Other Ways

Intercultural education in Australian primary schools

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March, 2010
Declaration

This is to certify that:

a) except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the candidate alone;
b) the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award;
c) the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program;
d) any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged;
e) ethics procedures and guidelines have been followed.

Margaret Toner
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<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>ACARA</td>
<td>Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority</td>
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<td>ACER</td>
<td>Australian Council for Educational Research</td>
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<td>ACT</td>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
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<td>APPA</td>
<td>Australian Principals Association</td>
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<td>CSCNEPA</td>
<td>Curriculum Standing Committee of National Education Professional Associations</td>
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<tr>
<td>COAG</td>
<td>Council of Australian Governments</td>
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<td>CPS</td>
<td>Creek Primary School</td>
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<td>DEST</td>
<td>Department of Education, Science and Training</td>
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<td>DEEWR</td>
<td>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations</td>
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<td>ECTL</td>
<td>Every chance to learn</td>
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<td>ELA</td>
<td>Essential Learning Achievements</td>
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<td>iEARN</td>
<td>International Education and Resource Network</td>
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<td>LPS</td>
<td>Little Primary School</td>
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<td>MCEEDYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs</td>
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<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
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<td>NAIDOC</td>
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<td>NALSSP</td>
<td>National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program</td>
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Summary

Other ways: Intercultural education in Australian primary schools

The thesis explores the question of how primary schools might work with students to help them get to know and get along with people they perceive to be different from themselves. It analyses how the ways of others are portrayed in recent national curriculum policies, initiatives and school programs and imagines other ways of bringing an intercultural approach to the development and delivery of curriculum for primary schools. Beginning with the Melbourne Declaration’s statement that the nation values the central role education plays in building a society that is "cohesive and culturally diverse and that values Australia’s Indigenous cultures" (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 4), the thesis goes on to examine primary schools’ capacity to fulfil these roles. It finds that though cultural diversity is generally met with good will and intentions in education, it is, nonetheless, given low priority in policy commitments and is treated superficially in most school programs.

It puts the case for intercultural education as part of the core curriculum arguing that in the context of a diverse, changing and uncertain world, social and intercultural capabilities should be considered essential elements in all students’ learning. The thesis develops an intercultural approach based on the social pillar of learning - learning to live together (Delors, 1996) that starts with what people have in common, but goes to the question of how they might live together peacefully when they do not agree or when they have nothing in common. It recognises that working with cultural diversity is likely to be as “difficult and challenging” as it is “exciting and fascinating” (Byram, 2006, p. 5). It develops and illustrates key principles and processes in examplars for interculturally focused primary schools and classrooms. It proposes a national agenda for Australian schools based on the goal learning to live together.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The germ of an idea

My name is Margaret Toner. I live at 153 Greville Street, Chatswood, New South Wales, Australia, the Southern Hemisphere, the World, the Solar System, the Milky Way, the Universe (Toner, circa 1962).

At some point in my childhood I realised how small I was in relation to the vastness of space. But, even while picturing myself as the smallest speck in the universe, I still lived large in my own world. Nowadays, the same idea is more likely to arise from a search activity on Google Earth. I have chosen to begin my thesis with this image because it plays with ideas of closeness and distance while placing the child in ever widening worlds, some known and familiar, others imagined and new.

For many children, primary schooling is the first point of entry to the worlds beyond their family. The primary school and the many worlds it opens to the child are the focus of my research project. It is premised on a belief that people are inherently social beings (Bauman & Tester, 2001) and that education is fundamentally a social experience (Delors, 1996). The school, as a social institution focused on helping children learning what it means to get along with other people and belong to a group, contributes to children’s progression in the world.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we live within and across a complex mix of local, national and global contexts. New technologies make concepts of time and space more fluid than ever before. Worlds are as likely to be virtual as they are to be real. Edges are blurred and the spaces within and across worlds are intertwined, resembling more than anything “a jumbled museum” (Greene, 2000, p. 2). In these times, it is difficult to overstate the complexity of the challenges we confront. Bates (2005b) nominates three issues that warrant immediate and urgent attention:

The first issue is how we deal with the reconstitution of our natural environment so as to avoid imminent disaster. The second issue is how we
overcome our xenophobia, learn to live with difference and construct institutions capable of accommodating difference. The third is how we mitigate gross disadvantages within and between societies. (p. 301)

One of the challenges for education in the 21st century is to equip students with the skills and dispositions to confront these issues individually and collectively. This thesis is about the place of intercultural experience and intercultural education in a 21st century education.

**Conceptualising the research project**

The research project’s central question is deceptively simple: how might schools work with students to help them get to know and get along with people they perceive to be different from themselves? The question seems simple because it concerns something so familiar - how people live together at an everyday level, how they make and maintain social relationships and how they interact. For the most part, the principles that apply in building any relationship hold true in how we forge relationships across perceived differences. Appiah (2006) suggests that to get to know people we see as different from ourselves, we need to engage in ‘conversation’, a term he uses not only to mean “literal talk but also as a metaphor for engagement with the experience and the ideas of others” (p. 85).

This is not much different from how we might conduct any conversation on meeting someone for the first time. Typically, we begin by acknowledging or greeting one another and introducing ourselves. We ask the other person about themselves and tell them something about ourselves. But if that is as far as it goes, we are inclined to lose interest and drift away. To move beyond finding out information about each other by way of introduction, we strive to make connections and look for shared interests or commonalities. Appiah (2006) identifies these as points of entry for cross-cultural conversations.

They do not need to be universal; all they need to be is what these particular people have in common. Once we have found enough we share, there is the
further possibility we will be able to enjoy discovering things we do not yet share. (p. 97)

And so we get to know one another and get along with one another, in spite of or possibly because of our differences. One might think this would be relatively straightforward to incorporate into the work of schools. Yet, as a teacher, teacher educator and school leader in ACT primary schools over a twenty-year period, it often seemed to me that most mainstream teachers rarely showed much interest in bringing the experiences and ideas of different cultural groups into their classrooms beyond the celebration of ‘special days’. What lies behind this apparent reluctance and what it says about the role of schools in the socialisation of young people prompted me, in the first instance, to undertake this project.

By mainstream I mean people, like myself, who are white, have Anglo-European heritages, speak English as our first and often only language and assume a sense of belonging to a core Anglo-Australian culture. While recognising this to be a rather simplistic characterisation, I wanted to distinguish between ‘dominant’ and ‘minority’ cultures in examining what seemed to me the generally superficial and incidental treatment of Indigenous and multicultural education by mainstream educators. However, though remaining reluctant to let the mainstream ‘off the hook’, I began to see several difficulties with the project conceptualised in this way.

Firstly, there is a problem in assuming that the mainstream consists of unified, fixed and stable identities, when, arguably, the boundaries of who and what might be considered mainstream are blurred, contingent and changing. Ang et al. (2006) suggest, for instance, that for many young Australians of culturally diverse backgrounds, cultural diversity “is becoming an increasingly mainstream experience” (p. 25). This may well be the case for young people regardless of their cultural background who interact as part of their everyday experience within culturally diverse communities.
Secondly, as this is essentially about people’s relationships, it assumes interaction involving at least two people. Limiting attention to only one person risks overlooking or lessening the importance of the second person involved in the interaction, achieving, in effect, the reverse of what is intended. This has been identified as a pitfall in approaches to multicultural education that recentre the dominant culture and marginalise minorities. Quoting Apple (1998, p. xi), Brandon (2003) warns that:

> Conceptualized as a white movement, multicultural education threatens to recenter dominant voices and to ignore the voices and testimony of those groups of people whose dreams, hopes, lives, and very bodies are shattered by current relations of exploitation and domination. (p. 37)

Thirdly, a mainstream focus risks the portrayal of the Other (capitalised here and elsewhere to signify someone who is not me and therefore is different to me) as an object or thing to be studied, examined, exclaimed over, pitied or thrown away. In this sense, the Other is powerless: someone who has something done to them that is beyond their control. As Hage (1998) suggests, the Other becomes a “national object to be moved or removed according to the White national will” (p. 18). In considering the notion of objectification from the perspective of the relationship between self and one other (the party of two), Levinas (1985) warns that in responding to the Other as an observed object:

> You turn yourself toward the Other as toward an object when you see a nose, eyes, a forehead, a chin, and you can describe them. The best way of encountering the Other is not even to notice the color of his eyes! When one observes the color of the eyes, one is not in a social relationship with the Other. (p. 85)

With these concerns in mind, the project shifted to focus more explicitly on encounters across difference and the ways in which teachers and students build intercultural relationships, in keeping with calls for greater curiosity (Mackay, 2004), conversation (Appiah, 2006) and interaction (Ang, 2008; Hage, 2005) between individuals and groups.
The rest of this chapter outlines the background and argues the significance of this thesis and its central question of how schools might work with students to help them get to know and get along with people they perceive to be different from themselves. It identifies key social and educational drivers relevant to the thesis in global, national and local contexts, before introducing the research project’s approach and objectives and the research question.

Background and significance

My research project’s concerns have arisen from the times and worlds in which we live. Its significance and background are best understood within a complex of social, economic, political and cultural contexts and conditions in interlinked global, national and local spaces at the beginning of the 21st century. In considering the significance of these contexts, I recognise they are not as neatly packaged as they appear here. They are fragmented, their edges are blurred, and sometimes they are not apparent at all in the realities of most people’s everyday existence.

Global contexts

In some respects, Australia occupies an unusual place in the world, seeing itself as an outpost of the West, located in the Southern Hemisphere, and “perched on the edge of Asia” (Gillard, 2008, p. n.p.). While we may be more closely connected to our region than ever before, the vestiges of an island mindset and a sense of isolation linger. All too often, we lose sight of worlds beyond our own. In the face of an ever-globalising world such a mindset is neither sustainable nor desirable.

Globalisation as we understand it today has many dimensions and is interpreted in as many ways. For instance, for Appadurai (2006) it encompasses the global movement of money, media, goods, ideas and people, made possible by new technologies that, among other things, have revolutionised how we think about time and space. It concerns the deregulation of the international economic system and the unchecked operation of massive transnational companies, separating the economy from culture and social institutions. It diminishes the autonomy of nation states and the spheres
over which they have control (Touraine, 2000) and contributes to society’s decline (Touraine, 2007). It increases the gap between the wealthy and the poor both within nations and between them (Bauman, 1997). It has different consequences for people depending on their circumstances (Rizvi, 2007). For some, it offers the excitement of accessing seemingly limitless sources of information that can be used for individual purposes. For others, it induces mistrust, fear and anxiety in response to lives that are fragmented and circumstances that can change at any moment. Many may not recognise the effects of globalisation even as they affect their own lives.

In these complex conditions, education policy makers, teachers and students must look beyond national borders to tap into international ideas and experiences. In this spirit, Pascoe (2005) nominates the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century’s report Learning: The Treasure Within (Delors, 1996) as “a common and comprehensive basis for dialogue and understanding” (Pascoe, 2005 p. 4). The Delors Report offers a way of thinking about education that challenges entrenched practices, proposing four foundations or pillars of learning: learning to know; learning to do; learning to be; and learning to live together.

Of the four, the Commission gives pre-eminence to the social pillar learning to live together, stating that:

...by developing an understanding of others and their history, traditions and spiritual values and, on this basis, creating a new spirit which, guided by recognition of our growing interdependence and a common analysis of the risks and challenges of the future, would induce people to implement common projects or to manage the inevitable conflicts in an intelligent and peaceful way. (1996 p. 20)

Understanding others is considered to be fundamental to twenty-first century learning. In the complex global realities they inhabit, young people need to develop the knowledge, capabilities, dispositions and skills to appreciate the rich diversity of lives beyond their own.
Chapter 1: Introduction

The events of 9/11 and the resulting ‘war on terror’ have only made the need more urgent. In response, some educators in Western countries have called for a renewed focus on education for democracy as a catalyst for engaging in conversations within schools about democratic values and for developing students’ capacity to consider the experiences of others. Reid (2003) stresses the importance of an education that develops democratic capacities, stating that:

In the end, the threat of terrorism and the growth of fundamentalism, introverted localism and racism can only be met by societies that comprise a citizenry with capacities to think beyond the confines of their own experiences, backgrounds and cultures. (p. 4)

Working from Touraine’s (2000) assertion that the key question to be addressed is whether we can live together, Bates (2005a) argues for a global curriculum based on “intercultural communication and understanding upon which, in the recognition of the Other, we can form a democratic social structure that celebrates human rather than market values” (p. 106) and the development of capabilities “that enhance individual freedom to live a valued way of life” (p. 106). It is the first of these foundations that is the central concern of this thesis – the development of a curriculum that promotes intercultural communication and understanding and strengthens the democratic values of learning to live together across difference.

National contexts

In the context of globalization, the power and relevance of nation-states and national governments have been called into question. As Ang (2008) observes, it is in this context too that national governments are caught between economic and social imperatives. While keen to capitalise on the prosperity that global capitalism brings, they are “ill-prepared for the social consequences” (p. 231). Whether prepared or not, national governments still wield power and influence on the domestic front, on both symbolic and practical levels and their social policy agendas are, ultimately, reflected in education policies and programs for schools.
Increased levels of global interconnectedness provide a new impetus for communicating with people across national boundaries. Nonetheless, the history and ongoing experiences of diversity within the nation continue to exercise a powerful and direct influence over how people live together across perceived difference. National and local concerns spark the question of how schools might work with students to help them get to know and get along with people they perceive as different from themselves.

In Australia, two dimensions of cultural diversity stand out – reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and responses to cultural diversity arising from immigration. While not supposing the two to be identical, in this thesis I take the position that both might be addressed, working with an intercultural approach. The two examples that follow, *Black and White Australia* and *Diversity and Difference*, are intended to be illustrative, touching on some of the issues at stake.

**Black and White Australia**

On 13 February 2008, when Prime Minister Rudd made an apology on behalf of the government and the parliament to Australia’s Indigenous peoples and in particular to the Indigenous children stolen from their families as a result of government policies, it was as though the nation breathed a collective sigh of relief (Hand, 2008). Rudd’s speech was principally addressed to Indigenous people, acknowledging the wrongs of the past “the hurt, the pain and the suffering” caused by the laws of previous governments and “the indignity the degradation and the humiliation” those laws engendered, but he also appealed to non-Indigenous Australians:

> I ask those non-Indigenous Australians listening today who may not fully understand why what we are doing is so important to imagine for a moment that this had happened to you. I say to honourable members here present: imagine if this had happened to us. Imagine the crippling effect. Imagine how hard it would be to forgive. My proposal is this: if the apology we extend today is accepted in the spirit of reconciliation in which it is offered, we can today resolve together that there be a new beginning for Australia. And it is to such a new beginning that I believe the nation is now calling us. (Kevin Rudd, 2008)
On a symbolic level, at least, the apology may well mark a new beginning in the conversation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians - a conversation that does not overlook or ignore the past and that looks to the future with hope rather than despair. Professor Mick Dodson (Canberra Times, 25 May 2008), calls the apology another step towards reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, noting that:

...reconciliation is about putting relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia on the proper footing, acknowledgement and understanding of the past, and an acceptance that we’ve got to share the country. And we have to do it in a mutually respectful way, where our world view and values, and our cultural inheritance is just as legitimate and respected as everybody else’s. (p. 29)

Schools can play an important role in reconciliation, in helping Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to get to know and get along with one another. However, there is some evidence to suggest that when it comes to practices in schools, mutual understanding and respect are more likely to be the exception than the norm. Aveling (2007) examines the extent to which schools developed and implemented anti-racism programs and had integrated knowledge and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other cultures, based on interviews with principals in Western Australian schools conducted over four years. She observes that few schools were proactive in addressing racism and that school programs around cultural awareness adopted a "benevolent multiculturalism" approach described as "reductionist and superficial" (p. 78).

**Diversity and difference**

Australia is a culturally diverse nation, heavily reliant on immigration for the continued growth of its population. Australian Bureau of Statistics figures (2008) show that in 2006 the number of overseas-born Australians reached five million, representing almost a quarter (24%) of the total population. As Ang et al. (2006) point out “cultural diversity is a fact of life in Australia” (p. 11). For most of the past thirty years Australia
has adopted a multicultural social policy to address its cultural diversity. But multiculturalism, defined most simply as "the opportunity for migrants to maintain their cultural identity" (Ang et al., 2006, p. 16), has always been subject to competing demands “such as local concerns about cultural maintenance and social justice and state concerns with social cohesion” (Noble & Poynting, 2000, p. 65). Over the past few years, it seems the state’s interest in promoting cohesion has come to the fore. This has been most notable since 9/11 and subsequent incidents around the world.

In 2005, following suicide bombings in London, the Australian Government under the auspices of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), developed a National Action Plan “to address threats to Australia’s social cohesion, harmony and security” (Erebus, 2006, p. ix). As a contribution to the plan, the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) commissioned Erebus, an independent program evaluation company, to undertake a study to “examine the issues affecting young Muslims at risk of potential isolation in schools; and investigate what schools, systems and sectors are currently doing to encourage the message to Islamic youth that Islam is compatible with, and can live alongside other faiths and Australian values” (p. ix).

In its report *Encouraging Tolerance and Social Cohesion through School Education* (2006), Erebus points out that even though the project originated from governmental and community concern arising from terrorist acts around the world, “the issues surrounding the challenge of achieving social cohesion within a multicultural society go well beyond consideration of the relationship between the values of any particular group and the wider Australian society” (p. 102). Erebus suggests that rather than the onus being solely on Muslim groups to fit in with so-called Australian values, the development of interfaith and intercultural understanding, which it identifies as one of the foundations of social cohesion, is a two way process, stating that:

...there is a need not only for certain groups to understand and respect “Australian values” but also for the wider society to reciprocally have greater understanding of the groups that make up our society. (p. 6)
Erebus finds the desire for interaction between schools most often comes from Islamic schools (p. ix). For mainstream schools (particularly those with largely monocultural populations) this sort of work is generally not seen as a priority, with many schools and their teachers arguing that the curriculum is already seriously overloaded. They find too that most attempts to address diversity in schools lack depth and often simply “rebadge” existing activities such as Harmony Day.

Tsolidis (2001) argues that while pedagogies and curriculum in Australian schools have altered to take changes in the population into account, they remain committed to the maintenance of the status quo. She contends that:

…the premise was that difference represented a challenge to national cohesion. The various policy approaches represented divergent means of achieving the same result; that is, the privileging of sameness. The pedagogies and curriculum of this period did shift somewhat. There were examples, of the mainstream learning about the marginal in order to better teach ‘them’ how to change and become like ‘us’. (p. 104)

A fundamental assumption in this thesis is that difference does not represent a threat to social cohesion. On the contrary, the privileging of sameness undermines our capacity to live together: conformity should not be mistaken for cohesion. It should be possible to disagree and still get along. On first reading, this may seem a simple proposition, but it is not. It requires a sophisticated and nuanced approach to social relationships. The question of how people learn to get along despite their differences is one of the questions this thesis addresses.

The examples above illustrate the challenge for the state to maintain social order and prosperity while its ability to control market forces diminishes. In broad terms, the capacity of governments, institutions, social and cultural groups to negotiate the tension between social cohesion and cultural diversity is at stake. For education, this translates to a question of its role in equipping students with the knowledge, skills, understandings and attitudes they will need to live together in the world of the 21st century.
To explore the consequences of social policies concerning cultural diversity for this research project, it is important to understand both national and local contexts and the connections between them. The next section introduces the local context and the articulation of social policy goals at a local level.

**Local contexts**

The local context for my research project is Canberra, Australia’s capital, in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Because of its size (around 340,000), in some ways Canberra is more like a big country town than a major city. And as the capital, it claims the highest levels of education, the lowest levels of unemployment and the highest per capita income of any city in Australia (ACT Chief Minister's Department, 2007). That said, in 2006, 13% of all ACT households were in the lowest 20% national income bracket (Cassells, Vu, & McNamara, 2007). Because of its overall affluence, the experience of poverty can be more pronounced in Canberra than in other places. This gap is also reflected in educational achievement. ACT students regularly achieve the highest performance levels in the country in international testing but the gap between the highest and lowest performers is also the greatest in the country. The ACT has been described as delivering high quality but low equity education (Save Our Schools, 2008).

Though a small jurisdiction, the ACT Government carries both state and local authority responsibilities, including the development and implementation of social policy and education. Two policy statements, *Building our community: the Canberra social plan* (ACT Chief Minister's Department, 2004) and the *Multicultural strategy 2006-2009* (ACT Office of Multicultural Affairs, 2006), embed the goals of social cohesion and social inclusion into ACT government priorities and activities. The social plan’s goal of respect, diversity and human rights includes the promotion of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canberrans and the maintenance of an environment that welcomes immigrants, particularly refugees (p.6). The *Multicultural strategy* states “the ACT Government will continue to use ‘multiculturalism’ as a policy to foster, promote and sustain our cultural diversity and to achieve social cohesion” (p.22). The
ACT Government also “supports an inclusive society and notes that members of the multicultural community are well integrated in the Canberra community” (p. 39).

All government agencies are required to report annually on their performance against the Multicultural strategy. To date, performance indicators for school education have not been promising. In its 2006 - 07 Annual Report, (2007a) the ACT Department of Education and Training reports that the number of government primary schools teaching a language decreased in 2006 (almost 40% had no languages program in 2008). Reported activities listed under cultural and religious acceptance are limited to the celebration of Harmony Day, or fun days associated with Japanese language programs in some primary schools. Indicators such as these echo both Erebus’ and Aveling’s findings regarding the superficiality of many school-based strategies. They point to the need to broaden and deepen work in schools, specifically in the curriculum, around the development of intercultural understanding and competence.

I have explored the contexts above in some detail in an attempt to highlight the significance of the arguments presented in this thesis in the diverse, changing and uncertain worlds that children are likely to encounter over the course of their lives. Whether described in terms of interdependence, reconciliation, cohesion, inclusion or tolerance, the message is fundamentally the same. We need to give priority to learning to live together – in our local communities, as nations and internationally. How this might be done is a question for society as a whole and education in particular.

The social purposes of schooling

This research project is concerned with rethinking policy and practice assumptions that lead to students learning to think beyond themselves, getting to know and get along with people they see as different from themselves. It goes to questions of how schools address the challenges of living together equitably and peacefully in the 21st century and how teachers work with diversity in their classrooms, neighbourhoods, the nation and the world at large. But the thesis also seeks to destabilise the established notion of socialisation as the process “by which individuals internalise norms and values of a
society and are able to integrate into it” (Erebus, 2006, p. 106). It works with Touraine's (2000) idea of ‘a school for the subject’ to raise questions about the purposes of schooling and its beneficiaries.

*The Melbourne Declaration on Education Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008) claims to place young Australians at the centre of its goals. However, others argue the current model of education is primarily designed to benefit society, whether to ensure future economic prosperity through its focus on work skills (Reid, 2009; Seddon, 2008) or as agents of socialisation to maintain social order. Touraine (2000) contends that:

Schools are still strongly defined by messages rather than communication, because they focus not on their audience, but on society or in other words the set of values, norms and hierarchies that make up the social order, and because they think that educating children means transforming them into social beings. (p. 275)

Arguing that in the context of “permanent and uncontrollable change” (2000, p. 13) the only stability lies in an individual’s attempt to transform their lived experiences, Touraine asserts that the primary aim of schools “must not be to train citizens or workers but to enhance individuals’ ability to become Subjects” (p. 273). According to Touraine, the subject is about “every individual’s desire to be the actor in his or her existence, the master of a time and a space, of memories and projects that are constantly traversed by external forces that come from afar” (p. 304).

He sees ‘a school for the subject’ as one:

that defines its mission as enhancing the capacity and will of individuals to become actors and learn to recognize that the Other enjoys the same freedom, the same right to individuation and the same right to defend social interests and cultural values that he or she enjoys in a democratizing system, providing that it recognizes that the rights of the personal Subject and inter-cultural relations require institutional safeguards that only a democratic system can supply. (pp. 283-284)
Touraine’s central contention, that “societies as integrated systems and vectors of general meaning” (p. 3) are disappearing, calls into question the role of schools as agents of socialisation. In proposing a new cultural paradigm, Touraine invites us to consider ways of thinking differently in order to respond to new times. This thesis works with Touraine’s propositions in examining current policy and practice in education and in imagining ways of thinking differently and acting differently in schools to address the complexities of cultural diversity and children’s socialisation.

**Learning culture**

Another way of thinking about socialisation is as a process of learning one’s culture. This correlates with a view of culture as “the complex of values, customs, beliefs and practices which constitute the way of life of a specific group” (Eagleton, 2000, p. 34). But culture is the most complex of terms and debate over its meaning continues unabated. Several conceptualisations of culture are relevant to this study, specifically in relation to their implications for education both at the level of policy and practice. To provide something of an overview, I have adapted Liddicoat’s (2005) model of approaches to culture in language teaching, which draws two axes to show how culture is commonly represented in language teaching. These two axes are: a facts/processes axis which puts culture as facts at one end and culture as processes at the other; and an artefacts/practices axis which puts culture as artefacts and institutions at one end and culture as practices at the other. The facts - processes axis shows the extent to which culture is seen as a defined or static body of knowledge or as “the dynamic system through which a society constructs, represents, enacts and understands itself” (p. 31). The artefacts - practices axis shows “whether culture is seen in terms of the things produced by society or as things done by members of the society” (p. 32). Although Liddicoat’s model is intended to show approaches to culture in language teaching, I have adapted it to locate more general approaches to culture in four quadrants tracked according to their relative positions along the two axes (Figure 1).

Thus, a Big C approach to culture (high culture, aesthetics and the arts) characterised by its concentration on facts and artefacts would fall near the top corner of the first quadrant. Little c culture (‘the way we do things around here’) would fall somewhere
between the third and fourth quadrants, with a concentration on behaviours, values, attitudes and patterns of everyday life. Kramsch’s (1998) conceptualisation of culture as “membership of a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings” (p. 10) and Abdallah-Pretceille’s (2006) notion of culture as “a place of expression and interaction between oneself and the other” (p. 475) would fall into the fourth quadrant concerned with the active construction of culture through interaction.

Figure 1. **Approaches to culture (adapted from Liddicoat, 2005)**

Most pertinent to this thesis are the implications for the treatment of culture in education arising from these different conceptualisations. For instance, whether culture is seen as a collection of facts (or artefacts) or as a system of processes affects approaches to teaching and learning and the relative emphasis given to cultural content or cultural learning processes. Learning contexts that stress processes are likely to work on competencies more connected to ‘know how’ than to ‘knowledge’. This is reflected in the extent to which individuals are portrayed as enactors and creators of their own cultures rather than as recipients of their own culture and observers of other cultures. In addition, by adopting a view of culture that is dynamic and variable we are less likely to treat culture as whole but more as encounters with a “variety of cultural fragments” (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006, p. 475). We recognise that our own cultural
identities and those of others are neither singular nor stable but are constantly shifting and changing.

**Learning to live together**

In introducing the question of how schools might work with students to help them get to know and get along with people they perceive to be different from themselves within multiple contexts, I have argued that new realities of time and space are diverse, multi-layered, uncertain and unstable. Young people learning to live together in the face of these realities need opportunities to interact positively with others and engage with their experiences and the ideas. Schools have an important role in helping young people learn how to live together, but to do so, need to consider new ways to develop students’ cultural understanding and the skills to move across cultures and contexts (Kalantzis, Harvey, Cope, & Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2001). This requires attention to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and engagement with cultural diversity within and across borders.

**Other ways**

This thesis is about other ways schools might address learning to live together across difference. It seeks an approach that addresses the realities of diversity, change and uncertainty in the core curriculum for all teachers and students. An intercultural approach to education offers one way for schools to work productively with these complexities. It recognises that intercultural experience occurs “whenever world views come into contact and engage, and is a potential whenever two people meet” (Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2003, p. 27).

In the diverse worlds of the 21st century, such encounters are inevitable and are the expectation on which intercultural education is based. It aims to develop students’ intercultural capabilities based on interaction and engagement with the experience and ideas of others. It encourages students to make connections between their lives and the lives of others, building on shared interests and commonalities and learning to mediate disagreement and conflict. It is as much about the transformation of oneself as it is...
about understanding others. As such, it is about an intercultural way of being in the world, encapsulated in a concept of interculturality.

**Interculturality**

Mostly, we think of ourselves as normal. We assume our practices, beliefs and values to be ‘natural’, rather than thinking of them as constructed by the society into which we were born and in which we live. Liddicoat, Lo Bianco and Crozet (1999) describe these assumptions as “the cultural maps we hold in our minds to make sense of the world ...which we often mistake as immutable truths” (p. 4). We begin to be ‘intercultural’ when as a result of some kind of experience or interaction with other ways of being in the world we come to question what we know and expect. The experience of Otherness creates in us the potential to question ‘givenness’, that is, what we take for granted.

But to be intercultural requires more than an awareness that people are different from one another. For Alred, Byram and Fleming (2003) being intercultural “is both the awareness of experiencing otherness and the ability to analyse the experience and act upon insights into self and other which the analysis brings” (p. 4). The salient point here is that insights arising from an intercultural exchange are as likely to pertain to us as they are to the Other. In order to understand other people one needs to “work on oneself” (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006, p. 477). Then, when we reflect on our own experiences and lives in relation to others, ideally, we come to understand that our way of seeing the world is one of many and also that it is possible to appreciate other perspectives without abandoning our own. Byram (2008) calls the process through which “new beliefs and schemata are held side by side with existing ones, the individual being ready to operate with whichever is relevant in a given context” (p.137) ‘tertiary’ socialisation.

In the *UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education* (2007), interculturality is described as a dynamic concept in relation to the “evolving relations between cultural groups” (p.17). It is defined as:
the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect. (p. 17)

Seen in this way, interculturality encompasses encounters (interaction, dialogue, or experience) between people who see themselves as different from one another (diverse cultures), the dispositions and attitudes each person brings to the encounter (respect) and what comes out of it (shared cultural expressions, commonalities or connections).

The notion that encounters between people with diverse cultures generate commonalities or shared expressions is important in intercultural thinking. According to Abdallah-Pretceille (2006), “intercultural reasoning, often confused with a cultural or even a multicultural approach, emphasizes the processes and interactions which unite and define the individuals and the groups in relation to each other” (p. 476). From a more political vantage point, Hage (2006) argues the importance of looking for what we have in common to thwart the ideology of warring societies that “cannot tolerate the thought of commonness with the other” and that relish the difference of the other. Difference makes it possible to dismiss others and treat them without the respect we would have to accord them if they were like us. Therefore, in seeking commonality, we strengthen the bonds between us rather than undermine them by focussing on our differences.

But, commonality is not without its problems. Like social cohesion and social inclusion, it risks privileging unity or sameness to the extent that it enforces conformity. And it begs the question of how we communicate with people with whom we have nothing in common. Potentially, what distinguishes an intercultural approach is that what we share or what unites us arises from our interaction with one another rather than from pre-existing commonalities such as language, nationality or religion. It is a space between us – neither yours nor mine but a shared experience or expression that we reach together.
Developing an intercultural approach

The intercultural approach adopted in this thesis starts from what we have in common (in keeping with Appiah’s (2006) notion of conversation), recognising this as part of the process of getting to know and getting along with one another. But it also goes to the question of how people can live together when they do not agree, considering how disagreements and differences might be negotiated or mediated. It works with students’ abilities to empathise with others, to analyse their experiences critically, to gain insight into themselves and others and to act upon what they have learnt. The approach goes to the heart of people’s relationships and to the ways in which modern, diverse communities might function. We might expect such important social functions to be at the core of what schools do. In examining how schools might work most effectively with an intercultural approach and where it should be located in the curriculum, this thesis asks whether this is the case.

Supporting Alred, Byram and Fleming’s (2003) claim that intercultural experience occurs whenever world views come into contact and engage, I contend it is possible to bring an intercultural approach to learning in schools wherever and whenever students engage with other people and their lives. For this reason, an intercultural approach is as applicable in a science-based unit on natural disasters, for example, as it is in a social science-based unit on families or a languages-based unit on celebrations. The school-based aspect of this research project is concerned with what an intercultural approach looks like in integrated units of work in primary school classes. It examines the how, when and why of intercultural experiences in the classroom and considers possible outcomes from such experiences.

Principles for intercultural education

The approach taken throughout this thesis, specifically in relation to the work in schools, is based on six guiding principles for intercultural education (Table 1). They are intended to help teachers shape their thinking about intercultural work in schools. In general terms, I have developed the principles from Liddicoat et al.’s (2003) intercultural language learning principles (active construction, making connections, social interaction, reflection and responsibility) and Byram’s (2003) intercultural
competencies or savoirs (savoir être, savoir comprendre, savoir apprendre/ faire and savoir s'engager) in order to capture the nature and scope of intercultural knowledge, understandings and learning as they pertain to this research project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intercultural education principle</th>
<th>Characteristics of the principle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>engagement</td>
<td>interest, curiosity, enthusiasm, belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connection</td>
<td>commonality, comparison, relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive interaction</td>
<td>context, activity, dialogue, awareness, negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>empathy</td>
<td>imagination, feeling for others, care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>consideration of and critical insight into multiple points of view and ways of seeing, critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-knowledge</td>
<td>self awareness, openness, reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 1: Guiding principles for intercultural education

The intercultural language learning principles provided an initial stimulus for this research project. However, they focus exclusively on language learning, whereas Byram (2003) is open to a range of educational contexts outside languages in which intercultural learning might occur. Byram’s model also includes an explicitly critical social dimension (savoir s’engager) that combines critical cultural awareness and political education, providing a connection between intercultural learning and the real world. These two elements were integral to the case studies undertaken in primary schools in this research project.

The principles also reflect approaches that are not designed simply to encourage intercultural learning but that include high levels of interpersonal and social learning. Elements of Kalantzis and Cope’s (2005) thinking on engagement; Wiggins and McTighe’s (2005) interpersonal aspects of understanding (empathy, perspective taking and self-knowledge) and Todd’s (2003) position on responsibility and the limits of
empathy have also influenced the shaping of the principles. While the principles apply to learning in general they relate most directly to social learning. They are essentially interpersonal, connecting the skills, processes, values and dispositions that build and sustain relationships between people. What distinguishes them as intercultural is their application to encounters with difference. Together, the principles are dynamic and fluid, active and reflective. They involve thinking and feeling, imagination, analysis and action.

The guiding principles for intercultural education (engagement, connection, positive interaction, perspective, empathy and self-knowledge) combine thinking and feeling, imagination, analysis and action. Together, they represent an orientation to learning that draws on student’s own cultural resources and encourages interest in the lived experiences of others. First and foremost, “being intercultural is an activity” (Byram, 2003, p. 61): it is something you do rather than something you have, which means that positive interaction is at the heart of intercultural learning. Through interaction it is possible to stimulate dialogue between different cultural groups in order to build relationships based on mutual respect that can support the negotiation and accommodation of difference. But intercultural learning goes beyond shared experience. It involves feeling for others and critical thinking in a process that is essentially concerned with learning about yourself as you learn about others. The principles are not linear. They can, and optimally do, occur at various stages in the learning process. Chapter 2 provides an elaboration of the individual principles and describes their derivation in more detail. Chapter 5 uses the principles to structure the examination of intercultural approaches in schools.

**Research problems and questions**

The research problem is to explore how schools might work with students to help them get to know and get along with people they perceive to be different from themselves. In order to address the problem, it investigates key education policies, curriculum documents and classroom practices in primary schools in one education jurisdiction from an intercultural perspective. It does this by:
Chapter 1: Introduction

- examining connections between theoretical positions on the social order, culture and cultural diversity, and education
- analysing curriculum policy and frameworks
- constructing case studies of intercultural learning
- considering the impact of intercultural thinking on the social purposes of education, school curriculum and school practices at the beginning of the 21st century
- proposing Other Ways of approaching intercultural education in Australian classrooms, primary schools and education policy

This thesis locates intercultural education within broader political, social and cultural contexts as they connect with education. Spanning global, national and local spaces, the thesis concentrates on the latter two by examining relevant national education policies and programs and by describing and analysing classroom practice focused on intercultural education in several Australian primary schools. Rather than foregrounding one or the other, the thesis addresses education policy and teachers’ practice in schools equally, as two separate but intertwined threads, seeking to tease out connections, gaps and silences in relation to intercultural education. It goes on to imagine other ways of working with students through education in order to help them learn to get to know and get along with people across difference.

Experiences of difference occur across a broad spectrum of society, based on many factors including gender, wealth, class, and sexual preference. Though these factors often intersect, for the most part, this thesis is about engagement and interaction between people based on perceptions of racial, ethnic and religious differences. Consequently, it is most concerned with education’s capacity to respond positively to the complexities of cultural diversity in contemporary Australian society.

Chapter 2 introduces key discourses that have informed the thesis and the issues, controversies and gaps they expose, in order to explain the thinking that underpins the thesis and to provide a sense of the contribution it makes.
Chapter 2: Society, culture and education

As inevitably as the meeting of oxygen and hydrogen results in water, hope is conceived whenever the imagination and moral sense meet. (Bauman, 2005, p. 151)

This chapter introduces and discusses literatures that inform the thesis. Located at the intersection of society, culture and education the research problem touches on vast fields of research. As it is not possible to encompass such an expanse of work in any depth, my intention here is more specific, focussing on the principal discourses that have shaped and shaken my thinking, discussing my interpretation of them and their relevance to the research project. The chapter is organised into three themes - society, culture and education. Many of the issues and concerns identified in a particular theme overlap. The three themes themselves coalesce in the guiding principles for intercultural education that are central to the research project. At the end of my discussion of the three themes, I present a working view of ideas for the thesis derived from each discussion.

Society, the Subject and the Other: three visions

As mentioned in the Introduction, this thesis is premised on the beliefs that people are social and that education is a social process. In describing people living together en masse, the notion of society encompasses “the body of institutions and relationships” within which people live and “the conditions in which such institutions and relationships are formed” (Williams, 1976, p. 291). In the field of sociology, the way in which social institutions and relationships form, function and change is the source of constant debate and contestation. One view of contemporary society and modern life is captured in the notion of modernity. Taylor (2002) captures much of the complexity and unsettledness of modern life, describing modernity as:

that historically unprecedented amalgam of new practices and institutional forms (science, technology, industrial production, urbanization), of new ways of living (individualism, secularisation, instrumental rationality), and
new forms of malaise (alienation, meaninglessness, a sense of impending social dissolution). (p.91)

In this reading, modernity is not simply about the rapidity of change in technology and communications or comparable changes in people’s lives, it is also about people’s psychological and emotional responses, their sense of loss and confusion and their struggle to make meaning of their lives. It is this uncertainty in response to change and social fragmentation that Bauman (2000) refers to as ‘liquid modernity’ – “a redistribution and reallocation of modernity’s melting powers” (p.6). In the absence of any certainty or confidence about what the future holds or any sense of a shared existence people experience a sense of transience and a desire for instant gratification. Life is increasingly individualistic and “public space is not much more than a giant screen on which private worries are projected without ceasing to be private or acquiring new collective qualities in the course of magnification: public space is where public confession of private secrets and intimacies is made” (pp. 40-41).

Touraine (2009) takes the notion of alienation further as a disconnection between people’s personal lives and the society in which they live, stating that we live in a time “where the norms and rules of social institutions are further and further removed from personal realities” (p. 11). He asserts that society, as it has been constructed in the Western world over the past few hundred years, is in decline, stating that:

The constructs we call societies, which are made up of activities and laws, or hierarchies and solidarities, are dissolving, rather as though the monuments we thought were made of marble and cement were no more than castles made of sand that looked solid but which are falling apart as the wind dries them out. The wind, which has become a storm, is the accelerated movement of financial, economic and media exchanges. It is blowing across the whole planet, and setting everything in motion. (p. 100)

Touraine’s analysis of social decay argues that “the crisis and decomposition of the social paradigm of social life have created a chaos into which have rushed violence, war, and the domination of markets that elude any social regulation – but also the obsession
with identity of the various communitarianisms" (2007, p. 16). Thus, he identifies the two main threats to social life as a globalised and unregulated economy on the one hand and the emergence of groups based on cultural homogeneity and a refusal to countenance difference, on the other. He takes the view that the State or society can no longer be considered a principle of integration or unity and that people no longer look to it to provide structure and regulation to their lives, no longer believing in institutions as they one did or with the certainty they once had.

It is not difficult to find examples of this disconnection in everyday life. The incapacity of rule bound institutions to connect to or to meet people's needs is powerfully illustrated in Manne's (2009) account of the failure of fire fighting authorities in the February 2009 Victorian bushfires that resulted in the loss of 173 lives. In documenting successive failures to issue timely and accurate warnings to people in fire-affected areas, Manne observes that "far too few inside the fire-fighting bureaucracies were willing on 7 February to break the rules, to disobey authority or to act spontaneously at a time of crisis" and further that "conformity to rules was in turn the enemy of judgment, commonsense and moral responsibility" (p. 35). According to Touraine, we now need to look somewhere other than institutional norms and rules to make meaning in our lives.

**The idea of the social imaginary**

This grim portrayal of decay, disjuncture and disillusion serves as a backdrop for my thesis. However, not wishing to become trapped in a position of such unrelenting doom from the outset, I press on in the search for ways of seeing the world that will help me to make sense of and frame my research project. One possibility lies in the idea of the social imaginary that Taylor (2002) describes as "the ways in which people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (p. 106). By this reckoning social existence is not fixed. Potentially, it can be what we make of it rather than being a set of unyielding realities over which we have no control or influence.
Appadurai (1996, 2001) claims that imagination has escaped the space it traditionally occupies in art, myth and ritual and has entered the “quotidian mental work of ordinary people in many societies” (1996, p. 5) becoming in effect a form of social imagination. He suggests that imagination can be used either as a means of control by powerful interests or as a means of emancipation “through which collective patterns of dissent and new designs for collective life emerge” (2001, p. 6). As such, the work of the imagination is “a space for contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern” (1996, p. 4). The imagination becomes the platform from which action is propelled.

The idea of a social imaginary that encompasses collective emancipatory action and that opens up new possibilities for social existence fits with the question of how people get to know and get along together. Through its promise of collective resistance to the forces of globalisation in everyday experience, more than anything, the social imaginary guides this research project in its consideration of other ways of forming and sustaining social relations across cultural difference.

In this research project, the idea of social imaginaries offers a frame through which ordinary people, that is people with no particular claims to power or wealth – in schools, in communities and in different parts of the world - might imagine their existence in various ways. The work of the imagination injects a sense of optimism and hope into the inquiry, concerned not only with what is but what might be or what ought to be. It serves as a reminder to think beyond the known to consider what is possible within the realms of social existence. That said, hope alone is not enough, especially when faced with a society in ruins.

**The idea of the subject**

Having reduced society to a pile of sand and declared ‘the end of the social’, Touraine (2007) claims we must look elsewhere to reconstruct social thought and new representations of social life. For this, he turns to two “non-social” (p.16) principles of modernity, rational thinking and the human rights of all individuals, to orient action and to evaluate behaviours, through which the idea of the subject emerges. The subject
represents the right and freedom of all individuals to be themselves, to be actors in their own lives rather than victims of it, to resist forces that impinge on their rights, and to demand recognition and respect. Therefore, for Touraine:

The will to be ourselves and to create and defend ourselves as individuals, with all our roots and branches, and in the full awareness that we are a tree, is now the only principle that can guide our behaviours and allow us to tell good from evil. (2009, p. 199)

To my mind, the idea of the subject is like a riddle, variously holding qualities and characteristics that may seem contradictory and somewhat elusive but that are, nonetheless, illuminating. For instance, the subject is about the self and individual rights but is not about any one individual. This means as a first step “we have to look inside ourselves to find the subject” (p.145). However, the subject is also about our relationship with others and “can only come into being by learning to recognize others and their difference” (p. 177). Furthermore, though the subject resists the norms and regulations of social institutions, it “is present in individuals and groups that are aware that they belong to a people, a culture and a history” (p. 145). Above all, the subject is distinguished by its commitment to universal rights and freedoms vested in individuals and their self-creation and self-transformation.

Touraine (2007) charts a progression of political, social and cultural rights that human beings have struggled to attain, claiming that the current transition to cultural rights “has extended democratic demands to all aspects of social life” (p. 148). He states that cultural rights mobilise people more powerfully because they are concrete. Unlike other rights, they “protect particular populations” and their right not to “be like others but to be other” (p. 147). Cultural rights recognise the freedom within cultural particularities. Not only do they protect individuals’ rights to their religious beliefs or lack of beliefs but also their rights to change their beliefs and the rights of others to hold completely different beliefs. Such is Touraine’s conviction about the importance and nature of rights, he states, “the future of our societies will depend on their capacity to recognize and encourage cultural rights” (p. 159). Therefore, the norms and rules that shape how
people live together need to be primarily directed towards individuals’ rights to be different.

‘The end of the social’ may seem an odd basis for a research project in a field as thoroughly social as education, especially as the research problem is about people and their relationships. However, as I understand it, Touraine does not challenge the importance of social relations so much as the continued dominance of a social lens in academic work that focuses on the power of social institutions over individuals rather than the power of individuals to become social actors or subjects. The idea of the subject calls into question an accepted socialising role of education and calls for consideration of what Touraine calls a ‘school for the subject’. It draws attention to the purposes of education and whether it is principally intended to serve individual or social benefits. This leads me to the question of whether schools have the capacity or the commitment to develop the qualities of the subject that Touraine envisages, such as personal empowerment or agency and intercultural communication, and whether these in themselves challenge social injustice or promote diverse cultural values and a strong democracy as Touraine suggests.

