

Preparing teachers to promote intercultural understanding: Exploring the role of critical literacy and dialogic practice.

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Abstract:

It currently stands that pre-service teachers need to show they have developed both skills and strategies to foster learning and engagement for young learners from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. This study explored the perceived sense of readiness of pre-service teachers to facilitate intercultural understanding in their future classrooms, focusing on General Capabilities and Cross-Curriculum Priorities related to intercultural understanding in the Australian national curriculum. The first stage of this project surveyed participants to determine perceived growth in intercultural competence through a final-year literacy-based subject. The second stage investigated the potential impact that understanding critical literacy and dialogic practice had in preparing pre-service teachers to enact these capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities. Data were gathered from participants at two different Australian sites: Western Sydney University and a regional Australian university in Queensland from 2023 to 2025 (N=120). Surveys were informed by Deardorff's (2004) model of IC to capture personal levels of intercultural competence in the first stage. In the second stage, follow-up interviews were conducted with a selection of pre-service students from both sites (N=8). Findings highlight the importance of understanding how different learning environments and backgrounds can influence pre-service teacher confidence and sense of preparedness to promote intercultural understanding in future primary classrooms. The importance of better preparing teachers to enact intercultural understandings through personal understandings, strategies and practical activities in 21st century classrooms will be discussed. Equally, placing a stronger focus on critical literacy during pre-service teacher training and using purpose-built assessment emerged as a clear recommendation.

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