SEN04197 Cooking with caste: cultural diversity and TAFE.

Kim Senior

University of Melbourne

> *..not like one group I had.. they were all Indians. They were chatting away in Hindi, and I can't understand… so, I had to speak to them in German … So then they spoke back in English… With this Indian group, one thing I didn't realise, I found this out later - that they have these different castes. And that created a problem between some of the students. Because some didn't want to sweep the floor. And I didn't know who was in what caste. …others did go to it without any problem. So it was a bit of strange situation. Especially if you are ignorant of that and nobody tells you. We have to find out through the grapevine. … I just treated them all the same. Because that is the way… I didn't know who was in what caste and we are not in India, we are in Australia. And I think **here**, they should play to the Australian rules… they can do this when they go back to India.* Joseph (Senior, 2004:52)

Introduction

Nationally, Australia's 85 TAFE institutions provide education and training over 1,460 campuses for 1.3 million Vocational Education Training (VET) students (National Council for Vocational Education Research, 2003). As part of this network, Victoria's 19 Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions deliver education and training to over 480,000 students per year (*Post compulsory Education and Training*, 2004). In the past, TAFE has been characterised as a provider of technical skills for vocational students by tradesmen. However, during the 1980's TAFE institutions were introduced into the open training market and 'a new vocational education system' (Foley, Crombie, Hawke, & Morris, 2000:121). More recently the Victorian government has called for a change in direction for the VET sector from one 'designed for an industrially based economy to one that assists business to compete in the innovation economy' (*Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy*, 2002:1). Central to this new direction is the promotion of cross-cultural communication skills amongst TAFE students for 'global trade and other cross-cultural exchange' (*Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy*, 2002:1) that will contribute to 'strong economic growth' (*Major goals for post compulsory education and training*, 2004).

1

A report on the TAFE workforce by the Victorian Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment (TAFE Staff Development Advisory Committee, 2000:11) found that most TAFE teachers were 'relatively old'[1], male and most were employed on tenured or fixed-term contracts. However, the same report goes on to state that sessional teaching was the predominate area of employment growth (TAFE Staff Development Advisory Committee, 2000:12). Historically homogeneous, TAFE institutions and teachers are expected to prepare students for, and teach in, an increasingly heterogeneous environment. In 2002, the Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics (National Council for Vocational Education Research, 2003) described the diversity of VET students as follows: 48% are female; 36% are from rural areas; 38% are aged between 15 to 24 years of age; 20% are over 45; 6% self-identified as having a disability; 3.5% are indigenous Australians; 14% come from a non-English speaking background and only 9.5% study full time. In 2000, the VET sector also included 30,800 international students, a growth of 58% in six years (*Participation in Education: Overseas students*, 2002:5).

Responding to change?

For three decades there has been growing concern amongst those involved in multicultural education regarding the increasing cultural, racial and ethnic gap between teachers and students and how this may impact on the educational success of students (Aragon,1978; Banks et al., 2001; Brandon, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). The need for multicultural or cross-cultural competence in teacher education is widely acknowledged in research (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Hickling-Hudson & McMeniman, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Osborne, 2001; Thomas, 1997; Ukpokodu, 2002), but has not been equally embraced in practice (Banks, 2001; Craft, 1996). Reassuringly, the cultural gap between teachers and students may not necessarily be an obstacle to teacher efficacy in a plural classroom. According to Osborne and Cooper (2001:62) 'culturally responsive teachers need not come from the same ethnic group as the students they teach'. In this case, the key is for the teacher to have a clear understanding of their own culture (Hofstede, 1986) and a socio-political consciousness or awareness of how factors such as ethnicity, class and gender may impact on the classroom (Banks, 2001; Bennett, 1999; Osborne, 2001b; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Such awareness may enable teachers to identify and manage culturally based miscommunication in the classroom, as well as assist students as they learn and develop similar skills (Singh, 2002).

---

[1] A national survey of TAFE teachers by the AEU (Australian Education Union) in 2000 establishes the average age of TAFE teachers at 47 (Kronemann, 2001).