The idea of unconditional responsibility

The idea of the social imaginary and the idea of the subject offer two ways of thinking about the research problem, from a social or collective perspective and from a subjective or personal perspective. In his argument for an ethics of unconditional responsibility, Levinas (1985) invites a third vantage point. Rather than beginning with society or the individual, for Levinas, the starting point is the Other. Before anything else, we are responsible for the Other and, though we can choose to ignore it, we can never avoid it. Unconditional responsibility invites us to ask:

...what if the other person mattered not because of the interests they serve or the promise they made me? What if, instead of explaining our responsibilities in terms of its effect on me or us, we simply started with the needs of the other? (Manderson, 2001, p. 4)
Chapter 2: Society, culture and education

A second strand of Levinas’ thinking relevant here is a conceptualisation of otherness as something absolute and ultimately unknowable in contrast to notions of otherness that are concerned with inclusion and exclusion or with the social construction of oppression. According to Todd (2001), Levinas:

...proposes that in order to acquire any knowledge there is already in place an orientation to receive and work with a new idea or theory or experience. Knowledge requires in the first instance openness to something new, something foreign something totally other beyond the self. The approach to knowledge implies first and foremost an ethical relation to difference; that is, what we learn is conditioned upon an initial susceptibility to what is outside and exterior to us. (p. 68)

The notion of the ultimate unknowability of the Other challenges the assumption that we can ever truly understand someone else’s experiences or feel their pain. It warns there are limits to empathy. Todd argues:

When I think I know, when I think I understand the Other, I am exercising my knowledge over the Other, shrouding the Other in my own totality. The Other becomes an object of my comprehension, my world and my narrative, It reduces the Other to me. (p. 73)

Therefore, to teach and to learn responsibly and responsively, one must approach the Other with ignorance and humility, realising that there are limits to how well I can ever know them. Rather, I can be open to them and hope to learn from them.

Bauman (2005) says that hope is conceived where imagination and the moral sense meet. In imagining the experiences of others, I bring my own experiences and my thinking and feelings into play. Empathy or feeling for others may serve as a catalyst or a conduit for engaging with them, but essentially I am compelled by an unconditional responsibility for the Other. A moral sense tempers any inclination to be certain about what one imagines the Other’s experience to be, a reminder that one can never really know them. It is as though there are two energies: one that comes from me that actively projects outwards to the world with curiosity and fellow feeling; and another that
comes from ‘not me’ that exposes my susceptibility and openness to the Other and that prompts me to attend to the world with ignorance and humility. In this research project I attempt to find a meeting place between imagination and a moral sense.

A working view of social order

Though there are doubtless many other possible starting places, the ideas of the social imaginary, the subject, and unconditional responsibility provide three distinct perspectives on the research problem. These might be characterised most simply as: the individual or subject (me); the Other (you); and the social (us). Each of the perspectives makes it possible to see the familiar in new ways and to expose areas of contention and gaps in thinking. The three perspectives also inform the views and assumptions that underpin the thesis. These include a view of a social order that is clinging to past certainties (rules, regulations, power and privilege) in a world of unsustainable and unregulated consumption and in times of rapid change and instability. While it is neither possible nor desirable to return to the supposed certainties of the past, present uncertainties cause many people to face the future with a “complex mix of hope and fear” (Ang, 2006, p. 16). The thesis works from the premise that social existence is not fixed but is the site of individual and collective contestation, negotiation and emancipation. It assumes that things can be done differently.

In stating these assumptions, I am aware they are principally derived from Western philosophical and sociological traditions and that my own cultural position, influenced by ethnicity, class, education, age, and sexuality, is reflected in whatever I think, see, say and do. In the research project, this was most obviously the case in my interaction with teachers in schools, but is also true in the interpretations, understandings and gaps in the thesis itself. Though the research project provoked constant personal and professional exploration, questioning and learning, I am conscious that the rendering of what I have learnt is partial and will remain so (Stake, 2008).
Culture

The second field this research project traverses is that of culture, a term Raymond Williams (1976) nominates as one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. It is not my purpose here to try and cover the history or scope of thinking about culture, dealt with extensively from various standpoints (Geertz (1973), Bhabha (1994), Bruner (1996), and Eagleton (2000) among many others) but to explore selected understandings of culture and their significance to this inquiry.

Understandings of culture

Definitions of culture can be expansive or narrow. For instance, Eagleton (2000) describes culture both as a way of imagining society, “just everything that is not genetically transmissible” (p. 34) and as "the complex of values, customs, beliefs and practices which constitute the way of life of a specific group” (p. 34). Eagleton documents crises between differing conceptualisations of culture, beginning with the conflict between big C (high culture, aesthetics and the arts or culture as civility) and little c (the behaviours, values attitudes and patterns of everyday life of social groups, culture as identity or culture as solidarity) versions of culture. Eagleton goes on to nominate two more recent ideas of culture - culture as commercialism or consumerism and culture as radical protest or resistance, seeking to capture the increasing domination of the market as evidenced in the spread of global capitalism and the movements and pockets of resistance to its domination.

Byram (2003) defines culture simply as “the shared beliefs values and behaviours of a social group” (p.50), while also suggesting that the terms culture and context have become almost interchangeable in some interpretations. Tsolidis (2001) also draws attention to the importance of context as a determinant of cultural variation and mutability:

Culture is understood as complex and contradictory, rather than beholden to traditions which can be crisply delineated from each other, and associated with birthright and nation. Culture embraces a range of relations that are bound by a specific context. We cannot assume that culture is
linked solely to ethnicity, the same culture will be interpreted quite
differently as it intersects with gender, class or context. (p. 101)

In turning to the way culture is represented in educational contexts, Risager (2007) identifies a conflict between those who support the idea that culture-learning is basically a subset of language learning and those who support the view that culture-learning’ is interdisciplinary. Risager observes that while Byram acknowledges the dangers of both presenting culture as unchanging or homogenous and conceptualising encounters as being between different language and culture systems, and he maintains that language and culture are separate entities.

For Hall (1997), culture is about ‘shared meaning’, specifically:

- the production and exchange of meanings - the ‘giving and taking of meaning’ - between the members of a society or group. To say that two people belong to the same culture is to say they interpret the world in roughly the same way and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways that will be understood by each other. Thus culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and ‘making sense’ of the world in broadly similar ways. (p. 2)

In exploring the idea of culture as shared meanings, Hall (1997) describes a ‘circuit of culture’ that identifies five key moments or practices through which cultural meaning is produced and circulated. He says that, “the question of meaning arises in relation to all the different moments or practices” (p. 4). Meaning is produced and circulated in how we represent things, ideas, feelings and actions to give them meaning (representation); in our sense of self and belonging that extends to the ways in which “culture is used to mark out and maintain identity within and difference between groups” (p. 3) (identity); in personal and social interaction and through the media (production); through our use of cultural things, expressed through everyday practices, rituals and stories (consumption); and in how social life is shaped and regulated (regulation). Hall nominates language as “the privileged medium in which meaning is produced and exchanged” (p. 1). He describes language as a system of representation from which
other representational systems might be modelled – how elements in the natural or material world can be used to symbolise or signify “the meanings we wish to communicate” (p. 5).

Like Hall, Kramsch (1998) views culture as a product of imagined communities - created and shaped by language. She defines culture as “membership of a discourse community that shares a common social space and history, and common imaginings” (p. 10), noting that members take the community’s “system of standards” with them even when they leave it. Moreover, culture is semantically encoded in the language itself and is expressed through the use of language. This is not to say that culture is homogenous or static. Members of the same discourse community may differ in many ways (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, life experiences, political opinion) but membership of the community ultimately means that others are not. For Kramsch, “to identify themselves as members of a community, people have to define themselves jointly as insiders against others, whom they thereby define as outsiders. Culture as a process that both includes and excludes, always entails the exercise of power and control” (p. 8).

In Australia, proponents of intercultural language learning concur broadly with Kramsch’s definition. The presenter’s notes for the *Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning in Practice Professional Learning Program (2007)* provide the following definition:

> Culture is not seen as static knowledge, but rather as a way of creating meaning. It is not a set of rules for behaviour, nor is it a body of knowledge to be mastered, but rather a framework in which things come to be seen as having meaning. Culture is shaped by, and in turn shapes, language. (p. 8)

Abdallah-Pretceille (2006) sees culture as being like language “a place of expression and interaction between oneself and the other” (p. 475). In the context of contemporary cultural diversity, she questions the appropriateness of the concept of culture at all, suggesting that the “variety of cultural fragments” is more important than the culture as a whole (p. 478). She claims that a recent emphasis on culture amounts
to a ‘cultural dictatorship’ by reducing an individual to his/her membership of a cultural group, stating that:

Our time is no longer one for nomenclatures or monads, but on the contrary for multicoloured patterns, mixing, crossing over and contraventions, because every individual has the potential to express him/herself and act not only depending on their codes of membership, but also on freely chosen codes of reference. (p. 478)

Taken in this way, cultures are better understood in terms of the relationships and interactions between individuals and groups rather than by the sum of a group’s characteristics and traits. If cultures are seen as social constructions rather than as objective facts, cultural competence should be considered as ‘know-how’ rather than knowledge alone, moving “from the knowledge of cultures to the recognition of otherness” (p. 477).

Most pertinent here is Abdallah Pretceille’s notion of culture as an expression, leaving behind descriptive and static versions of monolithic cultural imaginaries and moving towards cultural fragments expressed in interactions that are influenced, among other things, by global forces such as the media and the movement of people as well as local circumstances and histories. Liddicoat (2005) also describes a dynamic approach to culture as one “which views culture as sets of variable practices in which people engage in order to live their lives and which are continually created and re-created by participants in interaction” (p. 31). He notes that culture “is not about information and things, it is about actions and understanding” (p. 31).

Though Hall (1997) also views culture as a dynamic process of making meaning through interaction or dialogue, he adds that this dialogue is “always only partially understood, always an unequal exchange” (p. 4). He suggests that, rather than thinking of meaning in terms of truth or accuracy, we might instead think of it as an “effective exchange - a process of translation, which facilitates cultural communication, while always recognizing the persistence of difference and power between different speakers, within the same cultural circuit” (p. 11). In this sense, notions of difference as well as
commonality are essential to intercultural communication. In an interview in *The Observer* (Adams, 2007), Hall offers a personal illustration of this point:

I am not a liberal Englishman like you. In the back of my head are things that can't be in the back of your head. That part of me comes from a plantation, when you owned me. I was brought up to understand you. I read your literature. I knew "Daffodils" off by heart before I knew the name of a Jamaican flower. You don't lose that, it becomes stronger".

He smiles. I smile. He doesn't blame me, he says, or anyone. But the least we can do is acknowledge our difference. Then we can start to talk. *(Observer Review, p. 8)*

**A working view of culture**

Clearly, the way in which culture is characterised has important implication for education, generally and for intercultural education in particular. The following points summarise the position taken in this thesis:

- Culture is a dynamic process of making meaning through interaction or dialogue. It is as much about how people interact with one another and the skills and strategies we deploy in building relationships with others as it is about information. It involves know how as well as knowledge.
- In our encounters with others we do not experience culture as a whole but as a variety of fragments.
- Cultural exchanges are only ever partially understood and are always unequal, concerned with differences as well as commonalities.
- Our cultural identities are neither singular nor stable. They shift and change. My identity and the identities of others are not static. Similarly, difference does not remain the same. It too is always changing.
- Individuals are portrayed as enactors and creators of their own cultures rather than simply as recipients of a given culture and observers of other cultures.
- Our own cultural assumptions and expectations are rarely made visible and often we are not aware of them ourselves.
Cultural diversity: Australian contexts

This research project arises in response to the realities of cultural diversity in global, national and local contexts and the capacity of people to live together peacefully and productively across difference. Though Australia has long been culturally diverse, this has not been reflected in terms of national identity or the stories we tell about ourselves, as discourses around race, ethnicity and social policy reveal.

Forgotten histories

Any Australian history that privileges a single narrative, such as Captain Cook, the First Fleet and British colonisation, refuses to acknowledge there are other imaginations, other meanings and other lives that tell different stories, most notably those of Australia’s original inhabitants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. This is scarcely surprising for, as Wadham et al. (2006) note, "mainstream histories tell stories that represent mainstream communities" (pp. 184-5). Importantly, such a narrative allows White Australians to be shielded from the realisation that we are the beneficiaries of and therefore complicit in Indigenous dispossession. Such a realisation may be unsettling and at odds with the way we like to see ourselves. In Australia, Indigenous narratives and the process of “building relationships for change between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians” (Reconciliation Australia, 2008) through reconciliation must be integral to the education of all students.

Philips (2005), in pointing out the contribution schools make “to the ways in which we see ourselves, our connections to others and the ways in which we develop ideas about our role in Australian society” (p. 23), argues that Indigenous stories and history are marginalised in the curriculum, treated, if at all, as remnants of a static past. She says that history is of significance to the present “because of the way it unfolds in minds and imaginations and becomes embodied through cultures that are not only responsive to but reinforced by this knowledge and these imaginings” (p. 13). The construction of Indigenous people stuck in a static past or as the unfortunate victims of modernity may appear much more comfortable.
The absence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories or their marginalisation in the curriculum in Australian schools is a touchstone in this thesis. In asking how people get to know and get along with one another across their differences in Australia, the research project’s first concern must be the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Recently, the process directed to the improvement of this relationship has been reconciliation. On What Works (http://www.whatworks.edu.au), a federally funded website dedicated to the improvement of Indigenous education, reconciliation is defined as “a process based on getting to know each other better, with respect, as differing equals” (2007). The Reconciliation Australia website (http://www.reconciliation.org.au) defines reconciliation as a process of raising awareness, increasing knowledge of Indigenous history and culture, changing, attitudes and encouraging action “where everyone plays their part in building a better relationship between us as fellow Australians” (2008).

Going further, the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children et al. (2008) suggest that reconciliation is not only a practical action to make and repair relationships but is an approach to life. It “is not only a remedy; it is an orientation with which to manage the inevitable problems, sharp divergences and conflicts of community life” (p. 13). However, even for those committed to reconciliation, the process is not as simple as it may seem. In their analysis of the discourses of a group of white Australians involved in reconciliation, Green and Sonn (2006) conclude that they can become involved without having to consider their own ‘white’ position of privilege. Rather than challenging inequity and injustice, “white people can engage with processes, such as Reconciliation, so as to avoid any interrogation of dominance and privilege” (p. 390). They suggest that for reconciliation to achieve its transformative potential, White Australians must become aware of the power underlying their own actions. Their position echoes Hall’s statement (Adams, 2007) that people from different cultural groups can only begin to talk once they have acknowledged their differences and, even so, exchanges between them will always be unequal.

**The myth of multiculturalism**

Many Australians now acknowledge their convict ancestry and are proud to say they are sixth, seventh or eighth generation Australian. Any awareness of the relative recency of
the arrival of their ancestors is often lost in a sense of national pride and belonging. The push to increase the population, from the gold rush period of the 19th century through to the immigration schemes of the 20th century, was constant but also contingent. Immigration was encouraged as long as you were white – a position underpinned by one of the first Acts of the Australian Parliament in what became known as the White Australia Policy (Tavan, 2005). Even though the policy was gradually dismantled after the Second World War, Tavan asserts that its influence remains in the public imagination.

By the 1970s, the idea of Australia as a multicultural society emerged in response to continuing and increasingly diverse immigration and in an attempt to dispel the racist image of Australia the White Australia policy engendered internationally (Tavan, 2005). The extent to which multiculturalism has been embraced both in policy terms and as a way imagining Australian society has waxed and waned over time. Supporters of multiculturalism argue that it promotes tolerance and enriches us as a nation, making us more outward looking and open. However, multiculturalism as a government policy was greatly diminished during the final years of the Howard Government, replaced by a new emphasis on citizenship and shared loyalty to common Australian values.

Irrespective of government policy, in culturally diverse nations such as Australia the debate about multiculturalism continues. Striving for a balance between unity and diversity, Smolicz (1995) takes a somewhat benign view identifying “an overarching framework of shared values (original emphasis) that acts as a lynch-pin of unity in a multi-ethnic state - a framework that is flexible and responsive to the various cultures of the ethnic groups that compose the nation” (p. 3). Hage (1998) argues that such a balance is illusory, identifying instead a “White Nation” fantasy based on the Anglo-Australian belief in “their centrality as enactors of the law of Australia” (p. 16). Anglo-Australians “share in a conception of themselves as nationalists and of the nation as a space structured around a White culture, where Aboriginal people and non-White ‘ethnics’ are merely national objects to be moved or removed according to a White national will” (p. 18). He claims that dual imaginaries operate in how nationalists view their relationship with the nation – that he describes as “passive” and “government” (p. 40).
18) belonging. ‘Passive belonging’ means individuals see themselves as belonging to the nation, being a part of what it has to offer and feeling at home in it. ‘Government belonging’ implies a right or ownership over the nation, of having some say over its management. Hage (1998) argues that when nationalists exclude people they see as undesirable from the national space, they believe it is their right to do so as “enactors of the national will” (p. 47).

The White nation fantasy allows one group to bolster its position with a version of history that enables it to justify its dominance. But, the assumed existence of an homogenous majority group, or belonging to it, does not guarantee one’s social position. Hage (1998) contends that a failure to recognise the sense of loss that some White Australians experience, in response to the increasing diversity of the world around them, has resulted in what he calls the ‘discourse of white decline. This was famously given voice by Pauline Hanson in her maiden speech to the Australian Parliament in 1996. According to Hage:

> While the politicians and academics who have given their support to multiculturalism have often concentrated on the ‘gains’ of multiculturalism, this gain discourse has not been accompanied by an equal interest in losses. (p. 22)

In keeping with the discourse of white decline, Wadham et al. (2007) argue there has always been a significant ‘other’ in the imagination of White Australia. And while Asian immigration no longer appears to pose the threat in the popular imagination it once did, in a post 9/11 world, the group most often identified as ‘Other’ in Australia and other Western nations is Muslim, particularly Muslims of ‘middle Eastern appearance’. In an exploration of the tensions between Anglo-Australian surfers and young Lebanese Australians following riots in a southern Sydney beach suburb, in December 2005, cultural studies commentator Johns (2008) observes that for Anglo-Australians:

> the themes of Christianity, nationalism and white Australian rules seem to be fused together, forming a homologous set of cultural traditions against which Muslims and Lebanese are cast as un-Australian. (p. 12)
Johns concludes that in repudiating multiculturalism and emphasising Australian values, the Howard government reshaped what it means to be Australian, incorporating the myths of mateship and the spirit of ANZAC “within a distinctive neo-conservative and monocultural social agenda” (p. 11), thereby intensifying intolerance towards those (such as Muslim and Lebanese Australians) who might differ.

At the same time, the demands placed on migrants are high, with assimilation into the Australian community remaining an overriding expectation. In contrasting migrant experiences in Australia and the United States of America, Aly (2009) argues that while the Australian message “expresses a national identity that is comparatively fixed, that makes its demands without inviting input and that, as a consequence, inspires little fidelity [the American message] expresses a national identity that is dynamic and open, and offers citizens a belief in their own freedom of conscience and the opportunity to contribute something new” (p. 40). He suggests there is a lesson to be taken from the American example, “that for a national identity to find a place in the hearts of a diverse population - and remain coherent in an era of rapid migration and globalisation - it is best constructed on civic ideals and an ethos of participation” (p. 40). In other words, rather than expecting newcomers to ‘fit in’ to Australian society, it may be more useful to ask them to ‘join in’.

Though multiculturalism is less prominent in Australian social policy than in the past, the complexities it attempts to address are not about to disappear. As Ang (2008) points out, “living with difference is an unavoidable part of social existence in the twenty-first century everywhere” (p. 230). This is especially true in countries of high immigration such as Australia where, in 2007, migration was at a record high - 175,000 or 300,000 people if those on temporary visa are included (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2008).

Hage (2008), previously one of multiculturalism’s most trenchant critics, now asserts the need to reaffirm it, but also to transcend it by addressing past shortcomings. He sees its main limitation as being based on a paradigm of recognition rather than one of negotiation, suggesting that:
We can start from a very simple observation, and that is that ‘recognition’ or the verb ‘to recognise’ always involves a ‘recogniser’ and a ‘recognised’, while, to negotiate does not involve ‘a negotiator’ and ‘a negotiated’. It involves another negotiator. And this means that any negotiation, involves recognising the person you are dealing with or the group you are dealing with as a subject, not as an object. And I think this is quite important because this has been increasingly the limit of the paradigm of recognition on which multiculturalism has been based. (p. 1)

The distinction Hage makes here goes to the heart of this project. Firstly, it addresses the imbalance of multicultural approaches where the dominant culture recognises values or celebrates difference but where the minority culture has no role other than to be recognised. Secondly, it places a demand on the minority culture to engage with the dominant culture. Conceived in this way, multiculturalism becomes a two way process that expects both parties to engage, to negotiate and to exercise judgement in order to reach a position of reasonable accommodation with one another.

The importance of two-way processes of communication and negotiation across difference is a recurring theme in multicultural discourses. Ang (2008) proposes the term cosmopolitan multiculturalism to describe a way of strengthening connections between people across difference that “emphasises our multiple identities and the changing and dynamic character of groups and communities. The term conveys the potential of cultural synergies and opportunities for cultural renewal through interaction” (p. 230). Through this conceptualisation, Ang attempts to move away from a form of multiculturalism that puts individuals into “rigid boxes of inherited identities” (p. 230) while avoiding any return to integration that is essentially assimilationist. Ang draws on Appiah’s (2006) notion of interaction as “conversations across boundaries” (p. 238), which he notes may be enjoyable or may be annoying but no matter what else, they are in the end inevitable.

In an opinion piece in the Australian Financial Review (22 July 2005) Hage describes what interaction entails, drawing attention to the effort that it requires:
...when we interact with people from other cultures trying to understand them, making sure they understand us, trying to interpret what they are doing and making sure they do not misinterpret what we are doing the whole thing can be exhausting. There will be misunderstandings but there will also be increased knowledge and, very importantly, increased intimacy. It means that people from other cultures stop being abstract things to respect or not respect. They become complex human beings who have things about them that we like and things that we dislike. (n.p.)

**Social cohesion**

Ang (2008) states that on an everyday level, “most people want to live in a society that is stable, harmonious and enduring” (p. 233), looking for a glue that binds society together. However, contemporary societies that are diverse, fragmented and changing have difficulty maintaining the illusion of cohesion predicated on unity and certainty.

In Australia, multicultural policy has long been subject to competing demands “such as local concerns about cultural maintenance and social justice and state concerns with social cohesion” (Noble & Poynting, 2000, p. 65). While acknowledging that there is no agreed definition of social cohesion, Markus (2008) identifies the following commonly nominated characteristics “shared values, sense of belonging, attachment to the group, willingness to participate and to share outcomes” (p. 8). However, when cohesion becomes synonymous with shared values, disagreement and conflict may go unacknowledged or be disguised. The most that is expected of people in response to diversity is a passive form of tolerance and when envisaged in this way, policies that promote cohesion may become more like a push for conformity in the guise of shared values.

Hickman, Crowley, and Mai (2008) move beyond such a consensualist approach, claiming that “cohesion is about negotiating the right balance between difference and unity” (pp. 175-176) and that cohesion lies in the extent to which the need for shared values can be reconciled with the realities of diversity. They conclude that “social cohesion exists where all people are able to live in close proximity, accept differences, and mix with those with whom they wish, and have local agreed and effective means for
resolving disagreements and problems (p. xii). In the Australian context, Markus (2008) characterises cohesion “as a continuous working towards social harmony, rather than a point in time at which social cohesion may be said to have been attained” (p. 26) and seeks to broaden the definition of a socially cohesive society as one in which people:

- identify and feel a sense of belonging to Australia and pride in being Australian
- actively participate in political, economic and civic life
- feel included in relation to social justice and equality of opportunity
- respect minorities and newcomers and value diversity
- have trust in other people and confidence in public institutions
- are satisfied with life and optimistic about the future. (p. 26)

**Social inclusion**

Hickman, Crowley, and Mai (2008) connect cohesion and equality, observing that any discussion of the relationships between people that does not deal with inequality is unlikely to result in a society that is harmonious and cohesive. In Australia, the current policy aimed at addressing inequality is social inclusion, described on the South Australian Social Inclusion Initiative’s website as being “about participation; it is a method for social justice. It is about increasing opportunities for people, especially the most disadvantaged, to engage in all aspects of community life” (Government of South Australia, 2008).

Since its election in November 2007, the Federal Labor Government has promoted a social inclusion agenda. In a speech on intercultural and interfaith education, the Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion, Ursula Stephens, describes the Labor Party agenda as enabling, “all individuals, regardless of their faith, background or circumstances, to fully participate in the economic, social and civil life of their local community” (Stephens, 2009). She adds that “a lack of understanding of other cultures and belief systems can lead to social exclusion, inequity and economic disadvantage”, implying a reciprocal relationship between people who are excluded and the society or group from which they are excluded. This represents an advance on approaches to social inclusion where the onus is on the marginalised or excluded individual or group.
to take up the opportunity that is being offered. Consequently, any failure to do so would be theirs as well.

Young (2002) argues the need to “widen democratic inclusion” (p. 17), recognising that some people have greater access and ability to use democratic processes than others. She proposes “a communicative model of democratic inclusion” (p.18), based on different groups within society engaging with one another across their differences rather than papering over those differences for the sake of a ‘common good’. Young, like Hall, identifies disagreement as a central tenet of democracy and describes the democratic process as primarily a discussion of problems, conflicts and interests. But a robust democratic process is built on dispositions of respect and openness to others, of being prepared to listen to their points of view and to make an effort to understand them. In culturally diverse communities this means the cultivation of intercultural understanding.

Collin (2008) draws attention to education that seeks to promote inclusion through participation. Contrary to the prevailing wisdom that young people are disengaged, Collin finds there is clear evidence that young people in Australia are interested in and knowledgeable about political and social issues. However, they feel alienated by formal, institutionalised politics and less inclined to engage in traditional forms of participation (p. 6). Collin concludes that young people are committed to “making a contribution to the community, but many do not consider their participatory acts to be volunteering. They prefer to focus on ‘making a difference’ and seek participatory experiences that afford them agency and where they can see tangible results of their efforts. These may address local or global issues” (p. 6). Both Collin (2008) and Aly (2009) make similar points about two different groups - young people and newcomers. In each case, people’s sense of belonging is most likely to be enhanced through community participation and contribution.

Young people choose to participate in activities and issues where they feel they can make a difference and where they have evidence that this is the case. This has obvious implications for schools seeking to encourage student participation and engagement. They need, for instance, to look closely at the levels of student participation in
interculturally focussed programs. But some programs may only involve a few students. Only certain students are chosen to participate and as a result, “inadvertently promote further marginalisation and alienation of those who do not participate at an elite level” (Erebus, 2006, p. 109). Inclusivity needs to be about making opportunities for everyone not just a select few.

**A working view of cultural diversity**

This research project takes the view that in the 21st century, regardless of where you live, cultural diversity is a reality and that “living with difference is an unavoidable part of social existence” (Ang, 2008, p. 230). It examines the adequacy of current approaches to cultural diversity and applies ideas concerning the promotion of the freedom of the subject (Touraine, 2007, 2009), participation in civic life (Aly, 2009; Collin, 2008) and a new paradigm of negotiation (Hage, 2008) to the areas the research problem investigates - the formation of education policy, the curriculum and practices in primary school classrooms.

It regards social cohesion and inclusion as interactive processes: seeing social cohesion as a willingness and an ability to understand and engage constructively with other people and social inclusion as the participation of excluded or marginalised groups in all aspects of civic life on their own terms. Such a view moves beyond the expectation of shared values, tolerance or co-existence to engagement, communication, negotiation and participation between individuals and groups living together across difference. It involves everyone and it is ongoing. For schools, this may represent a fundamental shift in the way they enact their roles as agents of socialisation and invites the question of how schools might work with students to help them get to know and get along with people that they perceive to be different from themselves.

**Education**

This research project’s principal field of study is education, specifically education in Australian primary schools. It is interested in the connections between education, society and culture because the research problem asks about education’s capacity to
address a broader social and cultural question - how we might get to know and get along with people we perceive to be different from ourselves. The links between education, society and culture may seem obvious, with schools serving as primary institutions for children’s socialisation and cultural learning. However, just as accepted notions of society and culture are contestable so too are notions of personal, social and cultural learning in schools. In returning to the key ideas about society and culture introduced above, the following section considers some of the gaps and silences they expose as they apply to the field of primary school education and as they elucidate the concerns of this research project.

**Personal and social learning**

School education in Australia is generally intended to benefit both individuals by assisting them to achieve personal fulfilment and the society through the delivery of a skilled workforce and an informed and active citizenry. According to Kalantzis and Cope (2005), "creating good workers, actively contributing citizens and persons of stable and resilient identity are three of the fundamental objectives of education" (p. 16). Reid (2009) distinguishes between public purposes intended to advance the interests of society as a whole such as the development of active and informed citizens and private purposes that advance the interests of individuals through social mobility, self-advancement or personal fulfilment.

Touraine (2000, 2007, 2009) argues that schools should change their primary purpose from benefitting society through teaching students to understand and accept social rules and norms to benefitting students through teaching them to become autonomous and independent subjects who are able to create and control their own lives in consort with others who are engaged in the same struggle. He envisages a ‘school for the subject’ that educates all students to withstand whatever pressures they encounter in their struggle to take part in economic life, to give expression to their cultural identities through collective action, and to recognise the rights and freedoms of others engaged in the same struggle.
Touraine (2009) admits to a tension between individual and social demands. In schools, this may become apparent when students or their parents demand their rights at the expense of others – when freedom is not coupled with responsibility or care for others. Therefore, an approach that starts from personal freedom must also draw attention to the consequences of exercising one’s own freedom on the freedoms of others. Freedom is not a solitary or individualistic pursuit. For students to get to know people they perceive to be different from themselves they need to look beyond themselves – to forego self-interest or the presumption that they have any special knowledge or understanding of the lives of others (Todd, 2004). Kalantzis and Cope (2005) describe this as a shift in focus from personal to interpersonal learning, where "the interpersonal is about negotiating differences and in a world of growing difference this is about strategies for finding common ground, collaborating with strangers and the morality of compromise" (p. 24). This thesis works with the notion of interpersonal learning considering the interaction between oneself and the Other an essential element in intercultural learning.

But the question of broader social relationships remains. Bauman (2001) contends that the extension of relationships from the interpersonal to the social introduces a political dimension that in democratic societies is formalised in the notion of citizenship. Touraine (2009) does not dismiss the notion of citizenship altogether but rejects the role of the citizen in so far as it is defined by and intended to benefit a society that is in ruins. Though he gives primacy to the subject as an individual pursuit, Touraine states that the subject is not alone. It only comes into existence in relation to others and is always aware of belonging to a community. It is unclear how Touraine expects schools to navigate the complexities of the subject, particularly as defenders of their own political, social and cultural rights and the same rights for others. Others (Aly, 2009; Collin, 2008) advocate increased political and social participation, acknowledging young people’s alienation from formal institutionalised political and social forms, but also their preparedness to participate on their own terms in activities that are personally meaningful and that have tangible results.

Still unresolved is the question of what to do when individual freedoms come into conflict in the public domain. Disagreement is part of the fabric of democratic
societies. Hall (2006) in conversation with Pnina Werbner observes that democracy is not easy. It is argumentative and quarrelsome. He suggests that in schools we must “consciously think about whether we are transmitting the values of critical openness, of respect for but not subservience to difference, of a democratic culture of questioning”. One way that students might learn how to negotiate disagreements in ways that allow for different points of view, values or beliefs is through learning that deals explicitly with culture.

### Cultural learning

Touraine (2009) argues that respect and recognition is what everyone most desires, but arguably the desire for belonging (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005) is as strong as the desire for recognition and respect. And with belonging come questions of identity and the ways in which culture is used to identify and distinguish between groups. Ideas about belonging and personal, group and national identity tie into cultural learning. In Australian schools to date this has largely been the province of multicultural education.

### Intercultural education and multicultural education

According to Leeman (2003), the central objective of intercultural education is “learning to live in an ethnically and culturally diverse society” (p. 31). Leeman notes that the term intercultural education is commonly used in Europe by UNESCO, and the Council of Europe. In the Netherlands for instance the term intercultural is preferred because of it conveys a sense of reciprocity, emphasising that intercultural education is for everyone (p. 32). In contrast, the term ‘multicultural’ is considered too static and one-sided. Though intercultural and multicultural education have much in common, there are clear distinctions between them. Some writers (May, 1999; Fong & Sheets, 2004) claim that multicultural education is under theorised and not well understood in schools, lacking agreement or consensus on a definition and leading to fragmentation or dismissal in the field.

*The UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education* (2007) distinguish between multicultural and intercultural education in another way, suggesting that while multicultural education “uses learning about other cultures in order to produce
acceptance, or at least tolerance, of these cultures” (p. 18), intercultural education “aims to go beyond passive co-existence, to achieve a developing and sustainable way of living together in multicultural societies through the creation of understanding of, respect for and dialogue between the different cultural groups” (p. 18). In addition, the Guidelines state that intercultural education should be integral to the learning environment as a whole and not an ‘add on’ to the regular curriculum.

The most significant distinctions here are the active rather than passive orientation the intercultural approach promotes and its attention to ‘learning from’ as well as ‘learning about’ other people and cultures. This last point has been critical in the development of an intercultural approach. It signals a shift in focus from cultural knowledge or facts to the development of relationships based on interaction and mutual respect. Todd (2003) asserts that such relationships must also be founded on ignorance and humility, recognising that, as we can never really know the Other we must be careful in the assumptions we make about them. In addition, an approach consisting only of facts or content risks not only superficiality but as Abdallah-Pretceille (2006) notes, "all teaching of cultures based around a selection of cultural facts risks being merely a takeover, a possession of the Other” (p. 477).

In Australia, multicultural education has mostly been about minority cultures often studied superficially through ‘kilts and cakes’ or ‘heroes and holidays’ approaches. Interest and engagement in intercultural experience for most teachers have been peripheral at best. In an analysis of State and Territory languages education curriculum frameworks, Liddicoat, Papademetre, Scarino and Kohler (2003) observe that:

At times, culture is connected to students’ immediate learning context; however, it tends to be associated with students of non-English-speaking background. This treatment has the effect of locating culture with ‘others’ and diminishing or rendering invisible the place of one’s own culture and of the concept of C-ulture in general. (p. 40)

This observation reveals a fundamental flaw associated with the implementation of multicultural education often evident in Australian schools. Culture is presented as the
province of ‘others’. There is little attempt to allow students to consider their own cultural beliefs and practices or that these might connect to the experiences of others. Students are thus reduced to observers of other cultures (who may be enriched but remain otherwise unaffected by them) rather than participants involved in direct intercultural experience. As far as the proponents of intercultural language learning are concerned a logical corollary is that students can really only participate fully in intercultural experience through learning a foreign language. For them, “being monolingual means being an observer rather than a participant in other cultures” with access to “a limited appreciation of expressive elements of culture such as food, dance, music or arts” (Liddicoat et al., 1999, p. 1). They argue that:

multiculturalism without multilingualism encouraged for all promotes a passive form of multiculturalism where tolerance rather than participation in ‘otherness’ tend to dominate. (p. 2)

**Intercultural learning**

In its approach to cultural diversity and difference in Australian schools, intercultural learning takes directions that multicultural education has by and large failed to take. Its strength and potential lies in the active and critical engagement of all teachers and students, interaction between different cultural groups, openness to learning from the Other and its location within the core curriculum. In this thesis I develop an intercultural approach to education that draws on my reading of the literatures discussed in this chapter and that is based on the set of guiding principles identified in Chapter 1 and described in more detail below.

**Intercultural principles**

**Engagement**

Engagement - how to involve students most effectively in their learning - is a central challenge for education. In thinking about the meaning of engagement here, I return to the metaphor of conversation. What happens in a conversation is, to a certain extent, determined by how we approach other people. A primary condition in getting to know people is to be interested in them. In addressing Australian diversity, Mackay (2004)
suggests that we “don’t need more tolerance of immigrants, 'ethnics', 'illegals', Muslims, Aborigines, refugees or any other minority groups, what we need is more curiosity. We need to master the art of getting to know each other better” (p. 177).

But engagement also depends on the interest that others show in us and the recognition that they accord us. According to Kalantzis and Cope (2005), learning should take account of students’ individual identities, backgrounds, experiences, abilities and interests or lifeworlds. This is something that most primary teachers try to do in getting to know the children and their families in the class. However, Kalantzis and Cope take the idea further, arguing that engagement is tied up with two fundamental conditions for effective learning – ‘belonging’ and ‘transformation’. They say, “belonging occurs where formal learning engages with the learner’s experiential world (lifeworld). Successful engagement must recognise difference and actively take account of the diverse identities of students in content and approaches to learning. Transformation occurs when a learner’s engagement is such that it broadens their horizons of knowledge and capability” (p. 37). Deakin Crick (2007) suggests that while engagement with the unknown may entail risk, it is essential to the process of learning, asserting that “in order to learn something, the learner has to move beyond their ‘comfort zone’ and often has to face uncertainty and risk” (p. 147).

The notion of transformation as it is described here is highly relevant to intercultural education. Staying within what you already know or where you feel safe does not facilitate learning. As much as learning is about affirming identity and creating a sense of belonging, it is also a process of moving away from the familiar, everyday world of the known. It is journey of personal and cultural transformation (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005) that combines an affirmation of the self with an openness to the Other and to experiences beyond the worlds they know. For teachers particularly of young children, students’ exposure to uncertainty and risk requires both care and judgement in steering a course between students’ well-being and their capacity to learn and grow.

**Connection**

Connection is a bridge between oneself and the Other or between the known and the unknown. Much of the work in establishing and sustaining relationships between
people is in building and strengthening connections (Liddicoat et al., 2003). The extent to which this is possible is influenced but not determined by proximity – how close or how distant new worlds and experiences are to one’s own. Connections may be more tenuous across greater distance and may require more work to maintain them.

At the level of conversation or encounter, a relationship flourishes or flounders on the connections we make with others. A conversation in which one person asks all the questions and the other provides the answers becomes more like an interview or a fact-finding mission than the to and fro of a conversation. In education, an emphasis on finding out cultural facts can have the same effect as a one-sided conversation. One of the intentions of intercultural encounters is to make connections between our own experiences and feelings and those of others. Sometimes, these connections might turn into ‘light bulb moments’, for example, in moments of insight into another person’s world, in a realisation that difference may not be as great as previously perceived, or in questioning or reassessing something previously taken-for-granted. Sometimes, they may be more akin to noticing differences between the ways you and others say or do things and in imagining how others might see you.

Interaction

Interaction is at the core of intercultural education, providing its active dimension in the form of an exchange. People get to know one another through talking and doing things together, sharing interests, stories and experiences. Positive interaction involves interactants in a process of communication and negotiation that helps them get to know and get along with one another, to develop and sustain a variety of interpersonal relationships. For most people, interacting with others in this way is a part of their everyday lived experience, given little conscious thought unless it goes astray. Being able to communicate successfully with someone you perceive to be different from yourself requires high order skills. Being able to do so in foreign language even more so. Scarino et al. (2007) emphasise the centrality of interaction in intercultural language learning, describing a culturally situated exchange in which students makes deliberate choices in the language they use. They recognise the distinctness of the Other and their responses, are aware of the appropriateness of what might be said and done and monitor their own responses and reactions. Though this description is intended to
inform language learning, it could apply to any intercultural exchange whether or not one of the interactants is communicating in a foreign language. It requires students to bring a sense of mindfulness to the context and to their own actions and an openness to the Other’s responses within the interaction.

In working with an intercultural approach teachers need to think about how they might build interaction into learning activities. This could mean in the first instance choosing content that portrays a range of perspectives and resources that make those perspectives accessible to students. However, in itself this does not necessarily promote the sort of interaction described above. In most classrooms interaction occurs between the teacher and students and students with one another. Exposure to other ways depends to some extent upon the diversity of the class. In relatively homogenous classes, opportunities for intercultural interaction may be limited unless teachers look beyond their classrooms or for ways to generate interaction such as role-play.

The negotiation and mediation of difference is integral to interaction. The extent to which students are prepared to share their perspectives and ways of being in the world is part of that process and teachers need to be sensitive to students’ preparedness to expose any point of difference they may have to their classmates.

**Empathy**

Greene (2000) explains her advocacy of imagination “as a means through which we can assemble a coherent world” (p. 3) from which empathy becomes possible. She says that imagination is:

...what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those teachers we teachers have called “other” over the years. If those others are willing to give us clues, we can look in some manner through strangers’ eyes and hear through their ears. That is because, of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that gives credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions. (p. 3)
In an intercultural approach to education, the work of the imagination is to open up possibilities for ‘multiple readings of the world’, allowing us to explore the unknown and discover the unexpected as an essential part of making meaning of the world and how we live in it. Thus, the development of empathy (the capacity for feeling another’s pain or imagining what it might be like to ‘walk in another’s shoes’) is both a powerful force in the work of the imagination and has a valuable role to play in intercultural education. Students imagine what it might be like to be in someone else’s shoes or what it would be like to be them. They ask - how would I feel if this were I? The development of empathy is cited as one of the benefits of working with diverse perspectives in education particularly through literature and the arts (Arnold, 2000).

An online Reuters bulletin reports research suggesting that “when children see others in pain, their brains respond as if it were happening to them” (Steenhuysen, 2008). Bearing this in mind, it is critical that teachers handle experiences that are emotionally charged or that involve disturbing events with great care, without shying away from them altogether.

However, it is important to be aware of empathy’s limitations. In imagining the experiences of others, we inevitably bring our own experiences and feelings into play. Todd (2004) claims that despite our best intentions, empathy masks the Other’s radically different feelings, experiences and needs. She contends that, “empathy necessarily leads to questionable assumptions about how the other is ultimately somewhat like you, and that what you feel is the same as the other's feelings” (p. 348). So while empathy may serve as a catalyst or a conduit for engagement, or provide a degree of insight into the Other's world, it should not be mistaken for a complete understanding of the Other.

**Perspective**

In a sense, perspective is the flip side of empathy. It calls for reasoning and distance rather than fellow feeling and closeness. In gaining perspective students recognise that their point of view or way of seeing the world is one of many, realising that any question or issue may evoke a number of plausible explanations or responses and that how ideas are presented may vary according to the presenter’s point of view.
Perspective brings rigour and critical analysis to students’ thinking. They learn to consider their own and other positions critically, seeing things from a less personal, disinterested perspective. According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), perspective enables students to “expose questionable and unexamined assumptions, conclusions and implications. When students have or can gain perspective, they can gain a critical distance from the habitual knee-jerk beliefs, feelings theories and appeals that characterize less careful and circumspect thinkers” (pp. 95-96).

Perspective allows students to question what is usually taken for granted and to examine information and opinion critically and carefully. Byram (2003) takes the notion of perspective from the personal to the political in the intercultural competence ‘savoir s’engager’ or critical cultural awareness, which he describes as “an ability to evaluate critically, and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries” (p. 62). This aspect of intercultural education adds a critical social dimension that connects to social action and to political education.

**Self-knowledge**

Exposure to other ways offers students the opportunity to consider their own predispositions and prejudices in a new light. Experiences that cause them to consider their own beliefs, understandings and attitudes, and challenge their previous certainties enable students to gain insights into themselves. By way of example, in-country experience is often a catalyst for self-knowledge because it presents a powerful and immediate counterpoint to the ‘givenness’ of usual ways of seeing. Understanding self and understanding others go hand in hand just as learning is both a process of personal growth and making sense of the world. Wiggins and McTighe (2005) describe self-knowledge as “the wisdom to know one’s ignorance and how one’s patterns of thought and action inform as well as prejudice understanding” (p. 100). Understanding one’s own ignorance ties in with Todd’s (2004) concern with the limits of empathy. Once we acknowledge that we can never really know the Other we are more likely to approach them with ignorance and humility.
Greene (2000) asks “how can we teach so as to provoke questioning of the taken-for-granted, the kind of questioning that involves simultaneously critical and creative thinking and attentive engagement with actualities” (p. 175). Using an intercultural approach, teachers work actively with students’ individual interests, abilities and prior knowledge. They recognise their role in assisting students to approach a wide range of people and ideas with curiosity, interest and openness, seeking not simply to learn about them or with them but also to learn from them.

**The Curriculum**

The discussion above has concentrated on the personal, social and cultural dimensions of learning as they have informed and shaped the guiding principles for intercultural education. Much of this thesis deals with the place, nature and status of intercultural education in the curriculum. And the curriculum itself can be viewed in any number of ways. For example, it may be seen as a product or a set of documents, a dynamic interactive process between teachers and students or a combination of the two. Alexander (2009a) defines the curriculum in three stages as “what is intended to be taught and learned overall (the planned curriculum); what is taught (the curriculum as enacted); what is learned (the curriculum as experienced)” (p. 20).

The ACT Curriculum Framework, *Every chance to learn*, (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2007b) states that “curriculum is all learning planned, guided and implemented by the school” (p. 7). Even though the framework is the official, system-wide curriculum’ for schools in the ACT, it acknowledges the ACT’s tradition of school-based curriculum development, recognising that the curriculum also encompasses documents developed in schools and the processes of teaching and learning in classrooms. In this sense, the curriculum is partially pre-constructed by the school, the education jurisdiction or national education authority and partially co-constructed by teachers and students. Rather like the facts - processes axis in the approaches to culture introduced in the previous chapter, the curriculum can also be conceptualised along an axis that has a given body of knowledge at one end and a process or pursuit at the other.
Reid (2005) argues that “what is chosen to be in the official curriculum and the ways in which it is enacted serves particular social ends - whether it is through establishing what is ‘valued knowledge’ and what is not, and/or who should have access to that knowledge and in what proportion” (p. 38). Thus, the official curriculum reflects prevailing political, social and cultural circumstances and values. Kennedy (2009) states that “by articulating valued knowledge, skills and beliefs that will benefit young people in the future” a national curriculum captures “a nation’s soul” (p. 6). He describes the curriculum as a cultural construction that is “related to the nation’s concept of itself and what it expects future generations to know, value and do” (p. 2). This version of the curriculum implies that a nation gets the curriculum it deserves. In a democratic society one hopes the curriculum would incorporate Hall’s (2006) democratic values of questioning, critical openness and respect for difference that goes beyond the transmission of pre-constructed or valued knowledge. Such a curriculum may also support personal learning but ultimately is geared towards children’s socialisation. Societal benefits outweigh personal benefits.

