Opening Eyes onto Inclusion and Diversity

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Foreword

SUSAN CARTER

At the University of Southern Queensland [USQ], we are committed to advancing the use of open textbooks in higher education evidenced by our membership as the first Australian university in the Open Textbook Network [OTN]. This textbook is a tool to support Wiley's five R's of openness – retain, reuse, redistribute, revise and remix.

Enjoy the collection of chapters, including:

1. Introducing the key ideas
2. Differing childhoods: Transgressing boundaries through thinking differently
3. Celebrating diversity: Focusing on inclusion
4. Opening eyes onto diversity and inclusion in early childhood education
5. Fostering first year nurses' inclusive practice: A key building black for patient centred care
6. Positioning ourselves in multicultural education: Opening our eyes to culture
7. Creating an inclusive school for refugees and students with English as a second language or dialect
8. Opening eyes to vision impairment: Inclusion is just another way of seeing
9. Setting the scene: The importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural perspectives in education (the danger of the single story)
10. Conclusion

In Australia and internationally much still needs to occur to promote inclusive practices in education and society with many educators not feeling equipped to recognise or appreciate diversity or cater effectively for inclusion (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015). It is into this space that a University of Southern Queensland team of researchers, practitioners, and academics intends to contribute an open textbook "Opening Eyes onto Inclusion and Diversity". With embedded audio–visual components, the Open Textbook is designed to enhance the quality of the reader's experience with each chapter posing key understandings underpinning inclusion and diversity. Readers are encouraged to answer questions on culture, special learning needs, varied educational contexts, gender diversity and more. The key expected outcome of this open textbook is to engage readers in making meaning of inclusion and diversity and applying their learning to their own individual contexts.

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CHAPTER 1

Introducing the key ideas

PROFESSOR LINDY-ANNE ABAWI

Figure 1.1: Abawi, L. (2019). Photograph of street art: Giving diversity voice. Stavanger Norway, USQ.This book is for any reader who wishes to learn more about the rich tapestry of learners and individuals who make our world such an interesting and diversely textured community. Although our focus is largely on diversity and inclusion in Australian educational contexts we believe that the perspectives and insights presented within each chapter have much to offer the broader community as a whole.

Each of the authors provide unique insights into a diverse range of learners, from Chapter 2 that considers different childhoods through to Chapter 8, in which eyes are opened into experiences of visual impairment

and Chapter 9 with its eye opening look at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in education. Each authors' lived experiences of, and research into, diversity underpin the perspectives presented. Every chapter is designed to not only provide information, but to stimulate reflection and present opportunities to demonstrate knowledge transfer into personal contexts. By opening eyes onto diversity we challenge every reader to consider what it means to be inclusive of diverse individuals, both within educational contexts and beyond.

As with many countries across the world, Australia has a long history of colonisation and immigration. Many might automatically consider diversity within Australian society as being about culture, race and religion, at least as their initial response to this powerful and exciting word. Diversity is much more than this. However you might define diversity, and certainly many definitions abound, it is diversity in the world around us that excites, challenges and rewards us in so many ways… but only when we open our eyes to the inherent complexities and beauty associated with diversity.

There would be few individuals who lack awareness of people with physical attributes different from their own, whether these be related to race, birth characteristics, sexual characteristics, age, diagnosed [dis]ability, injury and the like. What may be more difficult to ascertain are differences related to sexual orientation, gender, mental health, autism, socioeconomic status, family structure…and the list goes on. Underpinning all of these are also personality differences, religious differences, learning preferences, health issues and psychological attributes. So much diversity, yet so much that remains unseen, resulting in individuals who feel invisible and believe that those around them are blinded to their needs.

Figure1.2: Abawi, L. (2019). Photograph of street art: Feeling unseen. Stavanger Norway, USQ

The act of trying to list the types of differences that contribute to what the word 'diversity' seeks to express is inherently an 'exclusionary' process because invariably there will be a form of difference that is not mentioned and which may have personal importance and significance to an individual. For example geographical location can affect any and all of the above, as can levels of adversity, historical or circumstantial, which may have impacted an individual, a family, a community, a country or a people.

Whilst acknowledging the power of words to both include and exclude, the authors of this book are highly conscious of establishing from the very beginning, a willingness to 'have-a-go' regarding talking about issues that many find difficult to talk about because they are fearful of offending an individual or group of people without intending to do so. We have taken care to try and use terminology that will not offend others, but we acknowledge that even as we write we might inadvertently use words that might be considered offensive by some even though these same words are accepted by others as being respectful.

Ultimately, we believe that by talking about diversity we open avenues for sharing and knowledge acquisition that are essential in the fight to learn about, and to value diversity as a strength in our schools and our communities. If what we share challenges your understandings, triggers discussion or prompts debate, including the rightness or wrongness of what we say, then this book has achieved its purpose.

Hand in hand with any discussion about diversity goes the concept of inclusion and what that looks likes, sounds like and feel likes. In educational contexts many would accept that as Norwich (2013) suggests

inclusivity is a principle whereby a general system is adapted to the diversity of learners. Norwich (2013), along with Allen and Slee (2008) see a weakness in current understandings of diversity and applications of inclusion as being bounded by politics and policy instead of emancipatory action based on sound theory and practice. We don't believe that adaption is what is needed, rather it is a mindset of acceptance and planning for all right from the start, which of course is the essence of the Universal Design for Learning approach where planning takes into account multiple means of representation, multiple means of engagement and multiple means of action and expression (Rose & Meyer, 2006).

As educators, and as members of a diverse society, we need to be thinking about, negotiating and transforming the relationships that exist within our classrooms, the teaching that occurs, the production of knowledge that happens, the education setting structures, and the social relationships that exist within the wider community, society and nation-state (Nouri & Sajjadi, 2014). Without exception this requires a thorough understanding of individual strengths, challenges and needs.

Recent research into diversity and inclusion in varied Australian school contexts (Abawi, Carter, Andrews & Conway, 2018) acknowledged that inclusive educational contexts are not easily attained or sustained. Findings indicated a set of six principles underpinning the creation of an inclusive culture:

Principle 1 Informed shared social justice leadership at multiple levels – *learning from and with others.*
Principle 2 Moral commitment to a vision of inclusion – *explicit expectations regarding inclusion embedded in school wide practice.*
Principle 3 Collective commitment to whatever it takes – *ensuring that the vision of inclusion is not compromised.*
Principle 4 Getting it right from the start – *wrapping students, families and staff with the support needed to succeed.*
Principle 5 Professional targeted student-centred learning – *professional learning for teachers and support staff informed by data identified need.*
Principle 6 Open information and respectful communication – *leaders, staff, students, community effectively working together.*

As a reader, we ask you to reflect on the six principles and how they are demonstrated within these pages. We also ask you to consider your own learning, work or social context and to what extent these principles are applicable and evident, as well as what more could be done to embrace diversity and embed inclusion. Many of the authors are in the middle of this process themselves as they reflect on data from a more recent and ongoing research project, early findings of which have been woven into Chapter 3. The aforementioned research also raised a question about "how can an uncompromising social justice agenda that is inclusive of others and caters for diversity be anchored to the needs of a changing population within specific contexts?"

We seek your assistance in developing a picture of what the answer to this question might be, to co-construct knowledge of ways of being inclusive and catering for diversity and intend to collate your responses and publish them in the next addition of this text as an epilogue of learning, a co-construction of knowledge in an on-going and reiterative process of collective learning. Please post your responses to www.usq.edu.au/open-practice . We will then utilise reader responses as a basis for further study and publication.

The themes and issues raised within this text vary starting with **Chapter 2**, *Different Childhoods: Transgressing boundaries through thinking differently,* by Charlotte Brownlow and Lindsay O'Dell, which considers the intersectional nature of individual identity drawing on key examples from domains of difference through exploring [dis]ability, gender and culture. It considers the narratives of [non] inclusion that frequently operate

within educational environments, from early childhood through to lifelong learning, and implications for positive identity constructions for individuals are explored. Children who are in some ways 'different' can find interactions in education settings challenging due to negative assumptions held by others.

Ability and socially approved identities must be carefully outlined and managed within systems, with clear benchmarks established concerning what is 'appropriate' and what is deemed 'inappropriate' when identifying and responding to difference. In conclusion the authors urge readers and educators to move beyond impairments to view differences through careful reflection on environments and the need to personally act in ways which maximise ability.

In **Chapter 3**, *Celebrating diversity: Focusing on inclusion*, Lindy-Anne Abawi, Melissa Fanshawe, Kathryn Gilbey, Cecily Andersen and Christina Rogers remind the reader of the increasing emphasis, in education settings, on understanding and catering for the diversity of learners in our classrooms. Education is acknowledged as being fundamental to shaping our future for it involves "the formation of each new generation into the citizens of tomorrow…In this age of 'super-diversity', it is difficult to categorise or place people into neat boxes. It is therefore all the more important for us to sharpen up our thinking and practice by developing a critical understanding of issues of difference" (Wrigley, Arshad & Pratt, 2012, p. 209).

The starting point for understanding is knowledge and experience. These two lenses will be used throughout this chapter to develop critical thinking and reflection on pedagogical practices. You may be asked to challenge your own pre-conceived ways of thinking and engaging with others; you may be asked to reflect on personal and possibly confronting experiences; and, most of all you will be asked to bring an open mind to the concept of diversity and engage with the scenarios presented with respect, tact and integrity. Every individual is shaped and influenced by multiple factors: ethnicity (language, religion and cultural diversity); variable skills and capabilities; socioeconomic background; health and well-being; and, gender identity and sexual orientation. It is these variable and varied factors that contribute to each of us as individuals and are what we add to the rich tapestry of schools and community. Diversity is a celebration of the richness and strength that it brings to society and is a primary responsibility of all those who teach and of all those who support teachers (Peters, 2007).

Chapter 4, *Opening Eyes onto Inclusion and Diversity in Early Childhood Education*, by Michelle Turner and Amanda Morgan, sees diversity as a celebratory characteristic of early childhood education in contemporary Australia. The education system in Queensland defines inclusion as the need to encompass individual differences such as culture, language, location, economics, learning, abilities and gender (Queensland Government Department of Education, 2018). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the principle that all children have the right to feel accepted and respected. As a signatory of the convention Australia is committed to a policy of respect for diversity providing children with access to fair, just and non-discriminatory education and care (Queensland Government Department of Education, 2018).

Regardless of the level of diversity evident in a setting it is important that all young children have the opportunity to develop an appreciation and respect for the diversity of their local and broader communities. Early childhood education offers the ideal setting for children to learn about diversity and the benefits it brings to their community. Through engagement in contexts that promote understanding of difference, children and families have the opportunity to develop their own understandings about diversity and build positive relationships with their local communities. Adopting a holistic approach to diversity is promoted as a strategy for educators working in contemporary early childhood settings.

Chapter 5 takes a slightly different tack and views diversity from a position of care. Entitled *Fostering first year nurses' inclusive practice: A key building block for patient centred care*, Jill Lawrence and Natasha Reedy investigate how we can better understand and cater for the diversity of learners in our classrooms. The depth and breadth of the research enriches and stretches our preconceptions by not only encompassing a range of contexts (early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, community and 'in between' spaces) and but also by exploring issues emanating from 'difference' (language, religious and cultural diversity, skills and capabilities, socioeconomic background, health and well-being, and gender identity and sexual orientation).

The chapter themes challenge our ways of knowing and thinking, and of engaging with others. They require us to reflect on others' experiences in exploring our concepts of diversity and inclusion and to, in turn, apply this critical thinking to our own pedagogical practices. To achieve this, the chapter asks us to embrace the authenticity of inclusion: to confront how notions of power, voice and agency can shape 'outcomes' for those on the 'margins'; to imagine the implications for society of positive identity constructions for individuals; and to highlight a way of working that facilitates the creation of shared cultures, a place where all can feel safe and included. There are also cautionary tales. For example, in this contemporary rationalised world we often fail to appreciate that the cost of caring always includes pragmatic considerations that educators must meet.

Renee Desmarchelier and Jon Austin, in **Chapter 6**, *Positioning ourselves in multicultural education: Opening our eyes to culture, explores how Australian* schools are increasingly providing education to very ethnically and culturally diverse student populations. In some schooling areas, the backgrounds of students attending both public and private schools have changed rapidly. So, the authors ask questions such as: What does it mean to be 'multicultural'?; Is multicultural education just something we provide to students from backgrounds that are not white-Anglo Australian?; and, How do we as teachers position ourselves in relation to multiculturalism, multicultural policies and education system requirements and expectations?

They suggest that through recognising culture as something that everyone has, we start to unpack our own attitudes to culture and multicultural education. We engage in critical self-reflection so we can understand ourselves to better position us to understand others. The authors share a tool with which to do this – a physical cultural audit. This involves a process of collecting data in the form of observations and/or photographs of the physical spaces around us and analysing them for the messages they give about the culture/s present in a particular environment. Through turning the gaze on ourselves and our own cultures we can come to understand the ways in which we culturally construct our understanding of the world around us.

This can assist us to be better educators in multicultural contexts through recognising that the students we are teaching are not the only ones to have 'culture' but that we ourselves are coming from a particular cultural position. Through such processes we can then work to unpack our own and the education system's expectations of all students and recognise where we may need to change our approach in order to achieve more socially just outcomes for students from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds.

Chapter 7, *Creating an inclusive school for refugees and students with English as a Second Language or Dialect*, is written by Susan Carter and Mark Creedon who argue that although inclusion is a basic need for humans, schools in Australia and internationally are still exploring what this really means in a rapidly changing global context. Challenges face educators as never before as the rate of migration has vastly increased with more people seeking asylum than at any time since World War II (Gurria, 2016). Schools face challenges in educating students who have little understanding of the official language or the school's cultural context. This chapter

seeks to bring into focus the need to include students new to Australia, with limited or no English speaking skills, to regular classrooms.

The chapter specifically explores the inclusive practices of one highly diverse junior school and seeks to share the effectual ways that they support, engage, enculturate and educate students. Use of case study methodology, revealed a way of working that facilitates the creation of a shared inclusive culture, a place where individuals share that they feel safe and included. The cost of caring is however a realistic consideration confronting educators and this chapter outlines some strategies on how to engage community help and create a sense of hopefulness.

Chapter 8, *Opening Eyes onto Diversity and Inclusion for students with Vision Impairment*, by Melissa Cain and Melissa Fanshawe shares the challenges that abound for students with vision impairments. Access and inclusion in education settings can be overlooked, as facilities are set up for those who can see. Many critical elements the school is trying to portray, such as the culture, behaviour management and curriculum, are displayed in visual format. Think about your journey into a school, through the office, into the classroom and around the school grounds and the incidental learning you acquire through visual means.

The author looks at the educational, physical and social impact of vision impairment and a mindset of designing curriculum opportunities to consider students with vision impairment. It investigates the implications that visual impairment should have on the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy, as well as the need to show concern for a student's ability to move independently within and between classrooms and throughout the school. It also looks at the social competence of students with vision impairment, who may find it difficult to interact with their peers due to missing the sighted cues to adhere to social norms (Wolffe, 2012). Through the use of modifications and a mindset of ability portrayed in this chapter, it is hoped educators can open their eyes to vision impairment, to find inclusion is just a different way of seeing.

Melissa Fanshawe, Lindy Abawi and Jillian Guy **Chapter 9**, *The Importance of Australian Indigenous Cultural Perspectives in Education (The Danger of the Single Story)*, leaves the reader with additional insights into the need to acknowledge and specifically address the needs, beliefs and histories of Australia's First Nation people, the oldest living culture in the world. We started this text with an acknowledgement of Country and have attempted to weave insights into Australian Indigenous perspectives throughout many of the chapters.

Chapter 9 seeks to consolidate the narrative of survival, celebration, disadvantage, injustice, racism and generational distress that is part of Australian history. The authors investigate the conceptual understandings of race, colonisation and Western viewpoints proposing considerations to ensure all students receive a culturally sensitive education and ensuring that what is left with the reader is a realisation and an urgency that more needs to be done to ensure First Nation Peoples attain their rightful place in Australian society.

Finally, Opening Eyes onto Diversity and Inclusion, the concluding chapter by Jill Lawrence, investigates how we can better understand and cater for the diversity of learners in our classrooms. It touches on what has been explored throughout this text. At its heart, this text galvanises us by presenting strategies about how to engage community and to create inclusion and hopefulness for those marginalised by difference. It exalts us to celebrate the richness and strengths of diversity and to accept our responsibilities in motivating and supporting all educators, including ourselves, to appreciate and build on these strengths.

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CHAPTER 2

Different childhoods: Transgressing boundaries through thinking differently

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR CHARLOTTE BROWNLOW AND LINDSAY O'DELL

What does it mean to be different? How does difference influence the way we see ourselves and others?

Key Learnings

- **View differences in ways that affords opportunities.**
- **Create environments that are supportive rather than challenging.**
- **Promote appropriate partnerships to enable successful learning and development.**

INTRODUCTION

These are important and complex questions to answer. Difference is evident in many settings and across the whole of the lifespan. At each developmental stage, individuals engage with systems, people, and broader environments, which allow varying degrees of agency on the part of the individual, from pre-school, school, higher education, and work.

Figure 2.1: Photograph by Benny Jackson on Unsplash

A HISTORY OF IDENTIFYING DIFFERENCE

The identification of individuals as in some way 'different', 'deficient', or 'other' is not a new phenomenon, and disciplines such as psychology have had a significant influence on the definition and identification of individuals who do not necessarily fit within the dominant developmental path. This section will explore some of the ways that understandings of what is considered to be 'normal', and what behaviours transgress this, have become shared understandings, and the impacts that these ideas may have for the shaping of positive individual identities.

The discipline of psychology has had a strong influence in defining boundaries of normality, and such ideas have been readily taken up in other disciplines such as education. Philosopher Nikolas Rose (1989a) has argued that disciplines such as psychology, individualise children, which enables abilities to be measured and quantified with children being placed in categories based on calibrated aptitudes. Any variability in individuals can therefore be identified and appropriately managed. This consequently places a high importance on the need to fit in with the identified norms and the power to identify and intervene is firmly placed with professionals, namely psychologists and psychiatrists.

Rose (1989a) argues that with the advent of psychometrics and the focus on the individual, psychology could develop its position as the appropriate authority to govern the lives of the individual. This rise of psychology to a powerful position led to a normalising vision of childhood and development. Rose (1989a) argues that

the newly developed scales were not just a means of assessing children's abilities, they provided new ways of thinking about childhood with the development of milestones of achievement.

Such milestones led to ideas about appropriate childhood activities and 'normal development' that regulated the behaviours and understanding of a variety of groups, including parents and health workers. Burman (2008) proposes that this new position adopted by psychology was so powerful in its impact on the everyday lives of people that its ideals became taken with the goal of measuring and regulating behaviour while monitoring any deviations from prescribed norms, came the important marrying of the concepts of human variability and the statistical principle of the normal distribution.

By employing the concept of normal distribution, human variability could be presented in a simple visual form, with the assumption that human attributes varied in a predictable manner. Such patterns of behaviour therefore became governed by the statistical laws of large numbers (Rose, 1989a). Intelligence for example could now be quantified and intellectual abilities could now be presented as a single dimension, with an individual's aptitude plotted within the distribution (Burman, 2008; Rapley, 2004; Richards, 1996; Rose, 1989b).

This then enabled the appropriate action to be taken by the expert psychologist. Intellect and its variations had therefore become manageable and the transformation of ability into a numerical form could be used in political and administrative debates (Rose, 1990) such as tests for selective schooling. Rose (1989a) further argues that such concepts of normality are not gleaned solely from our experiences with 'normal' children but are also developed by experts drawing on the study of 'abnormality' or cases deviating from the prescribed norms in a given situation.

The relationship between normality and abnormality is therefore symbiotic: it is the normalisation of individual development that enables the 'abnormal' developmental patterns to become visible, and vice versa (Burman, 2008). Rose (1989a) concludes that normality is therefore not an observation of a group of individuals, but a valuation.

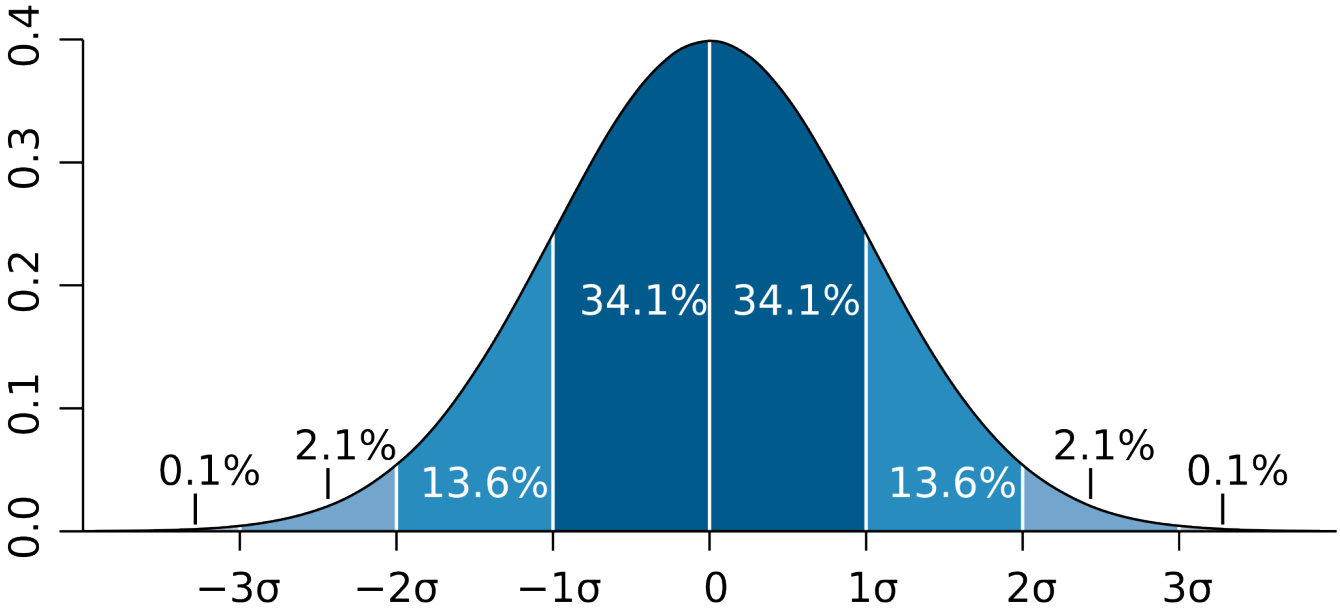

Figure 2.2: Normal distribution curve by M. W. Toewes

This move towards the quantification of normality and transgressions from this, led to some individuals being labelled as 'other' – as 'abnormal', 'lacking', and 'impaired'. Due to the statistical laws of the normal distribution, the majority of individuals would fit within the average scores, while a proportion of individuals are assumed to fit at the extreme scores – either above or below the average. Such graded understandings therefore lead to negative constructions of those individuals who fall outside of the tolerance of the boundaries of 'normal' behaviour. Once identified and labelled, the opportunities for negative self and 'other' identity abound. Such negative connotations of labels have an implicit (and often explicit) narrative concerning the assumptions of 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour, which impacts on individual interactions with others, who frequently consider us to be different or deficient based on acquired labels and observed differences.

One important challenge to this has been in the rise of self-advocacy movements, and while initially led by those with physical disabilities (Barnes & Mercer, 1996), these are now evident across other groups, such as autistic communities (Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, Brownlow, & O'Dell, 2015). These groups vary in action from political agitation to positive group identity on social media platforms such as Facebook, challenging members to question previously held assumptions by themselves and others. The call for action by such groups has been reflected in values such as 'nothing about us without us', challenging broader issues such as interventions and research.

This chapter will primarily focus on individuals who are different within the education system, particularly those who identify, or who are labelled by others, as being neurodiverse. The next section will therefore focus on the neurodiversity movement and some of the ways that this is challenging beliefs and action on diverse individuals.

A NARRATIVE OF NEURODIVERSITY

The neurodiversity movement has been influential in challenging dominant ways of thinking about people who are in some way 'different'. The term 'neurodiversity' was first coined by Australian researcher and activist Judy Singer in the late 1990s and has had widespread adoption within the autism community. The term however is not limited to autism and has been drawn on when considering difference across a range of labels including dyslexia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder [ADHD], and attention deficit disorder [ADD] (Armstrong, 2010).

One of the core principles of the neurodiversity movement is the shift in positioning of neurodiverse individuals from those who have a *deficit* to those who are *different*. The narrative is therefore one that draws on an abilities framework rather than a disabling framework. While it has had several critiques concerning its reduction of individuals to their basic neurology rather than their social position (see for example Ortega, 2013), proponents of the framework of neurodiversity argue that what it enables is a shift in thinking from positioning an individual as 'impaired' or 'deficient' to one where difficulties are acknowledged but are constructed as alternative rather than lacking.

Reflection

Think about a child or student that you have taught who is autistic.

- How might they be described in 'education language' and how might they be described reflecting on the principles of neurodiversity?

Such re-framings of understandings have important implications for identity, where individuals have more opportunities to craft a positive identity due to the alternative constructions of their label in the broader community. This has had an impact on the ways that labels are used and by whom. Traditionally a person-first language has been adopted, which refers to a 'person with autism' or a 'person with dyslexia'. However, self-advocacy movements have consistently called for an identity-first use of language, which acknowledges that a label is an intricate and positive part of an individual's identity rather than an 'add on', and therefore references such as 'autistic person' or 'dyslexic' are common.

Scholars such as Harmon (2004) argue that identity-first language is crucial in the crafting of positive identities, as it highlights the central role that labels such as autism play within an individual identity. Harmon provides the example that it would appear strange to refer to someone as 'a person with femaleness' rather than 'female', and labels such as autism and dyslexia could be considered similarly. However, while an increase in the influence of the principles of neurodiversity has been seen, there is still no concrete agreement as to the terminology and individual preferences should always be respected.

In addition to the proposal of framing autism within a language of neurodiversity, individuals who do not attract a label have also been reframed in the narrative of neurodiversity. The terms 'neurotypical', 'neurologically typical', or the abbreviation 'NT' have been traced back to a self-advocacy organisation called Autism Network International (Dekker, 2000). Dekker notes that in order to avoid having to use the word 'normal' to refer to those without autism, a new term of NT was coined. NT is now commonplace within the autism community and is widely recognised by parents and some professionals, particularly in Europe and the United Kingdom. Additionally, terms such as 'predominant neurotype' [PNT], and allistic are also being increasingly used as alternatives to neurotypical, reflecting the ongoing development and shifting of language.

A shift in thinking in line with that of a perspective of neurodiversity calls into question issues of educational and social inclusion and the need to create equitable environments for individuals with a variety of learning needs. In the current Australian educational context, autism, or Autism Spectrum Disorder [ASD] as it is now referred to, following restructuring of the DSM-5, remains a supported learning difference within the classroom, but other types of neurodiversity, such as dyslexia, are rightly or wrongly no longer officially recognised. The following section will examine the challenges of inclusion across the educational spectrum.

INCLUSION ACROSS THE EDUCATIONAL SPECTRUM

Challenges for neurodiverse students within education in Australia are consistently documented in both academic research and government statistics, across all levels of the education spectrum (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2017; Cai & Richdale, 2015; Parsons, 2015). The figures reported by the ABS for autism within education highlight that 96.7% of children with an autism diagnosis have had some form of educational restriction, with additional support being required for most within educational settings. Of individuals aged 5-20 years attending an educational institution, 83.7% reported the experience of some form of difficulty within their educational context, spanning challenges with social encounters, learning difficulties, and communication difficulties (ABS, 2017). However, formal support was accessed by just over half of this population (55.8%), with 20.7% not receiving any additional assistance (ABS, 2017).

Unsurprisingly therefore the ABS also reports that this population are less likely to complete an educational qualification beyond school, and people with other disabilities were 2.3 times more likely to have a bachelor degree than neurodiverse individuals (ABS, 2017). The flow on effects for employment are obviously apparent, with a labour force participation rate of 40.8% for neurodiverse workers, compared with 53.4% for individuals

with disability and 83.2% of individuals without disability (ABS, 2017). Unemployment rates are just as alarming, with unemployment for autistic workers three times the rate for people with a disability, and almost six times that of people without disability (ABS, 2017). Of those who are in employment, challenges are frequently reported from a lack of workplace accommodations by employers, the difficulties of managing social encounters with co-workers, and stigma concerning their diagnostic label – all issues that do not impact on an individual's ability to perform a job well (Brownlow & Werth, 2018). Additionally, individuals will need to navigate systems that are not immediately connected with the workplace on a regular basis. The National Autistic Society in the UK have documented some of these challenges in the following film: Diverted – NAS

There are also neurodiverse labels that are not recognised within the Australian education system, yet still require supports within schools. One of these is dyslexia. Dyslexia is recognised in Australia under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and by the Human Right Commission, yet New South Wales is the only state or territory where it is legally recognised as a learning disability. This is in stark contrast to countries such as Canada and the UK, which explicitly recognise and support dyslexia, with routine screening and support for learning within schools and support for training teachers.

The definition provided by the Australian Dyslexia Association to characterise dyslexia is as follows:

> Dyslexia is a specific learning difference that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterised by challenges with accurate and/or fluent single word decoding and word recognition. Difficulties with spelling may also be evident. These challenges typically result from a deficit in the phonological and/or orthographic component of language. These challenges are often unexpected in relation to other strengths, talents and abilities. The ADA do not relate dyslexia to IQ since reading and IQ are not correlated. Dyslexia can remain a challenge throughout life despite mastery of language and literacy concepts; even with the provision of effective evidence-based classroom instruction. Secondary issues may include challenges in reading comprehension and reduced reading experience and these can impede growth of vocabulary and background knowledge. Dyslexia, if left unidentified and or unassisted, can cause social and emotional troubles. (Australian Dyslexia Association [ADA], 2018).

However, understanding what it might actually feel like to be dyslexic is often difficult. In recent times technological simulations of challenges have been created following the descriptions of dyslexic individuals. Try this Online Dyslexia Simulation.

As you can see, things that most of us take for granted such as letters remaining stable and in one place are not necessarily the case for some dyslexic people. As well as navigating the appearance of words and letters, the English language is littered with homophones and 'exception to the rules' spelling conventions – all of which need to be navigated by the dyslexic child.

The (un)predictability of English...

The duck swam in the pool while I had to duck to the shop.
The flour was milled to make a beautiful flower cupcake.
Their shoes are just over there.

Given the challenges to negotiate and the need to separate dyslexia from reflections on intelligence, developing a positive identity as a dyslexic can be challenging, despite many famous individuals who also identify as dyslexic being very vocal, such as Sir Richard Branson and actor Tom Cruise. The animation below describes what one dyslexic child would like his teachers to know about what it means to be dyslexic. Click here to view.

However, as with autism, and other neurological diversities, dyslexia is not something to be grown out of, and the challenges evident in childhood remain into adulthood. In the video below, Dan explains how dyslexia continues to impact on all aspects of his life. Watch Dan on Dyslexia. As we can see from the video, dyslexia continues to have both an educational and social impact beyond school and the importance of fostering positive self-identities are therefore crucial.

Unlike dyslexia, autism has had much more of a focus within Australian educational contexts. However, the understandings of the experiential aspects of the challenges faced by autistic individuals are still not well understood. In 2016 the National Autistic Society in the UK launched their *Too Much Information* campaign, releasing a series of films depicting the sense of being overwhelmed that individuals may face across a range of situations. The first film featured 11 year old Alex and his experiences of being in a shopping centre:

Reflection

Think about a child that you have taught or know who is autistic, or an individual that you have worked with.

- How might they be experiencing some of the routines that are a part of everyday practice?
- What might be some of the major challenges throughout a typical day for them?

NOTHING IN ISOLATION: THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERSECTIONALITY

So far, we have considered aspects of single points of difference, such as being autistic or dyslexic. However,

we need to also consider issues of intersectionality and the impact of multiple influences on an individual. Two such influences are gender and socio-economic status, and an individual will always be influenced by factors such as these within their broader social context.

GENDER DIVERSITY

Increasingly, researchers and practitioners have moved away from binary understandings of gender, which categorise individuals as either 'girl' or 'boy', 'man' or 'woman', and instead have revised understandings to consider the complexities that influence an individual's identification with a particular gender – or neither gender. In recent work Johnson (2018) explored the dominant understandings of gender evident in psychological theories and how a stable identification of oneself as either a girl or a boy has become evident of a key 'normal' developmental marker for individuals. Johnson critiques normative expectations for gender, particularly in childhood, and calls for a more critical reflection on what gender diverse childhoods might look like.

One area that has received increased attention within the research literature is that of the links between gender and autism. Traditionally research focusing on gender and autism has prioritised the higher prevalence of autism rates diagnosed in boys rather than girls, giving rise to the assumption of autism being traditionally considered a male condition (Taylor et al., 2016). However, in more recent years the under representation of females has been highlighted, with some researchers arguing that females may exhibit characteristics in different ways (Dworzynski et al., 2012). Lai et al. (2015) further propose that females may indeed present in more socially acceptable ways, and are therefore sometimes overlooked by clinicians for a diagnosis. This is often something anecdotally reported by educators, who typically describe the different behaviours of boys and girls with autism within classrooms, leading to boys more quickly attracting a label and therefore supports and interventions.

Reflection

Think about children in your classroom or other individuals who you believe to be autistic.

- Have any been 'labelled' as autistic, and if so did they identify as being male or female (or neither)?
- In what ways did they behave similarly or differently from each other?

While the research is providing some much needed reflection on the important impact that gender may have for an individual, this largely overlooks the intersectional nature of difference, and more attention needs to be given to the impacts on an individual of having two marginalised identities and how a person might negotiate these. What might it mean for an individual to be both autistic and gender diverse? Read the article from The Atlantic for an interesting perspective.

There are many children whose gender development does not align with traditional theories of gender development, and the term transgender is a broad term used to describe people who do not retain the gender identity that they were assigned at birth. Barker (2017) notes that these may mean quite different things for different people, with some identifying with the opposite sex, others may take steps to align their bodies with their identity, while some may retain a more fluid sense of gender identity. *Cisgender* is a term used to refer to people who retain their gender identity that they were given at birth. Though most people who the term cisgender describes would not label themselves, recognising this label may go some way to help de-marginalise people who do not conform to traditional gender identities (Barker, 2017).

Recent work by Kourti and MacLeod (2018) explored the experience of gender identity in a group of individuals who were raised as girls and identified as autistic but who did not necessarily identify with a specific gender. Kourti and MacLeod found that their participants did not identify with what could be considered 'typical female presentations', and resisted many gender-based social expectations and stereotypes. They therefore call for more complex understandings to be engaged in with respect to gender identity and autism, and focus on the importance of the intersectional influences on an individual of two or more powerful identity components.

It is therefore important to recognise that all of us will have more than one influence on our identity, and sometimes these may compete, while at other times they may be more complementary. Children therefore present with many influences, some of which are individual to them, and others which are shared socio-contextual issues.We need to be mindful of the complexities that can be associated with these intertwining challenges. While gender may be an example of an individual identity element, shaped by powerful social discourse, socio-economic status is something that we very much share with others, rather than 'own' as an individual.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

Socio-economic status is something that defines all of us, and reflects a spectrum of financial and social opportunities, and social positioning by self and others. For children in Australia who are neurodiverse, low socio-economic status may mean a delay in accessing professionals to effectively advocate for assessment and diagnosis due to the financial prevention of seeking this independently of supported healthcare systems.

In 2016, the Autism CRC produced a report on diagnostic practices surrounding autism within Australia and found that there were stark differences between the public and private healthcare sectors in terms of the employment of multidisciplinary assessments and the frequency of diagnosis (Diagnostic Practices in Australia, CRC, 2016). The report found that while there was no cost associated with diagnosis within the public sector, there were long wait times. In contrast, a diagnosis could be more readily realised within the private sector, but with an average associated cost of $2750. The intersections therefore between socio-economic status and diagnosis and supports received by individuals is inextricably bound, and frequently not well understood.

In addition to financial barriers such as those associated with diagnosis, Woolhouse (2018) also highlights the social stigma that is associated with socio-economic status, and the likelihood of 'mother-blaming' or 'culture blaming' for those deemed to be in the 'lower end' of social brackets. Woolhouse (2018) proposes that children who are positioned outside of the 'ideal' white, middle-class family norm are frequently stigmatised. Woolhouse's (2018) work focuses on eating practices and highlights that working class mothers are particularly scrutinised for their failure to prevent childhood obesity for example, through making 'bad choices' and are therefore considered 'high-risk'.

Scrutiny of mothers is not limited to eating practices, and mothers of neurodiverse children are frequently the focus of research (e.g. Benson, 2018), with the invisible outward presentation of autism often allowing an element of social judgement of the mother from on-lookers (Neely-Barnes, Hall, Roberts, & Graff, 2011). Social judgement is therefore frequently synonymous with perceived social class, and therefore the complex nexus between social status and diagnostic label can add a dual marginalised facet to an individual's identity.

Within the Australian context a further consideration is where a child lives. Access to services and support are scarce and more difficult to access for children and families who live in rural settings.

Reflection

Individuals will have many things contributing to the crafting of their identity. We have focused on gender and socio-economic status.

- Can you think of other things that might impact on an individual and their positive sense of self?

THINKING DIFFERENTLY WITHIN EDUCATIONAL SPACES: THREE KEY LEARNINGS

In this chapter we have introduced some alternative ways of thinking about differences, ones that focus on an abilities framework. However, what does this mean for us as individuals and particularly for educators? We propose three key learning points from the points raised in this chapter.

MOVING BEYOND IMPAIRMENTS TO VIEW DIFFERENCES

One crucial aspect in starting to think differently is the need to reconsider how we view differences and the potential that such differences might provide. For example, can we use an abilities approach to understand a neurodiverse individual's exceptional focus on particular interests to develop understandings of other areas? Is it possible to acknowledge difficulty, such as that of an individual with dyslexia, but find ways to support their different learning styles to create a sense of positive identity and self esteem?

REFLECTING ON OUR ENVIRONMENTS

Can we create more inclusive and accommodating environments for individuals to learn in? We saw earlier, through the eyes of Alex, how unpredictable and scary situations can be. Can we put ourselves in the place of someone who thinks differently so as to try and understand what some of the challenges might be? By understanding what individual's find difficult, can we understand their behaviours more accurately?

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTNERSHIPS

Experts are found in a range of roles, and we need to think broadly about what expertise a particular individual is bringing to a situation. Parents can bring experiential expertise in terms of knowledge about their children, and neurodiverse adults can provide a wealth of expertise in reflecting back on their experiences as children – these are not challenges but opportunities for shared learning.

Being an educator is a challenging profession – one that requires a negotiation of many different roles and contexts. Creating an environment that is inclusive in respecting the different needs of all individuals is a key focus, and marginalising those who think differently creates a missed opportunity for both the individual and society more widely. Not fitting into a set educational context and the management of this in a positive way requires thinking differently for all, requiring us to open our eyes to a range of complex diversities.

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CHAPTER 3

Celebrating diversity: Focusing on inclusion

PROFESSOR LINDY-ANNE ABAWI; MELISSA FANSHAWE; KATHRYN GILBEY; CECILY ANDERSEN; AND CHRISTINA ROGERS

So, what can we do as teachers to prepare ourselves to be social justice advocates and teachers whose inclusive classrooms embrace and honour diversity?

Key Learnings

- The Australian demographic has been changing dramatically resulting in an increasingly diverse population.
- Every individual is shaped and influenced by multiple factors which add to the rich tapestry of a school and community.
- Inclusion involves acceptance and catering for the needs of all learners.
- At the heart of any inclusive school is the creation of a culture where each individual is accepted and embraced for who and what they bring to the learning space.

INTRODUCTION

As teachers, we are privileged to have the opportunity to work in diverse contexts and with diverse groups and individuals. The richness and opportunities within today's classrooms provide a wealth of opportunities to learn from, and with our students, parents, community and colleagues. By sharing perspectives and histories that may be unfamiliar to us and to others, opportunities are created that must be embraced in order to break down the many social injustices that still exist, and which limit the opportunities of students to fulfil their full potential.

In 2013, then 16 year old Pakistani activist, Malala Yousafzai spoke at an international assembly and said " thousands of people have been killed by the terrorists and millions have been injured. I am just one of them. So here I stand, one girl among many. I speak not for myself, but for those without a voice that can be heard. Those who have fought for their rights. Their right to live in peace. Their right to be treated with dignity. Their right to equality of opportunity. The right to be educated" (Malala Yousafzai Quote, 2013). As teachers it is our moral obligation to do no less.

Many of our most marginalised students and families find it difficult to be heard and we can be their voice and advocate for inclusion and equity. The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008) clearly states our moral and legal obligation to provide opportunities for all students to succeed, as do

the various Australian state jurisdiction Anti-Discrimination Acts. As a consequence, teaching should, and can be an activist profession (Sachs, 2003) where we can seek to make a difference in the lives of the children and young people that we teach. To achieve this, educators must also be continual learners, seeking to know and understand their students and their education setting communities, in order to be able to provide targeted support, because "learning in schools occurs when meaning making takes place. A sociocultural approach to understanding how learning takes place is built on cognitively explicating the relationships between actions and understandings" (Abawi, 2013, p. 91).

