Developing Initial Teacher Action Competence with Diverse Learners

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Overview and Purpose

Context of our work:
- Teacher Education Reform in Aotearoa New Zealand
- New ITE programme-Masters of Teaching and Learning
- Action Competence

Inquiry Framework:
- Theoretical perspectives
- Research question
- Cultural Tool

Critical Lens 1: Preservice Teacher Development of Action Competence
Critical Lens 2: Theorizing teacher education practice

Conclusion: Contribution to International/European conversation
Preparing New Teachers to better support culturally diverse students

‘Good’ practice for teaching and teacher preparation that is responsive to diverse learners is negotiated in context – socially and culturally grounded; in political and policy contexts

Aotearoa New Zealand

- Treaty-based, bi-cultural partnership (Crown & Māori) and indigenous rights
- Aspirations of Māori for educational success as Māori
- MOE focus on “priority learners” (Māori, Pasifika, student with special educational needs, children from lower-socioeconomic communities, and those who speak English as an additional language)
- MOE drive to prompt a ‘step change’ in the system through enhancing teacher quality—Exemplary ITE Initiative begun in 2012
To prepare teacher graduates who are critical pedagogues, action competent and culturally responsive, enabling them to be innovative, adaptable and resilient in supporting and enhancing the diverse learning strengths of each of their students.

- Sense of agency and responsibility for learners
- Strong sense of self-awareness
- Engage in ongoing inquiry & critical engagement with “problems of practice”
- Hold deep understanding of the socio-cultural context of students’ lives
Action Competence

Fontes (2004) ‘Action competence’ is a central notion of quality teaching

Action competence = Repertoire of effective pedagogical tools coupled with

• Knowing about learners, society and teaching (knowledge about)
• Knowing how to act (knowledge in action)
• And being Willing to act to bring about change (values for action)

Provides the foundation for Culturally Responsive Praxis

• A vision for social and cultural sustainability and justice in education
• A sense of moral purpose to address inequalities and injustices
• Commitment to individual and collective action
• Capacity to critically reflect and respond to practice challenges in support of diverse learners
Inquiry Framework

Practitioner-inquiry stance (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006) allows:

- Critical lens 1: exploration of initial teachers development and
- Critical lens 2: critical examination of our practice as teacher educators

Focus of this study:

How has the iterative use of a graphically-presented synthesizing framework (a
programme cultural artifact) enabled and/or constrained preservice teachers in
developing action competence as culturally responsive pedagogues?

*Particular focus one one aspect of the framework: inclusiveness and equity*

Data set:

- 23 initial teacher portfolios from 2015 cohort
  - Evidence-based philosophy statement (exit)
  - Practicum reports (mid-programme; end-of-programme)
Te Mana Taurite: Commitment to Inclusiveness and Equity

- Effectively communicates with Whānau to create a supportive and inclusive learning environment.
- Demonstrates flexibility in response to the affective, cognitive and physical needs of diverse Whānau to ensure well-being and cultural safety of all Whānau.
- Has the skills to utilise interactions with parents, Whānau, kohi, kākā, Pākehā and other cultures within the community.

- Demonstrates a range of strategies for promoting and nurturing a safe environment.
- Analyses, theorises and responds to classroom situations using understanding of cultural inclusive pedagogy.

- Explains how knowledge of local context and local Whānau and community is important in supporting Māori, Pākehā and other cultures to achieve in and through education.
- Has the tools and skills to engage local knowledge and history (or the people who hold that knowledge) to support teaching and learning programmes.

- Shares a clear purpose for learning with Whānau through co-constructed and co-operative learner-focused activities.
- Develops a learning environment that is a shared space.
- Understands that Whānau, kohi and kākā have expertise in their own right.

- Develops culturally responsive and inclusive practices.
- Positively engages all Whānau in learning experiences.
- Engenders a tone of respect and engagement in the classroom.

- Creates opportunities for learners to draw on their identity, language and culture as contexts for learning.
- Adapts teaching and learning programmes based on Whānau evidence.
- Encourages all Whānau to share prior knowledge and rich cultural experiences as part of the learning.

