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Neoliberal influences on the goals of intercultural curriculum initiatives

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Curriculum initiatives with intercultural educative aims are not uncommon in many schools around the world. This paper argues that these initiatives and their classroom implementation by teachers is strongly impacted on, and influenced by, the prevailing neoliberal context of schooling. The findings of a project working with teachers on implementing the Intercultural Understanding General Capability and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Cross Curriculum Priority of the Australian Curriculum are used to demonstrate the specific ways in which neoliberalism shaped and defined teachers' work. The neoliberal elements of consumption, individual responsibility, individuals being set adrift from values, surveillance and the illusion of autonomy are used to highlight teachers' approaches to understanding and implementing the curriculum elements in their science classrooms. Teachers in the study saw the potential for enacting social justice in terms of intercultural education in their classrooms but were often hampered in their efforts by prevailing neoliberal discourses influencing their own assumptions and actions, as well as those of the schools they worked in. It is only through interrogation of how neoliberalism impacts on intercultural educative aims that openings for counter-hegemonic activities can be identified.

Keywords: curriculum; neoliberalism; Australian Curriculum; Indigenous

Knowledges; intercultural education, Participatory Action Research

Curriculum and neoliberalism

At its core, neoliberalism holds the market as the central organising principle, resulting in a belief that individuals within a society should be able to manage their own lives in a way that can lead to personal profits based on fair and equal competition. Giroux (2004) described neoliberalism as “one of the most pervasive and dangerous ideologies of the twenty-first century” (p. 495). Neoliberalism shapes public policy in relation to education globally and promotes a corporate-based ideology that privileges the role of education as job-training and embraces top-down management and standardised curriculum (Giroux 2010). This narrow definition of school as being to enable students to get a job (Down 2009), often produces a “bare pedagogy” where moral responsibilities are scorned, and education is stripped of its public values and civic responsibilities (Giroux 2010).

Education can simultaneously be recognised as having the potential for social liberation and as being a tool for social oppression (Sefa Dei 2019). Current curriculum initiatives in areas of intercultural education should be read within this context. It is a task for researchers and teachers to examine and understand the complexities of intercultural curriculum initiatives and to critically evaluate what is potentially liberatory and/or oppressive (Sefa Dei 2019). Such a task takes careful, reflective consideration not only of educational policy and the resultant curriculum but also of the on-the-ground practices of the teachers who are left to implement intercultural curriculum initiatives, often with little support, training or guidance.

It is important to recognise that achieving the aims of intercultural education as often loftily stated in curriculum and policy documents worldwide is a challenging process in neoliberal times. Writing from a United State of America context, Sleeter (2014) identifies that many societies, teachers are tasked with the implementation of initiatives designed to promote social cohesion or an engaged citizenship in relation to multicultural and intercultural aims. Sweeping statements are often made about the need for creating active and informed citizens or, as a specific example in the Australian context, ensuring "that schooling contributes to a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity" (Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2009). The reality is that democracy and diversity cannot be neatly packaged and reduced to standardised narratives and formulas (Sleeter 2014). While curriculum aspects promoting intercultural learning may be embedded, the enactment of the curriculum may or may not operate to realise the potentially liberatory components. Working in an Indigenous African context, Shiza (2010) identifies that there is a tension between the perceived need to address increasing globalisation in curricula, which has a homogenizing effect in a neoliberal society, and preserving other ways of knowing and promoting cultural identity development. Often, a powerful effect of neoliberal ideology is its success in "the epistemic domination of educational resistance" (Sefa Dei and Simmons 2009) meaning that even well-intentioned teachers struggle to see epistemic justice in the form of intercultural education in their classrooms.

School-based educational policy in Australia has long been recognised as being part of a neoliberal regime, particularly through the emergence of national testing and curriculum. Through the implementation of accountability measures, schooling in Australia has been exposed to market forces in terms of more parental choice and competition between schools

as accepted ways of driving up standards (Lingard 2011). Down (2009) argues that this type of restructure shows instrumentalist values and results in a narrowly conceived version of education. Some authors (Camicia and Franklin 2015; Lingard and McGregor 2014) argue that knowledge in the Australian Curriculum has been selected to position students to have desirable skills and dispositions as global citizens and workers in an interconnected global community, placing the curriculum within a neoliberal frame.

Two aspects of the Australian Curriculum have been designed to promote cohesive and culturally diverse values and assist in promoting reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians. The first of these is the Intercultural Understanding General Capability (GC) and the second is the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cross Curriculum Priority. This paper exposes the experiences of a group of secondary school science teachers when engaging with these elements of the curriculum within the neoliberal context of Australian schooling. Of particular importance is how the pervasiveness of neoliberal ideology influenced their reactions to, willingness to engage with, and unthinking assumptions about, the curriculum elements.

