

DIVERSITY AND AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

Professor Steve Dinham
National Research Director
Teaching, Learning and Leadership ACER
Robert Bosch Foundation Workshop
Berlin
4th December 2008

Diversity: Yes

- Spectrum of academic ability/mixed ability
- Inclusion/mainstreaming of students with intellectual/physical disability
- Focus on the individual, catering for difference, teaching the 'whole child'
- Interpersonal learning, more emphasis on thinking, life skills to equip the individual
- Respect/recognition of varying socio-cultural backgrounds, views
- Anti-discrimination, backed by legislation
- Tolerance, anti-bullying, anti-victimisation
- Different school system types, approaches to structuring schooling

Diversity: No

- Doesn't/shouldn't mean tolerating or rationalising poor performance from certain groups on the basis that they are different because of their background or because of a belief that they are innately inferior.

A Common view ...

“The most important reason to include all students in the mainstream is that it is the fair, ethical, and equitable thing to do ...It is discriminatory that some students, such those "labelled" disabled, must earn the right to be in them regular education mainstream or have to wait for educational researchers to prove that they can profit from the mainstream, while other students are showed unrestricted access simply because they have no label. No one should have to pass anyone's test or prove anything in a research study to live and learn in the mainstream of school and community life. This is a basic right, not something one has to earn” (Stainback and Stainback, cited in Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004).

Mastropieri, M., & Scruggs, T. (2004). *The Inclusive Classroom: Strategies for Effective Instruction* (Second Edition ed.). Ohio: Pearson: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Australia: Demographics

- People arrived in Australia at least 40-45,000 years ago
- Over 110 broad Indigenous 'countries' (see map previously)
- First European settlement 1788 – 'terra nullius'
- 1850's gold rushes attracted significant migration (British, Irish, German, other European, Chinese)
- 1901- Federation (Commonwealth of Australia)
- Immigration Restriction Act 1901 ('White Australia Policy')
- Post WWI immigration (mainly British)

Australia: Demographics

- **1948**: Indigenous peoples recognised as citizens
- **1967**: Referendum 1) Commonwealth could make special laws in respect of Aboriginal people 2) Counted in census

Australia: Demographics

- Post WWII: Massive immigration; British, displaced Europeans, Greeks, Italians ('populate or perish')
- Subsidies for immigration until 1970
- More recently: Lebanese, Iraqi, Chinese, Pacific Islander, South Korean, Chinese, Indian/Pakistani/Sri Lankan
- Combination of skilled workers and refugees (e.g., Sudan)
- Current worker shortages in rural areas; temporary migrant workers from Asia, Pacific

Australia: Demographics

- Population today: 21,500,000
- Aging population (median 37)
- Annual growth rate 1.4%
- 85% European descent
- 2.5% Indigenous (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) (69% of whom are mixed race)
- 25% of the population born overseas
- 15% of the population speak a language other than English at home

Most Common Languages

- In order:
 - Only English
 - Italian
 - Greek
 - Cantonese
 - Arabic
 - Mandarin
 - Vietnamese
 - Spanish
 - Filipino + Tagalog
 - German
 - Hindi
 - Macedonian
 - Croatian
 - Aboriginal languages

Overview of Education

- School education, curricula, public exams a State/Territory role yet mainly financed by federal government
- More than 60% attend government schools although non-government sector growing (most religious-based)
- Government funding of non-government schools (contentious)

Overview of Education

■ Curricula until mid 1960s:

- Prescriptive
- Public, internal exams
- ‘mono-cultural’ curriculum
- Indigenous, ‘primitive’ history
- Assimilation emphasis on new arrivals
- Society, culture ‘British’
- Students with disabilities in ‘special schools’
- Tiers of schooling, loosely based on SES
- Minority competed secondary school (<20%)

Overview of Education

■ **Changes from mid-late 1960s:**

- Comprehensive secondary schools (extra year)
- School Based Curriculum Development (frameworks rather than prescription; local content/context)
- Values, social issues, more prominent in curriculum
- More focus on the individual student; emotional and personal development as well as academic

Overview of Education

■ From 1970s:

- Multiculturalism: policies, perspectives, content
- Broadening of curriculum
- Mainstreaming/integration of some students
- Personal development education
- Higher post-compulsory retention
- Society itself far more diverse
- Decline in exams, greater in-school assessment
- Anti-discrimination legislation
- Indigenous activism

Overview of Education

■ From 1980s/90s:

- More detailed policies, resources on:
 - Sexism, racism, homophobia, bullying, anger
 - Greater acknowledgment of difference
 - Indigenous culture recognised
- Greater attention to individual student progress, remediation, ESL/needs of NESB students, literacy, student welfare programs, rights and responsibilities

Overview of Education

- Community involvement, context
- Greater range of programs to support students as learners and people
- Greater emphasis on training teachers in behaviour management
- Greater emphasis on facilitating learning
- Overall emphasis on inclusion and recognition of diversity
- Achievement conceived more broadly ('Adelaide Goals' of 1999 – academic, personal, social)

Overview of Education

- Emphases in teaching:
 - Discovery learning, constructivism, inquiry-based teaching and learning
 - Students taking more responsibility for learning
 - Individualised instruction, learning contracts
 - Major emphasis on outcomes-based teaching, assessment
 - Teaching more responsive to the individual student
 - Greater tracking of student performance, intervention, remediation
 - Catering for less academic post-compulsory student (VET)
 - Standardised testing (see later)
 - ICT

Victoria: Case Study

- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

- 'Blueprint'

- See

- <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/blueprint2008/default.htm>

