Chapter 17

Addressing Diversity in Schools: Policies, Programs and Local Realities

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Introduction

In a multicultural, multilingual and multi-religious country such as Australia, providing opportunities for children and young people to acknowledge difference, learn about and experience other cultures, languages and religions, is an important dimension of their education. Since the late 1970s, all Australian state and territory school education systems have put in place a range of policies, programs and parts of the curriculum that specifically acknowledge and seek to address issues related to cultural, linguistic and, to a lesser extent, religious diversity.

Yet diversity sits as one of many issues, often located in access and equity divisions of education bureaucracies, that over recent years have been moved to the margins of educational discourse. It is framed within what is a highly unequal and segmented Australian school system that is shaped by significant structural, geographic and socio-economic divisions and disadvantage.[1] Furthermore, as the Australian Government grapples with educational reform, school education budgets have come under increased pressure, and both national and state governments have pushed for greater deregulation and devolvement to the local school level – providing for greater local school autonomy through such initiatives as the national Empowering Local Schools partnership[2] or the New South Wales Local Schools, Local Decisions program.[3]

Within this context, we focus in this chapter on the local school level and the interplay between state-wide policies and programs on the one hand, and their implementation at the local school level on the other. This chapter considers aspects of the demography of diversity in Australian schools, policies, programs and curricula provided to schools, and a view of how schools have responded to the challenges of diversity and difference, whether they are active, reactive or disinterested. The aim is to highlight the ongoing struggle for schools between the opportunities provided centrally by policy-makers and their responses at the local level. The main focus is on culture and language, as issues related to religion and Indigenous background have not been included.

Our analysis points to the urgent need for policy-makers to reconceptualise diversity from a progressive perspective, where structural divisions and inequalities are addressed and diversity is linked to achieving greater social, political and economic justice for all students and their schools. A way forward involves building on what has been achieved so far, linking diversity more closely to human rights and global citizenship. At the local level, it means that educational authorities should be providing teachers and staff with greater, not less, support, to enable them to focus on the complexities of cultural and linguistic diversity within their school and community, and to address diversity within national, regional and global contexts.

Diversity: what do we mean?

If we see diversity in terms of cultural and linguistic difference, for many Australian schools, diversity became a 'demographic reality' as a result of Australia's mass migration program that began in the late 1940s. The make-up of schools and communities has continued to change under the impact of migration, but it took until the late 1970s for educational researchers and policy-makers to acknowledge these changes and begin to address cultural and linguistic difference as an important educational issue.

Research about diversity in education is an extensive and growing field, with studies located in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and across Europe.[4] In Australia, while a great deal has been written about multiculturalism and the development of multicultural policies,[5] the most important recent debates about multicultural education theory, policy and practice took place during the 1980s and 1990s.

Since then, national policy and funding have retreated from multiculturalism, and the concept of multicultural education has been replaced by diversity. Consequently, educational researchers and school educators have seen issues of diversity moving to the margins of educational discourse, research and policy-making. Even so, a number of important themes have emerged in recent Australian studies addressing diversity in school education, including:

- acknowledging and responding to diversity
- intercultural engagement and linking diversity to the concept of global citizenship
- implementing local responses related to local contexts
- a critical, multi-dimensional transformative approach
- a rights agenda focused on access, equal opportunity and tackling systemic disadvantage and racism.

The focus on acknowledging and responding to diversity – with a special emphasis on culture and language – is a feature of a number of national education statements and state government education policy documents, and continues to be restated as a central policy objective. The importance of intercultural engagement is a key feature of the 'interculturally proactive school' model, by Hickling-Hudson,[6] while others of its key features include taking a global perspective and linking diversity to the concept of global citizenship.[7] Cultural diversity, for Jakubowicz,[8] is about the preservation of cultures, intercultural engagement and the capacity of students to operate as global citizens.

Given the many complexities of diversity at the school level, Leeman and Reid[9] see that local responses by schools are central to developing a positive recognition of diversity in different contexts and histories. Also at the local school level, a valuable view of diversity by Ho points to an important aspect of schools – their ability to act as 'micropublics',[10] or spaces where diversity plays out through the everyday interactions among

people of different backgrounds, which can lead to the development of a better acceptance and understanding of difference.

