

# Chapter 5

## Indigenous Knowledges, Graduate Attributes and Recognition of Prior Learning for Advanced Standing: Tensions Within the Academy

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### Introduction

What counts for knowledge in higher education programs is not the prerogative of the West, nor should it be. The Bradley Review (2008) emphasised two points regarding this: first, the valuing of Indigenous Knowledges (IK) in the academy; second, the need for a particular Indigenous graduate attribute. The Behrendt Review (2012) recommended that Australian universities should take these issues on board, albeit with an initial focus on teaching and health professionals. The Bradley Review (2009, p. 33) stated that ‘it is critical that Indigenous knowledge is recognised as an important, unique element of higher education.’ The Behrendt Review (2012, p. 94) concurs, stating that ‘Indigenous knowledge, translated into practical curriculum, teaching practices, and graduate attributes, makes important contributions to helping professionals meet the needs of Indigenous communities.’ Parent (2014) suggests that for IK to be respected as legitimate, universities need to ensure that IK is acknowledged within institutional policies and practices. Goerke and Kickett (2013, p. 63) assert that IK in the higher education environment should be aligned and integrated ‘between policies, programs, practice and professional development.’

The Behrendt Review (Behrendt et al. 2012) proposed that IK should be an element of graduate attributes (GA). Graduate attributes involve higher education sector-defined categories of fundamental skills, people skills, thinking skills and personal skills (AQF 2013). These inform curriculum design and the provision of learning experiences and are the core values within universities that graduates develop on successful completion of studies (Barrie et al. 2009). The Behrendt Review (2012) states that ‘appropriately crafted Indigenous graduate attributes have

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the potential to significantly alter the cultural competence of the nation's professional workforce in the future and to improve outcomes for their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients' (Behrendt et al. 2012, p. 193). Behrendt et al. (2012, p. iv) also suggest that universities develop 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teaching and Learning Frameworks that reflect the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge within curriculums, graduate attributes, and teaching practices.' This call for Indigenous-specific or Indigenous-referenced IK and GA implies teaching and learning of both within the academy, and some form of measurement. One university confirms this requirement to 'include cultural competence as a graduate attribute, with measures of acquisition for all students' (University of Sydney 2012).

IK and GA are bound to values, including diversity, respect, sensitivity, cultural awareness and inclusion. Pitman (2011, p. 65) states that when universities define values 'as curriculum outcomes, then an argument might be made for learners to use RPL ... [recognition of prior learning] ... to accredit them.' RPL is a process that is available for all students studying in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. In the higher education sector, RPL is more widely viewed as contributing to advanced standing (or credit). One university states that its *Advanced Standing for Previous Studies and Recognised Prior Learning* policy recognises that previous formal study and RPL may contribute to further formal study and to establish the equivalence of academic achievement regardless of the similarity or differences of the education processes involved (James Cook University 2015).

This chapter aims to consider the presence of IK within Australian universities, evidenced by relevant policies and procedures, and discuss the tensions that surround IK within the academy.

## Literature

### *Indigenous Knowledge*

Battiste (2002) notes that IK has been a growing field of enquiry for some years and defines IK as embodying

a web of relationships within a specific ecological context; contains linguistic categories, rules and relationships unique to each knowledge system; has localised content and meaning; has established customs with respect to acquiring and sharing of knowledge (not all Indigenous peoples equally recognise their responsibilities); and implies responsibilities for possessing various kinds of knowledge. (Battiste 2002 p. 14)

Parent's (2014) definition emphasises the multiplicity of IK systems that 'encompass the technological, social, economic, philosophical, spiritual, educational, legal and governmental elements of particular Indigenous cultures throughout the world' (Parent 2014, p. 59). Parent (2014) also draws attention to the dynamism and the multiple dimensions of IK:

As Iks are context-specific and interwoven within a given community's lived experience, they are dynamic and ever-changing to reflect environmental and social adaptations. Indigenous Knowledges are therefore not a singular body of knowledge but are multi-dimensional and pluralistic in that they contain many layers of being, knowing, and modes of expression. (Parent 2014, p. 59)

Likewise, Nakata et al. (2008) discuss the multiplicity of IK meanings and its reference to experiences and understandings:

This 'Indigenous' knowledge may simply mean 'experience' of the world as an Indigenous person, it may mean historical understanding passed down from the Indigenous perspective, it may mean local knowledge, or community-based experience, or traditional knowledge, all of which are not well-represented in course content, if at all. (Nakata et al. 2008, p. 138)

The transformative nature of IK in the academy (McGovern 1999) is characterised by inclusiveness and diversity (Van Wyk 2006) and by the ways that IK 'can be used to foster empowerment and justice in a variety of cultural contexts' (Kincheloe and Steinberg 2008, p. 136). Nevertheless, Macedo (1999) cautions that a 'global comprehension of Indigenous knowledge cannot be achieved through the reductionist binarism of Western versus Indigenous knowledge' (Macedo 1999, p. xi). Nakata (2004) believes that 'the whole area of Indigenous knowledge is a contentious one' (p. 19) and cautions about what can be achieved in higher education 'in relation to controlling Indigenous content or in shaping knowledge and practice to be uniquely and identifiably Indigenous' (Nakata 2007a, p. 225).

Within formal education, Nakata's (2004) concern is that in making the curricula more inclusive, it has 'encouraged extraction of elements of Indigenous ways of understanding the world – mathematical knowledge, astronomy, stories, mythology, art, environmental knowledge, religion, etc. to fit with the curriculum areas' (Nakata 2004, p. 25). Nakata (2007a) also stresses the importance of understanding some vital issues about IK in the academy:

It is important for those wanting to bring Indigenous knowledge into teaching and learning contexts to understand what happens when Indigenous knowledge is conceptualised simplistically and oppositionally from the standpoint of scientific paradigms as everything that is 'not science.' It is also important to understand what happens when Indigenous knowledge is documented in ways that disembodies it from the people who are its agents, when the 'knowers' of that knowledge are separated out from what comes to be 'the known', in ways that dislocate it from its locale, and separates it from the social institutions that uphold and reinforce its efficacy, and cleaves it from the practices that constantly renew its meanings in the here and now. And it is also important to consider what disintegrations and transformations occur when it is redistributed across Western categories of classification, when it is managed in databases via technologies that have been developed in ways that suit the hierarchies, linearity, abstraction and objectification of Western knowledge – all of which are the antithesis of Indigenous knowledge traditions and technologies. (Nakata 2007b, p. 9).

## *Graduate Attributes*

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) conflates generic learning outcomes (GLO), used within the VET sector, and GA as ‘transferable, non-discipline specific skills a graduate may achieve through learning that has application in study, work, and life contexts’, and categorises these as ‘fundamental skills; people skills; thinking skills and personal skills’ (AQF 2013, p. 94). The AQF notes GA are defined by each higher education provider.

Universities have focused on GA for over ten years (Oliver 2011). GA are used to inform curriculum and learning outcomes (Barrie 2009). They have been defined as core abilities and values which are both needed socially and professionally, and which are developed in students during their studies and experiences in higher education (Barrie et al. 2009). More recently, graduate attributes have been expressed as belonging to a 2020 vision for higher education where the system produces graduates with not only the requisite knowledge and skills but also a third component which involves

a broader element variously described as understandings, capability or attributes (that) permits the individual to think flexibly or act intelligently in situations which may not previously have been experienced, (with) a commitment to lifelong learning or to responsible citizenship, or the insights derived from practical experiences. (Bradley et al. 2008, p. 6)

## *Recognition of Prior Learning for Advanced Standing*

Definitions of recognition of prior learning in the higher education vary from quite tight notions of credit to conceptions of it as ‘a reflective process with impact on the learning process’ (Stenlund 2010, p. 784). RPL for Advanced Standing (RPLAS)<sup>1</sup> can often be viewed in instrumental terms (Castle and Attwood 2001), with university policies not considering RPLAS on purely epistemological grounds or equity of learning experiences (Pitman and Vidovich 2013). RPLAS builds on the principle that adults have useful experiences that are worthy of recognition, and these experiences form a basis for further personal, professional and academic development (Castle and Attwood 2001, p. 64). RPLAS should be both a bridge (de Graaff 2014) and a development tool (Armsby 2013) that spans the workplace and the academy and provides an opportunity for self-development and space for knowledge claims. Although RPLAS remains a challenge to institutions to recognise the diversity of people’s opportunities for learning (Pouget and Osborne 2004), Pitman (2011, p. 237) contends that ‘RPL policies are evidence that informal learning is not only accepted, but attains the same status, or rank, as learning achieved in a more traditional, formal environment.’ RPLAS should widen access to education through validating informal and non-formal learning (Pitman and Vidovich 2013).