Victoria: Case Study

- **Major Priorities of DEECD:**

- ‘Increase access to high-quality early childhood health, education and care services
- Strengthen public confidence in a world-class school education system, with a strong and vibrant government school sector at its core
- Integrate services for children and families
- Improve outcomes for disadvantaged young Victorians’.
 - See <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/directions/default.htm>

Professional Standards

- State/territory teacher registration authorities (ATRA)
- Diversity embedded in standards
- Standards for:
 - Graduate Teachers
 - ‘Competent’ teachers
 - ‘Accomplished teachers’
 - ‘Leading/expert teachers’
 - Leadership
- Currently being aligned nationally

Example from New South Wales Institute of Teachers

Professional Leadership

2.4.1

Use expert theoretical knowledge of student diversity to develop effective and practical policies, programs and teaching strategies that address students' social, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds.

See <http://www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/Main-Professional-Teaching-Standards.html>

Significant Developments Today

■ National Approaches:

- National Curriculum (English, maths, science and history: 2011)
- see <http://www.ncb.org.au/default.asp>
- National standardised testing (NAPLAN) (2008-)
 - Years 3,5,7,9 see <http://www.naplan.edu.au/>
- National standards and accreditation of teacher education courses (2008-)
- National standards and certification for higher levels of teacher accomplishment (2009?-)

Significant Developments Today

- Much greater attention to quality teaching, student, teacher and school performance
- Accountability and scrutiny
- 'Performance pay' (Victoria, 2009/2010?)
- National early childhood literacy initiative
- Greater attention to evidence, research on teaching and learning e.g. meta-analytic effect size research
- Instructional leadership role for principals

Pressing Issues

- Australia's relatively good performance on international measures: high quality yet low equity (long 'tail')
 - see PISA <http://www.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/>
- SES has a larger influence on student achievement than in some other highly performing nations
- Indigenous health, housing, employment and education – closing the gaps
 - Instruction in English, community schools, boarding, early literacy

Pressing Issues

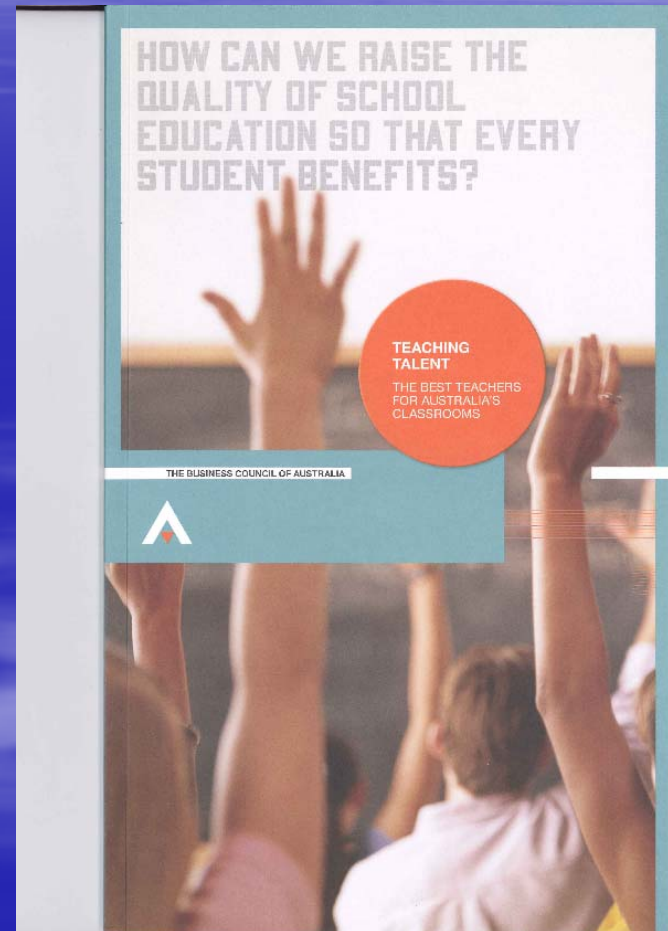
- A quality teacher in every classroom is the biggest equity issue in Australian education (attracting, preparing, retaining) (see Dinham, Ingvarson & Kleinhenz, 2008)
- Student disengagement in the early secondary years, widening achievement gaps
- Pressure for openness, accountability
- Competition within and between systems
- Higher post-compulsory retention (now over 75%)
- The place of vocational educational training (VET)

Pressing Issues

- The teacher and leadership exodus
 - Attracting, retaining teachers, leadership succession
 - Balancing shortages with quality (fast tracking)
- Intervention in areas of poor educational performance
- Continued shift of responsibilities to schools ('extras' plus the 'basics')
- Rethinking, reconfiguring schools
- The balance between diversity, individual student, school context, and lifting, measuring student achievement ('league tables, 'failing' schools)

Quality Teaching

- Business Council of Australia (Dinham, Ingvarson & Kleinhenz, 2008)
 - See <http://www.bca.com.au/Content/101446.aspx>



Dinham (2008) ACER Press

<http://shop.acer.edu.au/acer-shop/product/A4066BK>

How to Get Your School **MOVING** and **IMPROVING**

Steve Dinham



Contact Details

Professor Stephen Dinham

Research Director – Teaching, Learning and Leadership

Australian Council for Educational Research

Private Bag 55

Camberwell Vic 3124 Australia

Email: dinham@acer.edu.au

Phone: + 61 (0) 3 9277 5463 / 0427275591

Website: www.acer.edu.au/staffbio/dinham_stephen.html