A corollary of Osborne and Cooper's (2001) work is that culturally responsive teachers have undergone some sort of training or professional development. In the case of TAFE, there are a number of difficulties with this assumption. Firstly, the 'relatively old' TAFE teachers may have completed their teacher training at a time when cultural issues in teaching and learning were not a priority, or, they may be 'ill-informed' by present standards (Osborne, 2001a:5). Also, while they may have the experience and skill to accommodate changes in the classroom, Huberman (1988 cited in Sikes, 1992:47) found that 'older teachers were not only more resistant to change, they were also less likely to believe that it would work'. This would suggest that careful planning and consideration needs to be given to how even experienced TAFE teachers may be supported through the changing teaching and learning environment. Secondly, the expanding sessional 'new blood', tend to be younger (TAFE Staff Development Advisory Committee, 2000) and are not required to have teacher training. The minimum entry qualification to teach in TAFE is the 'Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training'. Delivered variously as a two to six day course, it is primarily a basic introduction to the VET sector, workplace assessment procedures, and training for small groups. This is very worrying when seen in light of a study by Smith, Jones et al (2001) which found that while sessional teachers were expressly interested in teaching and learning issues, 70% of those surveyed had not received any professional development at all. There would appear to be some danger in assuming that multicultural or cross-cultural competence in TAFE is a given.

As the world, through international students, and the broader Australian community draw closer into the TAFE 'innovation economy' classroom, there are serious questions about the capacity of TAFE to manage the human dimensions of this interaction. During 13 years at TAFE I have observed growing feelings of confusion, and in some cases hostility, amongst my colleagues. Joseph's experience (at the opening of this paper) gives some indication of the circumstances that may be contributing to these feelings. However, there is also wonder and excitement amongst teachers when confronting these changes in the TAFE environment. Like all change there is opportunity and potential for the better, as long as the voices of all involved are heard and valued. Prompted by a concern that the views and experiences of TAFE teachers regarding cultural diversity are largely marginalised to corridor chatter, my research sought to explore what TAFE teachers understand about cultural diversity and what impact they believe it has on their classrooms.

Corridor chatter to research

The study that provided the basis of this paper, sought to examine teachers' beliefs about cultural diversity and give voice to their experiences in the changing

TAFE teaching and learning environment. I chose a qualitative research approach as enquiry into 'seat-of-the-pants observations, reflections and informal experimentation' (Gardner, 2002:1) is most appropriately made through the words of the teachers themselves. While illuminating teachers' perceptions, these words needed to be placed within the broader context (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000:181; Neuman, 1991:146) of an ethnographic case study (Wilson, 1977). The study took place within one Melbourne TAFE institution – my own place of work for the past eight years. I was aware of the dangers of conducting the research 'in my own backyard' (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), but believed these concerns were outweighed by an opportunity to draw upon a rapport with colleagues to explore an issue that could be regarded as problematic or sensitive.

The data for the case study was gathered using multiple methods and sources of evidence. This was in response to the inductive nature of the study and to explore its complex nature (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992:7). The views, opinions and experiences of teachers, and their reflections upon those experiences, were sought and represented in the data collected. Data analysis used themes emerging from, and between, teachers to describe what was happening. A teacher survey, individual and focus group interviews, as well as document and material interpretation were used to triangulate emerging themes and enhance the validity of the study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992:24; Merriam, 1988:69; Neuman, 1991:125; Patton, 1990:187). I collected and analysed public documents generated by the institution that may illustrate priorities or views regarding cultural diversity: student information guides; annual reports; professional development guides; and the institute's website. For logistical reasons, and in the interest of trying to include as many sessional teachers as possible in the study, a survey was conducted using a questionnaire. In total 180 questionnaires were distributed for the teacher survey with 52 respondents (29%). The purpose of the questionnaire was to gather opinions about teaching and learning, as well as elicit interest in participation in the interviewing process of the study. While 27 respondents indicated that they were prepared to participate in either an individual or focus group interview, in the end 17 teachers were interviewed. A standardised open-ended question format was used in both the individual and focus group interviews and all interviewees were given pseudonyms to maintain confidentiality.