Acknowledging and engaging with students' different cultural identities, tackling racism and exclusion, and developing for all students the skills and knowledge to access both the mainstream culture and other cultures is the focus of Mansouri and Wood.[11] They draw on critical education theory and set out a 'multi-dimensional transformative model' of multicultural education that addresses the systemic disadvantage faced by many students from backgrounds other than English.

The importance of a rights agenda that links diversity to social justice and social transformation is what Keddie[12] also argues for. So for her, diversity involves challenging the political, cultural and economic obstacles faced by students. This is especially important because the most marginalised students often come from diverse backgrounds, and the combination of these obstacles prevents them from succeeding in school. Racism is also an important factor, and a number of studies have highlighted the impact of racism across Australia, including the persistence of strongly held anti-Muslim views, intolerance against Asian, Indigenous, Jewish[13] and especially Arab Australian youth in schools.[14]

Diversity in schools

As Connell et al.[15] showed clearly in 1982 and the Gonski Report[16] in 2011 again demonstrated, Australia's school sector is highly segmented and unequal. Among the most disadvantaged are students from some Asian, Arabic and Pacific communities, along with recent refugee arrivals from Africa, and many Indigenous students.

If one of the main aims set by policy-makers for schools is to respond to and reflect diversity and to avoid discriminatory and racist behaviour, an important starting point is to see what is known about how diverse schools actually are. This continues to be a challenging task, as the measures

used in reports and studies vary – languages other than English, language backgrounds other than English, country of origin, ethnicity, and so on – all have limitations, and gathering data across states, territories and school sectors remains difficult. For this study, we have focused on language background and language spoken as the most widely used measures of diversity.

The most recent national data reported by Gonski shows that 29 per cent of students in the Northern Territory speak a language other than English (LOTE), the highest proportion in the country. This was followed by New South Wales (28 per cent) and Victoria (25 per cent). There were smaller proportions in the Australian Capital Territory (16 per cent), Western Australia (15 per cent), South Australia (14 per cent), Queensland (6 per cent) and Tasmania (5 per cent). Considering the distribution across three main school sectors in Australia: government schools had 20 per cent, Catholic schools 19 per cent and independent schools 17 per cent LOTE students.

Enrolment data from Australia's most populous state, New South Wales (NSW), shows the range of diversity more clearly. NSW government schools,[17] which account for more than two-thirds of student enrolments in the state and are Australia's largest school system, had almost 30 per cent, or 224,794 students, in 2011 from a language background other than English (LBOTE). And there were large variations among and within school regions. One region, South Western Sydney, stood out. LBOTE students made up 65 per cent of its enrolments, by far the largest proportion in the state. There were also sizeable proportions in two other regions – Western Sydney (38 per cent) and Northern Sydney (38 per cent). In sharp contrast, a number of rural and regional areas had very low percentages, including New England (2.8 per cent), Western NSW (3.2 per cent), North Coast (4.5 per cent), and Hunter (6.2 per cent).

Chinese and Arabic language backgrounds were by far the largest, together accounting for just over 30 per cent of all LBOTE enrolments

in NSW schools.[18] Then followed Vietnamese, Greek, Hindi, Tagalog/Filipino, Korean, Samoan, Spanish and Italian. Together these backgrounds accounted for 61 per cent of all LBOTE students.

Table 1: Language backgrounds of New South Wales school students, 2011

Language	% LBOTE
Chinese	17.6
Arabic	13.1
Vietnamese	6.7
Greek	4.1
Hindi	3.9
Tagalog/Filipino	3.6
Korean	3.2
Samoan	3.2
Spanish	2.9
Italian	2.7
Other languages	39.0
Total	100.0

Source: NSW DET 2011

The formerly dominant European language backgrounds had declined since multicultural education policies first emerged in the late 1970s, with only Greek, Spanish and Italian still in the top ten. In addition to these largest groups, a further 240 other language/cultural backgrounds, including Indigenous, are represented in schools.

Furthermore, Ho's study[19] of NSW secondary schools in Sydney, analysing the available My School data, found significant concentrations of non-English-speaking background (NESB) students in both government schools and government selective schools. This was in sharp contrast to many independent schools, which had very low proportions. Another study[20] showed that Sydney's high-fee private schools had less than 10 per cent NESB students and remained largely the preserve of English-speaking background students. This suggests that schools are more

highly segregated than previously thought, and that the pattern of school enrolments significantly limits educational opportunities for many children from NESBs.

