The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives, 2013, 12(1), 61–81
ISSN 1443-1475 © 2013 www.iejcomparative.org

Working towards the assurance of graduate attributes for Indigenous cultural competency: The case for alignment between policy, professional development and curriculum processes

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In the Australian higher education environment, often preoccupied with internationalisation of education and associated issues around intercultural competencies, there is an uncomfortable awareness of the commensurate lack of attention on 'Indigenisation of the curriculum' and the interconnected 'Indigenous cultural competencies'. This paper supports the argument that the optimum way for graduates to attain attributes connected to Australian Indigenous cultural competence, is for them to be in a learning environment where the staff they encounter also exhibit these attributes. To achieve success in this sphere, alignment is essential between key policies and plans, staff professional development and curriculum design. Such an alignment will give impetus to resolving the overall lack of knowledge and awareness within Australian universities around Indigenous cultural competence and knowledge. The case of one university presents an example of how this issue is playing out in the Australian tertiary sector.

Keywords: indigenous knowledge, cultural competence, internationalisation, graduate attributes, professional development.

This paper examines the significance of policies and other institutional documents in determining university graduate attributes associated with Australian Indigenous cultural competence. The analysis is situated within an environment informed by Universities Australia and the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) *Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities (2011a)* and the accompanying *Guiding Principles for*

Developing Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities (2011b). The recommendations in these documents are likely to foreground any related teaching and learning standards planned for release by 2014 by Australia's peak regulatory body for tertiary education, Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). 'Indigenous cultural competence' and associated 'Indigenous knowledge' are defined as:

> …student and staff knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian cultures, histories and contemporary realities and awareness of Indigenous protocols, combined with the proficiency to engage and work effectively in Indigenous contexts congruent to the expectations of Indigenous Australian peoples. (Universities Australia & IHEAC, 2011b, p. 6)

The subsequent complementary 2012 'Behrendt Report' (Behrendt, Larkin, Griew, & Kelly, 2012, p. 144) reiterates this definition while recommending that universities use the framework in all spheres of a university connected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including in graduate attributes discussions about Indigenous cultural competence. To enhance the success of graduating people with attributes related to this competency, one needs alignment of national and local policies with on-the-ground teaching and learning practices. Even though students can acquire – or may already have – various generic capabilities without explicit input from their university, if that university promotes and advocates Indigenous cultural competence it must be evident in the leadership and teaching staff of that university. Only then can students have an authentic opportunity to develop this attribute within their tertiary environment. For many staff to achieve a level of competency (or even a more basic awareness), universities must provide appropriate opportunities for professional development, or other adult learning, hopefully embedded within the requirements of employment. Such requirements underscore the need for universities to frame their operations on the principles outlined by the Universities Australia and IHEAC documents (2011a, 2011b) that call for Indigenous cultural competence to be incorporated into policy and practice at multiple levels across higher education institutions.

Theorising and determining Indigenous cultural competence and graduate attributes is relatively new, in comparison to work done around associated concepts in higher education on internationalisation and intercultural competence. Thus, university policies and plans will need to be regularly reviewed with input from across the institution and wider community – including Indigenous people and employers of new graduates. Such a dialogue will lead to Australian universities graduating students who have worked towards what we clumsily term 'Indigenous cultural competence' – which is unpacked in a 'culturally safe' way. The concept of 'cultural safety' is included because Dr Marion Kickett, a Ballardong Nyungar woman, and this paper's co-author, cautions "my experience with people who believe they are competent is that they also believe they do not need to learn anymore and such people are quite dangerous."

The goals of this paper are to analyse key concepts associated with Indigenous cultural competence within a higher education environment and show the importance of achieving alignment and integration between policies, programs, practice and, professional development (PD) in that environment. The story presented here is a complex journey that interrogates Australian Indigenous knowledge and the concept of Indigenous cultural competency within the lived experience of one of Australia's largest and 'most multi-cultural universities' (Curtin University, 2012b). This is done with the complementary voice, and local case evidence, of Dr Kickett, who has been central to the shaping and expression of the key concepts associated with Australian Indigenous knowledge and cultural competence' at this case university over many years.