In this chapter we seek to develop the reader's understandings by exploring the concepts of diversity and inclusion in order to prepare ourselves for action, as teachers who are social justice advocates, and teachers whose inclusive classrooms embrace and honour diversity.

Figure 3.1: Photograph by Matteo Paganelli on Unsplash

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY

A SNAPSHOT OF OUR NATION

There is an increasing emphasis in schools, on understanding and catering for the diversity of learners in our classrooms, and rightly so. Consequently, let's examine what diversity looks like within a contemporary Australian landscape.

The demography of Australia has been changing dramatically, with increasing evidence of a nation rich in diversity. According to statistics from the 2016 Australian National Census, 33.3% of Australians were born overseas, and a further 34.4% of people had both parents born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2018). In 2016, 82% of the overseas-born population lived in capital cities (refer to Table 3.1) (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2018). Disturbingly, in 2012, 2.55 million people (13.9%) were living below the poverty line, after taking account of their housing costs, and 603, 000 children (17.7% of all children) were living below the poverty line (Australian Council of Social Service [ACOSS], 2012).

Figure 3.2: Photograph by Christopher Burns on Unsplash

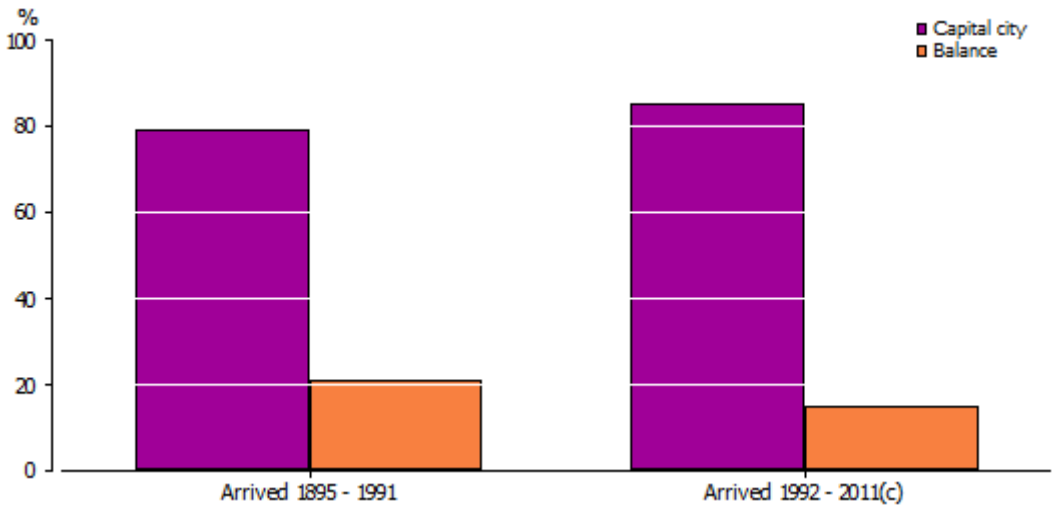

Table 3.1. Generational Changes in Overseas Born Australians Living in Capital Cities

The 2016 National Census identified that the resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Australia was 649 171 people, 2.8% of the total Australian population counted, up from 2.5 per cent in 2011, and 2.3 per cent in 2006 (ABS, 2018). Of the Australian states and territories, the largest populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians live in New South Wales and Queensland. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians comprised 30% of the population of the Northern Territory, the highest proportion of any state or territory.

Figure 3.3: Photograph by Commonwealth of Australia, Indigenous Advancement Strategy

Between 2001 and 2011, the number of people reporting a non-Christian faith increased considerably, from around 0.9 million to 1.5 million, accounting for 7.2% of the total population in 2011 (up from 4.9% in 2001). The most common non-Christian religions in 2011 were Buddhism (accounting for 2.5% of the population), Islam (2.2%) and Hinduism (1.3%). Of these, Hinduism had experienced the fastest growth since 2001, increasing by 189% to 275,500, followed by Islam (increased by 69% to 476,300) and Buddhism (increased by 48% to 529,000 people) (ABS, 2011). The 2015 Survey of Disability,

Ageing and Carers (SDAC) identified that almost one in five Australians reported living with disability (18.3% or 4.3 million people) (ABS, 2015).

As a result of the impact of the diversity on the Australian population, many educators struggle to meet the needs of learners within education settings composed of students from culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse backgrounds, in addition to students with varying levels of ability, children raised in poverty and the dynamics of alternative family structures (Sands, Kozlwak & French, 2000).

Reflection

- What does an increased diversity of demographic mean for your classroom / education setting or organisation?
- What does this mean for your teaching practice?
- How well prepared are you for this level of diversity?

REFRAMING DIVERSITY

What does the term diversity mean?

Certainly, these statistics are significant in understanding the diversity of our nation, but it is important to understand diversity, not just in terms of groups or labels but rather in terms of individuality. As we know each and everyone of us is unique and different in many varied ways, with our difference from each other influenced by a collection of diverse genetic and environmental factors (Ashman, 2015).

As such, the term diversity then includes more than socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences. It also includes differences arising from gender and sexual orientation, and includes differences in tastes, preferences and communication styles. Appropriately, the term diversity also includes the differences in the skills and capacities that learners bring to education settings (Sands et al., 2000). Consider also the diverse learning styles and preferences of students, and the role that motivation, cognitive load, and mental ability have on students, and how they also add to the diversity of any learning group.

Often in education settings, we group students by labels. We talk about catering for gifted and talented learners or exceptional learners, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, students for whom English is an Additional Language or Dialect [EAL/D], autistic students, or even group a diverse range of disabilities and learning impairments into one group such as students with disabilities.The danger with such groupings is that we may then think of each of these groups homogeneously with a 'one size fits all' mentality, and this impacts on how we plan the learning and cater for diversity in our classrooms.

When individuals appear to have some similar characteristics, they tend to be labelled by others and themselves (Sands et al., 2000). For example, it is not uncommon to refer to the 'nerds' at school or the 'sporty types' as collective groups. Likewise, classifying is a common practice in health, education, and business. For example, in health, patients are categorised by conditions [heart, cancer etc.]. In education, and in life, we tend to label in multiple ways, and in doing so we sometimes risk assuming that individuals within a category have all the same needs and all learn the same way. This is not always the case. Such labelling can also result in deficit thinking, and in fact result in lower expectations and/or create stereotyping.

Watch

Inclusive Education: a way to think differently about difference. (12.36 minutes)

Consider the graphic representation in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4: Factors contributing to diversity

It is these variables and varied factors that contribute to each of us as individuals, and are what we add to the rich tapestry of education setting and its community.

Watch

Invisible diversity
Talking about disability

In our classrooms, we have young people who have similarities and differences in:

- Philosophy – points of view , perspective, religion and experiences.
- Physiology – genetics, cognitive and physical ability and mental, physical health and wellbeing.
- Identity- race, gender, ethnicity, nationality, age and family.
- Demographics – socio-economic, citizenship and location.
- Learning preferences – types of intelligences or visual, auditory or kinesthetic learning styles (VAK).

FAMILY DIVERSITY

One of the most powerful activities in getting to know your students is to ask them to draw a visual representation of their family. This will give you great insight into the diversity of family structures. These diverse structures challenge teachers to consider the fact that many children do not live in what is often described as the traditional family – Mum, Dad, children and the pets. Often in Western cultures, and portrayed this way in the media, this family is seen as the most desirable type of family. Given this, children who do not live in a family that fits this profile and promoted norm can grow up with a view that their family is not normal.

Figure 3.5: Photograph by Sebastián León Prado on Unsplash

What is acceptable in one family and culture may not be in another. For example, in some cultures, polygamy is common. There are rules in some families, for example, where one member is considered the person in charge. In patriarchal families, the family is ruled by men – they make the important decisions – whereas the opposite is the case for matriarchal families. Families are also very fluid. Partners may change through death or divorce and be reconstituted with further marriage or relationships (Cohen et al., 2007).

So, let's consider the types of diversity that can exist in learners' lives.

Organisational Diversity

Different kinds of family compositions – single parent, blended, reconstituted or fostered.

Cultural Diversity

For example, the Kibbutz in Israel where families live together communally; arranged marriages in India; or stem families in China (three or more generations live together).

Social Class Diversity

Different access to material and economic resources.

Life Cycle Diversity

Different stages of development – a family in early stages of development would have young children (consider the fact that sleep may be interrupted on a regular basis).

Cohort Diversity

Each period is likely to impact on families in different ways: for example, the radical social change that occurs as a result of war. (Adapted from Cohen et al., 2007).

THE CULTURAL INTERFACE IN AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

Considering the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students in our education settings and the families who support them, it is worth reflecting on ways to see if we can bridge gaps in understanding and knowledge, in areas where we, as educators, may be lacking. Nakata (2006) suggests that educators conceptualise the cross cultural space, not in terms of perceived opposites and differences, but in terms of knowledge systems composed of sets of complex, layered concepts, theories and meanings. Nakata's work has been central to bringing non-Indigenous Australians and Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people toward a closer understanding, respect and appreciation of the richness and value in diversity.

Too often within education settings, a dominant 'white' perspective on the world is most evident, and this can have ongoing consequences for children and young people who find it difficult to see themselves as having

a valued place within a 'Western' education system.It is important then as teachers, especially for those of us who are non-Indigenous teachers, to carefully consider how we can be a part of the struggle to address the lies and omissions that shape Australian history. We must proactively work against racism in any form. To help us in this mission we need to construct counter-discourses and utilise ways of thinking and pedagogical practices that engage and challenge learners to think differently and to dig deeper into their own consciousness and experiences and embrace the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and peoples.

The following statistics from the Closing the Gap, Prime Minister's Report, 2015 were based on standardised proportions and indicated that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were: twice as likely as non-Indigenous people to have asthma (rate ratio of 1.9); more likely than non-Indigenous people to have diseases of the ear and/or hearing problems (rate ratio of 1.3); more likely than non-Indigenous people to have heart or circulatory diseases (rate ratio of 1.2); and three times as likely as non-Indigenous people to have diabetes/ high sugar levels (rate ratio of 3.3). Similar statistics portray an equally negative discourse about educational outcomes. However, this type of deficit discourse presents one view only and has been criticised for the language, cultural overtones and assumptions made.

Click and explore the concepts of knowledge, power and voice, and whose voices are often silenced.

Watch

A role play filmed in 2017, conceptualised by USQ's Indigenous Curriculum and Pedagogy Consultant, Megan Cooper, and enacted by a number of academics and friends of USQ, including Megan herself who introduces the scenario.

Reflection

As you engage with each segment ask yourself the following the questions:

- Whose points of view resonate with yours?
- Which are the dominant voices? Why? Should they be?
- How is 'knowledge' positioned within the meeting? Whose knowledge counts?

How would you explain the power relationships between the groups presented in the video? Consider the concepts of 'Power over', 'Power with' and 'Power to' and how a deficit discourse creates ongoing inequity resulting in low expectations and the framing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as victims. What other sections of our society are being victimised? It is so simple to stereotype learners and make generalisations. Is there not also a similar deficit discourse about refugees and Muslims for example?

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

Certainly there have been efforts made in recent times to ensure that Australian Indigenous peoples and their knowledge systems and beliefs are being valued within the Australian educational system. The most significant of these relates to the advent of the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum was introduced in 2008 with an aim to ensure an equal curriculum for all Australian students (Australian Government, 2008).

A big plus for the curriculum is the inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures as a cross-curriculum priority, meaning that the Indigenous perspective is embedded throughout the eight learning areas of the Australian Curriculum. 'Country/place', 'culture' and 'people' and 'identity within the living community' are embedded in the curriculum, as well as the "development of knowledge about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' law, languages, dialects and literacies" (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2018). Themes of celebration of strength and resilience "against the historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation" (ACARA, 2018) are explored.

The Australian curriculum also acknowledges that Indigenous students' first language may be Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander dialect and literacy will therefore be more complex to learn. It recognises the diversity of sociocultural, linguistic and cultural factors of all Indigenous learners and the personalised learning needs they may require to meet the curriculum. Continuing to be critical about the curriculum is important to ensure anti-racism curriculum is implemented. The inclusion of Indigenous perspective in the Australian Curriculum was not difficult (Nakata, 2011). The Australian Curriculum developers ensured coherence with policies and practices at a system level (Schleicher, 2017), there was content rigour (Morris & Burgess, 2018) and curricula were developed with Indigenous authors (Parkinson & Jones, 2018). However, the education setting administration needs to be committed to implementation of the curriculum and teachers need to deliver content with an understanding of the dispossession and struggle experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the continuing effect of colonisation on their lives (Schleicher, 2017).

An Indigenous Pedagogical Framework originating from research with Australian Indigenous communities in Northern New South Wales, called the 8 Ways Pedagogy provides teachers, and others, with one set of culturally inclusive lenses with which to view the world and also to use when planning activities, the framework can be used to .

LEADING A CULTURALLY RESPECTFUL SCHOOL

Schleicher (2017) identified that in education settings where Indigenous students had high rates of achievement, the results of that success could be generally attributed to a highly effective and committed principal who exhibited a 'do whatever it takes' approach that ensured that Indigenous students attended school, engaged in learning and made good progress. Effective principals set high expectations for teachers and take responsibility for monitoring student performance.

Under such leadership, resources are provided to ensure culturally sensitive teaching. Extra support is provided to support individuals who require more help. Cultural competence training is delivered to assist educators to understand cultural perspectives of Indigenous peoples and to identify their own underlying bias (Riley & Pidgeon, 2018). Professional development to understand Aboriginal specific language development and cultural norms is provided to further assist educators' understanding Indigenous learners (Schleicher, 2017). Approaches in such schools tend towards a 'whole-of-child' perspective that placed students' overall wellbeing as a key priority, ensured indigenous students progressed academically, expected progress was met and that any necessary interventions were put in place in a timely manner (Schleicher, 2017).

Principals who are committed to developing best possible outcomes for Indigenous families, treat families with respect (Schleicher, 2017). They acknowledge and address the negative impact and trauma that Indigenous people will have experienced with education systems, which may cause Indigenous families to resist the traditional school culture. Culturally responsive content is addressed in a holistic manner and a sense of belonging is created so students want to attend school regularly (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016).

TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

Many of the teachers who are delivering the Australian Curriculum, were exposed to only one side of the story in their own education (Gilbey, 2018). Teachers may be ignorant of the Indigenous perspective, have racist beliefs acquired from their own knowledge and upbringing or anti-racist and therefore struggle to support ideals striving to support all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders well-being and education (Gilbey, 2018). Teachers may not have had Indigenous perspective courses in their Higher Education courses, or may not have worked in schools with Indigenous students (Slee, 2011). Developing a culture of inclusion for Indigenous students will only occur when the curriculum addresses the indigenous perspective, teachers create respectful trusting relationships with Indigenous students and have high expectations about Indigenous students (Riley & Pidgeon, 2018).

According to Schleicher (2017) Indigenous learners said they felt supported when:

- their teachers took an interest in them;
- cared about them and who they were as Indigenous people;
- expected them to succeed in their learning; and
- assisted them to learn about their cultures, histories and language/s.

The importance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people working together to understand cultural bias in the curriculum has been espoused by Nakata (2011). Nakata argues non-indigenous people can never fully understand the dispossession, trauma and racism experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as a result of colonialism, but they can listen and understand the impact on their identity (Nakata, 2011). Using this knowledge, local community members can create partnerships with schools to ensure an anti-racist education is established and maintained.

Watch

Engaging the community within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early education

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

There is a significant amount of literature, research and debate about the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on educational outcomes for children. The following factors are considered to contribute to socio-economic disadvantage and add to the diversity of individual, groups and communities.

1. Poverty

Measuring disadvantage in wealthy countries is calculated by considering the proportion of the population living below what is referred to as the 'poverty line'. Poverty lines are mostly based on the after-tax income of households. According to the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) Report on Poverty (2012), single parents, females, adults born in countries where English is not the main language, people with a disability, the unemployed, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are at higher risk of poverty and at greater risk of social security being the main source of income.

2. Deprivation

Another measure of disadvantage is 'deprivation'. Deprivation is measured by the proportion of households

lacking items which the majority consider as essential. Saunders and Wong (2012) identified that there were six key categories of essential needs:

1. the need for basic materials;
2. the need for good health;
3. the need for accommodation;
4. the need for social interaction and functioning;
5. the need for safety and reduced risk; and
6. the need for children's needs to be met.

3. Social Exclusion

There are many definitions of social exclusion.

- Lack of connectedness.
- An inability to participate in key activities in the local community because of a lack of access to resources required.
- An inability to access institutions, services and social networks.
- Negative impact on quality of life and wellbeing.

However, it is important to note that individuals may experience social exclusion without necessarily living below the poverty line. Similarly, individuals may experience levels of deprivation and be above the poverty line.

Figure 3.6: Photograph by Marina Panades on Unsplash

There have been a number of studies linking persistent socioeconomic disadvantage to negative impact on educational and life outcomes. Feruson, Bovaird and Mueller (2007) describe four factors that impact on education and life: 1) social functioning; 2) academic functioning; 3) chronic physical health problems; and 4) psychiatric disorders which can also significantly affect the school readiness of young children.

Similarly, a longitudinal study by Duncan (1993) found that family income and poverty status correlated strongly with the cognitive development and behaviour of children. Having said this, there are also studies that question the strength of this correlation. Rothman (2003) refers to data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth which found a decrease in the relationships between socio economic status and academic achievement between 1975 and 1995, although this was less evident between 1995 and 1998. These surveys analysed reading comprehension and mathematics performance data.

Without a doubt though, students living with socioeconomic disadvantage can feel a sense of social exclusion in schools. The impact of not being able to afford equipment, attend excursions, buy school photos and more, contributes to disengagement and social exclusion. We should not, however, assume that all students who live in disadvantaged situations are disengaged and feel social exclusion in educational settings. If this is not understood then again stereo-typing occurs. Payne's (1995), A Framework for Understanding Poverty, has been used in teacher training and professional development activities for years, particularly in the United States but also in other countries, such as Australia. Recently this work has come under intense academic

scrutiny for exactly the reason mentioned above (Gorski, 2012). The reasons for this are that broader systemic issues are ignored and stereotyping and the deficit perspectives at play are in fact theoretically ungrounded.

According to Lee and Burkam (2003) as cited by Gorski (2012), students labelled 'at-risk' who attend schools that combine rigorous curricula with learner-centred teaching achieve at higher levels and are less likely to drop out than their peers who experience lower-order instruction. All learners, including those from low socio-economic backgrounds learn best in schools where there are very high academic expectations for all students. Standards should never be based on socioeconomic status, nor should they be lowered in response to the socio-economic background of learners (Gorski, 2012)which clearly resonates with Paulo Freiere's Pedagogy of the Oppressed first published in 1968.

FACTORS ADDING TO GROUP DIVERSITY

Learning Styles

Learning styles describe how we approach different tasks as well as our different individual preferences and strengths in learning. We all process information and learn different skills in a variety of different ways as our brains are complex, and can make use of visual (seeing), auditory (hearing), kinesthetic (touching) and reflective (thinking) processes. As a consequence, learning styles also contribute to the diversity of a learning group, with a variety of preferences for learning evident in any one class group.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, developed by Howard Gardner (2006), proposed that individuals possess a number of autonomous intelligences, which individuals regularly draw on both individually and collectively, to create and solve problems that are relevant to the societies in which they live (Davis, Christodoulou, Seider & Gardner, 2011). The intelligences include: visual intelligence, linguistic (verbal) intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, naturalistic intelligence, bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, and musical intelligence. Over time Gardner built on these and added spiritual/existential and moral intelligences (refer to Figure 3.7).

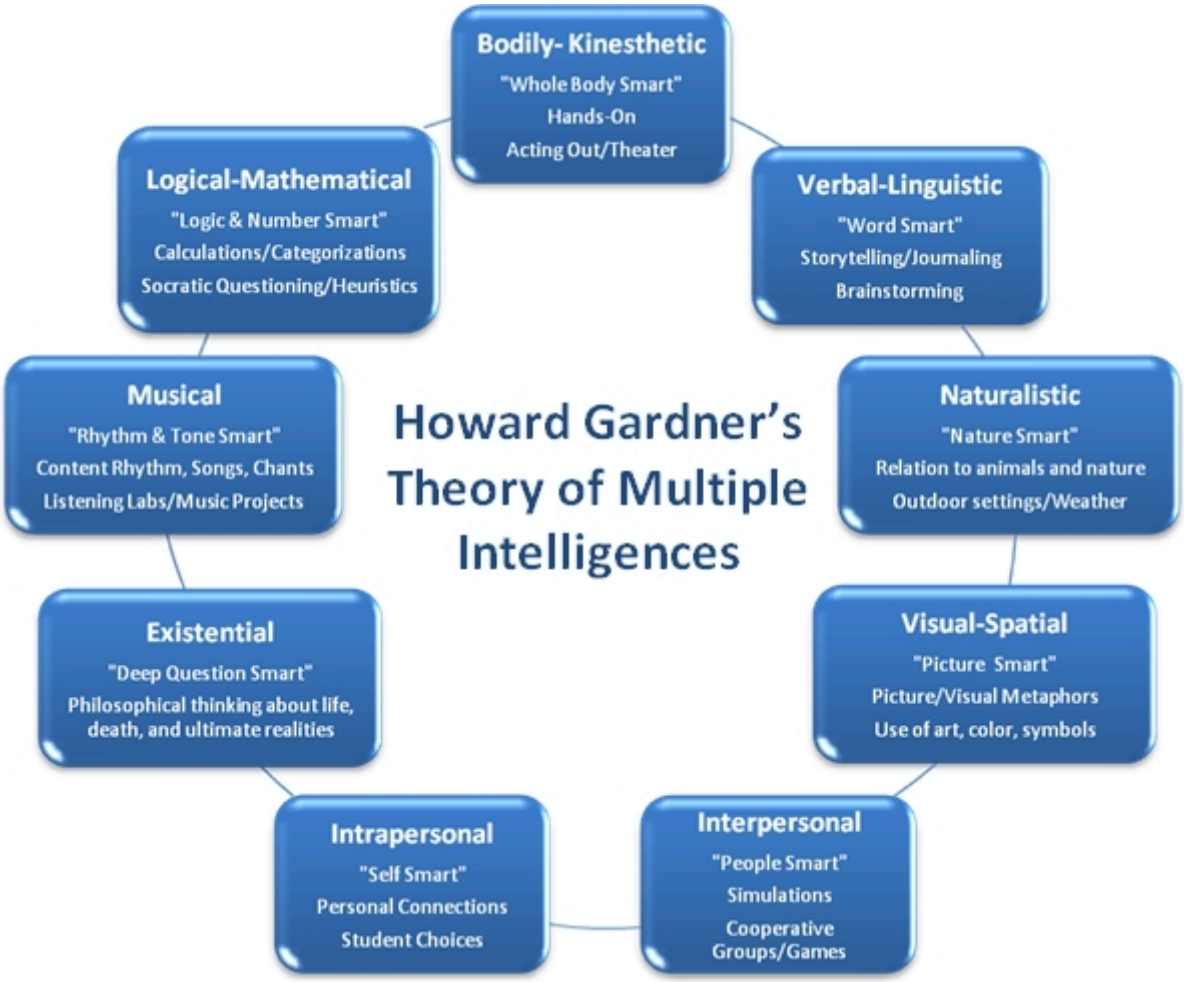

Figure 3.7: Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences

Others question the validity of different learning styles theory and argue that the theory is a culturally biased way of understanding the varied ways in which learners learn (Peariso, 2008). Many critics describe the theory as being moralistic and overly focused on delivering a highly individualised child centred pedagogy rather than pedagogy that nurtures a broader, set of human attributes (Peariso, 2008).

Despite such criticisms, educators consider Howard Gardner's (2006) Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Figure 3.7) and other learning styles theories to be useful ways of considering the diversity of learners in our classrooms. The important message to retain from any theory is that learners do learn differently and may well have very different learning preferences. Therefore, as teachers it is incumbent upon us to ensure that varied ways of learning and assessment of learning should be provided to students. Such activities need to be consciously chosen so as to cater to a student's strengths whilst at other times building and consolidating areas that are challenging for them.

The Domains of Learning

Using labels, particularly for students with disabilities, does not always help teachers to plan effectively, make adjustments and select the most appropriate learning activities, and can sometimes result in, unintentionally, stereotyping a student. However, naming groups does serve a purpose when trying to pinpoint specialised needs. Anderson and Krathwohl's (2001) revised work on Bloom's Taxonomies devised four domains of learning that assist in understanding the needs of each learner: 1)the cognitive, 2) affective, 3) sensorimotor and 4)social domain.

In psychology, these concepts are often referred to as:

- the cognitive domain (knowledge);
- the psychomotor domain (skills);
- the affective domain (attitudes); and
- the psychosocial domain (social skills) (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2016).

Sands et al., (2000) suggest that these domains do not stand alone, and instead are complex, interactive components of the whole person. Using the four domains of learning can assist in understanding the needs and characteristics of individuals and groups of learners.

UNDERSTANDING THE INDIVIDUAL

If we then consider an individual in terms of the four domains and varied learner preferences, then layer that with a person's culture, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status, we have a better understanding of diversity. Diversity is something that all children, young people and adults have in common, both within individuals and across groups. In response to such diversity, it then becomes an essential responsibility of all educators and all those who support educators, that each and every individual's diversity is built upon, that a belief is held that all individuals have the capacity to learn, and that educators uphold all individuals' right to learn (Peters, 2007).

The Neurodiversity – each of us is special

The National Symposium on Neurodiversity (2011) proposed that Neurodiversity should be recognised and respected the same as any other human variation. Neurodiversity includes neurological difference such as Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Dyscalculia, Autistic Spectrum, Tourette Syndrome. Listen to this simple explanation of Neurodiversity and then watch this brilliant young man explain the same thing in pictures – in Ryan's Book of Brains.

ACCOUNTABILITY

As you would be aware it is important that teachers have knowledge of the relevant legislation that impacts on their legal and professional accountabilities. Diverse learners are protected by a suite of federal and state Acts which focus predominantly on age, gender, human rights, race and disability an include the following:

- **Commonwealth Age Discrimination Act 2004.** https://www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/C2004A01302
- **Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act 1975.** https://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2014C00014
- **Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Act 1984.** https://www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/C2004A02868
- **Queensland Consolidated Acts: Anti-Discrimination Act 1991.** http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/qld/consol_act/aa1991204/s7.html
- **Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992.** https://www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/C2004A04426
- **Disability Standards for Education 2005.**https://www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/F2005L00767/Download

Coupled with legislation, policy and procedure underpin the functioning of schools both state and non-

state. For example, in Queensland's Department of Education and Training (DET), there are a raft of policies/ frameworks that relate to diversity and inclusion including:

- Inclusive Education Policy Statement
- Disability Policy
- Supporting Student Health and Wellbeing policy
- Students in Out-of-home Care Policy
- English as and Additional Language or Dialect Policy
- Capability Framework: Teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander EAL/D Learners
- Learning and Wellbeing Framework

THINGS TO REMEMBER ABOUT DIVERSITY

It is important to remember that even though the research might indicate, for example, that Aboriginal students often work best in group work, we should never stereotype an individual and assume a 'one size fits all' mentality – after all group work is best for many different learners. Above all, we need to know our learners. For example, it is important to understand the ways of learning that work best for gifted students but be very careful not to assume that every gifted learner will learn that way because we need to consider other factors in their life, such as ethnicity, gender, health and family. We must also not assume that skills in one area are automatically translated into another.

UNDERSTANDING INCLUSION

DEFINITIONS OF INCLUSION

The Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008) declared that "all Australian governments and all school sectors must provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location" (MCEETYA, 2008, p.7). Inclusion is therefore not a choice but an obligation.

What does the word inclusion mean?

There are numerous definitions of inclusion and inclusive education. Let's consider some of the definitions and considerations. Ashman (2015) defines inclusion in terms of 'acceptance' and catering for the needs of all learners by making appropriate adjustments. The term inclusion describes the act of accepting a student completely – regardless of any difference, their impairments or their disability, within a regular class, with adjustments made to the learning program to ensure that every learner is fully engaged in all class activities (Ashman, 2015).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO] Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education (2009), describes inclusion holistically by referring to inclusive education as a 'process' where by it is the system that needs to be inclusive: "Inclusive education is a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners, and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve (education for all)" (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8). The UNESCO guidelines also consider inclusion not only in terms of

the right to participate in learning but also in terms of social acceptance so that children actually feel included, as do their families, in every relevant aspect of school life.

According to Hyde (2010), inclusion is about learning, social participation and enduring well-being, and is directly influenced by an individual's ability to successfully access and engage in quality educational and social experiences. Hyde (2010) also refers to the importance of engagement when considering inclusion where engagement is the degree to which the student is attached emotionally, socially, cognitively and academically to the school.

Figure 3.8: Photograph of The odd one out by Steve on Flickr

Carter and Abawi (2018) developed the following definition "inclusion is defined as successfully meeting student learning needs regardless of culture, language, cognition, gender, gifts and talents, ability, or background" (p.2). They go on to say that "within the literature, definitions are blurred and 'special needs' are often referred to when exploring inclusion. 'Special needs' has been linked to disadvantage and disability, but we define special needs more broadly as the individual requirements of a person, and the provision for these specific differences can be considered as catering for special needs" (p. 2). What does inclusion mean to you?

SEGREGATION TO INCLUSION – A BRIEF HISTORY

Figure 3.9: Segregation to Inclusion

Chronology of historical educational practice in Australia

The following chronology of education in Australia provides an outline of the major milestones and trends in the development of educational practices and the movement from segregation to inclusion.

1850's

During this period education few children from the working classes and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children engaged in education.

1860s and 70s

Education Acts placed all primary education under one general and comprehensive system controlled by Boards of General Education.

1880s and 90s

Free, secular and compulsory education in State schools .The 'Blind, Deaf and Dumb' became a focus with schools established to cater for vision and hearing impaired students.

1900s and 1910s

Arguments proposed for universal secondary education.

1920s and 30s

Rise of technical and domestic schools for the working class in order to meet the needs of a growing economy post World War 1. The first special classes were provided for 'handicapped' children. Classes for 'backward' children became 'Opportunity Classes'. Education becomes compulsory for vision and hearing impaired children through the Blind, Deaf and Dumb Children Instruction Bill of 1924.

1950s

The State Schools for 'Spastic Children' open. Separate schools were established for students with mild intellectual disabilities.

1960s

Establishment of comprehensive high schools. Differentiation between government and non-government. Streaming between academic and vocational. Integration started to gain traction in some schools, although the prevalence of institutions and special schools continued. Opportunity schools contained large numbers of students with 2000 students placed in Queensland Opportunity schools in the 1960s.

1970s

The Karmel Report had impact with a focus on educational inequality.

1980s

Parental choice and diversity of schooling emerged. Compensatory funding for identified/targeted groups began to get traction. A growing culture of expectations of school and student performance.

1990s

Education department policies began to focus on accommodating the diverse needs of students. A stronger focus on discrimination legislation emerged.

2000s –

Schools viewed as corporate models with targets and performance indicators. Disability Standards for Education with a focus on inclusive school cultures.

WHAT WOULD YOU EXPECT TO SEE IN AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL?

• The student is part of the community.

• Schools make adjustments to fit the students.

• Acceptance.

• Fair treatment.

Unfortunately, some schools are less than inclusive. Right from the point when parents ask questions around enrolment and the first interview with the school Principal or Deputy takes place problems can start to arise. In the words of a District Support Officer:

> *Our schools [State Schools] can't say no, but some make things seem very challenging … "oh … your child will be the only child like this in Year 3 so we don't really have a structure where we could pull them out to do this, that or the other, so this is all we can do for them.* (Abawi, 2015)

Although no student can be explicitly turned away from a school, it is certainly not unknown for the leadership team to suggest that a child with a particular need would be better catered for at another school. Parents feel that their child is unwelcome and rather than debate the issue they leave and try again. Not only is the child 'excluded' but so are the parents.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

At the heart of any inclusive school is the creation of a culture where each individual is accepted and embraced for who and what they bring to the learning space. It is also about social justice and about enabling each individual to reach their full potential. In order to do this, we may have to set aside our pre-conceived norms and assumptions about a student's ability, and build learning opportunities to challenge and extend by enabling engagement at every level.

Inclusive practice can be described as any type of practice or efforts made by educational settings where students and their parents and care givers are made to feel welcomed and valued. Within this practice it is implied that if a student's participation becomes as issue as a result of disability, gender, behaviour, poverty, culture, refugee status or any other reason, then ever effort will be made not to establish special programs for individuals or groups, but instead to expand mainstream thinking, structures and practices so that all students are accommodated within the setting (Shaddock, Giorcelli & Smith , 2007).

Inclusive school communities:

- Uphold the rights of students.
- Value diversity.
- Ensure access and participation.
- Match pedagogy to student need.
- Share responsibility.
- Share decision making.
- Value parents/carers as partners.

However, Sands et al. (2000) note that creating an inclusive culture is not a simple task. Building and sustaining an inclusive culture requires the development of a sense of belonging, opportunities for meaningful participation, the fostering of positive alliances and affiliations, opportunities for collaboration and the provision of emotional and technical support for all members of the community.

Quality relationships – belonging and participation

Human beings have a fundamental need to belong and be accepted. Loneliness and isolation deeply affect many people at some stage in their lives. It was not all that long ago that segregation of diverse learners was evident in schools. For example, for many years special education services were provided to identified students in a 'special education unit', often an isolated place with minimal social and academic interaction with other students in the school. Although no malice was intended, students with disabilities were often systematically excluded from many educational settings and from many interactions that their peers would have typically experienced (Sands et al., 2000).

Every student in every classroom wants to belong and be accepted by others. Relationships matter in the classroom, between students and between students and their teachers. Learners very quickly pick up whether their teacher cares about them as an individual. Glasser (1998) talks about the need to put emotional deposits into the relationship bank so that these can be drawn upon when needed. If a learner has gained respect and built a relationship with their teacher they are much more likely to develop the resilience to be able to cope with tough conversations and disciplinary measures.

Alliances and affiliations

There are many additional relationships within a education setting that support diverse learners. There are often well-established alliances and affiliations; support networks and varied collaborations. Classrooms are complex and challenging learning environments, and catering for the range of students is a challenging. yet

rewarding part of teaching. Unfortunately, all too often the relationship between an education setting and its community can easily become unwelcoming and inaccessible (Groundwater-Smith, Ewing & Le Cornu, 2014).

It then becomes important that school community members form strong alliances to support learners. In schools, where professionals and families work in a strong alliance to support a student, an increased prevalence of inclusive practices is evident. For example, consider a year five teacher who has 25 students in the class, seven are refugee migrants classified as EALD [English as an Additional language or Dialect], and two have Down Syndrome. This teacher needs the support and advice of EALD specialists in the field and support from external advisory staff. Meaningful contributions by the parents/carers [with the support of an interpreter where needed], medical professionals, fellow staff and school leaders. A school wide approach is essential so that effective support is not only provided in the year 5 teacher's classroom but also in the playground, and as these children move in and out of other classroom contexts.

Figure 3.10: Photograph by University of Southern Queensland

Mutual emotional and technical support

Sometimes teachers are their own worst enemies. Too often, teachers operate behind closed doors with high levels of stress because of an overwhelming sense of inadequacy at the enormity of their task. Stress levels in teachers can be traced to professional isolation and increasing complex classroom environments associated with increased student diversity, expanding levels of intensity of students' needs, and larger class sizes, all of which contribute to a progressively more challenging work environment (Sands, et al., 2000).

Teachers need to support each other, share their expertise and have frequent access to support personnel who have some expertise in particular fields. No one teacher can be expected to be an expert on the various needs of all the students in their classroom. An open sharing culture must be established where school basic norms and assumptions (Schein, 1992) include the belief that every child is every person's responsibility and that there is no shame or blame attached to admitting difficulties in meeting student needs and asking for support and advice (Carter & Abawi, 2018).

Building professional teams is important and can work well even across-school contexts. Teachers need the support and advice from others in the field, experts, paraprofessionals, parents/carers. In schools there are a number of resident and visiting specialists (guidance officers, speech language therapists, psychologists, youth workers) who can support a classroom teacher. Sands et al., (2000) refer to the importance of 'transdisciplinary teams' that made up of a team of individuals who work together to support the needs of a student where expertise and ideas are shared in order to support a learner 's needs and build a sense of community, connectedness, belonging, affiliation and mutual support.

Figure 3.11: Photograph of a "Classroom" (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) by Ohio University Libraries

Characteristics of collaboration

For transdisciplinary teams to work effectively, there must be a spirit of collaboration. Collaborative individualism first conceptualised by Limerick and Cunnington (1993), is now becoming regular practice in many schools. When working collaboratively, members share responsibility, accountability and decision making, respect others' opinions, and build trust and mutual support. Productive partnerships in schools enable inclusive school practices to thrive, and can be applied to partnerships in transdisciplinary teams and partnerships with families.

Characteristics of supportive and effective partnerships

• Opportunities are created for authentic dialogue and reflection.
• Trust of, and respect for each other is established.
• Each other's knowledge is valued.
• Clear structures and focus are identified and used.
• Roles within the group within the group are identified and defined.
• Roles in observing and teaching are shared (Saggers, Macartney & Guerin, 2012).

Potential obstacles to effective partnerships

• Policies promoting partnership are not realized in practice.
• The school is a hostile environment where the physical and emotional environment and school practices become intimidating.
• Educators assume they alone know what is best for a child.
• The student is not respected, not included in decisions about their program and their input is not valued.
• Parents are directed as to what to do.
• Parents are treated as having a disability and seen as part of the problem rather than part of the solution(Saggers, Macartney & Guerin, 2012).

CHARACTERISTICS OF INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

Ashman (2015) describes six enabling characteristics essential to the creation of inclusive classrooms.
1.*Independent access*
Learners are able to physically access facilities, venues and learning activities safely and independently.
2. *Prerequisite skills required for a learning task*
Learners are provided with opportunities to develop and perform the prerequisite functions and skills of the

learning task.
3. *Adequate social skill levels*
Learners have appropriate social skills that enable them to participate effectively in the learning task.
4. *The presence of social networks*
Learners have the ability to develop personal friendships.
5. *Valued membership*
All learners are valued members of the education setting.
6. *Active involvement*
All learners are actively involved in the design and organisation of their own learning.

But how easy is this to achieve? Where do we start? We can begin with a change of mindset which is reflected in the language that is used within the classroom and across a school.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

What is inclusive language?

> Inclusive language is language that is free from words, phrases or tones that reflect prejudiced, stereotyped or discriminatory views of particular people or groups. It is also language that doesn't deliberately or inadvertently exclude people from being seen as part of a group. Inclusive language is sometimes called non-discriminatory language. (Department of Education Tasmania, 2012, p. 2)

Because language is our main form of communication, using non-discriminatory language avoids false assumptions, stereotyping and exclusion and promotes respectful productive relationships. Indeed research has shown that there is a symbiotic relationship between language used within a education setting context and the characteristics of the education setting culture that exists (Abawi, 2013), so evidence of an inclusive education setting culture can be heard in classrooms, playgrounds, and staffrooms.

