

The Australian professional standards for teachers reflect the importance of providing an inclusive curriculum and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (AITSL, 2014). In the Australian professional standards there are two particular focus points that directly relate to teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and an expectation to decolonise the curriculum and teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander points of view. The first is Standard 1.4, to develop strategies for teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The second is Standard 2.4 which focuses on the need to promote understanding and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to promote reconciliation (AITSL, 2014).

While these standards are of vital importance for the teaching of all students, many teachers have a reluctance to incorporate these into their practice. To be able to achieve these standards a number of significant barriers need to be overcome and so be able to provide an inclusive curriculum and to give voice to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective (O'Dowd, 2010).

The first step to overcoming the many barriers that prevent teachers from engaging in an effective pedagogy and respectful practices is to identify them barriers and also where they stem from.

Many teachers have a reluctance or resistance to teaching from an Indigenous perspective due to the Great Australia Silence. The Great Australian Silence was first discussed by Professor William Stanner and refers to the lack of any reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout history, art and literature (O'Dowd, 2012a; O'Dowd, 2012b). Professor Stanner referred to a period of time from the 1880's when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presence and culture was completely and deliberately absent from education and history (O'Dowd, 2012b).

This Silence promoted a sense of superiority of white Australia and an inferiority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Thijs, 2008).

The Great Australian Silence gives rise to one of the main barriers that face educators today, to challenge the concept of the master narrative. The master narrative is defined as the dominant account of the past which defines the history of a population (O'Dowd, 2012a). Due to the Silence, Australia's master narrative is only focused on the white Australian pioneer ideal. The 'battler' of the land which colonised Terra Nullius, the vacant land', in 1788 (O'Dowd, 2011). This master narrative leads to the idea of the dominant white male being superior and the introduction of the 'other' (Thijs, 2008).

It may often feel quite controversial to non-Indigenous teachers to challenge the idea of the typical Australian presented in our master narrative and engage in Australia's complete history. For this barrier to be overcome educators need to challenge the cultural identity and give voice to who is missing (O'Dowd, 2012a). Educators need to be fully aware of the master narrative and recognise who is missing and who's view is being presented. We need to challenge this Silence and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. This barrier is often one of the most difficult to overcome as it requires deep and critical self-reflection (Aveling, 2002).

During this critical reflection non-Indigenous educators may experience a range of emotions including guilt, shame, reluctance and anger (Aveling, 2002). Each of these emotions is another significant barrier to real change. Non-Indigenous educators need to work through and challenge the idea of the master narrative and really appreciate the invisible position of the Indigenous Australian. They must also begin to work through all the emotions that may present as they do this. While these

barriers may be difficult to overcome it is important that students know all of the past to be able to move forward (O'Dowd).

Another barrier which needs to be overcome is for educators to recognise and challenge their own Racisms. Discussions regarding racism often evoke similar emotions as outlined above and this barrier cannot be overcome without identifying our own racist attitudes (Beattie, 2013). Educators need to be able to recognise and challenge their own racisms but also to attempt to step outside their non-Indigenous selves and to move beyond seeing the world only through our eyes. While racisms must be challenged, non-Indigenous educators also need to recognise the position of white privilege that they hold. While many accept that another group may be at a disadvantage, non-Indigenous educators often fail to grasp that, if this is the case, that one population is at an advantage (McIntosh, 2004). To be fully accountable, educators need to not only challenge racisms but realise that they are in a position of white privilege and therefore in a position of power that can be used for change (McIntosh, 2004).

For this barrier to be overcome, educators need to recognise their own ethnicity (Beattie, 2013), and history and appreciate that the Indigenous and non-Indigenous history is not a shared history, where the two populations experienced the same events, but rather an interface history.

Teachers often want to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into their practice and try to introduce cultural awareness education to their students (O'Dowd, 2012b). However many teachers are unsure how to do this, or may be unaware of resources available. A mistake that many teachers then make is to present a superficial and possibly insulting view of the 'typical' Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Many teachers may see this as a barrier to engaging in effective

pedagogy as they believe that they are not in a position to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture (Price, 2012). This barrier is regrettable as often teachers feel like they want to incorporate a culturally responsive pedagogy but just don't know how to do this respectfully. This may then result in avoiding the topic altogether as non-Indigenous teachers may feel that they are not in a position to teach, or do not have a right to teach, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture (Price, 2012). Non-Indigenous teachers have a right, and I believe a responsibility, to teach Indigenous culture to students. Teachers need to be brave and challenge the master narrative and to speak into the Silence to be able to work towards restorative justice (O'Dowd, 2011). As non-Indigenous people we have a responsibility to address the wrongs of the past, and as educators, we are in the best position to help develop an ethical position for the future generations (O'Dowd, 2011). It is essential to overcome this barrier to be culturally responsive teachers. We need to talk into this space and challenge the stereotypes of the typical Indigenous images that are often produced in superficial classrooms. By challenging this stereotype and introducing our students to a more realistic portrayal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people we can also assist to remove the barrier of 'otherness' within our students (O'Dowd, 2011).

To be able to overcome these barriers and fully engage with the professional standards, more education of teachers is needed (Reynolds, 2005). Many organisations provide ongoing cultural awareness workshops and training courses and this would be of great benefit within schools. Educators need to develop their own ethical stance on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and act as agents of change to create a culturally inclusive pedagogy (O'Dowd, 2010). While it may be difficult to begin with, all educators need to focus on the key point of restorative justice and strive to overcome barriers to their own practice and aim to uncover

barriers for other educators. The introduction of education programs for cultural awareness for the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is of vital importance for pre-service teachers. This education also has flow-on effects within schools. New teachers, exposed to these types of programs, can act as agents of change within schools and can assist to change attitudes, uncover assumptions or racisms and help to overcome barriers experienced by long practicing teachers (Reynolds, 2005). By educating pre-service teachers in cultural awareness, real attitudinal change can be achieved within schools and all teachers can move to achieve the professional standards outlined in this essay and a more inclusive education can be provided to all students.

There are many opportunities to address and overcome these barriers within a secondary mathematics class. The focus of this lesson sequence is restorative justice and fairness, which can be addressed through a lesson sequence on data and statistics. The learning outcome for this sequence is for students to overcome the barrier of 'otherness' which addresses the professional standard 2.4 to promote understanding and promote reconciliation. As a project, students will be asked to investigate statistics as key indicators of quality of life of a population or country. Students will be required to research key statistical data such as life expectancy, average income and child mortality rates of their chosen population or country. They will then be required to plot this data in a stem-and-leaf plot against the 'mystery statistics' provided by the teacher. From this stem-and-leaf plot students will be asked to draw conclusions about the quality of life experienced by both populations and present their findings to the class. Once all groups have presented, the teacher will then reveal the mystery data as the data of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population within

Australia. The aim of the following lessons is to encourage reflection within the students asking them ‘Is this fair?’ and ‘How can it be possible within Australia to have such a divide?’

This lesson sequence aims to remove the ‘otherness’ barrier from the students learning within this mathematics class and to instil a sense of social justice. By hiding the source of the data students will build up their own assumptions about what kind of population and living conditions that it comes from. When unmasking the data, students will have the assumption or barrier blown away and are then able to address the large gaps presented by two populations, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, living within the one country.

This lesson sequence works to remove the association of ‘other’ and promote a sense of restorative and social justice, encouraging the students to be advocates of social change to ‘close the gap’.

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