Indigenous Knowledges, Development and Education
TRANSGRESSIONS: CULTURAL STUDIES AND EDUCATION

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Scope
Cultural studies provides an analytical toolbox for both making sense of educational practice and extending the insights of educational professionals into their labors. In this context Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education provides a collection of books in the domain that specify this assertion. Crafted for an audience of teachers, teacher educators, scholars and students of cultural studies and others interested in cultural studies and pedagogy, the series documents both the possibilities of and the controversies surrounding the intersection of cultural studies and education. The editors and the authors of this series do not assume that the interaction of cultural studies and education devalues other types of knowledge and analytical forms. Rather the intersection of these knowledge disciplines offers a rejuvenating, optimistic, and positive perspective on education and educational institutions. Some might describe its contribution as democratic, emancipatory, and transformative. The editors and authors maintain that cultural studies helps free educators from sterile, monolithic analyses that have for too long undermined efforts to think of educational practices by providing other words, new languages, and fresh metaphors. Operating in an interdisciplinary cosmos, Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education is dedicated to exploring the ways cultural studies enhances the study and practice of education. With this in mind the series focuses in a non-exclusive way on popular culture as well as other dimensions of cultural studies including social theory, social justice and positionality, cultural dimensions of technological innovation, new media and media literacy, new forms of oppression emerging in an electronic hyperreality, and postcolonial global concerns. With these concerns in mind cultural studies scholars often argue that the realm of popular culture is the most powerful educational force in contemporary culture. Indeed, in the twenty-first century this pedagogical dynamic is sweeping through the entire world. Educators, they believe, must understand these emerging realities in order to gain an important voice in the pedagogical conversation.

Without an understanding of cultural pedagogy’s (education that takes place outside of formal schooling) role in the shaping of individual identity—youth identity in particular—the role educators play in the lives of their students will continue to fade. Why do so many of our students feel that life is incomprehensible and devoid of meaning? What does it mean, teachers wonder, when young people are unable to describe their moods, their affective affiliation to the society around them. Meanings provided young people by mainstream institutions often do little to help them deal with their affective complexity, their difficulty negotiating the rift between meaning and affect. School knowledge and educational expectations seem as anachronistic as a ditto machine, not that learning ways of rational thought and making sense of the world are unimportant.

But school knowledge and educational expectations often have little to offer students about making sense of the way they feel, the way their affective lives are shaped. In no way do we argue that analysis of the production of youth in an electronic mediated world demands some “touchy-feely” educational superficiality. What is needed in this context is a rigorous analysis of the interrelationship between pedagogy, popular culture, meaning making, and youth subjectivity. In an era marked by youth depression, violence, and suicide such insights become extremely important, even life saving. Pessimism about the future is the common sense of many contemporary youth with its concomitant feeling that no one can make a difference.

If affective production can be shaped to reflect these perspectives, then it can be reshaped to lay the groundwork for optimism, passionate commitment, and transformative educational and political activity. In these ways cultural studies adds a dimension to the work of education unfilled by any other sub-discipline. This is what Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education seeks to produce—literature on these issues that makes a difference. It seeks to publish studies that help those who work with young people, those individuals involved in the disciplines that study children and youth, and young people themselves improve their lives in these bizarre times.
Indigenous Knowledges, Development and Education

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1. INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES, DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

An Introduction

OPENING THOUGHTS

It is important when introducing a book that aims to bring different epistemic world views into dialogue with one another that there is a clear sense of who is behind the book, and where they are coming from. This is especially true when we are speaking of Indigenous knowledges, as over 400 years of colonialism and neocolonialism have seen these knowledges alternatively appropriated and discredited, and the peoples who have produced and refined these knowledges over centuries alternatively enslaved, enclosed, infantilized and exterminated. This is a legacy of violence that requires a degree of respect and transparency from those who work with and learn from these knowledges if the legacy is to be confronted in our contemporary time. With this need in mind, it is therefore critical for me, as the editor of this collection, to speak of its inspiration.

Firstly, this book is directly inspired by ongoing work in Ghana of my colleague Coleman Agyeyomah and I with Chief Isshaku Gumrana Mahamadu, the bonesetter of Loagri; his work with those who come to him for help, with broken bones of every type, has been the single biggest revelation to me of what a different epistemic world view means. He does not even see the need for a term like patient, let alone think of those who seek his help as merely a set of symptoms and ailments needing a cure. Rather than this prescriptive view, Chief Isshaku sees a person who comes to him as a whole being, which includes his/her history and future and his/her set of relations. This all-encompassing mindset is clearly revealed in the help he has asked for over the years: where governments and aid agencies are interested in building clinics, Chief Isshaku has used any support-funds that have emerged to build housing for the families of those who seek his help, so that they may be close by while their family member recovers – thereby allaying their worries while also contributing directly to the healing of their relative. As a mark of respect for the inspiration Isshaku’s knowledge and approach to life has generated, the editor’s royalties from this book are going to contribute to his efforts to expand these family abodes in Loagri – the community pictured on the cover of this collection.

The second inspiration behind this book is derived from the authors who have given life to the aim of the book: to bring Indigenous knowledges into dialogue with the fields of development studies and education. This aim was taken on as a project by the contributors to this book, as we first presented our ideas for the book...
at a conference in 2006 and then built our chapters from the collaborative and open dialogue that informed this conference space. Throughout this process, the philosophy of the project has been one of autonomy for contributors; this autonomy gave room for the meaning and interpretation of Indigenous knowledges, education and development to be individually defined by authors, yet to contribute these individual definitions to a larger collective conversation about these terms and what they represent. For readers of this collection, it is hoped that this autonomy on the one hand and spirit of collaboration on the other leads to a multiplicity of definitions and nuanced meanings that is indicative of the open dialogue that informed our coming together to create this book. The dual nature of this coming together is in keeping with the relationships all of the contributors have with Indigenous knowledges and peoples. For each of us has a story like the one above, where the work we have been engaged in is embedded in a relationship with a particular Indigenous community – be it our own or the ones we have come to identify with; and each of us knows that these relationships are based both in collaboration and in autonomy for all those involved. The rights of communities to have autonomous ownership over their knowledges is critical, even as collaborative processes help to share their stories and knowledges in other communities, such as education and development communities. Likewise, we must all be given the room to explain our understanding of terms such as development and education if collaborative dialogue is to begin. This notion of ongoing dialogue and collaboration, taken from Mahia Maurial’s (1999) work (discussed further in the Agyeyomah & Langdon chapter that concludes this collection), is the root-system that led to the growth of this book, and the community-contributor relationships are what made working on this book inspirational. Although these stories are not necessarily overtly mentioned in each chapter, authors have added some details about them in the list of contributors section below.

Thus in this introduction, I have aimed to lay out trends in ways in which each of the three key terms is individually used by contributors, and the dialogue between these uses. As is expanded upon below, development studies and education both have a long and chequered history with Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous peoples, yet the two fields and their sets of relations with Indigenous knowledges, as well as the ways in which they speak to each other through these sets of relations, has yet to be explored in the multiplicity of ways contained in this collection. In this sense, the introduction here provides brief starting points for the dialogue that continues throughout the book. It first looks at the parameters in which all of us who contributed to this book discussed the notion of Indigenous knowledges. It then situates this discussion in the convergence of the three themes amongst the various contributions, pausing briefly in this larger discussion to connect the chapters here to ongoing debates in the field of education and of development studies. Throughout the introduction there is a conscious attempt to refrain from providing set-in-stone definitions for the three key terms, but there is also an attempt to provide some background of the debates around these terms so that the reader can better situate the contributions of this collection in these ongoing dialogues and debates.
To speak of Indigenous knowledges is a complex undertaking for any author or editor. Not only are there a wide number of ways to interpret what is meant by Indigenous knowledges, but the term ‘Indigenous’ itself carries many layers of meaning. Rather than give a definitive interpretation of what is meant by Indigenous knowledge here, I want instead to briefly outline the broad parameters in which the authors in this collection are using this term, since there is some range in their usages. As mentioned briefly above, one of the fundamental organizing ideas of this collection is the autonomy of the authors to interpret the three themes of Indigenous knowledges, development and education from their experience, understanding and perspective. These are all terms with room for different meanings. Yet, the autonomy has not led to a set of definitions that do not speak to one another; instead, what follows is a synergistic set of interpretations that speak inter-textually to a similar set of meanings. Here, I will elaborate on the broad outlines of this synergistic inter-textuality in reference to Indigenous knowledges.