TERMINOLOGIES AND PHILOSOPHIES

Graduate attributes and related terms

In this paper, 'graduate attributes' and 'generic graduate attributes' are used interchangeably to refer to the same concept. The phrase 'graduate *capabilities*' appears to have a broader outlook regarding what a graduate can do – if he/she has that named capability rather than the narrower concept of 'attributes' that has connotations about affective dispositions. The term 'capabilities' 'embraces competence but is also forward-looking, concerned with the realisation of potential' (Stephenson, 1998, p. 3) and several contemporary scholars, such as Oliver (2013) and Yorke (in Knight, Tait, & Yorke, 2006) prefer its more nuanced definition. It is fifteen years since Yorke cautioned that the lists of attributes, provided to students of every Australian university, could not "describe the complexity of a graduate's learning [and that] they may become segregated in curricula and miss the integration that is necessary for the demonstration of the capability to handle the 'messiness' of problems in the real world" (Yorke, 1998, p.176). Nevertheless, such published lists of each university's attributes/capabilities, enable critiques of the curriculum and opportunities for discussions around learning outcomes and benchmarking with other institutions.

Employability

The explanation for 'graduate attributes' during the early 1990s described them as personal qualities and values that all students could acquire by graduation regardless of their discipline (Higher Education Council, 1992). The preferred contemporary definition is attributed to Bowden, Hart, King, Trigwell, and Watts (2000 cited in Barrie 2005, p.1) extended this explanation to "include but go beyond the disciplinary expertise or technical knowledge that has traditionally formed the core of most university courses. They [graduate attributes] are qualities that also prepare graduates as agents of social good in an unknown future." To supplement this definition further, there is a caution from the earlier 'West Report' (West, 1998, p.57) reminding employers and universities to maintain an active dialogue so as to keep these attributes dynamic and relevant to the needs of the present-day workplace.

In discussing graduate attributes and employability simultaneously, Yorke's explanation (2006, p.8, cited in Oliver, 2010, p.10) of the attributes as "the skills, understandings and personal attributes that make an individual *more likely* (authors' emphasis) to secure employment and be successful in their chosen occupations to the benefit of themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy" prompts debate about how we specify the components of these skills for future graduates. There may be even further debate about how and what constitutes attributes associated particularly with 'intercultural competence' as employers appear to be vague about the meaning of this attribute (Prechtl & Lund 2007; Hagen 1999 cited in Busch, 2009, p.432). Whatever the outcomes of such arguments, the author agrees with Behrendt (2012, p.193) who noted: "Appropriately crafted Indigenous graduate attributes have the potential to significantly alter the cultural competence of the nation's professional workforce in the future and to improve outcomes for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients."

Generic skills and graduate attributes

As an extension of graduate attributes, students are expected to develop 'generic skills or capabilities' within the learning experiences of their discipline. The official terms used in the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) (2000), which determines the qualifications framework for the tertiary sector, is to label them as 'generic skills' or 'generic learning outcomes'. Though 'Indigenous cultural competence' is not explicit in the AQF, it currently could be incorporated within the concept of generic skills as per the example provided to illustrate the concept of 'values' which "can be expressed in terms of knowledge (of codes of conduct and manners), skills (behaving in acceptable ways) and attributes (showing respect for others, having a disposition to overcome stereotypes and prejudices)" (Bowman 2010, p.10).

Indigenous Cultural Competence, Cultural Safety, and Indigenising the curriculum

Though related to 'Indigenous cultural competence', 'Indigenising the curriculum' (within the Australian context) is a more complex idea. This phrase usually alludes to the embedding of Indigenous knowledge throughout the formal and informal curriculum of a course/discipline area. Here, it is acknowledged that any conversation about 'Indigenising the curriculum' must always include a "discernible Indigenous voice as Indigenous people insert their own narratives, critiques, research, and knowledge production into the corpus" (Nakata, 2007b, p.8). Also, as has already been mentioned, within the concept of 'Indigenous cultural competence' this paper acknowledges 'cultural safety' especially because of its significance to the lived experience of the co-author, Marion Kickett. 'Cultural safety' is best defined by Williams (1999, p.213 cited in Bin Sallik, 2003, p.21) as "an environment that is spiritually, socially and emotionally safe, as well as physically safe for people; where there is no assault challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they

need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience of learning together."

International Cultural Competence and Internationalising the Curriculum

'International Cultural Competence' or 'intercultural competence' refers to "a dynamic, ongoing, interactive self-reflective learning process that transforms attitudes, skills and knowledge for effective communication and interaction across cultures and contexts" (Freeman, et al., 2009, p.13). This term is situated within the multifarious concept of 'Internationalising the curriculum'. It origins emanate from guidelines created by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) referring to 'a curriculum with an international orientation in content and/or form, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context and designed for domestic and/or foreign students (OECD cited in Van Der Wende, 1997).

