ABSTRACT

This paper examines the work of education in nation states where mainstream education systems are undergoing significant external global challenges. Education systems have been developed within a complex and specific set of historical circumstances that were developed over hundreds of years in sometimes distant imperial centres, overriding the needs of already present systems of education that had been developed by Indigenous peoples. Overlaying this challenge is a complexity of newer immigrant populations that have settled in such nation-states, coming from all corners of the globe, creating complex multicultural societies that demand, for example, that teacher educators are able to teach student teachers how to meet the needs of school students from myriad ethnic cultural and religious backgrounds. Of central importance to this paper is the question of how nations such as Australia and Japan, that endorsed the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations 2008), manage their respective Indigenous rights challenge within a multicultural space of negotiation, while recognizing the need to substantially reimagine their national educations systems.

Within this context, the paper will first discuss emerging definitions of 'multicultural', 'global', 'local', and 'international' and then move into an examination of their interactions with teacher-, student-, and learning-centered
pedagogical traditions, providing analysis of the types of pedagogical content knowledge that will be required by teacher educators and teachers in order for them to expertly respond to the teaching and learning demands of multicultural societies.

**Key Words**

Global; local; international; multicultural societies; teaching and learning; pedagogical content knowledge; teacher-centred; student-centred; learning-centred.

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**Introduction**

Over the last 25 year, I have witnessed significant changes in the ethnic and religious composition of Australian society. In response to these changes, I have seen shifts and changes in how Australia has approached the idea of multicultural education. I am in teacher education and we know that the challenge for teacher educators lies in their responses to the set of challenges facing them as they prepare the next generation of school teachers within complex, multicultural states. Many of the challenges were identified in the Brundtland Report (1988). This report provided something of a watershed
moment in thinking about the future of education in multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic, multireligious nations (see also Beare & Slaughter 1993).

Australia’s most recent census of 2016 tells us that Australians were born in close to 200 different countries, there are more than 300 languages spoken at home, more than 100 religions, and more than 300 different ancestries reported. Australia has a higher proportion of overseas-born people (26%) than the United States (14%), Canada (22%), New Zealand (23%) and the United Kingdom (13%). Even more significant, people born overseas, or who had at least one parent born overseas, made up almost half (49%) of the entire population of Australia in 2016 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017).

The current Australian education system has been designed and developed by the white settler and other white immigrant communities. These ethnic communities shape the majority view in a country such as Australia. In 2016, the most common ancestries were: English (36.1%), Irish (11.0%), and Scottish (9.3%) making up over half of the population. The Australian teachers’ and teacher educators’ professions mainly come from these groups, together with smaller numbers of white immigrants from New Zealand and South Africa.

A second group making up almost 20% of the Australian population is comprised of immigrant peoples from Europe - Italian (4.6%), German (4.5%), Greek (1.8%), and Dutch (1.6%), from China (5.6%), and India (2.8%). Their non-British ethnic cultural backgrounds have substantially been subsumed into mainstream education and it has been only in the past 20 years that Australia has adopted a more culturally inclusive approach to the education of their children, with a small number of teacher educators and teachers now coming from these ethnic cultural backgrounds.

A third numerically small and significant group comprises Australia’s Indigenous Peoples who make up 2.8% of the total population. At the time of British colonization, Aboriginal people were not brought into the newly established education system. It was not until the new settlers had established themselves, first in small settlements in Sydney and later in new settlements as
the colonial frontier spread across the continent, that education administrators turned their mind to the education of Indigenous children within the mainstream education system. The development of education for Indigenous children happened slowly and haphazardly, sometime established by Christian missionaries and sometimes by the State government.

What is often forgotten is that Indigenous People of Australia have an education history of at least 80,000 years and they have always been multilingual and multicultural, even before the colonization of Australia by the English peoples (Anderson & Atkinson 2013). There were estimated to be more than 250 languages spoken. In the image below, the map on the left shown the distribution of Aboriginal languages at the time of British colonization and the one on the right shows some of the languages that are still spoken today. Many other communities are working with linguists to reclaim their languages, especially in those green areas where the impact of colonization was felt most strongly.