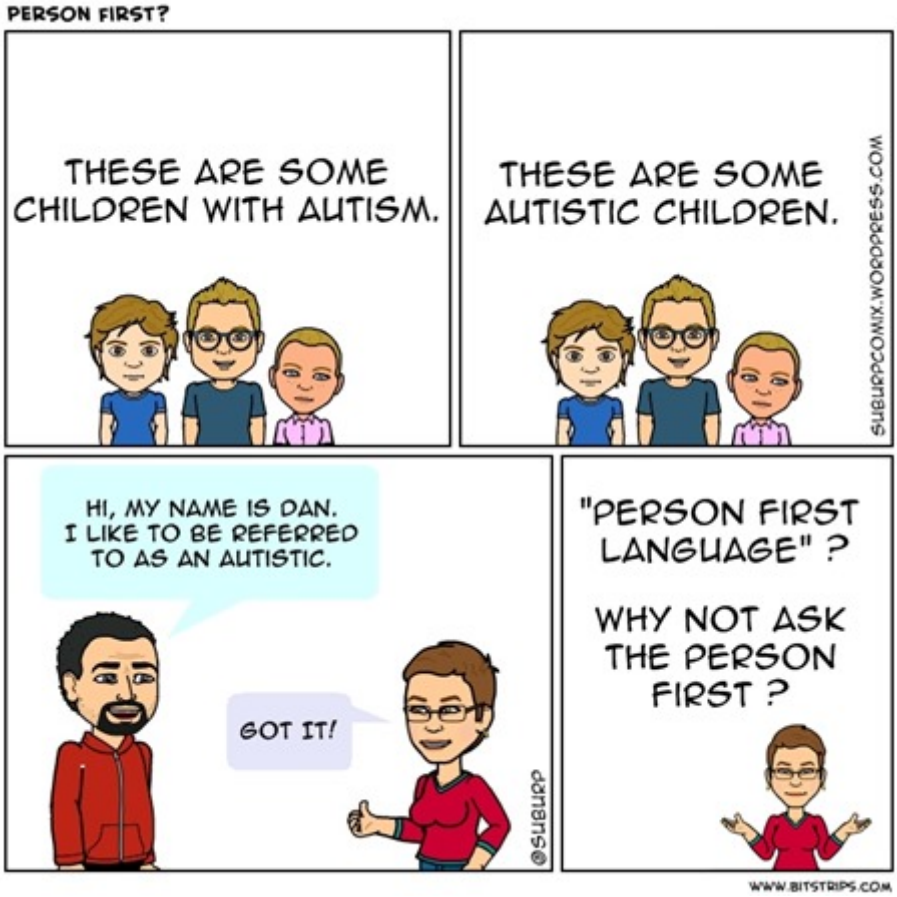

Figure 3.12: Person first cartoon, Source: https://suburpcomix.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/15-person1st.jpg

Throughout 2017 and 2018, a number of the authors of this textbook have been conducting a research project within 6 schools spread across one broad region of Queensland. As data has been analysed researchers have discussed the preliminary findings and concluded that in three of the six schools involved in the research, there is clear evidence that inclusive language and practice is embedded within every aspect of school life, whilst in the other schools although there is a willingness and a desire to be inclusive there is still work to be done. The extract below is taken from a transcript of the researchers' conversation as they unpacked the recorded conversations with a range of school Principals, Deputy Principals, teachers, teacher aides, and Heads of Special Education Programs.

> *It's that feeling of personal connection that comes through – at some of the other schools there just does not seem to be a true connection to the kids. It was more of an intellectual exercise with strategies rather than heart. There needs to be that moral imperative and a passion… Rhetoric and process cannot make up for passion to make a difference in a child's/young person's life… It's the 'how' in the schools where inclusion is effective it's not the fine grained 'what' but the how and the holistic view… It's powerful the language that is used – they talk strategies broadly but then they talk about how they evidence that so that you can actually see that student has improved… Data use and the pedagogy of inclusion is differentiated for students and for teachers – they clearly acknowledge that. The way they talk about each other and the way they talk about staff is always positive – you don't hear negativity… there is a shared language and meaning – so there is a repertoire of strategies being used and they know them (*Abawi, Andersen, Brownlow, Carter, Desmarchelier, Leach, Lawrence & Turner [personal communication, 2018]).

FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

In some schools, family involvement is sometimes limited to formalised parent/teacher interviews and

attendance at key functions. In others, where there is an embedded culture of families as equal partners, families are respected as active decision makers about their child's educational and co-curricular programs. They are also very involved with the strategic planning and direction of the school, actively participating in School Councils Boards, committees and taskforces.

The level of family involvement in education settings varies from family to family, teacher to parent and education setting to education setting. Yet as Bottrell and Goodwin (2011) noted, relationships between education settings, families and communities are recognised as important to children and young people's wellbeing and learning, from early childhood through primary and secondary education. Although some parents have had negative experiences in their own lives of education, and do not always have the confidence or are sometimes less likely to want to be involved, it is important that educators and education settings reach out and try and remove these barriers. Establishing productive and positive partnerships with families is critical in creating inclusive classrooms and settings .

Recognising and respecting diversity in families

In building productive partnerships with families, it is important that teachers consider the following:

- Accept of the composition of the family.
- Respect for the ways in which families function and make decisions.
- Shift away from thinking that the educator is the sole 'expert'.
- Be mindful of one's own beliefs and values that are shaped by personal history, life experience and education and how these influences the decisions.
- Be cautious of judgements that can be made about students and their families.
- Have an awareness of the cultural, ethnic and linguistic heritage of students.
- Avoid generalising or stereotyping.
- Learn about the cultures represented in the education setting.
- Be aware of the communication styles or level of context that families use. (Sands et al., 2000)

Watch

Working with parents and the issues facing families (17.00 minutes)

SUMMARY

Teachers can make a significant difference to the learning outcomes of students by:

- having high expectations as the norm;
- using a strength based approach to learning;
- using a rigorous curriculum that develops higher order thinking skills;
- using learning and assessment tailored for individual need;
- using sensitive ways to support students to not feel excluded (for whatever reason) from school events therefore ensure principle led decision-making regarding curricular and co-curricular activities;
- building quality relationships and partnerships with students and their families/carers built on trust,

discretion, non-antagonist approaches to poor behaviour and disengagement;

- avoiding stereotyping or judgmental thinking regarding students and their families and/or carers;
- analysing materials for cultural bias;
- promoting literacy enjoyment and critical literacy skills; and
- forming broad support teams, interventions and programs.

Schools can make a significant difference in the educational outcomes of students by creating an inclusive school culture through the alignment of inclusive practices. [School culture is conceptualised in terms of the seminal work of Schein (1992) regarding organisational culture.] In the Openaccess book entitled New Pedagogical Challenges in the 21st Century, in Chapter 3 Inclusive Schoolwide Pedagogical Principles: Cultural Indicators in Action, Abawi, Carter, Andrews and Conway (2018) highlight the following themes as being key indicators of an inclusive school.

- Organisation and structures that are strongly student centred and inclusive.
- Best fit choices are made for students, teachers, teacher aides, resources and environment.
- Explicit teaching of social skills and the valuing of diversity.
- Clear communication, shared language and shared expectations.
- Positive relationships building between staff, students, parents and community.
- A strong sense of safety, family and wrap around support.
- Transitions into and out of school are prioritised.
- Teachers use information and data to plan adjustments and engage learners.
- Differentiation and inclusive pedagogies are articulated negotiated and actioned.
- Professional learning and sharing occurs between staff members.
- Evidence of strong ethical and moral Principal leadership.
- Targeted informed leadership evident at all levels of the school.

These various factors are captured in Figure 3.13 below:

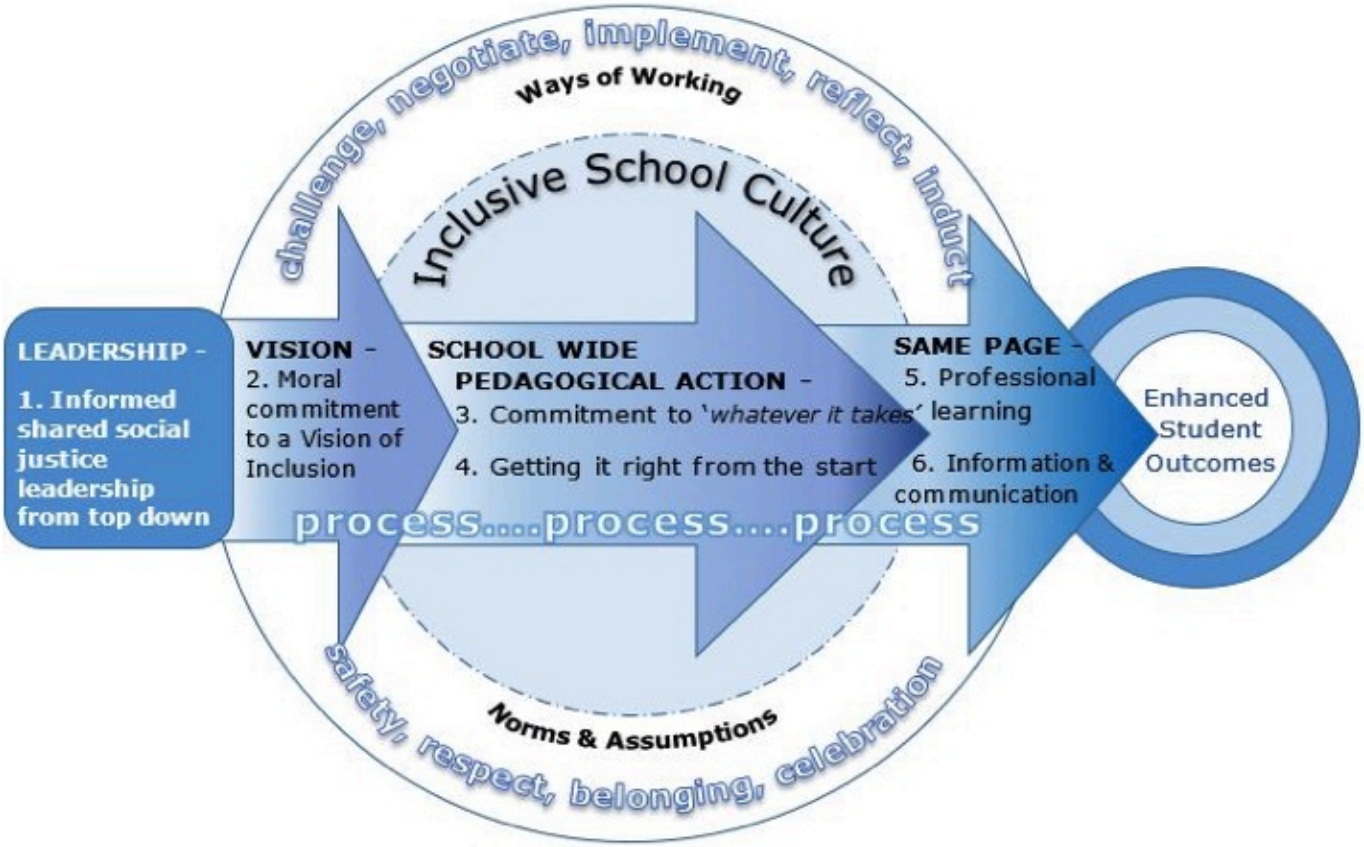

Figure 3.13: A conceptual model of the cultural indicators of an inclusive school taken from Abawi, L., Carter, S., Andrews, D. & Conway, J. (2018).

Consider your context – how inclusive is it? Is diversity truly celebrated and embraced for the richness it brings? If not what could you do to start the discussion?

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CHAPTER 4

Opening eyes onto inclusion and diversity in early childhood education

MICHELLE TURNER AND AMANDA MORGAN

What can educators do to create inclusive early childhood contexts that provide children and families with the opportunity to develop understandings of difference and diversity?

Key Learnings

- Diversity is a characteristic of early childhood education in contemporary Australia.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the principle that all children have the right to feel accepted and respected.
- It is important that all young children have the opportunity to develop an appreciation and respect for the diversity of their local and broader communities.
- Adopting a holistic approach to diversity is promoted as a strategy for educators working in contemporary early childhood settings.

INTRODUCTION

In early childhood education, diversity and inclusion go together like "roundabouts and swings, a pair of wings, fish and chips, hops and skips, socks and shoes, salt and pepper, strawberries and cream, pie and sauce, the oo in moo" (McKimmie, 2010, p. 1). Effective early childhood educators understand that creating an inclusive learning environment that is responsive to a diverse range of characteristics and needs, can be a challenging and overwhelming endeavour with sometimes limited or underwhelming results (Petriwskyj, Thorpe & Tayler, 2014).

Traditionally, inclusive education in the mainstream early years classroom focussed on catering for children with special needs, such as physical impairment or autism, and for children considered 'at risk' or 'disadvantaged' in relation to issues such as socio-economic circumstances or geographical isolation (Petriwskyj, 2010). Petriwskyj's (2010) research extends this notion of inclusive education to include many more considerations, such as the social, political, cultural, English as a second language, trauma-related and economic backgrounds of educational stakeholders.

This chapter is designed to reveal how early childhood educators could facilitate effective, inclusive

pedagogies and programs in the mainstream classroom. Generally, when children have a diagnosed disability or a physical disability (such as needing a wheelchair or hearing aid), the general classroom teacher has access to support in the form of outside agencies or assisted technology (Forlin, Chambers, Loreman, Deppler & Sharma, 2013). However, when a teacher may think a child is 'odd', their learning progress is slow, or their behaviour is difficult to manage, then inclusive practices become difficult to seek, plan for and implement (Petriwskyj, 2010). The following information, ideas and activities are designed to be a general 'teaching toolkit' for new teachers to implement in a mainstream early childhood classroom to assist them to be more responsive and inclusive to its diverse clientele of students and families.

DIVERSITY

Diversity is a characteristic of early childhood education in contemporary Australia. Children engaging with early childhood contexts come from a range of social, economic, cultural and ability groups, and bring with them a considerable variation in life's experiences. Diversity is defined by the Queensland Government Department of Education (2018) as encompassing individual differences such as culture, language, location, economics, learning, abilities and gender. Broader diversity constructs presented in the literature, such as diverse abilities (Ashman & Elkins, 2005), diverse learners (Coyne, Kame'enui & Carnine, 2007), diverse learning rights (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2006) and learners in diverse classrooms (Dempsey & Arthur-Kelly, 2007), highlight the complex and multi-dimensional nature of difference and the associated power relations of inequality (Ng, 2003). The representation of these constructs in the literature suggests a movement away from categorising children through ideas of normativity, to supporting learners with varied characteristics through differentiating pedagogies (Graham, 2007).

Australian society has become increasingly diverse in terms of the cultural and ethnic backgrounds, composition and size of families (Moore, 2008). Children's developmental pathways are also more diverse. Taken for granted approaches about parenting and child development and traditional early childhood practices are challenged by this changing diversity (Fleer, 2003). Bronfenbrenner's social ecology approach assists in the conceptualisation of the developing child in this changing diverse landscape because the model enables the recognition of "the broad range of contextual factors that can affect human development and education" (Odam et al., 2004, p. 18).

In the model, the child is situated at the centre of a number of concentric layers. These surrounding layers move out from the centre to reflect the varying contexts associated with the child at any given time in their life's journey. Relationships between the child and surrounding layers are seen as dynamic.

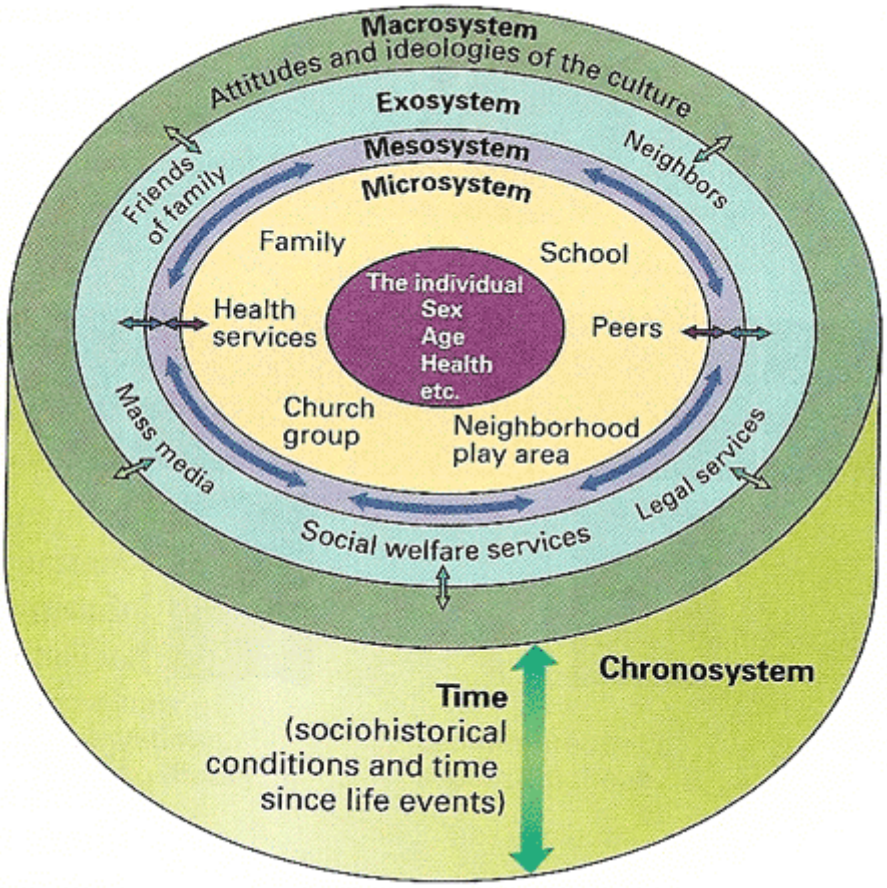

Figure 4.1: Bronfenbrenner's social ecological model

Characteristics of the child such as age, health and personal traits, are embodied with the child in the centre of the model. The system closest to the child is called the microsystem and consists of the components in the child's immediate surrounds such as family, extended family and early childhood setting. These components are seen to influence the child physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively. Emotional attachment with other people was viewed by Bronfenbrenner as a significant element in this layer (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The next layer of the model is called the mesosystem and refers to the alignment between contexts in the microsystem (Grace, Hayes & Wise, 2017). It is desirable for the child to experience high levels of alignment between the differing contexts experienced within their microsystem. A child who encounters a misalignment between the early childhood centre they attend and their family life may not be able to experience the best opportunities for learning. A strong match, however, between the values of the centre and their home life is likely to lead to improved learning outcomes.

The next adjacent layer, the exosystem, represents those systems or contexts that the child is not directly involved in but will still be impacted by. Parental employment, for example, can impact the child through such things as lower levels of income, higher working hours and increased stress levels. The final layer, the macrosystem, refers to the broad cultural and societal attitudes and ideologies that may influence components in all of the other systems. This layer represents the overall values of the society in which the child lives and is impacted by across all aspects life. Grace, Hayes and Wise (2017) provide the example of a society in which females are treated as being inferior to males by being denied equal access to education and employment, which may result in the female child possibly having reduced opportunities in life.

A final important point the Bronfenbrenner model makes, is that the child is not viewed as a static participant. The child is a dynamic being and influences the environment in which they engage. For example,

parents of a child with vision impairment may make decisions about support mechanisms that the child has access to and bring these with them to the early childhood centre. Children, according to Bronfenbrenner's social ecological model, will be influenced by, and will influence, their environment and the people in them (Grace, Hayes & Wise, 2017). Considering the child in their social, ecological surrounds can therefore assist educators in developing clearer understandings of children and their individual, unique diverse contexts.

INCLUSION

Ideas around inclusion in the early childhood field have evolved steadily over the past few decades, and are continuing to progress. This has occurred in a context of ongoing social change, which has been accompanied by similar changes across a range of social values and ideas. Definitions of inclusion traditionally focussed on readiness for assimilation into a general class (mainstreaming) (Petriwskyj, 2010) and integration in general classes with English language instruction and support for disability (Cook, Klein, & Tessier, 2008). These views have shifted to those incorporating curricular and pedagogic differentiation to support children's senses of belonging (Gillies & Carrington, 2004). Changing values and ideas about diversity and difference, ability and disability, and social inclusion and exclusion in early childhood have been influential in this shift (Moore, Morcos & Robinson, 2009).

THINKING ABOUT DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE

Global populations are becoming more mobile, generating multi-cultural societies and therefore ethnic and cultural diversity in many world nations including Australia (Arber, 2005). Emerging from this is a growing awareness that everyone has their own cultural framework, which shapes perceptions, values and ideas (Gonzalez-Mena, 2004). Over (2016) notes that to experience personal growth and wellbeing, positive social interactions and long lasting relationships are necessary. Current thinking acknowledges the importance of incorporating children's unique identities and diversities to enable positive experiences for personal growth and lifelong learning. Developing effective contexts for inclusion that support children manage their own needs in diverse and different multicultural group settings is therefore an important goal in an inclusive approach to diversity in early childhood settings.

THINKING ABOUT ABILITY AND DISABILITY

Diversity exists in the way children develop. Development in children occurs at different rates across a population. However, when children fail to comply with the developmental pathways typically outlined and expected in the school culture, they are sometimes labelled as having a developmental disability. Disability is an overall term defined by the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2002) and incorporates three components:

1. Impairment, which refers to body functions (for example, sensory or cognitive functions) and body structures (for example, organ or limb functions)
2. Activity limitations, which refers to the challenges of carrying out daily activities such as self-care, mobility and learning.
3. Participation restrictions experienced as the child endeavours to participate within the family and community settings.

Reframed notions of the continuum of what is 'normal' have emerged in thinking around disability in recent years. . The impacts of social and environmental factors have come to be seen as additional components associated with disability and have led to challenging what is interpreted as normal. For example, the increased number of sites with wheel chair access has enabled wheel chair users to engage with a greater variety of

facilities and therefore life experiences. Such inclusive actions works towards incorporating Article 23 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which specifies that children with disabilities have the right to special care with assistance appropriate to their condition in order to promote the child's social integration and individual development.

THINKING ABOUT SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION

Developed nations have experienced social changes, which have not been beneficial for all members of society. Some people have failed to benefit from the changed social and economic conditions and instead have experienced social exclusion and therefore poorer outcomes (Hertzman, 2002).). A report released by the Australian Early Development Census in 2015 revealed that one in five children who enter school in Australia are developmentally vulnerable in one or more domain, including cognitive skills and communication (Shahaeian & Wang, 2018). Social changes have resulted in the fragmentation of communities, greater demands on parents, and systems that are ill-equipped to cope with the needs of children and families (Moore & Fry, 2011). Social exclusion arises when children suffer from multiple factors that make it difficult for them to participate in society (Hertzman, 2002). These factors may include growing up in jobless households, being a member of a minority group or living with a sole parent. This may lead to the child being at risk of living in poverty and being socially isolated (Moore, Morcos & Robinson, 2009).

Whilst social inclusion may appear to be the opposite of social exclusion it incorporates much more. Social inclusion infers a proactive, mindful approach that requires action to facilitate conditions of inclusion (Caruana, & McDonald, 2018). Current understandings about child development and learning, as well as social justice and social inclusion, indicates that relationships, interactions and experiences in children's early lives have a profound influence on early brain development and future life outcomes (Centre on the Developing Child, 2011; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Reducing boundaries, barriers and social and economic distances between people are important when promoting a more inclusive society (Hayes, Gray & Edwards, 2008). To be inclusive it is vital that children and adults are able to participate as valued, respected and contributing members of society.

INCLUSION IN THE EARLY YEARS

According to Early Childhood Australia [ECA](2016), the peak early childhood advocacy body in Australia, "inclusion means that every child has access to, participates meaningfully in, and experiences positive outcomes from early childhood education and care programs" (p. 2). Inclusion is significant as: it incorporates current thinking around child development; implements the current mandated legal standards for early childhood education and care [ECEC]; supports children's rights; and reflects quality professional practice (ECA, 2016). Additionally it needs to be recognised that acts of inclusion facilitate acceptance of diversity and the reduction of barriers that may preclude a child from achieving their fullest potential in an ECEC setting.

Inclusivity occurs when all children, regardless of their diversity, have equitable and genuine opportunities to participate in and learn from the everyday routines, interactions, play and learning experiences that occur in the early years (The State of Queensland [Department of Education and Training], 2017). A policy statement intended for all levels of schooling, including the early years, developed by the Queensland Government Department of Education (2018) states that:

> Inclusive education means that students can access and fully participate in learning, alongside their similar-aged peers, supported by reasonable adjustments and teaching strategies tailored to meet their individual needs. Inclusion is embedded in all aspects of school life, and is supported by culture, policies and every day practices (p. 1).

Inclusive settings in the early years, according to the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority [QCAA] (2014) sees that "educators strive to improve all learners' participation and learning, regardless of age, gender, religion, culture, socioeconomic status, sexual preferences, ability or language. Inclusion encourages everyone in the community to participate and achieve" (p. 1). KU Children's services who manage a range of inclusion support services for the Australian Governments Inclusion Support Programme created the following information sheet fact for educators and services about what Inclusion Is:

POLICY AND LEGAL REQUIREMENTS FOR INCLUSION IN THE EARLY YEARS

Early childhood contexts in prior to school settings in Australia are governed by the National Law and National Regulations which outline the legal obligations of approved providers and educators and explain the powers and functions of the state and territory regulatory authorities and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority [ACECQA]. The Education and Care Services National Law (National Law) and the Education and Care Services National Regulations (National Regulations) detail the operational and legal requirements for an education and care service including most long day care, family day care, kindergarten/ preschool and outside school hours care services in Australia.

The National Law and National Regulations are components of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care [NQF] which aligns with the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child by aiming to ensure that all children have the opportunity to thrive, to be engaged in civics and citizenship and opportunities to take action and be accountable (ACECQA, 2017). The NQF also "recognises all children's capacity and right to succeed regardless of diverse circumstances, cultural background and abilities" (ACECQA, 2017, p.10). Inclusion is acknowledged as an approach in the NQF where educators recognise, respect and work with each child's unique abilities and learning pathways and where diversity is celebrated (ACECQA, 2017). This approach of inclusive service delivery and practice is embedded in the national approved learning framework for early childhood settings; the Early Years Learning Framework [EYLF].

Additionally, the rights of children with disability and from diverse backgrounds to access and participate in ECEC services are set out in national and state based legislation such as:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)
- Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Commonwealth)
- Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Queensland)
- Child protection Act 1999 (Queensland)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Queensland)

Additional information around the legal requirements associated with diversity and inclusion is available by at the following link: Inclusion of children with disability

School settings in the Queensland context are also required to comply with legal requirements, in particular, the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (Qld) and state and commonwealth discrimination laws. To read further about these requirements click on the following link: Inclusive education

Additional Readings

To extend your understanding around policy and legal requirements in the early years access the following articles online through the USQ Library webpage:

- Miller, M. & Petriwskyj, A. (2013). New directions in intercultural Early Education in Australia. International Journal of Early Childhood, 45, 251-266. Doi: 10.1007/s13158-013-0091-4
- Petriwskyj, A., Thorpe, K., & Tayler, C. (2014). Towards inclusion: provision for diversity in the transition to school. International Journal of Early Years Education, 22(4), 359-379. doi: 10.1080/09669760.2014.911078

INCLUSION BARRIERS AND MYTHS

Despite significant changes in thinking around diversity and inclusion, potential barriers to successful inclusion still exist. Barriers may serve to reduce the opportunities educators are prepared to take to design and create inclusive environments. The barriers can emerge from a range of issues including personal, attitudinal and organisational. From a personal perspective educators may be unwilling to engage with inclusion because of a perceived increase in workload or lack of confidence in their own skills to work with children with diversity. Personal bias and attitudes may impact upon the educator's willingness to consider making adjustments to their program or to support children appropriately within their program.

Organisational systems and structures can create barriers for educators through such things as lack of leadership supporting inclusive practices, professional development for staff or finances for resources. Early childhood is a unique period, which provides the blueprint for all future development and learning. Where barriers exist, opportunities for children's learning and development can be greatly reduced.

Myths associated with inclusion may also serve to dissuade the development of inclusive environments for all children. Dispelling myths associated with implementing inclusive practices through sound reflective practice, educator commitment and teamwork have been identified as starting points for successful inclusion. Livingston (2018) summarised myths under the following headings; the view that inclusion is not about disability, the perceived effects of including a disabled child in a classroom and the differences between inclusion and early intervention. Following is a discussion around these myths.

Inclusion is not just about disability

Ashman and Elkins (2005) note "inclusion enables access, engagement and success for all learners" (p. 65). The NQF promotes the valuing of diversity, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with a disability and people from diverse family compositions. The definition of inclusion in the approved learning frameworks for ECE is broader than simply providing for children with a disability. Inclusion is about embracing diversity, including every child holistically and providing opportunities for all children to participate and benefit.

As indicated above when discussing relevant policy and legal requirements, inclusion is a basic human right. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children have the right to an education (Article 28) that develops their ability to their fullest potential, prepares children for life and respects their family, cultural and other identities and languages (Article 29). This is reflected in Regulation 155 of the National Regulations where it states that an approved provider must take reasonable steps to ensure that the education and care service provides education and care to children in a way that maintains at all times the dignity and rights of each child.

Including a child with additional needs

There has been a perception by some that inclusion of diverse children will be detrimental to other group

or class members. There is now sufficient evidence to suggest that peers are not harmed or disadvantaged through inclusive classrooms; rather, they grow and develop as a result of the relationships they cultivate and sustain with their diverse counterparts (Odom et al., 2004). Typically, developing children learn a great deal from their classmates in inclusive settings. The inclusion of children with disabilities prompts classmates to become more understanding of, and to develop positive attitudes toward, their diverse counterparts (Odom & Bailey, 2001).

Inclusive environments are characterised by repeated and impromptu interactions, which support all children in social, emotional and behavioural development (Odom et al., 2004). When children with disabilities or differing abilities attempt to engage their peers in social interaction, typically developing children with experience in inclusive environments respond to these initiations and progress relationships by initiating interactions, negotiating sharing and developing an understanding of other children (Odom et al., 2004). Additionally, children with experience of inclusive environments have been found to approach play with a stronger focus on fairness and equity and utilise more targeted ways to include diverse counterparts in their play (Diamond & Hong, 2010).

Research has found that children are most receptive to actions of inclusion at an early age. Evidence suggests that older children are less likely to be receptive of children with disabilities being included in academic settings (Siperstein, Parker, Bardon, & Widaman, 2007). Since inclusion is beneficial to all children, inclusion in early childhood settings is considered to be highly important (Gupta, Henninger & Vinh, 2014).

Inclusion and early intervention are not the same

Inclusion and early intervention for children with diversity are interrelated concepts but are viewed differently and have separate outcomes. As noted above the definition of inclusion in the EYLF refers to all children holistically. Early intervention relates to children who require additional support and involves the support of early childhood intervention specialists. The outcome of early intervention is to support children to develop the skills they need to take part in everyday activities and to be included in family and community life. This process is achieved in an inclusive environment where the important adults in the child's life provide the experiences and opportunities necessary to help children participate meaningfully in their everyday lives.

Reflection

- Critically reflect upon these three myths.
- What can you add to the discussion?
- Have you experienced a change in your thinking?

INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

The image of the child

The starting point for successful inclusive practices is reflecting upon the image of the child. Loris Malaguzzi (1994) suggests that the educators' image of the child directs them in how they talk, listen, observe and relate to children. The image of the child influences how the educator views the child and influences their expectations they have of them. Reflecting on the image of the child shifts the focus back to the child as they are, not just the way they are perceived or labelled.

The image of the child promoted by advocates of inclusive practices, presents the child as being so engaged in experiencing the world and developing a relationship with the world, that he or she develops a complex system of abilities, learning strategies and ways of organising relationships (Rinaldi, 2013). Children are the "bearer and constructors of their own intelligences", expressing their leanings in a variety of ways; a process Reggio educators refers to as 'the hundred languages' (Rinaldi, 2013). Underlying the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia (2010) is the belief that children are competent and capable of actively constructing their own learning.

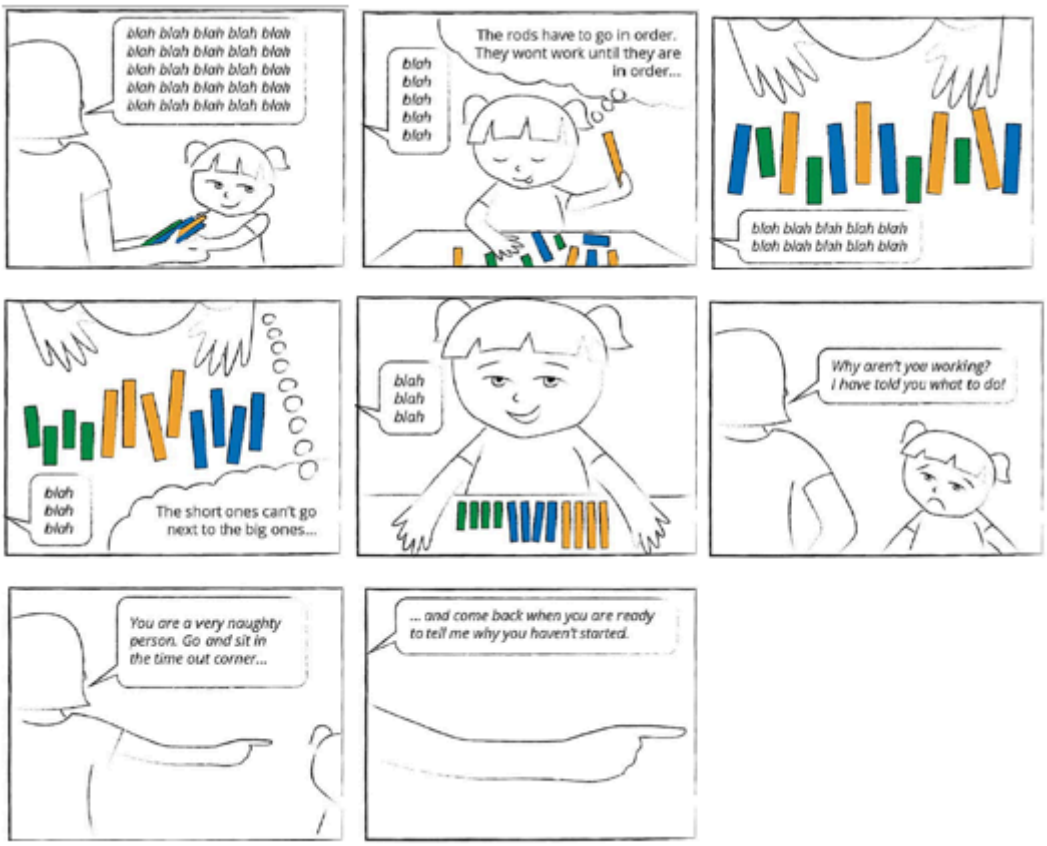

Figure 4.2: Comic strip of a child. (2019). Australia, USQ.

Reflection

- What is your image of the child?
- Do you see the child's competencies and complexities?
- Is this a child who shares their thinking, theories and wonderings with you or do they censor themselves in adult child interactions?

Getting to know the children

It is important to get to know individual children so that the appropriate support can be offered to them. This is most successfully achieved through discussion with the family and the child and through observation and documentation. Discussions with the family will provide educators with vital information about the child. It is important to ask questions with sensitivity and understanding in talks with parents and to set a tone of welcome for the family that encourages communication and open discussion built on trust and respect.

Figure 4:3: Photograph of child with guinea pig (2018), Australia, USQ Photo Stock.

Conversing with the child about their abilities, needs, and interests empowers the child and increases their sense of agency. Conversations provide the opportunity for the child to verbalise their interests and needs. Observations are a vital tool for early childhood educators to build an understanding of children's interests, abilities, learning, development and wellbeing (Colville, 2018). When observing an individual child, it is important to focus on the child's abilities. Looking beyond a textbook definition of their possible diversity and noting their strengths and what they can do is also helpful. Documenting observations of children professionally and regularly, without labels or diagnoses is also a useful step. Interpreting these observations and applying this information when making decisions about programming and planning that relate to individual children and groups of children is also effective in building an inclusive culture.

Early childhood educators are key in knowing and understanding child development. Understanding that children learn skills in a particular order will help the early childhood educator set realistic expectations for the child's skill development. As an example a child needs to practice standing before practicing walking. A child with special needs may need to have a skill divided into smaller steps before the skill can be mastered.

The following e-Newsletter provides practical ideas for learning about children's knowledge, ideas, culture and interests through observation. Click on the following link to access the information sheet: NQS PLP e-Newsletter No. 39 2012 – Observing children

Figure 4.4 Photograph of a mother and a baby on Unsplash

Inclusive environments

The importance of high quality early years education and care has been well documented (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 2007; Dearing, McCartney & Taylor, 2009; Peisner-Feinberg et al., 2014; Sylva, 2010, Torii, Fox & Cloney, 2017). Participation in inclusive high-quality early childhood settings is fundamental to supporting children to build positive identities, develop a sense of belonging and realise their full potential. Supporting children's positive individual and group identity development in ECEC is fundamental to realising children's rights. Inclusive environments provide the space for the recognition of gender, ability, culture, class, ethnicity, language, religion, sexuality and family structure as integral to society (Queensland Government Department of Education, 2018b).

Carefully planned environments engage and enable children to co-construct learning and build deeper understandings (Queensland Studies Authority, 2010). The educator's image of a child and the environment they create are strongly connected. Creating an environment that supports the inclusion of every child means each child can be supported to thrive and build a respect and valuing of diversity. High quality education and care is characterised by thoughtfully designed environments that support intentional, structured interactions to scaffold children's growth and learning. Quality child-care contributes to the emotional, social, and intellectual development of children.

A starting point in creating an inclusive environment is to pay close attention to the physical environment. Does the physical environment meet the needs of the children and support children to engage naturally with things that interest them? Physically inclusive spaces maximise each child's opportunity to:

- access and explore indoor and outdoor areas as independently as possible;
- make choices about the resources they access and the experiences they participate in;
- interact meaningfully with other children and adults;
- care for themselves as independently as possible;
- experience challenge and take managed risks;
- engage with images, books and resources that reflect people with disabilities as active participants in and contributors to communities in a variety of ways (Owens, 2012, p. 2).

Figure 4.5: Photograph of child with cattle (n.d.). pxhere.

When adapting the physical environment to include a child with a disability, it is important to consider what needs to be altered or added to enable the child to manage daily routines and experiences as independently as possible. How accessible are the resources for the child? Do items need to be placed at a different height or level so that the child can reach them? Considering issues of fairness and equity at the level of the individual child and the group and providing appropriate adaptations that allow diverse children to participate in the classroom curriculum is an effective strategy as well (Diamond & Hong 2010). Attention to the physical demands of daily classroom activities for example may support classroom wide intervention (Brown, Odom, McConnell, & Rathel, 2008). For example, moving a painting activity from an easel to a tabletop for all children may offer support for those who find it difficult to stand and paint for long periods (Sandall & Schwartz, 2008).

Adaptations to the indoor and outdoor environments that increase children's access to activities might be effective in supporting peer interaction (Diamond & Hong 2010). For example, a child with a communication difficulty may benefit from using visual resources such as pictorial flow charts to help them understand and participate in the day's routines and activities (Owens, 2012). Inviting all children to become familiar with the visual resources and encouraging them to support those who are unsure is another useful strategy. A child who experiences high levels of anxiety or behavioural issues may need a safe, quiet area to go to when they feel overwhelmed or want time away from the group (Owens, 2012). Such additions to the environment often benefit all children.

It is beneficial to include strategies that support children's independence as they access the class resources to undertake their learning. Educators in classrooms make use of a large variety of ideas and strategies to enable learner's independence. Visit the resource below and make a note of the different ideas one teacher has used to create an inclusive prep classroom in a Queensland primary school. Use these ideas to begin your own collection of strategies and build upon the list as you continue to engage with ideas around creating inclusive classrooms.

Cultural competence

In creating an inclusive physical environment, a shared culture of inclusion can be modelled and supported. Children are naturally curious about the people around them as they attempt to develop a sense of their

own identity. One way of achieving this is by defining what makes them different from everyone else. A child may ask questions about observable characteristics like skin colour, accent, or manner of dress. "Children are around two or three when they begin to notice physical differences among people" (Kupetz, 2012, p. 1). Questions about characteristics such as "Why is Kiah's skin brown?" are not motivated by any intention to offend or hurt. Educators can use these opportunities to send a fair and accurate message about each diversity, so that children learn that these differences make a person unique. The educator can utilise these encounters with diversity to enrich all children's learning.

In this podcast the educator took the opportunity to support children to become familiar with, understand and experience being different. Families NSW (2011) recommend simple examples to embrace diversity within an early childhood setting:

- Make a point of acknowledging where all the children in the group come from by simply hanging a map and tagging locations with the child's name and country of origin.
- Showcase a country each week or month and take the opportunity to invite parents to share words or phrases from their language, songs, music, food, traditional dance and costumes.
- Celebrate culturally diverse calendar events throughout the year.
- Display and make accessible multicultural and multilingual resources.

However, it is not enough just to raise cultural awareness. It is a requirement of the NQF for educators to become culturally competent. Cultural competence is about thinking and actions that lead to:

- Building understanding between people;
- Being respectful and open to different cultural perspectives;
- Strengthening equality in opportunity (ACECQA Newsletter, 2014).

Read more about developing cultural competence through the We Hear You newsletter published by ACECQA.

Intentional teaching

In the Early Years Learning Framework, the term 'intentional teaching' is used to describe teaching that is purposeful, thoughtful and deliberate (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2009). In this definition it is the word intentional that is important since it assumes that an intentional educator is someone whose actions stem from deep thoughtfulness where the potential effects have been considered (Epstein, 2007). Epstein goes on to point out that this means the educator understands why they are doing what they are doing (the intentional act) and what strategy is required for the teachable moment.

A number of effective intentional environmental strategies to support interactions among children with disabilities and their classmates without disabilities include limiting the size of groups and using materials that are familiar and likely to encourage social interactions. Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) 2017) have suggested the following strategies for applying intentional teaching practices within inclusive environments.

Model appropriate behaviours

Children learn through observation and imitation (Meltzoff, 1999) and modelling by an educator becomes a powerful tool in intentional teaching. Children notice when adults are working and collaborating together and modelling positive behaviours. Children imitating this modelled adult behaviour will demonstrate considerate actions that support an understanding of inter-dependence both within and outside of an early childhood setting.