Language background and language study

If almost 30 per cent of students have a NESB in NSW government schools, how do schools respond to this linguistic diversity? Australian languages policies and the study of LOTE provide further insights. During the 1980s, Australia was seen as one of the leaders in language education policy development, but this pre-eminence hides a history where language policies and programs moved through what Lo Bianco[21] has called 'various ideological positions' and a language 'policy parade' (see also Lo Bianco's chapter in this volume). He describes language teaching as having moved from being 'comfortably British' to assertively Australian, and ambitiously multicultural in the early 1970s, to energetically Asian in the 1990s. Since then, the dominant view has been fundamentally economic, focusing on English literacy, while the teaching of other languages has continued to decline.

Australian students are given opportunities to learn their home or community language at school or after-hours, and to study key Asian languages, and non-background speakers are encouraged to study a language in primary and secondary school. Even so, the overall picture remains one of steady decline in language study since the 1970s. Despite the growing number and range of languages spoken across Australian school communities, less than 11 per cent of students study a language in Years 11 and 12. The high point for language study was in fact the late 1960s, a time when the study of a language was a mandatory requirement for university entry.

Diversity of school teachers

Given the nature and mix of diversity among students, how does the make-up of the teaching

staff in schools measure up? From the available Australian data,[22] it is evident that the teaching body does not fully reflect the diversity of students. An overwhelming majority of teachers in Australia were born in Australia and were from English-speaking backgrounds. Only a small proportion (17 per cent) were born overseas, and most were English-speakers from countries like England, New Zealand, South Africa, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Among the few teachers from non-English-speaking countries, the largest numbers came from Germany, Italy, Holland, Greece, India and Poland, with few from emerging communities.

Education policies and programs

Education policies in Australia have been shaped by a wider public policy debate around multiculturalism and, more recently, concepts of community relations, harmony and diversity. The first multicultural school education policies emerged in the late 1970s in response to the findings of a number of key national studies, such as the Galbally Report[23] in 1978 and the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council Report[24] in 1979, which focused for the first time specifically on the role of education in working towards a multicultural society. At the same time, political pressure from vocal and well-organised ethnic community organisations, including educational working groups, helped to bring about important policy moves at national, state and territory level. As Jupp[25] noted, the 1980s were the 'high point' for multicultural education and language programs. It was then that multicultural education policies and programs were implemented in most states and territories, the curriculum amended, funds allocated and staff employed to address aspects of cultural and linguistic diversity in schools.

A major achievement at this time was the establishment of multicultural education units within government school systems, and to a lesser extent in Catholic and independent schools. This was a significant step, because despite the ebb and flow of public debates and the conceptual turn away from multiculturalism to harmony and diversity from the late 1990s, education systems have maintained a multicultural/diversity bureaucratic presence, even as governments have come under increased pressure to cut programs and staff and to devolve more decisions to the local school level. Across Australia, the many educational policies, programs and curriculum opportunities for teaching about diversity remain in place, largely as a result of the establishment of a foothold in the educational bureaucracies.

School education addressing diversity

School multicultural education and education for diversity have focused on a number of key areas: policy and program development (including teacher professional development and resource production), curriculum change, and an annual celebration of cultural diversity. These have all been part of a multi-pronged effort to try to bring about change at the local school level.

Significant policy support for the role of multiculturalism and diversity in school education was achieved at a national level, with Australia's Ministers of Education including a specific mention of diversity among the national education goals through the 1999 Adelaide Declaration[26] and the 2008 Melbourne Declaration,[27] as well as the work to develop in Australia a new National Curriculum.[28]

However, overall, the broader focus on schools addressing and acknowledging diversity has diminished, in favour of a more specific focus on students learning about Asia and Indigenous cultures. The 1999 statement confirmed that, as part of the aim for 'socially just schooling':

> all students understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, such diversity in the Australian community and internationally.

By 2008, with global integration, globalisation, technological change and the need for engaging with Asia featuring strongly as new priorities in the preamble, diversity appeared only as part of the goal of developing active and informed citizens. Its role had been diluted to call for students to 'appreciate Australia's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity' and to be 'able to relate to and communicate across the cultures and countries of Asia'.