But it is possible to develop a curriculum that balances personal and social goals. In the Cambridge Primary Review report, *Towards a New Primary Curriculum*, Alexander (2009a) suggests a view of knowledge as:

> the process and outcome of coming to know, or the combination of what is known and how such knowledge is acquired. It encompasses knowledge both propositional and procedural, public and personal, established and reconstructed, and it allows for reservation and scepticism as well as certainty. (p. 20)

In *The Times Education Supplement*, Alexander writes that *The Cambridge Primary Review* proposes a new primary curriculum for England for 21st century, based on twelve aims that “balance children’s present and future needs, encourage positive and responsible attitudes to other people, society and the wider world, and place knowledge, skill, imagination and productive interaction at the heart of classroom life” (Alexander, 2009b). The twelve aims fall into three groups: the individual; self, others and the wider world; and learning, knowing and doing. The first group identifies
personal qualities and capacities and individual needs: wellbeing; engagement; empowerment; and autonomy. The second group identifies four orientations to other people: respect and reciprocity; interdependence and sustainability; local, national and global citizenship; and culture and community. The third group deals with the content, processes and outcomes of learning: knowledge and understanding; skill development; imagination; and dialogue.

Although The Cambridge Primary Review differentiates between individual and social aims for primary education, it highlights their interdependence, stating that “individuals who are engaged, empowered and capable of autonomous thought are more likely to act effectively for the greater ‘benefit of society’ than those who are not; conversely, the Review’s ‘societal’ aims of respect, reciprocity, interdependence and cultural engagement clearly benefit the individual no less than others” (Alexander, 2009a, p. 33). In this research project, The Cambridge Primary Review offers a broad conceptualisation of a primary curriculum designed for the 21st century from which to compare current curriculum developments for primary schools in Australia. In particular, it gives weight and breadth to social learning that goes beyond the utilitarian benefits of national prosperity or adherence to societal rules and regulations to include positive interpersonal and intercultural relationships.

A working view of education

This thesis works from a view of school education that covers more than the basics and delivers more than a narrow set of enabling skills. It takes the view that most parents do not merely want the basics for their children they want the best. Therefore, access to a rich, deep and diverse curriculum must be regarded as a learning entitlement for every student. Integral to this is the acknowledgement that personal, interpersonal and social dimensions of learning are fundamental to the needs of children and young people learning to live in the complexity and uncertainty of the 21st century. This thesis contends that these dimensions are inextricably linked to learning to live together and the aims of an interculturally focussed education.
The intersection of society, culture and education

This chapter has covered a broad canvas, identifying and scrutinising discourses that inform the question of how schools might work with students to help them get to know and get along with people they perceive to be different from themselves. From its examination of the three themes - society, culture and education - a number of key ideas have emerged.

The thesis responds to the complex and fractured worlds and times in which we live and the uncertainties and challenges that the future promises. It accepts Touraine’s (2009) proposition of a disjuncture between society (its structures, rules and institutions) and people’s personal lives. It explores the universalist and individualist dimensions of the subject as a creative and a defensive response to the worlds and times in which we live. It works from the premise that social existence is not fixed but is the site of individual and collective contestation, negotiation and emancipation that, in the context of cultural diversity, stretch and test official social policies concerning social cohesion and social inclusion and ideas about democracy. It seeks to respond to these complexities with openness, imagination and a moral sense.

The thesis takes a broad view of culture, seeing it both in what people know and what they do. It incorporates what people know about their own or other cultures but also sees it as a process of shared meanings and “a place of expression and interaction between oneself and the other” (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006, p. 475). It recognises that cultural identities are neither singular nor stable, that cultural exchanges are only ever partially understood and are never equal, and that cultural assumptions and expectations are rarely made visible often being unknown and unexplored. In terms of intercultural learning it seeks to portray individuals as enactors and creators of their own cultures rather than solely as recipients of a given culture and observers of other cultures.

The intercultural principles, elaborated above, were developed to guide the intercultural approach to learning adopted in the research project. However, they were always open to adaptation and refinement in response to project findings.
Chapter 3 sets out the design of the research project and the specific methodologies and the research methods the project employed.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Premised on the belief that people are inherently social beings and that education is fundamentally a social experience (Delors, 1996) this thesis is concerned with making meaning from the ways people exist in the world and specifically with education’s role in supporting students learning to live together and in discovering and negotiating worlds beyond their own. It addresses how schools might work with students to help them get to know and get along with people they perceive to be different from themselves. As it explored and interpreted the complexities inherent in a human and social problem, the research project adopted a qualitative approach to the research process as will become evident in the chapter that follows.

This chapter sets out the philosophical underpinnings, worldviews and the paradigm in which the research thesis is situated. It describes the overall design of the research, before drilling down to the specific methodology and research methods that the project employs.

Research paradigms

A paradigm is an interpretative framework guided by "a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Guba, 1990, p. 17). It combines the researcher’s beliefs about ontology, epistemology and methodology; that is, what they believe concerning the nature of reality, the relationship between the inquirer and the known and the ways in which knowledge of the world is gained. While the array of paradigms available to the novice researcher is initially bewildering and somewhat intimidating, such profusion is scarcely surprising given that the attempt to make sense of the world through research is an ongoing and evolving process that resists absolute and final explanations and generates new ways of knowing and understanding (Lather, 2006).

The thesis is unapologetically messy, bringing into play apparently disparate ways of seeing, being and knowing, seeking to uncover “a less comfortable social science full of stuck places and difficult philosophical issues of truth, interpretation and
responsibility” (Lather, 2006, p. 52) in its intention to think differently about difference. Working from the assumption that there is no “one-best way” (Lather, 2006, p. 47) of thinking about or proceeding with the research process, it uses several perspectives as lenses that work together.

In an attempt to be as explicit as possible about the philosophical stance in the thesis, I take significant research paradigms as points of entry and departure. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) and Creswell (2009) nominate four overlapping though not identical paradigms. Variously described, they are named here as positivist; constructivist-interpretive; critical (Marxist, emancipatory); and feminist-poststructural. In helping students to map the field, Lather (2006) groups paradigms under the following five headings: paradigms that predict; understand; emancipate; deconstruct; and those yet to be classified that project into the future. The discussion below focuses on the two most closely aligned to this project - interpretivist/constructivist and critical/emancipatory paradigms. The following section considers the principal assumptions and characteristics of the interpretivist/constructivist and the critical/emancipatory paradigms, recognising that elements of each cross over and complement one another in important respects. It goes on to describe their role as informants of the research project’s design.

**The interpretivist paradigm**

As Lather (2006) indicates, the key intent of the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm is to understand the social world and how it has been put together. The principal driver for researchers working within an interpretivist paradigm is to “seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). Constructivism is based on the claim that people construct meaning in engaging with others in the world. In other words, in their social interactions people “co-create understandings” (Stake, 2008, p. 32) and meaning is generated through social interaction. Constructivism also claims that reality is not simply the way things are, but is better understood as the sense we make of things (Crotty, 1998). Reality depends on the way you look at things, which in turn is shaped by your cultural identity, your history and the circumstances in which you live. According to Crotty (1998), “we need to recognise that different people
may well inhabit quite different worlds [and] their different worlds constitute for them diverse ways of knowing, distinguishable sets of meanings separate realities” (p. 64). Therefore, constructivism claims multiple realities and multiple meanings. In relation to research processes, an interpretivist paradigm adopts an inductive approach where meaning is generated from data collected in the field. This underlines the importance of setting and context in the research process, based on the understanding that data is shaped by the constructions of both the researcher and research participants and their backgrounds and cultures.

The interpretivist approach “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). Interaction or dialogue is of central importance in order to “become aware of the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of others and interpret their meanings and intent” (Crotty, 1998, pp. 75-76). Through participation in and observation of the processes of social interaction, the researcher gains access to multiple accounts of the world in order to understand and explain the connections between ideas and practices (Fay, 1975) by becoming an interpreter of the complexity inherent in the worlds he or she observes as an “agent of new interpretation, new knowledge, but also new illusion” (Stake, 1995, p. 99).

Driven in the first instance by a desire to understand and explain a phenomenon - the seeming reluctance or lack of interest of many primary teachers in bringing diverse cultural perspectives into their classrooms, observed over time and in a range of school settings - the research project took an interpretivist approach to the work it conducted in schools. Based on the notion that we can only tell what people have understood by what they say and do, the project began with the observation, description and interpretation of everyday social practices, in this case, the experiences of teachers and students in primary school classes working in the domain of intercultural education. Within this context, the interpretivist paradigm offered a useful way of thinking about the social construction of knowledge and the negotiation of meaning to interpret and understand the worlds of teachers, schools and their communities.

However, my intent in the research project went beyond a desire to understand a specific phenomenon observed in primary school classrooms. I wanted to examine the
“persistence of difference and power” (Hall, 1997, p. 11) in a broader social and education framework. My interest was in challenging rather than simply understanding the status quo, thus inviting the use of approaches that sustain social critique and advocate social change. My desire to understand and interpret the meanings of experience with a view on practices that work and do not work and a motivation to change practice brings my research to the critical edge of the interpretive approach.

The critical paradigm

The critical paradigm incorporates a range of perspectives that are informed by the critical social theory associated with the Frankfurt School theorists (Kellner, 1989). It encompasses Marxist, feminist and, in some descriptions, at its peripheries, post-structuralist perspectives (Crotty, 1998). Some of these are as likely to be at odds with one another as they are to agree but are grouped together here on the basis of several distinguishing characteristics. Firstly, the critical paradigm takes a materialist view of reality, holding that “the real world makes a material difference in terms of race, class and gender” (Stake, 2008, p. 33) and that these differences result in the marginalisation of some groups and individuals and the domination of some groups over others. This view, critical of the prevailing social order, is political in its orientation seeking to empower the disenfranchised and to bring about social change. Rather than reading the world in terms of interaction and community, this paradigm, steeped in a critical tradition, reads the world in terms of conflict, oppression and emancipation (Crotty, 1998). It supports research concerned with social issues that advocates social change and contains “an action agenda for reform that may change the lives of the participants, the institutions in which individuals live and work and the researcher’s life” (Creswell, 2009, p. 9). From this perspective, my research project fits broadly within the critical paradigm in that it is concerned with educational responses to a social issue - the capacity to live together across difference – in order to effect change in ways of being in the world for children, their teachers and the society in which they live.
Working with a critical edge

Whereas, in the past, social criticism was primarily concerned with individual behaviour, today it is directed more to the social institutions and structures that constitute the prevailing social order (Crotty, 1998), including education and the work of schools. Contemporary critical research examines how “issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 281). It addresses big social issues such as inequality, oppression and disempowerment, “aiming to confront the injustice of a particular society or public sphere within the society” (p. 305) in order to bring about change. Critical research is driven by a seemingly utopian vision of social change and the emancipation of marginalised or disempowered groups, “guided by the shadowed outline of a dream of a world less conditioned by misery, suffering, and the politics of deceit. It is, in short, a pragmatics of hope in an age of cynical reason” (p. 321). Nonetheless, Crotty (1998) points out that, “while critical inquirers admit the impossibility of effecting consummate social justice, they believe their struggle to be worthwhile. It can lead to a more just and freer society than we have at the moment” (p.157). This also evokes an outlook that envisages an ongoing process rather than something that is done and left behind – that is never quite there yet but is always in the process of becoming. In this thesis I seek to provoke debate in order to affect change, recognising that what I might advocate here as a desirable way of living together is a process subject to change and negotiation rather than a destination at which we all disembark and live happily ever after.

Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) define critical researchers as people who use their work as a form of social or cultural criticism, accepting a set of assumptions concerning the intrinsic relationship between power, language, knowledge and awareness. In this research project, however, it is the assumption “that certain groups in any society are privileged over others, constituting an oppression that is most forceful when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary and inevitable” (p. 304) that resonates most strongly and informs my thinking about how diverse social and cultural groups might get to know and get along with one another. From this stance,
the research project analysed education policy and aspects of school-based practice critically. It applied a critical lens to national and local education policy formation, questioning assumptions that underlie the identification of social problems and policy solutions working with a methodology informed by policy archaeology (Gale, 2001; Scheurich, 1997) that is described in more detail below.

In addition, it sought to investigate how specific instances of teachers’ actions could be seen within broader historical and social contexts, and their implication in prevailing power structures and ideologies. Smyth and Shacklock (1998) describe this in terms of:

...the dialectic relationship between particular instances, concrete empirical relations, abstract core concepts, and structure and history. Harvey (1990) speaks about critical research as cutting through ‘surface appearances’ (p. 19) by locating the issues being investigated in their historical and structural contexts... [where] phenomena from a critical vantage point, are not considered to stand on their own but are implicated, embedded and located in wider contexts that are not entirely innocent. (p. 3)

Therefore, the project’s school-based case studies, though certainly interpretive in their approach, also considered how relationships of power and privilege are portrayed in the curriculum, interrogating and challenging accepted practices, beliefs and values especially in relation to cultural diversity and examining the capacity of teachers and students to reflect critically on their position within society in relation to the position of others, in line with the project’s guiding principles for intercultural education. There were, however, limits in the application of a critical approach in the case studies. Though teachers were asked to apply an intercultural approach to the pedagogy and content in a specific unit of work with their classes, there was no expectation or requirement that this would lead to lasting change in their teaching practice.

Crotty (1998) suggests that while critical inquiry may express itself in many ways, ultimately, it is a form of praxis – a search for emancipatory knowledge “in the context of action and the search for freedom” (p. 159). My overriding interest throughout this research project was to develop "a praxis that disrupts the horizon of an already
prescribed intelligibility to ask what might be thought and done otherwise" (Lather, 2006, p. 45). The research project’s objective was to interrogate current education policy and practices in schools in relation to cultural diversity in order to learn from the “ruptures, failures, breaks (and) refusals” (Lather, 2006, p. 45) that are revealed. The approach taken was not uniformly interpretive or critical. In looking for ways of thinking and acting differently through an intercultural approach to education, the view that there is “one best way” was rejected. In a similar vein, ways of approaching research problems also recognise that increasingly genres are blurred. In this spirit, Touraine’s (2009) argument for the reconstruction of social thought that takes the ‘end of the social’ as its starting point, offered a way of looking at things differently.

The end of the social

Touraine (2002) acknowledges critical theory’s considerable contribution to sociology in identifying power as intrinsic to all aspects of social life but argues that it “gets caught in its own incapacity to understand the constant transformation of society by social actors since it sees the latter merely as the manifestations of a hidden domination” (p. 388). He contends that “we have gone from problems that could be defined in terms of domination and exploitation to new problems that must obviously be defined in terms of decay and desocialization, but also in terms of self-construction of the subject” (2009, p. 90). In turning the gaze away from society per se to focus on the individual as social actor, Touraine advocates a new sociology that “studies the construction of social actors and also of conflicts and negotiations between actors, on the ruins of what was society” (2002, p. 389) and proposes the core idea of the subject, as representing “the individual in his effort to be a responsible actor” (2002, p. 391).

Touraine’s argument was significant methodologically in two ways. Firstly, it influenced the conceptualisation of the research problem, specifically in challenging fundamental assumptions about the social purposes of schooling and in considering the implications for both policy and practice of an education “oriented towards the freedom of the personal Subject, intercultural communication and the democratic management of society” (p. 269). Secondly, Touraine’s characterisation of the disjuncture between people’s personal lives and the rules and regulations imposed by social institutions
provided an additional lens through which to analyse the space between school-based practices and education policy.

In summary, this project used what might be described as a hybrid methodology. It combined two approaches, one that could be characterised as close and personal, describing everyday experiences and personal lives as witnessed in primary school classrooms and the other that could be characterised as distant and critical, examining education policy documents and their relation to practice. The rationale for this decision and the approaches themselves are described below.

**Research approaches**

While the research approaches adopted in this project may be described as messy, hybrid and blurred at the edges, nonetheless, they followed established methods of data collection and analysis. The research project employed two separate but related processes of inquiry - school-based fieldwork and the analysis of relevant education policies and programs. The school-based aspect of the project took a broadly interpretivist approach, using case studies to describe and interpret data collected in schools. The examination of education policy took a more critical turn, using policy archaeology as its principal analytic tool. The two processes worked in tandem, so that rather than one being a context for the other; the two were equally significant. This was intended to provide insights into different education contexts at national and local policy level, and in schools, and to consider their capacity to inform one another. This included the interpretation and enactment of education policy in schools, the responsiveness of policy to practice and the connections, gaps and silences between them through the lens of desocialisation and the self-construction of the subject (Touraine, 2009).

The following section describes two specific approaches - case studies and policy archaeology - both in general terms and as they were applied in the research project. It covers research settings, project participants, the principal methods of data collection and analysis, and the ethical considerations that were brought to bear on the project.
Case studies

My choice of case study methods for the research project arose from a desire to work collaboratively with teachers in schools in order to shed light on the research problem. Using Yin's (2009) three criteria for choosing a research method: that is, the type of research question being posed; the degree of control the researcher has over the events to be studied; and whether the events are contemporary or historical, case study methods were chosen given my research problem and intended approach. Yin defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (2009, p. 18).

The focus of the research problem was contemporary and it sought to understand a phenomenon located in real-life primary school classrooms. From the outset, the purpose of my work in schools was to explore intercultural education's role in expanding and deepening the ways in which language, culture and diversity are made visible, negotiated and mediated in generalist primary school classrooms by:

- describing and analysing experiences of working with an intercultural approach in integrated units of work
- identifying principal opportunities and challenges and potential outcomes
- assessing the usefulness and relevance of the six intercultural principles for learning identified for this study and asking what makes experiences intercultural.

This fits well with Stake’s (1995) description of an instrumental or multiple case study because it is intended to provide insight into an issue rather than simply to understand a particular case.

Needless to say, in the research process nothing is as simple as it first appears. Stake (2008) describes the case study as both a process of inquiry and the product of that inquiry (p. 123). Yin (2009) explains that one of principal characteristics of case study inquiry is its the capacity to cope with situations that are distinctive and highly varied. The inquiry is validated by its reliance on multiple sources of information that ensure the triangulation of evidence. Data collection and analysis are assisted by “the prior
development of theoretical propositions” (p. 18). To complicate matters further, both Yin and Stake nominate several other features of case study design. I have attempted to synthesise these under Stake’s two headings: the case study as a process of inquiry and the case study as a product of that inquiry.

The process of inquiry

Case definition and selection

Case study design starts with a clear articulation of the research question and what it proposes. This research project began with the proposition that schools have a role in helping young people learn to live together in a culturally diverse society. Stake (2008) points out that the selection of key issues is fundamental to uncovering what can be learned from the case study. In the early stages of this project, issues were framed generally as factors likely to help and hinder teachers in working with an intercultural approach to the curriculum in the classroom. These evolved into more specific issues as the project unfolded and the complexity of the contexts in each case study site emerged. These included teachers’ capacities to understand and implement aspects of the guiding principles for intercultural education.

Stake describes the case study as a “bounded system” (p. 120), that is the case has discernable boundaries, such as time and place, and the system has certain recognisable features and patterns of activity. He adds that the complexities of context – historical, cultural, physical, social, economic, political, ethical and aesthetic – are the legitimate concern of the qualitative case study. A number of these contextual elements were highlighted in the case studies conducted in this project. Consideration of the intertwined historical, cultural, social and political contexts was critical in developing pictures of the specific circumstances of school sites as they intersected the local context of the Australian Capital Territory, and the national context of Australian education.

Stake (2008) also notes “much qualitative research is based on a view that social phenomena, human dilemmas, and the nature of cases are situational, revealing experiential happenings of many kinds” (p. 127). The contexts of the case studies in
this project reflected these complexities. The schools, classes and teachers reflected a range of influences. For instance, their location in the ACT meant that the level of cultural diversity in the school population was less than schools in other metropolitan capitals but greater than regional areas of Australia. The location of schools within different areas of the ACT reflected a range of economic circumstances between the school communities. The difference between schools in the government and Catholic sectors was another factor contributing to the complexity of context. In terms of time and place, the boundaries of the four case studies were clearly defined and understood by participants, defined in time as a school term or approximately ten weeks and in place as participants’ schools and classrooms. However, as discussed in more detail below, time is something constantly negotiated in schools and this boundary was somewhat porous.

**Settings**

My case studies were set in primary schools in the ACT. Initial interviews were conducted in four schools with four school leaders and eight teachers. This was followed up with intensive collaborative work with five teachers in three schools, planning, delivering and evaluating an integrated unit of work over one school term (a period of approximately ten to twelve weeks). Originally, the principal criterion for the selection of schools was to be Hickling-Hudson’s (2003) range of ethnic profiles - predominantly indigenous, multiculturally mixed including white ethnicities, and predominantly white (of British and European descent), in so far as this was possible in the ACT. There are, for instance, no predominantly Indigenous primary schools in the ACT. Therefore, to ensure variety between participating schools, two other criteria were added - geographic location and education system. Canberra has distinct demographics in different regions, so schools were chosen from older inner and newer outer suburbs whose populations are relatively more or less affluent. Three schools were from the government system and one was from the Catholic system.

I received permission to conduct research in ACT government schools from the ACT Department of Education and Training and in Catholic schools from the Catholic Education Office Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese. The ACT approval process was in two stages with the central office giving in principle agreement and individual school
principals giving approval to proceed. I gained approval from individual principals in
government and Catholic schools only after university and system approvals had been
received.

**Research participants**

After initial approaches to school principals and following project presentations to
teachers in staff meetings in several schools, individual teachers and teaching teams
were invited to participate. Teaching teams in two schools and individual teachers in
the remaining two schools agreed. In the case of teaching teams, several teachers
decided not to participate and in the case of one teacher, two members of her team
participated informally in project activities. I attended team planning meetings.
Participant and school profiles are described in Chapter 5. School names and teacher
identities have been changed to ensure anonymity.

**Data collection**

One of the attractions of case studies is their flexibility in the methods of data collection
they can employ. Though data are likely to be gathered at least partly through direct
observation, other methods include interview and the collection of documents and
other artefacts. Yin (2009) advises the use of multiple sources of evidence
(triangulation) and the establishment of a “chain of evidence” (p. 42) to support
validity during the data collection phase. Stake points out that while no observation or
interpretation is completely repeatable, triangulation “clarifies meaning by identifying
different ways the case is being seen”, adding that, ultimately, it “helps to identify
different realities” (p. 133). To strengthen the credibility of the case studies in the
project and to lessen the risk of misinterpretation of data, a variety of methods were
employed to collect data. The two principal methods were interviews and participant
observation (as described below). Additional data were derived from email
communication with teachers, my journal entries, work samples and curriculum
documentation.

**Interviews**

At the start of the project in each school I conducted audiotaped interviews with school
leaders, each lasting approximately one hour. I also conducted two interviews with
participating teachers in three schools, at the beginning and end of their involvement and one interview with the teachers who withdrew from the project before undertaking the classroom-based component of the research. In line with the interpretivist position that “only through dialogue can one become aware of the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of others and interpret their meanings and intent” (Crotty, 1998, pp. 75-76), interviews were informal and consisted of open-ended questions used to guide conversation. Participants were sent the questions several days prior to the interview sessions and most made notes on what they wanted to say. The interview schedules are located at Appendix 1. Interviews with school leaders sought background information about their school and canvassed their views on the place of intercultural education in the curriculum and in the life of the school more broadly. Interviews with teachers covered their backgrounds and experiences in living and working in diverse cultures, including time spent living abroad, interculturally focussed training and their teaching experiences. The interviews explored teachers’ stances and perspectives on culture and learning and the effect of these on their approaches to teaching and learning. The principles of intercultural learning – engagement, connections, social interaction, empathy, perspective taking and self-knowledge – were used to guide conversation about classroom practices, curriculum content, pedagogy and teachers’ views on what intercultural competence might mean.

Observation

In schools, I collected data through discussions with teachers, participation in team planning sessions and team meetings, observation of classroom interactions and interviews. Yin (2009) describes participant observation as a data collection technique, distinguishing it from a case study, which he considers a research method. In this project, participant observation was among the data collection techniques undertaken within case studies. Given my own background as a teacher in ACT primary schools and also that I was asking teachers to try an approach to learning that was, in some respects, new to them, it was logical to assume a role that incorporated elements of participation and observation, an arrangement that had both advantages and drawbacks. On the one hand, working closely and collaboratively with teachers enabled me as to gather a great deal of research data and to gain an insider’s perspective on the fluidity of everyday practices in schools and on differences between the planned and
the enacted curriculum. As teachers and students accepted me readily into their classrooms, it was generally not difficult to become a participant in the school culture. On the other hand, at times, it was difficult to maintain observer and participant roles simultaneously catching and recording incidents that occurred in rapid succession. It was also difficult to spend sufficient time in team meetings to plan activities for the integrated unit of work. Though my presence was accepted in team meetings, I was conscious of a pressure to limit meeting time spent on the project even when there were issues that required discussion and clarification. Throughout the period of observation, I kept a written journal of my recollections and reflections from planning meetings and team meetings as well as email communication with teachers. I also recorded my observation of and participation in class activities and collected samples of student work from key activities.

In working with teachers during interviews and in planning meetings, I attempted to adopt an approach based on critical reflection, both as a research practice and as a tool in developing intercultural competence. Larrivee (2000) advocates critical reflection as a means of transforming teaching practice, merging critical inquiry with self-reflection. Describing critical inquiry as “the conscious consideration of the moral and ethical implications and consequences of classroom practices on students”, Larrivee suggests that self-reflection adds “the deep examination of personal values and beliefs, embodied in the assumptions teachers make and the expectation they have for students“ (p. 294). By approaching critical inquiry in this way, teachers (and researchers) have a practical framework for examining personal and professional beliefs as well as being able to consider the ethical implications of their teaching practices. Larrivee (2000) considers critical reflection allows for greater integrity, openness, and commitment assisting practitioners to view what they do in a new way:

Becoming a reflective practitioner calls teachers to the task of facing deeply rooted personal attitudes concerning human nature, human potential, and human learning. Reflective practitioners challenge assumptions and question existing practices, thereby continuously accessing new lens to view their practice and alter their perspectives. (p. 296)
Consequently, in working with teachers, I attempted to keep the following obligations for researchers in mind:

To recognize our engagement in active and partial meaning-making, to recognize that all participants will be changed through the research process, to acknowledge that all participants contribute to the act of witnessing, and to explore multiple meanings of equity and care while acting to promote our understandings of these concepts. (Ropers-Huilman, 1999, p. 33)

For the most part, it was possible to maintain collaborative relationships with teachers that involved open and spirited discussion of issues and ideas and reflection on the effectiveness of learning tasks. However, there were several moments where my interests as a researcher did not match what teachers felt comfortable in doing. In a sense, these moments of resistance, though challenging at the time, provided much food for thought, and, apart from one occasion, it was possible to come to a position to suit our mutual purposes.

Much of my work with teachers was in the discussion of an intercultural approach to the planning, implementation, assessment and delivery of an integrated unit of work of their choice. In what was essentially a collaborative approach, we engaged in conversations around what intercultural education might look like in teaching and learning processes in their classes and in keeping with school and system requirements, for at least one session per week for the duration of the unit or as negotiated with teachers. Together, we discussed and developed activities and tasks in which:

- students’ interest/curiosity about other people and cultures was engaged
- students had opportunities to explore their own cultural positions
- intercultural interaction was facilitated in classroom settings
- alternative viewpoints and ways of thinking were represented
- students were encouraged to take perspectives other than their own.

The collection of case study data took place over a ten-month period from August 2006 till May 2007. Classroom observation occurred during Term 4 2006 in Little Primary School and Term 1 2007 in Creek Primary School and Ridge Primary School. As planning was also part of the process, contact with participants began in the previous
term or during the school holiday period prior to the commencement of term. Initially, teachers agreed to participate in the project for a ten-week period with a commitment of around fifteen hours non-class time and fifteen hours of class time. However, in practice, time in schools is something that is constantly negotiated. Therefore, in three of the case study schools the processes of planning and delivery of the unit took longer than anticipated and in the fourth school, lack of time resulted in those participants’ withdrawal from the project. Though teachers provided me with feedback informally in person and through emails while I was working with them in their classes and in their final interviews, I did not ask them for further feedback at later stages of the project.

Data analysis

The case study is an empirical inquiry based on the observation of human activity. Stake (2008) observes that the questions driving case study research are “not questions of opinion and feeling, but of the sensory experience. And the answers come back, of course, with description and interpretation, opinion and feeling all mixed together” (p. 134). A key challenge in the analysis of data is to distinguish experiential knowledge from personal opinion and emotional response. Though the availability of multiple sources of evidence assists this task, in the end, analysis is a matter of theorising and interpretation. While the work is observational “more critically, it is reflective. (italicised in original) ...The case researcher digs into meanings, working to relate them to contexts and experience” (Stake 2008, p. 128). In the process of analysis, the researcher works with data that is subjective and partial, looking for patterns and relationships, ruptures and stuck places and the expected and unexpected, seeking to build explanations. At this stage, considerable time is spent ‘playing’ with the data, establishing connections between the data and research question and in developing and refining themes.

The product of the inquiry

Possibly, the advantages of the approach are most apparent in the final account of the case study. It is in the telling of a rich and complex story that readers are offered opportunities to experience aspects of the case vicariously and are invited to interpret what they read in their own ways. It is equally important, though, to recognise that readers do not have access to the whole story or even to the same story as the

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researcher. Inevitably, the researcher decides what to include and exclude from what they have observed and collected and it is their responsibility to provide a clear account of what they have learnt. Like other approaches to research, the case study has its shortcomings, leading Stake (2008) to suggest that “more will be pursued than was volunteered, and less will be reported than was learned” (p. 137). That too, has been the case in this project.

**Policy archaeology**

Though primarily concerned with how schools work with students learning to get to know and get along with people they see as different from themselves, this project considered the problem in relation to education policy as well as observed practices in schools. This was for several reasons. As the research problem addressed a social issue, consideration of the social purposes of schooling and schools as social institutions fell within its ambit. In Australia, these are most frequently articulated in education policy at national and jurisdictional (state and territory) level. As well as revealing explicit policy directions, messages and commitments relevant to the problem, critical analysis also uncovered implicit assumptions and messages about social issues in policy choices and probed the role of policy as a measure of social control. Such an analysis also opened the way for comparison of relevant messages and commitments articulated in education policy and enacted in schools and allowed the identification of gaps and silences in the spaces between them.

According to Scheurich (1997), many policy studies researchers treat social problems as diseases in need of treatment, claiming that, regardless of approach, policy analysis typically includes a description of the problem, a discussion of competing policy solutions, consideration of general implementation problems and an evaluation of specific policy implementations. For Scheurich (1997), the underlying problem with this approach is that the “question of whether substantial social problems are an indicator that the liberal social order itself should be questioned is not addressed” (p. 97). He divides his proposed methodology for policy studies, which he calls policy archaeology, into four arenas of study.
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Arena II. The social regularities arena: the identification of the network of social regularities across education and social problems.

Arena III. The policy solution arena: the study of the social construction of the range of acceptable policy solutions.

Arena IV. The policy studies arena: the study of the social functions of policy studies itself. (1997, p. 97)

Policy archaeology questions the ‘givenness’ of an identified problem within the established social order. Examining the emergence of a problem and the processes of its emergence, it asks why some ‘problems’ are identified and not others. It considers the conditions that precede the naming of a problem, investigating “the constitutive grid of conditions, assumptions, forces which make the emergence of a social problem, and its strands and traces, possible - to investigate how a social problem becomes visible as a social problem” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 98). For him, this network of conditions or social regularities determines possible options within social problems and policy choices. While social regularities constitute “dominant categories of thought and ways of thinking” (p. 100), they are neither intentional nor do they preclude other ways of thinking. They do, however, generate a range of policy solutions that fall between the possible and the impossible.

In applying policy archaeology to the problem of school failure of urban children, Scheurich describes five regularities - gender, race, class, governmentality and professionalization - as contributing to the construction of the problem that “operate like a grid that generates what may be seen and talked about, while occluding grid-incongruent alternative possibilities” (p. 106). In uncovering the construction of social problems and policy solutions, he asks why the most vulnerable are depicted as problems while the most powerful are not subjected to the same scrutiny in most public and academic discourses. As a final point, Scheurich contends that traditional policy studies is not “a ‘neutral’ enterprise that attempts to bring to public visibility and
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‘understanding’ social and education problems” (p. 112) but does the reverse, serving to reproduce the prevailing social order.

In using policy archaeology to analyse Australian higher education entry policy, Gale (2001) chooses to focus on some parts of Scheurich’s methodology over others. In Gale’s account, policy archaeology asks:

(1) why are some items on the policy agenda (and not others)?
(2) why are some actors involved in the production of policy (and not others)?
(3) what are the conditions that regulate the patterns of interaction of those involved? (pp. 387-388).

Gale identifies the main difference in his analysis as the inclusion of policy actors, though his interest is “not so much in who speaks as what is spoken” (p. 389) and the position being articulated. Scheurich (1997) acknowledges that the elimination of conscious subjects from his methodology may alienate some who might think he has created “a monstrosity called the grid of social regularities” (p. 102). Nonetheless, this does not seem sufficient reason to justify the eradication of the individual as a social actor altogether and, therefore, while I believe that the grid of social regularities offers a powerful tool for analysis of social policy and use it here, in the end, I return to Touraine’s (2009) practice to “always look for an actor behind a victim” (p. 208).

In this research project the questions underpinning the analysis of education policy documents, adapted from Scheurich (1997) and Gale (2001), were as follows:

• What is or is not identified as a problem in education policies in relation to learning to live together across difference?
• What are the social regularities that make the emergence of these problems possible?
• How do social regularities shape (possible and impossible) policy solutions?
• Why are some actors involved in the production of policy (and not others)?
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Sampling of education policy

I examined key education policy documents developed at national and jurisdictional levels in Australia over the past five years. All documents addressed curriculum in school education. At a national level, these were developed either through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) or by the Australian Government. The most important of these was the National Goals for Schooling in its most recent iteration, *the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008). *The Melbourne Declaration* is at Appendix 4. The National Goals provide the blueprint for school education in Australia for the next ten years. As they do not provide detail about curriculum, I focused my attention on two learning areas, the humanities and social sciences and languages, analysing: *the Statements of Learning (SOL) for Civics and Citizenship* (Jones, Giorgi, & Brown, 2006); the *National Framework for Values Education in Schools* (2005); and the *National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools* (2005), referring also to reports on national initiatives in these areas of learning. I also considered the recent work of the National Curriculum Board, now constituted as the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), in the development of a national curriculum.

At the jurisdictional level, the key education policy document developed by the ACT Government is *Every chance to learn* (ECTL), a curriculum framework for ACT schools preschool - year 10 (2007b). It gives an overview of learning considered essential for all students in ACT schools in twenty-five Essential Learning Achievements (ELAs). My analysis concentrated on one of these - ELA 15: communicating with intercultural understanding.

Policy data analysis

My analysis focused on the ways in which social cohesion and cultural diversity were formulated as problems in these documents. It identified and discussed the social regularities that make their emergence possible and the ways in which these shaped the proposed policy solutions. It also examined the positions and influence of key players in the formulation of the National Goals and the relative importance of intercultural
education in the school curriculum within the larger debate about the social purposes of school education.

**Ethical considerations**

According to Stake (2008) qualitative researchers “are guests in the private spaces of the world” (p. 140) and, therefore, ethical considerations are of primary importance. As case study research uncovers people's personal views and circumstances it is imperative that the participation of all those involved is voluntary and that privacy, anonymity and confidentiality are protected.

In the research project participants were provided with detailed information about the project and its requirements on them, prior to their agreement to participate. Their anonymity was protected by disguising their identities through the use of pseudonyms, by altering distinguishing characteristics and by putting a coding system in place for identification. Participants received questions prior to interview and were interviewed about normal professional matters such as curriculum policy, teachers’ work and children’s learning.

Primary school students were involved in the classroom practice component of the project. While students were not identified or interviewed individually for the project, they were observed while engaged in their usual environments and undertaking the normal routines of classroom learning. In writing accounts of classroom interactions, I ensured students' anonymity by disguising identities through the use of pseudonyms, altering distinguishing characteristics and combining attributes of several children. Before commencing observation of classes, I informed parents and guardians about the project through school newsletters, followed up with individual letters (at Appendix 2) seeking their consent to their child’s participation in the project. As I did not receive signed consent from all parents, I only used observational data about individual children where parents had given consent.

The research involved issues and themes connected to culture, ethnicity, religion and politics. All are traditionally sensitive topics of conversation for some individuals and
groups within the community. Therefore, to ensure that this did not compromise participants, I took the following actions:

- established a dialogue between researchers and participants that recognises sensitivities, allows for doubts, uncertainties, disagreements and differences and looks for common ground across them.
- encouraged participants to record their fears and concerns through initial interviews, their journals and debriefing meetings.
- outlined a procedure for participants’ concerns and complaints, including their right to withdraw from the project. Potential participants were given this information in writing prior to the commencement of their involvement with the project.

In summary, the research project’s methodology was principally interpretive with a critical edge. It not only sought to describe and understand the phenomenon of intercultural education in policy and primary school practice, but also to examine current policy and practice from a critical standpoint. In attending to the two dimensions, the project was interested in exploring connections and gaps between educational thinking and school-based practice, in order to address the question of how education might help students learn to get to know and get along with people across cultural difference.

Chapter 4 addresses education policy. It begins with an analysis of the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (MCEETYA, 2008). It then considers significant, national and jurisdictional initiatives that flow on from the National Goals.
Chapter 4: Policy

National governments and people want the prosperity that global capitalism brings, but they are ill-prepared for the social consequences, including the intensification of everyday diversity - especially in the large cities. (Ang, 2008, pp. 231-232)

This chapter takes as its starting point the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008), its vision for Australian society and education’s role in building that society. It examines the Declaration’s portrayal of social cohesion, cultural diversity and reconciliation in relation to how schools might work with students to help them get to know and get along with people they perceive to be different from themselves. Together, this chapter and chapter 5 follow the cascading effect of curriculum policy emerging in Australian school education, from the formation of national policy to its interpretation in jurisdictional curriculum frameworks and its implementation in schools.

This chapter begins with a critical analysis of social goals, problems, policy solutions and policy actors in the formation of the national goals for schooling. It examines how these flow into national curriculum initiatives in general, and then more specifically, into two learning areas (the humanities and languages). It concludes with their emergence in the curriculum framework for schools in the Australian Capital Territory. Chapter 5 deals with the development and implementation of curriculum in schools.

My analysis of the Melbourne Declaration is informed by four guiding questions, adapted from Scheurich’s (1997) and Gale’s (2001) approaches to policy archaeology:

- What is or is not identified as a social problem in the policy in relation to learning to live together across difference?
- What are the conditions that make the emergence of these problems possible?
- How do these conditions shape policy solutions?
- Why are some actors involved in the production of policy (and not others)?
Touraine’s (2000, 2007, 2009) notion of ‘a school for the subject’ also informs my analysis, unsettling policy assumptions about individuals, society and the purpose of schooling particularly as they relate to the research problem.

The National Goals for Schooling

Although state and territory governments in Australia bear primary responsibility for school education constitutionally and historically, the Australian Government increasingly drives a national education agenda, albeit wrapped in the rhetoric of national collaboration. Since 1989, this collaboration has been formalised in a series of national declarations on education. These declarations are made by all State and Territory and Commonwealth Ministers for Education under the auspices of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs’ (MCEETYA), that from July 2009 was replaced by The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) and set directions for education for the next decade. The most recent of these is the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA, 2008), which is in three sections – a preamble, two broad educational goals for young Australians and a commitment to action.

It should be noted at the outset that the Declaration does not purport to be a curriculum document and is necessarily short on detail. There is a separate process to develop a national curriculum being run by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and all states and territories have their own curriculum frameworks and syllabuses. A number of national statements also cover curriculum relevant to this thesis. I come to these later in the chapter but begin with the national goals because they provide the key point of reference for all subsequent national curriculum development and, increasingly, state and territory curriculum frameworks.
Preamble

The Melbourne Declaration begins with a vision for Australian education, based on its role in building a society that upholds certain national values, beliefs and attributes. It states that:

As a nation Australia values the central role of education in building a democratic, equitable and just society - a society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Australia’s Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation’s history, present and future. (p. 4)

The key elements in the Declaration’s vision - democracy, justice, equity, prosperity, social cohesion, cultural diversity, and the valuing of Indigenous cultures - pull together values and aspirations that, at first glance, may seem easily agreed but may not be as well understood, well-defined or as straightforward as they appear.

The Melbourne Declaration works from the assumption that education is intended to benefit individuals and the society. It states that a central purpose is to ensure the “ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion” (p. 4) of the nation. Reid (2009) claims that, under the current Federal government, an economic rather than an individual or social rationale is the principal driver of education policy. This seems to be substantiated in the Preamble which states Australia’s future prosperity depends on “the ability to compete in the global economy” (p. 4). It identifies a number of new demands on education arising from “major changes in the world” (p.4), including increased global integration and international mobility, the emergence of Asian economies, globalisation and rapid technological change and the development of complex environmental, social and economic pressures that cross national borders.

Though it acknowledges that these changes heighten “the need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship” (p. 4), I would argue that the Melbourne Declaration underplays the social consequences of globalisation, focussing primarily on the economic opportunities it is supposed to offer. By way of contrast, Touraine (2002) claims that the consequences of globalisation are more far reaching, threatening the very idea of
society as “the two universes, the economic one and the cultural one, the world of objectivity and the world of subjectivity, are separating and drifting in opposite directions” (p. 389). For Touraine, in a global context of instability and unpredictability, social control and the unity sought through social cohesion are no longer possible. While prosperity and the need to be internationally competitive are powerful drivers in school education, they are tangential to the concerns of this thesis. My interest here is in examining education’s role in addressing complex social goals, in particular, their interpretation and implementation in policy documents, program initiatives and school programs for the purposes of intercultural education.

**National goals and commitments to action**

In its goals and commitments to action, at several points *the Melbourne Declaration* refers to social cohesion, cultural diversity and Indigenous cultures but provides few clues as to what these terms mean or what is intended by them. Goal 1 (promoting equity and excellence in Australian schooling) simply restates the commitment to “ensure that schooling contributes to a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity” (2008 p. 7). Goal 2 (all students become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens) addresses social goals in its elaboration of active and informed citizenship. Qualities of active and informed citizenship include an appreciation of Australia’s social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity; understanding Australia’s system of government, history and culture; a commitment to shared national values; understanding and acknowledgment of Indigenous cultures and contribution to reconciliation; being able to relate to and communicate across cultures, particularly the cultures and countries of Asia; and becoming responsible global and local citizens. This description brings many areas of study - civics education, studies of Asia, languages, global education, values education, Indigenous studies and intercultural education - together under the umbrella of citizenship.

The three roles - learner, individual and citizen - are broadly comparable to the grouping of aims identified in the review of primary school education in England, *the Cambridge Primary Review*, (Alexander, 2009a) the individual; self, others and the
wider world; and learning, knowing and doing. However, Alexander’s notion of the self in relation to others and the wider world opens a window on social relationships that is not solely tied to citizenship as membership of a state (Halstead & Pike, 2006) and is more open to a range of social relationships. This broader formulation of social learning endorses the provision of a rich, relevant and outwardly focused primary curriculum that includes many voices, many stories and many ways of seeing the world. I will refer to the Cambridge Primary Review as a comparative position at other times in this discussion.

But broadening the notion of citizenship to include all social relationships does not let citizenship off the hook. The characterisation of students both as individuals and as citizens rekindles the question of the purposes of education and the extent to which it is intended to be of benefit to the individual or to the society. The Melbourne Declaration claims that students are at the centre of its goals, as noted above. However, much of its rationale is couched in ‘benefit to the nation’ terms, especially in regard to the fulfilment of national economic prosperity and social cohesion. But Touraine (2000) argues “schools are not there for society’s benefit. Their primary mission must not be to train citizens or workers, but to enhance individuals’ ability to become Subjects” (p. 273). This proposition casts the role of schools in a new light. Though not dismissing the importance of social or cultural learning, it challenges the pre-eminence of approaches that are most interested in national unity and that do not connect to students’ lives or appear relevant to them.

To a certain extent, Alexander (2009a) also bridges the individual/society divide, suggesting that the two purposes are not mutually exclusive. He argues that:

- individuals who are engaged, empowered and capable of autonomous thought and decision are more likely to act effectively for the greater ‘benefit of society’ than those who are not. And conversely, that ‘societal’ aims of respect, reciprocity, interdependence and cultural engagement clearly benefit the individual no less than others. (p. 33)

These goals are more ambitious and directly applicable to primary school education than the Melbourne Declaration’s successful learners, confident individuals and
informed citizens, characteristics that, in another context, Alexander disparages as “minimal expectations” (p. 28). Though offering a way through the question of the purposes of education, this approach still assumes strong links between individuals and their societies which Touraine claims are now broken. It uncovers a tension between the personal and the social that is tied up in the question of how people get to know and get along with one another.

In the final section of *the Melbourne Declaration*, a commitment to action for all Australian governments, social questions around cohesion, cultural diversity and reconciliation drop into the background. Only two of the eight areas for action, the development of stronger partnerships between schools, families and communities and the improvement of educational outcomes for Indigenous and disadvantaged students, address them (indirectly). Another, the promotion of world class curriculum and assessment, includes the statement that the curriculum supports “students to relate well to others and foster an understanding of Australian society, citizenship and national values, including through the study of civics and citizenship” (p. 13) as part of a “solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values” (p. 13) for students’ further learning and adult life. It seems to me that *the Melbourne Declaration* gives civics and citizenship education the principal carriage of its social goals. However, given the nomination of traditional disciplines for early development in the national curriculum, civics’ position in the curriculum is by no means certain.

The following sections are based on the guiding questions derived from policy archaeology. They consider the emergence of social cohesion, cultural diversity and the valuing of Indigenous cultures and reconciliation as social problems and policy solutions in *the Melbourne Declaration* and examine the interests and influence of education stakeholders, notably the Council of Australian Deans of Education and the Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA), as policy actors in the direction and shape of the national goals.
Social goals as social problems and policy solutions

In the Melbourne Declaration, social cohesion, cultural diversity and the valuing of Indigenous cultures and reconciliation are grouped together to evoke a vision of Australian society. The meaning of the three terms is taken as given. Any tension between them is not acknowledged and, therefore, is not addressed. The three goals can be seen to mark out social problems that are “assumed to be known” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 109) and to provide rationales for policy solutions. In this light then the processes of naming, defining and discussing them and the conditions that have made their emergence possible casts new light on them. Though other conditions have undoubtedly contributed to the emergence of social cohesion, cultural diversity and reconciliation as the markers of social problems and policy solutions, the common factor is race. This is scarcely surprising in a society such as Australia, with a colonialisst past built on the dispossession of its Indigenous peoples and a population consisting largely of immigrants and their descendants.

Arguably, the fundamental social problem underlying and standing in the way of cultural diversity and reconciliation goals is racism. Its very existence in society and in schools is routinely disputed (Aveling, 2007) and the charge that Australia is a racist country continues to be denied by political leaders. In recent times, Deputy Prime Minister Gillard’s representation of Australia as a welcoming and safe country to the people of India (Roy, 2009), in the face of a spate of attacks on Indian students in Australian cities echoes then Prime Minister Howard’s characterisation of the 2005 Cronulla riots as a "law and order issue" (Davies & Peatling, 2005). He capped this statement with a refusal to accept the existence of any underlying racism in the country.

Gillard also states that Australia has a “a zero tolerance of racism” (Roy, 2009), thereby neatly avoiding having to admit to its existence. A possible partial explanation for this extreme sensitivity, apart from the threat to a valuable export market in the case of international students, is the fear of being associated with the discriminatory practices and racist underpinnings of the White Australia policy, Australia’s immigration policy from Federation in 1901 till its abolition in the 1970s (Tavan,
2005). Where there is public acknowledgement of racist behaviour or attitudes, it is characterised as the aberrant behaviour of a minority and possibly criminal group. The society at large remains blameless.

The issue of race also underlies social cohesion, cultural diversity and reconciliation as policy solutions. *The Melbourne Declaration* does not elaborate on what it means by social cohesion. However, social cohesion is mentioned more explicitly than it was in *the Adelaide Declaration* (MCEETYA, 1999) ten years earlier, possibly as a response to an increased sense of vulnerability following attacks on Western targets in the United States, Bali, Madrid and London in the intervening years. The connection between social cohesion and terrorism is evident, for example, in the Council of Australian Government’s (COAG) 2005 *National Action Plan* “to address threats to Australia’s social cohesion, harmony and security” and its project to investigate what schools, education systems and sectors could do “to encourage the message to Islamic youth that Islam is compatible with, and can live alongside other faiths and Australian values” (Erebus, 2006, p. vi).

The immediate problem is seen to be the threat of terrorism and therefore the threat to social harmony and national unity. The source of the problem is identified as Muslim youth, unable to make the connection between Islamic values and Australian values. While they are the most recent group marked by their inability to ‘fit in’ (Aly, 2009) to Australian culture, people from minority groups, faiths and ethnicities have long been identified as problematic in the imagination of White Australia (Wadham et al., 2007). Assimilationist policy solutions, intended to ensure allegiance to the nation and to safeguard national unity and national values, too often reflect what Hage (1998) describes as a fantasy of white supremacy that continues to imagine Australia as a ‘White Nation’ and to deny the multicultural composition of Australian society.

The approach to cultural diversity that *the Melbourne Declaration* endorses has not changed markedly from *the Adelaide Declaration*. Appreciation of, and respect for, cultural diversity have been constant themes in multicultural education policies over the past thirty years, often translated into classroom practice as the study of people and groups deemed to be multicultural. It seems that minority groups should fit into
‘the Australian culture’ and, in return, the dominant group will appreciate and respect minority groups’ social, religious and cultural diversity. Appreciation and respect are intended to foster positive dispositions towards others. But, like the idea of tolerance, they imply an unequal and one-sided relationship - a relationship in which one party is the subject of the action (who appreciates and tolerates) while the other is the object (who is appreciated and tolerated). This analysis fits well with Hage’s (2008) critique of ‘recognition’ as the paradigm underpinning Australian multicultural policy. As a policy solution then, the appreciation of cultural diversity proposes a relationship that is essentially one-sided. By way of contrast, Hage (2008) suggests that ‘negotiation’ might be more useful, better describing a reciprocal relationship between two parties that allows for the mutual and reasonable accommodation of one another.

A similar pattern emerges in relation to reconciliation. Apart from a change in nomenclature, the Melbourne Declaration’s commitment to valuing Indigenous cultures and reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is identical to the commitment made in 1999. But progress towards reconciliation has been slow. While this may be explained in many ways, recent AusPoll (2008) research underscores how little non-Indigenous Australians know about Indigenous histories and cultures and reveals the weakness of the ties between the two groups.

Designed to gauge attitudes affecting progress towards reconciliation, the Australian Reconciliation Barometer (AusPoll, 2008) measures awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life and history, attitudes and perceptions that Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Australians have of one another, and action that people are prepared to take to improve the relationship between the two groups. Even though both groups believe the relationship to be important and improving, the findings reveal low levels of trust on both sides and an inability to recognise positive qualities that they see in themselves in the other group. Most non-Indigenous Australian do not feel confident in their knowledge of Indigenous culture and history, though more than three quarters would like to have contact with Indigenous people in the future. Only twenty percent know what they can do to help disadvantaged Indigenous people. There is a view (Dodson, 2009b; Nakata, 2008) that reconciliation must move beyond valuing
Indigenous cultures towards a more reciprocal approach, based on Indigenous and non-Indigenous people getting to know and get along with one another.

I have argued that the statements on social cohesion, cultural diversity, the valuing of Indigenous cultures and reconciliation in the Melbourne Declaration offer nothing new. As policy solutions they are weakly defined and are thinly represented in the Ministers’ commitments to action. Nonetheless, the document does offer a few openings for new ways of thinking about social problems and new approaches to policy solutions. I consider how to make the most of these opportunities in the curriculum in more depth later in the chapter, but turn first to the influence of key stakeholders in the shaping of the national goals of education.

Policy actors

*The Melbourne Declaration* is not simply an agreement between the Australian Government and the States and Territories. The document is the end product of a complex process of consultation, negotiation and compromise that also involves Catholic and independent education authorities and other key stakeholders. Over the past few years, a number of significant education organisations have produced statements outlining their positions on the purposes and direction for education for the 21st century. Here, I contrast the policy position of the Deans of Education in *New Learning: A Charter for Australian Education* (Kalantzis et al., 2001) with that of the Australian Primary Principals Association in their *Charter on Primary Schooling* (2007) and consider their influence as policy actors on the national education agenda. The analysis of the positions of the two organisations and the extent to which these are reflected in education policy addresses the guiding question of why some actors are involved in the production of policy (and not others).

The Deans of Education

In their 2001 Charter, the Australian Council of Deans of Education address the need for education to respond creatively to changing times – conceptualised as New Learning. They move away from the idea of learning a defined body of knowledge “towards more general and more comprehensive education, around technology
(science, mathematics, applied sciences), commerce (working together sociably), and the humanities (cultural understandings, capacities for intercultural interaction and boundary-crossing)” (p. 62). The Deans’ Charter states that education for the twenty-first century should be about the shaping of new persons with the capabilities to adapt to new realities. More recently, Kalantzis and Cope (2005) describe this as the ability “to navigate change and diversity, learn-as-they-go, solve problems, collaborate and be flexible and creative” (p. 10). New Learning also entails a shift from the personal to the interpersonal, focusing on what happens between people rather than simply who they are. Kalantzis and Cope (2005) describe this distinction as:

The personal is about shaping oneself in the image of others, recognising oneself in one’s similarity with other models of gender or national identity, and making oneself into one person. The interpersonal is about negotiating differences, and in a world of growing differences this is about strategies for finding common ground, collaborating with strangers and the morality of compromise. (p. 24)

The Deans’ description of New Learning marries well with Touraine’s (2000) notion of a school for the subject, which he describes as “oriented towards the freedom of the personal Subject, intercultural communication and the democratic management of society and the changes that occur within it” (p. 269). The Deans published their Charter at the height of the Federal Coalition’s term of government and their ideas fell on deaf ears at a Federal level. Possibly, their ideas were more favourably received in state and territory education jurisdictions in the development of curriculum and pedagogies such as New Basics (Department of Education and Training, 2004), Productive Pedagogies (Hayes, Mills, P, & Lingard, 2006) and Essential Learnings (Department of Education, 2008). Many of the concepts integral to productive pedagogies are still evident in some curriculum frameworks (Department of Education Training and Employment, 2001; Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2007). However, over the past few years they have lost much of their momentum with the public abandonment of Essential Learnings in Tasmania (Department of Education, 2008) and the diminution of New Basics (Queensland Department of Education and Training, 2004). It seems that ‘Old Basics’ continues to be more
The primary principals

The interests of the primary principals are another matter altogether. APPA argues primary schools do not have the resources to meet either the social demands or goals that governments set for them (Angus, Olney, & Ainley, 2007). In correspondence to the Federal Education Minister, Julia Gillard and published on its website, APPA President Trimper (2008) states that:

Primary schools are under increasing pressure. Teachers are of the view that their core business of educating young children in the basic tools of education has become more difficult as they are required to and expected to, provide school-based solutions for an ever-increasing range of social problems and an increase within the range of learning areas. If we want our young children to make a successful start to school it is essential that we unclutter the curriculum and ensure they get their educational building blocks right.

APPA is not alone in its concern about the crowded or cluttered curriculum. In probing teachers’ reasons for not incorporating intercultural and interfaith activities into their teaching, Erebus International (2006) states that the most frequent response is lack of time to plan and implement activities. Teachers ask what they should abandon in order to include learning about other faiths and cultures, While giving some credence to their response, Erebus speculates that "the lack of time argument disguises a deeper issue about the relative priority that is given to some aspects of schooling over others" (p. 107).

APPA sets out its solution in the Charter on Primary Schooling (2007). The Charter begins with the statement that the main purpose of primary schooling is to ensure that
children learn and to develop in them a permanent love of learning. While acknowledging “the importance of a rich, vibrant classroom and of schools which focus on creative, cooperative and innovative teaching and learning” (p. 1), the Charter’s main focus is to define a core curriculum that all primary school students in Australia should be guaranteed. This core consists of English literacy and mathematics, with science and history identified as less central though nonetheless valuable. APPA argues that a limited core curriculum will benefit schools by allowing them to “respond to individual and local needs, interests and circumstances” (p. 4). The extent to which schools include non-core activities such as the arts, sport and physical activity, community activities, rites of passage, matters of the spirit and activities involving other languages and cultures will depend on whether children have made satisfactory progress in the core areas, assessing the needs of children and the capacity of the school to teach each subject.

APPA’s Charter is above all a pragmatic document, resembling a log of claims more than a vision for education. It makes an oblique reference to possible, negative consequences of increased “assessment and accountability requirements” (p. 1) for some schools. However, it does not challenge the increasing number of demands that the Australian Government makes on schools, nor does it address the impact that requirements such as national standardised testing and national reporting have on schools. Instead, it strips out rich content and abandons programs that attempt to deal with the complex worlds and times in which we live.

The advent of My School (ACARA, 2010b), a website with nationally comparable data on Australian schools, brings a new level of accountability and scrutiny to Australian schools. My School uses the results from the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), the literacy and numeracy tests conducted annually across Australia for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, as the basis for comparison. My School compares NAPLAN results for schools that are considered to be statistically similar to assess the effectiveness of school programs. While My School has proved extremely popular since its launch (Coorey & Robin, 2010), there is a concern among some educators that teachers and schools are under increasing pressure to ‘teach to the test’ (Sheffield, 2010).
Australia is not alone in prioritising national assessment and reporting regimes. *The Cambridge Primary Review* (Alexander, 2009a) concludes that in English primary schools “entitlement to a broad, balanced and rich curriculum has been sacrificed in pursuit of a narrowly-conceived ‘standards’ agenda” (p. 3). High-stakes testing, described by one teacher as “the elephant in the curriculum” (Alexander, 2009a, p. 13), used as the most important and most visible measure of a school’s success or failure, encourages schools to reduce the primary curriculum to literacy and numeracy learning. While there is no doubt they do provide a foundation for other learning, it would be a mistake to imagine that they alone provide students with all they need to do well at school. Many would resist the notion that doing more of the same with students who are struggling to meet benchmarks, improves their results to any marked degree, but it does switch off more able students very effectively indeed.

I do not mean to dismiss to APPA’s concerns out of hand. Time, or the lack of it, is a real issue in schools. However, a solution that narrows the core curriculum to the basics inevitably privileges those areas of learning that are subject to national standardised testing. Throughout this thesis, I argue that the development of social capacities through education is as fundamental to children’s futures as literacy and numeracy. The richness and diversity of experience that primary schools can offer children play a part in developing the capacities they will need to operate effectively within and across the many worlds they are likely to encounter in their lives. As McRae (2008) observes:

> These skills and understandings stand alongside literacy, numeracy, subject discipline knowledge and use of technology. The danger is that the next divide in Australia will be between those students who have a global outlook and an international language and those who do not. (p. 1)

*The Melbourne Declaration* identifies equity as a priority that education systems and schools need to address. Therefore, a new divide between students who have a global outlook and skills in communicating across cultures and those who do not should be cause for concern on equity grounds alone. APPA’s model suggests a move towards
what is essentially a two-tiered approach to education, with some schools offering a ‘no frills’ curriculum consisting mostly of literacy and numeracy while others offer a ‘bells and whistles’ curriculum providing a rich program across all learning areas. This is already apparent in ACT government primary schools, where the Department’s own figures demonstrate that schools in more established, affluent suburbs are more likely to offer languages programs than those in newer and less affluent suburbs (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2008).

It is vital that primary schools do not diminish social and cultural learning because of pressure to cover the basics. Primary school mottos such as ‘Reading, Writing and Arithmetic’ or ‘Just the Basics’, may seem far-fetched now, but may be all that some schools strive for in the future. Most recently, the Prime Minister has emerged as a keen supporter of the basics, indicated in his comments on the national curriculum in a doorstop interview:

Our objective with the national curriculum is...to get back to the absolute basics on spelling, on sounding out letters, on counting, on adding up, on taking away. The basics that I was taught when I was at Primary School a long time ago, and that's what our national curriculum is all about. (K Rudd, 2010)

Regardless of what the national curriculum actually does, politically it is being used to consolidate the message that the curriculum should not change in response to changing times but should stay firmly entrenched in the past, because that is what parents want and understand.

**The middle ground**

Beyond the media glare, the rhetoric and processes of policy deliberation are more mundane. In August 2007, the Curriculum Standing Committee of National Education Professional Associations (CSCNEPA), an umbrella organisation that includes APPA and the Deans of Education, as well as other national principals’ associations, peak professional associations and education unions, put out a working paper entitled *Developing a twenty-first century school curriculum for all Australian students* (2007). In the paper, CSCNEPA puts a position somewhere between that of the Deans
and APPA that, in many respects, looks remarkably similar to the Melbourne Declaration. In supporting a national approach to curriculum, the paper identifies priorities for learning at different stages of education. It emphasises the foundations of learning in the early years, the development of deep learning and skills and general competencies in the middle years and more specialised learning in the senior years. The paper states that a national collaborative effort “should be about producing a twenty-first century curriculum designed to have all students leaving school with a broad general knowledge, that helps to explain society, gives students a sense of humanity’s achievements and failures, gives them a sense of their place in history, gives them an appreciation of the arts, gives them an understanding of other peoples and cultures and a sense of how the world works” (p. 8). However, the paper seems to support the idea that students develop broad general knowledge and capabilities once they have mastered the basics, identifying the middle years as the key time for developing understandings for effective participation in society, validating APPA’s line of argument. The identification of the middle school as the most appropriate stage for developing intercultural understanding also appears to be the approach favoured in MCEETYA’s (2009) four year plan.

Regardless of its shortcomings, the importance of the Melbourne Declaration, as the overarching national statement on school education on which the twenty-four State and Territory, Catholic and Independent education authorities and the Federal Government have agreed, cannot be overstated. As evidenced in the work of the National Curriculum Board (2008b), and the work to date of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the Melbourne Declaration is a blueprint for school education, underpinning much national and jurisdictional work for the next ten years. Though there are some glimmers of hope, for learning that falls across learning areas and outside identified priorities, such as intercultural education, it is still a matter of getting a foot in the curriculum door. In any event, since the Melbourne Declaration’s release in December 2008, the national education debate has moved on.
MCEETYA’s four year plan

In March 2009, MCEETYA endorsed a companion document to the Melbourne Declaration, the MCEETYA four year plan 2009 – 2012 (2009) that lists the strategies and initiatives governments have agreed to undertake to achieve the National Goals. Chief among these is promotion of “world-class curriculum and assessment” (p. 14). The development of a national curriculum has become the central focus of activity, interest and contention, as discussed below. The plan’s two final strategies for promoting a world-class curriculum are the study of languages and cultures, especially Asian languages and studies, and “a focus in curriculum on developing respect for different cultural values and beliefs and appreciation of the importance of Indigenous cultures as part of Australia’s social, cultural and economic capital” (p. 15). The first of these correlates with the revamped Australian government Asian languages and studies initiative, the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP), but it is more difficult to pinpoint specific actions that address the second strategy. The most obvious place to find curriculum that focuses on cultural diversity would be in the current work on the national curriculum.

The national curriculum

Though the idea of a national curriculum is not new, past efforts have foundered on the provision in the Australian Constitution that gives primary responsibility for schools and school education to the states and territories. For the time being, the current initiative though funded by the Australian Government has the support of all states and territories. The initiative is to develop curriculum for all students from kindergarten to Year 12, in nominated disciplines or learning areas, starting with English, mathematics, the sciences and history. Though each curriculum document is to be distinct, it will follow a consistent format, based on three elements - content, achievement standards and a reporting framework. It is intended that the curriculum “will describe the knowledge, understandings, skills and dispositions that students will be expected to develop, in sequence, for each learning area across the years of schooling” (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, p. 9). It is also intended that each of the seven learning areas to be developed in phases 1 and 2 of the national curriculum.
will embed ten general capabilities and three cross-curriculum dimensions as appropriate.

Intercultural understanding has been identified as one of the general capabilities. It is described in the following terms:

Intercultural understanding enables students to respect and appreciate their own and others’ cultures, and to work and communicate with those from different cultures and backgrounds. It includes appreciation of the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; respect for Australia’s multicultural composition; communicating and working in harmony with others within and across cultures, especially in relation to cultures and countries of the Asia-Pacific; and appreciation of difference and diversity. (National Curriculum Board, 2009a, pp. 12-13)

Two of the cross-curriculum dimensions, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia, also intersect with intercultural learning.

Though the identification of intercultural understanding as a capability is a positive move, the national curriculum may well turn out to be a missed opportunity for intercultural learning in primary schools. There is a real danger it will suffer the same fate as previous cross-curriculum initiatives bolted on to the curriculum rather than integral to it. Much depends on how intercultural understanding is described and applied. If, for example, it simply means including content about other cultures, or if it is considered the province of any one learning area alone, or even limited to some age groups, then little will have been gained.

At the moment, the approach to the general capabilities and the cross-curriculum dimensions in the national curriculum is a work in progress. The consultation draft for phase one subjects (English, history, mathematics and science) released online on 1 March 2010 (at http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Home) contains content descriptions, achievement standards, content elaborations and some annotated work samples for each subject. There has also been an attempt to embed general capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions into learning area content descriptions
and elaborations, though not into achievement standards. It is intended that the capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions will contribute to, and be developed through, teaching in each learning area. Though it is possible to search the consultation draft for each of the ten capabilities and three cross-curriculum dimensions, they are not made explicit. Instead, curriculum writers have identified and tagged content descriptions and elaborations where they believe the capabilities and dimension to be inherent. At this stage, these could be seen more as indicators than anything more substantial. The content of individual disciplines is the central concern of the consultation draft.

Arguably, the return to traditional disciplines and stand-alone subjects in the national curriculum reflects a secondary school orientation to learning, given that an integrated approach to content is more common at the primary school level. The national curriculum shaping papers acknowledge some opportunities for cross-curriculum study. However, in what Reid (2009) describes as “a particularly emaciated version of cross disciplinary learning” (p. 16), these are framed in terms of their capacity to be used within the subject rather than showing how the subject might be incorporated into integrated units. As well as offering scope to work with culture in a holistic way, integrated and cross-disciplinary approaches to social learning have a number of advantages (Marsh, 2008) and appeal to primary schools for a range of pragmatic and educational reasons. Given the above, the representation of intercultural understanding in separate disciplines in the national curriculum is likely to be fragmented and decontextualised, making it difficult to achieve any depth of learning or consistency in approach.

**Competing demands: a curriculum hierarchy**

Though the *Melbourne Declaration* nominates eight areas of learning - English, mathematics, sciences, humanities and social sciences, the arts, languages, health and physical education and information and communication technology and design and technology – it states they are not of “equal importance at all year levels” (p. 13). As the national curriculum exercise demonstrates, there is a clearly discernable hierarchy of subjects. Prioritisation of some areas of learning over others, notably literacy and
numeracy in the primary years, has intensified the need for other subjects to stake their claims, often through subject associations lobbying for the relevance and importance of their subject. Some success is apparent in the successive addition of subjects such as languages and the arts to the national curriculum. With this in mind, the following section considers the position of two learning areas (social education and languages) in recent national initiatives and examines their approaches to intercultural learning.

Social education: looking backwards to tomorrow

It could be argued that culture permeates all areas of the curriculum, as the curriculum itself is a cultural construction (Wells, Halsey, & Brown, 1997). However, as an area of study, culture struggles to maintain its own space in the curriculum. Following the last venture into a national approach to the curriculum in the 1990s, social education was rebranded as studies of society and environment (SOSE) and divided into aspects or strands in many national and some state and territory curriculum documents (Kennedy, 2008). Concepts and content were organised along the following lines: time continuity and change (history); place and space (geography); systems, resources and power (politics and economics); and culture (anthropology and sociology).

Returning to a more traditional discipline base, the Melbourne Declaration nominates history, geography, economics, business and civics and citizenship as the subjects falling into the humanities and social sciences learning area. This change, plus the nomination of only history and geography in the national curriculum, means that culture as a separate strand disappears, presumably to be represented within the frames of other disciplines or through the capability of intercultural understanding.

By way of example, though the National Curriculum Board’s consultative Framing Paper for History (2008a) mentions culture in several places and advocates the inclusion of multiple perspectives on past events; culture is viewed through an historical lens. In the paper, culture is depicted as the traditions, stories, myths and legends that explain the values, beliefs and sociocultural elements of past societies (p. 10) or as everyday practices in the past. It is understood as an object to be examined as a whole rather than something expressed in a fragmented way and negotiated with
others in the here and now. Even though the paper states that learning history at school aims to “provide students with knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the past in order to appreciate their own and other’s culture, to understand better the present and to contribute to debate about planning for the future” (p.1), from what has been proposed so far it is not entirely clear where in the curriculum this debate takes place.

**Civics and citizenship – values education - studies of Asia**

_The Melbourne Declaration’s_ description of active and informed citizenship covers a broad swathe of learning including Indigenous studies, values education, global education, sustainability education, studies of Asia, and intercultural education. Because Indigenous studies, Studies of Asia and sustainability education and intercultural understanding have been identified as cross-curriculum perspectives and a capability in the national curriculum (National Curriculum Board, 2009a), one can argue they must have some place in history and geography curriculum documents.

Beyond this, the principal area in the humanities offering most potential for intercultural learning is civics and citizenship education (civics). Though not identified for development in the early phases of the national curriculum, in 2008, the civics agenda received a substantial boost with the requirement that state and territory education authorities incorporate the _Statements of Learning for Civics and Citizenship_ (Jones et al., 2006) into their curricula by 2010. The civics Statements of Learning (SOL) are intended to inform rather than prescribe state and territory curriculum development and “describe the knowledge, skills, understandings and capacities that all young Australians should have the opportunity to learn and develop” (p. 2) at four band levels (Years 3, 5, 7 and 9). They cover three aspects of civics and citizenship: Government and Law; Citizenship in a Democracy; and Historical Perspectives.

Like _the Melbourne Declaration_, the civics SOL identify “an appreciation of the experiences and heritage of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their influence on Australian civic identity and society” and “an appreciation of the uniqueness and diversity of Australia as a multicultural society and a commitment to
supporting intercultural understandings within the context of Australian democracy” (p. 2) among their aims. They address cultural diversity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures explicitly within two broad frames - people’s rights and responsibilities in a democratic society and Australian history - and describe what students at Year 3 and Year 5 are expected to do. For example, they state that:

Students in Year 3:

explore the use of narratives, such as Dreaming stories, to teach community values and appropriate behaviours. They appreciate the contributions of diverse groups of people to their community and contribute to intercultural understandings through participation in appropriate events. (Year 3, Citizenship in a Democracy, 2006, p. 5)

Students in Year 5:

investigate the range of ways in which people work together to contribute to civil society and discuss values that can help people resolve differences and achieve consensus. They appreciate the right of others to be different, within the rule of law, and participate in activities that celebrate diversity and support social cohesion. (Year 5, Citizenship in a Democracy, 2006, p. 6)

The civics SOL expect that students will explore and investigate different cultural influences throughout Australian history, through stories and personal, local and national histories, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, learning to recognise and appreciate differences between people and the contributions of others. In keeping with the Melbourne Declaration’s call for cultural appreciation, students take part in celebrations of diversity. There is nothing wrong with this as far as it goes. The problem is that schools could achieve most of this by doing little more than celebrating Harmony Day and NAIDOC week each year, a strategy that is too often tokenistic and superficial (Aveling, 2007; Erebus, 2006). Cultural learning as something to be appreciated in others or celebrated through participation in
multicultural or Indigenous events in my view should be seen as a *starting point* rather than all that is to be expected.

Other national documents foreground culture differently – using it as an organising strand. For instance, in *the Asia Scope and Sequence for Studies of Society and Environment* (2007), culture is one of four ‘aspects’, through which students “explore the beliefs, values, customs and practices of diverse societies and cultures in Asia, as well as the interactions of Australians with these societies and cultures, both in Asia and in Australia, in order to develop intercultural understandings” (p. 12). The culture aspect describes the progression of knowledge, understandings and skills from lower primary to middle secondary levels of schooling that students need in order to develop intercultural understandings. Though learning is to include “opportunities for students to apply their understandings to ‘real world’ contexts by participating in relevant actions in a wider context” (p. 12), culture is most often depicted in national terms (comparing the people and countries of Asia and Australia) rather than in personal terms. This means that students are more likely to be positioned as observers of national cultures than as participants in intercultural exchanges and thus are likely to remain relatively unaffected by their experiences. This is a critical distinction in approaches to cultural learning. Its significance will be considered further in chapters 6 and 7.

One national initiative that sought to promote a more active approach to intercultural learning was the Values Education Program. Initiated by the previous Federal Government, values education in schools has come a long way from its politically driven origins and its advocacy of so-called ‘Australian’ values. The *Final Report of the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project - Stage 2* (Bereznicki, Brown, Toomey, & Weston, 2008, p. 11) shows that schools in the national values education pilot project affirmed the importance of affective, social and cognitive dimensions of learning using what Lovat et al. (2009) describe as a troika of values education, quality teaching and service learning approaches.

The report identifies ten principles of good practice in values education including the use of “values education to consciously foster intercultural understanding, social
cohesion and social inclusion” (p. 11). It claims that a number of school-based projects demonstrated that values education is “uniquely placed” to work across different forms of social divide, providing “opportunities for social inclusion, fostering social cohesion, developing intercultural and interfaith understanding, and engaging the disengaged” (p. 11). It describes a range of activities such as intercultural visits, cultural events, festival exchanges, art programs, community forums, Socratic circles and student leadership programs, intended to strengthen connections between different cultural groups through the discovery of common ground.

However, as Hickling Hudson (2003) points out, cultural diversity is not uniform across Australia and working with intercultural approaches in less culturally diverse communities presents different sets of challenges. Most of the reported projects focused on intercultural understanding were from areas of Sydney and Melbourne with highly diverse populations. Nonetheless, these examples from values education project schools provide guidance on the development of connections between students based on personal experience and interaction between different cultural groups.

Languages

Recent developments in languages education integrate language, culture and learning, but the position of language learning in Australian education is uncertain. While languages (especially Asian languages) appear in the *Melbourne Declaration* as a learning area and a discipline associated with the development of deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values, they are not named as part of foundational learning. They do, however, connect to students’ development as active and informed citizens, “able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia” (p. 9), making a neat link to the Australian Government’s *National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program (NALSSP)* for secondary schools. The omission of languages from foundational learning fits with APPA’s position on core learning in primary schools which puts languages as an optional extra. In this light, the prospect for language learning in all primary schools is not promising, despite a succession of national policies and programs for languages endorsed by Federal and State and Territory Ministers of Education that promote the value of
language learning. From an intercultural perspective, this is especially concerning because, over the past few years, languages education has been the principal vehicle for introducing intercultural approaches into Australian schools.

At a national policy level, the National Statement for Languages Education in Australian Schools (MCEETYA, 2005) identifies the need for education to engage with and be responsive to a world that is changing rapidly. The Statement advocates intercultural language learning as an approach that integrates language, culture and learning. It states that such an approach “helps learners to know and understand the world around them, and to understand commonality and difference, global connections and patterns” and that as a result students “will view the world, not from a single perspective of their own first language and culture, but from the multiple perspectives gained through the study of second and subsequent languages and cultures” (p. 3). Most notably, it states that intercultural language learning contributes to students’ ability “to communicate, interact and negotiate within and across languages and cultures” (p. 3).

The language, culture, learning nexus (Risager, 2007) reflects a view of language teaching and learning that is increasingly common among language educators in Australia. They promote language learning as a means of exposing students to other ways of viewing the world (Liddicoat, 2005) through a dynamic approach to culture, that distinguishes between knowing information about a culture and knowing how to engage with it. An intercultural approach to language learning engages with both linguistic and non-linguistic cultural practices through interaction. Liddicoat, Lo Bianco and Crozet (1999) maintain that non-language based approaches to culture restrict students to the status of observers rather than participants in other cultures. Language, they say, mediates culture, because it “constitutes an interpretive framework through which the social world is both analysed and created. Without a linguistic experience of difference, a cultural experience of difference cannot reach the same depths” (p. 4).

Approaches to intercultural learning that cast students as observers of other cultures are considered by some to be limited. For example, Liddicoat (2005) argues that
though many education policies may use the term intercultural as part of their language, they do not incorporate elements of cultural change or cultural accommodation into what they do. Instead, policies “construct a form of interculturality that leaves learners entrenched within their previously established cultural context while downplaying the potentially and necessarily transformational nature of intercultural contact” (p. 41). Such a view suggests that, despite any changes in terminology, a predominantly tourist approach to culture still lingers in policy documents, expressed in concepts such as recognition and cultural appreciation. These approaches leave students’ own worldviews untouched and students themselves remain essentially unaffected by their experiences of engagement with the lives of others. In contrast, the case is made that students learning a new language have the opportunity to experience ‘culture from within’. Language learning brings two ways of seeing the world into contact shaped through language.

That said many of the difficulties of intercultural learning are as pertinent in language classes as they are in other areas of the curriculum. For instance, learning about other cultures as a static body of knowledge is common to language classrooms and personal transformation through intercultural contact remains largely aspirational. Liddicoat et al.’s (2003) intercultural language learning principles help language teachers to bring an intercultural approach to their planning and teaching. After reviewing curriculum policy and practice, I dispute the assertion that the development of deep intercultural understanding is only possible through language learning. The principles on which it is based are also applicable to other areas of the curriculum.

The connection between language and culture is not at issue. However, to locate intercultural learning exclusively within languages, not only shuts out other areas of the curriculum but also leads to the sort of confusion evident in the ACT curriculum framework described in the following section. To claim that other modes of understanding amount merely to “a limited appreciation of expressive elements” (Liddicoat et al., 1999, p. 2) is to deny their potency and veracity. Language is not the only way people communicate, solve problems or reach understanding. Notably, Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (M. K. Smith, 2002, 2008) proposes linguistic intelligence as only one way students learn and engage with the world,
suggesting that for many students other forms of learning and expression may prove more effective. For some students, doing things together for a common purpose may be the most effective way to generate positive cross-cultural interaction and understanding (Platow & Hunter, 2001).

In addition, it is difficult to justify limiting the scope of intercultural education to languages when cultural differences may be as great between people speaking the same language as they are between those speaking different languages. In seeking to broaden the field beyond languages, Alred, Byram and Fleming (2003) suggest, “other domains of education also have a role to play” (p. 5). I contend that opportunities for working with an intercultural approach to education arise whenever “people from different social groups with different values, beliefs and behaviours (cultures) meet” (Byram, 2008, p. 186). Expressed succinctly, intercultural education operates in a social context.

Yet, Liddicoat et al.’s (2003) intercultural language learning model links weakly to the social world. For instance, they state that the process of intercultural language learning “involves the learner in the ongoing transformation of the self, his/her ability to communicate, to understand communication within one’s own and across languages and cultures, and to develop the capability for ongoing reflection and learning about languages and cultures” (p. 53). What appears to be missing is a sense of connection to the real world. That is, the transformation of self occurs in a social void. This inward-looking focus contrasts with Byram’s (2003) model for intercultural competence that includes a more robust, critical social dimension, which he calls savoir s’engager, combining critical cultural awareness and political education into a notion of intercultural citizenship (Byram, 2008).

Although language learning may offer direct unmediated encounters with Otherness, far too often this is not reflected in school languages programs. Even where primary schools offer language programs, classes usually occupy less than an hour per week and rarely connect to other learning. As revealed in interviews conducted with school leaders in this research project, they provide a means for release from face-to-face teaching for class teachers, and do not routinely incorporate intercultural language
learning principles. Even advocates like Liddicoat et al. (2007) do not contend that learning a language automatically immerses the student in another culture, acknowledging that in many language curriculum documents and school programs culture is treated as a separate strand in much the same way it is in social education. And while it is true that intercultural language learning is a relatively recent innovation, it has been observed (Harbon & Browett, 2006) that language teachers don’t yet know what intercultural language learning looks like in practice.

From the national to the local

As mentioned previously, primary responsibility for schooling in Australia lies with state and territory governments. However, there is a complex relationship between the federal and state and territory governments in regards to education policy. The Australian Government has long been a major source of funding for schools in the private sector and increasingly in the public sector. Over recent times, it has shown a growing interest in what is taught in schools and how it is taught, often under the banner of national collaboration or through federally funded national initiatives such as Discovering Democracy (Curriculum Corporation, 2001) and the Values Education Schools Project (Bereznicki et al., 2008). National education policies such as the Melbourne Declaration or the national curriculum require the agreement of all state and territory and the Federal Ministers of Education, they are necessarily the subject of considerable negotiation and compromise. States and territories are then responsible for marrying what are generally broad national agreements with detailed curriculum policies for the schools in their jurisdictions. The extent to which national policy is apparent in their curriculum frameworks and syllabuses varies between jurisdictions according to their power, size and histories. The following example illustrates how intercultural education gets entangled in systemic responses to national requirements.

Every chance to learn: the ACT curriculum framework

The ACT, as a small and junior jurisdiction, is careful to comply with national demands. When it separated from the New South Wales education system in the
in the 1970s, the ACT developed what was then considered to be an innovative education system, choosing a school-based model of curriculum development approved by the School Board rather than a centralised system controlled by the Education Department. However, control has shifted over time, driven at least in part by the need to ensure the ACT complies with Federal requirements.

In 2007, the ACT Department of Education and Training released *Every Chance To Learn* (ECTL) a curriculum framework for ACT schools (2007b), preschool to year 10, intended to provide the foundation for “a comprehensive and balanced” (p. 6) curriculum in all ACT schools and an overview of learning considered essential for all ACT students. ECTL incorporates key national initiatives intended to satisfy the Australian Government’s demand for national curriculum consistency and provides guidance for schools on developing curriculum appropriate for their students. In its principles, the Framework states that curriculum should be equitable and inclusive and that:

> Curriculum decisions should value and include the knowledge, perspectives, cultural backgrounds and experiences each student brings to their learning. The school curriculum should provide opportunities for students to develop intercultural and inter-group understanding and value diversity. (p. 10)

The Framework identifies twenty-five Essential Learning Achievements (ELAs), of which nineteen are discipline-based and six interdisciplinary. They describe what is essential for “ACT students to know, understand, value and be able to do from preschool to year 10” (p.12). ELA 15 (the student communicates with intercultural understanding) is categorised as discipline-based and listed as the single learning achievement for the languages discipline. ELA 15 draws on Liddicoat et al.’s (2003) report on intercultural language learning. It outlines the scope and expected achievements of intercultural language learning, identifying intercultural understanding as the key to “developing students’ capacities to communicate effectively with people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds” (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2007b, p. 144). ELA 15 states that:
A person with intercultural understanding values cultural diversity and understands that both histories and languages shape cultures. Communication between people from different cultures is enhanced when they understand how culture impacts on people’s identity and ways of thinking, speaking and interacting. (ECTL, 2007b, p. 144)

Even though intended as an achievement of language learning, much of ELA 15’s substance concerns learning that does not entail learning a language. It covers the shaping of individual and group identity, the social construction of culture, the development of “mental preparation for meaningful intercultural communication” (p. 144) and learning about “language and language variants and how speakers using a second or third language are influenced in some ways by their first language” (p. 144). Though linked to other ELAs, such as understanding Australia and Australians (ELA 21), citizenship and democracy (ELA 22) and world issues (ELA 23), ELA 15 is not linked to disciplines such as social sciences, English or the arts. This makes languages the only area of the curriculum explicitly addressing intercultural learning.

In addition, much essential content and many markers of progress in the ELA do not require students to develop linguistic competence nor do they expect any depth of intercultural competence. For example, one descriptor of essential content in the later- childhood band of development states that:

students have opportunities to understand and learn about:

how and why people celebrate cultural events in different ways according to their religion, culture, race or location (e.g. new year, religious festivals).

(p. 147)

‘Celebrations’ is a well-worn, ‘multicultural’ topic, often taught as an integrated unit of work around Christmas time. It is scarcely challenging for upper primary students, indicating a possible mismatch between the content in languages classes where students have relatively low levels of linguistic fluency and cognitive ability. It seems that ELA 15 sits uneasily between languages and social sciences and does justice to neither.
It is notable that ELA 15, unlike the other 24 learning achievements presumably considered truly essential, has an opt out clause that states, “individual schools make decisions about languages offered and when and how they are taught” (p. 145). Given that in 2008 almost 40% of ACT government primary schools did not offer any languages program whatsoever, (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2008) there is a real risk that intercultural education will be marginalised in much the same way as multicultural education or treated as an optional extra like languages. Primary schools with no language programs may overlook intercultural learning altogether.

The ACT’s curriculum framework sets out to provide guidance for schools on the learning achievements considered essential for students in ACT schools. However, in regard to students’ capacity to communicate with intercultural understanding, it is both confused and confusing, doing justice neither to intercultural learning nor language learning more generally. It is to be hoped that intercultural approaches do help to strengthen the position of languages in the primary school curriculum, but they cannot be considered the sole source of intercultural learning, nor should the role of other areas of the curriculum be limited to cultural appreciation.

**Moving towards intercultural learning**

There are significant gaps and silences in the various policies, frameworks, statements and initiatives examined above. In announcing a vision of Australian education as central to the creation of a society that is prosperous, socially cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Indigenous cultures, *the Melbourne Declaration* promises much. However, it struggles to live up to its promise. Its goals and commitments to action seem more a reflection of where we have been than where we are going. They are symptomatic of a society that has identified major changes in the world but is not yet sure how to deal with them, particularly as they concern the social consequences of globalisation.

This uncovers two distinct but related issues. Firstly, though there is in-principle agreement that education should equip young people to relate positively to people and
groups they see as different from themselves, this is not its main concern. Intercultural skills are seen as a good thing but they do not have the urgency or priority that in the primary school curriculum is given to other foundational skills. Secondly, though it identifies a need to nurture greater appreciation and respect for cultural diversity, the Melbourne Declaration relies on well-worn strategies such as the promotion of cultural appreciation and peaceful co-existence, rather than intercultural dialogue and interaction. Thought of in terms of Touraine’s notion of the disjuncture between society and people’s everyday lives, the two issues converge. If they are to carry real weight, social goals must have significance in people’s lives. Learning to live together must be seen as a personal responsibility and a shared project.

In this light, I stake a claim for an intercultural approach to the primary school curriculum based on three propositions:

- that learning to live together in a world that is diverse, changing and uncertain is as fundamental to students’ futures as foundational learning such as literacy and numeracy
- that culture comes into play in any learning that concerns people and their relationships
- that intercultural learning should not be considered the province of any single learning area alone.

This approach to intercultural education supports the identification of intercultural understanding as a general capability across the whole curriculum and as an orientation that operates across the whole school. It seeks to move beyond learning about other people and cultures to focus on interaction and learning from others, encouraging curiosity, empathy, the capacity to see multiple perspectives and in so doing to grow in self-knowledge. It opposes moves to narrow the primary curriculum because it reduces students’ access to deep and diverse experiential learning and may well exacerbate disadvantage. Above all, it asserts that all students, from the earliest years of schooling, are entitled to a rich mix of personal, social and intercultural learning.
The questions for schools include how best to meet this entitlement, how to connect students with other people and the wider world and how to provide them with experiences where they can interact positively with people they perceive to be different from themselves. These are real, practical and important and the answers are not always (or often) found. The work of schools is the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter 5: In schools

But how can we learn to live together in the ‘global village’ if we cannot manage to live together in the communities to which we naturally belong – the nation, the region, the city, the village, the neighbourhood? (Delors, 1996)

The importance of learning to live together is not simply a consequence of globalisation. New realities and uncertainties that accompany the global flows of information, goods and people may make the need more pressing, but fundamentally, we learn to live together much closer to home, in our local neighbourhoods and schools. The previous chapter examined key national and system education policies and programs in terms of their commitment to education that supports students in learning to get to know and get along with people they perceive to be different from themselves. It uncovered layers of policy demands and priorities that suggest, while there is in-principle support for intercultural education, its already tenuous place is accentuated by a narrowing of the curriculum, particularly at the primary level. Much of the time, schools remain oblivious to the intricacies of national policy deliberations. Eventually though, they do feel the effects of competing pressures and priorities, many of them externally imposed, that play an increasing role in the work of schools and the curriculum choices they make.

This chapter examines practice in schools, based on fieldwork conducted between August 2006 and June 2007 in four primary schools in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). It incorporates the views and perceptions of class teachers and school leaders collected in interviews with them, and provides accounts of working with teachers to bring an intercultural approach to the planning, implementation and evaluation of integrated units of work. It asks what an intercultural approach might look like in integrated units of work in primary school classes.

The chapter is in two parts. The first part introduces the teachers and schools involved in the project. It portrays a range of voices and stories to convey the perspectives of teachers and students as well as my own observations of how schools might work with students learning to live together. It covers teachers’ understandings of culture and the importance of intercultural education to the processes of planning and implementing an
integrated unit of work in their classes. It includes their assessment of what did and did not work in their classes, what was interesting and what was boring, and what they learnt from the experience. Ultimately though, the accounts are partial, shaped by my choices to include or exclude certain statements, activities and events and to portray them in a particular light.

The second part of the chapter uses the six principles for intercultural education, introduced in earlier chapters, as an organising structure. It draws on my observation of learning activities and teachers’ reflections on them to elaborate on the principles of engagement, connection, positive interaction, empathy, perspective, and self-knowledge and to consider the extent to which these principles might be considered robust, realistic and relevant in working towards a pedagogy of intercultural learning. To illustrate the nature of the tasks teachers developed and to give some idea of the variety and substance of student responses, it also includes examples of learning activities and samples of student work.

Overview

As ACT schools are individually responsible for curriculum development, there is considerable diversity in the approaches they adopt. The new system-wide curriculum framework, *Every chance to learn* (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2007b), now provides a basis for school curriculum planning, but it came into effect after the fieldwork for this study was completed. Of the three schools examined in detail here, one used the 2006 draft framework as a guide and the other two used approaches they developed themselves or that had been adopted across the whole school. These were based on *Learning by Design* (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005) and *Understanding by Design* (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Though some of the data reflect this disparity, the three approaches are not compared directly in any detail. Like most ACT primary schools, all four schools worked with an integrated approach to curriculum, particularly to cover content across the humanities and the sciences. Individual teachers and teams developed integrated units of work that typically were delivered over a school term. The
primary focus of the fieldwork was the planning, implementation, assessment and evaluation of a single unit of work in each of the participating schools.

**Starting points**

I went into my fieldwork in schools assuming it was possible to work with an intercultural approach in any unit of work that had people in it. Even though integrated units are intended to be transdisciplinary, in primary schools a lead or core discipline often guides the direction they take, as was the case in this study (Table 2).

Because social science is concerned with the interaction of people, their society and the environment (R. Reynolds, 2009, p. 1), intercultural education falls naturally within social science based units. Though I wanted to consider working in other disciplines, it could be argued that giving a science unit a ‘human perspective’ changes its focus and makes it more like a social science unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Year level</th>
<th>Unit of work</th>
<th>Area of study</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little</td>
<td>Year 2</td>
<td>Alguien como yo</td>
<td>Social world</td>
<td>Term 4 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1 class)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley</td>
<td>Years 1/2</td>
<td>Christmas around the</td>
<td>End of year</td>
<td>Term 4 2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3 classes)</td>
<td>world</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridge</td>
<td>Years 3/4</td>
<td>Where do I belong?</td>
<td>Civics</td>
<td>Term 1 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3 classes)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creek</td>
<td>Year 6</td>
<td>Our changing Earth</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Term 1 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1 class)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: **Overview of the fieldwork**

I agreed to work with the units of work class teachers proposed. This was not without its drawbacks. For instance, the teachers in Valley School were reluctant to work with me on their main unit for term 4, Water, nominating instead their final unit for the year Christmas around the World. As it turned out, their Water unit took up most of the term, leaving little time for the unit on Christmas. Although I made another attempt to work with them at the beginning of Term 1 2007 (described later in this chapter), Valley
School teachers decided to take no further part in the research project. However, their initial interviews and a description of the school are included here as they provide useful perspectives on the research project’s concerns. In the three remaining schools, I worked with individual teachers and teaching teams (5 classes in all) in planning meetings and weekly team meetings and in the classes, to devise, shape and modify the units.

