive assimilation on Aboriginal students while denying the reform required to achieve a respectful and productive liberation for Aboriginal peoples from the educational apparatuses of colonialism.

Similar to the arguments of the two researchers from Africa mentioned earlier, Battiste et al (2002) note that unless community participation is rigorously achieved in education, and without acknowledgement of the history of colonial education's privileges and benefits for non-Indigenous

students, initiatives tagged as "Aboriginal" will continue to be a paternalistic, gendered, classed and racialised politics of knowledge production and dissemination.

Significance of locating our project within the Cultural Interface

The cultural interface framework has evolved from a Western dominant practice of talking 'about' Indigenous peoples and cultures, with or without Indigenous people's input or perspectives. We argue that IK cannot be realised within the academy without disrupting this hegemony. As Phillips, Whatman, Hart & Winslett (2005, p.2) argued, the discomfort with teaching 'about' Indigenous people maintains the status quo of privileged Western knowledge through:

> the **un-critical** consumption of 'information' by the [mainly] non-Indigenous students; the **impossibility** of representing Indigenous peoples' cultures and histories through such a narrow, descriptive and circumscribed process; the distance that students were able to maintain from the **consequences** of knowing, from their own **privileged** positions.

It has often been perceived that Indigenous knowledge is out there with Indigenous communities. On the contrary, Indigenous knowledge is all around us and is with us. It includes all knowledge that is present, held (or withheld), exchanged, refined and reproduced in what Nakata calls "the cultural interface" (2002, 2007). This interface 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 (Nakata, 2002, p.285).

This lifeworld is the everyday life where socio-cultural influences intersect every moment. Thu, the lifeworld of teaching and learning environments at the institutional level is an environment of hegemonic relations. African-American educational practitioner Lisa Delpit (Delpit, 1988, p138) calls for a pedagogy of direct instruction with full awareness of the power relations between teachers and learners. Teachers use their power as expert source of understandings about dominant codes. Do we facilitate our students to use their own power in their understanding of their own codes as expert sources? How does this relate to our argument of decolonising 'doing Indigenous studies' or 'studying Indigenous peoples'? Who is the 'doer' and the person 'studying' here? What is their knowledge and approach? What is their level of critical awareness (Harrison, 2003)?

This project has been conceptualised from the standpoint that curriculum innovation in EIP should be driven by Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in the academy, which, following Nakata (2002; 2007), can be described as a 'cultural interface'. In this cultural interface, IK is in constant tension and negotiation with Western knowledge systems, competing for validity, authenticity and the right to be located in educational systems. This theoretical understanding of the cultural interface contextualises the struggles that pre-service Indigenous students face when negotiating pedagogical demands and

expectations of the university and professional school site, which have historically privileged Western knowledge.

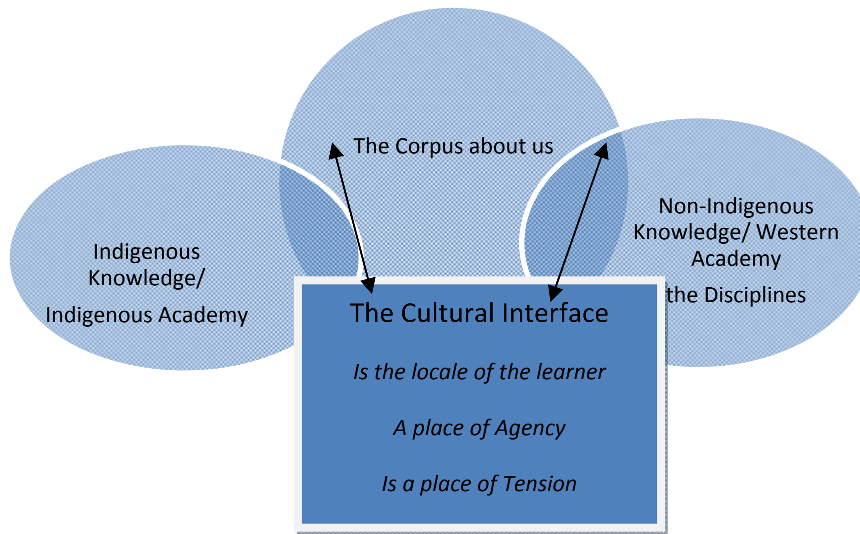

Figure One: The Cultural Interface (Nakata, 2011)

As Nakata (2011) illustrates in Figure One, there are three principles that shape the interface:

1) The Locale of the learner– where you are actually at. A pivotal question is 'Who is in the interface with you?' How do they impact on your position in the locale and learning?
2) Agency has to exist here. If you only depict people as victims or through a narrative of "cultural loss", then you strip them of agency. This principle acknowledges complicity of Indigenous people in this space to take away each other's own agency.
3) There is "tension" within this space. Some would call it choice, others call it power.