The Australian Curriculum

Curriculum initiatives and inclusions with intercultural educative aims are found in many countries worldwide. In the Australian context, the implementation of a national curriculum (the Australian Curriculum) in 2012 (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) 2014) heralded the first common approach to developing intercultural understanding in school children. Previously, each state and territory had

developed their own curriculum (Lowe and Appleton 2014) and suggestions of how best to engage with different aspects of intercultural education. Most states had previously had some emphasis on aspects such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' perspectives and education, however, the extent to which these were valued and supported differed from context to context.

The development of the Australian Curriculum has been seen as a political response to globalisation and re-occurring poor standardised test scores in literacy, mathematics and science in international rankings (Lingard and McGregor 2014; Lowe and Appleton 2014). The Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA 2008), provided a rationale for the development of a national curriculum to which all State and Federal Education Ministers elected to office at the time were signatories. School based education in Australia is the constitutional responsibility of State and Territory Governments. While the development and implementation of a national curriculum was novel, there had been political manoeuvres over several decades to establish a uniform curriculum to eradicate inter-state variability, which was seen to impact on children moving across state borders (Lowe and Appleton 2014).

The Australian Curriculum has been conceptualised as "three dimensional" in that key learning areas sit alongside three Cross-Curriculum Priorities (CCPs) and seven General Capabilities (GCs) (ACARA n. d.-a). The GCs, one of which is Intercultural Understanding, are designed to support "young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens" (ACARA 2016b, para 1). The CCPs, Sustainability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, and Australia's Engagement with Asia are,

> addressed through learning areas and are identified wherever they are developed or applied in content descriptions. Cross-curriculum priorities are also identified where they offer opportunities to add depth and richness to student learning in content elaborations. They will have a strong but varying presence depending on their relevance to the learning area (ACARA 2016a, para. 2)

One way in which the Intercultural Understanding GC is included in the curriculum is in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures CCP. While Intercultural Understanding GC and the CCP are not necessarily the same, in many curriculum elaborations the CCP and the GC are both tagged, suggesting curriculum writers perceive the CCP to be a way in which to develop the Intercultural Understanding GC.

The introduction of the CCPs addressed three key areas identified in The Melbourne Declaration (MCEETA 2008) as being of benefit to individuals and Australia as a whole (ACARA 2013). At the time of initial development, the CCPs were intended to "provide dimensions which will enrich the curriculum through development of considered and focused content that fits naturally within learning areas" (ACARA 2013, para. 1). In this way CCPs are supposed to enable teachers to deliver the content of the learning area while developing knowledge, understanding and skills in the CCP. Lingard and McGregor (2014) describe the CCPs as a curriculum approach based on what the education system wants students to become, contextualised through an idea of contemporary Australia (recognising a need for reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians) and global political concerns (like climate change and a focus on Asia).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures CCP was designed to take account of:

> the underlying elements of Identity and Living Communities and the key concepts of Country/Place, Culture and People. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identities are represented as central to the priority and are approached through knowledge and understanding of the interconnected elements of Country/Place, Culture and People. (ACARA n. d.-a, para. 1)

The Intercultural Understanding GC was designed to develop key personal and interpersonal social capabilities in school children (Halse et al. 2015). The organising elements of the GC are:

a) recognising culture and developing respect

b) interacting and empathising with others and

c) reflecting on intercultural experiences and taking responsibility (ACARA n. d.-b).

The influences on the development of the GC came from a multiculturalist ideology, dominated by ideas of cohesion and harmony (Salter and Maxwell 2018). However, in the absence of professional training and development, teachers and schools are often uncertain as to how Intercultural Understanding differs from previous pushes around Multicultural Education and how the curriculum might be implemented in the classroom (Halse et al. 2015). Similarly, teachers often lament their lack of knowledge around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and knowledges and suggest that this limits their success in implementing the CCP in practice as well (Baynes 2016; Baynes and Austin 2012).

Theoretical Framework

In order to theoretically frame this discussion, I have drawn upon Davies (2005) characterisation of the neoliberal subject. Davies contends that there are several definable

elements of individuals “appropriately subjected within neoliberal discourses” (p. 8). These elements are in italics to identify the terms used in the rest of this section. The first is *consumption*, seen as the definition of the self in terms of income and the capacity to purchase goods, which constitutes subjects’ identities in term of their jobs. Secondly, the notion of *individual responsibility* leading to the possibility of each person within a society being responsible for their own wealth generation. Coupled with this is a removal of individuals’ dependence on, and links with, the social. This results in individuals being *set adrift from values*, and with the focus on individual responsibility, less commitment is generated for outcomes linked to the social good. The development of a humanist self is less important than individual skills for survival linked to generating income. Within this neoliberal constitution of self, *surveillance* becomes key due to a lack of trust between individuals generated by “the heightened emphasis on the individual’s responsibility and the de-emphasizing of inner-values and commitment to the social good” (p. 10). However, an *illusion of autonomy* is created. While the emphasis is on individual responsibility, more surveillance is introduced in forms such as accrediting bodies. Davies summarises her view of neoliberalism as:

- a move from social conscience and responsibility towards an individualism in which the individual is cut loose from the social;
- from morality to moralistic audit-driven surveillance;
- from critique to mindless criticism in terms of rules and regulations combined with individual vulnerability to those new rules and regulations, which in turn press towards conformity to the group. (p. 12)

Methodology

The project used a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology where the university-based researcher worked with a group of five secondary school science teachers to consider the implementation of the Intercultural Understanding GC through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures CCP. Through cycles of questioning, reflecting, investigating, developing a plan and implementation, (McIntyre 2008) the research addressed the broad question of "What happens when science teachers attempt to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures CCP in their classrooms?" The question was intentionally broad at the beginning of the project to allow for the capture of the many possibilities a participatory project could produce. The research process also acted as professional development for teachers to allow them to explore their own knowledge and understanding with regard to Indigenous knowledges, aspects of their conceptualisation of science and appropriate pedagogical and assessment strategies. Action research has been recognised as effective teacher professional development in Indigenous education (see Burridge, Whalan and Vaughn 2012). This paper reports on data, analysis and findings that relate to the influence of neoliberalism on curriculum implementation as a sub-set of the larger project.

The secondary science teachers worked with the researcher-participant for a period of approximately a year. The teachers volunteered to be involved in the project and all came to the research with an interest in, and intent to, implement the CCP and GC in their classrooms. Teachers taught at four different schools in the same regional city and came with varying lengths of their teaching careers and experiences with attempting to include Indigenous Knowledges in their science teaching. A summary of the teacher participants' characteristics is presented in Table 1. All teacher participants and the researcher-participant identified as

non-Indigenous Australians. One participant (Cristy[1]) was in her first year of teaching, two participants (Isabelle and Karl) were in their first five years of teaching while the remaining participants (Sue and Allen) were experienced teachers who had been teaching for more than fifeteen years. Teaching contexts differed too. Isabelle and Sue taught at the same co-educational religious-based private school, Cristy taught at a boy's religious-based private school, while Allen and Karl worked at different co-educational public schools. As non-Indigenous teachers, their experiences with Indigenous knowledges, cultures and communities were limited. None of the teachers had studied Indigenous related courses in their teacher education programs and they had only their own limited research efforts to guide their implementation of the CCP. While Karl was part of the project, he did not consistently engage with the group activities and did not move to classroom implementaiton. Therefore, there were not enough data pertaining to his participation to include in the analysis presented in this paper.

Insert Table 1 about here

The project also had three critical friends, all of whom were Aboriginal people. These critical friends acted in assisting and advising roles to the project and were all employed in different aspects of Indigenous education. One was a public school teacher working at an environmental education center; another was an Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Perspectives Officer with the Department of Education and Training, and the final critical friend was part of a university-based Indigenous student support and research centre. They supported the researcher-participant at the beginning of the project to understand the

[1] All names are pseudonyms

educational field and complexities of Indigenous peoples' perspectives on including Indigneous knowledges in schooling and to keep the project working in culturally appropriate ways. Knowledge and assistance was also provided by these critical friends to the teacher-participants through presentations and discussion which informed their participation in the research cycles and their classroom implementation (where it happened). As such, while volumenous data were collected from/with critical friends through the project, the focus of this paper largely represents their input through the influence it had on the teacher participants understanding of and participation with curriculum implementation.

As the researcher in the project, I aimed to enable a participant-driven research agenda. This did not exclude me from participating in the decision-making processes of the group, but it gave weight to the decisions made at a group level. There is a continuum of positions that researchers can take in the action research process, and clarity about the position occupied by the researcher is necessary to establish the rigour and ethics of the research (Herr & Anderson, 2005). An adequate title for the role of a university researcher in a PAR project has been recognised as problematic (McIntyre, 2008). The term 'facilitator' often carries "connotations of neutrality" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 569). In this project, I named myself researcher-participant with an understanding of the responsibility of this position in making or assisting social change, rather than attempting to act in a neutral, objective way (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). In order for the research to genuinely be 'with' and not 'about' or 'on' people, a degree of inter-dependant collaborative reflection is necessary (Heron & Reason, 2001). In order for this reciprocity to be achieved, the issue of what each participant wished to achieve through the research was negotiated carefully (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

My role as researcher-participant was sometimes constituted as that of an insider and, sometimes as an outsider to the processes taking place. To name oneself solely as either insider or outsider is a dichotomising perspective that overlooks the complex nature of the relationships within a PAR project and the possibility that a researcher occupies multiple positions (Brydon-Miller et al., 2011). I was positioned as an outsider because I was not part of the schools that the participants worked in, nor was I working as a teacher myself. In other instances, I was an insider, working with the group to understand the dynamics of the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in science education

Data were collected in multiple forms across the duration of the project. Initial interviews were conducted with teacher-participants as they entered the project to clarify their previous experiences with trying to implement Indigenous knowledges in science education and to ascertain their understanding of, and positions on, the inclusion of the GC and CCP in the curriculum. PAR group meetings and a workshop day were audio recorded and transcribed using a minimalist approach (Fairclough 1992). Artefacts such as unit and lesson plans as well as other school-based documents were collected and observations of classroom teaching were made. The researcher-participant, also kept a reflective journal that acted as a data source.