Curriculum opportunities

Changing the curriculum to address aspects of multiculturalism and diversity was an important focus of efforts by educators from the early 1980s and into the 1990s. Leeman and Reid[29] described it as a 'perspectives approach' that was adding important concepts and opportunities about aspects of diversity into the curriculum. The inclusion of perspectives on cultural and linguistic diversity was fought for and achieved during that time, with most states amending their curriculum documents to include issues related to diversity. This meant that, to some extent, opportunities for students to learn about different cultures and different histories were included across a number of subject areas, such as English, History, Geography and Human Society and the Environment.

Recently, the moves towards developing a National Curriculum that began in the mid-2000s have provided further opportunities for teachers to embrace concepts of diversity. This time, diversity has been included through a specific focus on intercultural understanding, engagement with Asia, the study of Asian culture and history, and the teaching of a select number of key languages. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), in drafting the various National Australian Curriculum documents,[30] has included two important aspects specifically related to diversity across all subjects:

- intercultural understanding – which is one of seven 'general capabilities' (literacy, numeracy, information and computer technology, critical and creative thinking, personal and social, ethical and intercultural understanding)

- Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia – which is there as one of only three 'cross-curriculum priorities' (together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, and sustainability).

In addition, the study of languages[31] was also included. Eleven languages were selected for development as part of the main 'learning areas': Chinese, Italian, French, German, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, Arabic, Modern Greek and Vietnamese.

The focus on the 'general capability' of intercultural understanding was seen as a way of encouraging students across all subjects to develop the ability 'to reflect, recognise, interact, empathise, respect and act responsibly with people from different cultures'. The 'capability of Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia' refers to students gaining a knowledge and understanding of Asian societies, cultures, as well as the skills to communicate and engage with people of Asia. It also included learning about the diversity within and between countries in Asia, and within Australia, as well as helping students to develop attitudes and abilities that would foster more social inclusion and cohesion within the Australian community.

Learning a language was seen as being important, as it was 'an integral part of developing global citizenship'. While students can study over seventy different LOTE subjects at some level in schools across Australia, only eleven languages were selected for development as part of the National Curriculum. The reasons for the choice of each language were:

- Chinese and Italian had the greatest numbers of learners across the nation
- Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese and Korean were national priority languages
- French, German, Indonesian and Japanese were among the most commonly taught languages in Australian schools
- Arabic, Modern Greek and Vietnamese were among the most commonly spoken languages at

home in Australia and were also supported by community schools
- Spanish and Arabic were languages of global importance.

A further twenty-seven languages were also identified as being important, even though they had small candidatures. Students could continue to study them at a senior secondary level, supported through the Collaborative Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Languages (CCAFL) arrangement that the Australian Government had with each state.

State policies: New South Wales and Victoria

An examination of recent policies of two states, New South Wales[32] and its 2005 Community Diversity and Community Relations policy, and Victoria's 2002 and 2009 policy statements,[33] shows how national statements have informed key state education policy objectives in relation to diversity and its place in school education.

The first state multicultural education policy in Australia was released in NSW[34] in 1983, targeting all government schools across the state. Importantly, it included a focus on intercultural education, study of a number of ethnic communities, inclusion of multicultural perspectives in the curriculum, teacher professional development, educational resource production, and the teaching of both community languages and English as a second language (ESL). Reviewed in 1995 and again in 2005, the NSW policy changed from a focus on multiculturalism to an emphasis on cultural diversity and community relations. This was largely a linguistic shift and did not significantly alter the policies and programs available to schools.

As the most recent education policy statement on diversity in government schools in NSW, the 2005 policy emphasised that a major focus for schools was 'responding to and reflecting' cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. It continued a focus on providing opportunities

for equal participation and achieving equitable outcomes. For the first time, the policy included an emphasis on students acquiring the skills needed to become 'active citizens'. The policy objectives also now included the importance of promoting community harmony and positive community relations, and inclusive teaching practices, while maintaining a focus on countering racism and intolerance, and supporting students to learn English.

Victoria was acknowledged as a leader in the field during the 1980s, when its educators adopted a more progressive and wide-ranging approach. But according to Mansouri and Wood,[35] it wasn't until 1997 that the Victorian Government's schools multicultural education policy provided a legislated framework for enshrining access and participation for all school students and the teaching of LOTE. The policy also identified the importance of making changes to the curriculum, and required that a multicultural perspective be introduced into subjects across all eight key learning areas.

