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## Teacher education for diversity: afterword

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### ABSTRACT

This final contribution offers an overview of issues that arise in the earlier papers. It makes a commentary on what has been established about teacher education for diversity in Anglophone countries, by considering three themes that emerge from a reading of the papers collectively: policy as the context for teacher education for diversity, what it means to be a teacher in diversity, and how diversity can be conceptualised in educational contexts.

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Teacher education; diversity; educational policy; English as an additional language; mainstreaming

## Introduction

This volume grows out of an invitation to consider the question of how teacher education can be sufficiently responsive to the multiple diversities that teachers encounter in their classrooms. It is prompted by a recognition of the increasing diversity of contemporary classrooms with consequences for how teachers enact teaching in such contexts of diversity. The preceding chapters present a critical and expansive exploration of the issues confronting teacher education for diversity and illustrate some possible ways of engaging positively with diversity when preparing students to become teachers. The different authors have raised specific concerns about teacher education policy and practice in the Anglophone world and how it responds to the diversity present in contemporary classrooms. They also present some alternative considerations for engaging teacher education students with diversity as a regular part of their preparation.

## Policy contexts

The papers in this volume all situate teacher education within a policy content in which EAL learners are increasingly being educated in the same classrooms as students who speak English as a first (and often only) language. Supporters of integrating EAL learners into regular classroom often argue that such integration has social and cognitive benefits for learners and also reorients their education way from a narrow view of language learning to a more expanded educational goals (Clegg 1996; Leung 2019). The papers also make the point that linguistic and cultural diversity is increasing in all of the countries studied and

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that teaching EAL learners is an ever present and increasing part of the experience of all teachers. This policy, whether it is called mainstreaming, inclusion, or any of a host of other terms, would thus appear to be a defining context for teacher education in the contemporary Anglophone world. However, the policy of integrating students has often not had positive effects for students' learning. For example, the PISA results for Australia and New Zealand indicate a significant gap in achievement between EAL learners and their peers who speak English as their main language (Song, Perry, and McConney 2014). EAL learners in mainstream classrooms are exposed to a uniform curriculum that is not adapted to their needs linguistically or culturally and they may not receive the support they need to engage in the dual tasks of learning the curriculum and learning the language. Scarino (this volume) sees integration as 'an erasure of individual students' in that their distinctive needs and experiences are not recognised.

This policy of integration has consequences for what teachers need to be able to do in their classrooms as it is increasingly the case that all teachers need to teach students who are simultaneously acquiring English and learning the content of specific curriculum areas. In fact, the policy of integration delegates the task of implementing educational programs for EAL learners to teachers and schools in their local contexts. This means, as Scarino (this volume) observes that in such contexts, what happens for EAL learners depends ultimately on the teachers themselves, and how well prepared they are to teach EAL learners. In their local contexts, teachers respond to this delegation from the perspective of very different education and experiences and as a result the actual implementation varies considerably (Harklau & Ford, this volume). Local school cultures, including practices, beliefs, values, discourses and ideologies, practical circumstances and institutional requirements all have an impact of what teachers can do and how they will understand their roles and responsibilities (Liddicoat, Scarino, and Kohler 2018).

Delegating responsibility for the education of EAL students means that teaching EAL learners is something for which all teachers need to be prepared in their education, including those teachers who may not think that questions of linguistic and cultural diversity are within their disciplinary remit. As Harklau and Ford (this volume) note, in the integration model, mainstream teachers have dual instructional roles as content-area teachers for all their students and also providing specialised teaching for their EAL learners and so teachers need to be prepared to take on these dual roles. It is this question of the consequences for teacher education that the papers in this volume take as their main focus.

### The teacher in diversity

One aspect of teachers' work that emerges from the papers is what it means to be a teacher in contexts of high diversity. The papers collectively reveal that the current state of teacher education is one of high needs for teachers to develop the resources required to enact their teaching in contexts of high diversity, but that newly qualified teachers are often underprepared for this work. In fact, such reparation may not even be seen as a priority in teacher education. For example, Harklau & Ford (this volume) report that while English learners may spend most of their school time with mainstream teachers, fewer than half of states in the USA require mainstream teachers to have received any preparation to work with such students. What is revealed by the papers in this volume is that while EAL students are being

mainstreamed, EAL pedagogy and practice is not. Thus, there seem to have been few accommodations made in teacher preparation for the presence of linguistic, cultural and other forms of diversity in classrooms.