The cultural interface allows one to assert their position and knowledge in relation to others' position and knowledge systems. It theorises a platform to describe the locale, reveal potential agency and recognise and address existing tensions. These tensions emerge as a result of two competing systems of knowledge, manifested by rejection, resistance, ambivalence and accommodation – the gamut of human response is evident particularly in Indigenous history since European contact. Nakata argues this place of tension requires constant negotiation (2002, p.285). These concepts and the processes contextualising the cultural interface of these competing knowledge systems provide important theoretical and analytical tools for understanding the variables affecting the student-teacher-mentor relationships (locale, agency & tension) occurring on practicum.

Embedding Indigenous perspectives into Queensland school curricula: Some observations

Community participation has been well documented as a key factor in Indigenous student success in Australia (DEEWR, 2010). The current DET initiatives to embed Indigenous perspectives into

Queensland school curricula are rationalised under social justice and social change agendas to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school success rates and, in what might be termed a 'Sovereignty' agenda, to recognise the rightful place of Indigenous knowledges at the core of education systems in this country.

Genuine 'engagement' occurs when the processes for that engagement have been mutually developed and agreed upon; when students and community feel a sense of ownership over the process and are actively involved in decision-making which leads to greater recognition and embedding of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in curriculum. We concur that "Indigenous learning communities hold the potential to embody in symbol and practice the meaningful relationships, networks and trust that enable community development and capacity building" (Schwab & Sutherland, 2001, p.16). As Farrelly & Lumby (2009, p.15) argued, attempts to implement teaching approaches derived from an expectation of a universally agreed cultural competencies just cannot work because of the inability for such a skill set to be a product of deep engagement and shared ownership in that particular context.

Teachers' dispositions towards Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in education was highlighted as a contributing factor to educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students by the working party on Indigenous Studies in Teacher Education (Queensland) chaired by Penny Tripcony (Board, 2004, pp.14-15). This working party noted the importance of the following issues:

- Teachers' personal and professional attitudes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners;
- The links between knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and cross-cultural awareness;
- Teachers' ability to establish and maintain positive relationships with the community; and
- The need for teachers to understand local context when creating learning environments for Indigenous students.

As such, the attitude of supervising teachers towards Indigenous student-teachers doing practicum is of critical importance in supporting EIP on practicum, and ultimately, student success through the recognition of EIP & IK expertise in final practicum grading.

Within the debate about IK in curriculum, the positioning of Indigenous perspectives as a distinctive process is often unclear to the practitioners of education (such as school teachers, university teaching staff). Researchers coming from postcolonial societies such as African nations and India, quoted earlier in the paper, hold a similar viewpoint that the exact processes of embedding IK and IP within the existing Eurocentric, modern and formal curriculum are unclear. Embedding Indigenous perspectives incorporates broad and complex processes including struggles to shift mindsets and perspectives of non-Indigenous peoples, unpacking cultural constructions and exposing hegemonic

relationships, decolonising the curriculum and knowledge re-production, and focusing on systemic change within institutions (Owuor, 2007; Sarangapani, 2003; Semali, 1999).

By focusing on the understandings of IK by pre-service teachers and their supervisors, the project team can primarily identify and unpack the barriers occurring within the relationships between these two stakeholder groups. Secondly, a focus on Indigenous perspectives within our university's institutional structures creates opportunities for the relationships developed within the practicum experience to be scrutinised from a cross-disciplinary position in future research endeavours: applicable across all faculties using field placement as an important component of their degree programs. The common element in this research project is the existing relationship between the Student Support Centre staff, and each of the stakeholder groups. This research then creates a holistic framework for investigating a model for more effective processes of EIP within the practicum experience, one that will extend current cultural competency projects (Grote, 2008).