Data analysis took place on two levels, firstly as part of the on-going reflective cycles of the PAR group and secondly by the researcher-participant in order to connect the group's work to relevant theory. Prior to the start of the PAR group meetings, each teacher-participant was given a copy of their interview transcript to review (and change if they wished) and to use as a reflective tool to promote discussion in the first group meeting. Recordings of the group meetings were available to participants and a summary document

was written by the researcher-participant to act as a point of departure for refleciton and planning in future meetings. While the group met to discuss and reflect on their progress, as teachers were in different schools their planning and implementation were done individually.

Secondly, data were analysed by the researcher-participant (McIntyre 2008). The transcribed data from interviews, group meetings and individual discussions as well as the research journal and documentary data were examined for themes. Themes were analysed according to a critical theoretical framework using Seidel's (1998) cyclical data analysis process of noticing, collecting and thinking and connected to my knowledge of relevant academic literature. Coding of themes took place during data collection and at the conclusion of the data collection phase. Coding was used heuristically to lead from the data to the emergent theme and back from the theme to all the data pertaining to that theme (Saldaña 2013). In this way, patterns in the data related to the research question and the projects' critical intent were identified and examined.

In this study, the term 'trustworthiness' was used in preference to validity in relation to data analysis, in line with Lincoln and Guba's (1986) suggestion that trustworthiness is more appropriate to qualitative inquiry than validity. Here, trustworthiness indicates that the researcher-participant's interpretations of the data 'ring true' to the participants of the project. An indicator of trustworthiness within a PAR project may be the genuine achievement of a sense of "we" or "us" so that any writing-up of the project contains no surprises to the participants but is embraced by them as expressing theory and practice already trialled (Wadsworth, 2001). This was achieved through the use of collaboration and member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2000) that involved taking transcripts and interpretations back to participants to allow them to "see how their own speech objectified and represented them" (D.

Foley & Valenzuela, 2005, p. 223) and allowing for critical reflection and comment on my analysis as the researcher-participant. In addition, the project's critical friends were asked to assist in examining subjectivities and pointing out problematic taken for granted assumptions (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

Findings and Discussion

Consumption

Some participants identified a link between the inclusion of an Indigenous based CCP and improving economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Baynes (2016) outlined the creation of a Collective Vision Statement from the teachers in this project. The "Hopes" expressed included "Improving outcomes for Indigenous students in education and society more broadly" (p. 85). For example, Sue suggested that success of the CCP may be judged well into the future if "it has impacted on their Aboriginal health and how they live and their integration, you know, are they finding jobs within the population?" (Sue, Initial Interview, Sue and Isabelle). While project critical friend (and Aboriginal teacher) Daniel considered the implications of poor Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander achievement on society, stating that the inclusion was "not because of some moralistic point of view; it's because it is hammering society so much, rather than a pure moral point of view" (Initial Interview, Daniel). Both of these positions framed the inclusion of the CCP as a way of mediating economic impact on society produced by (either real or imagined) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander underachievement in education thereby, allowing Indigenous people to more fully participate in the consumption of the goods and services provided by society. What was often unsaid in the data is the underlying assumption that

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are less likely to be seen as *consumers* and have the same ability to consume goods and services as non-Indigenous people. Critical friend, Daniel, recognised the discourse of deficit in his statement about the implications of poor Indigenous achievement in formal schooling. The participant diagnosed deficit in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students going on to hold "good jobs" speaks strongly to Davies' (2005) construction of identity through "income and the capacity to purchase goods" (p. 9).

Within the neoliberal context, the function of education is framed as "to get a job". By participating in the discourse around schooling being primarily for employment, teachers such as Sue and Isabelle perpetuated a version of success for students as individuals participating in the market through their role as consumers. Isabelle and Sue also questioned the perception of parents and students of the usefulness of learning about Indigenous knowledges for pathways to university and therefore higher earning jobs:

> *There's not many courses at university that have any IK prerequisites. Do you know what I mean? So I think that's a big problem as well. Is that they're going to say well where am I going to use this knowledge?*
> (Isabelle, Initial Interview, Sue and Isabelle)

Individual Responsibility

Strongly linked to ideas of consumption, survival in a neoliberal frame is seen as an individual responsibility. The CCPs and GC in the Australian Curriculum have been framed as a way for students to increase their cultural competence in order to be successful in a globalised economy (Lingard and McGregor 2014). As Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) assert, Indigenous knowledge comes to be viewed as either a threat to Western ways, or as a commodity to be exploited. In some ways, the teacher participants of this project were

attempting to use the CCP to speak back to some of these neoliberal notions through the development of praxis with socially just motivations.