- Values student voice and feedback in the lesson.
- Uses an inclusive approach in all teaching and learning.
- Uses positive and clear communication with Whānau.

- Knows and values Whānau holistically.
- Makes Whānau feel welcome in the classroom and ensures they participate and contribute.
- Recognises the bicultural nature of teaching and learning in Aotearoa New Zealand.

- Models high expectations for learning.
- Ensures the learning environment reflects the world of the Whānau, their interests and cultures.
- Understands the importance of identity, language and culture to the development and learning of Whānau.

- Supports learning through shared communication with Whānau, Whānau, kohi and communities.

- Develops and applies understanding of practice that is culturally inclusive.
- Provides contexts for learning where the identity, language and culture of Whānua and their Whānau are affirmed.

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Critical Lens 1: Preservice Teacher Development of Action Competence

**Knowing About: Understanding learners and teaching**

Key themes in evidence-based philosophy:
- **Shifted and expanded views of diversity**
- **Knowledge of students backgrounds, needs, strengths**
- **Power of teacher, sense of responsibility in light of power**

“Initially I thought that every learner should be treated the same regardless of their ethnicity or other diversities, because that is what I thought inclusion was. But now I’m aware of how important it is to actually see and act on the diversities. Each learner brings their own funds of knowledge into the classroom and it’s so important that we don’t ignore that.” Primary preservice teacher

“A teacher is an incredibly influential person; you have the power to change someone’s life. And that can be quite a scary thing because that could be in a positive way or it could be in a negative way. So we do have a lot of power and influence as a teacher.” Secondary preservice teacher
**Knowing how: Action in responding to student learning needs**

Seen in practice and recorded in comments on professional practice reports.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>PP1 N=22</th>
<th></th>
<th>PP2 N=22</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates inclusive pedagogy</td>
<td>45% (10)</td>
<td></td>
<td>91% (20)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates adaptive pedagogy</td>
<td>32% (7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>55% (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates reflective practice/responsive use of feedback/use of student voice</td>
<td>23% (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>86% (19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incorporates/encourages use of students prior knowledge/creates opportunities for students to draw on own culture/identity</td>
<td>14% (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>32% (7)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes all students feel safe/welcome/valued/known</td>
<td>41% (9)</td>
<td></td>
<td>50% (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates positive/effective communication/relationships with students</td>
<td>77% (17)</td>
<td></td>
<td>100% (22)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates positive/effective communication/relationships with teachers/staff</td>
<td>64% (14)</td>
<td></td>
<td>86% (19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstrates positive/effective communication/relationships with whanau (family)</td>
<td>27% (6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>45% (10)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uses local resources/knowledge/connections</td>
<td>9% (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>23% (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brings oneself (through use of mihi, for example)</td>
<td>14% (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td>23% (5)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Knowing how: Action in relation to cultural values in poutama

Revealed in comments from pre-service teacher presentations at end of year

**Rangatiratanga**: Developing and applying understanding of practice that is culturally inclusive
- *Sharing mihi*
- *Names and greetings – “small gestures”*
- *Respectful relationships/don’t cause shame*

**Tangata Whenuatanga**: Provides contexts for learning where the identity, language and culture of ākonga and their whānau are affirmed
- *Embracing diversity/Know your learners*
- *Valuing different knowledges/Guided by learners/Incorporating students’ history and experience – easy to say, hard to do*
- *Affirming/Empowering/Fostering growth mentality*
- *Addressing social and emotional needs*

**Wānanga**: Supporting learning through shared communication with ākonga, whānau, iwi and the community
- *Displaying ethic of care/”genuine care”*
- *Sharing who you are/teachers seen as people*
Knowing how (acting) – vignette 1

“Inclusion is so important now, more than ever. New Zealand is becoming increasingly diverse, so even what seems like a tiny gesture, like sharing a mihi, or greeting learners each morning, or even simple things like getting the learner’s name right, pronouncing it correctly, make such a huge difference. And it can make the world of difference when creating an inclusive learning environment with that culture of belonging.”

