

PEARLs, Problems and Politics: Exploring Findings From Two Teaching and Learning Projects in Indigenous Australian Studies at The University of Queensland

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This article explores the implementation of PEARL (Political, Embodied, Active, and Reflective Learning) in two courses at The University of Queensland: a first-year introductory Indigenous Studies course and a second year Indigenous Education course. We draw on findings from a 2-year (2010–2011) Office for Learning and Teaching (then ALTC) funded curriculum renewal project and findings from a pilot project (2013) implementing PEARL in a compulsory Indigenous Education course for all pre-service teacher educators in primary and secondary teacher training at The University of Queensland. Drawing transformative education theory into conversation with critical pedagogy and anti-colonial/racist education, we share student data from focus groups, questionnaires and reflective journals to examine the shift in students' understanding of Indigenous issues, histories and peoples. Finally, we reflect on the ways the results hold great potential for the further implementation of PEARL into other university level courses, specifically in relation to a 'pedagogy of solidarity' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

■ **Keywords:** transformative education, Indigenous Studies, PEARL

Historically, Indigenous Australian Studies as a discipline in and of itself, and Indigenous Australian Studies within the field of education has relied upon anthropology and history as foundational for the construction of knowledge about Indigenous Australian peoples (e.g., Craven & Price, 2011; Mackinlay & Barney, 2011, 2012; Nakata, 2007). However, the past 20 years have seen a shift alongside the postmodern turn in the social sciences whereby the concept of Indigenous knowledge as constructed, represented and sustained by Indigenous voices has become a defining feature of what the discipline of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies now looks like. This is true, too, for the ways in which Indigenous Australian cultures, knowledges and perspectives are framed, negotiated and taught within classrooms, curricula and educational communities. Through inclusion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cross-curricular priority in the Australian national curriculum, educators are being asked to localise, enter into relationships and make space for Indigenous Australian people as holders of knowledge that is valid, legitimate and relevant for all Australians. The question

for us right now in the context of higher education is how we might enact these agendas as pedagogy.

PEARL (Political, Embodied, Active, and Reflective Learning) is a term we developed while undertaking an Office for Learning and Teaching (then ALTC) funded curriculum renewal project to describe the type of 'Problem-Based Learning' (PBL) pedagogy enacted in the context of Indigenous Australian Studies. The PEARL project was carried out over a two-year period (2010–11) and sought to understand the ways in which teaching and learning in Indigenous Australian Studies is performed as transformative education, that is, pedagogical praxis that critically engages with social, political and legal discourses — indeed, the colonial corpus — to frame, reflect upon and interrogate colonial and white race power and privilege from within and against students' own positioning in

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relation to Indigenous Australian peoples, knowledges, histories and cultures. Like the gem from which this teaching and learning approach draws its analogy, PEARL pedagogy continues to grow, and in this article we present a discussion of PEARL as we understood it in 2010 in its early stages of development, and PEARL now. Our thinking is framed around the data shared with us by students at The University of Queensland in an introductory Indigenous Australian Studies course in 2010, and pre-service teachers enrolled in a compulsory Indigenous Education course in 2013. Focus group interviews, student questionnaires and reflective learning journal entries are explored to consider the ways in which PEARL pedagogy makes space, as Sefa Dei (2002, p. 124) insists, to transform a spiritual, emotional and embodied self into an 'agent of change', whereby student positioning in relation to white settler colonial imperatives is exposed, acknowledged, and understood. Questions are asked about the potential of PEARL for the kind of 'wide awakeness' that Maxine Greene (2009) speaks of in enacting change in student's understandings.

About Us

Certainly, one of the difficulties in writing this article and entering into this discussion is that both of us are non-Indigenous academics. We are aware of the complexities and diverse perspectives on the roles, responsibilities and rights of non-Indigenous peoples to enter into discussion about Indigenous Australian Studies. It is an important issue to consider and then keep on considering, and we reflect briefly in our positioning here. Liz is a non-Indigenous woman who began her academic career in ethnomusicology in 1994, working with Yanyuwa, Garrwa, Mara and Kudanji people in the remote town of Burrulula in the southwest Gulf of Carpentaria in the Northern Territory of Australia. She is married to a Yanyuwa man and is mother to their two children. Her PhD in ethnomusicology, combined with higher education teaching experience, led her to embark on a second PhD in education, exploring the performativity of power, race and relationship in Indigenous Studies. Liz's research has increasingly focused on issues of social justice and education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (e.g., Mackinlay, 2008, 2011). Liz had been using PBL processes in her Indigenous Australian Studies classrooms at The University of Queensland since 1997, and had seen, experienced and felt the transformative learning potential of this pedagogy. Her work in this area became the inspiration behind our PEARL research — that is, to explore whether or not Problem-Based Learning is as transformative as we think it is in the context of Indigenous Studies.