The papers, however, point to some directions in which teacher education can begin to prepare teachers for the contexts of diversity in which they will be required to work. Leung (this volume) argues powerfully for a view of teacher education as professional rather than as technical education. A professional teacher is not simply someone who knows teaching techniques and how to apply them but someone who is able to exercise agency to design productive learning experiences. As Leung argues, professional teachers are those who are enabled to resource themselves professionally and personally. There is thus a need for a focus on praxis, that is on developing the ability to make informed judgments about actions and the ability to take action that is informed by theory and to theorise action to produce new insight. In order to develop this, there is a need in teacher education to focus on the emerging self as teacher and questions of responsibility, agency, identity, values, one's and personal stance as a teacher and as a holder of disciplinary knowledge.

The idea of 'stance', and becoming aware of one's own stance, seems to be central to the preparation for teachers to work in contexts of diversity. For Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) stance emphasises the idea that, in teaching, teachers are positioned intellectually and in practice in relation to what and how they teach and note that 'Teaching is a complex activity that occurs within webs of social, historical, cultural and political significance' (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999, 289). Understanding one's positioning within these complex webs is central to being able to respond agentively in teaching. As Toohey and Smythe (this volume) argue, learning to teach is not about attaining mastery but about entering into an ongoing process of enquiry. The issue of stance is drawn out in Scarino's (this volume) critique of EAL teaching in Australia. She argues that teachers' lived experiences of languages, cultures and how they are situated personally, linguistically and experientially in relation to teaching, learning and disciplines is central to how they understand their students, their teaching and their ways of being and acting in the classroom. This reflects Sleeter's (2008, 150) argument that '[t]eachers' prior life experiences, beliefs and assumptions,... act as powerful filters through which they interpret teaching, students and communities'. If teacher education is to prepare teachers to work in contexts of diversity, it needs to provide them with opportunities to explore their own stance and its consequentiality for how they engage with diverse others both inside and outside classrooms. Foley (this volume) uses 'identify positions' to capture a similar idea and argues that student teachers' ability to construct positive professional identities is central to their work in diverse classrooms and should be central to teacher education. In particular, she notes that many student teachers adopt monolingual and monocultural identity positions/stances in their teaching practice. That is, teachers entering in contexts of diversity do so with a monolingual habitus (Gogolin 1994) that views monolingualism as the normal way of functioning in educational contexts. This monolingual habitus is in conflict with the multilingual and multicultural lived experiences of their students. Teacher education therefore needs to develop professional identities/stances that recognise responsibility for the learning needs all students and respond positively to the complex, diverse lives of their learners, including their linguistic and cultural situatedness.

The papers reveal that, if teacher education is to engage productively with preparing teachers for the complex diversities of their classrooms, it needs to open spaces for critical reflection on self, self-as-teacher, and self-in-relation-to-education. In preparing to engage with diversity, teachers need to understand themselves in relation to that diversity and to adopt a critical perspective on their own situatedness, on the situatedness of their learners and on the situatedness of curriculum they teach and pedagogies they use. In this sense, teacher education needs to be critical education, in Habermas' (1968) sense of learning as an emancipatory process that enables learners to become self-determining social actors. Critical reflection is thus central to educational practice. In teacher education for diversity, this needs to encompass critical reflection to engage widely with the aspects of diversity teachers are likely to experience in their classrooms (language, culture, ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, and so on). Learning to be a teacher is then essentially a hermeneutic process, or as Habermas argues a logic of growing insight, and teacher education needs to foster this process as a central component of preparing teachers to work in contexts of diversity.

### Conceptualising 'diversity'

Within much contemporary discussion of diversity (including papers in this volume), superdiversity has become a central lens for understanding diversity. Superdiversity refers to current levels of population diversity that are significantly higher than before. Drawing on an examination of the UK, Vertovec (2007, 1024) notes that contemporary diversity 'is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade'. Superdiversity is thus primarily understood as diversity that results primarily from recent changes in global mobility flows. Superdiversity specifically points to the expanding range of origins of immigrant groups as the result of new migratory patterns of smaller groups from more places. This means that one emphasis within superdiversity is to construct diversity in quantitative terms – a numerically greater proportion of immigrant groups present in societies emphasising the expanded range of differences within a group. This quantitative framing may reflect observable realities but numbers themselves do not encapsulate the complexities of diverse communities. Superdiversity does not however simply emphasise diversity in quantitative terms but also recognises the different ways that members of such groups are positioned within societies (e.g. as citizens, refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented immigrants, secondary migrants, etc.). It thus involves a specific recognition that groups are internally diverse as well as diverse from other groups. There is, however, a risk in considering internal diversity of immigrant groups as a new feature of diversity as it tends to represent older patterns of immigration as less differentiated and to downplay the inevitable diversity of any social group.