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<sup>1</sup>My use of RPLAS encompasses the literature that relates to issues of RPL in higher education.

Pouget and Osborne (2004, p. 58–59) suggest that the higher education sector should respond ‘to the need for a single credit system – the single currency, rather than the exchange rate mechanism – which recognises achievement in all domains,’ where RPLAS is seen to be about learning as well as assessment. Valk (2009, p. 88–89) believes that although universities have policies that recognise RPLAS, few practise it, with much ‘high-level scientific and political discussion but much less action.’ Valk’s (2009) analysis notes some obstacles: the general focus of higher education provision, staff attitudes, staff workload issues and financial considerations. Pitman and Vidovich (2012, p. 771) assert that universities ‘enact policy symbolically, for position-taking, rather than for any pragmatic reason.’

## Approach

There are 43 universities in Australia, including one specialist university and two overseas universities. To investigate the topics of IK, GA, and RPL in the academy, relevant university policies, procedures and reports were accessed through each university website and then reviewed. The focus of the review was to determine the presence of IK in the academy, realised through university policy and reports that make reference to the teaching and learning of IK; to determine the number of Indigenous-referenced GA evident in Australian universities’ GA statements; and to undertake an analysis of RPLAS, through a social inclusion frame, to identify themes that align with the espoused principles of IK and Indigenous-referenced GA in the academy.

## Outcomes

### *Indigenous Knowledge and the Academy*

University statements regarding the presence of IK are expressed in Indigenous education statements (IES),<sup>2</sup> reconciliation action plans (RAP),<sup>3</sup> strategic plans or frameworks, or not at all. University participation in IES is compulsory, whereas RAP is voluntary. Universities report on IES yearly expenditure relating to out-

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<sup>2</sup>The Indigenous Education Statement (IES) is used to determine a university’s eligibility for Indigenous Support Program (ISP) funding. Universities in receipt of ISP funding are required each year to provide the Commonwealth with a report on the expenditure of the grant amount and on progress towards improved educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians as set out in the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.

<sup>3</sup>The Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program is a framework for organisations to realise their vision for reconciliation. An RAP enables organisations to commit to implementing and measuring practical actions that build respectful relationships and create opportunities for Indigenous people.

comes and future plans to meet ongoing responsibilities for Indigenous student achievement in higher education, including assessing and reporting on progress towards improved educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians as set out in the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP), one of which encompasses understanding of, and respect for, Indigenous traditional and contemporary cultures. IES reports often refer to evidence in University strategic plans or reconciliation statements. Examples of university Indigenous education statements that reference IK include the following:

- Develop curriculum that can be incorporated into all courses to ensure cultural awareness and sensitivity is part of graduate attributes (University of Canberra).
- Recognise Indigenous knowledge as a distinct knowledge paradigm within learning and teaching practices (Macquarie University).
- Embed relevant Indigenous knowledge in all courses in support of the commitment to the Indigenous graduate attributes (Western Sydney University).
- Imbue student learning at all levels, [including] the commitment to respect Indigenous Knowledge, values, and culture (University of Western Australia).

RAP is an action plan to identify and pursue opportunities to advance reconciliation as part of the university's core teaching and research activities. Examples of university RAP statements that reference IK include the following:

- Incorporate Indigenous Australian content into all of the university's undergraduate course offerings, and embed related descriptors into the university's graduate attributes (Charles Sturt University).
- Include Indigenous perspectives in all Curtin undergraduate courses and post-graduate coursework awards (Curtin University).
- Continue to embed Indigenous knowledges and perspectives into all undergraduate courses (Edith Cowan University).
- Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges and perspectives in appropriate university curricula to provide students with those knowledges, skills, and understanding when working alongside Indigenous peoples (Murdoch University).