Figure 4.6: Photograph of a teacher reading. (2011). Monkey business.

Using a range of communication strategies

Children cannot always find the appropriate words to use to express how they feel especially when they are faced with something outside of their normal experiences. Introduce and use a wide range of communication strategies with all children to equip them with a variety of approaches to use when they attempt to organise their own feelings, explain events and resolve conflict. A variety of communication strategies may include gestural, pictorial, oral and written components. It may be necessary at times to "give" the children the appropriate words to use. For example, in the following scenario the educator helped Sam express his thinking, using words:

Scenario

Sandpit play:

Sam is building a road in the sand using a spade and a trowel. He puts the spade down as he picks up the trowel. Peter turns around and takes the spade. Sam immediately pushes Peter over and takes the spade back. The educator checks that Peter is OK and then says to Sam. "I can see that you are still using the spade but Peter did not see that. Could you please say to Peter "I am still using the spade"? Sam repeated the words and Peter nodded his head turning back to his own sand construction.

Using self-talk

Using self-talk can be a powerful form of guidance for children. Educators can 'self- talk' through activities with which they are engaged, so that they are giving children a commentary on their actions. For example, 'I am cutting around the picture. I am trying to be careful and make the scissors stay on the line'. Educators can also 'parallel talk' as they provide commentary on what the child is doing. Both strategies can be very helpful for short periods but should not be extended to the point where they become intrusive or inhibiting.

Be firm when necessary

Children need the security that comes with knowing that there are limits and that when they need help with their behaviour they will get it. Children need adults to set reasonable boundaries and help them to organise their feelings and responses. Educators can support children to focus on the outcomes of being considerate to others while searching for a fair and equitable resolution that supports children's learning.

Acknowledge considerate behaviour

Let children know when they do things that you want to see more of. Try to support children to manage their own behaviour in a way that tells the child "I know this is hard for you, but I will help you". Modelling empathy provides children with a repertoire of examples and strategies to use themselves.

The emphasis is on supporting children to manage their own behaviour in a ways that teach and show respect. When responding to a child's behaviour it is important to make sure you are doing so in ways that maintains their dignity and rights. In order to do so, it is important to take a moment and reflect on the best way to respond, rather than simply react, however in some situations educators may need to respond quickly if safety is an issue.

High Expectations

Every child is unique. Children may share the same type of disability, but be completely different from each other in every other respect. While there are some exceptions many two year olds with special needs have, for example, they will also face the same challenges of being two that all children face. Setting high expectations for each individual child is vital to their overall success.

Figure: 4.7: Photograph of child bouncing. (2018). Australia, USQ Photo Stock.

Promoting inclusion and the participation of all children across the entire program involves working with each child's unique qualities and abilities, strengths and interests, so that each child can reach his or her potential. Early childhood professionals are key in knowing that children with special needs are more like all children than different. Where and when possible setting similar expectations for children will help them to be accepted. High expectations of all children can be delivered through flexible program approaches and curriculum decision making, focused on inclusive practice. Curriculum decision making for inclusion of children with a disability is about creating opportunities for all children to engage in daily experiences, rather than planning alternative or separate experiences for a particular child (Owens, 2012). Curriculum considerations includes all planned and unplanned "interactions, experiences, routines and events" that occur each day (ACECQA, 2011, p. 203). When undertaking inclusive curriculum decision making, educators intentionally extend each child's learning by designing experiences that build on the child's "strengths, interests and abilities in both planned and spontaneous learning experiences" (Owens. 2012, p. 2).

Involving families

Families of children with diversity have the same needs for ECEC as do other families. Inclusive ECEC environments offer all families the opportunity to engage in regular life patterns (Jansson & Olsson, 2006). Offering inclusive settings removes barriers and provides the opportunity for all children to engage in high quality ECEC that may enhance their learning and developmental success.

Be clear and transparent

At the outset inform all families about the setting's philosophy in regard to inclusion and diversity. When educators and families have different views regarding this, the educator may need to seek support from colleagues and draw on the centre policies for guidance. A focus on the holistic, inclusive approach of the NQF will be of assistance here.

Pay attention to settling-in

Every family can face challenges when settling into a new ECEC setting, as each child must adjust from their home culture to the culture of the service. Children from different backgrounds, minority groups or a child with a disability may face an extra challenge as they undergo this transition from their home to the setting. The cultural and educational approach of the setting, which is generally based on the values and perspectives of the majority population, may be new to families. It is essential that such families feel confident that the settling-in process will support, and be appropriate to, their child's needs.

Support families when asked

Educators play an important role in helping families support and guide their child's learning and development in positive and effective ways. When families are well-supported by educators they may be better equipped to nurture their child's learning and development (Hunter Institute of Mental Health, 2014).

Families may need support, and educators need to respond in non-judgemental ways. As with so many areas of communication and relationships, it helps if the educator can put themselves in the shoes of the family and think about how they (the educators) may feel in the same situation. Developing collaborative partnerships that involve respectful communication about all aspects of a child's learning and development helps both parties to adopt a holistic and consistent approach. Taking a professional approach supports educators in presenting a positive attitude to families, working collaboratively to identify options to solve problems.

Providing the family with professional advice about their child's learning and development, including their strengths and their psychological, social and emotional development is important. Families do not always know where to go to for assistance to act on the information provided. Recommending reliable sources of information and support for families in their local community and beyond is vital. The early childhood educator regularly serves as the conduit between families in need and agencies structured to assist. Educators with a sound knowledge of the variety of support systems available for the community group associated with the ECEC setting is best equipped to be of assistance here.

Communicate with families

It is important that educators identify children's learning needs and respond quickly to any concerns they may have. Communicating concerns about a child to the parents is often a difficult step. Success is more likely if this step is taken from an already-existing relationship that is built on trust and respect. Even when this relationship is in place, educators need to plan what they will say about concerns for the child. A discussion of this nature should take place in a private location, with adequate time allowed, and, if applicable, both parents in attendance.

The first step is to ask the family members how they see the child and then to share the positive qualities observed within the ECEC setting. At the outset, it is helpful for educators to let the family know that:

- They share concerns for the child.
- Their intent is to support the child's development.

In order to do this, educators need to get some ideas for how to best meet the child's needs. If family members differ in their view of the child, be open to their perspective, ask questions, gather information, and invite them to be your partner in meeting the needs of their child. When done respectfully, this communication can lead to a fruitful exchange of ideas and ultimately help for the child. The following document provides practical ideas for communicating with parents effectively in ECEC settings. Click on the following link to access the information sheet: Kids Matter – Effective Communication between families and staff members

Figure 4.8: Photograph of a staff member and a parent and child. (2018). Australia, USQ Photo Stock.

Negotiate multiple agency involvement

While in an early childhood program, children with special needs may receive additional therapy from specialists. Early childhood professionals are key in partnering with the family and other professionals in the provision of support services for the child. Communication with those providing specialist support helps to coordinate the activities of the child. Educators play an important role in working with parents to support their children.

Successful engagement between educators, families, professionals, agencies and community members

enable the sharing of information that ultimately support children's learning and development. Strong partnerships between these sites also help vulnerable children feel more secure (Hunter Institute of Mental Health, 2014). By working with families, professionals and agencies, educators may have access to helpful information and strategies to manage or guide children's learning and development.

Empowering Children

Educators who enact thoughtful and informed curriculum decisions and work in partnership with families and other professionals provide children with the greatest opportunity for success. Enabling child agency through considered curriculum and program design empowers children to engage confidently with their own learning and development. By purposefully planning experiences and engaging in nurturing, non-directive interactions with children, staff can optimise children's learning. Supporting children's agency enables them to make choices and decisions, and influence events and their world. Appropriate choices provide children with an opportunity to implement their emerging skills and develop a strong sense of identity. A practical strategy is to implement strategies, practice and programs that support every child to work with, learn from and help others through collaborative learning opportunities.

It is important to acknowledge children as individuals with a range of skills, emotions and experiences, both at home and at the setting, that may impact on how they cope being part of a group setting on any given day. Children's learning is most effective when staff members are responsive and make the most of the spontaneous skill learning opportunities that arise in children's everyday experiences. For children to learn to guide their own behaviour they need help to understand expectations and what is acceptable. For example, they may not understand why they have to wait to use the new equipment; why they cannot draw on the walls; why it is not appropriate to pull someone's hair to get them to move. The answers to these questions are not always obvious to children. Empower children by acknowledging their understandings and supporting them as they develop new knowledge.

Play-based Pedagogy as a Tool for Inclusive Education and Diversity

ECEC settings serve a wide range of children with various needs, backgrounds, abilities, genders, cultures, languages, and interests. Play based learning experiences are at the heart of early education (Booth, Ainscow & Kingston, 2006). Children make sense of their world through their play and engage in the social world of their peers when they are playing. They benefit from the opportunities play offers to make decisions, predictions and solve problems. Where children are supported in play, they actively interact with others to create experiences to develop the skills and rewarding relationships that are fundamental to their personal growth and development across physical, social, emotional and cognitive domains (KidsMatter, n.d.). They create valuable learning opportunities for themselves through their interactions with their world and the people in it (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). Children learn to transfer their social and emotional skills and understandings to new situations through play and interactions with their peers.

Shipley (2013) suggests the following principles relating to learning through play. Children learn:

- when given plenty of opportunities for sensory involvement.
- through exploration and experimentation where they are free to move and pursue self-paced activities at their individual developmental level.
- by doing and interacting with real objects in a playful learning environment.
- most effectively if they are interested in what they are learning and free to choose to play in their own way.
- in an environment where they experience psychologically safety, a place where risk taking and mistake making are acceptable and where encouragement is offered in a timely manner that supports a learning moment.
- by uncovering concepts through open-ended exploratory play.

• most effectively when they progress from concrete to abstract concepts involving simple to more complex levels of knowledge, skill, and understanding, and where they can make sense of general concepts through to specific concepts.
• by revisiting prior knowledge, previously acquired skills, and concepts in manner that reinforces the transference of knowledge from a known context to application in a new context.
• most effectively when their experiences of play build on what they already know, and can take one step further, what is known as a zone of proximal development at a pace that is scaffolded to suit the individual.

Figure 4.9: Photograph of child with spiral book. (2018). Australia, by USQ Photo Stock.

Play-based pedagogy is well suited to supporting diversity and inclusive education, as it incorporates the interests, insights and backgrounds of all the children (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004). Educators who embrace a play-based pedagogy are responsive to the individual strengths and needs of children, which lead to a naturally inclusive environment (McLean, 2016). Within a play-based learning environment, educators have the opportunity to adapt the environment and resources routinely to promote optimal learning experiences for all students based on individual development, interests, strengths and needs. Educators are key in encouraging children to be independent. Children like to do things on their own and it is better for the development of children, to encourage them to do whatever they can for themselves. A play-based setting supports this approach.

The role of the educator is integral to supporting children's learning and development. Educators provide support (i.e., scaffold) to extend the duration and complexity of children's play as well as encourage children to incorporate language, literacy, and numeracy within their play (McLean, 2016). When teachers consider individual children's abilities, interests and preferences, they create an environment that is engaging for all.

To support all children to learn and develop through play, Wood (2007) suggests educators:
• plan, resource and create challenging learning environments;
• support each child's learning via intended play activity;
• extend and support play that is spontaneous;
• develop and extend each child's communication in play;
• assess each child's learning through play promoting continuity and facilitating progression;
• combine child-initiated play with adult-directed activities;
• accentuate well-planned, purposeful play in both outdoor and indoor settings;
• plan for connection between work and play activities;
• provide time for children to engage deeply in work activities; and
• scaffold opportunities for engagement connecting children and adults.

When enacting play-based pedagogies educators are able to recognise the discoveries being made by children as they construct their own knowledge, in their own ways (McLean, 2016). Curriculum objectives will be met in an integrated program, allowing for depth as well as breadth as children make meaning from the world around them. Play-based approaches open a setting to all learning possibilities in a way that inclusion happens as part of every-day life and diversity is welcomed and celebrated.

CONCLUSION

It is the right of every child to be provided with the opportunity to learn and develop to the best of their ability. Early childhood educators are required to facilitate effective, inclusive pedagogies and programs in the both childcare and school settings to cater for the diverse children and families who may attend their site. Strategies and ideas for developing diverse classrooms have been suggested in this chapter.

Conclusion Activity

Managing inclusivity within your classroom will require flexible and creative approaches. Reflecting upon the information provided above prioritise 5 approaches you will utilise to create a more inclusive environment. Use resources such as those provided via the websites below to begin your list.

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

Recommendations for best practice for early childhood educators in Queensland state schools (Prep teachers) are as follows:

1. **Build relationships.** The Early Years Learning Framework Practice Based Resources – Connecting with families: Bringing the Early Years Learning Framework to life in your community (for more information, refer to https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/connecting-with-families_0.pdf) offers practical advice for early childhood practitioners. PACE attitude training, offered in Queensland by Evolve Therapeutic Services, is a valuable resource for teachers working with children who have experienced trauma or neglect (for more information refer to https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childsafety/partners/our-government-partners/evolve-interagency-services).

2. **Connect with culture.** Non-indigenous teachers should seek access to safe, reliable cultural cues from other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff within their school or wider community (Dockett, Perry & Kearney, 2010; Lewig et al., 2010; Zon et al., 2004). Professional practice should also reflect other minority cultures represented in the school's student population (Cortis et al., 2009; Gilligan & Akhtar, 2005; Hundeide & Armstrong, 2011; Libesman, 2004; Ryan, 2011).
Refer to the Foundations for Success website for further information https://det.qld.gov.au/earlychildhood/service/Documents/pdf/foundations-for-success.pdf#search=crossing%20cultures%20training%20teachers. Also, Queensland state school teachers can access Crossing Cultures and Hidden History training – for more information, refer to http://indigenous.education.qld.gov.au/school/crossingcultures/Pages/default.aspx

3. **Manage behaviour effectively**. Use real and life-like examples to role-model socially-acceptable responses, reactions and reflections to everyday situations (Doyle, 2012; Howe, 2005). Establish and maintain routines, timetables and rewards systems (Gross et al, 2006; Karr-Morse & Wiley, 1997). The Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL) behaviour management approach is currently being implemented in Queensland state schools (refer to http://behaviour.education.qld.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx) and is recommended for children with challenging behaviours (DET, 2015; Umbreit & Ferro, 2015).

4. **Access help and support at a school level**. Queensland state schools have access to specialists including speech/language pathologists, behaviour coaches, occupational therapists, guidance officers and learning support teachers (refer to https://education.qld.gov.au/students/students-with-disability/specialist-staff for more information). Contact the school's Principal if there are extended absences or a suspected case of child abuse or neglect (refer to https://oneportal.deta.qld.gov.au/Students/studentprotection/Pages/Studentprotectionprocedureandguidelines.aspx for further information). A wraparound approach to support is preferred (Cortis et al., 2009). This could include the school's collaboration and cooperation with different

community-based support agencies (Cortis et al., 2009 The HIPPY (for more information, refer to http://hippyaustralia.bsl.org.au/) and FAFT (Families as First Teachers) programs (for more information refer to http://www.earlyyearscount.earlychildhood.qld.gov.au/age-spaces/families-first-teachers/) assist families with young children to develop the language and interactions which best support parent-child relationships and a child's transition to school (Dean & Leung, 2010). Working with families is viewed as best practice for educators, parents and 'at risk' children (DiLauro, 2004; Karr-Morse & Wiley, 1997).

5. **Supporting children with additional needs**. Early Years Connect is a website developed by the Queensland Government Early Childhood Education and Care section of the Department of Education. The purpose of the site is to help educators support children with complex additional needs to participate in early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. The resources include information sheets, online modules and webinar recordings.

6. **Complex and additional needs**. The Early Years Health and Development website developed by the Queensland Government Department of Education provides to a number of links for supporting inclusive practice in early childhood settings along with links to information around health and development issues.

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CHAPTER 5

Fostering first year nurses' inclusive practice: A key building block for patient centred care

PROFESSOR JILL LAWRENCE AND NATASHA REEDY

What can we do as university teachers to enable first year nurses to embrace and honour diversity and to begin to develop their inclusive professional practices?

Key Learnings

- Communication and critical theories can draw our attention to the complexity of communication in Australian health care contexts
- Health care contexts are becoming increasingly diverse with differences in cultural, group and gender identities now being voiced
- A professional nursing identity involving the overarching concept of patient centred care encompasses inclusivity: the acceptance and capacity to cater for the needs of each individual patient
- Nursing students need to reflect on their self-awareness, as well as develop their professional identity, so that they can more effectively demonstrate patient centred care

COMMUNICATION AND CRITICAL THEORIES

Communication and critical perspectives can focus attention on the complexities of communication in a diverse, changing and complex context like health care. Understanding how communication perspectives have evolved helps us appreciate the implications of this diversity and complexity and may provide approaches to developing more inclusive practice.

Models conceptualising communication theory have evolved from Shannon and Weaver's (1948) rudimentary linear model. This model reflected the idea that there was a message as well as a sender and receiver who had little to do with the interpretation of the message so that the message was seen to be essentially independent from both the sender and receiver. While this model does not reflect the two-way nature of communication, nor the role that the sender and receiver both plays, we often communicate as if this were the case. Have you been in a classroom where the teacher transmits their lesson without acknowledgment of either verbal or nonverbal feedback and assumes that students receive the message in the way it was communicated with 100% accuracy? While the linear model did concede that sometimes the message was not effective, it only recognised one form of communication barrier, that related to physical noise [such as a computer falling].

Figure 5.1: Photograph by NeONBRAND on Unsplash

A more sophisticated model of communication, the 'interactive' model of communication, updated the linear model by incorporating the sender's and receiver's perceptions into the model. Within this model, a communicator's perceptions or fields of experience are identified as playing a decisive role in the effectiveness of communication. In addition, the concept of two-way feedback was also identified as being integral to effective communication processes.

Without two-way feedback , communication could be interrupted or disrupted by barriers that can impede the process of communication. For example, semantic or language and word barriers can occur along with psychological or intrapersonal barriers. Intrapersonal barriers stem largely from our perceptions of 'difference' or diversity. They include the assumptions that we make about others and the differences between us. They also encompass our expectations, our fears and anxieties and prompt us to stereotype people which in turn can lead to bias, prejudice and labelling. Likewise, our cultural understandings / misunderstandings can also lead us to experience interpersonal barriers which can emerge largely from cultural or gender difference[s].

A third, more advanced 'transactional' model of communication also appreciates the simultaneous and continuous nature of communication, as well as the fact that communication occurs within a context (a time, place, situation or relationship). The transactional model also identifies communication strategies that can be employed to alleviate barriers: self-awareness, motivation, audience analysis, listening, empathy (Engleberg & Winn, 2015), assertiveness and feedback. Figure 5.2 demonstrates these ideas.

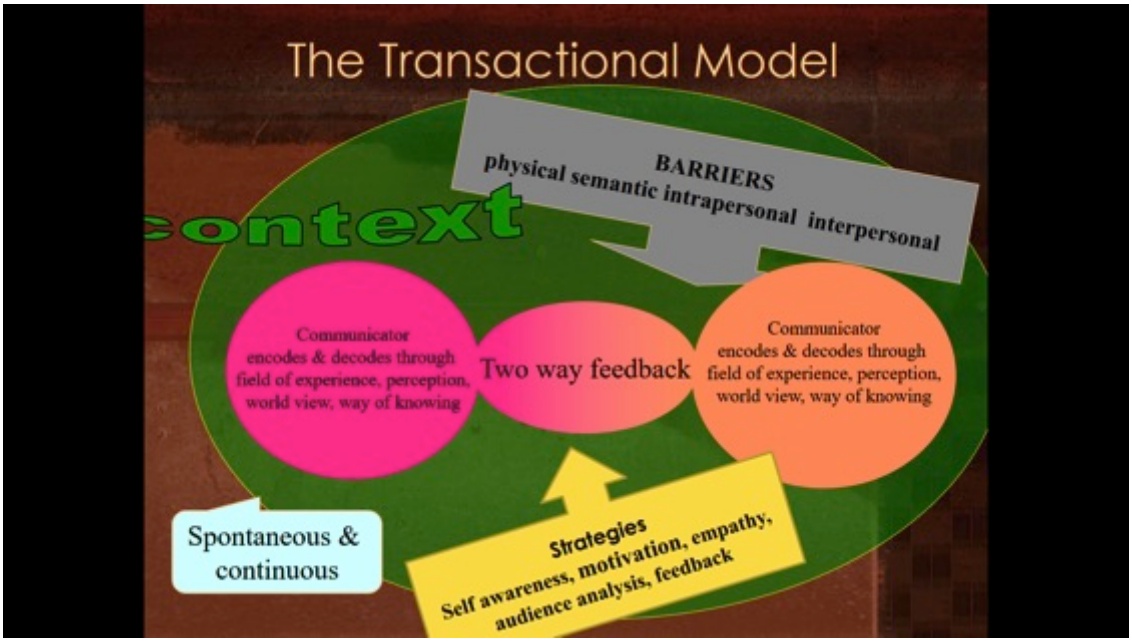

Figure 5.2: Transaction Model of Communication, adapted from Kossen, Kiernan & Lawrence, (2017).

This chapter will explore how these communication barriers, and the strategies to overcome them, underpin the themes of diversity and inclusion in the specific context of healthcare and as enacted by students learning to construct or develop their identities as professional nurses.

Critical theory adds to communication perspectives by considering the ways in which perception shapes communication as a way of maintaining existing regimes of privilege and social control. Its role is so critical that it is defined as a threshold concept in a number of disciplines. In anthropology or ethnography it is defined as culture, and in critical theory as world view, way of knowing or discourses.

In this chapter we define perception as culture and appreciate that all human beings, including ourselves, have and make culture and that culture is reflected in our everyday activities, relationships, social processes, our values, beliefs, norms, customs, possessions, rules, codes, and assumptions about life. Shor (1993) (as cited in Lankshear et al., 1997) argues that "culture is what ordinary people do every day, how they behave, speak, relate and make things. Everyone has and makes culture … culture is the speech and behaviour of everyday life"(p. 30).

Our often taken-for-granted cultural understandings instil ideologies and power structures with the purpose of reproducing conditions in ways which benefit the already-powerful (Giroux, 2007). Advocates of critical pedagogy view communication as inherently political and reject the neutrality of knowledge (Giroux, 2007). In this way, differences from the norm, or the understood, accepted or taken for granted ways of knowing or mainstream culture, are seen to be deficit. Many of us live in a homogenous or common culture that we take for granted and accept as 'natural' or 'normal'. Some of us do not question this cultural understanding. We might not have been exposed to individuals with different perspectives, perceptions of backgrounds, to different groups or cultures or to different ways of understanding and knowing.

Previous chapters have explored how we communicate using specific verbal practices and nonverbal behaviours. This helps us to understand that the same act can have different meanings in different cultures. This includes differences in the cultural understandings of individually and collectively orientated cultures,

and the cultural differences in the way females and males and gender neutral or transgender individuals communicate.

If these understandings from communication and critical theories are merged, then elements of the communication process, for example the context of the communication, the role of culture and the barriers to communication, can be acknowledged as the means by which those in power, whether individuals, organisations or communities, can make judgements that can disempower or marginalise those who are assumed, labelled or stereotyped as being 'different'. Alternatively, if other elements are prioritised or reimagined, then these communication elements can become agencies of empowerment and transformation. For example, empowering elements can encompass self-awareness and an understanding that our own perceptions, culture, world view or way of knowing is just one of many, and that other world views are as equally legitimate as our own.

The chapter will explore these understandings by applying them to the diversity present in the health care context – differences displayed by both patients and staff in the context – as well as to the ways in which student nurses can learn to be more inclusive of the differences they encounter in a health care context.

DIVERSITY IN NURSING

Diversity is ever-present in the health care context. Australia is a multicultural country. In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been in Australia continuously for 60,000 years (Hazelwood & Shakespeare-Finch, 2010). Everyone else is an immigrant of less than 250 years. Australia also has a high level of first-and second-generation immigrants. In 2016 the Australian National Census demonstrated that 33.3 % of Australians were born overseas, and a further 34.4% of people had both parents born overseas. However, numbers of migrants and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people vary across Australia. For example, only 1.6 per cent of the South Australian population identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared to 27.8 per cent of people in the Northern Territory (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2006).

Despite this diversity in the population, Western ideas of communication are the taken-for-granted way of communication in Australia. For example, English is used as the standard language, written communication is valued (in legal matters) and the accessibility of ideas (through the internet), is a taken-for-granted notion reflecting the individualised Western way of communicating.

Figure 5.3: Photograph by rawpixel on Unsplash

With increases in the numbers of graduating nurses born outside Australia, being part of a multicultural healthcare team is now standard in most workplaces. In 2011, 33 per cent of nurses, 56 per cent of General Practioners [GPs] and 47 per cent of specialists in Australian were born overseas (ABS, 2013). This is significant, as the continuing increase of medical professionals from other countries enriches the workplace. However, it can also present many communication challenges in the healthcare environment. The increase in English language proficiency requirements for a registered nurse in Australia (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency [AHPRA], 2014) has reduced spoken-language errors in healthcare environments. However, given that less than 7–10 per cent of the meaning of communication is from verbal communication (or the words alone), there is still a high potential for miscommunication when there are cultural differences in team membership in healthcare settings.

Nurses work in these diverse contexts, with diverse groups and individuals and care for diverse patients or clients. Like educational institutions, health care is at the forefront of diversity. As Crawford, Candlin and Roger (2017) contend, with increasing cultural diversity among nurses and their clients in Australia, there are growing concerns relating to the potential for miscommunication, as differences in language and culture can cause misunderstandings which can have serious impacts on health outcomes and patient safety (Hamilton & Woodward-Kron, 2010). Grant and Luxford (2011) add that there is little research into the way health professionals approach working with difference or how these impact on their everyday practice. Furthermore, there has been minimal examination of intercultural nurse–patient communication from a linguistic perspective.

Applying communication and critical models and strategies to nursing practice can help nurses understand what is happening in their communication with patients, particularly where people from different groups or cultures are interacting. Applying these approaches can help to raise awareness of underlying causes and

potentially lead to more effective communication skills and therapeutic relationships, and therefore enhanced patient satisfaction and safety.

APPLYING COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVES TO DIVERSITY IN THE HEALTHCARE CONTEXT

Semantic, language and words are barriers that emerge in health care contexts (Graham & Lawrence, 2015). When first entering any unfamiliar healthcare context or workplace, it is important to recognise there will be a new or unfamiliar language. Out of necessity, healthcare environments use healthcare jargon terms, which confuse not only new healthcare professionals but patients as well. This language use can lead to semantic barriers and generate difficulties in interactions with healthcare professionals (Graham & Lawrence, 2015). To complicate matters, there are many commonly used healthcare acronyms related to medication and treatment that are specific to specialised areas. Many are Latin, and their full meanings not intuitive – particularly for students whose first language is not Latin-based like English. Examples include mane (morning), nocté (night), prn (when required), stat (immediately), tds (three time a day) – there are many others.

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC, 2011) has published a list of acceptable commonly used abbreviations /acronyms and identified abbreviations that have caused adverse patient events due to the acronym being mistaken for something different. For example, the abbreviation/ acronym CA can be written to represent carbohydrate, (cancer) antigen, cancer, cardiac arrest or community-acquired. ACSQHC recommends writing the full medical term in patient charts, followed by its acronym, in the first instance to ensure patient safety. Despite these recommendations, it is common in healthcare settings to hear sentences constructed almost entirely of healthcare jargon and acronyms.

Intrapersonal and interpersonal communication barriers can be endemic in the health care context. From a cultural perspective, the power distance or hierarchical structure within healthcare settings are much more structured and more clearly defined than in the wider Australian communities. Similarly, the need for clear lines of authority and the call to minimise ambiguity in all communication to safeguard patient safety, mean communication within healthcare settings tends to be much more direct than it is in the broader population. Outside health care, such power differences are less clearly defined, and might even be able to be avoided completely. In a case such as this, where patient needs are paramount, healthcare staff need to develop strategies for communicating and effectively advocating for their patients.

Patients and healthcare staff who have grown up in a collectivist culture are likely to have a stronger sense of family commitment than is typical in the broader Australian community. Although Australian healthcare staff, patients and family members care deeply about family members, they are more likely to negotiate caring responsibilities with others. Being from a collective culture may mean healthcare staff are unavailable to work due to family commitments, or patients' relatives may insist on staying with an ill family member in hospital during treatment. This strong sense of family duty, and the resulting obligations are amplified when accompanied by strong loyalty. It is important that this deep sense of duty is recognised and accommodated where possible.

The non-verbal element of personal space is another area of significant difference between broader Australian culture and healthcare culture. For example, when providing treatment, nurses need to be physically closer to patients than is usual outside a healthcare setting. Although healthcare professionals are accustomed to close physical and often intimate personal interactions, they still need to gain consent from patients and explain

what is being undertaken and why it is important. The need for this consideration is even greater in cultural groups where higher levels of personal modesty are the cultural norm.

With such diversity and difference present in health care contexts, how do nursing students begin to develop an approach that assists them to understand the depth of diversity and its impact on their professional nursing practice? How do they develop an approach that is inclusive of the diversity they encounter in the health care context? In nursing an inclusive approach is synonymous with the concept of Patient Centred Care. The next section explains how student nurses can be encouraged to think about who they are and why they need to focus on developing their patient centred care, or an inclusive approach to their nursing practice.

PATIENT CENTRED CARE

Patient (person) Centred Care [PCC] is a care approach that considers the whole person and is important for nurses to be aware of in order to inform and foster inclusive care practice and 'become ' a Registered Nurse. A PCC approach improves health outcomes of individuals and their families (Arbuthnott & Sharpe, 2009; Arnetz et al., 2010; Beach, et al., 2005; Boulding, Glickman, Manary, Schulman, & Staelin, 2011). It is a concept that consists of several constructs and as a consequence, a globally accepted definition of PCC is yet to be formed. The main widely accepted constructs of PCC include person, 'personhood' and effective communication.

The term 'person' acknowledges a human being has rights, especially in relation to decisions and choice (including being sensitive to nonmedical/spiritual aspects of care, patient needs and preferences), and being respected (Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, 2012; International Council of Nurses, 2012; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 1948; 1976). The term 'person' reflects that a person is a human being, who is made of several human dimensions. These dimensions include intellectual, environment, spiritual, socio-cultural, emotional, and physical, all of which operate together to form the whole person (Smith, 2014).

Personhood is the expression of being human, that is one's humanity. A nurse can seek out an individual's personhood by spending time communicating with them (the patient). In particular, communicating with them in order to find out what interests them, what is important to them, what concerns them and what threatens them (Dempsey, 2014). Importantly though, the element of PCC vital to improving health outcomes is presence of effective communication between the nurse and the patient and the patient's family in order to facilitate information sharing (Dempsey, 2014; Kitson, Marshall, Bassett, & Zeitz, 2012).

For communication to be effective, it needs to be based on mutual trust and respect. Trust and respect are key enablers in the establishment of a therapeutic relationship with patients (Dempsey, 2014; Kitson, et al., 2012). Other core dimensions of PCC include: education, emotional and physical support, continuity, transition and coordination of care, involvement of family and friends and access to care (ACSQHC, 2011). When delivering PCC, it is important to consider all these constructs and dimensions as a whole unit, and how they work in unison to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of a patient and their family. Therefore, as first year nurses, awareness of these PCC constructs and their benefits are essential in order to foster inclusive care practice.

The next step is to provide student nurses with several building block activities, designed to:

- Raise their self-awareness of the values they hold as 'being' human' and their associated behaviours in a everyday way of being.

- Raise their awareness of the values the nursing profession holds.
- Identify 'ways of being in every day practice' in order to develop the values and behaviours that the nursing profession holds in promoting inclusive care practice.

Reflection

The following activity can help us to understand the implications of this way of thinking in our approach to the values we hold. What do we value in 'being' human?

- Reflect on the values you place on being human. Write down your thoughts in the first column.
- What behaviours shows these values in action? Write down these behaviours in the second column.

Values I place on being human	Behaviours that reflect my values in being human

The nursing profession holds specfic values in relation to 'being' human. There are, for example, multiple Codes of Practice that designate these values. These include the International Council of Nurses (2012) with the ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's (2018) Registered Nurse Standards for Practice and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, and the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's (2018) Code of Professional Conduct for Nurses in Australia. Today's rapid changes in value systems in society are causing health care to encounter more ethical and philosophical challenges at providing care to its clients. These changes have created diverse and changing nursing environments that require professional nursing.

- What behaviours would you show to reflect these values in your inclusive professional practice?
- Write down these behaviours in the second column.

Values we placed on being human	Behaviours that reflect our profession's values in being human

Now we compare our personal values to the professional values towards 'being' human to help us develop inclusive practice?

1. Circle the values and corresponding behaviours that are a match.
2. Identify the values and the corresponding behaviours that do not match by highlighting these with a highlighter pen.
3. Write down three strategies you could begin to implement in your everyday 'way of being' (behaviour) towards other people, to address areas that were a mismatch to your professional codes of practice.

Strategies to implement to improve my way of being with others to ensure my behaviour reflects the nursing standards and codes of practice

1.

2.

3.

We can see how developing the concept of professional behaviours, or in the context of health care, Patient (person)-centred care, is a professional approach that considers the whole person and is important for first year nurses to be aware of in order to inform and foster their inclusive care practice in 'becoming' a Registered Nurse. By considering the patient as a person with their own values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, student nurses are beginning to overcome some of the barriers that can arise when they communicate across difference. The following case study shows how one student is developing her person-centred care.

Case Study

I would like to show I care as a student nurse on my first clinical placement firstly by getting to know the people I will be working with, by understanding my scope of practice through a thorough orientation, not being too nervous and hopefully feeling relaxed and confident, this will certainly put me in better stead to show my caring nature. I will ask many questions (at appropriate times) to help me to understand conditions and diagnosis and this will assist me to understand about the people in my care. Building a rapport with patients and taking the time to get to know them will be top of the list for showing I care for patients, I would also build rapport with their families to help ease their worry, as I know it is awfully difficult leaving a loved one in hospital and uncertainty of the unknown and wishing there was more they could do. Through a transactional communication model, congruent body language, displaying genuine interest, being empathetic, positive, encouraging, honest and respectful and culturally aware, I will hopefully be off to a good start in showing my caring nature on my first student placement.

In this next section we link ideas derived from communication and critical perspectives and those of Patient Centred Care to the strategies or skills and competencies to enhance an inclusive approach in a health care context.

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL TO DEVELOP AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH

A conceptual model to develop an inclusive approach presents three practices that emerge from integrating communication and critical theories with Patient Centred Care (Lawrence,2015). The three practices include self-awareness and reflective practice, communicative practice and critical awareness of context (or critical practice). The practices underpin a conceptual model depicted below in Figure 5.4.

Figure 5.4: Model for Inclusive Practices, Lawrence, (2015).

SELF-AWARENESS AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Developing self-awareness is more complex than most people imagine. It is difficult to change or shift our taken-for-granted assumptions and expectations and to accept others' differences without judging them. Listen to this TED talk about cultural identity, how our lives, our cultures, are composed of many overlapping stories. Novelist Chimamanda Adichie tells the story of how she found her authentic cultural voice — and warns that if we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding.

To encourage nursing students to make this shift they are asked to reflect on their self-awareness by using the Johari window. The activity below assists them to accomplish this.

Activity 1

Develop your self-awareness with the Johari Window

- Watch: The Johari Window in Model
- Complete the quadrants of the Johari window reflecting about your nonverbal communication as an example. Then, ask a peer, class or work colleague or friend, family member, etc. to add their reflections about your nonverbal communication.
- Reflect about what you might have discovered about your own self-awareness. How could you learn more about how others perceive you?
-

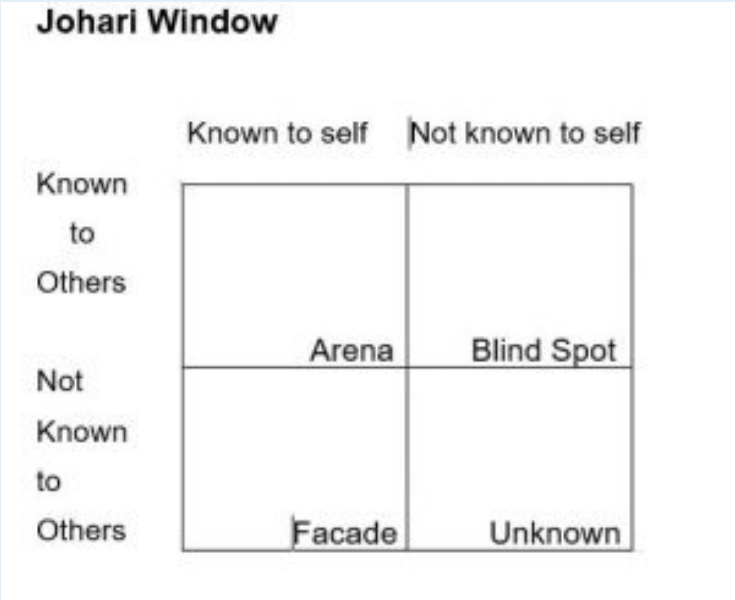

Figure 5.5 Johari Window, Public Domain image, Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johari_window#/media/File:Johari_Window.PNG

- Culturally safe and respectful practice requires having knowledge of how a nurse's own culture, values, attitudes, assumptions and belief's influence their interaction with people and families, community and colleagues.
- Refer to the Code of Conduct for nurses (NMBA, 2018). Which principle/s do you think aligns with this activity?

Activity 2

Interview someone who has worked in a health care context and ask them about their experiences and what helped them to be confident in the new context.

- Your task is to ask your interviewee about their nursing experiences / problem solving strategies they have developed; what worked for them; did they become more comfortable in a clinical situation; how did they balance life, study, children and work; something they found unexpected; one thing they wished they had known at the start.

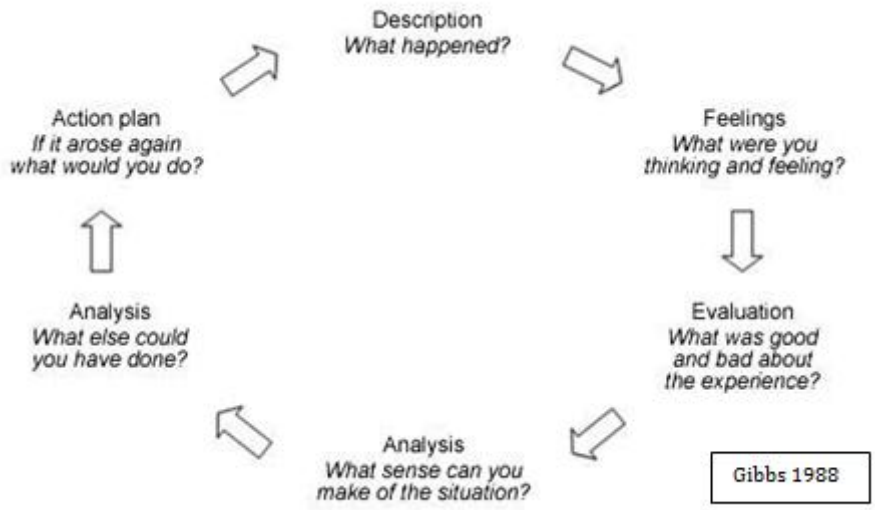

Figure 5.6: Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988)

Activity 3

Build your reflection skills by practicing Gibb's reflective cycle (1988).

- Reflective practice is another important strategy you can engage in to develop your self-awareness, understanding of situations and interactions encountered in practice and your own responses to these. There are quite a few frameworks for reflective practice.
- Apply the stages of Gibbs Reflective Cycle to the interview you conducted in Activity 2. In the feelings stage outline one surprising thing that you discovered about nursing and patient-centred care that differed from the expectations you had about nursing and in the action plan stage put forward a strategy that we can use to become comfortable with an unfamiliar group or individual in a context is our ability to reflect on the behaviours, languages or jargon in the context.

In a practical sense this means that we need to observe, monitor, to watch, listen to and reflect on other's or the group's behaviours and practices and to learn from our observations. In a health care or clinical context for example, how do you address clients, colleagues and supervisors? What happens if you don't do this well? Where do you need to go to find out about the accepted requirements for interaction? Is there a source of help and assistance? Lawrence (2015) suggests that one way to learn how to understand this is to watch how our colleagues and clinical supervisors communicate with us, analyse their practices, the kinds of information that are valued and begin to develop evidence-based practice. What do our studies inform us about? What does the research literature say? What exactly does this mean for our practice and our communication in that context? Good observation techniques can save us a lot of time as well as help to identify the group and/or individuals we need to communicate with in the new context. It is important to recognise too that if we do not know the practices in the new context, we are not deficient, we are unfamiliar.

COMMUNICATIVE PRACTICE

The second practice relates to communication. Communicating effectively helps gain and develop an understanding of an unfamiliar culture, group or person being engaged with as well as their specific behaviours and practices. The specific communication strategies discussed here include seeking help and

information, participating in a group or team, and making social contact and conversation. In terms of communication theory, these practices signify 'feedback' and facilitate more effective communication between communicators.