On having difference or being different

The 17 TAFE teachers interviewed had a broad interpretation of cultural diversity and a positive, yet wide-ranging, response to the professional implications for teachers. Their definition of cultural diversity included background, beliefs, and attitudes. Background included characteristics such as nationality, religion,

ethnicity, class, age, physical and emotional disability, gender, and educational background. During the interviews teachers' comments on cultural diversity ranged from 'awareness' to 'valuing', but stopped short of any specific mention of a 'commitment to social justice' (Rios, McDaniel, & Stowell, 1998:168). One teacher observed:

> *It means to me the differences in people's beliefs, and the way they live, at their language, and their food, and their art, the way they do things, their traditions, their religions, and possibly even their politics. That it just says to me that we are all different.* Rita (Senior, 2004:53)

The simplicity and veracity of Rita's statement lies at the very heart of cross-cultural communication. Her use of the word 'we' clearly places herself within the cultural dynamic. However, by contrast, most interviewees tended to describe cultural diversity in terms of something that 'other' people have or in terms of being different:

> *… all of the different beliefs and attitudes that those people have and their backgrounds.* Karen (Senior, 2004:53)

> *…the whole lot of people who come from different countries. … Who have different religions, different backgrounds, and … diverse cultural backgrounds.* Pam (Senior, 2004:54)

> *So it is about socio-economics, it is about the suburb they grow up in, the demographics that they come from…*Sharon (Senior, 2004:54)

Despite being able to recognise the myriad of ways that cultural diversity may manifest itself, some teachers did not appear to be aware that they are a part of the phenomenon. Gollick and Chin (1994:8) suggest that because our own culture is the 'lens through which we judge the world…it can become an unconscious blinder to other ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. Our own culture is automatically treated as innate'. Therefore, much discussion generated about culture tends to be confined to how 'other' people are 'different' - different from 'us' - contributing to a divisive 'us' and 'them' discourse. Failure to recognise the infinite diversity of all human existence and the fact that we are all different, '"being different" assumes all groups have essential differences that prevent communication and cooperation' (Miller & Eleveld, 2000:89). Teachers may be so firmly focused on the students' differences that they may overlook their own role in the cross-cultural communication process. Nevertheless, most teachers still referred to cultural diversity in the classroom in a very positive way. Michael saw it as a positive learning opportunity for students:

*…I see having diversity as a real positive. Because it can be of benefit for
all those people to come together and have contact with, and gain an
understanding of those who don't have the same background as their
own.* Michael (Senior, 2004:54)

Professional challenge for teachers

Just as Michael believed that cultural diversity was a positive learning opportunity
for students; Karen and Pam saw it as a positive learning opportunity for
teachers:

*… it means lots and lots of challenges.   It means primarily …
primarily for me a much more interesting classroom. ... And we're
lucky that we have a multicultural classroom, or environment. So for
me, it brings challenges to cater for their needs, but my world as a
teacher is so much more enriched because of the variety of
students.* Karen (Senior, 2004:54)

*In some ways, it makes things more difficult. But in other ways…
that difficulty and challenge can be quite exciting.* Pam (Senior,
2004:54)

Smith (1997) writes that diversity in the classroom not only provides challenges
for teachers, but that it can also be a positive means of generating increased
staff motivation. Even though his work is related to higher education, some of the
factors he outlines that may impact on this potential are equally relevant in the
TAFE sector: class sizes, workload, and strong leadership (Smith, 1997:262-4).

For occupational health and safety reasons TAFE practical class numbers are
small. However, theoretical subjects are taught in much larger groups of up to 30
or more students. In recent years, at this particular TAFE, there has been a trend
away from classes to a lecture/tutorial mode of delivery for theoretical subjects.
Anecdotal accounts from teachers and students suggest that this format has
been less than successful. Unlike higher education teaching staff, TAFE teachers
have little or no experience with this mode of delivery and often find themselves
working with sessional tutors who are paid for class contact time only. There is
usually little or no paid time for planning or consultation for sessional teachers.
Permanent institute teachers are expected to do this in their own time.