Like NSW, Victoria moved away from the concept of multiculturalism, and in 2002, its *Guidelines for Managing Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Schools*[36] focused for the first time on cultural and linguistic diversity (CALD). The document explained why diversity was an important issue for all schools, and how schools could 'successfully manage cultural, linguistic and racial diversity'. More recently, diversity has been linked to students being educated for global and multicultural citizenship. Victoria's 2009–13 education strategy, *Education for Global and Multicultural Citizenship*,[37] outlined for the first time the link between diversity and difference within a global context, connecting the Australian community to the rest of the world. While schools were still asked to negotiate cultural, linguistic and religious differences, the strategy linked 'respect for our similarities and differences' with the need for schools and students to be aware of 'our interconnectedness with people and environments around the globe'.

The importance of language study has also been taken up by Victorian policy-makers, with the government setting out a new languages study policy for government schools[38] that aims to have all its students studying a language by 2025.

Recognising the need to address diversity and developing policies is one thing; providing actual resources – the necessary finance and staffing to support the implementation of programs – is another matter. Data is not available on the total funds allocated for multicultural programs in either NSW or Victoria, but considering the policy commitments and the size and nature of diversity in schools, the amounts made available appear modest.

In NSW, the multicultural programs available to schools have focused on four distinct areas of diversity: cultural diversity, teaching of languages and ESL courses, refugee programs, and anti-racism and anti-bullying initiatives.

Cultural diversity was addressed through a number of programs promoting cultural understanding, improved community relations and workshops to help to develop the capacity of particular NESB communities. An important feature was a program to support school cultural exchanges – both across school regions and with schools overseas.

The teaching of languages has included both the study of LOTE and ESL courses. Students have been able to study a LOTE in their kindergarten to Year 6 classes, either in the classroom, by attending after-school classes, or through community languages school classes. Less than 20 per cent of government school students study a language in primary school.[39] In secondary school, a mandatory NSW Board of Studies requirement means that most NSW students in Years 7 to 10 study a language for at least 100 hours, mostly in Years 7 and 8. In the senior years (Years 11 and 12), students can continue their language studies or take up a language as a beginner or a background speaker, with a choice of one of thirty-two languages. Just

under 12 per cent of all students study a language in the senior years.[40]

Where students arrive at a school without a sufficient mastery of English, schools employ specialist ESL teachers to provide classes to help them. A number of programs support students who have arrived as refugees, including a settling-in program, a refugee assistance scheme, and a professional development program for teachers. Just as important are the programs to counter racist attitudes and promote anti-racism and anti-bullying, such as the Cooling Conflicts program, and various anti-racism and anti-prejudice kits and resources.

The future of these programs in NSW government schools remains uncertain, as the implementation of the Department of Education and Communities' Local Schools, Local Decisions initiative in 2013 has meant a restructuring and reduction of school regions and significant staff cuts, including specific cuts to multicultural programs and staff and a major threat to existing ESL and primary school language programs.

While programs vary from state to state, a feature of the last two decades has been the increasing running-down and marginalisation of diversity programs in schools, together with reductions in the staff and resources available to support the implementation of diversity and multicultural education policies. While states and territories maintain laudable multi-faceted policies, there is a major gulf between the statements, policies and programs developed, and their implementation at the local school level.

Celebrating cultures

One aspect of diversity that schools have embraced since the 1980s has been having an annual event for the celebration of different cultures. In NSW from the late 1970s, Carnivale, which was funded by the Ethnic Affairs Commission of that state (now the Community Relations Commission) enabled ethnic community groups to organise an annual celebration of cultural diversity in their

local community. In most locations, primary schools, and in some cases secondary schools, were regular participants.

Following the attacks on multiculturalism during the mid-1990s, support for this kind of cultural celebration was wound back. Multiculturalism was reframed around diversity, and a Diverse Australia program[41] was introduced in 1998 by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. It focused on addressing intolerance and promoting fairness and inclusion, and one of its initiatives was to encourage schools to celebrate diversity on one day each year – 21 March, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In Australia, the event was named Harmony Day and schools were encouraged, rather than to focus on racism, instead to celebrate cultural diversity in their in their school community. Dubbed by Kalantzis and Cope[42] 'the 'spaghetti and polka approach' to difference, this kind of celebration can be seen as largely symbolic, one that has often involved a very narrow, superficial and limited focus on the exotic – and expressed as a celebration of only food, dance, music and costume.

