

# Mandating Indigenous Education: tensions and transformations

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# Research Focus Questions

1. To what extent does the implementation of pedagogical content knowledge enhance student learning?
  2. Do we create and model culturally safe learning environments for pre-service teachers in Mandatory Indigenous Education?
  3. Did the assessment process capture key aspects of the learning that took place?
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# “Hunting Assumptions”

Brookfield (1995) explains that “...teaching innocently means assuming that the meanings and significance we place on our actions are the ones that students take from them” (p. 1).

Brookfield outlines three sets of assumptions (p. 2-3);

- › Prescriptive
- › Pragmatic
- › Causal

Four critically reflective lenses

- › Autobiographical
- › Student
- › Peer
- › Theoretical

## 1. Autobiographical lens

Experience of learning at the cultural interface occurs from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal standpoints.

## 2. Peer lens

Develop “emotionally sustaining peer learning community” – hold “critical conversations (Brookfield, 1995, p. 244)

## 3. Theoretical lens

How we *actually* teach (Mackinlay and Barney, 2012)

## 4. Student lens

Getting inside student's heads is the trickiest!

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## › Focus group data

### 2011

Primary:	7 groups	n=67 (response rate 64%)
Combined Degrees:	13 groups	n=98 (response rate 76%)
HMHE:		n=67 (response rate 88%)

### 2012

Primary:	7 groups	n=78 (response rate 76%)
Combined Degrees:	11 groups	n=111 (response rate 79%)
HMHE:		n=49 (response rate 79%)

### TOTAL

**38 groups**

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Nakata (2004, p. 27) describes the cultural interface as

...the intersection of the Western and Indigenous domain...the place where we live and learn, the place that conditions our lives, the place that shapes our futures and more to the point the place where we are active agents in our own lives – where we make decisions – our lifeworlds

- Locale of the learner
- Agency of the learner
- Tension that occurs when Indigenous and western knowledge systems intersect

## Can the cultural interface shed light on assumptions?

Example : assumption – students have little knowledge about this area

- › Prescriptive: what we teach and how
- › Pragmatic: some students will be racist, negative, lack motivation and wont feel 'safe' in this environment
- › Causal: create 'culturally safe' environment

Emergent data indicates:

- › Locale: students understand the safe space and the significance of Indigenous education – “they get it”
- › Agency: students felt their agency was being undermined – “voice is important”
- › Tension: dilemma between speaking openly to have a robust debate and feeling the need for caution so as not to be thought of as ignorant or naïve.

## Impetus to Act

“Some of the lecturers if we ... we are definitely trying to understand but sometimes it felt like they were ... maybe they didn't mean to, it just felt like they were accusing us, we get it and we want to understand, I mean it is a pretty hard state of affairs but you just ... you can't have that sort of tone, it's just not very helpful because we didn't make things the way they were, we're trying to help and our teaching hopefully will help so it's kind of like ... it freaks you out, it's like well, what's the point of trying if you think that we're already going to screw this up so I think that maybe just they've just got to think about it, I think”.



## Impetus to Act

› This dynamic has two parts:

1. Students respond to what they are learning with a desire to learn and take action (and feeling questioned/encouraged to act and apply their learning in the future role as a teacher).
2. They encounter resistance to their attempts to respond; some students express feelings of powerlessness and frustration at being thought of as inadequate.

The desire to contribute their own ideas/solutions to assist (impetus to act) but finding barriers (e.g. tutors trivialised ideas, peer scorn, perceived as naive).

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