As well as dealing with these changes and restrictions, TAFE teachers are also
more likely than their higher education colleagues to teach a variety of subjects
within a greater number of student contact hours. Some teachers have been
expected to teach up to 8 or 9 subjects per semester within the minimum 21

hours per week face-to-face teaching workload. While change and professional challenge can provide a catalyst for teacher motivation in dealing with student diversity, Smith (1997) is very clear that for the change to be effective it must also provide opportunities for collaboration from all stakeholders. Importantly, he asserts that 'negotiating competing demands and attention to educational values and goals will continue to require skilled leadership…leaders will be required to be educators, not just managers…' (1997:264). In light of this, Jim's comment is very instructive:

> *You know, it comes down to: there are timetable, there are rooms, resources, and we have to get around that. And the educational priorities become you know a poor second or eighth…* Jim (Senior, 2004:43)

Managing conflict

Perhaps the greatest area of concern for TAFE teachers has been in the area of student to student, and student to teacher relationships. Managing the interaction between international and local students remained problematic in the view of some teachers:

> *And the challenge would be for the teacher to… increase the opportunities for Asian students, for example, to be able to put forward his or her opinions without fear of being laughed at …or criticised…*Tim (Senior, 2004:58)

> *Just coming back to September 11… we had, a young boy from United States in one of our apprentice classes. … we were all making pastry in the kitchen. We were all facing each other like this, and someone had brought it up and everyone was sort of chatting and suddenly he blurted out… he'd go, like I'd go to Afghanistan, you know and blow them up and all this sort of thing. And then, everyone, everyone on the table, just like, like…. I was just sitting there thinking, like oh god!, I don't want this to blow out! And, one of the teachers was just walking by, and everyone just started… pretty much yelling at him. I said, look, you know, that is his opinion. Just leave it at that. You shut up. You shut up. Everyone just get back to what you were doing. You know, and then, as the teacher walked by, he said, 'what is going on over here?'…one of students, tried rearing up and I said, look, forget about it. I took that teacher aside and told them what had happened, and he said 'everything is okay?' And I said yeh at the moment. You know, but…yeh… something*

> *like that can be so… I don't know, it can be really…* Carlo (Senior, 2004:58)

Not only are teachers influential in the classroom because of the professional qualities they employ, but their values and behaviour also impact upon students (Banks, 1997). Teachers who tolerate, or fail to adequately deal with, behaviour that undermines the value of all members of the class send an implicit message of disaffirmation. In a culturally diverse society, and classroom, some conflict between individuals or groups is inevitable. But it is how conflict is handled that is important. Singh (2002) and Le Roux (2001) point out that in such environments it is a teacher's responsibility to assist students to develop the communicative skills to deal with conflict. Devoting class time to 'discuss current, especially controversial, issues… is characteristic of effective teachers' (Wilson et al 1975 cited in Collett & Serrano, 1992:46). The ability to recognise and handle conflict or sensitive issues in the classroom requires a great deal of confidence and skill on the part of the teacher. It also requires recognition by teachers that their work involves more than the transfer of information or practical skills. A primarily vocational focus and emphasis by TAFE means that some teachers see their role as follows:

> *The role of the teacher is to mentor. To pass on the skills, to pass on the knowledge, to be firm as well, to make sure they have done it and completed all assignments as required.* Delia (Senior, 2004:59)

Other teachers, such as Craig, Karen, Sharon and Tim believe that their role involved getting students to mix and facilitate communication between groups in their class, although nearly all of them expressed general frustration at the difficult nature of the task:

> *…and some teachers, I think actively try to get the groups to mix. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, it doesn't seem to work in group assignments. Because, as in all groups, some people do the work that some people don't. But I think, I think it's been demonstrated in the classrooms that they tend to stick together. I think it's difficult to break down these barriers.* Tim (Senior, 2004:59)

For these teachers experience and a commitment to this aspect of their professional duty means working through problems and finding a way to achieve a positive outcome:

> *If there is issues in the class either between students, or students and outside influences, or even between me and the students, then we need to work that out and why that is a problem. And when*

8

*things are going well, just exploit it. To the absolute max…*Sharon
(Senior, 2004:59)

Less experienced or qualified teachers may not see their role in the same way, or
be aware of some of the more complex pedagogical issues:

> *Especially being a young teacher, you know, I think they think…
> there may be some students here that, you know, are the same age
> as myself. And, they may not like myself or someone else that is
> their age being an authority figure. Or, you know, passing on
> knowledge to them. They might find that hard. But, I don't know, I
> try, try to, you know, break the ice with these people. You know,
> and talk, if there is a problem or if I find there is a problem in the
> class then I will maybe ask the class, look you know, what is going
> on? You know, is there anything we need to talk about? And then
> try to you know, bring it out in the open straight away, than to start
> stewing and dwelling on it I think… that's my… I think I would rather
> know if there was something I really did need to know. But, with
> caste wise, I think all, or what is happening in their country, I think I
> would rather not know, because it is better that way. You know, I
> can keep them on equal ground…*Carlo (Senior, 2004:59-60)

Carlo is not the only teacher interviewed who believes that treating all students
the same, or that ignoring difference, is a sound non-discriminatory practice. At
previous professional development sessions some teachers have been vocal in
their opposition to international students being given lecture notes for example,
on the grounds that it discriminates against local students. But claiming blindness
to differences in the classroom is counterproductive (Neuwirth, 2003). Nieto
(2000:139) argues that 'treating everyone the same way will not necessarily lead
to equality, rather, it may end up perpetuating the inequality that already exists'.
Miller and Eleveld (2000) are of a similar view and go on to argue that educators
must ensure that the reality of human difference does not degenerate into a
divisive debate about being different. Preferring to remain ignorant about the
background or circumstances of students would not appear to be an appropriate
response to difference and the development of a humanistic civil society:

> It would be a wonderful trick, indeed to humanize others by ignoring
> them. The continued personalization or humanization of others
> depends on the premise that others are human or persons as I am
> (Miller & Eleveld, 2000:99).

Carlo's previous comment alludes to a problem that teachers at TAFE are on
occasion finding themselves having to deal with conflict between international
students themselves:

*…we have people who are, at least in their own country, are at war with one another. And they are here, like, we had this Pakistani and the Indians they were at each other's....*Joseph (Senior, 2004:60)

*We have had instances where they don't get on. Particularly, what is happening in the world, that will often cause tensions as well. I suppose an incident might have been, I am sort of getting away from the institute here, but an incident might have been say September 11 and how people reacted in that situation. In terms of looking at information about their families, looking up information on web sites, and finding out what happened…*Yvonne (Senior, 2004:60)

*I came out of the recreation lounge and am not too sure… and I really didn't want to get into it… with these two kids, but, these two blokes were fighting. As I walked out the door (short laugh) a bottle of Gatorade had gone flying past my face and hit someone in the back of the head. And, you know, it was on… I split them apart. And said "look! what do you think you guys are doing?" You know… and, I think they thought I was just a local student because I was in casual clothes. And I said, "I am actually a teacher here. Can you guys stop it?" And they said, "What do you do?" I said, "I'm a cookery teacher" and they have just gone sort of you know… and they must have been cookery students you know, because… not mine but…you know, and then… suddenly, both of them just you know… I said, "is everything cool here?" They both said "yes. Sorry sir". And I was like, "Don't worry about it - just don't let it happen again, you know, it is just real happy here – yeh?" And I then, I hope that they were fine after that but…you know, but that was like, that was the first time I had seen something like that at the college. I had been a student here and a teacher - and I had never seen anything like that…. you know, two students really going at each other like that..*Carlo (Senior, 2004:60-1)

As an ex-student, now sessional teacher, Carlo believes that this kind of conflict is relatively new to the institute. While that may be the case, a lack of awareness or understanding about students' social and cultural backgrounds by teachers may make them less inclined to mediate or become involved (Johnson, 2003), particularly when they run the risk of appearing ignorant or ill-informed. In the situation described above, Carlo quite correctly focused on the violent behaviour of the two students. However, rather than being concerned for the 'happy' environment of the institute it may have been more appropriate in this circumstance to explicitly remind the students of their responsibilities under the student discipline guidelines and Occupational Health and Safety legislation. As possible recent arrivals to Australia, the students may not be aware of the underlying rules or responsibilities of a 'happy' environment or they may need reminding.