It is both the voices of the teachers and their silences in the data that are important in interrogating the sense of individual responsibility and its relationship to neoliberalism. For example, the group produced the Collective Vision Statement including the hope that "we provide engaging teaching experiences for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students". In part, this was recognition that current teaching practices were not necessarily doing so. It is possible, given the focus of some participants on the function of education as getting a job, to view this from competing perspectives. Either, the statement linked to gaining nourishment through a humanising and liberating praxis or the focus was engaging students to enculturate them into being individually responsible for their own welfare (socially and economically). Indeed, the hope of "working towards improved outcomes for Indigenous peoples in education and society" (Collective Vision Statement) could be read in a similar way, depending on how the purpose of education is viewed.

Similarly, concerns around "who is this priority for?" (Allen, Meeting 1) presented the underlying scepticism of participants Allen and Cristy as to whether the CCP would be enacted in a way that benefited society as a whole. The ensuing discussion around the purpose of education challenged the political motivations of the CCP.

Allen: *Are we aiming at, we are aiming at a particular cultural group? So we're actually aiming at Aboriginal Australians? And when trying to link it to an outcome of an improved outcome in their education, is that what we're trying to do?*

Renee: *Well, that's the question. Yeah.*
Cristy: *Is that what we're trying to do? Is that what the new policy that is embedded in ACARA and of all that sort of thing, is that what it's*

> *trying to do? I don't know whether the people writing these documents really have a full understanding of what they want out of it. Or is it just ticking the box?*
>
> Meeting 1

The suspicion of the intent of the curriculum was apparent in the first group meeting. Christy was questioning if there was a commitment from Government to genuine and broadly conceived educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students or if the construction of the CCP was just "lip service". It was from this point that Cristy and Allen agreed that, for them, the CCP was about benefitting all students through providing a perspective broader than just that limited to Western ideas (Meeting 1). The group's intent was to benefit society through generating an inclusive version of an Australian perspective that all students could find relevance in (Collective Vision Statement). This speaks to generating a humanising and liberating praxis, rather than enculturation into neoliberal ideas about individual responsibility.

Recognition of this inclusive Australian perspective may be used to speak back to the pathologisation of Indigeneity. Through inclusive praxis based around the CCP, the positioning of Indigenous peoples and societies as "in deficit" may be problematised in students' minds. The neoliberal frame of *individual responsibility* places Indigenous people facing disadvantage as holding sole responsibility for their situation, rather than recognising the systemic, historical and institutional forces that are at play. While the inclusion of the CCP in the curriculum may be seen as an intent to counteract this, as Darder (2012) points out, "those who practice neoliberal multiculturalism enact a structure of public recognition based on acknowledgement and acceptance…. while simultaneously (and conveniently) undermining discourses and practices that call for collective social action and fundamental

structural change" (p. 417). Darder provides further analysis recognising that where professionals such as educators see the complexities inherent in the politics of difference, they can be deemed disruptive to the prevailing neoliberal order. It is an individual teacher's approach to how the CCP and GC are implemented and their reading of the intent of the curriculum that frames how or if critical pedagogical practice is enacted in individual classrooms.

Set adrift from values

While personal factors around epistemology, pedagogy and politics influence individual teachers' implementation or otherwise (see Desmarchelier, 2016, 2020 for more in-depth analysis), neoliberal external pressures may have also played a role in participants' willingness to change their pedagogical practice. As Davies (2005) explains, individual survival under the influence of neoliberalism trumps the need to act for the collective good; in fact, it becomes risky to act in a way that promotes the liberal and humanist self at work. While all participants saw a "common good" in societal terms in regard to the CCP, only two proceeded to actual implementation. For some teachers, their belief in the common good of the initiatives was outweighed by their fear of being challenged for being "political". In a discussion between Isabelle and Christy about the politics of, and conflict over, land sovereignty in Australia, Isabelle described "I don't feel equipped to be able to deal with that conflict in the right way" (Meeting 3) and described her strategy as "to avoid it" for fear of being seen as political by her students and their parents. Combined with the epistemological and pedagogical challenges around implementation and a lack of institutional support, sometimes teachers' best intentions did not bear pedagogical fruit.