Seeking help and information is an important communication strategy which cannot be underestimated. It is critical in understanding another's' beliefs, values and cultural practices. We cannot assume that we can understand another person or patient because they are a certain age, nationality or have a certain sexual preference. We have to seek their help in developing our understanding of them, and in a health care context our understanding of their needs and requirements.

In daily life the evidence is overwhelming. Kids Help Lines assist younger people cope with changes in their lives. Cancer Support groups are set up to help people diagnosed with cancer to develop sources of support and information. The following case study documents students' clinical experiences of seeking help and information.

Case Study

I would admit it has been difficult to understand some of the strong ethnic accents when they talk. I don't want to appear rude but I have to ask them to repeat what they have said.

One of our Indian CNs wasn't able to communicate with an old digger who was being quite rude and abusive to her. She asked me if I would assist him as there was not going to be the opportunity for her to do so as he was not going to change his mind. She wasn't upset or angry, she tried, she handed over and all was good, because I was able to culturally communicate with him, as I am Australian, from the bush with a military background. Nurses need to work with the understanding that no two persons are the same and communication and respect are important.

I found that working for Blue Care and in the hospital the problem with communication is either with the patient or client (most elderly) who is hard to understand as they are unable to speak clearly and unable to voice their concerns. Or that information was not handed over properly, as staff are usually flat out and understaffed. I find it's better to go to the patient's care plan or file and look at progress notes thus getting a basic detail of the history of the person. I feel if we just take a little bit of time and to listen to others we might hear something, others can't hear.

It is important to reflect on our own attitudes to asking for help. Some people don't find it easy to ask for help. Kossen, Kiernan and Lawrence (2017) suggest that some may believe asking for help is a sign of 'weakness' while others may feel that they lack the confidence to ask. Still others might be reluctant to ask because they are overconfident about their own abilities. Others may feel they do not have the 'right', or believe that they could be considered 'stupid', or they may equate help as 'remedial'. Other groups' cultural belief systems may not value asking for help or do not prioritise it.

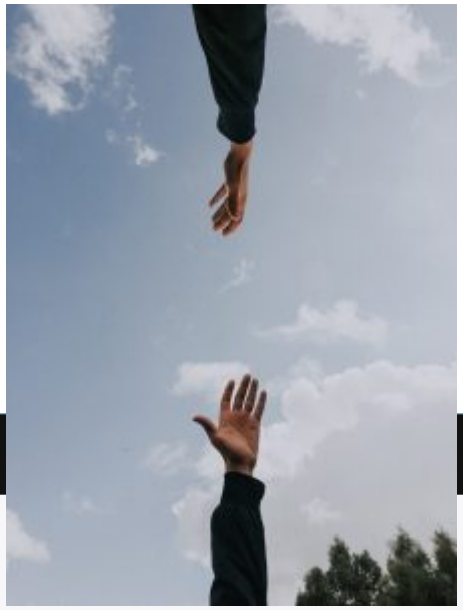

Figure 5.6: Photograph by youssef naddam on Unsplash

Case Study

Again students reflect about why they felt unwillingness to ask for help and support.

Sometimes, my fear of conflict prevents me from communicating effectively because I tend to keep quiet rather than express my own point of view or speak up if I feel something is incorrect. Sometimes I cannot understand the supervisor what he means, so I must ask again.

This is really uncomfortable for me. The biggest part of communication is to have to ask for help. Recently I asked for help from one of my colleagues and was nervous to see them as I may appear stupid for just not getting it.

Reflection

- Reflect about your approach to asking for help. For example, do you hesitate to ask because it is difficult for you?
- I sometimes hesitate because I sometimes feel that I do not like to bother people with my problems?

Asking for help is critical in building our learning capacities, so it is vital not to minimise the value of this skill. However it must be done appropriately and professionally. We need to prepare ourselves, for example asking 'who to ask' and 'how to ask'. The question about 'who to ask' often requires research. The most appropriate one to use may need prior investigation, where we use sources of information gained by making social contact and conversation. It is also useful to reflect on how to seek help and information. This is because the way that we ask needs to be socially and culturally fine-tuned to the particular context. In relation to verbal communication, we may need to consider the actual words we will use. Will we use colloquial language or jargon, long sentences or short sentences? Will we prepare and practice how to ask? Will we ask directly or indirectly? How close will we stand?

Physically, how and where we will ask for help (in consultation times, on a forum, using email, through an appeal if it is about a grade)? In terms of nonverbal communication we would need to think about our gestures, facial expression, body language and whether we use direct or indirect eye contact. In terms of paralinguistics what tone of voice, what pace, volume and pitch will we use? We need to ensure our choices are appropriate to our context. The verbal and non-verbal ways we would seek help and information from a lecturer would, for example, differ from the ways we would ask our friends or our employer or a client in an aged care institution.

Participating in a group or team

The communication strategy used when participating in a group or team can help us develop our confidence as well as contribute to critical thinking and questioning. This is essential in both learning and professional contexts and is crucial in team-centred workplaces like nursing or healthcare contexts.

Case Study

Students reflect about their use of this strategy or practice using online tools:

Having things like blackboard collaborate was extremely beneficial. The feedback, the advice I received, and the fact that I saw that people were in a similar boat with study helped me stay focused and determined.

I had what I thought was a lot of experience when it came to acquiring information from digital resources. When it comes to developing my skills I realised I am not as knowledgeable as I thought. There are more ways to access information that I had no knowledge of or had access to. I found that participating in online forums was very helpful in learning due to giving and receiving advice from and to other students. I am gaining a lot of confidence and more digital literacy skills.

Reflection

- Observe your colleagues' and peers' use of team work.
- Write down one example of a strategy that contributes to effective teamwork and one strategy that negatively affects the team's productivity.

Building team and group capacities not only helps gain confidence in performing in health care contexts, they can also help gain employment and/or promotion. Team and group capacities assist with accomplishing professional tasks more effectively and productively. However, the verbal and nonverbal behaviours and cultural beliefs underlying this skill also change from person to person, culture to culture, place to place, context to context. Some individuals may feel more comfortable with team work while others prefer to work independently. Some groups enjoy early getting-to-know-you humour before they progress to the actual work of the meeting, hand over or consultation? Some groups are more collectively orientated while others more individually orientated. Cross-cultural theory sees these differences in behaviours as cultural practices or cultural literacy. But the fact is that we often take our own behaviours and practices for granted while perceiving others' ways as different or deficit. It is important to stress that **one way is not better than the other – just different.**

Making social contact and conversation

This practice not only increases our sources of support it also assists in brainstorming solutions or solving problems. Confidence in employing this practice will increase our capacity to develop networks, learning circles, mentors, friends and partners.

Case Study

Again students reflect on their capacities to make social contact.

When I came here in Australia five years ago, my communication skills were very limited. High school helped me a lot and talking to different people in English really built up my communication skills. I have a great support system around me including two great girls who I have met on clinical. It is great to have them to talk to and ask questions we also keep each other on track. I also have a friend who graduated last year so this is also a great avenue to receive information and get help. I will be working in the industry during my studies so I believe I will have plenty of help from experienced nurses when I need it.

I didn't know anyone when I started, but I met a 2nd year undergraduate in the library who took me under her wing and showed me how to use the library, photocopier, Study Desk online and forums. She also added me to her study group on Facebook. I was very thankful that she took her time to show me these vital things.

Reflection

- Observe your colleagues and peers' use of this strategy.
- Write down three approaches that you would feel comfortable in using to make social contact.

Again there can be differences in the ways that individuals and groups approach this strategy as its use needs to be socially and culturally fine-tuned to the specific context or situation. Its use depends on a very complex social and cultural interplay of factors. For example, do you need to be introduced before you are able to meet someone? Do you need to think of a suitable topic with which to start a conversation (for example the weather,

a significant cultural event)? Are there 'taboo' subjects which could lead to a communication barrier or even offense? What kinds of personal information can you use to help authenticate your status and position which may be necessary for establishing relationships in particular cultural groups? Are there any unwritten social mores regarding this skill which would mean that if you were to ignore or overlook them would there be a risk offending someone?

Critical awareness of context

The third practice is the most difficult. Critical practice moves beyond our self-awareness of our own belief systems and cultural practices to include an awareness of the relationships in operation around us. This is called critical self-awareness or more generally critical practice. Critical practice involves a) the ability to seek and give feedback about specific practices and belief systems and b) an awareness of the power relationships operating in the context or culture.

Seeking and giving feedback is critical. For example, teachers give feedback all the time in assignments, in class and on forums. Students want feedback as feedback assists students to improve their skills and knowledge. In a nursing workplace there will be performance reviews and case conferences and seeking feedback allows you to learn more about your own practices and beliefs as well as those of your colleagues and peers. It also allows you to check whether your understandings and interpretations about these are accurate. Asking for and giving feedback is also an empowering strategy. When it is positive it can facilitate teamwork, improve interpersonal relationships and lead to greater productivity.

Providing constructive feedback or negative feedback, in socially and culturally appropriate ways, can be a difficult and risky strategy. It can be vital in being assertive, in putting forward your point of view, in developing flexibility, in time management, in preventing stress and in minimising conflict. For example, in keeping patients safe, sometimes nurses have to take their colleagues to one side and tell them that they are not doing something correctly or the way they communicate with others is not being well received. If you are inadvertently offending someone then it is much better if that person were to let you know.

Case Study

Student nurses reflect about situations where feedback became an important strategy in avoiding communication barriers and in enabling them to fulfil their study goals.

The communication error I witnessed was in my class. We were learning about long bones, and our practical involved dissecting a bone from a cow. Our lecturer completely forgot to mention that the bone was from a cow. We cut the bone, and one lady was standing back. It was lucky that she realised herself that it was a cow's bone, as she followed a religion which meant that the cow was a sacred animal to her religion. It was an honest communication error in which the lecturer apologised profusely.

If someone is offending you then it is important for you, in a socially and culturally acceptable manner, to provide them with some constructive and careful feedback that would help to overcome this potential barrier between you and the other person. You could, for example, use the the following strategy:

- Prepare what you want to say, as well as when, where and how, beforehand.
- Start with something positive and/ or place yourself in their situation (be empathetic).
- Give your reasons and/or explanations for why you feel offended/disagree.
- Provide an alternative or state what specific action you would like them to do.

Reflection

Provide some examples of where you either sought or gave feedback about specific practices whether or not they achieved the solution you were aiming for.

- For example, you might want to give a lecturer feedback about how marks were distributed in an assignment.
- Your outcome might be to have your marks increased.

Power relationships

Power relationships operating in the culture or context can affect our effectiveness. If you were studying social science or politics you would be studying power relationships for the entire degree. Power is the ability to influence or control the behaviour of people. Sometimes power is seen as authority which is the power which is perceived as legitimate by the social structure surrounding the context. Examples would encompass a Federal or State or Local Government, a Hospital Board, the University Council. Sometimes power can be seen as evil or unjust and you might agree or disagree with the decisions made.

However the exercise of power is accepted as pervasive to humans as social beings. In the business environment, power can be upward or downward. With downward power, a company's superior influences subordinates. When an organisation exerts upward power, it is the subordinates who influence the decisions of the leader. In higher education academic staff can be seen as having more power than you as first year students? Health care workers or nurses will be witnesses to power relationships both in their studies and clinical experiences. Domestic violence, whether physical or verbal, is an expression of power.

Case Study

In thinking about my conversations about caring I engaged with the concept of putting on a new face for the next patient you see, I find this particularly difficult as I can be emotive at times and this is something that I will be working on for my future practice. I am also aware that body language has an important role in this interaction and my facial expressions can give me away at times also. Other strategies that I use to communication towards others is talking at the eye level of the person instead of standing over them, sitting beside their bed so there is no power play happening as I believe we already display a power imbalance through our knowledge, practice and skills we have developed so the patient who is unwell and in a vulnerable position, whether they are laying down, sitting, or with people standing over them can be at eye level. Ways in which I have shown care is by building a rapport with people and their families, asking about their interests, their concerns by actively listening, acknowledging, paraphrasing to understand and responding appropriately also giving space or silence when needed. I also like to follow up any with any questions that the person has that I may not have the answer to and respond back in a timely manner or refer the person to someone who may be able to explain, I like to be authentic and honest. In times that I have shown care towards others it has mostly been positive although there were times when the person was in pain or just fed up with their situation and they were short with me or just plain rude and abrupt and this was understandable considering their situation, so not taking everything on board is important when caring for people and usually an apology slips in down the track when they are feeling better, although I have explained sometimes to people I care for that "I am doing my very best and I understand you are not well, but let's try and get through this together" that usually puts a different spin on the outcome of care and a genuine, honest understanding of each other.

I am of Aboriginal decent but due to my appearance am not recognised as such by the public. An example of discrimination was in a meeting group when one lady very openly pronounced some offensive things not only in front of me but also in front of another fellow Aboriginal student. We were all offended by the comments but chose to only discuss our feelings amongst ourselves afterwards. This was very unprofessional and in a patient/professional environment very inappropriate.

Reflection

- Reflect about when you may have experienced or witnessed discrimination

The three practices are lifelong learning skills that can assist us to be more inclusive and help nurses practice patient centred care. For example each will have particular ways of communicating and operating. The practices can instil in us a resilience that enables us to apply and re-apply these practices so that we are empowered to practice inclusivity whenever diversity emerges in the fast moving and complex world in which we live.

CONCLUSION

This chapter explored how our awareness of self shapes our capacities to adapt to develop a more inclusive approach to diversity by integrating the concept of Patient Cantered Care. Patient Centred Care was described as an inclusive practice that new student nurses need to understand and practice as they progress through their degrees. The twin concepts of awareness of self and awareness of context were used to inform a model of inclusion. The model emphasises the use of self-awareness and reflective practice, communicative practice and critical awareness of context. These practices can assist nurses to develop patient centred care, at its heart an approach that by its nature, is inclusive.

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CHAPTER 6

Positioning ourselves in multicultural education: Opening our eyes to culture

RENEE DESMARCHELIER AND JON AUSTIN

How do we, as teachers, position ourselves in relation to multiculturalism, multicultural policies and education system requirements and expectations?

Key Learnings

- Australian schools are increasingly catering for ethnically and culturally diverse student populations.
- Through recognising that culture is something everyone has, we start to unpack our own attitudes to culture and multicultural education.
- A physical cultural audit collects data in the form of observations and/or photographs of the physical spaces around us and analyses them for the messages they give about the culture/s present in a particular environment.
- Recognising our own cultural postions assists unpacking our own and the education systems expectations and requirements of culturally diverse students.

UNDERSTANDING 'CULTURE' IN 'MULTICULTURAL'

CULTURE AS A SLIPPERY CONCEPT

In coming to a chapter considering multicultural education, participants may consider that they have a good understanding of the idea of what multicultural means. However, it is a term that is used extensively within the Australian context, across multiple formal educational settings and quite often in an unproblematic way. There are many policies connecting to the idea of multicultural, such as Queensland's Multicultural Recognition Act 2016 (Figure 1).

Interestingly, the definitions section of this act does not contain a definition of multicultural. Instead it seems to assume that a reader would understand what is implied by this term. It is worth noting that the term diversity in relation to the idea of being multicultural is defined as "cultural, linguistic and religious diversity" (Queensland Multicultural Recognition Act , 2016, p. 5). This chapter contends that in order to understand what is meant by a term such as multicultural, it is first necessary to consider what could be meant by the term

culture. As you can see from Figure 6.1, official considerations of the idea of multiculturalism depend upon something termed *cultural diversity*.

Multicultural Recognition Act 2016

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The *Multicultural Recognition Act 2016* (PDF) was passed as a Bill on 16 February 2016 and commenced on 1 July 2016.

The Act:

- promotes Queensland as a united, harmonious and inclusive community and will foster opportunities for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to participate in all aspects of life in our prosperous state
- acknowledges that a diverse, dynamic and cohesive society will deliver important benefits for all Queenslanders, including the community, government and business sectors
- recognises our diverse cultural heritage and aims to ensure that government services are responsive to the needs of our multicultural communities.

Figure 6.1: Queensland Multicultural Recognition Act (2016). Retrieved from https://www.communities.qld.gov.au/multicultural/policy-governance/multicultural-recognition-act-2016

While both the terms *culture* and *multicultural* are often presented as simple in their meaning, upon closer investigation, they are complex, slippery and hard to pin down. While 'common sense' understandings exist in the public consciousness, to critically engage with multicultural education we need to interrogate these ideas a little further.

Figure 6.2: Photograph by ACME Squares. (2011).

Often, particularly within the context of policy documents and ideas around multicultural education, the idea of culture depends on the original nationality or country of origin of a group of people. This might extend not only to where a person was born but also to where their parents and/or grandparents were born. It might refer to a whole national context or a regional area within a particular nation. The tie here is to ethnicity as a way of defining cultural diversity.

Linguistic diversity is also often considered to be part of multicultural considerations (as seen in the Queensland Multicultural Recognition Act, 2016). Language and culture exist in a complex relationship where they are both expressions of each other. If we consider culture to be related to shared values and beliefs of a given group, one way in which these are expressed and communicated is through language. Language development is influenced by culture, and while two individuals from different communities may share a language, they may not necessarily share the same understanding of the use of particular word/phrases.

Figure 6.3: Photograph by Adiputra, M., (2010).

Figure 6.4: Photograph by Fœ, (2013). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Didgeridoo_(Imagicity_1070).jpg

Sometimes, culture is represented through physical artefacts, clothing or symbols, as well as artistic representations such as painting (e.g., on the didgeridoo on the left) and music. Often these are linked to certain traditions, ceremonies or cultural activities with embedded implicit, as well as explicit, meanings. Superficial consideration of a particular culture through its physical representations can result if the intricacies of a particular tradition/representation are not well understood. There is danger in physical representations being misunderstood and feeding into stereotypical ideas/ideals of what a particular culture might be like, particularly if considered in isolation.

In many celebrations of diversity, food is central to displaying and sharing groups' differing cultural backgrounds. Diverse communities come together to experience each other's cultures through consuming dishes that are considered to be representative of traditional ways of eating. Food is related to the natural environment, local knowledges about cultivation and gathering, religious beliefs, methods of preparation, norms of how meals are shared and how/when specific foods might be able to be consumed. Again, the interconnectedness of food and culture is more complex than it may seem on the surface and perhaps difficult to grasp through one-off or limited experiences (particularly if isolated from a cultural context).

Figure 6.5: Photograph by S2art, (2005).

Underlying the markers of culture are less tangible aspects of culture that relate to how cultural groups relate to each other, develop societal expectations and norms. While food, flags, festivals, language and art might provide visible markers, they do not of themselves constitute a particular culture. Concepts such as peoples' roles related to their age, notions of family and notions of self are influenced by culture as are approaches to social situations such as treatment of elders, raising of children and the importance of individuals and community.

SO, WHAT DOES 'MULTICULTURAL' MEAN?

Figure 6.6: Photograph by DIAC images, (2010).

In the public consciousness, the meaning of being multicultural most often relates to peoples' cultural backgrounds, largely defined by ethnicity (particularly in relation to being non-Anglo-Australian) and living together in a particular society. What this 'looks like' and how (or if) it is best achieved can differ substantially according to an individual's position on issues such as who should/has the position of privilege; what is acceptable and not acceptable in terms of cultural expression; should sameness be the goal or should difference be celebrated; and do particular groups have the right to make decisions in their own best interests?

Steinberg and Kincheloe (2009, pp. 4-5) describe different manifestations of multiculturalism:

a) Conservative diversity practice and multiculturalism or monoculturalism:

- privileges Western patriarchal culture;
- promotes the Western canon as a universally civilising influence;
- has often targeted multiculturalism as an enemy of Western progress;
- sees the children of the poor and non-white as culturally deprived; and
- attempts to assimilate everyone capable of assimilation to a Western, middle-/upper-middle-class standard.

b) Liberal diversity practice and multiculturalism:

- emphasises the natural equality and common humanity of individuals from diverse race, class, and gender groups;
- focuses attention on the sameness of individuals from diverse groups;
- argues that inequality results from a lack of opportunity;
- maintains that the problems individuals from divergent backgrounds face are individual difficulties, not socially structured adversities;
- claims ideological neutrality on the basis that politics should be separated from education; and
- accepts the assimilationist goals of conservative multiculturalism.

c) Pluralist diversity practice and multiculturalism:

- shares many values of liberal multiculturalism but focuses more on race, class, and gender differences than similarities;
- exoticises difference and positions it as necessary knowledge for those who would compete in a globalised economy;
- contends that school curriculum should consist of studies of various divergent groups;
- promotes pride in group heritage; and
- avoids the use of the concept of oppression.

d) Left-essentialist diversity practice and multiculturalism:

- maintains that race, class and gender categories consist of a set of unchanging priorities (essences);
- defines groups and membership in groups around the barometer of authenticity (fidelity to the unchanging priorities of the historical group in question);
- romanticises the group, in the process erasing the complexity and diversity of its history;
- assumes that only authentically oppressed people can speak about particular issues concerning a specific group; and
- often is involved in struggles with other subjugated groups over whose oppression is most elemental (takes precedence over all other forms).

e) Critical diversity and multiculturalism:

- focuses on contextual issues of power and domination;
- promotes critical pedagogy as a way of understanding how educational institutions work in terms of power;

- makes no pretense of neutrality, as it honours the notion of egalitarianism and the elimination of human suffering;
- rejects the assumption that education provides consistent socioeconomic mobility for working-class and non-white students;
- identifies what gives rise to race, class and gender inequalities;
- formulates modes of resistance that help marginalised groups and individuals assert their self-determination and self-direction;
- is committed to social justice and the egalitarian democracy that accompanies it; and
- examines issues of privilege and how they shape social and educational reality.

UNDERSTANDING OUR OWN CULTURE TO UNDERSTAND 'OTHERS'

One of the aspects of culture that has become increasingly important, and therefore far more intensely researched or investigated, is that of dominant and subordinate relationships between cultures. It is important to realise that whilst this material talks about cultures, as if it is possible to clearly identify and contain specific cultures, as if there are certain homogeneities or commonalities that allow distinctive cultures to be identified and named, each person experiences culture in their own idiosyncratic way. That is, despite the need for the purposes of this chapter to talk about cultures as if they are internally consistent, by no means is this the case in the lived experience of people. For example, to talk about Greek culture or Indigenous culture is to perpetuate a very serious error in understanding the fluid and relational aspect of what constitutes culture. However, for the purposes of this chapter, we will work with this sense of broadly monolithic or homogenous cultures.

To say that every person has 'culture' potentially casts the individual and their communities as passive recipients and carriers of culture. This perspective ignores the very important fact that we all also create (and re-create) or construct (and re-construct) culture through the very practices of everyday living. As Paulo Freire (2009) pointed out, culture is made by people, and can therefore be remade by people to better serve their emerging needs and purposes. In other words, being 'cultured' is a continuously active process, and forms the basis for what we might see as the ongoing development of identity, as well as social change.

Once we understand that everyone has 'culture' and that this is not just the province of those who would seem to be culturally different or Other to us, then the focus of areas of study such as anthropology, history, sociology and education in particular broaden considerably to include the culture of those undertaking the enquiry. This has not always been the case. By way of example, anthropology grew as a discipline that had, as its core purpose, to make the seemingly strange cultures of Others understandable to those of Western European backgrounds. In its early days, anthropologists undertook extensive fieldwork in 'exotic' locations, attempting to understand the strangeness that they found (or created) there.

THE GAZE

Because we live the large part of our lives within our own primary or home culture, because that culture is the one that we have been born into, educated regarding, and live on a daily basis, each of our own ways of living or being or knowing seem to us to be 'the way things are'. That is, our own cultural perspective seems to be right or proper, and the way people should aspire and be helped to live. This is because we have grown up and been acculturated into a way of living that we see almost daily as universal or applicable to everyone. Our way is the best way. Those for whom a different cultural context is the norm similarly see the world from that different cultural perspective. The end result is that each of us sees, interprets, and labels cultures other than

ours in a particular way whilst at the same time reinforcing views of the acceptability of our own culture. Figure 6.7 represents this:

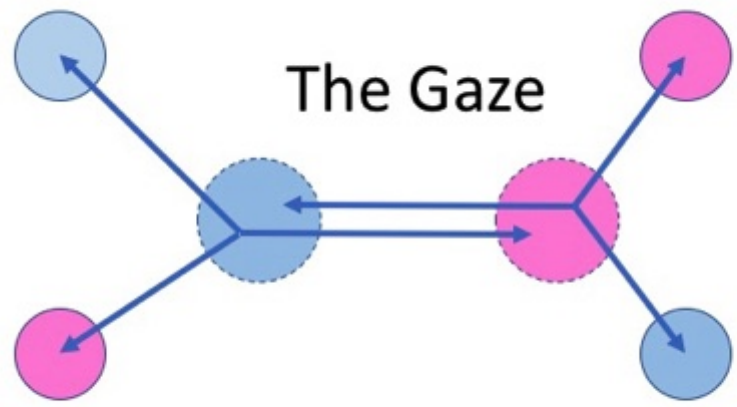

Figure 6.7: The Gaze

This diagram attempts to represent a complex process in a graphical way. In it there are two cultures – blue and pink – that are in some relationship with each other. That is, each is aware of the other's existence, has had some limited experience with that other culture, and each tries to make sense of the other relative to its own standards of right and wrong, normal and deviant, acceptable and unacceptable. The process whereby members of one culture come to observe or in some way try to determine the features of another culture is sometimes called the Gaze. Whilst this term suggests a purely visual process, clearly there are many other sense-based ways in which we come to know about or experience the culture of others – think music and speech (hearing and movement), food (taste and smell) and clothing (touch and sight).

In this diagram, neither of the cultures is clearly bounded or impenetrable. The dotted line boundary around each of the main cultural circles is meant to suggest the fact that no culture is unchanging or impenetrable. The location of the gazing arrows is also important to notice. Both the right-looking and the left-looking arrows start from deep within the blue and the pink circle, that is from deep within the culture doing the looking. However, each arrow only marginally pierces the current boundaries of the other culture, the culture being looked at. This is meant to suggest that the initial Gaze is often largely purely superficial or a first encounter with the other culture and thereby not a deeply experienced and understood encounter with that culture.

What is the impact of 'the Gaze'? Not only do the formal and informal processes that constitute 'gazing' lead to the collection of knowledge about another culture, they also have important impacts upon the culture doing the looking. In the diagram, those cultural workers from within Pink culture will contribute to the ongoing process of developing 'knowledge' or 'the truth' (and this is a very contested term in this sense) about Blue culture. The promulgation of such information and purported understandings need to be made available to the broader membership of Pink culture. This was the role of the early anthropologists, as mentioned above, and remains a core purpose of ethnographic research today. This continual addition to knowledge about Blue culture is represented by the small blue circle flowing out of the Pink culture circle. In other words, as Pink culture's understanding of Blue culture spreads through Pink culture, broader community understandings and perspectives on Blue culture become embedded and seen as 'the truth' about Blue culture.

At the same time, as members of Pink culture come to understand and 'know' other cultures in the world, Pink culture's view of itself is also impacted upon. Comparisons between what is seen to be the essence of Pink culture are formally and subconsciously culturally compared with those of Blue culture, and typically those comparisons will favour the culture doing the comparison – in this case, Pink culture.

Such a constant comparative process, we would argue, is a continuous one engaged in by all cultural groups at all times. In many ways, this is what the so-called culture industry has as its central educative or public pedagogical purpose: to reflect back to the home culture images of its own essence and worth whilst at the same time presenting comparative ideas and images about those who are different.

In summary, the process of coming to understand Others is one that involves two very distinctly connected developmental characteristics – one, coming to know something about the Other and the second, a process of maintaining or challenging what the gazing culture understands of itself.

As you might imagine, this is also clearly the basis for a fairly universal facet of all cultures, racism (perhaps this term should be more appropriately called culturism). All cultures utilise forms of intellectual abstractions and cultural shorthand to try to capture the infinitely complex aspects of cultures other than their own. Invariably, such reductionisms lead to overly-simplistic, stereotypical attitudes and practices regarding other cultures that are frequently discriminatory and detrimental.

TURNING THE GAZE BACK ONTO OURSELVES

For those from a White cultural background, this means looking at how that position privileges us – that is, turning the Gaze this time back upon ourselves (Figure 6.8) in order to try to understand how our cultural location(s) set us up for benefit or advantage, and how our particular ways of seeing and making sense of the world influences the way we see, position and treat Others.

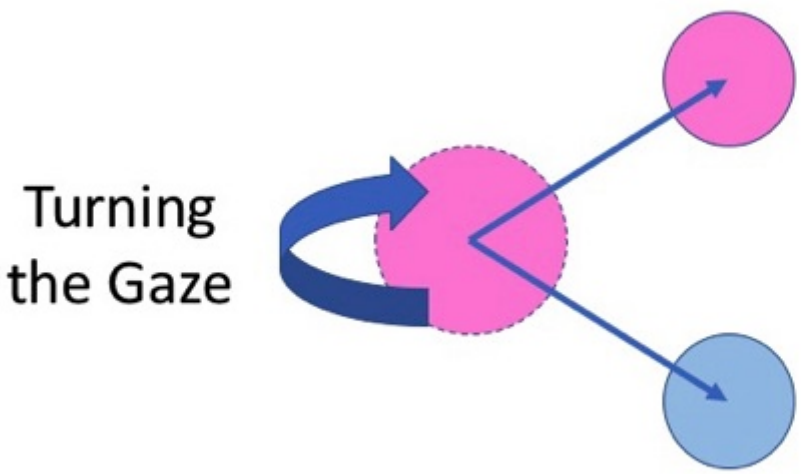

Figure 6.8: Turning the Gaze on our own culture

The whole question of belonging to a particular cultural group revolves around two important aspects of identity. One of these is the identity and identification we claim for ourselves: we self-identify as white Australian, Anglo-Australian, Aboriginal Australian, and so forth. But, as the discussion about the operation of the Gaze above exposes, we are also identified BY others as well. Whilst we see ourselves in particular ways, others see us in ways that might sometimes fit with those ways or, at least as frequently, differ considerably from how we see ourselves.

What is important here is that it is the power of the dominant group, through its direction of views of community members, to be able to formulate a view of Self and Others that is so powerful and embedded so deeply within the dominant culture that these views become universalised – they become 'commonsensical' 'natural' statements about the way people are.

Reflection

- Make a list of five words you would associate with the word 'white'.
- Write a parallel list of words you associate with 'black'.
- Compare your lists. Can you suggest the ways in which colours convey something about cultural preferences and senses of inadequacy or deficit?

SO, WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN FOR MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION?

In order to be able to approach the question of the appropriate ways to work with multiple cultures through education, we need to be genuinely determined to include the dominant culture as one of those cultures being investigated. In other words, a genuine multicultural education in contemporary Australian society must, of necessity, focus on white culture and its impact, as well as on non-white or marginalised cultures. Examples of the types of things such a focus might include in an education sense would be to look at the ways in which whiteness is normalised. This can be achieved through the interrogation of the everyday, such as asking why the tuckshop serves certain food, or where the knowledge base for a certain subject comes from.

How whiteness is conflated with 'human nature' – and how this renders those who don't share the characteristics of white culture as being deviant from a norm is unfortunately the most common outcome of much that passes as multicultural or cultural diversity education at present – the view of cultural difference as cultural deficit or cultural deviance (deviance here meaning deviating from the White norm). An interrogation of the ways in which white culture re-embeds and reasserts its superiority over other cultures and similarly the implied inferiority or subordination of other cultures to such superiority can be seen as a necessary starting point in the development of any genuinely culturally aware and respectful person. In other words, it is essential to understand Self in order to understand others.

Watch

The Physical Cultural Audit Process (4.57 minutes)

THE PHYSICAL CULTURAL AUDIT PROCESS

As Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire (2009), pointed out, culture is something that is made by people. He

contrasted the cultural with the natural. The natural, he said, is virtually a given, with natural objects being largely unable to be modified in a significant way by people (clearly, his thoughts about this, written in the late 1960s and early 1970s, weren't able to foresee the impact of human technologies such as genetic modification and the like). When we go looking for evidence of the 'type' of people living in a particular area or community or the dominant culture of that particular place, there are several sorts of evidence we draw upon to hazard some guesses about the nature of that community and those people within it. We could look at the ways in which people interact with each other in that community, or at particular images of that community that people create and display through more permanent recording methods (books, movies, music, and various things that would be generally accepted as cultural products or artefacts).

A starting point in trying to come to terms with what sort of community we are looking at could well be the physical or built environment, that is, the non-natural aspects of a landscape that are clearly the result of human activity. It is this approach to developing an initial feel for or understanding of a particular community that we investigate here.

What does the Physical Cultural Audit process involve?

Imagine coming across a landscape where you seem to be the only human being around, something like a Twilight Zone scenario where you're the only human left in a place, or a Star Trek episode where you've been stranded in a place where you seem to be the only form of life similar to that of the human. What you see around you is all you have to work on in coming to understand and perhaps trying to predict what sort of community this was, and maybe still is. This is the essential mindset that needs to be taken into a physical cultural audit: whilst it would be largely impossible to empty space of all visible human presence, in conducting an audit of this type, we have to imagine the space and the place devoid or emptied of human beings. In other words, the audit – like a stock-take – is an attempt to look at what is present in the environment and try to then construct some possible ideas about the type of people who use this place or space.

The audit process involves you in the role of a researcher, trying to piece together various ideas about the place so that you might then move into something of a science-fiction or fantasy writer mode by trying to create a possible, though imagined, understanding of what this particular place might be like were one to be living in it. There is no one set way to conduct a physical cultural audit, but the following steps seem to cover everything for such a process.

Step 1: Work out the boundaries of your space

For many purposes of conducting a physical cultural audit, the place to be investigated is clearly bounded. For the purposes of this particular exercise, that space could be a school where the boundaries of that space will be clearly defined by fences, or your office space, or your living room. However, in a broader sense, places such as shopping centres, city blocks, and the like also present as sites for an audit.

Figure 6.9: Photograph by Google Earth. (2017). Ruthven Street, Toowoomba, Australia.

Step 2: Decide on who

Will you conduct the audit by yourself, or with others? There are benefits to both of these options, most of which are connected to the ideas of outsider and insider research. An insider, in this context, would be someone who is very familiar with the space or place to be audited. Consequently, an outsider is somebody for whom the space is new or very unfamiliar. This type of work conducted by insiders brings the benefit of being able to draw on local knowledge of the space such that the insider researcher or auditor will be in a good position to know where to find certain hidden aspects or at least less visible aspects of the environment that may have relevance to the project.

The downside of insider research in this type of project is that sometimes being so familiar with the area or the space means that unnoticed or 'taken-for-granted' examples are potentially missed or overlooked. This is where the fresh eyes of an outsider bring a benefit – an outsider, whilst not being overly familiar with the hidden or less obvious parts of the site, will probably look at everything as new or novel, thereby picking up some aspects that a more familiar eye might miss.

Figure 6.10: Photograph by Jon Austin. (2017). Australia.

An advantage of having more than one person in the audit team is that of being able to engage with each other in on-site discussions about what the particular environment offers or the audit process. The shared experience of having moved around the site while discussing the value of certain parts of that site for the audit process will often lead to a stronger analysis of the particular evidence collected. Overall – how you choose to conduct this type of audit is a decision you make. In some ways, the 'ideal' team might consist of two people, one an insider and one an outsider.

Step 3: Decide on how you will conduct your audit

There are a couple of things to consider here:

- If you're conducting the audit as a team, will you all walk around the site together or individually at first and then collate your individual notes and impressions later?
- Will you use digital photographs to help record aspects of the site that you find of interest?
- Will you audio record any conversations you might have in your team regarding the initial impressions of the site?

- How many circuits of the site will you make? A useful design here is to make an initial walk around to get a feel for the site followed by a more focused investigation of the site (including photographic recording, etc.) and then a final circuit to confirm the ideas or interpretations you've made of the evidence you've collected on your second circuit.

Step 4: Conduct the walk-around and recording processes

Some things to perhaps consider regarding this stage:

- Is there a particular day of the week and/or time of day that might provide the best opportunity to collect the type of material you need?
- It is important to bear in mind that you're looking in this physical cultural audit to capture the physical environment, not the social or human environment. In your recording process, are you able to minimise the presence of people in order to focus on the physical?
- Will you have to arrange permission to enter and/or photograph some parts of the site?
- Will you need an acceptably accurate map of the site? If so, how will this be acquired or developed?

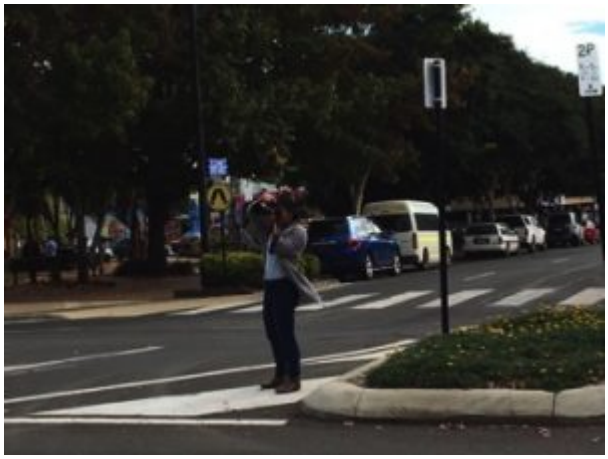

Figure 6:11: Photograph by Jon Austin. (2017). Australia.

Step 5: Analyse the evidence or data you have collected

In this stage, the auditor or auditors try to draw out the impressions that aspects of the environment captured have made on them with regard to the type of community this site is a part of. The ways in which this type of analysis might be conducted vary, but essentially come down to arriving at answers to the question "What does this image tell me/us about this community?" It should be emphasised here that there are no right or wrong answers with regard to this question, you are looking to draw out a team consensus about the sorts of messages conveyed by each particular image of the site. It would be important to record – either in writing or in audio – the conclusions you or your team arrive at for each of the images, and then for an overall summation of what this site seems to reflect with regard to 'culture'.

With regard to the physical cultural audit that has been developed as a part of the materials for this chapter, the auditing process was conducted by two insider auditors (we were both familiar with this particular street block), and consisted of an initial and a more focused team walk around the city block involved. The second walk also involved a more professional photographer who was able to make the most of what were sometimes poor lighting conditions. What the team considered to be illustrative examples of 'culture' in this area were initially discussed, selected and then photographed, with notes regarding the reasons for selecting the particular images recorded in writing. The team then selected from the total photographic collection a smaller number of images for use with the interactive map. The team analysed, through discussion, each of these images and arrived at a number of points regarding these. A spoken commentary was recorded for each of the images and mounted on the interactive map.

Cultural audit map = https://lor.usq.edu.au/usq/file/0669532e-75e9-4145-a327-2d7b5e5ccbff/2/Cultural_Audit_OpnStreetMap.zip/index.html

Once we recognise the multiple and nuanced ways in which culture manifests in society, we can start

considering the assumptions and norms that underlay institutions such as schools and universities as well as the public spaces within our communities. Questions such as, what are the expectations of behaviour in this place? who do I expect to see here? and, what function does this place have? all have answers based in the assumed and sometimes unchallenged norms of a society.

To help us consider the ways in which dominant cultural norms inform actions, activities and identities, Dr Ann Milne suggests the analogy of a child's colouring-in book:

> *If we look at a child's colouring book, before it has any colour added to it, we think of the page as blank. It's actually not blank, it's white. That white background is just "there" and we don't think much about it. Not only is the background uniformly white, the lines are already in place and they dictate where the colour is allowed to go. When children are young, they don't care where they put the colours, but as they get older they colour in more and more cautiously. They learn about the place of colour and the importance of staying within the pre-determined boundaries and expectations*. (Milne, 2013, p.v)

As Milne explains, our educational institutions (and other places in society as well) usually work from this unthinking background of white dominant culture. Recognising this background assists us to understand how the written and unwritten 'rules' of institutions and society might impact on people whose backgrounds do not align with this cultural norm. As Milne points out, this background is not neutral and this impacts upon the daily existence of people from culturally non-dominant backgrounds.

Figure 6:12: Photograph of Paint Kindergaten Tinker Coloring Pages Pens, CC0 1.0 by Max Pixel.

WAYS OF CONSIDERING INTERSECTING CULTURES

There are several ways of considering how cultures intersect in order to be more culturally inclusive. The first we will explore comes from a Torres Strait Islander perspective through Martin Nakata's idea of the cultural interface (Nakata, 2008b). Nakata's work, being from his particular standpoint, can assist us to consider a very Australian context for intersecting cultures and speaks to the relationships between Indigenous and settler peoples and knowledges. Secondly, we can look at how people from dominant cultures might refocus their thinking in order to better consider perspectives from non-dominant cultures through the idea of multilogicality (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008).

