

INTRODUCTION: UNDERSTANDING THE LEARNER TO INFORM EDUCATORS' IMPLEMENTATION OF PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES TO TRANSFORM LEARNING

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this introduction, you will be able to:

- critically differentiate the importance of knowing and embracing the richness of the diversity of learners as foundational to pedagogical decision-making
- define pedagogy and understand the pedagogical responsibility of an educator across the early years, primary and secondary educational contexts
- understand and critically analyse the principles of inclusive, responsive, enabling and socially just pedagogical approaches
- discern the interconnection between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, the significance of learner-centred pedagogies, the role of student agency and the co-design of learning experiences
- develop efficacy in applying self-reflective strategies for a sustained critique of one's own and shared educational practice in applying inclusive, responsive, enabling and socially just pedagogical approaches.

INTRODUCTION

The central tenet underpinning *Teaching to Transform Learning: Pedagogies for Inclusive, Responsive and Socially Just Education* is the untapped richness of the lived experiences, histories, contexts and identities of the learners that we engage with in our educational communities. Understanding and integrating such richness within the co-construction of learning with young people is premised to further support the educator in the quality of their pedagogical decision-making to maximise young people's engagement and learning. Educators are predominantly drawn to the teaching profession with a passion and ethic of care in making a difference in the lives of young people, founded upon instilling a feeling of pride in who they are and what they can become and achieve. That is, educators are committed in their responsibility as transformational agents for *all* young learners in their innovative provision of *pedagogies for inclusive, responsive and socially just education*.

The significance of this text contributes to transforming professional practice in being responsive to the increasing diversity within society. Such diversity should afford richer opportunities to learn from one another, including histories, culture, language, religion, gender, ability and lived experiences, thus enhancing inclusive and intercultural understandings and respect for the richness of the complexity of diversity (Price et al., 2020). Evidence of increasing disengagement from learning is resulting in a growth in young people opting to engage in alternative and not school options (Vinson et al., 2015) with many young people at the edge of education, employment and society (Howard & Price, 2022; MacGill, Carter & Price, 2022). Efforts at designing a national curriculum such as the Australian Curriculum first implemented in 2011, aimed to provide engaging, consistent and relevant learning opportunities inclusive and responsive to this increasing diversity across the nation. The matrix approach prioritises not only learning areas but also underpinning learning by embedding overarching cross-curriculum priorities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia, and Sustainability as well as general capabilities; intercultural understandings, ethical understandings, literacy, numeracy, personal and social capability, information and communication technology capability, and critical and creative thinking (ACARA, 2023; Gilbert, 2019; McInerney, Green & Price, 2019). Despite such policy intentions, the curriculum remains significantly monocultural, leaving some learner's funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) and lived experiences at the door or school gate. When learning and the curriculum does not connect to a learner's prior knowledge, it is difficult to retain, increasing the potential for disengagement and academic challenges and compromising the young person's sense of identity in being able to see themselves within their learning. Educators play a significant role in transforming learning with 'the need for curriculum to be dynamic, living, and responsive' (Price, 2022, p. 181) and doing 'curriculum justly' whereby the 'most marginalised are recognised and representatively empowered, diverse traditions of knowledge and action are valued, and spaces are opened for meaningful local and global content' (Brennan & Zipin, 2018, p. 186). In continuing to shape a national curriculum inclusive of diverse learners, national education goals in Australia reflected in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (Education Council, 2019), commit to the holistic development and achievement of all learners. As educators including pre-service and in-service educators and those within higher

education, it is important that we have efficacy and commitment to employing pedagogies that are responsive to, and inclusive of, *all* learners.

This introduction sets the scene by exploring the richness of the diversity of learners and critically examines the imperative for educators within the current educational climate to employ pedagogies that transform learning experiences, particularly for those who continue to be marginalised and are increasingly disengaged from education. The aim of this introduction is to lay the foundation for the significance of supporting educators in pedagogical decisions that prioritise and are socially just and responsive to the *inclusion of all learners*, thereby engaging and empowering learners as active co-designers and self-regulators of respectful, meaningful and impactful learning. In scaffolding educator efficacy, this introduction encourages self-reflective strategies for a sustained critique of applying inclusive, responsive, enabling and socially just pedagogical approaches within educational practice.

