

Using the Threshold Concepts Framework to explore student learning in Indigenous Studies

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Despite criticism that it is neither a framework nor a theory (Walker, 2012), the Threshold Concepts Framework, first proffered by Meyer and Land (2003) has gained considerable momentum as a mode of inquiry in Higher Education Learning and Teaching. Threshold Concepts are said to be the 'jewels in the crown' of a curriculum; the critical ideas without which students are commonly unable to fully grasp the discipline (Land, Meyer, Cousin & Davies, 2006). While the initial project was in economics and subsequent research tended to be in the scientific disciplines more recently the disciplinary areas have diversified to include fields such as the health sciences, law, and social work. One key aspect of the Threshold Concepts is the idea of liminality or the notion that students often spend time in a state of learning flux, oscillating between understanding and misunderstanding, as they grapple with new knowledge. For example a learner might feel confident about concepts such as gravity, power or precedence in the classroom but at home find the meaning has slipped from their grasp. Without these critical concepts it is likely that learners will struggle to achieve the genuine learning required for discipline mastery. Indeed students who encounter the troublesome knowledge (Perkins, 2008) associated with liminality may be more likely to display behaviours such as plagiarism or regurgitation. This showcase presentation will report on preliminary findings from a qualitative research study designed to identify threshold concepts in first year Indigenous Studies, and particularly to explore the relationship between liminality and the student resistance commonly noted by Indigenous Studies educators. The data includes interviews with students, Indigenous Studies teachers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders.

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Perkins, D. (2008). Beyond understanding. In R. Land, J. H. F. Meyer, & J. Smith (Eds.), (pp.3-20). Rotterdam: Sense.

Walker, G. (2013). A cognitive approach to threshold concepts. *Higher Education*, 65(2), 247-263.