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**Professional development for intercultural education: Learning  
on the run**

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**Author Biography (approx. 25 words)**

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## **Professional development for intercultural education: Learning on the run**

In many parts of the world, there is a visible increase in the numbers of culturally and linguistically diverse students entering compulsory education. To explore the preparedness of teachers for responding to this diversity, this article reports the findings of an ethnographic study which had a specific focus on Samoan students. In semi-structured interviews, teachers of a south-east Queensland primary school described initial challenges they encountered, as well as their opinions about the professional development they had received for intercultural education. In talanoa (Pacific Island-style discussions), parents in the school community shared their concerns about the cultural and linguistic responsiveness of the teachers compared to their previous experiences. Analysis of the findings revealed that teachers experienced ‘culture shock’ in highly multicultural classrooms perhaps related to the lack of opportunities for professional learning about teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. Too few opportunities for teachers to develop and sustain positive dispositions towards intercultural education may have factored into the school staff’s focus on the ‘how’ of intercultural education, rather than the ‘why’. A scarcity of professional and human resources in this area was also identified. The article concludes with ideas for future research.

**Keywords:** multicultural learners; intercultural education; culturally and linguistically diverse learners; Pasifika (Pacific Islander) learners; professional development

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## Introduction

A worldwide surge in international migration has led to increased cultural and linguistic diversity in 'high-income countries' (United Nations, 2017), but often this diversity is not reflected in the teaching profession (Boyle & Charles, 2011; Sleeter, 2017). In Australian primary schools, the typical staff demographic is mostly female, Anglo-Australian and middle class (Commonwealth of Australia, 2007; McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy, & McMillan, 2014; Willett, Segal, & Walford, 2014), and primary teaching remains one of the likeliest occupations for women with a bachelor's degree or above (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017b). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the indigenous peoples of Australia, account for 5.8% of primary students but only 2.13% of Australian primary teachers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Disproportion is also seen in overseas-born populations: 26% of the Australian general population was born overseas, a higher proportion than the United Kingdom (13%), the United States (14%), Canada (22%) and New Zealand (23%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017a), yet only 16.4% of Australian primary teachers were born overseas (McKenzie et al., 2014). In terms of language, 21% of Australians spoke a language besides English at home (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017c), but only 8.9% of primary teachers reported the same (McKenzie et al., 2014). These figures call into question teacher preparedness to teach in schools with multicultural student populations.

Australian teachers are required to have knowledge about teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. This competency is embedded in the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* 1.3 (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012) and it is an ideal implied in state and national policy instruments such as *The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (Education Council, 2019). Intercultural understanding also features in the Australian Curriculum as a general capability to be developed across the

years of compulsory schooling, adding further impetus for exploring teachers' intercultural understandings. In addition, teachers must involve parents and carers in planning and implementing the educative process (Standards 3.7 and 7.3) (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012). This recognises that the views of parents and carers are critical to understanding the education of students from diverse backgrounds.

To understand more about teacher preparedness, this article presents a study of staff and parents connected to a multicultural primary school which posed the question: 'How do teachers and parents perceive teacher preparedness for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students?' The article begins by surveying current literature about professional development for intercultural education before describing details of the current study. The next section presents school staff and parent perceptions, privileging their voices and ideas. The subsequent discussion will argue that teachers are learning about intercultural education through a patchwork of experiences and knowledge gained 'on the run', but to be effective, professional development for intercultural education needs a more comprehensive approach. The article concludes with suggestions for future research.

In the text that follows, the term 'intercultural education' is used to specifically refer to the teaching of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Intercultural education presupposes that human society is multicultural or culturally diverse (United Nations Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2006). This diversity refers not only "to elements of ethnic or national culture, but also includes linguistic, religious and socio-economic diversity" (UNESCO, 2006, p. 17). Intercultural education overlaps with 'multicultural education' which is used to refer to a metadiscipline that aims to increase educational equity for culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Banks, 2010; Nieto, 2010; Sleeter, 2018; Watkins, Lean, & Noble, 2016) and 'transcultural education' where "cultural difference is seen as being part of the societal norm, and not as a phenomenon to be

treated in isolation” (Casinader, 2016, p. 266). The use of the term ‘intercultural’ does not deny the complexities of the terms intercultural, multicultural and transcultural which are well documented (for instance, Guilherme & Dietz, 2015; Marotta, 2014), but it matches teacher knowledge more closely to the language and expectations of the Australian Curriculum and unlike ‘multicultural’, carries less ideological and political connotations in Australia (Forrest, Lean, & Dunn, 2015; Watkins et al., 2016).