Primary pre-service teacher
Knowing how (acting) – vignette 2

“It’s about incorporating their history into the class and building those positive relationships... So for example we had this class, and we had quite a few priority learners in this class, and in one lesson I introduced a pūrākau [legend] and in choosing this pūrākau I made sure this pūrākau was going to relate to them and that it related to the origins of Ngāi Tahu, which is where one particular boy’s iwi was, and just the turnaround in the engagement that we saw in this class was amazing. He was the kind of boy that would sit at the back and just talk the whole time and not really engage and then he was answering questions he was telling things from his perspective and how he felt.”

Secondary pre-service teacher
Willing to Act: Values for Action

Key themes from evidence-based philosophy:
- Sense of moral purpose to enhance children’s lives
- Critical Self-reflection on own beliefs and actions
- Equity stance

“[Experience in the programme] strengthened my desire to empower students to empower each other, and to think about the whanaungatanga and the manaakitanga in my classes so that students can think about their own identities and each other’s identities to affirm themselves in the learning process.” Primary preservice teacher

“Teaching scared me because it is a big responsibility, but I like it because it is not just about me anymore; its about other people, it’s bigger than who I am.” Secondary preservice teacher

“We know that there’s a disparity in the educational system and the social system in general in NZ for Māori and Pasifika, and it’s not enough just to know that these issues exist. We have to take the next step. We have to do something about it. And we also have to encourage our ākonga too, because it is their responsibility as well.” Secondary preservice teacher
Critical Lens 2: Theorizing teacher education practice

• Poutama as a central and pervasive ‘cultural artifact’ does support preservice teachers in developing action competence as culturally responsive pedagogues.

• Tool serves all members of the programme—preservice teachers, university staff and mentor teachers—as a shared framework for iteratively, consistently and explicitly focusing on the aspirational vision of ‘good teaching’ related to culturally responsive practice.

• Serves as a focal point and scaffold for on-going discussions and meaning making about pedagogical practices and actions within different contexts—1) our teacher education practice as model; 2) mentor teacher PLD; 3) classroom practices of mentor teachers and preservice teachers.

• Tool is a necessary but not sufficient scaffold, the on-going dialogue and shared meaning making must accompany the learning process in order to support preservice teachers in development of action competence.

• The tool clearly shapes the discourse among members of the community. We see and hear the language of Māori values, inclusion, equity and cultural responsiveness in preservice teachers self-reflections that connect directly to their actions in classrooms.
Summary
Contributing to international (European) conversation about Teacher Education

Teaching culturally diverse children is a challenge for Irish schools

Opinion: Changing the profile and training of our teachers is vital to avoid the alienation and underachievement of ethnic minorities

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Stafford Hood

'Veducation of immigrant and culturally diverse students is a global challenge.' Above, St John the Evangelist National School in Adamstown, Co Dublin. Photograph: Dara Mac Dónaill
Finland’s education system is viewed as highly effective, based on the level of student performance in international comparisons (PISA, 2003, 2006), as well as parity in achievement in terms of sex, domicile, and socio-economic background (Kivirauma & Ruoho, 2007). Soilamo (2008) however found that Finnish teachers do not have the appropriate knowledge base and strategies to address the needs of multilingual learners. Itkonen and Jahnukainen, (2007) suggest that increasing diversity is resulting in growing gaps in achievement between immigrants and native Finnish students. To address these gaps Finnish teachers need a grounding in both linguistically (Lucas & Villegas, 2013) and culturally responsive practices (Gay, 2010). ...
Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Ngāi Tahu Educational Advisory Group for the MTchgLn programme and colleagues in the UC College of Education who are part of the MTchgLn development team.

The programme development has been a collaborative effort, and the structures developed for the operationalisation of the broad goal to prepare adaptive and action competent pre-service teachers reflects the knowledge and wisdom of the group.

Mā te whakaaro nui e hanga te whare;
 mā te mātauranga e whakaū
Big ideas create the house; knowledge maintains it