

Reflections on First Publication Transcript.

The publication you've just read provides context and gives the backstory around how I came to be interested in and committed to exploring First Nations teaching and learning practices and processes in a contemporary educational setting.

In my own education journey, I have been profoundly influenced and supported and inspired by First Nations teachers who on reflection, I believe consciously utilized First Nations approaches to their teaching and learning, and in doing so shared and instilled first nations values, philosophies and beliefs.

And so I came into an academic setting into my own professional space with a strong sense of valuing these experiences that were a result of First Nations teaching and learning practices

Reflecting on my own experiences in mainstream, white dominated and controlled education settings, I felt very strongly that those First Nations learning and teaching experiences were missing from the education settings I was involved in, both as a student throughout school and university and then as a teacher in schools and university settings.

I saw and felt that there was a big gap between the First Nations teachers that I had had the benefit of learning from and the institutional settings that I was working in, where those First Nations teachers were not typically present or readily accessible or certainly not present in regards to the sharing of First Nations values, philosophies and beliefs that I had been educated from and come to see so much value in.

When I started teaching within mainstream education settings, I was committed to sharing what I had learnt from First Nations teachers, I could really see the value in those First Nations experiences in terms of the support and development of the students that I was working with. Not just for First Nations students but for all students across a broad curriculum context.

As you can read in the first paper, my opportunity came to provide First Nations students and non-indigenous students an opportunity to connect with First Nations teachers by taking students on country and into First Nations community context. At that time I was lucky to have the resources and tacit support to do this within a university program and teaching context. In a way I was subverting the dominate paradigm by using the resources available to me at this time in ways that they were not expected to be used but at least I had those resources available to do that.

Almost 25 years later I maintain that strong commitment and belief in the value and the importance of students having connection with First Nations learning and teaching experiences.

In terms of this PhD study, I decided what needed to be done was to provide a more focused discussion, from an evidence base, around what determines and defines a First Nations approach to teaching and learning practice and experience.

This decision came about after I realised that there was very little discussion, via published literature, that talked specifically about how a First Nations Australian approach to teaching and learning is conceptualised and practiced in a contemporary setting. I came to this realisation whilst I searched for published reference points over the years and via a more focussed literature review

leading into the formalisation of this PhD study. When I say very little published literature, I'm referring to discussions and studies set in Australia, within a First Nations context. I'm not including literature from a First Nations perspective outside Australia here because I want to keep this discussion within an Australian context and in direct relationship to First Nations peoples and societies, made up groups that are commonly identified as either Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

The rationale for choosing this primary research question is based on providing some reference points from which we can have more informed and wider discussion around why and how First Nations people should be far more involved in the Australia's learning and teaching cultures and experiences generally and in university settings more specifically.

Arguably it is process, not simply content that differentiates different what cultural beliefs and values look like in practice.

When I originally brought up the idea that there was not a significant body of work, amongst colleagues and peers, and amongst potentially research participants, that talked specifically about contemporary First Nations teaching and learning practice and experiences there was some noticeable push back, even some concerned disagreement. What I found interesting is that much of the published evidence cited to contradict my opinion was not specifically speaking to the practice or even conceptualisation of teaching and learning from a First Nations perspective and approach. It was most often about approaches to Indigenous research theory and practice or to the issue of how to engage First Nations peoples in mainstream, Anglo Australian controlled education practices and objectives.