The theoretical framework informing this study draws from Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) and Cummins (2000, 2015) who recognised the work of schools and teachers as manifestations of relations of power. A Bourdieusian perspective of interculturality interprets it as a type of embodied cultural capital that includes intercultural competencies, skills and experience and the circumstances by which these can be transformed into other types of capital (Pöllmann, 2013). This view promotes interculturality as an asset in particular environments, depending on wider societal relations and hierarchies of power. Interculturality can be gained through intercultural education which Cummins (2015, p. 456) defines as education which “promotes knowledge, understanding, and respect for diverse cultural traditions and beliefs to the extent that these traditions and beliefs are consistent with social justice and human rights”, acknowledging that intercultural education is enacted within discourses of education that may be competing and contradictory. As one example, Ogay and Edelmann (2016) note the positive tension between equality and diversity, values that are central to intercultural education. On one hand, educators perceive all students as equal which may lead to indifference to cultural diversity. On the other hand, educators would like to recognise and respond to students’ cultural diversity but this may lead to teachers reifying culture or culturalisation (Ogay & Edelmann, 2016). How educators navigate this and other tensions will depend in part on their own intercultural experiences, skills and competencies as well as the knowledge they may gain as part of their professional development.

## **Literature review**

Teaching interculturality has been a perennial challenge for the professional development of teachers. Part of the challenge is its multi-faceted nature, encompassing content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 2010; Kalantzis, Cope, Noble, & Poynting, 2012; Nieto, 2010). Teachers may touch upon some or all of these issues in their initial teacher education, particularly on pedagogy (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014) but it is reported that many novice teachers feel a lack of confidence in enacting intercultural practices once in the classroom (Dobinson & Buchori, 2016). Teacher attitudes, related to their own or their teacher educators' social justice dispositions, as well as their feelings of self-efficacy, also influence whether or not they will utilise intercultural practices (Castro, 2010; Gale, Mills, & Cross, 2017; Gay, 2010; Walton et al., 2014). The literature strongly suggests that what teachers need are programmes of professional development that can increase skills and understandings across all dimensions of intercultural education, while also developing positive attitudes and durable dispositions for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students.

To meet national teacher standards, all Australian initial teacher education programmes include courses or course components about teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students with priority on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. Pre-service education is a key opportunity for teacher beliefs and attitudes to be challenged, transformed and internalised (Castro, 2010; Gay, 2010, 2013). Yet a state-wide survey of New South Wales teachers reported by Watkins et al. (2016) found that only 47.5% of respondents reported having pre-service professional development in multicultural education (the term of choice for that state), while 27.4% reported having pre-service professional development in teaching learners with English as a Second Language (ESL). A smaller

Queensland study found that only 16 (4.7%) of 337 of state high school staff had undertaken undergraduate or postgraduate studies in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse learners (Gilmour, Klieve, & Li, 2018). Such figures are low given that all teacher graduates are assumed to already possess the necessary professional skills for teaching in Australia's multicultural classroom settings.

Graduate or novice teachers often do not continue transformative learning on their own (Dharan, 2015), so in-service professional development is essential. Such opportunities should occur across a whole programme of professional development, not just in one course, allowing teachers to explore their own diversity and difference (Gale et al., 2017; Santoro, 2009; Smyth, 2013) and to develop relevant dispositions (Casinader & Walsh, 2015). Research has found that teachers often express overwhelming support for cultural diversity, multicultural education and strategies to combat racism and discrimination (Forrest et al., 2015; Gale et al., 2017). Yet even teachers who are highly experienced with teaching diverse learners can make assumptions (i.e., essentialising ethnicity) that impact their pedagogy (Allard & Santoro, 2008). Gilmour et al. (2018) found that only 10.4% of the 337 teachers they surveyed had received in-service professional development about teaching learners from diverse backgrounds. This contrasts with Watkins et al. (2016) which reported that around 60% of teachers received in-service professional learning about multicultural and ESL education. However, they also found that 14.8% (of which one fifth were classroom teachers) reported no in-service professional development at all. There is an evident mismatch between what research recommends and what teachers actually experience in terms of professional development in this area.

