Executive summary

Increasingly multicultural societies have an impact on education and student achievement. Educational challenges posed by family background, socio-economic context and migration status are not only strongly linked to student performance, they determine student performance over and above the school's influence.* Schools and education systems must therefore seek to overcome such inequalities and at the same time harness the benefits that students and teachers from diverse backgrounds bring to classrooms. A successful school system treats diversity as a source of potential growth rather than an inherent hindrance to student performance. It uses the strength and flexibility of its teachers to draw out this potential, and provides them with the appropriate support and guidance to accomplish this task.

Educating Teachers for Diversity: Meeting the Challenge explores the concepts underlying diversity in various contexts and the challenges involved in creating an evidence base that could guide policy makers on this topic. It looks at the need to better articulate the links between initial and in-service teacher education and the necessity of addressing current gaps in our knowledge. Such gaps include how to attract and retain more diverse student teachers and how best to educate the teacher educators themselves. It also examines classroom practices and principles in a number of country contexts. Throughout the volume, issues raised by student teachers, teachers and teacher educators who participated in an online consultation are used to highlight emerging themes and key challenges in the field.

An important theme underlies all the contributions to this publication: that diversity is an asset for educators and societies in general and that efforts should be made to make the most of this rich resource. This approach contrasts with the view that diversity is a problem that needs to be avoided, or, if this is not possible, "solved".

*OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2003 and 2006: *www.oecd.org/edu/pisa*.

The increasing complexity of the globalised classroom – but how do we measure successful teaching for diversity?

The issue of educating teachers for diverse classrooms needs to be addressed urgently. **Part One** presents an analysis of contexts, concepts, and research that have had an impact on how OECD countries prepare teachers for diversity in the classroom. In the Introduction, the OECD Secretariat sets the stage with key factors, including:

- an increasing proportion of migrants and immigrants in OECD countries;
- continuing disparities in scholastic achievement between first and second generation immigrant students and their native peers;
- lower scholastic achievement and graduation rates for indigenous populations in countries with a long history of migration;
- changing roles of teachers and continuing difficulty in attracting and retaining new recruits to the teaching force;
- a lack of empirical research on effective strategies for teacher education for diversity.

Also in Part One, international researchers examine the concepts and traditions underlying research on teacher education for diversity. Examples of using large scale data analysis to guide suggestions for policy and practice are provided. In Chapter 3, Ben Jensen provides analysis of the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) in regard to teachers' responses for teaching in a multicultural setting. The importance of disaggregating data when using large-scale data sets is underlined in Bruce Garnett's work in Chapter 4. Underlying the contributions to Part One are two questions: How can we measure the success of a particular initiative or policy? And what are the political and educational costs of the absence of strong and relevant research on this key topic?

Preparing teachers: linking initial teacher education to in-service training and identifying knowledge gaps

Many practitioners who responded to the online consultation rated sensitivity to diversity issues as considerably important for becoming an effective teacher; far fewer reported feeling well prepared to handle diversity issues in

the classroom. **Part Two** looks at teacher education itself and the different strategies used to prepare practitioners to respond to diversity in the classroom. In Chapter 5 Russell Bishop explores the distinction between diversity and disparity, in which *diversity* itself is a neutral concept (*i.e.* one can be short, tall, urban, rural, etc.) that is distinct from *disparity*, in which diverse situations are associated with different outcomes or differential treatment. This chapter looks in particular at a concrete example from a professional development programme aimed at improving educational outcomes for indigenous Maori populations in the New Zealand context.

This is followed by a special focus on two themes that are often overlooked in current research and policy making: *(a)* recruiting and retaining diverse teachers and student teachers; and *(b)* educating the teacher educators themselves. Chapter 6 highlights research from the Netherlands looking at three case studies of initial teacher education programmes and explores the experiences of the student teachers as they pursue their chosen studies and seek to find appropriate placements and practicum. In Chapter 7 Richard Milner discusses the preparation of teacher educators and offers planning principles and questions to help guide teacher educators in the crucial area of curriculum planning for increasingly diverse student classrooms. Part Two ends with a look at a teacher education programme in Italy, a country which is still developing its approach to diversity in the school and in society more generally.

Moving into practice: the importance of context, flexibility, and critical reflection

In the online consultation, teachers and teacher educators reported "creating an interactive environment to promote and support diversity" as their most favoured strategy to respond to diversity in the classroom. But how might one do this? **Part Three** focuses moving into practice and the realities that confront schools, principals, and teachers in the classroom in countries with uniquely different traditions and experiences of diversity. As these contributions make clear, context matters.

In Chapter 9, Anne Sliwka explores the process of change with an analysis of the steps taken to transition from a relatively homogenous society (Germany of the 1960s) to one more prepared to embrace its increasing diversity. Chapter 10 looks at Spain, a country that has experienced dramatically increased levels of migrants in a rapid period of time. By tracing the legal instruments used to effectuate change in teacher education and analysing how well these changes are reflected in current teacher education programmes, Miguel Essomba explores the process of moving from theory to practice.

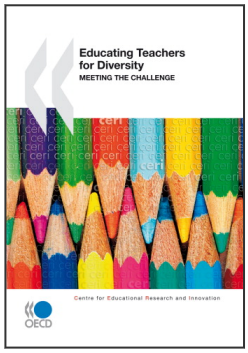
Chapter 11 focuses on a country in transition: Northern Ireland. Claire McGlynn explores the different kinds of approaches that school principals have used in addressing diversity in such a context, including the important role of leaders in championing the explicit acknowledgement of diversity issues.

Lastly, this section ends with a look at the highly diverse American context, and explores how teachers can be best supported to choose the classroom practices with the most potential in light of their particular classroom context. In Chapter 12 Geneva Gay provides guiding principles and illustrative examples of how these principles can be translated into practice through the use of specific pedagogic tools.

The pending agenda – assessing the status quo*, highlighting gaps, and moving forward*

Part Four concludes the volume by identifying areas where further attention and action is needed in governance, research, and teaching. A number of gaps and areas for improvement that emerge from the publication are identified and described, followed by orientations for the pending agenda. It looks at common obstacles and resistance to change in teacher education for diversity and offers suggestions of discussion topics for policy makers and practitioners.

Educating Teachers for Diversity: Meeting the Challenge explores the evidence base that can be used to allow initial and in-service teacher education to prepare teachers for their changing classrooms. It provides concrete examples of challenges facing teachers in OECD countries and presents a range of policies, experiences and practices that are used in various contexts, from countries with long histories of diversity to those with more recent experiences. This publication also asks how these insights can inspire continuing educational reform and change in a globalised world.



From:

Educating Teachers for Diversity

Meeting the Challenge

Access the complete publication at:

https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264079731-en

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2010), "Executive summary", in *Educating Teachers for Diversity: Meeting the Challenge*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264079731-3-en

This work is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This document and any map included herein are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

You can copy, download or print OECD content for your own use, and you can include excerpts from OECD publications, databases and multimedia products in your own documents, presentations, blogs, websites and teaching materials, provided that suitable acknowledgment of OECD as source and copyright owner is given. All requests for public or commercial use and translation rights should be submitted to rights@oecd.org. Requests for permission to photocopy portions of this material for public or commercial use shall be addressed directly to the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) at info@copyright.com or the Centre français d'exploitation du droit de copie (CFC) at contact@cfcopies.com.