NAKATA'S CULTURAL INTERFACE

As introduced in Chapter 3, the cultural interface, as the space where Western and Indigenous ways of knowing meet, can be a place of tension as well as of immense opportunity (Nakata, 2002, 2008a, 2010). From his standpoint as a Torres Strait Islander man, Nakata (2011) conceptualises the cultural interface as the contested space between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, knowledges and cultures. He describes the ways in which Indigenous peoples have not capitulated to the order of Western knowledge, but have taken up what has been necessary to meet practical needs in people's life worlds (Nakata, 2010). Working from a cultural interface perspective accepts that knowledge systems are dynamic, evolving constantly in response to change, and embedded within culture. It involves a balance of ensuring continuity while simultaneously harnessing change and using the interaction in a way of working that assists Indigenous interests, upholding the unique distinctiveness as First Peoples (Nakata, 2002).

Nakata's (2002) notion of the cultural interface becomes a useful way of conceptualising the interactions between Indigenous and Western ways of knowing. Clearly the cultural interface is a place where there is both constant tension and negotiation. To explore this space requires an understanding of different discourses and acknowledgment that conflicts that may arise when discourses compete with traditional ones. A cultural interface perspective requires examining and interrogating all knowledge and practices, reflecting upon conditions for convergence of all these and exploration of issues. The challenge is for people to assume a responsible course in relation to future practice where an Indigenous standpoint is embedded (Nakata, 2002).

Presenting differing ways of knowing and naming the world recognises the discontinuities and convergences of the cultural interface while showing an appreciation and acknowledgement of the presence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous standpoints (Nakata, 2011). Allowing the two knowledge systems to sit side by side without competition also connects with the multilogical epistemic stance described by Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008) as being necessary to non-Indigenous peoples' understanding of Indigenous knowledges.

MULTILOGICALITY

The idea of multilogicality encourages people, particularly those of dominant cultural backgrounds, to look at issues, knowledges, concepts and situations from multiple logics in order to increase the complexity of their understandings. When we access a wide range of perspectives from different cultural backgrounds, there is potential to layer and nuance understanding to develop a critical and complex perceptions that takes into account ways of knowing that may not be our own. In effect, multilogicality offers the opportunity to move from a one-dimensional image like a single photograph to being able to see multiple perspectives like a holographic image (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008) adding richness and complexity to our cultural awareness.

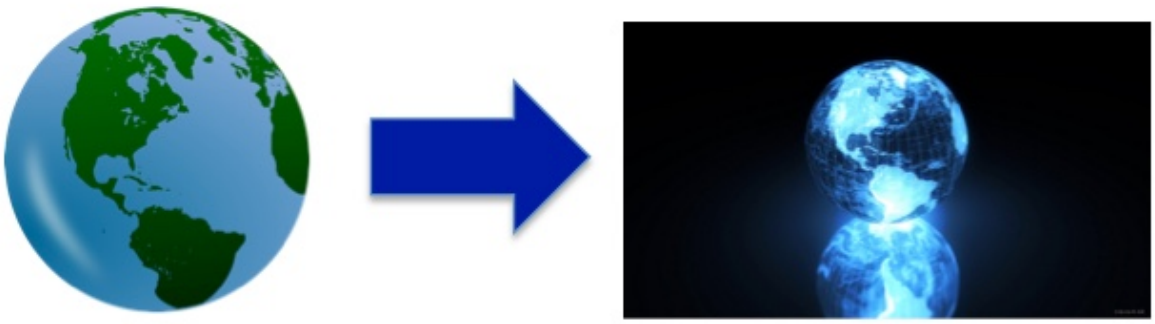

Figure 6:13: Photographs by Open Clipart-Vector/27448 images, World Map, CC0 1.0 and Kevin Gill (2014), Holographic earth, CC BY 2.0 AU.

In order to work with diverse ways of understanding the world, it is first necessary to see the boundedness of culturally dominant knowledge systems and then embrace multiple cultural viewpoints (Austin, 2011). Here we see the necessity of understanding Milne's colouring book analogy, without considering the background and lines as actively constructing our perceptions, actions and ideas, it is difficult to consider how different perspectives might come together to form new, multilogical spaces.

CONCLUSION

So, what does a cultural interface or multilogical approach mean for educators in Australia? How might a more culturally nuanced reading of our spaces contribute to better positioning ourselves as educators?

Reflection

- How can understanding your own cultural position help with how you engage with multiculturalism in the classroom?
- What could the concepts of cultural interface and multilogicality mean for implementing curriculum?
- How can you promote similar understandings of cultural contexts in your students?

In everyday classroom practice, multiple opportunities exist to promote a version of multiculturalism that is not exocitising, marginalising or oppressive. Recognising our own cultural position allows us to see/feel/experience from a more informed perspective opening the possibility for expanding our own and our students' worldviews. Educators can start by asking questions such as, 'How might my teaching material be experienced by those who are not from the same culture as me?' Or, 'What other cultural perspectives might assist me to provoke curiosity about this topic?' or 'How am I making this classroom an inclusive cultural experience for my students?'

The first step in enacting culturally appropriate pedagogies and practices is to recognise your own cultural position in order to not further perpetuate marginalising practices. This can be an incremental and continuing process. It can be a case of once we start opening our eyes with a different outlook, we never see the 'everyday' in the same way again. Likewise, bringing this new perspective into our practice can be an ongoing process. Critical reflection on our teaching is essential to continued improvement in practice. We may not get it 'right' or perfect every time but this is not a reason to stop reflecting and trying new approaches. To be committed to enabling all students to flourish means knowing yourself, knowing your students and being committed to making a difference.

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CHAPTER 7

Creating an inclusive school for refugees and students with English as a second language or dialect

SUSAN CARTER AND MARK CREEDON

How can school communities create an inclusive school?

Key Learnings

- The Australian demographic is now a fast changing increasingly diverse population.
- Every individual is shaped and influenced by individual experiences, many of which remain unrevealed to others so the challenge is both in recognising diversity and accepting the diversity that we cannot see nor yet understand.
- Inclusion involves accepting difference and catering for the individual needs of learners.
- At the heart of any inclusive school is the creation of a culture where each individual is accepted and embraced for who and what they bring to the learning space.

INTRODUCTION

It could be argued that inclusion into society is a basic need for humans. Schools in Australia and internationally, are exploring what this really means in a fast changing global context. Challenges face our educators as never before as the rate of migration has vastly increased with more people seeking asylum than at any time since World War II (Gurria, 2016). Schools face challenges in educating students who have little understanding of the official language or the school's cultural context.

This chapter seeks to bring into focus inclusion for students new to Australia, with limited or no English speaking skills. It specifically explores the inclusive practices of one Australian school and seeks to share the effectual ways that they support, engage, enculturate and educate students. Through case study methodology, the data findings revealed in this chapter highlight a way of working that facilitates the creation of a shared culture, a place where individuals share that they feel safe and included. The cost of caring is however a pragmatic consideration that educators face and this chapter outlines some strategies on how to engage community help and create a sense of hopefulness.

Our schools are changing. Schools in Australia and indeed internationally are opening their community to refugees and migrants at a rate that has not been experienced before. Refugees are seeking safe places at rates higher than at any time since World War II (Gurria, 2016). In 2015, approximately 244 million people were

living in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development {OECD} countries outside their country of birth (Gurria, 2016). Currently, the OECD is an assembly of 34 industrialised countries that design and advocate for economic and social policies. The 34 OECD member countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Hylén, Damme, Mulder, & D'Antoni, 2012). Many of the families residing in these countries arrive at state/publicly funded schools that are expected to provide equity of access and learning opportunities for all students.

In reality this is an extremely complex process of catering for differing values, beliefs, ideas, and opinions on what this looks like and how it is enacted. School communities need to be encouraged to embrace a shared philosophy of inclusion and participate in practices that encourage equity, viewing changes in student population and diversity as an opportunity for learning (Carter & Abawi, 2018).

This chapter is based around the way of working that one Australian school with 52% of its student population with English as a second language or dialect {ESLD} has embraced to create an inclusive school community where there is an explicit focus on the positive learning achievements of every student. The school known as Darling Heights State School, is located in a large regional city near a university where researchers are welcomed in to help contribute to growing a learning culture. The school has been able to create an inclusive school culture and the school community wishes to share their learnings with others.

There are four specific sections to this chapter. Section one will begin by exploring the theoretical underpinning of inclusion. Section two is a scenario section that focuses on knowledge synthesis and application. Three specific animated characters in various scenarios are introduced and readers are expected to describe how they would create an inclusive environment for the character. Section three focuses on meaning making. Knowledge acquisition is challenged and deepened as readers can then explore the actual scenarios that the animated characters were based upon to see how the school created an inclusive environment for the real person. The last section encourages the reader to analytically reflect upon their knowledge and understandings of inclusion and consider how this can be applied into their real world context. The need to ensure our teachers have knowledge, skills and attitudes to create inclusive learning opportunities for students is clear but the how this is done is somewhat more complex. It is hoped that your engagement with this chapter will foster the development of new knowledge and understandings that prove useful in enacting inclusive practices.

THEORETICAL EXPLORATION

Inclusion is perceived differently within the literature and Maclean suggests that it is an "increasingly contentious term that challenges educators and education systems" (2017, p. 528). Within Australia the focus has been both at the whole-school and in-class support level (Forlin, Chambers, Loreman, Deppeler, & Sharma, 2013) with discussion centred on inclusion being about what is in the best interests of individual students based on the key features of participation, and integration together with the removal of elements that marginalise or exclude (Queensland Department of Education, 2018). Other researchers go further and suggest that inclusion must be a way of thinking, a philosophy held by educators that encompasses the recognition and removal of barriers to learning and values all members of a school community (McLeskey, Rosenberg, & Westling 2013).

This chapter is based around the McLeskey, Rosenberg, and Westling (2013) definition where the school involved does not just try and educate the child but goes further to help the family engage in the community and access supports that enable the enrolled student/s to engage fully in all parts of school life. Carter and Abawi (2018, p. 2) aver that "inclusion is defined as successfully meeting student learning needs regardless of

culture, language, cognition, gender, gifts and talents, ability, or background." They go on to say that the needs, often considered as special needs should be appropriately supported. Within the literature 'special needs' have been linked to disadvantage and disability, but Carter and Abawi (2018) define special needs more broadly as "the individual requirements of a person, and the provision for these specific differences can be considered as catering for special needs" (p. 2).

Refugees and migrants are identified in this paper as having English as a Second Language or Dialect {ESLD} or what some literature terms as English as a Foreign Language {EFL} learners (Roberts, 2016). Migrants and Refugees are however very different groups. It is acknowledged that some refugee children may have increased exposure to experiences of violence, persecution, rape, torture, and abrupt dislocation (Lusk, McCallister, & Villalobos, 2013) while some migrants may have had more opportunity to move with differing levels of financial security (Black, Adger, Arnell, Dercon, Geddes, & Thomas, 2011).

This paper does not explore the specifics of the groups but rather it explores the individual needs of students and families and their inclusion in a specific school. Inclusive schools move beyond what Mathews (2008) termed as piecemeal interventions to creating welcoming learning environments and spaces for participation, providing communication supports, developing positive relationships, encouraging friendships, developing a sense of belonging, and fostering learning about oneself and others. Schools that have a whole school focus on inclusion reduce the vulnerability and build resilience for refugee students (West 2004) and provide hope for the future (Rutter, 2006).

SCENARIO EXPLORATION

Kirk, Gallagher, Coleman, and Anastasiow (2012, p. xxix) assert that "one of the major challenges that teachers face in schools today is meeting the wide range of student needs". They point out that the majority of classes will most likely have students that have been diagnosed with disabilities and other students who require more scaffolded support in order to achieve success. Some students will have behaviour problems, social emotional adjustments difficulties and /or emotional difficulties.

Such a wide range of student needs can feel overwhelming to a teacher (Kirk, Gallagher, Coleman, and Anastasiow, 2012, p. xxix) amid all of the complexities in a school and the challenges of knowing and catering for the individual needs of all children. Given the information that you have read on inclusion I hope you feel ready to engage in exploring your understanding of inclusion through some animated scenarios. Below are three scenarios that allow exploration of inclusion from differing perspectives.

UNDERSTANDING DIVERSITY: A SNAPSHOT

Statistics from the 2016 Australian National Census, depict that 33.3 % of Australians were born overseas, and a further 34.4% of people had both parents born overseas. Analysis highlighted that in 2016 nearly half (49%) of all Australians were either born overseas or had at least one parent who was born overseas. This State School's statistics for being born in an overseas country, are even higher with 52% of students born overseas. Given this information consider how diverse that makes the Australian population and the inherent complexity in not only recognising diversity but catering for it in schools and embracing it as a part of our national culture.

Darling Heights State School has a current enrolment of 690 students and the ten most commonly reported countries of birth for students born overseas are depicted in the table below

Table 7.1 Student enrollment by country

Country	Number of students	% of students
Iraq	61	8.8 %
Kenya	15	2.1%
Congo, Democratic Republic	12	1.7%
Libya	12	1.7%
Sudan	9	1.3%
Afghanistan	8	1.1%
Uganda	8	1.1%
India	7	1%
Malawi	7	1%
Zambia	7	1%

Watch and respond: Activity one

- Please engage in thinking about what it means to be inclusive by engaging with the animations and the videos. ***Instructions for activity one which consists of three separate scenarios – please carefully read:***
    - *Do NOT refresh – If you refresh your responses are deleted.*
    - *You must complete a response to each question in order to move to the next section. All responses to the three scenarios need to be completed and then you can save as a PDF or print. If you quit out mid way through your responses are lost.*
    - *I strongly recommend you* ***copy your responses and save into a word document as you go*** *so that you can edit these later. It also means that you can stop and return to the activity later and still have your previous answers.*
    - This activity takes approximately an hour and a half, allowing 45 minutes to view the three animations and videos, and 45 minutes to respond to the questions. You can chose to break it into shorter segments and return to it but you must save your responses into a separate word document.

Engage here with activity one (it will open in a new tab).

MEANING MAKING

At the heart of any inclusive school is a culture of individual acceptance where diversity is respected, perhaps even considered the norm and individuals are valued for what they bring to the learning journey. Inclusion is based upon social justice where individuals are perceived as having rights to a quality education. Such an understanding of inclusion raises questions:

- What does respect for diversity mean?
- How is inclusion enacted?
- What are the possible challenges and rewards of creating an inclusive learning environment?

Darling Heights State School has embraced inclusion at a **whole school level** where the needs of individual students are a focus, the student's well-being is fore-fronted, and a school team of experts support the individual needs of students and families. The school has several classrooms where intensive English lessons are run and these classrooms are known as the Intensive English Centre {IEC} and the teachers and teacher aides that work at the IEC are expert in their knowledge of supporting and engaging families with EALD and providing quality learning outcomes for students and outreach supports to classroom teachers.

In the Scenario 1- The Student video, did you notice:

- The depth of understanding participants had about this child and the expansive opportunities in place to support this child?
- The engagement all participants had in the discussion and willingness to share experiences and ideas to support the teaching and learning of this child?
- The shared understanding all participants had in ensuring the parents were involved in the learning program for this child?
- The excitement shown when the smallest of improvements or achievements were registered?
- What factors were taken into account in accepting diversity and engaging a student through inclusive practices?

In Scenario 2 – The Teacher, did you notice:

- How critical it was that all school staff acknowledge the importance of working in teams to support children?
- That ensuring the vision for the school is critical in establishing and maintaining culture?
- References that were made to particular principles for the School's Pedagogical Framework?
- Which of the 5 principles: Community, Relationship, Diversity, Learning, Achievement, were evident for you?
- Would you have felt supported in this new or unknown setting?
- What factors were taken into account in supporting this teacher and how this teacher is included in the school community:

This video for Scenario 2 – The Teacher, outlined several programs that the school had in place to support students. The programs focuses on the primary goals:

- to support parents to engage with the school as a learning community
- to support and guide parents to establish positive learning environments at home that support their children's learning needs; and
- to foster in parents a deeper understanding of the school and the Australian educational system while promoting active engagement in school processes and increased student academic success.

After engaging with Scenario 3 – The Parent did you notice:

- What efforts the school had made to support the parent?
- What this parent values and appreciates within the school and community?
- The depth of support that can be provided by a Parent Engagement Officer?
- What factors were taken into account in supporting this family and how is the family included in the school community?

In our schools, consider the diversity of our families, and the diversity of experiences between refugees and migrants, no one person's journey is the same. Research depicts that migrant children are faced with hostility and segregation at school (Devine, 2009); challenges with identity and a sense of belonging (NiLaoire, Carpena-Mendez, Tyrell, White, 2011) and coping with changed family structures post migration (White, 2011). Sime and

Fox (2015) suggest that moving to a new country is marked by anxiety, excitement and practical challenges. Such challenges can involve:

- Philosophy: attitudes, values, beliefs and perspectives; religion; life experiences
- Socioeconomic background and access to services such as health
- Variable skills and capabilities and value placed upon education
- Ethnicity – language, religion and cultural diversity
- Demographics: socio-economic, citizenship, location.
- Interests: music, sport etc.

KEY PRINCIPLES AND WAYS OF WORKING OF THIS INCLUSIVE SCHOOL

This school community evidences six principles that recent research has highlighted as underpinning the creation of an inclusive culture (Abawi, Carter, Andrews & Conway, 2018):

Principle 1 Informed shared social justice leadership at multiple levels – *learning from and with others.*

Principle 2 Moral commitment to a vision of inclusion – *explicit expectations regarding inclusion embedded in school wide practice.*

Principle 3 Collective commitment to whatever it takes – *ensuring that the vision of inclusion is not compromised.*

Principle 4 Getting it right from the start – *wrapping students, families and staff with the support needed to succeed.*

Principle 5 Professional targeted student-centred learning – *professional learning for teachers and support staff informed by data identified need.*

Principle 6 Open information and respectful communication – *leaders, staff, students, community effectively working together.*

These six principles are intertwined in the schools way of working. In establishing an inclusive school culture the principal has spent time in visioning what the school community could look like, working with the community to capture the context and the people in a way that has grown a lived shared vision of inclusive practice where all students are expected to achieve. The purpose of this action was to create a collective commitment to a philosophy of 'whatever it takes' to ensure that the school put in place all possible resources and strategies to cater for the needs of students, expecting and catering for diversity in an inclusive way. When visiting the school and observing practices it was evidenced that the Principal clearly articulates, displays and models the school vision of inclusivity. In an interview he outlined the key characteristics as:

- Setting a clear direction where values and beliefs are aligned with practices
- Embedding a culture of care where diversity is accepted, expected, and appreciated
- Ensuring quality curriculum and pedagogy
- Promoting professional learning
- Ensuring safe and orderly environments
- Supporting the strengths of teachers (Principal, 2017)

Figure 7.1 highlights one example of how the clear direction of the school is made explicit in the School Wide Pedagogical Framework.

The visual representation that staff see on a daily basis where values and beliefs are fore fronted and expected to align with practices. These core principles are promoted within the school community (as displayed on the table) and these principles are embedded in the School Wide Pedagogical Framework {SWPF}, which seeks to capture how those within the school operate. By having the SWPF on the table, it means it is within view, deliberately fore fronted in the eyes of everyone who works, meets or eats at the table.

Figure 7.1 Photograph of a table displaying the core school-wide pedagogical principles. (2018), Australia, USQ.

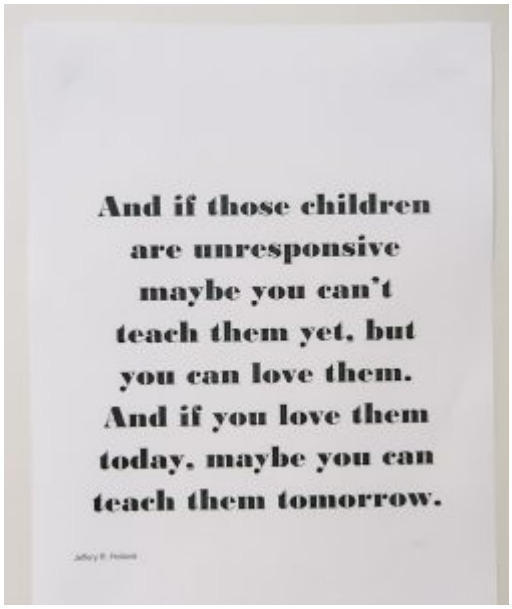


Figure 7.2: Adapted from Holard, J. (n.d.). A photograph of a poster: The culture of care. (2018). Australia, USQ.

Within the same room, and throughout the school the visual representation of care is captured as shown Figure 7.2. The culture of care was verbally evidenced in classrooms, on parade, and it could be seen in the way that staff, students and parents interacted with each other.

The school focuses on creating a caring and inclusive culture and uses visual representation in a colourful way to illustrate their vision, values and beliefs as shown below in the Mural of a Harmony Tree, in Figure 7.3.

Figure 7.3: A photograph of a wall : Mural of the core values of the school community. (2018). Australia, USQ.

The mural captures the living, breathing and growing of a school community and the visual representation

of the tree in harmony with its surroundings, aligns with the tree depicted in the SWPF. This image of the Jacaranda tree is a derivative of the schools Motto "Grow with Knowledge, Many Paths Many Futures".

The table graphic, the posters and the mural are visual representations of the core values of the school that underpin the way the school works. These visual representations act as a key daily reminder that the school is focused on diversity and inclusion to staff who work in the meeting room, to students, and to the school community who see the mural on the main wall in the school, that the school is focused on diversity and inclusion.

The principal invested time and knowledge in building professional learning networks with the neighbouring university, inviting researchers in to work with the school on a variety of projects. The purpose of this action was the establishment of shared social justice leadership at multiple levels where staff, parents, students and the broader community were engaged in learning from and with others so they felt included and empowered to learn. The focus was and continues to be on connecting credible theory to practice. This occurs in many ways such as providing mentors for new or beginning teachers, on-going expert professional development, informed data collection, analysis together with deep pedagogical discussion, on-going feedback cycles, and specifically engaging teachers and staff members to buy-in to the development of collaborative relationships that further enhance teachers' knowledge and understanding of inclusive practice and ways to enhance the learning environment for all students.

A synthesis of research on parental involvement in education compiled by Henderson and Mapp (2002), depicts the importance of parental involvement, an element of schooling clearly acknowledged by the school where they have invested in the employment of a family liaison officer. The purpose in creating this role involved 'getting it right from the start', wrapping students, families and staff with the support needed to succeed. "When families of all backgrounds are engaged in their children's learning, their children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and pursue higher education" (Henderson & Mapp, 2002, p. 73). The role of the school appointed family liaison officer is featured as pivotal. Matthews (2008) suggests that the role of a school liaison worker is a key in brokering intercultural knowledge and enculturating both the school and families into a way of proactively appreciating difference that should be embedded in school culture. Hek (2005) suggests that they develop a sophisticated repertoire of understandings about everyday issues and questions, and that this knowledge serves to mitigate social exclusion and help develop cultural understandings and build self-worth through whole-school interventions.

For families being included into the school community, the focus was on providing the initial support to mitigate barriers, upskilling people and scaffolding their learning together with the expectation that they needed to learn so that they could meaningfully engage in community life. The school did not enable a deficit model of learned helplessness but deliberately scaffolded for positive learning experiences with a strong moral commitment to a vision of inclusion. A community of care was also inbuilt into this learning relationship where people (such as the school community liaison officer, and the deputy principal) routinely checked to ensure that families were doing well and supports were either added or withdrawn based upon need. Families were helped to see themselves as learners, developing English speaking skills and having opportunities for employment.

The school has over time, developed an understanding of ethnic and cultural differences, sought to determine reasons for forced migration and refugee fleeing conflict so that they were better placed to appreciate the diversity and the complexities of creating an inclusive environment. Engaging teacher aides who are fluent in students' home language and in English has also been a focus. This enables discussions and questions in both languages and responses that are culturally sensitive and appropriate (Janinski, 2012) and the sharing of this knowledge helps to build the school community's cultural sensitivity. Matthews (2008) highlights the importance of developing an understanding of people's differing situations and the importance

of identifying specific individual issues and needs, averring that schools are in a position to advocate for the rights of all individuals to non-discriminatory education.

The suggestion is for an education that can influence the world towards inclusive peaceful possibilities where everyone is seen as having potential. While this may seem a lofty ideal, Adlous Huxley suggested that "there is only one corner of the universe you can be sure of improving and that is your own self" (Guide, A. S. A. R., 2013, p. 17). This quote has been embraced by the Principal where he has actively sought to champion social justice and has influenced his staff and students to do the same, and in so doing improve a corner of the universe.

The school also had spent a decade supporting teachers to upskill in how best to teach students with ESLD and engage their families. An important aspect of this has been acquiring an understanding of identity formation. Miller, Mitchell, and Brown (2005) suggest the importance of developing a deep understanding of how background factors can disrupt identity formation as students seek ways to balance conflicting demands and to reconcile their present and past lives.

Schools focusing on inclusion can be stabilising elements in the uncertain lives of refugee students (Matthews, 2008) and migrant students, providing safe places for new learning and interactions (Alexander, 2017). Alexander (2017) suggests that migrant children are often disadvantaged post migration and develop their own mechanisms to mitigate the impact of migration because they already have a developed set of skills, such as resilience. Orellana, (2009) suggests they are looking to a better future where educational opportunity is valued. Education is often perceived by migrant families as a way to facilitate intellectual and personal development; grow income, obtain an occupation and engage in the community (Alexander, 2017).

Being inclusive at Darling Heights State School involves thinking deeply and broadly about what the educational experience might be from someone else's perspective and actively obtaining information from diverse sources to build an accurate picture of the student and their needs, including family needs that might impact the student's educational outcomes. It involves understanding diversity. The school offers what Rutter (2006) suggested should be a requirement: a whole school focus on ensuring literate futures, informed by knowledge and understandings of post and pre displacement concerns. From a whole school perspective the team involved in taking the enrolment (initially office staff and then Principal, or a Deputy Principal) develop an understanding of the context and put in place supports to ensure that the initial interview meeting has positive outcomes.

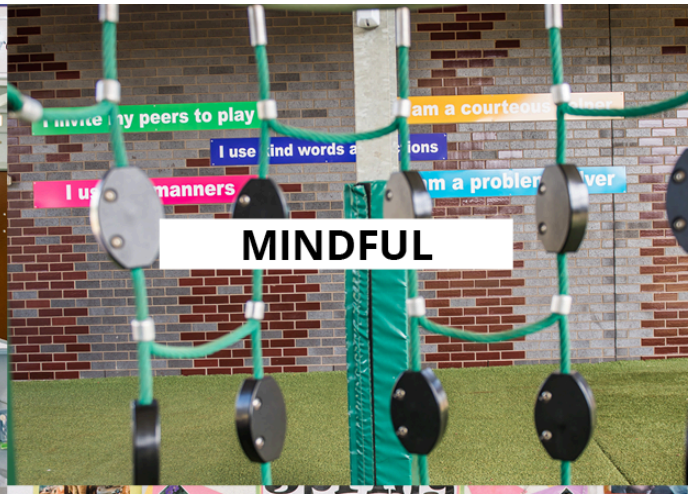
In practice the policy of inclusion involves removing communication barriers. Initially this involves organising another person who speaks the same language to attend the initial enrolment interview so that communication can be effectual, and the immediate needs of the students and family can be ascertained. The school promotes engaging in open information where supports, processes, ways of working are clearly espoused, enacted and consistently modelled. There is also a clear expectation of the utilisation of respectful communication that enables the community to effectively work together. The focus is on developing a positive and supportive relationship based on establishing, up front, the clear perception that the school is here to work with families and families are expected to work together with the school. The parent and student engagement officer is involved in ensuring community linkage for necessary family supports and providing on-going connection and supports when needed. The focus is on helping families to be enculturated in the community but also to learn to how to support themselves. Parents are valued as having an important role in the education of the student and their viewpoint is both invited and listened to so that the parents' perception of the individual skills and needs of their child, is heard.

Within the classroom context the teacher is recognised as a key link to enabling positive and engaged learning. As such the school ensures that supports are put in place to help the teacher be the best teacher they can be, enabling the learning journey for both teacher and student. Research suggests that teachers are key

to producing literacy outcomes needed for educational success, post school options, life choices, and social participation (Mathews, 2008). Language Policy and Planning {LPP} research highlights the connection between official and local policy interpretation and appropriation for students with EALD (Alexander, 2017). Meken and Garcia (2010) aver that classroom teachers are key agents in supporting EALD students and in implementing policy. The school featured in this chapter did not expect teachers to cope, they challenged and supported teachers to competently engage, support and provide a quality educational experience for all learners.

There was consistent evidence of an inclusive environment that was resourced, mindful, supportive, colourful, inviting, safe, stimulating and purposeful, as highlighted in Figure 7.4.

Burundi
Cambodia
Chad
China
RESOURCED


MINDFUL

Safety
Thinking
Acting Responsibly
Respect
SUPPORTIVE
BUDDY BENCH

COLOURFUL
WELCOME
FUTURE
MULTICULTURAL

INVITING

Behaviour Wall
School Values
Expectations
Class Rules
Safety
Make good choices to keep everyone safe.
Rule Of The Week
Positive
Thinking
Think before we act.
SAFE
Responsibly
Respect
Look after and value each other and our school.

Egypt
Eritrea
Fiji
Iran
STIMULATING

PURPOSEFUL

Figure 7.4: An image of an inclusive environment. (2018). Australia, USQ.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

Shared attitudes and expectations are evidenced across the school in relation to diversity and inclusion. Attitudes, and expectations were evidenced that focused on acknowledging diversity and accepting the professional responsibility of understanding, planning and catering for diversity. There was also a shared commitment to inclusive practices with an explicit focus on providing a quality education for all students. The professional development of teachers and teacher aides regularly linked to legislative reminders as well as moral and ethical obligations that fore fronted the valuing of inclusion as more than an obligation. The school community focused on ensuring professional targeted student-centred learning where professional learning for teachers and support staff was informed by data where identified needs were explicitly addressed. Inclusion was and still is portrayed as the way of accepted working in the school. Staff were explicitly aware that "all school sectors must provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location" (MCEETYA, 2008, p.7).

Teachers with expert knowledge coached and mentored other teachers supporting them within the classroom, facilitating their opportunities to increase their knowledge, understanding, and implementation of inclusive practices. This involved coordinated and administratively supported planning times; collaborative group, team and school processes; and in-class strategies and resource supports. Such support necessitates significant adjustments to school organisation and pedagogical practice that meets the needs of a highly diverse population of students with a broad range of skills, knowledge, and understandings (McLeskey & Waldron, 2002; Smith & Tyler, 2011).

At a classroom level the instructional practices and accommodations used by teachers for ESLD learners were modelled and teachers were supported by experienced and knowledgeable educators in best practice. Instructional practices were centred on what worked best with an individual student and how best to teach to fill the gap in their learning ensuring that they could demonstrate this learning. For some students this involved intensive on-arrival English-language programs delivered in a specific classroom, with English lessons also provided out of work hours for parents. The instructional practices often targeted a group of students who appeared to have similar learning needs with individual students taught in differing ways and with different resources.

The intervention was clearly targeted, based on the specific needs of individual learners. Educators acknowledged that refugee students with interrupted schooling face the daunting task of acquiring English and may also have other additional learning needs. For this reason, a team of educators were used to support and monitor the progress of individual students so that positive education outcomes were set based on individual targets. If individual targets were not achieved, then exploratory questions were asked, such as 'why has this occurred' and 'what needs to be done differently to support this learner'?

The decisions made regarding the provision of accommodations for students with special needs were complex, informed by data, collaborative, and involved three levels of decision making. Firstly, the decisions were made from a whole school perspective in alignment with the school vision and policy (principal led process); secondly they were collaboratively refined by teaching staff who engaged in on-going professional dialogue where the needs of the individual child were fore-fronted and then the clustering of student needs were aligned with resources; and thirdly by the individual class teacher.

Individual teachers were supported by colleagues and their own embracement of learning to ensure that

needs such as those identified by Miller, Mitchell, and Brown (2005) were catered for: the topic-specific vocabularies of academic subjects, understandings of register and genre, cultural backgrounds to scaffold their understanding, social understandings of how to 'be' in the classroom, and learning strategies to process content were imparted competently. Data was utilised extensively in all three levels of the decision making to inform judgments regarding teaching and learning, ensuring that individual learning goals, instructional practices and accommodations were appropriately aligned to individual students.

The decision making also seemed to be based on maximising resources to support the needs of all students. Intervention for students was enacted as soon as needs were perceived, discussed and planned for and this enactment could be triggered at the individual class level, in group teacher discussions, such as year level meetings, or at the whole school level. Support was provided at multiple points for both the learner and the teacher and this support was collaboratively developed as depicted in Figure 7.5.

Figure 7.5: A Photograph of a group of professionals working together: The process of collaborative decision making. (2018). Australia, USQ.

The unrelenting focus on the development of teams and ways of productively working in teams ensures the effectiveness of these collective decision-making processes within the school. The school had a way of working where collaborative decision making was embedded. A team of informed experts considers the specific needs of each student and this team collaborates on how best to meet the needs of the students with the current available resources.

CRITICAL REFLECTION

There is an acknowledged challenge: barriers need to be removed so all students are given the chance to engage with high quality education (Carter & Abawi, 2018). The inclusive practices enacted at the school

featured in this chapter highlight the importance of cultural learning, not just language learning. The knowledge of how to 'be a student', and indeed look like one, entails many skills, behaviours, formative experiences and a great deal of knowledge (Miller, Mitchell, & Brown, 2005). Educators at Darling Heights State Primary School acknowledged that students with ESLD have much to learn but they also embraced their whole community as being capable and indeed important is this educative role. It was not merely the teacher teaching but the whole school community working as a fluid organism, operating with a way of working that embodied inclusive practices. "Education has the capacity to stimulate knowledge and understanding of the conditions and circumstances of those most vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion" (Matthews, 2008, p.35).

After watching the animations and the three scenario videos, and then reading about the process of inclusion, it is time to critically reflect and think about your thinking – engage the process of metacognition.

Watch and respond: Activity two

- Please engage in thinking about what it means to be inclusive by engaging with the critical reflection. ***Instructions for activity one which consists of three separate scenarios – please carefully read:***
    - *Do NOT refresh – If you refresh your response is deleted.*
    - *Once you complete your response you can then save as a PDF or print. If you quit out mid way through your response is lost.*
    - *I strongly recommend you* ***copy your response and save into a word document as you go*** *so that you can edit this later. It also means that you can stop and return to the activity later and still have your previous response.*
    - This activity takes approximately 15 to 20 minutes.
- *Engage here with activity two* (it will open in a new tab).

In transferring your learning about inclusion into pedagogical practices in the workplace, outline what would it look like, sound like, and feel like to a new student; a new teacher; a parent; and how you would evidence inclusive practice?

CONCLUSION

School leaders and teachers play a vital role in supporting students, acknowledging their diversity, creating a culture where diversity is accepted within moral parameters and engaging in inclusive practices to foster optimal learning outcomes for all students. It involves advocacy and social justice where barriers to learning are recognised and where possible removed. To create an inclusive and caring culture takes time and commitment from the school community to embrace their strengths and weaknesses, and is underpinned by a willingness to learn new skills, acquire knowledge where mindsets are challenged, and develop, refine, and review processes that enable uses to make a positive difference. It was our hope in writing this chapter that your knowledge and understanding of inclusion has deepened and your passion for engaging in inclusive, socially just practices has been ignited. We leave you to ponder how an uncompromising social justice agenda can be maintained and anchored to the needs of a changing student cohort within a specific school context.

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CHAPTER 8

Opening eyes to vision impairment: Inclusion is just another way of seeing

MELISSA CAIN AND MELISSA FANSHAWE

Figure 8.1: Image of a Colourful Eye

How can teachers best support students who can't access the curriculum and content through their vision?

Key Learnings

- Vision impairment can be classified as damage or disease to the eye or visual system and is considered a disability when it

cannot be corrected with the use of glasses or medication.

- There are visual behaviours that may alert teachers to undiagnosed vision impairment.
- Students with vision impairment should have the same access to quality education as their peers, but may experience physical, social, emotional, and academic barriers to education.
- Positive teacher attitudes and perceptions about disabilities are important in creating an inclusive culture.
- There are many visual images and representations used in the curriculum, therefore, students with vision impairment require adaptions or alternative technologies to access information.
- Students with severe vision impairments or who are blind need an *Expanded Core Curriculum* to teach compensatory skills, including working with the latest digital technologies and developing social skills.

INTRODUCTION

For students with vision impairments, access and inclusion in education settings can be overlooked as facilities are generally set up for those who can see. Many elements that help to create an inclusive and safe learning environment such as the school culture, behaviour management, and curriculum are displayed in visual format. Think about your journey into a school, through the office, into the classroom and around the school grounds, and the incidental learning you acquire through visual means.

This chapter examines the educational, physical, and social impact of vision impairment and the development of a mindset supportive of designing curriculum opportunities to overcome barriers encountered by students with vision impairment. It investigates the implications of adjustments to curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy, as well as a student's ability to move independently and confidently within and between classrooms and throughout the school. This chapter suggests ways for enhancing the social competence of students with vision impairment who may find it difficult to interact with their peers due to missing the sighted cues implicit in social norms which are most often shared through non-verbal communication (Wolffe, 2012). It also addresses ways to raise the awareness of those without vision impairment to the realities and complexities for those whose eyesight is impaired.

An important part of learning about the realities of teaching students with vision impairments is hearing the voices of those who appreciate the complexities, or have experienced vision impairment in their lives. In this chapter, we present three narratives which provide points of view or 'lenses' through which you can experience what schooling might be like for a student with a vision impairment. The student lens serves to demonstrate the importance of resilience, advocacy, and access. The parent lens highlights the importance of physical and social inclusion for students with vision impairment and the role of support services in assisting the family, and the educator lens highlights the necessity of modifications to ensure students have equitable access to the curriculum. You will be asked to make links between the theoretical content presented and these stories to gain a holistic understanding of the impacts of vision impairment in schools and to discover that inclusion is just *a different way of seeing*.

UNDERSTANDING VISION IMPAIRMENT

Vision is a sense that allows students to learn incidentally, synthesise information, and respond to the environment. Vision motivates movement by providing information and stimulation, integrates and organises information in the brain, and encourages social interaction (Gentle, Silveira, & Gallimore, 2016). In classrooms, barriers can exist for students with vision impairment as the curriculum, the way it is delivered, and common

assessment methods in the mainstream classroom are designed for those who can see (Morris & Sharma, 2011).

Students with vision impairment may have difficulty understanding where objects are in the environment and may need to use a white cane to travel independently. In addition, students with vision impairment are often unable to collect information from visual cues. Being able to interact confidently and in culturally appropriate ways is important for social inclusion and a sense of belonging, however, the vast majority of communication occurs through non-verbal means such as body posture, arm and hand gestures, and facial expressions , all of which students with a vision impairment may not be aware.

Learning Objectives

It is anticipated that upon completion of the chapter you will have:

- An understanding of vision impairment and how vision impairment impacts students socially, physically, emotionally and academically in education.
- An understanding of the legal and ethical requirements for educators to demonstrate the core tenets of the inclusive education agenda, and the difference that can be made by creating a culture of inclusion.
- A range of strategies to assist students with vision impairment or blindness including *Universal Design* and the *Expanded Core Curriculum*.

DEFINING VISION IMPAIRMENT

We define vision impairment as a limitation in the eye or visual system which results in vision loss.

Figure 8.2: Photographs comparing near and clear vision

One image shows a blurred image as seen by a person with a moderate near vision impairment. The faces are blurred, which means the person with vision impairment, would not be able to see any details such as eye colour, or facial expressions.

The International Classification of Diseases 11 (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2018) defines vision impairment as:

- Mild –visual acuity worse than 6/12

- Moderate –visual acuity worse than 6/18
- Severe –visual acuity worse than 6/60
- Blindness –visual acuity worse than 3/60

For school aged children, visual acuity is usually measured on a *Snellen Vision Chart* (Sue, 2007) (Figure 3). A person with perfect vision should be able to read the bottom line of the *Snellan Vision Chart* at six metres. This is recorded as 6/6 or 20/20 vision, which refers to the imperial measurement in feet. A child with a visual acuity of 6/12 has a mild vision loss, meaning they can see at six metres what a person with perfect vision could see at 12 metres. A severe vision impairment of 6/60 or more is considered legally blind (Vision Australia, 2018).

