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Making a difference: moving beyond the superficial treatment of diversity

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As populations in contemporary Western societies grow more diverse, the need for teachers to better understand and work with difference productively becomes increasingly critical (Allard & Santoro, 2006; D'Cruz, 2007). However, the literature on teacher education shows that historically, teacher education programs have aimed to address diversity with add-on or piecemeal approaches, with little success (McDonald, 2005). Moreover, some authors (e.g. Lortie, 1975) have argued that "the predispositions teacher education students bring to teaching are a much more powerful socializing influence than either pre-service education or later socialization in the workplace" (Johnson, 2002, p. 154). This article explores research and scholarship in this area and argues that we must move beyond the fragmented and superficial treatment of diversity if we are to encourage dispositions in all pre-service teachers that are more closely aligned with a recognitive view of social justice.

Keywords: diversity; pre-service teacher education; social justice; teacher dispositions

Introduction

Education is often perceived to be the great equaliser in an otherwise unjust society. Since the introduction of mass schooling in the mid-nineteenth century, many Australians have looked to public education as a basic right and a vehicle that will furnish them with the rewards and opportunities to experience more fulfilling and satisfying lives. Yet, as Thomson (2001) points out, there has never been a free and democratic public education system. Because access to education has always been at a cost to parents, schools have always favoured the rich and powerful (Connell, 1993). Indeed, there is a long history of schools having a tendency to "connect best with, and work best for, students of middle-class, Anglo, male backgrounds" (Ladwig & Gore, 1998, p. 19).

While differential student outcomes are often attributed to (teachers' and/or students') hard work or the lack of it, the hidden linkages between scholastic aptitude and cultural heritage point to the role that schools and school systems play in reproducing social and cultural inequalities. The injustices of "allowing certain people to succeed, based not upon merit but upon the cultural experiences, the social ties and the economic resources they have access to, often remains unacknowledged in the broader society" (Wacquant, 1998, p. 216). However, those involved in reproducing the social order often do so without either knowing they are doing so or

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wanting to do so (Bourdieu, 1998). In particular, teachers frequently do not see and often do not intend the social sorting that schooling imparts on students.

However, teachers *can* act as agents of transformation rather than reproduction (Mills, 2008). It is this interest in making a difference for the most disadvantaged students that has led me to question the role of pre-service teacher education in this transformation through the development of socially just dispositions in beginning teachers.

While dispositions towards social justice may encompass a number of perspectives, recognitive justice (Gale & Densmore, 2000), informed by the work of Young (1990) and Fraser (1995), includes a positive regard for social difference and the centrality of socially democratic processes in working towards its achievement. While the limits of space prevent me from giving a full account of recognitive justice in this article, in brief, it advocates the fostering of respect for different social groups through their self-identification; opportunities for their self-development and self-expression; and the participation of groups in making decisions that directly concern them, through their representation on determining bodies (Gale & Densmore, 2000). This article argues that we must move beyond the fragmented and superficial treatment of diversity if we are to encourage dispositions in all pre-service teachers that are more closely aligned with a recognitive view of social justice.

The article makes this case through a review of research on pre-service teacher education programs and the ways in which they prepare teachers for dealing with student diversity. While over 50 publications or presentations from 1990 to 2008 were reviewed, not all are mentioned in this article. Table 1 presents a summary of some of the key empirical studies referred to. The database, sourced through electronic searches employing descriptors such as *diversity*, *(pre-service/initial) teacher education* and *social justice*, indicates that a variety of papers, both theoretical and empirical, continue to be published on preparing teachers for diverse student populations. A decision was made to incorporate publications from both within and beyond Australia, particularly given the attention this topic has received in the USA. Peer-reviewed journal articles as well as both refereed and non-refereed conference papers were included in the database. The literature reviewed here, then, does not constitute a truly random sample. Even given the same criteria for selection (e.g. key terms used to locate existing research), another reviewer could have identified a somewhat different sample of studies.