Like Liz, Kate's background is in ethnomusicology and Indigenous Studies, and she completed a PhD working with Indigenous women performing contemporary music in 2006. Since then her research has shifted to a collabo-

rative framework and she has undertaken research collaborations with Indigenous researchers (see Barney, 2012a). Kate has also worked on a number of research projects focused on teaching and learning approaches in Indigenous Australian Studies (e.g., Barney, 2012b; Barney & Mackinlay, 2010) and facilitating support for Indigenous students (Barney, 2013). The PEARL project, along with her work coordinating the Australian Indigenous Studies Learning and Teaching Network, has given her space to further collaborate with Indigenous colleagues. From Kate's perspective, collaborative research between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people holds the potential to allow non-Indigenous and Indigenous people to work equally together, engage in dialogue, and to learn from each other.

About PEARL in its Early Stages

Our original aim for the Office for Learning and Teaching (OLT) funded PEARL project was to evaluate the effectiveness of PBL as transformative education in Indigenous Australian Studies at tertiary level. Our study focused on PBL because this method is used in many Indigenous Australian Studies classrooms in preference to other approaches. In its broadest sense, PBL can be defined as a 'method of learning in which the learners first encounter a problem, followed by a systematic, student centred enquiry process' (Schwartz, Mennin, & Webb, 2001, p. 2). PBL as we know it today was first implemented in health science and medical education curricula in Canada in the late 1960s (Schwartz et al., 2001, p. 2), and is commonly used in the course content of engineering, mathematics and professional degrees (e.g., business, law, social work, education). Described by Savin-Baden (2000) as a 'student centred' approach to pedagogy, she explains that PBL offers students opportunities to 'explore a wide range of information, to link the learning with their own needs as learners and to develop independence in enquiry' (p. 3). However, despite its possibilities for transformative teaching and learning, there had been little research on the application of PBL in the Arts and Humanities (see Mackinlay & Barney, 2010). The project team consisted of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous members: Heidi Norman (University of Technology, Sydney), John Maynard (University of Newcastle), John Bradley (Monash University), Greg Williams (Charles Darwin University), Cat Kutay (University of New South Wales), Sean Ulm (James Cook University), and Ian Lilley (The University of Queensland).

Our reference group consisted of three Indigenous Australian scholars: Steve Larkin (Charles Darwin University), Clair Andersen (University of Tasmania), and Lynette Russell (Monash University). Their role was to attend the three reference group meetings, participate in discussions and provide consultation and feedback to project team members. Carmen Robertson from the University of Regina was

our external evaluator. She is a First Nations Canadian and has a strong commitment to Indigenous Education in global contexts. Her role was to participate in online meetings and discussions and to attend the final reference group meeting and evaluate the outcomes of our project in December 2011.

Data was collected from pre- and post-student free-writes responses, student focus group discussions, lecturer reflections, and classroom observations at five university sites (The University of Queensland, Monash University, University of Technology Sydney, University of Newcastle, and Charles Darwin University). One of the major outcomes of the project was the formulation of a new way of theorising and framing pedagogical processes in Indigenous Australian Studies through the acronym PEARL. While we started with the term 'PBL', it became clear as the project progressed that the terminology we were using was not politically or pedagogically appropriate. As the data began to reveal, the research team became increasingly uncomfortable with the colonial underpinnings and associations of the term 'Problem-Based Learning' and began to explore the possibility of redefining what we do as something else entirely. Also, the approach as applied in Indigenous Australian Studies is more than just solving problems — but the term assumes that a scientific outcome is possible and that a solution can be found. There was also much discussion within the reference group meetings about the terminology. The project team members noted that as academics we have a responsibility not to treat Indigenous Australian Studies as a problem, and there are ethical implications for this. It was also acknowledged that the term needed to engage multiple perspectives and convey the excitement of this way of teaching and learning. During the final reference group meeting in 2011, a decision was made to move away from the term 'Problem-Based Learning'. Liz suggested 'PEARL' as a new term to encompass the political, embodied, active, and reflective aspects of this teaching and learning approach and together the reference group developed the following description of PEARL as a teaching and learning approach in Indigenous Australian Studies:

P (for performative, political, process, place based): We bring our experiences, knowledge and practice to the place where the current learning process occurs, reflecting and responding to the agency of the space and the elements of the place, performing our learning, embodying the process and recognising the inherent political nature and knowing that we move through and out of the place and back to influence the places where teaching and learning occurs.

E (for embodied, experiential, explorative, engaged, emotion, empathy, experience): A holistic exploration that engages mind, body and emotion in empathetic dialogue. A transformative process based on equal collaboration.