As a concept, superdiversity positions diversity as being largely a phenomenon of immigration and this focus can become especially privileged in discussions of EAL education in Anglophone countries as EAL learners are usually understood as new arrivals in the country. However, as Toohey and Smythe (this volume) point out, indigenous groups are also a significant component of the diversity that teachers of EAL may need to engage with. It is

therefore important to recognise, as this volume does, that diversity is much more complex and that teachers need to be able to engage with diversity that is complex and multivalent. Nonetheless, discussions of diversity in the context of EAL teacher education, including those in this volume, tend to cluster around a narrower range of diversities that relate to language, culture and ethnicity, and other diversities that could be brought into focus often have a more peripheral status, for example race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, (dis)ability, life experience and so on. This privileging of language, culture and ethnicity is often present in descriptions of teachers and teacher education students as monolingual and monocultural and with little consideration of the diversities that exist within these populations.

One consequence of the privileging of language, culture and ethnicity in constructions of diversity is that members of majority groups are often positioned outside diversity and diversity becomes associated with those who diverge from the mainstream norm. This can be seen for example in terms such as CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) as in the following extract from an Australian government strategy document:

A CALD workplace means having employees who:

- are from different countries, including other English-speaking countries;
- have different cultural backgrounds;
- can speak other languages besides English; and/or
- follow different religions, traditions, values and beliefs.

(Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2018, 2)

In this definition, difference is strongly emphasised and here difference largely refers to difference from an Australian 'norm' in terms of place of birth, cultural background, language and religion. Thus, to be 'diverse' means to be different from a normalised national identity. Moreover, certain aspects of identity are marked as atypical, for example multilingualism.<sup>1</sup> Diversity is thus an othering category; it separates those who are diverse from those who are not. What this means is that members of the dominant mainstream community are not positioned as *participants* in diversity; diversity is something that is external to them. This view of diversity is particularly problematic if it is adopted into thinking about teacher education because, when teachers who are the members of the mainstream are positioned as being outside diversity, they can only be *managers* of the differences of others never a part of the diversity they experience in schools and societies. Moreover, as they are not viewed as participants in diversity, they will be understood as having little lived experience to draw on to support them in becoming managers of the diversity of others.

One problem in preparing teachers to work with diversity is that diversities are often seen as bounded categories and are kept separate in both thinking and practice. If such categories are seen as bounded, people are positioned either inside or outside the categories and are seen as engaging with the categories from this positioning. Rather than emphasising types of diversity, it is also important to consider diversity as a complex, ever-present phenomenon that shapes the lived experience of all members of a society; that is, people, understood as participants in diversity, have multiple relationships with and lived experiences of diversity and, thus, have potential resources to draw on when engaging with diversity in personal and professional contexts, although these may require drawing out and development through education. One part of the educative dimension of developing

engagement with diversity is the recognition of the various possibilities for discrimination and privilege that exist within the social context and how they are created by different social and political identities.

## Concluding comments

These papers have shone a light on the often chaotic and fragmented ways teacher education in Anglophone countries has responded to increasing demands on teachers to engage with and respond positively to diversity in their classrooms. At the same time, they have shown potential ways forward to develop policy and practice in teacher education that often require significant rethinking of how education programs are conceptualised. In sum, this special issue provides potential ways to engage with the complexities of teaching in the contemporary world and at the same time highlights the need for continued thinking and research in this area. It is notable that this special issue brings together the work of scholars specifically focussed on questions of language teaching and learning and so represents insights from a circumscribed section of teacher education. Such scholars have diversity, especially linguistic and cultural diversity, as a central concern in their work and in their thinking. However, the ideas presented here are not relevant only to those who are interested in and committed to questions of diversity in their professional work. It is important that the ideas discussed here begin a dialogue with teacher educators who are currently less aware of the impacts of diversity on specific disciplinary areas.

## Note

1. There is actually a problem in the definition as it seems to include people who come from 'other' English-speaking countries but also assumes abilities to speak languages in addition to English. In most definitions used in government documents the words 'including other English-speaking countries' are usually absent.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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