This project focuses on supporting Indigenous pre-service teachers, who are already presumed to have the ability to demonstrate curriculum leadership in Indigenous knowledges and perspectives by virtue of their cultural background, rather than through consistent explicit training. We are aware of the unfair and unrealistic expectations placed upon Indigenous pre-service teachers on field experience to "know all things Indigenous" by their supervising teachers and school administration has been discussed in previous research work (see Herbert, 2005; Nakata, 2007; Salik, 1991). This project builds upon such research via the starting premise that all students, including Indigenous students, need to be provided with specific learning and teaching experiences in order to develop their expertise in embedding Indigenous knowledges. The imperative for focusing upon Indigenous pre-service teachers as the initial cohort is that we intend to privilege Indigenous knowledges (IK) and perspectives that Indigenous students already possess in designing the most effective activities to support IK on their practicum teaching practice. Their experiences and knowledge will then inform the development of approaches in the second year of the project for a larger student cohort that includes non-Indigenous pre-service teachers who have completed or are completing the Indigenous Studies Minor/pathway.

Curricular reform within the university

Over the years, a mixture of successful and not so successful outcomes from professional experiences by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students motivated our conversations with various faculties of the university. The conversations would occur after students being graded a fail grade for their practice teaching unit, resulting in repeating the study unit and extending the duration of their course progression, and/or agreeing to graduate with a Bachelor of General Studies. Such practice reinforces

the current situation in which most Indigenous staff in schools are relegated to the roles of assistant teachers, without due recognition of ownership of Indigenous knowledges they bring with them.

We have discussed the university's aspiration in embedding Indigenous knowledge in the university curricula elsewhere (McLaughlin & Whatman, 2008; McLaughlin & Whatman, 2011). In 2001, the Faculty of Education, through a Teaching and Learning Grant, re-conceptualised the Bachelor of Education program and commissioned an Indigenous Studies Unit as part of its foundation unit offered to all pre-service teachers. An Indigenous academic was appointed to conceptualise and design the unit of study. This unit became compulsory for every pre-service teacher from 2003, with consistent staff development programs designed to inform teaching staff from the faculty of education (Phillips, et al., 2005).

Teaching this Indigenous Studies Unit as a foundation unit to all pre-service teachers has revealed positive and challenging outcomes, particularly from students' experiences and perspectives. On the one hand, some students have embraced the opportunity to understand Indigenous perspectives and knowledge, they question the lack and absence of such knowledge in school curriculum and begin to develop a critical approach to learning and teaching. On the other hand, non-Indigenous students resist Indigenous knowledge and perspectives, but continue to engage since this unit is required if they hope to graduate with the award of a Bachelor of Education. A comprehensive investigation into this resistance has been documented (Phillips, 2011), mapping out disruptions of colonial knowledge and how this disruption unpacks / inspires much resistance to knowledge that challenge colonial ways of knowing and being.

Upon completion of this foundation unit, some pre-service teachers elect to undertake Indigenous Studies minor (ISIK) (Hart & Moore, 2005). The knowledge they gain, the critical pedagogies and perspectives they develop, we argue, will influence the way they approach teaching whilst on professional experience. These 'critical moments' within field experience, successful or otherwise, need to be explored, analysed and addressed with teacher education and preparation for embedding Indigenous knowledge in Australian school curriculum.

The experience of Indigenous pre-service teachers doing practicum: Some explorations

Existing research identifies pre-service teachers' tensions occurring within student-teacher-mentor relationships when they are on their practicum. Research literature has pointed out not only pre-service teachers' but also supervising teachers' beliefs and perceptions towards their practice teaching and supervision influence their experiences; how pre-service view themselves as future teachers and change agents, but marked by their anxieties in role-perception and engagement in teaching and learning processes is well-researched (Chai, Teo, & Lee, 2009; Cherubini, 2009;

Clandinin, Downey, & Huber, 2009; Dee & Daly, 2009; Price & Valli, 2005; Wilson, 2008; Zipin & Brennan, 2006).

In her analysis of two teachers' experiences of supervising of pre-service teachers, Sim (20011) pointed out some complexities which implied a shift in teacher identities and revealed conflicting emotions about teaching. These experiences emerge as pre-service teachers work towards addressing a pool of Professional Standards (QSA, 2011) on which they are assessed as well as developing their capacity to respond the National Curriculum Framework (ACARA, 2011). Thus, these require building a positive relationship with their supervising teacher, meeting professional requirements as well as meeting with the assessment criteria of their university (Klenowski, 2009; Swabey, 2010).

