Implementing Indigenous knowledge approaches in Australian doctoral education: policy findings

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During the last two decades, a body of significant research has emerged relating to universities’ education of Indigenous and transcultural doctoral candidates. Australian universities, however, have been very slow to create recognition and accreditation programs for First Nations and transcultural (migrant, refugee and international candidates’) knowledge systems, histories, geographies, languages and cultural practices in doctoral education unlike Aotearoa/New Zealand and South Africa. This paper will report on the first phase of an ARC project that aims to address this gap by putting forward research-based strategies to harness the power of the multiple Indigenous and transcultural cultures in Australia in order to create the conditions for what de Sousa Santos (2014) calls ‘epistemic or cognitive justice’ in Australian doctoral education. Cognitive justice (our theoretical framework) involves the full and equal recognition of all of the worlds knowledge systems, languages and cultural practices, not only Northern science.

The overall project adopts key First Nations knowledge approaches as the foundation for our research project design and decision making: the agency of Country; the power of Stories and the production of knowledge as iterative, intergenerational and intercultural. We redefine the goals of Australian doctoral education through these 3 First Nations knowledge approaches in order to go beyond colonialist and Euro-centric research practices as basis for knowledge work. This will assist Australian universities to catch up with cutting edge, international developments in Indigenous and transcultural doctoral education policies and practices.

In this paper, we present the findings of the comparative international policy analysis of doctoral education protocols in Aotearoa/New Zealand, South Africa, Australia and China (phase 1 of the whole project) in order to trace cutting edge approaches to valuing First Nations and transcultural knowledges, histories, geographies, languages and cultural practices in research and harnessing the transnational nature of First Nations’ knowledge networks. This policy analysis will provide the contextual background for the remainder of the project which will use life history interviews and multisensory time mapping of First Nations and transcultural doctoral candidate and supervisor knowledges and multilingual capabilities in order to produce research-informed recommendations for universities to develop supervision and examination protocols that recognize and value Indigenous and transcultural knowledges, histories, geographies, languages and cultural practices.

References:
