



Reading summary

Kelly, S., & Rigney, L.-I. (2022). Unsettling the reason of time: Indigenist epistemology and the child in the Australian curriculum. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 43(3), 386–404. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01596306.2021.2019889>

Indigenous knowledges have for many years been silenced and gone unrecognised in Australian education, as the education system has projected western normative notions of time and place onto First Nations' sense of being and connection to place. In recent years some steps have been taken to incorporate Indigenous knowledges into curriculum and pedagogy, but they merely assimilate aspects of knowledge as an educational resource within western frameworks. This article examines how time figures in the curriculum, in Indigenous knowledges and in conceptions of the child.

Western conceptions of time tend to emphasise linear chronology and human progress, and thus to devalue non-western knowledges. Western education seeks to train the child into a rational being, emphasising logic and reason at the expense of senses and experiences. The child is seen as an object of knowledge who needs to develop to reach their potential, and whose development is measured against their peers and curriculum statements. In Australian education policy a child's subjectivity is produced through their numerical identification with the norm. This has similarities with Plato's model, in which the child comes to know their temporal self as a subject of measurement.

First Nations researchers argue that, for Indigenous children to be included and to succeed at school, schools need to invoke First Nations identities, knowledges, relational ontologies and epistemologies. This should include re-centring and normalising First Nations' understandings of time, such as the experience of the past and present as intertwined. In First Nations cultures, past, present and future emerge out of the experience of place and place-based cultural practice. Children in First Nations communities are educated to perceive

the presence of their descendants in nature and to invoke processes of creation through caring for Country and participating in song and ceremony. The child's sense of time is not confined by linear frames; rather, through cultural practice such as story and songs, time is experienced as a continuous, simultaneous recurrence. Also, through practices such as the performance of songlines, the child participates in the learning and (re)creation of knowledge. Rather than being situated in and by time to a determined account of the future, the child actively participates in the constitution of time.

Without questioning the fundamental assumptions underlying the curriculum, it is difficult for schools to decolonise the epistemic, political and pedagogical effects of the settler curriculum. This requires redressing the asymmetric relations of knowledges between First Nations peoples and settler educational policies and practices. One place to start is to decolonise the conception and application of time that structures the government of knowledge and human subjectivity.

Take-home messages

First Nations knowledges and constructions of time: To truly incorporate First Nations knowledges into the curriculum, we need to challenge constructions of time that normalise white settler perspectives.

Connecting time, community and land: To improve understandings of First Nations ways of knowing, we need to create pedagogical encounters that connect time, community and land.

Education policy and knowledge translation: Current education policy documents that claim to bring together different systems of knowledge in fact perpetuate views of rationality and subjectivity that limit the possibility of knowledge translation.