But why did the teachers see the implementation of an official part of the curriculum as a challenging political act? Teacher knowledge as to the benefits the CCP particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, was apparent from past pushes surrounding the embedding of Indigenous perspectives. The rhetoric of why the CCP was a good idea had permeated the teachers' ideas and motivations. However, the reality of implementing pedagogical practice framed around a minority way of knowing presented challenges. As previously highlighted, Isabelle she feared that students would not be interested in Indigenous knowledges as it would not be relevant to their future careers. She indicated that her responsibility as a teacher was to assist students to enact their individual capabilities in regard to increasing their capacity to get "a good job" rather than to broader social issues. So, while the rhetoric surrounding the common good that was possible through the CCP was recognised and sympathised with, the sense of responsibility lay with individual concerns set adrift from values surrounding the common good.

Sue and Isabelle found it difficult to follow through with their commitment to the social justice concerns of the project in the face of overwhelming pressure to produce the right type of neoliberal subject. Isabelle highlighted that she believed that many teachers were not producing the highest quality learning experiences they could because of the many and varied demands on teachers' time (see also *surveillance* section) .

> *It sucks though because I think teachers, generally, teachers are there for the good of the kids and they want to be the best that they can be. But, resources such as time are so limited. You find yourself in a tug-of-war, like, "do I have time? No, I don't, I just need to get something planned". And you're teaching these lessons that you know could be so much better if you only had time. But you just don't, and it's bad.*
> Isabelle, Initial Interview, Sue and Isabelle

The only teacher who did not was Allen, whose high level of autonomy and experience allowed him to implement not only his CCP informed units but also plan for

future teaching also addressing the curriculum initiative. Christy implemented a unit inclusive of the CCP but could not implement her planned activity of a professional development session derived from her work in the project as while her school principal also supported the rhetoric of the CCP, he did not make the time in the school's calendar. As with the non-implementing teachers, concerns around improving social cohesion were pushed aside in favour of moving forward on other areas related to the curriculum.

Institutional and educational system pressures on teachers to engage with the areas of curriculum implementation that were seen as more important, contributed to teachers' concerns around not having enough time to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to implement the CCP. This was evident where epistemological and political conflict existed for teachers (Desmarchelier 2020), such as Isabelle's concerns about the inclusion of Indigenous "mythology" in science teaching or when she questioned how students' parents might see the inclusion.

A lack of time imposed through institutional pressures to emphasise other curriculum elements acted as motivation for the teachers to disengage from the project and from their commitment to implementing the CCP. Where teachers saw it as challenging to "act politically", especially in the face of little or no institutional support, it was also professionally risky to push forward. In this case, committing the time to develop knowledge and skills became a personal responsibility, not one upheld by the institution. This meant that it was not linked to be a requirement of the teachers' job thus relieving them of both the social and individual responsibility to implement.

Surveillance

Also strongly linked to the concerns that teachers had around not having enough time to appropriately engage with the CCP was the rise of accountability measures in the Australian education system. This frustration was summed up by Isabelle (above) when she acknowledged that "you're teaching these lessons that you know could be so much better if you only had time. But you just don't, and it's bad" (Initial Interview, Sue and Isabelle). As Apple (2000b) explains, as time becomes a less available resource, "getting done is substituted for work done well" (p. 119). In their exit interview, Sue and Isabelle reiterated their concerns around fitting in this type of project while attending to their accountability responsibilities. This suggests that they did not see the CCP planning as possible from them for some years in the future. Sue saw the focus of their teaching practice as meeting examination and reporting requirements, thus leaving little time for planning other elements. Sue and Isabelle's experiences highlight the pressures of surveillance in the neoliberal education system.

High levels of surveillance of teachers' activities do not only act to reduce the amount of time they have available to devote to pedagogical development, but they also act to shift responsibility from the social to the individual good. In order to be "trusted" as a good teacher by the educational system, emphasis is on individual teacher's responsibility to meet reporting requirements. This self-responsibility can overshadow any commitment to the social good, especially if punitive measures are involved in non-compliance. Therefore, the focus of teachers' work becomes a commitment to reporting, accountability and surveillance.

(The illusion of) Autonomy

While teachers mostly seemed to have autonomy over their teaching practice, in reality their work was framed largely by the neoliberal discourse around the function of schooling and the need to comply with accountability measures. Pressure within their schools usually resulted in their rhetorical commitment to implementing the CCP being overshadowed by the privileging of other curriculum elements. For all teachers in the project, their autonomy to engage as they wished was undermined to greater or lesser degrees by their individual responsibilities to meet other institutional demands.

Project Critical Friend Daniel, highlighted the intensification of teachers' work through the example of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), a standardised test that all Australian school students sit in years 3, 5, 7 and 9. In this quote, Daniel intentionally misnames NAPLAN as NAPALM in recognition of the impact he perceives it having on teachers and students.