As part of the 'talking up the research process' we spoke informally to two Indigenous pre-service teachers in 2011 about their pending practicum. These pre-service teachers sought support for their forthcoming practice teaching from the project team. Pre-service teacher 1 was doing her first practice teaching; she was not sure how much and how well the university lectures and unit content given to her prepared her for the forthcoming practice teaching. She pointed out the disjunction between other study units and the field experience unit. She needed to talk to someone who had experienced practicum and knew what exactly happened in classrooms and had some strategies for behaviour management. She was apprehensive about going into a classroom to a supervising teacher with authority to judge her against the Professional Standards.

Pre-service teacher 2 was going on her third practicum. Based on previous practicum experiences, she expressed apprehension about numerous expectations from her supervising teacher and the university. She felt the university teacher education program did not help much with rigorous preparation for the practicum to face the everyday practicalities of a classroom and the achievement of the QSA Professional Standards requirements. She acknowledged the importance of relationship between supervising teacher and the pre-service teacher. She did not recall doing any teaching and learning that incorporated Indigenous knowledges and perspectives in her previous practice teachings.

Our experiences as academic advisors at the student support centre provide the background to the tensions and anxieties when indigeneity and cultural identity impacts on pre-service teacher and supervising teacher relationship. Several pre-service teachers have shared their experiences of supervising teachers commenting on their Indigenous identity, and its implications for performance on practicum. Locating such tensions and anxieties within the cultural interface becomes increasingly significant.

There is little published research exploring the experiences of Indigenous pre-service teachers, and both Indigenous and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers engaging in embedding Indigenous knowledge in teaching practicum. Therefore, some key questions arise as we interrogate feelings and experiences of what is supposedly professional relationship. How do Indigenous pre-service and non-

Indigenous pre-service teachers differ in their experiences of embedding IK and IP in their practice teaching? What are the experiences of supervising teachers participating in this process? How are their tensions and anxieties addressed and with what support? An exploration of tensions and anxieties that are underpinning supervising/ mentor and pre-service teacher relationships will contribute towards addressing these issues within teacher education field as well as support mechanisms that can promote efforts of decolonising knowledge and curricula in Australian schools.

We believe an interpretive phenomenology is an appropriate methodological framework to explore the experiences of pre-service teachers embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in their practice teaching. This methodology will assist to illuminate pre-service teachers' existing knowledge and skills, the tensions that in their relationship with their supervising teacher, and the supervising teachers' experiences in supporting such an endeavour during practice teaching.

Interpretive phenomenological framework in this project

Phenomenological research illuminates the essence of an everyday, common experience as it is understood by the person having the experience. Phenomenology challenges assumptions, explores perceptions and beliefs, exposes emotions and feelings – by going back to the things themselves of all the complex phenomena we experience in our everyday life. It is a philosophy, method of enquiry and research process (van Manen, 1990). As a method of study, phenomenology is now a vast field of study that is realised in a multitude of ways, from social phenomenology, to transpersonal phenomenology to neurophenomenology (Laughlin, 1988, 2001; Sokolowski, 2000).

Phenomenological research illuminates the essence of lived experience: that is experience as understood by those having the experience. It aims to provide descriptions of the essence of experience as lived, by starting any enquiry with a mindset that is *ideally* free of previous thoughts about that experience.

Interpretive/hermeneutic phenomenology provides the lens of co-interpreting the meaning of what they experience, not so much what they consciously know at the outset, but by delving deeper into their lifeworlds (Lopez & Willis, 2004). The concept of co-constitutionality, that is, the process of arriving at meanings through a fusion of horizons is valued by the researcher immensely (Gadamer, 1976). The horizons are the assumptions, meanings and experiences of the researcher and research participants which are fluid and open to change (Flood, 2010, p.10). These horizons may also illuminate pre-service teachers' voices of agency, dissent, acceptance and resistance. The horizons may bring to fore what the supervising teachers at schools think, feel and experience with layers of acceptance and resistance whilst embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into practice teaching.