One key point of departure for this collection, agreed on at the outset by all authors, was a move to pluralize the notion of Indigenous knowledge. This decision was a direct result of feedback from participants in the conference presentation where the book project was introduced. For myself as the editor of the collection, and for the authors included, this pluralization represents an important point of departure for our work here for two key reasons: first, by saying Indigenous knowledges, we are acknowledging the depth, breadth and multiplicity of knowledges developed over thousands of years by Indigenous peoples the world over; second, we are muddying the waters of potential dichotomization, where Indigenous knowledge is set up as some “other” against which the drama of Western thought has emerged, or where Indigenousness is boiled down into some single set of characteristics universally determined through the gaze of Western colonization. This differentiation is important, even as the collection takes stock of those who have defined and used the term Indigenous knowledge previously. Out of these definitions, three key characteristics have emerged as being crucial to the chapters that follow.

Firstly, following Dei, Hall and Rosenberg (2000), as well as Semali and Kincheloe (1999), Indigenous knowledges are seen to be linked to the long-term everyday occupancy, knowledge production and experience of living in a particular location. Embedded in this conceptualization, and this is something many of this collection’s authors echo, is a groundedness of knowledge – a resistance to and a discomfort with notions of the universal. This groundedness is also the starting point of Walter Mignolo’s (2000) concept of “local histories.” For Mignolo, all histories are local histories, yet some, such as Western scientific thought, have global designs – a desire to universalize their world view and impose it upon other local histories. This process of imposition, and the subsequent resulting effect on the subjugated local history, is what Mignolo has termed the “colonial difference”. Mignolo’s framework introduces the other two key characteristics of Indigenous knowledges that surface throughout this collection: the often-conflictual and power
laden relationship Indigenous knowledges have with Western thought, and the colonial origins of these sets of relations.

As Mignolo’s framework clearly illustrates, the universal aspirations of Western thought – its global designs – are the sites of its coercion of other local histories, or local ways of knowing and being; this is true not only of those local histories that have come to be identified as Indigenous, but also of the collection of local histories that make up Western thought – silenced in the name of universalization. As Semali and Kincheloe (1999) note:

This Western modernist way of producing knowledge and constructing reality is one of a multitude of local ways of knowing – it is a local knowledge system that denies its locality, seeking to produce not local but translocal knowledge. (p. 28)

This tendency of Western thought to silence its own origins also includes its historical amnesia of the origins of many of its ideas, where the cultural origins of thoughts, and the long history of their cross-fertilized development are conveniently forgotten as they become subsumed into the universal (Rains 1999). As Francis Rains puts it:

It is an interesting system, this “Western” knowledge production – it is self contained, self-sustaining, handy, convenient, and even tinged with a sense of righteousness … Hermetically sealed, the closed system of “Western” knowledge production has been institutionalized, in a matter of several hundred years, to such a degree as to dismiss Indigenous knowledges based on thousands of years of experience, analysis, and reflection as primitive. (1999, p. 317)

It is precisely as a result of the power of the Western collection of local histories with global designs that this collection uses the term Indigenous knowledges: in generating a simplistic dichotomy that boils down local histories from the West and local histories not form the West into two simple categories, the richness and complexity of the epistemic origins of ideas is reified into a single different knowledge system than that of the West’s whose ideas can therefore be universalized and absorbed into what Sillitoe (2007) unabashedly calls “global knowledge” – knowledge that is somehow above the local. Mignolo is quick to point out how the history of confrontation surrounding this process is precisely where this dichotomy is resisted: “if Western Cosmology is the historically unavoidable reference point, the multiple confrontations of two kinds of histories defy dichotomies” (2000, p. ix).

This then is the third point of connection in the chapters that follow: the history of colonial confrontation is the point of origin of the power relations between the Western knowledge production system and a wide array of other epistemic systems, yet it is also the site where resistance to these relations of power begin. This colonial relationship is acknowledged in some definitions of Indigenous peoples, such as that of the International Labor Organization, where a people:
Are regarded as Indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of ... colonization or the establishment of present state boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural, and political institutions. (Quoted in McCarty et al. 2005, p. 1)

The colonial legacy of violence is also recognized in the new UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (2007), where Article 7 states:

1. Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.

2. Indigenous peoples have the collective right to live in freedom, peace and security as distinct peoples and shall not be subjected to any act of genocide or any other act of violence, including forcibly removing children of the group to another group. (p. 4)

And Article 8 states:

1. Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture. (p. 4)

Both of these articles in the new UN Declaration speak to centuries of violence and forced assimilation Indigenous peoples have faced as a result of colonialism. This historical set of power relations has contributed directly to the ability of Western thought to discredit the depth, astuteness and innovation of Indigenous epistemologies. This process of hierarchization is also essential for the appropriation of ideas from Indigenous sources, the silencing of this historical root of thought, and then subsequent patenting and commercialization of these ideas/knowledges. The role of education and development in this process of knowledge hierarchization and subsequent commodification cannot be understated either – as many of the contributions that follow point out. In this sense, it is important to be reminded of the quotidian and contemporary nature of the legacy of colonialism, where the vast power differential between, say, an Indigenous community defending its knowledge of particular crops and a multi-national corporation with legions of patenting lawyers is a product of this legacy that is being played out on a daily basis around the world.