Understandably, it is difficult for teachers to remember that not all students have access to implicit cultural knowledge. Teachers face the challenge of managing the varying cultural understandings brought to the classroom. Mark mentioned in his interview the difficulty in trying to balance a student/teacher relationship with both international and local students:

> *Well, certainly, it does make life more challenging as a teacher. When you have a diversity of cultures there… Obviously there are language difficulties, you also have got differences in the way students learn, their interest or their willingness to participate in discussions, and their attitudes to the teacher. Sometimes you can see Australian students responding and dealing with approaching the teacher in a way that the…those other guys find very strange sometimes, offensive, or even rude. And you have got to be able to manage that. On the one hand, you, you have got to manage a sense of decorum, but you also have a relationship with the Australian students that is culturally based. But you also have to recognise that there is a cultural basis for that relationship. …You've got to sometimes, sometimes you have got to sacrifice or burn the Asian students, who may not be understanding what you're talking about, in order to engage and keep the interest of the of the Australian students. And that's… assuming that is always that case, and sometimes that is not necessarily the case, because sometimes you can talk more vigorously with the Asian students because they have a more worldly view than the Australian kids. But, you do need to sometimes be prepared to…um, you know, give up some kids in order to keep the other kids interested.* Mark (Senior, 2004:62)

Ray, on the other hand, was concerned about the pressures upon, and the attitude of, some international students regarding gaining their qualifications:

> *That has been a big cultural difference between fee-paying students and non-fee-paying students. Most of the Australian students who are only paying 500 bucks a year, they don't have to travel overseas and worry about visas and so forth, if you fail them they just accept that they just come back next semester and finish it off… but fee paying students expect, that they have an absolute right to finish everything on time. No matter how they perform….Yes…That is a cultural emergence that we have to deal with.* Ray (Senior, 2004:62)

Corroborating Ray's view was a comment made by Peter in his interview about the way in which some of the Indian international students dealt with conflict in the student/teacher relationship:

*About the behaviour of the Indians…and they found that very difficult
because to deal with the pushiness that was…the confrontational
nature of these guys. Most of them were, virtually all of them were
young men coming from a background of…where you have to push
yourself forward… you have to assert yourself if you want to get
anything done…that was their modus operandi… and very
specifically culturally based…think because of the...just the nature of
the life in modern India. And that caused an enormous amount of
difficulty with teachers…The Indians were...they were in a perpetual
state of uproar...but they had their own technique of dealing with
that. It often meant that 11 or 12 of them flooded into a room and
surrounding the person...and not, almost refusing to leave until they
got something that was in their favour…* Peter (Senior, 2004:62)

There are considerable stresses placed upon both international students and
their teachers by legislative requirements (Cook, 2003), that may be exacerbated
by differing cultural beliefs about the student/teacher relationship. The result is
often unpleasant and leads, more often than not, to the reinforcement of
stereotypes and divisive notions of being different.

All of the qualities and situations discussed by the interviewees have highlighted
an unacknowledged aspect of teacher's work as a result of increasing culturally
diversity in classrooms. More so than in the past TAFE teachers have to dig
deeper into their professional training and teaching repertoire to meet the needs
of their students. They are also dealing with new and sometimes unfamiliar social
dynamics between students, as well as coming to terms with new expectations of
the teacher/student relationship. As Michael and Peter see it:

*I think a lot of people see teaching as the provision of the
information, or the font of all knowledge. Certainly, I think, that there
is an aspect of that within teaching, but managing the learning
process and understanding all the people within the room and being
able to assist each of them is one of the undervalued and often
neglected aspects of a good teacher.* Michael (Senior, 2004:63)

*But I think that it boils down to… perhaps teachers recognising that
they are bringing their own ethnocentricity to the class. And not to
hide it… and within the class everyone is operating within a position
of perhaps ah… ethnocentrism… to some degree stereotyping. But
you can't hide that. You can't suppress it. You can't pretend it
doesn't exist. You have to… what you need to do is draw that out
and and reflect on how that is sort of impacting on … on the way in
which the class is operating. And the way in which the individuals
within the classroom are interacting. And using that as.. as a base to
develop a sort of inclusive approach.* Peter (Senior, 2004:63)

In a culturally diverse classroom managing the learning process has become more complex at a time when pedagogical skill and experience may not be sufficiently valued by TAFE management. By virtue of its presence alone, cultural diversity will not promote or contribute to the positive development of cross-cultural skills amongst students or teaching staff required by the innovation economy. A view supported by Lima and Lima (1998:322):

> 'the cultural dimension of human experience apparently does not by itself prepare the individual to understand (and to value) cultural diversity'.