Interpretive phenomenology is particularly suitable to explore educational experiences as it looks for meanings of what people experience rather than what they consciously know (Grumet, 1992; van Manen, 1990). A phenomenological framework would illuminate feelings and experiences of experiencing a phenomenon – in this research, the phenomenon of being a pre-service teacher, doing practicum and reflecting on practicum experiences. The phenomenological process also explores how pre-service teachers (student teachers) make meaning from and within their lived worlds, and how practicum supervising teachers make meaning of their supervising experience whilst student teachers are embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into their teaching practice. It emphasises each participant's experience as unique and different whilst exploring the ultimate essence of the experience. It would also validate the individual woman/man's standpoint in elucidating the experience.

In an interpretive process, perspectives on lifeworlds, worldview and lenses get highlighted (Cunningham & Stanley, 2003). The everyday familiar (or unfamiliar) becomes the singular focus, seen through different lenses, thus making public the personal particular. Or on the other hand, what has been generalised about education and educational outcomes involving pre-service teachers can be interpreted by the individual pre-service teacher. Each such individual pre-service teacher and practicum supervising teacher can re-orient themselves to their lived world. The generalised notions can be unpacked with the provision of alternative analysis and viewing. This act in itself is profoundly meaningful for many individuals interrogating their lived experiences by engaging in a deeply reflective process. What could otherwise have been considered 'formidable territories' in a pre-service teacher's and a practicum supervising teacher's life whilst studying to become a teacher and starting their teaching practicum, and supervising field experience can be reopened in the reflective process to make a new beginning based on enriched self-understanding and self-awareness (Trotman, 2006).

Asking "What is your experience...?"

Phenomenological research places a profound emphasis on the formulation of an effective research question which has personal and social meaning (van Manen, 1990). Teacher preparation involves a balance of theoretical understanding of teaching, learning, and curriculum and the schooling contexts and field experiences through teaching practicum or field experiences. Teacher preparation experiences inform and influence pre-service teachers profoundly in their beliefs, values and future professional practice. Hence asking the question: "what is your experience of being a pre-service teacher?" and at a later stage asking the question "what is your experience of embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in your practicum?' is essential in supporting pre-service teaching on embedding Indigenous knowledges on their teaching practice. Asking these questions becomes necessary as it opens up their understanding of their location as a pre-service teacher, personal beliefs

and values associated with their imagination of being a teacher in future, and importantly their experiences of embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in their practice teaching.

For a practicum supervising teacher, we ask the questions: “what is your experience of being a practicum supervising teacher?” At a later stage, we ask the question “what is your experience of embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in curriculum?” Asking these questions opens up their reflection on their lifeworld of professional practice by describing and exploration of their own beliefs, assumptions, stands, viewpoints, expectations, values, knowledge and perspectives in relation to mentoring and professional relationship with pre-service teachers under the tutelage.

Embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into teaching practicum is a complex process for both pre-service and practising teachers. Phenomenology may help both these stakeholders to locate their practice, their pedagogical understanding of embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into classroom teaching. Phenomenological interpretation of their words has the potential to help both stakeholder groups to realise that their actions give meaning to the words they use (van Manen, 1995).

Summary: Locating EIK with tension and agency

The process of asking, listening and re-living the experience has the potential to reveal what is hidden from the academic research, pre-service teachers’ insights into their teacher preparation program, professional experiences and expectations, and how individual participant perceives their experiences of starting their teaching practicum with their knowledge and perspectives (Ahmed, 2007; Beresford & Gray, 2006; Herbert, 2000). Through the development of phenomenological interviews and multiple layers of interpretation, this research will suggest an alternative way to approach (Stone, 1979) and explore indigenous pre-service teachers’ experiences.

Indeed schools are locations of hidden curriculum (Bonnet, 2009). The language of curriculum delivery and experience by learners and facilitators of their formal knowledge assume different approaches, arising from socio-political cultures of individual societies. For example, van Manen recognises the North American language of curriculum as one of social engineering and empirical science which contrasts with the language of curriculum of the Dutch that is aligned to philosophy and dialectical phenomenology (van Manen, 1979, p.6). Writing on pedagogical sensitivity in 2008, states that teachers need a pedagogical language “in which they can express, in a professional manner, the pedagogical nature of their task (p. 5).” Learning that pedagogical language calls for a pedagogical experience, one which is a “phenomenological, philosophical, conceptual, and empirical exploration” (van Manen, 2008, p.8).