In addition to these parameters within which the chapters in this collection define Indigenous knowledges, there are also two key issues these chapters deal with in careful ways. The first of these is an overly simplistic understanding of cultural knowledge production – an understanding that positions Indigenous communities as if they exist in some isolated context without any cross-fertilization of ideas from other cultures. This is a continuation of the desire to resist facile dichotomizations of Indigenous knowledges elaborated above, and it means the chapters pay particular attention to those instances where attempts are made to essentialize what it is to be Indigenous – regardless of the strategic purpose of this
essentialization. As Semali and Kincheloe state, “addressing the problem of essentialism is a complex but necessary step in the study of Indigenous knowledge[s]” (1999, p. 22). While on the one hand being cautious about essentialism means questioning essentialist pejorative portrayals of the indigene that discount Indigenous peoples contributions to certain kinds of knowledge, it also means resisting attempts at essentializing Indigenous identity in either romantic or polemical directions. This does not mean a discounting of the knowledge production processes of Indigenous peoples, and their original, dynamic and innovative ways of knowing and being, nor the intrinsic link between these knowledges and the ways of life and experiences that produced them. What it does mean is that the chapters in this collection tread cautiously on the ground of reifying indigeniety in such a way that ignores the ongoing knowledge production by Indigenous peoples in contemporary times, and how these new knowledges are grounded in a millennium of learning. Bryan Brayboy (2005) has described this tension perfectly when he notes:

Culture is simultaneously fluid and dynamic, and fixed or stable. Like an anchor in the ocean, it is tied to a group of people and often to a physical space. For many Indigenous people, culture is rooted to lands on which they live as well as to their ancestors who lived on those lands before them. However, just as the anchor shifts and sways with the changing tides and the ebbs and flows of the ocean, culture shifts and flows with changes in contexts, situations, people, and purposes. (p. 434)

This then leads to the final issue all of the chapters that follow contend with, namely the position of the researcher with regards to the Indigenous communities and knowledges being discussed — especially important when one considers the dangers of appropriation mentioned above. As Semali and Kincheloe (1999) note, this danger is even present when scholars are attempting to develop research with, and not on, Indigenous communities. Briggs and Sharp (2004) have made a similar caution in connection with the way in which Indigenous knowledges are being used within the development industry, noting that many projects speak of the importance of local and Indigenous knowledge, yet in the end either appropriate this knowledge into larger scientific processes, or marginalize local communities after all the initial requisite symbolic gestures have been made. The position of the researcher and his or her relationship with the given Indigenous peoples is the subject of much writing, ranging from Smith’s (1999) influential discussion of the ways in which to decolonize research methodologies in order for Indigenous communities to have greater say and control over the research conducted by them or with them, to Spivak’s provocative questioning of the ability of subalterns, such as marginalized Indigenous communities, to actually speak (1988). The question in many ways is whether the researcher can or should speak on behalf of a marginalized community, even — following Spivak’s question — if they come from that community but have become a part of different community in the process of becoming a researcher. How the authors of this collection negotiate this question is different, yet each has been very open about his or her relationship with a given
community in much the way that this introduction began. It is these transparent relationships that must be the foundation of discussions of bringing Indigenous knowledges into dialogue with both the field of education and of development: it is important to know where people are positioned in commencing these dialogues (Harding 1998).

Moving on from these discussions of Indigenous knowledges, it is important to indicate where this book is going, even as we establish where this book, and those contributing to it, is coming from. For those familiar with academic writing on the subject of Indigenous knowledges, there should be an inherent question hanging in the mind, namely how is this book different than the many other collections out there. This brings us to the connection in the book’s title between Indigenous knowledges, development and education. Indigenous knowledges have been an important topic in both the development and education field, yet there has been little effort to bring these two rich sets of writing into dialogue. This dialogue is important not only for purposes of enriching academic understanding in both fields of their mutual engagement with Indigenous knowledges, but also because development and education have a similar concern with practice – the way in which development and/or education is enacted – as well as a similar chequered legacy with Indigenous peoples and knowledges.