Most if not all universities reference IK through either individual RAP and/or their IES reports. Of the 43 listed universities, at the time of writing, IK is referenced as follows: in RAP (14); in IES (16); in both RAP and IES (1); in strategic plans or frameworks (7); not referenced at all (5).

The presence of IK requires the appropriate inclusion of Indigenous content and practice so that students gain inclusive perspectives through IK and experiences. Evidence for the application of IK in the academy is through the curriculum, which can be either university-wide or through specific courses within the university. These courses could be stand-alone, discipline-specific, integrated or restricted. A stand-alone course would be one in which IK is at its core, for example, a Bachelor of Indigenous Studies, which has been designed to communicate and generate a better understanding of Indigenous world views. IK in discipline-specific courses is specific theoretical and practical knowledge required for a professional discipline,

for example, a Bachelor of Arts (Indigenous Studies) that aims to develop knowledge and understanding of Indigenous cultures and societies within the Australian community and a broader international context. An integrated study is one in which IK is included within a course, for example, within an astronomy course that includes a focus on the ways in which Indigenous people understand and utilise the stars, or an environmental course where Indigenous fire practices are studied. Restricted offerings are courses for Indigenous students only, for example, the Bachelor of Contemporary Australian Indigenous Art, which has been designed to prepare Indigenous students to become professional artists and is planned by Indigenous principles and philosophies, including respecting Indigenous laws concerning the ways in which techniques and images may be used.

The application of the IK in some universities, whether stand-alone, discipline-specific, integrated or restricted, informs the shaping and attainment of graduate attributes.

### ***Indigenous-Related Graduate Attributes and the Academy***

At the time of writing, 12 universities include either an Indigenous-specific GA statement or a GA that implies an Indigenous dimension, including statements on cultural competence:

- Able to engage meaningfully with the culture, experiences, histories and contemporary issues of Indigenous communities; and practice ethically and sustainably in ways that demonstrate *yindyamarra winhanga-nha* – translated from the Wiradjuri language as ‘the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in’ (Charles Sturt University).
- Demonstrate respect for, and acknowledgement of, ideas and knowledge of others; appreciate Indigenous culture and history (University of New England).
- A global world view encompassing a cosmopolitan outlook as well as a local perspective on social and cultural issues, together with an informed respect for cultural and indigenous identities. An ability to engage with diverse cultural and Indigenous perspectives in both global and local settings (Southern Cross University).
- Include cultural competence as a graduate attribute, with measures of acquisition for all students (University of Sydney).
- Aim to ensure that all UTS graduates have Indigenous professional competency as appropriate to their profession (University of Technology Sydney).
- Demonstrate knowledge of Indigenous Australia through cultural competency and professional capacity (Western Sydney University).
- Have an understanding of the broad theoretical and technical concepts related to their discipline area, with relevant connections to industry, professional, and regional and indigenous knowledge (Charles Darwin University).

- Have an understanding of Indigenous Australian issues and cultures (James Cook University).
- Social and ethical responsibilities and an understanding of indigenous and international perspectives (Queensland University of Technology).
- Intercultural and ethical competencies: adept at operating in other cultures; comfortable with different nationalities and social contexts; able to determine and contribute to desirable social outcomes, demonstrated by study abroad or with an understanding of Indigenous knowledges (University of Adelaide).
- Respect Indigenous knowledge, cultures and values (University of Melbourne).
- Respect Indigenous knowledge, cultures and values (Curtin University).