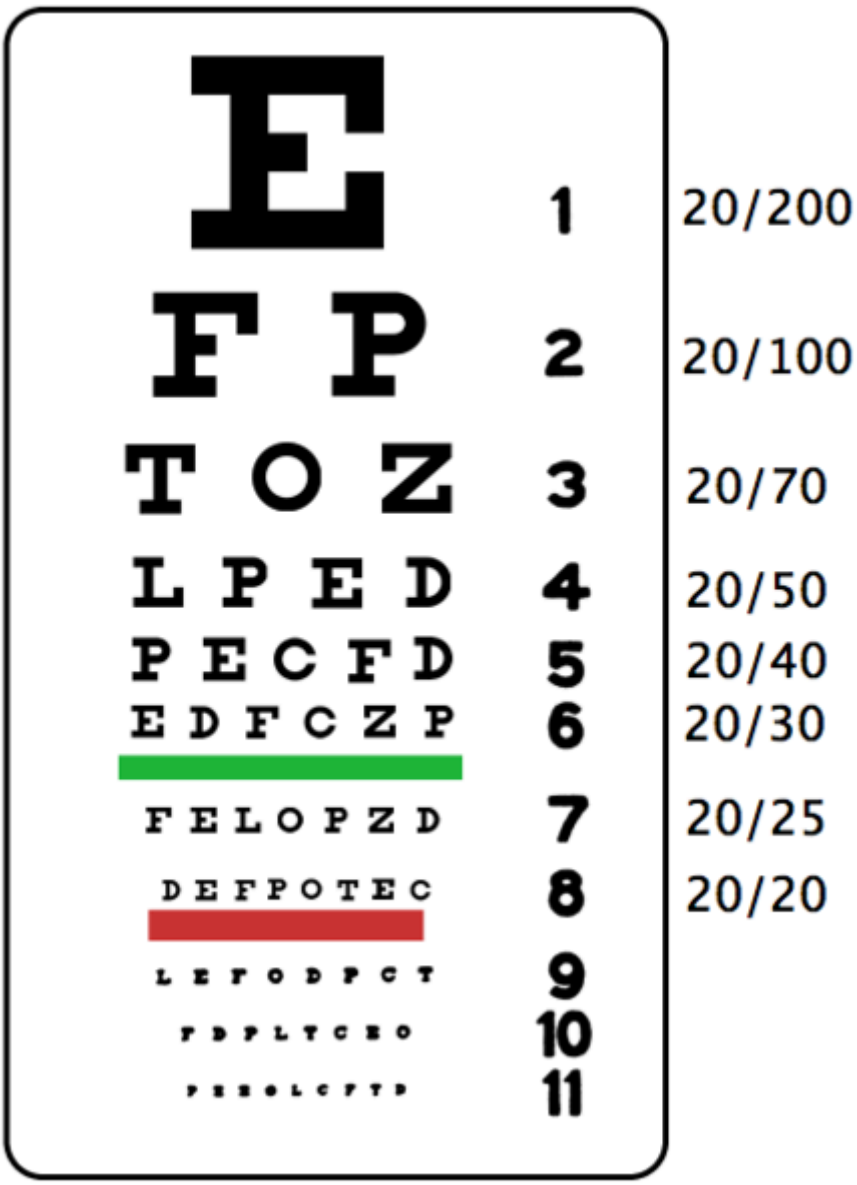

Figure 8.3: Example of a Snellen Vision Chart

The image shows a *Snellen Vision Chart* which has the letters starting large at the top and small at the bottom.

Causes of vision impairment

Damage or disease to any part of eye or the structure can cause impaired vision. The visual system is very vulnerable (Deloitte, 2016) and if left untreated, abnormalities in vision can become permanent. Vision

impairment is heterogeneous due to the complex nature of the visual system (Kelley, Gale & Blatch, 1998). The vast array of causes of vision impairment means that each child has their own particular educational needs and adjustments.

Childhood severe vision impairment or blindness can be caused by:

- Hereditary conditions such as genetic disorders;
- Intrauterine trauma such as Rubella or Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder [FASD];
- Perinatal conditions from prematurity or brain injury; and
- Acquired impairment due to untreated conditions and accidents, trauma, or cancers.

(Gilbert & Foster, 2011)

Incidence of Vision Impairment

Although some children with vision impairment may have other disabilities and attend special education units, the majority of students with vision impairment attend mainstream schools throughout all geographical areas of Australia (Media Access Australia, 2013). In Australia, it is estimated that there are 3,000 children with a vision impairment (Morris & Sharma, 2011). Indigenous Australians are three times more likely to have a vision impairment due to the high incidence of uncorrected or undiagnosed refractive errors (Foreman et.al., 2016), and children in low socio-economic areas are more likely to have vision impairments due to undiagnosed refractive errors, low take up or follow up of infant eye screening, intrauterine malformations, or decreased perinatal health (Deloitte, 2016). Due to the low incidence of severe vision impairment and blindness, it may be unlikely for you to come across a student with very low vision. In fact, less than 320 students in Australia have been identified as having a severe vision impairment or blindness (Deloitte, 2016).

Effect of Vision on Development

Vision is known as the co-ordinating sense which combines information gathered from all the senses to construct concepts about the environment. For sighted people, most learning opportunities are obtained incidentally from visual information (Ferrell, 2016). Vision provides incentive to the child to interact with their environment and engage with others.

A vision impairment impacts:

- Motor development (reaching, crawling, walking);
- Cognitive development (incidental learning of the world through sight);
- Social development (visual cues and facial expression, as well as social interactions).
-

Although babies with vision impairment develop through similar stages (Geld, 2014), they require direct, planned, and repetitive contextual experiences, providing auditory information to assist concept development (Ferrell, 2011). Early intervention is important to be able to access support and services and achieve full developmental potential (Lueck, Erin, Corn & Sacks, 2010).

Individual Characteristics

The cause and severity of vision impairment will be different and unique for every child. How a vision impairment impacts on a child's development, will depend on:

- the degree and type of impairment;

- the age at the time of impairment;
- the presence of other developmental or learning needs;
- the child's personality and abilities;
- fluctuations in time of day or eye fatigue;
- family environment and support; and
- access to early diagnosis intervention, support, and engagement. (Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children [RIDBC], 2016).

Functional vision is the term given to how students use their vision and other sensory information to interact in the environment (Telec, Boyd & King, 1997)). Functional vision can be increased by teaching students multiple ways to access information and through a positive mindset.

It has been well documented that certain personality traits, such as self-determination, creative and divergent thinking, being goal directed, and striving for accuracy create successful learners (Australian Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs, 2008; Mindful by Design, 2013). In the article *The Skills of Blindness: What Should Students Know and When Should They Know It,* Wright (2007) argues that advocating for one's own learning is also a useful tool for students and helps them develop skills for advocating for themselves in the workforce. Self-advocacy is reliant on the child's personality and the classroom culture. Providing a safe and encouraging learning environment will encourage students with vision impairment to speak out when they cannot see information or when need additional assistance.

Bishop and Rhind's (2011) research of students in tertiary education with vision impairment highlights that the success of a student is socially determined by the student's self-identity. They also found that the attitudes of the child's parents, as the first teachers, and their peers through acceptance and social interaction, assist students with vision impairment to develop a positive self-concept.

Watch this video of Kirsten to see how vision impairment affects her everyday life and how she has found ways to negotiate her environment, be successful in school, and advocate for her own wellbeing. Getting to know all your students, their learning preferences, and finding ways for them to participate and best demonstrate their understanding is key for good teaching practice (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2018).

Watch

Kirsten's Video 'Disability and Development' 10:04 min

Undiagnosed Vision Impairments

In Australia, developmental checks are performed at certain times throughout a child's development and if there are any concerns, children are referred for specialist assistance (Deloitte, 2016). According to the Australian Register of Vision Impairment, (RIDBC, 2014) only 72% of vision impairments are diagnosed in the child's first year. Therefore, it is possible that teachers may be the first one to notice the effects of vision loss and recommend that the child sees a specialist for an assessment.

Thurston (2014) notes there could be up to one in five students in early years classrooms with undiagnosed and correctable vision impairments. Refractive errors causing difficulty in reading and attaining satisfactory literacy levels have a major impact on academic achievement. Such vision problems could usually be addressed with corrective glasses and/or minor modifications in the classroom.

There have also been concerns that as access to digital technologies and screen time increases, so does the potential for vision problems (Rosenfield, 2018). Visual fatigue occurs when eye muscles tighten during visually intense tasks which causes the muscles to become uncomfortable, dry, and irritated (Sheppard & Wolffsohn, 2018). In the last four decades, the time spent on laptops, mobile phones, tablets, and other devices has increased rapidly, with children now spending more than two hours of screen time a day (Vision Council, 2016). Smaller, portable screens mean closer viewing distances, which increases the demand on the eye to accommodate the image (Sheppard & Wolffsohn, 2018). Studies have shown an increased risk of dry eye disease in children, affecting the long-term health of their eyes (Moon, Lee, & Moon, 2014). Ocular migraines have also been associated with digital screen time, due to glaring or flickering lights and/or strain on the eyes (Sheppard & Wolffsohn, 2018).

As a teacher there are certain behaviours or characteristics that might alert you to the fact that a student may have vision impairment. Telec, (2009) suggest these may include:

- appearance of eyes – turned, red, teary, or student blinks excessively;
- complaints – headaches, dizziness, blurry, watery eyes, or light sensitivity;
- behavioural – head turning across the page, head tilted to one side, holds books very close to the face, rubs eyes frequently, becomes irritated when completing written work;
- eye movement – loses place when reading, uses finger to track the words, omits small words, writes up or down on the paper;
- eye teaming abilities – seeing double, repeats letters, misaligns digits, squints, tilts head, postural deviations, eyes shake;
- eye-hand coordination – feels objects, poor hand–eye coordination; and
- refractive – difficulty copying from board to paper.

A timely diagnosis by medical experts and referral to intervention is essential to allow children with vision impairment access to services to support physical, academic and social requirements of school (Anthony, 2014; Janus, 2011). In some states in Australia such as Queensland, important support is provided for classroom teachers by specialist Advisory Visiting Teachers [AVTs] who visit the school and make recommendations for modifications in the classroom. The work of AVTs is to "support the access, participation, and achievement of students with a disability" (Queensland Government, 2018).

In the following video, Dr Michelle Turner interviews Melissa Fanshawe on how to recognise and support vision impairment in the classroom.

Watch

Inclusion and Diversity: Diagnosing Vision Impairment video 19:20 min

Reflection

- Have you met a person with a vision impairment?
- If so, what did you notice about the way they negotiated their environment and written information?
- How might you feel if one day you began losing your vision?

- What services in your local community might you access to assist you in teaching a student with vision impairment?

ATTITUDES AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS

THE ROLE OF TEACHER PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDES

Helen Keller said "not blindness, but the attitude of the seeing to the blind is the hardest burden to bear". People have been known to speak louder to someone with vision impairment and change conversational words to avoid using 'seeing' or 'looking'.

As vision impairment is a low incidence disability, many teachers may not have interacted with a person with severe vision impairment or blindness and feel underprepared and nervous about catering for their needs in the classroom (Brown, Packer, & Passmore, 2012). 'Lack-of-knowledge' theory purports that the lack of information about a topic or proposition confirms that the proposition is false.

Hollins (1989) notes that lack-of-knowledge theory can be applied to issues of vision impairment, and asserts that many people have not had any prior experience with people who are blind and therefore don't have prior knowledge to base their opinions. They therefore rely on their own assumptions, which results in a misalignment between expectations and solutions. This can also lead to a deficit view (seeing the disability as a hindrance and that students lack the ability to achieve) rather than focusing on the many abilities and strengths of the student. Making connections a person with a vision impairment or blindness is the most effective way to gain insight into, and a foundation of knowledge about the range of challenges, abilities, and successes.

Watch the video Don't Dis my ABILITY which shows the daily activities of Graham Hinds, a person who is blind. In this video, Graham demonstrates how people with vision impairment are independent and capable and provides some tips on interacting with people who are blind. The video is 'Audio Described' so that it is accessible to people with low vision.

Watch

'Don't Dis my ABILITY: Day in the life' 02.29 min

HIGH EXPECTATIONS: ACADEMICALLY, SOCIALLY, AND BEHAVIOURALLY

It is well argued that students who have a vision impairment should be held to the same academic, social, and behavioural standards as students who are sighted (Rosenblum, 2006; Tuttle & Tuttle, 2004; Wolffe, 2012). Holbrook and Koenig (2000) believe that students who have a vision impairment need to be given the same accessible content to ensure that (i) students acquire what is needed in that subject, (ii) do not have diminished expectations from their peers, and (iii) are prepared for adulthood when they will be judged equally in competitive employment markets. Social skills are equally important as behavior influences the attitudes of others as the basis for employment, social participation, and community and reflects on their self-concept and self-esteem (DeCarlo, McGwin, Bixler, Wallander & Owsley, 2012; Wolffe, 1999).

DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF INCLUSION

Opportunity, participation, and a sense of belonging in the school setting are paramount to positive social and cognitive development for students with vision impairment (DeCarlo, et al., 2012). It is important to create learning environments that allow for independence and provide age appropriate activities in a manner that can be achieved successfully (Beardslee, Watson Avery, Ayoub, Watts & Lester, 2010). Olmstead (2005) believes that success for students with disabilities comes in part from the "schools' commitment to inclusion" in practice (Olmstead, 2005 p. 65) Abawi, Fanshawe, Gilbey, Andersen and Rogers share more information in Chapter 3 of this text, Celebrating Diversity: Focusing on Inclusion.

OUR LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES AS TEACHERS

Creating a culture of inclusive, safe, and supportive environments is not just best practice, it is an ethical and legal requirement for all educational contexts in Australia. Australia hasn't always supported inclusive education in mainstream schools for students with a disability, and for many years exclusion or integration was the norm. The 1990s saw a strong push towards inclusive education for all students with several key policies and statements being instituted (Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2014). Perhaps most importantly, Australia became a signatory to the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education in 1994 (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1994).

Other documents that will guide your work as educators and with which you should become familiar include the Disability Discrimination Act (1992), the Disability Standards for Education (2005), the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (2008), and the Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2012). The Disability Standards for Education (2005) mandate that we as educators "make reasonable adjustments to assist a student with disability to participate in learning, and to demonstrate knowledge and understanding" (Department of Education, Training and Employment, n.d., p. 1). Refer to chapter 3 for further information about teachers' legal and ethical responsibilities regarding diversity and inclusion.

THE IMPACTS OF VISION IMPAIRMENT ON EDUCATION

Vision impairment can impact physical, social, emotional, and academic participation in education.

PHYSICAL IMPACTS OF VISION IMPAIRMENT ON EDUCATION

Motor skills, development, speech and vestibular development can be delayed with congenital vision loss (Telec, Boyd, & King, 1997). Neck posture and gait may also be affected by students as they accommodate their body to visual field loss. For students with decreased vision in one eye, lack of depth perception creates greater perceptual uncertainty, affects hand-eye coordination and balance required for daily routines, sports, and hobbies (Ekberg, Rosander, von Hofsten, Olsson, Soska, & Adolph, 2013).

For students with vision impairment, moving through the school can be difficult due to reduced sight to navigate through spaces. The general layout of the school will impact mobility as gauging the depth of steps, positioning of playground equipment, and changes in gradient are difficult. As you heard in Kirsten's story, the time of day, glare, and number of people around can impact on accessibility. Effective mobility skills and spatial awareness are important to confidently navigate the school environment.

Depending on their level of vision and their location within the classroom, students with vision impairments may find it difficult to see the whiteboard, or continuously copy from the board to their books. Glare from the

windows may impact their viewing of books, computers, or the whiteboard. Trip hazards may exist with chairs and bags that are in pathways and can't be seen.

In a study of students with vision impairments aged 10-12, Stuart and Lieberman (2006) found that physical activity of children with a vision impairment was significantly less than their fully sighted peers, and levels for physical activity decreased relative to the levels of vision. Physical education classes may be difficult to access due to equipment, programming and instruction, however, the many benefits of physical activity and social inclusion in sport, particularly team sports, means it is essential for teachers to find ways to overcome these barriers for full participation (Lieberman, Haegele, Columna & Conroy, 2014).

Watch this video about Goalball, a Paralympic team sport and the only one designed specifically for people with a vison impairment or blindness. Goalball is fast paced, requiring excellent aural attention and spatial awareness.

Watch

'Goalball' 01:13 min

SOCIAL IMPACTS OF VISION IMPAIRMENT ON EDUCATION

Acceptance by peers is important to develop a sense of belonging and positive self-concept. Self-concept is developed by feelings of acceptance and a person's perception of how others view them (Rosenblum, 2006). Students who are blind or have severe vision impairment often lack social competence which can affect their ability to bond with other students (Rosenblum, 2006). They may lack the ability to recognise faces or to initiate conversations, and may not gather intricate social cues such as facial expressions and body gestures (Fanshawe, 2015). Many students with low vision may have socially inappropriate behaviours, such as not respecting personal space, as they are unable to see correct behaviours modelled.

EMOTIONAL IMPACTS OF VISION IMPAIRMENT ON EDUCATION

A student's personality and a positive mindset to overcome challenges will also impact their ability to cope with vision impairment (Fanshawe, 2015). Research in several Western countries has revealed that students with vision impairments often feel lonely and isolated from their peers (George & Duquette, 2006). Students do not like to perceive themselves as different, particularly in the teenage years (Ihrig, 2013), and using white canes or reading Braille highlights such differences. Feelings of, and inadequacy and anxiety about their ability to cope with the academic workload have also been reported (Ihrig, 2013).

Whether the vision impairment was congenital or acquired will impact psychosocial adjustment (Tuttle & Tuttle, 2004; Welsh, 2010). An acquired loss of vision will be more difficult to adjust to, particularly if students have lost the ability to work or participate in sports and hobbies they once enjoyed (Ihrig, 2013).

ACADEMIC IMPACTS OF VISION IMPAIRMENT

Vision impairments create a particular challenge in the Australian mainstream classroom, as the content and the assessment of the curriculum is designed for those who can see (Telec, 2009). Visual images are throughout classrooms and schools in the form of posters, signs, and displays. Multimedia is embedded throughout the national curriculum with many visual images and videos, models, and symbols for students to decode. Subjects such as Science, Mathematics, Geography, History, and Visual Art have proved infinitely

more difficult to access by students with low vision (Rule et.al., 2011). These subjects contain a high number of graphical representations, diagrams, graphs, tables, and pictorial representation of data. Students with vision impairments studying these subjects cannot see important information and often rely on working memory to access this information (Rokem & Ahissar, 2009) which can result in increased cognitive load.

Reflection

Take time now to read the three lenses of vision impairment; a child, a parent, and a teacher

- Are there any common themes?
- How does seeing the different viewpoints help you to understand the impact of vision impairment?
- What physical, social, emotional, and academic impacts can you identify in these narratives?
- How might you respond if you were Oska's teacher?
- How does reading the parent's story help you to understand the emotional impact on the parent?

THREE LENSES OF PERSPECTIVE: CHILD, PARENT AND TEACHER

The following three narratives provide authentic perspectives on how vision impairment effects education. We hear firstly from Oska, a primary student about what he encounters on a day-to-day basis in his school. Next, we hear from a parent of another child with vision impairment and the effects on family, accessing services, and expectations for inclusive education for her son Mika. Finally, we hear from a teacher who without experience or training managed to successfully negotiate teaching a student with vison impairment, Katie, and the wealth of learning opportunities that presented.

CHILD'S LENS: OSKA'S STORY. LISTEN TO THE AUDIO OF OSKA 05:03 MIN (TRANSCRIPT APPENDIX 1)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://usq.pressbooks.pub/openingeyes/?p=104#audio-104-1

Child's lens

PARENT'S LENS: MIKA'S STORY. LISTEN TO THE AUDIO OF MIKA'S MOTHER 08:21 MIN (TRANSCRIPT APPENDIX 2)

Parent's lens

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://usq.pressbooks.pub/openingeyes/?p=104#audio-104-2

TEACHER'S LENS: KATIE'S STORY. LISTEN TO THE AUDIO OF KATIE'S TEACHER 04:43 MIN (TRANSCRIPT APPENDIX 3)

One or more interactive elements has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view them online here: https://usq.pressbooks.pub/openingeyes/?p=104#audio-104-3

Teacher's lens

SUPPORTING INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH VISION IMPAIRMENT IN MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS

FAMILY, CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Long before a student enters your classroom, their parents, carers, family and early intervention specialists have been developing the child's skills to orientate themselves in space and move safely around their environment. It is important for you to be aware that having a child with a disability is a major emotional

journey for parents (Davis & Day, 2010; Tanni, 2014). Prior knowledge, cultural, and religious beliefs towards disabilities will impact how a family provides support for their child (Chen, 2009, Waldron, 2006).

It is important that educators are respectful of the decisions and choices parents have made in the child's interests and work together to ensure maximum participation in the educational settings. If it is recommended that a student has an Individual Education Plan [IEP], this must be completed with the knowledge of the teacher and the approval of the parent or carer. In most States students with a vision impairment will have their disability verified attracting government funding. This will assist the teacher and school to apply the recommended adjustments in the IEP possible.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN: CONSIDERATIONS OF VISION IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL STUDENTS

As mentioned in Chapter 3, a culture of inclusion needs to be created throughout the school to ensure students have a sense of belonging (Abawi, Fanshawe, Gilbey, Andersen, & Rogers, 2018). This includes not just school staff and students but also the school community in a systemic manner. Inclusive culture aims to create a school environment that is designed for the universal needs of all the students within the school so that low vision does not impair a person's participation. Adjustments, accommodations, and differentiation are all used interchangeably throughout this chapter to refer to any "measure or action taken to assist a student with disability to participate in education on the same basis as other students" (Australian Government Attorney General's Department, 2005, p. 10). Universal design for learning means creating a learning environment which promotes access to the curriculum, learning and teaching for all learners.

Access to information

Writing

- Ensure contrast, font, size, clutter, and line spacing is legible.
- Minimise unnecessary copying of tasks.
- Use 2B pencils or black marker pens for recording.
- Use large font on the board or interactive whiteboard.
- Place posters and other visual prompts around room within visual fields.

Technology

- Allow activities and testing to be completed on a computer.
- Promote inbuilt accessibility options or preferred settings to enlarge font.
- Train students in 'shortcuts' for quick access to system commands.
- Develop keyboarding skills and touch typing to allow for typed responses.

Textbooks

The Marrakesh Treaty set in June 2013 (World Intellectual Property Organisation 2013), allows a relaxation on copyright laws for people with a print disability, which allows all materials from textbooks to be provided by the publisher in electronic format, allowing them to be enlarged.

Digital media

Ensure font is large, use a contrasting colour and avoid clutter.

Auditory skills

Provide different ways for students to accurately express their knowledge.
Provide timely and constructive feedback in a students preferred style: written, typed, auditory.

Visual fatigue

The 20-20-20 rule is suggested to maintain eye health; after 20 minutes of screen time, you should look for 20 seconds at something 20 feet away (6 metres) (Rosenfield, 2018).
Provide ways to reduce cognitive load and assign realistic workloads and homework tasks.

Organisation

Plan ahead to have materials prepared or emailed for accessibility.
Teach students how to organise materials within their 'tidy tray' for quick access.
Teach students how to use files on the computer to store information.

Environment

School Culture

Ensure achievable expectations of academic curriculum.
Foster a safe, supportive and inclusive environment and promote independence.
Encourage students to advocate for the ways they learn best.;
Support students to develop social inclusion through positive friendships and a sense of belonging.

School grounds

Highlight any hazards in the environment such as steps by using yellow strips.
Cover drains and other trip hazards.

Classroom Organisation

Organise the classroom to allow sufficient space for ease of access.
Consider lighting that is bright enough but does not produce glare.
Plan the layout of desks to ensure all students have good access to the board.

Pedagogy

Use explicit verbal instructions so students are aware of what is happening and when.
Verbalise writing as you put it on the board.
Ensure examples are modelled and scaffolded.
Equitable learning experiences for all students.

MODIFICATIONS FOR SEVERE VISION IMPAIRMENT

Holbrook and Koenig (2000) believe students should have a variety of tools that they can use to access the curriculum as independently as possible. Students with severe vision impairment can use a combination of auditory and tactile technologies to assist them accessing the curriculum such as screen readers, touch typing, Braille, and auditory recordings. This toolbox of different technologies allows students to participate in the classroom through the independence to choose which tool will assist them to access the curriculum and engage in the learning environment.

Stratton's (1990) Principles of Adaption, proposes a hierarchy to assist educators when making adjustments to the core curriculum. The model recognises the importance of modifying the curriculum based on the

student's individual set of needs. It proposes the use of the least restrictive methods at all times, so the students can connect and interact with their environment as much as possible (Stratton, 1990). Stratton proposes four levels of adjustments in his model (Figure 8.5).

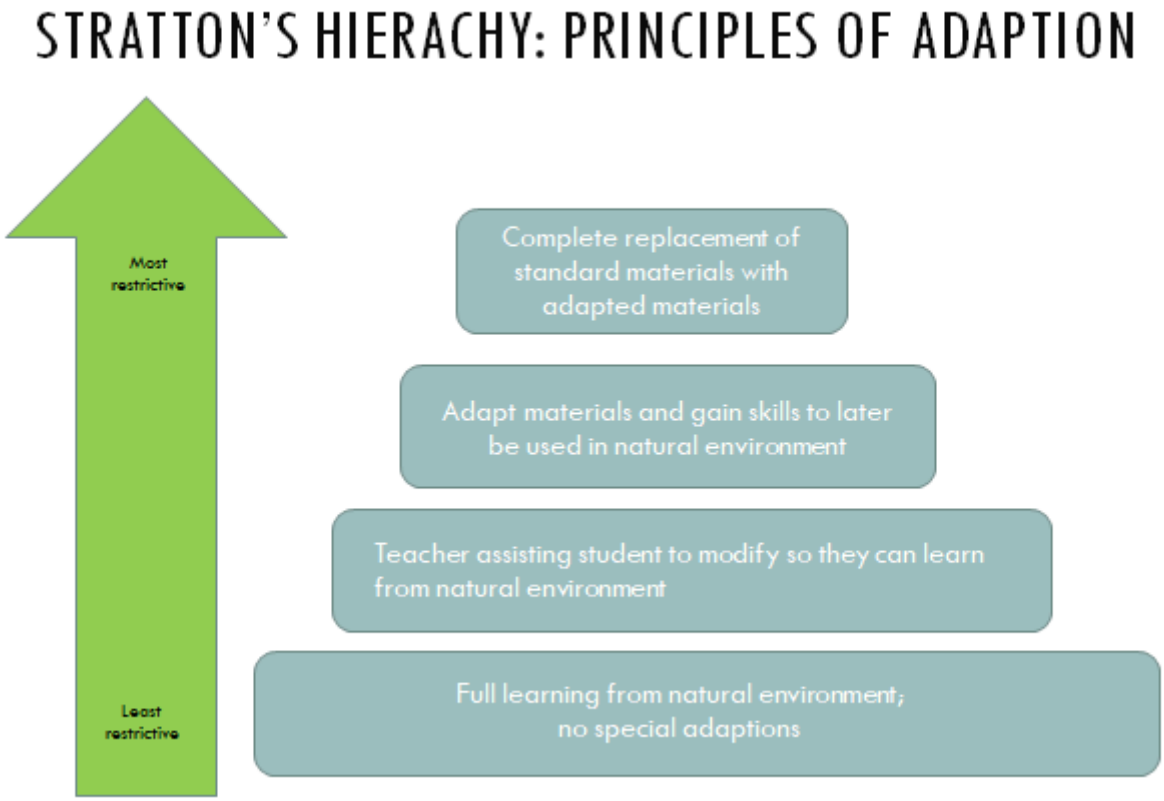

Figure 8.4: The Principle of Least Restrictive Materials (Stratton, 1990).

The least restrictive method (bottom layer of Figure 8.5) is when the theory of Universal Design for Learning (Rose, 2000) is used, in which, curriculum design provides multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement to suit the needs of all learners.

The second level, is the teacher providing modifications so the student can learn in the classroom. This may be in terms of larger print, enlarged diagrams, or printed Braille. The third level requires some modifications to be made to curriculum and assessment to meet academic demands. This may be necessary when the materials contain complex visual images, such as cartoons, videos, learning objects, diagrams, and maps. If this still does not allow access to the learning activity at the same level as their peers, educators need to look at entirely different ways to ensure the student is able to participate in the learning.

Expanded Core Curriculum

Inclusion in the classroom is facilitated by allowing students to independently access the academic and social curriculum in the classroom. To fully participate in education The South Pacific Educators of Students with Vision Impairment (2004), believe that students need to be exposed to an Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). The ECC comprises of nine areas that require explicit teaching to students with vision impairment to compensate for skills sighted peers gain incidentally by observing others.

Assistive Technology

Assistive technology includes specific tools that enable students to access information. It can include Braille machines, screen reading software, mobile phones, iPads, and magnifiers.

Career Education

Career education provides students with vision impairment an opportunity to be exposed to the jobs that they may not be aware of without the ability to observe people working. It includes understanding the student's strengths to make decisions about suitable careers.

Compensatory Skills

Compensatory skills are the skills necessary for accessing the core curriculum. This can include study skills, access to enlarged print, tactile graphics, and Braille.

Independent Living Skills

Independent living skills include the tasks required in everyday life, hygiene, dressing, cooking, eating, and chores to increase independence.

Orientation and Mobility

Orientation and mobility (O & M) instruction helps students to become aware of where their body is in space and how to travel safely. It may include cane training, travelling in the school of community, and using public transport.

Recreation and Leisure

Recreation and leisure is important for belonging and participation. Assistance in becoming aware of many physical and leisure activities allows social interaction and is good for well-being.

Self-Determination

Self-determination includes making decisions, solving problems, and advocating for oneself. Students who know about themselves as learners and advocate for what they need will be able to be more successful.

Sensory Efficiency

Sensory efficiency incudes using other senses and systems (proprioceptive, kinaesthetic, and vestibular systems) to be able to access and participate in their environments.

Social Interaction Skills

Social interaction skills explicitly teach social skills and promote awareness about facial expressions, body language, and interpersonal relationships that cannot be learned by visually observing people.

CONCLUSION

Vision is the sense that provides information about the environment and as such, students with severe vision impairment may miss incidental information and important social cues. Vision impairment is a low incidence disability that can impact physical, social, emotional, and academic engagement within a school if modifications are not made to promote inclusion.

Academic and social inclusion in schools is important to model the diversity of the community. Being inclusive of students with disabilities in the classroom, helps all students develop empathy and understanding for their peers (Rosenblum, 2006). It is important to note that designing learning activities for all students does not mean designing for the average student. In fact, studies demonstrate that when you design for the average, the outcomes usually suits no-one (Rose, 2016). Classrooms can be designed to suit the individual needs of all students which will encourage active participation for students with vision impairment.

Students should be provided a toolbox of technologies both digital and traditional, which can help then

access the curriculum. The Expanded Core Curriculum is therefore important for students with severe vision impairment and blindness to access knowledge and skills that will help compensate for their vision loss. It is likely that you will have children with mild or moderate vision impairments in your classroom. It is also possible that you may identify issues with students' vision within your classroom. Armed with the knowledge from this chapter, it is hoped that you can modify content in the least restrictive manner and use pedagogies that create an inclusive culture and promote active participation of all students in the classroom.

Meaning Making

- How would access to information be different for student with vision impairment?
- Why is it important to promote social inclusion in the classroom?
- What behaviors could be evident if a child could not access information easily or effectively?

Reflection

- How can you provide information home to parents that may have vision impairments?
- How can parents/ grandparents with vision impairment be included in parent/teacher/student school activities?
- What else can cause problems for an individual with vision impairment in a school? (e.g. people walking around on iPhone not looking).
- How can teachers manage their own visual fatigue?

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APPENDIX 1: CHILD PERSPECTIVE (TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIO)

My name is Oska, and I love sport, playing with my friends and lasagne. I also have a vision impairment. This is what my day looks like. When I wake up, I can't see out the window to know if it is day or night. I ask Siri

for the time. If it is time to wake up, I make my way to the bathroom. It's three metres from my room to the bathroom door. I go to wash my hands, but my brothers always move the soap, so I have to find it first. The cupboard door was left open in the hall and I collide with it on my way to the kitchen to get my breakfast. It doesn't hurt as I run into things all the time. My breakfast consists of cereal and milk. I know the containers even though I can't read what is on the label. Once my mum bought juice in the same container as milk and I accidently poured it on my cereal, until I realised it didn't smell like milk.After breakfast, my job is to unpack the dishwasher. Apparently, I sometimes leave things in there, even though I do my best. Everyone has to remember to pack sharp knives in the same place so I don't cut myself.

I have a shower, I squirt out a bit of the container. It is thick and moisturising, so I know that it the conditioner. I get the other bottle and wash my hair. To get dressed, my school shirt is in a certain place in my drawers and has a different texture. They have tags on them to make sure they are the right way around. My socks are already paired for me and my shoes are in the cupboard. I pack my lunch, computer and my focus 40 Braille machine into my school bag. I play the trumpet, but even if you know Braille music, you have to remember the notes off by heart, so it makes it harder to play. I am band captain and I help set up for band. When I get to school, I walk with my brother up to class. I can hear all my friends say 'hi'. I know them all by their voice. My friends and I go the classroom to line up.

It takes me a while to get my focus 40 paired with the computer. I'm really good at technology, but some days it won't pair, which means I need to type everything and listen to screen readers. When this happens, it is frustrating as Braille helps me spell and punctuate and means I can easily go back and forth within a document. I seem to take longer than others to do my tasks, but my teacher gives me extra time, or if there isn't he tells me which part to do. Last week at school I had to do two assessments. I'm pretty sure I got an A. Using Braille or listening to the words, is just a different way of getting the information. It's the only way I know, so it is no problem for me. I can't see the posters on the wall, but my teacher reads them all out to me at the beginning of the year and emailed them to me, so I have a copy if I need to.

The bell rings, I get my lunchbox and follow everyone down the stairs. Usually my lunch is in containers. One day mum gave me a sandwich in glad wrap and it took me half the break to open the thing. My friends offered to help but I ended up ripping the gladwrap. At playtime, we all run together to the oval to play tiggy. One of my friends run with me and tells me which direction to run, and the location of the person who is 'it'. I can hear other people running around me and love the feeling of the air on my face. The bell goes and it is time to go back in. I move around the school easily as I have mapped where everything is. Usually all my friends are with me anyway. If my teacher is writing on the whiteboard, he reads it out as he writes it. If we need to copy it, he will send add it to my One Note, so I can access it electronically. Maths, Science, or HASS can be difficult if there is a graph or diagram. However, I have a PIAF machine, which raises the lines on a diagram by putting it through a laminator type machine. That was I can feel it in the same way as my friends see their diagrams.

When it is time to go home, I meet my younger brother outside our classroom. Sometimes he runs off and I have to call out or ask someone if they have seen my brother. After school I usually have homework, I do it quickly because I really love to ride my bike. My brother and I ride all afternoon. My brother rides in front of me, so I know where is safe to go. I still run into things a lot, but my bike and I are tough, and our backyard has been made quite safe for me. I probably should go on a tandem, but it is way more fun on my own bike. At dinner time, I can usually smell what we are eating. I get my knife and fork and just cut and put it in my mouth and hope for good flavours. Mum reads us a story. I lay with my eyes closed an imagine myself in the story. Sometimes after I go to bed and everyone thinks I'm asleep, I stay up late and read a Braille book. I usually dream about cars and about how I will get a good job, so that I can buy a fancy car and a driver, or maybe by then I will have a driverless car.

APPENDIX 2 : PARENT PERSPECTIVE (TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIO)

By the time my son Mika was born we had been living overseas for many years. After an emergency caesarean Mika was given a positive Apgar result and all seemed well. His sisters' births were fairly routine with minor complications, and as Mika's pre-natal scans showed nothing untoward, we assumed it was third time lucky. My son didn't open his eyes until just before we were due to leave the hospital. It was only momentary glance but enough for me to notice the white cloudiness covering both eyes. I thought I should mention this to the nurse but didn't feel particularly concerned. The next hour was quite confusing as a specialist was brought into investigate. "He can't see" was the specialist's delicate summary. "Are you sure, are you sure?" I questioned, still somewhat in a blur from the medication. "You don't believe me? Then get another opinion!" That was the last we saw of the specialist and the start of our journey.

The first six months of Mika's life was spent researching a very rare condition–-bilateral Peters Anomaly—and finding out that if there was to be any chance of sight, Mika would need a transplant or alternative operation as soon as possible; a narrow window of opportunity to activate the visual system to prevent amblyopia or permanent blindness. The country we were living in had no donated corneal tissue appropriate for a baby, and Australia did not send tissue to this country, so we were placed on the waiting list for a cornea from the US. Over time it became apparent that it would be a long wait to be at the top of the donation list, so we opted for an older and rarely used surgical alternative back in Australia. Four operations later and Mika had some peripheral vision at the top of one eye. A miracle it seemed.

And soon it was time for Mika to start pre-school. I wasn't sure what to expect or whether he would be allowed into a 'regular' school. The country we were living in did not fully include students with a disability into mainstream schools and when I had left Australia in 1991, Australia had not subscribed to the inclusive education agenda, with the Salamanca Statement on Special Needs Education only signed in 1994. As an educator, I rarely had the opportunity to teach students with a disability. An international school said they would admit Mika with the only preparation being that we would 'just see how we go'. The school had very limited experience with children with a disability and had not taught a student with vision impairment previously. Teachers, teacher assistants, and Mika figured it out as they went along. Mika had many, many falls as he could not see steps, changes in levels, and much of the playground equipment, so it seemed like he was at the nurse's office every day. But despite his bruises, Mika was particularly resilient and determined to learn and play alongside his peers.

We moved back to Australia when Mika was in kindergarten and in year one he attended the local primary school his sisters had attended. Once again, the school had limited experience working with students with a disability, but from day one our experience was mostly very positive. I was very nervous about Mika learning the layout of the school as it was much bigger than his kindergarten and, as expected, Mika had daily trips to the nurse after running into poles or falling down stairs. After we learnt about the verification process, Mika's disability was substantiated which meant that support agencies could be contacted, and some government funding would be received for additional help. An orientation and mobility expert from Vision Australia helped Mika to navigate the school. They made suggestions for adjustments such as reducing glare, the purchasing of a tablet on which words could be enlarged, and the use of contrasting colours in the classroom and on the playground (in particular, yellow-on-black). Vision Australia have been an amazing resource and Mika wouldn't have had the success he had a primary school without their input. It wasn't until the end of year five that Mika learnt to use a white cane which further increased his confidence. A distinct advantage was that the school has a Student Services Coordinator well versed in the legal requirements for teachers to adhere to the principles of inclusive education, as well as having extensive knowledge of practical adjustments.

Without exception Mika's classroom teachers were accepting of the advice and assistance provided and embraced the suggestions for differentiation. There did not appear to be any limitations on his inclusion in

everyday activities except for those suggested by his ophthalmologist, such as a ban on contact sports. Over the years Mika has taken part in dance, drama, softball, fencing, handball, choir and band. He attended school camps in years 4-6 including the year 6 adventure to Sydney and Canberra. Mika very much benefited from having an additional parent accompany him on this trip; someone to describe things he could not see, as well as the use of an Ipad to photograph and expand images at Australia's Parliament House. Of course it has not always been smooth sailing for Mika, but these are points for learning. With an additional diagnosis of Rieger Syndrome and an action tremor, Mika has always struggled with fine motor skills and his hand writing is still almost illegible. Whilst he has had many sessions with an occupational therapist and was provided a scribe for activities that required lengthy written work, adjustments did not flow into other specialist subject areas such as visual art and Asian languages that use characters. Few alternatives were forthcoming in these areas. Whilst Mika had played the trombone for several years following the footsteps of his sisters, he struggled with seeing the music even when enlarged as much as possible. A significant dip in his eyesight at the end of year five coincided with a significant dip in his confidence in several areas. Although the purchase of a music reading app and wireless pedal looked promising, Mika became depressed at the thought of not succeeding in music and eventually gave up playing. Mika is to start learning Braille soon, but in hindsight it may have been best to begin this a lot earlier, so he could move to Braille music when the printed music became impossible to read.

I am reflecting on Mika's journey whilst on holiday and Mika sets off for the beach again. Yesterday he learnt to snorkel and kayak for the first time, loving every minute. He is confident (fearless), resilient, and positive and is very much looking forward to starting high school next year. I have many reservations of course, especially Mika negotiating a new and much bigger school landscape and in time, public transport. Knowing that early visual loss can have profound effects on a child's motor, social, emotional, and psychological development, Mika could be a very different child today had his journey not included open-minded, supportive, and caring teachers and specialists who believed he should have the same educational opportunities as his peers. His friends share the same qualities and are a fabulous support. Being surrounded by strong role models such as his fellow Goalball and blind golf players who have competed at international and Paralympic competitions gives Mika even more to strive towards. Inclusive education is not always this way, but it can be, and should be.

APPENDIX 3 : TEACHER PERSPECTIVE (TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIO)

I first met Katie in a rural school in Central Queensland. Having just entered Year 4 she was happy, well-spoken, and had been blind from birth.

As a relatively new teacher, I will be honest; I did panic the week before school started, when I found out Katie was going to be in my class. I had never met anyone who was blind and had no experience at all with working with people with no vision, and the thought of learning Braille was overwhelming! Katie was transferring from a different school so I was not able to meet with her previous teachers to hear about how they adapted the curriculum. Fortunately, our district had an Advisory Visiting Teacher (AVT) for vision impairment, who met with me and went through her case notes, to help me get a sense of who Katie was as a learner. With assistance, I worked out ways I would need to adapt the way I presented information, my teaching pedagogy as well as how I set up my classroom and group interactions.

