

## **Examining placestories in-between: Traversing education policy directives and local school practices to reimagine intercultural education in Australia.**

Tanya Davies<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Monash University

In his 1993 work, *Legitimizing the lived curriculum*, Ted Aoki argues that curriculum work is not the implementation of a set of plans, but rather the lived and relational interaction across and between curriculum plans, teachers and students. This has implications for teachers' work as they negotiate the spaces in-between diverse and dynamic identities, experience and histories, whereby the stuff of teaching and learning is mediated by individual and collective positionings in the world. This places identity at the centre of teaching and learning, and as such an important constituting factor in teachers' work.

There has been much written about schools as sites of identity production. Schools are mechanisms for producing national identity (and allegiance). Schools are central to developing societal values and norms. While schools also play a central role in helping young people understand themselves and their place in the world. In multicultural, or superdiverse, nations such as Australia, the intersections of diverse and complex cultural identities and the ways these cut across the dominant imaginary of what it means to be Australian complicates the work of teachers in a multitude of ways.

This paper illuminates the tensions between a kind of 'harmonious pluralism' that exists in intercultural policy and curriculum documents and the lived experiences of teachers interpreting and enacting intercultural work in local school settings. Drawing on an ethnographic study at one secondary school in outer-east Melbourne, I explore the risk and challenge for teachers' and young people to move outside of the normative 'cultural and emotional terrains' into an affective domain of difference. I argue that when teachers and young people teach and learn with, through and across diverse cultural positionings, the everyday 'cultural terrains' of groups and individuals become sites of negotiation, in-between spaces of struggle and growth. The paper draws on stories of and in place to complicate easy notions of intercultural education and reimagines intercultural education as an exploration of the uncomfortable and unfinalizable spaces in-between self and other.