A (for active, anti-racist, anti-colonial, active): Theoretical imperatives relate implicitly to anti-racist/anti-colonial discourses. Practically, we view PEARL as aiding students to shift from reflection to action through agency and awareness. The shift to action is a critical element of transformation and enables students to become agents for change and decolonisation.

R (for relational, reflective, reflexive): Through reflection on particular structured learning activities, students' experiences are transformed into knowledge and deeper wisdom which they apply to their personal and professional lives.

L (for lifelong learning): Learning in PEARL is learning for life, for change, for empowerment, for hope, for knowledge, to lead, to let go of assumptions, to liberate and to lustre — to shine!

As a teaching and learning process then, students work in small groups with a lecturer or a tutor who acts as a facilitator of discussions and learning (Schwartz et al., 2001, p. 2) to discuss a set of stimulus materials. In many ways, PEARL group work enables the class to build a 'community' of learners, joined by a shared commitment and desire to 'know', which hooks (1994) maintains is essential to create a climate where openness, intellectual rigour and personal transformation can happen (p. 40). There are no 'right' answers in PEARL, rather this approach seeks to raise questions in order to allow students to deeply explore, discuss and reflect. In the Indigenous Studies classroom there are occasions where students generate questions that the lecturer cannot answer — this in turn begins another cycle of reflection-action-reflection as both student and teacher enter into a dialogue together to find what it is that needs to be learnt and to better understand what is problematic about a situation. A website (www.teaching4change.edu.au) was an outcome from the project and has become a repository of research and praxis in PEARL. The website includes example PEARL packages, a guide to successful PEARL delivery in Indigenous Australian Studies, a facility for submitting example teaching and learning scenarios using PEARL, information about the project, the project team and transformative education, and links to useful websites. A special issue of *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education* focusing on issues arising from the project was also published (Mackinlay & Barney, 2012).

PEARL as Transformative Education: Entanglements with Critical, Anti-Racist and Anti-Colonial Pedagogy

Indigenous Australian Studies today is an interdisciplinary field that takes a critical and reflexive approach to actively deconstruct colonialism and the all-pervasiveness of whiteness in the construction of knowledge about, by and in relationship to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

peoples. At the heart of Indigenous Australian Studies is arguably a political agenda whereby teaching and learning aims to challenge, disrupt, and shift the stronghold that white settler colonial thinking has about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our relationships with one another, so as to actively work towards social justice and empowerment for Indigenous Australians. PEARL attempts to translate this agenda into pedagogy and originally sought to do this by grounding itself firmly in the framework of transformative education. When we first began thinking about PEARL, the aims and goals of transformative learning provided an appropriate educational framework within which to situate our teaching and learning approach in Indigenous Australian Studies. We were inspired by the early work of transformative educator Mezirow, who asserted that 'learning is understood as a process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action' (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162). Later, Mezirow (2003) further explained that 'transformative learning is learning that transforms problematic frames of reference ... to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change' (p. 58).

Transformative education can further be defined as teaching and learning that involves: a deep structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings and actions; a shift of consciousness that alters our way of being in the world; understanding ourselves, our self-locations, and our relationships with others in the world; understanding relations of power in interlocking structures of race, class and gender; and envisioning alternative approaches and possibilities for social justice (O'Sullivan, Morrell, & O'Connor, 2002, p. xvii). The emphasis on critical shifts taking place ontologically, epistemologically and politically in transformative learning as it is practised today so that learners become actively engaged in new avenues for social justice (Garde-Hansen & Calvert, 2007) seemed to capture the pedagogical aims of PEARL, at least in the beginning. We found common ground in discourses of critical pedagogy and transformative learning, particularly in terms of the ways scholars such as Giroux frame critical pedagogy simultaneously as a 'theoretical resource and as a productive practice' for interrogating and resisting how power works and is deployed as dominance, and for developing a 'vocabulary in which it becomes possible to imagine power working in the interests of justice, equality and freedom' (Giroux, 2011, p. 5). Using a critical pedagogy lens within a transformative learning framework, we could clearly see the potential for interrogating and deconstructing education as a site for colonial power, whereby classrooms, curricula and educational communities are 'deeply implicated in the reproduction of colonial hegemonies' (Gatimu, 2009, p. 67).