As noted above, Indigenous-related GA are often associated with the concept of cultural competence. The concept of cultural competence is discussed more comprehensively elsewhere in this book (see Sherwood and Riley-Mundine), but in brief, cultural competency has been defined as

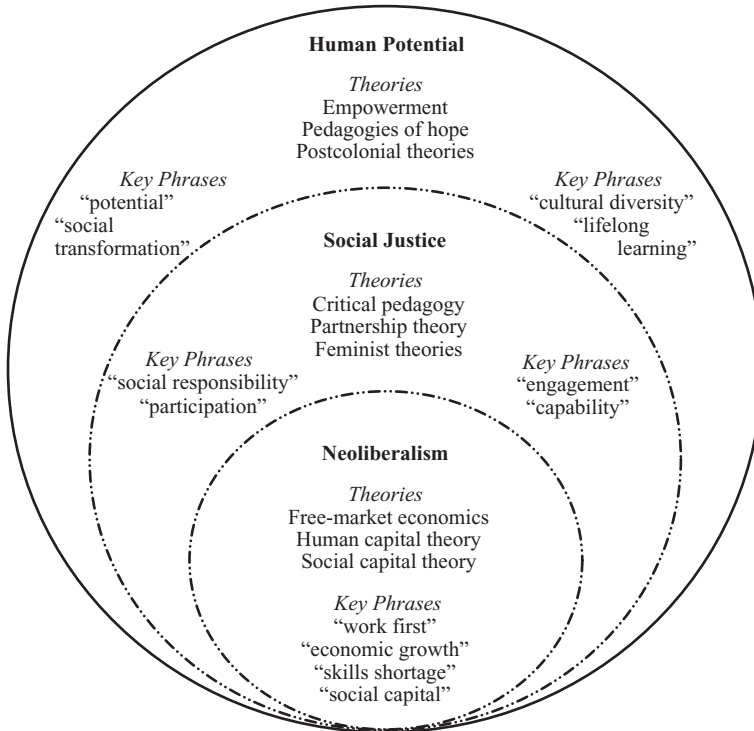
Student and staff knowledge and understanding of Indigenous Australian cultures, histories and contemporary realities and awareness of Indigenous protocols, combined with the proficiency to engage and work effectively in Indigenous contexts congruent to the expectations of Indigenous Australian peoples (Universities Australia 2011, p. 3)

Also, Universities Australia (2011) sets out five themes that are associated with the guiding principles for developing cultural competency within the university environment. One of the five themes specifically addresses teaching and learning, with a recommendation that universities include Indigenous cultural competency as a formal GA: ‘Recommendation 2: Embed Indigenous cultural competency as a formal Graduate Attribute or Quality’ (Universities Australia 2011, p. 32). Of the 12 universities that make reference to IK in their GA, the University of Sydney and Western Sydney University specifically refer to cultural competence as a GA, with the University of Sydney further adding to include ‘measures of acquisition for all students’.

### ***The RPLAS Factor***

While most universities describe the purpose of RPLAS policy, a smaller number make explicit statements about guiding policy principles. An analysis of RPLAS from a social inclusion theory perspective can assist with understanding the approaches taken by Australian universities. Social inclusion can be viewed as degrees of inclusion where the ‘narrowest interpretation pertains to the neoliberal notion of social inclusion as access; a broader interpretation regards the social justice idea of social inclusion as participation; whilst the widest interpretation involves the human potential lens of social inclusion as empowerment’ (Gidley et al. 2010, p. 7). The key phrases associated with each of these interpretations (Fig. 5.1) have parallels with the language around RPL.





**Fig. 5.1** Spectrum of Ideologies Underlying Social Inclusion Theory and Policy (Source: Gidley et al. 2010, p. 8 © 2009 Dr. Jennifer M. Gidley)

Most university policies that recognise RPLAS focus on practice rather than principles; however, the 18 universities that make specific reference to principles use the language of a social justice ideology (10) or human potential ideology (8). Key phrases in the former focus on participation, in particular with the notion of ‘life experiences’. The latter include statements on ‘lifelong learning’, ‘diversity’, and ‘inclusiveness’. Nevertheless, when it comes down to the practice of RPLAS, the underlying ideology is that of human liberalism with a strong focus on human capital theory. Coleman (1988, S100) states that ‘human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways.’ The focus of the application process is, in most cases, providing evidence of the skills and capabilities attained in previous studies or life experiences. Examples of questions and statements on RPLAS forms that reflect human capital theory include:

- What skills do you already have that relate to this program/course (RMIT)?
- Provide detailed explanations of prior work and/or professional experience for assessment (Notre Dame University).