Publications were reviewed and synthesised according to major themes that emerged from findings. The themes extracted from this sample of studies tell only one of many stories that could have been constructed. In that sense, this is a somewhat subjective distillation, although like Kagan (1992), I would argue that there can never be a truly objective review of literature as comprehension of any text is subjective. Accordingly, this review is not intended as an effort to present a comprehensive, coherent synthesis of the international literature on teacher preparation for diverse students. Through this analysis of the literature, areas in need of revision are canvassed and what those revisions might entail are drawn out where feasible. Rather than specific strategies for change, this article makes it possible for us to take stock of what is currently known as a beginning point for future empirical work.

Table 1. Summary of key empirical studies referred to in this article.

Researchers	Focus	Participants	Data sources	Findings
Allard & Santoro (2004)	How difference is constructed and diversity is "taken up" by teachers as they engage with secondary students who have Language Backgrounds Other Than English and who are economically disadvantaged.	Seven teachers in two separate schools who identified themselves as "experienced in working in diverse contexts".	Individual interviews; two extended focus groups; classroom observations.	Teachers did not ignore differences. They were able to speak informatively about specific cultural and gendered behaviours on the basis of their daily interactions with different groups. While they recognised how these students did not 'fit' into the standard expectations of 'good student' and in doing so, called into existence the mythical 'norm', they didn't compare these students to the mainstream and find them wanting.
Allard & Santoro (2006)	How teacher education students construct their own identities around understandings of ethnicity and socio-economic class.	Eight teacher education students in the third year of the secondary course who had attended mainly Anglo-Australian, middle class schools as students and as student teachers.	Introductory focus group; student journals recording experiences and reflections on practicum; individual interview at the end of practicum; final focus group.	While most students made some headway in coming to deeper insights concerning difference, the focus on their own identities served more as an awareness raising exercise rather than an explicit development of necessary professional knowledge and pedagogical skills.
Aveling (2002)	Student teachers' resistance to examining their own racialised assumptions.	Three cohorts of students, each with an annual enrolment of approximately 150 students, studying both in internal and external mode.	A variety of students' writings such as essays, critiques, reading journals, anonymous student evaluations conducted by the University's Teaching and Learning Centre, as well as comments made during tutorial discussions.	For some students, engaging with material that had been confronting was worthwhile. While others had successfully been made uncomfortable in their racism, they could not be encouraged to take a stance against it.

Table 1. Continued.

Researchers	Focus	Participants	Data sources	Findings
Brown (2004)	The influence of instructional methodology on the cultural diversity awareness of teacher education students.	All Caucasian teacher education students in a required junior-level cultural diversity course (100 total).	The Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI) was used as a pre-test and post-test empirical measure; and reflective journals, field experience reports and research projects were examined to investigate incremental changes.	A relationship does exist between the instructional methods used in stand-alone cultural diversity courses and changes in the cultural diversity awareness of students. Although the message and previous experiences do have some influence on increasing student cultural diversity awareness, the gains are more substantial when coupled with appropriate methodology.
Causey, Thomas & Armento (2000)	The effectiveness of an approach to diversity issues used during the final year of a teacher preparation program and residual effects three years later.	An undergraduate class of 24 students; follow-up research with two teachers three years on.	All written data produced by the students in this group: autobiographical and post-experience essays, reflection journals and diversity plans developed by the students. Individual interviews with and classroom observations of teachers three years on, as well as a videotaped group interview.	Prospective teachers who display a disposition to thoughtfulness and reflection are the most likely candidates for cognitive restructuring and new learning. But experiences after the completion of teacher education programs can also cause restructuring, growth and regression.
Garmon (2004)	The factors that may be associated with the development of greater multicultural awareness and sensitivity in pre-service teachers.	One 22-year-old White female teacher candidate.	Extensive interviews.	Six factors appeared to play a critical role in her positive multicultural development. Three of the factors were dispositional and included openness to diversity, self-awareness/self-reflectiveness and commitment to social justice. The other three factors were experiential and included intercultural experiences, support group experiences and educational experiences.

Table 1. Continued.