Image 1: Map Left: Tindale Map available at <http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/images/asp_languages_map_large_151126.png>

Map Right: Languages of Australia 2017 available at http://www.d-maps.com
Definitions of some key terms

Let’s first examine the phrase ‘multicultural education’ - as it is generally understood within the Australian education policy context:

Multicultural education refers to any form of teaching and learning that incorporates the histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of people from different cultural backgrounds.

Considering ‘internal awareness’ - Teachers and teacher educators bring to their work myriad understandings of this phrase. Their internal awareness of the society around them, how they interact with people who do not come from their ethnic/cultural background, and how they have been taught to speak to strangers will all influence how they approach a multicultural classroom. But it is also government policy that shapes teacher pedagogy and curriculum choices. Since the 1990s, the Australian government has developed a raft of policies and procedures for managing ‘Multicultural Australia’.

There are a raft of documents and organizations that support government bodies to implement the Multicultural Australia’ policy framework. In the case of teachers and teacher educators, and moving beyond our personal understanding and stance about multicultural education, we are expected to be able to address the intention of Australian government policies. Many teachers report that they lack the skills or the confidence to do so in multicultural education.

Teachers and teacher educators have a wealth of opportunity in the Australian classroom to draw on curriculum that is ‘local’, ‘global’, and ‘international’ simply by being aware of the ethnic and religious cultural backgrounds of students and having the pedagogical skill to draw such perspectives into the teaching and learning environment. But many teachers and teacher educators also report that they lack the skills or the confidence to bring in local, international and global perspectives into their work (Giroux 1998; Ma Rhea and Teasdale 2001).
Approaches to ‘Multicultural Education’: Two Responses to Policy

There are an array of responses to the idea of ‘Multicultural Education’ in Australia. Here I will focus on some of the underlying assumptions embedded in thinking about Indigenous and multicultural education and most specifically about how teachers and teacher educators might respond to government policy intentions: these are the Assimilationist Approach and the Separation Approach.

The Assimilationist Approach to Multicultural Education: ‘Fitting In’

By far the most common pedagogical approach to multicultural and Indigenous education has been for all students to ‘come in and fit in’. Sometimes called the assimilationist approach, it is strongly teacher focused, and reflects the dominance of British and American cultures and perspectives in the development of instructional design and curriculum. This approach reflects the comfort zone of the teacher at its most strong. This approach has been criticized because it positions multicultural and Indigenous education as ‘helping’ others to fit in better. It has historically been the main driver in Australian government education policy and practice. It is embedded in concepts of national identity (What is an Aussie?) but it approaches multicultural education from a strong ethno-specific perspective.

The pink-lined sphere represents mainstream British-descent cultural group who hold most positions of public power within Australian society despite long term non-British immigration to Australia.

There are many different groups who come to live in Australia who keep some aspects of their ethnic cultural affinity but they are also influenced by the majority culture. It is now known that subsequent generations lose their affinity to their ancestors’ cultures and become ‘Aussie’ to various degrees. Is ‘multicultural education’ simply a transitional system that only needs to be in
place until the majority of non-British descent immigrants to Australia have been here a few generations?

**Separation Approach to Multicultural Education**

The other response to Indigenous and multicultural education policies has been separation. We have many examples of this approach in schools and university teacher educator courses. Everyone teaches what they are comfortable to teach. The approach is teacher-focused, something that is reflected in pedagogy and in curriculum formation.

One group (on the right in the image) is the ‘Indigenous Education’ group. Teachers and teacher educators in Indigenous Education are an emerging group. There are strong arguments for this to be a separate Key Learning Area, rather than being collapsed into ‘multicultural’, ‘inclusive’, or ‘diversity’ education as has been the practice. In being separate, these teachers and teacher educators are vulnerable to becoming marginalized and swamped by the established Key Learning Areas and come to be regarded as a politically correct ‘bolt on’ to already well-established education practices. Together with
our colleagues from Japan, we are researching the way that these professionals are developing their pedagogical approach and their curriculum formation.