By way of introduction to the project, I gave all teachers the following written overview:

*This project is about how teachers and learners might engage with different cultures through intercultural approaches to teaching and learning. It is about how teachers and learners come to understand more about themselves - how they live, what they believe and how they see the world in relation to the lives, beliefs and ways of seeing the world of people they see as different from themselves. And it is about how they learn to negotiate those differences.*

*This area of study is neither simple nor is it well understood. Through the project, I hope to show what some interculturally focused classrooms might look like – describing the difficulties and uncertainties as well as successes and breakthroughs they go through. I also want to make links across learning areas and education programs such as LOTE, SOSE, the Arts, studies of Asia, and values education, expanding opportunities to incorporate intercultural experiences in the curriculum.*

**In the classroom** I am asking teachers to think **differently** about content and pedagogy.

**Content:** To some extent, when teachers develop units of work that move from learners’ individual lives to their membership of different groups - their families, friends, the local community, the nation and the world - a range of perspectives may be evident. However, because we tend to assume our way of doing things is right or the only way, we may only notice the views of groups to which we belong. Therefore, in developing content, teachers should consciously represent
worlds and perspectives that are unlike learners’ own. At times, the teacher’s role may be to present alternative ways of seeing the world.

**Pedagogy:** Content that presents different ways of seeing the world is simply a starting point. Once learners have some idea of the experiences and beliefs of different people in relation to the topic, they focus on making comparisons with their own lives, and on imagining how they would respond to someone else’s world and how that person might respond to their world. They are asked to reflect on how they see others and how others might see them.

**The schools**

The schools depicted here are not unusual, sharing the broad characteristics, commitments and organisation of many other Australian primary schools. They also have distinct identities influenced by people and place and shaped by their histories. It has always seemed to me that every school has its own distinctive feel, much of which is apparent on entering the school. And so, I begin the short profiles below with my first impressions of each school.

**Little Primary School (LPS)**

I arrive at the end of lunchtime and the children are still out playing. The playground is an enclosed leafy area and looks rather like a child-friendly backyard with lots of bikes and scooters lying around. A girl comes out of the main building and starts ringing a hand bell, till the clanger falls out. The children head for their classrooms. The girl, the bell and I go into the reception area together. Inside, a fish tank displays a watery world in miniature. I notice a thank you card on the noticeboard from the previous principal signed with love. (Journal entry, 10 August 2006)

Little Primary School is a well-established early childhood government school with an enrolment of around eighty students in 4 classes from preschool to Year 2. Unlike other government schools, there is no requirement for students to live in the local area. A
place in the school is based on being first through the door on the morning enrolments open. Places are prized and the school has a waiting list. It has an ethos of care and closeness with high levels of parental involvement. Teachers know all the children and their families. Bev, the school principal, describes a relatively homogenous community, with parents having a “pretty well educated, middle class background”. She says, “one of my parents who is interested in us teaching the students about social justice issues basically and people less fortunate than ourselves, said to me we don’t get the kids that the other schools get. And I think she’s right”. Though the school has no languages program across the school, Bev gave Anna (the Year 2 teacher) considerable support and encouragement to start a Spanish language program in her class.

Valley Primary School (VPS)

At 9.30am the car park is full but there is no one to be seen. All the school buildings look alike. I head to the closest and follow the arrows to the front office. The secretary asks me to take a seat as the deputy principal whom I’d come to see had someone with her. Gerri, the deputy principal, comes out of her office to say she won’t be long. From inside I hear a boy’s voice, “You can’t stop me”. A man is hovering nearby. He comes and sits with me and we get into conversation. He has been the building supervision officer at the school since it opened and he tells me about changes to the school over that time. I get the feeling he is here as a back up for Gerri. Eventually, Gerri emerges followed by a boy of about eight. She hands him over to a male teacher who seems to know what’s going on. She explains to me that the boy is upset because he has not been allowed to go to football. Among other things, in his anger today, he told her she has aliens coming out of her arse. (Journal entry, 9 August 2006)

Valley Primary School is located in one of the relatively new, outer suburbs of Canberra. It is a government school with around 280 students. Enrolment is declining. Most of the students live in the area. The school receives additional funding under the Schools Equity Funding program for disadvantaged schools and houses several learning support units. Gerri describes the school as “very monocultural”. She continues: “We do have
other cultures represented there. I think at our birthday party there was something like 26 or 27 flags paraded including the Aboriginal flag and the Aussie flag. I mean the American flag was there and the Scottish flag was there, but a lot of Asian countries as well, a lot of European countries. So... but it doesn't hit you in the face, you know, and they just kind of blend in, and I think as a whole, we don't really... have much dialogue about anything else other than our own culture going on”.

Valley Primary is different from Little Primary in a number of respects. It is a conventional government primary school (kindergarten to Year 6) rather than an early childhood school (preschool to Year 2). It is considerably larger than Little Primary and its enrolment is principally derived from the local area whereas Little School accepts enrolments across the whole of the ACT. Valley Primary is in a relatively new area of Canberra and the school has an open-plan design. This facilitates a team-based structure of multi-aged classes in contrast with Little Primary’s traditional single teacher to a single year level structure. Relative to Little Primary, Valley Primary has a high proportion of students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Both schools are broadly mono-cultural though Valley Primary has a small English as a Second Language (ESL) program catering for around 5% of its students. Valley Primary does not offer a languages program. In comparison with Little Primary, Valley Primary has a relatively high number of young or recently qualified teachers and a significant turnover of staff from year to year.

**Creek Primary School (CPS)**

The school is in a new suburb where the buildings still look like a collection of demountables in a paddock. While I wait for the principal and the deputy I fall into conversation with a teacher putting together a display in the tiny foyer area. It’s a giant spider web depicting the whole school focus for religious education for 2007 – with a sequence of core values to be taught over the year. The focus for Term 1 is care and compassion. I am struck by how up front the Catholic ethos is. (Journal entry, 22 November 2006)
Creek Primary School is a parochial Catholic school in a part of Canberra that is still growing. The school’s population has increased rapidly since opening twelve years ago and is now around six hundred students and twenty-six classes. Megan, the deputy principal, notes that the school has “quite a cultural mix” with a prominent Croatian community. She says, “… it is fantastic to have another culture, and it's fantastic that you have this background that you can reflect, but we're here in Australia working together. We're all Australians on that playground”. For Megan, the Catholic ethos was “the centre from which we do everything”, giving the school freedom to work in areas such as values education more readily than might be possible in government schools.

Creek Primary is the largest of the primary schools participating in this research project. In contrast to Little Primary whose enrolment is small and stable and Valley School whose enrolment is declining, Creek School’s enrolment continues to grow, in line with its location in the ACT’s newest and fastest growing satellite centre. Compared with Little Primary and Valley Primary, Creek Primary School is moderately multicultural with students from a range of cultural backgrounds, including a relatively high proportion of students with Croatian heritage. Creek Primary offers a limited Japanese language program. As a Catholic school, Creek Primary differs from the other three schools in its explicitly Christian mission and vision but, otherwise, like the other schools, it follows ACT curriculum requirements. It falls between Little Primary and Valley Primary in its organisation of classes, with teachers working in single classrooms but planning their learning program together in year-level teams.

**Ridge Primary School (RPS)**

I arrive just as lunchtime finishes. There are lots of children milling around the front office – collecting the newsletter, returning a video camera and assorted other business. The secretary greets all the children and me by name, saying that Kate, the deputy principal, is expecting me. Kate arrives soon after, first of all turning on the school PA system so that a child can announce silent reading time to be accompanied by several students playing flute in the corridor. As she shows me around, Kate describes the school as “an oasis”. (Journal entry 31 August 2006)
Ridge Primary is a government school in an established suburb. It has a population of around 300 students that remains steady, with about one third travelling from other areas. Kate, the deputy principal, says “one of the interesting things I have found about our school that I haven’t in other places, is that lots of those people choose to bring their children across several suburbs, because perhaps grandparents are in the area, and quite a number of our parents were students here themselves”. The school has an environment centre purpose built by parents at the school. One of the teachers, Ita, describes the school culture as “very accepting”. The school is predominantly middle class. Kate describes the students as “Mastercard kids” - readily accepted anywhere.

In comparison with Valley Primary and Creek Primary, Ridge Primary is older and more established, as reflected in its stable student enrolment and long serving staff. Like Creek Primary, Ridge Primary could be described as moderately multicultural with students from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. Unlike the other schools, Ridge Primary offers a languages program across the whole school. Like Creek Primary and Little Primary the teachers work in single classrooms, though, as in Valley School, they plan their learning programs in teams across two year-levels.

The teachers

Research cited in the ACT discussion paper Teachers: the key to student success (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2004) confirms that of all the variables within schools it is teachers who make the most difference and who have the most impact on children’s learning in schools. While I do not suppose that the teachers and school leaders who participated in this project represent the voices of all teachers, what they say and do resonates with the experiences and perceptions of many (Aveling, 2007; Hickling-Hudson, 2005). In working with me, they showed overwhelming generosity, openness, thoughtfulness and a commitment to delivering the best possible education for the children in their care. Consequently, much of this chapter explores teachers’ thoughts, beliefs and classroom practice as they relate to intercultural education.
What teachers bring

In my experience, most teachers think and talk constantly about their work, students and parents. The teachers in this project are no exception. The two teachers’ comments below indicate something of their preparedness to challenge their assumptions, to be open to other ways of seeing things and to change what they do, in the first case reflecting on the unit of work as a whole and in the second a specific activity.

Well I think we just got stuck on the fact that it’s not a natural disaster if it hasn’t affected people and the environment. We got stuck way back there because it really never occurred to us. What surprised us was something so simple and logical had never occurred to us, and then it changed how we thought about it and what information we gave or shared or discussed. So it made a difference. (Helen, CPS)

We only got our crests done today. It was really funny; they all got stuck on being part of a country. I stopped myself halfway through...trying to tell them that just because their grandmother is a quarter Greek, doesn’t mean they’re part of the Greek community. But then I thought no don’t because that’s obviously something they’ve thought of that means something to them. And then I pose ...”Well if you’re part of a Greek community, what things do you do together?” Then it turned out some of them do Greek dancing and some go to Greek school. But I, in myself, had a problem with them identifying as that, even though it was only, you know, three generations before them... I was thinking as they were doing it, well they’re not really part of that community, but then I thought maybe that’s just my view of what a community is ... and then I was bringing my value system into it but then I thought, oh bugger it, just let them do whatever’s important... whatever is obviously important to them. (Justine, RPS)

Teachers: the key to student success (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2004) describes teaching and learning as “a dynamic process”, influenced by the “abilities and needs, knowledge and skills, self-concept and motivation, beliefs, values
and feelings, background and experiences” (p. 2) of both teachers and students in learning environments and in broader local and global contexts. At a deep level, it could be argued that teaching is as much about who you are and what you believe as it is about your professional knowledge and expertise. This is particularly evident in social dimensions of education such as intercultural education that explore people’s relationships, worldviews and values.

Liddicoat et al. (2007) point out that an intercultural approach to language learning should not be seen as just another ‘method’ for teachers of combining language, culture and learning but as “an overall orientation, a way of thinking and doing, a stance, which influences all decisions regarding curriculum design, its operationalisation and ongoing renewal” (p. 48). The influence that one’s personal stance may have on teaching practice, particularly in relation to intercultural education, was only mentioned explicitly once. In discussing the importance of intercultural education, Gerri (VPS) made the following observation:

...the way I see it, it's got to be in your thinking... It must come from your thinking, that if you want kids to be able to have empathy about other people, you know, where other people are coming from, their culture, their language, their race, their religion, then you've got to have an understanding about that yourself and know where you need to go.

Anna (LPS), who migrated from South America as a child, had no difficulty in making a personal connection with intercultural education.

I find it important... because I guess I see myself, when I came here I was different.
I'm still different, but you know what I mean, I've got a different background, so it's interesting that I want to share that. And something different from what we do here.

However, most other teachers thought of intercultural education as something external to themselves that would primarily be of benefit to their students. In general terms, they suggested that intercultural education would give students a better understanding of themselves in the world and as citizens of the world with an ability to accept everyone’s culture. Though they deplored discrimination and racism, most teachers did not automatically bring an intercultural orientation to their thinking or to their teaching.

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practice. It seems to me one consequence of this stance is that teachers often do not see the intercultural dimensions inherent in the curriculum.

**What students bring**

Teachers consistently emphasised the importance of knowing the children in their classes and establishing positive relationships with them. For instance, Lil (RPS) commented, “it’s a matter of knowing your kids... knowing their interests, but also knowing what they can do, like their capabilities and pushing them”. Anna (LPS) described how she gets to know children incidentally through talking with them in the playground. “I don’t want to be their friend really, but someone who they can talk to. So a lot of it is incidental because I want to talk to them and I want to find out things, and be interested in them”.

Teachers’ observations about children were revealing. Ita described the children at Ridge Primary as bringing “a wide, rich general knowledge on the whole. For example, two of my children went overseas for their holidays, one went to Fiji, and one went to South Africa. They have rich experience. And they know two languages or they know different cultures. So they can all contribute that way”. Justine (RPS) agreed, saying, “these kids do have a world view. They are aware there’s a drought, they’re aware that there are people at war and that, they’re aware of that because that might be the conversation that happens at the dinner table”. She continued, “the families are educated. It goes back to education being valued. And that is a thing that crosses ethnicity”.

Kate (RPS) described what children bring from their home cultures as their “virtual school bags”. When asked how they connect what children bring with them to their learning in school, teachers tended to be less specific. Kate suggested it could involve “looking at experiences like other languages or other activities that the kids might be involved in as a good thing... as resources to draw on”. Helen (CPS) explained that children’s experiences often came up incidentally through stories rather than something that was planned, adding “the stories sometimes do overtake the lesson”. Carly (VPS) recalled the mother of a Cambodian child bringing in some Cambodian food and dress as
part of a cultural focus. Gerri (VPS) gave the most concrete example from her experience as a class teacher in a previous school, describing the effect of observing special occasions and celebrations for children from minority cultures in her class. She said, “it certainly made a difference to the children who were highlighted for the first time, yeah they suddenly stood up and had their chest out and shoulders back and thought I am a member of this class actually, I’m not just a little dark coloured person that’s different to the rest”.

However, several teachers were tentative about drawing attention to any cultural diversity in their class. In describing her class at the beginning of the year, Ita (RPS) said, “it’s again very multicultural. I think a lot of the children here would classify themselves as Australian... and I don’t want to say “where are you from?” and isolate them, because they’re Australian, but if you have a different cultural background would you like to share it? Because you know to them, they’re Australian and that’s what they are, they were born here”. Danni (VPS) explained her reluctance to talk about cultural and religious differences, saying, “You don’t know if you’re going to offend”.

Asking students to talk about their own cultural backgrounds is by no means straightforward. Kamler (2003) cites the argument that “asking students to publicly reveal information about their lives and cultures in the presence of others – including teachers – is at best voyeuristic, and at worst a dangerous form of surveillance to see if students produce the right voice” (p. 8). At times, teachers may assume a level of knowledge and awareness about heritage they don’t expect in other students or may undercut what children want to say. When a friend’s daughter returned from visiting her grandparents in Vietnam, she asked her teacher whether she could give a class talk about Vietnam. In agreeing, the teacher began by telling the class about her own experiences travelling in Vietnam, describing the dirt, the heat and the poverty. When it came to her turn, the child felt there was nothing she could say.

While unanimous in their support for intercultural education in principle, a number of teachers qualified their comments. Helen (CPS) drew attention to the beliefs and values children bring with them from home, particularly when these come into conflict with those taught at school. She says, “you tend to be fighting an uphill battle sometimes,
especially if you’re trying to have a conversation or interview with the parents and if you’re talking to the father who doesn’t like women then you’re in that particular difficulty… but children I think, if they are presented with this over a period of time can change the way that they see their world”. Lil (RPS) emphasised the importance of being sensitive to different children and contexts, saying, “it’s not like here’s a booklet, go and teach it you know? Because it’s going to be different in different schools, it’s going to be different in different areas of Australia”. Though Danni (VPS) said intercultural education was extremely important, the only opportunities she nominated for its incorporation were scripture and Christmas activities. Tellingly, she added it could be more appropriate “in older groups once skills are established”.

Justine (RPS) also questioned the appropriateness of intercultural education for all children, such as the children at her previous school who “were all white kids who didn’t know anything bigger than [their suburb]”. She speculated “this wouldn’t be so relevant... to those kids in my class who didn’t know anything about any of them (different cultures)... because for those junior primary kids, it is hard, if they’ve not ever experienced it, even the people next door being a different culture”.

All the teachers in this research project express concern for their students and recognise the importance of establishing positive relationships with them. The extent to which teachers incorporate children’s backgrounds into the classroom varies considerably as does their assessment of children’s knowledge of the world and the importance of intercultural learning for some children. I explore the implications of the belief that intercultural education is only relevant for some children or for children once they mastered the basic skills of literacy and numeracy in more detail in the next chapter.

Managing time and space - the calendar, the timetable and the classroom

School calendars and timetables frame what happens in teachers’ classes. There is a seemingly natural progression of activities and events from ‘getting to know you’ at the start of the year through to end of the year celebrations. As the school calendar mirrors the Christian heritage of most of the community with holidays and celebrations for
Christmas and Easter, teachers with students who do not celebrate these occasions in their class face a dilemma (or a learning opportunity):

So what we do at Christmas and Easter and things like that, this is when we bring in “what do you do?” When you see all the eggs in the shop you know what do you do and how do you relate to that and how do you feel? And that helps. (Ita, RPS)

Given a multiplicity of constraints, teachers’ work is to manage the available time as best they can. Anna (LPS) describes the approach taken by staff at her school. “We usually start off with the term planner and then we add things that we know are going to happen, which is easier because you can plan everything and then go but there’s two weeks of swimming, oh we’ve got to get rid of that. So that’s what we do. Big days and big things”. It is scarcely surprising that primary principals complain about the overcrowded curriculum. Over two school terms and across the five classes, ‘big days and big things’ that I noted included: Children’s Week, Confirmation, Civics and Citizenship national testing, Sustainable Schools Program, school review, curriculum renewal, swimming program, dance program, school camp, swimming carnival, Harmony Day, Christmas craft, Care flight and the school concert, as well as regular tasks such as parent interviews and the introduction of A-E reporting.

In the face of constant, complex demands on learning time, teachers showed remarkable inventiveness. Helen (CPS) described how her Year 6 team intended meeting several major commitments the following term:

Our next unit is really Inspirational People but next term’s Confirmation, so the first seven weeks, up to the seventh week is the Confirmation program. And we’re shifting the program not away from Confirmation, but also including inspirational people in a political sense. Because we’re also being tested in Term 3 in the Civics and Citizenship test... and because of that, we needed to do a bit of democracy. So we’ve somehow linked democracy with Confirmation. And we are looking at inspirational people like Nelson Mandela, and we’re going to do a little look at apartheid and the government at the time and look at different forms of democracy and look at the countries, if it is a democracy or if it’s not.
The complexity of the contemporary primary classroom is such that to ask teachers to add more to what they already do may seem excessive. Many primary schools respond to the ‘overcrowded curriculum’ by taking an integrated approach and managing, like Helen, to ‘kill several birds with one stone’. In considering how an intercultural approach might best be introduced into primary classrooms, it is important that it is not seen as something extra that has to be squeezed into an already overfull timetable. Rather, it might be seen as working differently within what teachers already do.

Planning

Teachers’ approaches to planning have a major impact on learning (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2004; Kalantzis & Cope, 2005; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Wiggins and McTighe (2005) claim that much curriculum development occurs more by hope than design, with teachers building learning around a topic or resource they have chosen rather than starting with a clear goal in mind (p. 15). According to Gerri, teachers planning units of work are “not really looking outside ourselves and into other cultures in a deep way, we might have you know, the unit of work about China or Japan or whatever, which we've done for centuries, but to go to a deeper level, I don't see that happening”. By way of contrast, McRae (2008) quotes a primary teacher describing how teachers in her school routinely plan units of work to incorporate global perspectives. She says, “everything we teach is tested by the questions: Is it real? Is it rich? Is it relevant? Does it recognise difference?” (p. 9) The questions teachers ask themselves and the perspectives they take into account (both consciously and unconsciously) inevitably affect what is and is not included in their units of work and classroom activities.

When teachers were planning their units of work in the research project, I asked them to consider the following questions, based loosely on Wiggins and McTighe’s (2005) design framework combined with the six guiding principles for intercultural education:

- What do you want learners to learn from the unit – what is its purpose? What are the big ideas? How will you communicate these to learners?
Chapter 5: In schools

- How can you get learners interested and involved in thinking and talking about the lives and experiences of people they see as different from themselves? *(the engagement principle)*
- What sorts of things do you want them to look at in their own and in other people’s lives? *(the positive interaction principle)*
- How can learners relate what they find out about other people to their own lives? *(the connection principle)*
- Does this show up some of the things learners might take for granted about their own lives or ways of thinking? *(the perspective principle)*
- What activities or approaches related to the topic would help learners to see and hear other people’s points of view, to get beyond seeing them as weird or odd, to somehow get inside or imagine their feelings or ways of seeing things? *(the empathy principle)*
- How can you help learners to deal with the differences they see between their own lives and ways of thinking and those of others? *(the self-knowledge principle)*
- What evidence will you collect to show learning?

Because the ACT has a system of school-based curriculum development, there is no single template for curriculum planning. As became evident over the course of the fieldwork, schools had much in common and much that differed in their approaches and levels of teacher autonomy. Broadly, the teachers in the three schools developed integrated units of work using what were all essentially inquiry based approaches (J. Wilson & Wing Jan, 2003) informed to greater and lesser degrees by the three curriculum design frameworks (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2007b; Kalantzis & Cope, 2005; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). The way in which the topic was chosen and the basis for the unit design are summarised in table 3 below. This is followed by an overview of the three units, set out in accordance with their design.
### Units of work

In the summaries below, the ways teachers describe their units of work reflect the distinct design approaches they have taken, but also reveal several commonalties. They each attempt to make explicit the values underpinning multiple ways of seeing and experiencing the world, they share a commitment to deep learning through the identification of big/key understandings and they outline what students will be expected to know and do, covering what *the Melbourne Declaration* describes as “a solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values on which further learning and adult life can be built” (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 13).

#### Little Primary: Alguien como yo (Someone like me)

Anna, the Year 2 teacher at Little Primary, developed this unit from an original idea of familiarising her class with other places, around the world in thirty days. After talking together, she and I decided to limit the journey to three locations (across three continents) and to focus on people and where they live.

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**Table 3: Unit choice and design**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Choice of unit</th>
<th>Basis for unit design</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little Primary</td>
<td>Year 2 teacher</td>
<td><em>Understanding by Design</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Wiggins &amp; McTighe, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ridge Primary</td>
<td>Whole school integrated curriculum map for Years 3 and 4</td>
<td><em>Learning by Design</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Kalantzis &amp; Cope, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creek Primary</td>
<td>Year 6 team</td>
<td><em>Every chance to learn - draft ACT</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Curriculum Framework (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit description

The unit explores the lives of some children in different regions of the world – South Africa, Mexico and Thailand. We look at how children spend their time, what they eat and how they celebrate special occasions. As well as finding out information and imagining what other children’s lives might be like, Year 2 students think about their own lives in relation to those of other children - what they have in common, what makes them different from one another and whether where they live affects who they are. Finally, they consider how they might use what they have learnt about children in other parts of the world to plan a celebration that would include them all.

| Students are beginning to understand: | • the way they are and the way they live may not be the same for everyone.  
• respect for people they identify as being different from themselves.  
• the value of participating in events that support diversity, intercultural and intergroup understandings  
• there are many ways of seeing the world  
• all people have some things in common and some things that are different |
|---|---|
| As a result of doing this unit students will know: | • about aspects in the daily lives of some children in South Africa, Mexico and Thailand including how they spend their time, what they eat and how they celebrate special occasions  
• that they have lots in common with and some things that are different from children who live in these places |
| Students will be able to: | • explain aspects of children’s daily life of in South Africa, Mexico and Thailand  
• make connections between their own lives and those of some children in South Africa, Mexico and Thailand  
• imagine what other children’s lives might be like  
• apply what they have learnt about other children’s lives to new situations |
Anna taught the unit to her Year 2 class for around eight weeks during the last term of 2007. She could not extend the unit until the end of term because it clashed with the school-wide swimming program. Therefore, the final celebratory assessment activity had to be abandoned. Instead, the class developed a performance from a story set in Thailand for the end of year school concert.

**Ridge Primary School: Where do I belong?**

The topic for this unit followed the school social science curriculum for Stage 2 (Years 3 and 4). The four class teachers chose to focus on the question *Where do I belong?* because they thought it fitted in well with to getting to know one another and settling in activities at the beginning of the 2008 school year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Big understanding</th>
<th>A community is a social system in which people interact.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key questions</td>
<td>• To what communities do I belong?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What happens in our community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How can I contribute to my community?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a result of completing this Learning Element, students will be able to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential objectives</td>
<td>• read and record facts about Indigenous Australian communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• understand and summarise the role of citizens in our community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• understand their roles as citizens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual objectives</td>
<td>• categorise and classify communities in which they belong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• define characteristics of a good citizen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• make generalisations about common features of communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytical objectives</td>
<td>• analyse the importance of belonging to a community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• analyse the differences and similarities of specific Australian communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Applied objectives

• illustrate and explain how they have been, and can continue to be, a good citizen in any community
• assess how they actively involve and include others in day to day activities

The unit extended beyond the original ten-week period allocated for it, with individual class teachers adding and subtracting activities according to the responses of students in their class and the time they had available.

Creek Primary School: Our Changing Earth

The three Year 6 teachers at Creek Primary agreed on natural disasters as the topic for their first integrated unit for 2008, partly because one of the teachers had had successful experience with similar units previously.

Unit description

Students learn about the structure of the Earth and develop an understanding of how the Earth changes. They will explore the causes and effects of different natural disasters. Students will:

• explore the impact natural disasters have on people and places
• investigate the effects of human activity on the Earth
• undertake a research project of their own choice related to the topic which will include an action plan that addresses the consequences of their disaster.

Students use:

• scientific knowledge to describe and explain how and why disasters occur and what the effects are on people and places, in response to the question - what are the causes and effects of natural and man-made disasters?
• knowledge and understanding of natural and man-made disasters to be proactive about local, national and global issues that will determine how the future might be in response to the question - how can people have a positive impact on the future of our Earth?
the inquiry process in authentic situations as part of the topic (to clarify and define the inquiry purpose, assemble and evaluate information, and communicate and justify their conclusions)

- thinking strategies that generate different points of view on an issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Markers of progress</th>
<th>By the end of early adolescence, students have moved beyond thinking of others in terms of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and beyond assuming an underlying universal similarity with ‘us’. They identify that their own culture is dynamic and variable and that they themselves act within a cultural context. They acknowledge that other groups act within different cultural contexts and begin to understand that valuing diversity is about knowing how to engage with the cultural practices of other groups. They show respect for difference in more obvious areas of non-verbal behaviours. They set aside their own frames of reference temporarily to consciously adopt perspectives of other groups. (sections underlined by teachers)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Students learn about: | • the value of empathy in developing explanations and gaining insights.  
  • the interests, perspectives, knowledge, experiences and backgrounds of a range of groups in relation to topics or themes being studied in the school's curriculum. |
| Students learn to:    | • use the inquiry process and/or interpersonal attributes to investigate the perspectives of others.  
  • identify corollaries, analogies and points of comparison within their own frame of reference to enable them to enter into another's world. (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2006, pp. 76-77) |

The teachers delivered the unit to the three Year 6 classes over one school term. The unit’s main focus was on natural disasters, with selected man-made disasters addressed in the final stages.
Principles in practice

Though the three schools’ planning strategies highlighted different aspects of the intercultural principles in developing an intercultural approach to their units of work, they did not produce substantially different results, suggesting that different planning strategies may not necessarily lead to significantly different forms of practice across the six principles. Over the six to ten weeks of implementation, teachers also modified their units, extending original activities and developing new ones, based on their discussions during team meetings and student response to various activities. The original planning documents served as a rough guide or overview in these discussions and were freely adapted, with some tasks abandoned completely and others added.

In the section that follows, I describe and provide examples of learning activities and student responses to them, against each of the six guiding principles for intercultural education (Table 4). Even though I use the activities here to highlight specific aspects of each principle, in practice they were not used for such a singular purpose.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intercultural education principle</th>
<th>Characteristics of the principle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>engagement</td>
<td>interest, curiosity, enthusiasm, belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connection</td>
<td>commonality, comparison, relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive interaction</td>
<td>context, activity, dialogue, awareness, negotiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>empathy</td>
<td>imagination, feeling for others, care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>consideration of and critical insight into multiple points of view and ways of seeing, critical thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-knowledge</td>
<td>self awareness, openness, reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: The six principles for intercultural education
Engagement

Learning that engages students stimulates their curiosity and enthusiasm and drives them on. Ideally, it involves them in solving problems or challenges connected to the real world (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 195). At Little Primary, Anna introduced the study of children’s lives in South Africa by reading a letter the school had recently received from Sunil, a child in a South African school with which the school had a relationship, telling the children how much she had enjoyed a book they had published the previous year with a South African teacher. Sunil asked if Little Primary could send more books as they had very few. Anna asked her students to think about what they could do. In thinking about this question, students became interested in learning about children’s lives in South Africa.

At Creek Primary School, the notion of engagement was an important consideration. Helen described units of work as having three aspects - what students already know, what they want to learn and what they learnt. Our Changing Earth began by tapping into students’ prior knowledge about natural disasters and then asking them what they wanted to learn about them and what they thought they needed to know. The discussion stimulated students’ engagement with the topic, generating many possible directions for inquiry and providing teachers and students with a base from which to build the unit.

Kalantzis and Cope (2005) suggest that engagement is tied to belonging and transformation, both connecting learning with children’s own worlds and opening up new worlds for them to explore. At Ridge School, The Yellow Pages was one of the first activities in their unit Where do I belong?. As well as being a ‘getting-to know you’ activity for teachers and students at the beginning of the school year, the activity was intended to give all students a sense of being valued in their class for some area of expertise, as Ita explained:

“What are you an expert in?” “I’m an expert in cats”. “I’m an expert in soccer.” If you want to know anything about that, you go to that person. I’ve got some extraordinary spellers, if you want to know how to spell a word, don’t ask me, go and ask this child. It’s like multiple intelligences you know. We’re going to value every single aspect of you. If you’re not good at that,
you can improve. If you are good at that, great, we’re going to value that and we’re going to use you. It’s to fit, I belong and I’m special and I can contribute.

When teachers asked students what they wanted to learn they were sometimes surprised by what they said, as Anna (LPS) found out. After explaining that they would be studying the lives of children in three different parts of the world, she asked students to write down what they would like to know. Three responses appear below (work sample 1). The first is almost a restatement of Anna’s examples with questions about languages, clothes, food and activities. The second is more inventive, looking for time-specific information about pasta, Tin-Tin and Queen Victoria. The third introduces a subject that was to recur throughout the unit - how African houses are made.

The questions reflected both children’s interests and preoccupations and their desire to say the right thing or the same thing as their friend. At times, they also revealed stereotypical perceptions and misconceptions, with students asking: “Why do Chinese eyes look funny?” and “Why do South Africans chop off their right hand when they eat with it?” Interestingly, these questions were among the only ones not seeking information. Mostly, students asked simple questions, seeking factual answers.
Possibly, the greatest challenge and promise of engagement lies with transformation, the task of taking students beyond what they know into unfamiliar terrains. According to Kalantzis and Cope (2005), this is where change and deep learning occurs. One of the first activities in *Our Changing Earth* at Creek Primary used the text *If the World were a Village* (D. J. Smith, 2006) to provide an overview of the world’s people, their nationalities, languages, religions, food, wealth and access to clean air and water, electricity and education, as a backdrop to their study of natural disasters. At the outset, Year 6 Creek School students revealed both patchy world knowledge and a great enthusiasm for the task. When asked to name the world’s most populous country, they answered the USA, Tokyo and Europe and estimated Australia’s population to be around 6 million. They needed basic factual background knowledge from which to build. However, such was students’ enthusiasm for the idea of the world as a village, teachers extended what was essentially an information gathering activity to something more creative, with students designing and drawing their own villages and then imagining
possible consequences to it from a disaster of their choice. Work sample 2 depicts one student’s report of the disaster on Cadbury Island.

Work sample 2: Ferocious storm starts fire (CPS)

Connection

Moving from the known to the new encompasses relationships as well as information. In working with an intercultural approach, teachers need to consider how best to engage students in getting to know people and groups of people they see as different from themselves and in building and strengthening connections between them (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). For students, connecting the experiences of other people to their own helps to reconcile the two realities, though the task is still likely to be difficult when the other reality is distant from their own.

Intercultural language educators (Research Centre for Languages and Cultures, 2008) have identified two strategies to build connection - noticing and comparing. Many teachers are familiar with such awareness raising activities that ask students to look at aspects of other people’s lives carefully and consciously and then compare them with their own. At a simple level, teachers, using stimulus materials, ask students to observe the experiences of others and then to compare what they have observed with their own
lives. The additional step in these noticing tasks is that students are then asked to imagine how they might feel being in the other person’s place and how the other person might feel being in theirs.

At several points in their units of work teachers used noticing strategies, with mixed success. The four tasks below used texts as stimulus material. Three were a sequence of tasks about the lives of children in South Africa from Alguien Como Yo (LPS) and the fourth was an extended task looking at Indigenous Australian communities in Where do I Belong? (RPS).

The first task (activity 1 - on the following page) asked students to look closely at a single photograph from a picture book, consider the questions, discuss their responses in pairs and report their main ideas back to the class. The children commented on the number and composition of people in the photo compared with their families, eating inside or outside (several children nominated eating outside as something they liked) and the food itself (several did not like the thought of eating maize and thought South African children might also prefer the food that children in Australia eat). This task shows the two-step process of noticing – firstly, drawing students’ attention to what they notice about another’s life and secondly, asking students to imagine what others might notice about them.

In the second task, students were asked to record their impressions of a child’s life in Africa using a Y chart of what a child’s life looks like, sounds like and feels like, based on a shared reading of the text A is for Africa (Onyefulu, 1993). It was interesting to note the images that had the greatest effect on students through what they recorded under what Africa looks like. Two photographs stood out - mud huts and a traditional weaving loom. One unintended consequence of this task was that it caused some students to express a somewhat stereotyped and traditional view of Africa that was difficult to shift, as became evident later in the unit. I discuss these impressions later in this chapter. This activity drew my attention to the importance of careful selection of visual materials and guided discussion in their interpretation.
Activity 1:  *One Child One Seed* (Cave, 2002) (LPS)

Look at the photo of Nomusa serving dinner.
- What do you notice about it?

Now think about dinnertime at your house.
- What is it like?

Imagine you are going to dinner with Nothando and her family.
- What would you like about it?
- What would you dislike?

Now imagine Nothando is coming to dinner at your house.
- What do you think she would like about it?
- What do you think she would dislike about it?

The third task was based on an account of one South African child’s life as depicted in the text *Let’s Eat!* (Hollyer, 2003) Students compared aspects of Thembe’s life with their own, an activity they completed without difficulty after some discussion.
Work sample 3: Venn diagram - Thembe and Me (LPS)

The fourth task is from Ridge Primary. It used a series of texts *Life in Indigenous Australian Communities*, (Bruce & Huddlestone, 2006; Pelusey & Pelusey, 2006; Sertori, 2006; C. Wilson, 2006) that present first hand accounts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in northern and central Australia at Gawa, Haasts Bluff, Nguiu and Warmun. After looking at many aspects of life in one of the four communities, students were asked to consider the text on the final page headed ‘the best of both worlds’ and discuss the nominated questions:

The children of the Haasts Bluff community think they have the best of both worlds - whitefella and Anangu.
- What do they think is special about their community?
- What do you think is special about living in your community?

Activity 2: The best of both worlds (RPS)

Students were then asked to imagine what they would and wouldn’t like about living in the Indigenous community what Indigenous children might like and dislike about their community. In broaching this activity with teachers I suggested we add an extra point for discussion - whether students considered living in one community was better than
another, hoping to generate some sort of debate rather than the somewhat pointless listing of similarities and differences and likes and dislikes I had observed in previous noticing activities. However, teachers refused point blank, concerned that students responses would be negative and that parents would complain their children were being encouraged to make negative comments about other people.

Noticing and comparing activities offer useful techniques for naming commonalities and differences between people but need to be taken further and lead into deeper, more challenging learning if they are to have any substantial impact. Making comparisons does not necessarily lead to making connections with others. Students liked the idea of having a wallaby for a pet or being able to go fishing but were more fascinated by the power of medicine men and writing with charcoal. It is possible that students’ experiences and understandings were too far removed from the Indigenous communities for them to make any meaningful or significant connection with them. By way of contrast, students in Years 3 and 4 at Ridge Primary connected to Years 5 and 6 students’ descriptions of school leadership roles and easily imagined the roles they might take when they graduated to the senior school.

The effectiveness of noticing and comparing activities is also lessened when teachers direct children too closely about what to notice or give their own commentary and interpretation, while students’ own independent observation is too often overlooked. While studying AA’s life in Thailand, from a photo of AA eating a durian ice cream, one Little Primary student observed her contemporary clothing and commented, “I see Hello Kitty’s got to Thailand”. The potential directions for inquiry from comments such as this are myriad, but often overlooked.

**Positive interaction**

Hage (2005) advocates interaction over co-existence as a means of strengthening intercultural relationships. Interaction between people, how we act and react in response to one another, is part of our everyday experience, from incidental contact and routine conversations through to complex and sometimes difficult forms of exchange. This complexity is evident in school classrooms where all manner of interaction occurs,
albeit mostly within the known parameters of a structured learning environment. Interaction, as a process whereby two ways meet, act upon and accommodate each other, is central to an intercultural approach (Byram, 2006). In the first instance, intercultural interaction may arise from the cultural diversity within a class both in terms of incidental or everyday interaction and in structured activities. For example, Anna (LPS) recounted the following interaction in her class:

   The other day my dad came in. He was asking me about things. It was in the morning and they were all doing their morning activities. He came in and started asking me – all in Spanish – about, ‘oh I put a hole here and here.’ And I’m talking to him in Spanish. And then he left and one of the kids said, ‘Is that your dad?’ and I said, ‘yeah.’ ‘Oh, that’s Anna’s dad. I didn’t know you could speak Spanish with him.’

Apparently, until then it had not occurred to the children, that even though Anna taught them Spanish, she might also speak it in other circumstances. This example also points to the potential richness of mainstream classroom settings that integrate multiple worlds and languages as part of their everyday reality. For the Year 2 students at Little Primary, Spanish was part of their literacy program and because their class teacher was also their Spanish teacher, Spanish language learning cropped up incidentally through the day as well as during the allotted Spanish classes in the timetable.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, teachers do not always feel comfortable working actively with the diversity in their classrooms, nor are all classrooms necessarily particularly diverse (Hickling-Hudson, 2003). There are good reasons then to build intercultural interaction into structured learning activities. However, this requires teachers to look beyond their classrooms – bringing other voices into the classroom or looking for them outside the classroom either physically or virtually. There is also a need to consider how to promote interaction. It is not enough to bring two groups together and expect them to interact positively (Hage, 2005).

Anna invited Tarfula, an attaché from the South African embassy, to come and talk to her class. Tarfula had requested questions in advance but on the day of his visit children asked questions spontaneously, on topics ranging from the types of cars and trucks they
drive in South Africa and the sort of money they use through to health, wealth and poverty and why black and white people live separately. One child asked how they make mud huts. Tarfula replied he wasn’t sure and that though houses were traditionally made from mud and rocks with thatch roofs, they had a problem with rain and the government was providing money for new houses also that a lot of people live in cities. Another child asked how the weaving machines worked. Tarfula remembered his grandmother using one but didn’t know how it worked. He added that women still did traditional weaving to make money when their husbands were away working in the mines. The husbands sent money back for the family but it didn’t arrive every week or month. Tarfula’s stories put a human face to what they had seen and read. After his visit, when Anna asked the class to explain what African houses were made of, one student responded: “It all depends where they live”.

Apart from Tarfula’s visit to Little Primary, opportunities to interact with people outside the classroom across all three schools were few. It is true that activities involving members of the community or those leaving the school grounds are time-consuming and are often complicated to organise, but that should not prevent them from happening. What is most pertinent here is how little community interaction occurred. This was particularly surprising in the unit of work on communities (RPS) where the only activity involving people outside the school was a lunch to celebrate Harmony Day to which parents were invited.

 Needless to say, none of the teachers felt satisfied with the coherence or effectiveness of the unit. Lil’s assessment was that “we were looking on the outside, not doing and finding it.” She identified the unit’s main shortcoming as its lack of an action orientation. If she were to do the unit again she said she would choose something real with a current affairs or issues focus, more geared to showing students that their “actions have an effect on the community”. Yet, all too often, teachers appear unwilling to step outside the confines of the school grounds. And when students were asked to nominate one issue they wanted to do something about, several stated that the grass on the school oval was not green enough. They suggested one way to solve this could be for students to bring their shower water to school.
In *Our Changing Earth* a number of students used the 2003 Canberra bushfires as the basis for their independent research. While anecdotes concerning the fire came up during class discussion, students did not interact directly with people who had lived through the bushfires or less directly through resources such as the ACT Museum’s Bushfire exhibition. In their research projects, students rarely referred to people’s stories. The gravity and detail of disasters were most often recorded as statistics (human fatalities and injuries and levels of destruction) rather than faces, voices or stories.

That is not to say people’s stories were not used to good effect in all three units. Teachers incorporated real life and fictional stories in texts (books, sound recordings, film and the internet) enabling students access to vicarious experience (Arnold, 2005) but, it seems to me, interaction is essentially about experiences between people. While students may respond to texts in many ways, texts themselves are not responsive and there is limited scope for students to act upon them.

**Empathy**

Stories do play an important role in intercultural education, not least as a way into the experiences of others in order to tap into students’ capacity for empathy. Whether seen as a personal value or attribute to be developed (MCEETYA, 2008) or as an integral component of an intelligence of relatedness (Arnold, 2005) empathy is concerned with a person’s ability to imagine what it might be like to ‘walk in another’s shoes’ or to feel for their pain. It evokes care, compassion and closeness and can lead to “a change of heart” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 99). According to Greene (2000), imagination is what makes empathy possible. It is:

...what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called “other” over the years. If those others are willing to give us clues, we can look in some manner through strangers’ eyes and hear through their ears. That is because, of all our cognitive capacities, imagination is the one that gives credence to alternative realities, It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions. (p. 3)
Evidence from all classrooms in this study supports the view that primary aged children empathise readily with other people and their stories. In the three examples below students demonstrated their concern for the well being or suffering of others, readily imagining themselves in their skin (both animal and human).

**A Sailing Boat in the Sky**

After reading Quentin Blake’s story, *A Sailing Boat in the Sky*, students at Little Primary were asked to draw a picture of a person or creature they thought it would be good to help, to imagine themselves as that person and to write a story about what their life is like and why they needed someone to help them. When asked how she found the voice of the person in her story one of the students replied, “I thought about what had happened to her and the war, how she was feeling and what it would be like if it was me”. A number of students chose animals rather than people but all wrote from the point of view of creature in trouble as evidenced in the story below, written by a child whom Anna described as a deep thinker but who was generally a reluctant writer.

![Work sample 4: A Sailing Boat in the Sky (LPS)](image)

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**Work sample 4: A Sailing Boat in the Sky (LPS)**

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The Ripple Effect

In the context of learning about being a good citizen and making a difference in their communities, Year 3 class at Ridge School read the story of Iqbal Masih, a bonded child labourer who began a campaign to put an end to child labour and to promote the rights of all children to education. After introducing Iqbal’s story, Ita (RPS) explored different perspectives on it through a hot seat activity, taking on the roles of the factory owner and Iqbal’s father of whom the students asked questions. Almost all students had questions - Why did you sell Iqbal? Why didn’t you get work yourself? How did you feel when he was murdered? Why can’t you use adults in your factory? Why did you beat him and chain him up? Ita gave such plausible answers that even though students continued to feel for Iqbal and his plight, the activity gave them pause for thought.

While empathy may be a desirable attribute in itself, in many circumstances it may amount to little more than feeling sorry for someone, a response as fleeting as the exposure to another’s pain. Within an intercultural approach, empathy is not an end in itself but acts as a catalyst for critical analysis and action. In the Ripple Effect activity, students were asked to apply the notion of making a difference to their own lives, brainstorming situations where individuals and groups in their own community could be subject to harsh or unfair treatment and developing possible actions they could take to help. In this case, the activity was only marginally effective. Students had only a hazy idea of possible issues (the drought, child labour, poverty) and gave generalised proposals for possible action (complain to the government, save water, collect money for charities). The notion of making a difference and critical analysis needed much more work.

The human perspective

At Creek Primary, the Year 6 students examined a wide range of disasters from Pompeii in 79 AD through to the 2004 Asian tsunami. Most dealt with natural phenomena such as volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, floods and bushfires, but also the outbreak of the bubonic plague in the 1300s and the bombing of Hiroshima in 1945. For Helen (CPS); one of the positive outcomes of the unit was the sense of empathy students felt for
people who are affected by disasters. In assessing the overall effectiveness of the unit, she commented:

What worked really well was the human perspective, and what worked really well was looking beyond our own experiences and then looking at other people’s experiences and then making the links between how they feel and how I might feel if I was in the same boat. So really building that empathy for our world. And that our world is actually smaller, our connections are much closer than we think, you know it might take you 24 hours to fly over to another country but really, you’re a lot closer than that.

Perspective

The perspective principle starts from the recognition there are many ways of seeing the world and calls for a reasoned approach in negotiating these, based on an ability to detach oneself from a particular point of view (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). As Kate noted, for teachers and students to “take some blinkers off and start wondering and challenging things that they take for granted” they need to consider disparate ideas, arguments and points of view as dispassionately as possible. A sense of distance or detachment is similar in concept to decentring as it appears in intercultural language learning (Scarino et al., 2007). In everyday terms, it could be compared with thinking of others. As a guiding principle for intercultural education though, perspective also has a critical edge, encompassing the scope of analytic and critical scrutiny proposed in Luke and Freebody’s (Luke, 2000) model for critical literacy. In taking a critical perspective, students are asked to consider questions such as whose voices are being heard, whose are absent and whose interests are being served?