'Stepping back in order to better close in' as Freire (1998, p. 241) would suggest, we realised that critical ped-

agogy and transformative learning in and of themselves are not unproblematic discourses in the context of Indigenous Australian Studies. Both are critical movements constructed by white, largely male, not of colour and non-Indigenous people, and represent discourses that at least historically, have tended to ignore white race and colonial power and privilege (Allen, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Leonardo, 2002). We have questioned the relevancy and indeed, the ethical and political nature of our work with PEARL if we remain embedded in critical pedagogy discourse alone. Working with the 'power of not knowing' and allowing ourselves to be challenged by other knowledges' (Sefa Dei, 2002, p. 10), our thinking about PEARL then has become necessarily entwined in theorising around anti-racist pedagogy and anti-colonial (Sefa Dei, 2006, 2008) approaches in education. In many ways, this seems like an inevitable move for PEARL to make, particularly given that anti-racist and anti-colonial pedagogy have arisen from the struggles of racial minorities within and against the forces of imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism (Rezai-Rushti, 1995, p. 6). As our understanding of critical, anti-racist and anti-colonial pedagogy deepens, we understand that they are inextricably in dialogue with the other — the terms are sometimes used synonymously or sometimes as a point of departure, and the social-cultural-historical-political-pedagogical-personal locatedness of the researcher and research itself sometimes determines which is preferred. The suggestions made by Sefa Dei around what transformative learning 'should do' are highly relevant for our thinking about PEARL. He suggests that transformative learning in education should be able to 'resist oppression and domination by strengthening the individual self and the collective souls to deal with the continued reproduction of colonial and re-colonial relations in the academy' (Sefa Dei, 2002, p. 122). Importantly, transformative learning 'must also assist the learner to deal with pervasive effects of imperial structures of the academy on the processes of knowledge production and validation; the understanding of indigeneity; and the pursuit of agency, resistance and politics for educational change' (Sefa Dei, 2002, p. 122). PEARL today then, finds itself continually tangling, untangling and entangling self, Other, difference, race, whiteness, colonialism, domination, power, privilege and knowledge to ensure that action towards social justice and emancipation remain firmly fixed in our hearts and minds as teachers and learners.

PEARL Then and Now in Two Courses at The University of Queensland

We would now like to look more closely at the way that PEARL has shifted and changed from the original pilot project in 2010 to PEARL as it is implemented now. We have chosen to focus specifically on courses where PEARL was and is used at The University of Queensland.

ABTS1000: Indigenous Australian Issues: Past, Present, Future in 2010

ABTS1000 'Indigenous Australian Issues: Past, Present, Future' was the site for the PEARL project pilot study at The University of Queensland in 2010. It is a first-year undergraduate course to provide insight into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, contemporary issues and in-depth perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. In 2010, when we undertook the pilot study, the course had an enrolment number of 120 students (including three Indigenous Australian students), drawn from a wide variety of disciplines including arts, education, journalism and engineering, and it is a popular course with incoming international exchange students.

Before undertaking the PBL package, students were asked to fill out a pre-questionnaire about what they understood by the term 'Problem-Based Learning', their prior experiences with the approach, and their understandings of what would be involved. Data collection in *Indigenous Australian Issues* represents our thinking about the transformative nature of PBL in 2010 and, as noted above, by the end of 2011 we had moved away from the use of 'PBL' as terminology. The PBL package used in the class was titled 'Re/presenting Hindmarsh Island: Aboriginal Women's Business' (see Mackinlay & Barney, 2010). The package focuses on the history and ongoing debates around Aboriginal women's traditional ownership of Hindmarsh Island in South Australia and sought to raise a number of questions about relationships to country, gender and knowledge, and the impact of colonisation. The contestation over Indigenous ownership of Hindmarsh Island, or Kumarangk as Ngarrindjeri people prefer this site to be called, spanned at least 15 years, and enables students to engage in multiple perspectives, including competing Ngarrindjeri interests, land development agendas linked messily to government control over Indigenous land ownership, environmental concerns, and debates over the role of historical and anthropological roles and representation in documentation of Indigenous histories and contemporary realities (Bell, 1998; Nile & Ryan, 1996). It was completed in two weeks across two individual 2-hour classes. By the end of the two classes students were expected to have:

1. described the Hindmarsh Island case;
2. examined the results of the High Court decision in relation to Hindmarsh Island, current status and the implications of the decision in relation to Native Title;
3. described aspects of women's social, political and cultural roles in Aboriginal societies that are relevant to an understanding of this case;
4. identified similarities and differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous approaches and perspectives presented in relation to the Hindmarsh Island affair;

5. discussed the implications of colonisation in relation to change, agency and the capacity of Indigenous Australian people to sustain 'tradition';
6. considered the different discourses at play in the Hindmarsh Island affair and the way that these discourses work to silence and/or empower Aboriginal peoples and particularly Aboriginal women;
7. adapted to a situation where they have primary responsibility for their own learning and the teaching staff act as facilitators rather than authorities;
8. demonstrated their acceptance of the responsibilities of collaborative learning.