> *There is so much stuff going on now that was never around five years ago, let alone 10, 20 years ago. Everyone's their [teachers] boss, so they can come and have a whinge, there's so many people they have to answer to, NAPALM is a huge waste of time and all the emphasis upon that. The stress for almost six months of the year, almost all you're focused on, it's so unfair and so detrimental to an active teaching, learning, even happy school room. It is so, so hard and I've met some wonderful teachers in my time and even some of the best ones are now seriously considering their careers because of the ridiculous pressures placed upon them by this NAPALM*
> *Daniel, Initial Interview*

The lack of autonomy over curricular and pedagogical choices was sometimes invisible to the participants themselves. Sue for example, as Head of Department for Science in her school, spoke of the choices she was making around session attendance at a curriculum related conference. In her and Isabelle's exit interview, she relayed that she was attending a state education authority conference where there would be sessions discussing the implementation of the CCP. However, she chose to attend the concurrent sessions on the

student verification processes that were related to assessment. Her sense of individual responsibility outweighed her sense of teaching for the common good, as did her desire to ensure that she was meeting surveillance and accountability requirements. While she believed she was exercising autonomy in her choice of session, her choices were framed by neoliberal demands.

A lack of autonomy can also be linked to reductions in teacher agency. During the project, there was the possibility of Allen's school being required to teach pre-designed lessons in response to not meeting the requirements of accountability measures. As Apple (2000b) describes, through the "degradation of labour" (p. 116), people working outside classrooms and schools now have greater control over what is taught by a teacher in the classroom. He argues that this leads to a pedagogical deskilling of teachers through the loss of the ability to control a large portion of their own work. While the prescription of lessons in Allen's school was not implemented in the end, mainly due to a lack of suitable lesson plans being available at the time, the apparent intent was to exercise control over teachers and schools where standards are not being met. This speaks to a systematic lack of trust in teachers' abilities to exercise autonomy and agency in ways that meet audit requirements.

Through this analysis of *consumption*, *individual responsibility*, being *set adrift from values*, *surveillance* and *autonomy*, it can be seen how neoliberalism impacted upon the teachers' participation in the project and on their positions around implementing the CCP.

Classroom Implementation

Not all participants proceeded to classroom implementation and those who did, varied in their approaches. Sue, Isabelle and Karl did not progress to classroom teaching and their experiences were characterised by some epistemological concerns around merging different ways of knowing; less critical discussion of how power differentials operated; a pedagogical reliance on more transmissive approaches; and being challenged by being seen as acting politically. Cristy engaged Indigenous knowledges as science, identified structures of power surrounding knowledge systems and took a critical pedagogical approach encouraging some co-creation of knowledge between students and the teacher; and showed a political concern about equity for all students. Allen identified Indigenous ways of knowing as different to, but as equally valid as, scientific knowledge; took an approach of learning with his students using critical and constructivist base pedagogies and politically showed a concern for a broadly conceived purpose of education. (For more analysis of the personal attributes in relation to the interacting factors of epistemology, pedagogy and politics influencing implementation see Desmarchelier 2016, 2020.)

Despite institutional, epistemological and political challenges, both Allen and Christy successfully (in their own determination) implemented classroom lessons inclusive of the CCP. In Allen's case, he was able to adapt quickly and implement the CCP in the next unit he was teaching on scientific classification systems. Christy needed to plan ahead more and designed a unit on forces that was offered to all science teachers in her year level for implementation. While Allen and Christy's approaches differed in terms of approach and pedagogy, they both succeeded in implementing units of work that considered Indigenous knowledges and had classroom involvement from Aboriginal people.

In Allen's class the students explored scientific (Linnaean) classification systems while also considering how Australian Indigenous peoples classified the world around them. Allen gathered knowledge about Indigenous perspectives on the topic through Internet based research and also engaged an Indigenous guest speaker to work with the class group. Figure 1 includes two PowerPoint slides from the accompanying assessment item showing how one student interpreted Indigenous ways of classifying and an Indigenous perspective on two species. This was juxtaposed against the Linnaean classification of the two species.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

In contrast to the other teachers, Allen confidently presented Indigenous knowledge in his science classroom as an alternative epistemic position. From a scientific epistemological perspective, Allen did not see Indigenous knowledge as science. He recognized science as coming from a strictly Western epistemological position and being produced through the scientific method, which, he believed, precluded the inclusion of Indigenous ways of knowing. Simultaneously, he recognized Indigenous knowledge systems as equally valid ways of understanding the natural world. This meant that, while he saw the two as separate, he did not experience epistemological conflict as a result. Science and Indigenous knowledges were presented as equal but different through his teaching.