The final set of tasks in Our Changing Earth (CPS) related to ‘man-made’ rather than natural disasters, specifically to dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in World War II. Helen used material to present two perspectives. The case for dropping the bomb was presented through a letter from president Truman explaining his reasons for making the decision and the recollection of the pilot of the plane that dropped the bomb. This was contrasted with information from the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and an audio-taped eyewitness account of a survivor. In two tasks students were asked to assess
the available information and to give their own opinions (thoughts and feelings) in response (activities 3 and 4).

Activity 3: Hiroshima information - part 1 (CPS)

In August 1945, Kejiro Matsushima was a sixteen-year-old student in Hiroshima, Japan. He was alone in the city. His father was dead, his mother was living in the countryside and his two older brothers were soldiers in the Japanese army fighting in World War Two. He was at school the morning the atomic bomb was dropped on the city.

Listen to his account of what happened that day.

- Describe what he saw, heard and felt.
- How does hearing his story make you feel?
- Can you think of some life-altering experiences that have happened to other people?

Activity 4: Hiroshima story - part 2 (CPS)
But students had more questions than answers. They wanted to know: Why Japan? How did WWII start? Would babies who survived the bombing have that memory for life? Why was there no warning given? Why didn’t bugs die? Did the soldiers feel guilty? After the class, several students clustered around Helen, wanting to talk more about it. When I mentioned this incident to Megan, the deputy principal (CPS), she commented, “Students are hungry for it.” They are interested in real issues and deep questions. In their research projects, students were asked to nominate the disaster they considered had the most effect on the world and why. Several chose Hiroshima. The response below is both personal and considered.

I think that the Hiroshima bombing has affected our planet the most. I think that it left a huge mark on the whole world not just Japan. It taught world leaders that nuclear bombs are so destructive and devastating that millions of innocent people die either instantly or slowly and painfully from radiation.

Although it was in World War II, I think that the USA would have been more careful about what they did when fighting with other countries from there on in.

Work sample 5: Hiroshima – one student’s response (CPS)

For teachers, aspects of perspective taking can be challenging. While the presentation of two perspectives can be reasonably straightforward, as evidenced in the example of Hiroshima above, on several occasions teachers resisted or avoided the exploration of issues that were potentially controversial or emotional. None of the units were issues driven, which may account, at least partially, for assessment of some teachers that their unit lost direction or lacked bite. As described above, issues such as poverty, war and justice arose incidentally but were generally treated as an aside, so that, for instance, the response to poverty (from the South African letter or child labour) was to give to those less fortunate than us.

At Little Primary, Bev explained her concern about parents’ request that the school address human rights. “This is an early childhood school, so we wouldn’t talk about it in
those terms, but we would and could talk about it, and do, in fact, talk about it in terms of... our children relating to other children. Not our children taking on the worries of the world. At this early childhood level we can talk about people that don’t have the books that we have to read and we can share”.

For teachers, questions of age appropriateness, the possibility of causing offence, potential parent complaints and concern over what students might say fed into the content and approaches they were prepared to use. For Year 1 and 2 teachers at Valley Primary planning a unit on families, my suggestion of Doris Pilkington Garimara’s *Home to Mother*, the story of three young Aboriginal girls’ journey home after being taken thousands of miles away to an Aboriginal mission, was the final straw. One of the teachers stated unequivocally, “I’m not doing that”. When issues are highly charged or involve conflict, it is difficult to maintain distance or detachment or to work from a critical perspective. It is more comfortable to stay on safe ground and this is largely what teachers in this study did. The following chapter addresses the complexity of this and other dilemmas teachers face in attempting to work with an intercultural approach.

**Self-knowledge**

As the final principle for intercultural education, self-knowledge may seem the logical outcome of what has gone before and this is true to an extent. It comes to the fore in the evaluative activities at the end of a unit of work, such as ‘a reflection’ or in addressing the question - What have you learnt? This is a difficult question to answer on the spot and often simply prompts the recollection of facts. Self-knowledge is not really concerned with the information students have learnt but what they have learnt about themselves and requires a level of self-awareness that many people do not automatically possess and arguably is something that develops with age. In the reflection for *Where Do I belong?* (RPS) one of the students identified bad language as a problem for the school community, saying that “it’s a bad habit and I’m wanting to stop it”. Though a personal response, this response seems somewhat random. Bad language had never been mentioned in discussion nor was it the focus of any of the activities during the unit of work.
Though all units of work included an evaluative activity of some type students were not asked directly what they had learnt about themselves. Helen (CPS) asked her class whether anything they had encountered in the unit of work changed them, recounting that “… a lot of them really appreciated what they had. They really appreciated where they lived and they really loved their parents. All the things that have happened to me are insignificant.” Their responses indicated that they were able to see themselves and their situations in relation to others and to recognise their position of privilege.

At another level, self-knowledge is more introspective and critical, acknowledging the prejudices and biases in oneself as well as strengths and abilities. It could be argued that introspection of this sort is neither suitable nor possible for primary school children. However, I would contend this underestimates children’s capacities to develop self-awareness and would deny them the opportunity to recognise that in learning from others they are learning about themselves (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006). Ultimately, in order to assist them to develop a better understanding of themselves, children need encouragement to approach other people and worlds with open minds and hearts, because it is in reflecting on the interaction they have with others they learn most about themselves.

**On reflection**

As evidenced in the examples above, some aspects of the intercultural approach proposed in this study were more easily understood and accepted by teachers and students than others. These were, on the positive side, that teachers recognised the importance of intercultural education and willingly included multiple perspectives into the content of their units of work. Even so, from time to time, teachers expressed uncertainty about what was intended and, on occasion, resistance to what was proposed.

On reflection, several teachers commented on a lack of depth or impact in their unit of work. There were few opportunities for students to apply what they knew through participation in action. This was most likely to be problematic where students’ exposure to different worlds was limited in other aspects of their lives.
A weakness in developing learning activities that promoted interaction and critical perspectives also meant that, by and large, students were cast as observers of other cultures rather than participants in intercultural experiences (supporting intercultural language educators’ claims). Teachers were also generally wary of working with anything controversial or confrontational. This (along with narrow opportunities for interaction) meant there was rarely any opportunity to mediate difference. Students were protected from anything potentially controversial. They were not exposed to issues that might evoke a strong personal response or that could be confronting. While these limitations are considerable, they are not insurmountable. The next chapter addresses key problems and issues emerging from the work in schools in this chapter as they intersect with and diverge from the broader policy context discussed in Chapter 4.
Chapter 6: Where policy and practice meet

We used to speak of the social functions of the individual; we now have to talk about how the function of the social organization promotes or threatens the freedom of the subject. (Touraine, 2009, p. 210)

This chapter pulls together the findings from Chapter 4 (Policy) and Chapter 5 (In schools) and turns them on their head. That is, it uses Touraine’s (2000, 2007, 2009) notions of the subject and a ‘school for the subject’ to bring another perspective to the social goals in education policy, to the curriculum and to the work of schools. If we accept Touraine’s claim (2009) of a disjuncture between people’s personal realities and the rules and regulations that govern social life, then it is reasonable to query social institutions’ capacity to respond to the rights and demands of individuals.

Two questions underpin this chapter. The first is whether education can or should adapt its role in the socialisation of the individual to become more attuned to the promotion of the freedom of the subject. This would mean an education more directed to the development of students who see themselves as actors in their own lives rather than victims of it, who can resist forces that impinge on their rights and demand recognition and respect for themselves and, equally, for all other human beings. The second question asks what the perspective of the subject signifies for an intercultural approach to learning. It considers the intersection of the subject’s personal freedom with the mutual recognition and positive interaction that is intrinsic to intercultural learning.

In exploring these questions, the chapter draws together the main findings from the two previous chapters. It is organised in three sections: social goals; the curriculum; and school practices. The first section examines four responses to the social goals around social cohesion, cultural diversity and valuing Indigenous cultures and reconciliation: cultural appreciation; shared values; the negotiation of difference; and making a difference. The second examines the curriculum’s alignment with social goals, specifically as it relates to the development of intercultural knowledge,
understanding and skills. The third builds on the discussion about social goals and the curriculum, to consider how these and other factors affect a school’s capacity to adopt an intercultural approach to learning and to become a school for the subject.

Social goals

There is broad agreement that Australian schools should equip young people to relate positively to individuals and groups they see as different from themselves. Terms such as ‘cultural intelligence’ (McRae, 2008), ‘cultural sensitivity’ (McGaw, 2008) and ‘intercultural understanding’ (National Curriculum Board, 2009a) are sprinkled through policy documents and education reports. Though both education policy makers and teachers give intercultural education in-principle support, it is rarely given high priority in policy commitments or in school programs. The four responses to the social goals below were evident to greater and lesser degrees in the various policies and practices examined in this research project. Viewed through the lens of the subject, they reveal a range of assumptions about students, particularly regarding their personal investment and involvement in learning experiences and their ability to exercise control over their learning.

Cultural appreciation – learning about others

Appreciation of diversity has been a central tenet of multicultural policy in Australia that has not altered significantly over several decades. Most notably, in the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008), an appreciation of Australia’s social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity is one of the desirable attributes of active and informed citizenship. This message has long been promulgated in schools through multicultural education policies. As evidenced in this research project, schools routinely celebrate diversity through multicultural food festivals, Harmony Day or NAIDOC Week activities, national costume parades and displays of flags from around the world. Skating along the surface of culture, such activities are quick but tokenistic ways to show appreciation, that are added on to children’s learning rather than being essential to it. They are unlikely to build deep intercultural knowledge, understandings or skills.
Teachers participating in this research project unanimously supported intercultural education as a way of learning about other people, and readily incorporated multiple perspectives into the content of their integrated units of work. Most commonly, this was done through stories about children with a range of cultural backgrounds in countries other than Australia (South Africa, Mexico and Thailand in Alguien como yo) and within Australia (three Indigenous communities in Northern Australia in Where do I belong?). Learning activities were designed to help students become aware of aspects of other children’s daily lives and compare them with their own. Finding out about what other children ate, where they lived, what their schools were like and what they did in their spare time, students gained information and were able to see that there were similarities and differences in the ways people live. They also developed some awareness of others and demonstrated generally positive dispositions towards them. But, it was a hypothetical form of appreciation that required little of them. For the most part it was vicarious appreciation and they had few opportunities to interact with people from the cultures they were studying and they did not have the chance to learn from them.

Cultural appreciation is a starting point in intercultural learning. But, it is an attribute that is essentially one-sided, requiring little personal investment from students or offering few opportunities for personal reflection or the development of self-awareness.

**Shared values - what we have in common**

*The Melbourne Declaration* endorses the teaching of national and personal values in schools, stating that, “a school’s legacy to young people should include national values of democracy, equity and justice, and personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, and respect for others” (p. 5). Values as broadly defined as democracy, equity and justice are unlikely to provoke strong disagreement from most quarters, and I do not wish to argue here about the values *per se*. Rather, it is the sense that everyone must agree with national or ’shared’ values, whatever they are determined to be.
National values are seen as an expression of “those beliefs and behaviours we share in Australia” (Pascoe, 2005, p. 9) and are said to provide the social glue that ties us together as a community. That is all well and good. In going about our daily lives we rarely have cause to reflect on the values we share or what binds us together as a community, but when others behave in ways we do not like, too often they are branded ‘unAustralian’. This unwritten code of behaviour everyone is expected to understand and abide by, that governs what it means to be Australian, supports a view of social cohesion delivered through national unity that is illusory.

Insistence on an unswerving adherence to national values takes no account of the ways people negotiate diversity within their own lives. It encourages mindless group behaviour as evidenced during the 2005 Cronulla riot (Johns, 2008) and undermines the freedom of individuals, as subjects able to determine their own lives. The promulgation of Australian values in schools is no longer as prominent as it was under the previous Federal government, though it is still apparent in the Melbourne Declaration and values are to be embedded into national curriculum documents (National Curriculum Board, 2009a). The notion of shared national values must always be balanced by respect for the rights of others. The teachers in research project schools rarely mentioned national values explicitly, referring instead to values in general terms or in relation to their schools. For example, Justine (RPS) described culture as a value system and a belief system and teachers at Creek Primary linked values to the school’s Catholic ethos.

In schools, the desire to promote commonalities between people runs strong. It underpins many activities aimed at developing better intercultural understanding and social harmony. Bereznicki et al. (2008), state that the discovery of common ground is one outcome of values education programs intended “to consciously foster intercultural understanding, social cohesion and social inclusion” (p. 42). For example, after participating in an interschool forum, one student in a values education project school commented, “while some had a different religion to me and went to different schools, we were alike in other ways. We had similar ideas, we said the same things, enjoyed the same food and drink” (p. 43). Following activities that encourage interaction between students from different religious and cultural groups, students’ perceptions of others do
shift with the realisation they have much in common with people they normally consider to be different from themselves, most commonly expressed in terms of how they are ‘like me’. The idea of common ground brings a level of personal investment into students’ learning. It moves away from national values to personal values to focus on self-awareness and an awareness of others. Students understand others in relation to themselves, noticing how the Other is like me.

But intercultural education seeks to go further, helping students understand themselves in relation to others, so that they are able to hold “new beliefs and schemata ... side by side with existing ones” (Byram, 2008, p. 137). In making sense of the connections between themselves and others, they begin to attach personal meaning to abstract concepts such as a shared humanity, shared futures and a shared planet. They begin to see commonality as a shared space and that:

> the challenge is not to make any one experience of Australia the only experience - it is to make it but one story among many, to acknowledge that we all live among and between these different stories - and that is our common ground. (Nakata, 2008, p. 1)

It would be foolish to assume that harmony or cohesion is simply a matter of finding common ground. We do not have to agree or be the same as one another to live together. But, in order to find a way forward we can agree upon, we do need to be able to negotiate our disagreements. As Appiah (2006) points out, "we can live together without agreeing on what the values are that make it good to live together; we can agree about what to do in most cases, without agreeing about why it is right" (p. 71). This is where the Melbourne Declaration falls silent, venturing no further than cultural appreciation as a response to difference, or as a way into reconciliation. Yet, everyday in school playgrounds children have to negotiate their differences one way or another.

**The negotiation of difference**

The following two stories from the field typify some of the dilemmas teachers face when they seek to bring multiple readings of the world into primary school classes.
At Valley Primary School, the Year 1 and 2 teachers were discussing their first unit of work for the year around a theme of family relationships. As part of the discussion of what might be included, I suggested Doris Pilkington Garimara’s *Home to Mother*, an adaptation for young readers of her book *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence*. It is the story of three young Aboriginal girls taken from their mothers to an Aboriginal mission thousands of miles away who escape and find their way back home. As soon as I had made the suggestion I knew it was a mistake. After a moment’s silence, one of the teachers said bluntly “I’m not doing that.” The others agreed, one adding that some of the children (particularly one Aboriginal boy) would not be able to cope with such disturbing content. (Journal entry, 30 January 2007)

At Ridge Primary School, as part of their unit of work on communities, Year 3 and 4 classes were studying life in several Aboriginal communities in northern Australia compared with their lives in suburban Canberra. Towards the end of the unit, I suggested to teachers that students might be asked whether they thought one way of life was better than another and if so why. Teachers did not like this idea at all. They were concerned that parents might object on the grounds we would be encouraging children to express their prejudices. They also thought that this was not the right time or place to deal with the issues that might arise. (Journal entry, 23 March 2007)

In developing and selecting content, teachers constantly assess the acceptability and appropriateness of learning activities for the children in their classes. Their choices reflect their own experiences, levels of confidence and professional judgement. For most teachers the boundaries of acceptability, though rarely discussed, are apparent as soon as they are breached. In primary schools, teachers often choose ‘feel good’ messages, stressing what people have in common and focusing on obvious features of other cultures, such as celebrations and food. In not venturing beyond where they feel
comfortable and what they know, teachers present students with a limited view of the world. It is that professional judgement that is being exercised in these examples.

In ACT primary schools, typically, this world is white, female, English speaking and middle class, reflected in the school culture and ‘the way we do things round here’. Even when teachers include materials that present other ways of seeing the world, they often unconsciously reinforce their own worldview through commentary and questioning. According to King (2004), the process of ‘not seeing’ anything that might differ from our expectations or desires is deeply institutionalised. Teachers feel the need to be in control, “to assure others as well as themselves of the intelligibility of the world” (p. 143). This is challenged when in working with other cultures, they find themselves in unfamiliar and uncertain territory, “because the Other always carries within it the potential to disrupt the familiarity, comfort and security with which our prejudices and preconceptions present themselves to us, it is, in a very real sense, something to be feared and resisted” (King, 2004, p. 144).

Teachers’ avoidance of potentially controversial issues points to their “reluctance to dwell in the borderlands, to risk foregoing control, confront uncertainty and negotiate the distance between the familiar and the strange” (King, 2004, p. 145). They do not address the questions students may have, such as ‘why Chinese people have funny eyes’. In this way, the breadth and depth of students’ learning is conditional upon teachers’ preparedness to venture into the unknown.

The stories above also illustrate teachers’ concerns about the appropriateness of content, and the difficulties in working with topics or stories that are highly emotive or controversial. For the most part, teachers in the project baulked at topics that could cause disagreement or provoke an emotional response. The examples noted above pushed teachers further than they were prepared to go. Megan, the deputy principal at Creek Primary, acknowledged many teachers had become so anxious about getting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander protocols right, that apart from the celebration of NAIDOC Week they avoided Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives altogether. But if the Melbourne Declaration’s expectation that young people are to contribute to and benefit from reconciliation is to be met, topics that are uncomfortable
or that provoke strong emotions should not be avoided. For example, as Dodson (2009a) points out, reconciliation must not shy away from difficult questions.

Though issues that are controversial or sensitive vary from person to person according to time and circumstance, there will always be some issues that “have a political, social or personal impact and arouse feeling and/or deal with questions of value and belief” (Oxfam Development Education Programme, 2006, p. 2). Controversial issues are not so much concerned with facts as the interpretation of facts and they have the potential to divide opinion. Policy assertions will bring these issues to the fore, but they also provide rich learning opportunities, to engage both ‘head and heart’, and to work with cognitive and affective dimensions of learning, critical thinking and emotional literacy (Holden, 2007).

The ‘worries of the world’

Teachers in the research project gave various reasons for not wanting to step into controversial territory. These included a concern for what parents might say, the possibility they could cause offence, wanting to protect children from “the worries of the world” or suggesting that the issue should be handled in some other way or at some other time, chief among them. In this they are not alone. A report on emotive and controversial issues in history teaching in English schools (The Historical Association, 2007) identifies a similar range of causes for avoidance of controversial issues. Some teachers “feel that certain issues are inappropriate for particular age groups or decide in advance that pupils lack the maturity to grasp them. Where teachers lack confidence in their subject knowledge or subject-specific pedagogy, this can also be a reason for avoiding certain content. Staff may wish to avoid causing offence or appearing insensitive to individuals or groups in their classes” (p. 15).

In working with difficult and emotive issues in the classroom, teachers provide a framework for students to learn how to negotiate different beliefs and worldviews, recognising that “when we explore controversial issues we are not just weighing up facts or evidence but helping young people to explore differing belief systems” (Holden, 2007, p. 2). Because they concern things that matter to people, it is not surprising that
controversial issues provoke strong responses. Teachers may intend to protect children from the terrible things that exist in the world, but ‘the world outside’, for some children, is the world in which they live. Hearing stories about other people’s lives can help children make sense of their own lives and can provide a safe vehicle for talking about things they may not otherwise feel able to do. They give students an agency and a sense of personal connection that more mundane approaches often lack.

One of the teachers at Valley Primary, who considered Home to Mother inappropriate for her class, later described the first term of 2007 as the worst she had ever experienced, largely on account of the difficult behaviour of one boy, relieved only when the family moved interstate. His behaviour took on a new light when it emerged that, after being told at the beginning of the term the family was moving, he thought they were leaving him behind. His fears resonated with the trauma of separation experienced by the children in Doris Pilkington’s story.

Making a difference

Teachers’ tendencies to ‘play it safe’ in their selection of content means that students often get a watered-down version of the curriculum, where encounters with unfamiliar ways of living are rare. But this is not what all students, or their parents want (Holden, 2007). In trying to make sense of the world and their place in it, students have questions that do not have simple answers and invoke observations that make people feel uncomfortable. They care about local and global issues and are ‘hungry’ for real and substantial learning. They want to make a difference in their communities. For many young people, this is a primary rationale for involvement in their communities. They seek out “participatory experiences that afford them agency and where they can see tangible results of their efforts” (Collin, 2008, p. 6).

In schools, charity is a common strategy directed towards making a difference, as demonstrated at Little Primary School.

Bev, the school principal, explained that some parents wanted more focus on human rights. As an early childhood school, the teachers thought the most appropriate approach was for children to relate to other children
rather than human rights. They decided to have a ‘special lunch’ during Children’s Week based on the theme *A Sharing World Cares* as a fundraiser for a school in South Africa. The suggestion that children might research a South African child’s lunch and then make a typical lunch based on their research was not popular. The teacher organising the event thought children might not like the food that South African children had for lunch. Instead, children had a special lunch their parents had paid for, consisting of food they liked to eat. (Journal entry, 22 October 2006)

It is hard to say what children learnt from the charity lunch, possibly that it is good to give to others less fortunate than yourself. But there was no connection between the fundraising activity and the experiences of children in other parts of the world. That is not to say there is no place for charity-focused activities in schools. Singer (1997) points to the small personal cost of charity compared to its benefits, stating that "we can all save lives of people, both children and adults, who would otherwise die, and we can do so at a very small cost to us: the cost of a new CD, a shirt or a night out at a restaurant or concert, can mean the difference between life and death to more than one person somewhere in the world - and overseas aid agencies like Oxfam overcome the problem of acting at a distance” (p. 1). For Singer, in today’s world, charity is a matter of global responsibility or global ethics, tied to our capacity to affect the lives of others anywhere in the world. For schools, charity-focused activities offer an opportunity to help students consider the impact of their actions on people they will never meet in other parts of the world.

The idea of responsibility for distant others, for people we will never meet, brings an additional, more abstract dimension to intercultural interaction. It is in this respect that role-play activities derived from real-life, such as, the story of the bonded child labourer, Iqbal Masih, in *the Ripple Effect* activity, have the most impact. Children readily feel empathy for the plight of other children. And, though empathy may be a desirable attribute in itself, in many circumstances it may amount to little more than feeling sorry for someone, a response as fleeting as the exposure to another’s pain.
Ideally, in learning intended to strengthen intercultural understanding, empathy is not an end in itself but acts as a catalyst for critical analysis and action.

In the second part of *the Ripple Effect*, students were asked to apply the idea of making a difference to their own lives. They imagined situations where individuals and groups in their own community could be subject to harsh or unfair treatment and developed possible actions they could take to help. In this case, the activity was only marginally effective. Students had only a hazy idea of possible issues (the drought, child labour, poverty) and gave generalised proposals for possible action (complain to the government, save water, collect money for charities). The idea of making a difference is not something that works well simply presented as an abstract concept or without securing students’ personal involvement. Critical analysis and action add necessary depth and meaning to activities designed to support students in engaging with issues and learning to exercise personal authority and social responsibility.

There are a number of places where making a difference is carried further both as an idea and in practice. *The Values Education Project* (Bereznicki et al., 2008) identifies service learning as a means for students to take action, identifying two approaches. One is a charity approach that is typically short-term aimed at helping out people in difficult circumstances, and the others is a longer term social change approach that “looks to producing lasting societal changes that will alleviate the causes of social disadvantage” (p. 33). For example, one of the values education projects, the Edmund Rice Ministries, took a global education focus, investigating children’s working conditions in third world countries, and then taking action through a publicity campaign to alert people to goods produced by child labour.

In giving students the space and authority to make decisions and to take responsibility through social action, this aspect of values education resonates with Byram’s (2008) notion of intercultural citizenship education “when people of different social groups and cultures engage in social and political activity founded on democratic values and practices” (p. 186). It also connects to the social action strategy for intercultural understanding proposed in Delors’ (1996) four pillars of learning and summarised on the UNESCO website (1999):
When people work together on exciting projects which involve them in unaccustomed forms of action, differences and even conflicts between individuals tend to pale and sometimes disappear. A new form of identity is created by these projects which enable people to transcend the routines of their personal lives and attach value to what they have in common as against what divides them.

Potentially, strategies focused on making a difference through social action support the development of intercultural understanding; based on the idea that working together for a common goal diminishes the importance of perceived differences between individuals and groups. In developing a sense of personal empowerment and social responsibility in students, such strategies also support the idea of the student as subject (Bereznicki et al., 2008).

As might be expected, each of the approaches described above achieves different outcomes, derived at least in part from the level of personal investment expected of students and their capacity to influence their learning (Lovat, 2009). Cultural appreciation enables students to learn about other people and cultures with little personal investment. In comparison, activities focused on shared values and the negotiation of difference require greater personal involvement and the potential to learn from others through interpersonal interaction. When students are involved in social action, ideally, activities engage them on personal, interpersonal and social levels.

On first reading, learning directed towards the achievement of social goals and a school for the subject may seem at odds with one another. However, a more nuanced position might be that in order to have impact on learning, social goals must first of all have personal significance in students’ lives. This suggests that instead of focussing on the duties of citizenship or the adherence to externally determined values, it might be more useful, firstly, to connect social learning with personal learning and, secondly, to view intercultural learning as a combination of personal and social processes. It would then follow that if the goal of learning to live together is to gain traction in schools it should be seen both as a personal responsibility and a shared project for all students.
Chapter 6: Where policy and practice meet

The curriculum

This section considers the alignment of the curriculum with social goals: in particular, the connections between the curriculum, the goal of learning to live together and intercultural understanding. Though it discusses curriculum in general terms, it does so with one eye on the development and trialling of the national curriculum and the other on a curriculum that promotes the freedom of the subject.

According to Alexander (2009a), the problem with statements of educational aims or goals is that they “tend to march grandly in one direction while the curriculum slinks pragmatically in another” (p. 4). If aims are to serve anything other than cosmetic purposes, he states, “not only should they be in harmony with the curriculum but they should also shape it” (p. 4). In the current work on the national curriculum in Australia, Reid (2009) argues that there is a “serious disconnect” (p. 13) between the Melbourne Declaration’s aims and goals and the proposed curriculum. In part, this may be because when first announced the national curriculum was a reasonably contained exercise and the areas to be covered were few and pre-ordained - English, Mathematics, the Sciences and History. However, its scope has since broadened to include Geography, Languages the Arts, Health and Physical Education, Design and Technology, Economics, Business and Civics and Citizenship (Reid, 2009).

The National Curriculum Board (2009a) states that the curriculum will comprise the knowledge, understandings and skills that students should have by the time they leave school, describing “what teachers are expected to teach and students are expected to learn for each year of schooling” (p. 9). It also states that “curriculum documents will indicate how learning in a particular area will contribute to the goals in the national declaration” (p. 12), but provides no detail about how this might be done, and no assurance that all goals will be covered. The 2010 release of the draft national curriculum for English, history, mathematics and science reveals that there is still some way to go to align the curriculum and goals for education.

It is uncertain how attributes of active and informed citizenship such as the appreciation of cultural diversity, the capacity to contribute to reconciliation and the
ability to relate to and communicate across cultures will be addressed in the national curriculum. One possibility is the general capability of intercultural understanding. In this case, an important consideration would be the conceptualisation of intercultural understanding. Working within the national curriculum’s parameters, the following section considers intercultural understanding conceptualised as knowledge, understandings and skills.

**Knowledge**

The acquisition of knowledge is fundamental to education. It can be taken to mean many things and approached in many ways (Popkewitz, 1997; Young, 1999). As Kennedy (2008) and many others (Moore, 2004; Wexler, 1987; Young, 1971) point out, judgements about “which knowledge is of most worth are neither neutral nor value free” (p. 6) but reflect societal needs and beliefs. Students need to know about their own cultures, histories and geographies and those of other people, which inevitably invoke tensions in identity politics in the making of curriculum (Luke, 2005). They (and their teachers) cannot operate in a knowledge vacuum but also need to be aware of the cultural construction of knowledge (Goodson, 1997). As outlined in Chapter 2, the various ways cultural knowledge may be depicted in the curriculum result in different teaching approaches and learning outcomes. The examples below illustrate two approaches to knowledge evident in the schools in this research project - culture as products and culture as practices.

**Knowledge as a cultural product**

There was an ongoing fascination with facts in all the classes taking part in this research project. Sometimes, it came from students interested in detailed information such as the quantity, makes and models of cars manufactured in South Africa. As noted in the previous chapter, at the beginning of the unit of work the same students nominated concrete information as what they wanted to learn. It was also apparent that work focused on feelings or people’s relationships was not to all students’ liking, as evidenced in some students’ evaluations of the unit on communities which they described as boring and vague.
As part of their integrated unit, *Our Changing Earth*, Year 6 Creek School students were asked to complete an assignment on natural disasters. They had to write a general description of the type of disaster they had chosen, explain how it affected people and the environment and include a ‘real-life’ example. Students chose all manner of disaster – floods, hurricanes, bushfires, tsunamis, avalanches and volcanoes. Most of their examples were well known, with Pompeii and the Boxing Day tsunami being the most popular. Their accounts included when and where the disaster happened, how big it was and how many people died, were evacuated and injured. While the statistics were a broad indicator of the effects the disaster had on people (it killed them or forced them to leave their homes), students’ accounts were devoid of any sense of the people caught up in the disaster or the consequences it had on their lives. There were no personal stories or eyewitness accounts of what happened. Their assignments, full of facts and figures, lacked a human face.

It could be argued that as the unit above is fundamentally science-based, students’ attention to factual reporting is to be expected and indeed appropriate. Not all learning needs to include people’s stories or to have an affective dimension. However, as noted previously, natural hazards such as cyclones, volcanoes and earthquakes are deemed disasters only when they affect people. With careful selection of content, teachers can help students move beyond the facts – to be exposed to a range of perspectives and to consider information critically. For example in the case of natural disasters, there is an opportunity to use news reports from around the world on disasters that seem to be occurring with increasing frequency and intensity. Eyewitness accounts, easily accessible through print and digital media, offer an invaluable opportunity to engage and empathise with people in adversity and to understand the range of circumstances that influence their fate.

**Knowledge as a cultural practice**

Learning activities focused on cultural practices can sometimes fall into the same trap of superficiality as those focused on cultural products. Take, for example, stories that follow a typical day in the life of a child, such as Thembe’s in a South African village (Hollyer, 2003). Though the story represents real people and explores culture in the context of every day life, it is tempting for readers to generalise from a single example,
leading to stereotypes such as the ubiquitous mud huts in Anna’s class at Little School, an idea that even Tarfula’s visit did not dislodge completely. The task of working with cultural practices as fragments or expressions of people’s identities that are both partial and contingent on context is rather more complex.

In *the Really Big Beliefs Project*, Costain (2005) presents aspects of the religious beliefs and practices of a range of people in a single community, showing diversity in the practices of people with apparently similar beliefs and similarities in the practices of people with apparently different beliefs. Structured as the school project of two students, the text is as much an account of their learning through interviews, field trips and personal reflections as it is a report about people’s beliefs and practices. However, this approach has not proved altogether successful with teachers concerned that students may find the large amount of information embedded in people’s stories challenging and difficult to organise. Consequently, the publishers (the Asia Education Foundation) have provided an overview of facts about the major belief systems practiced in Australia.

While the desire for a simple explanation of different belief systems with clearly defined points of comparison is understandable, it is also disappointing that opportunities for working with rich, messy, situated ways of thinking, about beliefs or other cultural practices, has not been taken up. Knowing about different beliefs or even being able to describe similarities and differences between them may be useful starting points for intercultural understanding. Unfortunately, all too often, this is where learning stops.

For several teachers in the research project, cultural practices were as important in incidental interactions and everyday practice in the classroom as they were in planned learning activities. For Lil (RPS) it was a matter of “knowing your kids”, of being sensitive to their individual needs and interests. Teachers’ interest in culture and cultural practices was as much to do with the culture of the school, what it stood for and what it valued, as it was to do with cultural realities outside school boundaries. This is in line with the commonly expressed notion of culture in schools as ‘the way we do things round here’. Though this approach is both child-centred and allows for the
inclusion of children’s cultural identities, it relies heavily on the diversity of cultural resources within the school or the classroom. This worked well even with the relatively culturally homogenous student population at Little Primary School because their teacher, Anna, provided them with a rich mix of planned and incidental linguistic and cultural learning. In many schools, access to such cultural richness is neither so immediate nor so constant.

**Understanding and deep learning**

In many policy and curriculum documents, understanding as the ability to make sense of what you know is represented as a corollary of knowledge. They also suggest understanding includes the ability to apply knowledge in a variety of circumstances. In this sense intercultural understanding would not simply be about what students know but how they apply this knowledge in a range of interactions.

But Wiggins and McTighe (2005) bring another dimension to understanding. Rather than drawing a loose link with knowledge, they choose ‘big ideas’, that is the “core concepts, principles, theories and processes that should serve as the focal point of curricula, instruction, and assessment” (p. 338), as the key to understanding. They describe big ideas as broad and abstract, timeless and universal, evident in a range of examples with common characteristics, noting that, “the challenge of teaching for understanding is largely the challenge of making big ideas in the field become big in the mind of the learner” (2005, p. 75). Intercultural learning lends itself readily to big ideas, covering concepts such as cohesion, conflict, inclusion/exclusion, diversity, community, culture, difference, care, perspective and responsibility. Big ideas such as these connect learning to social goals and to the concepts of democracy, citizenship, equity and justice identified in the *Melbourne Declaration*. They encourage deep learning.

In advocating deep learning and connectedness *Teachers: the key to student success* (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2004) states that “when learning is organised around major concepts, principles and significant real world issues, within and across disciplines, it helps students make connections and build knowledge
structures” (p. 4). Yet, as noted previously (Erebus, 2006, p. xiv), deep learning seldom features in approaches to diversity in mainstream classes. Teachers are often more comfortable working with surface features of culture such as celebrations. The celebration of Special Days such as Harmony Day and NAIDOC Week allows schools to say they address multicultural and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies. Another popular choice is through the study of celebrations such as Valley Primary’s proposed unit of work, Christmas Around the World. Too often, this marks the extent of intercultural learning. At best, it radiates a warm glow of harmony and celebration. At worst, it means nothing at all.

In their final interviews, several teachers expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of their units of work, variously citing a lack of depth, analysis, action and direction. Anna (LPS) said that were she to do the unit again she would do things differently and cover less content at greater depth. She commented, “there was so much potential to go with a particular culture or art or whatever, so much deeper”. As mentioned in the previous chapter, all the teachers at Ridge Primary in reflecting on their unit, thought it lacked depth and coherence and nominated the lack of any problem-solving or action-based dimension as a fundamental flaw. They did not, however, suggest how they might bring a more intercultural approach to units of work on communities in the future. As this topic is almost as popular as celebrations in the primary school curriculum, I use it in chapter 7 as one of the exemplars illustrating a proposed alternative approach to intercultural learning.

**Skills and processes**

Though some (Alexander, 2009a) consider the process of learning to be a component of knowledge, others distinguish between knowledge as content and know-how or skills. Increasingly, intercultural approaches (particularly in the domain of languages education) favour the teaching of cultural processes over cultural knowledge. Abdallah-Pretceille (2006) claims that when we seek to gain knowledge of other cultures we categorise, label and describe them in order to formulate a generalised cultural framework. When we meet individuals we apply our partial and limited cultural knowledge of the group to which we assume they belong, in order to fit them
into our assumed framework. This is problematic not only because individuals do not necessarily fit within the framework we have created but also because it reduces individuals to their membership of a particular group. Such encounters are predicated on the question of what we know about others or their culture that helps us communicate with them, rather than how we use culture, our own and that of the individual or group we are interacting with, in order to communicate.

Abdallah-Pretceille (2006) contends that an interculturalist approach should be more concerned with know-how than knowledge:

To learn to see, to hear, to be mindful of other people, to learn to be alert and open in a perspective of diversity and not of differences, calls for the recognition and experience of otherness, experience that is acquired and that is practised. Other people cannot be understood outside a communication process and an exchange. (p. 478)

Her conceptualisation of an intercultural approach breaks loose from a static view of culture that categorises and reduces individuals to their membership of a group. Instead, it seeks to build a repertoire of skills and dispositions that enable people to relate to and communicate with one another. Byram (2008) suggests three sets of skills - the skills of interpreting and relating (savoir comprendre), discovery (savoir apprendre) and the skills of interaction (savoir faire) - as integral to intercultural learning. Expressed in terms of intercultural principles these are comparable to connection, engagement and positive interaction.

In the research project schools, some skills were more familiar and accessible to teachers and students than others. Students were able to identify commonalities and differences between their lives and the lives of others and suggest reasons why this might be so. They could also imagine what other children’s lives might be like and empathise with their situations. However, opportunities for experiential learning, based on interaction or communication with other groups or participation in any activities outside the classroom were rare. So students never needed to get to know or get along with people they perceived to be different from themselves or to use culture as a means of communication with others. For the most part, students learnt in an
abstract way about people in far away places with whom they had no personal connection. The only exception to this was at Little Primary where students connected to another language and culture through daily class routines and incidental events with their teacher Anna, as much as they did in formal learning activities.

For all the teachers in this research project, a process-driven approach to intercultural education represented a significant challenge. In part, this may have been associated with its intangibility. What was expected was neither concrete nor easily defined, as reflected in Lil’s (RPS) comment that, “it’s not like here’s a booklet, go and teach it”. For some, this was a source of frustration and uncertainty. At the end of the project, reflecting on her understanding of intercultural education Anna (LPS) said, “maybe I felt that I would have a really good grasp on it and feel really confident by the end, but I don’t”. Even so, Anna and other teachers participating in this project demonstrated a capacity and a willingness to incorporate a range of intercultural experiences into formal and informal learning activities in their classrooms. This is indicative of “an overall orientation, a way of thinking and doing, a stance, which influences all decisions regarding curriculum design, its operationalisation and ongoing renewal” (Liddicoat et al., 2007, p. 48). It may well be that a teacher’s intercultural orientation is the key to securing a place for intercultural education in the curriculum.

The national curriculum and intercultural understanding

While the two ways of looking at culture – as knowledge and know-how – may be somewhat simplistic, they represent a choice to be made in the national curriculum that goes back to the national goals and what the curriculum is intended to achieve. If it simply aspires to develop students’ appreciation of cultural diversity then content depicting a range of people and their stories might suffice. If it seeks to develop students’ capacities to relate to people across cultures, to negotiate difference and to learn to live together in a diverse and changing world then something more sophisticated is called for. This research project’s findings suggest that intercultural understanding cannot be developed simply by adding multicultural content to the curriculum. Intercultural understanding is concerned with what you do as well as what you know. Because it is as much about beliefs and values as it is about knowledge, its
effectiveness is enhanced when it focuses on personal as well as social learning. Also, because culture may be made explicit in any learning that concerns people and their relationships, intercultural understanding should not be considered the province of any one learning area alone.

**Curriculum and the freedom of the subject**

It is difficult to see how a national curriculum that prescribes what is taught and what is learnt might promote the freedom of the subject. Though the general capabilities hold a slim hope for flexibility in the national curriculum, its pre-packaged approach to knowledge seems diametrically opposed to an education focused on the promotion of individual freedom. The subject and the idea of intercultural learning proposed in this thesis are more obviously supported by alternative approaches such as a democratic approach to curriculum and a pedagogy that puts the learner and learning at its centre (Deakin Crick, 2009). A democratic approach is based on an idea of education as “a process of human development through experience” (Reid, 2005, p. 45). Personalised learning focuses on developing in students “the confidence and responsibility to become active agents in their own learning” (Deakin Crick, 2009, p. 76).

The two approaches take a view of the curriculum as an interactive process that works from students’ own experiences, beliefs and circumstances. In line with the interactive approach to cultural learning proposed here, a democratic curriculum and Deakin Crick’s personalised approach depict students as enactors and creators of their own learning rather than simply being recipients of it. Both approaches work with the construction of the subject, supporting an individual’s right to freedom, the recognition of others and an awareness of belonging to a people, a culture and a history. In so far as they offer concrete ideas about the realisation of the subject in schools and schooling, the two approaches enhance the intercultural approaches conceptualised and elaborated as *Other ways* in the final chapter.
Chapter 6: Where policy and practice meet

In practice

The final section of this chapter focuses on the curriculum in primary schools. It explores schools’ capacity to promote students’ individual freedom and rights, to connect students with others and the wider world and to support them in learning how to live together in a diverse and changing world. It uses findings from chapter 5 to identify significant external and internal pressures that affect teachers’ ability to work with intercultural approaches in their classrooms.

Pressures from without

The school as the main institution carrying out social and education policies is particularly vulnerable to a range of external pressures, over which it has only limited control (Angus et al., 2007). Chief among the pressures identified in this research project affecting schools’ ability to adopt an intercultural approach to the curriculum were the move towards centralised control over the curriculum and the emergence of a ‘two-tiered’ curriculum as is the case in the United Kingdom (Alexander, 2009a). One disturbing consequence of these pressures is that intercultural education becomes an elite option.

Centralising control over the curriculum

In the ACT, the release of the first ever system-wide curriculum framework (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2007b) limits schools’ control over curriculum development. As one of the cornerstones of the ACT system, in the past school-based curriculum development gave teachers a level of professional responsibility and ownership that ‘teacher proofed’ centralised syllabi can never provide. This was evidenced at Little Primary School where the teachers developed a curriculum for integrated learning suitable for the character and needs of their early childhood school. Entitled A world of learning, the curriculum characterises learning as opening new worlds, locating students and their learning in four domains - the personal world, the social world, the natural world and the built world. These domains are loosely matched to the health, social science, science and technology learning areas and the essential learning achievements in the ACT curriculum framework, Every chance to learn (ACT
Department of Education and Training, 2007b). Little Primary School’s curriculum meets the external requirements of the ACT framework, but importantly, is also tailored to the needs of its community and works well for its students.

The essential problem with the national curriculum is that it is attempting to deliver a 21st century curriculum using a nineteenth century framework, that is, through traditional disciplines. The use of a discipline-based structure aligns more closely to the curriculum and organisation of secondary schools than to primary schools. Whether or not it is the best approach for either level of schooling is in itself debatable (Reid, 2009). National curriculum work published to date acknowledges opportunities for cross-curriculum study. The History Shaping Paper (National Curriculum Board, 2009b), for example, links history with other learning areas but the structure of discrete disciplines undercuts integrated learning. This challenges the holistic and transdisciplinary approach to learning frequently adopted by primary schools. Additionally, for primary schools already struggling with curriculum overload, the return to traditional disciplines will inevitably place additional pressure on their timetables.

**A two-tiered curriculum**

Increasingly, Australian primary schools are dominated by the requirement to improve students’ literacy and numeracy, driven by a national standards agenda and a national testing regime (Luke & Woods, 2007). With an increasing proportion of the school day devoted to this end, the primary curriculum divides into core and non-core subjects. The national curriculum makes the hierarchy of subjects plain and will further constrict schools’ control over the curriculum and the timetable. In the consequent narrowing of the curriculum, areas of the curriculum not subject to national testing are most likely to be considered non-core - the dessert students are allowed once they have eaten their greens - enjoyable but not necessary. Typically, this would affect children who are already marginalised, restricting their access to a rich and diverse curriculum, until after they have acquired the basics. For many teachers, intercultural education might be considered one of the curriculum’s desserts.
Such pressures call into question what matters most in primary schools. Though a solid foundation in literacy and numeracy is essential to students’ future success at school, it is not all that matters (Alexander, 2009a). Traditionally, primary schools have been children’s point of entry to the world outside their family, where they build social relationships and learn to make sense of themselves as individuals and social beings in the world – to explore who they are in relation to others. Though not subject to standardised testing, this aspect of students’ learning is critical not only in students’ success as individuals but also in how they learn to live together. It must not become an optional extra for any student, regardless of their background or their ability to read and write.

**The next divide**

As discussed above, the curriculum in primary schools has become distorted, with a two-tiered curriculum, based on a hierarchy of core and non-core subjects (Alexander, 2009a; APPA, 2008). The ‘no frills’ curriculum (consisting largely of core subjects) is most often apparent in schools with high proportions of students who are marginalised. As stated in *the Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) and evidenced in national and international literacy and numeracy test results, in Australian schools today there is a significant gap or divide in educational achievement between groups of students from high and low socio-economic backgrounds. A major imperative for schools in low socio-economic status (SES) communities is to improve students’ literacy and numeracy levels. However, more than half the instruction time in primary classes is already devoted to English and Mathematics and principals and teachers complain about inadequate time to address other curriculum areas properly. Consequently, as discussed in Chapter 4, there is a move to “to define the primary curriculum in practical terms as ‘the basics plus the rest’” (Angus et al., 2007, p. 95). They acknowledge such an approach challenges the provision of a “broad, rich curriculum” for all students. Unfortunately, by this reckoning, those most likely to miss out will be students in schools with a low socio-economic status (SES) or schools that perform poorly in national literacy and numeracy testing.

One of the most pressing issues to emerge from this research project concerns differences in the richness and diversity of learning experiences schools offer primary
school students that is dependent on the acquisition of basic skills. In this research project several teachers mention the primacy of establishing literacy and numeracy skills in relatively low SES schools. Though they identify low levels of exposure to diversity within students’ homes and neighbourhoods, teachers question the relevance of intercultural education or agree to its inclusion conditionally, once students have mastered the basics. In contrast, teachers in the two middle class schools in this research project describe their students as “having a world view”, that comes from wide-ranging experience such as overseas travel, awareness of current affairs and is associated with families who are affluent and well-educated. They describe another group of bilingual or bicultural students who may speak a language other than English at home and who mediate between home and school cultures as part of their everyday lives. These two groups are contrasted with so-called white kids in less affluent suburbs whose awareness of people and worlds beyond their immediate neighbourhood are more restricted. While teachers ascribe students’ worldliness more to social class than to ethnicity, they also explain it in terms of their contact with a greater range of people and experiences outside the school environment.