In the first class, the students were first given an introduction to the learning material in the form of a handout about the historical background to the Hindmarsh Island case. A short video excerpt was then played, which showed a journalist reporting on the 'facts' of the case and questioning the legitimacy of Aboriginal women's claims to ownership. Students then formed small groups of four to six people to talk about the main issues raised in the learning material. An important part about PBL is self-directed learning, where the role of lecturers is to guide students through the package — in this way becoming teachers and learners together — and therefore the facilitators circulated between the student groups to discuss the issues with students.

By the end of the first class, each small group was expected to develop research questions that would help them to consider the main issues. Once each group had framed the issues raised in their discussion as research questions, each group was asked to share their list of research questions with the entire class. The research questions were collated and each group was assigned one of these questions. Each group was then expected to explore their research question/s between classes. Students were encouraged to meet as a group outside of class to do this or to allocate each group member a specific task to bring back to class next week. In the second class, the learning stimulus material was revisited briefly. The groups then reformed, with each individual group member contributing the information they had researched over the past week to come to an understanding of the research question(s). The group then decided what information they would like to present back to the class on their research question(s). This information could be presented in any format and some were presented by the entire group, while other groups had a nominated spokesperson. Each group presented an exploration of their research question(s) back to the class. The class then worked together to come to a series of main points that addressed the research questions raised in the package, as a whole. At the conclusion of the package, students were asked to fill out a post-questionnaire and also invited to participate in a focus group discussion about their

experiences undertaking the package as part of the PEARL project.

EDUC2090: Indigenous Knowledge and Education in 2013

EDUC2090 'Indigenous Knowledge and Education' is a compulsory course in the primary, middle years and secondary teacher preparation degrees in the School of Education at The University of Queensland. The course 'Indigenous Knowledge and Education' aims to introduce students to the landscape of Indigenous Education in Australia as a dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing, pedagogical practices, voices and perspectives. The course explores the terrain of Indigenous Australian Studies as a curriculum area and our work as teachers in relation to Indigenous Australian students. The course is structured as a 1-hour lecture that introduces students to important theories and philosophies which underpin Indigenous Australian Education in both a historical and contemporary sense, combined with a weekly 2-hour tutorial workshop that makes use of dialogic and interactive approaches to teaching and learning.

In light of three recently published national frameworks promoting the professional development of Indigenous cultural competency, the School of Education at The University of Queensland made the decision to make 'Indigenous Knowledge and Education', previously a popular elective course, into a compulsory component of all teacher education degrees. The frameworks referred to are:

1. The Australian National Curriculum, in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures form one of three 'cross-curriculum dimensions' (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2011);
2. The National Professional Standards for Teachers, standards 1.4 and 2.4 (Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, 2011):
 - 2.1. Graduate Standard 1.4: Demonstrate broad knowledge and understanding of the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background on the education of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds;
 - 2.2. Graduate Standard 2.4: Demonstrate broad knowledge of, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages; and
3. The National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities (Universities Australia, 2011).

As a result of this change to compulsory mode, student numbers increased from 50 students in 2010 to 240 students in 2012. The course is organised into primary and middle years (approximately 60 students), and sec-

ondary streams (approximately 180 students), with the primary/middle years students leaving to attend a 4-week practical experience from Week 6 to Week 10.

In 2013, the School of Education entered into a partnership with the Teaching and Educational Development Institute at The University of Queensland to explore, map and evaluate student attitudes to 'Indigenous Knowledge and Education' as a compulsory course in education and to the broader area of Indigenous cultural competency. The evaluation strategy drew on two data sources: qualitative focus groups and quantitative pre- and post-surveys, and here we will focus on the survey data to provide a biographical picture of the students who take this course. The response rate was 56% (153 respondents) at Time 1 and 36% (97 respondents) at Time 2. In 2013, there was a population of 269 enrolled students. Averaged across Survey 1 and Survey 2, 75% of respondents were female, 24% were male, and 1% was unidentified. Seventy per cent of respondents were enrolled in the secondary stream, 39% in primary, with 1% unidentified. Over one third of respondents (38%) expected to start teaching either in a regional town and another third expected to start teaching in a capital city (32%). On average, 9% expected to start teaching overseas, 9% in rural areas, and 4% in remote areas. Sixty-two per cent of respondents expected to start teaching in a public state school, and 30% in the private system, 20% in religious schools, 9% in secular schools and 1% in an independent school (e.g., Montessori). The students in 'Indigenous Knowledge and Education' then, are predominantly young 17- to 24-year-old, white females who have particular expectations around the sites in which their subjectivities as white teachers will be performed in educational spaces as pre-service teacher educators, and as teachers in schools.