When I first met Katie I was impressed with her persistence, resilience, and friendly nature. She quickly became a popular member of our classroom. I found Braille really intriguing, the coding element was really exciting and so did many other students. I did an online course, but to be honest Katie's devices all translated into print on the computer, and she had support from the AVT for Braille, so the students and I learnt basic Braille and would use it to send messages of confirmation to each other throughout the week. We also used it for spelling activities, which became the favourite part of our week (and my students had the best spelling

scores in the district). I had to be organised and know what I was teaching each week, so that it was available in Braille. A number of other students responded really well to my change of teaching pedagogy, which involved speaking as I wrote on the board, explaining everything verbally and describing illustrations in books, maps and diagrams in science. Brailling took longer than reading or writing, so although I did ensure Katie had work of the same academic integrity, I gave her only one or two examples (as long as she got them correct). Of course, there were occasions when something changed, or altered at the last minute and Kayla would become frustrated. I taught Katie to advocate for herself and tell me if something was inaccessible and we soon became good at thinking on our feet, having a student read something out, or I read everything to the class. However, through our preparations, on most occasions Katie was able to independently access what everyone was doing.

My classroom was the best laid out it had been in years. I had set up wide spaces between desks and put required items in accessible areas. Of course Katie bumped into chairs left out by the students every now and then, but I found that it gave the students a reason to tidy up after themselves, tuck their chairs in and walk slowly through the classroom. Katie was involved in lunchtime activities with her friends, who ate with her and then showed her where everything was in the playground. She particularly loved the monkey bars and could get there even without her cane, as she appeared to have mapped out the school.

When I started the year, I admit I felt sorry for Katie. I wondered how she would interact with others and how she would complete her work. By the end of the year, I was nothing short of inspired. With a few modifications Katie was doing what all her peers were doing, just accessing the content in a different way. I was impressed with her perseverance and resilient disposition. I also noted wonderful qualities of empathy and awe from the other students. Working together to help everyone, including Katie, to achieve goals was their priority and I am sure that having Katie in their class, meant they were more equipped to work with diversity and tolerance in their futures.

Teaching Katie had a profound impact on me. I decided to retrain as a teacher of the vision impaired and have since met many children who are blind. Just like the rest of our children, they are diverse in personality, ability, and confidence. Adaptive technology has improved greatly, with inbuilt screen readers on computers and iPads, electronic Braille devices, 3D printers and many general technology tools, such as the iPhone, that makes information so accessible.

Teaching is a career that makes a difference. Teaching a child with a vision impairment just requires rethinking your curriculum and pedagogy and a desire to see all children access education to reach their potential. I encourage anyone who has the honour of teaching a child with a vision impairment to use it as an opportunity to improve your own teaching and the minds of all the students in your class.

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CHAPTER 9

The importance of Indigenous cultural perspectives in education (The danger of the single story)

MELISSA FANSHAWE; PROFESSOR LINDY-ANNE ABAWI; AND JILLIAN GUY

Why teachers must embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives in all educational contexts as the first step in acknowledging and catering for diversity in the classroom?

Key Learnings

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have experienced dispossession and trauma through historical and modern colonisation.
- Educators can be agents of change, by ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are embedded in the curriculum and implementing an inclusive pedagogy.

USQ acknowledges the Giabal and Jarowair peoples of the Toowoomba area, the Jagera, Yuggera and Ugarapul peoples of Ipswich and Springfield, the Kambuwal peoples of Stanthorpe and the Gadigal peoples of the Eora nation, Sydney as the keepers of ancient knowledge where USQ campuses and hubs have been built and whose cultures and customs continue to nurture this land. USQ also pays respect to Elders – past, present and future. Further, we acknowledge the cultural diversity of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and pay respect to Elders past, present and future.Finally, we celebrate the continuous living cultures of First Australians and acknowledge the important contributions Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have and continue to make in Australian society.

Take a moment to listen to why all those who do not come from the land on which they are living, learning and working need to acknowledge its traditional custodians.

INTRODUCTION

The danger of viewing a narrative from a single lens is that a story is painted from one viewpoint and therefore conclusions are drawn from one perspective. Kathryn Gilbey (2018) gave a talk that inspired chapter 9 and she said "when we continue as an institution to teach courses and only ever present one perspective or world view, we remain complicit in the staggering statistics that surround Aboriginal people in out of home care and detention".

In Australia, statistics alone, show that Western Colonisation has led to dispossession, trauma, high numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being taken from their homes into foster care,

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in prison without legal cause, and laws inflicted in communities that pertain to only to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, there are personal stories that lie behind these statistics.

This chapter examines the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the impact of attitudes of Australian society. It looks at the impact of these attitudes within the Education system and the importance of pedagogy in establishing a critical anti-racism approach to cultural diversity within all educational contexts. It investigates the conceptual understandings of race, colonisation and Western viewpoints and proposes considerations to ensure all students receive a culturally sensitive education.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education literature discusses the importance of not characterising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the problem or having the problem. Issues are created by systemic racism inherent within the systems that interact with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The issues (e.g., child removals) may arise because of the different understandings around concepts such as parenting. It is when these issues are used to frame Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities as being the problem that the contentions arise. In looking at what could be termed as problems or issues, it is clear that there are differing perspectives as to how events, actions and lives are viewed. The challenge in reading this chapter is to consider a strength-based approach to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people rather than a deficit discourse.

Learning Objectives

It is anticipated that upon completion of the chapter you will have:

- An overview of the impact of cultural subjectivity in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- An understanding of the effects of historical and contemporary colonialism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- A range of considerations to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives are embedded within Australian educational contexts.

BACKGROUND

Life histories continually shape who we are and how we view and interact with the world. Our life histories, and futures, are partly shaped by our interactions with others and experiences shared with us, particularly when they are shared by significant others such as family and close friends. When events are particularly traumatic and far reaching, and touch whole families and indeed peoples, then ongoing repercussions last for generations. If not acknowledged and addressed the trauma continues unabated (Fossey, Holborn, Abawi & Cooper, 2017).

> The lives of Indigenous Australians today are affected by what has happened to us and our ancestors over the past 230 years since Europeans arrived. This can be hard for non-Indigenous people to understand, particularly if you haven't learned much about Australian history at school. When people have some knowledge of Aboriginal... culture and the history of our contact with non-Indigenous Australians since 1788, they have a much better feel for our achievements and our persistent problems. They are more likely to share our pride and to want to improve relationships between us as fellow Australians. Professor M. Dodson AM, Australian of the Year 2009. (Reconciliation Australia, 2015)

Australian society is tainted by a history of longstanding colonial occupation imposed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Samson & Gigoux, 2016). Australians have been taught in many classrooms,

that Australia was 'discovered' by Captain James Cook in 1770. This European perspective of 'history' erases Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who had previously inhabited Australia for close to 70,000 years (Roberts, 1994), from Australian history and identity . The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had been living with sustainable use of land and resources, hunting and gathering for food, building shelter and creating culture within expanding communities (Clark, 1994) and this is still occurring in places today.

Upon European settlement, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were immediately regarded as 'Natives'. The land upon which they had been living was claimed by settlers (Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who resisted dispossession were 'controlled' through Martial Law, with tens of thousands of men, women and children killed between 1770 and 1837. In addition to this, many others were forcibly settled in managed 'reserves' in appalling conditions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were also believed incapable of citizenship and legally banned from giving evidence in court, serving in the armed forces, receiving pensions or having a right to vote. Worse still, was presence of a Western Supremacy view that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were unfit and incapable of caring for their own children. From 1893 – 1971 many children of Aboriginal descent were removed from their parents and the Director of Native Welfare became their legal guardian (MacFarlane & Hannah, 2007). The children lived in mass dormitories or were assigned to white Australian parents in order to attend educational institutions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

It was not until the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were given the same status of citizenship and entitlements as other Australians. However many of these rights were still in limited, with many capabilities and laws taking up to ten years to process (MacFarlane & Hannah, 2007), with voting for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples first legalised in 1962. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were advised that they needed to assimilate to the "same responsibilities, observing the same customs and be influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians" (Commonwealth of Australia, 1961).

It wasn't until 1972 that the Government removed the 'White Australian Policy' and introduced self-determination policies. This meant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were granted equal status and children were no longer removed from their parents (though many would argue that this is still taking place due to the way our social welfare system I operates [removing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families at 10 times the rate of white children]. As a consequence, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were able to attend Government schools and able to acquire land. However, it was not until 1992, that Native Title was acknowledged through the 'Mabo' decision and precedents for reclaiming land by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples was established. It was also in this year that the Government acknowledged the wrongs to the people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage.

The trauma, devastation, struggle and loss that was suffered through colonisation largely remains a hidden history from children in schools. The use of Western imperialistic language in the history curriculum, such as Captain Cook 'discovered' Australia, further serves to marginalise generations of Indigenous people, and does not acknowledge the dispossession of land and culture, and the removal of children enforced on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Grant, 2018). Language reinforced in the recorded history of Australia, perpetuates the hierarchical structure established by Western colonists and portrays Europeans as 'superior' and 'civilised' and Indigenous people as 'natives', a 'dying breed', 'savages', and 'primitives'.

Derogatory names are still used as a tool of insult which can mean that the colour of skin can attribute identity (Carlson, 2016). Further negative connotations are attributed to people who identify as part Indigenous, with words such as 'half caste' being used. This can add further confusion to identity as expressed by Carlson (2016, p. 6) "not being recognisably black meant I was not Aboriginal. This was an early source of anxiety about who I was and how I was to represent myself".

CURRENT CHALLENGES FACING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

Despite legislation now stating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples theoretically have equal access to health care, education, employment and to participate in society, in reality there is still only one side of the story being told. The "compounding effects of low income, poor education, poor health, unemployment, poor housing and a lack of essential services" (Guthridge et al. 2016, p.125) means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples do not have equitable access to land, education, health and welfare. Harrison et al., (2017, p. 189) believes this is a direct "legacy of their dispossession [causing] ongoing socio-economic disadvantage and racial discrimination within the dominant non-Indigenous culture".

Furthermore, as noted earlier, institutional racism is apparent through the continuing high levels of welfare intrusion in the lives of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. In order to move forward together toward a respectful and strong future it is important to understand the urgency of the current situation for many Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

This chapter challenges you to consider the strengths of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and then to also consider the complexities faced such as high numbers of children in out of home care, alcohol consumption, incarceration rates of Indigenous people, health concerns, educational inequities and raises hope in strengthening strengthen pride in Australian Indigeneity the oldest surviving culture in the world.

OUT OF HOME CARE

Unresolved trauma and grief from marginalisation, dispossession and racism can account for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being over represented in out of home care (AIFS, 2017). In 2015-2016, 43.6 per 1000 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children were in out of home care (AIFS, 2017). In June 2016 36% (n=16,846) of children in care were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (AIFS, 2017). Bailey, Powell & Brichacher (2017) argue these figures can be incorrect and there is a fear and mistrust of the justice system by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Neglect is attributed for 40% of children in out of home care (AIFS, 2017). If a social worker, according to their own subjective view, determines parenting as not sufficient, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child can be removed from their family. D'Souza et.al (1995) believed that this is a result of the paternalism of the white establishment that did not believe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were capable of making suitable decisions and carrying them out in their way.

The unnecessary removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their kinship groups, causing excessive, and often multiple, trauma for families, is therefore often based on assumptions that are uncontested. If a critical lens is used, as Lohoar, Butera & Kennedy (2014) contend, these assumptions fail to take into account the concept that the structure of the child rearing is culturally different to European expectations, and many wonderful benefits stem from the family structure and kinship system of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kinships. With these understandings, many agencies are working towards a better understanding of the culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to ensure children are kept with their families (SNAAIC, 2016).

ALCOHOL

The Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) is the peak body overseeing primary health services in the Northern Territory and their work has been instrumental in advocating for the right of

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to have adequate funding for health care services. In their Submission to the Alcohol Policies and Legislation Review in the NT it was highlighted that:

> In the Northern Territory, 38.6% of people aged 12 years and older consume alcohol at rates that place them at risk of short-term harm, and 28.8% consume alcohol at levels that place them at risk of long-term harm, including chronic disease and illness. This is significantly more than the reported national consumption rates … While most Aboriginal people in the NT experience positive wellbeing and engagement with their families, communities and culture, it is also the case that many people's lives are marked by profound disadvantage, including experience of intergenerational poverty and trauma, overcrowded housing, poor educational attainment and unemployment (AMSANT, 2017, p5).

The submission also acknowledged that

> Aboriginal communities carry a high burden of intergenerational and ongoing trauma resulting from colonisation and historic and ongoing government policies, institutional racism, discrimination and the effects of entrenched disadvantage and disconnection from traditional lands, languages and cultural practices. Trauma has profound impacts on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of individuals as well as broader community wellbeing. Alcohol and substance misuse has been associated with intergenerational and other types of trauma, including childhood trauma. (AMSANT, 2017, p7).

In an attempt to minimise alcohol related misuse and harm, Governments have implemented Alcohol Management Plans (AMPs) in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. AMPs provide special policing powers for designated 'alcohol-protected areas' which mostly cover Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Many people argue that this violates the Commonwealth Racial Discrimination Act (1975) which protects people from being unfairly victimised due to race.

This was tested in Maloney versus The Queen 2012 when an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman appealed a sentence for possessing two bottles of alcohol in an AMP area (Gear, 2013). Her lawyers argued that alcohol was only being criminalised for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples but not other Australians and therefore violated the Discrimination Act and marginalised her for being Aboriginal. Maloney's sentence was upheld as it was deemed that under Section 8(1) of the Racial Discrimination Act (1975) that 'Special Measures' can be cited to redress historical disadvantage. Activists were angry that the legislation created a lawful context for discriminatory treatment in the policing and sentencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in regard to criminalised alcohol consumption. Governments are called to address the cause of alcoholism in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities "including poverty, racism and discrimination, access to health care, housing, education and employment" (AMSANT, 2017, p.3) rather than create and enforce laws to again, deliberately dispossess Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE DIFFERENTLY?

As a society we need to have aspirations and enable children, youth, and older generations to be able to enact their aspirations. Consider then the disproportionately high level of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander juveniles {10-17} and young adults {18-24} who are incarcerated (Parliament of Australia, 2018). "The detention rate for Indigenous juveniles is 397 per 100,000, which is 28 times higher than the rate for non-Indigenous juveniles (14 per 100,000)… Indigenous juveniles accounted for 59 percent of the total juvenile detention population" (Parliament of Australia, 2018, p.1) while representing only 2.5% of the total Australian population. 22% of juveniles in detention were aged 14 years or younger (Parliament of Australia, 2018). Why has this occurred and what are we doing differently to change this story?

The Don Dale facility in Northern Territory; a former maximum security prison, is a juvenile detention centre in which 100% of occupants are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under 18 years. In 2014 Four Corners aired a program "Australia's Shame" which found children subject to verbal, physical and sexual abuse, being forced to commit acts of violence and denied, food, water and toilets. It was also alleged that 80% of the

children in detention were remanded in custody without sentencing. The program launched an investigation by the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. Despite the report finding the conditions of the jail not suitable for the custody or rehabilitation of children and recommending closure, the facility is still being used, putting the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people at risk (The Australian Human Rights Commission, 2018). Why has this occurred and what are we doing differently to change this story?

Also concerning, is the high number of women in custody with the rate rapidly rising. Between 2000 and 2010, there was a 45% increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women incarcerated (Parliament of Australia, 2018). Women in jail account for 2% of Australia's population yet 34% of the women behind bars. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are incarcerated as they are unable to pay the set bail or fines (Whitburn, 2014). 80% of these women are mothers, which creates a disequilibrium in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, intergenerational disconnection and increases the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care (Human rights Law Centre, 2017).

Many of these women in jail are survivors of the Stolen Generations, victims of violence, suffer from poverty, low education and low income (Human Rights Law Centre, 2017). Weatherburn (2014) found that poverty, poor school performance, unemployment and drug and alcohol abuse were the most common risk factors for incarceration. As authors we repeat the question, why has this occurred and what are we doing differently to change this story?

A STRENGTH-BASED APPROACH TO HEALTH

In looking at the health of our Australian population analysis of data revealed that systemic change needs to occur in ensuring the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. While the poor state of health can be attributed to the colonial occupation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ongoing racism, discrimination, forced removal of children and loss of identity, language, culture and land (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2016), our challenge as a society is what do we do to improve it.

Reflection

How might the devastating result of colonisation on Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples be raised and discussed within your educational context in a manner that builds on strengths and focuses on improvements? One way is to explore the messages presented by John Marsden and Shaun Tan in the book The Rabbits: An allegory of colonisation. Ideas of how to unpack the messages within are available from the 3Rs website.

For many years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enjoyed a semi-nomadic lifestyle, living in community groups and eating food that was hunted and gathered (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, 2018). Upon arrival of European colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were subject to the introduction of many new diseases and illnesses. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples died from disease, or dispossession of land, were killed or kept in managed reserves, or schools for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples lost the ability to use traditional medical practices as white Colonisers made decisions about the health and public policy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (www.naccho.org.au). It wasn't until 1967, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 'were granted' access to Commonwealth Health care services, but by then poor health was widespread due to lack of

education, lack of adequate nutrition, poor sanitation and inadequate housing.Health, especially mental health is a world-wide concern.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, health is a holistic term, consisting of the mental, physical, cultural and spiritual wellness of a person (Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, 2017). According to the 2016 census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017) there are 649,171 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Australian population. In 2016, there is an estimated 8 year gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians in metropolitan areas and a 13 year gap in life expectancy in rural and remote areas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

Infant mortality rates are twice as high for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies, with 6.2 per 1000 compared to 3.2 per 1000 for non-Indigenous babies (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, 2018). 15% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples mothers are teenagers, compared to 2.4% in total population (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, 2018). The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' death rate is 9.6 deaths per 1000 people as opposed to 5.7 deaths per 1000 non Indigenous people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples people are 3.3 times more likely to die of avoidable diseases. The median age of death is 58.8, compared with the non-Indigenous rate of 70+, and the top three causes of death are heart disease, diabetes and suicide (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, 2018). A pressing concern is the high mortality rates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adolescents, with about 60% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth deaths due to suicide and road traffic injury (Cunningham, 2018).

The effect of the physical environment also influences health and wellbeing; housing issues, sewerage, water and electricity and sanitation (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, 2018). The introduction of Western food and a mostly inactive lifestyle has impacted health (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, 2018). Smoking is the leading preventative risk factor for illness, causes early death and ongoing medical concerns in the next generation (Boulton, 2016).

According to Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet, (2018, p.20) the factors that have a positive impact on the (health of) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples include:

- connection to country, spirituality and ancestry
- kinship (connection to family)
- self-rule, community authority and cultural continuity

Many factors have been identified as having a negative impact on a person's (health) such as

- discrimination and racism
- grief and loss
- economic and social disadvantage
- child removal by care and protection orders
- violence, and
- substance use.

EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

Education plays a significant role in reinforcing the positive factors listed above. Education is recognised as having a profound impact on quality of life standards in Western countries and plays in integral role in influencing the viewpoint of further generations (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016). As educators we must challenge ourselves to go beyond trying to counteract the many inequities faced by people and begin looking at how we can support individuals building upon their strengths so they are a valued and recognised part of the community. We need to engage in changing community attitudes and reducing both personal and systematic racism. What role has past education policy and practice played in producing the following statistics?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have the highest non-attendance rates and the lowest literacy and numeracy levels of all student groups in Australia (Quicke & Biddle, 2016). Approximately 20% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are not enrolled in schools and a further 25% are not attending school regularly. According to Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (2018), the overall attendance rate in the Northern Territory declined from 70.2% (2014) to 66.2% (2017). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school attendance rates are lower in more remote areas and as the year level progresses (Australian Government, 2018). In 2014, 47% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieved Year 12 or equivalent (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016).

In terms of literacy and numeracy attainment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the most educationally disadvantaged student group within Australia (Mackie & MacLennan, 2015). Despite numerous State and Commonwealth Government initiatives, intergenerational educational disadvantage is proving difficult to curtail (Beresford, 2012). In some schools, up to 85% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are below the National Minimum Benchmarks in Reading set by the Australian Government (Slee, 2012). According to Slee (2012), educational disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can be linked to the lifelong inequalities that have been perpetuated through colonialism such as attendance, lack of fixed housing, poverty, home factors, and poor health, along with the Education system not supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ways of learning.

Educational systems and targets to measure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' educational performance have been created from a Western perspective (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2016). Further, tests of literacy and numeracy may not be culturally sensitive, or take into account Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's unique dialects. Attendance may not consider high geographic mobility of some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes (Quicke & Biddle, 2015).

Quicke and Biddle (2016), suggest that from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples perspective of "formal education has been a tool of colonialism: employed initially to physically exclude Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from schools, and later to attempt to remake them culturally and socio-economically into closer replications of their colonising counterparts" (p.58). "Generations of racist-inspired policies produced intergenerational underachievement and alienation" (Beresford 2012, p.119) which perpetuates poverty.

As educators it is up to us to ensure culturally safe and supportive learning environments. A number of the chapters within this book will expand on this concept because inclusion and the celebration of diversity in all its guises, is fundamental to improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's outcomes, as it is for other minority groups within Australian society.

Figure 9.1: Photograph of Banner by Takver on flickr

Education curriculum and practice often through the busyness of daily agendas fail to adequately address the hidden curriculum of racism. This 'hidden' curriculum becomes part of the learning process, the practices conducted in the classroom and the wider school community can reflect subtle values and beliefs, like an informal code. These values and beliefs are pervasive and can exclude, rather than include students (Fossey, Holborn, Abawi & Cooper, 2017).

Figure 9.2: Photograph of Priscilla by USQ Photography, (2018).

Listen to Priscilla who shares her educational journey. How does Priscilla's story challenge your understandings of the role of educator in the fight to end racism?

STRENGTH IN CULTURAL IDENTITY

Identity lies at the heart of understanding the impacts of colonisation and marginalisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples. An individual's identity is impacted by the attitudes and perceptions of society (Boulton, 2016). Identity and belief about oneself is "formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems around us" (Hall, 1992, 277).

Despite policies stating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can continue with their own cultures with pride, the contrasting reality is that practices are still judged by Western standards (Boulton, 2016). Many Government policies, school and health systems, criminal systems, still want to assimilate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples into one western-centric society.

Programs such as 'Closing the Gap' (Australian Government, 2018), a ten year program aimed to 'increase standards' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to 'meet' non –Indigenous Australians in education, employment, economic development, health and community living, are based in a deficit discourse that frames Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples and communities as 'the problem' that needs fixing instead of examining the assumptions the policy operates from.

It is a misconception to believe that this approach will work (Mankiller, 2009). This structural inequality fails to listen to the voices of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and adequately reflect peoples'

identity and culture. "Aboriginal identity is a dynamic and interactive process of self-recognition firmly rooted in tradition, culture and community values" (Samson & Gigoux, 2016. p18).

Along with globalisation, new technologies and ways of living, such as iPhones, gaming, computers, internet and drugs, as well as housing and transport have been introduced, all of which were not originally a part of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people's culture. In some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities it has become more difficult to pass on traditional elements of culture, language and ceremonies to the next generations (Mankiller, 2009), resulting in, "a loss of cultural knowledge in many Indigenous communities … being transferred from one generation to the next" (Parliament of Australia, 2018, p1). The dichotomy between traditional culture and globalised society has resulted in great tension within multiple Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural groups, and is a major cause for concern in the identity of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Boulton, 2016; Mankiller, 2009).

Moreton-Robinson (2015) believes that within the current socio-political climate, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are being represented as needing saving. Articles in the media, Government reports and systemic priorities, such as 'Closing the Gap' are portraying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as drunk, uneducated, criminals (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). This colonialist view paints the picture to other Australians and indeed the world, that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are inferior.

There is a need for every Australian to develop an understanding and pride for the cultures, traditions, connections and kinships of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and recognise these identities as legitimate, equal and powerful. "We should have pride in our culture, our families, our ancestors and knowledge systems. In knowing the land and the sky and the waterways in beautiful innate detail. In knowing how to go slow and silent" (Gilbey, 2018).

PRESENTING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES' PERSPECTIVES IN EDUCATION

Education is recognised as having a profound impact on quality of life standards in Western countries and plays an integral role in influencing the viewpoint of future generations (Bodkin-Andrew, & Carlson, 2016, p.785). However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's perspectives have not been valued or fore fronted in Australian education. Best practice to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are ingrained systemically in Education, is still being debated between theorists.

Whilst some argue that studies about the history and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be included as subjects in all schools to ensure there is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective and understanding, others believe the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives need to be embedded throughout the Australian Curriculum. This chapter portrays the need for explicit teaching of subjects containing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and embedding culturally specific perspectives throughout the curriculum to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are given a "fair go" (Moreton-Robinson, 2015).

Reflection

"If you have come to help me you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together" (n.d., retrieved from https://happyuniverseman.wordpress.com/2014/10/19/if-you-have-come-to-help-me/).

This quote is often attributed to an Indigenous Australian visual artist, Lilla Watson, who was a founding member in the Aboriginal activists group in Queensland in the 1970s. What does this quote mean to you, in terms of ensuring Indigenous perspectives within the curriculum?

CONCLUSION

The authors agree with Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson (2016, p. 786) who stated that "as a multicultural country the future of Indigenous students are tied to the future of all Australians and their acceptance of the importance of Indigenous cultures". The perspective inherently in education systems up until recently, and still in existence in many schools, has been based on a white colonised viewpoint of Captain Cook 'discovering' Australia. It is therefore follows that many Australians are not aware of the dispossession of land, livelihood and family that occurred upon colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

However Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are still experiencing modern systemic colonisation defining experiences with education, health and well-being. As educators, we need to rise to the challenge of understanding our own cultural bias and exposing deficit ways of working, to conscientiously and collaboratively explore and proactively enact ways of ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are valued as active and informed citizens.

The most effective approach we can use is to remove the systematic barriers institutional racism places in peoples' paths. When we embrace the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective within Education systems, we become change agents. We paint the whole picture for future generations to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is respected and celebrated with the pride it deserves within the Australian community.

Reflection

- What were you taught about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture in your schooling?
- Have the views taught then informed your current attitudes about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?
- How will you approach these issues introduced in this chapter in your own teaching?

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CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

PROFESSOR JILL LAWRENCE

EQUAL

Figure 10.1: Photograph by Oliver Cole on Unsplash

This text has explored the rich tapestry of learners and individuals in a range of different contexts. The authors' experiences connecting with diversity underpinned the perspectives they presented as they interrogated the meanings of diversity, especially for those marginalised by difference, thus expanding our ways of seeing, knowing and understanding, and exploring new ways of embedding inclusion and hopefulness in these contexts. At its heart, this text galvanises us to celebrate the richness and strengths of diversity and to accept our responsibilities in motivating and supporting all educators, including ourselves, to appreciate and build on these strengths in developing inclusive environments and approaches.

The chapters explored a range of theoretical and contextual perspectives. Chapter 1: Introducing the key ideas by Lindy Abawi applied a critical orientation to reflect about the meanings of diversity and inclusion. Chapter 2, Different Childhoods: Transgressing boundaries through thinking differently by Charlotte Brownlow and Lindsay O'Dell, used the intersectional nature of individual identity and domains of difference to draw out the implications for positive identity constructions for individuals. In Chapter 3, Celebrating diversity: Focusing on inclusion, Lindy-Anne Abawi, Melissa Fanshawe, Cecily Andersen and Christina Rogers explored the Australian context to understand contemporary issues of difference and how education is not only fundamental in shaping the future but also critical in facilitating these processes. Chapter 4, Opening eyes onto inclusion and diversity in early childhood education, by Michelle Turner and Amanda Morgan, adopted a holistic approach to diversity and advocated that it be promoted as a strategy for educators working in contemporary early childhood settings. Chapter 5, Fostering first year nurses' inclusive practice: a key building block for patient centred care by Jill Lawrence and Natasha Reedy advanced the concept of patient centred care, a theoretical perspective advocating a care approach that considers the whole person and guides nurses to cultivate an inclusive care practice in 'becoming' a Registered Nurse. In Chapter 6 Positioning ourselves in multicultural education: Opening our eyes to culture Renee Desmarchelier and Jon Austin exercise critical theory to unpack our own physical landscapes and the education system's expectations of all students. They highlight areas where we may need to change our approaches in order to achieve more socially just outcomes for students from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds. Meanwhile Chapter 7 Creating an inclusive school for refugees and students with English as a Second Language or Dialect written by Susan Carter and Mark Creedon, applied inclusive practices to regular classrooms to support students with limited or no English speaking skills. Finally Chapter 8, Opening eyes onto diversity and inclusion for students with vision impairment by Melissa Cain and Melissa Fanshawe, used critical pedagogy to reimagine the educational, physical and social impacts of vision impairment and to design curriculum opportunities for students with vision impairment.

From the very beginning it is acknowledged that culture and cultural experiences impact our lives and also, insidiously colour our experiences of others with cultural biases, many of which we are not consciously aware. With the authors being critically conscious of their own 'whiteness' and middle-class backgrounds, they embraced the oral presentation of Kathryn Gilbey, an Alyawarr woman and colleague, to provide the basis of chapter 9, sharing cultural understandings from an Australian Indigenous perspective.

Woven together, these different perspectives disclosed six key themes to help us understand and reconceptualise the ways we see diversity and embed inclusive practice. The first theme to emerge related to **intrinsic complexity and multifaceted nature of diversity**. The 'big' picture of diversity materialised from the chapters, acknowledging that concepts of difference are constantly evolving.

Lindy Abawi began by challenging readers to think through what it means to be inclusive of diverse individuals, both within educational contexts and beyond, and however we meet them – in our workplaces, in educational and health facilities, though social media, in online environments and through our friends and families.

Chapter 1 expanded our views of diversity, introducing us to the importance of understanding the lived experiences of people with physical attributes different from our own, for example those related to race, birth characteristics, sexual characteristics, age, diagnosed (dis)ability, injury as well as differences related to sexual orientation, gender, mental health, autism, socioeconomic status, family structure and cultural affiliation. Underpinning all of these, Chapter 1 argued and expanded our understandings of personality differences, religious differences, learning preferences, health issues and psychological attributes. It is also important to recognise that each one of us embodies a complex mix of culture and abilities.

These understandings challenge us by introducing new ways of conceptualising diversity and how inclusive approaches and strategies might function in the contexts explored in the chapters that followed. Charlotte Brownlow and Lindsay O'Dell introduced new ways of seeing (dis)ability, gender and culture in order to explain how narratives of (non) inclusion frequently operate from early childhood through to lifelong world contexts.

Lindy Abawi, Cecily Andersen and Christina Rogers then called on us to sharpen our thinking and practice by rebuffing our inclinations to place people into neat boxes and to instead develop a critical understanding of issues of difference. Melissa Cain and Melissa Fanshawe illuminated these challenges from the perspective of students with vision impairments, who need to navigate environments often not designed for students with vision impairments.

Figure 10.2: Photograph of We welcome, by Brittani Burns on Unsplash.

A second theme acquainted us with the **concept of 'super-diversity'**, which results from an era of rapidly changing conceptions of diversity arising from the increasing change, dislocation and disruption occurring in contemporary spaces and places. The pace of change in political, social, cultural, scientific, technological and digital contexts is unrelenting, so much so that concepts of diversity are constantly changing form and shape, often as a result of emerging collisions between cultures; increased understandings generated by changing scientific and technological advancements; and the need to respond to shifts in power and politics.

In Chapter 6, Renee Desmarchelier and Jon Austin explored the rapidly changing and very ethnically and culturally diverse student populations now entering communities and schools. This prompted them to ask: 'What does it mean to be 'multicultural'?; 'Is multicultural education just something we provide to students from backgrounds that are not white-Anglo Australian?'; and " How do we as teachers position ourselves in relation to multiculturalism, multicultural policies and education system requirements and expectations?'

In Chapter 7 Susan Carter and Mark Creedon argued that schools in Australia and internationally need to continually probe what inclusion really means in a rapidly changing global context, where the rate of migration is exponentially increasing as more people with limited or no English speaking skills seek asylum. The authors also made suggestions on ways of being inclusive to a child and the child's family.

A third theme emerged from the need to make a **shift from that of certainty to one of uncertainty**. Many authors, for example, not only provided ways we might consciously or unconsciously ignore diversity but also ways to unpack, and then adapt, our own attitudes to culture and multicultural education.

Lindy-Anne Abawi, Melissa Fanshawe, Kathryn Gilbey, Cecily Andersen and Christina Rogers roused us to understand that the act of listing the types of differences that contribute to the word 'diversity' is, at its core,

an 'exclusionary' process and that invariably there will be differences that are not mentioned but which have personal importance and significance to specific individuals or groups. For example geographical location can affect any and all of the above, as can levels of adversity, historical or circumstantial, which may have impact on an individual, a family, a community, a country or a people.

Jill Lawrence and Natasha Reedy applauded us to see that patient centred care intrinsically involves perceiving, communicating and caring for patients as individuals rather than as the end products of health systems where patients are treated with a 'one size fits all' mentality. Renee Desmarchelier and Jon Austin argued that engaging in critical self-reflection helps us understand ourselves and places us in a better position us to understand others. Melissa Cain and Melissa Fanshawe shared the challenges of limited access and inclusion for students with vision impairments with many critical elements of schooling, culture, behaviour management and curriculum displayed in visual format. A shift in thinking is needed before educators can think beyond the visual elements and incidental learning students with vision 'naturally' acquire through visual means.

A fourth, powerful theme emerging from the theoretical perspectives is the **power of silencing**. This theme reverberated from the recognition that many differences continue to remain unseen and unheard, resulting in individuals and groups who feel invisible and believe that those around them are blinded to their needs. In Chapter 9 Melissa Fanshawe, Lindy-Anne Abawi, and Jillian Guy reinforced how we need to acknowledge and purposely address the needs, beliefs and histories of Australia's First Nation people. Probing questions challenged us to 'see' what we are missing; to 'hear' what we are currently not attuned to; and to 'feel' or empathise with those from an Australian Indigenous background who often feel unseen and disregarded. No matter the reason there are many individuals in society and in our education settings who are unable to voice their diverse ways of knowing and thinking, as they are often marginalised from mainstream views and approaches.

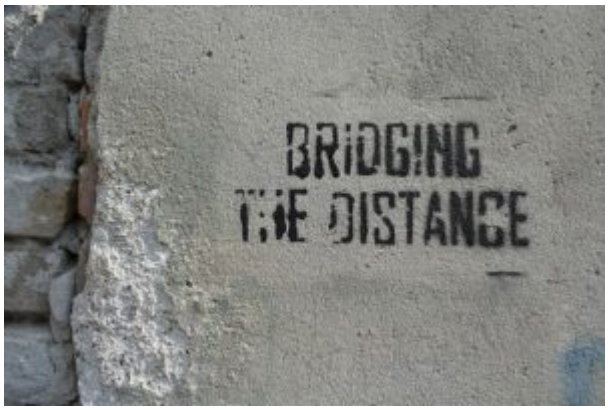

Figure 10.3: Photograph of Bridging the distance, by Marija Zaric on Unsplash.

Before reading these chapters it may have seemed straightforward or natural to 'write off' differences, to ignore them and perhaps even to stereotype or actively discriminate against difference from a dominant, privileged or mainstream position. Recognising diversity in all its guises and forms requires shifts in our thinking .It also requires us to move from a position of certainty about our view of the world (that our way is the right, the natural or normal way) to one of uncertainty where we can no longer make assumptions or have expectations about difference.

Chapter 2, for example explained, how negative assumptions held by others can exacerbate the interaction challenges for children who are 'different' in some way. Chapter 3 challenged our pre-conceived ways of thinking and engaging with others by reflecting on personal and possibly confronting experiences; by bringing an open mind to the concept of diversity; and by engaging with scenarios with respect, tact and integrity. A corollary of the theme of silencing was the authors' recognition that, whilst acknowledging the power of words to both include and exclude, they were highly conscious of being explicit about readers' willingness to 'have-a-go' regarding issues that many find difficult to talk about because they are fearful of offending an individual or group of people without intending to do so. Thus the authors took care to use terminology that would not offend others, but acknowledged that even as they wrote, they might have inadvertently used words that could be considered offensive by some even though these same words are accepted by others as respectful. Inclusion can therefore be a tricky mindset!

Another predominant theme arising from the chapters was the c**oncept of inclusion and what it looks like, sounds like and feels like.** Chapter 4 for example, viewed inclusion as a celebratory characteristic of early childhood education encompassing individual differences such as culture, language, location, economics, learning, abilities and gender. The chapter referred to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and its principle that all children have the right to feel accepted and respected through the provision of fair, just and non-discriminatory education and care for children.

Chapter 1 defined inclusion as a mindset of acceptance and planning for all. In essence the chapter affirmed that inclusion encompasses the Universal Design for Learning approach where planning takes into account multiple means of representation, multiple means of engagement and multiple means of action and expression. Chapter 1 confirmed that as both educators and as members of diverse communities, we need to be thinking about, negotiating and transforming the relationships we forge as teachers with our students. Inclusion also means having a thorough understanding of individual strengths, challenges and needs that are directly connected to knowledge production, institutional structures, and to the social and relationships within the wider community, society and nation-state. Chapter 1 outlined a set of six principles that underpin the creation of an inclusive culture (Abawi, Carter, Andrews & Conway, 2018) with each being embodied throughout the text.

Principle 1 Informed shared social justice leadership at multiple levels – learning from and with others.

Principle 2 Moral commitment to a vision of inclusion – explicit expectations regarding inclusion embedded in institution wide practice.

Principle 3 Collective commitment to whatever it takes – ensuring that the vision of inclusion is not compromised.

Principle 4 Getting it right from the start – wrapping students, families and staff with the support needed to succeed.

Principle 5 Professional targeted student-centred learning – professional learning for teachers and support staff informed by data identified need.

Principle 6 Open information and respectful communication – leaders, staff, students, community effectively working together.

The final theme built on the theme of inclusion by introducing specific **inclusive strategies** can be used to become more inclusive in our personal and professional lives.

Chapter 2 advised that ability and socially approved identities must be carefully outlined and managed within systems, with clear benchmarks established about what is 'appropriate' and deemed 'inappropriate' when identifying and responding to difference. This chapter urged readers and educators view differences through careful reflection on environments and the need to personally act in ways that maximise ability.

Chapter 4 shared a physical cultural audit which involved a process of collecting data in the form of observations and/or photographs of the physical spaces and analysing them for the messages that they give about the culture[s] present in an environment. Chapter 4 contended that by turning the gaze on ourselves and our own cultures, we forefront self-awareness and become conscious that we view the world from a particular cultural position. Thus we can better understand the ways in which we culturally construct our understanding of the world around us. These processes assist us to unpack our own and the education system's expectations of all students and recognize where we may need to change our approach in order to achieve more socially just outcomes for students from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds.

Chapter 5 advanced the concept of patient centred care to confront notions of power, voice and agency which has potential to shape 'outcomes' for those on the 'margins'; to imagine the implications for society of positive identity constructions for individuals; and to highlight a way of working that facilitates the creation of

shared cultures and a place where all can feel safe and included. There are implications from this chapter that resonate within educational contexts.

Chapter 7 outlined the inclusive practices of one highly diverse junior school to share the ways that they support, engage, enculturate and educate students. The case study methodology used revealed a way of working that facilitates the creation of a shared inclusive culture, a place where individuals share that they feel safe and included. The chapter cautioned however that the cost of caring was a pragmatic consideration that educators face, and that strategies need to be consciously actioned in order to engage community help and create a sense of hopefulness.

At its heart, this text requested you to consider your own learning, work or social context and the extent to which the principles explored in each of the chapters are applicable and evident. The text also asked you to reflect on what more could be done to embrace diversity and embed inclusion. A key question was posed: how could an uncompromising social justice agenda anchored to the needs of a changing student cohort within a specific school context be maintained? The text then requested readers' assistance to develop a picture of what the answer might be. As an epilogue of learning, your responses will be collated and published in the next addition of this text. Your responses can be uploaded at the website: This outcome personifies and exemplifies a co-construction of knowledge in an on-going and reiterative process of collective learning.

This text was based on the assumption that by talking about diversity and inclusion avenues for sharing and knowledge acquisition are opened up. This in turn then values diversity as a strength and validates the need to embody inclusive practices in our educational institutions and communities. If what we have shared here has challenged your understandings, generated discussion or provoked debate, including the rightness or wrongness of what we have written, then this book has achieved its purpose.

Figure 10.4: Photograph of Community, by William White on unsplash

We seek your assistance to co-construct knowledge of ways of being inclusive and catering for diversity . We intend to collate your responses and publish them in the next addition of this text as an epilogue of learning, a co-construction of knowledge in an on-going and as a reiterative process of collective learning. Please post your responses to www.usq.edu.au/open-practice . We will then utilise reader responses as a basis for further study and publication.

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