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

Transformative learning refers to "the process by which we transform our taken-for granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action" (Mezirow, 2000, pp.7-8). Transformative learning involves "participation in constructive discourse to use the experience of others to assess reasons justifying these assumptions, and making an action decision based on the resulting insight" (Mezirow, 2000, p.7). Also, unpacking Indigenous cultural competence may be challenging, as evidenced in the case outlined, but a transformation can only occur if there is discomfort first, for if one is content and comfortable, there is unlikely to be any need or desire to change/transform (Mezirow, 1997). This transformative process is an essential part of exploring how to assure the graduate attributes are realised by both the staff and the students of our universities.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

A social justice position is taken in this paper with acknowledgment that for an organisation to aspire and work towards any Indigenous cultural competence, it must have "an organisational culture which is committed to social justice, human rights and the process of reconciliation through valuing and supporting Indigenous cultures, knowledge and peoples as integral to the core business of the institution" (Universities Australia & IHEAC, 2011b, p.3; Young, 1990, p.5). Hence, there are problems with trying to explicate a social justice theory and the authors of this paper concur with Young that they would too rather provide 'a reflection on justice' that it "begins with heeding a call, rather than mastering a state of affairs, however ideal. The call to 'be just' is always situated in concrete social and political practices that precede and exceed

the philosopher". Social justice in this context is also understood to be inextricably connected to Human Rights as expressed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007). A more recent local declaration on this topic was made by Mick Gooda in the 2012 Southgate Oration (Gooda, 2012) when he harnessed the Declaration as "a good place to start, as it gives 'necessary practical guidance' about how to engage with Aboriginal people – especially in terms of cultural competency" .

The foundational and universal values of 'social justice, equity and social responsibility' (Haigh & Clifford, 2011, p.580) extend the "social justice concept and underpin the graduate attributes and policy discussion". They also underscore such attributes as sustainability and a compassionate awareness of equality and sensitivity to other people's cultures and beliefs. Haigh and Clifford (2011) argue that these will be the most valued attributes in the graduate of the future and advocate for a move away from a focus on individual achievement leading to material success and the education system's 'present 'exterior systems' focus' to a "focus on an agenda of personal responsibility and on individual and social interior attributes". Haigh and Clifford's graduates are 'world citizens' who know they are charged with the responsibility to take care of the whole planet – and to do this, they need to connect and become more aware of the various First Nations such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. In Australia's First Nations peak higher education organisation, IHEAC, and Universities Australia key documents, Principle 2 is of key relevance: "All graduates of Australian universities will have the knowledge and skills necessary to interact in a culturally competent way with Indigenous communities" (2011b). As mentioned earlier, Dr Kickett seeks to extend this principle and add the words 'safe way' alongside 'competent'. Kickett states that:

> "No-one can ever be totally competent and my experience with individuals who believe they are 'culturally competent' is that the individual is not culturally safe as they believe they have reached a place where they do not need to learn anymore as they know it all. Some believe they even know more than an Aboriginal person; they become quite paternalistic and sadly they don't even know they are."

INTERNATIONAL VERSUS INDIGENOUS

It is imperative that we critique, and shape policies and protocols associated with Indigenous cultural competence alongside those relating to International cultural competence. This is best done in open, continual dialogue with the local Indigenous, International, and non-Indigenous students, staff and communities who will be affected by the outcomes. What is evident in the discourse around internationalisation of education, with its significant research history and open discussions, is a similar level of serious engagement with Indigenous knowledge and Indigenisation of the curriculum. It is the activities related to the 'intercultural' graduate attributes that are inextricably expressed as being part of internationalisation, just as they are to Indigenisation of curriculum – as in the case explored here – (see Curtin Graduate

Attributes website (2012a), providing the convergent points for such a discussion. Thus, opportunities for regular dialogue, about relevant protocols and policies with the key stakeholders will enable more meaningful expressions of how both the local (Indigenous cultural competency) and the global (International cultural competency) can interconnect and scaffold into university student and staff learning.

As Bowman (2010, p.6) noted, there is pressure on educational institutions to graduate people not only with discipline specific skills but also with a range of generic skills – including skills that can be articulated around "globalisation and international mobility". The *Australian Curriculum* includes 'Intercultural Understanding 'as one of its nine 'general capabilities', and they have defined this as the "appreciation and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity" (ACARA, 2013). It is a logical progression to further develop this capability into the tertiary education arena and to broaden it even further to challenge students "to address levels of concern that rise through the self and the social toward the welfare of the whole planet" (Haigh & Clifford, 2011, p.581) and this, in turn, should be reflected in aligned policies and processes where these students are studying.