Researchers	Focus	Participants	Data sources	Findings
Johnson (2002)	How White teachers' concepts of race change over time and the socialisation process by which some White teachers reject the colour-blind perspective toward race in their personal and professional lives.	Six White female teachers who teach in racially diverse schools and had been nominated as being "aware of race and racism" by a diverse panel of experts.	Autobiographical narratives regarding race developed through a series of semi-structured interviews; a drawing of their racial identity; and a classroom visit that examined classroom artifacts and teacher-student interactions.	Study supports the need for revising candidate selection criteria, increasing the racial diversity of students and faculty and experiencing 'immersion' in communities of colour in pre-service teacher education.
McDonald (2005)	How two teacher education programs implement social justice in an integrated fashion across the entire program.	Two elementary teacher education programs that make social justice and equity central to the preparation of prospective teachers.	Individual semi-structured interviews with teacher education faculty members and 10 case-study teachers; observations of university courses and case-study teachers' clinical placements; a review of documents such as accreditation reports, course syllabi and assignments; and pre- and post-surveys of the cohort of prospective teachers in the two teacher education programs.	The two teacher education programs had explicit commitments to social justice and equity. However, the implementation of this commitment in practice varied within each program in terms of their emphasis on conceptual and practical tools. Clinical placements were found to enable or curb teachers' opportunities to learn about social justice depending on the specific diversity of the students in their placements.
Wiest (1998)	Whether a cultural immersion project (participating in an unfamiliar culture for a minimum of one hour) can help students gain knowledge about another culture and insight into how it feels to be a member of a minority culture.	Three classes of pre-service elementary and secondary teachers in their fifth year of a five-year teacher education program completing the final semester of coursework before student teaching (86 students total).	Students' project write-ups as well as oral comments made in class or privately.	A short, more informal, intense cultural immersion experience can strongly influence pre-service teachers and have far-reaching effects.

Table 1. Continued.

Researchers	Focus	Participants	Data sources	Findings
Whitehead (2007)	Students' understandings about social difference and social justice as recorded in their professional journals.	Third year pre-service teachers (62 total).	Professional journals in which students are encouraged to reflect on a range of teaching and learning issues.	Most students were prepared to engage with social justice in their professional journals. While students' reflections on their school experiences were grounded in the culture of individualism, some also acknowledged that class, race, gender and ethnicity shape their lives and their future students' worlds.

Diversity and schooling: teachers making a difference

Australia is one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world (Howe, 1999). While the Australian student population – as in most parts of the globe – is linguistically and culturally diverse, it is significant that the Australian teaching profession is overwhelmingly Anglo-Australian and of middle-class background (Allard & Santoro, 2006). In this way, Australian teachers are demographically quite similar to teachers in other Western countries (Cochran-Smith, Davis & Fries, 2003). That is, while student populations are becoming increasingly diverse, bringing to classrooms divergent racial, ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic experiences (Allard & Santoro, 2004; Brown, 2004), the pre-service teacher population is becoming more homogeneous, primarily White and middle-class (Causey, Thomas & Armento, 2000).

Compounding this, Allard and Santoro (2006) have expressed concern about the homogeneity of experience of the majority of teacher education students in Australian universities. Many of these students attended middle class, Anglo-Australian schools for their primary and secondary education; are among similarly restricted cultural and linguistic diversity in the teacher education population; and often find themselves in schools not dissimilar to their personal schooling experiences for their practicum placements. Pre-service teacher education providers now face the daunting task of preparing predominantly White middle-class students with limited or no experience with persons from another ethnicity or social class to be effective teachers of diverse students (Causey et al., 2000).

As populations in contemporary Western societies grow more diverse, the need for teachers to better understand and work with difference productively becomes increasingly critical (Allard & Santoro, 2006; D'Cruz, 2007). Indeed, the growing disparity between teachers' and students' cultural experiences – a situation that may result in cultural discontinuity, or "misunderstandings between the teachers and students in the classroom" (Au, 1993, p. 8) – can impact negatively upon students' educational outcomes (Delpit, 1995). This is an important issue, given that:

> "a significant proportion of school-age students whose ethnicity, socio-economic status or 'race' mark them as different from that of the middle-class, Anglo-(Australian) mainstream, continue to fail to achieve educational outcomes that are equivalent to their peers … The failure of such a significant proportion of students is no longer morally or socially acceptable." (Allard & Santoro, 2004, p. 2)