Summary

TAFE teachers in this study demonstrated a broad interpretation of cultural diversity and consequently identified a wide-range of implications for their role in the classroom. One issue that many teachers believed to be problematic in the culturally diverse classroom was the management of conflict. According to the interviewees, this conflict arises between students (local and international, as well as between international students) and between students and teachers. Many teachers felt ill-prepared and ill-equipped to deal with this conflict. However, in general, the professional challenge for teachers was seen as a positive learning opportunity and many teachers spoke about the need for empathy, flexibility and praxis. Interestingly, despite their broader interpretation of cultural diversity, teachers still made the connection between culture and 'others' – they could see the differences of their students but some appeared unable to see themselves as part of the cultural dynamic. This understanding is indispensable in a plural educational environment where culturally based miscommunication may not only be present, but the guidance of such communication is a fundamental responsibility of the teacher as a cultural worker in the classroom.

References

Aragon, J. (1978). An Impediment to Cultural Pluralism: Cultural Deficient Educators Attempting to Teach Culturally Different Children. In M. D. Stent, W. R. Hazard & H. N. Rivlin (Eds.), *Cultural Pluralism in Education: A Mandate for Change* (pp. 77-84). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Banks, J. A. (1997). *Educating Citizens in a Multicultural Society*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Banks, J. A. (2001). *Cultural Diversity and Education - Foundations, Curriculum, and Teaching* (4 ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Banks, J. A., Cookson, P., Gay, G., & Hawley, W. D. (2001). Diversity within unity: essential principles for teaching and learning in a multicultural society. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 83(3), 196-203.

Bennett, C. (1999). *Comprehensive Multicultural Education - Theory and Practice* (4 ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Brandon, W. W. (2002). Interrupting Racial Profiling: Moving Pre-service Teachers from White Identity to Equity Pedagogy. In J. J. Slater, S. M. Fain & C. A. Rossatto (Eds.), *The Freirean Legacy* (pp. 139 - 156). New York: Peter Lang.

Cochran-Smith, M. (2003). The multiple meanings of multicultural teacher education: A conceptual framework. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 30(2), 7.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research Methods in Education* (5 ed.). London: RoutledgeFalmer.

Collett, J., & Serrano, B. (1992). Stirring it up: the inclusive classroom. In L. Border & N. Van Note Chism (Eds.), *Teaching for Diversity* (Vol. 49, pp. 35-47). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Cook, M. (2003, 25 June). Tomorrow, the world. *The Age,* pp. 6-7.

Craft, M. (1996). Cultural Diversity and Teacher Education. In M. Craft (Ed.), *Teacher Education in Plural Societies - An International Review*. Bristol: Falmer Press.

Foley, G., Crombie, A., Hawke, G., & Morris, R. (2000). Policy formation in adult education and training. In G. Foley (Ed.), *Understanding Adult Education and Training* (pp. 117-126). Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin.

Gardner, H. (2002). *The Quality and Qualities of Educational Research*. Retrieved 12 February, 2003, from www.edweek.org/ew/ew_printstory.cfm?slug=01gardner.h22

Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1992). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers*. New York: Longman.

Gollick, D. M., & Chinn, P. C. (1994). *Multicultural Education in a Pluralistic Society* (4 ed.). Colombus: Merril Publishing.

Hickling-Hudson, A., & McMeniman, M. (1996). Pluralism and Australian Teacher Education. In M. Craft (Ed.), *Teacher Education in Plural Societies - An International Review.* Bristol: Falmer Press.

Hofstede, G. (1986). Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 10*, 301-320.

Johnson, L. S. (2003). The Diversity Imperative: building a culturally responsive school ethos. *Intercultural Education, 14*(1), 17-30.

Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy. (2002). Melbourne: Department of Education and Training.

Kronemann, M. (2001). *TAFE Teachers: Facing the Challenge.* Paper presented at the The 4th Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA), Adelaide.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Multicultural teacher education: research, practice and policy. In C. A. Banks & J. A. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Multicultural Education* (pp. 747 - 759). New York: Macmillan Publishing.