GLOBAL VERSUS LOCAL

Extending the preceding concepts into the realms of what it means to be 'global' versus 'local', it is noteworthy that in contemporary Australian projects researching graduate attributes, discussion about global citizenship is often connected with attributes about the 'local' (Barrie et. al, 2009; Oliver, 2011). In the proposed policy framework based on research from the National Graduate Attributes Project, Barrie (2005, p.9) named 3 attributes including one entitled 'Global Citizenship' with the following explanation: "Graduates of the university will be global citizens, who will aspire to contribute to society in a full and meaningful way through their roles as members of local, *national and global* communities." To achieve this complex attribute, students need opportunities for safe spaces to develop awareness, knowledge and relationships with local, national and global communities, such as those provided in the classrooms referred to in the 'Indigenous Cultures and Health' section of this paper. In a recent article focussing on Asia, Michael Wesley's (2011, p.29) critique that Australia's "unwillingness to change our education models as [being] the product of an arrogant belief that in the western school, college or university rests the pinnacle of knowledge and teaching by humanity", could also be applied to why Australian universities struggle to engage with our First Nations' knowledge systems. However, in our globalised world, without a commensurate awareness – and competency – with the local, (that is, Indigenous cultural competencies) our graduates will miss the fundamental building block for the transformation required to enable them to be truly global citizens.

One caution in this discussion comes from Davis (2008) who supports the growing international movement developing laws and standards for the acknowledgment and protection of the rights of Indigenous peoples. He cautioned that "the parallel risk of this globalisation will tend to promote a universalising or essentialising of Indigenous

culture and heritage at the expense of acknowledging its place-based and localised nature" (2008, p.31). Therefore, arguments articulating separate graduate attributes for general intercultural competence and those associated with the local Indigenous cultural competence have merit, at this time in Australia's history. The research, resources, and policies to enable staff and students to work with international – and new immigrant – students have existed for several years, whereas similar research, resources and policies associated with Australia's First Nations is relatively little and new, as evidenced by the Universities Australia publications in 2011.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

In the discussion about Indigenous cultural competency and graduate attributes one cannot separate discussion about Indigenous Australian knowledge and how this is valued in the academy. The 'Bradley Review' (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, & Scales, 2008) by the Australian government's Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) was unambiguous in stating, "it is critical that Indigenous knowledge is recognised as an important, unique element of higher education, contributing economic productivity by equipping graduates with the capacity to work across Australian society and in particular with Indigenous communities" (Bradley et. al, 2008, p.33). The authors clarified they were referring to more than just subjects with Indigenous content but rather to "embedding Indigenous cultural competency into the curriculum to ensure that all graduates have a good understanding of Indigenous culture" (Bradley, et al., 2008, p.33).

In response to the Bradley Review, the Australian government announced a ten-year reform plan for higher education in the 2009-10 budget and this included the establishment of TEQSA. TEQSA has several regulatory functions and it is within the current TEQSA Standards Frameworks discussions, including the ongoing arguments about an Australian version of the American Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLAs) (Department of Industry Innovation Science Research and Tertiary Education, 2012) to assess university students' generic skills, that determine the framework around Indigenous cultural competency or/and knowledge best fits. Another proposal that could have linked to Indigenous Cultural Competencies was that TEQSA was contemplating using the CLAs to measure the impact of students' engagement with their university by assessing their generic skills upon entry and at graduation. The Discussion paper had alluded to the need for the sector to "develop a culturally appropriate version of the CLA for the Australian environment" (Department of Industry Innovation Science Research and Tertiary Education, 2012, p.1). Though the TEQSA website still contained a document outlining the CLA and how it could be tested in Australia, in June 2012, the decision was later made that the CLAs did not appear to be 'fit for purpose' (Advancing Quality in Higher Education Reference Group, 2012) in the Australian context and to date, there is no further information on how the dialogue around the generic competencies, and thus anything related to Indigenous cultural competency, will be assessed and monitored at the national level.

However, the involvement of the IHEAC and Universities Australia, especially via the 'National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities (2011a); the Guiding Principles for Developing Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities (2011b) and the Behrendt Report (2012), strongly suggests that these documents will be the basis for any TEQSA reporting, benchmarking and related emerging standards. These significant documents were created in response to earlier research and recommendations from IHEAC – namely from the report which included a recommendation for the enhancement of the status of Australian Indigenous cultures and knowledge within universities (IHEAC, 2006). Enhancing the status of Indigenous cultures and knowledge is something that several universities, including Curtin University in Western Australia, have been working towards over the last three decades.

In considering the national agenda, it is also worth noting that just as the idea of using policy, supported by staff education to drive positive change in issues related to Australian Indigenous education, is advocated at primary and secondary school level (Ma Rhea & Anderson, 2011), so could a similar framework work at the tertiary level. Policies and professional development which have been informed and connected to global graduate attributes – and the United Nations 'Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' (2007) and local Reconciliation Action Plans, can now overlay conversations and along with the principles outlined in the Universities Australia documents, inform the national standard for graduate attribute/s linked to Indigenous Cultural Competencies for all graduates.

LOCAL CONTEXT – CURTIN UNIVERSITY

Policies and plans: Indigenisation of the Curriculum and the RAP

Curtin University first attempted to Indigenise the curriculum in 1995 with the Aboriginal Curriculum Project (Collard, Walker & Dudgeon, 1998). Another Indigenising the Curriculum project commenced in 2007. This was connected with a whole-of-university course review project known as 'C2010' (Curtin University, 2008a), and linked back 10 years to the University's first public statement of reconciliation in March, 1998 (Sonn, Garvey, Bishop, & Smith, 2000; Curtin University, 2008b, p.3) and a subsequent drive to 'Indigenise' the curriculum was motivated by the desire to have curricula that was inclusive of Australian Indigenous students as well as other students. When the project was recreated in 2007, the aim was to educate all students about Australian Indigenous knowledge. By 2008, this purpose had been encapsulated in the university's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), published in February 2008. The RAP stated a vision that the University – being the first university to have a RAP – would be "a place of learning that respects Indigenous culture and diversity; a place where Indigenous and non-Indigenous people come together to learn their chosen discipline, contextualised within Indigenous culture and history" (see Curtin's RAP on the Reconciliation Australia website).

The plan, with its outcomes and deliverables associated with various areas of the university, was further enhanced in 2012 when it was embedded into the Indigenous Governance Policy. Though still in draft form at the time of print, the policy would assist in clarifying the accountability of all the deliverables. Just as the Behrendt Report (Behrendt, et al., 2012, p.148) advocates, this university's RAP is connected to the university's plans and reports directly to the Deputy Vice Chancellor Education, rather than to an Indigenous education area of the university.

The Curriculum: a 'triple i curriculum' and the graduate attributes

A further indirect link to the RAP was evident in the enhancement to the university's graduate attributes in 2008 in the '*Triple i curriculum'* with the news release by the Vice Chancellor, Jeanette Hackett, stating this "curriculum model will meet student and industry needs by ensuring industry links, intercultural and Indigenous awareness, and interdisciplinary study are clearly embedded within each course" (2008). The three 'i's were named as 'industry, intercultural, and interdisciplinary'. The model also added two further words to the broader capability 'intercultural' by naming the locally associated capability, 'Indigenous', beside the global one, 'International'. The university curriculum review process, required staff to address the three 'i's in their courses plus the now more explicit 'Indigenous' and 'International' superimposed onto the nine current graduate attributes. The ensuing documents from this process were ratified within the university committee processes. These foci had been established based on research data (Oliver, 2011), consultation with the university community, experts and industry, and by national inducements (such as the IHEAC reports). The resultant policies, plans, and papers form 'textual accounts' of the institution and epitomize the 'corporate consensus' of the institution (Ball, 2003). This is reiterated by the Vice Chancellor who states that the University has "a long standing commitment to Indigenous education and culture and knowledge" (Curtin University, 2012b). Research and exploration has been recognised with national awards and grants (including an Office of Learning and Teaching *Teaching Fellowship* to Professor Beverley Oliver for 'Assuring graduate capabilities: evidencing levels of achievement for graduate employability' (2013). The University's Graduate Attributes Policy has been under review in 2013 and it is hoped the current explanation of Graduate Attribute 7 which contains the sentence 'Recognise the importance of cultural diversity particularly the perspective of Indigenous Australians' (Curtin University 2012a) will include a further reference to Indigenous Australian cultural competence, given the earlier call by IHEAC in 2007 for the inclusion of Indigenous cultural competence as a graduate attribute –under Key Strategy 4 of the *Ngapartji Ngapartji – Yerra: Stronger Futures Strategy* (IHEAC, 2007, 5) – along with guidelines in recent key documents (Universities Australia & IHEAC, 2011a, 2011b; Behrendt, 2012).

Though there are a myriad of ways Australian universities outline how their attributes are reviewed, assessed or assured (Barrie, Hughes & Smith 2009; Oliver, 2011), the comprehensive curriculum mapping tools along with the auditing of policies, should

continue to maintain a degree of transparency regarding outcomes associated with this attribute. Some universities have done exemplary work in this area with the Charles Sturt University website, *Indigenous Curriculum* (2012) providing an explicit declarative stance on this subject area and an excellent model for other universities to emulate.