To elaborate on the first similarity, education and development studies maintain a tight-rope existence between action and reflection; both fields reflect constantly on the theory and practice emerging in their respective domains of study/work. For many within both fields, a theory that has not been tested in either the classroom or the community indicates potential problems. Most of the academic writing in each of the two areas of study is preoccupied with this tension. Both fields of study also directly connect to the world of implementation, where large amounts of money are invested in both endeavors with specific outcomes in mind. As such they also have whole bureaucracies engaged in enacting educational or developmental policies, and a vast quantum of grey literature (reports, evaluations, project proposals, policy documents, etc.) that surrounds these bureaucracies and resources. Finally, both fields have extensive writing that engages with Indigenous knowledges – writing that is discussed briefly below in reference to each field.

In terms of the chequered legacy of either education or development, both of these disciplines are also intrinsically tied to the ‘global design’ of Western epistemology discussed above (Mignolo 2000). There are countless historical and contemporary instances of Western knowledge being imposed on other ways of knowing within the practice of both of these disciplines. One need only think of residential schools in Canada or Australia to connect this type of imposition to education; and similarly, one need only reflect on the disastrous effect of World Bank structural adjustment policies on rural populations throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America to be able to see development practice as harmful to alternative ways of being.
In this sense, it is the similar concern with practice as well as the legacy of engagement with Indigenous populations that make both these fields of study apt for comparison and dialogue, especially through the lens of their relations with Indigenous knowledges. It is therefore ironic that this dialogue in connection with Indigenous knowledge has largely failed to materialize. It is towards a more conscious merging of these sets of writing that this book is headed. It is hoped that by beginning this dialogue here, both disciplines might learn from one another’s complex set of relations with Indigenous knowledges, even as they deeply reflect on past and ongoing attempts to impose a global design on these knowledges. This is in addition to learning from Indigenous knowledges themselves.

DEVELOPMENT AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES

Since what some consider to be its beginning in 1945 – and others see as the continuation of Western colonialism – development as a practice and as a field of study has had a preoccupation with Indigenous knowledges. This history has moved from attempts to label these local ways of knowing as the obstacles to development to contemporary times where they are seen as intrinsic starting points for development (Sillitoe 2007). Recent critiques of development (Escobar 1995; Rist 2002; Briggs & Sharp 2004) and development studies (Sylvester 1999; Sumner 2006) resonate with Mignolo’s framework established above. For instance, Escobar (1995) and Rist (2002) criticize the Eurocentrism of development, and the way in which it colonizes the notion of progress in particularly ethnocentric ways. Similarly, Briggs and Sharp (2004) warn of the ways in which Indigenous knowledges are being appropriated by current development practice in order to continue to force local communities to develop in ways external to their frame of reference, while superficially speaking of respect for local ways of knowing. Sylvester (1999) has labelled this as one of the blind spots of development studies: an inability to truly listen to and connect with local community voices and ways of being. Likewise, Sumner (2006) notes that a key current challenge faced by the discipline is “how it addresses heterogeneity” and “opens up space for alternative ‘voices’” (p. 647).

In this sense then, the collection that follows pushes thinking in development studies about its engagement with Indigenous knowledges. Dei and Simmons contribution tackles head-on the legacy of development in engaging with Indigenous knowledges. Langdon’s contribution exposes the Eurocentric frame that encloses development studies. Harvey elaborates the ways in which development expert knowledge is used to exclude local ways of knowing. Stocek and Mark’s contribution presents a direct epistemic challenge to Eurocentric visions of development by beginning a discussion of an alternative iteration of development based in Cree values. Metallic thinks-through the implications of a decolonized science, grounded in a respect for Indigenous epistemics, and what it can contribute to a community’s development. Sarkar presents a personalized account of her daughter’s growing awareness of challenges facing Western health systems and the potential of other ways of conceiving of wellness. On the same
theme, Agyeyomah and Langdon’s chapter concludes the collection by asking how different epistemologies of wellness can contribute to greater community choice, health and, ultimately, self-determined development. The chapters each provide one angle through which to see Indigenous knowledges engaging with development. These engagements are not simplistic, nor are they aimed only at critique. Each has attempted to provide different avenues through which the critical engagement of development and Indigenous knowledges can lead to mutual enrichment.