However, even celebrations have proved of little or marginal interest to schools where there is a perceived lack of diversity and disinterest in issues related to diversity. Although Harmony Day is officially sanctioned by state education departments, there is some evidence from a study by Burridge and Chodkiewicz[43] that it has been embraced mainly in schools with a high level of CALD and with an active interest in diversity. It was these schools that were the most willing to respond positively to the diversity in their school and school community and to include the organisation of an annual celebration as one part of their efforts.

Local responses, 'local realities'

While most states and territories have diversity policies, programs and changes to the curriculum in place, the implementation at the local level

is largely a matter for each school. Even with a more centralised and relatively better-resourced system, such as that of NSW, where the regional support provided to schools continues to be the largest in terms of staff and funds allocated, the take-up by schools across the state is difficult to assess. However, a small-scale study by Burridge and Chodkiewicz[44] in Sydney showed that school responses to diversity at the local level can be categorised as being either 'active', 'reactive' or 'disinterested'.

A feature of the 'active' schools was that they generally had a highly diverse school population and drew on a range of programs and initiatives. They were involved in welcoming students and parents from different backgrounds, promoted cultural understanding, offered language classes, celebrated cultural difference, sent teachers to attend various regional diversity professional development workshops, worked on community engagement by employing community liaison staff, and organised regular events at school to engage parents from different cultural and language backgrounds.

The 'reactive' schools were those that ignored diversity until the school or local community was affected by a major racial incident. They responded to the event by taking up a number of their region's diversity programs to address racism and conflict, such as the Cooling Conflicts program. They also focused on addressing incidents of racism or bullying in the school, and made efforts to promote better cross-cultural understanding within the school. These included cross-cultural exchanges – a key regional initiative that involved students taking part in organised visits to other schools that connected them with students from other cultures and backgrounds.

The 'disinterested' schools openly spoke about their lack of interest in diversity, suggesting there was no need to address diversity, because it was not an issue in their school or other schools in their region. They argued that there was a low level of diversity in the school and the community and, as a result, diversity could be ignored and

no regional programs or initiatives were taken up. The only concession offered was that where any student arrived at the school with an inadequate or poor level of English, the school would look at providing ESL classes.

As many schools at the local level struggle with the increasing pressures of the 'crowded curriculum', limited funding, and – for a significant proportion – structured inequalities and disadvantage, it is not surprising that many schools have little or no interest in addressing CALD in any meaningful way. So if there is an evident and striking gap between the national and state policy statements, programs and curricula, and their delivery and implementation at the local level, an important way forward is to reconceptualise diversity and to renew efforts to meaningfully support schools at the local level.

Reconceptualising diversity

There is value in recognising and building on the achievements of the multicultural and diversity policies and programs put in place since the 1980s. This includes the curriculum changes that include opportunities to explore diversity, the teaching of community languages including ESL programs, the promotion of better cultural and cross-cultural understanding, school–community engagement, anti-racism, supporting refugees, and having a specific focus on access and equity for the most disadvantaged students.

A major challenge for policy-makers and educators continues to be how to reconceptualise diversity so that the concept is better understood and seen as relevant, not only to schools with a high level of CALD but to all schools. In 1999, Kalantzis and Cope[45] called for a rethinking and reconceptualisation of diversity and multicultural education. Taking a critical perspective, they suggested that it was time for a 'new visions ... to transform pedagogy for all students ... and to reconstitute mainstream social and educational practices in the interests of all'. That call remains relevant today.

Given the contesting discourses around diversity and multiculturalism, an important step in reworking the concept of diversity is to more clearly explain how diversity is an important feature of school education in Australia and to restate the benefits from embracing diversity, including economic, nation-building and national security reasons.

Another aspect is to continue to articulate the importance of equity and inclusion, restating the equity reasons for providing students from other backgrounds with access and opportunities for learning, as part of a broader human rights agenda. Conceptually and strategically, there is a strong case for linking diversity to teaching and learning about human rights and global citizenship. In the USA, Banks[46] reflected on the importance of this link on the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In Australia, the national consultation on human rights in 2009[47] identified schools as key sites where students could learn about human rights, including cultural, linguistic and religious rights. The establishment of an Australian human rights framework,[48] along with moves to support human rights education in schools and the community, should provide a way for including a rights-based focus on diversity in both the school curriculum and the teaching and learning about rights at the local school level.