The subject: 'Indigenous Cultures and Health'

Though Curtin University offers Indigenous Australian Cultural Studies major, related units for Education students and several courses from the CAS for Indigenous students, it is in the Faculty of Health Sciences that there is the strongest evidence of the progress in knowledge associated with Indigenous cultural competence, for both students and staff. In 2011 a common first year curriculum was introduced across the Faculty and this included a common core unit, *Indigenous Cultures and Health (ICH),* which all students in all health courses were required to study. The unit had been preceded by a unit originally taught in the early 1990s in the School of Psychology (Sonn, et al., 2000, p.144) followed by a later, 2006, compulsory unit in the School of Nursing and Midwifery entitled, *Indigenous Health and Culture*. This unit was compulsory for nursing students and it won the Neville Bonner award in 2010 for its contribution to Indigenous education in Australia (Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT), 2012).

The key strength of the current unit is that it is team-taught by Indigenous and non-Indigenous teaching staff who partner together to deliver the content and support the students, and each other. The team is led by Dr Marion Kickett and Dr Julie Hoffman (a Whadjella,[1] academic). The transformation experienced by the staff who teach in this unit appears to be powerful as attested in pending publications captured by those associated with the leadership project (Scott, et al., 2011). Kickett is clear that "this unit is not only about empowerment of my own people, but also the empowering of others [non-Aboriginal tutors]".

The students too, appear to be happy with the unit. The 2011 Curtin Annual Report (2012b) reported a percentage agreement of 94% 'overall satisfaction' for the subject in the student evaluation survey (*e*VALUate). This response came from more than 1600 students and reflected extremely positively on how well this subject has been delivered and received. Faculty leadership in this area have acknowledged the huge positive contribution of the Indigenous staff in their added roles in the team in up-skilling their non-Indigenous colleagues in developing Indigenous cultural competence.

Professional Development

As researchers on the National Graduate Attributes Project (GAP) project (Barrie, et al., 2009) noted that staff development is an essential focus for a university to ensure any developments or changes to occur related to teaching graduate attributes. In addition, just as a university can be considered "a business enterprise" (Marginson &

1 Whadjella – Nyungar word for a person of European heritage

Considine, 2000), it is within the plans and policies of this 'enterprise', that Indigenous cultural competence must be held and attended to.

University staff need an understanding of their particular university's generic graduate attributes so that they can assist their students to graduate with these "skills, knowledge and abilities, beyond disciplinary content knowledge, which are applicable to a range of contexts" (Barrie, 2004, p.262) and are thus transferable to global contexts. All universities purport to be graduating students who have attained a list of attributes, though it is difficult to ascertain the level of engagement or of even a performative understanding of these same attributes, in the staff who teach them. Without addressing the issue of whether or not the teaching staff comprehend what these graduate attributes might be, one cannot discuss how to develop them in students.

During the university-wide curriculum review project (Curtin University 2008a) at Curtin University from 2007 to 2010 the use of detailed curriculum mapping tools provided evidence that staff were experiencing difficulties engaging with and developing course learning outcomes associated with the attributes linked to intercultural communication and global perspectives. Simultaneously, the author regularly encountered staff who expressed their discomfort with teaching graduate attributes that they did not 'know' about and that were not explicitly connected to their discipline area. This was especially relevant to the attribute alluding to Indigenous knowledge. Barrie (2004) confirms this staff sentiment, from his research projects on graduate attributes. However, just as we expect all the students – whether, for example, they be maths graduates or social work graduates – to have acquired all of the attributes named at their university, it becomes imperative that the 'knowledge apartheid' (Anderson, Robertson & Rose, 2006, as cited in IHEAC report, 2006) in this area, and experienced especially by our non-Indigenous staff, needs to be addressed if they in turn are to facilitate students to attain the related attribute. Nakata (2007b, p.13) is unequivocal that our "educators need themselves to develop their scholarship in contested knowledge spaces of the cultural interface and achieve for themselves some facility with how to engage and move students through the learning process". This is particularly relevant to the tutors who work in the already named ICH unit. All the tutors are interviewed personally by Kickett and Hoffman who select a team of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who they ensure have a background and understanding of issues surrounding Aboriginal people. They also ensure that the Aboriginal tutors are able to deal with the sensitive questions students may pose. Dr Kickett explains, "What is important to both Julie and I, is that the students are safe and that the tutor too is safe. Thus, much support is provided by us for all the tutors". This type of extraordinary education and support in cultural competency and safety is invaluable professional development that a university needs to acknowledge this formally as staff learning.