KNOWING AND EMBRACING THE RICHNESS OF DIVERSE LEARNERS

With the advancement of globalisation as well as societal factors such as forced and voluntary migration, we are experiencing increasing diversity in Australian educational settings (IOM, 2018; Morrison et al., 2019). It is therefore important to respect and understand the dynamic nature of culture as it constantly changes, along with recognising individual differences within a group. As an educator, while you are not expected to, and you cannot, know everything about the cultural, religious or linguistic backgrounds of every learner in your educational setting, engaging in communities with rich diversity affords optimal opportunities for promoting an ethic of care, self-growth and life-long learning for the educator, young people and the broader educational community. Recognising, valuing and ensuring that each learner's virtual schoolbag provides an entry point to their learning is important in your practice, as it makes learning more meaningful and effective, which in turn increases engagement and academic success. The pedagogical approaches that you employ therefore play an important role. Often, we consciously and/or subconsciously draw on a range of pedagogies that seemingly align with our values as an educator. This makes it imperative that we consistently reflect on our approach and critically examine who is included and who might be unintentionally excluded. The following reflection aims to encourage self-awareness and self-reflection in our educational practice and how we have much to learn from one another.

Fatima is from Afghanistan and has recently migrated to Australia. Fatima's ability to communicate in English is emerging and she hesitates to share her journey just yet. She wears a hijab (Muslim headscarf) so one may assume she is Muslim. Wanting to support her transition to a new school and cultural context, the educator spends their spare time reading about Afghanistan and Islam and learns that a cornerstone of Islamic religious observance is praying five times a day and that some of those prayer times fall within the school day. Speaking with colleagues at the school, the educator realised that other Muslim learners in the school gather daily for their mid-afternoon prayer in a spare classroom. In attempting to be responsive to the cultural and religious needs of learners, it is decided to introduce Fatima to other Muslim peers and the place for prayer. When the educator arrives at the spare classroom with her, Fatima reacts with anger and runs off leaving the educator confused in what they had misread. (Price et al., 2020, p. 44)

In this example, the educator's actions were well-intended; however, they failed to understand that diversity is complex. For example, the educator knew that Fatima came from Afghanistan; however, they did not recognise that not all people from Afghanistan are the same. For instance, among Muslim people there are two different sects, *Sunni* and *Shia*, which underpin and inform their beliefs and way of living their faith (Thobani, 2017). So, we cannot assume that all Muslim people are the same and live their faith in the same way.

Knowing and recognising the diversity that exists within diversity goes a long way; however, it is important to understand that developing relationships with learners and their families also plays a crucial role in ensuring that learners like Fatima are supported in their learning and feel connected to their educational context. As an educator, it is important to recognise that a 'one size fits all' approach does not work and that the role that your pedagogy plays is critical to all learners. This exemplifies the extraordinary skills we have as educators in being adaptive and responsive through acquiring an understanding of a range of pedagogical approaches so that we can make informed decisions about our own pedagogy and transform the learning for all young people.

UNDERSTANDING PEDAGOGY AND THE EDUCATOR'S ROLE

Educating young people provides opportunities to create a preferred future in which there is an active place for them. The pedagogy(ies) that we as educators employ can either engage or disengage learners and can privilege some and not others. Effective pedagogy has been recognised as key to meeting learning outcomes and increasing learner engagement and achievement (Harbour et al., 2015). However, often the pedagogy that an educator chooses is monocultural and only recognises and draws on the lifeworlds of some learners, leaving others feeling disconnected and disengaged with their learning. So, the decisions that you make about your pedagogical approach and how you will enact the curriculum is critical to the success of all learners.

What is *pedagogy* and how does it differ from education? Hinchliffe (2000) argues that while 'education can be defined as "learning for its own sake", pedagogy can be defined as learning oriented towards social goals' (p. 31). More commonly it is defined as 'the function or work of teaching; the art or science of teaching, education instructional methods' (DEEWR, 2009, p. 42). Visually, pedagogy is represented as a triangle (Lusted, 1986) where the corners represent the educator, learner and the knowledge being taught. Supporting this, Thomson and Hall (2019) suggest that pedagogy refers to the 'totality of a learning experience – the ways in which relationships are developed and conversations are held; the practice used to sequence, pace and scaffold knowledge and skills; the use of time/space; the monitoring, formative and summative assessment of learning; the ethos of the classroom and school, and the ways in which the everyday lives of children are recognised, valued and used to connect them to what counts in schooling' (p. 1).