The qualitative data from the survey revealed that 'Indigenous Knowledge and Education' is a personally, pedagogically and politically challenging subject for students. In the field of Indigenous Education and pre-service teacher education, it is generally acknowledged that when courses concerned with race, diversity and difference are made compulsory, student discontent and resistance increases (e.g., Cho & De Castro-Ambrosetti, 2005/2006, p. 25) and this subject is no exception. Students expect that the course will provide them with practical teaching and learning 'how to' tools to 'close the gap' on Indigenous educational disadvantage, but realise very quickly that their own lack of knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, histories and cultures means that they need to start at the beginning to build a sense of cultural competency. The course as a whole is built around three important concepts in relation to the Indigenous Australian Education landscape: respect, relationships, and reconciliation. On top of this, we ask students to: know yourself, know your world, know your students, and know what you teach. These are the threads that pull content together in this course and make room

for students to feel that they have the capacity to begin a discussion in their classrooms and curriculum about working effectively with Indigenous Australian students, teaching Indigenous Australian Studies, and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

One of the key teaching and learning tools in Indigenous Australian Studies shared with students in 'Indigenous Knowledge and Education' is PEARL pedagogy. In week 3, the students participated in a PEARL learning process that sought to raise a number of questions and to provoke new ways of thinking about the students as teachers and learners in the landscape of Indigenous Australian Education. The stimulus material for their discussions included a coloured copy of Horton's map of Aboriginal Australia (AIATSIS, 1996), a photo of Boundary Street in Brisbane, and a YouTube news grab documenting Indigenous protests at Musgrave Park in 2012, when the traditional owners were forced to 'move on' by police to make way for the Greek Paniyiri Festival. Horton's map is a representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups and is used as evidence of the both the diversity of Indigenous groups in Australia and also Indigenous land ownership boundaries. There are four Boundary Streets in the city, the names which marks the exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the town at night during the 19th century. Located in the centre of the 'boundaries', Musgrave Park continues to be a site of social and spiritual significance for Jagera people, the traditional Indigenous owners of this place, and includes bora rings for community and ceremonial gatherings. It, too, continues to be a site for contestation over land and Indigenous sovereignty, and the accompanying YouTube clip is aimed at highlighting these ongoing tensions.

Some students were familiar with some or all of these materials; for others, they were images that they had never seen before or thought very much about what they represent. The aim of these materials combined was to continue student's journeys towards understanding what, who, where and why they are in the context of Indigenous Australian Education and to experience a pedagogical process which is effective in teaching Indigenous Australian Studies. The 'Boundary Street' PEARL, as it became known, was a big picture exercise and by completion, students were asked to have:

1. identified the main issues raised by the materials for them as teachers and learners in the landscape of Indigenous Australian Education;
2. identified narratives and discourses around place, identity, history and belonging for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people today, with particular attention to the local context of Brisbane, that these materials bring to our attention;
3. considered the ways in which the materials facilitate education with Indigenous Australian students, and in the context of teaching Indigenous Australian Studies;

4. reflected upon what the materials symbolised for them personally, politically and pedagogically, and what this means for their positioning in the Indigenous Australian Education landscape and how they might teach Indigenous Australian Studies.

If students are going to be able to articulate an understanding of the centrality of relationships and relational approaches to Indigenous Education, an important aspect of their journey through 'Indigenous Knowledge and Education' is critical reflection. A reflective learning journal is linked to their workshop attendance and functions as a personal record of students learning experiences. It is intended to be a space where students can record and reflect upon their observations and responses to situations, which can then be used later to explore and analyse ways of thinking and being in specific educational contexts. At the end of each workshop, students were asked to complete a weekly reflection on issues raised in the lecture, the weekly readings, the workshop activities and the course as a whole. Student reflections on the 'Boundary Street' PEARL process recorded in their reflective learning journal are shared here in this article to explore the transformative potential of PEARL.

Exploring the Findings

Indigenous Australian Issues: Past, Present, Future

Here we draw on data from a student focus group interview and student free-writes from students who undertook the 'Re/presenting Hindmarsh Island' package in 'Indigenous Australian Issues: Past, Present, Future' at The University of Queensland in 2010. Many students discussed how the approach was transformative for them:

It was transformative for me to really go back and have a look at what was the story, the issues, it was transformative to go deeper. (Student focus group)

A personal journey. Benefit of being able to work with a team. I'll remember this for a long time. (Post-questionnaire response)

The way it's transformative is that it informs the reality of situations and moves the illusion around what people's perceptions are ... you've had an opportunity to grow and change and I think that's about getting really 'present' about how it is for other people. (Student focus group)

Students also noted that the approach assisted them to engage with the material, and allowed them to enter into dialogue with other students and consider how they could be 'agents of change':

Is it empathy instead of sympathy? It's sort of getting into someone else's shoes. By having to do all the research into it and go a bit deeper it should make people really connect with the issue. (Student focus group)