Allen claimed his agency as a teacher within his own classroom. He was not concerned about surveillance and enacted his own autonomy to teach as he pleased in his class. He was less concerned than other teachers about being seen as acting politically and

held fast to his commitment to the collective good. He firmly believed in the value of education not only for social and economic betterment of individuals, but for society as a whole. While these beliefs were voiced by other teachers, they were more constrained by their perceptions of the neoliberal environment surrounding them. Part of Allen's ability to exercise his agency came from the trust of the school principal in his teaching abilities and minimal surveillance from the school.

Cristy's approach to how Indigenous knowledge could be incorporated into her science teaching differed significantly from Allen's. Cristy took a more structured, less exploratory, more content-based approach to her teaching. She also extended her teaching plan out of her own classroom and made it available to all of her school's staff teaching the same unit. This met with mixed success. One teacher used her plan and collaborated with her to deliver his teaching program. The only other teacher involved refused to use Cristy's plan and completely omitted any Indigenous content from his teaching, preferring to teach straight from the textbook.

Cristy's unit plan consisted of a four-week block; where one week was devoted to the topic "Forces of the Past" where Aboriginal "simple machines" (a curriculum term) were considered, as seen in Figure 2. The summative assessment item for this unit required students to produce a poster on their choice of six topics, one of which was Aboriginal simple machines. Cristy reported that the Indigenous topic interested students with approximately one third of her class choosing it for their assessment.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Cristy's content based approach privileged scientific knowledges over Aboriginal cultural understanding. The use of the title "Forces of the Past" could be considered to signal an historical perspective in enactment of the curriculum, limiting the understanding of how many of the tools discussed are used in contemporary times. However, in practice, this historical perspective was ameliorated by partnering with Tom, an Aboriginal student, to co-teach the class. Tom brought in artefacts (examples of simple machines) which were owned by, and culturally significant to, his own family.

The political climate of the school was particularly challenging for Cristy. Initially she had strong support from the school's principal to participate in the project and she led the implementation of the curriculum initiative in the school. However, upon the challenge of a senior teacher around the value of the initiative, the principal offered less support. Her discussion of the situation shows her frustration and demonstrates how easily such initiatives can be shut down:

> I got really, really angry, and when I went and approached the teacher that didn't engage – because like I did the whole unit up for the other teachers and I put it on their desk before the start of the term… I think there was 18 lessons that I did up PowerPoints. I did all the research and he just point blank said to me, "I'm not doing it because it's not in the textbook". (Christy, Workshop Day)

The scale of the implementation of the CCP within Christy's school was limited by the challenge of one teacher who did not value the intercultural aspects of the CCP. While the school's principal had been very supportive, when challenges arose, he chose to privilege aspects of the curriculum that were related to "getting a job" over those that were perceived as being linked to the collective good. In a private school, this could be read as a response to pressures around delivering the right type of neoliberal subject in accordance with

perceptions about parents' expectations. Nevertheless, Cristy's intrinsic motivation to achieve socially just outcomes for her students assisted her to continue to pursue the work despite the opposition, at least in the short term while the project was running.

Conclusion

The vision of what education could be in relation to the CCP and GC is in the educational imagination of teachers and schools and was evident in this project. However, as Apple (2000a) attests, "while the construction of new theories and utopian visions is important, it is equally crucial to base these theories and visions in an unromantic appraisal of the material and discursive terrain that now exists" (p. 229). It is important to recognise the "openings for counter-hegemonic activity" (Apple 2000b 10) which have been created through the inclusion of the CCP, but the possibility of change only exists with the tactical analysis of knowledge and power relationships and what is necessary to actually bring about pedagogical change in the classroom. As Sefa Dei (2011) contends, if we fail to contest power and the neoliberal stance, listening to diverse standpoints can only be seductive and end up actually affirming the dominance of particular forms of knowledge.

Lessons from the implementation of the CCP and GC in Australia may be applicable in other educational contexts around the world. Many educational systems are considering how increased globalisation and movement of people across nations can be reflected in approaches to schooling (Casinader, 2016). Curricula may have similar aims to the Australian Curriculum in terms of developing culturally aware global citizens through the inclusion of intercultural capabilities (Lingard and McGregor, 2014). As neoliberalism is a global system, it is likely that teachers in countries other than Australia are also experiencing the pressure of

producing the right type of neo-liberal subject that are in tension with their socially-just values in intercultural education. Indigenous curriculum considerations specifically are of concern in many colonised countries. The experiences of the teachers in this study may act to bring visibility to some reasons why such intercultural or Indigenous curriculum inclusions are difficult to implement widely across a given system.

This study work with a small group of teachers in one regional location in Australia. There is opportunity to continue the investigation of the specific impact of neoliberalism on teachers' educational practice across different contexts and in larger studies. While much literature is devoted to neoliberalism and its impact on education in a broad sense, there remains a dearth of analysis of the micro-level impact on teachers' day-to-day activities and what can be done to mediate and overcome barriers to more successful and broadly implemented intercultural education.

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