For the individuals and groups of students historically at risk in the Australian education system – such as non-English speaking background students, rural and remote students, students from low-socioeconomic status backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with learning difficulties and disabilities – "apart from family background, it is good teachers who make the greatest difference to student outcomes from schooling" (Hayes, Mills, Christie & Lingard, 2006, p. 1). Observations of 800 classrooms in 24 case study schools throughout Queensland, Australia, as part of the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study, demonstrates that teachers and their practices are central to achieving socially just outcomes (Lingard, Mills & Hayes, 2000; Lingard et al., 2001). However, there is danger in attributing students' lack of achievement solely to the quality of teaching (Lingard, Hayes, Mills & Christie, 2003) – the challenge is in emphasising "the centrality of teachers' work without implying that teachers – individually or collectively – are the panacea for the problems of education"

(Cochran-Smith, 2001, p. 541). We must continue to recognise the significant effects on school performance of students' backgrounds. That is, teachers "can and do make a difference, while not being able to fully compensate for society" (Lingard et al., 2000, p. 97).

Pre-service teacher education: the fragmented and superficial treatment of diversity

If teachers are integral to making a difference in these times of increasing student diversity, we need to find ways to improve the success of diverse students through our pre-service teacher preparation. However, in spite of the enormous changes that have taken place in our society, some schools of education are still functioning as if they were preparing teachers for the classrooms of half a century ago (Nieto, 2000). Although most teachers are competent in their subject areas, Sogunro (2001) argues that they lack adequate knowledge, skills and attitudes that are necessary to successfully teach diverse student populations. Indeed, the literature on teacher education shows that, historically, teacher education programs have aimed to address diversity with add-on or piecemeal approaches, with little success (McDonald, 2005). I believe that this is due to the fragmented and superficial treatment of diversity in pre-service programs, which does not lend itself to the development of dispositions in pre-service teachers that are aligned with a recognitive view of social justice. As is expanded below, encouraging the development of such dispositions requires a commitment of time. In this context, the need for issues of social justice and diversity to be central components of the pre-service program takes on particular significance.

While discourses of empowerment, diversity and equity are widespread and it is now rare to find educational programs that do not make reference to attending to diversity, as Gore (2001) points out, "slogans can be widely adopted without their translation into programmatic impact" (p. 125). Indeed, "as critical concerns have been normalized within educational discourse, they have also been modified and in many cases watered down" (Gore, 2001, p. 125). By this, Gore refers to the fact that concerns with socioeconomic class and race have been subsumed within broader categories of "disadvantage", with the needs of so-called gifted and talented students given equal status. As Zeichner (1993) states, "In some cases … the use of particular terms has become almost meaningless because of the way in which teacher educators, holding very diverse perspectives, have often expressed allegiance to the same slogans" (p. 2).

This is a good example of the way that a commitment to social justice does not necessarily mean a commitment beyond narrow conceptualisations of socially just practice. As Gale and Densmore (2000) point out, individuals and institutions utilise social justice discourse, notably liberal-democratic versions of distributive justice, to maintain unjust social arrangements. Like Villegas and Lucas (2002), then, I believe that we need to move the field of teacher education beyond the fragmented and superficial treatment of diversity that currently prevails. While the typical response of teacher education programs to the growing diversity among students has been to add a course or two on multicultural education but to leave the rest of the curriculum largely intact (Goodwin, 1997), this approach to curriculum reform does not go far enough. As Villegas and Lucas (2002) point out:

> "unless the ideas introduced in the added courses are reinforced and expanded on in other courses, prospective teachers are not apt to embrace them as their own, particularly if those ideas clash with the views they bring into teacher education. Worse still, if the new ways of thinking are contradicted by courses comprising the 'regular' curriculum, any positive effect of the added courses will likely wash out." (p. 20)

Brown (2004), for example, reports that Banks (2001), Sleeter (1995) and others have found that many pre-service teachers enter and exit stand-alone cultural diversity courses unchanged, often reinforcing their stereotypical perceptions of self and others in the process. Hatton (1999) has also critiqued foundational teaching in initial teacher education as failing to impact on the racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism of many pre-service teachers in Australia. Indeed, the continued "othering" of students who are "different" from themselves suggests that such teachers do not acknowledge the equal moral worth of students from different social groups or hold a positive regard for social difference, both of which are key conditions for recognitive justice (Gale & Densmore, 2000).