- Address how you achieved all the required learning outcomes of objectives through your professional and/or work experience (Murdoch University).
- What type(s) of non-credentialed programs/training/study have you undertaken and experience acquired since leaving school relevant to this application (Victoria University)?

## Discussion

### *Tensions*

The presence of IK and Indigenous-referenced GA in the academy presents some tensions. Nakata (2002) states that the intersections of different knowledges and discourses produce tensions, and that ‘Indigenous students often feel the contradictions and tensions within having to align to one or the other’ knowledge systems (Nakata 2007b, p. 10). The same could be said for some non-Indigenous students who for possibly the first time experience IK in ‘curriculums, graduate attributes and teaching practices’ (Behrendt et al. 2012, p. iv). Nakata (2007b) also notes other tensions around the complexity of IK, the dislocation of IK from contexts and the ‘disintegrations and transformations ... [of IK] ... when it is redistributed across Western categories of classification.’ IK present tensions for universities, for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students: how are these assets (Nakata et al. 2008) recognised regarding what students bring to the academy, how are they measured, and what are the possibilities? To this can be added, how is IK contextualised, embedded, taught and assessed in a discipline area? In discussing decolonising teaching and learning processes, Zubrzycki et al. (2014, p. 20) add further questions:

- Who should develop and teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content?
- What type of training and professional development of educators is needed?
- How should the content be delivered?
- What type of student assessment reflects this pedagogy?
- How can the learning environment be culturally safe and secure for all students and staff?

Nakata et al. (2012) propose that an answer to some of these questions lies in a pedagogy that engages students

in open, exploratory, and creative inquiry in these difficult intersections, while building language and tools for describing and analysing what they engage with. This approach engages the politics of knowledge production and builds critical skills—students’ less certain positions require the development of less certain, more complex analytical arguments and more intricate language to express these arguments. Pedagogically, we propose this as a way to also prevent slippage into forms of thinking and critical analysis that are confined within dichotomies between primitivism and modernity; and as a way to avoid the

closed-mindedness of intellectual conformity, whether this is expressed in Indigenous, decolonial, or Western theorizing. (p. 121)

In parallel with tensions around IK, further questions can be asked about how GA are developed, assessed and assured (Oliver 2011, p. 9). For graduates to successfully establish a GA that characterises their qualities and those of the university (University of Sydney 2015), there needs to be alignment of national and local policies with on-the-ground teaching and learning practices (Goerke and Kickett 2013, p. 62). Research on national graduate attributes (Barrie et al. 2009) shows that there is a range of ways in which Australian universities approach how graduate attributes are 'reviewed, assessed or assured' (Goerke and Kickett 2013, p. 70). Goerke and Kickett (2013, pp. 70–71) advise that to maintain a degree of transparency regarding the outcome associated with GA, there needs to be 'comprehensive curriculum mapping tools along with the auditing of policies.'

A report on graduate employability skills (Cleary et al. 2007, p. 1) investigates:

- How universities currently develop and integrate employability skills into their programs of study
- How universities teach employability skills
- How universities currently assess students' employability skills
- How graduate employability skills might be assessed and reported upon

The report stated that although there is variance in GA across Australian universities, there is a link between employability skills and GA, and that 'universities' graduate attributes also address employability skills' (Cleary et al. 2007, p. 12). This creates a further tension. If it is accepted that within the higher education sector the recognition of prior learning is viewed as contributing to Advanced Standing, it will follow that the granting of credit acknowledges 'life experiences' *ipso facto*; this would extend to students who are seeking credit for existing employability skills gained through life experiences.

## ***Balance***

To a certain extent Australian universities have heeded the call from both the Bradley Review (2008) and the Behrendt Review (2012) for a valuing of IK in the academy through the curriculum, teaching practices and GA. Nevertheless, this has created some tensions that need to be considered and addressed. First, the questions raised by Nakata (2008) require answers or solutions, not least the transformation of the academy that is informed by what Nakata (2002) terms the cultural interface. The cultural interface is 'the intersection of Western and Indigenous domains... the place where we live and learn, the place that conditions our lives, the place that shapes our futures and more to the point the place where we are active agents in our own lives – where we make our decisions – our lifeworld'. The cultural interface has commonalities with the concepts of both ways (Wunungmurra 1989; Marika et al. 1992;

Ober and Bat 2007) and interculturalism (Abdallah-Preteuille 2006; Coll 2004; Frawley and Fasoli 2012), as these are concerned with similar notions of space where systems, organisations, communities and people meet and interact, where there is balance, where knowledge is negotiated and where new knowledge is shared equally. Second, it is equitable and just that potential students who are contemplating higher education have access to a process that recognises what they bring to the academy, not just giving credit for prior studies but recognition of their life experiences and that this recognition is aligned with course content and course outcomes.