In line with this view, we believe that pedagogy involves the strategies and methods that educators employ to ensure that all students are included in their learning and can be seen in the curriculum that is taught enabling them to be successful. To achieve this, we need to consider a range of different pedagogical approaches. Some of these will resonate more with your own teaching philosophy than

others. Many of us employ a combination of pedagogies or different pedagogies depending on the learners we are teaching. Supporting this, Watkins and Mortimore (1999) suggest that pedagogy is ‘any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance the learning in another’ (p. 3). The focus on the individual in this definition resonates with our philosophy of ensuring that learning is inclusive of all learners, their backgrounds, cultures and lived experiences.

Your teaching philosophy, underpinned by your beliefs and values, will shape your pedagogy and practice. Therefore, it is important to spend time thinking about this in relation to young people and their education. Failing to do so may result in you relying on other people’s ideas and at worst blaming learners and their contexts when they are disengaged or not succeeding. Instead, when a learner is disengaged, we challenge you to question your own pedagogy and curriculum to ensure that it aligns to the lifeworlds of each learner in your context. We, as educators, need to ask fundamental self-reflexive questions. Are the ‘funds of knowledge’ of this learner being included in my planning? How are they being used? Are the learner’s funds of knowledge considered an asset? If we answer ‘no’ to any of these questions, we need to think about how we address this to ensure that the curriculum that we are enacting is engaging and relevant to each learner. As educators it is our role to ensure that learning is authentic to all learners and this means not only ensuring the curriculum is inclusive of all learners’ lifeworlds, but also our pedagogical approach. In this way we can help to meet the nationally agreed goals in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* that requires educators in the Australian context to employ pedagogical approaches that provide equitable opportunities for all learners to grow and succeed (Education Council, 2019). By doing so, you will be meeting the following Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (AITSL, 2022):

- Standard 1: Know students and how they learn.
- Standard 3: Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning.
- Standard 4: Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments.

THE PRINCIPLES OF INCLUSIVE, RESPONSIVE, ENABLING AND SOCIALLY JUST PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Many inclusive, responsive principles have been proposed to ensure that learning is enabling and socially just. We propose some of the key principles for you to consider when thinking about your own pedagogy and practice.

Foreman and Arthur-Kelly (2017) propose a *human rights and social justice principle* that recognises diversity in educational settings. Aligning with the United Nations’ *Conventions on the Rights of the Child* (UN, 1989), they argue that all learners should be involved in decisions that immediately impact on their lives; one of which is education. Supporting this is the recognition that learners are people first, arguing that ‘inclusion in education is often as much a rights issue as it is an issue of what works best in all circumstances’ (Foreman & Arthur-Kelly, 2017, p. 5).

Extending this principle, Foreman and Arthur-Kelly (2017) suggest that *all children can learn* in a least restrictive environment which provides the most appropriate and supportive context for both the child and their caregiver. However, talking about children with additional needs, they propose

that learning may not be the same for each child. For us, this also refers to learners from diverse backgrounds highlighting the need for a pedagogical approach that resonates with each individual learner. To achieve this, reflecting on the intended curriculum we are enacting in the classroom through our pedagogical approaches is important so that all learners have access and opportunity (Price & Slee, 2018).

Hyde, Carpenter and Conway (2017) highlight the role of the *school climate* and community by proposing that successful inclusion occurs when the school climate is positive, and diversity is valued by leadership and the school community more broadly. This involves collaboration between stakeholders to ensure that learner outcomes and pedagogies meet the needs of individual learners.

In addition to these principles, Price and Green (2019) argue that inclusion is supported when learners are *involved in co-designing learning, agents in making decisions* about things that immediately impact on them and are *involved in problem-solving and goal-setting*. This involves ensuring that all learner’s lifeworld experiences are valued and underpin their learning.

REFLECTION

Think about your daily life and interactions with others.

- Which of these principles do you enact?
- How do or will these principles influence your teaching, planning, assessment and pedagogy?
- What other principles do you apply in your teaching?