The National Curriculum Board specifically warns, “an alternative curriculum for students who are regarded as disadvantaged does not treat them equitably” (2009a, p. 8). However, there is a real danger of a new divide emerging between young people who have the skills and dispositions to make the most of intercultural opportunities and those who do not. McRae (2008) warns that the next divide will be between students who have highly developed intercultural skills and understandings and those who do not. Greene (2000, p. 36) observes how infrequently poor and at-risk children in schools in the United States are exposed to literature, dance and exhibitions. Some (Lynch, 2007) claim that No Child Left Behind has exacerbated this effect. Surely, rather than reducing the experiential basis of such students’ learning we should be looking for ways that we might increase it.

Throughout this research project, I have maintained that learning to live together - getting to know and get along with people we see as different from ourselves - is as much an enabling skill as literacy and numeracy for all young people in the 21st century. However, when the curriculum is narrowed, areas such as intercultural
education, the arts and social learning are among the first to go (Alexander, 2009a). Education that equips students with different levels of knowledge, skills and dispositions to work productively, communicate effectively and live peacefully in the culturally diverse environments of the 21st century is not equitable. A balanced, rich and diverse curriculum is essential for all primary students. It should not be restricted to those who have reached an acceptable literacy and numeracy benchmark.

**Pressures from within**

There are also a number of factors within primary schools themselves that affect their ability to take up an intercultural approach to the curriculum. These include the influence of the school culture, the extent to which social learning helps to connect students to their communities and the wider world, and the selection of content.

**School culture: the way we do things round here**

Several teachers in the project referred to the culture of the school, derived, in part, from the cultural, religious and social mix of the school community, combined with the accepted school ethos and an often unspoken adherence to ‘the way we do things round here’. Though not approaching the levels of cultural diversity found in major metropolitan centres, ACT schools are not entirely monocultural either. The population of most schools fall loosely into Hickling-Hudson’s (2003) predominantly white (of British and European descent) ethnic profile. As outlined previously, two of the four schools in this project could be described as moderately multicultural and two predominantly white. Ita described her class at Ridge Primary as “very multicultural” and Megan described Creek Primary as “quite a cultural mix”. Lack of cultural diversity was identified as a problem by parents at Little Primary and Gerri stated that though there were students from many cultural backgrounds at Valley Primary, they blended in and there was little evidence of anything “other than our own (sic) culture going on”.

The range of responses to cultural diversity discussed earlier in this chapter is evident in teachers’ descriptions of their school’s ethos. For example, Megan stated that, despite the cultural mix at Creek Primary School, “we’re all Australians on that playground” and Ita described the school culture as Ridge Primary School as “very
accepting” though she did not elaborate on of whom the school was accepting. As McRae (2008) notes, the school’s cultural mix affects its approach to diversity. However, intercultural education is important for all Australian students, regardless of where they live. Opportunities for interaction may differ according to school location, but should not be concentrated only in areas with high levels of diversity.

School staff (teachers, school leaders and administrative staff) influence, construct and sustain the school ethos, bringing their own values, beliefs and experiences to bear on the way things are done day to day across the school and in the learning programs of individual classes. At the beginning of the research project, teachers were asked to think differently about content and pedagogy in selected integrated units of work, attempting to: represent explicitly worlds and perspectives unlike students’ own; to develop their capacity to see things in different ways; and, in reflecting on how they see others and how others might see them, begin to understand the essential reciprocity of human relationships.

**School boundaries: stuck inside the classroom**

The classes in this project had little interaction with people from outside the school through their integrated units of work. While some units are clearly more suited than others to learning that physically takes students out of the school, even the classes studying communities as social systems were stuck inside their classrooms. It could be argued that a topic such as natural disasters (*Our Changing Earth*) does not readily lend itself to field trips. Nevertheless, the 2003 Canberra bushfires are a relatively recent, local reminder that disasters do not discriminate. This is commemorated in an exhibition at the Canberra Museum and is still fresh in the minds of many Canberrans, two readily accessible resources for classes studying disasters.

At no point did any of the classes leave the school grounds as part of their study, despite the fact that, as one student noted in his evaluation of the communities unit, students love excursions. The reasons for this are puzzling and it may be this is not a general trend in primary schools. Though an early idea for the community unit was to connect with a near-by, drought affected, rural community, this did not get off the ground, possibly because it was too difficult to organise. Possibly too, teachers think
their calendars are already too full and therefore, are unwilling to use up any more time on excursions. In reflecting on the unit of work Where Do I Belong?, teachers at Ridge Primary thought they had not given students enough opportunity to apply their learning through action. This may have been more apparent to them because it did not address one of the four knowledge processes that underpin their planning framework - the application of learning to real world contexts.

In all three schools, students’ exposure to a range of cultural perspectives occurred most frequently through activities associated with factual and fictional stories, videos and the internet rather than direct interaction with people outside the school. On several occasions parents joined students for special events such as the Harmony Day lunch in the school grounds. Otherwise, the only planned event that involved someone from outside the school was Tarfula’s visit to Little Primary. Schools are busy places and there are always people coming and going from classrooms. But the students need explicit opportunities to interact with a range of people, and to participate in learning experiences in settings outside the school, to broaden and deepen their experiences and ways of seeing the world.

**Appropriateness**

As well as keeping learning within the classroom, teachers were cautious about the content they included. While all teachers welcomed the idea of diversity and were motivated by a desire to make a difference in children’s lives, some teachers were happy with the way things were and did not want them to change. In particular, they baulked at activities that threatened to unsettle the equilibrium of their classes and teaching teams, and questioned the appropriateness of material that might stir undue emotion or uncover unacceptable attitudes. The matter of appropriateness is itself culturally determined (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Social acceptability is subject to external standards such as film and television ratings and Internet filters. But what is considered to be socially acceptable changes and also differs from one family, one school or one community to another.

Curriculum frameworks and syllabi offer schools and teachers general guidance on the appropriateness of content for students at different ages and levels of development.
This presupposes that children’s development correlates with a growing awareness of the world. Equally, children’s ability to understand social concepts depends on a basic competence in thinking about the thoughts and feelings of others. But as Hart (1997) points out, concepts about children’s social development such as perspective taking, social cooperation and the negotiation of peer relationships and friendship formation are also culturally determined.

**Understanding self, others and the wider world**

Primary school social education programs often depict students at the centre of a set of concentric circles that represent the ever-widening worlds they encounter as they grow up (Figure 2). This is evident in the proposed structure of the national history curriculum that moves from the personal worlds of the family and the school in early childhood classes, to the local community in middle primary and expand to the nation, the region and the world by years 5 and 6 (National Curriculum Board, 2009b). Teachers find this a useful frame of reference because it supports the idea of moving from known and familiar worlds to the unknown and the new, starting with family and friends in early childhood years to the local community in middle primary, the nation and the region in senior primary years. Circles could be added or subtracted to incorporate specific areas of study such as the school as a subset of neighbourhood, the state or the region. It provided a simple and sensible structure. But it also constructed these worlds and the relationships between them as orderly, fixed and stable.

![Concentric circle thinking](image)
But children’s worlds are no longer like this, if they ever were. The world has changed and people’s lives have changed with it. We cannot assume students in our classes live in nuclear family units (Dale, 2006). Their associations outside the family are not necessarily within their local neighbourhoods and social bonds are forged through their membership of many different groups (Mackay, 2009). Through the media and from an early age children are exposed to worlds far beyond their front door (McRae, 2008). In a global age, worlds intersect and the edges between them are blurred (Figure 3).

It may seem self-evident but concentric circles are clearly inadequate representations of the complexity and interconnectedness of the worlds and times in which we now live. A complex mix of close and distant, real and virtual worlds, are part of children’s lives that need to be acknowledged and included in their learning. However, evidence from the schools participating in this research project suggests that rather than encouraging interaction with the world classrooms can be like fortresses with teachers intent on holding the world outside at bay.
Chapter 6: Where policy and practice meet

Thinking differently

Though schools have long been held to account for children’s education, pressure to meet external demands, in the guise of stronger accountability and quality control measures, has been building rapidly over the past decade or so (Luke & Woods, 2007). Many of the demands on schools come from the Australian Government, passed through state and territory education authorities, based on funding agreements between the federal and state and territory governments. These demands have resulted in a raft of consequences for schools, anticipated and unanticipated, positive and negative, which affect primary schools’ ability to develop and implement approaches such as intercultural education. Increasingly, we see a loss of control over the curriculum as a consequence of compliance with system and national curriculum requirements and the narrowing of the curriculum as a consequence of national literacy and numeracy testing (Reid, 2009).

The strength and diversity of connections between the school and the community also play a significant role in broadening opportunities for intercultural interaction. Too often, the site of teaching and learning is restricted to the classroom with few chances to learn from people outside the school. Intercultural education’s struggle to get through the classroom door may be exacerbated by teachers’ reluctance to broaden the horizons of children’s learning beyond their classrooms or beyond topics they consider safe. At times, students’ access to others and the wider world may be curtailed. Whether this is in their best interests or in the interests of the school as a social institution is a moot point.

This chapter set out to think differently about the research project’s findings, based on Touraine’s (2009) claim that rather than talking about the obligations of citizens in society “we now have to talk about how the function of the social organization promotes or threatens the freedom of the subject” (p. 210). From its examination of three dimensions of Australian education: social goals, curriculum and school practices, two main conclusions emerge.
Firstly, in order to transform in-principle agreement about the importance of intercultural understanding into a core element in students’ learning, it must be personally significant to them. Unless students have a strong personal investment in it, intercultural learning is at best considered interesting, unusual and different and at worst irrelevant or useless. Intercultural understanding arises from people’s relationships, their interactions, and their capacity to withstand disagreement and to expect difference, as well as what they know about each other (Dodson, 2009a; Hage, 2005; Hall, 2006). Students need to engage and interact positively across different cultural groups through sustained intercultural experience. In this way, learning to live together becomes a personal responsibility and a shared project for all students.

Secondly, though the Melbourne Declaration identifies new demands on education in response to a rapidly changing, globalised world environment, this is not yet evident in recent work on the national curriculum (Reid, 2009). The knowledge, skills and dispositions that students require in learning to live together do not fit readily into its framework of individual disciplines. This may be mitigated to some extent by the addition of intercultural understanding as a general capability, but this approach is not ideal and how it is to be accomplished is still unknown. The pre-packaged or pre-constructed nature of the national curriculum appears to threaten rather than promote the freedom of the subject, being typical of a social organisation more concerned with its rules and structures than with than responsiveness to the freedom of the individual. It remains to be seen how successfully writers can incorporate students’ personal, social and intercultural capabilities into the learning area documents within the national curriculum. In the consultation drafts for English, mathematics, history and science (ACARA, 2010a), general capabilities and cross-curriculum dimensions have been tagged in learning area descriptors and elaborations where writers have judged them to be inherent. The effectiveness of this strategy remains to be seen. It is also uncertain whether capabilities and cross curriculum dimensions, embedded in national curriculum documents, will be given any priority in primary schools whose main concern is the achievement of literacy and numeracy benchmarks.

Whatever the outcome, at national, jurisdictional and school levels, education must rise to the challenges of learning to live together in a complex, changing and diverse world.
A primary curriculum that reflects the realities and complexities of children’s worlds and futures must give priority to their personal, interpersonal and social learning as well as the acquisition of basic skills. In the final chapter, I build on these ideas and principles to develop and describe an intercultural approach to the curriculum that promotes *Other ways* of learning to live together.
Chapter 7: Other ways

So the Australia I imagine for 2020 is one which allows all our stories to be heard in a different kind of conversation. It is a conversation that needs to be present not only in our national debates and policy-making, but in our sense of humour, in our theatre and films and literature, in our schools and university halls, and around our BBQs. (Nakata, 2008, p. 2)

This thesis has declared its interest in *Other ways* that Australian primary schools might support students in learning to live together. It has analysed how the ways of others have been portrayed in recent curriculum policies, initiatives and school-based practices, tracing the scope and limits of current approaches to cultural diversity in policy and practice. It has asserted that new ways of thinking and acting are needed to address comprehensively the goal of learning to live together. It recognises that in order to bring about the change in conversation that Sana Nakata envisaged at the Australia 2020 Summit (above), the interaction of many voices, many stories and many ways of seeing the world must become an integral part of learning for all students in Australian schools. This chapter proposes and elaborates a series of *Other ways* that brings a pedagogy of intercultural learning to the classroom, the school, the curriculum and education policy.

The first section concerns *Other ways* of thinking about intercultural learning, embedding it within layered interpersonal, personal and social relationships with people we know and are close to, people we live alongside but do not know personally and people we will never meet. The second section concerns *Other ways* of describing intercultural learning in terms of processes - observation, participation, reflection and expression. The third section imagines an intercultural curriculum illustrated by descriptions of three learning sequences for primary school classes. The fourth proposes a set of distinguishing characteristics for an intercultural primary school. The fifth sets out a refined set of principles to guide intercultural education. The final section recommends *Other ways* that national policy might pursue the educational goal of learning to live together.
Interpersonal, personal and social learning

My thesis takes the view that intercultural understanding arises from interaction between people from different cultural groups. It focuses on the interaction between the self (me) and the Other (you) and the creation of a shared consciousness (us). It connects to personal, interpersonal and social learning, the development of self-knowledge, a sense of social awareness and responsibility for the Other. The complexity of these three perspectives, their relationship to one another and their possibilities and limitations are at the crux of the approach I propose.

The interpersonal

Thinking about learning in personal, interpersonal and social terms connects to the individual and social purposes of education identified in the *Melbourne Declaration* (MCEETYA, 2008) as discussed in Chapter 4. It also adds a third element – the Other. In the context of learning, when we put the Other first, what comes after is cast in a new light.

In one sense, the idea of the Other is captured in the ethic that “a person is a person through other persons” (Louw, 1998), you come to know yourself only through others - by developing and maintaining a relationship with the ‘not me’. This idea asserts the primacy of the relationship between the self and the Other that Levinas (1985) calls the ‘party of two’. Within this relationship, whether I choose to acknowledge it or not, I am compelled by an unconditional responsibility for the Other that prompts me to ask, “what if, instead of explaining our responsibilities in terms of its effect on me or us, we simply started with the needs of the other?” (Manderson, 2001, p. 4). Starting with the Other requires an openness to something foreign or something totally beyond the self. It means that “what we learn is conditioned upon an initial susceptibility to what is outside and exterior to us” (Todd, 2001, p. 68). Arguably, learning from the Other with curiosity and openness should be a priority for all students living in global times and contexts.
Starting with the Other also draws attention to what happens between people rather than who they are, representing a shift in thinking from the personal to the interpersonal. Kalantzis and Cope (2005) claim this to be significant in intercultural learning because the interpersonal focuses on the negotiation of differences between people rather than the identification of similarities and group identities. In this sense, the interpersonal dimension of learning highlights the “essential reciprocity of learning and human relations” (Alexander, 2009a, p. 30). It reinforces the idea of intercultural learning as a two-way process or an exchange built on mutual recognition and respect.

The personal

In education policy and school practice, personal learning is commonly equated with the individual and personal benefits to be gained from education. This has been depicted in a number of ways. For instance, the Melbourne Declaration depicts the student as a successful learner and a creative and confident individual. Kalantzis and Cope (2005) identify the development of persons of stable and resilient identity and the Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2009a) names four personal qualities and capacities and individual needs - wellbeing, engagement, empowerment and autonomy - as among the key purposes and aims of school education.

The idea of the subject is both individualist and universalist (Touraine, 2000, 2002, 2007, 2009) and is most concerned with the development of individuals’ capacities to be actors in their own lives, often expressed in educational terms as personal empowerment. This individual focus is tempered by the understanding that others share the same need to resist forces that impinge on their right to be themselves and the same demand for recognition and respect. Clearly then, personal learning is not simply about the development of individual qualities, strengths and skills. It connects to the relationship and reciprocity between yourself and the Other in the give and take of learning and living. As you learn from others you grow in self-knowledge, and equally, if you are to understand others you need to work on yourself (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006).
In addition, Touraine’s (2009) claim that it is only “the will to be ourselves and to create and defend ourselves as individuals” (p. 199) that can guide behaviour, strikes a chord with recent approaches to personalised learning that argue knowledge cannot be contained within ‘pre-packaged’ subjects or learning areas (Deakin Crick, 2009). Unfortunately, in setting out what is to be taught and learnt and expected standards of achievement within stand-alone learning areas, the new national curriculum (National Curriculum Board, 2009a) will struggle to connect substantially to students’ personal lives. It would do well to allow room for personalised learning that students construct through shared experiences, encounters with others and participation in the world. According to Deakin Crick (2009):

the less we work things out for ourselves, the less we are required to get back ‘in touch’ with the world we live in. The less in touch we become, the less feedback we receive about who and what we are. Increasingly, we are losing our sense of where we belong in the world. (p. 76)

Consequently, in learning as in life, the links between the personal and social stand in need of reinforcement.

**The social**

The connection between the personal and social realms brings notions of belonging, solidarity and shared values, and identities to the fore. The social emphasises ‘us’, who we are and what we hold together, expressed in terms such as ‘our family’, ‘our school’, and ‘our nation’. However, this conceptualisation is problematic in a socially and culturally diverse world because it overlooks the existence of a third party, the person or group who is ‘not us’. The third party disrupts the equilibrium between you and me by introducing an additional unknown element in the guise of the stranger or outsider. The third party provokes questions about who is included in or excluded from our shared belongings. It causes us to look beyond our personal concerns and affiliations; to face the question of how to live together in a world of people who are ‘not us’, or with whom we seem to have nothing in common.

In Australia, interest in the question of how we might live with cultural, linguistic, social and religious diversity in nations, communities and neighbourhoods, has
intensified since 9/11, in politics, public discourse and social policy. This has been most evident in the public articulation of national values connected to democracy, justice and equality, and commitments to social cohesion, cultural diversity and reconciliation. As revealed in Chapter 4, these values and commitments appear in education policy but they are weakly defined, their meaning is assumed to be known, and strategies to ensure their realisation receive low priority. Cultural appreciation as the principal strategy that addresses cultural diversity promotes co-existence. But learning to live together requires the development of social relationships that are more robust than this. It requires sustained interaction across difference. It allows for disagreement and does not shy away from controversy or conflict and recognises that though disagreement may cause us to feel ill at ease, it is an essential element in the realities of democratic life.

The conceptualisation of active and informed citizenship in the Melbourne Declaration covers the knowledge and skills needed to participate in public debate about social issues. However, given that many students do not engage with current civics education programs (National Curriculum Board, 2009a) it is worth thinking about how the connection between personal and social learning might be strengthened, along with students’ confidence in their capacity to make a difference in their own lives and the lives of others (Collin, 2008).

As a first step, education policy and programs that aim to support students’ ability to get to know and get along with people they perceive to be different from themselves must consider personal, interpersonal and social dimensions of students’ learning.

**Cultural and intercultural learning**

Education is in some ways a process of learning one’s own culture - through its history, language, stories and practices. This aspect of cultural learning contributes to one’s sense of identity and belonging and is a point of reference in making sense of the world. However, children do not simply learn their culture as they do their times tables. For the most part, it is a subtle and unconscious process, and many students struggle to
identify and discuss their own culturally based beliefs, values and practices. But
culture may also be understood as an expression created through people’s interactions;
what they say and do together. In this sense, cultural learning is about students
enacting and creating their own cultures. They work with and combine cultural
fragments in familiar and unfamiliar ways rather than simply receiving and
reproducing a static entity called culture.

**Observation and participation**

Intercultural learning occurs in a number of ways. Students may learn about another
culture from the outside as observers, for example, through appreciation of cultural
features such as food, festivals, dance or music. Alternatively, they may learn the
culture from within, as participants or interactants, for example, through intercultural
language learning.

In thinking about a curriculum directed towards learning to live together, I have argued
the importance of moving beyond cultural appreciation approaches to more interactive
and reciprocal approaches, favouring the position that students are enactors and
creators of their own cultures rather than simply recipients of a given culture and
observers of other cultures. However, I have come to the view that the roles of observer
of culture (outsider) and participant in culture (insider) are both essential components
of intercultural learning, each presenting its own distinct opportunities and limitations.
In order to act interculturally, students need a mix of cultural knowledge and know-
how, developed through insider and outsider perspectives.

As observers, students learn about another culture, whether this is through finding out
about the culture of a country, the daily lives of children in other parts of the world,
current events such as natural disasters or through themes such as food, water or trade.
In learning about others in this way, students are one step removed from these other
lives and can bring a detached perspective to what they observe. In intercultural
learning, noticing activities draw on students’ capacity to focus on aspects of the lives of
others and to connect what they notice to their own lives. Ideally, this enables them to
use learning about other people, places and times to reflect on their own situations.
However, students learning about a culture from outside may only have access to a pre-packaged version of a culture, which may do little to challenge cultural stereotypes or cause them to reflect on themselves. Students need also to go beyond their own worlds, crossing cultural boundaries to encounter the worlds of Others and to learn from them.

As participants, students learn culture from within or as insiders. They participate in intercultural experiences, whether through learning a language, involvement in shared projects, social action or other experiences. However, it would be a mistake to assume that by learning another language, students automatically learn another culture or that by putting two groups of students together they will automatically engage in cultural exchange. Preferably, students become more aware of their own and other ways of knowing and being in the world, in their capacity to relate to and empathise with others. But, cultural exchanges are only ever partially understood and there are limits to empathy. It is important to remember that one can never fully understand the perspective of another. Hall (2006) illustrates the complexity of our relationship with people we do not know personally but for whom we feel an affinity, saying of the Palestinian people, “I know these people. They’re not me but they are part of my global world” (n.p.). This leads me to the conclusion that you can learn about others, you can learn from them and feel empathy and solidarity with them, but you can never become them.

**Reflection and expression**

Whether done consciously or not, reflection plays an integral part in how students learn to make sense of themselves in the world and their connections with others. Larrivee (2000) states that the practice of self-reflection “involves observing patterns of behaviour and examining behaviour in the light of what we truly believe. This process can be envisioned as flowing through several levels, from the level of core beliefs to the level of specific actions” (p. 303).

In this sense, reflection is an essential element in the process of intercultural learning. It is not enough to set up rich cultural encounters and hope that students learn from them. Students need opportunities to reflect on their experiences: to think how they
have affected their knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and behaviour, both looking back and looking forward. At times, reflective activities may involve students in deep reflection about themselves in relation to others and the wider world. At other times, they may be quick questions about something students have learnt, enjoyed or not enjoyed.

Though not all outcomes can be anticipated, teachers need to make the purposes of activities clear to students and provide them with guidance and a range of strategies to help them process their learning. At times, well-targeted and thought provoking questions help guide students’ thinking. For instance, students can come to see something that went wrong as a learning opportunity, through being asked what they would do differently in the future. At other times, the questions we ask of ourselves can be most rewarding or most confronting. Ideally, students are encouraged to become critically reflective, that is “to act with integrity, openness, and commitment rather than compromise, defensiveness, or fear” (Larrivee, 2000, p. 295).

While it may seem that critical reflection is a great deal to ask of primary aged students, the capacity to approach problems with honesty and openness is well worth cultivating in all children. As is the case with learning activities, students can be asked to reflect on their learning on personal, interpersonal and social levels. Students reflect at a personal level through written activities such as learning logs and diaries, relaxation or visualisation activities, thinking while having a solitary walk or listening to music. They can also reflect through talking with others, in pairs or within a group. Students might be asked to reflect on what they have learnt, what they have enjoyed or not enjoyed, problems they may have encountered, whether their ideas have changed or to imagine themselves as others might see them.

Expression comes into intercultural learning in at least two ways. In one sense, it is the flip side of reflection. Rather than looking inwards upon yourself, you emanate outwards as a means of making your thoughts feelings and opinions known. Abdollah Pretceille (2006) says that culture is a “place of expression” between oneself and the Other. In other words, culture is generated through interaction between people. It occurs in and through interaction. Both ideas contribute to intercultural learning. At an abstract level, expression is a cultural act created through bringing two cultures into
relationship. At a concrete level, expression enables students to show what they have learnt, through linguistic, artistic, practical and other means. It becomes both evidence of what students have learnt and a culmination of their learning.

**Everyone’s concern**

Given intercultural education’s marginal position and limited application in education policy and much school-based practice, it is reasonable to ask the point of a nuanced position such as that described above. I would argue it serves at least two purposes. Firstly, it underlines the point that intercultural learning is everyone’s concern: it is not solely the preserve of students from other cultures. And, secondly, it conceptualises and locates intercultural learning within interconnected personal, interpersonal and social worlds. It asserts its place in the curriculum for all Australian primary schools, premised on the belief that the study of self, others and the wider world (Alexander, 2009a) is fundamental to the primary curriculum and is vital to children’s development at all stages of the schooling.

Despite signs to the contrary, it may well be that intercultural education’s moment has come. At the very least, given that the National Curriculum Shaping Paper (National Curriculum Board, 2009a) identifies intercultural understanding as one of its ten general capabilities to be made explicit in learning areas, it presents an opportunity for progressing intercultural learning in Australian schools. Rather than describing intercultural understanding within specific disciplines, as will be the case in the national curriculum, in what follows I imagine intercultural curriculum in generic terms describing its intent and scope in the primary curriculum, what might be expected from it and what it might look like in practice.

**Imagining an intercultural curriculum**

An intercultural curriculum is based on the social pillar of learning - learning to live together (Delors, 1996). It assumes that learning to live together is in everyone’s interest and is everyone’s responsibility. It starts from the basic idea that:
To act interculturally is to bring into a relationship two cultures, the values, beliefs and behaviours of two groups of people. (Byram, 2006, p. 4)

An intercultural curriculum stimulates students’ interest in the lives of others. It cultivates in students the dispositions of curiosity, openness, empathy, reciprocity, respect and responsibility. It supports them in developing the knowledge and capabilities to get to know and get along with people they see as different from themselves in a culturally diverse and interconnected world. Key dispositions and capabilities are reflected in the keywords used to characterise the guiding principles for intercultural learning in Table 5 (below), reworked to highlight new emphases (shown in bold) that have emerged from the research project. I will elaborate on these in more detail later in the chapter but turn first to what intercultural learning might look like in primary programs and to the distinguishing features of an intercultural primary school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intercultural education principle</th>
<th>Characteristics of the principle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>engagement</td>
<td>interest, curiosity, enthusiasm, belonging, transformation, <em>connecting the personal to the social</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connection</td>
<td>commonality, <em>reciprocity of human relationships, mutual recognition and respect</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>positive interaction</td>
<td>context, dialogue, mediation, <em>observation, participation</em>, argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>empathy</td>
<td>imagination, <em>feeling for another</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perspective</td>
<td>consideration of and <em>critical insight into multiple ways of seeing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self knowledge</td>
<td>self-awareness, susceptibility and openness, responsibility <em>reflection, expression</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Intercultural principles revisited (new emphases in italics)
Chapter 7: Other ways

In the work of schools, intercultural understanding does not refer solely to a body of knowledge, or a set of skills that once taught can be ticked off and forgotten. It constantly influences how one thinks and acts, a dynamic process of observation, interaction, reflection and expression. Intercultural learning should not be corralled within a single discipline. Nor should content be restricted to topics that fall into familiar cultural territory such as celebrations, beliefs, what it means to be Australian, or Christmas around the world. Intercultural learning is well suited to the transdisciplinary approach commonly adopted in primary schools.

In seeking to show what intercultural learning might look like in primary school classes, I return to the assumption underpinning the research project - that it is possible to bring an intercultural approach to any unit of work that has people in it. Sometimes, this may involve bringing a new focus to familiar practices and topics such as children’s news or circle time. At other times, it may mean jolting students from the worlds they know through encountering the unexpected.

In the context of Australian schools, I propose an intercultural approach that:

- depicts complex, interconnected worlds - by bringing the world into the classroom, going out to meet the world and including multiple perspectives and voices in content
- brings students’ worlds into relationship with the worlds of others - through strengthening connections between students, others and the wider world and explicitly addressing personal, interpersonal, social and cultural aspects of learning
- gives priority to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- builds opportunities for observation, participation, reflection and expression (learning about, learning with, and learning from others) appropriate to students’ ages and stages of development, and providing a language that helps students to make sense of their experiences
- helps students develop an awareness of what they take for granted about themselves, an openness to the ways of others, and the skills to address difficult questions and disagreements constructively
involves students in enacting and creating their own learning.

One of the research project’s most troubling findings was that teachers were unclear about what intercultural practice entailed and unsure about how to move beyond superficial approaches. For many teachers, working with an intercultural approach is neither easy nor obvious, requiring a leap into the unknown that can be both daunting and threatening. And telling teachers to be more open or to challenge what they take for granted is like telling new immigrants to be more Australian. It is not something you can simply switch on or off. Nor does it simply mean working with intercultural learning activities or resources.

An intercultural approach is about building a habit of intercultural practice, acting interculturally in both planned and unplanned experiences in the classroom - in daily routines, incidental events, classroom organization, news, how teachers frame questions, and what they draw students’ attention to, and resources used and activities undertaken. The illustrations of intercultural learning below describe specific strategies and activities rather than generalised dispositions or orientations. This is because concrete examples are most often what primary teachers look for and find most useful.

I do not mean to add to the already abundant pile of resources and units of work developed by education jurisdictions, commercial publishers and initiatives such as studies of Asia, Discovering Democracy and Values Education (listed in Appendix 3), as well as a multitude of others to be found online. Instead, the examples below build on the units of work undertaken by participants in the research project. They are intended to illustrate key elements of the intercultural approach and ways of doing things differently rather than representing an entire unit of work or a sequence of learning. As acknowledged in Table 6 (below), many of the strategies and activities have been taken from other sources, adapted for the purpose of illustrating the topic and approach.

Despite my contention that learning needs to reflect the fact that borders between personal lives and local, national and global communities are neither as fixed nor as
stable as they were once held to be, the three units of work do move from the personal to the local and then to the global as students progress through the primary years of schooling. However, at each stage strategies and activities reach into global, national and local contexts to explore people’s relationships within and across them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Unit of work</th>
<th>Strategies - activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early childhood (K/P/R – Yr 2)</td>
<td><strong>Someone like me</strong></td>
<td>Circle time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• This stands for me (Immigration Museum, 2009)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The world in your classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Diversity dolls (MacNaughton, 2006; Ridley, 2006)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Living Libraries (Living Libraries Australia, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Helping others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Primary (Yrs 3 – 4)</td>
<td><strong>Local places, communities and cultures</strong></td>
<td>Working with an Indigenous world view (Grant, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Who owns what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Reconciliation action plan (RAP) leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Trading places</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Your silhouette is mine (Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children et al., 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural exchanges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7: Other ways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Unit of work</th>
<th>Strategies - activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Primary</td>
<td>Many people - one world</td>
<td>News of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yrs 5-6)</td>
<td></td>
<td>- <em>Graffiti Wall</em> (Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children et al., 2008)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- <em>Eyewitness</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Connecting through drama</td>
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<td>- <em>Hot seat</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- <em>Cooling Conflicts</em> (O'Toole, Burton, &amp; Plunkett, 2005)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Developing Intercultural Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- <em>ru MAD?</em> (Education Foundation, 2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: Intercultural learning strategies and activities

Early childhood: Someone like me

Year 2 students at Little School were interested in the lives of others and empathised readily with their situations. However, in order to make stronger connections between their own lives and the lives of other children, students need to be able to think about and describe their own lives first.

Circle time

- *This stands for me:* Children bring in (or draw) something from home that has special significance for them personally or for their families. They explain its significance to the class, why they chose it, where it comes from and how old it is. The objects could be placed on distance (closest to furthest away) and time (newest to oldest) continua. Once every child in the class has presented something about themselves, students are assigned another person's object to write about. The objects, continua and pieces of writing are displayed together.
The world in our classroom

As Hickling-Hudson (2003) points out, Australian schools have a range of profiles of diversity. It is important that teachers support students to access and use their cultural heritage in their growth as learners, individuals and social beings. However, it is equally important that students’ cultures do not become objects of voyeuristic interest for the class. Teachers and students need to relate and respond sensitively to their specific classroom cultures. At times, it is helpful to bring new cultural perspectives into the classroom.

- Persona or diversity dolls (MacNaughton, 2006; Ridley, 2006) are introduced during circle time. The dolls have their own physical characteristics, personalities and life histories. They bring diverse ethnic, religious, social and cultural backgrounds into the classroom. For students in relatively culturally homogenous classes and communities they offer opportunities for cultural interaction that otherwise may not be available to them. Through the teacher, the dolls tell stories about their lives, allowing students to explore ways of life that are different from their own and to discuss issues concerning diversity, discrimination and equity in a non-threatening manner. The dolls give young students the opportunity to discover what they have in common with people from different backgrounds, to empathise with the situations they describe and to work through problems or disagreements in the safety of a once-removed relationship.

- Living Libraries allow students to borrow a ‘living book’, that is, to have a conversation with someone with a particular story to tell – people who have faced some form of hardship or prejudice, or whose life stories are different from most of the community.

Helping others

At Little Primary, some parents wanted the school to introduce a stronger social justice focus to help students understand that many people in the world were less fortunate than they were. In response, the school organised a ‘special lunch’ to raise funds for a school in South Africa. This approach is not unusual as schools often hold fundraising activities to support local and international charities. Whether or not such activities
help students to understand the difference between their lives and the lives of others, or to develop a sense of responsibility for a person more vulnerable or less fortunate than they are, is another matter.

It should not be difficult to connect student learning with charitable giving. At a simple level, students could be given the brief to develop and run a fundraising event connected to the cause. For instance Year 2 students at Little Primary may have conducted research and designed a menu based on a typical lunch for children in South African schools. Whether through fundraising events or other activities, students need to understand the impact of poverty and inequality on the lives of others and the importance of sharing resources and helping others. In the case of the Year 2 class at Little Primary, the fundraising lunch could also be used as a culminating activity for their investigation of Someone like me - an opportunity to share their findings with other classes over lunch.

**Middle primary: Local places, communities and cultures**

The local community is a topic commonly covered in middle primary years, though if the experience at Ridge Primary is anything to go by, it does not necessarily hold students’ interest. Potentially, the topic is vast yet it is squeezed into a unit of work lasting around nine or ten weeks. A local area study undertaken over a whole year would offer far greater breath and depth of learning. It could encompass:

- study of the local area from an Indigenous perspective
- changing patterns of use and settlement
- a comparative study of people’s lives in two communities
- an environmental project

**Working with an Indigenous world view**

The first principle in seeking to work with an Indigenous worldview is to contact and work with the local Indigenous community. The aim is to learn from and be led by Indigenous people. A number of education jurisdictions and organisations have developed cultural protocol for schools (Board of Studies NSW, 2001). As expressed on
the Forming Partnerships page of the What Works. The Works Program website (http://www.whatworks.edu.au), the bottom line is that:

you can't have a partnership without a relationship, and you can't have a relationship without a conversation. You've got to have the conversation.

Everything starts here. (National Curriculum Services & The Australian Curriculum Studies Association, 2007)

For example, the Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework (Grant, 2006) includes a protocol for working with Indigenous people, developed in north Queensland that could be used as a starting point in working with local Indigenous groups. It presents an Indigenous approach to learning that considers topics holistically, identifying links between the key elements Land, Language and Culture contextualised in terms of Time, Place and Relationships. The six components interact with one another. Changes in one element result in changes to the other five. The framework offers a powerful alternative approach to topics such as local area.

Figure 4. The Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework (Grant, 2007, p. 56)
• **Who owns what?**

This activity asks students to reflect on shared space and the significance of land to identity. It includes an excursion to a local park and the exploration of the shared ownership of public spaces. This is challenged when students return to school to find their classroom has been taken over by another class in their absence. This provokes them to think about what it means to be dispossessed.

• **Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Leaders**

Students take a leadership role in developing and undertaking actions to implement a school-wide reconciliation action plan. Activities recommended by Reconciliation Australia (2008) include:

- inviting an Indigenous elder to talk about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditions, ceremonies or connection to country
- watching films about Indigenous history and culture
- creating an Indigenous exhibition with input or guidance from an Indigenous leader or organisation.
- arranging a heritage walk with a local Indigenous leader
- arranging a school excursion to an Aboriginal community.
- designing a poster about reconciliation and what it means to you
- organising a culminating activity.

• **Real-life stories**

These engage the imagination and allow students to enter worlds far removed from their own - to gain some insight into the lives of others. Though they may connect aspects of the story with their own lives, readers can never fully understand the particular experiences and perspectives of another, and remain at a distance as outsiders or onlookers. Students reading *Home to Mother* (Pilkington Garimara, 2006), the true story of three young Aboriginal girls’ escape from the Moore River Native Settlement and long journey home following the rabbit roof fence, are unlikely to find themselves in the situation of the three children in the story. However, they may have experienced the trauma of family separation in their own lives and can learn from the resilience,
enterprise and courage of the three protagonists. They are also exposed to an
Australian story that is not part of the mainstream cannon.

Trading places
An idea modelled with breathtakingly little cultural sensitivity in the Australian
television series Summer Heights High, where one of the central characters, Jam’ie, is
an exchange student from an elite private school to a government high school, and in
programs such as The World’sStrictest Parents and Wife Swap, trading places
activities are intended to build students’ understanding of the validity of multiple
perspectives and ways of life. The activities described here comprise an interpersonal
visualisation exercise and two forms of cultural exchanges between schools.

• Your silhouette is mine where in pairs students draw write on their own
  silhouette a thought (on the head), a feeling (on the heart), a need (on the
  stomach), a desire to do something (on the hands) and an activity they enjoy (on
  the feet). They then share this information with their partner, describing each
  thought, feeling, need, desire and activity without explaining why. Next,
  students lie down in their partner’s silhouettes, closing their eyes and trying to
  imagine their partner’s thoughts, feelings, needs and desires and the things they
  enjoy as if they were their own. The purpose of the activity is to “understand
  and appreciate other people’s perspectives” (Interfaith Council on Ethics
  Education for Children et al., 2008, p. 69). It is interactive and reflective,
  requiring students to listen to and learn from one another as well as learn about
  one another. It taps into their capacity for empathy and strengthens
  interpersonal connections.

• Cultural envoys are based on the idea of travel buddies. They are usually stuffed
  toys or puppets that a school class sends to visit students in other schools. They
  get to know the community they are visiting. Their experiences are recorded in
  diary entries and photographs, collated in a physical book or on a webpage.
  Cultural envoys have a particular interest in aspects of the community and use
  students in the receiving school to record their findings. They could, for
example, use the Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework (Grant, 2006) to structure and record their learning.

- **Exchange programs** between schools are not new. What is being suggested here is that they offer an invaluable opportunity for intercultural exchange - to bring into relationship students from two distinctly different communities for a common purpose. Where both schools are studying their local area, the exchange would enable them to make a comparative study. They may also be involved in locally based projects that address an issue of concern to either or both communities. In New South Wales, a Cultural Exchange in Schools Program (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2007) operates for all schools in the state that aims to promote greater understanding, respect and acceptance between students from diverse backgrounds.

**Senior primary: Many people - one world**

**News of the world**

From the Year 6 unit on natural disasters at Creek Primary, it was evident to the teachers that students were deeply interested in global issues but that their grasp of world geography and history was, at best, hazy. This pointed to a need for activities that strengthen the connection between students’ lives and the social world and that examine the impact of world events on people’s lives. The two activities described below are intended to strengthen students’ general world knowledge and to provide a springboard for subsequent activities and strategies.

- **Graffiti Wall**: Students construct a group collage of the world as they see it, using words, images, drawings, and graffiti to express their thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears about the world. Students reflect on their own understanding of the world through directed discussion prompted by questions such as: Is this the world you want to live in? What are the causes of the events shown on the wall? Are we responsible for what happens in the world? How can we make a difference? Depending on the view of the world students bring to this activity, it may be emotionally confronting for some students. It is important to consider
positive and negative viewpoints and to bring the activity to a close on a positive note (through an uplifting song, poem or prayer).

- **Eyewitness**: From a large world map each student selects one or two places (cities, countries or regions) that they are unfamiliar with or that they would like to know more about, aiming to cover all regions of the world. Over a set time, their task is to look for news and information about the selected places in newspapers, on the Internet and TV and by talking with parents and friends. Though everything they find out is relevant, they are to look specifically for stories that include eyewitness accounts. Each week the class holds a ‘news of the world’ session where students share what they have found out. The class interviews individual students as if they were eyewitnesses to the event. People and their stories are added to the world map. Once they have collected information from enough places, the class decides on issues or situations they would like to pursue further. This could take many directions, three of which are suggested below.

### Connecting through drama

It is likely that much of the news that students report will involve conflict and struggle. These situations present a way into a deeper examination of personal, cross-cultural and social conflict through drama based activities. Drama’s immediacy allows people to “observe themselves in action... They can see themselves here and imagine themselves there; they can see themselves today and imagine themselves tomorrow” (Boal, 2002, pp. 11-12). Teachers might use stand-alone activities such as the ‘hot seat’ activity used at Ridge Primary or through more substantial strategies such as the Cooling Conflicts Program (O’Toole et al., 2005) operating in schools throughout New South Wales.

- **Hot seat** is a commonly used drama activity used to explore character’s actions and motivations. Here the aim is to draw attention to different perspectives on the same situation. Using an event from the news of the world, the teacher and individual students take on the role of people involved in the situation by sitting in the hot seat. The class asks them questions to draw out their perspective on the situation.
• *Cooling Conflict* teaches students how to understand and manage conflict through drama and pass on what they have learnt to younger students through a peer-teaching program. Rather than focusing on finding solutions to deep and complex problems, it encourages students to think about the impact of conflict in other people’s lives and offers them ways to manage conflict in their own lives.

**Developing intercultural projects - making a difference**

Joint projects that address a common goal are an effective strategy for breaking down prejudices between groups (K. J. Reynolds & Turner, 2001). They offer individuals and groups the chance to get to know and get along with one another while achieving a shared purpose. For example, students from schools in different geographic locations and with different population mixes could work together to develop a campaign addressing a mutually agreed local or global issue around children’s rights or the environment (Hart & UNICEF, 1997). Such projects need to meet specific criteria, such as:

- bringing two cultures into a relationship to do something together for a common purpose
- giving participants control over the nature and level of their participation
- ensuring that participants have an agreed role in decisions concerning the project
- having a set completion date
- being solution-oriented.

There are many avenues through which students can develop and participate in projects designed to make a difference. For example, *ru MAD? are you making a difference* (Education Foundation, 2009), is an initiative that describes itself as “a dynamic mix of education, action, advocacy and events” that “enables young people to lead social change” through developing local projects. Many online networks connect to students in the region and around the world. One such network, iEARN (International Education and Resource Network), enables “young people to undertake projects designed to make a meaningful contribution to the health and welfare of the
planet and its people” (iEARN Australia, 2009) using information and communication technologies.

**Assessment**

While the activities above illustrate what intercultural learning might look like in daily classroom practice and the sort of interactions it seeks to encourage, they rely on certain assumptions about what it is expected that students will learn. From the outset, it is important to be explicit about what might be expected from intercultural learning. In fact, Wiggins and McTighe (2005) argue that in planning the curriculum “the best designs derive backwards from the learnings sought” (p. 14). Though intended learning is tailored to suit each unit of work, there are overarching intentions behind intercultural learning. The key attributes of intercultural understanding below derive from the intercultural principles used throughout this research project, augmented by McGury, Shallenberger and Tolliver’s (2008) assessment rubrics for intercultural learning and assessment activities and strategies in the *Learning to Live Together Programme* for intercultural and interfaith learning (Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children et al., 2008).

Intercultural understanding encompasses:

- mutual recognition and respect for the languages, cultures and beliefs of others
- an openness to other cultural perspectives
- a sensitivity to differences with others
- an appreciation of different perspectives
- an ability to empathise with others
- an understanding of oneself in relation to others and the wider world
- an ability to apply and adapt this understanding to new contexts.

The question of how intercultural understanding might be assessed is complex. Because intercultural understanding is about a way of being and acting, it is not simply a matter of assessing a body of knowledge or a set of skills. It is also questionable whether students’ intercultural understanding is a matter for public scrutiny and there is some uncertainty about how its achievement should be measured. But, given that
assessment activities are tools used to inform teachers’ practice and students’ learning as well as to determine the achievement of set goals (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009), it is reasonable to consider their place in intercultural learning. Formal and informal assessment activities may occur whenever students are asked to reflect on their learning, and may also be built into culminating activities in units of work. For example, after the fundraising activity in Someone like me, students could be asked to write to students in the South African school, with their responses assessed against the criteria above.

An intercultural school

Intercultural education is not confined to the curriculum or to the classroom. It is reflected and enacted in every aspect of a school’s operation – its ethos, priorities and practices. Whether undertaken explicitly within learning programs or not, schooling teaches children how to make and maintain relationships with a range of individuals and groups of people. In the interculturally focused primary school proposed here, personal and social learning incorporates both formal and informal processes. It is guided by intercultural principles that support students in developing interpersonal skills, in making sense of their own worlds, in engaging with worlds beyond their own and in promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. In this view, an intercultural school:

- is connected to its community - recognising that in addition to its educative role, the school plays important social and cultural roles in the life of the community
- engages with cultural diversity, bringing students’ worlds into relationship with others and with the wider world
- gives priority to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- addresses personal, interpersonal and social dimensions of students’ learning
- involves students in creating and enacting a democratic school culture
A community focus

An intercultural school sees itself as “a focal point of community life and thought”, developing “a relationship of deep and authentic reciprocity” (Alexander, 2009, p. 45) with its community, as a place whose culture influences its community and, in turn, is influenced by it. How a school sees itself is apparent in what it says and what it does, in the openness of its communication with the community, in policies and in everyday practices. These practices may be as simple as regular community coffee mornings or the development of collaborative projects of mutual benefit to the school and the community. A school with a dynamic relationship with its community opens itself to the world outside and invites it in.

The school also reveals its culture through public events such as school performances, art shows and sporting events. They are opportunities to showcase the school’s approach to cultural diversity while celebrating children’s work. The involvement of people from a range of cultural groups in the development of a school event is an opportunity for students to engage in intercultural interaction directed to a common goal and outcome. And, the inclusion of a rich mixture of cultural influences and perspectives communicates the school’s priorities to its community.