If it is accepted that IK and GA are central to teaching and learning in the academy, it must also be accepted that these can in some way be measured, not just for course assessment but also for the RPLAS process. If RPLAS is seen simply as a 'device to map one body of knowledge (e.g. working knowledge) against another (e.g. academic knowledge) rather than an exploration of the relationship between the two' (Cooper and Harris 2013, p. 448–449), then this becomes problematic to the intent of IK and GA. The 'knowledge' question has for a long time been contentious (Cooper and Harris 2013) and extends to some areas: categories of knowledge, forms of knowledge and knowledge differentiation. For Castle and Attwood (2001), the underlying issues are the relationship between different forms of knowledge, their status and their visibility. Questions about how trans-disciplinary and critical knowledge can be embraced or negotiated through RPLAS, and can be mapped onto academic knowledge, remain a tension (Cooper 2011; Hamer 2012). This is in part due to these types of knowledge not easily being translated into academic knowledge (or disciplinary knowledge) where relative power is retained 'when subjected to the academic rules of the game' (Cooper 2011, p. 53). If there is an assumption about the differentiation of knowledge, then this requires RPLAS applicants and assessors to be provided support 'to navigate their way into different academic discourses' (Cooper and Harris 2013, p. 448–449) and to negotiate around 'what counts as equivalent knowledge in the context of an academic course' (Pokorny 2012, p. 130).

When universities understand the professional realities of applicants and make use of the knowledge gained through the RPLAS process, then 'the act of teaching changes from one of traditional transmission to one of accompaniment, facilitation, and organization of knowledge' (Pouget and Osborne 2004, p. 60). Research by Cooper and Harris (2013, p. 460–461) shows that 'knowledge is as much about cultural and institutional practices as it is about conceptual hierarchies' and that 'these cultural practices translate into distinct organisational environments within which RPL has to take place.' This could result in transformation where RPLAS 'represents a radical challenge as to the nature and locus of knowledge' (Pouget and Osborne 2004, p. 62).

## Conclusion

There is no denying that RPLAS can be complex, time-consuming and confusing for the participants, including the applicants, assessors and administrators. Added to this are the unique contexts and institutional environments in which RPLAS takes place (de Graaff 2014) all of which pose certain challenges (Castle and Attwood 2001). These challenges range from the ways in which higher education institutions position themselves in term of RPLAS policy, epistemology, ontology and pedagogy through to the more prosaic, but nonetheless important considerations of resourcing. Tensions can also be experienced by participants who are engaged in a more transformative approach yet are required to be in alignment with regulated higher education RPLAS policies, processes and structures (Whittington et al. 2014). Frick et al. (2007) believe that higher education institutions need to contextualise RPLAS and that their intended approach must be clearly made. Otherwise, RPLAS will ‘remain a marginalised academic endeavour if adequate resources are not allocated to its development and implementation’ (Frick et al. 2007, p. 150). This is none more so than for the positioning of IK in the academy and its contribution to the formation of GA.

In universities’ IES and RAPs, the language focuses on ‘diversity’, ‘inclusion’, ‘awareness’, ‘sensitivity’ and ‘respect’. Likewise, discourse in universities’ GA that makes specific reference to IK includes notions of ‘respect’, ‘diversity’, ‘engagement’ and ‘values’. This is the language of transformation. For IK to be valued in the academy, universities need to go beyond ‘either/or’ thinking to ‘both/and’ possibilities (Gidley et al. 2010) so that Indigenous and non-Indigenous graduates can interact productively and creatively across cultural boundaries, and engage meaningfully and constructively with each other and with the academy.

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