Le Roux, J. (2001). Social dynamics of the multicultural classroom. *Intercultural Education, 12*(3), 273-288.

Lima, E. S., & Lima, M. G. (1998). Identity, Cultural Diversity, and Education. In Y. Zou & E. T. Trueba (Eds.), *Ethnic Identity and Power - Cultural contexts of political action in school and society* (pp. 321-343). New York: State University of New York Press.

Major goals for post compulsory education and training. (2004). Retrieved 12 September, 2003

Merriam, S. B. (1988). *Case Study Research in Education - A Qualitative Approach*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, G. D., & Eleveld, M. R. (2000). On "Having Differences" and "Being Different" From a Dialogue of Difference to the Private Language of Indifference. In S. F. Steiner, H. M. Krank, P. McLaren & R. E. Bahruth (Eds.), *Freirean Pedagogy, Praxis, and Possibilities* (pp. 87-100). New York: Falmer Press.

National Council for Vocational Education Research. (2003). *Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics*. Retrieved 18 February, 2004, from www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/vet/pocketgd/pocketoz/pocketoz.pdf

Neito, S. (2000). *Affirming Diversity* (3rd ed.). New York: Longman.

Neuman, W. L. (1991). *Social Research Methods - Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (4 ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Neuwirth, L. K. (2003). From Color Blindness to Cultural Vision. In G. Gay (Ed.), *Becoming Multicultural Educators - Personal Journey Toward Professional Agency* (pp. 272-292). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Osborne, B. (2001a). An overview of research - Informing teaching students from different cultural backgrounds. In B. Osborne (Ed.), *Teaching, Diversity and Democracy* (pp. 1-50). Altona: Common Ground Publishing.

Osborne, B. (Ed.). (2001b). *Teaching, Diversity and Democracy*. Altona: Common Ground Publishing.

Osborne, B., & Cooper, D. (2001). Culturally responsive pedagogy - First steps towards culturally relevant pedagogy. In B. Osborne (Ed.), *Teaching, Diversity and Democracy* (pp. 51-140). Altona: Common Ground Publishing.

Participation in Education: Overseas students. (2002). Retrieved 8 April, 2003, from www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs

Patton, M. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation Methods*. London: Sage.

Post compulsory Education and Training. (2004). Retrieved 18 February, 2004, from http://www.det.vic.gov.au/det/training/default.htm

Rios, F. A., McDaniel, J. E., & Stowell, L. P. (1998). Pursuing the Possibilities of Passion - The Affective Domain of Multicultural Education. In M. E. Dilworth (Ed.), *Being Responsive to Cultural Differences* (pp. 160-181). Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.

Senior, K. (2004). *Teachers as cultural workers in TAFE.* Unpublished thesis, University of Melbourne, Melbourne.

Sikes, P. J. (1992). Imposed Change and the Experienced Teacher. In M. Fullan & A. Hargreaves (Eds.), *Teacher Development and Educational Change* (pp. 36-55). London: The Falmer Press.

Singh, B. R. (2002). Problems and possibilities of dialogue across cultures. *Intercultural Education, 13*(2), 215-227.

Smith, D. (1997). Student Diversity: Challenge and Potential for Faculty Motivation. In J. L. Bess (Ed.), *Teaching Well and Liking It* (pp. 248-267). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

TAFE Staff Development Advisory Committee. (2000). *Trends in the Victorian TAFE Institute Workforce.* Melbourne: Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment.

Thomas, E. (2000). Teacher Education and Values Transmission: Cultural Dilemmas with Difficult Choices. In K. Watson, C. Modgil & S. Modgil (Eds.), *Teachers, Teacher Education and Training* (Vol. 1, pp. 246 - 259). London: Cassell.

Ukpokodu, N. (2002). Breaking through preservice teachers' defensive dispositions in a multicultural education course: A reflective practice. *Multicultural Education*, 9(3), 9.

Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). *Educating Culturally Responsive Teachers*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Wilson, S. (1977). The Use of Ethnographic Techniques in Educational Research. *Review of Educational Research, 47*(1), 245-265.