Linking diversity to global citizenship has been a feature of the most recent national education policy declaration, the National Curriculum proposal, and the most recent Victorian education plan. It is important to show teachers how addressing diversity is a key factor in preparing students for a more interconnected, multicultural and multilingual world. The challenge remains for schools and teachers to take up the opportunities that enable students to learn and experience diversity and to build a more equitable and inclusive school culture where students learn to value, explore and negotiate the cultural, linguistic and religious differences within their

communities, across Australia and Asia, and the wider world.

A focus on the possibilities for everyday cross-cultural engagement and collaboration can be significant in settings with high levels of diversity and through cultural exchanges that provide cross-cultural engagement. As suggested by Ho,[49] there are important opportunities and possibilities that arise from cross-cultural collaborations. As schools are 'key sites for the development of micropublics', they can help to foster respect for the presence of 'Others', through an everyday multiculturalism that can 'include tensions and conflict without fragmenting'.[50]

Another more challenging way forward is to adopt a transformative, multi-dimensional school approach that involves students in developing counter-narratives related to their lived experiences, focusing on issues of access and equity across the school and the lack of equal opportunities for some groups, as well as challenging existing socio-economic structures. As Mansouri and Wood[51] stressed, for interventions to be effective in school settings they had to be multi-dimensional. This meant that actions had to be taken to address pedagogy, the curriculum, teacher professional development, student and parent engagement, and the building of community–school relationships.

Conclusion

Educators in schools face increasingly complex and diverse classrooms, as pressures on schools at a local level continue to increase. As economic and social conditions worsen in a number of states, in the wake of the global financial crisis and the ongoing pressures of globalisation and structural economic changes, there has been a widespread retreat from many progressive educational and social agendas. Yet the push for even greater globalisation, the growth of connectivity, social media and increased overseas travel provides opportunities for reframing the value and importance of issues of the diversity of

culture, language and religion in Australian school education.

Key to the reworking and restating of the concept of diversity is acknowledging the nature and range of demographic diversity across each educational sector, and emphasising the importance for each school to consider not only its own local context, but the wider Australian and world community. Also important will be drawing a closer connection between diversity and a broader human rights agenda, linking in with the concept of global citizenship. A focus on everyday, cross-cultural interactions also provides schools at the local school level with a range of possibilities for learning about diversity. This is not to ignore the need for government and educational bureaucracies to address the wider structural divisions, inequalities and lack of opportunities, especially for the many NESB students.

The training of teachers and teacher professional development remains central to these efforts. Policies, programs and curriculum changes cannot be implemented locally across the school system without resources devoted to supporting teachers to learn about ways of addressing diversity across a range of classrooms and schools. A great many potentially positive outcomes for students and teachers will emerge if teachers are supported and encouraged to take up the opportunities from reconceptualising and better understanding diversity.

Although issues related to diversity have moved to the margins of educational discourse, they remain important for educational policy-makers, schools, teachers and students. The task for educators is to continue to work towards a more genuine and wide-ranging response to the challenges of diversity and to achieve greater social, economic and political justice for students, their schools and the wider Australian community.

Notes

1   Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) (2011), *Review of Funding for Schooling: Final Report*, Canberra: DEEWR.

2   DEEWR (2012), *Empowering Local Schools*, Canberra: DEEWR.

3   New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (DEC) (2012), *Local Schools, Local Decisions*, Sydney: NSW DEC; online: http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/news/lsld/index.php (accessed 7 June 2012).

4   J.A. Banks (ed.) (2004), *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives*, Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

5   E. Koleth (2010), *Multiculturalism: A Review of Australian Policy Statements and Recent Debates in Australia and Overseas*, Research Paper No. 6, Parliamentary Library, Canberra: Parliament of Australia.

6   A. Hickling-Hudson (2003), 'Multicultural Education and the Postcolonial Turn', *Policy Futures in Education*, 1 (2), 381–401.

7   L. Rae, R. Baker and C. McNicol (2008), *Global Perspectives: A Framework for Global Education in Australian Schools*, Carlton South, Victoria: Education Services Australia.

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Part Five
Points of Friction