A further challenge to the uptake of cultural competency staff development in a research intensive university is that staff may be less likely to voluntarily engage in

it, without the added authority of policy and associated compliance requirements. However, though compliance to local and national agendas may be the drivers for staff to engage, for such people to achieve any appreciation of Australian Indigenous knowledge and cultural competency, it is essential for them, and those delivering the training, to have a culturally safe space to meet and talk. It is crucial to have this space where people with their various world views gather to, with respect, listen and learn from each other and challenge racism (Fredericks, 2008). Such dialogue is more than cultural 'awareness'. It is the type of professional development where people are given transformative opportunities to work towards developing their intercultural competence generally (global schema), and Australian Indigenous cultural competence specifically (local schema). Whatever the staff learning experiences, when 'teaching' anything associated with Indigenous cultural competence within their discipline areas, staff must demonstrate a positive openness towards Indigenous peoples and knowledge. Though these same staff do not need a broad knowledge, they *do* need to show evidence of a minimum level of awareness of the existence of Australian Indigenous knowledge systems and the ways of working of the local Indigenous peoples (for example, the Whadjuk Nyungar people of the Perth area in Western Australia). The staff learning which needs to occur has a further nuanced layer as such teachers need to learn to "orient students to approach this [Indigenous] knowledge, not as facts of Indigenous realities but as the context that provides the conditions for intellectual reflection and engagement with contemporary Indigenous issues" (Nakata, 2007a, p.225). The existing opportunities to explore such learning in this case, though present, require substantial further commitment and resourcing by the University.

WOW: 'The Intercultural Curriculum' and other professional development

In this case university, there are three professional development options available to staff who want to begin to explore Indigenous cultural competency. There are the 'Ways of Working (WOW) with Aboriginal people' workshops run by the Centre for Aboriginal Studies (CAS); The 'Courageous Conversations about Race' organized with Malcolm Fialho (University of Western Australia, 2012); and, 'The Intercultural Curriculum' workshop, as part of the University's Foundations program. Foundations programs provide introductions to teaching and learning in a university and are offered in almost all the universities across Australia and New Zealand. In this case, it is policy compliance that drives participation in specified workshops of this program; however, there are several workshops that are optional for staff across the university. From January 2011 to January 2013, 163 staff participated in the half-day 'Intercultural Curriculum' workshop. This workshop has a social justice framework and aims to challenge staff to teach in a curriculum that is responsive to intercultural and international perspectives and to Australian Indigenous peoples. The workshop achieved overwhelmingly positive feedback with almost 100% satisfaction recorded by participants, who expressed appreciation for the opportunity to explore intercultural issues within their curriculum and the university's associated policies. Many staff express their appreciation for the opportunity to meet colleagues from the

CAS as for many, this is their first opportunity to meet Australian Indigenous people and discuss Indigenous knowledge, albeit within a very limited context. The workshop was developed by the author and CAS staff in 2008 and is regularly reviewed and when possible, co-delivered, with local Indigenous CAS colleagues.

Sustainable strategies are needed to facilitate how Indigenous staff involvement can be continued into the future. The related national statistics are grim; Steve Larkin, as chair of IHEAC, outlined the statistics about Indigenous staff in universities saying that 0.9 per cent of Australian university staff were Indigenous Australians, compared to 3.1 per of the overall Indigenous Australian population, and of these 66% were general staff (Ross, 2011). Not only should it be a priority to have willing Indigenous scholars involved at the forefront of staff training if the recommendations in the 'Guiding Principles for Developing Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities' (2011b) are to be realised, it is also essential that the University support her Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander staff to be the ones who "produce and control knowledges about themselves, their communities and their societies" (Dei, 2000, p.121).

Curtin University has committed to supporting and developing 'The Courageous Conversations about Race program' and the WOW program. The Foundations program is embedded in the teaching and learning plans of the university and though it requires input from Aboriginal colleagues, the University is also committed to continue offering some form of this program. The WOW workshops and 'The Intercultural Curriculum' workshop are included in the university's RAP – and in turn in the Teaching and Learning Strategic Plans.

Research findings to support such decisions by a university, show that as a further incentive for quality teaching and learning, one indicator of an improved student experience has been linked to staff who have had the opportunity to develop their overall cultural awareness. Baird and Gordon (2009) found the ability of teaching staff to engage in cross-cultural teaching is one such indicator; evidence again that direct training and support for staff around cultural competence is generally a valued enterprise. However, as Fredricks (2008) and Patterson (2006, cited in Safta, 2011) also found, the training that presently exists within Australia generally addresses cultural awareness and sensitivity rather than training that could lead to developing skills and deeper competence associated with Indigenous knowledge. In this case too, there are currently few embedded opportunities (within induction, leadership training or other professional development) for staff to explore the more developed area of developing 'competence' rather than 'awareness'. Thus, the opportunities to interrogate skills and competencies required for Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff and students to transform how they live and work together are limited. However, there are indications of further resourcing and development indicated through the current RAP and forthcoming university plans. The university executive is preparing the next set of 5-year strategic plans and the indications are that professional development in this area will be continued and enhanced.