The second group (in the middle in the image) represent teachers and teacher educators in the 'multicultural education' group. Commonly, they are teachers and teacher educators who come from the non-dominant immigrant group, and often they choose material that comes from their respective ethnic and religious cultural background. The material itself tends to be taught in silos. In a parallel research, I am examining the way that these professionals are developing their pedagogical approach and their curriculum formation.

In the third group (on the left in the image) are the teachers and teacher educators from the dominant culture who have developed the pedagogies and curricula for the Key Learning Areas such English, History, Mathematics, Science, and Geography. These teachers and teacher educators report being confident to teach these subjects from a deep knowledge base. They have already been educated by their own school experiences at school into these Key Learning Areas; they have seen their teachers teach these subjects; they are familiar with the content as learners; and their work aligns with the Australian government. They report that they don't feel confident to teach 'multicultural'
Reimagining pedagogical content knowledge for multicultural and Indigenous education

According to Shulman (1986, 1987), Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) is a combination of curriculum content and teaching knowledge and is distinct from either. Building from his foundational work, how educators develop pedagogical content knowledge poses a complex question of teaching style. Early work by N. Bennett (1976) examined the pedagogical approaches used by teachers and made the argument for 12 different teaching styles that he later collapsed into three main approaches: Informal, Mixed, and Formal. With the emergence of Shulman’s idea that there was something in teacher practice that fell between their teaching style (how they taught) and their choice of curriculum content (what they taught) that became known as pedagogical content knowledge, questions were asked about the societal factors that shaped a teacher’s PCK. The intellectual work underpinning PCK has been most profoundly shaped by the field of the sociology of education. For example, as Easthope, Maclean, and Easthope (1990, 117) argue, ‘The teaching style adopted by any teacher is not simply a product of her choice’. They identify four key aspects that influence what a teacher chooses to teach about (her curriculum choices). They are: her educational philosophy; the organizational practices of the school; the available resources; and the responses of her students, also shaped by their varied demographics (Easthope, Maclean, and Easthope 1990, 117).

I am suggesting here that the ideas that have been developed out of Shulman’s ideas and those of Cochran et. al. (1993), Gudmundsdottir (1990), work ‘PCK’ to reimagine multicultural and Indigenous education beyond being either assimilationist or separatist in response to education policy, supporting teachers and teacher educators to develop BOTH their pedagogy and curriculum formation. I suggest to you that the reimagining of PCK for
multicultural education will involve significant government investment in Civics and Citizenship Education and in teacher professional development. I also suggest that reimagining PCK for multicultural education will support teachers and teacher educators to be more confident in their translation of government policy intention into classroom practice. The ground-breaking work in researching how to develop intercultural competency through education done by researchers such as Bennett (1986, 1993, 2004), Brislin (1993), Casse (1979), Jamrozik et. al. (1995), and Seeleye (1985, 1996) has enabled a slowly emergent field of teacher professional development and appropriate pedagogies and curricula vision for the future to emerge in many different global locations as each nation state grapples with the transformation of the identities of its citizens.

I have my greatest hope in reimagining our approach to multicultural education using a PCK approach because it can support the teacher and teacher educator to find a balance between their subject expertise and their instructional design and planning. We can learn from the ancient cultural knowledge held by our students and our ancestors. We can learn from Indigenous people who hold very deep knowledge of their lands and waters and have been teaching people how to live sustainably since the beginning of time. We can learn from immigrants who bring their ancestral knowledge from other places to help us to look after each other and the planet.

The most important lesson I have learned is that we are living in a time of great transformation on this planet and that old ways can be brought together with new ways of doing things. As educators, I believe that we need to have the courage to develop these skills in our professional practice and teach our students how to have respect for the knowledge of others and the courage to negotiate a peaceful multicultural future.

[Extended Bibliography]