The power of whiteness was something that really became clear to me. (Student focus group)

Helped me engage in the course. Made me feel more comfortable in the lecture. Exchanged ideas with other peers. (Post-questionnaire response)

I'm glad it's been integrated into my life at this stage and not when I'm 50. I can start changing the way I live and knowing there are different sides of issues. Gender and Indigenous issues are so related and linked. (Student focus group)

Some students stated, however, that transformative learning takes time and does not necessarily happen for all students:

It [transformation] doesn't necessarily happen in a week. It's a big ask for people to negotiate that space in such a quick time when they don't know each other. (Student focus group)

[The process] has got to put you in a slightly different position to where you were when you started and I think that's what it's all about, is moving you from A to B. Even if you go back to A afterwards, that's your choice, but at least you've had an opportunity to move. (Student focus group)

Some people got angry about the situations being discussed and made knowledge transmission difficult. (Post-questionnaire response)

It forces — well, it should force people — to really connect with that issue in some ways — maybe not always. (Student focus group)

It's laid the seeds for part of the process of transformation. (Student focus group)

If there's commitment of participants, then it can be transformative. (Student focus group).

Indigenous Knowledge and Education

Here we draw on reflective journals from students who undertook the PEARL package in the course 'Indigenous Knowledge and Education' at The University of Queensland in 2013. A number of students noted the ways the PEARL process led them to ask more questions about their own identities as teachers and their knowledge of Indigenous peoples and histories:

How can my classroom be a location of possibility? How can I as a future teacher actively work towards deconstructing anti-racist practices? How do I avoid falling into the trap of perpetuating what happened in the past? ('Aboriginalism') Do I have the potential to contribute to positive change? ... I think PEARL pedagogy is a good place to start. (Student reflective journal)

Boundaries? What are they? Who decides where/why they are made? Who benefits and who doesn't in these situations? Did the Aboriginal people in the map have their own? So many questions have come to mind. (Student reflective journal)

We are so confined by the Australian Curriculum and expectations, how can we take steps to avoid being tokenistic or misrepresenting Indigenous culture and histories by trying to make it fit 'white' classrooms? What to do? (Student reflective journal)

Where has our sense of entitlement come from? How did this sense of entitlement shift to become a mission to 'save' or 'show

them the erring of ways'? How or has this changed at all and how am I inadvertently perpetuating this? What will it take to stop it? (Student reflective journal)

This week in tutorial we looked at how a central source [a PEARL] can be the linchpin to inquiry — how something as simple as a map can be the grounding for Indigenous education and further questions ... how do we even know when we are talking outside of colonial discourses? Is it even possible? (Student reflective journal)

This same student later noted that answers to her many questions were not always possible or even necessary:

But I'm going to stop looking for an answer to all the questions and focus rather on developing the philosophical approach to teaching. Trust the discomfort — there is no easy fix, nothing I can do or say as a teacher, but what I can do is help to inform and develop the mind sets of students I will teach in a socially just way. (Student reflective journal)

Yet again, I am left with questions to answer and that is OK. These questions will lead to answers and help to inform my perspective as a teacher. Using the PEARL framework in class to explore place and boundaries has been very insightful. (Student reflective journal)

Some students were inspired to be 'agents of change' in their future classrooms:

I was really inspired by the idea of teachers as 'agents of change' and feel as though this is a very large responsibility ... As a teacher I can make a difference by including Indigenous history and culture frequently and equally within my lessons ... Unless I make an active effort to deepen my learning and understanding this incomplete view of history could be transferred to my future students. (Student reflective journal)

Very much enjoyed the process of PEARL as it really encouraged me to develop my own ideas in regards to these land issues ... When I go into classrooms as a teacher, I want to be sure that my students are fully aware of their history, changes, and developments but that they are also critical of their own surroundings and unjust treatment of others. (Student reflective journal)

Some students noted that their understandings of Indigenous people's histories and cultures changed through the PEARL process:

When the stimuli were first given to us I originally felt confident. I had heard all of these things before. The more we discussed them and researched them however the more I realised I didn't know. One concept that jumped out at me today was the idea of white people attempting to represent Indigenous knowledge and concepts in a Western context/way of teaching. (Student reflective journal)

I didn't realise until this week just how much history has been produced, reproduced and transmitted from a colonial mentality. Everything I know (or thought I knew) about Indigenous ways of knowing and histories have been shaped and framed by non-Indigenous traditions, understandings, beliefs and ways of knowing. (Student reflective journal)

The PEARL package in the course ‘Indigenous Knowledge and Education’ also challenged student’s understandings of Indigenous students and communities:

Within the [PEARL] activity it was clear to me as a teacher how I have jumped to conclusions in the past and have not taken a critical look at how the media presents Indigenous events. It is also possible that students jump to these conclusions . . . It’s definitely important that I include the voices of a wide range of the community, including Indigenous members within my future classroom. (Student reflective journal)

Not all students’ understandings were transformed through the process, and some questioned the value of PEARL pedagogy:

As a whole, this week’s lessons appeared to be about exclusion and misunderstanding in multiple situations. With few suggestions as to how this could remedied, assumptions were made along with arguments, none of which really backing up any reasoning. Nevertheless, this week’s class provided much discussion and thought-provoking information. (Student reflective journal)

The futility of this imagining makes me angry. I cannot comprehend the motivations of colonial Anglo Saxons. I simply cannot. I suppose this could also stem from this self-imposed cultural sense of entitlement and supposed knowing what’s best. And now? Do we still know? (Student reflective journal)

However, many students were excited about the potential of PEARL as a learning activity that could be implemented in their own school classrooms:

While this was valuable to me as a teacher, not feeling the weight of judgment or expected answers, it was also useful to consider problematising teaching and notions of the teacher as educator. (Student reflective journal)

This learning experience has contributed to my development as a teacher within the landscape of Indigenous education, as it has created awareness and understanding of current issues and the importance of inclusiveness . . . I also now understand my role as a facilitator and how this can impact on my teaching . . . by participating in this learning experience it means that I have learnt six quality teaching which include: self-direction, regulation, social supports, connectedness to the world, narrative, and cultural knowledge. (Student reflective journal)

This activity has sparked my curiosity into the local history of Indigenous people in my area, and I know this could be done with my future students also. (Student reflective journal).

Conclusion

PEARL pedagogy aims to enable students to walk away from our classrooms as ‘agents of change’, committed to putting their knowing into action for a more socially just world — to know, to feel and to act. As Palmer and Zajonc (2010) remind us, ‘compassionate action is fostered in students when they learn not only with the intellect but also with the heart . . . Once knowing activates our feelings, we are moved to action’ (p. 98). The data was different for

the two projects (in ‘Indigenous Australian Issues: Past, Present, Future’ it was focus group interview and free-writes, while in ‘Indigenous Knowledge and Education’ it was student reflective journals), but in both projects the data demonstrates that for many students their understandings about Indigenous issues, histories, politics and peoples were challenged, and the potential for change occurred. The PEARL pedagogy led them to ask questions about their identities as non-Indigenous students and pre-service teachers in the context of thinking about race, whiteness and colonialism. Some students in both projects were inspired to be ‘agents of change’, to work towards social justice for Indigenous people. The shift in students’ understandings was more evident in the data from the Education course — perhaps because the data was in written form and allowed students to reflect further on their experiences, but also because our own thinking and process around PEARL had shifted and grown.

The more we experience PEARL pedagogy, the more we are convinced that it does have the potential to provide, as one Education student noted, ‘glimpses of hope along this journey’ of transformation. We know that not every student studying Indigenous Studies or every pre-service teacher in the Indigenous Education course leaves the PEARL classroom transformed and we wonder what happens to these students? Where do they go with their PEARL questions and experiences? What do they do with all of the talk about race, whiteness, colonialism, power and privilege? These questions hint at possible future directions PEARL might take us, that is, deeper understanding of the way in which the philosophy, pedagogy and politics that promotes becomes, to borrow from Tuck and Yang (2012), more than a metaphor. We are concerned to explore further how PEARL moves, beyond being a noun to describe pedagogical practice in Indigenous Australian Studies to become action for social justice in education (Griffiths, 2003). The Australian Indigenous Studies Learning and Teaching Network has been a space for us to share examples of PEARL in practice and discuss the application of the approach in other tertiary Indigenous Studies courses.

PEARL makes space for us as teachers and learners to not only ask the questions, but to have patience with those that remain unresolved and to ‘live the questions now’ through imagination and empathy, and thereby change the way we make intellectual and moral meaning of the world. Here we can see links emerging between PEARL and critical pedagogies of compassion, as discussed recently by Zembylas (2013, p. 514), whereby the personal is political is emphasised in order to engage students in ‘action-oriented solidarity’ and enable them to take steps ‘towards a different kind of relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia’ (Maddison, 2011, p. 175). As innovative pedagogical practice with the interrogation of race, colonialism and oppression *and* the positioning of teacher and learners as agents of change at the centre, PEARL continues to show that it has a place in teaching

and learning Indigenous Australian perspectives across a range of educational sites. PEARL pedagogy is still growing as a pedagogical practice — just like ourselves as teachers and learners, PEARL is not *there* yet (after Greene, 1995), it remains a location of possibility (hooks, 1994, p. 207).

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