EDUCATION AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGES

Education as a practice has, in many ways, a much longer history of engagement with Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous peoples than the development industry. As mentioned above, this history has been until recent times, one of cultural devastation and what some call linguicide (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). Much contemporary research has been done to document this history, both in countries colonized with settler populations (such as the United States, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia) and countries colonized, yet not settled (Hall 2000; Maurial 1999; Adams 2008). Equally so, a rich vein of research in the field of education has focused on the Eurocentric nature of education as a practice as well on as the possibilities that Indigenous knowledges provide in challenging this Eurocentrism (Battiste 2008; Bartolome 2008; Dei, Hall & Rosenberg 2000; McIssac 2000; Smith 1999; Semali & Kincheloe 1999). Similarly, educational research has challenged the ways in which research is conducted on Indigenous communities, rather than with, or by Indigenous communities and researchers (Cajete 2008; Lomawaima 2008; Holmes 2000; Smith 1999; Abdullah & Stringer 1999). Finally, contemporary research in education has concentrated on providing theoretical as well as empirical discussions of ongoing efforts to bring Indigenous knowledges and education into dialogue in the classroom (Liberman 2008; Kaomen 2005; Semali 1999; George 1999), in the academy (Couture 2000; Ng 2000; Wright 2000; Semali & Kincheloe 1999), in informal learning situations (Fasheh 2008; Kardos 2008; Dudziak 2000), and knowledge production in Indigenous social movements (Choudry 2007; Kapoor 2007). Like development studies, much writing in the educational field connected to Indigenous knowledges also speaks about Indigenous scientific knowledge (Awang 2000; Parrish 1999; Knijnik 1999; Prakash 1999; Jegede 1999) and health knowledge (Katz 2008; Shroff 2000; Dudziak 2000). Yet, in a different vein than development studies, education has also been preoccupied with the question of narrative, language and voice, where it comes into contact with Indigenous knowledges (Reiken & Strong-Wilson 2006; Skutnabb-Kangas 2000; Batiste 1998). Finally, it should be noted how much writing in education circles takes a critical stance and sees subjugated knowledges such as Indigenous knowledges as the starting place of social justice and social change (Brayboy 2008; Kapoor 2007; Shiva 2000; Dei, Hall & Rosenberg; Semali & Kincheloe 1999; Freire & Faundez 1989).
Many of these issues surface in the chapters that follow. While exploring the colonial legacy of education, Dei and Simmons ask how African education can be re-indigenized. Langdon offers thoughts on how the educational process at the heart of development studies can be re-framed through Indigenous epistemic inflections. Harvey suggests that incorporating Indigenous knowledges into environmental programs without also addressing the ways in which these knowledges are used or taught will not only fail to lead to sustainable development, but will also undermine the very potential this knowledge exchange contains. Stocek and Mark provide a living example where Indigenous knowledges and research approaches have led to new ways of conceiving of learning and development. Metallic elaborates an example where science education can be reconceived through Indigenous knowledges, and through the introduction of the Mi’gmaq language. Sarkar explores the implications of being confronted with different ways of knowing and being on the educational choices of a young medical student – her daughter. And, Agyeyomah and Langdon introduce conceptions of education from the perspective of Chief Isshaku Gumrana Mahamadu, a traditional bonesetter in Northern Ghana. Not only do these chapters provide a range of ways in which education is conceived, they also share a variety of examples of the ways in which education interacts with Indigenous knowledges.

CONCLUSION

As noted in the outset of this introduction, it is the hope of all the contributors that the multiplicity of experiences and articulations found in these chapters will help provide an indicative example of the ways in which Indigenous knowledges can and do influence concepts of education and development, and the ways in which both these disciplines of study can become more and more open to alternative epistemic lines of thought. Not only is there a challenge before the Western epistemic system institutionalized in the university academy to become more open to other ways of knowing and being (Battiste, Bell & Findlay 2003; Semali & Kincheloe), but there is also the greater challenge of facing the legacy of Eurocentrism’s “global design.” Disciplines such as education and development studies have an important role to play in decentering the universal pretensions of Western thought through the introduction of other epistemic systems, such as those derived from Indigenous knowledges. This role is important not only because of the chequered legacy of both fields of thought, but also because each discipline represents an important site of implementation, where theory meets practice. The implications for both of these disciplines should they fail to become more responsive and open to other ways of knowing and being is the potential further alienation of the populations that developed these knowledges (Battiste 2008), but also the very real risk that failure to act will facilitate the continuation of the colonial legacy.

This then is the starting point of this book. The chapters that follow speak to the interconnection of education, development and Indigenous knowledges, and examine how these different fields of knowledges co-exist in a number of specific