SETTING THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT AND LEARNER-CENTRED PHILOSOPHY

Understanding the value of employing learner-centred pedagogies is important but we also need to discuss how these practices inter-relate with curriculum and assessment. We will start by exploring the difference between the intended and enacted curriculum. The intended curriculum refers to the policy, achievement standards and guidelines that drive learning (Porter & Smithson, 2001). Yet, the enacted curriculum is where the real learning occurs. Porter and Smithson (2001) argue that ‘the enacted curriculum is arguably the single most important feature of any curriculum’ (p. 2), highlighting the importance of employing pedagogies that are learner-centred and support learner agency as these are all key features of the enacted curriculum.

The intended Australian Curriculum, while including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and cross-curriculum perspectives, has been critiqued for being largely monocultural, resulting in many students not being visible in the curriculum from which they learn (Rigney, 2018). We therefore advocate for providing all learners with an opportunity to inform both the intended and enacted curriculum by engaging in co-design activities as these provide opportunities to develop student agency and refine problem-solving skills. Providing such opportunities comes from the ‘belief that all people have something to offer to the design process and that they can be both articulate and creative when given appropriate tools with which to express themselves’ (Sanders, 2002). Co-design provides learners with the opportunity to inform their curriculum

and learning and to be active in decision-making in areas that immediately impact their lives in which they are experts. Chapter 11 discusses the co-design process in further detail.

EMBEDDING SELF-REFLECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR THE SUSTAINED CRITIQUE OF APPLYING ENABLING PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Education is dynamic therefore our pedagogical approaches need to continually evolve in response to changes in social and educational landscapes. The evolution of our pedagogical approaches can be achieved by embedding continual self-reflective strategies. Throughout this text, we pose questions to support your reflexive critique of your own application of inclusive, responsive, enabling and socially just pedagogical approaches. We begin by encouraging you to reflect on your lived experience and history and how these have shaped your educational philosophy and practice. It is important to understand how these experiences, beliefs, principles and values have shaped the pedagogical decisions that you make and how you enact these either consciously or sometimes unconsciously.

We challenge you throughout each chapter to consider your own understandings of inclusive, responsive, enabling and socially just pedagogical approaches. Do these understandings shift as you engage with the diversity of perspectives within this book? What is your positionality, responsibility and influence? Are some learners inadvertently privileged over others? Why/why not? What can you individually and collectively do to continually plan, implement and evaluate the effectiveness of your own collective and systemic inclusive, responsive, enabling and socially just pedagogical approaches for each learner?

AN OUTLINE OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXT

It is critical for all pre-service and in-service teachers to develop contemporary knowledge, skills and understandings of inclusive, socially just and responsive pedagogies to effectively engage all young people in learning. To achieve this, discussion of pedagogies that promote curiosity, exploration of the natural environment, playfulness, lived experiences and histories, independence and relationships, language and communication, family and carer connections and critical thinking, capabilities and interests are central. To support this, *Teaching to Transform Learning: Pedagogies for Inclusive, Responsive and Socially Just Education* is divided into three sections.

The first, *Pedagogies for all*, addresses a range of pedagogical approaches that cater for the needs of our diverse educational contexts. Chapters within this section include: Aboriginal pedagogies through exploring ways of knowing, being and doing; making lifeworld connections through critical pedagogies; culturally responsive pedagogies that view learners as assets; traversing identities by navigating the self, school and system for culturally responsive pedagogies; working towards a culturally and religiously responsive pedagogy; inclusive pedagogies; enabling pedagogy and critical teaching approaches in diverse classrooms; and pedagogy of hospitality.

Having discussed a range of pedagogies that are inclusive of all, the second part is: *Engaging pedagogies: making the curriculum come alive for all learners*. This section addresses redesigning pedagogy for transformation through: creative body-based learning; building transformative classrooms

through visual and creative body-based learning design; co-constructing early childhood pedagogies; learner-centred pedagogies that build on learner's capabilities and strengths; pedagogy informed by community expertise; nature-based approaches in enhancing experiential learning and learning; outside the classroom.

The third and final part, *Empowering pedagogies: 21st-century skill development and 22nd-century futures thinking*, considers transdisciplinary inquiry, citizenship education, and flipping constructivist pedagogies to enable the equal intensity of depth and breadth in learning.

Each chapter is mapped against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and examines a pedagogical approach that is underpinned by theoretical frameworks with implications for planning, teaching and assessment. Answers to the end-of-chapter questions as well as additional online resources for each chapter are available at www.cambridge.org/highereducation/isbn/9781009011235/resources. We hope you enjoy learning about pedagogies that support our vision of an inclusive, responsive, enabling and socially just education for all.

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