At the same time, there may be discrepancies between teacher beliefs and attitudes and teacher practices. A Queensland-based study examining the relationships between classroom practices and improved learning for all students found “how unconnected with

students' lives and communities . . . pedagogies were, most of the time” (Lingard & Keddie, 2013, p. 439). The study also found that as teachers attempted to connect with their students by using culturally inclusive practices, their pedagogy appeared to focus less on intellectual quality or rigour (Lingard & Keddie, 2013). A similar finding was identified by Coleman (2011) who found that teachers offered strong pastoral care to their African refugee English language learners, but “their pedagogical response to those same students' distinct academic needs was minimal” (p. 26). Research emphasises the limited use of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogies, as well as a perceived disconnect between such pedagogies and student academic achievement.

To fully understand the value of professional development, Sleeter (2018) recommended that for multicultural education, qualitative studies look beyond the gaze of professionals and other traditional measurements of educational achievement. While students are the primary recipients of teacher pedagogies, parents and caregivers also witness the impacts of teachers' work with their child or children. Being more familiar with the students' cultural and linguistic worlds outside school, caregivers may provide unique insights into teachers' practices, even when they feel disempowered by school contexts and communications (Bernhard, 2010; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). A range of studies with Pasifika<sup>1</sup> (Pacific Islander) caregivers and communities (e.g., Flavell, 2017; Fletcher, Parkhill, Fa'afai, & O'Regan, 2009; Kearney, Fletcher, & Dobrenov-Major, 2011) specifically emphasise the importance of cultural and linguistic capital, caregivers' desire that the school acknowledge learners' holistic identities and some non-alignment between teacher and family expectations. Overall, however, there is a paucity of studies that bring together the views of

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<sup>1</sup> In Australia and New Zealand, Pasifika are people or descendants of people originally from the Pacific Islands (McGavin, 2014; Samu, 2010).

caregivers and educators on issues that are seen to fall primarily within the professional domain such as professional development for intercultural education.

### **The current study**

The current article presents school staff and parent perspectives of teacher preparedness for teaching Samoan students. It draws from a larger doctoral study exploring the perspectives of key educational stakeholders into the academic achievement of Samoan primary school learners. The study was carried out at Mirragin State School (pseudonym), a suburban primary school in south-east Queensland. Mirragin was, at the time of writing, the only state primary school in its suburb where it was located. In the wider community, the top language spoken at home besides English was Samoan (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

Mirragin was well-established with a student population of between 900 and 1,000 students. The student body was multicultural with more than 30 ethnicities represented. Around 10% of the student population was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and around 10% was African, but the distinguishing figure was that more than 50% of the students identified as Pasifika, mostly of Samoan heritage. Around 35% of the student population were identified as having English as an Additional Language or Dialect. Ethical approval was gained from the university ethics committee prior to entering the site for research.

Participants for the study were selected using information-oriented purposeful sampling; that is, cases were selected on the basis of expectations that their data would be rich and informative. The school participants included every Year 3 and Year 5 teacher, a selection of English as an Additional language or Dialect (EAL/D)<sup>2</sup> and literacy support staff

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<sup>2</sup> In Australia, the term English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) is interchangeable with English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as an Additional Language (EAL). Framing English as an 'additional' language, rather than as a 'second' language, acknowledges the

and the principal (n=14). The teachers in this study were Anglo-Australian and monolingual except for one teacher who was bilingual in English and Japanese. The parent participants (n=7), all mothers, had children attending Mirragin, but not necessarily in Years 3 and 5. Pseudonyms are used for all participants.

Data were collected between September 2014 and October 2015 using ethnographic tools such as semi-structured interviews, informal ethnographic interviews and *talanoa*, a Pacific Island style of discussion (see Vaioleti, 2016). Data were also collected through participant observations, the collection of artefacts, field notes and a research journal. The data were then analysed by thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using Bourdieu's theoretical concepts (1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) and Cummins (2000) Intervention for Collaborative Empowerment framework which focused on the participants' micro-interactions. Synthesising Bourdieu's and Cummins' approaches offered a multi-layered perspective of the data and grounded the analysis in critical theory.

My interest in this topic stems from my own experiences as a culturally and linguistically diverse learner throughout my academic years. My parents prohibited English at home despite it being the language of schooling, and at primary and secondary school, I learned nothing about the Samoan culture although this was a fundamental part of my lived experience outside school. These and other experiences instilled in me a deep interest in intercultural education and they motivate me professionally.