For a pre-service teacher, the experience of teacher preparation is a deep canvas of tensions, reflections and agency; to make meaning of theoretical knowledge and the ‘gaps’ experienced during their teaching practice (Boulton-Lewis, Marton, Lewis, & Wilss, 2000; Cherubini, 2009;

Schmidt, 2010; van Manen, 2008). Whilst this is a generalised and broad experience of most pre-service teachers, there is a need to explore the experiences of pre-service teachers from a diverse background. This need is more pronounced questions asked of the dominant discourse of Eurocentric curricula in the light of the evasion of Indigenous knowledge (Battiste, et al., 2002, p.83) and perspectives in postcolonial Australian society (Ahlquist & Hickling-Hudson, 2003).

Whilst Indigenous peoples remain the authority on Indigenous perspectives, Indigenous knowledge, which is a contested, ever-changing corpus of knowledge can be approached and understood by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in an interface where their knowledges and cultures meet (Nakata, 2007). How Indigenous perspectives can be embedded into the educational curricula, which is practised by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers is a challenging task, one that insists on acknowledging and respecting the voice of the Indigenous pre-service teachers whilst remaining responsive to the interplay between their experience, their conceptual understanding of pedagogy and practice of teaching profession.

With regards to embedding Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in curriculum, initial document analysis is completed in addition to the 'talking up the research process' conversations. The analysis focused on curriculum undertaken by pre-service teachers at our university, various assessment tools that the Field Experience study units use, and exemplars of E-Portfolios. We have been in consultation with the Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives in schools initiative of Queensland Government.

As a result of the above stages, using Nakata's (2011) framework of the cultural interface, we propose that pre-service teacher education be a cultural interface where Indigenous pre-service teachers' knowing of Indigenous knowledge and non-Indigenous pre-service teachers' and supervising teachers' knowledge 'about' Indigenous cultures and knowledge meet and intersect. This intersection must essentially reflect the tensions of each agent within that interface (Refer to Figure 2).

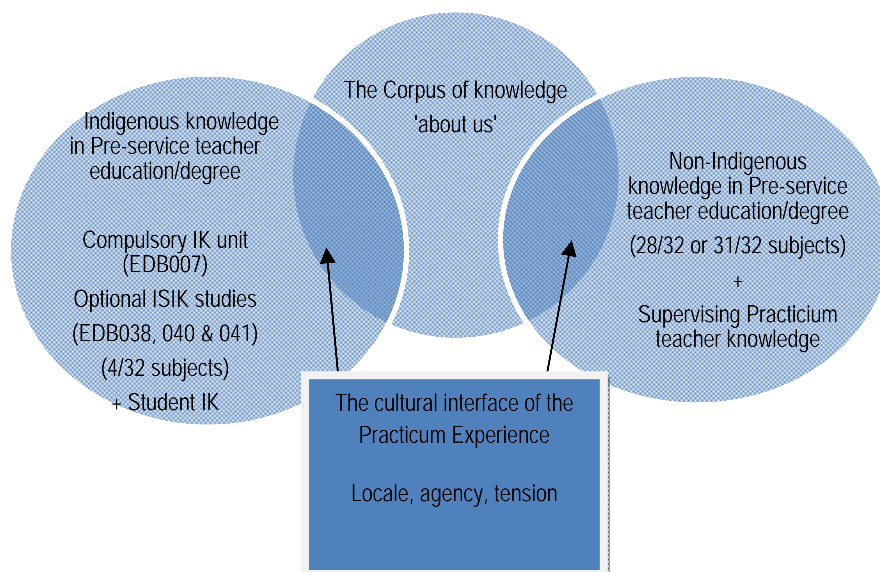

Figure 2 – the locale, agency and tension of teaching practicum, adapted from Nakata (2011)

Teasing out the sites within the cultural interface in which critical analysis of this corpus of knowledge can occur and is most likely to succeed and be sustainable, towards developing a model for embedding IK in curriculum. For as Downey and Hart argue: *the benefits of exploring the intersubjective relationships between western knowledge systems and the knowledge of Indigenous peoples have yet to be fully realised as an integral part of how education is reconceptualised…to better fit the social, economic and political context it is serving* (2005, p.57).

Weaving in the lived experience of pre-service and supervising teachers through phenomenological texts will offer new insights into this project whilst finding ways of supporting pre-service teachers in embedding Indigenous knowledge on practicum.

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