Another example is the leadership program organised by the Health Sciences Faculty, including the annual trips to Wiluna ('Visiting Country') that forms another level of Indigenous cultural training available to especially those in leadership roles, but with plans to expand the program across the institution in the future. These, along with outcomes from the Office of Learning and Teaching leadership project 'Working together: Intercultural academic leadership for teaching and learning in Indigenous culture and health' (Scott, et al., 2011), illustrate the growing consciousness of what engagement with Indigenous knowledge and competence can mean to a university. The call by IHEAC and Universities Australia is clear (2011a, p.86): "the time has come to ensure that academic staff are adequately trained in Indigenous pedagogies and strategies for teaching Indigenous Studies effectively."

ISSUES FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

There are some concerns that are beyond the confines of this paper but which should be addressed in exploring further how graduate attributes can be assured within a university's aligned configuration of professional development, policy and curriculum processes. The first is that one cannot discuss the teaching of Indigenous knowledge or Indigenous cultural competency specifically without considering the amount of energy and emotional labour involved in this type of work. Where this is not taken into account, it will be to the detriment of the wellbeing, and even performance, of the staff (often including the already small number of local Indigenous Australian staff) and inevitably the students. How this is acknowledged and built into the workload systems of a university are matters for robust discussion.

Also needing discussion and research is the subject of evaluating the impact of such training on the university (namely here, graduates and their attainment of the attributes). Though participants have a record of their participation in any training, actually warranting or reviewing whether or not there has been any effect or change in behaviour by staff who have participated in related professional development needs to be done. A further issue for success in this area, given the wide variety of discipline areas in the university, we must achieve variety and flexibility in how and what we include in the curriculum. We need a range of examples to suit the wide range of subjects and levels and we need input from Indigenous people as we develop this conversation (Behrendt, et al., 2012).

Another limitation is the very naming of 'Indigenous' as opposed to 'non-Indigenous' cultural competence and knowledge. Key contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars have grappled with this issue and whether or not it is helpful to use these categories. Arabena (2010, p.5) in her exploration of reconciliation asks, "What would happen if we removed indigenous and non-indigenous categories, what would we be? Why are we so heavily invested in these descriptors?" Nakata (2007a, p.225) more pointedly concludes his book stating we must "not be deluded about what we can achieve in higher education in relation to controlling Indigenous content or in shaping knowledge and practice to be uniquely and identifiable 'Indigenous'. It is not

productive to separate it out and lay claim to a separate domain of knowledge with any authority". So while the current need to name and differentiate the competencies has been argued for in this paper, this caution is heeded. Direction and guidance from local Indigenous scholars, such as Nakata, Arabena, and Behrendt in negotiating the best way forward for our universities in this area will always be essential.

CONCLUSION

While Davis (2008, p.31) argues for the development of a "new language of understanding, interpretation and translation [to] facilitate a better integration between Indigenous knowledge, and Western scientific knowledge", this paper has argued for an explicit articulation of the graduate attributes alluding to Indigenous cultural competence into an institution's policy frameworks along with a commensurate alignment in the related curriculum processes. The key reason why this should happen is that a student who, after studying with classmates from various nations and working with resources and information from around the globe, may graduate confident and inclusive in her communication with Chinese work colleagues from Hong Kong, however, she may also be unintentionally racist in her exchanges with Nyungar work colleagues from Kojonup. In acknowledging the many worldviews in our global village, we must begin by engaging with our local colleagues and classmates of the First Nations of the land on which our institutions of higher learning reside.

Within the processes of having these discussions and making and implementing policies McLaughlin and Whatman (2010, p.4) note that "without institutional commitment to Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, decolonising curricula demands a necessary but uncomfortable, transformational personal and professional practice". It is evident that even with such an articulated commitment, as in the case example, this transformation is required and the journey remains 'uncomfortable' but however uncomfortable it may be, "higher education needs a new model that addresses the real challenges of the future" (Haigh & Clifford, 2011, p.574). This future model must include a way to unpack understanding and capabilities associated with Indigenous Cultural Competency and the call is for the whole university to align to achieve this. As Universities Australia and IHEAC (2011a, p.148) remind us:

> Embedding Indigenous cultural competence requires commitment to a whole of institution approach, including increasing the University's engagement with Indigenous communities, Indigenisation of the curriculum, pro-active provision of services and support to Indigenous students, capacity building of Indigenous staff, professional development of non-Indigenous staff and the inclusion of Indigenous cultures and knowledge as a visual and valued aspect of University life, governance and decision-making.

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