## **Findings**

### *Staff views*

Every teacher interviewed stated that they were unprepared for the multicultural student

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linguistic and dialectal capabilities of Australian Indigenous and migrant learners (de Courcy, Dooley, Jackson, Miller, & Rushton, 2012).

population of the school. While teachers supported cultural and linguistic diversity as an idea, many described how they initially felt confronted by Mirragin's diversity. For example:

Ms Nettling (Year 5 teacher, 5 years teaching experience): Yes, it was very much a culture shock when I came here. Like if you walk into the average classroom there's like three white children in the classroom and the rest are from various cultures and that for me was...confronting, yeah. . . These kids . . . they don't have the same knowledge that I have, they don't have the same backpack that I arrived with. Yeah so you've got to sit back and go what, what don't they know that's making this not work?

Similarly, Ms Summer (Year 5 teacher, over 10 years teaching experience), described how all her practicum and teaching experiences had been in "very green leafy schools, you know, like private schools so when I came here it was a big shock". Miss Marsh (Year 5 teacher, 10 years teaching experience) agreed: "I had no idea that it would be such a, you know, vast, different culture here. I had no idea. You actually struggle to think, right, how do I teach this many people with this many backgrounds?" She reflected, "I would never have been prepared for this when I graduated. I would not have coped. I cried for the first two months I was here. I went home at night so stressed. I was just overwhelmed". It is notable that these were Australian-trained teachers teaching in an Australian school. Why were they experiencing "shock" at the culturally diverse Australian classroom?

One reason raised by the teachers was a lack of pre-service education in this area. No-one recalled specific pre-service education for intercultural education, and there was a sense that teachers had been left to their own devices. As Mrs Winter (Year 3 teacher, over 10 years teaching experience) stated, "I feel like when you come here, I mean, you learn on the run, because you have to." Mr McRieve (Year 3 teacher, 3 years teaching experience) added, "I think a lot of education is learning on-the-job, rather than the academic thing going into a classroom." He also pointed out that pre-service learning had limitations anyway because universities could not predict which cultures or languages teachers would encounter. This

idea was supported by the principal who described her experiences of hiring graduate teachers with high academic grades who had not proven capable in her classrooms. From a staff perspective, pre-service professional development in intercultural education had limited value for application in the classroom.

In terms of in-service training, professional development units for intercultural education were reportedly infrequent. Only the EAL/D teacher recounted professional development for EAL/D. The other teachers seemed aware of this professional learning gap, as Miss Marsh described:

We do a lot on disability, on inclusion and special education and all that, yeah, all those kinds of things but inclusion in terms of multicultural kinds of backgrounds, that doesn't happen. We had twenty or thirty kids with disabilities . . . but what about the other 70% of kids who have got different language backgrounds? We don't cater for that in terms of teacher training.

Mirrugin's staff had actually completed professional learning several weeks beforehand which, according to longer-serving teachers, was the first time that Pasifika-specific training had been offered. Delivered by the cultural liaison officer from a nearby high school and two of Mirrugin's own staff, the professional development unit included aspects of Pasifika culture, the pronunciation of names and the use of *talanoa* to communicate with Pasifika learners and their families. The teachers were overwhelmingly positive about the experience. According to Miss Marsh, teachers walked away "grinning because it was the first PD [professional development] all year that we'd actually felt was of use to us". She added "[Leadership] were quite shocked too that all of us were so engaged. . . because it was something different. We don't get offered PD on different cultural perspectives. There's nothing like that". Some teachers described how they used what they had learned in their classrooms the next day, for instance, to *talanoa* with their students. However, in classroom observations, this and other culturally responsive practices were rarely observed, indicating

that the positive pedagogical effects of the professional development unit had dissipated.

As successful as the professional development unit was perceived, it was unclear if it would be repeated. When asked about this, the principal responded that she could not find someone to deliver the units regularly. In addition, she was concerned that teachers did not understand how to use what they learned to benefit their students academically. Moreover, she said that the school did not have a high turnover of staff “so they [the teachers] get more and more desensitised in learning about the culture”. She acknowledged that the lack of professional development in this area was problematic, “but I think it’s something that you’ve got to hear about and experience. I don’t think it’s something like you can go to a few PDs and then [master]”. This contrasted with other areas where support for teachers was more deliberate and focussed. For example, in describing Mirragin’s annual school improvement agenda, for which plans for the following year had already been drafted, the principal described how “Our consultancy around every agenda item has a team, like a taskforce that runs that agenda item, reviews it, gets feedback then we document it. Once that taskforce documents it, it goes into ‘the bible’”. ‘The bible’ was essentially Mirragin’s Teachers Manual, a well-organised and regularly updated binder kept in every classroom. However, I found very little in ‘the bible’ regarding intercultural education or EAL/D, and no documents about specific cultures, such as Samoan.