However, Garmon (2004) suggests that the research results on the impact of such courses have been mixed, with some researchers reporting that students' attitudes and beliefs have been changed in a positive direction by a course on diversity, while others have reported little or no change. Perhaps this can be partly explained by Pohan's (1996) research, which found that students who bring strong biases and negative stereotypes about diverse groups will be less likely to develop the types of professional beliefs and behaviours most consistent with multicultural sensitivity and responsiveness. This finding is consistent with Kagan's (1992) observation that "candidates tend to use the information provided in course work to confirm rather than to confront and correct their pre-existing beliefs" (p. 154). That is, the personal beliefs and images that preservice teachers bring to teacher education usually remain inflexible.

Dispositional factors may be particularly significant, then, because they may determine prospective teachers' readiness (or lack thereof) to learn from their intercultural and educational experiences (Garmon, 2004). The classic study by Lortie (1975), for example, argues that the predispositions teacher education students bring to teaching are a much more powerful socialising influence than either preservice education or later socialisation in the workplace. As Hatton (1998) points out, "one of the most formative experiences on pre-service teachers is anticipatory socialization for teaching during the 12 to 15 years they spend as pupils in classrooms" (p. 7). Sinclair, Munns and Woodward (2005) suggest that despite modern improvements to the practicum experiences, due to the limited time spent in schools, the limited scope of tasks undertaken by preservice teachers and the haphazard organisation of practicum experiences in schools, these programs still fail to offset this prior socialisation. As a result, Haberman (1991) has advocated a more selective recruitment process, arguing that teacher educators have to find ways to focus on "picking the right people" rather than trying to "change the wrong ones" through teacher education.

By this, Haberman (1996) is advocating the recruitment and selection only of those who bring knowledge, experiences, commitments and dispositions that will enable them to teach in culturally diverse student populations well. Specifically, I would argue that the three dispositional factors identified by Garmon (2004) of openness (receptiveness to others' ideas or arguments, as well as receptiveness to diversity); self-awareness/self-reflectiveness (having an awareness of one's own

beliefs and attitudes, as well as being willing and/or able to think critically about them); and commitment to social justice are highly instrumental in teachers taking up a recognitive view of social justice.

Garmon (2004) suggests that these dispositions might be developed within pre-service teacher education through intercultural experiences (experiences in which there is an opportunity for interaction with individuals from a cultural group different than one's own); support group experiences (experiences with a group of individuals who encourage a person's growth through helping him or her make sense of experiences); and educational experiences to develop students' awareness of and sensitivity to diversity through being pushed to re-examine existing beliefs and attitudes. What these experiences might entail is explored in the section that follows.

Above all, however, dispositions – including dispositions towards social justice – that constitute what French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would characterise as one's *habitus*, are acquired through a gradual process of inculcation. If we consider Bourdieu's observation that the acquisition of cultural capital involves, amongst other things, extended periods of time with those who are themselves endowed with "strong" cultural capital, moving beyond the superficial treatment of diversity in teacher education takes on a new significance. Such transmission and accumulation is time-intensive, but stand-alone courses do not lend themselves to endowing our pre-service teachers either with the legitimate cultural capital or the disposition to make use of it (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Making diversity and social justice central rather than peripheral

Given the "deficit" construction of students from non-Anglo and lower socio-economic backgrounds common in the thinking of teachers, Allard and Santoro (2004, 2006) suggest the need for educational experiences that encourage pre-service teachers to question the taken-for-granted beliefs that they hold about themselves and "others", particularly as many of our students are located in dominant cultures. Indeed, such students frequently describe themselves as "only Australian" and see non-Anglo-Australians as the ones who have an ethnicity. However, through this exoticising of the "other", those who are different from themselves are:

> "inadvertently constructed in opposition to the mainstream and the 'normality' associated with membership of the dominant culture … Furthermore … their differences may create problems in terms of classroom management or lack of academic success that student teachers believe have to be overcome. Therefore, the 'exotic other' often becomes understood as deficit within classroom settings." (Allard & Santoro, 2006, p. 117)

Such understandings are indicative of a distributive view of social justice; one that assumes that all students have the same basic learning needs and provides justification for taking steps to compensate students who are disadvantaged through their "lack" of skills or abilities. These approaches have the potential to alienate students and re-emphasise existing inequalities in classrooms. Instead, those with dispositions more closely associated with recognitive justice have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, seeing resources for learning in all students rather than viewing differences as problems to be overcome (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Additionally, many pre-service teachers fail to understand how their privileged class status and Anglo-Australianness has contributed to their academic success,

attributing it instead to "individual effort" (see, for example, Whitehead, 2007). Their view from the centre of the hegemonic culture often leaves them unable to see how some individuals or groups are effectively disempowered or marginalised as a consequence of curricula, pedagogies and assessment practices that do not take into account their classed, gendered and racialised identities (McInerney, 2002).

As teacher educators, Allard and Santoro (2004) suggest that part of our role is to offer educational experiences to enable our students to understand and examine their own positionings. Based on the work of Santoro and Allard (2005), Whitehead (2007) acknowledges that it is critical that we help pre-service teachers recognise that ethnicity and social class are integral to the identities of both learners and teachers and not just descriptors of non-Anglo-Australians or of non-middle class students. Such "awakening of consciousness" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 116) may help to challenge deficit thinking and "naïve egalitarianism" which can cause student teachers to "deny the privileges they may enjoy because of their skin colour and social class" (Causey et al., 2000, p. 34). Interestingly, in the research reviewed, the call for challenging essentialist gendered understandings was not as prominent as those extended to ethnicity and social class. Perhaps this is explained by Aveling's (2002) research on pre-service teachers' resistance to exploring their own racism. While students' racialised and gendered positionings were a focus of the study, gender did not appear to be a contentious issue for the majority of students. Aveling suggests that this may reflect the fact that students had been alerted to gender issues during their undergraduate study and had generally – if somewhat superficially – taken this on board. Race, on the other hand, was the area that was most problematic for her students.

However, beyond encouraging this questioning of their taken-for-granted beliefs about themselves and "others", there are no universal strategies that can be shared with pre-service teachers for teaching students who are "culturally and linguistically different from one another, from their teachers, or from the "majority" students for whom instructional materials and school expectations are tailored and whose best interests are served by continuation of the current situation" (Cochran-Smith, 1995, p. 494). Moreover, "teachers do not become culturally or linguistically responsive simply by taking a course where these concerns are reduced to strategies" (Nieto, 2000, p. 184). Indeed, it is:

> "contradictory to the concept of cultural diversity itself to expect that educational experts can enumerate specific practices that teachers should learn and then apply across schools and communities with different histories and different needs. But it is also not advisable for teachers or children to mistake color blindness for educational equity." (Cochran-Smith, 1995, p. 494)

Zeichner (1993) suggests that as an alternative, we should help our students become critical consumers of research. Such an approach "does not lend itself to the distribution of recipes for teaching but to a set of ideas and skills that feed into a process of deliberation about teaching" (p. 9).

Intercultural experiences can also be useful in moving prospective teachers toward greater cultural sensitivity. The research of Causey et al. (2000), for example, involved prospective teachers investigating issues of equity and experiencing the barriers that race and class can create for students through a three week immersion experience in schools located in low socio-economic urban communities. The professor involved in finding placements for the students hoped such settings would

provoke cognitive dissonance as the interns' new learnings conflicted with their prior beliefs. Although many of the interns demonstrated idealistic beliefs about students, learning and equity issues after their diversity experience, the majority came away with new insights and knowledge about themselves and others.