Engagement with cultural diversity

An intercultural school is responsive to and respectful of the cultural resources that students and teachers bring to the classroom and also the cultural diversity of the local community. Though approaches will differ in response to the school’s cultural mix, this does not mean that a monocultural school need do nothing. Nor does it mean that students from minority cultures become involuntary objects of study or that students are simply voyeurs of other cultures.

From my research it is my view that an intercultural school demonstrates certain philosophies, priorities and modes of operation. Firstly, it does more than pay lip service to cultural diversity through the celebration of Harmony Day once a year. It looks for sustained cross-cultural interaction, rather than one off or tokenistic encounters. Wherever possible, it builds opportunities for intercultural experience both
within its own community and beyond. Intercultural interaction may be stimulated through sister school relationships and cultural exchange programs between schools with different social and cultural profiles and through collaborative projects. These may include partnerships between schools in another part of a city, between urban, rural and remote schools or with schools in another country. The *Australia Indonesia Bridge Program* (2009) provides a recent example of regional partnerships between schools. Online education and resource networks such as *iEARN Australia* (2009) increase opportunities to develop relationships with individuals and groups across communities, cultures and countries in the real and virtual worlds.

Secondly, an intercultural school cultivates a global outlook through its policies and programs, evidenced in the provision of a quality intercultural language program and whole school commitments to studies of Asia and global education. And it can be sustained in less formal ways as well, through simple initiatives. For example, to expand children’s global knowledge and understandings, a primary school may decide to nominate a region or continent to mark the year. The geographic focus is introduced at the beginning of the year with students choosing class names from animals native to the region. It is sustained through the year in class work, and in working in partnership with artists from the countries and cultures of the region to produce a whole school arts event.

Finally, an intercultural school recognises the connection between language and culture and that language learning is integral to students’ ability to relate to and communicate across cultures. It promotes opportunities for students to learn another language, preferably with bilingual class teachers integrating language learning into their literacy programs, or with specialist language teachers working with class teachers who take part in the language classes with their students.

**Reconciliation**

An intercultural school commits to the process of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians “based on getting to know each other better, with respect, as differing equals” (National Curriculum Services & The Australian
Curriculum Studies Association, 2007). One way of realising this commitment is through the development of a school reconciliation action plan (RAP) (Reconciliation Australia, 2008). As a first step, the school recognises the importance of symbolic actions such as flying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags, and uses occasions such as NAIDOC Week and Sorry Day to learn from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders. But the school’s commitment to reconciliation needs to go deeper.

Through projects such as Dare to Lead (APAPDC, 2003), school leaders and staff undertake professional learning that strengthens their skills, capacities and confidence to work effectively with Indigenous students and communities and to support non-Indigenous students in working towards reconciliation. They call on the expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and members of the community for advice on protocol and curriculum content. The school’s commitment is evident in what it says and what it does in the curriculum and in everyday practices. This may include the development of practices such as school assemblies that begin with an acknowledgement of country and welcoming ceremonies at key school events.

**Personal, interpersonal and social learning**

Schools like to think of themselves as child-centred. Teacher and school leader participants in this research project stressed the importance of getting to know their students and expressed concern for their well-being. These are important factors in ensuring students’ sense of belonging within their class and school. But, an intercultural school also considers different dimensions of learning, beginning with the students’ capacity to become “active agents” (Deakin Crick, 2009, p. 76) in their learning. It encourages students to see themselves as having a say in their learning and a personal investment in it. As students have a greater say in their learning, so the teacher’s role changes. In an intercultural school, this includes supporting students to move beyond personal preoccupations and interests to learning from others through interpersonal and social interaction. In supporting children’s attempts to make sense of their worlds, an intercultural primary school makes the most of wide-ranging experiences that encourage exploration, imagination, interaction and conversation, that contribute to the intrinsic joy of learning and the motivation to learn.
A democratic school culture

The primary school develops children’s social skills. It is where they get to know and get along with all sorts of people, as they make friends, do things together and encounter situations where people disagree. An intercultural school actively builds on children’s interpersonal skills developing in them qualities such as curiosity, openness, care for others and a preparedness to engage with people and situations that are beyond the familiar and known. Through intercultural experiences, students learn as much about themselves as they do about others. They begin to understand the essential reciprocity of learning and of human relationships (Alexander, 2009a) and the importance of mutual respect.

Such a school would see its role not simply as normalising or socialising children into the school culture but also as developing in them an independence of thinking and a sense of personal agency. This allows them to influence and shape school culture and to see themselves as having an active role in the creation of a democratic school environment and in their learning. Arguably, the best opportunities for democratic experiences come through sustained social interaction (Hart & UNICEF, 1997). And, working together towards a common goal is a most effective strategy for reducing antagonism between groups (K. J. Reynolds & Turner, 2001). Therefore, social action projects, with students from different schools developing and implementing joint projects that have a common goal, help students to see themselves as capable of influencing the world around them, while breaking down stereotypes and hostility between different groups. Such projects extend formal learning beyond the classroom through experiences that generate interaction, and offer opportunities for diverse groups to learn to get along, manage conflict and work together for a common goal.

Revisiting the guiding principles

The guiding principles for intercultural education have evolved over the course of the research project, with the addition, removal, reconsideration and rearrangement of concepts and keywords. The principles as they currently stand differ from those with which I began. While they retain much of their original intent, their elaboration below
Chapter 7: Other ways

adds new dimensions or places new emphases on old dimensions - as described in the learning activities and strategies earlier in the chapter. Though the current arrangement represents my most recent thinking, the placement of keywords and concepts under one principle or another is, to some extent, arbitrary. The principles are interconnected and so tend to overlap. Strategies and activities also rarely exemplify any one principle alone.

Engagement

The engagement principle is characterised by interest, enthusiasm and curiosity, belonging and transformation (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005) and with bridging the gap between students’ personal lives and the social world (Touraine, 2009). It recognises that learning moves from the known to the unknown; that transformative learning occurs when students engage with worlds that are new to them. It is about connecting personal worlds to social worlds. While an intercultural curriculum should aim to stimulate students’ interest in the lives of others, the hook into other worlds is often personal. This is the intention in activities such as This stands for me where the student brings an object of personal significance into the classroom. As well as saying something about students themselves, the object is located in time and space connecting it and therefore the student with the wider world. This idea also underpins Graffiti wall. Students’ own views of the world introduce a wealth of knowledge, feelings, attitudes, conceptions and misconceptions through which they might be engaged.

The challenge for an intercultural curriculum then becomes to provide students with opportunities to explore ways of making sense of the world, and to stimulate their enthusiasm, wonder and curiosity for new experiences (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005). Above all, it has to be interesting. Students live in a complex and interconnected world - to engage their interest, the curriculum needs to reflect this. While sensitive to students’ ages and stages of development, an intercultural curriculum assumes that young children now have access to distant worlds via family connections, the media and communication technologies and so does not restrict their gaze to their immediate worlds. Instead, it responds to the reality that students need to understand their place
in the many worlds they are likely to encounter. This may occur by inviting people into
the classroom, such as via *Living Libraries*, or it may occur by students going out into
the world through activities such as cultural exchanges and shared projects.

**Connection**

The connection principle is characterised by finding commonalities between people - in
recognising the essential reciprocity of human relationships, in establishing mutual
recognition and respect between individuals and groups regardless of difference and in
coming to an understanding of a shared humanity. In an intercultural curriculum the
notion of connection works in a number of ways. Like engagement, it begins with
students’ sense of belonging and the connection between themselves and the world. On
a day-to-day level, it refers to the connections between people in the interpersonal
relationships between students, their peers and their teachers. This extends to their
understanding of human relationships more generally and the capacity to see that
relationships are reciprocal rather than one sided - requiring an ability to accommodate
the differences between oneself and other people through a process of mutual
recognition and negotiation (Hage, 2008). An activity with an interpersonal focus,
such as *Your silhouette is mine*, allows students to connect directly and immediately
with another person’s thoughts, feelings, desires, needs and activities.

Conversely, as they learn about others, students also learn about themselves. Through
a strategy such as *Diversity dolls* students are introduced to worlds that they may know
little about. In learning about the life and concerns of another person, students are
couraged to draw parallels with their own experiences and to compare their lives
with the lives of others. This dimension of intercultural learning considers the essential
interconnectedness of people living together in communities, nations and the world. It
highlights what we have in common, our differences and the challenges we share.

**Positive interaction**

The positive interaction principle is characterised by processes of dialogue,
observation, participation, mediation, argument and reconciliation. Whether described
as a conversation (Appiah, 2006; Nakata, 2008), an exchange (Byram, 2008) or a
shared expression (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006), intercultural activity is a social and communicative activity centred on the sustained interaction between people from different cultural groups and their efforts to understand and relate to one another. Therefore, intercultural learning is an active, social and communicative process. For this reason, many of the activities above, such as Diversity dolls, role-play and drama activities, local area studies, Living Libraries, school cultural exchanges and social action projects place an emphasis on interaction and participation.

That said, students immersed in new experiences do not necessarily respond in the same way. While there may be an expectation that they should be active participants in intercultural experiences, some students learn better through observation. Activities such as Eyewitness enable students to observe the lives of others, in order to gain an understanding of their perspectives. When students themselves are interviewed, they represent what they have seen and heard as if they were eyewitnesses, bearing in mind the inherent limitations in Stake’s (2008) observation that in storytelling “more will be pursued than was volunteered, and less will be reported than was learned” (p. 137).

The positive interaction principle includes argument, and the negotiation and accommodation of differences. It recognises that people do not always agree, acknowledging that even young children are aware of conflict in their own lives and in the world at large, and that when people talk about things that matter to them controversy is inevitable (Simon, 2001). Therefore, if an intercultural curriculum is to engage with difficult and challenging situations (Dodson, 2009a), students and teachers need the skills and confidence to confront complex social issues, controversy and conflict in ways that are constructive and appropriate to students’ ages and stages of development (Holden, 2007).

In early childhood classes the negotiation of difference could begin with personal dilemmas or problems, introduced through Diversity dolls, in class meetings or during Circle Time. This gives students the time to express their opinions while learning to listen to the opinions of others. They are given opportunities to discuss problems where there are no easy answers and where agreement is not easily reached. For older
students, strategies such as *Cooling Conflicts* give insights into the development of conflict, and the skills to recognise and manage conflict as it emerges.

Interaction also encompasses the notion of social action that involves students from different social and cultural groups working together in the initiation, development and implementation of shared projects such as those supported through initiatives such as *Ru Mad* and *iEARN* among many others (Bereznicki et al., 2008). These projects are intended to make a difference either in students’ own communities or in other communities. Participation in social action projects contribute to students’ awareness of themselves as subjects (Touraine, 2009), capable of working with others to influence the world around them and of seeing themselves as actors in their world rather than victims of it. Such actions may also help build Byram’s (2008) notion of intercultural citizenship through students’ engagement in social and political activities across cultural boundaries.

### Empathy

The empathy principle is characterised by feeling for others, care and imagination. Empathy imbues in students a sense of solidarity with those close to us and far removed from us, through interpersonal experiences, stories, music, film and other visual materials that encourage students to imagine the lives of others and to empathise with their circumstances. Activities such as *Your silhouette is mine* enable students to develop empathy for one other person through an interpersonal exchange, whereas, *Eyewitness* calls for students to imagine the worlds of people they are unlikely to meet. Such activities extend the boundaries of students’ worlds and help them to imagine what something might be like from someone else’s point of view, or what it might be like for them if their lives were different. They may even result in a change of heart (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

At times, teachers may need to include perspectives and experiences that differ from any of those expressed by students in order to provoke or unsettle their certainty. This is particularly important in classes where there is little diversity of opinion. An experience such as being unexpectedly evicted from their classroom in *Who owns*
what? gives students a jolt. Rather than asking students to imagine what it might be like, students get a taste of how it feels. It provokes them to think about the effects of dispossession on others. However, there are limits to empathy. Though students may imagine other people’s feelings and circumstances, they can never really know them for sure. Therefore, they learn to approach Others with openness, humility and ignorance (Todd, 2004).

**Perspective**

The perspective principle is characterised by consideration of and critical insight into multiple points of view and ways of seeing and the capacity to process or reflect on the meaning of experience. Just as empathy encourages closeness and fellow feeling, perspective calls for distance, critical thinking and an ability to see one’s own point of view as one of many.

An intercultural curriculum will support students in learning to analyse critically and systematically “the perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries” (Byram, 2008, p. 162). The introduction of multiple perspectives show students that it is possible to see the world in more than one way at the same time. Byram (2008) describes the capacity to hold multiple perspectives simultaneously as a process of tertiary socialisation. Not only do students learn to hold new beliefs alongside existing ones, but also to apply them in differing contexts. New perspectives also give students the means to think about familiar concepts in new ways, as shown in Grant’s (2006) *Holistic Teaching and Learning Framework*, that allows students to view topics from an Indigenous perspective.

**Self-knowledge**

The self-knowledge principle is characterised by openness to others, a capacity for self-reflection and self-expression and a preparedness to take responsibility for one’s actions. Self-knowledge “demands that we self-consciously question our ways of seeing the world if we are to become more understanding - better able to see beyond ourselves” (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 102). It envisions students as actors in their own lives, as enacted in the *Interaction principle*, with the capability to influence the
world around them and the motivation, skills and confidence to believe they can make a difference in the world (Collin, 2008). Moving in the opposite direction to the engagement principle, from the social to the personal, its central idea is that that learning to live together is a personal responsibility.

Therefore, intercultural learning seeks to develop in students a sense of responsibility for others as well as themselves, an essential element in Touraine’s (2000, 2009) conceptualisation of the subject. This is the intention, for example, in Local places activities where middle primary students are asked to take a leadership role in the implementation of a school reconciliation action plan.

National implications

At the beginning of the 21st century, the complex contexts of globalisation, social fragmentation and psychic uncertainty place new demands on Australian education. This thesis concludes that these demands require new thinking about the goals and priorities for education. It pulls together commitments to social cohesion, cultural diversity and the valuing of Australia’s Indigenous cultures (MCEETYA, 2008) under a new organising goal of learning to live together across difference.

As a goal for education, it assumes that learning to live together is everyone’s concern and is in everyone’s interest. It recognises that the demands of living together hold true in our personal lives, in our families and neighbourhoods, and in the negotiation of national and international relationships. It goes to the sort of society we want to live in; how we approach the things that matter most to us and how we make collective decisions about them. It recognises that issues such as reconciliation, the treatment of refugees, aged care, the use of resources and climate change are shared concerns. To meet future challenges, young people need the knowledge and skills to participate in public debates where differences and disagreements are aired and that may be personally confronting.
In proposing *Other ways* that national policy might pursue the goal of learning to live together, this thesis seeks to avoid the problems of previous policies as detailed in earlier chapters and to emphasise the importance of the new goal for education. It recommends the development of a national *Learning to live together* agenda.

The agenda would ensure that learning to live together becomes a national priority for school education that is made explicit in the national curriculum, is enacted in schools and is well-supported by teachers and the community. Initially, the agenda would comprise four components:

- a national statement and plan that clearly defines the goal of *learning to live together* and its significance, and outlines its rationale, intentions, proposed actions and intended outcomes
- the alignment of learning to live together with the national curriculum - ensuring that there are significant elements of the national curriculum which specifically and explicitly serve the goal of *learning to live together*
- national projects promoting cultural exchanges and intercultural social action projects between schools at local, national, regional and international levels
- ongoing professional support for teachers and schools.

A *Learning to live together* agenda may not be as far-fetched as it first sounds. It would build on existing national education initiatives and add new dimensions and directions to them. A national statement and plan would frame the initiative and give it impetus and urgency. The alignment of the national curriculum with the goal of learning to live together would give it a solid foundation and purpose. National projects would provide concrete examples of how the goal might be realised in schools. Teachers and schools would be supported by professional development incentives.

**Alignment with the national curriculum**

This research project has generated a number of ideas about how such an agenda might be progressed in the curriculum. In principle at least, the goal of *learning to live together* links readily with identified elements in the national curriculum - the general
capability of intercultural understanding and the two cross-curriculum dimensions - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies and Australia’s engagement with Asia.

This intercultural approach proposed here assumes that *learning to live together* is integral to the learning program for all students. In the curriculum it:

- incorporates personal, interpersonal, social and cultural dimensions of learning
- is developed through sustained encounters with different ways of being in the world that combine cultural knowledge and know-how, focusing on what you do as well as what you know
- includes expecting difference and withstanding disagreement as well as finding commonalities and ways to get along
- is cross-curricula - it is pertinent to an area of the curriculum that studies people and their relationships.

In the primary school curriculum, *learning to live together* could be expressed as an aim as simple as that described in *the Cambridge Primary Review* - that students learn to understand themselves, others and the wider world (Alexander, 2009a) - which is made explicit in learning area content and processes. Alternatively, it could build on intercultural understanding and be expressed as a general capability, elaborated in qualities and abilities such as:

- mutual recognition and respect
- openness to other cultural perspectives
- sensitivity to differences with others
- appreciation of different perspectives
- an ability to empathise with others
- an understanding of themselves in relation to others and the wider world
- the ability to apply their understandings in new contexts

Either way, as the national curriculum consolidates and expands its coverage of the learning areas and the embedding of general capabilities within these areas, it will be important to gauge the breadth and depth of intercultural understandings it achieves and its alignment with the goal of *learning to live together*. 
National projects

The idea of national projects is based on the belief that learning to live together is a personal responsibility and a shared project. Building on initiatives such as the Values Education Project, Harmony Day and State-based school exchange programs, national projects would promote cultural exchanges between schools and culturally focused social action projects.

As demonstrated in earlier examples in this chapter, projects would develop inter-school relationships at local, national, regional and international levels that are sustained through ongoing conversations and contact in real and virtual worlds. Cultural exchanges and social action projects would bring together students from different cultural, social, religious and geographic groups to work together on projects of shared interest or concern - designed to promote student participation, empowerment and intercultural understanding. They would support students learning interpersonal and social skills - interaction, negotiation and compromise - to identify needs, generate ideas, develop options, make decisions and carry out actions related to their shared project.

In the Learning to live together agenda, special attention would be devoted to cultural exchanges and social action projects concerned with reconciliation. These could be tied to schools’ reconciliation action plans and supported through Reconciliation Australia (2008) or Dare to Lead (APAPDC, 2003). They would support schools in working appropriately with local Indigenous groups in their community and in forming partnerships with other communities.

Professional support for teachers and schools

It is reasonable to expect that education initiatives will not succeed without proper support from teachers and schools. Evidence from teachers in this research project suggests that in-principle support for a goal such as intercultural understanding is not in itself enough to bring about substantial change to long-standing practice. For many teachers, intercultural learning is not something they are conscious of, or that is personally significant to them. Like students, they need opportunities to connect their
own lives with the lives of others. They also need the skills and confidence to handle situations where different perspectives collide. That is why a professional learning element in a national *Learning to live together* agenda is critical to its success.

In the past few years, several professional learning projects (Asia Education Foundation, 2005; Research Centre for Languages and Cultures, 2008) have introduced intercultural learning approaches to Australian teachers, mostly focused on intercultural language learning. The promotion a *Learning to live together* agenda to teachers, schools and communities would not concentrate exclusively on intercultural learning. It would include schools’ roles in strengthening the connections between people’s personal lives and broader social contexts, encouraging school cultures that are outward looking and teachers who bring intercultural curiosity and openness to their work. Professional learning would include opportunities for cultural exchange programs for teachers and cultural study tours for teaching teams, possibly building on existing national initiatives such as the *Endeavour Language Teacher Fellowships* (DEEWR, 2010) and the *Access Asia Study Tours* (Asia Education Foundation, 2010).

A national *Learning to live together* agenda would set broad directions and goals, and provide guidance, funding and support for schools. However, the principal focus of activity would be at a local level in schools, and the schools would determine priorities and programs to meet the needs and characteristics of their communities.

**Conclusion**

This thesis set out to investigate ways that education might respond positively to the complexities of cultural diversity in contemporary Australian society, asking how schools might work with students to help them get to know and get along with people they perceive to be different from themselves. From its analysis of recent education policies, curriculum documents and classroom practices in four ACT primary schools, it has drawn a number of conclusions about the current situation in Australian schools and has proposed a series of *Other ways* of thinking and acting for schools to support students learning to live together in a complex, diverse and fragmented world.
The thesis concludes that despite broad agreement by policy makers and teachers that education should equip young people to relate positively to people and groups they see as different from themselves, this is not easily realised in policy or practice. Goals relating to social cohesion, cultural diversity and valuing Indigenous cultures, as expressed in the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, are weakly defined and their meaning is assumed. In schools, attempts to address diversity often lack depth and simply ‘rebadge’ existing activities. Most educational approaches to diversity tend to emphasise learning about other people. They are rich in information but poor in interaction and result in the formation of superficial relationships held together by flimsy connections.

Current priorities for primary education have also diminished the importance of social and cultural learning. MCEETYA’s (2008) strong focus on literacy and numeracy in the primary curriculum, reinforced by national testing, risks the entrenchment of a hierarchy of school subjects that assigns lower importance to subjects not falling under the testing regime. It is vital that these emphases do not jeopardise the richness and depth of the primary curriculum (Alexander, 2009a) particularly for students who struggle to reach performance benchmarks in foundational subjects. A primary curriculum that reflects the realities and complexities of children’s worlds and futures must give priority to their personal, interpersonal and social learning as well as the acquisition of basic skills. The personal, social and cultural dimensions of *learning to live together* should be regarded as educational entitlements for all students across all stages of schooling, whether or not they form part of external assessment and accountability regimes.

In accepting the proposition that the flows of modernity and globalisation have precipitated a rift between personal lives and the rules and regulations of social organisations and social life, the thesis concludes that goals intended to benefit the society do not carry the power they once had. If they are to serve any function beyond symbolic significance, goals must now carry personal as well as social meaning. With this in mind, the thesis proposes a new goal for Australian schools based on Delors (1996) social pillar of learning: *learning to live together across difference*. 
Education based on the goal of *learning to live together* combines personal, social and intercultural learning. It is both a personal responsibility and a shared project. As actors in their own lives, students imagine the world they want to live in and act with others to fulfil their dreams. Through sustained intercultural experience, they learn to accept that there are many ways of being in the world and to handle disagreement peacefully and constructively. This approach starts as soon as children start school. It begins in the classroom with teachers who approach learning from an intercultural stance. It is nurtured in an outward-looking, culturally inclusive school environment and supported but not controlled by a national agenda directed to the goal of *learning to live together*. 
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References


References


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Conference. from


Appendices
Appendix 1: Intercultural Education Research

Project interview schedules

1. Initial interview with participating teachers

- Can you tell me a bit about yourself - your background, and any experiences you have in living and working with diverse cultures?
- Turning to your work as a teacher, how do you usually plan units of work?
- In general terms, can you tell me about the unit of work you are doing next term?
- What do you think the term ‘culture’ means?
- Do you consciously think about working with culture in your classroom? This could be, for example, in relation to tasks and activities, teaching approach, content, resources, student outcomes and assessment, classroom organisation or management.
- Are there any aspects of working with culture in the classroom that you find problematic or difficult? If so, could you describe what they are and how you deal with them?
- In this project I am interested in looking at how:
  - students’ interest/curiosity can be engaged in the lives/experiences of people that are different to their own;
  - students can explore their own cultural positions;
  - intercultural interaction can take place;
  - alternative viewpoints and ways of thinking can be represented;
  - students can be encouraged to take perspectives other than their own; and
  - ways in which students can reflect on their experiences
- Do you think these characteristics are apparent in your classroom at the moment? How?
• What do you see as the benefits of intercultural education? What do you see as its limitations? Given so many competing demands on the curriculum, how important do you think intercultural education is?

• What are your expectations, hopes and anxieties about participating in this project?

• What sort of information or resources would you find useful in helping you to get a better idea of this project?

2. Interview with school leaders

• I would like to start with your story. Can you tell me a bit about yourself - brief description of your background, your experiences in living and working with diverse cultures?

• Could you give a brief description of your school – such as the school's history and philosophy, characteristics of staff and students and its main programs?

• What do you think the term ‘culture’ means?

• How do you work with culture in your school?

• Are there any aspects of working with culture that you find problematic or difficult? If so, could you describe what they are and how you deal with them?

My research project is about ways that teachers and students might consider how people might relate to one another across perceived differences and how they might reflect on their own beliefs and attitudes and how they might better understand people they see as strangers.

  o What do you see as possible benefits of intercultural education interpreted in this way?

  o What do you see as its limitations?

  o Given competing demands on the curriculum, how important do you think intercultural education is?
3. Final interview with participating teachers

- What do you think worked well about the unit of work and why?
- What do you think didn’t work so well and why?
- What, if anything, surprised you?
- Looking at what you were hoping to achieve with the unit to what extent do you think they were met?
- What would you do differently next time?
Appendix 2: Communication with parents and the school community

1. Plain language statement for parents

Dear parents and carers

My name is Grette Toner. I am undertaking a PhD at RMIT University under the supervision of Associate Professor Geoff Shacklock in the School of Education. The title of my research project is Living in a bubble: culture, curriculum, diversity and intercultural education in Australian schools.

In the past few years, a number of national education statements have endorsed intercultural education as an important component of education for the 21st century. The focus of my research is to investigate the place and potential of intercultural education in a range of primary school classes. At its simplest, this project is concerned with how people get along with one another. More particularly, it is about what schools might do to help students better understand themselves and people they see as different from themselves. I anticipate my research will make a useful and practical contribution to the development of intercultural learning in primary schools.

Your child’s school and teacher have agreed to participate in the project. During Term 1 2007, your child’s class will study a unit of work that takes an intercultural approach. I will be present observing and taking notes during lessons where the teacher and students undertake the unit of work. No child will be interviewed. They will be observed undertaking normal class routines and activities in their own classroom. I would also like to collect examples of children’s work to help illustrate the learning that has taken place in the classroom. I will ensure your child’s anonymity by removing identifying features from all work I collect. I am, therefore, seeking your permission to document your child’s participation in these classes and to photograph examples of their work.
No student, teacher or school will be identified by name and pseudonyms or code names will be used in any reporting of the research. Access to the data will be limited to my supervisor and me. All research data will be stored in a secure place for six years, as required by RMIT University, after which time it will be destroyed.

The data will be used in the writing of my thesis to be submitted to RMIT University as a requirement of the PhD and may also be used in academic publications and conference presentations. I will provide a report of the project’s outcomes to the school upon completion of the project.

If you agree to your child participating in this project, please fill in and return the attached Consent Form to the class teacher.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent at any stage during the study in which event your child’s participation will cease immediately and any information obtained from or about them will not be used.

If you have any further questions or concerns regarding the study, please contact Grette Toner on ph. (02) 62477216 or email grette@badger.com.au or Dr Geoff Shacklock at RMIT University on ph. (03) 9925 7850 or email geoff.shacklock@rmit.edu.au.

Thank you for your consideration of this information.

Yours sincerely

Grette Toner
2. Project information: Little Primary School newsletter

Intercultural education project

Next term, Year 2 will be participating in a doctoral research project being undertaken by Ms Grette Toner from RMIT University. The project is investigating the place and potential of intercultural education in primary education and will be conducted in a range of primary school classes in the ACT. At its simplest, intercultural education is about how people get along with one another. More specifically, this project is looking at what schools might do to help students better understand themselves in relation to people they see as different from themselves.

Year 2 students will study a unit of work that offers students opportunities to consider how much people have in common as well as some examples of how there are many different ways of seeing and experiencing the world. Parents and carers of Year 2 students will receive detailed information about the project and a form for you to complete consenting to your child’s participation. Please return consent forms to school by Thursday 28 September.
Appendix 3: Intercultural resources for schools


Appendix 4: The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians
Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians

December 2008
This Declaration is made by all Australian Education Ministers:

Mr Andrew Barr MLA
Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Children and Young People (Australian Capital Territory)

The Hon. Julia Gillard MP
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Minister for Social Inclusion (Australian Government)

The Hon. Verity Firth MP
Minister for Education and Training (New South Wales)

The Hon. Marion Scrymgour MLA
Minister for Education and Training (Northern Territory)

The Hon. Rod Welford MP
Minister for Education, Training and the Arts (Queensland)

The Hon. Dr Jane Lomax-Smith MP
Minister for Education (South Australia)

The Hon. David Bartlett MP
Premier and Minister for Education and Skills (Tasmania)
Chair, Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

The Hon. Bronwyn Pike
Minister for Education (Victoria)

The Hon. Dr Elizabeth Constable MLA
Minister for Education (Western Australia)

Ministers would like to acknowledge the members of the Working Group responsible for developing this Declaration, and thank them for their valuable contribution.
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As a nation Australia values the central role of education in building a democratic, equitable and just society—a society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Australia’s Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation’s history, present and future.

In the 21st century Australia’s capacity to provide a high quality of life for all will depend on the ability to compete in the global economy on knowledge and innovation. Education equips young people with the knowledge, understanding, skills and values to take advantage of opportunity and to face the challenges of this era with confidence.

Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation’s ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion. Schools share this responsibility with students, parents, carers, families, the community, business and other education and training providers. In recognition of this collective responsibility, this declaration, in contrast to earlier declarations on schooling, has a broader frame and sets out educational goals for young Australians.

In the 1989 Hobart Declaration and the 1999 Adelaide Declaration, the State, Territory and Commonwealth Education Ministers committed to working together to ensure high-quality schooling for all young Australians. The Melbourne Declaration acknowledges major changes in the world that are placing new demands on Australian education:

- Global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the past decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities for Australians are emerging. This heightens the need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship.

- India, China and other Asian nations are growing and their influence on the world is increasing. Australians need to become ‘Asia literate’, engaging and building strong relationships with Asia.

- Globalisation and technological change are placing greater demands on education and skill development in Australia and the nature of jobs available to young Australians is changing faster than ever. Skilled jobs now dominate jobs growth and people with university or vocational education and training qualifications fare much better in the employment market than early school leavers. To maximise their opportunities for healthy, productive and rewarding futures, Australia’s young people must be encouraged not only to complete secondary education, but also to proceed into further training or education.
Complex environmental, social and economic pressures such as climate change that extend beyond national borders pose unprecedented challenges, requiring countries to work together in new ways. To meet these challenges, Australians must be able to engage with scientific concepts and principles, and approach problem-solving in new and creative ways.

Rapid and continuing advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) are changing the ways people share, use, develop and process information and technology. In this digital age, young people need to be highly skilled in the use of ICT. While schools already employ these technologies in learning, there is a need to increase their effectiveness significantly over the next decade.

Australia has developed a high-quality, world-class schooling system, which performs strongly against other countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In international benchmarking of educational outcomes for 15-year-olds in the 2006 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment, Australia ranked among the top 10 countries across all three education domains assessed. Over the next decade Australia should aspire to improve outcomes for all young Australians to become second to none amongst the world’s best school systems.

In striving for both equity and excellence, there are several areas in which Australian school education needs to make significant improvement. First, Australia has failed to improve educational outcomes for many Indigenous Australians and addressing this issue must be a key priority over the next decade. Second, by comparison with the world’s highest performing school systems, Australian students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are under-represented among high achievers and over-represented among low achievers. Third, there is room for improvement in Australia’s rate of Year 12 completion or equivalent.

Literacy and numeracy and knowledge of key disciplines remain the cornerstone of schooling for young Australians. Schooling should also support the development of skills in areas such as social interaction, cross-disciplinary thinking and the use of digital media, which are essential in all 21st century occupations. As well as knowledge and skills, a school’s legacy to young people should include national values of democracy, equity and justice, and personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience and respect for others.

As signatories to the Melbourne Declaration, Australian Education Ministers seek to achieve the highest possible level of collaboration with the government, Catholic and independent school sectors and across and between all levels of government. Australian Education Ministers also seek to achieve new levels of engagement with all stakeholders in the education of young Australians.
The Educational Goals for Young Australians
Improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to the nation’s social and economic prosperity and will position young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives.

Young Australians are therefore placed at the centre of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals.

These goals are:

**Goal 1:** Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence

**Goal 2:** All young Australians become:
- successful learners
- confident and creative individuals
- active and informed citizens

Achieving these educational goals is the collective responsibility of governments, school sectors and individual schools as well as parents and carers, young Australians, families, other education and training providers, business and the broader community.

Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence

Australian governments, in collaboration with all school sectors, commit to promoting equity and excellence in Australian schooling.

This means that all Australian governments and all school sectors must:

- provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location
- ensure that schools build on local cultural knowledge and experience of Indigenous students as a foundation for learning, and work in partnership with local communities on all aspects of the schooling process, including to promote high expectations for the learning outcomes of Indigenous students
- ensure that the learning outcomes of Indigenous students improve to match those of other students
- ensure that socioeconomic disadvantage ceases to be a significant determinant of educational outcomes
- reduce the effect of other sources of disadvantage, such as disability, homelessness, refugee status and remoteness
- ensure that schooling contributes to a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity
- encourage parents, carers, families, the broader community and young people themselves to hold high expectations for their educational outcomes
- promote a culture of excellence in all schools, by supporting them to provide challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all students to explore and build on their gifts and talents
- promote personalised learning that aims to fulfil the diverse capabilities of each young Australian.
The Educational Goals for Young Australians

Goal 2:
All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.

Successful learners... 

Australian governments commit to working in collaboration with all school sectors to support all young Australians to become:

- successful learners
- confident and creative individuals
- active and informed citizens.

- develop their capacity to learn and play an active role in their own learning
- have the essential skills in literacy and numeracy and are creative and productive users of technology, especially ICT, as a foundation for success in all learning areas
- are able to think deeply and logically, and obtain and evaluate evidence in a disciplined way as the result of studying fundamental disciplines
- are creative, innovative and resourceful, and are able to solve problems in ways that draw upon a range of learning areas and disciplines
- are able to plan activities independently, collaborate, work in teams and communicate ideas
- are able to make sense of their world and think about how things have become the way they are
- are on a pathway towards continued success in further education, training or employment, and acquire the skills to make informed learning and employment decisions throughout their lives
- are motivated to reach their full potential.
Confident and creative individuals...

- have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing
- have a sense of optimism about their lives and the future
- are enterprising, show initiative and use their creative abilities
- develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others
- have the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives
- have the confidence and capability to pursue university or post-secondary vocational qualifications leading to rewarding and productive employment
- relate well to others and form and maintain healthy relationships
- are well prepared for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members
- embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions.

Active and informed citizens...

- act with moral and ethical integrity
- appreciate Australia’s social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and have an understanding of Australia’s system of government, history and culture
- understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia’s civic life
- are able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia
- work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments
- are responsible global and local citizens.
A Commitment to Action

Together, all Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors and the broader community to achieve the educational goals for young Australians.

This commitment will be supported by action in eight inter-related areas:

- developing stronger partnerships
- supporting quality teaching and school leadership
- strengthening early childhood education
- enhancing middle years development
- supporting senior years of schooling and youth transitions
- promoting world-class curriculum and assessment
- improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- strengthening accountability and transparency

Developing stronger partnerships

Parents, carers and families are the first and most important influence in a child’s life, instilling the attitudes and values that will support young people to participate in schooling and contribute to broader local and global communities.

Partnerships between students, parents, carers and families, the broader community, business, schools and other education and training providers bring mutual benefits and maximise student engagement and achievement. Partnerships engender support for the development and wellbeing of young people and their families and can provide opportunities for young Australians to connect with their communities, participate in civic life and develop a sense of responsible citizenship.

In particular, the development of partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities, based on cross-cultural respect, is the main way of achieving highly effective schooling for Indigenous students.

Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to ensure that schools engage young Australians, parents, carers, families, other education and training providers, business and the broader community to support students’ progress through schooling, and to provide them with rich learning, personal development and citizenship opportunities.
Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to attract, develop, support and retain a high-quality teaching and school leadership workforce in Australian schools.

The teachers and leaders who work in Australia’s schools and educate young people are of fundamental importance to achieving these educational goals for young Australians. Excellent teachers have the capacity to transform the lives of students and to inspire and nurture their development as learners, individuals and citizens. They provide an additional source of encouragement, advice and support for students outside the home, shaping teaching around the ways different students learn and nurturing the unique talents of every student.

School principals and other school leaders play a critical role in supporting and fostering quality teaching through coaching and mentoring teachers to find the best ways to facilitate learning, and by promoting a culture of high expectations in schools. School leaders are responsible for creating and sustaining the learning environment and the conditions under which quality teaching and learning take place.

All Australian governments, universities, school sectors and individual schools have a responsibility to work together to support high-quality teaching and school leadership, including by enhancing pre-service teacher education.

Australian governments commit to supporting the development and strengthening of early childhood education, to provide every child with the opportunity for the best start in life.

Governments have important roles to play in ensuring that children receive quality early childhood education and care. The period from birth through to eight years, especially the first three years, sets the foundation for every child’s social, physical, emotional and cognitive development. Early childhood education and care provides a basis for life and learning, both within and beyond the home, and is supported by healthy, safe and stimulating environments.

Children who participate in quality early childhood education are more likely to make a successful transition to school, stay longer in school, continue on to further education and fully participate in employment and community life as adults. Support for Indigenous children in the early years before school is particularly important to ensure a successful transition to schooling, which may involve a culturally different learning environment.

Australian governments commit to supporting the development and strengthening of early childhood education, to provide every child with the opportunity for the best start in life.
Enhancing middle years development

The middle years are an important period of learning, in which knowledge of fundamental disciplines is developed, yet this is also a time when students are at the greatest risk of disengagement from learning. Student motivation and engagement in these years is critical, and can be influenced by tailoring approaches to teaching, with learning activities and learning environments that specifically consider the needs of middle years students. Focusing on student engagement and converting this into learning can have a significant impact on student outcomes. Effective transitions between primary and secondary schools are an important aspect of ensuring student engagement.

Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to ensure that schools provide programs that are responsive to students’ developmental and learning needs in the middle years, and which are challenging, engaging and rewarding.

Supporting senior years of schooling and youth transitions

The senior years of schooling should provide all students with the high-quality education necessary to complete their secondary school education and make the transition to further education, training or employment. Schooling should offer a range of pathways to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of all young Australians, encouraging them to pursue university or post-secondary vocational qualifications that increase their opportunities for rewarding and productive employment. This requires effective partnerships with other education and training providers, employers and communities.

Schools need to provide information, advice and options to students so that they can make informed choices about their future. All governments and school sectors need to support young people’s transition from schooling into further study, training or employment and enable them to acquire the skills that support this, including an appetite for lifelong learning. Support may also be needed for young people returning to education and training after a period of employment.

Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to support the senior years of schooling and the provision of high-quality pathways to facilitate effective transitions between further study, training and employment.
Promoting world-class curriculum and assessment

Curriculum

Curriculum will be designed to develop successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.

State, Territory and Commonwealth governments will work together with all school sectors to ensure world-class curriculum in Australia. Together the national curriculum and curriculum specified at the State, Territory and local levels will enable every student to develop:

A solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values on which further learning and adult life can be built

The curriculum will include a strong focus on literacy and numeracy skills. It will also enable students to build social and emotional intelligence, and nurture student wellbeing through health and physical education in particular. The curriculum will support students to relate well to others and foster an understanding of Australian society, citizenship and national values, including through the study of civics and citizenship. As a foundation for further learning and adult life the curriculum will include practical knowledge and skills development in areas such as ICT and design and technology, which are central to Australia’s skilled economy and provide crucial pathways to post-school success.

Deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values that will enable advanced learning and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications

The curriculum will enable students to develop knowledge in the disciplines of English, mathematics, science, languages, humanities and the arts, to understand the spiritual, moral and aesthetic dimensions of life, and open up new ways of thinking. It will also support the development of deep knowledge within a discipline, which provides the foundation for inter-disciplinary approaches to innovation and complex problem-solving.

General capabilities that underpin flexible and analytical thinking, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise

The curriculum will support young people to develop a range of generic and employability skills that have particular application to the world of work and further education and training, such as planning and organising, the ability to think flexibly, to communicate well and to work in teams. Young people also need to develop the capacity to think creatively, innovate, solve problems and engage with new disciplines.
Learning areas
The learning areas below will be incorporated into the curriculum with breadth, balance and depth of learning appropriate to students’ phases of development. Schools and school systems are responsible for delivering curriculum programs that reflect these learning areas, with appropriate flexibility to determine how this can best be achieved in a local context.

The learning areas are not of equal importance at all year levels. English and mathematics are of fundamental importance in all years of schooling and are the primary focus of learning in the early years. However, humanities and social sciences, for example, take on greater scope and increasing specialisation as students move through the years of schooling. Each learning area has a specific discipline base and each has application across the curriculum. In addition, a focus on environmental sustainability will be integrated across the curriculum and all students will have the opportunity to access Indigenous content where relevant.

- English
- Mathematics
- Sciences (including physics, chemistry, biology)
- Humanities and social sciences (including history, geography, economics, business, civics and citizenship)
- The arts (performing and visual)
- Languages (especially Asian languages)
- Health and physical education
- Information and Communication Technology and design and technology

Assessment
Assessment of student progress will be rigorous and comprehensive. It needs to reflect the curriculum, and draw on a combination of the professional judgement of teachers and testing, including national testing.

To ensure that student achievement is measured in meaningful ways, State, Territory and Commonwealth governments will work with all school sectors to develop and enhance national and school-level assessment that focuses on:

- assessment for learning — enabling teachers to use information about student progress to inform their teaching
- assessment as learning — enabling students to reflect on and monitor their own progress to inform their future learning goals
- assessment of learning — assisting teachers to use evidence of student learning to assess student achievement against goals and standards.

Australian governments commit to working together with all school sectors to ensure world-class curriculum and assessment for Australia at national and local levels.
Improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds

For Australian schooling to promote equity and excellence, governments and all school sectors must improve educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians and encourage them, their families and their communities to hold high expectations for their education. Educational outcomes for Indigenous children and young people are substantially behind those of other students in key areas of enrolment, attendance, participation, literacy, numeracy, retention and completion. Meeting the needs of young Indigenous Australians and promoting high expectations for their educational performance requires strategic investment. Australian schooling needs to engage Indigenous students, their families and communities in all aspects of schooling, increase Indigenous participation in the education workforce at all levels, and support coordinated community services for students and their families that can increase productive participation in schooling. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, those from remote areas, refugees, homeless young people, and students with disabilities often experience educational disadvantage. Targeted support can help disadvantaged young Australians to achieve better educational outcomes. Australian governments must support all young Australians to achieve not only equality of opportunity but also more equitable outcomes.

Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to:
- 'close the gap' for young Indigenous Australians
- provide targeted support to disadvantaged students
- focus on school improvement in low socioeconomic communities.
Good-quality information on schooling is important for schools and their students, for parents and families, for the community and for governments.

For schools and their students
Schools need reliable, rich data on the performance of their students because they have the primary accountability for improving student outcomes.

Good quality data supports each school to improve outcomes for all of their students. It supports effective diagnosis of student progress and the design of high-quality learning programs. It also informs schools’ approaches to provision of programs, school policies, pursuit and allocation of resources, relationships with parents and partnerships with community and business.

For parents and families
Information about the performance of individuals, schools and systems helps parents and families make informed choices and engage with their children’s education and the school community.

Parents and families should have access to:
- data on student outcomes
- data that allows them to assess a school’s performance overall and in improving student outcomes
- contextual information about the philosophy and educational approach of schools, and their facilities, programs and extracurricular activities
- information about a school’s enrolment profile.
For the community

The community should have access to information that enables an understanding of the decisions taken by governments and the status and performance of schooling in Australia, to ensure schools are accountable for the results they achieve with the public funding they receive, and governments are accountable for the decisions they take. The provision of school information to the community should enhance community engagement and understanding of the educational enterprise. This includes access to national reporting on the performance of all schools, contextual information and information about individual schools’ enrolment profile.

Parents, families and the community should have access to information about the performance of their school compared to schools with similar characteristics. Australian governments will work together to achieve nationally comparable reporting about schools.

In providing information on schooling, governments will ensure that school-based information is published responsibly, so that any public comparisons of schools will be fair, contain accurate and verified data, contextual information and a range of indicators. Governments will not themselves devise simplistic league tables or rankings and privacy will be protected.

For governments

Governments need sound information on school performance to support ongoing improvement for students, schools and school sectors.

Good quality data enables governments to:
- analyse how well schools are performing
- identify schools with particular needs
- determine where resources are most needed to lift attainment
- identify best practice and innovation
- conduct national and international comparisons of approaches and performance
- develop a substantive evidence base on what works.

Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to ensure that public reporting:
- focuses on improving performance and student outcomes
- is both locally and nationally relevant
- is timely, consistent and comparable.
The Melbourne Declaration will be supported by a series of action plans, commencing with an action plan for 2009–12. The action plans will outline the strategies and initiatives that Australian governments will undertake, in collaboration with all school sectors, to support the achievement of the Educational Goals for Young Australians.

The action plans will be supported by and based on a renewed commitment to federalism that encourages best practice in education and enables governments to share and apply their knowledge. With such an approach all governments will share the costs and benefits of reforms to give every young Australian a real chance of becoming a successful learner, a confident and creative individual and an active and informed citizen.

There are many innovative educational reforms developed in individual schools and sectors, and there is potential for the best of these to be adapted and shared across the nation. All Australian governments will jointly convene a biennial national forum to support the achievement of the educational goals and to showcase best practice across Australian States and Territories, the Commonwealth and government, Catholic and independent school sectors.

With commitment and hard work—from children and young people and their parents, carers and families, from schools, teachers, communities, business and all Australian governments—all young Australians will be provided with the opportunity to reach their full potential.
The Working Group also received significant contributions from:
Mr Bill Burmester (Australian Government), Ms Norma Jeffrey (Western Australia) and Ms Leslie Loble (New South Wales).

The development of the Melbourne Declaration was supported by a Secretariat and Project Team based in the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

The goals were informed by extensive national and jurisdictional consultation over two stages. Initial input and feedback based on the Future of Schooling in Australia report helped shape the first draft of the new Declaration, which was then the basis for a second round of targeted consultations and public submissions. All feedback was considered in developing the final document.

The Working Group also drew on a range of international literature and particularly benefited from the United Kingdom Qualifications and Curriculum Authority’s Futures in action: Building a 21st century curriculum, which informed the drafting of Goal No. 2.

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