### ***Parental views***

Generally, the parents were concerned at the level of teachers’ cultural and linguistic responsiveness. They discussed how absenteeism was interpreted by the school as truancy, whereas in their view, extended overseas trips were necessary to fulfil family and cultural obligations. As Sia stated, “Going away for a week or having kids off school because you’re doing all these preparations and work for all those kinds of events, they [Mirragin’s teachers]

don't understand that kind of stuff". The parents also expressed a concern about teacher attitudes towards the Samoan language and bilingualism. For example, Raquel said that teachers did not seem to recognise the value of the Samoan language as a resource, nor did they see bilingualism as a strength. From the mothers' perspective, teacher understandings around issues important to their community needed improvement.

Specifically, teachers should have been better prepared for Mirragin's cultural diversity through their own inquiries or by the school. In response to the 'culture shock' teachers reported, the mothers said:

Trish: That's funny because when I first came to Australia, like when I walked into Mirragin I remember thinking, "Oh my gosh, I feel like I'm at home". So they're probably having the opposite of [that]. Oh that's hilarious! . . .

Sia: We get drawn in the deep and we just learn as we go.

Trish: I guess that it's a bit different. . . Because if I went to go teach in Mexico or whatever you kind of can prepare yourself for the culture shock because you're moving away but if you're not moving anywhere, you're just going to the local school. . .

Sia: Down the road [laugh]. . .

Trish: Yeah, you are not actually expecting anything so you're not prepared . . . I can imagine it would be quite hard for some people in terms of preparing for it.

While these mothers expressed empathy, in their view the school bore responsibility for being transparent about the realities of the multicultural student population so that new teachers were better prepared. At the same time, it was a teacher's responsibility to "do their homework before they come" because "you can't really bring your ideas and your thinking from down the road to a school like this because it's not the same" and "there is a difference between teaching what you might call the average Australian kid and those that are coming from [this community]". To illustrate this point, each parent shared past experiences from other schools that highlighted culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy, from the inclusion of families and their cultures in classroom activities to the use of student languages

in school events. As Trish described:

Coming from a different perspective, like i.e. New Zealand where they have a lot of different cultures and how they cater for those cultures in classrooms, like there's a lot more, I guess that . . . it's just done without thinking about it.

Trish further pointed out that in contrast to Australia, Pasifika people are more visible in the New Zealand school system both as teachers and leaders, making it easier for parents to relate to school staff.

## **Discussion**

Professional learning has significant potential for shaping teacher preparedness in intercultural education. That teachers in the current study felt 'shocked', 'confronted' and 'overwhelmed' by the school's cultural diversity emphasised their lack of experience with multicultural classrooms. For the mothers, the teachers' culture shock highlighted that teachers were inadequately prepared by the school. Both groups of research participants viewed education through an arbitrary cultural lens (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). In other words, the teachers characterised the typical Australian classroom as largely homogenous with diversity at the margins, while the mothers characterised the Australian classroom as diverse, representing their own communities. Both groups saw the Australian classroom as reflections of their own images, and for teachers, this is problematic. To understand their relation to others, teachers should first understand their own diversity and difference within the communities they teach in so they can understand their privileges and positioning (Gale et al., 2017; Santoro, 2009; Smyth, 2013). Correspondingly, the principal observed that teachers got "more and more desensitised in learning about the culture", signifying that the longer teachers worked at Mirragin, the less they noticed cultural and linguistic diversity as a characteristic of their students. Such 'culture-blindness' contributes to the reinforcement of

coercive relations of power (Cummins, 2000). For this reason, professional development for intercultural education should encourage introspection and reflection for sensitising teachers to issues of diversity and difference. Awareness and understanding of oneself as a cultural being is a first step for recognising and managing cultural phenomena (such as culture shock) when encountered.

In addition, the frequency of professional development is important. The enthusiasm with which the teachers received their first and only intercultural professional development unit (the first in 13 years, according to one teacher) matched their positive attitudes towards teaching multicultural learners, but these attitudes were not sourced from nor supported by any deliberate programme of professional development. Given that positive dispositions are known to develop in the pre-service period (Castro, 2010; Gale et al., 2017; Gay, 2010, 2013), it was concerning that teachers could not specifically recall any relevant pre-service education. Equally concerning was that, in line with Watkins et al. (2016), the teachers reported rare opportunities for in-service professional development in intercultural education. If it is only resourceful teachers who pursue development in this area and convert their beliefs and attitudes into practice (Dharan, 2015; Walton et al., 2014), then professional learning opportunities for teachers should not be one-off, but part of a strategic and focussed course design (Casinader & Walsh, 2015). Frequent professional development opportunities can update teacher knowledge and refresh their practice with context-specific ideas, as well as help solidify the positive dispositions that lead to durable intercultural practices.