Wiest (1998) has found that even short, more informal, intercultural experiences can strongly influence preservice teachers. The cultural immersion assignment she set for final year pre-service teachers aimed to help students gain knowledge about another culture and insight into how it feels to be a member of a minority culture. Students experienced and participated in an unfamiliar culture for a minimum of one hour and then speculated on how what they have learned might apply to classroom teaching. Students suggested that newly acquired cultural knowledge helped dispel stereotypes, misconceptions and fears they had about the group they visited. Enhanced ability to look at a situation from another's perspective and increased empathy for feelings people experience when outside of their more familiar culture were additional valuable outcomes of this experience for students.

However, it is very important to provide opportunities for critical reflection on intercultural experiences with a support group. Johnson (2002), for example, argues that that immersion experiences alone may not increase racial awareness, but opportunities to critically reflect on those experiences can help deepen understanding. While teachers' attitudes and beliefs may be influenced by experience, "experience is educative only with time for reflection" (Richardson, 1990, p. 12). Interestingly, while much of the literature reviewed made similar claims about the importance of critical reflection, very few studies that reported on field experiences included this opportunity for reflection and those that did chose not to elaborate on the success or otherwise of such initiatives.

We need to recognise, though, that it is difficult to influence long-held beliefs and attitudes in the space of one course (McDiarmid, 1990). Pohan (1996) suggests that a program with attention to diversity issues over several semesters offers the best hope for moving preservice teachers toward greater effectiveness in culturally diverse classrooms. To avoid essentialising complex categories of difference or reinforcing stereotypes, Santoro and Allard (2005) similarly argue for an exploration of "these issues from a number of different perspectives and over a period of time in order to move beyond simplistic or superficial analysis and the temptation to come up with quick solutions" (p. 872).

We must be careful not to interpret these goals narrowly to mean "the sprinkling of disparate bits of information about diversity into the established curriculum, resulting in the superficial treatment of multicultural issues" (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 21). Indeed, McDonald (2005) advocates for programs that integrate a social justice orientation across program settings. If we are to take seriously the challenges of diversity and making a difference, such changes to our pre-service programs should be considered.

Conclusion

While the research reviewed in this article does not provide a formula for preparing pre-service teachers for diversity, what we do know is that, as teacher educators, we need to find more effective ways to challenge values, attitudes and practices through intercultural, support group and educational experiences if we are to develop socially

just dispositions in beginning teachers. A complete redesign of pre-service programs may be in order if teachers are to be empowered to make a difference through their engagement with diverse student populations. Producing teachers who "explore and reconsider their own assumptions, understand the values and practices of families and cultures that are different from their own, and construct pedagogy that takes these into account in locally appropriate and culturally sensitive ways" (Cochran-Smith, 1995, p. 495) must be a goal of any teacher education program with the aim of engendering dispositions that are aligned with a recognitive view of social justice.

While all teacher educators would be concerned about issues of social justice and diversity, the degree of emphasis and particular meaning given to these factors within teacher education programs may require reconsideration. This is not to suggest that all teacher education programs are inadequate in this respect. Clearly, a more detailed analysis of teacher education programs and the specifics of their offerings – through examination of program documents, unit outlines, assignment requirements etc. – would be of value in determining the degrees to which programs of initial teacher education in Australia address student diversity and social justice.

Nevertheless, it is our responsibility to support the teaching profession to develop deeper, more meaningful ways of engaging with diversity over a sustained period. Making issues of diversity and social justice central rather than peripheral at the pre-service level is the first step to ensuring that teachers see themselves as agents of social change (McInerney, 2007); as active participants in social processes that "make a difference" for the most disadvantaged students and contribute to "a more humane, equitable, socially just and democratic society" (Ambe, 2006, p. 694).

Empirical research that focuses upon delivering specific suggestions for program change and, more particularly, curricular and pedagogical strategies that "move beyond a superficial treatment of diversity" must be our next step. While these practices may help us realise the move toward a more central approach to diversity and social justice in pre-service teacher education, a longer-term consideration of the effect of these strategies on teachers' understandings of diversity, and subsequent pedagogical practice in classrooms is also in order.

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