A further consideration is the scope of professional development which in the current study was focussed on practice. One of the reasons the teachers reportedly enjoyed the Pasifika-focussed unit was for its immediately useful practices, or the 'how'. However, similar to Smyth (2013), the motivation to use these practices seemed to have worn off by the time I entered classrooms for observations. Additionally, culturally or linguistically

responsive pedagogy was never mentioned by teachers as a priority or possibility, which indicates the importance of giving teachers frameworks and principles they can use across a range of contexts (Gale et al., 2017; Santoro, 2009; Smyth, 2013). An example is the mothers' suggestion that teachers increase their awareness about bilingualism, a point supported by Sleeter (2018). Intellectual engagement in the full range of ideas for intercultural education (Watkins & Noble, 2016) means that teachers' understandings and practices are more likely to develop by design, and not by default. Furthermore, widening the scope of professional development may help teachers make intercultural education an inherent part of their professional practice, ultimately leading to an appearance of effortlessness, to a point where, as one mother put it, "it's just done without thinking about it".

To embed intercultural education in teacher practice, the 'how' of intercultural education must be supported by the 'why'. The principal's perception that teachers were not able to use culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy to improve students' academic achievements echoes previous findings regarding the fuzzy relationship between culturally responsive pedagogies and academic achievement (Coleman, 2011; Lingard & Keddie, 2013). The principal, who held decision-making power over the teachers' in-service professional development, perceived this relationship to be tenuous. However, intercultural education is not merely a means of improving students' academic achievement. It is also a means of empowering diverse learners. For example, the school may have perceived cultural absenteeism as mere truancy whereas the mothers saw it a way to maintain their cultural capital within their families and communities. Professional development aimed at resolving such dissonant understandings can potentially promote collaboration with the community to establish shared understandings around absenteeism (Kearney et al., 2011). This also applies to the issue of bilingualism that was raised by the mothers. Thus, rather than focusing on

educational achievement, teachers and school leaders might benefit from a more holistic perspective of intercultural education encompassing the broader critical aims of empowerment and agency.

None of the points raised so far can be achieved without resources. Although Mirragin was a well-established school that had experienced waves of diverse student populations (Vietnamese, Samoan and currently African), resources for intercultural education were not included in the Teachers' Manual as it was for other areas such as literacy, numeracy, and student behaviour. Furthermore, the principal's lack of access to a professional development educator indicated a scarcity of human resources, a point reinforced by the mothers who observed the lack of diversity in Mirragin's staff. The scarcity of professional and human resources rationalises the infrequency of professional development opportunities reported in other studies (i.e., Gilmour et al., 2018; Watkins et al., 2016). When guiding documents or knowledgeable people are not at hand to guide the process, schools may offer less regular, quality professional development for intercultural education.

## **Conclusion**

This article has presented the views of teachers and parents from one Queensland school around teacher preparedness for intercultural education. It argued that culture shock can be mitigated by introspective and reflective components of professional development that draw teachers' attention to the role of privilege and power in education. It also made a case for more frequent opportunities for professional development to promote positive dispositions through deep and sustained engagement with intercultural principles and practices. While pedagogical strategies are appealing to teachers, the 'why' is just as important as the 'how'. When intercultural education is understood as a means for empowering culturally and linguistically diverse learners, and not just a means to improving their educational

achievement, it can more genuinely fulfil the aspirations of teachers and communities for their learners. Finally, this study highlighted the paucity of professional and human resources for intercultural education as a prohibitive factor. Empirically, this study shows that professional development for intercultural education requires a more planned and purposeful approach than what is currently being offered.

Ultimately, the challenge is to move beyond the image of a teacher as merely a technician or practitioner, and to recast them as intellectuals (Watkins & Noble, 2016) who possess agency, and who have an ongoing commitment to deepening their knowledge about the nature of their profession. Further research in this area might explore enablers and barriers to educators' engagement with intercultural education, the ideal scope and frequency of professional development in intercultural education, and how schools and communities can work together for locating and creating professional resources. These inquiries will hopefully lead to teachers learning about intercultural education at a guided and steady pace, rather than on the run.

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